

Introduction

Rather than ask, “What is the *attitude* of a work to the relations of production of its time?” I should like to ask, “What is its *position* in them?” This question directly concerns the function the work has within the literary relations of production of its time. It is concerned, in other words, directly with the literary *technique* of works.

Walter Benjamin

proof

James Joyce’s interaction with London as a political and aesthetic force that shaped his work has a long and complex history. Why London? Although Joyce never lived in the city for as long and continuously as he did in Dublin (and later in the cities of Trieste, Zurich, and Paris), the metropolis of the British Empire was the place where he, like many other Irish, aspired to move and publish as a young man and where the majority of his work eventually appeared up to *Ulysses* (Paris, 1922), and thereafter. London was the city where Irish intellectuals wished to move and make a mark—at least since Swift in the eighteenth century. Since that century, London had been the cultural capital, “the new Rome of the West” that was “soaking up Irish talents.”¹ London remained within Joyce’s compass throughout his life: as the place where he aspired to work as a journalist when he was a young man; as the site of publication; and as the city he moved to in April 1931 with the intention to settle permanently. However, compared with other urban sites, London is largely absent from Joyce scholarship.² Alongside Dublin, research has paid particular attention to the impact that European cities, such as Trieste and Paris, had on Joyce’s formative years.³ But, within

this binary opposition of a European Joyce versus an Irish Joyce, the role of London has been overlooked, and little space has been allowed for Joyce's literary London context.

Up to Maugthy London: Joyce's Cultural Capital in the Imperial Metropolis examines the relationship between James Joyce's writings, their publication history (1900–1939), and London, arguing that they are intrinsically related owing to the scale of Joyce's ambition and to the geopolitical significance of the metropolis as the vortex of the British Empire. The book explores two main strands: first, London's status as a matrix for political and cultural formations and those aspects that are intertwined with the representation of London in Joyce's work; and second, Joyce's diverse publications and the promotion of his work in London's literary marketplace. By assessing the promotion of his work through publisher's series, magazines, anthologies, radio broadcasts, and sound recordings, and by referring to unpublished manuscripts, drafts, notebooks, diaries, and letters, the book offers fresh readings of literary representations of London in Joyce's work and sheds light on his aspirations to become a London published author.

The book covers specific episodes and aspects of Joyce's long history of interaction with London: from his first visit to the city in 1900 and an epiphany he wrote in Cockney idiom relating to that visit to the composition in 1938 of the section of *Finnegans Wake* (1939) wherein the portmanteau word "Londub" (*FW* 625.36) features prominently. In terms of publications, the book traces Joyce's association with London from 1900 and his first publication there in the *Fortnightly Review* to his eventual conquest of this market with the legal publication of *Ulysses* in 1936 and the publication of *Finnegans Wake* in 1939, the ground for which was prepared between 1929 and 1931, the period during which Joyce traveled frequently to London and eventually moved, in 1931. His involvement with the Paris-based journal *transition* (which had suspended publication in 1929), and the significantly smaller networks of Paris, had diminished due to the economic depression. Between 1929 and 1931, Joyce was focused on reinforcing his international career through divergent networks that strategically linked him with a plethora of London-based institutions, publishing houses, and influential writers, artists, and critics. While in London in 1931, he signed an advantageous contract with Faber and Faber for *Work in Progress* (the standard name for *Finnegans Wake* until its publication in 1939), and he intensified his efforts to achieve the legal publication of *Ulysses*.

Studies of Joyce and of modernism have paid little attention to this time and place, which now need to be appraised and analyzed in detail. This gap in Joyce research can be understood as a consequence of a key hermeneutic problem that challenges readers of his work: how to deal with the constant tension between Joyce's obsessive depiction of Dublin in his work, on the one hand, and his geographical detachment from the city, on the other. This contradiction has preoccupied scholars, who have developed divergent methodological and historiographical tools with which to tackle it. Post-World War II criticism tended to place Joyce among the apolitical aesthetes whose work was frequently examined through the methodology of New Criticism, which paid attention to issues of close reading and biography and advocated a nonideological approach to literature, as though only the literary "text as an object" of study mattered and not "the extrinsic accidents of history."⁴ Subsequent, highly valuable, Irish-centered readings of his work discuss Joyce as an Irish post- or "semicolonial" artist.⁵ This scholarship has substantially revised Joyce's position within contemporaneous historical developments and has pointed toward a more inclusive and nuanced contextualization of his writings within the geopolitical developments in Ireland, Britain, and the British Empire during Joyce's lifetime. Later criticism focused on the constructed versions of Joyce that the author himself created to promote his work through the tumultuous times of the early twentieth century. Joyce even offered suggestions and prompts to critics, because he aimed at providing the public with interpretations of his work. As John Nash reminds us, "Joyce sought to extend his readership by actively promoting his work (having copies delivered to particular critics and acquaintances, thanking all for their reviews despite also exacting some comeuppance on a few)," and through such strategies, Joyce aspired to cultivate an appreciative audience of critics that would assign cultural value to his work and connect it with the great masters of the past.⁶ Such a process of canonization aimed at overriding the censorship of *Ulysses* both in Britain and the United States and at valorizing the overexperimental *Work in Progress*.⁷

