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Introduction

> [In 1938] when a young Harvard student wrote to him to praise *Ulysses* but complain of Joyce's attitude toward his race, Joyce remarked, "I have written with the greatest sympathy about the Jews."[1]
>
> Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*

Sixteen years after the publication of *Ulysses*, James Joyce remained sensitive to the controversy of Leopold Bloom's "Jewishness." Nearly sixty years later, and despite an often undervalued wealth of argument on the subject, we ourselves are still contending with the "indeterminacies" of Bloom's Jewish identity, as well as with the role of "the Jew" in the novel. While *fin-de-siècle* discourse about "the Jew" informs Bloom's character throughout the text, within the framework of Judaic law, he cannot of course be considered *Halachically* Jewish.[2] A few readers of the novel, moreover, may continue to assert that – despite efforts on Joyce's part to the contrary – *Ulysses* perpetuates pernicious Jewish stereotypes. It is less arguable, however, that a multitude of European cultural markers of "Jewishness" are critical to Joyce's construction of Bloom's inner-life as well as to his subject position. In this manner, a study of the extrinsic forces that impacted on both Joyce and his work is central to an understanding of "the Jew" in *Ulysses*. But contextual analysis alone cannot evince the meanings of the text's representations of "the Jew"; Joyce's narrative experiments also play a decisive role in such an endeavor, and often render intricate portrayals of Bloom's plight as a marginal Jew. Bloom's "Jewishness," then, whatever we discover it to be, cuts across both form and content, becoming pivotal to the representational, narratological, and even historiographical aspects of the novel.

Like many complex social/textual issues, however, questions surrounding "the Jew" in *Ulysses* have met over the years with some

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devastating ironies. While Stuart Gilbert's work inaugurated the subject's study, which has steadily and quietly continued to this day, a recognition of the centrality of "Jewishness" in both Joyce's consciousness and the novel has yet to be achieved. Joyce scholars still often view discussions of "the Jew" as less crucial than those of other fields of interest, or even worse, regard it merely as anecdotal for the Joycean "insider." In the past, this lesser status has been enabled because, despite the movement in humanities from a liberal to a radical center, "the Jew" as a key point of cultural analysis has negligently remained a "specialized" endeavor. Moreover, in traditional Joyce studies, "the Jew" was and is too often investigated not through cultural discourse or political history, but as a mythic trope, a static element of hermeneutics. In his recent work, *Constructions of "the Jew" in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875–1945* (1993), Bryan Cheyette locates such a failure to address both "the Jew" and anti-Semitism at the center of contemporary literary studies:

> Not unlike Michel Foucault's history of sexuality, 'literary anti-semitism' has been conceived as an open 'secret' or unacknowledged common place that, during intermittent 'storms of abuse' is also spoken about '*ad infinitum*'. This unhappy state of affairs has, furthermore, been unwittingly reinforced by influential studies of 'The Jew in English literature' which have defined Jewish literary representations as fixed 'stereotypes', 'myths' or 'images' that have remained essentially the same across centuries and are thus, in the words of Hannah Arendt, 'natural consequences of an eternal problem.' The privileged cultural realm of literature remains essentially unthreatened by the naturalized construction of an eternal mythic 'Jew'. The mythic 'Jew', that is, exists quite comfortably in the realm of 'culture' which is, supposedly, above and beyond the messy contingencies of history and the crude expediencies of politics.[3]

Due to the breadth of his project, Cheyette conducts a predominantly textual analysis of Joyce's "semitic discourse." As my work here demonstrates, however, grasping "the Jew" in *Ulysses* entails no less than weighing the cultural, biographical, political, intertextual, and textual into a combined approach toward a rereading of the novel.

Despite the inattention of the larger world of Joyce studies, however, a retrospect of work on "the Jew" in *Ulysses* could begin with the book's very first reviews. Valéry Larbaud, one of Joyce's earliest supporters, claimed Bloom was a Jew because of "symbolical, mystical and ethnological reasons. . .[and] not because of anti-Semitism."[4] Frank Budgen was also interested in the controversy of

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Bloom as a Jew, and characterized him as "no stage Jew. . .[but] a product of three-hundred years of social and political emancipation."[5] (Budgen would have been more accurate in altering his phrase to *attempted* emancipation.) Writing under the pseudonym Lawrence K. Emery, A. J. Leventhal, a Trinity University lecturer and an acquaintance of Joyce, suggested Bloom's Jewishness as central among the novel's "themes" as early as 1923.[6] In 1963, he postulated that Stephen Dedalus' "silence, exile, and cunning," as a strategy for survival in the margins of society, also attaches to Bloom as a Jew:

