

WANDERING ROCKS

Island Politics in the Offshore Locales of James Joyce

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Abstract

This article addresses the representation of islands within the fiction of the 20th Century writer James Joyce. It is argued that Joyce reveals how islands and concepts of islandness can be made to serve varying political, historical, and literary ends. Writing in the immediate aftermath of Irish independence and partition, Joyce used the island settings of the Aran Islands and the Isle of Man in order to comment on the implications of those recent historical developments. While contemporary writers like Yeats and Synge valued the Aran Islands for their inculcation of traditional Irish values, Joyce rejected that vision as parochial and outmoded. Instead, Joyce drew attention to important comparisons and contrasts between Ireland and the Isle of Man. In *Ulysses* (1922) Joyce contrasted Ireland's long and bloody struggle for independence with Man, whose legislature, the House of Keys, presented a dramatic counterexample of legitimate Home Rule. For both Joyce and his characters, Man was associated with familiar island stereotypes, including self-sufficiency and wholeness.

Keywords

Ireland, Aran Islands, Isle of Man, representation, House of Keys

Introduction

It seems almost inevitable that the Irish novelist James Joyce would devote considerable attention to islands in his landmark novel *Ulysses*, first published in 1922. After all, Joyce's novel took both its name and its encyclopedic scope from Homer's *The Odyssey*, whose wandering epic hero became one of the foundational archetypes of Western culture, as he island-hopped his way across the Mediterranean on his long journey home from the Trojan War. Of course, Joyce's *Ulysses* took place not amongst the luxuriant scattered isles of Homer's Mediterranean but in Ireland, the so-called 'second island' of the British Empire. Published just four years after the partition of the island of Ireland into a northern British province and an independent south, the novel, like the Irish political debates which raged beyond it, pointed out the seeming contradictions between natural and political geography; between, on the hand an island scarred by division, and, on the other, a newly self-sufficient Irish Free State. The novel's time and place also carried particular significance for Joyce and his own vexed relationship to his native island. For it was in 1904, the year in which the novel was set,

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that Joyce's mounting frustration with Irish insularity had culminated in his resolute departure from Ireland for a life of exile on the continent. His subsequent Homeric-like wanderings in the opening decades of the 20th Century helped certify his credentials as an artist of the 20th Century. Like so many of his contemporaries, Joyce highlighted, in his works and in his life, the kinds of uprooted and nomadic narratives which have come to characterise what we think of as modernist literature and culture.

Fittingly, islands play a representative role in the formation of this typically modern nomadic sensibility. Though intermittent, and often overshadowed by his attention to the city scenes of his native Dublin, Joyce's attention to islands was sustained across his lifetime. As set out above, the circumstances of Joyce's life - literary, historical, and biographical - provide some initial context for understanding his interest in islands and islandness. Beyond their presence in Joyce's immediate surroundings, islands have long occupied an important place within the British literary imagination (Law, 2005; Gillis, 2004; Dodds and Royle, 2003; Peckham, 2003). Taking up Gillis's terminology, "islands of the mind continue to be extraordinarily valuable symbolic resources" (Gillis, 2004: 3). For Joyce, that imaginative value is particularly high, given, first, his general emphasis upon symbolism, as he recasts Homer's epic as a modern odyssey and, second, his more immediate familiarity, as a colonial Irish subject, with both islands and metaphors of bounded-ness. In what follows, I will examine Joyce's fiction for how it responds to and re-imagines the symbolic values attached to three interrelated island settings: the Aran Islands, the Isle of Man and Ireland itself.



Figure 1: Ireland and the Isle of Man (Fleury, 2009)

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As I will show, for Joyce and his contemporaries the Arans were associated with a regressive brand of Irish nationalism that prized the islands as a kind of 'little Ireland.' By contrast, the Isle of Man provided for Joyce a counter-example of a forward-looking home rule, whose bounded-ness connoted not imprisonment but rather a self-sufficient totality. If, as Peckham has put it, "the island was crucial, not only in providing a setting for Britain's colonial conquests, but... in furnishing a model for the island state" (2003: 500), then the same was true for the newly independent colony of Ireland as it looked outward for new models of statehood. In 1922, the year that *Ulysses* came out, Ireland had only recently undergone the partition which has come to define its history ever since, and so, for Joyce's Ireland it was not the necessarily the case, as it was for Britain, that "the island stood for a unified totality" (Peckham, 2003: 500). Devoid of that stability, the islands of Joyce's fiction are instead historically contingent places whose symbolic values are to be fought over and contested. And whereas Joyce's Irish contemporaries like W.B. Yeats and J.M. Synge gravitated to the Arans for their perceived place in a resurgent Irish nationalism, Joyce offered up a competing vision in which the Isle of Man functions as both an idealised microcosm of the modern nation-state and a model for Irish Home Rule. In making these distinctions, Joyce alerted his readers to the multiple uses to which islands and islandness could be put in the service of thinking about Ireland as an island-nation.

