Introduction: Joyce in the Nineteenth Century

John Nash

The frontispiece image shows James Joyce, formally dressed in a tall straight hat, bow tie, dark overcoat, and carrying aloft an umbrella, walking at leisure along a wide Paris boulevard – not in the 1920s, when he lived there, but in the 1870s, before he was born. It is an obvious pastiche, which was digitally modelled by superimposing a 1930s photograph of Joyce's face onto the prominent male figure in Gustave Caillebotte's *Rue de Paris; temps de pluie* (1877).[1] Here, then, is Joyce in a quintessential centre of European modernity, apparently 'the capital of the nineteenth century'. Some of the details of the scene and Caillebotte's artificial arrangement may be considered fitting for Joyce, such as the informality of the urban walk that seems about to edge off the canvas, the moment of privacy in public space, the hint of class consciousness in the modernity of Haussmann's Paris (which Joyce later inhabited), and the sense of a transient ordinariness. But the image is also strikingly inappropriate, of course, in its historical disjunction. The street scene shows only walkers and horse-drawn carriages; there is not a tram, a motor or an advertisement in sight; the hat is comically ludicrous to audiences who have seen many times the famous photograph of Joyce as a student in his flat cap; and Haussmann's uniform modern city is far from Joyce's Dublin of revenants. There is perhaps something oddly telling here, though, in the image's playful amalgamation of nineteenth-century Paris and twentieth-century Joyce. In Caillebotte's painting, the man in the centre foreground inhabits the position and appearance of the confident male bourgeois: he walks directly toward us, confident that the future is his, casting across the street to his right a strong upward gaze that is both nonchalant and authoritative. He is fashionable, the public space is his habitus, and he has a woman on his arm who loyally follows his gaze. However, the pastiche disrupts the apparent confidence of Caillebotte's bourgeois subject. The painting has been called 'a masterpiece of bourgeois seriousness' but the pastiche self-evidently is not.[2] In it, Joyce's eyes are narrowly averted: he looks slightly aside to the left and downwards into

the pavement. It is evident that his eyes are weak; the stride now looks hesitant; uncertainty lines his facial expression. Is the woman 'on' his arm or is she, the younger person, providing a necessary physical support to this ailing man? She alone gazes across the space of the picture. The man's self-certainty, and with it the seriousness of the picture, have been washed away. Moreover, in the pastiche, Joyce appears dislocated within the scene, and not just historically: the canvas is divided vertically through the middle by the lamp-post, separating the man from the street, slightly off-setting and marginalising him (in the painting this effect is reduced by the man's gaze back across the lamp-post). This is a Joyce many times displaced.

Although there has been provocative work on 'Victorian modernism', this volume does not seek to perform a sort of critical pastiche by reading Joyce *in* the nineteenth century as if he were secretly all along a late-Victorian. Wyndham Lewis's acerbic pronouncement – 'Proust *returned* to the *temps perdu*. Joyce never left it' – misses the importance of Joyce's historicism, that is, the open acknowledgement in his writing of the many historical relationships between the past (including the unknown past) and his present.[3] Instead, *James Joyce in the Nineteenth Century* represents the first concerted exploration of the depth and range of Joyce's complex inheritances from, and inhabitation of, key literary, intellectual and cultural issues that were prominent in the nineteenth century, the century in which he was born and educated.

These original essays explore many of the cultural, political and formal connections that Joyce has with his predecessors, linking Joyce's formal innovations to his reading of, and immersion in, nineteenth-century cultural life. Of course, this volume does not seek to catalogue exhaustively all the possible connections but to offer the first substantial, and focused, rumination on some of the historical questions opened by the topic. It seeks to read Joyce as already working within, and at times against, a number of that century's major concerns insofar as they were important, but sometimes unrecognised, aspects of his writing. But it does not do so by labelling, for instance, 'imperialism' and 'gender' as issues that might be treated discretely by a single essay; instead, such broader concerns inflect the volume as a whole.[4] The essays gathered here address a series of related topics that illustrate some of the primary and less-explored issues in Joyce's relationship with nineteenth-century literature, society and thought rather than more simply linking Joyce back to a set of chosen nineteenth-century figures or texts. These topics include Joyce's conceptualisation of narrative voice and genre in a mode that was distinctly informed by nineteenth-century Irish writing; his sense of the historical moment at the turn of the

century; his engagements with the modern modes of advertising, insurance and commodification; and his formal adaptations from a range of cultural models, including Darwinism, philology and visual culture. The collection contains numerous analyses of new, hitherto unexplored or unknown contexts for Joyce, such as his reading of Queen Victoria's journal and Mill's *On Liberty*, his engagement with the Revivalist debate over 'food values', and the developments of both the advertising industry *in Ireland* and the official manipulation of risk by the insurance industry. Taken together, these essays comprise a detailed and provocative analysis of how Joyce's work was already *in* the nineteenth century, and how it took on and transformed key issues from that period.

