

EURAMERICA Vol. 47, No. 2 (June 2017), 215-261
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“OMNIUM GATHERUM” —Representations of the Intellectuals in “Aeolus”*

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Abstract

Intellectuals, admittedly, have dominated central parts in the pages of modern Irish history, and James Joyce incorporates a diverse array of intellectuals into his texts. The “Aeolus” episode in *Ulysses* depicts members of the professional intelligentsia in journalism, law, and education. However, the picture of the independent and nonconforming intellectual functioning as the conscience of the people and speaking truth to power seems gravely distorted in “Aeolus.” Instead of acting as society’s conscience, these Dubliners corrupt the national spirit: their idleness, flatulence, alcoholism, and nostalgia result in failure and unfulfillment, and,

Received July 27, 2016; accepted March 22, 2017; last revised March 28, 2017

Proofreaders: Hsueh-mei Chen, Yu-hsien Liao, Kuei-feng Hu

* This article is the result of a research project sponsored by the National Science Council (NSC 101-2410-H-005-051). I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and valuable suggestions. I am also indebted to Professor Yen-Yen Hsiao and Miss Hui-I Sung, who inspired the aforementioned research project, and hence this article.

more grievously, signify the degeneration of the intelligentsia. Retrospective rather than innovative, dedicated to the borrowed rather than the self-created, these “talents” fail to live up to their calling. In contrast with Joyce’s portrayal of his protagonists, his depictions of these “talents” offer critiques of the corruption of certain intellectuals, his dialogue with those who exercised profound influence on modern Ireland, and his rethinking of the role of the intellectual.

Key Words: “Aeolus,” James Joyce, intellectuals, Ireland