

## **Taking the Punch: Joyce and Wilde vs Tenniel and M. Shelley, Shakespeare Presiding; or The Use of Populism in the Arts for Political Gain in 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century Britain**

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**Abstract:** *In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Britain was in the midst of attempting to heal a wound destined for amputation: the independence of Ireland from its English colonizers. To this end, both sides used the words of some of literature's most brilliant minds to persuade the general public of the righteousness of their stance. This use of artistic populism – both in literature and illustration – touched on the pathos of the people. One of the many battles of wits was subtly fought between John Tenniel, the acclaimed English illustrator for the satirical magazine Punch, and James Joyce, the acclaimed Irish author. Fascinatingly, in the skirmishes explored in this paper, English artist Tenniel employed the beloved words of English author Mary Shelley, while Irish author Joyce utilized the famed lines of Irish writer Oscar Wilde; and casting his long shadow over both Tenniel and Joyce was the immortal influence of William Shakespeare. This was a battle for the soul of the British empire with literature used as the subtle weapon in a war of populism.*

**Keywords:** populism, punch, James Joyce, John Tenniel, political cartoon

### **Populism in the Arts – A Subtle War**

Throughout history people have used the words of predecessors and poets to illustrate the pathos of a point they are trying to make to a contemporary audience. When attempting to make an emotional appeal to those they are trying to sway to their side, few people can convince a public quite like an artist, whether it be of the visual or literary arts. The most influential chord to strike in the psyche of the masses is pathos and few mediums subconsciously pluck that chord quite like literature and illustration. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Britain was in the midst of attempting to heal a wound destined for amputation: the independence of Ireland from its English colonizers. To this

end, both sides used the words of some of literature's most brilliant minds to persuade the general public of the righteousness of their stance. One of the many battles of wits was subtly fought between John Tenniel, the acclaimed English illustrator for the satirical magazine, *Punch*, and James Joyce, the Irish author of such works as "The Dead", *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses*. Fascinatingly, in the skirmishes explored in this paper, English artist Tenniel employed the beloved words of English author Mary Shelley while Irish author Joyce utilized the famed lines of Irish writer Oscar Wilde; and casting his long shadow over both Tenniel and Joyce was the immortal influence of William Shakespeare. To be clear, this is not to suggest that Joyce was directly responding to Tenniel, but rather using the same tactics against him. Whether it be the oppressive English or the oppressed Irish, they were each weaponizing the nonthreatening words of familiar voices to win over the hearts of the very people they were trying to protect.

It is worth noting that both Tenniel, as well as the editors of *Punch*, and Joyce were engaging in an artistic yet political form of populism. *Punch*, since 1814, was interested in reaching the ordinary masses of Britain to relay the news in a satirical fashion. The use of colloquialisms, the disarming nature of humour, and integration of political cartoons were all tools employed to reach the average reader and this created *Punch's* massive influence in Britain. Likewise, *Ulysses* was always considered by Joyce to be a book for the everyday person. The characters are based on real-life Dubliners and when considering their speech, behavior, and intertwining relationships, they fit the mold of the average Irish citizen in 1904. While the style of the novel was certainly revolutionary and brought forth the genre known as modernism with a heavy thud, it was never Joyce's intent that *Ulysses* be relegated to niche world of literature graduate studies. *Punch* and novels were perfect mediums to exploit given their range and appeal with the populace. And so, both texts, *Punch* and *Ulysses*, were able to plant within the subtext of their everyday characters and colloquialisms the true perspectives of the inventors which would reach the masses on a more subtle, subversive, and unconscious level.

### **"The Irish Frankenstein"**

Let's begin with May 20, 1882 and volume 82 of *Punch*. In this issue, John Tenniel drew the iconic cartoon entitled "The Irish Frankenstein" which shows a grotesquely large humanoid figure with tasseled hair, fangs, and an ape-like face disguised by a black mask. This creature wears a dark cape and tucked into his belt is a long dagger and a couple of small handheld weapons reminiscent, appropriately, of what are called monkey's fists or monkey's paws. This monstrous fiend holds a drawn pistol in his left hand and a large knife dripping blood in his right. He looms menacingly over a defensively crouched English gentleman donning a top hat, bow tie, vest, and coat, left hand raised for protection. On the ground is a paper bearing a skull and crossbones and barely

legible, the words “Capt Moonlight”. The caption to this cartoon reads, “The baneful and blood-stained Monstern [...] yet was it not my Master to the very extent that it was my Creature?...Had I not breathed into it my own spirit? [...] (*Extract from the Works of C.S. Parnell, M.P.*” At the bottom of the illustration is John Tenniel’s monogram signature of the combined “J” and “T” as well as the signature “SWAIN SC” for Josephn Swain, the English wood engraver (see fig. 1).

The mention Captain Moonlight is a reference to Charles Stewart Parnell, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, who before he was arrested, was said to have claimed that if he were apprehended, “Captain Moonlight will take my place.” The implication was that other Irish nationalists would rise in his place. This encapsulated the populist mentality of the Home Rule movement in that it was never about one man, but rather the entire populace coalescing around the common cause for independence. The caption further connected Parnell to this Irish Frankenstein despite the fact that he never said or wrote such a thing. Perhaps to avoid direct libel, this might be why the vowels in Parnell’s name were removed from the citation of the imaginary quote.

