'Going down where the asparagus grows': insight and resistance as Ezra Pound confronts *Ulysses*

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The jocularly self-styled 'Titanic Intellect' (Read 1967: 143) of modernism, Ezra Pound, is, I believe, at least as important as a literary entrepreneur as he is as the constructor of the shape of modernism, or even as a poet. Wyndham Lewis colourfully referred to him as the 'Demon panotechnicon driver, busy with moving of old world into new quarters' (Carpenter 1988: 271). My intention in this paper is to give (qualified) credit to his achievement in his role as a critic of Joyce. It is clear that he identified the debates and set the directions of Joycean criticism for decades to come, and that his judgments, though idiosyncratic, were often astute. In addition, I shall deploy large quantities of hindsight to examine his shortcomings as a critic of Joyce, which I identify as: body-phobia masquerading as an aesthetic judgment; a lack of understanding, and consequent diminishment, of the Irish dimensions of Joyce's work; and a grotesque underestimation of the political nature of Joyce's critique. Finally, I shall examine the intriguing contribution that Pound's resistance to Joyce made to Canto XIV.

The story of Pound's support of Joyce is a well-known one (Ellmann 1959, Read 1967, Carpenter 1988, Nelson 1989, Longenbach 1988, Wilhelm 1990, Hayman 1965) and heroic by any standards. An ardent champion of Joyce, he was a tireless correspondent, exchanging 198 letters, 103 by Joyce and 95 by Pound (Spoo 1995). Joyce's reactions to these letters reveal his independence of Pound's editorial suggestions, and his wariness of him. Pound was prepared to defer publication of one of his own books to free up space on his publisher's list for *Portrait* (Read 1967: 75), sent him money (which he could ill afford), and applied for grants for him (Read 1967: 75, Carpenter 1988: 277-8). Most importantly, Pound championed him via formal essays, sent a barrage of letters defending him from censorship, and promoted him to those who might be useful to him. However, after the publication of *Ulysses*, the relationship soured, Pound declaring that *Finnegans Wake* was 'work in regress' (Spoo 1995: 578; Carpenter 1988: 442). His defence of Joyce from the censors was foundational, but it took many years and many factors for his championing of Joyce to be translated into canonical status (see Kelly 1998: 179-225, Brannon 2003: 11-30, Devlin-Glass 2003). Pound's work as a critic becomes more remarkable in the light of this more general resistance to the work of Joyce.

Much of what Pound did for Joyce as an entrepreneur and critic (roles not easily disentangled in Pound's case), although it took the form ostensibly of literary essays
for journals, was effectively a form of advertisement, teasers for publishers, and functioned as guides to the cognoscenti as to what to read and admire. It also supplemented his meager income (Read 1967: 84). However, it is useful to examine Pound's critical methods and assumptions and to estimate what in them was insightful and helpful in smoothing the way for Joyce's reception, and what was positively self-referential, even narcissistic, and shortsighted.

When at Yeats's instigation, Pound sought poetry and stories from Joyce, he presented himself as an agent for the Egoist and Cerebralist (both London publications), Mercure de France in Paris, Smart Set in New York and Poetry in Chicago (Ellmann Letters 1966, vol. 2: 327). The unsolicited letter represented a dazzling array of possibilities for Joyce who had managed to publish only Chamber Music in 1907, and Dubliners had been twice rejected (Nelson 1989: 121-3). Joyce's reply to Pound was expeditious: three manuscripts were in the mail within two weeks, and Pound published Joyce's protest about censorship in the Egoist with astonishing speed (15 days later). Pound's response (Read 1967: 19-20) demonstrates his professionalism: his extensive networks, willingness to share them, and his knowledge of how they operated. It was also strategic in its attempt to balance proper payment for artistic work against two goods: both independence of expression in the face of endemic censorship and getting exposure as a prelude to full publication.

