



Creasy, M. (2022) Scylla and Charybdis. In: Flynn, C. (ed.) *The Cambridge Centenary Ulysses: The 1922 Text with Essays and Notes*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, pp. 276-319. ISBN 9781316515945 (doi: [10.1017/9781009027007.012](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009027007.012))

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Deposited on 07 December 2021

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Scylla and Charybdis

Matthew Creasy

The ninth chapter of *Ulysses* takes place at 2pm within the National Library of Ireland on Kildare Street. Shortly after the publication of Joyce's novel in 1922, the Library relinquished book storage space in neighbouring Leinster House to accommodate the new parliament of the Irish Free State. Its location became absorbed into a focal point of power in Ireland. But this central space at the heart of Dublin had long been a site of political significance. In 1836, a committee led by the Conservative M.P. William Smith O'Brien established the basis for a 'National Library' in Ireland, open for 'respectable persons of all classes'.¹ But the buildings, designed by Thomas Newenham Deane for the Royal Society of Dublin and the Department of Science and Art in London, only opened to the public in 1890 and entry to this supposedly national institution was not readily available to all.² As Joseph O'Brien notes, readers required access by introduction or 'on the recommendation of a property holder'.³ It was maintained by a committee headed by prominent Protestant, Anglo-Irish figures, such as Ireland's Chief Justice, the Astronomer Royal and Professor Edward Dowden of Trinity College, but the National Library was also popular with Catholic students from the Royal University, including Joyce himself and his fictional counterpart, Stephen Dedalus. At the time of *Ulysses*' setting in 1904, John Nash identifies it as a 'shared but contested space', where the tensions of colonial rule could be traced.⁴

Within this fraught, politically-sensitive site we discover Stephen delivering a version of the theory of Shakespeare promised to Haines and mocked by Buck Mulligan in the first chapter of the novel ('He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father' (1.555-56; p 21)). Haines has left the scene to pick up a copy of some Gaelic poetry by Douglas Hyde (9.91-94; p. 238).

Instead, Stephen is cloistered off the main reading room in the office of the head librarian, Thomas Lyster, who is just one of the historical figures from Dublin's literary scene in this chapter. In addition to Lyster and his assistant director, Richard Best, are found assistant librarian William McGee who published influential essays and criticism on Irish literary topics under the name 'John Eglinton' and the writer and editor, George Russell, who published poetry as 'A.E.'. Stephen has dropped by the library after drinking in the pub with the journalists from the 'Aeolus' episode in chapter seven. Ostensibly, he is there to pass on a letter from his employer, Mr Deasy about Foot and Mouth disease in cattle (entrusted to him in chapter two) and secure its publication in the *Irish Homestead* (9.317; p. 246).

Stephen, however, is also aware of an ambitious literary gathering to be held at the house of the writer, George Moore ('Our national epic has yet to be written, Dr Sigerson says. Moore is the man for it' (9.309-10; p. 246)). Since Russell plans to publish a volume of 'our younger poets' verses' (9.291; p. 245/46), Stephen may hope to demonstrate his own literary prowess, and impress these figures from the Irish Literary Revival with his views of Shakespeare, winning a space for himself amongst 'our young Irish bards' (9.43; p. 236). (Historically, Russell was instrumental in publishing Joyce's short stories in the *Irish Homestead*.) If so, his approach looks misjudged, since much of the conversation is antagonistic and Stephen is pointedly omitted from any invitation to join the evening's gathering. It is in this context that the 'contested' space of the National Library proves highly apt to Stephen's situation and the broader relevance of this chapter to the concerns of *Ulysses* as a whole.

‘Scylla and Charybdis’ is not only set in the centre of Dublin; as the ninth of eighteen episodes it stands numerically at the centre of *Ulysses*. Michael Groden notes that Joyce wrote ‘End of First Part of “Ulysses”’ on the last page of a manuscript copy of this chapter, recording the date ‘New Year’s Eve 1918’, ‘as if to indicate that one phase of *Ulysses* was ending and something new was about to begin’.⁵ This is reflected in the narrative rhythms of *Ulysses*: ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ is preceded by chapters that tend to focus on the experience of individuals, such as Leopold Bloom’s lonesome attempts to find lunch in the previous chapter, the ‘Lestrygonians’ episode. It is immediately followed by the ‘Wandering Rocks’ chapter, which moves around the city and across the perspectives of a wide variety of characters, as *Ulysses* opens up to a broader social spectrum of experiences. For Groden, this positioning also reflects a shift in Joyce’s stylistic approach. Prior to this point, he notes, Joyce had largely employed an ‘initial style’ that mixed traditional ‘third-person past tense narration’ with ‘first person, present-tense monologue’.⁶ Subsequent chapters, such as ‘Circe’ and ‘Ithaca’, abandon this initial style in favour of more experimental forms, including closet drama and catechism, testing the limits of the modernist novel.