The Islands in Context

At the turn of the 20th Century, each of these three island settings - Ireland, the Arans, and the Isle of Man - occupied distinct historical and political positions. In 1904, when Joyce began his writing career in earnest, Ireland was as yet a colony of Great Britain, having endured centuries of repressive imperial rule and having witnessed a series of bloody uprisings in which the island sought, unsuccessfully, to break from rule. Over the course of the First World War (1914-1918), the movement towards Irish independence gathered steam, aided in part by Britain's commitments on the continent. Though marred by violence, most notably the Irish uprising of Easter 1916, which was to form the subject of one of Yeats's most famous poems, Irish independence was finally achieved in 1922, ratified by treaty with England just one month before the publication of Joyce's *Ulysses*. While Ireland would not gain full independence as a republic until 1937, the transformation from colony to nation was thus largely complete.

Located on opposite sides of the larger island of Ireland, the Arans and the Isle of Man are quite distinct from one another in many ways. Found off the Irish west coast, in the mouth of Galway Bay, the Arans are a chain of three islands that have always been part of Ireland, historically, geographically and politically, even as they are defined by their remoteness from the mainland. Largely uninhabited until the 18th Century, the Arans served as a place of refuge for many Irish Catholics dispossessed by absentee landlords over the course of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries (Robinson, 1992: viii-x). As I will show, the relative isolation of the islands would become their defining characteristic - more so to outsiders than to native islanders - during the time in which Joyce and his contemporaries were writing. Far less isolated than the Arans, the Isle of Man is located in the middle of the Irish Sea, halfway between Ireland and England, at almost the geographic centre of the British Isles. Inhabited for millennia, by the turn of the 20th Century, Man was - as it remains today - a self-governing dependency of the British Crown (Moore, 2005: 93). Part of neither the United Kingdom nor Great Britain, Man

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stood in dramatic contrast to the political and historical realities of both colonial Ireland and the Aran Islands. And indeed it was that very contrast upon which Joyce would eventually seize in *Ulysses*.

Yeats, Synge, and the Aran Islands

Critics can be excused for not having spent much time on the islands of Joyce's fiction. Often overshadowed by the central role that Dublin and its cityscapes play in his work, islands occupy the edges of Joyce's geographic vision. Perhaps more obviously, Joyce's islands often remain uncharted because of how islands loom so large in the work of some of his Irish contemporaries. After all, it was not Joyce but W.B. Yeats, Joyce's contemporary and rival for Irish literary affections, who gave us one of the most lasting images of an island in modern literature in his 1890 poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. In that poem, Yeats's speaker turns his back on Dublin, if only imaginatively, in favour of the recuperative pastoral charms of a secluded island located in a loch in the west of Ireland, where "midnight's all a-glimmer, and noon a purple glow" (line 7). For the speaker, an island life carries familiar associations of solitude, liberty and permanence. After opening the poem with the simple declaration, "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree," the speaker proceeds, in the second line of the poem, to create an island landscape for himself that is self-sufficient in its simplicity and archaic in its rhetorical formulation: "And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made". Once transported to this idyllic life, Yeats's speaker intends to "live alone" on his secluded lake isle (line 4), where he "shall have some peace... for peace comes dropping slow" (line 5). In a final testament to the appeal of the island setting, the narrator then stamps it with the seal of permanency, closing the poem with a reiteration of the reclusive declaration that had opened it: "I will arise and go now, for always night and day / I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore" (lines: 9-10). For Yeats, the island charms of isolation, simplicity, and unchangingness provided a much sought-after contrast to the pace and travails of modern city life in Dublin.

