

Hideous Hobgoblins: Monstrous Form in Darwin, Marx, and Joyce

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Thanks, said Stephen.

You mean I am a monster.

(A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man)

One of Hegel's key insights into theology was that ontological reconciliation between the divinely nonhuman and the mortally human would generate monstrosity. Because the human body remains an obscenely inappropriate vessel for the godhead, any form in which the two approach synthesis can only be that of a monster: "the appearance of God in the flesh," he reflected in 1824, is "the monstrous reality [*das Ungeheure*] whose necessity we have seen."¹ For Hegel, the monster formalizes a dialectical category reserved for beings that are simultaneously human and nonhuman. As a reformulation of the ancient *monstrum*, a physical embodiment of divine displeasure, we know this entity from elsewhere in the history of modern thought: from the Hobbesian Leviathan through Burke's reactionary teratology, to the Nietzschean *Übermensch* and Freudian *Unbewusste*, right down to Derrida's post-structuralist affirmation of "the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity."² Adapting philosophical thought into literary fiction, that modern monster also lurks in the unmapped zones of imperial narrative, emerging from between sites of epistemological illumination and representational mimesis to both formalize and threaten a Eurocentric worldview, as in Joseph Conrad's racist primitivism, Jean Rhys' colonial fantasia, and H. P. Lovecraft's cosmic weirdness. Keeping strictly to the medium of written words, though recognizing the undeniable migration of celluloid monstrosities from screen to page, the modern monster also appears concretely as W. B. Yeats' "rough beast" and again as T. S.

Eliot's "bats with baby faces," to later arrive at something like its profane apotheosis in the fables of Franz Kafka, doing so nowhere more disturbingly than by the name of Gregor Samsa. Perhaps this throng of decidedly modern monsters is why Theodor Adorno's seminal account of modernist art directs us toward monstrous form. "By determinate negation," he says, "artworks absorb the *membra disjecta* of the empirical world and through their transformation organize them into a reality that is a counterreality, a monstrosity."³ If Adorno is correct on this, then the aesthetic experience of modernism and its negative grasp on the categories of human and nonhuman should accordingly be the experience of a monster. And if, as Adorno would also insist, modernism's determinate negation of the empirical is in fact an affirmation of the utopian, can similar things be argued about the modernist fixation with monstrosity? Is there an affirmative political dimension to modernist monsters?

The following essay attempts to answer these questions with reference to three very different writers and their relationship to one another: Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and James Joyce. While Marx and Joyce inhabit the traditions of philosophical and modernist monstrosity, this essay unfolds a common vision between them from points of textual overlap. My hypothesis is that Joyce shares Marx's affection for monstrous figuration, the purpose of which for that earlier writer was to reckon with economic and political forces as decidedly nonhuman: as the unholy deformation of human experience or the collective transcendence of the isolated human's finitude. In other words, this essay accounts for the politically-motivated conjunction of human and nonhuman with which Joyce, drawing from Marx, formulates a vision of capitalist modernity and affirms a post-capitalist imaginary. While Joyce was influenced by Marx's writing, this is especially true of moments when Marx models his criticism on the work of another writer, namely Darwin, who appears as a mediating figure between Marx's critique of political economy and the Joycean transformation of literary form. It will therefore be the goal of this essay to demonstrate that

aesthetic commitment to an ultimately and irreducibly political vision is one of the reasons why Joyce conceptualized the modern world through evolutionary biology and ecological science as much as he did through ancient myth.

The first half of this essay begins by establishing the fact of Joyce's engagement with Marx by attending to an allusion to the *Manifesto* made within *Ulysses*, which is then used to contextualize further consonances between the two writers. The goal here is to determine what Marx meant to Joyce, what monsters meant to Marx, and to scan Joyce's prose fiction for signs of Marx, a figure who appears therein as a talisman for monstrously nonhuman energies trespassing, for better and worse, on the realm of human experience. Here, too, we encounter the Darwinian mediation, which lures both Marx and Joyce into the space of monsters. The essay's second half turns exclusively to *Finnegans Wake*, a book that Joyce – like many of his subsequent critics – is said to have described as its own kind of monster.⁴ To suggest, even in playful terms, that the book itself is a monster is to insist on its place within a unique aesthetic tradition. For Václav Paris, writing on visual logic of the *Wake*, “one might think of it in this light as also an encyclopedia of monsters, a *liber monstorum*.”⁵ Recalling Foucault's gloss on the “monstrous quality” of Borges' “certain Chinese encyclopedia” – “the fact that the common ground on which such meetings are possible has itself been destroyed” – there is an argument to be made that the *Wake* is likewise monstrous precisely because of its encyclopaedic impulse to forge a heterotopic common ground on which to stage the impossible propinquity of everything and everyone.⁶ “No one,” Edward Mendelson once described Joyce's literary pedigree, “could suppose that any encyclopedic narrative is an attractive or comfortable work. Like the giants whose histories they include, all encyclopedias are monstrous. (They are *monstra* in the oldest Latin sense as well: omens of dire change.”⁷ While this claim is manifestly true of what we might call the modern epic, it is also true that such “monstrous” works all contain monsters of their own, as though to refract

their formal ambitions in miniature. Goethe's *Walpurgisnacht*, Dickens' *Megalosaurus*, and Melville's *Cetacea*; the Cthulhoid presences lurking in the major works of Pynchon, Bolaño, and Marguerite Young; the Wagnerian staging of *Reginn* and *Fafnir*, the back-strapped demon in Schoenberg's *glückliche Hand*, and the unholy conjurations in Stravinsky's *Firebird*: these are only some of the most familiar iterations of the monster's diegetic redoubling. *Finnegans Wake* is, like these other narratives, rife with monsters. But rather than situate the *Wake* within their tradition, the final part of this essay argues that this book is, in its engagement with monsters that emerge from the pages of Marx and Darwin, as much a work of revolutionary literature as it is a moment of literary revolution.

