

Childhood, Gender, and Nation in *Ulysses**

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Abstract

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is the modern national allegory of Ireland. However, it also contains many narrative strands involving children. In these strands, most children are seen to live unhappily, suffering from poverty, which results from British colonization, and from adults' discipline. Children of different genders play different roles in the novel. Boys are the epitome of the future while girls are usually of a marginalized status and their virginites are sites of men's desire and fathers' worry. Children of different genders allegorize different aspects and situations of Ireland. Boys stand as an allegory of the Irish national future and character while girls are the allegory of Ireland's land and culture.

Key words

Ulysses, children, childhood, gender, nation

Introduction

James Joyce's *Ulysses*, as some critics claim, is the modern national epic/allegory of Ireland (Gilbert, 1963, p. 180; Jameson, 1986, p. 68). It encapsulates Joyce's profound concern with the national dilemma of Ireland under British colonialism. It is also regarded the pioneer post-colonialist novel (Duffy, 1994, p. 2-3). Though thinking about a nation's fate (as this novel mainly does) seems to bear little relation with writing about children, who are often supposed to hold little knowledge about national affairs, *Ulysses* does contain a lot of writing about children in a number of cases.

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Joyce's writing about children and childhood in this national epic is one of the essential ways of writing about his nation. Though *Ulysses* does not overtly claim that it is true that "a person's identification with nation begins to take root in childhood" (Scourfield, Dicks, Drakeford, & Davies, 2006, p. 1), its writing about children is subtly connected with its writing about Irish people's national identity on an allegorical level. As a matter of fact, the writing about children in *Ulysses* is closely related with Joyce's concern with the fate of both Ireland and its people. Quite interestingly, Joyce's writing about children of different genders expresses his concern with different aspects of the national affairs of his motherland.

Children and Childhood in *Ulysses*

As Rousseau (1762/2007) stated in the Preface to *Emile*. "We know nothing of childhood" and "the wisest writers [...] are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man" (p. 34). Though Joyce tells us nothing of what the children are thinking, readers can infer what kind of life the children live, or what kind of life adults lead, or even what problems the adults are confronted with, because "childhood is conventionally seen as a time of 'structured becoming,' a time defined as preparatory to the values and preoccupations of the adult world which take root within a child self that is still malleable and 'different'" (Scourfield et al., 2006, p. 1).

In *Ulysses*, there are two types of children, that is, the living and the dead. As for the living, whether rich or poor, whether boys or girls, these children live unhappily. Though many historians and literary researchers have made tentative studies on childhood, they cannot agree on many issues concerning childhood (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1998, p. 12). "It is [the] question of the existence and investment of emotion which has clearly generated a great deal of anxiety, and which became - and has remained - the focus of concern and dispute" (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1998, p. 11). That is, it is the dispute concerning the question of whether parents in history attached as much emotion and love as parents in contemporary society are claimed to do to their children that lies in the core of all those disagreements (Lesnik-Oberstein, 1998, p. 12). But an unhappy childhood in *Ulysses*, in most cases, does not necessarily indicate anything related to their parents' lack of love or negligence of their duty as parents, because all the

parents except Stephen's father are loving ones, which will be shown in my later discussion.

The living can be roughly divided into two groups, namely, the unhappy ones and the seemingly happy ones. In *Ulysses*, most living children are not happy. In the novel, most parents love their children very much. According to Stephen, his mother, as well as Cyril Sargent's, "had loved [her child], borne him in her arms and in her heart," and she means protection to her child, for "[b]ut for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail" (Joyce, 1986, p. 23). Here Stephen seems to think about his and Sargent's mothers, but he is in fact thinking about all mothers, because a mother would love her child's "weak watery blood drained from her own" (Joyce, 1986, p. 23). This kind of love, in Stephen's mind, is the "only true thing in life" (Joyce, 1986, p. 170), because it is out of a mother's nature to love her own blood. Bloom, as a father, loves his children very much, too. His memory of the scenes of Milly's birth, his "row" with her for that bracelet, "her slim legs running up the staircase," "her pinching her cheeks to make them red," and his concern for her salary and safety (Joyce, 1986, p. 54) all show that he is a loving father. But no matter how much these parents love their children, most children suffer poverty and starvation in the Ireland of *Ulysses*. To the parents who themselves suffer from poverty and starvation, their children are a burden to their family economy and have no choice but live in poverty and starvation as their parents do. For Mr. and Mrs. Breen, their children are a burden to their family because they seem to have too great an appetite in the eyes of their parents, who are too poor to support a large family (Joyce, 1986, p. 128). For Mrs. Dignam, who has just lost her husband, her children means a great burden to her, and her friends are arranging to send her elder son and her daughter to some workhouses to earn a living, thinking that they are doing something good to the Dignams (Joyce, 1986, p. 84). Though these children's parents love these children, they are too poor to provide their children with a happy childhood.