As it happens, Yeats's picture of a restorative island setting in the west of Ireland was part of a larger cultural vision which dominated Ireland during the time in which both he and Joyce emerged as modern artists. The 19th Century Irish cultural and literary revival, of which Yeats was one of the leading and most influential members, dedicated itself to the renewal of all aspects of 'authentic' Irish life including music, myths and legends, sporting events, and, most prominently, the Irish language itself (Deane, 1985: 12-6). In seeking to restore an Irish identity that had ostensibly vanished under the twin threats of modernity and British colonialism, the revival turned to places just like Yeats's island landscape, places whose very timelessness seemed to mitigate - if not fend off entirely - the homogenising advances of modernity (Deane, 1985: 34-5; Kiberd, 1996: 155; Castle, 2001: 172). Indeed, islands, with their longstanding associations with anachronism and constancy, occupied a special place in the revivalist imagination. And nowhere was more "special" in this way than the Aran Islands, located off Ireland's west coast. With their much-heralded isolation, charm, and Gaelic-speaking inhabitants, the Arans were held up by 19th Century Irish revivalists and nationalists as a "place where a sense of Irish roots and origins could be rediscovered" (Boey, 2009), and as "the uncorrupted heart of Ireland" (Robinson, 1992: xvii) - in a telling substitution of geographic periphery for cultural and national centrality.

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Yeats himself was a devotee of the Arans, their inhabitants and all that they seemed to signify for the Irish revival. In the year following the publication of his 'Lake Isle of Innisfree', he traveled to the Arans, seeking out material for a proposed new novel, in which the cosmopolitanism of modern Europe was to be contrasted with the simplicity of a rustic island life whose virtues were seen as authentically Irish (Robinson, 1992: xvi). But if Innisfree had been his own, Yeats was to share the Arans with many other revivalist figures and artists, including Lady Gregory, Sean Keating and J.M. Synge, for each of whom the islands anchored a "romantic nationalism which was transforming Ireland's image of itself" (Robinson, 1992: xv). Synge had in fact been led to the Arans by Yeats, who had told him in 1896: "Go to the Aran Islands [and] express a life that has never found expression" (Greene, 1975: 19). In their declarative force, Yeats's words to Synge recalled his bold opening statement of intent from "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," and, as he had in that poem, Yeats made an easy association between an isolated island-life and artistic clarity. In this respect, Yeats's words were to prove prophetic. Partly as a result of Yeats's advice, partly due to his encounters with Celtic Revivalists elsewhere (Kiberd, 1979: 30; Greene, 1971: 3), Synge spent extended periods of time on the Arans between 1898-1901 and his experiences there would yield two plays, *In the Shadow of the Glen* and *Riders to the Sea*, published in 1902, and a book-length travelogue entitled simply *The Aran Islands*, published in 1907. In each of these works, Synge constructed island-life as pure and immutable, and the islands themselves function as place-holders of an Irish identity whose undistilled authenticity they preserved as if in a rocky crucible.

In *The Aran Islands* in particular, Synge marvels over the preservation of Irish identity in an undisturbed island setting. Throughout the work, in keeping with disciplinary conventions long associated with writing about islands and their inhabitants, Synge takes on the tone of the amateur anthropologist and ethnographer. As Castle points out, the fact that "Synge's work conforms in significant ways to the protocols of the emerging discipline of ethnography" is not surprising (Castle, 2001: 100). Synge's visit to the Arans followed closely upon that of the ethnographers A.C. Haddon and C.R. Browne, who had visited the islands just a few years before him, and who had published their study, *The Ethnography of the Aran Islands* in 1893. Synge, Haddon, and Browne were part of a larger cultural and disciplinary trend which had arisen with Charles Darwin and others and which would see islands occupy an increasingly privileged place in anthropological field work. As Castle puts it, Synge's familiarity with these associations, together with the imperatives of cultural revivalism, "prepared him for his experience of the primitive Aran Islanders" (ibid: 99). Thus immersed in the discourses of island ethnography and cultural nationalism, Synge repeatedly characterises the Arans as primitive and timeless, telling his readers that "(e)very article on these islands has an almost personal character, which gives this simple life, where all art is unknown, something of the artistic beauty of mediaeval life" (Synge, 1992: 13-4). And as he surveys the inhabitants of the island, he discovers that there are practical reasons for the seeming uniqueness of the Arans. He observes, that is, that "many adult(s)... have never set foot upon the mainland," namely Ireland (ibid: 7). In so opposing the timeless ways of life on the islands to the corrupting influences that come from the mainland, Synge recalls here the similar rhetorical gestures of Yeats in 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree'. But beyond this, he appropriates the perspective of the Aran Islanders themselves, so that Ireland - itself an island - is now reconfigured as mainland. In this deft rhetorical maneuver, Synge depicts the Arans as both the epitome of a newly romanticised Irish identity as well as the antidote to the modern forces which are seen to be eroding that identity.

