‘The Anti-Racist Avant-Garde: Modernist Legacies and Experimentation in Ralph Ellison and James Joyces’ postcolonial and racial subjects’

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Contents

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Abstract

When Ralph Ellison won the National Book Award for his 1952 novel *Invisible Man*, he cemented himself as a crucial figure in the American literary canon. His depictions of the difficulties in African American life remain crucial and relevant to this day, seventy years after their publication. The themes of nationhood, visibility, technology, and betrayal found in Ellison's work still resonate deeply with modern society, and through the depth of his prose Ellison was able to render a fully three-dimensional picture of how the tensions between these themes manifested themselves in Black life. Ellison took great inspiration from the modernist writers of the early twentieth century in the production of his work, but arguably no writer played a more significant role in Ellison's literary development than James Joyce. Despite this clear engagement with Joyce's modernist legacies, relatively little has been written about Ellison's relationship to the Irish author - a lacuna which provides the inspiration for this thesis.

The first chapter will look at Joyce's 'A Mother' and Ellison's 'In A Strange Country' to provide an overview of each authors' early anti-colonial/-racist arguments, with specific focus on their use of music as it relates to nationalism. The second chapter will discuss the pinnacle of each authors' canon - *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man* respectively - within a cultural materialist framework. This chapter will investigate the temporal experimentation in the 'Cyclops' section of *Ulysses* and the 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue' sections of *Invisible Man*, examining how such experimentation effects the anti-colonial/-racist arguments in each text. The final chapter will focus primarily on several published excerpts from Ellison's unpublished second novel *Three Days Before The Shooting*…, discussing how his experimentation in these pieces allowed him to dissect and expose the socio-technical ensembles that enabled the promulgation of white supremacy in America.

The radio sections of *Finnegans Wake* will provide crucial support here, with Ellison's 'Cadillac Flambé' providing the pivot point for the chapter.

This thesis will chart a parallel development in Joyce and Ellisons' work, from their early short stories, to their career defining novels *Invisible Man* and *Ulysses*, before looking at their final works, investigating the symbiotic relationship between the experimentation in and the serialisation of these novels. It will argue that their technical and formal experimentation enabled a nuance and complexity in their arguments which would otherwise have been lacking, and as such bolstered their textual diagnoses of the multi-faceted issues of anti-racism and anti-colonialism, creating more sophisticated blueprints for social change.

Notes on the text

- All material quoted in this thesis appears as originally printed and is cited according to MHRA style conventions. Throughout this thesis, I will be capitalising ‘Black’, and leaving ‘white’ in lower case when referring to ethnicity, in line with current critical usage. Cited texts will be referenced fully upon their first appearance in the thesis, with further references being shortened accordingly. Where a single text is cited by one author, further footnotes will reference surname and page number only. Where multiple texts are cited from one author, the footnote will reference surname, page number, and which text the reference is located in.

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Abbreviations:

- ‘In A Strange Country’ = *IASC*
- *Invisible Man* = *IM*
- *Finnegans Wake* = *FW*
- *Three Days Before The Shooting…* = *TD*

Introduction

> That Senator up there wasn't simply degrading my Caddy. That wasn't the *point*. It's that he would low-rate a thing so truly fine as a *Cadillac* just in order to degrade *me* and my *people*. He was accusing *me* of lowering the value of the auto, when all I ever wanted was the very best! [1]

This quotation, from Ralph Ellison's unfinished second novel *Three Days Before The Shooting…,* succinctly conveys the author's preoccupations in the aftermath of his National Book Award winning debut, *Invisible Man*.[2] Adam Sunraider - the ex-child preacher from a Black community turned race-baiting, white supremacist U.S senator - has suggested that, due to the number of African Americans driving Cadillacs, the car should be offensively renamed with a racial epithet as the 'Coon Cage Eight".[3] LeeWillie Minifees, a Black jazz musician who hears this pronouncement over the radio, decides to reply to the racist, inflammatory statement by burning his Cadillac on the Senator's lawn in protest, delivering the speech quoted above in the process. Minifees' words strike to the heart of Ellison's preoccupations at the time of writing here - the interplay between the dominant socio-technical ensembles prevalent in mid-century America, and the anti-Black racism that abounded in the lead-up to the signing of the Civil Rights Act. The relationship between consumption and upward mobility, the racially signifying power of automobiles, the media ecology that enabled the proliferation of white supremacy, and the racist, exclusionary politics of mid-century America are all investigated in this work with Ellison's trademark precision. Minifees status as a famous jazz musician is crucial in this figuring: his improvised music informs his improvised political activism in the form of burning his Cadillac, which acts counter to the rigid structures of the hegemonic white media ensemble he is protesting. In order to be able

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[1] Ralph Ellison, *Three Days Before The Shooting…,* ed. by John F. Callahan and Adam Bradley (New York: The Modern Library, 2010), p. 1092.

[2] Ellison, *Invisible Man* (London: Penguin Classics, 2001).

[3] Ellison, *TD,* p. 1095.

to truly understand and appreciate the complexities of Ellison's final work, we must first trace a thread back to his literary origins at the Tuskegee Institute. Ellison joined the prestigious Black college in 1933 in order to study music - the trumpet, specifically - and it was during his studies that Ellison first became acquainted with T.S Eliot's landmark work *The Waste Land*.[4] In '*The Art of Fiction*: An Interview', Ellison cites reading *The Waste Land* as a crucial moment in his literary development, asserting that it both 'moved and intrigued' him, and lead him to wonder 'why I had never read anything of equal intensity and sensibility by an American Negro writer.'[5] From here, Ellison 'practiced writing and studied Joyce, Dostoevsky, Stein, and Hemingway', and in the process, connected his project to the high modernist tradition. Discovering these critical touchstones of Ellison's early literary studies coincided with his disillusionment with the Tuskegee Institute: far from finding a more egalitarian, socially progressive ethos than the white universities that would not admit him, Ellison discovered that Tuskegee was equally (though differently) obsessed with class distinctions and other limitations on African Americans intellectual and social potential. Arnold Rampersad writes that initially, Ellison could not afford to enrol in the School of Music, and decided instead to enrol in 'the cheaper, less desirable School of Education', which lead him to 'almost quit Tuskegee altogether' at the time.[6] This sharpening of Ellison's class-consciousness became a clear motive for writing, and he would brutally satirise the Tuskegee Institute and its shortcomings in the early chapters of *Invisible Man*. But intriguingly, in the same interview, Ellison also asserts that he 'didn't think too much of the proletarian fiction' of the time, and looked instead to André Malraux as a model of 'the artist revolutionary rather than

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[4] T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', in *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002), pp. 39-57.

[5] Ralph Ellison, '*The Art of Fiction*: An Interview', in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp. 210-224 (p. 210).

[6] Arnold Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 2008), p. 56.

a politician when he wrote'.[7] His course was clear then - fiction that enacted social change, developing from the modernist tradition but adapting it to his own needs, or departing from it altogether. I would argue, therefore, that the modernist writer most central to the evolution of Ellison's fiction was not T.S. Eliot, as is often asserted, but James Joyce.

It is of course hard to overstate James Joyce's influence over the literary landscape of the past century, but his influence over Ellison is of particular - though not always fully acknowledged – importance. In 'Richard Wright's Blues', a review of Wright's *Black Boy*,[8] Ellison writes keenly that Wright's 'use of fictional techniques, its concern with criminality (sin) and the artistic sensibility, and in its author's judgement and rejection of the narrow world of his origin, it recalls Joyce's rejection of Dublin in *A Portrait of the Artist'*.[9] Such themes resonated with Ellison in Joyce's work, and would later find their way into his own fiction. In a letter to Kenneth Burke, Ellison directly addressed his relationship with Joyce, writing that he 'went to Joyce for illumination of Negro life only to discover that it works both ways and that Negro life dominates much of Joyce.'[10] This is a clear rejection of the literary fashion of the time: the New Critics' attempts to 'decontextualize literature, to isolate it from the social fabric and ignore its political import', which led to focusing solely on the 'permutations and complexities of language' in Joyce's work rather than his complex political engagements.[11] So whilst Ellison's relationship with Eliot was foundational, Joyce's themes of exile, troubled national identity, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism spoke more urgently to the arguments contained within Ellison's fiction, as well as

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[7] Ibid., p. 211.

[8] Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (London: Vintage, 2000).

[9] Ralph Ellison, 'Richard Wright's Blues', in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp. 128-154 (p. 129).

[10] Ralph Ellison, *The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison,* ed. by John F. Callahan and Marc C. Conner (New York: Random House, 2019), p. 208.

[11] Jeffrey Segal, *Joyce in America: Cultural Politics and the Trials of Ulysses* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 120-124.

to his lived experience as a Black man in pre-Civil Rights America. Crucial to this relationship, too, was Joyce's overtly experimental language. The complex linguistics of *Ulysses*[12] - alongside its crucial temporal experiments in sections such as 'Cyclops' - provided pivotal inspiration for Ellison's debut novel, with both authors' acts of aesthetic disruption in their experimentation enacting a disruption of the hierarchies which language often imposes upon oppressed peoples.

Despite this powerful connection between Ellison and Joyce, however, comparative explorations of their work has been relatively neglected by critics when compared to, for example, the relationship between Ellison and Eliot, or even Dostoevsky.[13] While there have been extended explorations of Ellison's relationship to Joyce - most notably by R.N List -[14] the critical landscape is still comparatively bare. In addition, the comparatively recent publication of the manuscript drafts of *Three Days* in 2010 has widened the field of Ellison studies remarkably, but has included no current work on Joyce's influence on the text. This thesis aims to contribute to filling this gap in Ellison criticism through its comparative analysis of the authors' work by means of a literary historical close reading of works from different points of their respective careers, within an intersectional anti-racist, anti-colonial framework. It will explore the experimental nature of Ellison and Joyces' prose, and its modernist origins, to consider how their literary vanguardism impacted their anti-racist and anti-colonial messaging. The thesis will also investigate how Ellison engaged with modernist legacies and adapted them to fit his specific needs as a Black writer in mid-century America, and in the process, how he became a pioneer of anti-racist postmodernity. The thesis will argue that the complexity stemming from the authors' experimental prose disrupted the rigid social hierarchies that language can perpetuate, whilst also acting

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[12] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000).

[13] See Ralph Ellison, *Richard Wright's Blues*, p. 129.

[14] R.N. List, *Dedalus In Harlem* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1982).

as a diagnostic tool for exposing other systems that can proliferate oppression, such as technology and the media.

The first chapter will investigate foundational examples of each authors' early short fiction: James Joyce's 'A Mother',[15] and Ralph Ellison's 'In A Strange Country'.[16] Unlike the work that I will be discussing in later chapters, these two short stories are both firmly rooted in the realist tradition, and as such they will allow me to establish a 'base line' against which to consider the more overtly experimental literary techniques that defined their later output. Crucially, these works also established their anti-colonial and anti-racist strategies, and I show how music became the defining link between the short stories' political arguments. In Joyce's 'A Mother', the plot centres around a concert being staged by an Irish nationalist society, with complications ensuing when an English soprano is drafted in at the eleventh hour to perform traditional Irish music. Ellison's 'In A Strange Country', on the other hand, deals more explicitly in the nationalist element of music through its engagement with national anthems, performed by the singers of a Welsh members' club for a Black American soldier, Parker, who has suffered a violent, racist attack at the hands of his white brothers in arms. The stories provide a clear vision of how the authors' would engage with the disjunctions of national identity, colonial subjugation, and racism in their later works, with the musical through-line hinting towards their later literary experimentations with sound technologies. This chapter also establishes the post-colonial and anti-racist critical frameworks of the thesis, with Joshua Epstein's work in *Sublime Noise: Musical Culture and the Modernist Writer* providing crucial

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[15] James Joyce, 'A Mother', in *Dubliners* (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), pp. 134-148.

[16] Ralph Ellison, 'In A Strange Country', in *Flying Home and Other Stories* (New York: Random House, 1996), pp. 137-146.

theoretical groundwork within which I frame the close readings.[17] The work of Douglas Hyde and Martin Dowling are also essential critical touchstones in unpacking the nationalist politics at play in Joyce's 'A Mother', while Daniel Williams and Barbara Foleys' work being similarly pivotal in my readings of 'In A Strange Country'.

The second chapter develops the first chapter's emphasis on sound, as the thesis moves on to investigate the authors' *chef d'oeuvres* - Ellison's *Invisible Man*, and Joyce's *Ulysses.* An extensive investigation of both texts is beyond the scope of this thesis, but there are some centrally important sections in each novel which strongly correlate Joyce's work and Ellison's. To that end, I focus on the 'Cyclops' episode from *Ulysses*, and both the 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue' sections of *Invisible Man*, while drawing on salient examples from other parts of the books. For example, Joyce's denounces the anti-Semitism he witnessed in Dublin through his experimental characterisation of 'the citizen' and the nameless narrator of 'Cyclops' so effectively that the section remains one of the most critically enduring episodes of *Ulysses.* His use of asides and parodies complicates linear plotting, which not only sharpens the reader's eye to the instances of anti-Semitism in Barney Kiernan's pub, but also functions as a layered critique of regressive Irish nationalism itself through its deployment of traditional literary styles. Ellison likewise steps outside of linear time in the 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue' sections of *Invisible Man* in order to convey the way in which African Americans live 'outside the groove of history',[18] and how this affects the formation of their identities in relation to hegemonic white society. In doing so, Ellison enforces a form of Du Boisian double consciousness - the fact of African Americans 'always looking at [themselves] through the eyes of others as a result of their position as an Othered racial group in America

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[17] Joshua Epstein, *Sublime Noise: Musical Culture and the Modernist Writer* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014).

[18] Ellison, *IM,* p. 426.

-[19] upon his protagonist. It is through this enforced perspective that the unnamed narrator known as 'Invisible' is able to understand the historical depths that contribute to the formation his own Black identity. This second chapter of the thesis builds upon the post-colonial and anti-racist frameworks of the first by expanding its critical horizons into a cultural materialist framework. Karen Lawrence and David Hayman's work on Joyce's *Ulysses* - and specifically their work on 'Cyclops'- provide crucial historical and socio-political context to the close readings, with the work of Alexander G. Weheliye and Michael Germana framing my analysis of Ellison's temporal experiments in *Invisible Man*.

The third and final chapter of the thesis engages with the previously utilised frameworks - alongside a media theory lens - in order to discuss Ellison's experimentation and vital anti-racist arguments in a selection of the published excerpts from his unfinished second novel *Three Days...* The most enduring excerpt of the eight published in Ellison's lifetime, 'Cadillac Flambé' will provide the central locus of the argument, with *Finnegans Wake* providing context for the modernist legacies that the close readings engage with.[20] In particular, this comparative reading develops my focus on sound from previous chapters, by discussing how both 'Cadillac Flambé' and *Finnegans Wake* use radio as a key technology in the dissemination of nationalist and racist rhetoric in the mid-twentieth century, and provide important insights into how such socio-technical ensembles overlap in different spheres of society, and in particular how they can promulgate exclusionary, harmful beliefs. Ellison's use of radio places this broadcast technology at the heart of the white supremacist discourse in America, using its media ecology as a microcosm in which to explore the spread of racist ideologies. The chapter also examines how what I call the meta-

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[19] W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Souls of Black Folk', in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 613-740 (p. 615).

[20] James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

serialisation – the plot of the excerpts containing narrative, stylistic and extra-narrative through-lines to other excerpts - of the work re-enforces ideas about the role of media in the spreading of racial hatred. To this end, John F. Callahan and Adam Bradley's insights into Ellison's unpublished work help contextualise the print and reception contexts of the published excerpts, while Sam Halliday's *Cinema and Cinematicity in Ralph Ellison's* Three Days Before The Shooting…[21] and Jeremy Packer's *Mobility Without Mayhem* engage with technology and media studies frameworks, which I draw on when discussing the role of technology in the proliferation of hate in Ellison's work.[22] Packer's work in particular addresses the racially signifying power of automobiles in the United States, by developing Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s definition of signifyin(g) as 'the Daydream of the Black other' which enacts 'chiastic fantasies of reversal of power relationships' to include technologies.[23] Garry Leonard and Catherine Flynns' work on consumer culture, technology, and radio in *Finnegans Wake* also helps trace the development of media technology as a driver of literary experiment from modernism to early-post-modernism in this chapter.

The mastery of craft needed to interleave the racially signifying power of consumption, the socio-technical ensembles that enable white supremacy, as well as the tensions and nuances of inter-racial power dynamics that accompanied the build-up to the signing of the Civil Rights bill in 'Cadillac Flambé' helps explain the urgency of Ellison's literary experimentation. The complexity of his subject matter required complexity of prose, just as James Joyce's high modernist project had required such complexity decades before. Without the experimentation at the heart of each writer's literary

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[21] Sam Halliday, *Cinema and Cinematicity in Ralph Ellison's* Three Days Before The Shooting…, *Literature of the Americas*, 8 (June 2020), 309-335.

[22] Jeremy Packer, *Mobility Without Mayhem: Safety, Cars, and Citizenship* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008).

[23] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 78.

oeuvre, their anti-colonial and anti-racist arguments would arguably not have so successfully challenged the language of oppression, nor the prevailing social hierarchies of their day. The symbiotic, if outwardly paradoxical, relationship between clarity of argument and unconventional prose are arguably why the authors' works endure to this day. To fully understand the societal importance of Senator Sunraider 'low-rat[ing] a thing so truly fine as a *Cadillac'*,[24] however, we must explore – as Ellison did in his unfinished novel - the early twentieth-century origins of anti-colonial and anti-racist argument that shaped their later vanguardism. As the first chapter of the thesis will discuss, the vocal performances of 'A Mother' and 'In A Strange Country' laid clear foundations for the music-media ecology that would remain vital to both authors' literary projects, with the critiques of nationalism, racism, and colonialism that these performances enabled suggesting Joyce and Ellison's later counter-hegemonic arguments.

[24] Ellison, *TD,* p. 1092.

Chapter 1: Vocal performance as nationalist expression in ‘A Mother’ and ‘In A Strange Country’

One of literary modernism’s most significant interdisciplinary connections is its fascination with music and the musicality of the written word. Perhaps the main artistic challenge of this convergence - translating the elusive, aural sensations of the played note onto the page without musical notation - preoccupied many writers throughout this period, and James Joyce and Ralph Ellison were no exceptions. As Joshua Epstein writes, noise and music are ‘mutually informing sonic presences’, and states that after the war, modernist musicians saw their art as an avenue through which they could ‘interpret, orchestrate, sublimate, amplify, or critique the sounds and the affective shocks of industrialization, urbanization, warfare, publicity, and mechanical reproducibility.’[25] Epstein goes on to note that, despite the sonic revolutions that were occurring, such as the ‘syncopations and disjunctive melodic contours of jazz, [and] the introduction of mechanical instruments and industrial noises in concert pieces’, music was in fact ‘digesting, not annihilating, its traditions through new rhythms, dissonances, and noises.’[26] This same ‘digestion’ was also present in the birth of literary modernism. Both art forms were ‘digesting’ their traditions, all the while embracing the dissonance and disharmony of a post-war world, resulting in radical new works which, from the language of Jelly Roll Morton’s genre defining *Jelly Roll Blues*,[27] to the music of Virginia Woolf’s earliest experimentations in *Jacob’s Room,*[28] were tuning readers into this new fidelity.

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[25] Epstein, p. xv.

[26] Ibid, p. xiii.

[27] ‘Jelly Roll Blues’, Jelly Roll Morton (Indiana: Gennet Records, 1923) [Spotify].

[28] Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room* (London: Hogarth Press, 1922).

The fidelity to which the audience were being tuned, however, is perhaps the main point of contention between the two mediums. The prevalence of jazz and folk music resulting from the impact of the war was attuning the genres' listeners to a sense of community that was urgently needed in a traumatised society. As Bohlam notes, 'Folk music in the modern world […] has shed any cloak, real or imagined, of isolation. No community experiences only its "own" folk music, whether its external experiences are by its own volition or not.'.[29] Musical modernism was gestating an attitude of acceptance, breaking down social boundaries as a response to the horrors that had been collectively experienced during the war years. The same attitude was not necessarily present in literary high modernism, however. Though structurally innovative, literary high modernism often championed a return to a more traditional conception of erudition, with writers like Eliot and Pound writing from a place which prioritised a 'classically educated' idea of intellectualism, drawing heavily from mythology, religion, and orthodox canonical figures like Dante and Shakespeare. Instead of looking forward towards a more fractured and progressive societal model, literary high modernism attempted to heal the trauma of the war with a regression to previous ideals of intellectualism.[30] T.S. Eliot expressed this view most clearly when he wrote of *Ulysses* that [i]n using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him.'[31] Eliot saw the literary high modernist method as a way 'of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history', and thus

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[29] Phillip V. Bohlam, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) p. 124.

[30] See Joshua Kavaloski, *High Modernism: Aestheticism and Performativity in Literature of the 1920s* (New York: Camden House, 2014), pp. 39-72.

[31] T.S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth', in *The Dial,* 75.5 (November 1923), 480-483 (p. 483).

regaining a sense of control that had society had been lacking since 1914.[32]

Joyce is identified as a pillar of literary high modernism, but assignations of Joyce as a high modernist are complicated by the contradictions between the subject of his writing and the ideals of the literary high modernist method. Whilst he draws from myth and religion extensively throughout his writing, the folk and nationalist music that encompassed the Irish national identity of the time are also central to Joyce's work. Irish folk music was championing a more community spirited, individualistic ideal of society, and was deeply rooted in pride about the Irish identity, shunning the colonial power of England in favour of a return to traditional Irish culture. This rejection of English traditionalism implicitly contained within it a rejection of the 'classical erudition' that literary high modernism revered, and by focusing on such cultural outputs Joyce placed himself in a complex and uncertain position with regard to literary high modernism. The legacies of high modernism were perhaps most prevalent throughout the interwar period, it being the defining literary movement of the time,[33] and it is upon these legacies that Ralph Ellison began his literary experiments towards the beginning of the Second World War.

Ralph Ellison's writing placed him in a similar position to Joyce. Ellison's literary experimentation situated him adjacent to the literary high modernist camp, and his novel *Invisible Man* winning the National Book Award in 1953 cemented him as a crucial inheritor of the form.[34] The arguments that he puts forth in his fiction, however, are often representative of what Daniel Williams describes as the 'internationalist, anti-fascist politics of the war

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[32] Ibid., p. 483.

[33] Kavaloski, pp. 39-72.

[34] See Barbara Foley, *Wrestling with the Left: The Making of Ralph Ellison's* Invisible Man (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 69-108.

years'.[35] This sets him apart from some of literary high modernism's main advocates - namely Pound, Eliot, and Yeats - whose political beliefs tended towards fascism, anti-semitism and racism in various forms throughout their lives. Where literary high modernism was exclusionary in its return to 'traditional ideals' derived from classical, white, middle class education, Barbara Foley describes various aspects of Ellison's early fiction as 'left-wing argument[s] for proletarian internationalism', and writes that the epilogue to *Invisible Man* is a 'protomulticulturalist celebration of American diversity'.[36] Neither of these descriptions of Ellison's writing can be squared with the often classist, racist ideals of literary high modernism. Through his engagement with music in his early short fiction - particularly his dealing with national anthems in 'In A Strange Country' - Ellison adapted the modernist entanglement with music to his own arguments, ploughing an anti-nationalist, anti-racist furrow in doing so.

