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Sailing to Aranmor: James Joyce's Transcultural View of the West of Ireland

Abstract: In the summer of 1912, James Joyce spent several weeks in Galway, visiting Nora Barnacle's family and writing essays for *Il Piccolo della Sera*. Two essays produced during his stay in the West of Ireland are directly concerned with the region and its inhabitants: one describes the past and present of Galway city and the other is an account of his trip to Aranmor, the biggest Aran Island off the west coast of Galway. Joyce's selective focus on the past glories of those places and utopian vistas connected with the development of the Galway Harbour is interesting as a counterpoint to the notion of the West of Ireland, shared by representatives of the Anglo-Irish Revival who saw a relatively homogeneous repository of traditional Celtic values in the region. Joyce's journalistic representation of Galway and Aran deserves attention also because it anticipates late twentieth-century emphasis on hybridity, miscegenation and transcultural mobility. Finally, Joyce's two 1912 essays are a significant reflection of his own fluctuating attitudes to Ireland and its history, at a point when he was gradually abandoning his epideictic rhetoric of "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages" to embrace a more cosmopolitan view of the West of Ireland as a milieu shaped by various European influences.

Keywords: transculturalism, postnationalism, travel writing, Galway, intersectionality

Abstrakt: Latem 1912 roku James Joyce spędził kilka tygodni w Galway, odwiedzając rodzinę Nory Barnacle, a także przygotowując artykuły dla triesteńskiego *Il Piccolo della Sera*. Dwa teksty, które wówczas powstały, dotyczą bezpośrednio zachodu Irlandii – regionu Galway i jego mieszkańców. Jeden z nich opisuje przeszłość i teraźniejszość samego miasta Galway, natomiast drugi stanowi relację z wycieczki Joyce'a do Aranmor, największej z Wysp Arańskich leżących na zachód od Galway. Joyce wybiera z przeszłości regionu elementy stanowiące powód do dumy dla jego mieszkańców, opisując także perspektywy rozwoju zachodniego wybrzeża Irlandii w związku z planem rozbudowy miejscowego portu (the Galway Harbour Scheme). Takie spojrzenie na zachód Irlandii stanowi istotny kontrapunkt w stosunku do wizji regionu przedstawianej w twórczości przedstawicieli Irlandzkiego Odrodzenia, którzy dostrzegali tam przede wszystkim skarbnicę tradycyjnych wartości „celtyckich” o stosunkowo jednorodnym charakterze. Dziennikarskie spojrzenie na Galway i Wyspy Arańskie zasługuje na uwagę współczesnego czytelnika tekstów Joyce'a, ponieważ antycypuje kluczowe

znaczenie zyskujących popularność dopiero pod koniec XX wieku kategorii, takich jak hybrydowość czy mobilność transkulturowa. I wreszcie artykuły Joyce’a napisane dla *Il Piccolo della Sera* w 1912 roku dostarczają wartościowego materiału do refleksji nad zmieniającą się perspektywą pisarza na Irlandię i jej historię, powstały bowiem w okresie, kiedy Joyce stopniowo odchodził od retoryki charakteryzującej wykład z 1907 roku pt. „Irlandia – wyspa świętych i mędrców”, zmierzając w kierunku znacznie bardziej kosmopolitycznego postrzegania zachodu Irlandii jako przestrzeni w istotny sposób kształtowanej przez rozmaite wpływy europejskie.

Słowa kluczowe: transkulturowość, postnarodowość, literatura podróżnicza, Galway, interseksjonalność