The case is also true with Stephen's brothers and sisters. Stephen has fourteen brothers and sisters, and they are too many for their family, which keeps on declining economically in the face of British colonization. They often live in malnutrition and starvation. What they can eat is only "[p]otatoes and marge, marge and potatoes" (Joyce, 1986, p. 125) and they have to sell their brother's books for money. They only mean annoyance to their

father, because they need money from their father to buy food, but their father wants to keep that very little sum of money for drinking alcohol and pleasure seeking, for he is unhappy with his family's decline.

These children are living in malnutrition and starvation not because their parents don't love them but because their parents, who are also living in poverty and starvation, cannot provide them with sufficient food. Stephen's father seems to be an exception, because he is reluctant to give his daughter money to buy food when he does have some money. But he himself is a victim of the British colonialism; he is suffering from the decline of his family's economic and social status and only drinking can make him feel a little better. Whether willingly or not, he does give his daughter a little sum of money out of his pocket. In this sense, he is only a co-sufferer with his daughters.

Besides suffering from material insufficiency, children have to endure adults' teaching and coaxing. In *Ulysses*, children's behaviors are doomed to be judged by adults who use double standards in dealing with their own affairs and those of the children. In Episode 13, there are 2 boys, Tommy and Jacky, who are twin brothers. They fight with each other because Tommy wants to take the sand tower Jacky built into possession and change it into the style he likes. Jacky defends his tower by attacking Tommy who is about to attack Jacky to rob Jacky's tower. The result of this slight altercation is that Tommy is defeated and comes to grief. At this moment, their sister Cissy, though still a girl but to the twin brothers playing the role of an adult caregiver, comes to end their altercation by appeasing Tommy and scolding Jacky as "culprit" and "nasty bold Jacky" (Joyce, 1986, p. 285). Neither Tommy nor Jacky dare to disagree with their sister because "[her] word was the law of the twin" (Joyce, 1986, p. 285). Here the altercation of the twin brothers is solved by their sister's law. Thus, the heroic Jacky, who bravely defends *his* castle, is judged as the culprit and the nasty bold boy. Of course, Cissy's judgment of Jacky may be taken as an attempt to appease Tommy, but Cissy names what the infant spits on his bib as "[p]uddeny pie" (Joyce, 1986, p. 297), and this is a telling case to prove that "Cissy labours throughout this passage, as elsewhere, to coax baby towards language" (McLean, 2004, p. 110). To put it in another way, Cissy uses verbal magic to babies and infants to convert what is unpleasant into what is sweeter and more acceptable to herself.

There is a group of children who seem to enjoy happiness in their child-

hood but have to be under adults' control in *Ulysses*. These are Stephen's students. They are the offspring of Ulstermen, who are comparatively rich. They live well and eat well. They don't study hard and live an easy life. What they want to do in school is hear ghost stories. But their wish is denied by the adult Stephen. They wish to hear a ghost story but instead are told riddles the answers to which they have no idea of. These children's relationship with Stephen is quite complicated: they have to listen to Stephen because Stephen is their history teacher, but they are unwilling to listen to Stephen because Stephen, as a native Irishman, belongs to the colonized and holds a lower status than these Ulster offspring. In this case, as children, they should listen to the adult; but as colonizers (though they are only followers of the British colonizers), they are masters, who are much superior to the adult subaltern.