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As if then to contextualise further the Aran worldview, Synge asserts that life on the islands “is perhaps the most primitive that is left in Europe” (ibid: 10). In Synge’s mind, there is no doubt that that primitiveness - viewed entirely positively - derives from the physical separation and geographic isolation of the Arans which have preserved their inhabitants from “the heavy boot of Europe” (ibid: 21). In so linking the fact of geographic remoteness to the Arans’ cultural recalcitrance, Synge draws our attention to the wider English and European context within which, by contrast, mainland Ireland and Irish culture are perceived to be under threat. Indeed, as Franks notes, Synge would have us see his islanders as types and traces of “what used to be the norm of the Irish peasant,” a type now ground down by the “heavy boot of modernity” (Franks, 2006: 103). In the pithy words of his modern editor, for Synge the Arans are simply “Ireland raised to the power of two” (Robinson, 1992: xvii).

To Synge, then, the Aran Islands function as a kind of primitive Irish exponent that stands in contrast not just to England and Europe as they threaten to engulf and transform mainland Ireland, but also to a modernising Ireland itself. In the views of both Yeats and Synge, much of the rest of Ireland was growing increasingly proximate to London due to the proliferation of cultural and technological links across the Irish Sea. Nowhere was this truer than in Dublin, an increasingly metropolitan city which, at one time, Yeats, Synge, and Joyce all called home, and which Joyce half-jokingly rechristened the ‘Hibernian metropolis’ after the old Roman name for the island of Ireland. In the context of cultural transformation on a wide scale, places like the Arans appealed to Irish nationalists and revivalists because of the islands’ relative isolation along an Atlantic coastline which faced away from Europe and which turned its back on both Dublin and Ireland in their putatively modern incarnations. In other words, island locales like the Arans, and Yeats’ ‘Lake Isle of Innisfree’ seemed to form a bulwark of Irish identity and national character that lay beyond the reach of the modernising and homogenising influences of Dublin, London, and the continent.

Joyce’s View of the Arans

Like Yeats and Synge before him, Joyce too was well-versed in the significant role that the Arans played in the Irish imagination of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Surrounded as he was by the nationalist and revivalist movements he could not help but be. But if some writers had promoted the Arans as a repository of Irish culture and character in the service of a reinvigorated Irish nationalism, Joyce’s view was markedly different. At the very least, as Castle puts it, Joyce “challenged the cultural associations of the Revival (and) the redemptive mode of ethnography that characterized Revivalism” (2001: 173). Indeed, many have characterised his view of revivalism as downright antagonistic (Duffy, 1994: 100-1; Cheng, 1995: 51-7). For one thing, in contrast to so many of his peers, Joyce made only one visit to the Aran Islands, in Autumn 1912, an experience of which he wrote very briefly in *Il Piccolo della Sera*, the newspaper in his adopted hometown of Trieste. Joyce’s piece, bearing the somewhat strange title, ‘The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran: England’s Safety Valve in Case of War’, is notable not for any emphasis upon Aran’s much noted remoteness but, instead, and rather strikingly, upon its strategic importance to the British Empire should war with Germany ever break out (Joyce, 1989: 235). And within Joyce’s fictional world, it is left to Molly Ivors, a relatively minor character from his short story ‘The Dead’ to speak for the Arans and their centrality within the Irish revival movement.

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In 'The Dead', the final entry in his 1915 collection, *Dubliners*, Joyce tells the story of Gabriel Conroy, a literary journalist and intellectual, whose rejection of revivalist politics mirrors Joyce's similar disdain. Throughout the story, Gabriel's desire to see himself as assuredly modern and therefore cosmopolitan, is defined against a backdrop of a parochial and insular Irish culture whose most strident spokesperson is Molly Ivors. Early in the story, she confronts Gabriel at a party over what she sees as his rejection of Irish nationalism, badgering him to take part in an upcoming revivalist-inspired retreat to the Arans in the tradition of Yeats and Synge. Like those precursors, Molly opens her appeal to Gabriel with an emphasis upon the islands' restorative power for both the individual and the nation: "O Mr Conroy... will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles this summer? We're going to stay there a whole month. It will be splendid out in the Atlantic. You ought to come" (1992: 189). Summoning up a powerful and familiar island landscape where time moves slowly and where isolation is a virtue, Molly appeals to the recuperative power over the Arans and recalls the declarative force with which Yeats's speaker had imagined his similar retreat to Inisfree.

