

JOYCE'S SAINTS AND SAGES: HISTORY, HAGIOLOGY AND THE IRISH FRANCISCAN TRADITION

'four owlers masters for to tauch him' (FW 21.29)

Joyce's engagement with the Irish Franciscan heritage is discernible from *Stephen Hero* to the opening line of *Finnegans Wake*, where Anna Livia finds herself 'riverrun past Eve and Adam's' (*FW* 3.1), more correctly, the church of the Immaculate Conception attached to the Franciscan Friary on Merchant's Quay. Although Joyce was primarily interested in the Spiritual Franciscan tradition, with its persistent scintilla of heresy, he also admired 'the comedian Capuchin' (*CP* 20), whose humble sermons he associates with Francis's description of himself as a *joculator Dei* ('jester for God'). This is exemplified by the sympathetic confessor Stephen encounters as a schoolboy in the Capuchin Church in Church Street, 'whose old and weary voice fell like sweet rain upon his quaking parching heart' (*P* 145). Indeed, it is telling that as an undergraduate, Stephen makes 'a slight dubiative movement with his lips' during the Director of Studies' eminently Jesuitical disquisition on the comic potential of Belgian Capuchins cycling in their *jupes*, 'The Capuchin dress, he thought, was rather too ...' (*P* 154).

One of the works that Joyce undoubtedly first encountered in school, which sustained him right to the end of *Finnegans Wake* is the '*Annals of the Fours Masters*', compiled between 1632-6 in the Franciscan friary at Drowse, near Ballyshannon. Joyce tells us this 'grand old historiorum' was written (*FW* 13.21) by 'the four of Masterers' (*FW* 91.20), Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, a Franciscan laybrother, and three laymen: Cú Choigríche Ó Cléirigh, Fearfeasa Ó Maoil Chonaire and Cú Choigríche Ó Duibhgeannáin, with the assistance of two scribes: Muiris Ó Maoil Chonaire and Conaire Ó Cléirigh.

The *Annals* was a collaborative effort, a method of composition which strove to achieve a historical consensus, and is parodied most effectively in the unreliable chroniclers of *Finnegans Wake*, named after the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, known collectively as Mamalujo. Joyce describes his 'fourbottle men, the analysts', dipping their nibs to produce

‘their anchluss about her whosebefore and his whereafters’ (*FW*95.28), which alludes to the synchronized chronology of the Irish annals.

In addition to the Four Masters, Joyce was greatly influenced by *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (‘Basis of Knowledge on Ireland’), completed in around 1634 by Seathrún Céitinn (Geoffrey Keating), a secular priest of Norman or Old English descent, born and bred in Co. Tipperary. Keating’s treatment of the coming of the Normans as the legitimate extension of the five ‘takings’ or invasions of Ireland had a particular effect on Joyce’s vision of history, whereby Old English families like the Keatings and Joyces became, in the well-worn phrase coined in the eighteenth century and recalled ironically by Bloom, ‘More Irish than the Irish’ (*U*7.100). However, a strong insistence on Ireland’s inalienable sovereignty as a kingdom - not a colony - unites the Gaelic Four Masters with the Old English Keating. Joyce also admired Keating, who was a familiar author in Irish secondary schools by the time Joyce attended Belvedere, and the squared copybook (Dublin, NLI MS 36,639/02/A), containing entries Joyce made during 1903 in Paris, during 1904 in Pola, and during 1912 in Trieste, also lists Keating’s homiletic work in circulation by 1631, *Trí Bior-Ghaoithe an Bháis* (‘Three Shafts of Death’).

One of the most notable Franciscans of Old English stock was ‘Mumblesome Wadding’ (*FW*377.15), important to Joyce’s depiction of St Patrick in *Finnegans Wake* because of his propagation of universal devotion to the patron saint of Ireland. Wadding ensured that 17 March became a universal feast day due to its inclusion in the revised Roman Breviary of 1632, granting ‘a vaticanned viper catcher’s visa for Patsy Presbys’ (*FW*210.27), while extirpating the emphasis on Patrick’s miracle-working powers in the early Irish accounts of his life. In *Finnegans Wake*, Wadding is depicted ‘cranking up to the hornemoonium’ (*FW*377.15-16), recalling his counter argument to some Franciscans who believed the founder had forbidden the use of organs, even singing, in church. Joyce is also aware of the processes of canonization ‘according to Wadding’, and the ‘pious theft’ of St Verdiana, mentioned in the *Annales minorum*, is parodied by the ‘pious fraud’ (*FW*573.25-6) ascribed to Anna Livia as Anita. However, Wadding’s reputation as a scholar rests principally on his theological work, especially his edition of John Duns Scotus. In a lecture delivered in English on 27 April 1907 at the Università Popolare in Trieste, entitled ‘Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages’, Joyce maintains Duns Scotus was Irish, which has led some to believe Joyce confuses him with John Scottus Eriugena (c. 815-c. 877). But there was a long tradition in Franciscan hagiography that claimed him for Ireland, including the distinguished scholars Hugh MacCaughwell, the Cork theologian John Punch, and Luke Wadding.