The politics that Joyce and Ellison engage with through their engagement with music differentiates them from their literary high modernist cohort, complicating their relationship to the movement, and embodying the disharmony of a world recovering from the greatest social trauma it had experienced thus far. Joyce and Ellison's complex position within the literary movements of the time is what leads to their writing being so deeply affective, as their engagement with internationalist, anti-racist, anti-colonial politics through the music they decide to write about adds nuance to their literary output and moves them away from an elitist, exclusionary form of literary high modernism in favour of community and diversity. By examining the authors' work comparatively, we are able to see how the musical forms they engage with further their anti-colonial and anti-racist arguments - specifically that the unconscious reaction music elicits can reveal nationalist

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[35] Daniel Williams, '"If we only had some of what they have": Ralph Ellison in Wales', *Comparative American Studies,* 4.1 (November 2013), 25-48 (p. 43).

[36] Barbara Foley, 'Reading Redness: Politics and Audience in Ralph Ellison's Early Short Fiction', in *Journal of Narrative Theory,* 29.3 (Fall 1999) 323-339 (p. 326).

beliefs, and can thus inform nationalist expression. It will also afford insight into how Ellison's productive engagement with Joyce's modernist project informed a literary project altogether more urgent to his own experiences, nation, and time, even at this early stage of his career.

Nationalist folk music in James Joyce's 'A Mother'

Joyce's engagement with traditional Irish folk music is best represented in his short story 'A Mother', through which he conveys the complicated relationship between national identity and art at a crucial moment in Ireland's history. In the very first paragraph, the reader is told that a 'Mr Holohan, assistant secretary of the *Eire Abu* Society, had been […] arranging about [a] series of concerts.'[37] Joyce immediately brings about a scene of post-colonial Ireland with the introduction of the fictitious *Eire Abu* Society, who borrow their name from a common nationalist slogan which translates to 'Ireland for Victory'. Joyce's mixing of nationalist slogans with an artistic endeavour points us immediately to a character in touch with the Irish cultural Revival. As Terence Brown notes, the Revival sought 'Irish cultural independence from English influence',[38] and concerts of traditional Irish music were key events in this attempt to build independence. The Feis Ceoil Association was a key aspect of this musical revolution, founded in 1897 by two members of the Gaelic League, Dr Annie Patterson and Edward Martyn. The Gaelic League's primary goal was to promote the use of the Irish language, and the Feis Ceoil Association was one avenue through which they aimed to achieve this. Every year, a competition is held by the Feis Ceoil, in which musicians from across Ireland compete in various categories, with a particular impetus on performing music in the Irish language - Joyce himself took part in the tenor competition of the 1903 Feis Ceoil, winning a bronze medal.[39]

While the musical programme Mr Holohan is concocting is not explicitly referenced as a Feis Ceoil Association event, Joyce's experience with the organisation are clear influences in this story. Joyce reasserts the

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[37] Joyce, *A Mother,* p. 134.

[38] Terence Brown, 'Notes', in *Dubliners* (England: Penguin Classics, 2000), pp. 237-337 (p. 292).

[39] Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 151-152.

link in his mind - and the public consciousness of the time - between music and Irish independence, when the reader is told that the story's familial centre piece, the Kearneys, would gather outside the Catholic pro-Cathedral after masses which marked special occasions with their 'musical friends or Nationalist friends', with the group often saying 'good-bye to one another in Irish' as members gradually peeled off.[40]

The group's decision to speak a little Irish with one another may seem insignificant at first glance, but the number of Irish people who spoke Irish daily was very low: in the 1911 census, only 17.6% of respondents answered that they could speak Irish.[41] The fact that the group decide to continue their use of the Irish language is a clear example of them holding on to their autonomy as Irish citizens, rather than merely accepting their place as subjects of British colonial rule. Joyce introduces the story's musical focal point - Miss Kathleen Kearney - through the mention of her schooling at 'a good convent, where she learned French and music and afterwards […] at the Academy.'[42] Here, the academy referred to is the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, a conservatoire which specialises in Irish music, with a particular focus on the harp - an unwavering and widely recognised symbol of Irish sovereignty. Through her RIAM education, combined with the Kearney family's explicit association with Dublin's nationalists, Joyce positions Kathleen as a personification of the musical revolution occurring in Ireland as a result of the Gaelic League's efforts, and accordingly Mr Holohan asks her to perform in the four concerts he is programming.

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[40] Joyce, *A Mother*, p. 135.

[41] Central Statistics Office, *Census of Population 1926 - Chapter IX: Irish Language* (1926) < https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/census/census1926results/volume10/C_1926_V10_Chapter_IX.pdf > [accessed 15 March 2023].

[42] Joyce, *A Mother*, p. 135.

When the first two concerts don't go to plan, the Committee decide to enlist an English soprano, 'Madam Glynn from London',[43] but in their haste to do so they overlook Kathleen's payment, to the point of Mrs Kearney having to fight them for the eight guineas her daughter is owed. Dowling remarks that Mrs Kearney's position in the musical affairs of her daughter 'endow her with specific and valuable cultural capital within the musical milieu' of the story, as evidenced by the fact that Holohan is 'completely dependent on her'.[44] This dependency is evidenced by Mr Holohan's initial involvement of Mrs Kearney, and with her aid in structuring the programme for the concert, in which she was 'invariably friendly and advising - homely, in fact'.[45] The Committee's overlooking of Kathleen - the embodiment of the Gaelic Revival's musically driven nationalist ambitions - represents the citizens of Ireland overlooking their heritage in favour of the saving grace of English culture. Mrs Kearney's struggle to have her demands met, and for Mr Holohan and the committee to insult her in the process, acts as a microcosm of England refusing sovereignty to Ireland for so long, and treating them abysmally in the process.

Complications with remuneration are at the heart of Anglo-Irish relations - a perfect example being the British government's initial refusal to provide aid to the Irish citizenry when the Great Famine began in 1845. As Gurminder K. Bhambra writes, the British government's view that the Irish had not 'paid their share of taxation' was a major factor in this decision,[46] despite British Prime Minister Robert Peel exempting Ireland from paying income and property tax to the British government in this period. Once the British government finally provided aid, they converted the sum into a loan, which

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[43] Ibid., p. 139.

[44] Dowling, p. 446.

[45] Joyce, *A Mother*, p. 145.

[46] Gurminder K. Bhambra, 'Relations of extraction, relations of redistribution: Empire, nation, and the construction of the British welfare state', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 73.1 (2022) 4-15 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9306532/> [accessed 1 December 2022] (para. 8).

Douglas Kanter estimates increased Ireland's debt to the British government by an astounding 75% during a time of fatal economic hardship.[47] Kathleen's payment, in comparison, is only 2.5% short, but Mrs Kearney's moral indignation at this makes it clear to the reader that she is aware of the monetary issues that abound within oppressive power structures. The gendered nature of the conflict between Mr Holohan and Mrs Kearney is abundantly clear as well - decorous behaviour on the part of Mrs Kearney 'requires submitting to [male] power rather than insisting on a contract' for her daughter,[48] just as 'proper' behaviour on the part of Ireland would be to simply accept the culturally obliterating force of its colonisation at the hands of the English. Mrs Kearney's fight, however, shows that neither women, nor Ireland, will simply submit to the demands put upon them by their oppressors.

A year before he founded the Gaelic League - and 46 years before he became the first President of Ireland - Douglas Hyde expressed his thoughts about the English influence on Irish culture in 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland',[49] delivered before a congregation of the Irish National Literary Society in 1892. Hyde begins by qualifying that his beliefs are not 'a protest against imitating what is best in the English people', but a rejection of the tendency of the period to 'adopt, pell-mell, and indiscriminately, everything that is English, simply because it is English.'[50] Kathleen being overlooked in favour of Madam Glynn is an example of this adoption of Englishness *qua* Englishness; Joyce makes this subtextual insinuation explicit when the actual performances begin. Madam Glynn is a clear embodiment of the British state, and yet she cannot render a tolerable

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[47] Douglas Kanter, 'The Politics of Irish Taxation, 1842–53', *The English Historical Review*, 127.528. (2012) 1121-1155 (p. 1139).

[48] Dowling, p. 447.

[49] Douglas Hyde, 'The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland', in *The Revival of Irish Literature: Addresses by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, K.C.M.G, Dr. George Sigerson, and Dr. Douglas Hyde* (London: FQ Books, 2010), pp. 115-161.

[50] Ibid., p. 117.

performance of ‘Killarney’, a situation which epitomises the Irish Nationalists’ rejection of the British state having any engagement with Irish culture, and vice versa. Hyde believed that Irish art and literature were ‘the best claim which [the Irish] ha[d] upon the world’s recognition of [them] as a separate nationality’ from the English, but were ‘throw[ing] away with both hands what would make it so’.[51] Hyde provides the theoretical workings of the problem, but through Madam Glynn, Joyce explicitly demonstrates that British assimilation without the loss of Irish culture is simply not possible, evidenced through the ‘cheaper parts of the hall making fun of [Madam Glynn’s] high wailing notes.’[52] In stark contrast to Madam Glynn’s tragic performance, Kathleen gives a rousing performance of several ‘Irish airs which were generously applauded’,[53] despite her status as a relative novice. Joyce highlights the dichotomy between the failings of Madam Glynn’s professional English performance and the triumph of the genuinely Irish exports of the evening further when he writes that the concert’s ‘first part closed with a stirring patriotic recitation delivered by a young lady who arranged amateur theatricals. It was deservedly applauded; and, when it was ended, the men went out for the interval, content’.[54]

The explicit success of the elements of the concert which were amateur, but earnestly Irish, over the imported English professionalism serves as proof of Hyde’s notion that it is the ‘Gaelic past […] [which] is really at the bottom of the Irish heart’,[55] and not a desire to assimilate with the British Empire. The contrast between the youth of the woman delivering the recitation and Madam Glynn, who ‘looked as if she had been resurrected

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[51] Ibid., p. 119.

[52] Joyce, *A Mother*, p. 145.

[53] Ibid., p. 145.

[54] Ibid., p. 145.

[55] Hyde, p. 121.

from an old stage-wardrobe' is striking here.[56] By aligning England with Madam Glynn's sense of faltering shabbiness, Joyce amplifies the vigour and strength of Irish nationalism, aligning it with a young amateur who is outshining an experienced professional. Joyce also ensures the reader is certain where the power lies within the nationalist cause through the final line's noting of the men's contentedness. Despite the crucial performances in this section being delivered by two women, Joyce reminds the reader that it is still the men who are at the head of the power structures within the movement. In this manner, Mr Holohan's treatment of Kathleen can be read as reflective of the issue of male dominance within the movement, leading the reader to question how radical and progressive the movement truly is. As Joseph Valente writes, Irish nationalist writes such as Padraic Pearse and W. B. Yeats 'tended to underwrite vigorously the normative code of gender hierarchy',[57] despite their radical nationalist ambitions, and it is the very same patriarchal traditionalism that Joyce takes aim at through this image. There is distinct dissonance between the two cultures, reflective of the 'new rhythms, dissonances, and noises' that Epstein notes were a key part of modernist musical composition. [58] While the music in 'A Mother' is traditional, its deployment as a means of combatting British cultural domination is inherently dissonant, with the conflict between the two cultural ideologies only amplifying the beauty and importance of the music in the process.

Joyce deftly concocts a microcosm of the Gaelic League's struggle against the homogenising aspects of English culture through the nationalist concert in 'A Mother', without placing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the coloniser. He shows the *Eire Abu* Society abandoning the victorious Ireland

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[56] Joyce, *A Mother*, p. 145.

[57] Joseph Valente, 'The Myth of Sovereignty: Gender in the Literature of Irish Nationalism', *ELH,* 61.1 (Spring 1994), 189-210 (p. 193).

[58] Epstein, p. xiii.

that their namesake champions in favour of pulling in a greater crowd and furthering ticket revenues, and the poor way in which they treat their home-grown *artistes,* overlooking them for the sake of England's colonising representative. Through these actions, Joyce suggests that not all Irish people implicitly share the vision of a distinct, Hydian Irish cultural identity. He chooses instead to take aim at those higher up within nationalist movements, questioning and problematising the idea that they are the best-suited group to bring about the change that many do indeed desire. Perhaps more important than where Joyce lays the blame, however, is where he suggests the true heart of the movement is: the faceless masses. In the space of a single paragraph, we are shown an audience who greatly appreciate their culture, and are quick to ridicule those who would appropriate it. Joyce places Irish musical heritage in the hands of the masses, and they use it as a powerful tool by which to cheerfully and jovially reject the English-washing of their culture, all whilst celebrating that which truly matters: themselves.

Music as artistic expression provides the perfect vessel for the social critiques that Joyce and Ellison are engaging with in 'A Mother' and 'In A Strange Country'. With music shaping each author's worldview to the extent of Joyce and Ellison, such engagement acted as a cultural lodestar, deepening and personalising the authors' critiques, and enabling textual experimentation in the process. In 'A Mother', Joyce's deployment of 'Killarney' displays the multivalent abilities of music; had the song been performed by one of the Irish singers, the crowd would surely have been more pleased than they were with Madam Glynn. He demonstrates that music takes on the character of the manner in which it is performed, rather than being a fixed entity, with the same being true of his critiques of Ireland throughout the story. Joyce is able to critique the higher ups in the *Eire Abu* Society, and question the veracity of their desire for Irish independence, whilst also using the crowd's reaction to Madam Glynn to convey the

sentiment that most Irish people felt towards the English at the time. The key lies in the execution of the critique. The nuances between different performances are part of what makes music such an intriguing form of expression, and Joyce and Ellison are keenly aware of this. For them to sit solidly on one side of an issue, or to take aim solely at one specific group/ issue within society, would be to deprive their work of a nuance that embodies the complexity of the issues they deal in. Ellison's deployment of music within 'In A Strange Country' helps to provide this nuance to his critique of America, and complicates the crucially important Welsh setting of the story, without breaking the flow and precision of his prose. In this way, music provides both authors with the perfect tool for framing their arguments, efficiently capturing complex tensions and affiliations that surface in the public realm through an aural shorthand.

National anthems as accessible nationalist expression in Ralph Ellison's 'In A Strange Country'

Ralph Ellison's 'In A Strange Country' recounts an evening in the life of its protagonist Parker, a Black American soldier who finds himself on the coast of Wales during the Second World War. The geographical context of the story is autobiographical, as Ellison served as a cook in the Merchant Marines during tours of duty in Wales and France. His experiences in Wales, particularly, informed his future writing a great deal.[59] Ellison felt he should play his part in the war effort, but refused to fight in the army due to the Jim Crow laws that still applied to it. As an alternative, he took a job as a third cook on a Merchant Marines vessel. Many in the army saw the Merchant Marines as a less dangerous form of service, but it was by no means a safe occupation - a poet friend of Ellison's had died on his very first tour. While initially stationed at port, Ellison eventually found himself aboard the *SS Sun Yat-Sen* as a second cook - alongside duties as a baker - and began his first voyage on the 28th of December 1943. By this time Ellison was well situated in his literary career, writing book reviews - as well short stories - for Dorothy West's *New Challenge* magazine*,* as well as for the Marxist publication *New Masses.* It would be two years until Ellison began work on *Invisible Man*, but he kept writing during his time in the merchant marine, using his tours as inspiration. Swansea was his first destination, and his interactions with the Welsh people and their culture provided the background for 'In A Strange Country'.[60]

The story begins *in medias res,* with a man named Mr Catti looking after Parker - who has sustained injuries in a racially-motivated attack by a group of white American soldiers - in the local pub. The first line of the story

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[59] Paul Devlin, 'The United States Merchant Marine', in *Ralph Ellison in Context,* ed. by Paul Devlin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 55-70.

[60] Rampersad, pp. 167-169.

foregrounds the extent of Parker's injuries - 'In the pub his eye had begun to close' - and after some pleasantries are exchanged, Parker's attention is seized by a singing patron.[61] Through free indirect discourse, Ellison informs the reader that the song is entitled '"Treat Me Like an Irish Soldier"', however the song he is presumably referring to is in fact called 'Kevin Barry'.[62] The song is an Irish nationalist ballad, honouring the eponymous Barry, and the chorus begins with the line: 'Shoot me like an Irish soldier', which is likely where Ellison's fictional song title comes from.[63] In the words of M.A. Doherty, Barry's life 'reached its climax at a vital moment in the long struggle for Irish self-government' when British soldiers hanged Barry at 18 years of age for his involvement in an Irish Republican Army attack.[64] The song is a harrowing indictment of the brutality enacted upon Barry, with the British colonisers being condemned in the caustic lines:

> Another martyr for old Ireland
> Another murder for the crown
> Whose brutal laws may kill the Irish
> But can't keep their spirit down.[65]

Ellison's choice to include such a fleeting reference to the song is canny, for with very little textual intervention he introduces themes crucial to the story: nationhood, alienation, and violent oppression. The comparison between Britain's treatment of Ireland and Parker's treatment at the hands of his white countrymen is clear - the dominant nation/racial group is enacting violence and discrimination upon the minority nation/racial group. The

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[61] Ellison, *IASC*, p. 137.

[62] 'Kevin Barry', The Dublin City Ramblers (Dublin: Dolphin, 2015) [Spotify]. I will be referring to the Dublin City Ramblers recording of the song throughout this thesis.

[63] Ibid. It is also possible that 'Treat Me Like An Irish Soldier' could have been a working title for the song, as its author remains unknown to this day.

[64] M.A. Doherty, 'Kevin Barry and the Anglo-Irish Propaganda War, *Irish Historical Studies*, 32.126 (2000), 217-231 (p. 217).

[65] Ibid., p. 217.

distinct binary of oppressor/oppressed is complicated through Ellison's decision to set the story in Wales, however.

R.R Davies points out that Wales is often overlooked as a nation that has been colonised by England, despite showing 'at various stages [of its history] the well-recognized features of a colonial society',[66] and is a country which, in the words of Daniel Williams, 'is itself riven by class, national and linguistic allegiances.'[67] Welsh devolution was still decades away when Ellison wrote this story, meaning Wales occupied a unique historical position. It was a nation which has been colonised by England, like Ireland, but which had not regained its sovereignty and was thus still allied in the minds of many with the colonising forces of England. This positioned Wales as both complicit in the colonisation of the United States of America – for whom Parker is fighting - and a colonised nation in itself, in a manner which is comparable to the discrimination Parker faces from his fellow soldiers because of his race. Whilst there are of course important differences between the situations - Welsh people not being a minority group within their own country, crucially - the intersections of colonial/racial oppression that Parker and the Welsh people have both suffered bring them closer nonetheless. Ellison demonstrates this complex position best through the singers in Mr Catti's members' club, and the music that they perform. Members' clubs bring to mind the idea of the 'elite' chomping cigars in red leather chairs and making business deals, but this is not the case here. While the club is most certainly white, with the notable (and temporary) exception of Parker, the members themselves are almost unanimously working-class positions. The four occupations Ellison mentions amongst the singers are those of the 'leading mine owner […] a miner […] a butcher […] [and] a union official.'[68] The latter three are overtly

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[66] R. R. Davies, 'Colonial Wales', in *Past & Present,* 65 (1974), 3-23 (p. 3).

[67] Daniel Williams, p. 34.

[68] Ellison, *IASC*, p. 143.

working-class professions, but the mine owner sticks out here as a pertinent reminder of Wales' place in the British Empire, with his ownership over presumable swathes of land being particularly pertinent. This medley of working class, colonised/colonising men further muddies the position of Wales with regard to America when they perform a song about '"a battle in which [they] defeated the English"', with Mr Catti noting that there is '"[n]othing like music to reveal what's in the heart."'[69] This overtly anti-English stance complicates the Welsh-American relation in the story further, and reads as a rejection of the binary of coloniser/colonised; similarly, Parker's footing with these white and colonising (yet seemingly compassionate and historically colonised) men cannot likewise be reduced to a neat, inarguable binary.

'He's from home',[70] thinks Parker, before smiling and apologising for walking into a white soldier, who proceeds to hurl the most grievous of racial epithets at Parker, and physically attack him. The heartbreaking use of the word 'home' in such proximity to a racist attack accentuates the idea of Parker's status as the Other within American society, despite his fighting for the freedom and safety of the very nation which alienates him. This conflict had been present since Black soldiers returned to the United States at the end of the First World War, and became a key point of focus in the fight for Civil Rights. Chad Williams asserts that, far from being treated as heroes upon their return to America, Black veterans were more actively targeted in lynchings than before.[71] This owed to the fact that many Black soldiers 'returned home with nothing other than their army-issued clothes', at a time when a Black soldier in uniform was seen as a 'bold act of defiance on the part of black veterans', due to military uniform 'connot[ing]

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[69] Ibid., p. 142.

[70] Ibid., p. 138.

[71] Chad Williams, *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I era* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

authority, power, manliness, and respect',[72] concepts which Jim Crow laws aimed to exclude Black citizens from. This exacerbation of racially aggravated attacks spurred Civil Rights activists to fight harder, as this worsening of race relations made the lives of Black veterans intolerable irrespective of whether they were in active service. The U.S military remained segregated until President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981 on the 16th of July 1948, calling for 'equality of treatment and opportunity for all those who serve' in the United States Army.[73] The call for equality may have finally been made, but it came three years after the end of the Second World War, and the dehumanising experiences of African American soldiers remained an ongoing root of trauma and pain. Their experiences would forever reinforce their awareness of the double consciousness they inhabit, in a society which views them both as a visible threat, and an invisible group whose oppression does not warrant concern.

The fact of Parker's having his eye injured is no superfluous detail, instead being a deeply important metaphor for how Parker views himself in relation to his white brothers in arms, and to white America as a whole. There is, as Williams notes, 'a play between 'eye' and 'I'' occurring here, as at its heart the story is one which 'explore[s] the layers of identity that constitute the African American self - the black 'I''.[74] It recalls an injury Ellison suffered on his journey to enrol at the Tuskeegee Institute in 1933, during which he hopped freight trains to cover the 700+ mile journey. Railway police were chasing Ellison from the tracks, and in the process of escaping he hit his head, leaving him with a wound above his eye which required him to wear a large bandage on his forehead during his first weeks at the college.[75] The

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[72] Ibid., p. 238.

[73] United States Government, President Harry Truman, *Executive Order 9981* (Washington D.C: The white House, 1948) <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-9981#transcript> [accessed 9 November 2022].

[74] Daniel Williams, p. 30.