Introduction

The year 2022 marked not only the centenary of the publication of *Ulysses* in Paris but also the 110th anniversary of James Joyce’s summer sojourn in Galway, his second visit to Nora Barnacle’s family in the West of Ireland, commemorated in his two articles written for the Triestine *Il Piccolo della Sera*. Alongside his poem “She Weeps Over Ragoon” and a number of more or less cryptic references to Galway in his novels, the two short pieces of journalism provide a unique insight into Joyce’s attitude to the West of Ireland. Furthermore, both pieces constitute a valuable counterpoint to much writing representative of the Anglo-Irish Revival which attached enormous significance to Connacht and other western regions of Ireland, mostly because Gaelic was still spoken there on a daily basis while old Celtic customs and patterns of living were clearly in evidence at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Usually bundled together with what some Joyce scholars call his ‘Triestine Writings’ (Gibson 2013, 92), his ‘western dispatches’ shift the onus of attention from politics and Irish nationalism to historical and cultural considerations, revealing, as Derek Gladwin has it, Joyce’s “deeper emerging interest in the land’s cultural geography” (2014, 177). By exploring Joyce’s “The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran” and “The City of the Tribes”¹ and juxtaposing them with selected writings from or about that period (including, e.g., J.M. Synge’s prose writings and Robert J. Flaherty’s film *Man of Aran* released in 1934) I want to highlight three related issues: 1) Joyce’s deliberate alienation as a “self-imposed exile” (Clark 1968, 71; Ryan 2013, 86), or “a voluntary exile” (quoted in Gibson 2006, 60), from other representatives of the Anglo-Irish Revival² while sharing some of their ideas and sentiments; 2) his evident attempt, probably stimulated by an awareness of his target audience, to exoticize and cosmopolitanize (or at least internationalize) the part of Ireland that

¹ It is worth bearing in mind that the two essays I discuss here are English translations of Italian texts whose publication in *Il Piccolo*, alongside Joyce’s further plan to compile an Italian collection of writings on Ireland, is discussed at length in Kevin Barry’s “Introduction” to *James Joyce: Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (Joyce 2000, X–XIII).

² Because of the scope of this essay, I do not raise the issue of Joyce’s attitude to Irish Catholic nationalism of late 19th century and early 20th century, which is, in itself, a complex and by no means unambiguous matter (Nolan 1995, 47; Gibson 2013, 92–122).

included, historically and geographically, Joyce Country; and, last but not least, 3) the overarching consideration of an intersectional complexity (Hill Collins, Bilge 2020, 36–37) of Joyce's voice as a UK subject born in Ireland into a Catholic family, who writes in Italian for a foreign audience about his life-long partner's home city and its environs.

Clearly, issues 1) and 2) are subsumed under issue 3), as intersectionality is an umbrella term for a conjunction of several concerns and categories, some of which I want to engage with in my discussion of Joyce's journalism. As a consequence, those three issues may be further redescribed and eventually merged into a syncretic perspective which combines selected insights of intersectionality, mainly based on Hill Collins and Bilge's already mentioned monograph study of the notion, Jürgen Habermas's discussion of cosmopolitan identities in his *The Postnational Constellation* laced with several points made, in *Postnationalist Ireland*, by Richard Kearney and, finally, some implications of transnationalism and cultural transversalism derived from the *Minor Transnationalism* volume edited by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih. Put together, these categories and standpoints yield a critical inspiration for my reading of Joyce's transcultural view of the West of Ireland. His two journalistic pieces produced for *Il Piccolo della Sera* are simultaneously pragmatic (Joyce started writing for money in 1900 and continued to make a living by producing reviews and other cultural and political commentary) and visionary because in 1912 Joyce emerges not only as a cosmopolitan artist but also as a herald of cultural complexity, hybridity and miscegenation, even though all those categories did not make an explicit appearance in critical discourse until the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century.

An intersectional approach to Joyce at the age of 30, temporarily stationed in Galway with his extended family (most of whom are not quite his family if one is a stickler for technicalities), involves, then, a number of interrelated considerations to do with his gender, economic and social status, cultural and political views as well as artistic experiences and affiliations. It may seem, at first sight, rather anachronistic to apply to those considerations a critical lens that did not emerge until the concluding decades of the 20th century and yet I argue that Joyce's dispatches from Galway anticipate and prefigure many later developments, thus making him a champion of transculturalism and transnationalism *avant la lettre*. Jürgen Habermas's claims about postnationalist constellations, advanced at the dawn of the 21st century, seem to retrogressively explain Joyce's perspective adopted in 1912. Habermas notes the emergence of "new constellations ... which do not so much level out existing cultural differences as create a new multiplicity of hybridized forms" (2001, 75). He posits that those constellations are a recent phenomenon, involving an "ongoing construction of new modes of belonging, new subcultures and lifestyles, a process kept in motion through intercultural contacts and multiethnic connections" (Habermas 2001, 75). As a consequence, Habermas insists, it is only in post-industrial societies that we can observe the nascence of "cosmopolitan identities" (2001, 76). And yet, clearly, we can observe those in the context of Joyce's writings, too.

