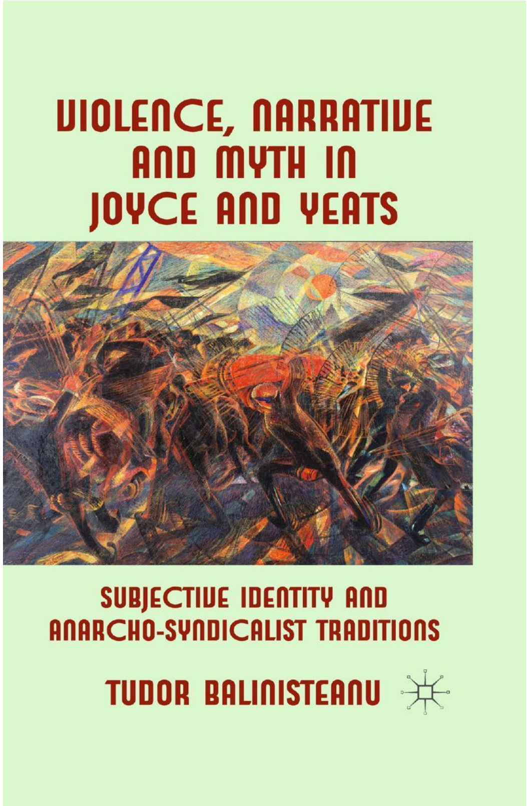
Violence, Narrative and Myth in Joyce and Yeats

Subjective Identity and Anarcho-Syndicalist Traditions

Tudor Balinisteanu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14 November 2012

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Also by Tudor Balinisteanu

NARRATIVE, SOCIAL MYTH, AND REALITY IN CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH AND IRISH WOMEN'S WRITING: Kennedy, Lochhead, Bourke, Ní Dhuibhne, and Carr

Violence, Narrative and Myth in Joyce and Yeats
Subjective Identity and Anarcho-Syndicalist Traditions

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To Eldalie

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Introduction

I would like to begin by asking you to bring forth in your mind's eye the world you envision as the home of your future self at some distant point in time. You will have thus created a coherent narrative of images in which you are the main character. Think about whether your present self has already begun to melt into your future, fictional self. Which of the two is your true self? Is your future, fictional self, already guiding you to action in the present as you set out to make that desired world happen? If so, your vision is not dissimilar to the vision engendered by a social myth as conceived by Georges Sorel whose theories are central to my arguments in this book.

Think about the narrative of images in which your future world is given as a river which collects many affluents, that is, other narratives. Think about how these other narratives flow into your narrative of yourself as you get carried away in your feeling of anticipation and faith in the world to come. What seemed at first a world complete in itself, given in a coherent and integrated narrative, will now appear as a fragmentary world, made up of overlapping voices of various texts that seek you as their interlocutor, or which perhaps speak in your voice, some with your consent, some against your will. Having isolated these tributary narratives from the narrative in which your future world had been given, do you find it easy to reconstitute the unity of the latter? I should think that you would not be able to do it without some effort.

Sorel used the term *diremption* to refer to that process of isolating a part from the whole in order to scrutinise and analyse it, a process which leads to losing sight of the unity characteristic of social myth:

> Social philosophy is obliged, in order to study the most significant phenomena of history, to proceed to a *diremption*, to examine certain parts without taking into account all of the ties which connect them to the whole, to determine in some manner the character of their activity by isolating them. When it has thus arrived at the most perfect understanding, it can no longer attempt to reconstitute the broken unity. (Sorel, 2004, p. 259)

There is an implicit contrast in Sorel's discourse here between the reality of experience and analysis. The reality of experience is the unitary totality of action, agent, and his/her narrative representations of self and the world. We cannot experience that totality as a memory from the vantage point of the future, although we can analyse representations of actions and agent, that is, their reflections in various narratives. Nor can we scrutinise our present faith in the advent of a certain future world. Doing so would mean losing that faith, and diminishing our will to act to the purpose of making that world happen.