In accordance with its central positioning within *Ulysses*, ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ lies somewhere between these two approaches. It focuses upon Stephen, giving extraordinary prominence to his spoken words: nearly 40% of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ (around 4700 words) consists of his dialogue, as Stephen unfolds his theory of Shakespeare. Here is his account of the opening of *Hamlet*:

—The play begins. A player comes on under the shadow, made up in the castoff mail of a court buck, a wellset man with a bass voice. It is the ghost, the king, a king and no king, and the player is Shakespeare who has studied *Hamlet* all the years of his life which were not vanity in order to play the part of the spectre. He speaks the words to

Burbage, the young player who stands before him beyond the rack of cerecloth, calling him by a name:

Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit,

bidding him list. To a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live for ever. (9.164-73; p. 241)

This description of Shakespeare's performance is in itself a kind of public performance that characterises his approach throughout the chapter. Stephen dramatizes the circumstances at the Globe theatre, then quotes directly from the play ('I am thy father's spirit') as well as paraphrasing it ('bidding him list'). This allows Stephen to intone words from *Hamlet*, whilst advancing his own argument. But he also incorporates material from other parts of the play (the First Player refers to standing clouds as the 'rack' (II.ii.484) in his description of Priam's death) and in other parts of Shakespeare.⁷ Some of what sounds Shakespearean here is, in fact, drawn from other sources. 'A king and no king' is the title of a tragi-comedy by Shakespeare's near contemporaries, John Fletcher and Francis Beaumont; whilst the phrase 'All the years of his life which were no vanity' alludes to the Old Testament Book of *Ecclesiastes*. The result is a patchwork of quotation designed to appeal to the literary sensibilities of his audience.

Elsewhere in 'Scylla and Charybdis', however, Joyce breaks with convention to incorporate formal experiment: two abrupt passages adopt the form of a play script (9.683-708; 893-934; pp. 260-61; 268-29) and at one point a snatch of music is represented in the form of a partial score (9. 499-500; p. 253). These departures reflect both the subject matter (Shakespeare's plays) and the public nature of the occasion, dramatizing a sense of debate and discussion amongst those present. But Stephen's private thoughts, conveyed through the

interior monologue aspect of the ‘initial style’ are also vital to our understanding of the chapter and the way that he responds to confrontation.

Consider his reaction when John Eglinton accuses Stephen of drawing on more obscure parts of Shakespeare’s oeuvre, such as the late play *Pericles*:

—The leaning of sophists towards the bypaths of apocrypha is a constant quantity, John Eglinton detected. The highroads are dreary but they lead to the town.

Good Bacon: gone musty. Shakespeare Bacon’s wild oats. Cypherjugglers going the highroads. Seekers on the great quest. What town, good masters? Mummied in names: A. E., eon: Magee, John Eglinton. East of the sun, west of the moon: *Tir na n-og*. Booted the twain and staved.

How many miles to Dublin?

Three score and ten, sir.

Will we be there by candlelight?

—Mr Brandes accepts it, Stephen said, as the first play of the closing period. (9.401-18; p. 250)

Outwardly, Stephen replies to Eglinton’s objections that his argument treads ‘the bypaths of apocrypha’ by citing the authority of the Danish critic Georg Brandes. Inwardly, he mocks the adoption of pretentious pseudonyms by Russell (A.E.) and Magee (Eglinton) as symptomatic of their own obscure predilection for mysticism and theosophy. As Richard Brown points out, the allusion to ‘Bacon’ is a ‘lightning-quick association’, one that ‘comically condenses and subtly mocks Eglinton’s comment’ and ‘apparently identifies it as a half-quotation of one or other example of the “distempers” of learning from Francis Bacon’s *Advancement of Learning* (1605)’.⁸

But this is a silent performance. Indeed, tensions between what Stephen thinks and what he says out loud serve to heighten our sense that the public version of Stephen's theory of Shakespeare is informed by a highly acute sensitivity to his own position and the circumstances in which he is speaking. The form of 'Scylla and Charybdis' both captures and encapsulates his entrenched position at this key juncture in Joyce's novel.