This satirical cartoon was published two weeks after Chief Secretary for Ireland and Englishman, Lord Frederick Cavendish – newly-appointed by Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone – and Permanent Undersecretary and Irishman, Thomas Henry Burke, were murdered in Dublin’s Phoenix Park by a violent branch-off nationalistic group known as the Irish National Invincibles. As of the printing of this cartoon, the murderers had not yet been caught, though five men would later be convicted and hanged in 1883 for the crime. This murder occurred only three months after James Joyce’s birth and so while the story was still widely known during his lifetime, he would have clearly been unaware of it when it occurred. This cartoon sparked fear in English readers of a brutally violent Ireland, under the leadership of Parnell, rising against them. Lord Cavendish’s older brother was Lord Harrington, Gladstone’s minister. And as a result of this heinous murder, Harrington split off from the prime minister, destroying any chance of the passing of a Home Rule bill organized by Parnell and Gladstone. Margot Backus wrote, “The Invincibles were, in James Fairhall’s words, ‘a tiny band that had no official ties with other nationalist groups’, but through the lens of London scandal culture, represented as typifying Irish nationalism” (Backus 2008, 105). As Ireland was struggling for more rights and eventually independence, England was attempting to brand these nationalists as usurpers trying to break up the empire. John Tenniel’s “The Irish Frankenstein” was a horribly effective image in the branding of the Irish nationalist movement as a violent mob of monsters.

### **Britain – An Empire with Suns Rising in the East and West**

One should remember that Ireland was one of Britain's earliest and closest colonies. Despite the fact that the island directly off the west coast of England never fully submitted to what was considered foreign rule, the English and Irish shared a complex history politically, socially, religiously, and economically. At this time, Irish independence was within fifty years of achievement and the belief in Ireland as a post-colony had never been closer on the horizon. This fueled the ever-growing and popular (in Ireland) view of Home Rule while created an ever-fraying relationship with England. It was said in Ireland that the Home Rule sun rose in the west as the western region of the country, farthest from the Pale and English control, was the hotbed of the nationalist movement. Prime Minister Gladstone, favoring Irish Home Rule, was hopeful that like Canada, Ireland would become a dominion of the British Empire as opposed to splitting off entirely. Gladstone's concept favored common ground which garnered much support from the British populace. The promise of a united empire, stronger together, was the focus of Gladstone's compromise. It was a political tightrope England was attempting to tread precariously and Ireland was attempting to cut with scissors of independence. And so the Phoenix Park murders were the lighting of the powder keg that forced the abandonment of the idea of Ireland as a dominion of Britain. With Irish assimilation and independence simultaneously at stake and in play, *Punch* lay at the crossroads of public opinion. By painting the Irish nationalists as monsters bent on murderous destruction, Tenniel was tapping into an old and well-known racial stereotype to dehumanize those in the independence movement and make union appear a more civilized and beneficial option.

In *Joyce, Race, and Empire*, Vincent Cheng quotes L.P. Curtis Jr.'s 1971 book, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian England* to emphasize the intentionality of this racial and political satire. "The timing of this culturally created image (of Irish apes) was again not accidental," Cheng writes, "for it was when the Irish turned to political activism and agitation in their demands for Home Rule that *Punch* and other periodicals began to 'picture the Irish political outrage-mongering peasant as a cross between a garrotter and a gorilla'" (Cheng 1995, 32). The timing of these images was not by happenstance nor were they a long-held association with the Irish before their yearning for more autonomy from England. They were manufactured for this very time and place for this very particular purpose.

However, few people familiar with the cartoon recall the editorial that accompanied it on the previous page also entitled "The Irish Frankenstein". There is no way to know who wrote this anonymous editorial, though Sir Francis Burnand was editor of *Punch* and there were roughly thirty-four writers on staff at this time, according to M.H. Spielmann's 1895 book, *The History of "Punch"*. A mere five paragraphs divided into four small sections, it further brought home the point Tenniel and *Punch* were making.

## Populism in Action – Reading Between the Lines

Below is the text in full, annotated for clarification. The text in regular font reveals the excerpts that come from Shelley's novel, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*, while the bold text reveals what was original to the editorial. The underlined text in brackets reveals the original text of Shelley's lines and following her quotes, one can read from which chapter in parenthetical italics of *Frankenstein* they were excised.

When I found so astonishing a power placed within my hands, I hesitated **some** [a long] time concerning the manner in which I should employ it. (*chapter 4*) [...] **But the visions of fancy and the pride of power** urged me **onward** [forward] (*chapter 4*), **and forbade too nice scruples or too prolonged delay. Scruple indeed seemed unworthy weakness in the light of so imposing an enterprise. The flame of an unholy ambition, whilst firing the courage, sears the conscience. What count some cunning sophistry of word, some politic ruthlessness of action, in the great tasks of conquest or of creation?** Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds[,] which I (*chapter 4*) **might** [should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world.] **set at nought and break down in my pursuit of – what?**

.....