I find it tempting to discuss this contrast using the words ‘grace’ and ‘violence’. The word ‘grace’ could be used to refer to the unity of experience engendered by faith in a future world envisioned as the right world for one’s future self, faith which energises our will to act in order to bring that world into being. The word ‘violence’ refers, on the one hand, to the breaking with the present world which one wants superseded by the future world; and on the other hand, to the breaking of that future world for analysis, which entails loss of faith. However, violence may indeed be engendered by what I referred to as the grace of faith in the world to come, if that faith energises one’s actions in such ways that it compels one to contest existing worldviews. And the breaking of vision in analysis, a form of violence, may liberate one from paralysing forms of faith, such as ideology, thus constituting the prelude to a more genuinely faithful recreation of the world. In this case, the violent breaking of ossified and normative ‘vision’ may prepare one for the graceful experience of epiphany in which new possibilities of being in the world are revealed. Thus, the intertwined experiences of grace and violence born from, and in turn engendering, faith and faithlessness lead to individual change, while the socialisation of those experiences implicates them in processes of social change.

The present book is about the role of literature in engendering or contesting faith and faithlessness of the same kinds as those which we distinguish as forces driving social change. I am concerned with literature as an instrument of grace, and as an instrument of violence. I am not concerned with literature as an object that can be explored in contemplation, or as art for art’s sake. Instead, I am interested in the ways in which literature can be seen as a means to an end, effective in, and effecting, social reality. Thus, while my object of study is the literary text, especially the works of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce, my principal concern is the value of text as a tool for use in the social sphere to reshape material reality.

In its material inscription, or in being carried in the vibration of speech, language belongs to objective, material reality. On this level, written or spoken language encodes one’s experience of the world in the material form of words. But material words only make sense when processed subjectively. Thus, while language is always embodied materially as object, it is also always embodied as a variety of one’s subjective existence for the world, or, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty put it:

> A novel, poem, picture or musical work are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression is indistinguishable from the thing expressed, their meaning, accessible only through direct contact, being radiated with no change of their temporal and spatial situation. (2002, p. 175)

In this perspective, language in its subjective mode of operation serves to express an author’s or speaker’s relation to the material and the social in such a way that it projects the energy of the self unto the world, where this energy in turn modulates the existential situation of readers and audiences. Thus, language is both a material object and a conduit for the propagation of the self's energy, through the self's subjective form, into the world, in a process in which speech becomes text, and text becomes embodied in readers' or audiences' existential attitude: 'a contraction of the throat, a sibilant emission of air between the tongue and the teeth, a certain way of bringing the body into play suddenly allows itself to be invested with a *figurative significance* which is conveyed outside us' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 225, original italics). Because figurative significance can be conveyed and then apprehended outside oneself, for both authors/speakers and readers/audiences, aesthetic experience inflects their being in history, that is, their material existence beyond the synchronic moment amenable to the phenomenological analysis of perception. In the material space of history, the space in which temporal and spatial situations are changed materially, the 'power of giving significance – that is, both of apprehending and conveying a meaning' is a power 'by which man transcends himself towards a new form of behaviour, or towards other people, or towards his own thought, through his body and his speech' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 226). Language transfers the energy of the self, signified as narrative subject, to social subjects, and the energy of narrative scripted actions, which signify the self's being in the world, to social action.

The perspective derived from such phenomenological analyses allows us to envision texts as performative, so that one could say that in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience the world of the text and the world of material reality merge into the one world which constitutes one's existence (or existential situation) at that moment. This is a central concern in this book, but my emphasis falls more strongly on the question of how the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience informs one's social life beyond that moment, that is, on the diachronic axis of history. I shall argue in favour of the idea that the merging of social subjects and narrative subjects that takes place in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience brings narrative subjects into the historical, social, material world. This is not to say that narrative subjects, who inhabit fictional worlds, somehow travel as fully formed beings from those worlds into ours. Indeed the subject of the text (the narrative subject) and the subject of action (the reader, who is a social agent in the material world of action) inhabit realities which we normally place in different dimensions: those of fiction and reality. Fiction is in an obvious way part of reality, because it is communicated in language, which has material existence, and because the perception and processing of text are phenomena amenable to scientific as well as philosophical description. But the realm of the world outlined in a fictional text is usually regarded as not belonging in the realm of material reality. However, I want to argue in favour of an acceptance of the possibility of transcendence between the two realms, so that one may feel justified in saying that narrative subjects join us in the world of experience contiguous with the world of action. Thus, while one cannot say that narrative subjects live *among* us, perhaps one may say that they live *within* us, and that we share our self with them. I do not mean to say that they live within us merely as figments of the imagination, but that they become expressed in our actions as we translate narrative language into the language of action: they speak in our voices, and act in our actions. In this perspective, literature, as indeed any kind of narrative, is defined as the medium through which narrative subjects join the subject of action. As social agents and subjects of action we are never alone in ourselves. We all have our avatars, so to speak, who manifest ourselves in social reality. We define ourselves socially through the embedding of the narrative subject in the subject of action.