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The public character of Stephen's speeches in 'Scylla and Charybdis' owes something to the chapter's origins in a set of twelve lectures delivered by Joyce for the Società di Minerva in Trieste from November 1912 to February 1913.⁹ Surviving notes confirm that Joyce used many of the same historical and critical sources for his lecture that inform the discussion in 'Scylla and Charybdis'.¹⁰ Such biographical connections are important, because links between art and life are part of this chapter's subject matter. Shakespeare's plays, Stephen argues, were intimately associated with his lived experiences. *Hamlet*, he suggests, epitomises the playwright's feelings about fatherhood and marriage, but not because of any conventional link between the introspection of Hamlet and his creator. Drawing on slender evidence from Nicholas Rowe, one of Shakespeare's earliest biographers, Stephen recreates the playwright's supposed performance as the Ghost of Hamlet's father because he conceives of that role's particular psychological importance.¹¹ Acting this part, Stephen suggests, allowed Shakespeare to connect imaginatively with his own lost son, Hamnet, who died aged eleven. But he goes further, arguing that Shakespeare also shares a sense of sexual betrayal with Hamlet's father. Stephen traces a motif of shame and humiliation across Shakespeare's plays and claims this reflects the playwright's problematic relationship with the older, more sexually-experienced woman he married, Anne Hathaway. Beyond the plays, Stephen's

historical evidence here, is that upon his death Shakespeare only left his wife his ‘secondbest’ bed (9.714; p. 261). The culmination of the lecture is interrupted by the return of Buck Mulligan. But in a final sequence Stephen identifies a culprit, arguing that Shakespeare’s habit of naming his villains ‘Richard’ reveals that Anne cheated on him with his own brother.

Joyce’s critics have never set much store by the outward content of Stephen’s theory. Perhaps this is because of the rapid way in which he disavows it himself:

Do you believe your own theory?

— No, Stephen said promptly (9.1065-66; p. 274).

Instead, critical accounts of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ have sought significance within symbolic patterns of oppositions within Stephen’s pronouncements. In an early influential reading of the chapter, S.L. Goldberg argues that it should be understood in terms of the contrast between the opposing philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, suggesting that this is personified in conflicts amongst the Joyce’s characters. Goldberg identifies George Russell as ‘the Platonic Charybdis of the chapter to the Aristotelianism and Scholasticism of Stephen’.¹²

This might account for the wealth of local detail about Shakespeare’s life that Stephen supplies: we learn so much about where and how Shakespeare lived because Aristotle’s theory of ‘entelechy’ holds that the soul’s potential is realised within the sensuous world and the ‘particulars of experience’.¹³ In contrast, Goldberg suggests that Russell is resistant to biographical enquiry, objecting to ‘this prying into the family life’ (9.180; p. 241) of Shakespeare, because he thinks in terms of ‘*formless* spiritual essences’, echoing Plato.¹⁴ For Goldberg, Stephen’s theory does not just concern Shakespeare, it serves as a broader theory about selfhood and artistic creativity. Hence Stephen’s public pronouncements about self and

continuity ('we walk through ourselves ... always meeting ourselves' (9.1044-45)), as well as his private joke about whether his present self owes the debt incurred by his past self:

But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under everchanging forms.

I that sinned and prayed and fasted.

A child Conmee saved from pandies.

I, I and I. I.

A.E.I.O.U. (9.208-13; p. 242-43)

Goldberg sees this in relation to Stephen's previous discussion of the artist's self in relation to epic, lyric and dramatic forms in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914). He identifies Stephen's concern with scholastic theories of knowledge derived from Thomas Aquinas' reading of Aristotle as a common starting point between 'Scylla and Charybdis' and *A Portrait*. But Stephen's disagreements with Russell and Eglinton sharpen the discussion in *Ulysses* for Goldberg, providing a stronger sense of artistic objectivity and greater consciousness of his own immaturity than Stephen has achieved previously.