A few years prior to the publication of *Postnationalist Constellations* by Habermas, Richard Kearney offered his own vision of a postnationalist Ireland. For Kearney, the transition from nationalism to (an idea of) postnationalism in Ireland is, in the first place, a remedy to the conflict between two antagonistic nationalisms in Northern Ireland (Kearney 1997, 7). His political and philosophical reflection has a very clearly defined objective connected with overcoming British sovereignty in the island of Ireland (1997, 8). In his book, postnationalism serves the purpose of reconfiguring the vectors of power defined by administrative divisions and state boundaries. Those, in turn, are largely responsible for the oppression of the minor by the major in the British Isles, a crucial theme of several chapters in a 2005 book concerned with transnationalism and cultural transversalism (Lionnet, Shih 2005). In their introduction, writing about cultural transversalism and transnationalist identifications, Lionnet and Shih note, very much like Habermas a few years earlier, the emergence of “new forms of identification that negotiate with national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, thus allowing for the emergence of the minor’s inherent complexity and multiplicity” (2005, 8). Rather than describe these new identifications in terms of cosmopolitanism, however, they emphasize the significance of power relations responsible for the calcification of minor/major hierarchies in modern societies. At the same time, they do not lose sight of the dynamic processes that underlie the constitution of what they call minor cultures: “minor cultures as we know them are the products of transigrations and multiple encounters, which imply that they are always already mixed, hybrid, and relational” (Lionnet, Shih 2005, 10). Joyce’s journalistic persona, defined by the parameters of his language(s), gender, views on culture and nationalism and his status as a tourist who is visiting his own country, may certainly be identified – from a contemporary perspective – as minoritized, transnational (or even postnationalist) and transcultural.

Joyce Country

What transpires from Joyce’s account of Galway and the Aran Islands is a twofold discursive performance. It involves 1) a cultural patchwork of European influences that must have left their trace in the flavours of local culture and tradition and 2) an evocative image of the future in which Galway regains its political and economic significance as a transatlantic port, the westernmost outpost of European civilization on the way to the New World. However, there is another, much less ostensible thread that crisscrosses the texture of his non-fiction produced for *Il Piccolo della Sera* in 1912: Joyce makes a concerted effort to find a new, adequate, markedly less artistic voice for the dispatches about the outlandish hinterlands of Europe. That voice speaks to, and on behalf of, Joyce’s hybrid, transcultural self-identification, which is, at bottom, a mixture, or an intersection, of several categories to do with his ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, economic status and background, artistic and intellectual standing and linguistic involvements. Significantly, with regard to Joyce’s Triestine writings, Gibson main-

tains that “the question of subjectivity is inseparable from history and politics” (2013, 125). Eventually, Joyce’s journalistic voice of an ‘objective observer’ (Joyce 2000, 115) is markedly different from his novels, short stories and his sole play in which thinly veiled allusions to his own and his family’s circumstances abound.

In his fine writings, the portrayals of both Bertha (*Exiles*) and Gretta Conroy (“The Dead”) – alongside Molly Bloom – owe much to Joyce’s lifelong partner, Nora Barnacle, who was also his immediate source of much information about the West of Ireland even prior to his first visit to Galway in 1909. However, Nora’s company on their joint visit to her homeplace in 1912 is not reflected in Joyce’s ‘western dispatches,’ a telling silence about the only person in his exiled family who has no reason to view the West of Ireland through a tourist’s eyes. Interestingly, Nora will come back to Galway once more, in 1922, to show it to her children and hurriedly get back on the Dublin train which will soon be pelleted with bullets (Burke 2016: 47) to announce, to tourists and locals alike, that the Civil War in Ireland is a fact, rather than another literary fiction or myth associated with the West of Ireland.