1. Manufactured Monsters

In Joyce's fiction, shipping has always been associated with capitalism. In *Dubliners*, which retains a commitment to conventional realism, the synonymy of capitalism and modernity presents itself when two errant schoolboys find themselves gazing out across the River Liffey and its docks, where manufacture and trade present themselves in material form:

We came then near the river. We spent a long time walking about the noisy streets flanked by high stone walls, watching the working of cranes and engines and often being shouted at for our immobility by the drivers of groaning carts. It was noon when we reached the quays and, as all the labourers seemed to be eating their lunches, we bought two big currant buns and sat down to eat them on some metal piping beside the river. We pleased ourselves with the spectacle of Dublin's commerce — the barges signalled from far away by their curls of woolly smoke, the brown fishing fleet beyond Ringsend, the big white sailing-vessel which was being discharged on the opposite quay. Mahony said it would be right skit to run away to sea on one of those big ships and even I, looking at the high masts, saw, or imagined, the geography which had been scantily dosed to me at school gradually taking substance under my eyes. (*D* 12)

The vision of labor gives way to an the imagined geography of empire – imaginary because it is conceived of from the standpoint of what Fredric Jameson describes as “a colonial city,” an urban space “whose compact size anachronistically permits the now archaic life of the older

city-state,” but which simultaneously denies its inhabitants the kinds of adventure exclusive to the agents of imperial expansion.⁸ That is what we encounter in the economic auxesis that takes us from the local resource extraction implied by a “brown fishing fleet” to the anachronistic spectacle of “the big white sailing-vessel,” which captures the imagination of a working-class lad in its projection away from Dublin and Europe and out toward the well-nigh fantastical peripheries of the capitalist world-system. The concept of capitalist modernity, a totality of economic relations here mediated into the lives of colonial subjects by shipping, returns via comparable images elsewhere for Joyce. When, in *Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen Daedalus’ evening stroll takes him “among the docks and along the quays,” he too is inspired, or at least agitated, by a comparable vision of commerce: “The vastness and strangeness of the life suggested to him by the bales of merchandise stocked along the walls or swung aloft out of the holds of steamers wakened again in him the unrest which had sent him wandering in the evening from garden to garden in search of Mercedes.” (*P* 66) This tendency to present economics via the suggestive metonymy of shipping is especially pronounced in *Ulysses*. There, however, Joyce will be less interested in straightforwardly realistic or naturalist descriptions of industrial landscapes than with performing economic totality as both prose style and its narrative frame.

Having been transformed by the satanic powers of Dublin’s nighttown from bourgeois reformer to immiserated worker and then elevated to an alderman of the state, Leopold Bloom begins to endorse an economic programme of capitalist development: “better run a tramline,” he suggests, “from the cattlemarket to the river,” which would thereby bring the Irish livestock industry into service of “our bucaneeering Vanderdeckens in their phantom ship of finance...” (*U* 15.1367-70). While this image marks a transition from imperial expansion and the shipping of merchandise to a more spectral mode of profiteering, namely financial speculation, before the apposition of finance and phantasm has time to register as critical

Bloom is cut short by applause from members of a ruling political class who hail him as “our future chief magistrate,” a speaker whose words will “be printed at the expense of the ratepayers” (*U* 15.1383-4). As it stands, the irony of this passage is that, precisely in his short-lived capacity as an accomplice to empire, Bloom portrays financialization as nothing other than ill-fated piracy; it is, like the voyage of the Flying Dutchman, a cursed enterprise destined for ruin. Captained by Hendrick Van der Decken, the canonical “phantom ship of finance” was (in Sir Walter Scott’s telling) “originally a vessel loaded with great wealth, on board of which some horrid act of murder and piracy had been committed,” and thus its mirage is “considered by the mariners as the worst of all possible omens.”⁹ While this irony, anchored by allusion to inevitable demise, points up the world-historical contradiction peculiar to capitalism as a whole — that, in another well-known gothic image, “the Bourgeoisie produce before all the men who dig their very grave”¹⁰— the next time Bloom speaks, his irony modulates into an unmistakable satire, emphasizing this very point from the critical perspective of Marxism. In this way, Bloom’s perspective appears as the ideological inversion of what the schoolboys and what Stephen conceived of on the docks several years earlier, whereby reverence and fancy are replaced by satire and derision.