Pound was characteristically ebullient and enthusiastic about chapter I of Portrait, and uncharacteristically deferential on the subject of himself as a critic of prose (Ellmann Letters, 1966, vol. 2: 327-8). His chief critical manoeuvre as a critic was characteristically comparative and one that located Joyce within a literary tradition. In the course of 17 essays published or broadcast on Joyce between 1914 and 1941, 10 of them in the first four years of their literary acquaintanceship, Pound compared him with Merimée (letter of 17 and 19 January 1914, cited in Read 1967: 24), in the tradition initiated by Stendhal, culminating in France in Flaubert ("Dubliners" and Mr. James Joyce), cited in Read 1967: 27-8 and letter of 6-12 Sep. 1915, Read 1967: 44-5, 194-5), and also aligned him with Lawrence (Read 1967: 29), Hardy and James (and letter of 6-12 Sep. 1915, Read 1967: 44). He styled Ulysses a 'super-novel' (Read 1967: 197) exceeding the experimentalism of Rabelais, Cervantes, Sterne, James and Proust.

Although the tone of Pound's essays on Joyce are magisterial, one is aware of reticence. Pound struggles to describe the qualities and define the kind of realism (Litz 1972: 5-18) he finds in Joyce, and uses a range of metaphors drawn, not surprisingly given his own imagist manifesto and poiesis, from painting: 'clarity of outline' (such that he 'might be dealing with locomotives or with builders' specifications,' Read 1967: 27). He initially located Joyce as an 'impressionist,' but slid from this into the label 'realist' which for him constituted the determinant of the 1910s style of writing, contradistinguishing it from the 1890s short story tradition. The attributes he
identified in Joyce – refusal to moralise and sentimentalise, poetic condensation as a result of rigorous selection – may constitute an explanation of what he means by realism. Another feature he discerned in Dubliners hinted that he appreciated Joyce’s narrative indeterminacy, his refusal to provide closure (Read 1967: 28). He pungently identified an important and innovative feature of Dubliners: what narratology would much later define as the technique of free indirect discourse, of dynamic thinking subjects in process.

Pound’s response to Dubliners and Portrait was ready, speedy and unqualified, but Ulysses gave him minor qualms. These he overcame in curious ways. However, he was not able to follow Joyce into the radical experiments of Finnegans Wake at all, which in turn gave Joyce the opportunity to parody Pound (Joyce, Wake, 89, 116, 131-2, 322, 565-6). By that stage, the relationship had become less dependent. Joyce no longer needed the pantechnicon driver.

Pound’s critical strengths and limitations were tested by Ulysses. Because of its serial publication in Little Review (New York) and the Egoist (London), and because copies of the first 13 chapters (up to the controversial Nausicaa) were sent to Pound as they were finished, Pound’s earliest responses are recorded. Unlike his critical reactions to Dubliners and Portrait, which were global and general, he focused down to the lexical level on Ulysses, suggesting changes in spelling, word-choice, and more importantly, and notoriously, excising a section from the Calypso episode. It is interesting to note how much freer Pound felt to offer suggestions by December 1917. He had, after all, served Joyce generously in securing publication of Portrait and Dubliners, and Exiles was close to being in print; he had scrupulously remitted sums of money that were undoubtedly welcome in the Joyce household in the pre-Paris years, and kept up a correspondence with Nora during the dark glaucoma trauma. Nonetheless, his suggestions for Telemachus were resisted by Joyce: he neither broke the chapter into sections, nor eliminated an unintended rhyme, and the minor changes he made may or may not have been a response to Pound. Joyce refused to be censored by Pound who deleted 20 lines of extended metaphor in which the pleasure of reading columns of a low-level story is wittily compared with releasing a rather more scatological column. Neither did Joyce heed Pound’s protestations that ‘urine’ was unnecessary in the famous introduction to Bloom in the opening of the Calypso chapter.

As they became more familiar, Pound more often used the Uncle Remus/showman vernacular persona (Carpenter 1988: 319), and he began to imitate Joyce in a way which suggested he was reading him closely (Read 1967: 129), producing his own imitation of Sirens in 1919 (Read 1967: 157). His diagnosis was that the text revealed symptoms of insanity and obsessiveness and his advice, again not taken by Joyce, was to provide more signposts, and, more radically, the abandonment of Bloom in favour of bringing back Stephen into the text. Joyce
would, of course, bring Stephen back into the text, but only in conjunction with Bloom, and not for several chapters. The advice, however, rattled Joyce, sending him into a depression about even more experimental chapters that he was currently engaged in writing. He worried that he had lost the support of his most ardent admirer, and perhaps through him of his patron, Harriet Shaw Weaver (Ellmann 1959: 473-5).