How can I [describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how] delineate the [wretch] **Monster which** [whom] with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? (*chapter 5*) [...] I had gazed on [him while] **it when it was** unfinished (*chapter 5*) – **it was hideous then, though to my distraught fancy bearing the promise and the potency of benignant beauty**.....I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. (*chapter 5*) [...] Mingled with this horror[,] I felt the bitterness of disappointment; dreams **vain, violent, conscienceless visions**, that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space, were now become [a] hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete! (*chapter 5*)

.....

A flash **as** of **blood-red** lightning illuminated the object, and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature and [the] **its** deformity of [its] aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, [instantly] informed me that it was the **ruthless** wretch, the [filthy daemon] conscienceless demon, **the baneful and blood-stained Monster** to [whom] **which** I had given life. (*chapter 7*) [...] I had turned loose into the world a depraved [wretch] **Horror**, whose delight was in carnage and [misery] **chaos**[:] had [he] **it** not murdered my [brother] (*chapter 7*) **countrymen, had it not wrecked the rising hopes of my country, had it not branded the author of its being, and the place of its birth, with the blood-red, indelible brand of shame?**

.....

**It** [He] approached; [his] **its** countenance bespoke [bitter anguish] **bold defiance**, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eye[s]. (*chapter 10*) [...] **And yet – yet was it not my Master to the very extent that it was my Creature? Hideous fatality; inevitable**

**NEMESIS of the shapers of ill? Had I not framed it, breathed into it my own spirit, pandered to its excesses when they seemed to serve my ends, profited by the very villainies which I had assumed to deprecate and denounce? And now that the work of my brain had got beyond the power of my hand, now that my heart sickened (*chapter 17*), more even with dread than with honest disgust, what power of control, of exorcism, of self-emancipation was left with me?**

**Shaken to the soul, I addressed it, yet faintly and falteringly, in words weakly expressive of disavowal and detestation [...with words expressive of furious detestation and contempt (*chapter 10*)?]. It met my late reproach, my tardy denunciation, with mockery and defiance. Hideous, blood-stained, bestial, ruthless in its rage, implacable in its revengefulness, cynical in its contemptuous challenge of my authority, it seemed another and a fouler *Caliban* in revolt, and successful revolt, against the framer and fosterer of its maleficent existence**

The title alone of the editorial and cartoon bring to attention Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, published in 1818. This novel would have been familiar to many readers of *Punch*. The obvious implication is that Charles Stewart Parnell is an Irish version of Frankenstein's monster, bent on the destruction of his master, the English. When one reads the editorial, it is highly reminiscent of Shelley's novel and in fact is written to appear as though these four sections are excerpts. However, a closer analysis on the text reveals a politically-motivated intent of exploitation. In truth, out of the 541 words that make up this editorial, only 39% are taken from Shelley's *Frankenstein*. 61% of the text is completely fabricated by the anonymous author of the editorial. This wasn't coincidental or even haphazard, but rather a deliberate and calculated manipulation of Shelley's original text.

It is also worth noting that at the time of *Punch*'s publication of "The Irish Frankenstein", Mary Shelley's novel had fallen out of copyright and so, while clearly ethically dubious in the least, it would not fit the legal definition of copyright infringement in British law at the time. And given that Mary Shelley's name is never printed with the text, there is no explicit suggestion that she is the author, merely an implicit one. By using a familiar word – "Frankenstein" – in conjunction with vaguely familiar phrases from Mary Shelley's novel, which was well-known in Britain by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Punch* was intentionally blurring the lines between Shelley's fiction and their own. This would give just enough realism to the text to suggest that Mary Shelley's monster was, in fact, comparable to the Irish nationalists *Punch* was satirizing and condemning.

Additionally, when one reads the editorial, a clear pattern of edits begins to emerge. On the surface level, one can see a dehumanizing effect when words such as "whom", "him", and "he" are replaced with "which" and "it". Then, slightly deeper edits are made such as changing the personal "misery", "bitter anguish", and "brother" – it was Victor's brother who was murdered in the novel – with the more inciting and politically-charged "chaos", "bold defiance", and "countrymen". In fact, words that appear in the editorial, but never appear

in *Frankenstein*, include, but are not limited to: “blood-stained”, “ruthless”, “conscienceless”, “scruple[s]”, “unholy”, “conquest”, “benignant”, “nemesis”, “villanies [sic] (villainies)”, “exorcism”, “self-emancipation”, “disavowal”, “denunciation”, “bestial”, “implacable”, “revengefulness”, “contemptuous”, “maleficent”, and “Caliban”.

