

James Joyce and Modern Animals: Reconstruction of Dublin's Denizens

by

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[Abstract]

As a critical response to the burgeoning new interdisciplinary field of Animal Studies, this dissertation is an attempt to reconsider the major works (*Stephen Hero*, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*) by an Irish writer, James Joyce (1882-1941). By shedding light on the hitherto unexplored reality of animals as well as animal by-products and nonhuman actors mentioned in his text, this dissertation takes up specific themes that were of major concern in the Victorian and Edwardian Age. By the term *modern animals*, I refer to animals that are rendered inconspicuous by forces in modern society that try to control their behavior or appropriate their strength, commercial appeal, and biological traits. This examination aims at opening up the myriad realities and perspectives surrounding the nonhuman denizens of Dublin.

Chapter I first addresses Joyce's line in the novel *Stephen Hero*: "The modern spirit is vivisection. Vivisection itself is the most modern process one can conceive." The discussion begins by exploring the genealogy of the "dissection metaphor," from Gustave Flaubert's "medical realism" (Lawrence Rothfield) to Émile Zola's "putrid" naturalism, and then observes how their dissection "scalpel-pen" is forged anew into a vivisectioning one through the character of Stephen Dedalus. Taking a cue from Zola's love of animals, my analysis veers into the Victorian vivisection controversy starting in the 1870s, which not only disclosed diverse social and ethical problems, but also brought "the question of animals" to new prominence. Numerous writers participated in the anti-vivisection movement, and Joyce also expressed his misgivings about science when still a university student. In "The Study of

Languages” (1899) he warned about the danger of natural science leading to inhumanity, as exemplified in the character Dr. Benjulia in Wilkie Collins’s novel *Heart and Science* (1883). Although Joyce’s *Stephen Hero* is notorious for its fragmented plot and unrefined writing, my analysis of the text demonstrates how the word *vivisection* coalesces with other key motifs including the hackneyed ones of paralysis or “hemiplegia of the will” and reveals Stephen’s budding philosophy of life.

Chapter II undertakes several interrelated topics which are, directly or indirectly, concerned with dogs. Regarding the long-standing assertion of Joyce’s “lifelong fear of dogs,” I return to Peter Spielberg’s cogent argument about “the danger of the biographical fallacy” and reconsider this idea of Joyce’s cynophobia, illustrating how the assumption is based only on slender evidence by re-presenting counter-evidence vis-à-vis the quasi-myth. To consider a wider range of dog-related issues, I refer to the historical social attempts to control dog-related problems by means of the dog tax, regulation by licensing, and muzzling orders. Dog-related laws and the modern institutional kennel grew out of widespread fear of “un-fixed” (unowned, unlicensed, undocumented, unmuzzled) dogs. When the rabies discourse sprinkled through Joyce’s text is placed in this historical context, dog actors in his works take on a new meaning. With the help of a “Dog Map” (Appendix I), this chapter concludes by examining the issue of varied “proximity” or distance between humans and dogs, which suggests one of the hidden dimensions of Joyce’s dogdom.

Chapter III examines the idiosyncratic role of *Ulysses* protagonist Leopold Bloom’s gaze at “poor animals.” Whenever Bloom encounters animals, he displays pity, compassion, empathy, or kindness, feeding, caring, or exercising his imagination about them. By this curious feature of the well-known literary hero, I initiate an inquiry into what specific experiences or historical backdrop might be behind such a trait. This chapter first points to how Bloom’s gaze foregrounds cruelty to animals, and then examines Bloom’s attitude toward the cat in his home, which exemplifies the way he sees animals and his proclivity for vicarious perception of what others are experiencing (e.g., “[w]onder what I look like”). Practicing Montaigne’s skepticism about anthropocentrism, as illustrated in his interior

speech “[s]ee ourselves as others see us,” Bloom employs a suppositional reversal of gaze or doubled vision, blurring the demarcation between humans and non-humans. Bloom’s “doubled vision” can be seen in his reactions to the horses and cattle that enter into his awareness (see the “Cattle & Horse Map,” Appendix II), highlighted by three experiences: (1) the Hengler’s circus at Rotunda; (2) the horse-whipping he witnessed at Harold Bridge; and (3) his employment under cattle trader Joseph Cuffe. Especially, Bloom’s experienced knowledge about slaughterhouses and knacker’s yards brings to our attention the killing and disposal of animals, problematizing the modern societal impulses to exclude “beastly” animals from urban public spaces.