> Joyce's choice of these three unusual weapons has a special significance in regard to the relationship in *Ulysses* between Stephen and Bloom. Bloom more than a symbol of the eternal Jew is in exile in the Irish capital; Joyce has imposed exile on himself in many European capitals. "Cunning," if we omit the overtone of artistic craft in the case of Joyce, is a characteristic of all oppressed races – an astuteness in avoiding penal laws and in skirting the pitfalls created by prejudice and hate. This applies only partly to Joyce himself, though it covers the Irish at an earlier period of history, and almost wholly to Bloom as a stranger among Irish patriots unwilling to accept him as one of themselves.[7]

Leventhal saw Jewish silence in the face of Nazi persecution and Joyce's silence toward the political turmoil of the post-Parnell years as analogous. Accordingly, Joyce chose expatriation rather than the arguments of nationalist politics, "the songs" of the Celtic revival, or the sounds of armed rebellion.

In America, two of the earliest voices to demonstrate the value of "the Jew" in the novel were those of Marvin Magalaner and Morton Levitt. Magalaner's 1953 research on Joyce's anti-Semitic sources was revelatory.[8] Levitt, whose 1969 article "The Family of Bloom" was one of the first readings to foreground Bloom's struggle with Jewishness, continued his interest through several other pieces, and has recently explored Talmudic aspects of *Finnegans Wake*.[9] Stanley Sultan's work, *The Argument of Ulysses* (1965) established the text's anti-Semitic tropes as vital to the overall narrative development of the novel.[10] In addition, various articles have appeared over the years, all of which have added to our knowledge of Joyce's "Jewish sources," as well as continually shaped and reshaped our view of Bloom.[11] In his more casual essays, for example, Leslie Fielder has over the years remained particularly vocal about Bloom as a Jew and Joyce's sensibility as a "*Yiddisher Kopf*."[12]

At present, *Ulysses* has also generated three book-length studies of

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its discourse on "the Jew." The first of these was Ralph Joly's *The Jewish Element in James Joyce's Ulysses* (1973), a Chapel Hill dissertation. Joly demonstrates how Judaic lore and ritual creates a textual structure as significant to the book as the influence of Homer's *Odyssey*. In her 1985 Wisconsin dissertation, *Joyce's Judaic Other: Texts and Contexts*, Marilyn Reizbaum explores Joyce's use of political and scientific sources to create Bloom's "Otherness" as a Jew. Reizbaum has, as well, maintained her interest in "Jewish Joyce" through several scholarly articles.[13] Collating such arguments and presenting new research, Ira Nadel published *Joyce and the Jews* in 1989, the only book on the subject to appear in print. Nadel's work is an excellent introduction to Joyce's relations with Jewish individuals and Judaic motifs, and offers key insights into Talmudic allusions in *Finnegans Wake*. As a study in "Culture and Texts," however, Nadel focuses mainly on social influences and makes no argument about Bloom's Jewishness as a central interpretative element of *Ulysses*.

Conversely, many extant textual analyses of "the Jew" in the novel too often highlight the same exact select passages. Because such discrete exegesis fails to explore the over-arching relevance of European anti-Semitic culture to the entire text, none have accomplished a comprehensive reading from this standpoint. Moreover, the failure (with the exception of Nadel) to examine the evolution of Joyce's lifelong encounter with ideas and programs about "the Jew" has only added to the subject's demotion in Joyce criticism. Explored in depth, however, Joyce's awareness of the cultural positions of such programs indeed forms a unifying component of his career.

In constructing Bloom, Joyce drew on a complex body of representations of "the Jew" that he had absorbed first as a Catholic child and adolescent, then as a disgruntled liberal Irishman, and finally as a "Europeanized," "modernist" author. On one level, Bloom is Joyce's construction of his era's assimilated Jew who was often marginal to both a dominant culture as well as to the culture of *Halachic* Judaism. But, *inter alia*, Bloom also reveals how Joyce, as a member of one disenfranchized group, imagines the racial or biological "nature" of a member of another. While a reader may respond to Bloom as an Irishman, Hungarian, or even "Everyman," Joyce appears always to have perceived him first as a Jew. This privileging of one of Bloom's many identities indicates that the converted, agnostic character embodied traits recognizable to Joyce as "Jewish." On occasion, Joyce in fact underscored his belief in "Jewish

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characteristics" with a bit of humor, a canard that ironically draws on the era's British convention of the "Jew joke" and "Scotch Joke":