James Joyce and Nora Barnacle spend the summer of 1912 together, playing husband and wife to Nora’s entire family who seem to take to Nora’s partner and the children so much that Michael Healy offers them lodgings and meals while James can make use of Healy’s bicycle to tour the surrounding areas, including Clifden³ and Oughterard (Ellmann 1982: 324; Rathjen 2003: 175; Burke 2016: 9). Also, during his 1912 sojourn in Galway, Joyce takes a trip to the Aran Islands, to *Inis Mór*, to be more specific. In fact, Joyce calls the island ‘Aranmor,’⁴ true to its original name in Irish, which was transformed into Inishmore, an anglicized version of *Inis Mór* (literally ‘a big island’), in the aftermath of the 1824–1842 Ordnance Survey of Ireland (Smyth 2001: 52–53). Galway and other related places in the West of Ireland will make cameo appearances in some of his works and yet none of those writings will be set in the West of Ireland, with the exception of a single poem, “She Weeps Over Ragoon”. The two pieces of reportage produced for *Il Piccolo*, and written in Italian, with a Triestine readership in mind, are certainly a case apart in this respect. As samples of pragmatic discourse, markedly different in style and aesthetic assumptions from Joyce’s artistic *oeuvres*,⁵ the essays may be read independently, as non-fictional representations of the West of Ireland, a kind of travelogue by an ostensibly unbiased continental observer who chooses a foreign language to address local concerns and themes. The point to stress is, however, that those two articles are conterminous with Joyce’s literary works (especially “The Dead,” *Exiles* and *Ulysses*) and his complex cultural identity. Both articles emanate directly from his personal circumstances as an impecunious father of two and a self-appointed breadwinner for his partner. That is why

³ The trip to interview Guglielmo Marconi about wireless telegraphy is echoed in *Finnegans Wake* when Joyce writes about “the lofty marconimasts from Clifdden” (Joyce 1992: 407).

⁴ J.M. Synge uses the same spelling in his earlier description of the island – see Synge 2018, 201.

⁵ In a letter to his brother, Joyce claimed that they had “absolutely no literary value” (quoted in Joyce 2000: xi).

Joyce's journalism connected with the West of Ireland lends itself to intersectional readings which emphasize relationality and complexity of "intersecting identities and experiences" (Hill Collins, Bilge 2020: 24).

The complexity involves several temporal and spatial paradoxes when it comes to Joyce's biography, non-fiction and fiction alike. O'Dowd (1999: 189) describes Galway as "part of the whole complex scene of James Joyce's background" and that is undoubtedly true but, like Dublin in most of his writings, the 'city of the tribes' was at that time as much part of his fictions as an actual environment which fed his imagination. Crucially, it was adapted to his authorial designs and transformed to fit literary representations produced before he even set foot in Galway for the first time in 1909. Much of the background to "The Dead," composed in 1907, is borrowed from the stories Joyce heard from Nora. When in 1912 he visited some of the places described in his own previously completed short story, including the Oughterard cemetery, he went there in a sense to verify his sources and develop postmemories (Hirsch 2012: 3) which would retrogressively justify the Galway themes in "The Dead". In a letter sent to his brother from Galway, Joyce went so far as to claim that in Oughterard he was visiting "the graveyard of 'The Dead'" (quoted in Burke 2016: 45), immediately vindicating the place to the status of a literary topos even though it was the Ragoon graveyard in Galway that deserved more credit for housing the remains of one Michael Bodkin (Burke 2016: 18), a model for Michael Furey in the concluding pages of Joyce's short story.