Despite his discomfiture with some of Joyce's experiments, there is much that Pound appreciated in *Ulysses*: he was that rare critic who could enjoy the fun of the novel, recognizing the extent of its parodies and defining them as Rabelaisian (Read 1967: 194), its 'sheer whoops and hoop-las and trapeze forms of technique' (Read 1967: 197). He probably uncovered the Homeric spine of the novel before it was disclosed by Joyce to Linati and Larbaud, though he did not accord it the central significance that Eliot (Litz 1972: 13), or Gilbert (more ponderously) did, seeing it merely (and in my view, properly) as a 'scaffold'. He was aware that each chapter involved a different style, though he complained that these stylistic changes were not necessary (Ellmann 1959: 473). He also identified the extent of the parodies (he claims 70; in fact one could multiply that by a factor of 10) and recognized Joyce's gift for multiple voices, and characters who speak and think in their own voices (another example of his mastery of free indirect discourse). On these grounds alone, one would have to say Pound was an impressive and fearless critic and Joyce was extraordinarily well served by him.

In so many ways, though, Pound, perhaps because of his High Modernist aestheticism, failed to understand the systematic nature of Joyce's critique of a range of ideological discourses, and their political nature. In what follows, and in particular, I want to examine Pound's body-phobia, his denial of the matter of Ireland and to establish the narrowness, relative to Joyce's achievement, of his definition of the political.

Pound's liberalism had its limits, and Joyce, *agent provocateur* rather than passive victim of the censors (Mullin 2003: 3), the 'vice crusaders' and 'puritansnooper[s]' (*FW* 434, 254), located them. Pound referred to the 'sordid' element in the work as 'odeur-de-muskat' (Read 1967: 132). In part, the censors lay behind his anxiety, but this is not the total explanation as Pound was willing to taunt them on other occasions in this period, and thought he was doing so even in publishing the relatively innocuous Telemachus chapter. Pound's excision of the corporeal referent in the jakes scene in Calypso gives an insight into a sensibility that was strikingly body-phobic (Read 1967: 301-2). Pound's excisions (restored in the 1922 edition) constituted a form of censorship which paraded as an aesthetic judgment (Joyce is accused in this instance by Pound for a lack of 'maestria', letter of 7 June 1918, cited in Read 1967: 131). It can be argued that Pound was protecting the editor of the *Egoist* from prosecution, but he was prepared to be suppressed for Chapter 1, so more is at stake than that.
Vanderham’s case that Pound drew firm religious (and hierarchical) lines between the erotic and the excremental in a way that Joyce did not, and that this is an extra-literary and ideological issue, is convincing (1995: 583-96).

It is interesting too that about this same period, Pound takes up a critique of Joyce made by Wells that Joyce has a ‘cloacal obsession’, which he had initially rebutted, wrestles with it and with the analogous term, ‘sordidness’, and, in subsequent letters/reviews, makes it his own. In a letter to Joyce of 17 July 1918, the metamorphosis takes the form of a move to theorise the difference between poetry and prose, and between Joyce’s prose and his own poetry. For Pound, Joyce’s prose, and perhaps prose in general, was analytical and satirical and tended to the excremental; by contrast, he saw poetry (including his own) as essentially phallic, asserting positive emotional values (see Read 1967: 146-7). This distinction bespeaks an ideology and religious system which prefer to sublimate and eschatologise the body. Pound’s anxiety is reflected in the use of dog-French (cited in Read 1967: 144). Pound’s claim to be ‘much milder & far less indecent’ is, of course, true of this stage in his poetic career, but indicates a preoccupation which was to transform his poetry in the following years, as I aim to demonstrate. At this stage in his career, Pound was curiously blind to much in Joyce’s treatment of embodiment, underestimating the significance of Joyce’s celebratory and comic inclusion in Ulysses of an encyclopaedic collection of excreta and bodily effusions (faeces, urine, nasal emissions, flatulence), as well as menstrual and mammary fluids). This is ironic given Pound’s early support for Joyce’s challenge to the censors. Pound’s use of French in referring to ‘les excrements and les feces humains et des bestiaux’ suggests a prudishness which by Canto XIV he will have repudiated, though in a different spirit from Joyce (see below). The currents of resistance and influence appear to have been mutual. Pound, as I will demonstrate later, would find uses for genitalia and excrement which override the squeamishness of this missive.