This embedding is made possible by our ability to participate in discourse. In discourse, the voice of narrative subjects often provides the tenor for the voice of the subject of action. It is true that not every subject of discourse, that is, the person one refers to as being oneself in one's discourse, is drawn from a literary text. We don't speak, for instance, the words of Yeats's poetry when we interact in social spaces. But even though in social interaction we speak non-poetic discourse, we are more than automatons reproducing, or varying, set formulae of discursive socialisation. The intentionality of non-poetic discourse is derived from a discourse of higher order, one which functions as a subject's guide to action. This higher order discourse is that of literature as *poïesis*, that is, in Heideggerian perspective, literature as a process of bringing forth the narrative subject into the subject of action. This is a process of recreation of the subject of action.

Thus, I regard literature as one of the principal means through which we steer ourselves as subjects of action in the material and social reality. In this view, to borrow a phrase from Finn Fordham's analysis of texts and selves in process, art is a form of labour which can 'provide an exception to Marx's sense that alienation is a consequence of all labour' (Fordham, 2010, p. 12). Indeed, literature is a form of labour in which the object of labour is the world and the self, the means of production include literary discourse, and the end product is a more meaningful self and a subject of action empowered to change material reality.

In this book I will discuss the ways in which literature becomes a guide to action through channelling or contesting social myths. I will use a theoretical framework derived from Sorel's social philosophy to develop a comparative analysis of Yeats's and Joyce's writing as discourses that engage with social myths. I will argue that Yeats's writing engenders a political aesthetic through which his discourse channels social myths. On the other hand, I will argue that Joyce's political aesthetic is one which helps readers to contest social myths. By using this comparative framework, I do not mean to suggest that the ethos engendered by Yeats's work can be easily set against that engendered by Joyce's writing. Although the two authors pursued divergent paths, their thought and spirit are often confluent in relevant ways. By studying these divergences and convergences in relation to the concept of social myth, one may gain a better understanding of this concept and the ethos of each of the two writers, that is, of the ways in which their writing mediates in different ways one's relation to material reality.

One working definition of social myth, which we may use before we get to the more detailed analysis of Sorel's concept, is provided by the sociologist Bernard Yack. According to Yack a social myth 'unifies many-sided social processes and phenomena into a single grand object' (Yack, 1997, p. 6). Yack's definition echoes Jean-François Lyotard's concept of grand narratives developed in *The Postmodern Condition.* For Lyotard, grand narratives are metanarratives that rely on a set of principles seen by those who defend them as expressing the unquestionable essence of historical reality at the expense of other possible visions of individual and collective destinies, thereby cultivating the kind of faith which sustains and legitimates oppressive social systems; in this view, a *sine qua non* condition of radical traditions such as poststructuralism is their contestation of the value of social myths (Lyotard, 1984). However, as Ernesto Laclau points out in an interview for the SUNY collection, *Strategies for Theory*, discussing the radical potential of poststructuralist theory, although one of the effects of poststructuralism has been the 'weakening of all essentialism', this weakening 'paves the way for a retrieval of the radical tradition, including Marxism' (Laclau, 2003, p. 70). The present book is premised on the importance of the anarchist intellectual tradition, along with Marxism, as a radical tradition, one that can participate in the 'disaggregation of essentialist paradigms', as Laclau put it (2003, p. 70).