Those personal elements, including the complicated relationship between his fiction and his actual experiences and memories, are absent from Joyce's dispatches produced for his Trieste readers in 1912. One more paradox that is missing from the two essays written for *Il Piccolo* is worth mentioning at this juncture. When Joyce visits the Oughterard cemetery, he seems to stumble upon his own tomb: one of the headstones reads "J. Joyce" (Burke 2016: 45). That alone, for a cosmopolitan writer with complicated loyalties (Shovlin 2012, 9–10), must have been a profound grounding experience (he writes about the discovery in a letter to Stanislaus), a powerful reminder that the West of Ireland is not only part of Nora's ancestral memory but also home to what has been called Joyce Country in Connemara, on the border of north Galway and south Mayo. Touring what Vaughan (2017, 135) describes as "the idealized western geography of true Irish identity," Joyce finds himself and his own family history buried there, deep in the ground. Meanwhile, the headstone with his own name appears to be a perfect inspiration for employing shadow associations in his novels, Stephen becoming Joyce's *doppelgänger* (Lockerd 2020, 112) in the parallel reality of his fictions.

Galway city

One of the most striking things about Joyce's representation of Galway is that it is not so much Gaelicized (like Douglas Hyde's Ireland) as Europeanized to the effect that every single nook and cranny of the city seems to have borne some traces of multicultural and multiethnic influence and interaction over the course

of its long history. With the onus of Joyce's attention on the glorious past of Galway, "The City of the Tribes" reads like a pamphlet that advertises local history by showcasing the context of its cultural commerce with the European continent. Through a historical narrative of an impressive breadth and scope, Joyce – like a skillful travel agent – presents Galway as a milieu characterized by smooth assimilation and seamless interweaving of the various European yarns. And yet the very beginning of "The City of the Tribes" involves, alongside references to the intermingling of Italian, Irish and Spanish elements, a complaint – it is impossible to surmise whether his or early 20th-century Galwegians' – about "this unsettling modernity" (Joyce 2000: 197), which makes us oblivious of the past. Consequently, to compensate for that unsettling fixation on the present, Joyce offers his Triestine readers a historical tour (*de force*) of Galway, with considerable emphasis on its multicultural traditions. He goes on to stress the international provenance ("the connections with ... Latin Europe") of street names in Galway and even plunges back to the Middle Ages to point out that the city was then a major hub for trade routes in the British Isles, becoming, in the 17th century, "the second port of the United Kingdom, and the first in the whole kingdom for Spanish and Italian trade" (Joyce 2000: 197). As a consequence, "almost all the wine imported into the kingdom from Spain, Portugal, the Canary Islands, and Italy used to pass through this port" (Joyce 2000: 198). Joyce's focus on the alcohol imported to Galway is later echoed in *Ulysses*, when, in The Cyclops Episode, he has the citizen mention "Spanish ale in Galway, the winebark on the winedark waterway" (Joyce 2000: 269). Interestingly, the citizen's entire tirade on the subject of the past glories of Ireland relies on similar historical and economic arguments to those that Joyce uses in "The City of the Tribes" to paint a markedly transnational and transcultural picture of Galway. That the picture could involve nationalist accents, too, is not quite inconsistent, as Andrew Gibson (2013, 118) claims that, for Joyce, in his Triestine writings, "[d]efence of Ireland can turn into critique of Ireland, and vice versa." It is important to stress this again: in his Galway essay, Joyce (2000: 200) highlights the past, rather than the present or the future of the west of Ireland. With the decline of international trade and the collapse of the Spanish houses which "are in ruins," Galway emerges from his account as a city whose potential is largely unfulfilled. Joyce concludes his essay with an image of nuns in the Presentation Convent whose white wimples appear in its windows while a "silent and grey" (Joyce 2000: 200) evening descends upon the city. The image is a vignette of Joyce's disappointment with his Irish compatriots' failed aspirations to modernity, a disappointment that, as Andrew Gibson observes (2013, 111), informs most of his Triestine writings.