[75] Rampersad, p. 51.

injury to Parker's eye stands as a metaphor for his experience of double consciousness, as defined in the Introduction section of this thesis. Du Bois writes that the Black American lacks 'true self-consciousness' due to being both 'an American, [and] a Negro; two souls, two thoughts […] two warring ideals in one dark body', but that the African American 'would not Africanize America', nor 'bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism', wishing instead that it were 'simply […] possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American'.[76] Parker is keenly aware of his being a 'black Yank',[77] as he is referred to throughout the story by his Welsh hosts, specifically being described as such 'with sly amusement' by the bartender at the club.[78] The necessity of the modifying 'black' when classifying Parker as an American, and the protagonist's own consciousness of this fact, is symbolised through the injury sustained to his eye. It stops him from enacting his initial plan of 'see[ing] the country with fresh eyes, like those with which the Pilgrims had seen the New World',[79] symbolically excluding him from the pleasure the white colonisers of America enjoyed in 1620. The fact of his only having one working eye also metaphorically complicates his relationships with the Welsh men. Just as double consciousness imparts a different mode of seeing the world, it can also limits one's vision, prohibiting full perspectives of situations. With only half of his usual sight, Parker is less able to fully assess the situation, and thus feels more at one with the Welsh men than he truly is, a fact that will become apparent as the night's events unfold. Parker is initially hostile towards Mr Catti and his cohort, but eventually mellows in his attitude towards them, wondering: 'Why should he blame them when they had only helped him?', and conceding that '[h]e had been the one so glad to hear an American voice.' This metaphorical distancing of Wales from America leads Parker to take Mr Catti's invitation

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[76] Du Bois, p. 615.

[77] Ellison, *IASC*, p. 141.

[78] Ibid., p. 141.

[79] Ibid., p. 138.

to the club, despite his insensitive suggestion that the members might 'sing some of your spirituals.'[80] Instead of bristling at Mr Catti's misguided comment, Parker instead makes light of it, thinking to himself that the Spiritual the singers might perform would be '*Massa's in de Old Cold Masochism!*',[81] a punning reference to the popular minstrel song 'Massa's in de Cold Ground',[82] in which a slave laments the death of his master. The song is deeply ironic, as is Parker's wordplay with the title, an irony which reflects the unconventional situation Parker has found himself in - being taken in by those from the eponymous 'strange country' after suffering violence and rejection from his own countrymen.

Once Parker begins enjoying himself in the club, Mr Catti asks how his eye is, to which Parker remarks that it is '"[a]lmost completely closed"', suggesting that he is having to allow it to recover, accepting his temporarily limited sight. Parker is so accepting of his current predicament that he goes as far to suggest that in America 'he could drown his humanity in a sea of concealed cynicism, and white men would never recognize it', but that his colonised companions 'might understand' his situation to a greater extent.[83] The closing of one of his eyes has left him with only a partial view of his situation, both literally and metaphorically with regard to his double consciousness, leading to Parker feeling relatively comfortable at the club. This state of comfort is immediately shattered when Mr Catti innocently gets the club's singers to perform the U.S. national anthem in Parker's honour. It takes Parker a moment to realise what the group are performing, but his reaction is less than jubilant upon realising:

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[80] Ibid., p. 139.

[81] Ibid., p. 140.

[82]'Massa's in de Cold Ground', Stephen C. Foster (New York: Firth Pond & Co, 1852).

[83] Ibid., p. 144.

> And suddenly he recognized the melody and felt that his knees would give way. It was as though he had been pushed into the horrible foreboding country of dreams and they were enticing him into some unwilled and degrading act, from which only his failure to remember the words would save him.[84]

The anthem does not feel the same as it did before, instead appearing to be 'charged with a vast new meaning which that part of him that wanted to sing could not fit with the old familiar words', as Parker cannot help 'hearing the soldiers' voices, yelling as they had when the light struck his eye.'[85] The violence here comes in both the visual and aural sense, with the soldiers' racist insults exacerbating Parker's physical injuries. The traumatic experience - likely combined with his alienating experience of war, and the camaraderie he has witnessed between the Welsh singers - has shifted Parker's unconscious ideas about his country to a place of isolation and displeasure. Parker's conscious ideas about his country are not made explicit throughout the story, but they are revealed somewhat when Parker and Mr Catti first enter the club, and share a toast with the bartender. Parker toasts Wales, with Welshman toasting America in return. Parker's reply is dripping in reticence: '"Yes," said Parker, "and to America."'[86] The pregnant pause that Ellison injects into the reply suggests that Parker's experience with the white soldiers has left him jaded about his relationship with America, and it can be reasonably implied that this is not the first time he has felt this way. Where his conscious emotions regarding his country are hidden by holding back from discussing the racist attack - the most detail Parker gives is passing it off as '"a sort of family quarrel"' - [87] Parker's unconscious aversion to the patriotic anthem of the country which disregards and discriminates against him cannot be avoided. He finds himself in a tense situation, serving a country which does not serve him in

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[84] Ibid., p. 145.

[85] Ibid., p. 146.

[86] Ibid., p. 141.

[87] Ibid., p. 139.

any way, and the psychic toll this takes on him - the feeling that ‘his knees would give way’, and that he was being ‘enticed into some unwilled and degrading act’ - cannot be underestimated.[88]

Music stimulates the unconscious mind in an intrinsically unknowable manner, and so any negative feelings that Parker has been repressing about the incident (or his relationship to the United States) present in his unconscious interact with the anthem as it begins. This results in an inescapable tension between Parker's unconscious reaction to hearing the music, and his conscious reluctance to sing the anthem of a country that violently oppresses him. The violent, upsetting reaction that Parker has to his realisation of the anthem being performed makes evident the question put forth in Pike’s *The Theory of Unconscious Perception in Music*: ‘how could a true musical feeling ever be known? How could any views concerning the phenomenon be expressed when the conscious mind is being constantly deceived by its unconscious?’.[89] This deception of our conscious desires by our unconscious reactions to music is what makes it such a complexly affective medium, as Parker’s emotional turmoil in this scene clearly evidences. Ellison is showing that music’s great power is its ability to make conscious our unconscious emotions, leaving us with a truer idea of ourselves: such is the experience of the concert-goers in ‘A Mother’, who instinctively reject the English soprano’s rendition of ‘Killarney’. Where the nationalist pomp of the anthem aims to stir Parker into a state of national pride, this great power of music instead awakens his unconscious feelings, leaving him with a great disillusionment towards America.

It is due to this quality of music that Parker first becomes truly aware of the position he is now in as a Black U.S. soldier, when he thinks to

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[88] Ibid., p. 145.

[89] Alfred Pike, ‘The Theory of Unconscious Perception in Music: A Phenomenological Criticism’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 25.4 (Summer 1967), 395-400 (p. 397).

himself, ‘For the first time in your whole life […] the words are not ironic.’[90] Whereas before the questions posed in the song are rhetorical - spoken with pride whilst pointing out the beauty in the freedom all U.S. citizens supposedly enjoy - the questions are now earnest. *Is* Parker able to see what there is to be proud of as an American? *Can* he still envision feeling joy at seeing the American flag flying high and, ultimately, did it ever ‘wave / O’er the land of the free’ where its Black citizens were concerned?.[91] If the ‘land of the free’ discriminates against all citizens who are considered Other to its hegemonic racial group, can it *truly* be considered free? Ellison does not address these questions directly, instead leaving the reader to answer them for themselves, however even a brief reflection upon Parker’s attack as a microcosm of race relations in America as a whole elicits a decidedly negative response to the anthem’s queries.

Crucial to Ellison’s utilisation of the anthem is the recognition that those it discriminates against still wish to be seen as American, rather than simply rejecting the powers that oppress them. In the same manner that Wales did not fight the colonising forces of England to a point of finality like a country such as Ireland did, Parker wants to be accepted as an American, rather than rejecting that part of his identity completely, making his relationship to his country more complex, and enduringly more tragic. Parker’s relationship with the United States bears a distinct resemblance to Joyce’s relationship with Ireland - no doubt an influence during the writing of this story. At once enamoured and appalled by the Ireland of his time, Joyce was condemned by many for the realistic (and at times unflattering) portrait he painted of the country whilst trying to save it from its evident societal shortcomings. Both Parker and Joyce find themselves rejected by their respective societies despite the positive change they attempt to

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[90] Ellison, *IASC*, p. 146.

[91] Francis Scott Key, ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, Doran, and company, 1942).

generate, resulting in complex and turbulent relationships with their own national identities.

The story ends with a deeply upsetting description of Parker '[holding] Mr Catti's flashlight like a club and hop[ing] his black eye would hold back the tears.'[92] The defensive position implied in the way he holds the flashlight lets the reader know that Parker no longer feels a man amongst equals, and is once again aware of his position as an excluded member of society. The flashlight is a strong metaphor in this context, with Parker's firm grip on the light source suggesting that any erroneous ideas about his own identity have been removed - he can once again shine a light upon his state of double consciousness, and clearly see the daily oppression he endures. It also recalls the light the white soldiers shone onto Parker before they attacked him, and how they were obscured by it. Ellison writes that Parker 'grinned and apologized into the light [the soldiers] flashed in his eyes' upon their noticing him, suggesting that Parker could not actually see his assailants at any point.[93] The light reveals his racial difference to the other soldiers, and is thus a conduit for his injury, whilst simultaneously obscuring the perpetrators into a faceless, white entity - a microcosm of the racism African Americans faced on a daily basis.

The most poignant implication of this shift in conscious attitude is the fact of this being the only time that Parker's injury is described as a 'black eye'. The reality of his standing within society hits Parker with a force more impactful than the physical blow he receives at the hands of his white countrymen, and with this Ellison finally reveals the injury for what it is - a Black eye, in both a physical and metaphorical sense. Williams describes Parker's injury as a 'suggestive metaphor' which represents the 'layers of identity that constitute the African American self - the black 'I'',[94] with the homonymic wordplay exemplifying Ellison's trademark deftness. The

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[92] Ellison, *IASC,* p. 146.

[93] Ibid., p. 138.

[94] Daniel Williams, p. 30.

anthem reaffirms his knowledge of the continual violence enacted upon Black people throughout the United States, providing a stark reminder that once he returns home, the ever-present threat of physical (and in some cases, mortal) danger will envelop him once again. The oppression that has been endured by African American citizens has not diminished, even if Parker is not currently there to experience it, but hearing the anthem re-vocalises these sufferings for him. Where Parker's experience of Wales thus far had led to him feeling accepted, the unconscious effect of the Welsh singers' honorific performance cautions him that this is not the case, and that he will always perceive his life through the lens of double consciousness: through Black eyes.

Ellison subtly sets the tone of the political and racial conflicts present within 'In A Strange Country' through the deployment of well-known songs, from the initial use of 'Kevin Barry' to bring England's colonising nature to the fore, to Parker's ironic recollection of a minstrel song when Mr Catti mentions the Spirituals. Ellison understands the socio-political connotation that much music cannot - and often must not - escape, signposting Parker's turbulent emotions throughout the story using these musical interventions. The possibility for multiple interpretations of the music in the story is also reflective of the double consciousness that Parker experiences. It can be assumed that 'Kevin Barry' is being sung as an anti-English, anti-colonial folk song in a Welsh pub, but we are reminded through Parker's presence in said pub that Wales was complicit in the colonisation of America. 'The Star Spangled Banner' functions as a symbol of the pride that Parker has for his country - a country he is risking his life for - but provides him with a stark reminder of his place as the Other within American society, and of the violent discrimination he faces as a result of this. Where the Welsh men only focus on one meaning in each of these songs, Parker sees both, because his experience of double consciousness as the 'black 'I'' will forever alter the way in which he experiences the world. Ellison draws the

comparison between music and double consciousness in this way, showing us the importance of musical culture on our perceptions of the world, and the equal importance of our perceptions of the world on musical culture. The musical folk culture of Wales paints a consistent picture of England as the colonising power that it is, but Parker's place as a Black American complicates the binary set up in these songs, reminding us of the multivalent and comparable complexities of both music and national/racial identity. Ellison acknowledges that the two cannot be separated, just as he acknowledges the power of music, and harnesses this ephemeral medium to enhance the impact of his prose.

Conclusion

Joyce's and Ellison's anti-colonial and anti-racist arguments in their short fiction forged a clear path for the rest of their work. The impacts of colonialism that Joyce would spend his career examining are evident through the crowd's treatment of Madam Glynn in 'A Mother', and the double consciousness that Parker experiences so keenly during 'In A Strange Country' would play a vital role in all of Ellison's work, but especially *Invisible Man*. The high modernists' engagement with music as a potential vehicle for nationalist expression enhances and acts as reference point for the authors' respective critiques in these stories by enabling subtle yet more agile and impactful engagements with the politics of nation and race through the connotations of the specific pieces examined. As I shall argue in the next chapter, such experimental engagement with music would be vital throughout Ellison and Joyce's literary careers, and would bolster their anti-colonial and anti-racist critiques throughout their fiction as their prose became more experimental, and their arguments more complex.

Chapter 2: Temporality, technology, and technical experimentation in *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man*

Whereas the anti-colonial, anti-racist critiques of 'A Mother' and 'In A Strange Country' were necessarily contained and direct due their short story form, the arguments that Joyce and Ellison put forth in *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man* were more complex, nuanced, and rigorous. The aesthetic disruption of the texts - as well their length - allowed for greater depth and breadth of critique. Joyce not only tackled issues of British colonialism in a more sustained way, but also critiqued and exposed the anti-Semitism he saw developing in his native country through his choice of a Jewish protagonist in Leopold Bloom. Ellison, in turn, increased the intensity of his anti-racist arguments enormously, taking on critiques of colourism, Communism, and Black nationalism as they interacted with the formation of racial identity in America in the first half of the twentieth century. The scale of the critiques, alongside the textual ingenuity that delivered them, have lead to *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man* remaining the most enduring works in their respective authors' oeuvres to this day.

The publication of *Ulysses* in 1922 puts it firmly within the timeframe in which Peter Childs argues postcolonial writing began to take shape as a true force within literature.[95] He writes that during the period between 1885 and 1930 'art at least lacked sympathy with Empire and at most wished to destroy it',[96] an attitude clearly seen in *Ulysses*. From the very first chapter, Britain's colonial power over Ireland is satirised and denounced, with Haines' directive for Buck Mulligan to 'Pay up and look pleasant' signposting the deep financial toll colonialism took on Ireland.[97] Joyce does not shy away from voicing his issues with Ireland, however, with his

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[95] *Ulysses* began serialisation in 1920, but the first complete edition of the text was not published until 1922 - see Sylvia Beach, *Shakespeare and Company* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), pp. 34-44, 84-86.

[96] Peter Childs, *Modernism and the Post-Colonial: Literature and Empire 1885-1930* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 1.

[97] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 17.

characterisation of Leopold Bloom being crucial in this endeavour. Bloom's Jewish identity brings about the issue of his acceptance in Irish society, and complicates the postcolonial discourse of the novel into a place of anti-racist discourse. This complication is present in *Invisible Man* as well, for reasons that Jean-Paul Rocchi summarises in his differentiation between African American literature and other Black postcolonial literatures:

> It is neither exterior, as African Americans were among the first to construct the country, nor interior, because, within it, they are denied their humanity. This point of view […] is that of a hole, of absence, of invisibility, of erasure.[98]

This position is present in crucial conflicts of both *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man*. Bloom and Invisible are both citizens of their countries,[99] and cannot thus be considered exterior to them, yet they are not fully accepted within their respective societies, being positioned as Other to their respective hegemonies. The blurring of the postcolonial into the anti-racist in *Ulysses* is what makes it so rife for comparison with *Invisible Man*, and grapples with Frantz Fanon's assertion that it is 'utopian to try and ascertain in what ways one kind of inhuman behaviour differs from another kind of inhuman behaviour.'[100] Joyce's blended condemnation of both colonialism and racism is responsible for it being such a crucial text to this day, and its exploration of Bloom's complicated experience as a Jewish man in Ireland displays clear thematic resonance with *Invisible Man*'s investigation into the life of the Black man in America. Central to *Ulysses*' discourse here is the 'Cyclops' chapter, which introduces one of Joyce's most infamous characters: the citizen. I will be analysing 'Cyclops' in order to discuss how the modernist experimentation Joyce engages with in this section - through

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[98] Jean-Paul Rocchi, *The desiring modes of being Black: literature and critical theory* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018), p. 12.

[99] Whilst Ellison's protagonist remains nameless throughout the novel, recent critical discourse has referred to him as 'Invisible'. For ease of discussion, I will be referring to him accordingly.

[100] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 63.

its narrative structure and use of parody - denounces the anti-Semitism that was rife in Irish society at the time, whilst also complicating ideas of Irish nationalism. In my examination of the citizen and the section's unnamed narrator, I will assess the success of Joyce's denunciation, and argue that the section's experimentalism greatly enhances its anti-racist messaging through its exposing of the Irish public's complicity in anti-Semitism, and portrayal of the citizen's nationalist views as regressive, exclusionary, and outdated.

Invisible Man explicitly engages with the modernist legacies Joyce helped to forge, as Ellison investigates the intersections between temporality, nationhood, racism, and nationalism with typical deftness. Whilst the novel synthesises these legacies to great effect, it does, crucially, move beyond them as well: Ellison went so far in his 1953 acceptance speech for the National Book Award as to say he believed the novel's 'experimental attitude' was its greatest point of significance.[101] He expressed his belief that any attempt to express the true American experience, which ranges from 'contact with slavery to contact with a world of advanced scholarship, art and science' would 'burst [current] forms of the novel asunder', and that, as such, '[a] novel whose range was broader and deeper was needed.'[102] While Ellison's influences are clear in the work (the speech goes on to speak of *The Odyssey*, suggesting the Joycean connection), here he is also pointing to the *shortcomings* of these legacies - their inability to *fully* express Black subjectivities as more than merely 'a gauge of the human condition' - and expressing his desire to go beyond this simplistic representation, which he describes as 'the final and unrelieved despair of our current fiction.'[103] It is from this desire that the experimentalism of *Invisible Man* emerged, with Ellison taking the textual experiments of Joyce

[101] Ibid., p. 151.

[102] Ibid., p. 152.

[103] Ibid., p. 153.

and other modernist writers and transforming them into something altogether more relevant to his experience of life as Black man in mid-century America.

I will be concentrating on the 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue' sections of the novel in order to discuss how Ellison transforms these modernist legacies into something more personally relevant to him. These sections exemplify Ellison's experimentation in the novel through their engagements with temporality and technology which, combined with the specific chronology of the sections, resonate deeply with the anti-racist message of the text through their enabling of Invisible to view the 'groove of history' from an a-temporal space, engaging the reader in the complexities and contradictions of Black identity in the process. I will also assess how effectively Ellison furthered his greatest argument - that 'being a Negro American involves a *willed* […] affirmation of self as against all outside pressures—an identification with the group as extended through the individual self'.[104] Ellison's use of temporal dislocation was an important element in his ambition to bring about the possibility of self-actualisation for African Americans, as was his engagement with technology; to this end, I will apply Rayvon Fouché's theory of Black Vernacular Technological Creativity to the work in order to discuss how the African American identity is 'willed' in the novel. These frameworks will allow me to evaluate the Ellison's disruptive narrative techniques as a means of accessing the depths of Black subjectivity and social history it enabled him to articulate. Throughout this chapter, I will argue that aesthetic disruption of *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man* is what facilitated such depth of anti-racist and anti-colonial critique in the respective works, as the prose fractured the hierarchies that language can impose upon society in daily usage. I will argue that, without such innovative textual experiments, the works would not be as impactful in their critique, and that as such, Ellison's and Joyce's

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[104] Ralph Ellison, 'The World and the Jug', in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp.155-188 (p. 178).

innovative prose furthered the anti-hegemonic positions that were crucial to their position in literary canons.

Anti-Semitism in the ‘Cyclops’ episode of *Ulysses*

Leopold Bloom’s Jewish identity has been the catalyst for much of the critical debate in the century that has followed *Ulysses*’ publication. ‘Cyclops’ is the pinnacle of Joyce’s anti-racist writing in *Ulysses*, representing his clearest and most sustained expression of anti-racist thought amongst other smaller moments throughout the novel. Whereas Joyce’s short story ‘A Mother’ presents to the reader a predominantly positive portrait of Irish nationalism, ‘Cyclops’ acts as the antithesis of this. Through his depictions of the citizen, the nameless narrator, and the other patrons of Barney Kiernan’s pub, Joyce reveals a far more disturbing side of the Irish nationalist debate. This corner of the movement is characterised by a blatant espousing of nativist, racist, exclusionary viewpoints - regressive in all meanings of the word - in the name of bringing Ireland out from under Britain’s colonial thumb, and back to her much romanticised ‘former glory’. The irony is, that in its attempts to bring about Irish independence, this specific strain of nationalism begins to resemble the British colonisers more and more. Just as the *Eire Abu* Society in ‘A Mother’ begin to embody traits of their colonisers through their financial tensions with Mrs Kearney, so the citizen begins to espouse prejudiced views more closely aligned with the British than he is perhaps aware. Seokmoo Choi writes of how ‘[h]istorically the ‘British have censured the Irish for the immorality they perceive the Irish to be guilty of’;[105] in this chapter, we see the ardent nationalists in Barney Kiernan’s pub attempting to displace that censure to Bloom for his perceived immoralities as a Jewish man. Margot Norris notes that the conversational exchange of information in ‘Cyclops’ is crucial in this perception, as it allows ‘cognitive relations — what persons know about others’ to play a vital role in the ‘collective representations of

[105] Seokmo Choi, ‘The Aspects of Anglicization of Irish Nationalism in the "Cyclops" Episode of “Ulysses”’, *The Harp*, 14 (1999), 21-32 (p. 24).

not only individuals, like Bloom, but also of social and racial groups.'[106] It is through this unreliable method of information transference that Bloom is 'perceived, or *mis*perceived, to personify the Jew in a manner congruent with modern European anti-semitism',[107] Levi concludes. It is also on the back of this misperception - the rumour, behind-the-back-remarks, and outright paranoia of the patrons - that Joyce builds his denunciation of anti-Semitism in all its forms. The use of the citizen as the mouthpiece for the section's most vitriolic anti-Semitism allows Joyce to critique the radical, exclusionary elements of the Irish nationalist movement, but also enables him to expose and denounce the passivity of the Irish public to such grievously offensive pronouncements as those made by the perennial anti-Semite. These factors combine to form an essential disavowal of anti-Semitism in literature- a disavowal which casts a long shadow over the Irish nationalist cause, complicating the interplay of anti-colonial and anti-racist discourses in the process.

While the crux of Joyce's engagement with anti-Semitism comes in the 'Cyclops' section of *Ulysses*, his first depiction of the anti-Semitic beliefs and behaviour present in Irish society come far earlier on in the novel, in both the 'Telemachus' and 'Nestor' sections of the novel. The views expressed in these sections by the Englishman Haines - whose name puns on the French word for 'hate' - and Mr Deasy, the protestant headmaster of the school where Stephen teaches, revolve around pernicious and racist ideas about Jewish merchants. Haines' views are espoused first, with the falsely authoritative claim 'I don't want to see my country fall into the hands of German Jews either. That's our national problem, I'm afraid, just now.'[108] Stephen does not challenge Haines on this, and the narration moves on

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[106] Margot Norris, 'Fact, Fiction, and Anti-Semitism in the "Cyclops" Episode of Joyce's "Ulysses"', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 36.2 (2006), 163-189 (p. 168).