Besides the living children, there is one child who died when he was only 11 days old and has been dead for 11 years. He is Bloom's dead son Rudy. He died before he knew the taste of childhood and his death is his parents' permanent pain. Bloom became impotent and has had no intercourse with Molly since Rudy's death. And Bloom's impotence is the very reason for Molly's adultery with Boylan, which in turn causes another permanent pain to Bloom. Though Rudy is dead and absent in the text, his spectral influence can be felt everywhere. His death does not only mean the absence of Bloom's heir, but also the death of Bloom's hope to reproduce another heir and the termination of Bloom and Molly's sexual pleasure.

Children and Gender in *Ulysses*

"Colonialism is often depicted in gender terms, with the paternal metropole governing a feminine periphery" (Baker, 2000, p. 35). As a national allegory of Ireland, children of different sexes play different roles and are written differently in *Ulysses*. Allegorically boys are the epitome of future while girls are usually of a marginalized status in *Ulysses*. Boys are the builders and makers, and even troublemakers, while girls are a site of worries and need protection from males, but at the same time have to play the role of pacifiers.

As the second-sex in patriarchal society, women are persecuted and victimized by males, and it is a tradition for anti-colonialist writers to express their anti-colonialist message in the narrative of gender, in which the sub-

altern group is often defined by “class, caste, ethnicity, age, gender, or any other form of subordination” (Sharpe, 1993, p. 16). Girls, as young subaltern women who haven’t reached the age of finding themselves a means of living, suffer most under the oppression of patriarch and ethnicity. Stephen’s sisters are not only under the oppression of colonialism but also under that of the males. They suffer from poverty, which is the direct result of British colonialism because it is British colonialism that makes their father lose his job and makes their family, and all Irish families, into “houses of decay, mine, his and all” (Joyce, 1986, p. 33). They also suffer from the patriarch, which is represented by their father, who keeps the large part of that little sum of money of the whole family for his own pleasure, drinking and singing with other men. These girls have to live on potatoes and marge. So they are the most marginalized among the marginalized Irish.

Girls are often the cause of worry and their virginity needs protection from their parents, especially their fathers. For instance, Milly, Bloom’s daughter, is the cause of Bloom’s worry, because she is subject to man’s desire and assault. Milly has just passed her 15th birthday. But when reflecting on her birthday, Bloom has only very momentary happiness and soon gets greatly worried for the potential that his daughter may be kissed by or even have intercourse with a man.

A soft qualm, regret, flowed down his backbone, increasing. Will happen, yes. Prevent. Useless: can’t move. Girl’s sweet light lips. Will happen too. He felt the flowing qualm spread over him. Useless to move now. Lips kissed, kissing, kissed. (Joyce, 1986, p. 55)

Bloom’s worry for her daughter’s being kissed becomes greater and greater. He knows that “[g]irl’s sweet light lips” are the very object for men’s desire, just as Gerty’s body is the very object for Bloom’s sexual desire in Episode 13 (Joyce, 1986, pp. 308-314). It is no use to prevent it, because his daughter, as a young girl, may be too attracted (by her boyfriend’s sexuality) to move, that is, to resist it. Bloom worries about his daughter’s losing her virginity and is eager to prevent it. He feels very sad when he realizes that he cannot do so. He seems to hope that his daughter

would never grow up or become mature or have intercourse with any males. His worry may have something to do with his awareness that his wife may have intercourse with Boylan. “Will happen too” also means Molly will be kissed by Boylan. This is another flowing “qualm” spreading over him. It is also useless to “move” (here, take action) now. It is quite interesting here for Bloom to mix his worries for his daughter and his wife. This may be due to his assumed role of a father to protect his daughter’s virginity and that of a husband to protect his wife’s chastity. It seems that both Milly and Molly are objects/possessions to be defended by males, either father or husband, and sites of men’s worry. We can infer from it that girls in the eyes of their parents are a source of worry and an object to be protected.