After Gabriel demurs, citing his earlier commitment to an upcoming cycling tour of the continent, Molly responds more forcefully, claiming that Gabriel's misplaced priorities constitute a slight to the Arans, and, more importantly, to their national symbolic value: "And why do you go to France and Belgium," said Miss Ivors, "instead of visiting your own land?" Gabriel's response, "that it's partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change," foregrounds both his cosmopolitan aspirations and his preference for change over a kind of island-bound timeless predictability (ibid: 189). More implicitly, he signals his distaste for the political value which Molly and others ascribe to the Arans. For Molly, though, the matter of language brings the issue into sharper focus as it is precisely Irish - the language spoken on the Arans - that is the only one that matters: "And haven't you your own language to keep in touch with - Irish?" she asks Gabriel (ibid). Like her fellow revivalists, Molly values the Arans for their preservation of the Irish language in the face of the very forces of modernisation, homogenisation and cosmopolitanism that Gabriel represents. In feeling this way, Molly echoes Synge, whose "first object in visiting Aran was to learn his native language" (Kiberd, 1979: 38). When Gabriel states, rather defiantly, that, "if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language," Molly can no longer contain her outrage: "And haven't you your own land to visit... that you know nothing of, your own people, and your own country?" (iJoyce 1992: 189-90).

Well-versed in the political significance of the Arans, Molly uses Gabriel's stated aversion to the trip as damning evidence of his failings as both a patriot and a nationalist. The real Ireland, she tells him, the only Ireland worth "knowing," in an echo of both Yeats and Synge, is found not in Dublin but on the Arans. Armed with this logic, Molly irrevocably casts the Dublin-bound Gabriel as a foreigner, a "visitor" - and very reluctant one at that - to his own land, a land whose purest expression and cultural center is the Arans. As it unfolds, then, the exchange between Gabriel and Molly reveals the political and nationalist uses to which familiar island-based themes of isolation, purity and preservation were typically put in the service of late 19th Century Irish revivalism as espoused by Molly and as critiqued by Joyce through his surrogate in Gabriel. Though Gabriel and Molly disagree over the desirability of travelling to the Arans and over the revivalist values that would motivate such a trip, neither disputes the link between island and nation nor the central role that the Arans, as venerated Irish outcropping, played within revivalist discourse.

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Gabriel's evident aversion to that discourse, and the view of the Arans which it frames, make him an obvious surrogate for Joyce, whose rejection of revivalism and Irish nationalism repeatedly informed both his fiction and his life (Manganiello, 1980: 25). In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Joyce talked of escaping the "nets" of Irish nationalism, while in *Dubliners* that same force is seen as paralyzing a whole generation of Irish citizenry. And in *Ulysses*, Joyce spent an entire chapter lampooning the excesses of Irish nationalism and revivalism, through which places like the Arans were turned into an almost sacred geography. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the Arans scarcely figure in 1922's *Ulysses*. In fact, the islands are mentioned only once, as one item in a lengthy list of innocuous travel destinations to be visited at some unspecified time by Leopold Bloom, the novel's central figure. In a chapter Joyce entitled 'Ithaca' after the native isle of Homer's hero, the narrator rhymes off a list of Irish places that Bloom would ideally like to see during his lifetime. They include the "cliffs of Moher, the windy wilds of Connemara, lough Neagh with submerged petrified city, the Giant's Causeway, Fort Camden and Fort Carlisle, the Golden Vale of Tipperary, the islands of Aran, the pastures of royal Meath, Brigid's elm in Kildare, the Queen's Island shipyard in Belfast, the Salmon Leap, the lakes of Killarney" (Joyce, 1986: 597). Bloom's list sounds like it is drawn from a fairly unimaginative (and conventional) Irish guide book, one in which the Arans have passed from nationalist epicenter to modern tourist destination. In reframing the Arans in this way, Joyce refuses to accord the islands the mythic status conferred on them by Molly Ivors and by Yeats and Synge. Subsumed by the sheer breadth of Bloom's encyclopedic list, the Arans are reduced to almost a footnote, in stark contrast to the exponential power granted them by Synge.

