Abstract

Whilst Joyce’s letters exhibit how he uses appetite as a litmus test for his family’s health, he also uses food in his fiction to make a number of comments on race, history, class and gender. I argue that food and eating in *Ulysses* is presented as a mediation of the quasi-scientific, nationalistic discourse of the Victorian era, and propose that while Joyce’s novel remains firmly hinged to the past through the Irish ‘habitual’ memory of famine and hunger, it also reaffirms life through pure, involuntary memory and ‘taste’. This paper discusses the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses* as it recalls the Irish famine and Imperial oppression. Joyce’s work has an irreducible multiplicity, however, and whilst Joyce replicates the ‘sacred wrath’ of the Irish, I also argue that in episodes such as ‘Wandering Rocks’ Joyce implicitly reveals that the wretched existence of the widows and children of Dublin is often the result of alcoholism and neglect of husbands and fathers. The paper will conclude with the sense of hope that emerges from the ‘Penelope’ episode, as the memory of seedcake leaves the ‘sweetest trace’. This small case study on food thus exemplifies my larger project’s concern with food in Joyce’s Modernism; that the art is created through a ‘concatenated union’ of ‘habits’ (William James *Pragmatism*; John Dewey *Human Nature and Conduct*).

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