When Pound objected to Bloom’s musical ‘fahrt’ at the end of the Sirens episode, one senses again his sexual inhibitions, and even perhaps homophobia:

... one can fahrt with less pomp and circumstance...
Mass effect of any work depends on conviction of author’s sanity =
Abnormal keenness of insight O.K. But obsessions arseoreal, cloacal, deist,
aesthetic as opposed to aresthetic, any obsession or tic shd. be very carefully
considered before being turned loose. =

... fahrt yes, but not as climax of chapter = not really the final resolution of
fugue. (Read 1967: 158).

Again he protests that ‘Phallus’ is preferable to ‘mittel europa humour [which] runs to
other orifice.’

It is also worth noting at this juncture a reticence in Pound’s criticism of the novel: nowhere does Pound record his response to the embodied-ness of the most fully embodied characters in the text, Gerty and Molly. He does, however, register a moral disgust at Molly (Read 1967: 198), the kind of misogyny and lack of gender-consciousness which decades of feminist Joyceans have enjoyed exposing (see Scott 1984 and 1987 for useful summaries). Pound cannot be said to have been responsive to what in Joyce’s writing was even more radical than his ‘going down where the asparagus grows’ (where the manure is liberally provided), that is his attempt to render embodied women in non-stereotypical ways in Ulysses. Molly confounds the narrowness in Pound’s stereotypes of woman: she is uninhibited, sometimes ungenerous to other women, and an adulteress, but also intelligent, a wily home economist, discerning, romantic, poetic in sensibility, questioning and free-spirited.

One of Pound’s earliest obsessions in relation to Joyce was probably ingested uncritically from Yeats during the Stone Cottage secretaryship – Pound assumed that Joyce was an uncomplicated anti-Hibernian and minimized the Irish content in Joyce’s writing. Pound’s Hibernophobia amounts to more than simply ‘de-Irishcing’ Joyce’s reputation in pursuit of aesthetic and modernist literary agendas, as Brannon (2003: 13) following Kelly (1998: 62-84) claims. So undiscriminating was he about the nature of Joyce’s nationalism that in 1915, at the behest of Gosse, he sought Joyce’s support to sign an oath of loyalty to Queen Victoria in order to ensure a Royal Literary Fund grant of £75 (Read 1967: 42). One could read Joyce’s inversion of this situation in Chapter V of Portrait (Joyce 1992: 210-216) as constituting a response to this demand. The request for this testimonial and the writing of the final chapter were almost simultaneous.

In his letters and essays, Pound freely indulges his essentialising prejudices about Ireland and the Irish, fulminating against the ‘Celtic’ imagination, Irish provincialism, and censorship (Read 1967: 28). His most derogatory comment is probably to be found in his 1933 article for the Chicago-based English Journal, when he denounced the ‘bigotry that has since effaced that country from the map of mundane intelligence’, a reference to the Free State’s Censorship of Publications Act of 1929. Earlier in his career, though, in 1915, he indignantly defended Joyce against the indifference of his compatriots thus:

Let us presume that Ireland is ignorant of Mr. Joyce’s existence, and that if any copy of his work ever reaches that country it will be reviled and put on the index. For ourselves, we can be thankful for clear, hard surfaces, for an escape from the softness and mushiness of the neo-symbolist movement, and from the fruiter school of the neo-realists, and in no less degree from the phantastists who are the most trivial and most wearying of the lot. All of
which attests the existence of Mr. Joyce, but by no means the continued existence of Ireland. (Read 1967: 33)

The final prediction gives a taste of how premature and dismissive Pound’s anti-Hibernianism could be.