Hall Caine and the Isle of Man

In rejecting the vision of Arans and of island-life as it was constructed by several of his Irish counterparts, Joyce was by no means signaling his lack of interest in islands, two of the most obvious signs of which are the novel's Irish setting and its sustained allusion to Homer's island-hopping hero. But whereas writers like Yeats and Synge had turned to the Arans as the islands which best befit their vision of Ireland; Joyce turned to another island: the Isle of Man. Like the Arans, the Isle of Man appears first in Joyce's earliest fiction, often carrying familiar associations. In the story 'The Boarding House', from *Dubliners*, the central character runs a boarding house with "a floating population made up of tourists from Liverpool and the Isle of Man and, occasionally, artistes from the music halls" (ibid: 56). Next, in 'A Little Cloud' from the same collection, the Isle of Man is cited in an exchange between two Dublin friends, one of who has just returned from an extended stay abroad. "I see you haven't changed an atom," Ignatius Gallaher chides his friend Chandler, "You'd want to knock about a bit in the world. Have you never been anywhere even for a trip?" "I've been to the Isle of Man," replies Chandler, to which Ignatius Gallaher responds with a laugh: "The Isle of Man! Go to London or Paris: Paris, for choice. That'd do you good" (ibid: 71). For Gallaher, as for Miss Ivors, islands like Man connote backwardness and insularity, though here those characteristics are to be mocked rather than prized. Under such a view, Chandler's feeble attempt to prove his worldliness by virtue of excursion to Man indeed seems laughable.

Yet, in opting for a holiday on Man, Chandler was not alone. In the opening years of the 20th Century, Man experienced both a technological and a tourist boom (Moore, 2005: 112-3). In 1913, just as Joyce was completing *Dubliners*, Man drew over 600,000

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tourists, an increase of tenfold from fifty years earlier and the highest numbers it would draw until the latter part of the 20th Century (Kinvig, 1975: 150). Excursionists, rather than anthropologists, these tourists were looking for, and finding, something on Man quite different from the qualities that had drawn Synge and others to the Arans. With its recently developed holiday pier, tourist railroad, and commercial esplanade, Man offered visitors like Chandler the type of resort holiday for which modern - and easily accessible - islands were rapidly becoming famous (Moore, 2006: 111-2). Of course, like the Arans, Man did have its share of romantic devotees, some of who, like the late Victorian poet and travel writer, Hall Caine, were just as wistful in their writings about it as were Synge and Yeats regarding Aran. Over the course of his life, Caine wrote several novels about Man in addition to a highly romanticised history of the Island, entitled *The Little Manx Nation* (1891). Replete with characterisations of Man as insular, "primitive," and "wholesome," a place populated by a "superstitious" and "home-spun people," Caine's work seemed to reproduce many of the same island-bound stereotypes as had Synge's work on the Arans. But for Caine, writing on the cusp of the 20th Century, those romanticised views are in fact no longer sustainable.

Indeed, rather than exhibiting resilience, Manx identity is seen to be imperiled in the face of modernity's inevitable assault: "The Isle of Man is not now what it was even five-and-twenty years ago," Caine writes mournfully,

there were only about two steamers a week between England and the Isle of Man at that time. Now there are about two a day. There are lines of railway on this little plot of land... This is, of course, a necessity of the altered conditions, as also, no doubt, are the parades, and esplanades, and promenades, and iron piers, and marine carriage drives, and... old castles turned into Vauxhall Gardens. (Caine, 1891: online).

As the lament makes clear, whatever symbolic value Man may have, it must perforce now stand in contrast to the anachronistic charms of the Arans. In fact, as Moore points out, it was Caine himself, as Man's most prolific promoter, who bore much of the responsibility for Man's modern transformation; the many novels and travelogues which he set on Man, along with the popular early film adaptations that were based upon his works (and which were screened to early 20th Century audiences across Britain) exposed many would-be travellers to Man's allure (Moore 2005: 115). As Moore puts it, though Caine "regretted the passing of insular rural simplicity... ironically it was his best-selling English books that helped draw people to the island and with them worldly influence" (ibid). If, as a result of this irony, Caine would face increasing difficulty in associating Man with familiar island-bound conventions of isolation and primitivism, Joyce would find an altogether different use for Man and its symbolic value, one having to do not with anachronism but with modernism and contemporary Irish politics.

The Manx House of Keys

Appropriately enough, the Isle of Man makes its first appearance in *Ulysses* as a site of exile and banishment. On their way to a funeral, the novel's central characters notice a passing figure, whom they identify as Reuben J. Dodd, who has just discovered that his son is in a scandalous relationship. Bringing his peers up to speed on this news, Bloom tells them that "there was a girl in the case, and he (Dodd) determined to send him to the Isle of Man out of harm's way" (Joyce, 1986: 78). Like Chandler in his own way, Dodd is,

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in exiling his son to the putative backwater of Man, simply trading upon longstanding associations of islands as places of banishment and incarceration (Peckham, 2003: 501-2; Edmonds and Smith, 2003: 5). In fact, during the First World War, just as Joyce was writing *Ulysses*, Man housed internment camps for both foreign nationals, mostly German, and prisoners of war (Moore, 2005, 118). In the case of Man, then the general association of islands with prisons has a specific local resonance, of which Joyce may very well have been explicitly aware.