Bloom censures the beneficiaries of finance capital and its accompanying industries as the descendants of feudal affluence:

(impassionedly) These flying Dutchmen or lying Dutchmen as they recline in their upholstered poop, casting dice, what reck they? Machines is their cry, their chimera, their panacea. Laboursaving apparatuses, supplanters, bugbears, manufactured monsters for mutual murder, hideous hobgoblins produced by a horde of capitalistic lusts upon our prostituted labour. The poor man starves while they are grassing their royal mountain stags or shooting peasants and phartridges in their purblind pomp of pelf and power. But their reign is rover for rever and ever and ev... (*U* 15.1390-97)

There is more of the worker speaking in this than the reformer or the alderman; these words are an attack on the ruling class as a unified whole, whose members are presented in scatological terms – “unholstered poop,” “peasants and phartrdiges” – as the grotesque

embodiments of unconscionable decadence. This, too, is a result of colonial subjugation. “Middlemen,” Marx had written in 1867, “accumulated fortunes that they would not invest in the improvement of land, and could not, under the system which prostrated manufactures, invest in machinery, etc. All their accumulations were sent therefore to England for investment... and thus was Ireland forced to contribute cheap labour and cheap capital to building up the great works of Britain.”¹¹ How these two classes relate to one another is written into the form of what Bloom says, the shape of his rhetoric, no less than the stated content of his words. Class identification works itself out through the grammar of collective possession as much as it does through articulated hostility. If the first-person, “our,” aligns Bloom with “prostituted labour,” its third-person antipode, “their,” distances the speaking hero from the “pomp and pelf and power” of labour’s social obverse, the bourgeoisie now glutted on finance. This speech, Bloom’s complaint against capital, adopts the tone if not language of a revolution from below, occupying the affective register of a proletarian’s soapbox populism. “A gobbledygook redaction out of Dreiser, Norris, Sinclair, and Howells,” Julian Murphet has described Bloom’s speech, “this lampooning of the naturalist octopus gutters out into Luddism pure and simple.”¹² And yet — while the naturalist octopus will make its return before this section’s end — all of this remains too generalized a reading, for it neglects the key textual antecedent underwriting these words.

Specifically, Joyce is reworking Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, not only by adopting their division of the social world into warring classes but also, beginning with an invocation of the mythic “chimera,” by performing their predilection for monstrous figuration. We get a clear sense of this by comparing Bloom’s speech to a passage from Marx and Engels. For those two, industrial machinery facilitates a unilaterally exploitative relationship between the classes, one that – in what we will come to read as a kind of political mitosis – means the incursion of nonhuman forces into the human mind and body:

the modern working men can live only as long as they find work, and they find it only as long as their labour increases capital. These workers, who must sell themselves by piecemeal to the highest bidder, are a commodity like other articles of commerce, and, therefore, are equally subject to all the variations of the market, and the effects of competition. Through the division of labour and the extension of machinery, work has lost its individual character, and therefore its interest for the operative. He has become merely an accessory to, or a part of the machine, and all that is required of him is a fatiguing, monotonous, and merely mechanical operation. The expense the wage-slave causes the capitalist is, therefore, equal to the cost of his keep and of the propagation of his race. The price of labour, like that of any other commodity, is equal to the cost of its production. Therefore, wages decrease in proportion as the work to be performed becomes mechanical, monotonous, fatiguing, and repulsive. Further, in proportion as the application of machinery and the division of labour increase, the amount of work increases also, whether it be through an increase in the hours of work, or in the quantity of it demanded in a given time, or through an increased rate of velocity of the machinery employed.¹³

While this text, from Helen McFarlane's original translation of the *Manifesto*, is almost certainly the source of Bloom's conceptualization, it will also be worth emphasizing the stylistic correspondence between Joyce's choice of words and those used by McFarlane in her rendering of Marx and Engels' German into English. There is, of course, an overlap in political-economic jargon, with a shared interest in "labor," and, at the level of rhetorical style, Bloom and McFarlane also share a tendency for listing multiple near-synonymous adjectives as strung together by alliteration, so that Joyce's "manufactured monsters for mutual murder" comes to bear a striking resemblance to Marx and Engels' "monotonous, and merely mechanical operation."

If these consistencies indicate a general affinity in political rhetoric – which would still only amount to a parody or pastiche of radicalism – all but confirming a more direct line of influence from Marx to Joyce and so a shared worldview is the description of machines as "hideous hobgoblins produced by a horde of capitalistic lusts upon our prostituted labour," which reuses one of the *Manifesto*'s best-known figures: "Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa." While subsequent translations of these words famously conjure the "spectre" of communism "haunting Europe"; in McFarlane's version, most readily accessible to Joyce at the time,

communism is in the first instance a “frightful hobgoblin” sprung from the forces of production. “A frightful hobgoblin stalks throughout Europe,” reads the McFarlane text. “We are haunted by a ghost, the ghost of Communism.”¹⁴ While “frightful” and “hideous” are near enough to synonymous that the substitution allows for the passage’s consistent alliteration without significant deformation of meaning, the noun “hobgoblin” is itself a creative departure from Marx and Engel’s more spectral “Gespenst.” The hobgoblin, a folkloric monster that appears throughout literature as something like an ugly fairy and most famously as Shakespeare’s Puck, is nevertheless a fitting embodiment of what Marx and Engels set out to describe: an embodiment of malevolence and the living potential for transformative social disturbance, but also a stunted creature typically tasked with laborious chores and only remunerated with food for subsistence. If the hobgoblin is, *mutatis mutandis*, a folkloric version of the proletariat, this interpretation clarifies when read against further redactions from Marx into Joyce.