In *The Portrait*, Joyce seems to indicate that “the mother seems to be in touch with the overwhelming chaos of nature. The father, in contrast, offers a model of logocentric control” (Henke, 1982, p. 82) in which actions are governed by reason and emotional distance. But in *Ulysses*, Joyce seems to point out that males are after all not so reasonable as all that and are more likely to cause trouble.

Quite interestingly, this kind of unreasonableness is specially applied to Irish men. All the Irish males seem far from models of logocentric control in the text. Bloom is a womanly man who is for the whole day distressed by his wife’s potential adultery with Boylan without finding out any reasonable way to solve that problem; Stephen is a cynical young man plagued by and brooding all day long about his position of being a servant of two masters and a servant of the servant, only finding exile as a solution. Dignam and Stephen’s father are drunkards, and Mr. Breen is a lunatic. As for boys, they are not only far from being under logocentric control, but also self-willed and headstrong and likely to cause altercations which only girls can pacify. In Episode 13, Tommy is described as headstrong, and Jacky as self-willed (Joyce, 1986, p. 285). They are the cause of discord, and even the epitome of troublemaking. The sentence “[b]oys will be boys and our two twins were not exception to this golden rule” (Joyce, 1986, p. 285) indicates that boys will inevitably behave like boys and this is a golden rule that applies to all boys. But what is this golden rule? The next sentences in the text give a hint: “The apple of discord was a certain *castle* [...] true to the maxim that every little *Irishman*’s house is his castle [...]” (Joyce, 1986, p. 285, emphases added). Here boys are closely linked with

the castle and the castle is closely linked with the defense of the castle and the right to possess it and thus is closely linked with strife and fight.

When boys make trouble or are in strife, it is girls who are more likely to assume the role of the pacifier. When Tommy and Jacky are in an altercation and fight with each other, it is their sister who pacifies the loser Tommy after the fight. Though Cissy, their sister, is not a teenage girl any more, it is reasonable to say that she had been a peace-maker and a pacifier even when she was a young girl, because she

was awfully fond of children, so patient with little sufferers and Tommy Caffrey could never be got to take his castor oil unless it was Cissy Caffrey that held his nose and promised him the scatty heel of the loaf or brown bread with golden syrup on. What a persuasive power that girl had! (Joyce, 1986, p. 284)

It is worth noting that Cissy's role as pacifier and peace-maker and her role as one having authority to judge and discipline the child do not coexist on the same level. She is the pacifier and peace-maker as a female, and law to judge and discipline as an adult. It is the adult that has the priority to judge the child, while it is the female that often plays the role of the pacifier, and even the caregiver, which can be further proved by the three girls in Episode 13 of the novel. Gerty, as a girl, plays the role of "ministering angel" and functions as "a second mother" for her family (Joyce, 1986, p. 291). She is "a sterling gold daughter" for her parents, taking good care of her mother and minding and doing house chores (Joyce, 1986, p. 291). Cissy and Edy are caregivers to their little brothers. Cissy takes care of the twin brothers and sweeps off the sand of Tommy and Edy looks after the infant and cleans its spit and urine. In *Ulysses*, "the three marriageable women are drubbers and cleaners, laundresses of the world" (McLean, 2004, p. 112).

Quite interestingly, however headstrong and self-willed, boys are the epitome of future and continuity, and however good in caring and cleaning, girls are not taken as future and continuity for their parents in *Ulysses*. Though Bloom has a daughter, he still thinks that he is an heirless father. His son Rudy has been dead since his infancy, and his death is a heavy blow to Bloom, not only making Bloom impotent but also worsening his

relationship with his wife. Bloom takes Rudy as the only hope for his continuity. So though Rudy has been dead for 11 years, Bloom keeps on missing him. The psychological result is that Rudy's spectre never leaves Bloom. Bloom becomes a sonless father forever in search of a "spiritual son" (Gilbert, 1952, p. 103), though he has a living daughter. Spiritually he becomes "the creator of Stephen Dedalus" (Gilbert, 1952, p. 103). That can explain why Bloom thinks Simon Dedalus, who has many daughters, "is right" in having a mind "full of his son" (Joyce, 1986, p. 73).