In an important way Joyce has always been out of joint. He was, of course, both displaced and out of step with the times – two sides of a related cultural fracture that can be read in the alienation of *Dubliners* just as it can in the 'marryvoising moodmoulded cyclewheeling history' of *Finnegans Wake* (*FW* 186.01–2). In its reinvention of literary forms and the inherited political modes from which it cannot escape, his writing wears the 'new secondhand clothes' that Stephen Dedalus assumes at the end of *A Portrait* (*P* 275). Stephen's injunction in the National Library that 'in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be' (*U* 9.383–5) echoes through Joyce's writing, begging the question of the relationship, and the differences, between 'future', 'past' and 'now'. Moreover, Joyce takes care to show that these temporal connections create historical narratives that occlude 'things that were not', those non-events of the past that 'might have been' (*U* 9.348–9). Joyce's writing embodies Stephen's determination to create a conceptual space in which 'possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known' (*U* 9.349–50) may yet resonate, and it does so by recreating turn-of-the -century Dublin with an as yet unseen comprehensiveness that is also a place of imagination, dissonance and illusion.

If a tension between historical rupture and enforced repetition may be said to structure Joyce's writing, as Seamus Deane argues, it is also historicist in that sense of foregrounding the relation between 'then' and 'now', and it is imaginatively non-chronological in its openness to 'possibilities' and returns.[5] In these ways, it displays that it is out of joint, purposely drawing attention to this methodological or historiographical question and gesturing at the cultural and intellectual dislocations that underpin it. The temporal dislocation of Joyce's writing is best seen as a form of historicism, that is, as the continual shuttling back and forth between periods and

cultures, raising the relationship between them as an interpretive question and not as a determining structure. One aspect of the present volume is to read this kind of historicism back into the nineteenth century and, in so doing, not to re-join Joyce but to re-member him in contexts from which his work speaks but that have become forgotten to us. *James Joyce in the Nineteenth Century* is therefore a means of reading Joyce's historicism as a series of particular engagements with some of the literary, intellectual and social themes of the nineteenth century that continue to resonate in his work.

It is the claim of this volume that a richer understanding of the uneven historical passages which Joyce negotiated in his life and work may be found by thinking of Joyce *in* the nineteenth century and in relation to contexts that open new approaches for Joyce studies. Yet so powerful has been our sense of Joyce as 'modern' and 'modernist' – indeed so strong is the wrongful confusion of those terms – that the complex and multi-layered relationship Joyce had with the nineteenth century, and especially nineteenth-century Irish literature and society, has been surprisingly little discussed. What does it mean to say 'James Joyce *in* the nineteenth century'? Clearly, it signals a different relationship between Joyce and that period than the words 'and' or 'of' would suggest. For a start, 'in' signals a more specific and historicised relationship than 'and' but also a less deterministic relationship than 'of' implies. 'Joyce *and* the nineteenth century' could be a very large and very loose topic, perhaps signalling a series of disconnected influences; 'Joyce *of* the nineteenth century' suggests a narrowly reductive limitation of Joyce's work to a 'product of' that time. Instead, by thinking Joyce *in* the nineteenth century, this book seeks both to immerse Joyce, carefully and specifically, in crucial moments from that period and to ask how his writing responds to cultural modes of the time that he adopted and adapted. This volume places Joyce back into specific moments, textual formations and cultural modes with which he was familiar – all of them crucial if not exhaustive snapshots of Joyce's historical relationship with the nineteenth century.

This volume may be said to spring from the question, To what extent was the modernity of Joyce already a feature of the nineteenth century? In answering that, the essays gathered here collectively propose that the nineteenth century was not merely an age that 'preceded' Joyce in a straightforward chronological sense. Of course, there are always inevitable crossovers between periods that make the categorisation of history or literature a question-begging exercise, however necessary it may appear. The overarching methodology of these essays is therefore firmly historical.[6] Their original

research and striking readings explicate Joyce's involvement in a number of important nineteenth-century literary, cultural and political modes; and they show how Joyce's modernity is a feature of that involvement.