According to Marx, only in full communism, when humans work collectively and beyond compulsion, will “society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!”¹⁵ Bloom, we know, was aware of this slogan even if he is not always committed to the vision as a whole, for he reproduces a version of it from deep within the pit of post-inebriate exhaustion, quipping to Stephen during Eumaeus: “Everyone according to his needs and everyone according to his deeds.” (PPP) The revolution that would bring about communism, for Marx and Engels, would result from the monstrous transformation of humankind in the factories and the workshops born of the first industrial revolution. “The progress of the modern industrial system,” McFarlane translates Marx and Engels on this point, “cuts away, from under the feet of the Middle-class, the very ground upon which they produce and appropriate to themselves the produce of Labour.”¹⁶ To describe industrial machines, in Bloom’s words, as “manufactured monsters for mutual

murder” is not a luddite complaint, no matter how tempting that interpretation might be. Instead, it is to reckon, as Marx and Engels did — with industrial machinery’s revolutionary immanence — with the way that, by replacing competition with association, modern industry provides the collective armament and military conditions under which to demolish via insurrection the entire relations of production. This is why, from the standpoint of capital, machines are simultaneously “their cry, their chimera, their panacea,” because they are engineered, technocratic solutions to increase production that, nevertheless, contain the potential for systematic annihilation of capitalism as a whole. What is monstrous about industrial machinery, then, is that by supplementing human workers with nonhuman industry, by turning the individual human into a mechanized collective, capitalism generates the conditions for its own demolition. Half human, half machine: the revolutionary proletariat. This, it would seem, is a monster known to both Marx and Joyce.

Mediating between Marx and Joyce on the question of monsters is a third figure in whom both writers were invested, and whose presence will help secure the political significance of monsters for both writers. Both Marx and Joyce were readers of Charles Darwin, the naturalist for whom monsters were understood as the deviation from categorical norms, such as or even primarily an amalgamation of the human and the nonhuman. By contrast to “species,” a term of taxonomic categorization by qualitative exclusion, the “monstrosity” is said to define evolutionary aberration, or “some considerable deviation of structure, generally injurious to or not useful to the species.”¹⁷ Monsters, for Darwin, are signs of accelerated evolution that has a tendency to outstrip or complicate or even annihilate the natural order of things – or, perhaps more appositely, monsters are what happens when, for better or worse, evolution becomes revolution. “Everyone who believes in slow and gradual evolution,” writes Darwin, “will of course admit that specific changes may have been as abrupt and as great as any single variation which we meet with under nature, or even under

domestication.”¹⁸ Enacting a sly reappropriation of natural science – perhaps reckoning with the etymological roots of evolution and revolution, species and specie – Marx not only takes the idea of monsters from Darwin but also a critical method to complement what had been learned from Hegel.

In a footnote from *Capital*, Marx cites the scientist to whom it has been rumoured he originally wanted to dedicate the book while outlining a methodology for his own approach to technology, which renders it the nonhuman other:

A critical history of technology would show how little any of the inventions of the 18th century is the work of a single individual. Hitherto there is no such book. Darwin has interested us in the history of Nature ‘s Technology, i.e., in the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which organs serve as instruments of production for sustaining life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs that are the material basis of all social organization, deserve equal attention?¹⁹

Marx wanted to write a history of technology in a similar spirit to Darwin’s history of species, looking at technologies as unique organs of human history, which, for Marx, had transformed itself into a history of commodity production. While, for Joyce, shipping would serve as its own kind of figurative technology, through which characters sense the relations of production on a global scale, for Marx, similarly, a “critical history of technology” would also be a history of capitalism. And while technology evolves out into the demonic alpha-beast of ecological figuration, Marx’s evolutionary rhetoric comes down hard against the human capital displaced by its arrival. Darwin would account for this predatory relation as ecological competition; and, true to form, Marx describes it in properly Darwinian terms. Unemployment is raised to the power of extinction, in examples that are simultaneously literal and metaphorical. “History discloses no tragedy more horrible than the gradual extinction of the English hand-loom weavers,” reads one passage, “an extinction that was spread over several decades, and finally sealed in 1838.”²⁰ Another refers to the effect of English cotton machinery on India’s working class: “The bones of the cotton-weavers are

bleaching the plains of India.”²¹ This is the ecological and evolutionary landscape of capitalism, strewn with the corpses of dead capital and roamed by mechanical titans; it is governed by savage contests, sudden mutations, survival of the fittest, and the extinction of all unsuccessful species – included classes within our own. The monster, within this setting, is the defiled human form, a natural body turned inside out by mechanical production, but it is also the collective embodiment of a subjectivity that reaches beyond the individual human, a monstrous figure capable of world-historic transformation.

For Joyce, the Darwinian monster is frequently used to render a condition of the colonial psyche, a kind of “double consciousness” in which the subject is divided between two cultural lifeworlds. This is a thinking that predates *Ulysses*. Before Darwin occupied narrative space within Joyce’s fiction, the prose of *Dubliners* and *Portrait* was styled as a Zola-esque naturalism, a mode of mimetic depiction influenced by evolutionary biology. Via the internal multiplicity of Stephen’s character in the latter of those two books, the outward form of naturalism dovetails with characterological self-consciousness and a sense of imperial dislocation to produce the figure of the monster. When Stephen is questioned about national allegiance, he first offers to prove his claim to Ireland by “the tree of my family,” before conceding that he is “a monster,” forged as such when his ancestors “allowed a handful of foreigners to subject them.” (*P*, 170) This tropological combination of social and biological monstrosities would then become a mainstay in Joyce’s writing. In *Ulysses*, for instance, the best-known monster is the nationalist “citizen,” portrayed as a cyclops in descriptions that are equal parts Homer and Darwin. “A couched spear of acuminated granite,” we read, “rested by him while at his feet reposed a savage animal of the canine tribe whose stertorous gasps announced that he was sunk in uneasy slumber, a supposition confirmed by hoarse growls and spasmodic movements which his master repressed from time

to time by tranquillising blows of a mighty cudgel rudely fashioned out of paleolithic stone.”