[107] Neil Levi, '"See that Straw? That's a Straw": Anti-Semitism and Narrative Form in Ulysses', *Modernism/modernity*, 9.3 (2002), 375-388 (p. 380).

[108] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 25.

swiftly from this first instance of anti-Semitism in the novel. In 'Nestor', Deasy's anti-Semitic beliefs are far more florid, but nonetheless follow the same train of thought as Haines':

> Mark my words, Mr Dedalus […] England is in the hands of the jews. In all the highest places: her finance, her press. And they are the signs of a nation's decay. Wherever they gather they eat up the nation's vital strength. I have seen it coming these years. As sure as we are standing here the jew merchants are already at their work of destruction. Old England is dying.[109]

Stephen challenges Deasy over this remark, and asks pointedly whether a merchant 'is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?'[110] Deasy, however, ignores the logic of Stephen's proposal, instead asserting that Jewish people have 'sinned against the light', and that they have 'the darkness in their eyes.'[111] Trevor Williams points out that, in this interchange, 'there is no point of contact between these two positions',[112] with neither Stephen nor Deasy being swayed by the other's arguments. Williams argues that, in this lack of connection, Joyce is asserting the influence of 'the imperialist development of capitalism' that has been effected by England's colonisation of Ireland, causing a 'fragmentation that persists throughout *Ulysses*', and writes of fragmentation being '*the* twentieth-century theme' where modernism is concerned.[113] Whilst these first instances of anti-Semitism have dealt solely with England, Joyce brings the conversation back to Ireland with the final lines of the chapter, in which Deasy jokes to Stephen:

> I just wanted to say, he said. Ireland, they say, has the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the jews. Do you

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[109] Ibid., p. 41.

[110] Ibid., p. 41.

[111] Ibid, p. 41.

[112] Trevor Williams, '"As It Was in the Beginning": The Struggle for History in the 'Nestor' Episode of "Ulysses"', *The Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 16.2 (1990), 36-46 (p. 39).

[113] Ibid., p. 39.

> know that? No. And do you know why? […] Because she never let them in, Mr Deasy said solemnly.[114]

Here, Abby Bender notes, Deasy is borrowing this statement 'from a tradition of Irish speechmakers proclaiming just the opposite',[115] namely that Ireland has welcomed Jewish people in, and that they have not persecuted those they *have* welcomed in. Joyce, then, is subverting this statement - and its important historical resonance - by turning it into an anti-Semitic joke. Bender claims that through this subversion, Joyce is 'warn[ing] of […] the reversibility of the Irish Jewish motif',[116] but I would argue Joyce goes further than this, with Deasy's joke showing that the Irish Jewish motif *has* reversed, and now sits in a place of prejudice and hate. Deasy's joke represents the beliefs of the Irish population through his invocation of the country as a whole, evidencing how casually this specific prejudice proliferates through the levity with which he repeats the punchline - 'She never let them in, he cried again through his laughter […] That's why.'[117] Joyce's decision to end the 'Nestor' section of *Ulysses* here asserts the presence of Ireland's anti-Semitism, allowing it to linger in the mind of the reader throughout the novel's introduction to Bloom and the beginnings of his day. This presence all but disappears until the citizen's anti-Semitic attacks hundreds of pages later in 'Cyclops', suggesting the nature of the anti-Semitism in Dublin is mostly hidden, making it far more insidious, for reasons I will discuss below.

'Cyclops' introduces *Ulysses*' readers to a crucial character in Joyce's literary canon - the citizen. He first appears in the manuscript for Joyce's

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[114] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 44.

[115] Abby Bender, 'Irish Jewish Studies at the Border: Precarious Solidarity from *Ulysses* to *Nine Folds Makes a Paper Swan*, *American Journal of Irish Studies*, 16 (2021), 76-92 (p. 82).

[116] Ibid., p. 83.

[117] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 45.

initial attempt at a novel, *Stephen Hero,*[118] which remained unpublished until 1944. The citizen is described only briefly here as a 'very stout black-bearded citizen who always wore a wideawake hat', and was aligned with 'the separatist centre' in which 'reigned the irreconcilable temper' of radical Irish nationalists at the time - [119] a position which the citizen still vehemently occupies during his appearance in *Ulysses.* He is no mere fabrication of Joyce's, instead being very clearly based on the Irish nationalist and founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Michael Cusack. Joyce's biographer, Richard Ellman, writes that a friend of Joyce's at University College actually knew Cusack as he was a keen advocate for Gaelic sport, and even introduced the two a few times according to Ellman, who reports diplomatically that 'Joyce liked [Cusack] little enough to make him model the narrow-minded and rhetorical Cyclops in *Ulysses.*'[120] Ellman's summarising of Cusack's ardent nationalist beliefs - such as that neglect of Gaelic sports was 'a sure sign of national decay and approaching dissolution''- [121] give further evidence for the inspiration behind the citizen's hyperbolic prophesying of the destruction of the nation.

By modelling a character so deeply anti-Semitic on such a key republican figure as Cusack, Joyce crafts an indelible link between the nationalist cause and violent, outspoken anti-Semitism. The citizen is only one of the two key players introduced in 'Cyclops', however, as Joyce abandons the style of narration that has thus far carried the novel. The narration is usurped by what Karen Lawrence describes as 'two stylistic "masks"', one she describes as the persona of 'a bard-cum-barfly who speaks in low Dublin idiom',[122] and the other as the parodic asides, which I

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[118] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (London: Grafton Books, 1986).

[119] Ibid., p. 59.

[120] Ibid., p. 61.

[121] Michael Cusack, quoted in Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 61.

[122] Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 101.

will discuss shortly. As Lawrence notes, there are 'inevitable questions about the reliability […] of his narrative',[123] as Noman commentates on the arguments occurring between Bloom and the citizen, but is by no means passive in this narration. He continuously adds his own anti-Semitic beliefs into the conversation - referring to Jewish conman James Wought as 'one of the bottlenosed fraternity' for example - [124] and relaying rumours about Bloom to the reader, such as his supposed befriending of an old woman in order to 'come in for a bit of the wampum in her will'.[125] The scene that Joyce presents with these characters portrays the anti-Semitic attitudes he would have seen in Ireland as paranoia predicated on fictional beliefs about the Jewish population. Colum Kenny writes that the view of the Jewish population by ethnically Irish people followed the 'European expression in respect to Jews as outsiders' amongst the native population, and encompassed the stereotypical view of 'the Semite polluted and polluting by commerce', with this specifically 'Jewish materialism corrupting Christians'.[126] Exacerbating these insidious stereotypes and beliefs is what Natalie Wynn describes as a 'reluctance to admit to, and deal objectively with, the existence of anti-Jewish sentiment in Ireland', a reluctance Wynn believes is still prevalent in Irish society.[127] Joyce displays a combination of these beliefs and behaviours to the reader through his experimentation Noman's narration. The casual harbouring of these beliefs and, perhaps more crucially, the patrons' unwillingness to stand up to violent and outspoken anti-Semitism, is what gives the citizen free reign in his attacks

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[123] Ibid., p. 101.

[124] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 417.

[125] Ibid., p. 395.

[126] Colum Kenny, 'James Larkin and the Jew's Shilling: Irish Workers, Activists and Anti-Semitism Before Independence', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 44.1 (2017), 68-84 (p. 67).

[127] Natalie Wynn, 'Jews, Antisemitism and Irish Politics: A Tale of Two Narratives', *PaRDes; Zeitschrift der Vereinigung für Jüdische Studien*, 18 (2012), 51-66, (p. 66).

on Bloom, with this relationship functioning as a microcosm of wider Irish society.

A large part of Joyce's experimentation in 'Cyclops' comes from his use of parodic asides to expand upon moments of plot that occur in the pub scene. These asides interrupt the text by expanding upon - and often satirising – the action that has just happened in the text by taking on the style of various literary movements, such as romanticism or the epic. Robert Colson estimates that the asides make up 43% of the section,[128] an exceptionally high percentage when, at first glance, the immediate expansion on minor moments of plot may appear unnecessary. However, Lawrence's noting that Joyce's primary engagement in these asides is with 'the epic, the narrative form of the past, and the newspaper item, the narrative form of the present' begins to shed more light on their purpose. [129] The combination of the temporality at play here between the epic and journalistic forms and the inflation of seemingly insignificant moments in the text is a key example of Joyce fashioning an example of Childs's idea of a 'distinctive discourse' where postcolonial and modernist writing intersect.[130] The high modernist experiment of parodying these traditional forms of writing here not only acts as thrilling textual innovation, but also breaks from its formal conventions by facilitating the postcolonial, anti-racist discourse surrounding Bloom throughout the chapter.

As Colson points out, most of the asides occur in the first half of 'Cyclops' and can thus be partially read as didactic, with Joyce teaching the reader how to navigate this particular section of *Ulysses*. The same guiding of the reader is present in the initial interpolations in 'Cyclops', however the

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[128] Robert Colson, 'Narrative Arrangements in Superposition and the Critique of Nationalism in "Cyclops"', *James Joyce Quarterly,* 53.1 (2015-2016), 75-93 (p. 76). See footnote 6 for Colson's method of calculation.

[129] Lawrence, p. 104.

[130] Childs, p. 1.

humour of Joyce's games in 'Sirens' here gives way to the serious nature of the writing styles being parodied. The first parody comes in the form of legal jargon, expanding upon the situation between Noman's client,[131] Moses Herzog, and a Michael E. Geraghty, who has reneged on an agreed payment. The aside takes up the best part of a page, ending with the verdict that:

> the said amount shall have been duly paid by the said purchaser to the said vendor in the manner herein set forth as this day hereby agreed between the said vendor his heirs successors […] and assigns of the other part.[132]

Lengthy legal diatribe over, the conversation between Joe Hynes and Noman continues without skipping a beat from where it left off a page earlier, as Joe asks Noman 'Are you a strict t.t.?'[133] Through this initial engagement with the asides, the reader is able to more clearly see that the parodies are being used to either enhance the nature of the action being parodied - bringing either bathos or gravity to a situation - or to suggest depths to the narrative that could not be presented through Noman's casual, colloquial narration.

To understand the impact of Joyce focusing and 'amplifying what we have already seen and heard' throughout the rest of 'Cyclops',[134] we must first understand the citizen's particular view of Irish nationalism. Colson describes the citizen as:

> an anticolonial nationalist, [who] sees the future glory of the nation in the romantic glory of the past, a past interrupted — but apparently

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[131] Noman is a debt collector.

[132] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 378.

[133] Ibid., p. 378.

[134] Colson, p. 79.

> not severed — by centuries of colonization, a past that one could return to again.[135]

Colson typifies this romanticisation of Ireland's past as 'a form of cognitive resistance to the cultural violence of colonization',[136] which provides a clear rationale for the citizen's nationalistic beliefs - that to bring about a new Ireland, the nation must return to a pristine version of its former glory, which now only exists in the minds of radical separatists such as himself. However, another telling indication of how the citizen views himself is through his use of the Irish language in conversation. In 'A Mother', the nationalist characters converse *with* one another in order to keep the language alive, but in 'Cyclops' the citizen only speaks Irish *at* his fellow patrons, for example referring to Joe Hynes as '*a chara*', meaning 'my friend', or telling Garryowen to '*Bi i dho husht'* rather than to simply 'be quiet'.[137] Hayman asserts that the lack of engagement from the other patrons shows 'that the Gaelic [the citizen] reserves for the dog or uses in curses to ornament his speech is an affectation,'[138] no more than a desperate clinging to his romantic notion of the past. Joyce pushes this point further in an aside when he writes that a 'most interesting discussion took place in the ancient hall of *Brian O'Ciarnain's* in *Sraid na Bretaine Bheag,* under the auspices of *Slough na h-Eireann',*[139] with Irish phrases translating to Barney Kiernan's, Little Britain Street, and The Host of Ireland respectively. Joyce's deliberate obfuscating of the story's details through his use of Irish here exposes how little the citizen is doing to further the nationalist cause by employing the token phrases of Irish he sees as a

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[135] Ibid., p. 77.

[136] Ibid, p. 77.

[137] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 381-386.

[138] David Hayman, 'Cyclops', in *James Joyce's Ulysses: Critical Essays*, ed. by Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 243-277 (p. 247).

[139] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 410.

crucial part of his identity. Not only does this suggest that the citizen's true devotion to the Irish nationalist cause is equally as superficial as his understanding of the language, it further - and perhaps more damningly - suggests that he is deluding himself as to his own efficacy as a force for change within the movement.

The use of the citizen's Irish combined with the florid, regressive literary style of the asides in the 'Cyclops' episode inform the reader as to the citizen's viewpoint. Colson suggests Joyce actions this through the asides effect a 'sense of incongruity by juxtaposing discourses and questioning the possibility of repetition and recurrence,'[140] concepts which deeply inform the citizen's quest for independence. Joyce does not suggest that the striving for Irish independence is a futile pursuit, however. In fact, one of the many rumours that Noman highlights is John Wise Nolan's suggestion that it was Bloom - the only character likely to garner any sympathy from the reader in this section - who 'gave the idea for Sinn Fein to Griffith',[141] making the citizen's bellowing of '*Sinn Fein!* […] *Sinn Fein amhain!* The friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us' at Bloom to exclude him deeply ironic.[142] The rumours are unsubstantiated - as is nearly all the gossip in 'Cyclops' - but when read in conjunction with this quote from Joyce's 1907 essay on Fenianism,[143] it is not unreasonable to suggest that Joyce positions Bloom as a more effective nationalist than the citizen. Joyce writes: 'The new Fenians have grouped in a party called 'ourselves alone' […] this latest form of Fenianism may be the most

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[140] Colson, p. 79.

[141] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 436.

[142] Ibid., p. 396.

[143] The Fenians were members of the Irish Republic Brotherhood, an Irish nationalist fraternity founded by James Stephens, dedicated to delivering independence to Ireland between the 1850s and 1920s. See Robert Kee, *The Green Flag: A History of Irish Nationalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 299-311.

formidable'.[144] Hayman suggests that this assertion on the part of Nolan 'tips the scales for the embattled outsider' in his fight with the myopic nationalists by 'underscor[ing] the citizen's failure to do anything comparable' to Bloom's supposed contribution to Irish independence.[145] This comparison suggests that the citizen's specific, regressive Fenian view of history is ineffectual and irrelevant to the modern day, consequently aligning the reader instead with Bloom's decrying of the '[p]erpetuating [of] national hatred amongst nations',[146] and belief in a more egalitarian society.

This admonishing of this regressive form of nationalism is only part of the use of the asides in 'Cyclops', however, with their other use being arguably more effective in their conveyance of Joyce's anti-racist beliefs in this section. As previously noted, the asides take up roughly 43% of the section, leaving the remaining 57% of the text to further the plot, and it is here that the citizen and Nomans' anti-Semitism abounds. Colson writes that a reader 'can see around the [asides], cutting them out altogether', in order to get the plot, but clarifies that exegetical surgery would be 'problematic, however, because [the asides] are integral to the episode and to Joyce's complex critique of nationalism.'[147] While some of the section's complexity would be lost by reading 'Cyclops' in this way, the crucial anti-racist argument will still be present, as evidenced by the placement of key action precisely before and after the asides.

From the very first interaction in 'Cyclops', the tone is set for the anti-Semitic nature of the coming scene, as when Noman revealing that he is currently representing Moses Herzog, Joe Hynes immediately shouts

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[144] James Joyce, 'Fenianism: The Last Fenian', in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 138-141 (p. 140).

[145] Hayman, p. 257.

[146] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 430.

[147] Colson, p. 82.

‘Circumcised!’, with Noman confirming Hynes’ suspicions with the phrase ‘Ay […] A bit off the top.’[148] Noman goes on to mock his client’s accent and speech patterns, saying he ‘had to laugh at the little jewy getting his shirt out. *He drinks me my teas. He eat me my sugars Because he no pay me my moneys?*’[149] Between the actions of the Geraghty - who has stolen from Herzog - and Noman’s derisive imitation of his client, Joyce begins to build up a picture of the derision and mistreatment the Jewish population face in Dublin. Perhaps more crucial than the racist imitation, however, is its placement within the text. The impression is the final line before the first aside of ‘Cyclops’, the previously mentioned page of legalese detailing Herzog’s case against Geraghty. The contrast in style between the legalese and Noman’s mocking of his client accentuates the degree to which the casual anti-Semitism stands out amongst the text - the reader tunes back in immediately to the racist insults after the fragmenting of the aside. While the interruption and fracturing of narrative was present within the high modernist narrative style of the time, Joyce’s injection of contrasting and out of place literary *forms* - such as the legalese and its overly-florid counterpart - set his work apart from that of his contemporaries, enhancing his anti-racist message by distancing the text from the anti-Semitic and sometimes fascist writings of other high modernists such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. Whereas these writers generally looked backwards toward tradition to address the fragmentary nature of the early 20th century, Joyce instead uses the literary traditions that preceded modernism to *create* fragmentation in the text, focusing the reader on *Ulysses*’ anti-racist elements in the process. By bringing the plot back into focus through the contrast of the asides with such impactful and outspoken examples of the anti-Semitic thought present in Barney Kiernan’s, Joyce foregrounds this issue as being of highest priority in the text, and ensures the reader engages with it.

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[148] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 377.

[149] Ibid., p. 377.

This signposting of the virulent anti-Semitic views of both the citizen and Noman is not the only method by which Joyce uses the greater literary experimentation of 'Cyclops' to critique Irish anti-Semitism, however. The deliberately faceless nature of Noman's narrative voice - as represented by his lack of a name in the text - is a tool with which Joyce highlights the problems within Ireland. Throughout the section, Noman is forthcoming with anti-Semitic barbs aimed at Bloom, whether that be subtly denigrating Bloom by referring to him as 'a prudent member',[150] playing into the unfounded stereotype of a nefarious link between those of the Jewish faith and the Freemasons, or more explicitly commenting on Bloom's 'dunducketymudcoloured mug',[151] in order to 'emphasize [a] physical sign of difference' and alienate Bloom from the other patrons.[152] This is the only description in 'Cyclops' where Bloom is racialised, and this selective acknowledgement of his race resonates with the Brotherhood's treatment of its Black members in *Invisible Man*. The organization, loosely based on the Communist Party USA, is keen to 'change this way we have of always talking about how different we are',[153] whilst simultaneously stoking racial tensions in Harlem to incite a revolution. Likewise in *Ulysses* Bloom's skin tone is not remarked upon until it can provide a means of excluding him. Hayman writes that Noman's 'dubious social position as a [debt collector] make[s] him especially cautious' within the discussions taking place, and reflects the fact that Noman 'has no real influence and less courage'.[154] With this understanding then, we can see Noman's racialising of Bloom more clearly for what it is - a transparent attempt to position himself in *opposition* to Bloom, in order to align himself more securely with the other patrons.

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[150] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 392.

[151] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 430.

[152] Michael Spiegel, '"The Most Precious Victim": Joyce's "Cyclops" and the Politics of Persecution, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 46.1 (2008), 75-95 (p. 77).

[153] Ellison, *IM*, p. 378.

[154] Hayman, p. 244.

Whereas the citizen's anti-Semitism is explicit ('I'll brain that bloody jewman […] I'll crucify him so I will'),[155] Noman's anti-Semitism is more subtle, reflecting something more sinister. Lawrence writes that the 'hostility toward Bloom is reflected technically in the shift from direct to indirect reporting' and as such 'the increasing alienation from the character is compounded',[156] leaving us with a reported view of Bloom as the 'outsider'. Joyce uses Noman's refusal to speak up in these matters and lack of courage to express himself to represent the non-violent, day-to-day anti-Semitism that pervaded Irish society at the time. This behaviour recalls more flagrant instances of non-violent anti-Semitism - made even more pertinent by the time period in which it occurred - such as the Limerick Pogrom of 1904-1905, in which the Jewish population, accounting for just 0.425% of the population of Limerick, were driven from the city following a boycott of Jewish traders organised by a Catholic preacher.[157] Such wide boycotting was only possible because of the widely held anti-Semitic views of the Irish public, views which Noman perfectly embodies through his passivity to the citizen's attacks in this chapter.

This is a crucial sphere of overlap in Joyce and Ellison's work: a need to expose racist messaging cloaked in discourse or hidden entirely. A crucial example of this once again found in Ellison's use of the Brotherhood in *Invisible Man* - discussed in more depth later in the chapter - whose racist, regressive beliefs are obscured by the veneer of communism, and thus are harder for Invisible to challenge. Hayman asserts that whilst Noman's views 'reflect those of the mob he personifies', Joyce's technique nonetheless develops in the reader 'a thirst for his gossip, a grudging respect for his reliability, and a taste for his wit'.[158] I would in fact argue the

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[155] Joyce, *Ulysses,* p. 445.

[156] Lawrence, p. 119.

[157] Rory Miller, 'Ireland's Jews: Past, Present, and Future', *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, 35 (August 2008).

[158] Hayman, pp. 223-244.

opposite. With the book, up until this point, being experienced through Bloom's consciousness, I would argue that this shift in narrative style makes Noman's so-called witticisms and personal attacks feel petty and snide, revealing in them an latent insecurity and prejudice. By 'Cyclops', the novel is positioned with a certain sympathy toward Bloom, and thus, far from Noman's disparaging of Bloom prompting intrigue, it instead elicits disgust at the anti-Semitic bile being spewed forth, and an opposition to these unvoiced views that would be otherwise impossible. There are very few characters in 'Cyclops' who are free of any guilt with regards to the anti-Semitic attacks Bloom is subject to. While not directly goading the citizen into making anti-Semitic remarks or attacking Bloom for his identity, the mere fact of the patrons continuing to rile the Fenian and supply him with drinks belies a complete lack of perspective with regard to the racist abuse that Bloom suffers. This highlights how even the more welcoming side of the pub are likewise complicit in the citizen's xenophobic, anti-Semitic histrionics.

The only person Bloom can directly challenge about their anti-Semitic remarks is the citizen, and the results of his doing so attest to Joyce's critiques of the tacit xenophobia of Noman and the other patrons. It is through his arguments with the citizen that Bloom becomes emboldened, proudly embracing his Jewish ancestry with proclamations such as 'Three cheers for Israel!', even becoming so brave as to bait the citizen by telling him that 'Your God was a jew. Christ was a jew like me.'[159] It is the explicit nature of the citizen's bigotry that allows Bloom to become so vocal about his own ethnicity, and Hayman asserts that Bloom's final proclamation about God 'marks the moment when being a Jew in Dublin ceases to disturb him', going so far as to suggest that his escape from the pub 'marks Bloom's first step toward the possible recovery of his self-possession and

[159] Joyce, *Ulysses*, pp. 444-445.

manhood.'[160] Whether or not the ongoing reclamation of one's character could be elicited purely from this encounter, this remains a key moment in Bloom's journey in the novel. The outspoken nature of the citizen's xenophobia and anti-Semitism allow it to be challenged, and by challenging these abhorrences, Bloom is able remove the citizen's power. Naturally, Bloom cannot challenge the unspoken anti-Semitism present in the pub, but this contest demonstrates the importance of both exposing and challenging such cultural myopia. It is only through direct engagement that Bloom is able to reveal what Spiegel calls 'the 'illusion of purity and the fragility of the majority culture' that must focus on 'means of differentiation for its conception of self',[161] resulting in the citizen's idea of a 'pure' Ireland being exposed as mere fantasy. The experimental narration of Noman, meanwhile, holds a mirror to the silent anti-Semites and xenophobes of Ireland, forcing them to have, in Joyce's own words, 'one good look at themselves in my nicely-polished looking glass', with the hope of preventing 'the course of civilization in Ireland' being held back by their deeply toxic and dangerous beliefs.[162]

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[160] Hayman, pp. 251-252.