In choosing exile, Joyce's highly developed sense of *non serviam* not only led him to regard Dante (who was perpetually exiled on pain of death from Florence in March 1302) as a worthy forerunner, but also to embrace the persona of the intellectual pilgrim adopted by Irish monks and laymen from the age of Colum Cille and Columbanus in the sixth and seventh centuries, and refashioned by Irish Franciscans on the Continent during the seventeenth century. As Joyce reminds us in 'Saints and Sages', Ireland 'sent its sons to every country in the world to preach the gospel, and its learned men to interpret and renew the holy texts' (*OPCW* 122) throughout the 'Insular period', that is, from the coming of Christianity to the coming of the Normans. This gilded vision had a profound effect on Joyce's formation and development as a creative writer. It provided an ideological counteractive to colonial depictions of the barbarous Irish, beginning with Giraldus Cambrensis in the twelfth century, and culminating in the simian caricatures of 'wild Irish' (*U* 1.731) in the nineteenth-century popular press. Joyce was acutely aware that the Insular period was a time when Ireland assumed a spiritual and cultural hegemony over large areas of what is now Scotland and Northern England, and the Irish church was intellectually and culturally confident enough to address Rome fraternally, at a remove from Rome's imperial shadow. From the sixth to the twelfth century, Irish intellectual activity extended across Europe as far east as Kiev, leaving a spiritual and cultural legacy still acknowledged on the Continent at the turn of the twentieth century, but purposefully written out of British history and folk memory.

Indeed, the 'miracle Irlandais', as Jules Michelet named this immense contribution to European civilization, made the prospect of settling on the Continent all the more palatable for the young Joyce. During the Insular period, Irish *peregrini* established scholarly colonies which became centres of academic excellence, from Laon to Fiesole, from Auxerre to Vienna. By the time of Charlemagne, these *peregrini* had a reputation for immense erudition, allied to extraordinary intellectual originality and, it must be said, overweening pride in their learning. This made them much sought after in the network of academies established across Western Europe which developed into the universities of the high middle ages. The bounds of Western Europe as defined by Charlemagne's empire, so often criss-crossed by wandering Irish scholars, offered Joyce the possibility of pursuing a creative life as an intellectual 'Missionary to Europe after fiery Columbanus', and such *peregrini* as 'Fiacre and Scotus' (*U* 3.192-3). This provided a stark contrast to the peripheral, albeit picturesque, ruins of Insular Ireland: romanticized as follies of a long dead and devalued past by the 'taratoryism' (*FW* 359.3) of

unionist antiquarians, or politically commodified as the nationalist totems that bestrew the Citizen's handkerchief in *Ulysses*.