For Laclau:

> The Sorelian conception of myth [...] is based on a radical antiessentialism: there is no 'objectivity' *in itself* of the social outside the mythical reconstitution of identities and of the relations that take place through the violent confrontation of groups. (2003, p. 70, original italics)

In the context of Irish modernism, Yeats conceived the social as lived through the mythical reconstitution of identities, and poetry as the means to effect such reconstitution which, in turn, redefined the social. This overhaul of the material reality by its filtering through myth led to the violent confrontation of groups, some of which longed for the tran-substantiation of the subject of myth into the subject of action. Yeats's writing was radical in Sorel's terms. The description of Sorel's perception of the social role of the arts and religion given by the political scientist John Stanley could be used to also describe Yeats's relation to literature as 'often governed by a particular kind of free spirit that produces new beliefs of a particularly schismatic nature' (Stanley, 2002, p. 187). Yeats's writing produced such beliefs as intended for men of free spirit, even while transforming traditional Irish myth into social myth so that the realm of fiction became nested within the realm of material reality. For Yeats, to have faith in the gods and goddesses of myth is to be free from bondage to material reality. However, for all its early romanticism, later turned into a modernist appeal to a reality of purer essence, Yeats's writing is not essentialist. For Yeats, the life of the subject of myth within the subject of action is a tragedy of many masks. The subject of action never truly becomes one with the subject of myth. Instead, the subject of action becomes an avatar of the subject of myth, donning many masks, or, should we say, social personae, or even forms of subjectivity, in its effort to attain unity of being. There is threatening heteroglossia in the experience of mediation, engendered by poetry, between the subject of myth, the narrative subject, and the subject of action.

If heteroglossia tormented Yeats, Joyce revelled in it. In the mythical reconstitution of identities effected by Joyce's writing, the subject of myth is the euhemerised subject of action. The life of the subject of myth in the subject of action is a comedy of many masks. According to Don Gifford, 'the action of *Ulysses* takes place at the confluence of two orders of literary time: dramatic time and epic time as Aristotle defines them in the *Poetics*' (Gifford and Seidman, 2008, p. 1). Bloom's adventures on 16 June 1904 take place in dramatic time which in terms of Aristotle's *Poetics* is the space of a single day prescribed for tragedy, but the events of the single day are also narrated in epic time (Gifford and Seidman, 2008, p. 2). However, the classical tragedies were immersed in myth, and so leaden with religious significance, whereas Joyce's writing secularises myth. In doing so, it submits the myth to the decentralising power of heteroglossia.

In the dramatic time of the novel, the events narrated in *Ulysses* can be seen as carnivalesque in Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of the term. According to Bakhtin:

> People who in life are separated by impenetrable hierarchical barriers enter into free familiar contact on the carnival square. [...] Carnival is the place for working out [...] a *new mode of interrelationship between individuals* [...]. (1984, p. 123, original italics)

Joyce's *Ulysses* is narrated, as Don Gifford points out, in a 'dramatic imitation of epic time' (Gifford and Seidman, 2008, p. 3), but the text invites readers to re-signify themselves as participants in an aesthetic of the Bakhtinian carnival, through which they may indeed discover new modes of participation in social interrelationships. In Sorel's terms, this aesthetic practiced in the mode of comedy does not contribute to the creation of a social myth, even though it engenders the subject's coming to action in a realm permeated by the violence of confrontations between various social groups (for instance those of the Jewish community, Irish nationalists, or English cultural elites). Rather, in Bakhtin's terms, Joyce's aesthetic offers a 'comic-ironic *contre-partie*' of myth (1981, p. 53).

Yeats's and Joyce's writing offer incentives for exploring two different ways in which texts function to engender a coming to action of the subject, that is, of the reader who participates in the work of the textual aesthetic and consents to being signified as narrative subject in the process of absorbing it into his/her social identity. Yeats's texts invite readers on a quest to find their godly self, a quest beset by the heteroglossia of radical violence, and obstructed by one's own many social masks. In the end, the quest leads to subjection through the monoglossia of social myth, with monoglossia understood as the manifestation of the myth's poetic authority. However, this subjection is perceived by Yeats as a mode of radical freedom. This radical freedom of the spirit may be manifested as the political stance of revolutionary nationalism. At the same time, it is anti-capitalist in that the free spirit is one liberated from the constraints of the material world, gathered 'into the artifice of eternity', as Yeats put it in 'Sailing to Byzantium' (Yeats, 1997, p. 197).