One can begin to see woven within the 328 words of original editorial text the message being conveyed. The horror and graphic imagery is amplified, nationalistic diction creeps in, and the connection between Parnell and Frankenstein’s monster appears completely justified by the words of Mary Shelley. The anonymous author of the editorial was clearly exploiting *Frankenstein*, manipulating Mary Shelley’s familiar and iconic text and themes to warrant an emotional hatred of Irish nationalism as something unnatural, evil, and dangerous. It could be argued that Frankenstein’s creation of the monster, was an act of rebellion against authority – God’s authority – and so the use of this character fits nicely with the metaphor of the seditious Irish nationals. After all, it was a traditional view that the British monarch, at this time Queen Victoria, was anointed by God, and thus any rebellion against the queen’s authority could be viewed as heresy. One key difference between Tenniel’s creation and Shelley’s was that Shelley’s monster was pieced together with Victor stating, “the dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials,” (Shelley 32); Tenniel’s monster, on the other hand, appears as an organic creature, not manmade of human parts, but rather of natural origins. L.P. Curtis Jr. writes, “Many members of the Victorian governing class believed that Irish inferiority was a more or less permanent state of affairs, the result of biological forces above and beyond the power of enlightened English administrators to control or ameliorate” (Curtis Jr. 1997, 95). This visual deviance from Shelley’s character gives the viewer the impression that instead of the monstrous Irish nationals being the manufactured invention of English colonialism, they are instead naturally born beyond man’s control, an innately evil presence in the world.

Using satirical political cartoons with a racial angle was commonplace for such political purposes. This is populism at work in the most efficient manner. It is subtle, the quiet side of populism. People are swayed on an emotional and deeper level without ever being explicitly told how to think. Even the exploitation of Shelley’s Frankenstein’s monster had become synonymous with enemies of the British people. According to Laurent Tourette, “When nineteenth-century English editorial cartoonists wished to depict some group as brutish, primitive, or inclined to run amok, they routinely invoked the image of the Frankenstein monster” (Tourette 2001, 55). And there was no better publication at utilizing the art of political cartoons than *Punch* in the 1800s. “Periodicals such as *Punch* saw no contradiction between avoiding personality and caricature for elite politicians,” writes Henry Miller, “and subjecting minorities or marginal groups such as the Irish, Catholics, Jews, and colonial native peoples to unpleasant and cruel treatment” (Miller 2009, 282). In this

sense, art was becoming perverted by politics. However, it is unlikely that even though, as Irishmen, they were on the receiving end of such slanderous illustrations, Oscar Wilde and James Joyce would have seen it quite that way. It is one of the many bonds between the two writers as Tim Conley writes in *Useless Joyce: Textual Functions, Cultural Appropriations*: “Wilde, an ironic pragmatist, literalizes the idea of art as a means to immortality [in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*]...As biographers and annotators habitually remind us, Joyce himself adopted (and adapted) it: ‘I’ve put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality’” (Conley 2017, 19). The corruption of art, as some may see it, would have more likely been viewed by these writers as giving art a purpose and thus breathing into it a life of its own – a sort of Frankenstein’s monster, if you will.

It is worth considering for the moment how John Tenniel, the illustrator himself, felt about satirical cartoons. After all, he also beautifully illustrated Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* in 1871. As Henry Miller notes, “Tenniel himself was a Tory, but abjured politics in his work: ‘As for political opinions, I have none; at least, if I have my own little politics, I keep them to myself, and profess only those of my paper’” (Miller 2009, 277-278). It is unusual that one of the most well-known political cartoonists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was self-proclaimed to have had no political opinions. Rather, Tenniel was simply manifesting the views of his employer, *Punch*. Interestingly, Miller also points out one of the key motives for an illustrator of Tenniel’s caliber to work for a weekly humor magazine. “In 1850, Tenniel found the offer of joining *Punch* too good to refuse. One can now more clearly see the attraction for an artist to lend his hand at some of the most widely distributed racial, economic, and political illustrations published in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. And while he may have claimed to have been apolitical, as L.P. Curtis Jr. writes, “The man who did most to change the Irish stereotype in English cartoons from man to beast was John Tenniel” (Curtis Jr. 1997, 35), who was later in life knighted for his contributions to the arts. One can do what they can in their own lifetime to forge a legacy, but history has a way of objectively peeling away the bias of present norms and intentions.

Lastly, in Tenniel’s “The Irish Frankenstein” there is a subtle reference to Caliban at the end of the editorial, referencing the infamous character from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. But as will be shown, the Caliban reference digs far deeper into the Irish smear campaign and English subconscious than may appear on the surface and is even later utilized by the Irish against their English masters. These slanderous tactics would not go unnoticed decades later by Irish author, James Joyce.

### **“The Irish Tempest” and Revenge of Caliban**

In Joyce’s famous short story “The Dead”, the protagonist, Gabriel Conroy, revels in his own educational superiority while he considers the speech he is to give later that night at the party. Joyce writes, “He was undecided about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they could recognize from Shakespeare or the Melodies would be better” (Joyce 1967, 133). Joyce was clearly aware of the advantages in using the words of the familiar bard to a more general audience in getting his point across. And Joyce certainly knew of *Punch* magazine and its strategies of publishing biased editorials and racist cartoons. Vincent Cheng points out, “As Joyce has Madden point out in *Stephen Hero*, the Irish Celt is labeled/libeled as ‘the baboon-faced Irishman that we see in *Punch*’ (SH 64)” (Cheng 1995, 45). With this established, there is one other cartoon by John Tenniel which further illustrates the theft of notable writers for political gain; this one, however, has its literary equivalent with Joyce taking a page out of *Punch*’s playbook to respond in kind which will be seen later.