Though Andras Ungar (2002) in *Joyce's Ulysses as National Epic* takes Milly as Bloom's continuity, he at the same time thinks the conjunction of Stephen and Milly as an alternative to Bloom's equation of Stephen and Rudy: "The design [of *Ulysses*] deploys the conjunction of Stephen Dedalus and Milly Bloom, the alternative to Bloom's tentative equation of Stephen and Rudy, as approximations of the communal 'we,' the attribution of collective agency that renders membership in a community thinkable" (p. 67). Here "alternative" indicates another choice or even second choice. Bloom has a daughter, Milly, but why does he look for a spiritual son? Why is he always missing Rudy? Why does he in hallucination identify Rudy with Stephen? The answer is obvious because Milly is Bloom's continuity only in the material and physical sense but not in the cultural sense. In Bloom's mind, "Molly. Milly. Same thing watered down. [...] Yes, yes, a woman too. Life. Life" (Joyce, 1986, p. 74). Milly is but a woman who will multiply and continue Bloom's life. But it is Rudy that Bloom takes for an heir, who can make it possible for "something to hand on," and it is only Rudy that is "[his] son," "from [him]," who can give him "strange feeling" (Joyce, 1986, p. 73). Bloom's heir-in-full-sense dies with the death of Rudy and though he has a daughter, he does not regard her as his heir because she cannot play the role of his future in the full sense, biological, cultural, economic, spiritual, and figurative. So his desire for an heir, who is his future in the fullest sense, will never be satisfied, except for a momentary hallucination in which he equates Rudy with another young male, Stephen, the mind of whose biological father is also "full of his son" (Joyce, 1986, p. 73).

Children and Nation in *Ulysses*

In *Ulysses*, Joyce's writing about children serves to articulate Joyce's thinking about Ireland. Firstly, Joyce writes about Ireland's loss of independence

and the miserable condition of Irish people through writing about children, mostly girls. Girls are closely related with a nation's land and territory in most (post)colonialist texts. When analyzing the images of women in *Ulysses*, Adam Woodruff (2004) argues, "the depiction of a virginal Irish motherhood [...] threatened by a ravishing invader has never been far removed from images of whoredom and feminine complicity" (p. 85). This indicates that the loss of the homeland or cultural purity of a nation is often allegorized by the loss of virginity, which results in the transformation of a virginal girl to a whore-like woman. The employment of the female body as the allegory of the territory or cultural purity of a nation is prevalent in the text of *Ulysses*. For an example, in the first episode, the old milkwoman is linked with Ireland quite obviously. She is named by Stephen as "[s]ilk of the kine" and "poor old woman" (Joyce, 1986, p. 12), which are both old names to refer to Ireland. Her sexuality is linked with Ireland's servility to and its loss of autonomy to Britain as well as the plague on it from Irish civilians. Ireland's servility to Britain and some of its civilian's disrespect for its autonomy are allegorized by the bodily pleasure she provides: "A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean" (Joyce, 1986, p. 12). And for another example, Stephen's mother May typifies "the stricture of motherhood and Catholicism, which threaten to trap Stephen's soul" (Benstock, 1975, p. 401). She is a "ghoul," "chewer of corpses" (Joyce, 1986, p. 9) preying on the young artist of Ireland, who "had come to him after her death," suffocating Stephen with her "odour of wax and rosewood" and "faint odour of wetted ashes" from her corpse (Joyce, 1986, p. 5). Not only the milkwoman and May but all the women in *Ulysses* are allegories for Ireland. "[T]he scenes of women are the scenes of the most thoroughly delineated subalternity in *Ulysses*" (Duffy, 2004, p. 189). If all the women can be taken as the allegory of subalternity in a novel which is regarded as a national epic, girls, who are an important group among women, can also be epitomes of Ireland.