There is, of course, more to Joyce's view of Galway than a simple contrast between its rich, multiethnic and multicultural past and a stagnant present, subdued like the spectral figures of silent nuns in a convent where Nora, aged 12, used to work as a portress. In "The City of the Tribes", there are also stories about Italian citizens of Galway who came to prominence there, travelers from Italy, a patron saint connected with continental Europe (St. Nicholas of Bari) and a papal envoy, Cardinal Rinuccini, who opposed both the clergy and the laity in the city. Most

of those accounts are based on James Hardiman's *The History of the Town and County of the Town of Galway* published in 1820, which, in itself, does not guarantee their credibility. For example, in a recent study of Joyce's connections with Galway, Ray Burke claims (2016: 37) that the longest and most complex theme presented in "The City of the Tribes" (that of the Lynches at the end of the 15th century), is largely a fiction and the account of the wreckage of the Spanish Armada off the west coast of Galway, discussed at the beginning of "The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran", is inaccurate at best (Burke 2016: 39). It is evident that Joyce did his best to select from available historical sources whatever might give Galway solid multicultural credentials. Whether in 1912, the year when Joyce visited it for the second time, the city itself was really so receptive to foreign cultural influences is largely an open question. On closer inspection, Joyce's two 'western dispatches' offer little commentary on his contemporaries' opinions and attitudes. As Kevin Barry notes, with a touch of irony, Joyce's "Galway is almost wholly lifted from the footnotes of James Hardiman's history of the city" (Joyce 2000: xxi). To speak of a multicultural or transcultural Galway at the beginning of the 20th century is, then, a gross exaggeration; it is only Joyce's selective vision of the past of the city that lays stress on the interweaving of cultures, traditions, languages and European influences.

The Aran Islands

Joyce's account of the journey to Aranmor begins, in a similar vein, with a nostalgic view of the Claddagh which until a few years prior to his visit had been a kingdom of its own, with "its own king ... its own style of dress ... [and] its own laws" (Joyce 2000: 201). A similar distinctiveness of local cultures emerges from his observations of the inhabitants of Aran, who speak "an English of [their] own" and dress unlike other people in the West of Ireland, making their island "the strangest place in the world" (Joyce 2000: 204). What also transpires from Joyce's account is the theme of hospitality and magnanimity. In the first page of the essay, those two qualities are illustrated by the fate of the Spanish sailors who were rescued by the local people when the fleeing Spanish Armada was eventually destroyed by storms off the west coast of Ireland in 1588. The Irish hid the Spanish fugitives from English soldiers and treated the shipwrecked dead with respect by giving them "holy burial" (Joyce 2000: 201). The qualities of hospitality and dignity reappear towards the conclusion of Joyce's essay, when he describes a modest meal received on Aranmor and the warm reception he and his companion meet with. An old woman, who invites them to her house, refuses money offered by the visitors in appreciation of her attitude (Joyce 2000: 4). This contrasts rather sharply with J. M. Synge's description of an old woman in Connemara who accosts him, begging for money (Synge 2018, 261), and with Joyce's own image of an old Irish woman delivering milk to the Martello Tower at the beginning of *Ulysses* (Joyce 1986, 11–13). Again, like in "The City of the Tribes", Joyce's emphasis is on retaining dignity in the face of poverty, with a hint of the past glory (or at least

some reasons for being proud of the people who were associated with Aran in the Middle Ages) informing the unique customs and traditions of the islanders.