[161] Spiegel, p. 79.

[162] James Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce,* ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), p. 64.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce's great anti-racist hope is for Ireland to reach 'to the glory of the brightness' which his prophet 'Bloom Elijah' ascends to by confronting a nationalist dialogue which perpetuates racist and xenophobic hatred.[163] Ellison's *Invisible Man* proffers a similar hope, with the journey of its nameless protagonist shedding vital light on the daily injustices faced by the African American population. The novel opens with the protagonist's assertion that, despite being 'invisible', he is neither 'a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe', nor a 'Hollywood movie ectoplasm[]'.[164] His state of invisibility comes about, in his own words, 'simply because some people refuse to see me',[165] with the novel following his journey to discover how he fits into mid-20th century American society as a Black man. Through deployment of literary techniques such as fragmentation and temporal dislocation - as showcased in Joyce's 'Cyclops' - the text interrogates the complex relationship between nationality and racism at a fraught time for American race relations. The prologue and epilogue are narrated in the present tense, placing them at the end of a linear chronology of the novel, but naturally they bookend the main body of the text, which Ellison sets up as first person oral memoir. In this way, both sections are both proleptic and analeptic, with Invisible pre-empting the novels' action before he relays it to the reader, whilst simultaneously looking back on his journey. The anticipation of Invisible's emergence from his underground dwelling also acts as a form of unfulfilled prolepsis, as there is no way for the reader to know if he ever does actually return to the surface. This state of looking both forwards and backwards resonates richly with the themes of the text, both with regard to Invisible's view of history, as well as Ellison's experimentation with time in the novel. His temporal experiments highlight

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[163] Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 449.

[164] Ellison, *IM,* p. 3.

[165] Ibid., p. 3.

the fact of African Americans experiencing time differently than white Americans due to states of double consciousness they inhabit, alongside their being forced outside the 'groove of history' by white a-temporality and oppression. Ellison's temporal preoccupation, I will argue, is particularly influenced by Joyce, and represents the most profound experimentalism within the novel. Ellison's engagement with technology is crucial in effecting the temporal experiments at play in *Invisible Man*, and Rayvon Fouché's theory of Black vernacular technological creativity will enable me to discuss how Invisible's engagement with technology relates to the expression of his Blackness. I will argue that it is through engagement with these experimental elements Ellison crafted such a searing, urgent critique of anti-Black racism and white hegemonic America society, and is ultimately what has lead to *Invisible Man's* enduring anti-racist legacy.

In his article 'Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud',[166] Rayvon Fouché set out his theory for what he describes as Black vernacular technological creativity. The development of this theory came from his observation that in the 'capitalist-supported tradition, the multiple effects that technology has on African American lives go underexamined'.[167] Fouché goes on to explain that African Americans have historically had 'distinctly adversarial relationships' with technology due to the fact that:

> technology has been a potent form of power in material form that has politically, socially, and intellectually silenced African American people, and in the worst cases rendered them defenseless and invisible.[168]

Whilst it is crucial to recognise the oppressive force that technology has been for many African Americans, Fouché asserts that discussing *only* this

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[166] Rayvon Fouché, 'Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud: African Americans, American Artifactual Culture, and Black Vernacular Technological Creativity', American Quarterly, 58., 3., (2006) pp. 639-661.

[167] Ibid., p. 640.

[168] Ibid., p. 640.

aspect of the relationship ‘strips black people of technological agency’ in a comparable manner to their initial oppression.[169] In Fouché’s mind, this exclusionary approach remains prevalent due to the fact that Black people’s interactions with technology are often ‘innovative engagements with technology based upon black aesthetics’, which result ‘from resistance to existing technology and strategic appropriations of the material and symbolic power and energy of technology.’[170] This appropriation is what characterises Black vernacular technological creativity, an idea which resonates with what Ellison was doing through his writing - what John Wright called his ‘syncretic drive to combine, reconcile, and reintegrate cultural realities […] in his theories of Afro-American and American character’.[171] In literature, Ellison found a method of expressing a true form of Black experience, but he was also an avid technological agent, describing in his essay ‘The Shadow and the Act’ how he spent his childhood ‘obsessively mastering the techniques and concepts of crystal-set circuitry, vacuum tubes, and winding coils’,[172] and detailing his construction of an elaborate sound system in ‘Living With Music’.[173] Ellison was crucially aware of the important arena technology offered for the expression of Black experience and culture, and this awareness is evidenced in the ‘Prologue’ of *Invisible Man.*

When we first meet Invisible, he asserts to the reader that he has ‘found a home - or a hole in the ground, as you will’, but is quick to clarify that it is

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[169] Ibid., p. 641.

[170] Ibid., p. 641.

[171] John Wright, ‘Shadowing Ellison’, in *Speaking For You: The Vision of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by Kimberley W. Benston (Washington D.C: Howard University Press, 1987), pp. 63-90 (p. 67).

[172] Ralph Ellison, ‘The Shadow and the Act’, in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp. 302-310.

[173] Ralph Ellison, ‘Living with Music’, in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp. 227-237.

not ‘cold and damp like a grave’.[174] By his own description, Invisible’s subterranean abode is full of light - ‘Yes, *full* of light’ - thanks to his ‘fight with Monopolated Light & Power’, which Invisible describes succinctly for the reader a line later: ‘I use their service and pay them nothing at all, and they don’t know it.’[175] Alexander G. Weheliye describes Ellison’s conception of the power company as ‘the modernized and electrified capitalist reformulation of Western-style heliocentrism’, and thus the resonance of Invisible’s electrical theft is amplified.[176] This fight is an instance of what Fouché calls ‘redeployment’, defined as:

> the process by which the material and symbolic power of technology is reinterpreted but maintains its traditional use and physical form, as with blues musicians extending the perceived capabilities of a guitar without altering it.[177]

Invisible is hijacking power - both literally and metaphorically - from ML&P, as the electricity retains its original use, whilst enabling both practical and symbolic political acts in the process. The practical side of the act is the cost incurred by ML&P, pushed to extremes by the fact of Invisible having 1,369 lightbulbs in his basement, and their being of the ‘more-expensive-to-operate kind, the filament type’ - a further ‘act of sabotage’ against ML&P.[178] The symbolic political act comes from the use of filament bulbs likewise, as it invokes the inventor Lewis Latimer. Latimer was an African American inventor who patented a method for making carbon filaments more efficient in the 1880s, drastically increasing the efficacy and affordability of electric lighting in America.[179] Despite this invention, he was

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[174] Ellison, *IM*, p. 5.

[175] Ibid., pp. 5-6.

[176] Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 52.

[177] Fouché, *Say It Loud*, p. 642.

[178] Ellison, *IM*, p.7

[179] Rayvon Fouhcé, *Black Inventors in the Age of Segregation: Granville T. Woods, Lewis H. Latimer, and Shelby J. Davidson* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

largely erased from history due to this race, only being inducted into the Inventors Hall of Fame in 2006, almost 80 years after his death. Thus, not only will the filament bulbs cost ML&P more, they do so in recognition of Latimer's invisibility, illuminating his plight in the process of fighting back against the homogenous power distributor.

The other crucial beneficiary of Invisible's stolen electricity - and another key example of redeployment - is his 'radio-phonograph', of which he announces his 'plan to have five.'[180] Upon announcing this plan, Invisible immediately clarifies its reasoning:

> There is a certain acoustical deadness in my hole, and when I have music I want to *feel* its vibration, not only with my ear but with my whole body. I'd like to hear five recordings of Louis Armstrong playing and singing 'What Did I Do to Be so Black and Blue' - all at the same time.[181]

In this plan, Invisible is neither changing the material abilities of each individual phonograph, as each remains physically unaltered, nor using them for non-traditional purposes, as each is being used to play the same Armstrong recording. The combined effect, however, is a clear example of Black vernacular technological creativity: Invisible wishes to have the music overwhelm his senses in order to better understand the personal and spiritual resonance of the way in which 'Louis bends that military instrument into a beam of lyrical sound', which transmits the poetry Armstrong has created 'out of being invisible'.[182] [183] The five phonographs will allow Invisible to manufacture a sensory overload akin to the overwhelming socio-cultural forces that cause his invisibility, thus allowing him to feel the

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[180] Ellison, *IM*, p. 7.

[181] Ibid., p. 7.

[182] Ibid., p. 7.

[183] Invisible's description of Armstrong's trumpeting skill is another clear example of Fouché's theory, taking the metaphorical resonance of the trumpet away from the American war machine (signalled by calling it the 'military instrument') and using it instead to express the struggles of the Black experience.

meaning beneath the music more acutely, as if stepping inside Armstrong's own subjectivity. This sensory overload, whilst not achieved through the multiple phonograph setup mentioned above, is instead enacted through what Weheliye describes as 'another cultural technology of dislocation and intensification': marijuana.[184]

Invisible begins this passage of the prologue by setting the scene: 'some jokers gave me a reefer, which I lighted when I got home and sat listening to my phonograph.'[185] The unexpected, accidental nature of Invisible's procurement of marijuana is crucial here, as the simulated sensory overwhelm is thrust upon him without deliberate choice on his part, mirroring the way in which double consciousness is formed in relation to hegemonic white society. The marijuana enables Invisible to simulate the overwhelm of the five phonographs, and as such he is able to engage with the Armstrong record on a far more impactful level than if he were sober. It is through this engagement that Ellison begins to inject his ideas of time into the narrative, with Invisible first giving the reader a brief overview of how time works for him with relation to his invisibility as a Black man, and how this resonates through Armstrong's work:

> Invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat. Sometimes you're ahead and sometimes you're behind. Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead. And you slip into the breaks and look around. That's what you hear vaguely in Louis' music.[186]

Invisible's mentioning of how time functions differently for African Americans, having an ability to leave one 'slip[ping] into the breaks', is translated textually as our protagonist recalls how, on the night he

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[184] Weheliye, p. 59.

[185] Ellison, *IM*, p. 8.

[186] Ibid., p. 8.

accidentally gets high before putting on his Armstrong recording, he found himself 'hearing not only in time, but in space as well'.[187] By stepping outside of what Ronald Schleifer describes as 'self-same […] surrounding "ether"',[188] of Newtonian time, our protagonist finds himself able to engage with the his Black identity diachronically, finding himself in a world of paradox and contradiction.

Time is the site of Ellison's other great experimentation in *Invisible Man.* Schleifer writes that, for modernist writers, time was a key area of interest, and describes how it was typically conveyed in their work: 'In Conrad as well as Yeats, in Joyce as well as T.S Eliot, there is a sense of arrested time - aesthetic time - captured in discourse reduced to image.'[189] He explains these writers' fascination with time was a natural reaction to the fact that both '[e]xperience and understanding in the early twentieth century involved an *awareness* of time',[190] due to the historic magnitude of events going on around them. Ellison carries on this modernist fascination with time in *Invisible Man*: within the first pages the reader is informed that Invisible possesses a 'slightly different sense of time' than the Newtonian norm.[191] Where Ellison differs from his modernist influences, crucially, is in his engagement with time as a far more malleable, fluid form of temporality than the 'arrested' time of Eliot and Joyce. Michael Germana writes that Invisible's sense of his own temporality is shifted throughout the novel, from being 'synchronic to diachronic' by the time we meet him in the prologue and epilogue,[192] suggesting that his awareness moves away from a synchronic focus on his own presence in the current moment to a

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[187] Ibid., p. 8.

[188] Ronald Schleifer, *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science, and Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 6.

[189] Ibid., p. 6.

[190] Ibid., p. 8.

[191] Ibid., p. 8.

[192] Michael Germana*, Ralph Ellison, Temporal Technologist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 221.

diachronic place of understanding and interrogating his past, and looking forward to his future evolution. In the prologue, Invisible warns the reader to 'beware of those who speak of the *spiral* of history', theorising of it instead as a boomerang, and advising the reader to '[k]eep a steel helmet handy'.[193] He goes on to claim that he has himself been 'boomeranged across [the] head so much that [he] can now see the darkness of lightness',[194] likely another punning reference to Lewis Latimer. This reverence for the presence of capital 'H' History is key to Invisible's worldview, no more so than when he realises that there are swathes of Black youth who are operating 'outside the groove of history', and makes it his mission to 'get them in, all of them'.[195] This temporal displacement is remarkably similar to the temporal displacement which Weheliye notes 'deem[ed] blackness beyond the epistemological and ontological reach of the West', as a reaction to the closer spatial proximity between Black and white people in order to cement 'Afro-diasporic subjects and blackness in general […] in the role of the other to Western modernity'.[196] The temporal displacement Weheliye refers to here is necessary for the African American to remain in the role of the Other, as the tenets that such beliefs were built from, namely 'slavery, colonialism, [and] scientific racism', are the pillars upon which 'both conceptually and sociohistorically […] the hubristic edifices of unmitigated reason and progress rest' within Western modernity.[197] Here, Ellison is suggesting that the African American population do not need to accept the role that this displacement forces them into, and can instead force themselves back within 'the groove of history' in order to experience the necessary 'boomeranging' that enabled Invisible to recognise his own position within the groove in the first

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[193] Ellison, *IM,* p. 6.

[194] Ibid., p. 6.

[195] Ibid., p. 426.

[196] Weheliye, p. 4.

[197] Ibid., p. 4.

instance,[198] before taking further steps to understand his own invisibility. Without the displacement allowing these archaic and destructive practices to become a-temporal, the facade of Western modernity as a wholly white endeavour would crumble.

A clear example of white a-temporality in the novel is the Brotherhood's use of morally abhorrent means - stoking of racial tensions in Harlem through exploitation of its Black population - to effect a communist revolution, which closely mirrors the situation of the citizen and his quest for Irish independence in *Ulysses.* Their insistence that in 'the Brotherhood we are all brothers' wilfully ignores the complexities of slavery and racism in a manner that would not be sustainable if the white edifice of modernity crumbled.[199] In this eventuality, their exploitation of Harlem's Black population could not take place, and would be seen for the racist, insidious play for revolution-at-any-cost that it is. Furthermore, it would have been infinitely less likely that Brother Clifton - a Black Brotherhood leader who disappears once he is confronted by the racist ideology that underpins the society - would have become disillusioned by their practices and ethos under a conception of modernity that related to - and, crucially, was influenced by - Black subjectivity and experience. It is arguable that, in such a world, Brother Clifton - who is gunned down by a policeman for selling Sambo dolls in the streets after leaving the Brotherhood - would likely still be alive. The Brotherhood episode acts as an investigation into Invisible's Marxist alienation - his feeling of disconnect from the products of his work - from the Brotherhood due to their veiled racism, with Ellison conveying how dangerous this positioning of an a-temporal Blackness beyond epistemological and ontological consideration of the West truly is.

When Invisible gets high and listens to Armstrong, he experiences a dilated, hallucinatory time. Ellison employs italics to denote the latter, which

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[198] Ellison, *IM*, p. 426.

[199] Ibid., p. 378.

as Brody writes, was a technique embedded in ‘a Western modernist tradition’ by the time of *Invisible Man*’s publication.[200] Brody clarifies, however, that Ellison *also* utilities his typography as a specific method of Black expression, by putting ‘black marks into the service of Black subjectivity’.[201] Ellison is using the italics to allow Invisible to view the ‘groove of history’ from the outside, enacting a Du Boisian relationship with history for his protagonist. This is enacting the legacy of what Joyce was doing in ‘Cyclops’ with the temporally dislocated asides - as readers, we are both within the ‘groove of history’ as it continues in the narrative, but are also able to view it externally, and more critically as a result of this remove. They key difference here is that Ellison’s protagonist experiences this dislocation alongside the reader, allowing it to inform his quest for the answer to his questions about Black identity. In the words of Brody, the italics work as ‘dramatic guidelines for the written word’ here,[202] letting us know that we are stepping outside of the narrative time of the novel, and allowing us to alter our perspective in line with Invisible’s shifting view of his own Blackness.

The first level of the ‘cave’ in which Invisible’s hallucination places him, is found ‘*beneath the swiftness of the hot tempo*’, and is described as containing ‘*a slower tempo and a cave* […][with] *an old man singing a spiritual as full of Weltschmerz as flamenco*’ in it.[203] The spiritually melancholic resonance is further intensified when Invisible describes seeing ‘*a beautiful girl the color of ivory pleading in a voice like my mother’s as she stood before a group of slaveowners who bid for her naked body*’ on the next layer down,[204] emphasising the devastating longevity of slavery’s socio-psychological impact on African Americans. On the next level,

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[200] Jennifer DeVere Brody, ‘The Blackness of Blackness…Reading the Typography of “Invisible Man”’, *Theatre Journal*, 57.4 (2005), 679-698 (p. 682).

[201] Ibid., p. 682.

[202] Ibid., p. 682.

[203] Ellison, *IM,* p. 8.

[204] Ibid., p. 8.

Ellison's protagonist envisions a preacher, reading a text entitled '*"The Blackness of Blackness"* ' before a congregation.[205] Here, Weheliye writes, the sermon 'emphasizes the paradox of his invisibility, since blackness, or rather the blackness of blackness, appears as a series of syncopated contradictions'.[206] Through the contradictions of *''Now black is… […] an' black ain't…"*, '*'Black will git you… […] …an' black won't"*, and the most succinct '*'It do… […] an' it don't"*,[207] Ellison once again evokes Du Bois' idea of double consciousness, using paradox to represent the African American experience of identity as being the struggle between 'two warring ideals in one dark body'.[208] Brody goes so far as to posit that Ellison's use of ellipses here can be read as 'a site of improvisation', with the ellipsis being 'a present figure of absence',[209] signposting the lack of an essential condition of Blackness. Similarly, Fred Moten writes that improvisation in music, far from being symptomatic of 'the absence of forethought, a lack of planning', in fact 'allows another transcription of previousness',[210] an idea that translates clearly onto Brody's idea of the 'improvisational' ellipses. As the sermon articulates the futility of trying to locate what Moten describes as 'the impossibly originary black moment',[211] the historical nature of the inherent contradictions of Blackness are brought about explicitly in the spoken words. What is crucial in the improvisation of the ellipses, however, is the reinforcement of these contradictions by emphasising the 'previousness' of the Black subjectivities that have preceded and indelibly informed the sermon, as well as highlighting the disjunctions that the experience of this 'previousness' can create in the present.

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[205] Ibid., p. 9.

[206] Weheliye, p. 60.

[207] Ellison, *IM,* p. 9.

[208] Du Bois, p. 615.

[209] Brody, p. 687.

[210] Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 64.

[211] Ibid., p.70.

Invisible is not only dislocated from his regular temporal structuring in this moment, but is facing one of his deepest existential concerns in the definition of his own identity as an African American. The nature of Blackness is being explored here in the hallucination, but where Invisible is hoping to find a concrete answers to the question of his existence, he is instead left with more questions, with the music having 'demanded action, the kind of which I was incapable.'[212] By placing the sermon at the centre of Invisible's hallucinatory journey, Ellison foregrounds the importance of paradox as a key tool in the understanding of Black subjectivity, without answering any questions as to *how* these paradoxes can be reconciled before the novel has begun in earnest, leaving this discovery in Invisible's hands as the action he must take. When read in order of the text, this point would appear to set up the narrative arc of the novel, but here we must take into account that both the prologue *and* the epilogue are taking place in the same temporal location - the present, strictly speaking - as Invisible is retelling his odyssey to the reader. Invisible is in fact speaking analeptically, focussing on what his journey *taught* him rather than recounting the mere *experience* of it, espousing what Michael Germana calls 'the creative difference behind every identity' rather than relaying a discovery of a 'true' definition of Blackness to the reader.[213] Invisible has rejected the idea of his own Blackness being an essential condition, an idea he admits he was initially beholden to:

> All my life I had been looking for something and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was. I accepted their answers too, though they were often in contradiction and even self-contradictory.[214]

Here the paradox is invoked once more, but rather than it speaking to Invisible as an expression of Black subjectivity, it complicates his quest for

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[212] Ellison, *IM*, p. 12.

[213] Germana, p. 48.

[214] Ellison, *IM*, p. 15.

a single answer to his unanswerable question. The answer cannot come, as the idea of Blackness is culturally-constructed and deeply subjective, and thus Ellison sets the novel's arc up in this way for Invisible to realise, in the words of Germana, that 'he is not a point […] but rather, he is a threshold that moves through a system composed entirely of lines.'[215] The lines Invisible moves through are the lines of different identity signifiers, be they related to race, gender, sexuality, political belief, etc., and due to this recognition, Invisible has, by the epilogue, 'stopped trying to realize the blueprints of transcendence and has begun trying to actualize something immanent to the present instead'.[216] Where he initially set out trying to pin his own identity down, the experiences of the novel enable Invisible to realise that this is not how identities are formed, in turn imparting this knowledge to the reader. Just as Joyce held a mirror to the Irish public, tacit in their acceptance of anti-Semitism, in a bid to shake them from insidious behaviour, here Ellison is holding a mirror to African American citizens, hoping to reconcile their search for a fixed state of racial identity with the knowledge of the inherent subjectivity of Blackness.

Time is crucial outside of the hallucinatory episode in the Prologue as well, however, for example through Invisible's 1,369 lightbulbs, wired to the walls of his underground dwelling in order to satisfy what he describes as humanity's 'need for light and ever more and brighter light'.[217] The fact of his stealing power, as already mentioned, is a crucial example of Fouché's idea of redeployment, with Invisible using his technological ingenuity to regain symbolic (and literal) power from a faceless monopoly supplier. While Invisible claims that 'truth is the light and light is the truth',[218] Weheliye argues the relationship is more complex than that, as 'the desire

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[215] Germana, p. 74.

[216] Ibid, p. 76.

[217] Ellison, *IM*, p. 8.