The potential loss of Milly's virginity is the allegory of Ireland's loss of its cultural purity in the process of British colonization. Kearney (1997) points out that in colonial and post-colonial writings, the loss of girls' virginity is usually the allegory of the loss of a nation's homeland (pp. 119-121). I would argue that this loss might well be the allegory of the colonized nation's loss of its cultural purity, which cannot be preserved in

the inevitable cultural hybridity that is attendant on the process of colonization. Bloom knows that Milly will lose her virginity one day, however hard he may try to prevent it. It is “useless” because Milly may be so enchanted/trapped that she “can’t move” (Joyce, 1986, p. 55). This is what faces Ireland. It will lose or has lost the virginity/purity of its culture (and of course it has lost its land). This “will happen” even though the Irish may not like it and may try to prevent the loss. Milly will become a woman and will very much likely become Molly, whose “yes” is interpreted by Duffy (2004) as an allegory for the possibility of building a community “on acceptance of equality between different but equal groups and subjects” (p. 207). I think the reason why Molly can allegorize “acceptance of equality between different but equal groups and subjects” is closely linked with her attitude towards her different lovers. Her acceptance of all kinds of lovers, old or young, black or white, native or foreign, fat or thin, is an allegory for the necessity to accept cultural difference in the process of cultural hybridity. As the “same thing” as Molly and a “watered down” version of Molly (Joyce, 1986, p. 74), there is no reason for Milly not to be taken as an allegory to stand for Irish culture.

Secondly, Joyce writes about the characteristics of the Irish nation through writing about children, mostly boys. In (post)colonial writings, “fellow-citizens are brothers and sisters” (Loomba, 1998, p. 216). That is to say, in (post)colonial writings, images of brothers and sisters are often used to stand for fellow citizens. But quite ironically, in the Irish case the “brothers” are always in strife, which can be shown in the case of Tommy and Jacky. Joyce links Tommy and Jacky’s altercation to Irishness. As *little* Irishmen, they are headstrong and self-willed and even a sand castle can be the apple of discord to them.

But if Master Tommy was headstrong Master Jacky was selfwilled too and, true to the maxim that every little Irishman’s house is his castle, he fell upon his hated rival and to such purpose that the would be assailant came to grief and (alas to relate!) the coveted castle too. (Joyce, 1986, p. 285)

One thing worth our attention is that there is no such maxim as “every little *Irishman’s* house is his castle” (emphases added). There is only a max-

im “every *Englishman’s* house is his castle” (emphases added). Joyce’s changing “Englishman” into “*little* Irishman” (emphases added) makes full use of the power of parody, the purpose of which is not only to emphasize by imitation but also to create irony and even to invert the original meaning. The purpose of Joyce in doing so may be to indicate that it may not be the Irishman but the Englishman who is at pains to prove that the Irishman is “selfwilled,” “headstrong,” and “little” (which has a hint of “childish and low in status”).

Given that in Joyce’s time Irish people were widely regarded by the British as “childish,” “headstrong,” and needing to be taken care of (Cheng, 1995, p. 28), we have enough reason to interpret this little altercation between the boys as an allegory of the discord among different camps in Ireland, and the twin brothers as an allegory of the childish, headstrong Irish people who are regarded by the British to be in “a niche somewhere between the ‘white negro’ and the anthropoid apes” (Curtis, 1971, p. 107) and in need of being ruled (taken care of) by their colonialist masters.

But this may be interpreted in another way. Joyce may emphasize that this quality of being “selfwilled,” “headstrong,” “little,” and liking altercation is Irishness. The resentment against one’s brother is prevalent in the text of *Ulysses*. Stephen thinks that “[a] brother is as easily forgotten as an umbrella” and takes his brother as a “whetstone” (Joyce, 1986, p. 173), the dullness and crudeness of which spurs him on in his artistic pursuit; Shakespeare has a great abhorrence for his brothers because they have “cuckqueaned” him with their adultery with his wife. “[T]he theme of the false or the usurping or the adulterous brother or the three in one is to Shakespeare, what the poor are not, always with him” (Joyce, 1986, p. 174). Of course in *Ulysses* Shakespeare is not a solitary character irrelevant to any other characters. He in the allegorical sense is Stephen himself: “[I]f Stephen’s Shakespeare theory tells us very little about Shakespeare the man, it speaks volumes about Stephen Dedalus [as an artist]” (Weinstock, 2004, p. 65). Stephen in many aspects is like Shakespeare. As elder brother, he resents his younger brother; as an artist, he makes the ugliness of life into art of beauty. Furthermore, Stephen’s resentment against his brother(s) is closely related with his resentment against his fellow countrymen, for he overtly equates his brother with the nationalist Cranly and the pleasure-seeking citizen Mulligan: “My whetstone. [my brother], Cranly, Mulligan” (Joyce, 1986, p. 175). He dislikes Cranly because Cranly, like