It is illuminating to compare Joyce's brief description of the islanders and their dress with J.M. Synge's portrayal of the inhabitants of the Aran Islands. Joyce notes that the "fisherman of Aran is sure-footed. He wears a rough, flat sandal of oxhide, open at the shank, without heels and tied with laces of rawhide. He dresses in wool as thick as felt and wears a black, wide-brimmed hat" (Joyce 2000: 204). Synge devotes much more attention to ethnographic details, which is not surprising given the subject, target readership, the length of his work and the time that he spent there. In *The Aran Islands*, he offers an elaborate description of the way women dress and then proceeds to a discussion of men's clothing, going over the colours, textiles (e.g., flannel) and manners of wearing particular items ("an indefinite number of waistcoats and woolen drawers" – Synge 2018, 203) to protect themselves from cold and wind. A crucial lexical difference occurs when both Joyce and Synge lower their eyes and focus on the footwear. Synge mentions "pampooties, or cowskin sandals" (Synge 2018, 202), a pair of which he then receives as a gift from his hosts: "they consist simply of a piece of raw cowskin, with the hair outside, laced over the toe and round the heel with two ends of fishing line that work round and are tied above the instep" (205). It is rather surprising that Joyce, who had an eye for footwear novelties (cf. the goloshes – the "[g]utterpercha things" (Joyce 1993, 131) – worn by the Conroys in "The Dead"), does not mention the pampooties in his essays from 1912. Possibly, he had not been familiar with Synge's 1907 book on Aran by that time; he was certainly familiar with it when he wrote the Scylla and Charybdis Episode of *Ulysses* (Roche 2015: 11), as he has Buck Mulligan issue a warning about "the trumper Synge" who "is out in his pampooties to murder [Stephen]" (Joyce 1986, 164). Don Gifford points out (2008: 227) that, thereby, Buck suggests Synge's going native, a process of assimilation which begins with wearing the local footwear. Joyce, in contrast, is more of a detached observer during his brief trip to Aran. On the whole, Joyce's discussion, in "The Mirage...", of local customs and patterns of living is rather superficial – only skin-deep – yielding the right of place to a lengthy presentation of historical figures associated with the Aran Islands. There is a clear contrast between Joyce's sparse remarks on how Aranmor appears to him in 1912 and Synge's sustained focus on the immediate experience of living there at the beginning of the 20th century, which results, in large measure, from each writer's markedly different purpose and duration of their visits to the islands.

There is a striking parallel, though, concerning the inclusion of transcultural themes and issues in their travel narratives. In Synge's work, intertextual elements that transcend the local, and yet blend with it, are less obvious so I will discuss them first to proceed, further on, to Joyce's transatlantic vistas. Listening to a local version of the story about Diarmid and Grainne, Synge notes that, in old Mourteen's narrative, Diarmid is killed by having a burning shirt put on him, very much like Hercules in Greek mythology. Another story, told by Pat Dirane, a local *seanchaí*, makes Synge reflect on the interconnectedness of cultures and traditions: "It gave me a strange feeling of wonder to hear the illiterate native of a wet

rock in the Atlantic telling a story that is so full of European associations” (Synge 2018, 205). Synge then goes on to produce a list of those literary associations, on behalf of the illiterate man as it were, only to conclude that they reach beyond Europe and involve Persia and Egypt as well. Joyce, significantly, finds little intertextuality in his brief encounters with the local people in Aranmor. However, the sea voyage itself encourages him to speculate on the future by revisiting the so-called Galway Harbour Scheme⁶ which, in itself, carries a promise of transatlantic connections between the Irish city and Canada.

Joyce’s “The Mirage of the Fisherman of Aran” is largely preoccupied with a mirage of a transatlantic port that “might be destined to rise” (Joyce 2000: 201) in Galway. There is a map included in his essay (copied from a prospectus Joyce consulted) and what emerges from it is a network of shipping lanes between Galway and North American ports. Interestingly, in “The Mirage...” Joyce focuses exclusively on Canada, ignoring the United States perhaps because of his dislike of Americans and his disinclination to travel there (Ellmann 1982: 4; Vaughan 2017, 138). When he speaks to an islander who can barely communicate in English, Joyce notes (2000: 204) that “time and winds have razed to the ground the civilization to which he belongs”. And yet the prospect of developing the harbour in Galway seems to be founded on a long-standing tradition of sea voyages from Aran to America, including St Brendan’s voyage to Florida, long before Christopher Columbus claimed to discover American shores. Even though Galway may appear to be an “old decaying city” (Joyce 2000, 203), reviving the idea of transatlantic connections, in Joyce’s view, is likely to bring new vital energy to its inhabitants and result in the whole region’s economic and political regeneration. Evidently, Joyce wants to offer, in his journalism, his own framework for the revival of the west of Ireland, markedly different from the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the Anglo-Irish Revival. His vision (a mirage?) puts emphasis on the necessity of infusing new, foreign energies into the stagnant, almost paralyzed Galway of 1912. Crucially, it is a future-oriented and transcultural vision which, simultaneously, maintains a firm foothold in the history of the West of Ireland.