Richard Ellmann's reading of the chapter in *Ulysses on the Liffey* claims that these arguments about art and the self are embodied within the text of *Ulysses*. For Ellmann, Stephen is concerned with Shakespeare's treatment of the mysteries of fatherhood and biological succession because artistic creation is cognate with 'natural creation'.¹⁵ Thus 'Scylla and Charybdis' is central to *Ulysses*, because it also accounts for the novel's own creation.

This can be seen in the way that Stephen's theories resonate beyond his own experience and awareness. For example, Leopold Bloom is the first character in *Ulysses* to quote the lines spoken by the Ghost of Hamlet's father which Stephen performs at the National Library

(8.68; p. 192). Curiously, both men mistake this scene, adding Hamlet's name to the beginning of the Ghost's line, which reads simply 'I am thy father's spirit' in the original. Like Hamlet, both Bloom and Stephen are dressed in black, and Shakespeare's play provides an unwitting point of connection between the two men. The loss of a son and a sexually unfaithful wife also evokes the personal and marital life of Bloom, whose son Rudy died in early infancy and whose wife, Molly will consummate her affair with her tour manager, Blazes Boylan later that afternoon. Stephen's preoccupations with fatherhood and betrayal in Shakespeare reflect anxieties and concerns from his own life about his relationship with his father and vexed friendships amongst his literary peers. But they speak unwittingly to the broader concerns of Joyce's novel, which holds out the possibility that Bloom might provide a spiritual father to Stephen. The ideas discussed in 'Scylla and Charybdis' may originate in Joyce's lectures on Shakespeare, but new patterns of meaning emerge from their fictional contexts in *Ulysses*.

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Goldberg's approach depends on what Brown describes as a 'neat structural opposition between the whirling Charybdis of Platonic idealism and the rock-like Scylla of Aristotelian fact', indicating the strong influence of Homer on readings of Joyce's novel.¹⁶ In Book Twelve of the *Odyssey*, the enchantress Circe warns Odysseus about various challenges he faces on the return to Ithaca, his home island. As well as the lure of the Sirens' song, she explains that Odysseus has a choice of routes. He can risk the 'wandering rocks' a treacherous stretch of sea that only Jason and his argonauts have ever passed through and lived; or, he can try to negotiate the passage between Scylla, a six-headed monster living along a cliff face on one side of a strait and Charybdis, a dark vortex on the other. Odysseus

decides to lose six men to Scylla rather than face total destruction of his ship and crew, but his predicament has become proverbial for a dilemma in which neither outcome is desirable.

Joyce fostered understandings of his novel in terms of this Homeric story by supplying a schematic account to the critic Stuart Gilbert, which identifies the ‘technic’ of ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ as ‘dialectic’ and by providing a list of opposing symbolic terms ‘London and Stratford, Scholasticism and Mysticism, Plato and Aristotle, youth and maturity’ to his friend, the Italian journalist, Carlo Linati.¹⁷ Such hints prompted Goldberg’s reading of Charles Peake’s announcement that ‘everything’ in the chapter ‘demands a pair of contrasting symbols to represent the two extremes between which Stephen must plot his course’.¹⁸

This patterning registers within the conflict between Stephen and his interlocutors, but also at a close, linguistic level: early on in the chapter, Stephen figures himself as ‘Between the Saxon smile and yankee yawp. The devil and the deep sea’ (9.139-40; p. 240) and being caught ‘between’ opposing elements becomes a recurring motif throughout ‘Scylla and Charybdis’. In London, Shakespeare dallies ‘between conjugal love and its chaste delights and scortatory love and its foul pleasures’ (9.631-32; p. 258) and Christ is figured as ‘He Who Himself begot middler the Holy Ghost and Himself sent Himself, Agenbuyer, between Himself and others’ (9.493-94; p. 253). Even quotations from other authors become absorbed into this recurring in-joke, so that it can be detected retrospectively within Thomas Lyster’s allusion to Hamlet’s soliloquy at the start of the chapter: ‘A hesitating soul taking arms against a sea of troubles, torn by conflicting doubts, as one sees in real life’ (9.3-4; p. 235).