On March 19, 1870, a month after Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone introduced the Landlord and Tenant Act 1870 to the House of Commons on February 15, *Punch* published a satirical cartoon of Tenniel’s entitled “The Irish ‘Tempest.’” in volume 58. This illustration shows a stoic and robed Gladstone protectively clutching a fair and frightened maiden with a sash reading “Hibernia”, the Latin name for Ireland. Gladstone holds in his right hand a long staff inscribed, “Irish Land Bill”, referencing the previously mentioned legislation. And threatening this couple is another monkey-faced villain with clenched fist and open palm. Short in stature and hunched, his dark and tattered clothes also reveal a light ribbon bearing the word “ultramontanism” or perhaps “ultramontanist” on it. Ultramontanism is the strong emphasis on the political powers of the Pope and the year before, Gladstone had passed the Irish Church Act 1869 which separated the Church of England and the Church of Ireland. This delegitimized the Church of Ireland so they couldn’t collect tithes from the Irish people or send their representatives to the House of Lords. His shirtfront reads “ribandism”, “orangeism”, and “fenianism”. Ribandism, also known as ribbonism, is a reference to a Roman Catholic secret society known as the Ribbon Society; orangeism is a reference to the Loyal Orange Institution or Orange Order, a Protestant fraternal society located in Northern Ireland, often opposed by the Catholic ribbonmen; fenianism is a broad term for numerous Irish nationalist organizations throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Whichever term the various readers of *Punch* might have been most familiar with, Tenniel covered his bases by listing numerous Irish nationalist words to strike fear into the English public. L.P. Curtis Jr. explains the Victorian context of these phrases when he writes, “The existence of Fenianism and the Irish Republican Brotherhood, which in turn spawned even more secret and lethal societies, convinced many Victorians that the Irish preferred

criminal and anarchist activities to constitutional politics” (Curtis Jr. 1997, 95). These very words being associated with the Caliban-like monster would trigger fear into the populace and immediately garner support for the unionist movement within Britain. People value their safety and the safety of their families. By portraying Irish nationalists as violent and dangerous, the issue of Home Rule is no longer merely political, it becomes tangible. Through the use of populism in the illustration, only the English such as Gladstone can protect the people from harm.

The monster’s belt contains no fewer than three pistols, a hatchet, and other unidentifiable weapons tucked within. Below the title of the cartoon is the caption: “Caliban (Rory of the Hills). ‘This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother, which thou tak’st from me.’ – *Shakespeare*.” This direct quote comes from *The Tempest* in Act I, Scene 2. And again, at the bottom of the illustration is Tenniel’s monogram signature of the blended “J” and “T” (see fig. 2). L.P. Curtis Jr., quoting from *The Tempest*, describes this cartoon as if it is designed to “remind the patriarchs of Britain of their imperial-paternal duty to protect Erin/Miranda from the rapacious desires of Irish rebels – those ‘misshapen’ Calibans ‘with foreheads villanous [*sic*] low” (Curtis Jr. 1997, 167). Again, these instruments of violence mixed with the names of political extremist groups and combined with the popular Shakespearean villain of Caliban all work towards the populist end of rallying the public behind the cause of British unity over Irish Home Rule.

Caliban, from Shakespeare’s play, is a half-man-half-monster which becomes enslaved by Prospero after he and his daughter, Miranda, occupy his island. One can easily sense the simplicity of the racist metaphor here for the Irish people and so Caliban was a literary slight used against the Irish on multiple occasions. An island-bound creature, not entirely human, enslaved by an occupying power, would certainly fit the prejudiced bill against Irish nationalists like Parnell.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce uses Buck Mulligan and the protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, to turn the tables on the thieving and slandering English. In his article, “‘Finnegans Wake’ and Irish Historical Memory”, Peter Maguire points out a key excerpt in *The Tempest* regarding Caliban, quoting the monster:

You taught me your language, and my profit on’t  
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language!

“Like Caliban, Stephen becomes aware of his power, having at his disposal the weapon by which his ancestors were finally conquered” (Maguire 1998, 302). Just as Caliban learned English from his occupier, so did the Irish who originally spoke Gaelic. It is this weapon which Tenniel and *Punch* as well as Joyce have learned to wield in order to win the war of public opinion. Mary Fitzgerald, in her essay, “The Unveiling of Power: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic Fiction in Ireland, England and America” writes, “The nineteenth century was also a

period of continual concussion in Irish life; it was a period during which the possibility of a future transformation of the Irish political vocabulary of power was established; a period during which the Irish gradually learnt to translate weakness into strength, to use power against itself[...]" (Fitzgerald 1987, 16). This sense of Caliban using Prospero's language to curse him is a perfect metaphor for the Irish using the English language against their colonial oppressors. And it is with Shakespeare's Caliban that Joyce will make his first strike, employing – through literary exploitation – his Irish solution to Mary Shelley: Oscar Wilde.