One can assume that Yeats’s disaffection with the Irish middle class, which found such eloquent expression in ‘September 1913’ and the opening stanza of ‘Easter 1916’, had infected Pound during the first winter at Stone Cottage. So anti-Irish was he that not even his awe for, or loyalty towards, Yeats inhibited him from engaging in a backhanded allusion to and critique of both Yeats’s ‘phanticism’ (code for Yeats’s occult interests), and also his revival (with Gregory) of the folk traditions of Kiltartan. He certainly seemed unaware that the anti-Revivalist Joyce had translated Synge into Italian (Nelson 108). Pound’s first public sally into Ireland-bashing in the essays “Dubliners” and Mr James Joyce’ (Egoist, 15 July 1914) has him patronizingly commenting:

It is surprising that Mr. Joyce is Irish. One is so tired of the Irish or “Celtic” imagination (or “phantasy” as I think they now call it) flopping about. Mr Joyce does not flop about. He defines. He is not an institution for the promotion of Irish peasant industries. He accepts an international standard of prose writing and lives up to it. (Read 1967: 28-9)

There is a certain measure of perspicacity in his claim that Joyce had outgrown three phases of literary nationalism: (i) the shamrock period; (ii) the dove-grey period; and (iii) the Kiltartan period. In a subsequent essay, ‘The Non-Existence of Ireland’ (New Age, 25 Feb. 1915), he would again implicitly exclude Yeats and Synge from the present decade of the modern, by defining Joyce as the only man ‘calling himself Irish’ (the equivocal nature of Pound’s turn of phrase is noteworthy). He argued that Joyce ‘gives us Dublin as it presumably is’, without ‘farce’ or ‘Dickensian caricature’ (Read 1967: 29) and makes the case (which modernism would make familiar) that the ordinary (the Committee Room, and nonentities like Little Chandler and the clerks) are ‘worthy subjects of art’. However, I take issue with his logical slide: ‘He gives us things they are, not only for Dublin, but for every city’ and his insistence that one could erase local allusions and substitute different locales and that this would make no significant difference to the meaning of the work (Read 1967: 29).

In claiming Joyce as a European, and an Internationalist, Pound usefully served a particular, if distorting, purpose for Joyce, who, for his own reasons, was doubtless grateful not to be limited to a coterie by being identified too closely with Ireland as a Revival writer. Tymoczko (1997: 20) demonstrates how Joyce, in his attempt to construct himself as a European writer, was at pains to bury the Irish dimensions of
his work; his knowledge of Irish and use of specifically Irish mythopoeic imagery, and his refashioning of the Irish heritage in *Ulysses* (1997: 20). To ignore the Irish content and politics in Joyce is to overlook not something that was accidental, as Pound would have it, but something essential.

On the matter of Ireland, Pound was capable of trivializing the political passions that are everywhere evident in Joyce and Yeats. To refer, even obliquely, to the Easter Rising as 'street riots' (Read 1967: 90) and to subordinate such political issues to the relatively more minor issue of censorship amount to a refusal of the matter of Ireland which is central to both writers:

When you tell the Irish that they are slow in recognizing their own men of genius they reply with street riots and politics.

Now, despite the jobbing of bigots and of their sectarian publishing houses, ... and the initial objections of the Dublin Publishers, and the later unwillingness of the English publishers, Mr. Joyce's novel [*Portrait*] appears in book form, and intelligent readers gathering few by few will read it, and it will remain a permanent part of English literature - written by an Irishman in Trieste and first published in New York City. ... If more people had read *The Portrait* and certain stories in Mr. Joyce's *Dubliners* there might have been less recent trouble in Ireland. A clear diagnosis is never without its value. (Read 1967: 89-90)

Pound in this essay masquerades as a social and literary theorist but in fact engages in tub-thumping, making a dubious connection between the parlous state of contemporary German literature and the horrors of World War I.

Clear thought and sanity depend on clear prose. They cannot live apart.