(*U* 12.199-205)

It is, however, in the stylistic medley performed for “Oxen of the Sun,” an episode constructed around “the natural stages of development in the embryo and the periods of faunal evolution in general,” that Darwin appears by name and does so in order for Bloom to describe a medical student, Francis Costello, as a sub-humanoid monster:

he nauseated the wretch that seemed to him a cropeared creature of a misshapen gibbosity, born out of wedlock and thrust like a crookback toothed and feet first into the world, which the dint of the surgeon’s pliers in his skull lent indeed a colour to, so as to put him in thought of that missing link of creation’s chain desiderated by the late ingenious Mr Darwin. (*Letters 1*, 139-40; *U* 14.854-9)

This minor character brings us full circle, for he reappears in the subsequent episode, during the hallucinatory passage through “Circe,” as a Darwinian monster more beast than human: “his jaws chattering, capers to and fro, goggling his eyes, squeaking, kangaroo hopping with outstretched clutching arms, then all at once thrusts his lipless face through the fork of his thighs.” (*U* 15.2157-9) The compound anthimeria, “kangaroo hopping,” reads here as a more specific allusion. For Darwin, the kangaroo is a hypothetical example of evolutionary monstrosity, an entity in which the frightful passes over into hideousness.

But it may be asked, what ought we to do, if it could be proved that one species of kangaroo had been produced, by a long course of modification, from a bear? Ought we to rank this one species with bears, and what should we do with the other species? The supposition is of course preposterous; and I might answer by the argumentum ad hominem, and ask what should be done if a perfect kangaroo were seen to come out of the womb of a bear? According to all analogy, it would be ranked with bears; but then assuredly all the other species of the kangaroo family would have to be classed under the bear genus.²²

The payoff to this vividly peculiar thought experiment is one for scientific knowledge as a shared endeavor. The naturalist, says Darwin, “includes monsters; he includes varieties, not solely because they closely resemble the parent-form, but because they are descended from it,” a supposition that reaches its epistemological limit (in a description of reproduction that

would have appealed to Joyce) with the kangaroo. While Costello might not embody the same colonial tensions as Stephen or the cyclopean citizen – though, as native Australia fauna, the kangaroo certainly might – his reappearance nevertheless acquires political significance through its semantic collocation with another monster in that episode, one we have already encountered.

Recalling Bloom's rhetorical taking from Marx and Engels, in Costello's reappearance he assumes the role of precisely that species of monster introduced by the *Manifesto*: "A hobgoblin in the image of Punch Costello, hipshot, crookbacked, hydrocephalic, prognathic with receding forehead and Ally Sloper nose, tumbles in somersaults through the gathering darkness." (*U* 15.2150-3) And so it is that the engagement with Darwin, shared by Marx and Joyce, returns us to Bloom, in Dublin's nighttown, describing the means of production as "manufactured monsters for mutual murder, hideous hobgoblins produced by a horde of capitalistic lusts upon our prostituted labour." In what might be the closest evolutionary antecedent to Bloom's speech, the centrepiece of the chapter on modern industry from Marx's *Capital* is an image of the factory system: "Here we have, in place of the isolated machine, a mechanical monster whose body fills whole factories, and whose demonic power, at first hidden by the slow and measured motions of its gigantic members, finally bursts forth in the fast and feverish whirl of its countless working organs."²³ This image is composed in a mixture of admiration and horror. In it can be felt the same affective intensity, that astonishing confrontation of wonderment and revulsion, which attends to Darwin's thinking about variform monsters of the middle paleolithic. The obvious difference between it and them is that this monster is in full possession of its own explosive futurity; it is what natural scientists might call an "apex predator," that most dangerous of all the organisms mobilized within any given ecosystem, and here we know its two names: capitalism and communism. This is the "hideous hobgoblin" made flesh, a revolutionary

figure born of modern industry in colonial Ireland, but it can still go either way, either securing the old world or creating a new one.

Perhaps this is why, before finishing his speech, Bloom gestures toward some kind of world-historic end using a satirical deformation of Handel's *Messiah*, invoking the monstrous body of Christ as an avenging angel. "But their reign," we read, "is rover for rever and ever and ev..." This ending introduces the idea of termination (the "over" in "rover" and in the syntactic truncation) into the permanence of the "Hallelujah Chorus," which uses the words "he shall reign for ever and ever, for ever and ever," so that in Joyce's version Bloom "is announcing the end of exploitation of the masses in the new Bloomusalem."²⁴ Perhaps, too, this is why the hobgoblin Costello presages "The End of the World," which appears before us in good apocalyptic fashion as humanity's judgment before our theriomorphic beast-gods. "Along an infinite invisible tightrope," we read, "taut from zenith to nadir the End of the World, a twoheaded octopus in gillie's kilts, busby and tartan filibegs, whirls through the murk, head over heels, in the form of the Three Legs of Man." (*U*, 15.2176-9) If, as Naomi Milthorpe is correct to argue, the image of the octopus within modernism is an index to urbanization in the early decades of the twentieth century — a monstrous caricature how "the undisciplined growth of the city beyond its orderly bounds blights a rural landscape that metonymically stands for modern democracy, national vigor, and Arcadian idyll"²⁵ — here it simultaneously collocates with Frank Norris' politicized brand of naturalism, in which the octopus figured an expansive railway network, but also the insurrectionary monster Marx and Engels sensed would become of the urban masses. It is all of these things together and at once, an aesthetic-ideological portmanteau, and that too is what makes it so monstrous.