By 2009, the diversity of historical elements that had been considered intrinsically related to the production, evaluation, and understanding of Joyce's work had proliferated to an unprecedented degree, with the term "context" being increasingly employed to highlight the importance of attending to the breadth of this variety. The term was used in this way in

Bernard Benstock's early "con/text" studies and has since come to stand for an even more pressing critical and historiographical concern.⁸ John McCourt, editor of a volume that examined Joyce in context, argued, "Today, one hundred years after Joyce was writing, it is important to reconstruct his principal contextual information."⁹ McCourt's edited collection of essays covers a range of contexts, from gender issues to Catholicism and cinema. This volume as a whole attests to the need to approach the Joycean oeuvre anew through a pluralistic lens rather than with a monolithic theoretical structure. In particular, Sean Latham's contribution to McCourt's collection of essays offers a constructive point of entry to the idea and term "context" that my book endorses. Latham argues that the very existence of these multiple "twenty-first-century critical contexts" poses the question directly: Why should we read Joyce in context? Latham's research is part of what is termed "New Modernist Studies," that is, a research program that advocates a reassessment and revision of the set agendas of modernist studies, the most pressing issues being those of canon expansion and of addressing "the relations between not merely individual authors or artists, but among various aspects of culture."¹⁰ Within this field, an increasing number of studies (reviewed later in this introduction) point toward the need for historiographical revisionism in order to reveal in detail "the interlocking flows of social, historical and economic capital which structured the rise of modernism."¹¹ Latham encourages pluralism when he claims that, owing to the vast amount of existing Joyce scholarship, "predicting any Joycean future (or even several) is, of course, at best fanciful, at worst impossible."¹² He argues that "the most daunting critical challenge we now face is developing the tools necessary not to unify all of these Joyces, but to constellate them without resorting to any one single point of reference."¹³

Such a constellation, though, would inevitably need to encompass one major Joycean story that the predominant strands of Joyce and modernist studies have thus far overlooked: Joyce's engagement with London's literary history and his efforts to succeed in its literary marketplace, especially between 1929 and 1931. This book argues that the London contexts are far from minor; on the contrary, Joyce's deep interest in London for aesthetic, political, and publishing reasons marked his oeuvre and especially affected the way its reception was shaped in subsequent decades. My book discusses Joyce's formation as a writer whose aesthetic project to render the Dublin space in a new literary register was deeply influenced by writings about

London, owing to what the Irish Studies specialist Lynne Innes has called “Joyce’s awareness of London as a centre of empire.”¹⁴ Further, the fact that some of Joyce’s interactions with London were short-lived does not preclude the need to research their significance for the ways London is inscribed in Joyce’s texts and in their publication history. Joyce had a long-standing connection with the London publishing industry, as nearly all of his work was published in this metropolis. Despite Joyce’s European itinerary beginning in 1904 and the landmark publication of *Ulysses* (1922) in Paris, London features as the place of publication for the majority of his work: *Chamber Music*, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Exiles*, and the Egoist Press edition of *Ulysses* that bore a strong statement of intent by having London on the title page—“Published for the Egoist Press, London by John Rodker, Paris” (*Letters* III 299).¹⁵ Although *Ulysses* was banned in England in December 1922, Joyce’s work continued to circulate and be read (within circles both avant-garde and of the literary establishment) during the 1920s, so that by the end of the decade there was a sufficient network of supporters to further promote his work. A plethora of edited collections, anthologies, and magazines published in London included his work up to the legal publication of *Ulysses* in 1936 and the publication of his last book, *Finnegans Wake*, in London in 1939.