The mush of the German sentence, the straddling of the verb out to the end, are just as much a part of the befoulement of Kultur and the consequent hell, as was the rhetoric of later Rome the seed and the symptom of the Roman Empire's decadence and extinction. A nation that cannot write clearly cannot be trusted to govern, nor yet to think. (Read 1967: 90)

The differences between the nationalist uprising, or 'revolution' as he later styled it (Read 1967: 249), in Ireland in 1916 and the imperialist ambitions of Germany in the first war could not be more extreme. Yeats, at precisely the period this essay was written, was struggling with the 'terrible beauty' and, according to Longenbach's account of the Stone Cottage relationship and in particular the third winter, and on the evidence of letters to Quinn, Pound certainly knew of Yeats's agonized response to the Rising and its 'heroes' (Longenbach 1988: 254-7). One can only conclude that, to
the list of sins of race hatred that can be laid at Pound’s door, Hibernophobia can be added. I prefer to argue, as I think Joyce or Irish revisionist historians of our own time might have done, that the kind of comic deconstruction of nationalist discourses that Joyce offers in, for example, the Cyclops chapter of Ulysses is a far more potent, sophisticated and artful way of defusing nationalist discourses than the kind of ‘fill-them-up’ pedagogy Pound appears to envisage guru-writers providing in their fiction for readers.

Pound was mistaken when, in a talk on Rome Radio in 1942, he pronounced Joyce’s Ulysses as

…the END…the completion of an era. It cooked up and served the unmitigated god damn stink of the decaying usury era.

…

It was whole, entire, gentle and jew first great book in contemporary english, insistin on Mr. Blum (jew) as existin, and as the father, in some senses, of the man who declined to be a jesuit. (Read 1967: 267).

It is difficult to decipher this, but its anti-semitism is clear, as is Pound’s refusal to acknowledge Joyce’s deep interest in matters of poverty and socialist perspectives; it imposes on Joyce a backward-looking orientation which subsequent literary history refutes. Pound was more explicit on this issue elsewhere:

Ulysses is a summary of pre-war Europe, the blackness and mess and muddle of a “civilization” led by disguised forces and a bought press, the general sloppiness, the plight of the individual intelligence in that mess! Bloom very much is the mess. (Read 1967: 251)

Bloom is a flawed character, an anti-hero, represented by Joyce as intelligent and questioning only to a point, but to identify him as ‘the mess’ (my emphasis) of wartorn Europe is an absurd misreading of Joyce’s novel, unless, of course, one is imposing on the novel anti-semitic Douglas Credit ideology (Carpenter 1988: 356, 545) that makes Jewish usury a key cause of a world war. Pound’s reading of Bloom was not always so extreme, and undoubtedly the cooling of his relationship with Joyce in the Work-in-Progress years might explain the splenetic quality of this judgment.

There is a kind of (fallacious) logic in Pound’s having identified Ulysses as the end of an era, and it arises out of his key methodology as a critic, that of locating his work within a tradition and viewing Ulysses as a culmination of the process of bringing Flaubert into English. But with hindsight, one of the most intriguing aspects of how Joyce has been received is not in terms of his modernism, but in the ways in which many major strands of postmodernism take his work as foundational: he is a
touchstone in the work Derrida, who proclaimed that there would have been 'no deconstruction without Joyce' (McArthur 227); is used extensively by the psychoanalytic school, and by many feminist critics (French 1975, Henke & Unkeless 1982, Scott 1984: 116-132, 1987) and theorists/practitioners who align themselves with psychoanalysis, notably Cixous (1968, 1970) and Kristeva (1982). Indeed, despite Pound's fulminations on Joyce's apoliticism, even neo-Marxists (see Kelly 1998: 50-6, Osteen, McCabe 1978: 133-71, Manganelli 1980) and postcolonialists (Cheng 1995: 2 and passim, Duffy 1994, Kibard 1996) claim Joyce as a practitioner of their particular politicised ideologies. Indeed, literary postmodernism is almost unthinkable without Joyce (cf. Elam 2003: 79). Insofar as it is at base political and concerned with the critique of power, Joyce's fiction more than half a century after Pound is seen to offer a political critique much wider in its scope than Pound's Douglas Credit.