2. Monster Book or "Nichtian Glossery"?

The most thorough account of the relationship between Marx and Joyce belongs to Patrick McGee, author of *Joyce Beyond Marx*. “There is,” he insists, “a specter haunting *Finnegans Wake*,” which he echoes Derrida in naming “the specter of Marx.”²⁶ This claim is pursued through a hypothetical connection or conceptual overlay between the first sentences of *Capital* and the *Wake*. Marx’s text begins with these words: “The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an ‘immense collection of commodities’; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form.”²⁷ Looking from Marx to Joyce, the “commodious vicus of recirculation,” according to McGee, “suggests, among other possibilities, that this work manifests the commodity’s mode or way of recirculation,” a force known to have engineered both “swerve” and “bend” in the “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s” of what McGee calls “human history.”²⁸ By formulating the *Wake*’s engagement with Marx as a question of humanity, and by emphasizing the language of the *Manifesto*’s opening, this reading inspires a further line of questions to be addressed from within the present context. To what extent might the *Wake*, in staging an intersection between human history and the nonhuman stuff of capitalism, also be a work of monstrosity, the kind of form to which *Ulysses* only gestured at via Bloom’s speech, a moment in the text that arguably had more to do with the realist and naturalist works that preceded it than the modern epic’s evolving narrative organism? If the allusions to Marx in *Ulysses* suggest a local presence – albeit one that required critical engagement in its rewrite and which would resonate thematically with further aspects of the text as a whole – might Joyce’s subsequent book, with its opening allusion, be read this way but on a more totalizing scale? Might, then, the productive association between Marx and Darwin animate the overarching form of a literary work as much as its content? The answer to these questions returns us to the monster.

As Laura Lovejoy has shown, the *Wake* explores the sexual politics of early twentieth-century Ireland through what she calls “the bestial feminine,” a gendered

anthropomorphism in which human characters are spliced with nonhuman animals and within which women are reduced to beasts. “Undeniably,” she argues, “the trope of the woman-as-animal is inseparable from deeply entrenched connotations of inferiority, and these are never irrelevant in any literary representation of bestial women and feminised animals.”²⁹ Despite overtones of abject and unforgivable misogyny, there is, for Lovejoy, a contextually-specific liberating dimension to this kind of monstrosity: “in addition to the negative connotations often conveyed by pet metaphors when applied to women, such metaphors can connote sexual attractiveness, playfulness or desirability – characteristics which undermine certain patriarchal models of feminine sexual purity, as in the case of ‘kitten.’”³⁰ Here, as it was for Bloom in *Ulysses*, the monstrous indicates transgression of the human by a nonhuman other in ways that, whilst predicated on debasement, are politically recalcitrant if not revolutionary. This argument aligns with Marx’s understanding of capitalism as Joyce is seen to have absorbed it. Capitalism, like patriarchy, exists as an impermanent contradiction, precisely because it contains the material and social forms of its own abolition. What remains of the essay expands this idea through two of the *Wake*’s episodic engagements with Marx and Marxism and toward a political construal of the monstrous form.

The first unambiguous staging of the *Wake*’s anti-capitalist vision takes place when HCE encounters Shem’s adopted persona of the “cad with a pipe” (*FW* 35.11). This is a moment in narrative that articulates almost all of the concerns we have already encountered within *Ulysses*. Fantasying a kind of high-noon shoot-out, HCE strives for proto-Darwinian self-preservation (“realising on fundamental liberal principles the supreme importance, nexally and noxally, of physical life” *FW*, 35.21-23) in the face of what reads as revolutionary terror. Upon sighting the cad, HCE is reminded of local decolonization struggles (“the nearest help relay being pingping K. O. Sempatrick’s Day and the fenian rising” *FW*, 35.23-24) and imagines himself within a civil war (“unwishful as he felt of being

hurled into eternity right then, plugged by a soft-nosed bullet from the sap”). The subsequent exchange, in its emphasis of masculine intimidation, recalls Bloom’s encounter with the citizen, and like that cyclopean monster the cad is also portrayed as monstrous, “luciferant not the oriolate,” and with “overgoat under his schulder, sheepside out,” thereby taking the form something like a hobgoblin or baphomet (*FW*, 35.13). Extending a hand to the cad, HCE offers a tremulous greeting: “Shsh shake, co-comeraid!” (*FW*, 36.20) To address this figure as comrade is to depict him not as a friend or equal but to suggest revolutionary menace, a suggestion encoded in the semantic distortion, as “comrade” sounds more like an invitation to “come raid.” Whilst comparably threatening, this threat comes from a different place to that of the citizen, though one that is similarly shrouded by nationalism.