[218] Ibid., p. 7.

for light only seems noteworthy in a world where social visibility is a given'.[219] He goes on to clarify that 'social discernibility already functions as light by legislating the boundary between the visible and invisible',[220] which resonates with Invisible's admission of the deeper reason that he engages in his battle with ML&P - '[i]t allows me to feel my vital aliveness.'[221] Invisible rejects this social discernibility which, Frantz Fanon writes, makes '[c]onsciousness of the body [into] solely a negating activity' for Black people, and chooses to provide his own illumination, enabling a state of self-conscious visibility in which he negates the feeling Fanon describes of a persistent 'third person consciousness' in relation to white society.[222] Invisible's embodiment in a first person consciousness is what leads to his feeling of 'vital aliveness.'[223] Germana points out that Invisible's numeric specificity further kindles this aliveness: 'Ellison's narrator takes the digits that appear on a single clock face […] and creates a multiplicity with the resulting sequence: 1,369.'[224] Here, Invisible is allowing - and enabling - himself to do exactly what Todd Clifton suggests it is sometimes necessary to do - 'to plunge outside of history.'[225] With the bulbs representing one smooth continuum of time - with representations of 1, 3, 6, and 9 o'clock all present at once - Invisible is able to invoke the multiplicity of his identity by simulating his being in four different temporal locations at once. This constructed sense of being four versions of himself at once allows Invisible to emphasise the paradoxical nature of Black subjectivity as set forth in the hallucinatory sermon, to embrace the inherent contradictions of Blackness,

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[219] Weheliye, p. 51.

[220] Ibid., p. 51.

[221] Ellison, *IM*, pp. 6-7.

[222] Fanon, p. 83.

[223] Ellison, *IM*, p. 7.

[224] Germana, p. 63.

[225] Ellison, *IM*, p. 364.

and thus to free himself from the angst these contradictions have caused him.

By changing his relation to time through the hallucinatory sermon and the lightbulbs' simulation of a continuous time, Invisible changes his relation to history, embodying a key 'truth' of Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History* in the process:

> A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.[226]

By recognising the influence that the multifarious Black subjectivities of the past have had on his own Blackness, Invisible is able to think about his identity in such a way that it is not being influenced by any present party - be that Dr Bledsoe, Ras the Destroyer, or the Brotherhood. All of these groups have an agenda: Bledsoe wants to retain his power at the fictionalised Tuskegee Institute, whilst Ras and the Brotherhood both want to bring about their respective revolutions through prescriptive conceptions of Blackness. By gaining an understanding of the history of his own identity, Invisible begins to feel rooted in the space he inhabits, rather than looking for direction in the beliefs of others, a condition he comments on in the Epilogue:

> [M]y problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own. I have also been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear what I called myself. So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others I finally rebelled. I am an *invisible* man.[227]

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[226] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations,* ed. by Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 253-264 (p. 254).

[227] Ellison, *IM*, p. 553.

As Germana argues, by listening Louis Armstrong in his temporally-dislocated basement, Invisible becomes able to truly experience the 'cross-section of the imbricated layers of black cultural codes' which suggest the range of Black subjectivity, rather than the possibility of a single definition.[228] As a result of this, he is able to reorder his self-perception into something diachronic and continually evolutionary, rather than something synchronic, and punctuated by discrete, immovable categories of being. All the contradictions present in the hallucinatory sermon now make perfect sense for Invisible, and for the reader, as they are being (re)viewed analeptically via Invisible's narration. In the previous synchronic view of time, the suggestions of Blackness as something that do/don't, or will/won't appear dichotomous and binary; however, in Invisible's newly-found diachronic view of time, the existence of all contradictory (un)states of Blackness seem perfectly able to coexist, hinging on the sermon's most profound assertion: '*'Black will make you […] or black will un-make you."*[229] This new understanding greatly informs Invisible's desire to get the Black youth back inside the 'groove of history', for it is only through engagement with his own history that he was able to come to this revelation. Whereas at the beginning of his journey, Invisible's believed his identity had to be in a fixed binary state - either made or unmade - as it referred to his race, now he is able to both make and unmake this identity simultaneously, as the continual, temporally heterogenous evolution of his sense of self roils on in temporal dislocation. This heterogenous evolution is what allows Invisible the realisation that there is no one single definition of Blackness, as he is able to understand the many individual Black subjectivities which have brought him to this point, all present within him - the multiplicity which is key to the novel's conception of Blackness.

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[228] Germana, p. 220.

[229] Ellison, *IM*, p. 10.

Sylvia Wynter writes that Invisible's odyssey provides him with 'another concept of freedom, [and] another possibility of liveable being',[230] but that this liveability can only be tested by a return to the surface. In the epilogue, Invisible makes clear his plans to return to the overground world, with his declaration on the penultimate page of the novel: 'I'm shaking off the old skin and I'll leave it here in the hole. I'm coming out, no less invisible without it, but coming out nonetheless.'[231] Crucial to this is his recognition that, even after the clarifying of his own identity that has taken place below ground, his invisibility will still be a part of him. Just as Bloom becomes to accept with his Jewish identity through his confrontation of the citizen, Invisible becomes comfortable with his invisibility through his trials in *Invisible Man.* Ellison is not suggesting that his character now inhabits a post-racial utopia, in which his Blackness has no effect on his life, but quite the opposite. It is his *understanding* of his invisibility through his temporal dislocation that allows him to be confident with his invisibility upon his return to reality, a confidence belied in his suggestion that 'there's a possibility even an invisible man has a socially responsible role to play.'[232] This recalls Benjamin again, when he states that 'only a redeemed mankind receives the fullness of its past—which is to say, only for a redeemed mankind has its past become citable in all its moments'.[233] Invisible's past - and how his past is moulded by that of his ancestors - has become citable to him, and as such he is 'redeemed', able to return to the surface and enact the change he believes in. Invisible's socially responsible role, then, is to bring the 'men dressed like the boys' and 'girls in dark exotic-colored stockings' whose fashions were 'surreal variations of downtown styles' back inside 'the groove of history', in order to allow them their own experiences

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[230] Sylvia Wynter, 'On Disenchanting Discourse: "Minority" Literary Criticism and beyond', *Cultural Critique*, 7 (1987), 207-244 (p. 227).

[231] Ellison, *IM*, p. 560.

[232] Ibid., p. 561.

[233] Benjamin, p. 254.

with the knowledge he has gained.[234] Only through this return can their own pasts become citable, and can they be redeemed from the existential funk Invisible sees in the Black youth of Harlem. While Invisible may begin the novel searching for a definitive answer to the existential concerns he feels regarding his socio-cultural identity as a Black man, he ends the novel having 'achieve[d] a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: That I am nobody but myself.'[235] Invisible now recognises that the shared invisibility of Black subjectivity is *only* shared so far as it relates directly to skin colour. Below the surface, Ellison reiterates, there are as many different conceptions of Blackness as there are Black people.

Ellison's mingling of the sonic and the visual through Armstrong feels particularly resonant in this idea, for as Sam Halliday notes, '[m]usic discloses the irreducibly multiple within the singular.'[236] There is no one definition of Blackness, just as there is no one way to listen to the Armstrong record that the novel begins with. Invisible readily admits, however, that it was only through his initial search for the essential conditions of Blackness that he was able to come to this realisation - 'first I had to discover that I am an invisible man!'[237] Through the bookending of his protagonist's spiritual odyssey - itself a temporal dislocation with regard to the novels' first person narration - with the confessional nature of the prologue and epilogue, Ellison creates a situation in which Invisible's 'future possibilities depend upon our recognition of his multiplicity, and with it, the heterogeneity of time'.[238] Through dislocation of both the narrative style *and* the narrator's own relation to his time, Ellison conveys the multiplicity of options spread out before his protagonist, enabling the African American reader to recognise the multiplicity of their own options a result of this.

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[234] Ellison, *IM*, p. 426.

[235] Ibid., p. 15.

[236] Sam Halliday, *Sonic Modernity: Representing Sound in Literature, Culture, and the Arts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 59.

[237] Ellison, *IM,* p. 15.

[238] Germana, p. 79.

Throughout *Invisible Man*'s Prologue and Epilogue, Ellison engages with the ideas of Black vernacular technological creativity and temporal-dislocation to answer crucial questions about his protagonist's quest for a stable identity. Invisible's redeployment of the phonograph - especially when combined with his use of marijuana as an additional cultural production - allows him to journey below the surface of the Louis Armstrong recording he is so fond of, in order to understand the Black subjectivities that have informed the recording. This allows him to gain crucial perspective on the a-temporality of his own, subjective Blackness: a perspective which enables Invisible to finally see himself as a heterogenous agent whose Blackness is in a state of diachronic becoming, rather than as a static point of identity on an imagined scale of essential Blackness measured against a dominant white hegemony. The hallucinatory journey below the surface of Armstrong's recording responds to the modernist legacy of Joyce's temporally dislocated asides in *Ulysses* to enact this change of perspective in such a way that highlights the importance of technology to expression of Black experience. This combination is what enables Invisible to uncover - or rather, to keep uncovering - some sense of his place within society by the novel's end. Ellison's engagement with and deployment of these concepts not only allows Invisible that journey, but suggests it as a jumping off point for the reader as well due to the diaristic, first person narration that is central to *Invisible Man*. This mode of narration increases the efficacy of the text's condemnation of the racist state of 'people refus[ing] to see' that which renders our protagonist Invisible,[239] whilst acknowledging how the complexities of such a situation can affirm and inform one's identity by the end of Invisible's journey.

[239] Ellison, *IM*, p. 3.

Conclusion

The symbiotic relationship between textual experimentation and urgent anti-colonial/anti-racist arguments in *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man* have lead to their enduring impact on literary canons. Where the majority of both authors' short stories were primarily realist - making them more conventionally 'accessible' to the general reader - their experimental novels allowed Joyce and Ellison's more nuanced arguments to flourish alongside one another, leading to deeply affective and complex works of literature. Their next (and final) works would push the bounds of their experimentation to their limits, but in the process lead, to difficulty in publishing and accessibility, part of which was to do with the serialisation of the works. In light of this, the next chapter of this thesis will explore the anti-colonial and anti-racist themes of the serialised sections of *Finnegans Wake* and *Three Days Before The Shooting…,* and discussing each authors' motivations for pursuing these themes, in the light of their works' respective publication histories. It will evaluate whether the two works became too 'avant-garde' to achieve the impact that *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man* had done on the public consciousness, on the one hand, whilst on the other, examining how and why the serialisation of the works actually redeemed them in this sense, by democratising the crucial sections of the works.

Chapter 3: Serialisation, consumer culture, and radio in *Finnegans Wake and Three Days Before The Shooting…*

Despite his writing to Albert Murray in 1951 that he was 'trying to get started on my next novel',[240] Ralph Ellison only ever published eight excerpts of his final work before his death in 1994. The compiled volume of the manuscript of what Ellison described as his 'Okla. book' [Oklahoma book, as much of the book is located there] was eventually released in its incomplete state in 2010,[241] and feels as though it merely scratches the surface of Ellison's intention for the work, despite the volume being over 1,000 pages long. For scale, Adam Bradley - who compiled the volume with John F. Callahan - asserts that Ellison's digital work on the novel alone amounted to 'more than 3,000 pages in 469 files on eighty-three disks using three computers', alongside the 'thousands of manuscript pages [and] countless notes' which constituted the work's physical archive.[242] Both *Three Days Before The Shooting…* and *Finnegans Wake* are the culmination of their authors' literary ambitions and abilities, and yet they are far less accessible - and far less widely read - than their respective opuses, *Invisible Man* and *Ulysses*. One crucial difference between the two authors stands out however - despite being almost blind by the end of his life, and taking the best part of two decades to get there, Joyce finished *Finnegans Wake*; the same cannot be said for Ellison and *Three Days Before The Shooting*…. The natural question arising from this situation is 'why?', and whilst there is no definitive answer to this question, Ellison's literary executor John F. Callahan's insight into Ellison's writing process with *Three Days* can provide some indications. One very clear roadblock in the process was a fire at Ellison's summer residence in Massachusetts in 1967 which, in a

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[240] Ellison, *The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison,* p. 268.

[241] Ibid., p. 291.

[242] Adam Bradley, *Ralph Ellison in Progress : The Making and Unmaking of One Writer's Great American Novel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 22-30.

letter to Jack Ludwig, he described as having destroyed 'part of my manuscript—the revisions over which I had labored in the summer and valuable notebooks.'[243] While the physical destruction of the manuscript was an obvious detriment, Callahan posits that the fire potentially 'took less of a toll on the actual manuscript than it may have taken upon Ellison's morale and confidence as the years went by.'[244] After this point, Ellison only published four excerpts from the novel: all of those were published within a decade of the fire, and nothing from *Three Days* was published during the last 17 years of Ellison's life.[245] Any momentum he had seems to have been destroyed, or at least, severely disrupted, as per Callahan's suggestion – but this did not mean he was not still working on the novel. The last known edits were made to the work in December of 1993, just four months before Ellison passed away, but this gives rise to another question: what was he doing for those seventeen years? Here, we find the crux of what prevented Ellison from finishing his major final work.

Whereas Joyce's experimentation in *Finnegans Wake* stems from the prodigious originality of its linguistic gymnastics, the site of the most significant experimentation in *Three Days* is located in Ellison's narrative structure. He moves away from the faceless narration of the eponymous Invisible and jumps between different distinctive narrative styles and voices throughout the work. Book I of the work is narrated in the first person by a white reporter named Welborn McIntyre, through whose eyes Ellison depicts the assassination of Senator Sunraider, and the ensuing chaos. Adam Sunraider is a senator of ambiguous race who was raised by Reverend Alonzo Hickman in a Black, Southern religious community, where he acted as a young preacher alongside Hickman. He leaves this life

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[243] Ralph Ellison, quoted in John F. Callahan, 'General Introduction to *Three Days Before The Shooting…',* in *Three Days Before The Shooting…,* ed. by John F. Callahan, Adam Bradley (New York: The Modern Library, 2010), pp. xv-xxix (p. xx).

[244] Callahan, p. xx.

[245] By comparison, it took Joyce 17 years to write the *entirety* of *Finnegans Wake*.

behind him, and for a while works as an exploitative film-maker, stereotyping and removing agency from Black communities through the use of cinema. The novel being unfinished, there is no explicit path between his filmmaking and his governmental career, but Ellison implicitly suggests that the oratorical skills he has gained through his preaching, alongside his immersion in the emerging socio-technical sphere of filmmaking, coalesce into a career where he can utilise both at once: government. As Sam Halliday asserts, 'Bliss's metamorphosis into Sunraider begins in an actual cinema',[246] suggesting that the overlap of the prominent cultural ensembles in the book have merged for Bliss: by Sunraider's own admission, in America '*it's change the reel and change the man.*'[247] It is this merging which leads him to becoming Senator Sunraider, whose use of race-baiting and intentionally controversial speech are the catalyst for great inter-racial tension at a crucial time in American history - the build-up to the signing of the Civil Rights Act. His unconventional upbringing affords a unique understanding of how race is constructed in America, and enables him to weaponise this construction through essentialist, derogatory statements – and the novel's core (but ultimately unanswered) question is why he chooses this path. Through his decision to use a white narrator to relay the Senator's eventual assassination - specifically through the role of McIntyre as a reporter - Ellison was able to infuse the narrative with the insidious, everyday anti-Black racism of white hegemonic U.S society. The narration then shifts in Book II between a traditional third-person narrator - though one engaging in free indirect discourse, as in Ellison's short fiction - and first-person narration from the Senator's point of view, enacting a similar knotting together of cultural discourses which lead to Sunraider's governmental career. This shifting narrative voice adds nuance to his public image, shedding light on how his evolution from Bliss, the child preacher

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[246] Halliday, *Cinema and Cinematicity in Ralph Ellison's* Three Days Before The Shooting…, p. 318.

[247] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1068.

raised in a Black community, to Adam Sunraider, the race-baiting, controversy-stirring Senator could possibly take place. The nature of the serialisation of the published excerpts themselves is a location of further experimentation for *Three Days*, as each excerpt is indelibly linked to the other in some tangible way, despite the often sizeable temporal and spatial gaps between their publication. This meta-serialisation - Ellison's continuation of narrative strands throughout his published extracts as a means of commenting upon how media ensembles function - adds further depth and nuance to the stories, whilst still allowing them to stand by themselves, shorn of context.

As with *Invisible Man*, it is Ellison's 'preoccupation with the interiority of his subjects' that affords him such depth and nuance in his arguments regarding nationhood, visibility, complicity, and technology.[248] In looking over Ellison's manuscripts, Callahan noted that the same scene was often re-written multiple times, sometimes with only minuscule changes to show for it. This was enabled by Ellison's use of a computer in the later stages of the novel's drafting. Adam Bradley credits this technological leap with 'transforming Ellison's compositional method and leaving an indelible mark upon his final manuscript' and its subsequent style, going so far as to describe Ellison as 'arguably the first major author of the digital age.'[249] As discussed in the previous chapter, such complexity of subject matter necessitates complexity of prose in order to allow such nuanced cultural critiques to be fully expressed, but also entails a far more arduous writing process as result. The computer allowed Ellison to edit more freely, and such he would often redraft section over and over. This vicious circle of editorial attrition resulted in Ellison leaving behind a work that, in Callahan's words, 'doesn't end so much as stop'.[250] Ellison remained unable to finish

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[248] Callahan, p. xxv.

[249] Bradley, p. 22.

[250] Callahan, p. xxvii.

the work, and thus his great anti-racist argument about the very fabric of American society and democracy lacked a conclusion. The depth and complexity of his experimentation overwhelmed him, and the only sections which ever saw the light of day in his lifetime were the eight excerpts published between 1960 and 1977.[251] In this chapter I will examine four of these excerpts - with a specific focus on the most enduring of the eight, 'Cadillac Flambé' - to suggest that Ellison's anti-racist arguments and societal critiques on display here are the finest examples of such in his fiction. The arguments and critiques in the published excerpts gesture towards the larger claims at the work in the novel around socio-technics, white privilege/unconscious racism, and the racial tensions present in American society in the build-up to the signing of the Civil Rights, doing so through a strategy of meta-serialisation - the publishing of separate but linked excerpts, which acts as a critique of media ensembles in itself through its interconnected structure. I will argue that, far from being mere *amuse-bouche* to keep the literary world's appetite whetted, these excerpts provide some of the most scintillating prose in Ellison's career, and that the magnitude of their impact in such short packages speaks to the exceptional precision of Ellison's writing. I will argue that, despite Ellison's experimentation (amongst other factors) preventing him from finishing the work, the weight that such experimentation provided his anti-racist arguments was invaluable in the published excerpts, and thus was a useful and justified tool, irrespective of its effects on the novel's completion. Joyce's experimentation in *Finnegans Wake*, specifically with regards to the importance of radio, will be crucial in my discussion of Ellison's critique of the technology as it relates to nationalism, though Joyce's work here will be more of a point of reference than of extensive comparison in this chapter. It

[251] The published extracts were 'And Hickman Arrives' (1960), 'The Roof, the Steeple and the People' (1960), 'It Always Breaks Out' (1963), 'Juneteenth' (1965), 'Night Talk' (1969), 'A Song of Innocence' (1970), 'Cadillac Flambé' (1973), and 'Backwacking, A Plea to the Senator' (1977). All excerpts have been reprinted in *Three Days Before The Shooting*…, and as such I will be referencing them from this text.

will inform both the inspiration Ellison took from Joyce's use of radio, and where his deployment of radio built on the critiques of *Finnegans Wake* to take them from a place of anti-nationalist modernist engagement with a developing technology, to a place of anti-racist post-modern engagement with a cemented form of the socio-technical structure which enables the spread of white supremacy.

White makes Black: Technology and consumption in ‘Cadillac Flambé’

‘Cadillac Flambé’ is one of the most enduring excerpts published from *Three Days*. The story details the destruction of a Cadillac by LeeWillie Minifees, a prominent, Black jazz musician who is angered by Senator Sunraider’s derogatory remarks regarding the amount of Black Cadillac owners. Whilst defending the American automobile industry, the Senator suggest that the Cadillac has been become ‘so common in Harlem that much of its initial value has been sorely compromised’, and that as a result he has been ‘led to suggest, and quote seriously, that legislation be drawn up to rename it the ‘Coon Cage Eight.”[252] The outrage that this sparks in LeeWillie Minifees - who hears this speech over his Cadillac’s radio, foregrounding the importance of radio as social technology in this excerpt - is relayed to the reader through the eyes of McIntyre, a white reporter who narrates the entirety of the novel’s first section. The burning of the Cadillac was actually prefigured ten years before its publication in the excerpt ‘It Always Breaks Out’, during which McIntyre and some of his fellow journalists discuss the incident over dinner at their country club. This excerpt begins with a pronouncement from McIntyre which perfectly sets the tone for both stories:

> I don’t know which was the more outrageous, the more scandalous —the burning of the Cadillac on the senator’s beautiful lawn, the wild speech made by the arsonist while the beautiful machine smoked and glowed in flames, or the crowd’s hysterical reaction the weird, flamboyant sacrifice.[253]

McIntyre succinctly summarises the key tensions in Minifees’ act here - the tension between the highly successful, upwardly mobile, Black jazz musician and the symbolic power of the vehicle he is destroying, as well as the onlooking crowd’s horrified reaction to such wanton destruction of a

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[252] Ellison, *TD,* p. 1095.

[253] Ibid., pp. 1043-1044.

pillar of American consumer society. Another crucial element of this pronouncement is McIntyre's use of the word 'arsonist'. Throughout both excerpts McIntyre refers to Minifees as the 'arsonist' at the centre of the event, and yet this term is not technically correct, because for an act to be considered arson it must either cause damage or harm to a third party's property or person. Minifees is not engaging in either - the Cadillac is his own, and he himself remarks that his intention is not to cause harm - '"please don't be disturbed! I don't mean you any harm, and if you'll just cool it a minute I'll tell you what this is all about…"'[254] McIntyre's continued use of the word 'arsonist', then, projects a sense of criminality onto the act where no crime has been committed. With the explicit racial context of the act, such a projection gives the reader their first evidence of McIntyre's unconscious racism, echoing the racist assumptions which infiltrate both the legal and media landscapes of America. The context of his being a reporter is also key here and throughout the work: the accuracy of his words earns him a living, and yet he incorrectly implies criminality without a second thought.

McIntyre's unconscious views are made even more explicit throughout the course of 'It Always Breaks Out', as he narrates the rantings of a Southern newspaperman named McGowan. McGowan's Southern heritage is a pivotal aspect of the the excerpt, as McIntyre - a Northerner - utilises the geographical disparity between the two men to emphasise what he believes to be their social disparity as well. McIntyre makes reference to this often throughout the course of his narration, for instance suggesting that McGowan 'could be amusing about Negroes' but that the group 'would have liked it better had he not been a Southerner',[255] and most concretely of all by describing himself as 'a liberal, ex-radical, northerner' later in the excerpt as a means of placing distance between himself and McGowan's

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[254] Ibid., p. 1089.

[255] Ibid., p. 1049.

racist tirade.[256] This opposition comes from a transparently self-conscious place, as McIntyre believes himself to be liberal in matters of race, claiming that during the 1930s he learnt 'to respected the sensibilities of [Black] people and to avoid all anti-minority stereotypes and clichés', in contrast to his assertion that Black people's mere existence disturbed McGowan's 'notion of a well-ordered society.'[257] One of the novel's key narrative threads is McIntyre's realisation that he is deluding himself - that the 1930s, ex-Marxist intelligentsia, white liberal essentialist prejudices are just as harmful and dangerous and McGowan's overt, outspoken racism, and his previous political and social alignments do not exempt him from his current patterns of unconscious racist thought.