On June 23, 1906, when the story of *Ulysses* was in its creative infancy, Joyce wrote to Grant Richards, his publisher of *Dubliners*, a collection of short stories culminating in "The Dead". In his letter, Joyce writes, "I send you a Dublin paper by this post. It is the leading satirical paper of the Celtic nations, corresponding to *Punch* or *Pasquino*. I send it to you that you may see how witty the Irish are as all the world knows." Joyce then, defending his artistic choices in *Dubliners*, pleads, "I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people from having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass" (Joyce 1975, 89-90). The key here is the proximity of Joyce acknowledging *Punch*, the satirical magazine, and one of his most famous lines – intentionally appropriated – utilized in *Ulysses*: the mention of Ireland seeing itself in his looking-glass.

We know that Joyce was familiar with Mary Shelley's famous novel and even thought about it during the early drafting stages of *Ulysses*. In the earliest known *Ulysses*-specific manuscript, under Joyce's header of "Books", he listed among others, "Shelley (Mrs): Frankenstein" (Joyce 2012). The James Joyce Digital Archives mentions that this notebook was likely purchased by Joyce in mid-October of 1917 and its earliest use was the "Telemachus" fair copy, the first episode of *Ulysses*. However, it is interesting that nowhere in *Ulysses*, or any of Joyce's works, is Mary Shelley or Frankenstein ever mentioned. So while these notes never materialized in the text of *Ulysses*, it was a particular book Joyce was thinking about during the construction of the "Telemachus" episode.

In Episode I of *Ulysses*, "Telemachus", first published serially in 1918 in *The Little Review*, Stephen and Buck Mulligan are slinging casual remarks at one another in the morning of June 16, 1904 where the novel begins. Stephen, Joyce's literary avatar, is a budding writer struggling to find his voice and Mulligan, the extroverted medical student, is all too obliging in poking at his insecurities. The feud begins with Mulligan holding the mirror he was using to shave with:

The rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in a mirror, he said. If Wilde were only alive to see you!

Drawing back and pointing, Stephen said with bitterness:

It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookingglass of a servant. (Joyce 1986, 6)

The phrase Mulligan uses is a direct quote from Oscar Wilde's preface to his own *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published in 1891. Wilde writes:

The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the  
rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.  
The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is  
the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a  
glass. (Wilde 2003, 1)

Mulligan's reference is the second part of the above stanza, in which Wilde illuminates the 1800s dislike at acknowledging their own realism and their dislike at acknowledging their lack of romanticism. It is almost hinting at Joyce's future use of realism in *Ulysses* over the outdated style which came before, thus holding a mirror to the ugly face of society unfettered by the blush of the romantics. To his credit, Mulligan does mention Wilde in his outburst. Vincent Cheng expertly elaborates on what can be seen as the relationship of this Wilde quote to the political cartoons of Tenniel and *Punch*: "While Buck may be willing to condone the English racialization and simianization of the Irish as a native 'Caliban,' the Irish response...was often the rage of the Irishman precisely at seeing his face represented in the English mirror as Caliban, and the parallel rage of not seeing in one's reflection oneself as one's own master" (Cheng 1995, 152). Again, while it is a stretch to assume Joyce's use of this particular Wilde quote was in *direct* response to Tenniel, it can be seen how he is beginning to appropriate his fellow Irishman's words against the English in similar fashion to the exploitation of Mary Shelley's words by *Punch* against the Irish.

Stephen's uncited phrasing comes directly from Oscar Wilde's essay, "The Decay of Lying", also published in 1891 and bearing an ironic title given how Stephen passively claims it as his own. It could be argued that Stephen is responding to Mulligan's Wilde quote with one of his own, but the appropriation will become evident later. Cyril and Vivian in Wilde's work are discussing art just as Mulligan and Stephen are in *Ulysses*. Cyril exclaims, "I can quite understand your objection to art being treated as a mirror. You think it would reduce genius to the position of a cracked looking-glass" (Wilde 1998, 10). And it is an interesting, albeit anecdotal, connection that Tenniel also illustrated Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* in 1871. Joyce is clearly utilizing Oscar Wilde's words to establish a sense of validity to his own writing style – a style that, deemed filthy by authorities, would see *Ulysses* banned in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. This writing style was referenced in his letter to Richards as well as justified in his quoting of Wilde in regard to a new century's shifting literary views. We have the connection of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* with Caliban and Joyce's use of Irish writer Oscar Wilde, and this leads to their linguistic curses against their colonial masters, as Shakespeare's monster suggested.

In his article, “Joycean Lice and the Life of Art”, James Ramey suggests that “since Caliban’s name is a well-known anagram for ‘cannibal’, Buck’s quotation can also be understood as a ‘cannibalizing’ of Wilde’s epigram [...]” (Ramey 2012, 41). Ramey continues with, “as Gifford and Seidman’s annotation reveals, Stephen’s rejoinder is also ‘cannibalized’ from Wilde, though Stephen keeps its provenance conveniently unmentioned [...]” (Ramey 2012, 42). Fascinatingly, this relationship between Caliban and cannibalism was not lost on the editor and writers of *Punch*. On October 15, 1902 in volume 123, an anonymous author in *Punch* wrote a very short editorial enticingly titled “Another Cryptogram”:

The name *Caliban* has been thought to be cryptographic for ‘cannibal.’ That SHAKESPEARE intended this to be the reading of the monster’s character is sufficiently shown by the complaint, cleverly assigned to another *persona* for purposes of disguise: ‘Not a relation for a breakfast.’ (*Tempest*, Act V 1902, 258)

This sense of literary cannibalism is a perfect metaphor for someone appropriating the works of one of their own national writers. And so, Caliban comes to represent this literary appropriation, the stealing of someone’s words for another’s pen.