As they mount up, however, such allusions have a recursive, duplicative affect that complicates reading the chapter in terms of simple opposites. For example, identifying Stephen’s Aristotelianism as the opposite pole to Russell’s Platonism, makes him part of the dilemma rather than a Homeric hero caught ‘between’ forces. The original Italian of the schema Joyce gave to Linati is suggestive here: for it lists the ‘Sense’ or ‘Meaning’ (‘Senso

(Significato)') of 'Scylla and Charybdis' as 'Dilemma Bitagliante'.¹⁹ Although Ellmann translates this as 'two-edged dilemma', Jeri Johnson points out that 'bitagliante' means 'twice cutting' so that a literal translation would read: 'double cutting-edge dilemma'. 'As well as being tautologous', she notes, this 'loses entirely the flavour of the metaphor', which she renders idiomatically as 'two-edged sword'.²⁰ But there is a terrible irony in Homer's *Odyssey*: having passed through Scylla and Charybdis, Odysseus' ship is later wrecked by Zeus because the sailors break a prohibition upon eating flesh from cattle belonging to the Sun God. Odysseus is forced to traverse the straits between Scylla and Charybdis a second time on his own. The proverbial history of Homer's story is complex too: as well as meaning 'we must choose the lesser of two evils', the sixteenth-century scholar Erasmus observes, 'we may use it to point out that a transaction is double-sided and dangerous' and notes that it can be used to indicate the unintended negative side-effect of trying avoid an unwanted outcome.²¹ So the double-edged tautology of Joyce's Italian formulation may be very apt to the Homeric echoes in *Ulysses*, reflecting the multiplication of opposing forces within the chapter.

A more complex understanding of Homeric myth and its legacy allows us to move beyond the 'neat' structural oppositions criticised by Brown and acknowledge the complexities of Stephen's situation in this chapter. Consider the preamble to his account of Shakespeare's performance as the Ghost of Hamlet's father:

—It is this hour of a day in mid June, Stephen said, begging with a swift glance their hearing. The flag is up on the playhouse by the bankside. The bear Sackerson growls in the pit near it, Paris garden. Canvasclimbers who sailed with Drake chew their sausages among the groundlings.

Local colour. Work in all you know. Make them accomplices.

—Shakespeare has left the huguenot's house in Silver street and walks by the swanmews along the riverbank. But he does not stay to feed the pen chivying her game of cygnets towards the rushes. The swan of Avon has other thoughts.

Composition of place. Ignatius Loyola, make haste to help me! (9.154-63; p. 240-41)

Once more, a characteristic pattern of allusions to Shakespeare is carefully woven into Stephen's speech: 'canvasclimbers' is lifted from Act Four of *Pericles*, whereas reference to 'the bear Sackerson' derives from Slender's boast in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: 'I have seen Sackerson loose twenty times, and have taken him by the chains' (I.i.294-96). But Stephen's silent commentary confirms a deliberate methodology at work here: 'Local colour. Work in all you know'. And his reference to 'accomplices' is nicely ambiguous: he may mean the imagined figures who populate his description of London or the assembled listeners in the Librarian's office. Such moments show Stephen caught between rehearsing pre-prepared material and extemporising as he seeks to follow through his own line of argument and respond to the vicissitudes of his audience.

The phrase 'composition of place' has another particular resonance. It confirms Stephen's acute sensitivity to the defining importance of space in this chapter, but it is also filled with mixed associations, since it derives from the *Spiritual Exercises* of the sixteenth-century Jesuit priest and theologian, Saint Ignatius of Loyola (also invoked here). For Loyola, the mind 'composes' itself to religious meditation by various techniques including mental contemplation of a particular space. But Stephen recalls the phrase as it is used in the Hellfire sermon in Chapter Three of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* where Father Arnall comments:

This morning we endeavoured, in our reflection upon hell, to make what our holy founder calls in his book of spiritual exercises, the composition of place. We endeavoured, that is, to imagine with the senses of the mind, in our imagination, the material character of that awful place and of the physical torments which all who are in hell endure.²²

Allusion to Loyola is thus also an allusion to Stephen's earlier experience. The implication is that he perceives a sudden parallel between Arnall's attempt to manipulate the thoughts and feelings of his young schoolboy audience and Stephen's own attempt to make accomplices of his audience in the National Library.

At such points it becomes clear that whilst Stephen Dedalus is acutely aware of his audience in the present moment within the National Library, he is also, as he says of the Ghost of Hamlet's father, 'turned elsewhere, backward' (9.472; p.252). This sequence enacts Stephen's point about 'entelechy' quoted earlier: it demonstrates the way that a sense of continuous identity depends on the persistence of 'memory' through 'everchanging forms', but it also questions that continuity. Stephen's self-presence is riven by multiple demands on his consciousness from the present and the past. He is always 'between' or amongst different selves.