There can be no doubt about Joyce's awareness of Man's unique political history, and it is for this history that Man plays its most prominent role in *Ulysses*. If, during the years surrounding the novel's publication, Home Rule and the division of Ireland were on both Joyce's mind and the minds of his readers, Man provided a compelling counterexample of an island history and geography that were intact, unfractured, and autonomous. Many have commented on Man's striking combination of physical isolation and geographic centrality in the middle of the Irish Sea, a situation that has helped to account for periods of relatively disproportionate economic power and an often-envied political autonomy (Kermode, 1984: 41-2; Moore, 2005: 94-5; Dickinson, 1996: 1). Indeed, in Man's case, geography has proven to be an especially strong determinant of history (Kinvig, 1975: 3; Kermode, 1984: 42; Moore, 2005: 95). Kermode frames the point well, noting that "(w)hile physical separateness is no guarantee of political separateness, as the history of the British Isles shows all too clearly, a remarkable feature of Manx history has been the retention of a separate political identity" (Kermode, 1984: 42). The contrast that Kermode alludes to here between Ireland and Man and between their two political fates vis a vis the United Kingdom is itself part of the historical relationship between the two islands and goes to the heart of Joyce's interest in Man in *Ulysses*. As Moore notes, though it is part of British Isles, a geographic, rather than a political formation, the Isle of Man is not now nor has it ever been part of either Great Britain or the United Kingdom, in striking contrast to Joyce's colonial Ireland (Moore, 2005: 94). And, while Joyce's characters yearn for Home Rule, their Manx counterparts enjoyed, according to some interpretations, the longest standing elected legislature in Western history (Gifford, 1988: 131). Known as the 'House of Keys', based on an old Manx word for 'member', the legislature was, according to Moore, "certainly functional before Magna Carta" (2005: 101), having emerged, according to Kermode, "during the tenth century" (1984: 43-4).

In Joyce's own time, both Man's autonomy and its long history of Home Rule were cited as compelling examples for an Ireland still emerging from a long and dark colonial past. In 1914, the year that Joyce began *Ulysses*, G.W. Lamplugh extolled Man's "extraordinary maintenance of semi-independence" (Lamplugh, 1914: 502), and twenty years earlier Spencer Walpole had alluded to this same history in giving his essay on the Isle of Man the simple title of 'The Land of Home Rule'. Man's political history, together with the positive press it was lately receiving, help frame Joyce's representation of the island in *Ulysses*, where the contrast between Ireland and Man is turned into a running joke by Leopold Bloom. By vocation, Bloom is a newspaper ad salesman, and he spends the bulk of his day in the novel trying to place an ad in one of the local Dublin papers for a tea and wine merchant known as Alexander Keyes. Ever conscious of the economy of words, Bloom captions his ad, the "House of Keyes," conflating the name of his client the tea merchant with the venerated Manx parliament, the "House of Keys," in a pun typical of such advertising media. Meant to catch the eye of both the average Dublin reader and the visiting tourist from the example, the basic assumption upon which the pun depends reveals how familiar both Joyce and Bloom expected their

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readers to be with the Manx parliamentary example. But, as Bloom explains to Nannetti, the press foreman, the pun has a further significance which he presumes will also not be lost on his readers. Sketching the ad's layout for Nannetti, Bloom states: "Like that, see. Two crossed keys here. A circle. Then here the name. Alexander Keyes, tea, wine, and spirit merchant. And so on.... Then round the top in leaded: the house of keys. You see? Do you think that's a good idea?" (Joyce, 1986: 99). When Nannetti offers no reply, Bloom then explains the logic and rationale of his clever allusion to the House of Keys and Manx politics. "The idea, Mr. Bloom said, is the house of keys. You know, councillor, the Manx parliament? Innuendo of home rule. Tourists, you know, from the isle of Man. Catches the eye, you see. Can you do that?" (ibid).

Bloom harbours few doubts that readers will catch both the allusion and the "innuendo" behind it. Describing the ad for his editor, a few pages later, he suggests that the Manx context will be immediately obvious once the ad is in print: "House of keys, don't you see? His name is Keyes. It's a play on the name" (ibid: 120). Bloom naturally assumes that, unlike the foreman and the editor who have not yet seen the ad in print, the newspaper's readers, Irish and Manx alike, will readily understand and appreciate the allusion to the Manx House of Keys. The ad's relevance and topicality derive from the fact that the "innuendo of home rule" dominated in 1904, as it had for decades, Irish political debate everywhere - including in the pages of the daily newspaper in which the ad will run. Thus, Bloom can indeed reasonably count on his readers not only to understand the pun, but to appreciate its wittiness in encapsulating so economically the central, and most intractable, debate in Irish political history, along with a proximate and powerful counter-example to that domestic dispute.