These appropriated quotes from Wilde finally become weaponized when it piques the interest of another character in the “Telemachus” episode: Haines, the English occupier of the Martello Tower where Mulligan and Stephen are living. Vincent Cheng beautifully elucidates this dynamic:

[...]the Martello Tower becomes a figure and parable for Ireland itself; as a small part of Irish territory embodying the dilemma of the whole, the tower is a synecdoche for the Irish condition without Home Rule: it is ‘occupied’ (in both domestic and imperial senses) by a British presence (Haines) and by a native collaborator, the latter having the treacherous qualities of the wooden-horse (Mulligan, ‘equine...grained and hued like pale oak’). Stephen’s very first words in the novel – ‘Tell me, Mulligan...How long is Haines going to stay in this tower?’ (*U* 1.47-49) – resonate with the Home Rule question and the longing for Irish autonomy from English occupation. (Cheng 1995, 151-152)

Towards the end of the “Telemachus” episode, Haines approaches Stephen and explains:

I intend to make a collection of your sayings if you will let me.  
Speaking to me. They wash and tub and scrub. Agenbite of inwit. Conscience.  
Yet here’s a spot.  
That one about the cracked lookingglass of a servant being the symbol of Irish art is deuced good. (Joyce 1986, 14)

Here, Haines’s intentions become clear. He wishes to use what he believes to be Stephen’s own witty commentary for his own purposes in publishing a

collection of Irish sayings. While he asks Stephen's permission, he certainly doesn't need it and it is likely more of a friendly formality rather than a request for usage. Haines, the Englishman, can certainly take what he wants from Stephen, the Irishman. Meanwhile, Stephen thinks to himself "agenbite of inwit" which is Old English for "remorse of conscience". Immediately after, Stephen quotes Lady Macbeth with, "Yet here's a spot" from Act V, Scene I of *Macbeth* in which she hallucinates the blood on her hands representing her manifested guilt regarding the monster her husband had become. Stephen feels the pang of a guilty conscience at letting Haines assume he is the originator of the quote, and yet he does nothing to correct this error. Haines, the Englishman, will undoubtedly appropriate Stephen's appropriation and hence the cannibalism of the Irish Caliban continues.

This feeling of letting the English steal – which is in their nature, as the Irish see it – what has already been stolen is a sort of poetic justice while also doubling as a revelation of the English's parasitic relationship with the colonized Irish. James Ramey writes of Stephen's line, "it also symbolizes Irish art because it has been stolen" and he continues with, "In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce would give expression to his parasitic brand of 'storytelling' with the oft-quoted term, 'stolentelling' (Joyce 1939, 424)" (Ramey 2012, 42). And so, this sense of the English injustices against Ireland crept up throughout Joyce's works in a myriad of allusions, references, and examples.

Fascinatingly, it is in Wilde's "The Decay of Lying", the very text Joyce has Stephen quote from, that he expounds on his views of art and literature. Richard Ellmann points out Wilde's pioneering perspective on art in this essay when he writes, "Towards the end of the 'eighties Wilde propounded such a general motive of art in 'The Decay of Lying.' In this he turned Aristotle on his head by saying that art does not imitate nature, nature imitates art" (Ellmann 1987, 30). This is a startling break from the popular romanticism of his predecessors. And yet, when one looks closely at this avantgarde, if not bizarre, interpretation of the value of art, one can sense that it lies at the heart of what Tenniel, *Punch*, and Joyce are doing in these instances. Consider the concept of nature extending beyond the branches of trees and songs of birds, but also to include human nature, our innateness and base instincts as living animals. It is the intent of Tenniel and *Punch* magazine with their illustrations and editorials to influence the English populace just as it is the purpose of Joyce to sway the minds of the Irish people in their views of the English by the allowing of Haines, the Englishman, to exploit Wilde's texts. In this sense, it is their aim to ensure human nature imitates art – their art.

## Conclusion

James Joyce's decision to appropriate Oscar Wilde's words and spirit were an intentional and symbolic one. As Margot Backus clarified, "In an abstract sense, Oscar Wilde and James Joyce were vulnerable relative to British print