Joyce gets some honourable mentions in the Cantos (LXXIV) (Pound 1996). It is a commonplace of Poundian criticism that Joyce influenced Pound's choice of the figure of Ulysses for his masterwork (Longenbach 1988: 245), but this is an overdetermined influence. Joyce in July 1920 (Ellmann Letters, 1966 vol. 3: 10) indicates his awareness of several writers in Paris making use of Homer (France, Fauré, Giradoux and Apollinaire). It was an Odyssean moment in Paris. Another overdetermined possible influence is the vigour with which Pound uses the technique of limited consciousness narration. It could be argued that he learnt this from Flaubert, but he certainly recognized and admired it in Joyce. Carpenter (1988) further suggests that the Cantos acquired some humour as a result of Pound reading Ulysses in book form (Carpenter 1988: 417), and if so, it's a kind of adolescent humour that, in the Hell cantos in particular, retains the body-horror noted above in relation to Calypso. Some very specific allusions to Joyce are to be found in Canto XIV, and as far as I am aware, they have not been pointed out before.

The Hell Cantos (XIV to XV) were first penned in 1918, just as Pound was reading the drafts of Ulysses. It is indeed curious that at the very point that Joyce was struggling with the second half of Ulysses, and in particular smarting from Pound's refusal to acknowledge receipt of Cyclops and Circe, and his criticism of his embodied Ulysses in Calypso and Sirens, Pound was incorporating into Canto XIV very specific allusions to Joyce and Ireland. What is most intriguing about Pound's manoeuvres is that they incorporate in an active and positive way many of the very issues on which he resisted Joyce. First, there is acknowledgment via both Yeats and Joyce of the matter of Ireland as being part of the horror of the current age. It may be negative notice, but the man who spoke trippingly of the Easter Rising as 'street riots' in 1917, is by 1923 in Canto XIV able to mark the roles of Pearse and McDonagh as victims of colonial abuse. It is not accidental that these are the same executed signatories to the Proclamation of the Republic who are named in Yeats's 'Easter
1916'. The other reference is more specifically Joycean: for Stephen, and Joyce makes clear that Stephen's tone is 'cold violence', 'Ireland is the old sow that eats her farrow', a phrase Pound freely uses in Canto XIV. What is more interesting is the scatology of this canto. Pound creates an absurd and debased image of politicians, with 'scrupulously clean table-napkin' under penis, spruiking through their [fundaments] 'arse-holes' about social purity issues like censorship and engaging in profiteering. Pound was quite self-consciously taking on the censors (Carpenter 1988: 421-3), and though Pound's is quite different in tenor from Joyce's deconstructive gambit, he does pointedly use a Joyceanism. The vice-crusaders are represented as 'fahrtig through silk, waving the Christian symbols'. Pound replicates the spelling used in his letter to Joyce about Sirens (Read 1967: 158). One wonders too if the filthy soil that seethes with beetles doesn't owe something to Hades and Bloom's vision of the obese rat or the manure-producing maggots of Glasnevin. Joyce's manoeuvre here and in Sirens in having Bloom 'fart' owe much more to the comedic tradition and to his commitment to representing the body in all its particular excretory manifestations (including defecation, urination and menstruation), but it also has a political dimension. At the end of the Sirens chapter, Bloom's fart (Joyce 1984: 239) occurs in counterpoint to fragments from Robert Emmett's extempore Speech from the Dock and its final injunction that his epitaph not be written until his nation is free. Joyce could not have chosen a more sacred text, made a more savage comment on the excesses of nationalism, or done so with more embodied humour. Pound, it is my contention, was led to emulate some of the writing strategies he most resisted in Joyce.

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Notes
1 Pound to Joyce, 7 June 1918 (Read 1967: 131, 157). The Joyce/Pound correspondence as well as Pound's essays on Joyce are conveniently brought together and interpreted by Read. I use this text for the analysis which follows.
2 I follow Read 1967 in not changing Pound's deliberately vernacular style and unconventional spelling, capitalization, and grammar.

References


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