The writing of James Joyce has long been understood as anticipating so much that seemingly followed, from Irish Independence to deconstruction. Jacques Derrida describes how it is 'always too late with Joyce' since he anticipates and even 'invents' his later audiences. The famous opening to Richard Ellmann's 1959 biography – 'We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries' (*JJ* 3) – itself heralded a late-twentieth-century reading of modernism as *avant la lettre*. Even two years prior to the book publication of *Ulysses*, the *Dial* hailed Joyce as a 'Contemporary of the Future'.[7] Joyce, it seemed, was always already modern, ahead of his peers, inhabiting a later age. Joyce's place in literary history became that of an innovator of narrative modes: a great many critical studies have established Joyce in relation to those writers who were his 'heirs' – from Beckett and Borges to Pynchon and Pamuk. But the modernity of Joyce lies not only in his prescient anticipation of cultural change and his undoubted influence and originality. It lies also in his past.

Around the early 1920s Joyce's position as a key figure within avant-garde literature was constructed by admirers, critics and other writers. Taking its cue from the stimuli of Eliot's 'mythic method', Larbaud's 'monologue intérieur' and Pound's championing of the 'universal', literary criticism has emphasised what is new about Joyce's work, stressing its formalist invention as if it had little or nothing to do with the historical and intellectual contexts from which it was written (whereas form is always historical and intellectual). 'The book would be a landmark, because it destroyed the whole of the 19th Century' – such was T. S. Eliot's view of *Ulysses*, in September 1922, as told to and reported by Virginia Woolf.[8] The busy Eliot can be seen here characteristically nudging a marker on his map of modernism but the 'landmark' of Joyce was even then an equivocal, ambivalent divide between one century and the next. If *Ulysses* 'showed up the futility of all the English styles', as Eliot reportedly claimed, then it could not help do so but by looking in two directions at once. Yet Joyce became a modernist through a process of selective forgetting by influential readers: the past that Eliot's 'mythic method' recalled was an ancient one, not a recent one; Pound preferred to erase the local, claiming that *Dubliners* could have been 'retold of any town'; and his critical descendant Hugh Kenner promoted Joyce as denationalised émigré author of formalist puzzles. Joyce's modernism, it seemed, was antithetical to the world in which he grew up.

But more recent work in both Irish studies and Victorianism has been suggestive of some of the ways in which Joyce criticism might read his modernity as also part of his nineteenth-century, and Irish, background. The point is not that the latter surprisingly persists, but that 'modernity' and the 'traditional' are always coalescing.

In addition to the once-dominant critical mode of Joyce as modernist innovator, there has also long existed a more historical reading of Joyce in which he functions as a fulcrum in literary history, social history and the political narrative of Ireland. Joyce's contemporaries, including perhaps especially those who were antagonistic to him, saw him as such a pivotal figure (and we are reminded that sometimes hostile criticism can be the most illuminating). Lewis's response to *Ulysses* – which was occasionally astute and sometimes ridiculous – argued that Joyce's sense of the world was stuck in the late-Victorian age, 'recording the last stagnant pumpings of victorian anglo-irish life'. *Ulysses*, claimed Lewis, was a cathartic outpouring of this 'record diarrhoea' after some decade and a half of social constipation: 'the voluminous curtain that fell, belated (with the alarming momentum of a ton or two of personally organised rubbish), upon the victorian scene'.[9]

That Joyce was a pivotal figure whose work relied upon an intimate knowledge of late-Victorian and Edwardian culture has long been recognised, even if scholarship of this engagement played second fiddle to the dominant modernist model. Perhaps the most significant initial work in this vein was Cheryl Herr's argument that Joyce's writing comprises a sort of late-Victorian memorabilia. 'Joyce's major works', she writes, 'circle back on the cultural processes that shaped their composition as well as on the social realities inscribed by those operations'.[10] The popular culture of the newspaper and magazine industries, of music-hall and theatre, all shaped Joyce's writing, inflecting its linguistic register, its humour and its politics.