In 'Saints and Sages', Joyce first expressed the opinion reiterated in *Exiles* that 'If Ireland is to become a New Ireland she must first become European ... Some day we will have to choose between England and Europe' (*E* 57). It is precisely because of the legacy of Ireland's early medieval past that Europe holds the way forward for Ireland's future as an independent nation and Joyce's own independence as an artist. He prefers to preach to those who remember those 'pilgrims or hermits and scholars and sorcerers' who 'carried the torch of knowledge from country to country' (*OPCW* 108), and he follows in their footsteps across France to Switzerland to the Austro-Hungarian empire, and back again. Joyce is aware that the perpetuation of the memory of these *peregrini* on the Continent owes a great deal to those working in the Irish Franciscan milieu throughout the seventeenth century. In compiling their historiographical and hagiographical sources such scholars as Ó Cléirigh, in contrast to their Insular forerunners, were forced into exile in a period where 'punic judgeship strove with penal law' (*FW* 90.35). Joyce identifies with such forerunners as Ó Cléirigh, who followed in the footsteps of MacCaughwell and other 'Bro Cahlls and Fran Czeschs' (*FW* 423.36), albeit Joyce is given the 'nonpenal start' (*FW* 398.7-8) denied to generations of Irish Franciscans in exile. In the course of gathering and transcribing Insular manuscripts, Ó Cléirigh moved between what Joyce calls the 'Hibernska Ulitzas' (*FW* 551.33) of Prague, Louvain and Rome. Here, Joyce recalls the Irish Franciscan College of the Immaculate Conception in Prague, inaugurated on 6 July 1631, which gave its name to the street on which it was situated, - Hybernská ulice - as did the Franciscan College of St Anthony of Padua in Louvain, and Wadding's foundation of St Isidore's in Rome. In their careful preservation and transmission of Insular learning, 'when they were all four collegians on the nod, neer the Nodderlands' (*FW* 385.8-9), the Four Masters mirror the antiquarian impulses of the *peregrini* who ventured into Europe almost exactly a thousand years before them, 'for auld acquaintance, to Peregrine and Michael and Farfassa and Peregrine, for navigants et peregrinantibus' (*FW* 398.14-16). In this respect, their mission is similar to such other scholars based at Louvain as Antony Hickey, Patrick Fleming and John Colgan.

Colgan came from a distinguished family of hereditary scholars from Donegal, and was the pre-eminent Irish hagiographer of the early seventeenth century. In *Finnegans Wake* in the interrogation of Yawn, the avatar of St Malachy in his twin roles as hereditary successor to Patrick and archbishop of Armagh, Joyce draws on the hagiographic fact that saints' lives may

often recur ‘in three times the same differently’ (*FW* 481.10-11), as he notes in relation to the seven Lives edited by Colgan in his *Acta Triadis Thaumaturgae*, published in Louvain in 1647: ‘I, 5, 7 Lives good / 2 3 4 fables’ (VI.B.14.54; VI.C.12.44). Joyce is also aware that Colgan’s Third and Fifth Lives of Patrick state that the young Patrick spent four years receiving instruction from Martin of Tours. One of Joyce’s preparatory notebooks for *Finnegans Wake*, VI.B.2, opens with a series of references relating to Patrick, allied to several notes on Martin of Tours, which point to Colgan’s influence. Indeed, in some hagiographical accounts, ‘St Martin of Tours’ (*U* 12.1694), is not only depicted as Patrick’s first teacher, but also his blood relative, and a native of Sabaria or ‘Szombathely and Szombathely begat Virag and Virag begat Bloom’ (*U* 15.1868). Just as Bloom is sprang ‘from Hungary!’ (*U* 12.1666-67), so is the Pannonian soldier regarded as the spiritual father of the Apostle of Ireland and one of the foremost saints in early Hiberno-Latin hagiography from at least the seventh century.

Joyce was keenly aware that the Insular age had been strategically excised by British historiographers from the time of Giraldus Cambrensis onward, just as he saw the inherent paradox in the excoriation of Cambrensis by such Old English historiographers as Keating, because he identifies that same paradox in his own historical perception. The families of these writers and their Old English patrons had become more Irish than the Irish themselves just as generations of New English settlers would in their wake. But unlike these later Protestant settlers, the Old English forged strong links with the Continent as a consequence of sectarian persecution for their adherence to the Catholic faith. Certainly, it was on the Continent that the writings of such exiled Franciscan historiographers and hagiologists as Wadding, Mac Caghwell, Colgan, Fleming, Ward, Hickey and Ó Cléirigh, had the greatest impact. In the nineteenth century, Jules Michelet and Augustin Thierry highlighted the Irish evangelization of Anglo-Saxon England for a British audience unfamiliar with those ‘farback, pitchblack centuries’ (*FW* 385.6), based on the work of the Irish Franciscans of the seventeenth century. In the wake of the Flight of the Earls, generations of Old Irish and Old English families ‘enlisted in all the foreign garrisons of European Powers, mainly France, Holland and Spain, and won many a victor’s laurel on the battlefields for their adoptive masters’ (*OCPW* 123). Just as the Wild Geese saw themselves as following in the footsteps of what Michelet describes as those ‘oiseaux voyageurs’ who migrated ‘avant, après saint Columban’, Joyce reminds his audience at the start of his writing career that ‘even today the flight of these Wilde Geese continues’ (*OCPW* 123).

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