The language of communism shades into the cad’s sartorial design, as he takes from “his gunpocket” a “shrapnel waterbury,” or watch, “ours by communionism, his by usucapture.” (*FW*, 35.28-29) In other words, the Cad’s watch has been expropriated – taken under law of usucaption – and that expropriation has been enacted by the sanction of “communionism,” an anti-colonial portmanteau that combines the monstrous right of communion – monstrous because of its predicates in transubstantiation and cannibalism – with the revolutionary politics of communism. While the exchange reveals little more about the threat posed by this figure, we can nevertheless identify a structure of opposition, in that HCE articulates himself in this episode as an exemplarily petit-bourgeois business-owner: “Hence my nonation wide hotel and creamery establishments which for the honours of our mewmew mutual daughters, credit me, I am woo-woo willing to take my stand, sir, upon the monument, that sign of our ruru redemption any hygienic day to this hour and to make my hoath to my sinnfinners, even if I get life for it, upon the Open Bible and before the Great Taskmaster’s” (*FW*, 36.21-27). If, in *Ulysses*, Bloom’s monster conveyed the industrial proletariat’s revolutionary menace to accumulation, here we encounter the structural

repetition of that opposition. HCE is reduced to stuttering anxiously, unable to give a compelling account of his politics, precisely because he stands before the embodiment of a kind of revolutionary terror that opposes and seeks to vanquish his class.

When Shem's cad persona returns as "the starving gunman, strike him pink," (*FW* 83.6-7) the political meaning is clearer still, revealing what Bernard Benstock once described euphemistically as a "definite Marxist tinge."³¹ While "pink" suggests "pinko," a slang term for communist sympathizer, here and from within a replay of the earlier confrontation we are given two direct references to Marx and a very different kind of monstrosity:

became strangely calm and forthright sware by all his lards porsenal that the thorn tree of sheol might ramify up his Sheofon to the lux apointlex but he would go good to him suntime marx my word fort, for a chip off the old Flint, (in the Nichtian glossery which purveys aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues this is nat language at any sinse of the world and one might as fairly go and kish his sprogues as fail to certify whether the wartrophy eluded at some lives earlier was that somethink like a jug, to what, a coctable) and remarxing in languidoily, seemingly much more highly pleased than tongue could tell at this opening of a lifetime... (*FW* 83.7-17)

There are two interlocking layers of meaning in this passage that will be addressed separately before moving to the words contained by parentheses. First, Marx's name is interpolated into the cliché, "mark my word for it," so that he figures within an appeal to truth; but, simultaneously, this appeal needs to be read literally as "marx my word fort," as in Marx is possessed as a "word fort," like a barricade made of language. Marx, this passage would suggest, vouchsafes the transformative weaponizing of language, or at least a capacity for turning words into concrete political matter, analogous to how (for Bloom) large-scale industry is potentially revolutionary in its capacity to proletarianize human subjects into combative monsters. This would be a typically Joycean reappropriation of revolutionary thought, using it to affirm his chosen medium as its own social force, a counter-current to the circulation of capital and its commodities. Second, and making good on that militaristic use of words, the concern with language is reframed within a narrative of evolution. The

following clause, “for a chip off the old Flint,” modifies an expression of genetic inheritance and hereditary descent, “chip off the old block,” by inserting a new material, flint, which since prehistoric times has served as a weapon (ranging from primitive blades through flintlock guns). Flint, too, puts us in the mind of Darwin, thinking on the primeval and by definition monstrous antecedents to humankind. “One can hardly doubt,” Darwin supposed, “that a man-like animal who possessed a hand and arm sufficiently perfect to throw a stone with precision, or to form a flint into a rude tool, could, with sufficient practice, as far as mechanical skill alone is concerned, make almost anything which a civilised man can make.”³² Flint, then, serves as a prehistoric modifier to evolution – the incursion of a mechanical or at least a tool-based, revolution. These transformations – mutations, even – are the “remarxing” of an otherwise decorative and settled language, “languidoily,” into the “opening of a lifetime,” an opportunity to transform the web of life.

The parenthetical content, like an authorial aside, seems to draw all of this together by potentially reflecting as the *Wake* as a whole and its negative grasp on scientific and linguistic categories. It is only fitting that this clarification is presented parenthetically, in a gesture typically reserved for the demotion of significance, for it describes the anti-taxonomic drive to become “nat language at any sinse of the world,” a book that actively and absolutely negates its own affirmative content, the “aprioric roots for aposteriorous tongues,” or what Darwin would call the origin of species. Humanity and its languages are conceived as a “wartrophy eluded at some lives earlier,” the result of evolutionary and also revolutionary contestation, struggles that this book would seem to keep alive within itself as a monstrous language and a monstrous narrative, in which no signifier ever means just one thing. That, precisely, is the “opening of a lifetime” engineered via “remarxing,” a revolutionary politicization of linguistic and rhetorical matter. What all of this offers, then, is a political construal of the idea that language in the *Wake* might be an aesthetically dissonant

monstrosity in and of itself. “There can be no doubt that a major reason for this negative reaction is the work’s intensive use of the portmanteau word,” Derek Attridge speculates as to why so many readers feel alienated by this text. “The portmanteau word is a monster, a word that is not a word, that is not authorized by any dictionary, that holds out the worrying prospect of books which, instead of comfortingly recycling the words we know, possess the freedom endlessly to invent new ones.”³³ In the portmanteau, which we have seen at full operation in this passage and elsewhere, language is denied any single meaning, so that its semantic destination remains forcibly open and monstrously multiple. This is an aesthetic analogy to how Marx explained the monstrosity of capitalism, a mode of production that would either press through evolution toward human extinction or through revolutionary transformation into something as yet and perhaps terrifyingly unknowable, but it is also and primarily a description of how language functions in the *Wake*.