many other nationalists, wants to “yoke [Stephen] as his yokefellow” (Joyce, 1986, p. 36), that is, to control Stephen’s artistic creation for the nationalist cause. And Mulligan, though going to the opposite direction by planning to “Hellenize” Ireland (Joyce, 1986, p. 6), plays the same role as Cranly, because the enterprises of both Cranly and Mulligan will do harm to Ireland. That’s why Stephen equates Mulligan’s arm with Cranly’s arm, which, in his mind, are both coercive controls. So Tommy’s altercation with Jacky is not something of a game or play thing, but can be interpreted as resonating with Stephen’s strife with his brother and his fellow countrymen, or allegorically, as an epitome of the strife among the nationalists (represented by Cranly), the collaborators with the colonialists (represented by Mulligan), and the young Irish artist who wants to “forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race” (Joyce, 1992, p. 196). And the result of Tommy and Jacky’s altercation is the ruin of the sand castle, which can be interpreted as an indication of the harm done to Ireland by the altercation among the nationalists, the collaborators with the colonialists, and the young Irish artist. In such a civil altercation, the Irish people may both lose their land to England and provide chances to their colonialist masters to further discipline them.

Sons are always allegorically connected with a nation’s future and the absence of sons often allegorizes the loss of hope and future in (post)colonialist writing, just as Stuart Gilbert (1952) has suggested: the motif of the heir in *Ulysses* should be interpreted as “a link between the past and the generations of the future” (p. 106). In *Ulysses*, there are two heroes. One is Bloom, a sonless father in search of a son; the other is Stephen, a fatherless son in search of a father. Finally they become spiritual father and son. What makes this possible is Bloom’s dead son, Rudy, the spectral child in *Ulysses*. Rudy is present in *Ulysses*, for he lives in Bloom’s consciousness; he is absent, for he is dead, and his death is in fact the real cause of Bloom’s impotence, which itself means lack of vitality. Rudy’s death does not only mean the death of Bloom’s heir, but also means the death of Bloom’s other potential heirs, because Rudy’s death results in the inability of Bloom to reproduce. But Rudy’s death also makes it possible for him to live through Stephen. This can be read as an allegory for the Irish culture. Irish history has lost its hope to reproduce its future if it is confined within its native culture, and its son, which is the offspring begot within its own native sphere, is dead, and results in the impotence of the

native father. The only hope is to find a spiritual son from another family, which allegorizes hybridity with other cultures. So Rudy, the spectral boy, and his spiritual substitute Stephen allegorize the dilemma and hope of Irish native culture. Or to put in another way, the state of Bloom's lack of a son and Stephen's lack of a spiritual father (he does have a biological one though), and that of Rudy's living between absence and presence indicate the discontinuity between Irish history and Irish future, and the potential solution of this discontinuity, for a father is often linked with the past, which is proposed or indicated by Stephen as well as some critics on *Ulysses*. In Stephen's Shakespeare theory, a son's growth means his father's decline (Joyce, 1986, p. 170), which means the father is forever his son's past. Weinstock (2004) also finds this and argues that "all that the father-function represents" is "authority, tradition, culture, society etc" (p. 66). And Maddox equates the father with the past when discussing Stephen's artistic freedom (Weinstock, 2004, p. 67). A fatherless son stands for the historyless future, and a sonless father stands for the futureless past. The dead son positioned between presence and absence, the son who is substituted for by a spiritual son, indicates a national future that is not a certain but only a glimmering hope.