Indeed, London features prominently in Joyce’s trajectory as a writer, since it was the epicenter of the largest publishing industry in the world, affecting thus the dissemination of his work. As Eric Hobsbawm observes, “Between 1876 and 1915 . . . Britain increased its territories by some 4 million square miles.”¹⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century the British Empire covered one-fifth of the globe. As book historians have demonstrated, the availability of books in its extensive territories was facilitated thanks to commercial networks for the circulation of goods that had developed from the nineteenth century onward.¹⁷ London’s publishing industry was crucial for the cultivation of Joyce’s audiences, and this study will take on board and engage with the issues that scholarship on Joyce has posed, and according to which Joyce was ill-at-ease with the cultural center of the British Empire.¹⁸ The argument of the book is that this is a retrospective assumption dictated by theories of identity politics or other agendas and fashions. Instead of offering retrospective labels to an author for whom the tension of wanting to succeed as a writer in an English/London-dominated market was a persistent concern, the book aims to inductively reconstruct the conditions

according to which Joyce and many other Irish intellectuals influenced the cultural forces and the literary market of London.

Why is such an approach significant for our understanding of Joyce's writings about London and his trajectory through the British capital? In a way, this type of contextual and materialist research sheds new light not only on the publishing history and circulation of Joyce's work but also on the history of its composition and the ways historicity and textuality interact. This kind of research program helps new readers and scholars to unpack the complex density of writings like Joyce's within frameworks that are firmly grounded in the author's contemporaneity or in what Walter Benjamin in the epigraph of this introduction highlights when he relates the literary technique of works to their position in the relations of production of their time. My book draws largely on the methodological models of New Modernist Studies scholarship, which advocates a return to the historical contingencies of the literary marketplace and to the ways modernist literature was formed against specific socioeconomic modes of production and circulation. A great number of such studies explore the intricate structures of the international modernist marketplace, as defined by its own complex networks of writers, agents, publishers, critics, and academic literary teachers.¹⁹ This scholarship extends and expands on previous groundbreaking studies of the formation of "common" readers, and specifically of the way modernist writers were able to create a marketplace for themselves, one that often grew by taking as its model the structures and methods of the mass book market.²⁰ Such mass audiences developed after the emergence of the middle classes, around the 1740s—a process that Marx dated to the introduction of the spinning machine in 1735 by John Wyatt and identified as the beginning of the industrial revolution—and were consolidated during the nineteenth century with the help of the Reform Act of 1867 and a number of Education Acts (1870 and 1902).²¹ These Acts, due to the industrial process and historical contingencies, set the conditions for the emergence of mass readerships. Many critics have studied how cultural producers in Joyce's time appropriated mechanisms of "autonomization," which caused their artwork to appear stylistically as a closed system: a unique and value-laden cultural event. Through such a process of autonomization, "a conquest of autonomy," which according to Pierre Bourdieu started in the 1840s with Baudelaire, cultural products acquired both symbolic and market value.²² Such mechanics and processes of symbolization of artworks enabled mod-

ernist literature to develop and circulate within the national and international boundaries of publishing markets. Bourdieu has analyzed this process and emphasized its significance, thus foregrounding the problematic premises of methodologies and schools of thought, such as New Criticism.

Equally significant is the way Bourdieu analyzed the structures and tropes of the “field of production” and the myriad agents involved in it. As he stressed, “The ‘subject’ of the production of the art-work—of its value but also of its meaning—is not the producer who actually creates the object in its materiality, but rather the entire set of agents engaged in the field.”²³ Among others, Bourdieu refers to artists, critics, collectors, agents, and in general those “who confront each other in struggles where the imposition of not only a world view but also a vision of the artworld is at stake, and who, through these struggles, participate in the production of the value of the artistic and of art.”²⁴ Bourdieu has foregrounded how artistic production is in many ways like any other mode of commodity production. With the concept of “cultural capital,” which is distinct from economic and social capital, Bourdieu offered a framework for analyzing the socioeconomic contingencies within which works of art are disseminated in terms of class and the economic status of producers and audiences.

Bourdieu’s concept of “cultural capital,” which relates to the educational background, the set of acquired skills and cultivated tastes, that confer on someone the authority to become a tastemaker, had a great impact on the discussion of issues of value and networks of cultural exchange.²⁵ By drawing on, and critically revising, Bourdieu’s work and by moving away from elitist critical discourses, New Modernist Studies argues that modernist literature is far from autonomous; on the contrary, it is important to read it against the historical scene within which modernist writers marketed themselves and communicated with their contemporary audiences, which were not always limited to highly educated patrons and individuals but often reached wider audiences through the exploitation of the “new” media of the time and modes of audience formation. Such is the case of Joyce’s strong interest in circulating extracts from his *Work in Progress* via gramophone records to be promoted through disc clubs, which I will discuss in chapter 6.

A number of scholars have thus reappraised the ways modernists negotiated with the marketplace, acted as advertisers of their work, and tapped into the system of patronage and elite readerships that could afford deluxe