Revolution is a monster. It is, within a worldview shaped in equal parts by Marx and Darwin, an evolutionary aberration, a moment of fierce contestation with potential to remake humankind in its own image. For the text to acknowledge this is both defensive and affirmative, and it is both of these things simultaneously for good historical reasons. Within the Irish context, the revolutionary monster is threatened by a regressive nationalism, as we have seen with the citizen and the cad as perceived not only from a threatened middle class but also from those subjects who, like Stephen Daedalus, view their own national identity as impurely monstrous. In a war-torn Ireland, “smeared with generous erstborn gore and ever free for all cobbleway slippery with the bloods of heroes,” we encounter a mauled landmass and a troubled people who, like HCE, are ultimately afraid of monsters (*FW*, 178.10-11). That is what we experience in the affective fissiparousness between Daedalus, Costello, the citizen, and the cad, whose nonhuman incursions encode political as well as national difference: the question of nationalism as well as its rejection for something better.

“The bridge between the national and international,” concludes McGee, “is the dialectical image of social desire that cannot be reduced to a form of property. It is this desire that *Finnegans Wake* manifests and that we must learn to call communism.”³⁴ These episodes, which conjure up the monstrous form of nationalism as a real expression of populist political discourse, have the supplementary function of gainsaying a political desire that is frequently mobilized but which must be overcome in the movement from historical evolution to social revolution. This is why, amidst a scene of full-blooded insurrectionary violence, the patriots are heard “chanting the Gillooly chorus, from the Monster Book of Paltryattic Puetrie,” (*FW*, 178.16-17) a pure and patriotic poetry against which Joyce’s polyglot mutations amount to a very different though equally monstrous volume, the “nichtian glossery” – a book whose explosion of the categories of human and nonhuman in the name of a post-national, post-capitalist imaginary will serve as an affirmation of the modernist monster, that hideous hobgoblin we are yet to become.

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- ¹ Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005), p. 161.
- ² Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 293.
- ³ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Continuum, 1997), p. 404.
- ⁴ See, for Joyce describing the *Wake* as a monster, *JJII* 716. His critics, most prominent of whom on this point is Derek Attridge, are cited throughout the essay.
- ⁵ Vaclav Paris, "Picturing the *Wake*: Arcimboldo, Joyce, and His 'Monster,'" *JJQ*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Winter 2012), pp. 235-259, p. 252.
- ⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. xvi.
- ⁷ Edward Mendelson, "Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon," *MLN*, Vol. 91, No. 6 (1976), pp.1267-1275, p. 1272.
- ⁸ Fredric Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 165.
- ⁹ Sir Walter Scott, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott: With a Sketch of His Life* (Philadelphia: J. Crissy, 1835), p. 234.
- ¹⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the German Communist Party," trans. Helen McFarlane in *The Cambridge Companion to the Communist Manifesto*, eds. Terrell Carver and James Farr (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), p. 270.
- ¹¹ Marx, "Outline of a Report on the Irish Question to the Communist Educational Association of German Workers in London," 16 December 1867: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867/12/16.htm> [accessed 20 January 2019]
- ¹² Julian Murphet, "A Streetcar Names Desire," in *Moving Modernisms: Motion, Technology, and Modernity*, ed. David Bradshaw, Laura Marcus and Rebecca Roach (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), p. 286.
- ¹³ Marx and Engels, "Manifesto," p. 266.
- ¹⁴ Marx and Engels, "Manifesto," p. 261.
- ¹⁵ Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Program" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker (London: Norton, 1978), p. 531.
- ¹⁶ Marx and Engels, "Manifesto," p. 270.
- ¹⁷ Charles Darwin, "Variations Under Nature" in *On the Origin of Species: Or, the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859): <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1228/1228-h/1228-h.htm> [accessed 20 January 2019]
- ¹⁸ Darwin, "Miscellaneous Objections to the Theory of Natural Selection" in *On the Origin of Species*.
- ¹⁹ Karl Marx, "Machinery and Modern Industry" in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. One trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1887): <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf> [accessed 20 January 2019]
- ²⁰ Marx, "Machinery and Modern Industry."
- ²¹ Marx, "Machinery and Modern Industry."
- ²² Darwin, "Hybridism" in *On the Origin of Species*.
- ²³ Marx, "Machinery and Modern Industry."
- ²⁴ Zack R. Bowen, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry through Ulysses* (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1974), p. 266.
- ²⁵ Naomi Milthorpe, *Evelyn Waugh's Satire: Texts and Contexts* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 2016), p. 23

²⁶ Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx: History and Desire in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake* (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 2001), p. 221.

²⁷ McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, p. 222. McGee is using Ben Fowkes' translation, which in many ways is superior to the Moor and Aveling edition. Within this context, however, I prefer to use Moor and Eveling's earlier translation, solely because this is the edition that readers in the English-speaking world were most likely to encounter.

²⁸ McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, p. 222.

²⁹ Laura Lovejoy, "The Bestial Feminine in *Finnegans Wake*," "James Joyce, Animals and the Nonhuman," ed. Katherine Ebury, *Humanities* Vol. 6, No. 3. (2017):

<https://doi.org/10.3390/h6030058> [accessed 20 January 2019]

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bernard Benstock, *Joyce-again's wake: an analysis of Finnegans Wake* (Washington: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), p. 248.

³² Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871): <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2300/2300-h/2300-h.htm> [accessed 20 January 2019]

³³ Derek Attridge, *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (London: Methuen, 1988), p. 196.

³⁴ McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*, p. 282.