> A Scotchman and a Jew were traveling on a ship which foundered and sank. They spent three days together in a lifeboat. At the end of that time, the Jew said, "I'm a Jew." The Scotchman said, "I'm a hunchback."[14]

What were "Jewish traits" to Joyce and why did he become so obsessed with them? On what cultural assumptions does his construction of Jewish identity rely? How does *Ulysses* appropriate and subvert hegemony about "Jewishness" in Europe? Why did Jews become so pivotal to Joyce? How did he arrive at the conclusion that certain "Jewish traits" lend themselves to the empowerment of Otherness? How do those specific traits figure in Bloom's conflict? Such questions have prompted me to reinvestigate Joyce biography, intertextual relations among Joyce's work and a host of sources, and the position(s) of "the Jew" in nineteenth-century European culture.

Scholars have indeed recently been called to the task of re-evaluating Joycean biography.[15] A central target for this approach, of course, is Richard Ellmann's work. Revisionary renderings of Joyce's life, however, do not always question the accuracy of Ellmann's findings, but rather provoke the curious to look for other "Joyces" than the one discovered in those conclusions. This study also attempts to broaden the scope of how we perceive Joyce by reinvestigating key moments of his career and offering new research to support the idea that "the Jew" was a dynamic aspect of his imagination since childhood. In this manner, juxtaposition of historical event, religious and racial discourse, Joyce's progress as a thinker, and the work itself, opens many new insights. My inquiry into the evolution of "Joyce's Jew" indeed culminates in a rereading of *Ulysses*, in which Bloom's struggle for a Jewish identity becomes the crux of the character's dilemma, as well as an entrance into the text's evaluation of "Jewishness" and its positioning of the era's Jewish question.[16]

Critics often work under the assumption that Bloom sprung nearly full blown from Joyce's imagination around 1914, some time after his friendship with Italo Svevo. But this is not the case. As alluded to above, the task of decoding "the Jew" in *Ulysses* is inseparable from a recognition of the cultural and political forces that played on Joyce throughout his life. The interplay of those forces, issuing from the distinct environments of Dublin, Paris, Trieste, and Zurich, is precisely where one must begin to unravel Bloom, who, as the product

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of Joyce's long-running fascination with "the Jew," is on many levels a demythologizing of the central notions about "Jewishness" in Europe.

Joyce was of course born into the liberal nineteenth-century atmosphere in which the subject of "the Jew" pervaded Christian doctrine as well as cultural, scientific, and political discourse. Shortly after he became an apostate from Catholicism, he encountered fully the Continent's racialist/scientized discourse about biologically inherited "Jewish nature." By the time the thirty-two-year-old Joyce began to compose *Ulysses*, his knowledge of culturally sanctioned myths about "the Jew" had reached a boiling point. In manipulating Bloom's conflicts, Joyce acknowledged that such stereotypes were based in and fueled by the dominant ideologies of his world: pseudo-scientific racism, Christian theologies, Church politics, aggressive nationalism, liberal culture-worship, and imperialist economic doctrine.[17]

Nineteenth-century scholarly discussions of Judaism were, moreover, often set in the context of the broader "verities" of Orientalism. One result of this placement was a bifurcated vision of "the Jew." On one level, Judaism as religion found a new popularity as a means to study ancient "Hebraism," now cast as the foundation of one pole of "European culture." On another level, "the Jew" was positioned as an inferior racial type and economic subversive, untrustworthy as a citizen. More decisively than the first, the second representation drew its strength solely from stereotype and of course fostered prejudice in both the educated and working classes throughout Europe. But the first notion about Jews as "Hebraic" was presented as an "academically unbiased" aspect of the history of "Western culture." Drawing on the work of German Romantics, especially that of Heine, these arguments routinely proposed Hebraism, the ancient, opposing force to Hellenism, as one of the twin poles of Western consciousness – an idea that Matthew Arnold made palpable for the British reading public through his theories in *Culture and Anarchy: an Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (1869). Becoming central to Victorian discourse on "the Jew," however, such assertions ultimately helped to solidify the perception of Jews as the modern "Semitic people" subordinate to those of "Indo-European" descent.