However, the title of this volume purposely evades the term 'Victorian'. While the essays here contribute to recent trends that question the chronological limits of Victorianism and modernism, folding the topics designated by these terms into one another, their point is not to provide more accounts of the instability of these terms. Nor is their purpose to suggest, like Lewis, that Joyce was effectively a late-Victorian or an Edwardian.[11] The range of this book is purposely wider, allowing for the intellectual and social modes that predated Victoria and sidestepping the limitations of the monarchic nomenclature. For some reason – perhaps because of its relative institutional strength and autonomy in late twentieth-century

literary criticism – Joyce studies has been largely impervious to discussions in Victorianism especially of the crossovers between the Victorian and the modern. A range of critics have argued for either the persistence of Victorianism or the early manifestation of modernism. In the latter camp, Jessica R. Feldman argues that 'the very Victorian qualities that modernists purportedly had to overcome – conventionality of form, sentimentality and coziness, discursiveness, didacticism – have, like Poe's purloined letter, been hidden for all to see on the very surfaces of Modernist works'.[12] While Feldman's focus is on late-Victorian figures such as Ruskin and D. G. Rossetti and, briefly, their influence on specific modernist works (Joyce is referred to only in passing), her list of 'Victorian qualities' is very much circumscribed by the mid-Victorian English novel. Extending this range of interests to Irish literary culture and society, and some of the most important discourses of the nineteenth century, the essays gathered here flesh out some of the connections implicit in Feldman's analysis. A crucial difference of the essays in this volume is this: they do not seek to argue that the Victorians were already moderns but to trace some of the dialogues between Joyce and the longer nineteenth century, while attending to the historicism of the relationship. They therefore complement and extend work in Joyce studies that has focused on the influence of late-nineteenth-century figures and discourses.[13]

Other critics have looked back on the construction of 'the Victorian'. In particular, interesting work by Simon Joyce addresses the way that twentieth-century writers 'reimagined' the Victorian period and shows how the Victorians have been mythologised from quite different later cultural perspectives.[14] The focus of both Feldman and Simon Joyce on the ways that Victorian concerns have continued into the present can be considered as an accompaniment in their constructions of a 'long modernism'. But this book does not set out to address directly either Victorianism or modernism, definitions of which are legion. Instead, its scope is both narrower and broader. The focus is on Joyce, with the emphasis on nineteenth -century Ireland defining a delineated area; the book also shows how some external contexts from beyond Victorianism – consumerism, liberalism, philology, evolution, pre-cinematic visual culture – can inform a reading of Joyce's work.

In order to move beyond tired debates about the 'transition' of Victorianism into modernism ('transition' is here to stay), we can look to recent work in Irish studies that helps to bring out the significance of Joyce's relationship with the Irish nineteenth century, which has long been overlooked by Joyce

scholarship.[15] (This was also the immediate context for the production of this volume as part of a wider project.)[16] It is also one reason why the pastiche of Caillebotte on the cover is misleading, in that it repeats the familiar story of modernity flourishing in 'the capital of the nineteenth century', where the emigrant artist thrives.[17] If Paris in the latter half of that century was a byword for modernity (embodied in Haussmann's destruction of the old city and creation of boulevards that ordered and centralised movement), then Ireland in the nineteenth century 'acquired a refurbished reputation as a national culture distinguished by its supposed antipathy to the modern'.[18] The complex reception of Romantic thought in Ireland helped to engender ideas of national culture that emphasised it as a site of tradition (community, orality, superstition) that issued in the Revival. This long-standing invention and careful nourishment of Ireland as a traditional culture is of course an incomplete account. Not only did Ireland obviously undergo forms of modernization that resulted from external forces such as the economic and legal transitions that the British State effected (and which the Church, wary of superstition, sometimes supported), but so too Ireland internally produced its own cultural modes and experiences of modernity. The point is not that the critical celebration of Paris has been wrong but that other places also experienced modernity within their own specific historical conditions.

The unevenness of the experience of modernization in Ireland in the nineteenth century – seen in the economy, the infrastructure, mechanisms of state, and the 'structures of feeling' in Raymond Williams's phrase[19] – did not disqualify it from the modernity that is more commonly associated with Paris, Vienna, London and Berlin but conferred what has been called a 'colonial modernity'.[20] Joyce certainly learnt from the latter, but he learnt also from the former (and its echoes in Trieste). The contestation of voices and values in nineteenth-century Ireland had a particular internal expression that was given impetus by those 'two masters' of Church and imperial State and which meant that the modernity of continental Europe – its ever-shifting balance between forms of opposition and the historical continuity conferred on the State by judicial-rational order – was also a modernity that was experienced, albeit under different conditions, in Ireland.

The critique of historicism that has structured much work in postcolonial theory has a direct bearing here, and it also bears a striking resemblance to Joyce's historical methodology and the comments of Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* (cited previously).

