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## Servants in the Cracked Lookingglass —Slaveys, Ireland, and Joyce

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### Abstract

A close reading of *Ulysses* reveals that a large number of ignored, if not invisible, working women are incorporated and represented in the text. Their obscurity in the text reflects their marginalization in the work market and in Irish society. In spite of this, Irish women in 1904 were far more active and productive economically than was previously thought. Re-viewing the Joycean text in this light, this paper attempts to investigate a group of working women hinted at in the Joycean text: slaveys. One of the major employments for women in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Ireland, domestic service had undergone tremendous change. Whether as a respectable and favorable job in the nineteenth century, or as an inferior and unacceptable form of work in the twentieth century, domestic service had allowed many Irish women to support themselves and their families; their contributions, however, were little recognized. The shadowy

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representation of Joyce's slaveys exemplifies the active but disregarded participation of women in Irish society and economy. The term "servant" was not merely a metaphor for colonial subjugation, but a social reality, an indispensable part of Irish life and history; the shade of the servant could be surely glimpsed in Joyce's cracked lookingglass. In his reconstruction of Irish colonial history with Stephen, Bloom, and Molly as spokespersons, Joyce represents—simultaneously but probably unintentionally—an obscure and fragmented history of working women in Ireland.

**Key Words:** James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Ireland, paid work, domestic servants