Acutely aware of how the Irish had been cast as Other in British society, Joyce eventually perceived a similarity between the plight of his people and that of the Jews. Demonstrating his acceptance of the era's "science," however, Joyce believed to some extent that this bond was grounded in the parallel "nature" of the two peoples: "They were

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alike, he [once] declared, in being impulsive, given to fantasy, addicted to associative thinking, [and] wanting in rational discipline."[18] In the avant-garde circles he entered on the Continent, Joyce came to perceive assimilated Jewish intellectuals as his literati, and soon selected "the Jew" as his dominant trope of Otherness. By the latter years of his career, Joyce suggested through "Shem the Penman" in *Finnegans Wake* that the position of the Jew was analogous to that of the twentieth-century writer, the fragmented voice (re)defining itself through the word. This shared sense of difference was later echoed by Jacques Derrida in his discussion of Edmond Jabès: "The only thing that begins by reflecting itself is history. And this fold, this furrow, is the Jew. . .the situation of the Jew becomes exemplary of the situation of the poet, the man of speech and writing."[19] For Joyce, however, this connection began well before he created Bloom, and grew to mean more to him than merely a literary "fellowship of alienation."

Joyce's theory about an Irish–Jewish similarity also drew on nationalistic rhetoric he had encountered in childhood. Utilizing Irish histories that claimed an Hebraic ancestry for the Milesian Celts, Parnell-as-Moses images influenced Joyce's earliest political awareness. But by the composition of *Ulysses*, Jews to Joyce were not so much "legendary forefathers" as much as they were brothers in marginality. Both groups to him had suffered a discrediting at the hand of Western tradition: both had played crucial roles in the development of Europe, yet both were disempowered by cultures that portrayed them as "racially" inferior and thus destructive to "blood-based" political programs.[20]

Previous to these influences, however, Joyce's formative years had taught him that the Jews' deicidal guilt was a central precept of Christian theology. But having for the most part discarded those beliefs as an adult, he came to view "the Jew" of Europe – the modern, assimilated Jew – as a focal point of some of the more volatile social issues of his day. This liberal, "secular" Jew – dubbed "the non Jewish-Jew" by Isaac Deutscher in the 1950s – was the product of years of acculturation within what had become the centers of *fin-de-siècle* thought.[21] To Joyce, Bloom represented the urban, Westernized Jew, lost to Judaism but still somehow inwardly "Jewish." This sense of "Jewishness" was embodied for Joyce in such renowned contemporaries as Stefan Zweig, Otto Weininger, Theodor Herzl, and, closer to his own experience, Italo Svevo. In interrogating his own culture, Joyce took that "Jew" and transported him to Dublin; if

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that city was to be made an exemplum of the era, then "the Jew" would reside at the center of *Ulysses*' narrative.

As an adolescent, Joyce of course became obsessed with the paralyzing self-hate of his own ethnic Irish legacy. When he moved to the Continent and began socializing with Jews, he discovered a similar self-hatred in many of those with whom he became closely acquainted. Recognizing the parallel, Joyce soon displaced onto his "Jew" his ambivalence toward being an apostate, expatriated Irishman – indeed, toward his own "Irishness." This dynamic is central to understanding Joyce's need to construct the seemingly indefatigable ambiguity of Bloom's "Jewishness."[22] But although such projection is essential to stereotyping, "Joyce's Jew" is neither stereotypical nor consciously anti-Semitic. Bloom is more a mosaic of Jewish representation, made complex through both Joyce's projection and critical imagination. Rather than fixing "the Jew" as a static reality, *Ulysses* presents a spectrum of anti-Jewish myths for analysis – from "the Jew" of Christianity to that of racial degeneracy to that of nationalistic pariahism.

Indeed, by confronting the differing anti-Semitic arguments inscribed in *Ulysses*, one simultaneously confronts nineteenth-century Europe's most prevalent representations of "the Jew." For example, the notion that during the imperialist era Jewish banking dynasties lost status in the nation-state and social hatred of "the Jew" thus gained a new power – a notion Joyce represents in *Ulysses* – was later studied by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).[23] The contemporary work of Sander Gilman explores many of the same Jewish stereotypes that surround Bloom, especially in those scenes where he is perceived as a Jew by non-Jews. Gilman demonstrates how psychological and physiognomic myths of "the Jew" formed cultural mythologies in European societies ranging from Vienna, to Paris, to London. In *Jewish Self-Hatred: Anti-Semitism and the Hidden Language of the Jews* (1986), Gilman illustrates how Jewish writers themselves, from Heine to Freud, encode in their language an internalized self-hatred of "the Jew" produced through the haunting sense of Otherness. Although he is not a writer, Bloom as a character expresses a similar self-abnegation, complicating it through his experience of both an Irish and Jewish identity. Another Gilman project, *The Jew's Body* (1991), also relates how "the Jew" of these myths appears most often as male.[24] This too is true for Joyce's "Jew"; while Joyce had a lifelong infatuation with "dark Jewish females,"

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"the Jew" of his literary imagination was most often male. As products of his Catholic upbringing, Joyce's childhood images of "the Jew" relied on prototypes such as Judas, Caiaphas, and perhaps most importantly, Ahasuerus. But because Joyce admired many of the Jewish men he came to know as an adult, this "Jew" soon served as an object on to which he projected his own self-image as a male – one which he characterized as non-violent, bookish, and domestically minded. Joyce often perceived "the Jew" as the Christian male's binary opposite; thus Bloom's struggle for a Jewish identity is also a struggle for a "Jewish masculinity," which encompasses discourse about the "feminized Jew" Joyce encountered most prominently in the writings of the German psychobiologist, Weininger.