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Against this complex understanding of selfhood and art, more recent accounts of *Ulysses* tend to emphasise the complicated literary politics of 'Scylla and Charybdis'. Stephen's verbal picture of Shakespeare's progress through the streets of London (including historical details about the bear garden next to the Globe theatre), owes a lot to the Danish critic, Georg

Brandes,²³ but Stephen also draws heavily on Frank Harris's *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life Story* (1909) and Sir Sidney Lee's *A Life of William Shakespeare* (1898).

Historicist criticism by Andrew Gibson and Len Platt stresses the relationship between such contemporary Shakespeare scholarship and the social and cultural contexts of Irish national politics at the close of the nineteenth century. Where Goldberg saw the personification of abstract, philosophical positions in this chapter, Platt argues that Eglinton and Russell are present as representatives of the largely Protestant Anglo-Irish Literary Revival. This is, he suggests, problematic for Stephen because of his Irish Catholic background, which aligns more closely with Irish Nationalism: 'Stephen's Shakespeare theory' he urges, 'defines itself against revivalist aesthetics and cannot be understood without reference to revivalist aesthetics'.²⁴ On this reading, when Stephen insists on locating Shakespeare and his plays within the material circumstances of his lived experiences, he is not just rejecting Platonic forms; Stephen's version of Shakespeare ('He was a rich country gentleman [...] a capitalist shareholder, a bill promoter, a tithefarmer' (9.710-12; p. 261)) offers a rebuke to the supposedly immaterial spiritualism of A.E. and the insufficiently radical politics of the Revival movement more generally.

In comparison, Gibson suggests Eglinton and Lyster are present in 'Scylla and Charybdis' as disciples of Edward Dowden, Professor of English Literature at Trinity College, Dublin, Head of the National Library's council of trustees and author of *Shakspeare: A Critical Study of his Mind and Art* (1875). For Gibson, this biographical study comes to epitomise Dowden's Unionist politics and dismissal of native Irish literature. In contrast with the dreamy Celticism of the Literary Revival, 'Dowden's account of Shakespeare,' Gibson explains, 'is quite blatantly political': it celebrates the playwright as a 'Benthamite', who exemplifies conservative, materialist, British Imperialist values.²⁵ It is Unionism and the

Anglo-Irish Revival that figure here as the perilous Scylla and Charybdis Stephen must negotiate.

He does this, Gibson suggests, by adopting Dowden's emphasis on Shakespeare's 'sense of property' (9.740; p. 262) and pushing it to extremes:

Not for nothing was he a butcher's son, wielding the sledded poleaxe and spitting in his palms. Nine lives are taken off for his father's one. Our Father who art in purgatory. Khaki Hamlets don't hesitate to shoot. The bloodboltered shambles in act five is a forecast of the concentration camp sung by Mr Swinburne. (9.130-35; p. 239-40)

Stephen's characteristic weave of Shakespearean allusions to *Macbeth* ('blood-boltered' (IV.i.122)) and *Hamlet* ('sledded poleaxe' (I.i.62-63)) intersects here with reference to the poet Algernon Swinburne's jingoistic celebration of maltreated Boer prisoners in a poem from 1901. This is a 'Fenian' account of Shakespeare as the epitome of the worst excesses of British Imperialism.²⁶ Likewise, Stephen's insistence on Shakespeare's sexual jealousy and its importance to his art, Gibson suggests, is intended to counteract the supposed proprieties of Dowden's account, mocked by Buck Mulligan late in the chapter ('all we can say is that life ran very high in those days' (9.733; p.262)).

Richard Brown concurs with such political readings, suggesting that Stephen transforms Shakespeare from 'a symbol of cultural conformity' into 'an aesthetic tool that Joyce can deploy against cultural "docility" in some important symbolic way'.²⁷ These critics agree that Stephen's reading of the plays is less important here than his biographical account of Shakespeare and the values he represents. Their accounts of how Stephen makes use of recent Shakespeare criticism help us understand more fully some of the ways that 'Scylla and

Charybdis' (and *Ulysses* more widely) is engaged in contemporary debate about the future of Irish literature.