By having McIntyre establish such a clear binary between himself and McGowan, Ellison is able to gradually expose the insidious nature of the all-too- common unconscious racism of American society to the reader as the excerpt unfolds.

Ellison sets the scene of the newspapermens' discussion in a members' club described as having an atmosphere 'resonant with historical associations and warmly civilised values',[258] with portraits of 'the nineteenth-century founders of the club' adding to the 'sense of security' about the place.[259] The group's 'inscrutable but familiar Negro waiter' Sam is presented as merely 'part of a ritual' of historical whiteness that the men play out in this place, with McIntyre description of LeeWillie Minifees as a 'wildman Negro jazzman',[260] setting him in stark contrast to the club's members, whilst upholding deeply embedded racist stereotypes of African American people. Through these descriptions, Ellison builds a stuffy, tense

[256] Ibid., p. 1054.

[257] Ibid., p. 1047.

[258] Ibid., p. 1045.

[259] Ibid., p. 1044.

[260] Ibid., p. 1044.

atmosphere around the scene, which mirrors the unease the journalists are feeling after Minifees' symbolic immolation. One journalist is so disquieted by the event as to proffer the question '"have we ever had a Negro assassin?"', which leads to an almighty tirade from a newspaperman named McGowan, following his proclamation that 'everything the Nigra does is political.'[261]

Ellison's spelling here is pivotal: at first glance the spelling of 'Nigra' can be attributed to McGowan's Southern accent when pronouncing the word 'Negro', but upon further consideration it is possibly something altogether more nefarious - a means of smuggling the first syllable of a racial epithet (the n-word) into a term which was socially acceptable in the story's era, using the cover of regional accents. McGowan's claims throughout his paranoid, racist tirade are hyperbolic and often contradictory, suggesting for instance that a Black man who 'drives too doggone slow or too doggone fast' is doing so as a political statement, or that 'there are few things in this world as political as a black Nigra woman owning her own washing machine."'[262] The contradiction present in much of McGowan's speech is very reminiscent of the "Blackness of Blackness' sermon that Ellison's protagonist experiences in the prologue of *Invisible Man,* but the resonance is entirely inverted coming from the mouth of a white establishment figure. Where the sermon speaks from a place of historic *understanding* of the paradoxes and contradictions that are prevalent in the formation of the Black identity, McGowan's tirade is steeped in historic *paranoia* around the advancement of Black people in American society. His claims seem ridiculous and hyperbolic, with McIntyre dismissing them as such to begin with, but as the excerpt continues McIntyre's voice recedes into the background and he becomes increasingly engaged with what McGowan has to say. The speech inevitably comes around more directly to issues of social equality, with McGowan claiming that a Black man who

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[261] Ibid., p. 1046-1048.

[262] Ibid., p. 1049.

enjoys Faulkner is a 'politically dangerous, integrationist Nigra"', and that a Black man who takes an interest in the stock market is 'power hungry and the next thing you know he'll want to vote and run for public office…."'[263] The resonance of both claims is clear to the reader - Ellison was deeply influenced by Faulkner, as well as being a proud integrationist, and Senator Sunraider holds public office as a man of indeterminate race, albeit one who identifies as white, and indeed with white supremacy. McGowan cannot possibly let go of the historical white hegemony in America - segregation still being in place at the time in which the excerpt is set - and this is why his racial hatred is so strong. McIntyre describes him as 'obsessed with history to the point of nightmare',[264] *á la* Stephen-cum-Joyce throughout *Ulysses*, though McGowan's 'nightmare' is an altogether more paranoid, myopic, racist nightmare than Stephen's. Both are trying to 'awake' from their respective nightmares, but where Stephen's awakening looks forward to a more hopeful, egalitarian future for Ireland, McGowan's awakening looks back, clinging to the racist strictures of pre-Civil Rights Southern America.

It is McIntyre's view of history, however, which is truly being critiqued in this work, as he realises 'with a twinge of embarrassment, that some of the things [McGowan] said were not only amusing but true.'[265] McIntyre is awakened to his own unconsciously racist views by McGowan's speech, much in the same vein of Joyce hoping to awaken the Irish public to their own prejudices through the flagrant anti-Semitism of the citizen. McGowan happily espouses racist, paranoid views that McIntyre 'dared not even think', and yet he finds himself agreeing with the Southern journalist, and wondering if the racist reporter's 'free expression of his feelings, his prejudices, made him freer' than McIntyre.[266] The excerpt concludes with

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[263] Ibid., p. 1049-1050.

[264] Ibid., p. 1054.

[265] Ibid., p. 1054.

[266] Ibid., p. 1054.

McIntyre's realisation that he does not know Sam the waiter's last name, that a crucial player in his weekly journalistic ritual is nothing more than a symbolic presence of the 'warmly civilised values' of the club, in which the Black serve the white, and are denied full humanity to the extent of their full names being unknown. McIntyre's seeing the world in such terms is a crucial factor in his retelling of the events of 'Cadillac Flambé', and enables Ellison to advance his critique of American consumerist society even further as a result.

LeeWillie Minifees' Cadillac is a crucial example of the vital role technology plays in the expression and formation of Black identity in Ellison's work. Alongside the power stolen from Monopolated Light & Power, the configuration of lightbulbs enabling permanent evincing of diachronic time, and the radio phonograph which allows Invisible to slip under the metaphorical layers of Louis Armstrong's recording, Ellison engages with the importance of cars in Black culture - and the radios within those cars - to examine how socio-technical ensembles function in American society. In his book *Mobility Without Mayhem*, Jeremy Packer writes that cars embody a great deal of 'strategic and metaphoric importance' in Black peoples' 'struggles over geographic and upward mobility',[267] concurring with an article from the influential African American *Ebony* Magazine's September 1949 issue which states the following:

> The fact is that basically a Cadillac is an instrument of aggression, a solid and substantial symbol for many a Negro that he is as good as any white man. To be able to buy the most expensive car made in America is as graphic a demonstration of that equality as can be found.[268]

This symbolic power is at the forefront of every character's mind in both excerpts, with McGowan going so far as to exclaim that 'a Nigra who'd burn

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[267] Packer, p. 189.

[268] John S. Johnson, 'Why Negroes Buy Cadillacs', *Ebony*, September 1949, p. 34.

a Cadillac car would do just about anything', so horrified is he with LeeWillie Minifees' symbolic act of defiance.[269] Ellison makes the car's alignment with the white hegemony clear through McIntyre's descriptions of the 'gleaming white Cadillac convertible', with its 'rich ivory leather upholstery', going so far as to call it 'the shining chariot' as Minifees covers it in gasoline and alcohol.[270] The consumerist yearning in the first two phrases sticks out immediately, with the descriptions ringing in the ear because of their advertising jargon. Both phrases could be copied verbatim from a newspaper advert – thematically resonant given McIntyre's profession – and the awed recitation of them speaks to the deified status of the Cadillac in American consumer society at the time. Garry Leonard writes that in *Finnegans Wake*:

> the barrier separating the language of the artist from the language of the marketplace disappears entirely. The result is a phantasmagoria of light, sound, and linguistic spectacle. Each word competes for attention: each declares its own special worth.[271]

The same levelling occurs in *Three Days*, with Ellison instead breaking down the barriers between religious language and consumerist language: it is no coincidence that McIntyre seems to regurgitate advertising slogans at will, where the book's other central narrative force, Reverend Hickman, quotes scripture instead. Ellison is pointing out that these impulses are two sides of the same coin, both trying to claim dominance over the other, serving their specific ideologies. This deification of the Cadillac further brings to mind one of the key questions Joyce poses in *Finnegans Wake*: 'His producers are they not his consumers?'[272] As Leonard notes, in this passage, Joyce succinctly describes the modern 'dialectical relationship

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[269] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1047.

[270] Ibid., p. 1085-1086.

[271] Garry Leonard, 'Joyce and Advertising: Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce's fiction', *James Joyce Quarterly* 30.4 (1993), 573-592 (p. 574).

[272] Joyce, *FW,* p. 497.

between the machines that produce, the goods that are produced, and the consumers who shape such production through habits of consumption'.[273] The Senator's description of the Cadillac as a 'machine' is a crucial framing of the Cadillac's production. McIntyre likewise discusses the Cadillac at multiple points throughout the story, describing it explicitly as 'the white machine' at one point, and the resonance is twofold.[274] Firstly, by designating the car as merely a 'machine', Ellison is stripping it down to its pure function as hardware: it has no mechanical value past its ability to transport the consumer from A to B. However, describing a Cadillac as a 'white machine' connotes the white social hierarchy that has inflated the symbolic - and subsequently financial - value of the car to a place beyond the reach of the ordinary consumer, thereby demonstrating that the mechanical value of technology cannot be taken on its own. No technology is neutral, no matter how it may appear, especially in African American culture, as it is always signifying (or even oppressing) in particular some way. As Lucius Brockway remarks in *Invisible Man*, Invisible and himself are '*the machines inside the machine*' of the Liberty Paint factory, pivotal in their production of the symbolising white paint, but both metaphorically and literally out of sight in the factory's basement.[275] Furthermore, all technology is linked, the crucial convergence in this extract being the relationship between the consumerism surrounding personal technology, and the media. By purchasing a Cadillac, you are able to place yourself within the 'Machine', and take control of your social and identitarian mobility *alongside* your geographic mobility. This is the situation LeeWillie Minifees finds himself in, then. Through the success of his music, Minifees has been able to purchase a Cadillac and, as he tells the audience that gathers around his burning car, the pleasure he takes in driving such an expensive, symbolically powerful car had him feeling 'free as a bird—even

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[273] Leonard, p. 580.

[274] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1089.

[275] Ellison, *IM*, p. 209.

though a black bird.'[276] He has contorted what Packer calls 'the signifying power of the Cadillac' to his own will,[277] and has embedded himself within the metaphorical 'white machine' that oppresses him through his purchase of its automotive representative.

The socio-technical ensemble that the Cadillac's radio fits into contains a crucial democratising power within its information transference technology. The key example in this extract is the car's radio enables the Senator's words to be transmitted live, without editing. In the past, the Senator's racist remarks would not have been heard by anyone except those present at the committee session, for as McIntyre notes, they were 'edited out, as is frequently the case, when the speech appeared in the Congressional Record and in the press.'[278] The prevalence of live broadcasting, however, meant that the committee session was both 'televised and aired over radio networks', allowing the victims of Sunraider's hate speech to hear for themselves exactly what he thought of their owning Cadillacs. The important of McIntyre's unconscious racism is foregrounded here once again, as his position in the media makes him complicit in the usual lacking reportage of such derogatory remarks. McIntyre's response to the events pushes this point further, as he informs the reader that the Senator has caused such outrage 'with a joke', which he admits was in 'extremely bad taste', before suggesting that Minifees' symbolic destruction of his Cadillac 'might simply be a case of overreacting expressed in true Negro abandon'.[279] This dismissal reasserts the racist hegemony in the United States, for the Senator is seen to only be joking, as opposed to honestly revealing the racist beliefs that underpin the dominant white supremacist mindset at the heart of the societal hierarchy. As such his remarks cannot

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[276] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1091.

[277] Packer, p. 190.

[278] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1096.

[279] Ibid., p. 1095-1096.

be effectively critiqued, for the nature of the speech as a 'joke' allows such criticism to be brushed off as over-reactive or simply missing the point. The radio's democratisation of information transference here enables the speech to bypass McIntyre and his complicity in downplaying these remarks, instead delivering them directly to those they are targeting.

Joyce engages with radio in a similar fashion in *Finnegans Wake*, when HCE's patrons decide to buy him a radio for the pub. Joyce describes the radio's technology as being 'as modern as tomorrow afternoon and in appearance up to the minute',[280] emphasising the importance of the immediacy of information transference it enables. Likewise, Joyce places descriptive importance in the 'supershielded umbrella antennas for distance getting', capable of 'capturing skybuddies harbour craft emmittences […] or man made static' allowing it to be delivered as a 'melegoturny marygoraumd, eclectrically filtered for allirish earths and ohmes.'[281] The pivotal description here is in the last quote - the merry-go-round of the captured information is made available to all homes indiscriminately, democratising the information on display by serving it all up at once, giving agency to the individual listener in deciding the broadcasts' relative importance. As Catherine Flynn writes, this passage of *Finnegans Wake* acts as a microcosm for its entirety, in that the 'assembled textual materials oppose the presence or power of a single voice' in favour of a more collective experience of literature.[282] The rest of the chapter acts as a montage in which 'figures of authority—invaders, oppressors, and patriarchs—are overcome in comic and eccentric ways', with Joyce using this 'man made static' of different tales being told in the pub to demonstrate how 'the voice of advertising and the political broadcasts' transmitted by the radio can be stripped of their authority by the listeners' ability to simply

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[280] Joyce, *FW*, p. 309.

[281] Ibid., pp. 309-310.

[282] Catherine Flynn, '*Finnegans Wake*'s "Radio Montage: Man-Made Static, the Avant-Garde, and Collective Reading', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 52. 2 (2015), pp. 287-306 (p. 287).

change the station, rather than accept the ‘passive reception of authoritative discourse.’[283] It is no great leap to suggest that, given Ellison’s enduring entanglement with Joyce, this passage would have provided great inspiration for the radio-as-catalyst in ‘Cadillac Flambé’, with Ellison’s examination of such a powerful social technology adding an important layer of nuance to proceedings. Where Joyce’s radio is ‘supershielded’, however, Ellison sees that what slips through the gaps amongst the static - the unfiltered, unshielded broadcasts such as the Senator’s racist remarks - are where the cutting edge of the radio’s power lay. The live element of the broadcast allows for unfiltered remarks to slip through the gaps, and as such is the location for radical change. Whilst radio was still relatively new when Joyce wrote *Finnegans Wake*, by the time Ellison came to write *Three Days*, its broadcasting abilities and uses were well established in all spheres of life. This, then, is Ellison’s adaptation of Joyce’s modernist engagement with radio to fit a post-modern critique, building on Joyce’s work on industrial modernity to make it more relevant to mid-century America. The greatest difference, of course, comes from the action taken by LeeWillie Minifees - whereas in *Finnegans Wake* the listener can choose to simply filter through the channels, here Minifees decides that simply filtering out the Senator is not enough, and thus embarks on his highly aestheticised political protest. Similarly, Ellison’s meta-serialisation of these excerpts functions as its own aesthetic protest against the socio-technics which enable the spread of racial hatred in the United States. The burnt out shell of the Cadillac stands as LeeWillie’s refusal to simply switch the frequency, with the spectacle of the destruction ensuring his own message cannot be filtered out. Thus, the democratising power of the radio is complicated in ‘Cadillac Flambé’.

In a crucial passage, McIntyre describes the Senator as ‘a master of the new political technology who ignores no medium and wastes no opportunity

[283] Ibid., p. 288.

for keeping his image ever in the public's eye'.[284] The Senator's race-baiting to stir up controversy is well established, for instance in 'It Always Breaks Out' when McIntyre informs the reader that he and the other journalists were 'delighted that at last one of the senator's butts has succeeded in answering him, if only briefly and at outrageous expense.'[285] The extent of his political tactics is confirmed - again by McIntyre - in 'Cadillac Flambé', when he notes that the Senator's remarks about the car 'had been mild and far short of his usual maliciousness' when attempting to manufacture outrage in Black communities.[286] These descriptions, then, do not align with the idea that the Senator's racist remarks merely happened to be overheard by Minifees - that the Senator 'forgot' about the live broadcasting, expecting the speech to simply be edited down as mentioned by McIntyre. The Senator is speaking deliberately and tactically in order to cause outrage, but his remarks cut deeper than mere offence for LeeWillie. In Minifees' own words, even after turning the radio off he could 'still hear that Senator playing the dozens with my Cadillac!'[287] This phrase in particular provides key context for Minifees' reaction to the pronouncements. The Dozens, as Nathaniel Mills writes, is 'a black vernacular speech ritual in which participants invent duelling insults', with a central tenet of this ritual being that 'the participants understand the imaginary, nonreferential nature of the insults.'[288] The Senator is well aware of playing the dozens, having been raised in a Black community by Reverend Hickman. Ellison clarifies the Senator's knowledge of the ritual in the excerpt 'The Roof, the Steeple and the People', when the Senator - at this point going by Bliss - is admonished by his friend Body, who asks 'How

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[284] Ellison, *TD,* p. 1086.

[285] Ibid., p. 1044.

[286] Ibid., p. 1096.

[287] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1091.

[288] Nathaniel Mills, 'Playing the Dozens and Consuming the Cadillac: Ralph Ellison and Civil Rights Politics', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 61. 2. (2015), 147-172 (p. 147).

come you let Sammy play the Dozens with you, you want to be white?' [289] Bliss makes this comment in response to Body's misunderstanding of Sammy referring to the young preacher as a rabbit, rather than a rabbi. Here, Sunraider is utilising his knowledge of this Black vernacular ritual in order to exacerbate the outrage that he causes: he is denigrating the Black community using their own linguistic expression, whilst a prominent figure of the white 'machine'. An examination of the insults themselves confirm this, as his fanciful description of it being 'a common sight to see eight or more of our darker brethren crowded together' in a single Cadillac places the speech well within the realm of exaggerative imagination that is critical to the Dozens.

A further complicating factor in the Senator's playing the Dozens is the fact of the radio being embedded into the Cadillac. The fact of the radio being built into the 'white machine' is just that - despite the democratising capacity of the radio, it is a tool that can nonetheless be used by the white hegemony to project their beliefs into the car: LeeWillie's understanding of this is what leads him to enact such a destructive form of political protest in the excerpt. In this way, the radio transmission acts as a technological articulation of Du Boisian double consciousness. LeeWillie realises that, by placing such importance in the Cadillac, he has tied a key part of his identity to the cultural view of the brand. In buying the car, he disrupted the traditional idea of 'whom [Cadillacs] were intended' for,[290] but by subverting that image, he has left himself vulnerable to further upending of the Cadillac's image, such as through the Senator's denigrations. This revelation is best expressed by the hallucination of an old man riding a mule that LeeWillie sees at the side of the highway: 'All you wanted was to have a pretty automobile, but fool, he done changed the Rules on you!''[291] The mule is crucial to the hallucination, representing the broken promise of

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[289] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1037.

[290] Ibid., p. 1096.

[291] Ibid., p. 1092.

Special Field Order 15, which designated 40 acre plots of Southern land either abandoned or confiscated during the Civil War to freed slaves, as well as offering use of the military's mules for work on the land. Within a year, however, the order had been reversed, and the land primarily returned to its original owners. As Du Bois puts it, the 'righteous and reasonable ambition to become a landholder, which the nation all but categorically promised the freedmen—was destined in most cases to bitter disappointment.'[292] Just as America changed the orders regarding 40 acres and a mule, here the Senator has changed the signifying power of the Cadillac: LeeWillie realises that the Senator has made the question of Cadillac ownership into 'a question of whether or not you can afford it in terms *other than money*'.[293] Despite LeeWillie having worked his way into the heart of this particular symbol of the white upward mobility, the fact of the Cadillac's radio ensures there is the possibility that a voice from the white hegemony can affect the way LeeWillie views himself, forcing him to consider his ownership of the car through white eyes as well as his own. Such enforced perspective leads LeeWillie to violently reconsider the very premise of his wanting a Cadillac in the first place, and the Senator's suggestion of renaming the Cadillac the 'Coon Cage Eight' strikes Minifees in particular.[294] The cage works within racialist tropes - connoting 'criminality and incarceration', as Packer notes - [295] whilst also working as a critical consumerist metaphor. This critique is best expressed when LeeWillie pulls over after hearing the broadcast, and begins to question his ownership of the Cadillac:

> "'LeeWillie, who put you in this cage?'
> " ' You put your own self in there,' a voice inside me said.
> " 'But I paid for it, it's mind. I own it…' I said.

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[292] Du Bois, p. 629.

[293] Ellison, *TD*, p. 1092.

[294] Ibid., p. 1093.

[295] Packer, p. 190.

> " 'Oh. no, LeeWillie,' the voice said, 'what you mean is that it owns *you*, that's why you're *in* the cage. *Admit* it, daddy; you have been NAMED. Senator Sunraider has put the badmouth, the NASTY mouth on you and now your Cadillac ain't no Caddy anymore!'[296]

As a result of the Senator's speech, LeeWillie is forced to grapple with the grip that the Cadillac has over him, both as a material object, and as a symbol of America's white hegemony: the revelations this prompts are what lead him to immolate his car on the Senator's lawn.

The intricate, codependent relationship between the personal and the private which plays out in this scene acts as a microcosm for how the domains coexist in American consumer culture at large. The spheres work dynamically, informing one another symbiotically and responding over time to reach new equilibria. Minifees' awareness of this following the Senator's speech is what drives him to such drastic measures, for one key reason:

> That Senator up there wasn't simply degrading my Caddy. That wasn't the *point*. It's that he would low-rate a thing so truly fine as a *Cadillac* just in order to degrade *me* and my *people*. He was accusing *me* of lowering the value of the auto, when all I ever wanted was the very best! [297]

As discussed in the Introduction section of this thesis, it is the Senator's willingness to sully the reputation of such a stalwart, foundational element of American consumer culture that drives home LeeWillie's realisation as to the symbolic power of his Cadillac. The depths of the Senator's racism are truly revealed in this instant, as the speech in which his remarks appear is, by McIntyre's account, supposedly 'defending the automobile industry' of America.[298] The damage that remarks to that effect would have on the purchase of Cadillacs cannot be calculated, but Ellison makes it clear in another published excerpt - 'Backwacking, a Plea to the Senator' - that the

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[296] Ellison, *TD,* pp. 1093-1094.

[297] Ibid., p. 1092.

[298] Ibid., p. 1095.

Senator's message is being heard. Norm. A. Mauler, the author of the letter that forms the excerpt, writes to the Senator that the 'Cadillac Speech you gave us was straight forward and to the point and much needed saying.'[299] Through this meta-serialisation, Ellison continues the story of the Senator's racist tirade, showing how such inflammatory and insulting remarks can be met with casual, unemotional agreement. This instance speaks to the systemic racism of mid-century American society in much the same way as the passivity of the patrons in 'Cyclops' spoke to the tacit anti-Semitism of early twentieth-century Ireland. The role of radio is once again key here: it enables Sunraider's populist nationalism and whites supremacy to reach wider audiences, such as Norm. A Mauler. Radio's enabling of populist nationalism was a point of particular critique in *Finnegans Wake*, and here Ellison is clearly continuing Joyce's argument, whilst adapting it to expose the socio-technical ensembles that promulgate white supremacy simultaneously. People whose beliefs align with the Senator's are out there, and while many cannot afford Cadillacs anyway, the *desire* to own one will be dented by the Senator's remarks amongst the white hegemony of America, devaluing and damaging a cornerstone American brand in the process. This highlights the lengths the Senator will got to in order to stoke racial tensions, and this revelation is the lodestar for Minifees' violent rejection of the Cadillac's symbolic power.