Despite the crucial role "the Jew" played in Joyce's psychology, however, some readers of *Ulysses* continue to question the relevance of calling Bloom a Jew in any sense of the term. One prominent example is the disturbing apathy toward Bloom found in Phillip Herring's *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle* (1987). Herring asserts that the "indeterminacy of identity" in characters such as Stephen, Molly, and "the man in the mackintosh" are "fascinating" examples of Joyce's use of "uncertainty."[25] In regard to the web of Bloom's Jewish identity, however, Herring claims that "the answer obviously depends on definitions about which there is no consensus and can never be," and thus concludes: "this is an example of indeterminacy of character I find unsolvable and not very interesting."[26] But while such a stance refuses to acknowledge Joyce's awareness of the intricacies of assimilated Jewish identity, Bloom's "Jewishness" does indeed present some daunting hurdles. Is Bloom, the uncircumcised, agnostic son of a Gentile mother, Jewish? Using such ambiguities in attempts to "universalize" the novel, there will always be those who maintain, evasively, that Bloom is neither Jewish nor Irish, but "the alienated outsider," a citizen of every country and none. But one cannot ignore the text's facts: Bloom's lineage is at least two- if not three-quarters Jewish, and the most poignant sense of continuity he expresses toward his existence revolves around his own Jewish identity as it relates to that of his father and his son.[27]

The answer to the question, then, resides not in *Halachic* law, nor in definitions of ethnicity, nor in Bloom's belief in God, or in Zionism, or in his doubts about being socially accepted as a Jew. Rather, Bloom's "Jewishness" can be measured by his desire to (re)attach himself to an identity that most empowers him as an adjusted male, a character

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who can get on with "living" – those essential aspects of humanity that Joyce himself always placed well above sectarian divisiveness. On June 16, the identity which Bloom discovers in every meeting and under every rock, is ultimately a Jewish one. That discovery becomes for Bloom, moreover, the moral core of his own *Yiddishkeit*, and in turn suggests the broader idea of a Joycean "*Menschlichkeit*." And there can be no doubt that Joyce knew the puzzle he was creating: it is not random that Bloom's non-Jewish quarter of blood is matrilineal, nor that he is the uncircumcised son of an immigrant convert who, in his final years, returned to practicing Judaism. Joyce drew on a range of experience and sources to construct Bloom as a representation of the assimilated or marginal Jew's "double binds": the struggle to straddle both a Jewish and nationalist identity; to believe oneself a Jew while often rejecting organized Judaism; to be legitimized as "European" and not continually cast as Other to Christian society; to occupy mercantile roles and not be condemned by the Left as a paradigm of bourgeois greed – Bloom is indeed backed into the very same corners the nineteenth-century created for "the Jew."

This cultural reading of Bloom may be one answer to the curiosity of why so many Jewish readers of the novel – readers who know quite well both the rubrics of Orthodox Jewish identity as well as Bloom's lack thereof – have for so long perceived the character as "Jewish." Perhaps the most notable utterance from this subject position was attributed in 1982 to David Ben-Gurion by Gerschom Scholem. While attending the Dublin symposium of the centennial of Joyce's birth, Scholem recalled a "conversation. . .in which Ben-Gurion said, 'Well, the rabbis might not say that Bloom was a Jew, but *I* do.'"[28] Secular Jews and Israeli political leaders alike, of course, may have self-serving reasons for viewing Bloom as a Jew. But even the sheer number of Jewish scholars of Joyce's work suggests that the play *Ulysses* offers with such concepts as matrilineal descent, race, religious knowledge, and Rabbinical edict does not end the discussion of Bloom's "Jewishness," but rather opens the ambiguities of ethnic identity in a manner that cuts to the core of our present explorations of racial, gender, religious, and nationalistic inclusions and exclusions.

Bloom is, moreover, not only a "Jewish character," but also one of the most deliberately complex literary constructs in all of fiction. Through the intricate portrayal of his quotidian life – his fears, desires, complacency, masturbatory obsessions, failures, "stream-thinking," ambivalence, confusion – Bloom becomes an uncompro-

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