> To critique historicism in all its varieties is to unlearn to think of history as a developmental process in which that which is possible becomes actual by

> tending to a future which is singular. Or, to put it differently, it is to learn to think the present – the 'now' that we inhabit as we speak – as irreducibly not-one. To take that step is to rethink the problem of historical time and to review the relationship between the possible and the actual.[21]

David Lloyd points to Joyce's learning in medieval Irish culture as one example of the ways in which the 'time-lag' of the past may be productively brought to bear on the experience of the present.[22] Similarly, those very forms of apparent 'backwardness' in nineteenth-century Ireland might be thought of instead as possibilities in the reconstruction of Ireland's modernity. A number of the essays in this volume implicitly or explicitly develop this point, including my own essay and those by Luke Gibbons, Emer Nolan and Helen O'Connell. Ireland's modernity is not seen by these essays as merely the result of outside forces but as something produced, in its own ways, internally. Joyce did not seek to erase the past, as modernization so often does (Haussmann's bulldozing of Paris, again), but to allow it to continue to haunt the present. His Dublin is not merely a pivot from one age to the next but a haunted space where different times can coalesce in discomforting fashion. The essays in this volume confer a particular focus, a nuanced textual reading, and a firm historical grasp on the wider project of calibrating Ireland's vexed relationship with modernity.

This book is divided into three parts, each making original contributions to inter-related aspects of Joyce studies: first, the cultural and literary inheritance from nineteenth-century Ireland, and Joyce's own complex situation as an aspiring writer at that point; second, Joyce's exploration of advertising and economic discourses more generally (especially within the Irish context); and, third, the formal innovations that Joyce adapted from nineteenth-century models, and here the focus is towards his reading in, and awareness of, specific texts and discourses emanating initially from Britain. These parts also 'speak to' one another: thus the focus on Irish economy in Part II picks up the essays of Part I and is continued in the first essay of Part III.

The four essays in the first part, The Politics of Form in Ireland, address the cultural politics of literary form with particular focus on Joyce's readings of, and relation to, Irish nineteenth-century prose writers. Emer Nolan's essay establishes the context of this theme by considering *Ulysses* in relation to the nineteenth-century Irish novel and, in particular, a tradition of Irish Catholic fiction that sought to narrate a coming democratic and consumerist culture. Following this are two complementary essays on Joyce and George Moore. Focusing on Joyce's early writings including his essay

'Ireland at the Bar', Luke Gibbons presents what he calls Joyce's 'vernacular modernism' as a debt to the careful gradation of voice and free indirect discourse in Irish fiction; and Richard Robinson re-considers Joyce's similarities and dissimilarities with Moore, showing the pertinence of their 'short story cycles' to debates within cultural nationalism. Robinson also considers forms of oral expression – 'orality' is a familiar trope of nineteenth-century Ireland – in showing how Moore and Joyce differently figure its relationship to script. It is still commonplace to assume that Joyce had relatively little interest in the literature of nineteenth-century Ireland and that he took his bearings predominantly from the naturalists and symbolists on the continent.[23] However, these essays form a powerful but balanced correction of that view, showing how Joyce's writing may be read in new relationships with nineteenth-century Irish literature and popular genres.

In the final essay of this first part, Andrew Gibson considers the situation of Joyce at the very end of the nineteenth century. He provides an original account of the significance of the 'critical writings' from the turn of the century, in which Joyce conceptualises the role of the artist at what Gibson calls an 'epochal moment'. Here, Joyce himself reflects on his relationship to the century that is about to end and looks to Ibsen and others as possible models. This essay further explores some of the issues raised in previous essays, most notably the sense of Joyce seeking to redefine 'the national project' in his own terms, but terms that echo and shift those of his nineteenth-century forebears. It also underscores the idea, raised by Gibbons and others, that Ireland in the nineteenth century offers a unique and incisive vantage point for a reading of the wider question of European modernity, of which it was a part. In some ways, the roots of Joyce's modernity are seen to lie in nineteenth-century Ireland, which is not to be thought of as the 'backward' other of Britain and Europe, but as itself partly constitutive of their modernity.

The four essays of the second part, Public and Private Economies, present new material to enhance our understanding of Joyce's engagement with the specific consumerist and economic contexts of insurance, advertising and consumption. Jaya Savige reminds us that Bloom previously worked in insurance, and his research into risk and its management via the life insurance industry demonstrates how this important but neglected discourse of modernity can enrich our reading of *Ulysses* as a whole and of Bloom in particular. Advertising has of course been discussed by many Joyce critics, but the following two essays approach the subject from new angles. John Strachan shows that there *was* an advertising industry in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century, which allows for