Sargent is yet another boy who is closely linked with the position of the Irish nation. His relationship with his mother is an allegory of the relationship between an Irishman and his nation. Though he is ugly, weak and stupid, Sargent is dearly loved by his mother: "Yet someone had loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail" (Joyce, 1986, p. 23). What cannot be ignored in the description of this boy and his teacher Stephen is that the image of Sargent is mingled with that of Stephen so much that it is hard to distinguish who is who. "Like him was I, these sloping shoulders, this gracelessness. My childhood bends beside me [...] Mine is far and his secret as our eyes. Secrets, silent, stony sit in the dark palaces of both our hearts [...]" (Joyce, 1986, p. 24). They mingled into one; even their hearts become one. Their mothers also metamorphose into each other. In many sentences of the text, it is hard to find out whether the mother is Stephen's or Sargent's. The mother in the sentence "with her weak blood and wheysour milk she had fed him and hid from sight of others his swaddlingbands" (Joyce, 1986, p. 23) can be Stephen's and/or Sargent's. So Sargent's relationship with his mother can be that of Stephen

with his mother. Weinstock (2004) argues, “May Dedalus [...] incarnates Stephen’s guilt at betraying his up-bringing, at having moved too far away from the cultural expectations [...] Stephen is trapped between two poles. The need to distance himself from his culture and his guilt at doing so” (p. 71). Weinstock here obviously links Stephen’s relationship with his mother to his relationship with his native culture. However much Stephen repudiates his culture, he still loves it and feels guilty for his betraying it, just as however much he rejects his mother, he still loves her and feels guilty at refusing to obey her will. Given that “[l]ike him was I” and “My childhood bends beside me,” it is reasonable to argue that Sargent’s relationship with his mother is that of Stephen with his mother, and that this relationship is also an allegory for the relationship between a person and his nation. In this view, however poor and weak a nation is, its citizens will love it and without it they would be trampled underfoot, like boneless snails.

Conclusion

All in all, in *Ulysses*, children are the most subaltern among the subaltern. On a realistic plane, they are “little sufferers” (Joyce, 1986, p. 284), who, as children, have to suffer from adults’ control and discipline; as Irish children, have to suffer from poverty and starvation resulting from British colonization; if they are girls, they are put into a much lower status than boys, and have to endure patriarchal oppression in addition to the oppressions from adults and colonialism. On an allegorical plane, children in *Ulysses* allegorize the fate of Ireland and Irish national character. Girls’ virginity is closely related with *Ireland*, its autonomy and its cultural purity, while boys are closely linked with the assumed Irish national character, the relationship among different camps of the natives, and the future of Irish nation. But as we explore Joyce’s writing about children, three things are worth our attention. Firstly, in this national epic, children’s identities are quite fluid and unstable, just as any characters in *Ulysses*, and the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is very complicated. Girls play double roles to boys: as females, they are cleaners and caregivers for boys; as substitutes for adults, they function as teachers and discipliners. The identities of Stephen’s students are also unstable in their relationship with Stephen: as sons of Ulstermen, these boys are masters; as students, they are under

the discipline of a native Irishman. Both Stephen, and Rudy are, in a certain sense, Bloom's heir, but their identities are different: Rudy is heir in all the senses except the biological sense, because he is biologically absent; Stephen is heir in the allegorical yet full sense. Secondly, metamorphosis is very important in analyzing Joyce's writing about children. In Bloom's mind, Milly and Molly are the "[s]ame thing"; in Stephen's eyes, Sargent's childhood is also Stephen's childhood. Sargent's mother is undistinguishable from Stephen's own mother; in Stephen's mind, Mulligan's arms are Cranly's arms. By such metamorphoses, Joyce deconstructs the binary oppositions between the adult and the child, the colonized and the colonizer, the nationalist and the gay-betrayer of Ireland. Thirdly, Joyce is quite ambivalent to Ireland and his fellow countrymen, as is allegorized by Stephen's repudiating and loving attitude to his mother and his regarding his countrymen as brothers who act as his whetstone. This kind of ambivalence can help to explain James Joyce's choice to be an exile far away from his homeland, refusing to be back home, but stick on writing about Ireland and Irish matters, spiritually never leaving his homeland till his death.

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