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The work of Gibson, Platt, Brown and others on the political resonance of the Shakespeare discussion in 'Scylla and Charybdis' is highly useful for drawing out undercurrents and tensions that may be sensed within the chapter, but which are not always explicit. They help explain why Stephen's first words are 'sneered' at Thomas Lyster's seemingly inoffensive and bland reference to Goethe (9.17; p. 235). The American critic, Harold Bloom saw in such nervous tensions, evidence of an anxiety on Joyce's part about his own literary status in comparison to Shakespeare.²⁸ Stephen's constant adaptation of Shakespeare's words might be understood as a form of 'Celtic Revenge', a term later applied by John Eglinton to Joyce in 1935 and adopted by Gibson. When he quotes and misquotes Shakespeare, Stephen repeats and transforms the English playwright's work for his own purposes. But Gibson is clear that 'Scylla and Charybdis' celebrates 'of the beauty of Shakespeare's language' too.²⁹

Shakespeare's example offers both Stephen and Joyce an opportunity to explore the vexed question of 'our national epic' in Ireland. One obvious solution is that *Ulysses* itself realises this ambition, but in a form that none of Joyce's characters and few of his contemporaries could imagine. Much of this depends upon Leopold Bloom – a figure only peripheral to 'Scylla and Charybdis'. The very unlikeliness of Bloom (cuckold, grieving father) as the hero of an epic work of national literature may be what most aptly fits him to the role. His kindness, tolerance and unorthodox ethics provide an alternative to the embittered tensions between the literary personalities in 'Scylla and Charybdis'. Barely glimpsed at the close of the chapter, he passes out 'between' Stephen and Buck Mulligan, as they leave the fraught

arena of the National Library (9.1202-3 (p. 279)). But Bloom and Stephen will get a chance to redeem this missed encounter much later in the day, in the second half of Joyce's novel.

¹ Gerard Long, *The National Library in 1904 and Thereabouts* (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2005), p. 1.

² Long, p. 5.

³ Joseph O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress 1899-1916* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 57.

⁴ John Nash, *James Joyce and the Act of Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 91.

⁵ Michael Groden, *Ulysses in Progress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ References to the works of William Shakespeare are given in the text, using *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. by G. Blakemore Evans et al (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

⁸ Richard Brown, 'Joyce's "Single Act" Shakespeare', in *Joyce / Shakespeare*, ed. Laura Pelaschiar (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015), pp. 107-27 (p. 114).

⁹ John McCourt, *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste 1904-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), pp. 190-92.

¹⁰ William Quillian, in *Hamlet and the New Poetic: James Joyce and T.S. Eliot* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1983), pp.79-145.

¹¹ Joyce probably found Rowe's account in a study by Sidney Lee from 1898. Quillian, p. 14.

¹² S.L. Goldberg, *The Classical Temper: A Study of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 68.

¹³ Goldberg, p. 70.

¹⁴ Goldberg, pp. 71-72.

¹⁵ Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (London: Faber, 1972), p. 86.

¹⁶ Brown 2015, p. 113.

¹⁷ Ellmann, p. 195.

¹⁸ Charles Peake, *James Joyce, the Citizen and the Artist* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p.162.

¹⁹ Ellmann, p. 190/91.

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- ²⁰ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 1993), p. 739n.
- ²¹ Erasmus, *Adages I.i.1 to I.v.100*, trans. by Margaret Mann Phillips, ed. by R.A.B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 387-89
- ²² James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000), p. 107.
- ²³ George [sic] Brandes, *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, trans. William Archer, Mary Morison and Diana White (London: William Heinemann, 1898), I, p. 120/21.
- ²⁴ Len Platt *Joyce and the Anglo-Irish: A Study of Joyce and the Literary Revival* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), p.174.
- ²⁵ Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics and Aesthetics in 'Ulysses'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 63-4.
- ²⁶ Gibson, p. 65.
- ²⁷ Richard Brown, "'Shakespeare Explained': James Joyce's Shakespeare from Victorian Burlesque to Postmodern Bard", in *Shakespeare and Ireland: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. by Mark Thornton Burnett and Ramona Wray (London: Macmillan, 1997), pp.91-113 (p.97).
- ²⁸ Harold Bloom 'Joyce's Agon with Shakespeare' in *The Western Canon* (New York: Macmillan, 1994), pp.413-32 (p. 414).
- ²⁹ Gibson, p. 79.