Once Minifees gets to Washington and parks up on the Senator's lawn, he sets about preparing the Cadillac. He covers the vehicle in 'good white *alcohol* and good *white* gasoline' to ensure the destruction, with the destructive power of whiteness being put on fully display,[300] informing a radical protest against its own power. McIntyre's reporting on the situation is key to the furthering of the plot, as it is only through his own retelling of the events that they come to light. As Minifees begins his speech, McIntyre

[299] Ibid, p. 1097.

[300] Ibid., p. 1093.

informs the reader that he was 'struggling within myself for the reporter's dedicated objectivity and holding my microphone forward as he raised both arms above his head',[301] but thankfully his journalistic instincts win out, and he is able to capture LeeWillie's words. Ellison's experimental narration comes to the fore here, as he creates a tension between McIntyre's expressed beliefs about Minifees' speech and the true content of the speech itself as relayed by the recording technology McIntyre uses. Where McIntyre downplays the scene as an overreaction on the part of Minifees, characterising it as a 'bizarre reply',[302] and going so far as to suggest that LeeWillie could have 'been putting on an act',[303] the tape recorder enables the reader to hear the importance and depth of Minifees' speech verbatim. Just as the radio allowed LeeWillie to hear the Senator's racist remarks, the tape recorder allows the reader to make up their own mind as to Minifees' justifications for burning the Cadillac, unencumbered by McIntyre's lacking narration.

Ellison set McIntyre's lack of thorough, moral engagement with LeeWillie's speech up years earlier in 'It Always Breaks Out' when McIntyre reveals that 'the newspapers reduced the event to a small item […] with all references to his wild speech and the crowd's reaction omitted'.[304] He goes on to give more context, acknowledging that:

> we, the newspapermen, members of the working press, champions of the reported fact who insist upon the absolute accessibility of the news, that we ourselves suppressed it, reduced it to insignificance by reflex and with no editorial urging whatsoever![305]

Just as the media failed to report the racist remarks that Senator Sunraider made in his speech, here they have refused to print the radical

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[301] Ibid., p. 1089.

[302] Ibid., p. 1095.

[303] Ibid., p. 1096.

[304] Ibid., p. 1044.

[305] Ibid., p. 1044.

pronouncements of LeeWillie Minifees, and in doing so wield a double-edged sword. The white hegemony of American society is upheld both by failing to report on or even acknowledge its own systemic racism, as well as through the suppression of crucial minority voices in the fight against such oppression. Crucial to this admission is the point of the suppression being reflexive. The reflexive nature speaks not only to the reduction of Black people in the press to stereotypes and caricatures, unworthy of proper journalistic investigation, but to a more situation specific fear, which is exhibited in the reaction of the crowd to Minifees's destruction of the Cadillac. From the very beginning of the action, the crowd are exceptionally hostile towards Minifees. Despite informing the crowd that he means them no harm, McIntyre notes that immediately a man 'at the other end of the crowd shouted angrily and tried to break up the hill' towards Minifees.[306] He is only prevented from doing so by three people grabbing him, including 'an hysterical, dark-haired woman […] who slipped to the ground holding a leg, shouting, "No, Fleetwood. No! That crazy [n-word] will kill you!"[307] The disparity between such an extreme reaction and LeeWillie's explicit pronouncement of holding no ill-intent towards the crowd speak volumes as to the racist reflexes of the onlooking pedestrians, but is not only their ingrained racial prejudices that the burning Cadillac exposes.

LeeWillie espouses explicitly upon the economic aspect of his act, when he acknowledges that 'it's very, very hard for you folks to look at what I'm doing and not be disturbed, because for you it's a crime and a sin.'[308] He then goes on to attack the American consumer cult surrounding the Cadillac more directly:

> You feel that it's unfair that everybody who's willing to work hard can't have one for himself. That's right! And you feel that in order to

[306] Ibid., p. 1089.

[307] Ibid., p. 1089.

[308] Ibid., p. 1089.

> get one it's OK for a man to lie and cheat and steal—yeah, even swindle his own mother *if* she's got the cash. That's the difference between what you *say* you believe and the way you *act* if you get the chance. Oh yes, because words is words, but life is hard and earnest and these here Caddies is way, way out of this world!"'[309]

Far from being the rational consumers they may believe themselves to be, the American public - by LeeWillie's estimation - are self-deluding hypocrites, who would happily cheat their own mothers out of money in order to afford a Cadillac. Whilst out of context such pronouncements may seem hyperbolic, the gamut of emotions elicited by the flambé serve to back up such assertions. Later in the excerpt McIntyre recounts that, upon Minifees' arrest, 'there was much shouting and shoving as some of the crowd attempted to follow the trussed-up and still grinning arsonist',[310] presumably to enact violence upon him for his extravagant sacrifice. McIntyre goes on to describe how other pedestrians 'continued to shout threats in their outrage and frustration, while others, both men and women, filled the air with a strangely brokenhearted and forlorn sound of weeping'.[311] Such an intense emotional response the destruction of another's property seems completely illogical, but the crowd are unanimous in their outrage, sadness, and frustration. While the image is a satirical one its believability is where the critique is the most impactful. It recalls Guy Debord's assertion in *Society of The Spectacle* that 'the economy's domination of social life brought about an evident degradation of being into *having* - human fulfilment was no longer equated with what one was, but with what one possessed.'[312] On the most basic level, then, the crowd's reaction makes more sense. Minifees is throwing his fulfilment in their faces, destroying an extraordinary possession in order to make a point about the degradations of consumerism, but due to symbolic and monetary

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[309] Ibid., p. 1090.

[310] Ibid., p. 1095.

[311] Ibid., p. 1095.

[312] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (London: Rebel Press, 1994), pp. 10-11.

destructivity of the scene, the crowd are not engaging with his argument. Minifees rejects the state of possession as fulfilment, however, and thus the critique does not fully work on this level. Debord further explains the nuances of the economy's domination over society by stating that:

> The present stage, in which social life has become completely dominated by the accumulated productions of the economy, is bringing about a general shift from *having* to *appearing* - all "having" must now derive its immediate prestige and its ultimate purpose from appearances.[313]

This stage of Debord's society more effectively interprets the interplay between the crowd, the Cadillac, and Minifees, then. The crowd are desperate not only for the fulfilment of *having* the Cadillac, but furthermore are seduced by the *appearance* of the Cadillac, and the connotations of upward mobility that surround it. Minifees, on the other hand, has seen through the veneer of the *appearance* stage of his own consumption, with the aid of the Senator's speech. He has realised that the nature of *appearance* as it relates to consumption is simply illusory - if the Senator can so easily denigrate what is by all accounts a fantastic car in order to cause controversy, then the *appearance* that comes with the car is as abstract and non-referential as Dozens insults. LeeWillie has been released from the economic stranglehold that the car had on him, and is able to separate the symbolic meaning from the physical utility of the Cadillac as a result. When he states to the crowd that 'nothing makes a man feel better than giving AWAY something, than SACRIFICING something, that he dearly LOVES!"[314] He still loves the physical object of the car, but cannot square it with the economic power the car has over him, nor the racist, derogatory connotations the Senator has forced onto the car, hence he resorts to its destruction.

The Othering power of the car is the unconscious factor that rounds out the reasoning for the crowd's reaction, and links back to the media's

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[313] Ibid., p. 11.

[314] Ellison, *TD,* p. 1094.

suppression of LeeWillie's sacrificial act. By destroying the Cadillac, LeeWillie is symbolically triumphing over his oppressor, the Senator. LeeWillie knows that this will get him arrested, suggesting early in the excerpt that 'it's going to cost me more to get *rid* of this Caddy the way I have to do it than it cost me to get it', but this does not deter him.[315] He is willing to trade his physical freedom for his symbolic freedom, and in this way he balances his spiritual scales. The crowd's reaction, then, alongside the media's omission of any recordings of Minifees's speech, signifies an acknowledgement of this fact on the part of the white hegemony. When LeeWillie describes how Washington D.C has 'a way of making a man feel like he's living in a fool's *paradise*',[316] he brings to mind McIntyre's description of himself in 'It Alway Breaks Out' as a 'liberal, ex-radical, northerner'.[317] In the context of what we know about McIntyre's unconscious racism, then, this self-deluding liberalism overlaps with the economic disparity expressed earlier between 'what you *say* you believe and the way you *act* if you get the chance' to suggest another element to the crowd's weeping. Washington D.C is naturally the geographic heart of American democracy, and as such should be a empowering metropolis, displaying the inclusiveness and social mobility that constitute the American spirit, yet whenever LeeWillie is there, he is unable to 'stop thinking about the difference between what it *is* and what it's *supposed* to be.'[318] The crowd's reaction to LeeWillie's rejection of oppression show the promise of democracy to be false. The crowd are weeping for their own lack of both *having* and *appearance*, but the fear, anger, and despair they feel is also related to their watching the white hegemony literally going up in flames before their eyes. They are witnessing their idea of the social contract - in which the African American is no longer enslaved, but remains under the

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[315] Ibid., p. 1090.

[316] Ibid., p. 1090.

[317] Ibid., p. 1054.

[318] Ibid., p. 1090.

thumb of the white hegemony - disintegrating in front of them, and are powerless to do anything. Furthermore, and more poignantly, they have brought this upon themselves. When Ellison emphasises the whiteness of the alcohol and gasoline that Minifees uses for ignition, he does so in recognition of the end result of the flambé. The Cadillac, the ur-symbol of pristine, white hegemonic power in America will end up both blackened in appearance, and Black in character. White makes black in regard to immolation, just as whiteness makes Blackness with regard to double consciousness.

Invoking Du Bois once again, Ellison displays the ways in which white society inherently impacts Black self-perception, and how this can be used as a tool of resistance. The Senator's speech is a clear an expression of white perceptions of African Americans informing Black self-perception, and it has backfired spectacularly on him. In an attempt to further oppress the Black population by eliminating an enduring method of perceived upward mobility for them, the Senator has guided LeeWillie to an extraordinary, emphatic triumph over both economic and racial oppression: in LeeWillie's own words: 'before I'd be in a CAGE, I'll be buried in my GRAVE—Oh!Oh!'[319] Minifees has rejected the Senator's racist notions about his car not by selling it, nor by defying him and continuing to drive it, but simply by removing himself from the game altogether. He refuses to exist either in defiance of or in opposition to the white hegemony and the economic oppression that the Senator and the signifying power of the Cadillac have over him, and so he simply eliminates the machinery that allows such oppression to continue. Just as Invisible's hallucinatory journey outside the 'groove of history' allows him crucial perspective on the construction of his racial and national identity, here LeeWillie's destruction enacts a similar situation, placing himself briefly outside the grip of the white hegemony. The Senator's attempts to stir up racial tensions by devaluing the Cadillac through aligning it with Black signification have failed

[319] Ibid, p. 1094.

- Minifees has both blackened and Blackened, by his own hand, and has achieved a level spiritual freedom in doing so. The victory is pyrrhic, however, as he finds himself in the hands of the police, voiceless but for McIntyre's reporting, and headed to a fictionalised version of St. Elizabeth's Hospital for psychiatric evaluation. Minifees has been forced back into the white hegemony's grip, this time literally through his incarceration, but he has made himself heard - if not reported - and has freed himself from the shackles of the Cadillac, even if he has almost nothing to show for it in return. The institution in which Minifees ends up is a fictionalised St. Elizabeth's Hospital, where Ezra Pound was incarcerated for 12 years on treason charges stemming from his work for the Italian fascists during the Second World War. LeeWillie's incarceration in the same institution is a further telling of how grievously his protest is viewed by the public: by destroying the symbolic hegemonic power of his own personal property, he has in effect committed treason.

While LeeWillie's triumph over his oppressors presents a jubilant image, Ellison is not naïve in his belief that this action will change the world. The world is not that simple, and the structures that keep such oppression viable are too big to be toppled by one man. The change that he wants to enact through his destruction of the Cadillac will not come about from this one symbolic action, and this action has cost him so dearly that future action is near-impossible. The techno-oppressive white supremacist hegemony of America - as represented by Senator Sunraider - remains undamaged by this assault, watching cooly from the veranda as the scene unfolds, and is dealt with. LeeWillie's actions will only be remembered by those present, and whilst the effect of his act upon the crowd produces obvious and violent results, but McIntyre stands at a certain remove from the scene as result of his journalistic capturing of the spectacle. His thoughts end the excerpt, as he ruminates on the fact that LeeWillie's sacrifice:

> had begun to sound in my mind with disturbing overtones which had hardly been meaningful. Rather they had been like the brief interruption one sometimes hears while listening to an F.M broadcast of the musical *Oklahoma!*, say, with original cast, when the signal fades and a program of quite different mood from a different wavelength breaks through. It had happened but then a blast of laughter had restored us automatically to our chosen frequency.[320]

The precision of Ellison's language here emphasises the magnitude of the fight for Civil Rights in America - McIntyre and LeeWillie exist on different 'wavelengths', or frequencies, suggesting that McIntyre, or any white person, will never truly be able to understand the struggle of African American people. McIntyre exists instead on the 'chosen frequency' of the white hegemony, pointing out the singularity of consciousness that exists within the white population: they decide how they are perceived, and in turn perceive themselves, rather than the double consciousness that so often robs the African American of personal and political agency. Where LeeWillie turned his radio on and was incensed by the Senator's remarks to the point of drastic, destructive action, McIntyre can instead choose to turn over, resuming his regularly oblivious broadcasting. The fact of this passage ending the excerpt acknowledges one of the central disjunctions and difficulties in the struggle for social equality, for despite seeing such a spectacularly powerful rejection of white hegemony, McIntyre can simply return to his regularly scheduled broadcasting, and think no further on the issue - a critical symptom of his white privilege.

[320] Ibid., p. 1097.

Conclusion

‘Cadillac Flambé’s’ ending is realistic, rather than optimistic, but this encompasses the complexity of Ellison’s fiction. The tension between McIntyre as an unconsciously racist narrator and his recording technology enables Ellison to create a microcosm of the overarching media structures that suppress Black voices, whilst the material sacrifice and spiritual freedom of LeeWillie Minifees speaks to the steep opportunity cost inherent in every decision the African American makes. The prose is necessarily complex, in order to reflect the inherent complexities, contradictions, and nuances of the African American identities, and McIntyre’s narrative voice throughout the excerpt is problematised by his verbatim recording of LeeWillie’s speech. Just like Joyce before him, Ellison was not willing to compromise the complexity of his prose, for to do so would be to limit the change that could be effected through his arguments. Both authors delivered some of the most biting cultural critiques their countries had witnessed through their prose, but their ultimate hope was a redemptive one, rather than a scathing one. Through enabling the Irish public to gaze through his ‘nicely-polished looking glass’ ,[321] Joyce hoped to alter the course of Irish social history to a place of greater compassion and understanding, not merely denigrate and bemoan it. Likewise, Ellison believed that he could ‘best serve my people and my nation by trying to write as well as I can’.[322] The ‘people’ and the ‘nation’ are not held in opposition, but as one, for African Americans are, of course, Americans. Ellison believed that African Americans symbolised both American democracy’s ‘most stringent testing and the possibility of its greatest human

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[321] Joyce, *Letters of James Joyce*, p. 64.

[322] Allen Geller, ‘An Interview with Ralph Ellison’, in *Conversations with Ralph Ellison*, ed. by Maremma Graham and Amritjit Singh (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995), pp. 70-87 (p. 82).

freedom',[323] and as such, like Joyce, his writing could not simply attack white, hegemonic America. Redemption is at the heart of both authors' work, and redemption requires critique of far greater nuance, breeding natural complexity into the work. As John F. Callahan writes, to say that 'Ellison did not come close to completing his second novel is not to say that he failed to produce a work of fiction with scenes as fully rendered and realized as anything he had ever written.'[324] The serialisation of such key moments in the text, and the packing of such insightful, resonant, impactful scenes into such accessible packages justifies the experimentation entirely, even if it did lead to the novel being unfinished. Ellison's short fiction formed the crucial foundations upon which he built *Invisible Man*, and the experimentation that grew from there is invaluable to the conveyance of his anti-racist arguments through post-modern engagements with technology and experimental narrative perspectives in *Three Days Before The Shooting*…. The work being serialised brought Ellison's damning social critique to a wide readership without demanding the time investment of *Invisible Man*, with the meta-sterilisation exposing the socio-technical ensembles that enable oppression in the process. The endeavour presented a poetic union between the previous stages of Ellison's writerly development, and delivered a significant, hopeful, empowering argument in the process.

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[323] Ralph Ellison, 'What America Would Be Like Without Black', in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. by John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp.581-589 (p. 589).

[324] Callahan, p. xxix.

Afterword

As I alluded to in the Introduction to this thesis, the clearest example of the modernist legacies present in Ellison's writing is his famous redeployment of T.S. Eliot's line from *The Waste Land* - 'O O O O O that Shakespearian rag' -[325] at the beginning of the pivotal Trueblood episode in *Invisible Man*, where Invisible intones: 'And Oh, oh, oh, those multimillionaires'.[326] As Mary Ellen Williams Walsh points out, the entire episode is 'clearly an adaptation of "A Game of Chess"', with its focus on 'the perversions of love and potency, which are symptomatic of [a] spritual aridity' affecting both the richest and poorest members of society, demonstrated through Trueblood and Mr Norton's shared incestuous desires.[327] Whilst such a clear allusion Eliot's work affirms the modernist legacies that Ellison engaged with in his writing, as I have argued in this thesis, at the formal and political level, the most its most urgent articulations in Ellison's work are not through Eliot, but Joyce. Ellison's engagement with Joyce is far more implicit than his engagement with Eliot, but Ellison's acknowledgement and development of Joyce's narrative techniques - and the anti-colonial, anti-racist arguments present within his work - are far more impactful due to their intersection with Ellison's own arguments. Both writers disrupted the social hierarchies that language imposes upon colonial and racial subjects in daily life by embodying those complexities in their increasingly experimental prose. Ellison took the level of textual craftsmanship and the incisive critique he identified in Joyce's work and modified it for his own purposes, forging a path for a crucial form of anti-racist post-modernism which was altogether more urgent to his own experiences as a Black man in mid-century America.

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[325] Eliot, *The Waste Land*, p. 45, l. 128.

[326] Ellison, *IM*, p. 37.

[327] Mary Ellen Williams Walsh, '"Invisible Man": Ralph Ellison's Wasteland', *CLA Journal*, 28.2 (1984), 150-158 (pp. 152-153).

Throughout Joyce and Ellison's work, the counter-hegemonic critiques that are central to their fiction arguments are, I have argued, furthered rather than (as conventional wisdom would have it) hindered in their efficacy through their respective textual experimentation. Even in their respective realist short stories 'A Mother' and 'In A Strange Country', Joyce and Ellison include specific pieces to demonstrate how nationalism reacts to and informs musical expression, thereby entering public discourse. The musical engagement brings both a subtlety to the works - as the critiques are not conveyed as explicitly as in the social-realist fiction of the period - yet both powerfully address the subjective nature of the music, for instance in Ellison's case, articulating the gulf between Parker's reaction to hearing 'Star Spangled Banner', and his Welsh hosts' intentions in playing it. In their respective major novels *Ulysses* and *Invisible Man*, the authors' formal experimentation was more overt, mirroring their themes and allusions, with the specific use of non-linear temporality in the 'Cyclops' section of *Ulysses* and the 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue' sections of *Invisible Man* advancing the counter-hegemonic critiques in their earlier fiction at the formal level. By stepping outside the linear time of the plot, Joyce was able to construct an even clearer picture of the citizen's regressive nationalism than could be built through mere characterisation, and thus denounce his flagrant anti-Semitism more vehemently. Ellison plunging his protagonist outside the 'groove of history' likewise enabled Ellison to reject essentialist ideas about Blackness whilst speaking directly to a key part of his readership as regards the construction of their own personal and racial identities. In order to transact more sophisticated anti-racist and anti-colonial arguments, Ellison and Joyce needed to deal with more nuanced issues, which in turn necessitated a greater degree of complexity and experimentation in their prose in order to meaningfully engage with such subject matter. The novel form allowed them room for such experimentation, and elevated their respective critiques accordingly.

By their final fictional publications, Ellison and Joyces' respective experimentations had taken distinctive paths. Where Joyce continued to emphasis his linguistic experimentation with the publication of *Finnegans Wake*, the work Ellison completed on *Three Days Before The Shooting…* dealt with its literary experimentation very differently. Rather than taking inspiration from Joyce's linguistic experimentation - as he had in *Invisible Man* - Ellison instead chose to engage with both formal and technical experimentation in his final work, primarily through his decision to use a white narrator in McIntyre for major sections of the novel.[328] Through McIntyre's narration, the reader necessarily engages with the events of the novel through an unreliable white lens, with McIntyre's own unconscious racial prejudices accounting for his biased retelling of events. Despite his engagements with African Americans, including a relationship with a Black woman, McIntyre's world remains that single consciousness - as opposed to the Black experience of double consciousness - and as such the narrative he imparts is skewed and blinkered. However, non-white characters such as LeeWillie Minifees in 'Cadillac Flambé' provide foils for McIntyre's white privileged perspective, exposing his unreliability as a narrator. The reader is both complicit in McIntyre's gaze, and sympathetic to LeeWillie Minifees' gaze in the same instance, forcing the reader to engage with the same event from multiple angles, and enacting social critique on a scene-by-scene basis as a result.[329] Both Ellison and Joyces' engagement with the technology of radio in their final works was likewise a crucial experimental engagement, and a traceable development in their work from their initial engagement with public vocal performances in 'A Mother' and 'In A Strange Country'. Their examination of radio enabled them to denounce the populist nationalism that the socio-technical ensembles of modern media enabled, with Ellison furthering Joyce's initial

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[328] Benji de la Piedra, 'Ellison's White Liberal Rhinehart: the Negro American Core of Book I of *Three Days Before The Shooting…*', *Literature of the Americas*, 5 (2018), 132-150.

[329] Bradley, p. 140.

critique of industrial modernism to include critiques of its use in the promulgation of white supremacy. Ellison's formal experimentation through the meta-serialisation of the published excerpts furthered this critique by displaying to the reader a working example how the 'white machine' operates, using its own structures against it in order to expose the breadth of its toxicity.

Both authors recognised that the aesthetic disruption of experimental prose was necessary to meaningfully encompass subjects of such complexity as colonialism, anti-Semitism, anti-Black racism, and white supremacy in their writing. They placed intellectual demands on their readers through their favouring of technical experimentation over social-realist prose styles, and in doing so were able to transact social change in their writing by disrupting the hierarchies that language imposed on oppressed groups within society. Bolstered by the depths of this experimentation, both Ellison and Joyce forewent the supposed apolitical aestheticism that the New Critics would attribute to high modernism, instead creating vital works of counter hegemonic literature that stand as paragons of their craft, and have continued to resonate with readers in the decades since their publication.

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