As Bloom's explanations and idealisations make clear, his House of Keys allusion is quite deliberate, an attempt to turn political sentiment and inter-island awareness into private economic gain. And Joyce too might be said to profit from the ad, by way of his clever allusion to the compelling case of Manx political history within a novel replete with ruminations upon the implications of, and barriers to, Irish Home Rule. Interestingly, the ad seems to have been as deliberate on Joyce's part as it is on Bloom's, for, in a novel virtually obsessed with historical accuracy, the Keyes advertisement is something of an exception. As Mary Power notes, though "Alexander Keyes did, in fact, exist," no such advertisement for his shop ran in the Irish papers in June 1904, the year which Joyce reproduces so faithfully throughout his text (Power, 1995: 701-2), a fact that suggests that the pun and its topical allusion to Man's independent history were too rich for Joyce to pass up.

Through a seemingly innocuous newspaper advertisement, Bloom ably draws attention to the striking divergence between Irish and Manx political history in order to mobilise the Isle of Man's historical and geographic associations with self-sufficiency and independence in the service of a sophisticated, if pithy, critique of the often violent and moribund Irish situation. Moreover, the Manx example of a lone island in the middle of the Irish Sea provided a powerful instance of self-sufficiency that resonated not only with Bloom's Irish readers but also with Bloom himself, an exiled Jew who spends much of the novel ruminating on the possibility of an as yet unrealised Jewish homeland. With that rich symbolic payoff in mind, Joyce signals the metaphoric potential of both islands and their typical cultural associations. If, when ruminating over Irish political strife, Joyce's compatriots like Synge and Yeats took refuge in the Aran Islands and their association with an isolated past; Joyce looked elsewhere across the Irish Sea to an island with a strikingly different history. Where their gaze was westward and

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introspective, his was eastward and outward, towards the Isle of Man, which in another Joycean irony, suggested the possibility of an emancipated future by virtue of an all too enviable independent political history.

Conclusion

Late in *Ulysses*, Bloom himself confesses to his admiration for pithy advertisements such as his House of Keyes caption. He dreams, we are told, “of some one unique advertisement... with all extraneous accretions excluded, reduced to its simplest and most efficient terms not exceeding the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life” (ibid: 592). In such terms, Bloom’s ideal advertisement, the ideal upon which the House of Keyes ad is based, can itself be seen as a kind of self-contained island on the page of copy; its characteristics of an idealised self-sufficiency and easy comprehensibility are recognisable as familiar tropes within the cultural history of islands (Baldacchino, 2005: 247). In other words, so associated with compactness and clarity, the island and the advertisement can constitute mirror images of one another. And through this association with advertising, the island, in a stunning reversal from its deployment in the works of Yeats, Synge, and others, becomes an emblem of modernity, linked to notions not of boundedness and anachronism but of economy, innovation, and efficiency.

So deployed, the Isle of Man thus provides Bloom with a typically modern opportunity for commercial efficiency and success. At the same time, though, the island’s symbolic value also resonated with the mythic past upon which Joyce was so focused as he wrote *Ulysses*. As the story is related by Moore, Man originated in legend with the deeds of the Irish giant Finn McCool:

When one epic day a Scottish giant invaded his land he furiously resisted and beat him back. (McCool) gave chase, throwing rocks at his retreating enemy, their impact so great that craters filled with water creating Lough Neagh, the biggest lake in Ireland. His misses meanwhile fell into the Irish Sea to form the Isle of Man and the smaller isle at its feet, Calf of Man (2005: 93).

In its imaginary beginnings, then, Man was indeed a little piece of Ireland but while Synge’s Arans were Ireland “raised to the power of two,” Man was instead a kind of Irish derivative. Even so, the island’s myth of origin only legitimates further the link between Man and Ireland that both Bloom and Joyce play up in the House of Keys ad, in which Man and its history function as both a microcosm of and a counterexample for early 20th Century Ireland. In all of its various functions across Joyce’s work, then - as a place of exile and isolation, as a place where modernity’s advance could be witnessed and lamented, and as a self-sufficient and territorially intact island-state - the Isle of Man, true to its epic origin, remained ultimately inseparable from the larger Irish island from which it was torn.

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