culture for identical reasons. Both were Irish, and both were repeatedly accused of running afoul of the British middle class, gentlemanly norms that their public deviations both challenged and defined” (Backus 2008, 106). And as she continued, there was a clear connection between Wilde and Parnell, the target of Tenniel’s “The Irish Frankenstein” cartoon. “[...] Joyce not only identified with Wilde, as he also clearly did with Wilde’s fellow Irish sex martyr, Parnell, but that Wilde’s double identity as both the subject and object of scandalous writing provided a locus in *Ulysses* for new writerly counter-strategies” (Backus 2008, 105). What Backus is referring to here is that in 1895, Wilde sued John Sholto Douglass, the 9<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Queensberry, for libel at the public accusation he was a sodomite. Wilde eventually lost the case, being forced to concede when it was revealed that the defense had evidence of his homosexuality. Also, this trial exposed Wilde for being a homosexual which meant that shortly after, he was charged with sodomy and gross indecency. Dirk Van Hulle elaborated on this and its effect on Joyce when he quoted Wyndham Lewis’s 1927, *An Analysis of the Mind of James Joyce*: “Oscar Wilde serves as a paradigm: ‘He became almost a political martyr, other countries using his well-advertised agony to point to the philistinism of England’ (209)” (Van Hulle 2009, 78). In May of 1895 Wilde was convicted of the latter charge and incarcerated until 1897. A few years earlier, when Captain William O’Shea divorced from his wife, Katharine, it came out that she had been having a long affair with Irish nationalist leader and parliamentarian Charles Stewart Parnell. Afterwards, the Catholic church condemned Parnell and others within his own political party abandoned him. Thus, as Backus proclaimed, Parnell and Wilde were connected in Joyce’s eyes as “Irish sex martyr[s]”, but also, as Lewis declared, Wilde was seen as a “political martyr” too. When considering whose works, if anyone’s, to appropriate in an attack against English thievery of the Irish, it is certainly poetic justice to use a prominent Irishman persecuted (and prosecuted) by the English. As a result of these political and social complexities, Parnell was even further associated with Caliban in *Ulysses* when in the “Circe” episode, the hallucination of Alexander J. Dowie accuses Leopold Bloom of being “Caliban!” (Joyce 1986, 401). The Mob then immediately proclaims, “Lynch him! Roast him! He’s as bad as Parnell was. Mr. Fox!” (Joyce 1986, 402). Mr. Fox was Parnell’s sobriquet in his affair with Mrs. O’Shea. Once again, the racially-charged Irish Caliban emerges to smear the image of an Irish nationalist.

James Joyce was very familiar with both of these national scandals involving Wilde and Parnell, as he revealed in his many writings. Oscar Wilde was no friend of the English and, in fact, during the time of the Phoenix Park murders, was in the United States on a lecture tour. On this tour, “he told an audience in Brooklyn, ‘One never knows how thoroughly right one is until one disagrees thoroughly on all important subjects with the English people’” (Rogers 2004, 255). Wilde was a fascination of Joyce’s for not only his admired works, but also his complicated life. In his 1909 essay, “Oscar Wilde: The Poet

of ‘Salome’”, published in *Il Piccolo della Serra*, Joyce wrote that, “His greatest crime was to have caused in England a scandal I[...]” (Joyce 2008, 150). Wilde beautifully embodied, like Parnell, the Irish martyr at the hands of the English oppressor. Appropriating his words which Haines, the Englishman would later steal for his own, was methodically appropriate for Joyce’s symbolic message.

In the same essay from 1909, Joyce also wrote, “Each man writes his own sin into *Dorian Gray* (Wilde’s most celebrated novel). What Dorian Gray’s sin was no one says and no one knows. He who discovers it has committed it” (Joyce 2008, 151). The use of having Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses* quote this particular novel was a stroke of genius because as Joyce points out, the sins one discovers within the text are reflective of the context in which it is read. If Haines were to eventually exploit Stephen’s quote for his own book of Irish sayings, he would likely discover from a well-read editor that he was actually exploiting the words of acclaimed writer Oscar Wilde, not Stephen. To use the sin of theft to reveal the sin of theft was Joyce’s way of revealing one of the many sins of the English colonizers through the very sin of which they were being accused.

It is in his very own use of literary theft that Joyce most effectively apprehends the English thief red-handed. In a way, this back-and-forth practice of artistic exploitation is actually self-cannibalistic. John Tenniel and *Punch* steal and manipulate the words of English writer Mary Shelley to paint the Irish nationalists as brutish murderers. James Joyce excises and quotes Irish writer Oscar Wilde to lay the trap, thus catching the English thief in the act of colonial parasitism. And both sides act out their political dramas in the shadow of Shakespeare, the unavoidable muse of English literature. The use of popular national writers would strike a familiarity with the public, allowing for subversive edits and reworking of messages. It is an unfortunately recognizable tactic in this 21<sup>st</sup> century age of “fake news”. And all of this in an effort to tap into the pathos of a society, coaxing the mass of public opinion to which a representative democracy must yield, in an effort to win the war of words (and images): enacting change with the liberation of Ireland as a free nation or stabilizing the status quo of a British empire united and stronger as one. Ultimately it would be the former that won the day when Ireland finally established its independence from Great Britain in 1922, the same year when in novel form, Joyce’s *Ulysses* was published and then banned in the United Kingdom.



### THE IRISH FRANKENSTEIN.

"The baseful and blood-stained Monster \* \* \* yet was it not my Master to the very extent that it was my Creature ? \* \* \* Had I not breathed into it my own spirit ?" \* \* \* (Extract from the Works of C. S. P-UN-LL, M.P.)



### THE IRISH "TEMPEST."

CALIBAN (RORY OF THE HILLS). "THIS ISLAND'S MINE, BY SYCORAX MY MOTHER,  
WHICH THOU TAK'ST FROM ME."—*Shakespeare.*

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