Conclusion

Synge’s superficial nativism (Messenger 2001: 354–355), alongside Robert Flaherty’s film *Man of Aran* released in 1934, contributed to the popularization of a pseudorealist representation of the Aran Islands used, later on, as an artistic tool in the constructions of national identity in the Irish Free State. In this respect, Joyce’s images of Galway and Aran are different although they are ideologically laden, too. In 1912, short of being a *Hiberniae Defensor*, Joyce is still determined “to correct what he felt was a distortion in Ireland’s image among some people in Trieste” (Reppke 2008: 462; see, also, Gladwin 2014, 176). On the face of it, his interest in Joyce Country, Galway and Aran is more historical than mythologi-

⁶ A detailed discussion of the Galway Harbour Scheme can be found in Mac Lochlainn (2002: 227–229) and Thornton (1973: 442).

cal (Shovlin 2012, 3) but his descriptions and historical allusions border on what Synge (2018, 202) identified as “the wild mythology on the islands” contrasted with the simplicity of the islanders’ lives. In Joyce’s account, however, the wildness of the stories largely depends on consciously introduced transcultural elements and connections. His narrative voice oscillates between moderate nationalism and moderate transculturalism and transnationalism, gradually abandoning the former for the latter in his Triestine writings. The fact remains, however, that even in 1914, by planning a collection of his political writings to be published as a single volume in Italian, he wanted “to state the case of Ireland to an international audience” (Barry in Joyce 2000: x; see, also, Gibson 2013, 112) for fear that those international audiences might be misinformed by British propaganda. At the same time, his hopes for the revival of what used to be unique and valuable in the west of Ireland lie in enhanced (both cultural and economic) commerce with the European continent and North America. While the Anglo-Irish Revival aims at regenerating Irish culture in the entire island, with the West of Ireland serving as a touchstone of ethnic and linguistic purity, Joyce wants to bring back to Galway and its environs some transcultural energy which is likely to emanate from interactions with Italy, Spain, France and other European countries. When he departs from Aranmor, it is not by accident that, looking back, he spots three Danish sailors on its shore. They seem poised to symbolically reconquer Galway, following in the footsteps of their ancestors who burned the city in 8th century CE. Transcultural mobility and interbreeding of ideas and influences are, ultimately, Joyce’s response to the paralysis of the island of saints and sages, including the West of Ireland, which the nativists associated with the Anglo-Irish Revival wanted to keep unaltered and unadulterated, like a precious insect preserved in a piece of amber.

Joyce’s focus on empowering the local people and re-energizing Galway is consistent with intersectional frameworks developed in the final decades of the 20th century. His voice in the two essays produced for *Il Piccolo* sounds Italian⁷ but some of his accents are also locally inflected: he wants to attract the attention of his readers (in an Italian city occupied by Austria-Hungary) to a colonial predicament of his own native land. Writing for a nationalist paper, he realizes that his notion of colonial oppression, and its consequences for the West of Ireland, will resonate with the Triestines (Gladwin 2014, 184). At the same time, his dispatches never pretend to be sociological or ethnographic, like Synge’s Aran writings; Joyce abandons realism for the sake of historicizing the West of Ireland and lamenting its current decline. While disclaiming affinities with the Anglo-Irish Revival, he also has an inclination to indulge in utopian thinking when, by highlighting ‘the mirage of the fisherman of Aran’ in his title, he gives fresh oxygen to the myth of Hy-Brasil (Barry in Joyce 2000: 342), a phantom island apparently sighted, in ancient times, by an islander from Aran off the west coast of Galway. At the end of the day, his own vision of the West of Ireland combines nostalgic

⁷ For a detailed analysis of Joyce’s Italian see Lobner (1983: 140–153) and Deane in Joyce (2000: xxxiii–xxxv).

cadences vaguely reminiscent of the Anglo-Saxon *Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt?* with a bold, entrepreneurial vista of Galway's restored glory, largely dependent on a new Galway Harbour Scheme and the transatlantic connections with the New World.

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