In contrast to the earlier chapters that have examined live animals, Chapter IV takes up those represented in scientific and popular discourses, visually represented in posters and pictures, and consumed as commodities. Introducing Joyce’s earliest essay “Force” (1898), which registers his early concern with animals, the chapter unpacks his theory of subjugation, and reveals what I call *tuskers* (applying the word mistakenly used by a character in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*)—mammoth, mastodon, extant elephants in his text. His fascination with extinct mammoth and mastodon demonstrates how different from today was the gaze to which these animals and their tusks were exposed; it also elucidates the fear inspired by extinct animals as representing “the unsubjugated.” Through references in the essay “Force,” the elephant episode in the Mullingar fragment of *Stephen Hero*, and the reference to Elvery’s Elephant House in *Ulysses*, we see how elephants, or pachyderms more broadly, were the target of curious gaze, and the elephant on display was seen as among “the subjugated”—one of the modern victims utilized to prove human virility and supremacy. Bloom’s gaze affords a channel for examining the cultural and historic backdrop for the ivory products that appear in Joyce’s novels. The horrendous consumption of ivory in the world market in his time which nearly drove African elephants to extinction highlights the theme of subjugation Joyce had so presciently propounded in “The Force.” Just when Joyce was writing in Dublin, commenting optimistically that the white race no longer practiced “the abuse of subjugation—slavery” (*OCPW* 7), in Africa’s Republic of Congo, people were being

violently coerced into ravaging their natural habitat for rubber trees and elephants' tusks. Joyce's "Force" thus unites seemingly disparate topics into one—aligning the mammoth and mastodon as the unsubjugated, elephants as the subjugated, and ivory as the consumed—to form the constellation of "Joyce's *tuskers*."

The last chapter deals with the plesiosaurus. In *Stephen Hero*, this large marine reptile of the Jurassic period appears when protagonist Stephen Daedalus envisions the birth of prehistoric art: "[h]e doubled backwards into the past of humanity and caught glimpses of emergent art as one might have a vision of the plesiosauros [sic] emerging from his ocean of slime." This thesis inquires why, of all the paleoimagery available at that time, Joyce conjures up the plesiosaurus and describes it in association with an "ocean of slime." The direct experience of seeing the plesiosaurus fossil, (*Plesiosaurus cramptoni*, now known as *Rhomaleosaurus cramptoni*) that was moved to Dublin's Natural History Museum in 1890 may have provided the source for Joyce's inspiration. An overview of traditional imagery of the slime-clad creature in paleo-geological writings elucidates how Stephen employs conventional verbal representation as he pursues his search for primordial art. Lastly, I probe the hidden nexus between the plesiosaurus and Stephen's monstrous egotism, or "self-centred" spirit vis-à-vis "self-submersive reptiles" (*SH* 34). The "ocean of slime" becomes an image symbolic of the geological soil of Dublin out of which the fledging artist attempts to rise. Finally, this line of argument illuminates how "the square ditch" into which the young Stephen is pushed down is connected to the depth of the "ocean of slime" from which the plesiosaurus emerges. As the young man later acknowledges in a somewhat elliptic syllogism, the statement "we are all animals. I also am an animal" features in his conclusion acquired through a desperate struggle to seek a "new humanity".

Noting the "host of minor characters throng[ing] the pages of *Ulysses*," Frank Budgen recalls in his 1934 memoir a conversation with the author: "'I want,' said Joyce, as we were walking down the Universitätstrasse [in Zurich], 'to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book.'" As some critics aptly point out, Joyce attempted to create "a

replica of the world” of Dublin with the “realistic substratum,” based on a cornucopia of material—culled and gleaned from quotations and allusions belonging to preceding texts in the corpus of European literature, from contemporary newspaper articles and advertisements, from songs, folklore, urban legends, the names of streets and people, and making use of the Ordnance Survey Map of Dublin and *Thom’s Official Directory of Dublin*, as well as much other ephemeral documentation. However, if we reconstruct the Dublin with such “licensed” citizens whose corresponding entities could be found, the city will be lifeless, a barren urban space because it will be devoid of nameless animals, most of which are not registered in documents. Their existence in daily life is somehow veiled, shielded, or embedded, and hence deeply rooted, permeating other things. My conclusion goes to the fresh recognition that animals are everywhere, ready to expose other-still-unknown worlds that have been marginalized and left unnoticed.