By contrast, Joyce's narratives invite desubjection, that is, immersion into the contingencies of the material world and a lack of faith in the stable form or stance that endures. Joyce's writing invites subjective transformation through the recognition, and subsequently the contestation, of the ideological functions of myth. The myth or exemplary epic is flattened on the plane of historical descriptions and melted down into the heteroglossia of the flux of life. One finds one's humanity only in this flux in a process of self-discovery which is threatened by the monoglossia of social myths.

Two ways of being modern are evidenced in the two writers' works. In Yeats's case, one is modern by being free in the eternity of presence guaranteed by myth, but this mode of freedom also strengthens the authority of the myth, making it susceptible of becoming social myth as understood by Sorel. In Joyce's case, being modern means living in the just now of experience that has not been defined or prescribed by a grand narrative of myth: freedom *from* myth rather than freedom *through* myth, with all the ensuing dangers of losing subjective unity. There is both grace and violence in the experience of modernism: grace through faith in myth, and violence deriving from that faith, or from the authority granted through that faith; grace in the flux of life that cannot be contained through social myths, and violence deriving from the loss of subjective unity and coherence, or manifested in the dynamism of the heteroglossic celebration of lived experience.

How is the early twentieth-century Irish experience, as reflected in the two authors' work, relevant for today? Is it a representative experience, that is, one that may be usefully explored to define the situation of the subject of action in the contemporary world more generally? For one thing, one cannot easily define the Ireland of Yeats and Joyce as a clearly delineated geo-political and cultural entity in the manner nation-states might be defined. For all its nationalist culture, Ireland remained a cosmopolitan space, its nation unsure of its identity and place in the world of the early twentieth century. This is not so different from the experience of postmodern cultures, the elements of which are now being gathered up from transnational and diasporic spaces, rather than being found in what has been hitherto imagined as the deep well of a strictly national spirit. In Terry Eagleton's words, the Ireland of Joyce and Yeats was, 'from the standpoint of advanced societies [...] a kind of nonplace and nonidentity' which could 'lend itself peculiarly well to a cosmopolitan modernism for which all places and identities are becoming progressively interchangeable' (Eagleton, 1990, p. 35). This cosmopolitan modernism was a manifestation of globalisation. According to Eagleton, Joyce's *Ulysses* reflected global capitalist tendencies in its formal aesthetic:

> The form of *Ulysses* is indeed in one sense an aesthetic resolution of historical contradictions – not least of the conflict between the new international circuits of capitalism, with their correlative cosmopolitan centers of culture in Paris, London, Berlin, and New York, and the older national forma-

> tions or cultural traditions that are being increasingly outmoded. (Eagleton, 1990, p. 35)

However, while the experience of a modern Ulysses may reflect processes of reproduction in the international circuits of capitalism, it may also lead to epiphany, an original and irreproducible experience like that engendered for the religious man by the classical myth of Ulysses, yet an experience by which modern man might profit. Similarly, although Yeats found inspiration in the Irish mythological tradition, the epiphanies he sought are experiences that should redeem the man of capital modernity, rather than representing an ineffectual escape in the past. Is it not the case that we seek today ways in which our identities may be socialised at critical distance from their own commodification?

These reflections suggest some of the ways in which the study of Irish modernism can provide an illustrative test case for developing a theory of social myth for the postmodern world, even though this theory is rooted in modernism. This theory can be developed by examining the potential of the concept of social myth for an analysis of the ways in which literature is an instrument for crafting the subject of action. The main purpose of this book is to examine this potential.

The first six chapters establish the value of the concept of social myth for an analysis of Yeats's and Joyce's political aesthetic, taking in a range of modernist writers and thinkers including Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme, T. S. Eliot, Dora Marsden, Edward Carpenter, Benjamin Tucker, Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, and George Russell. Chapters 7 to 9 expand the analysis of modernist political aesthetics by adding Bakhtin's theorisation of monoglossia and heteroglossia to the methodological framework in order to obtain a more complex and refining analysis tool. The last three chapters apply the previous analyses in theorisations of the role of art in engendering social change.

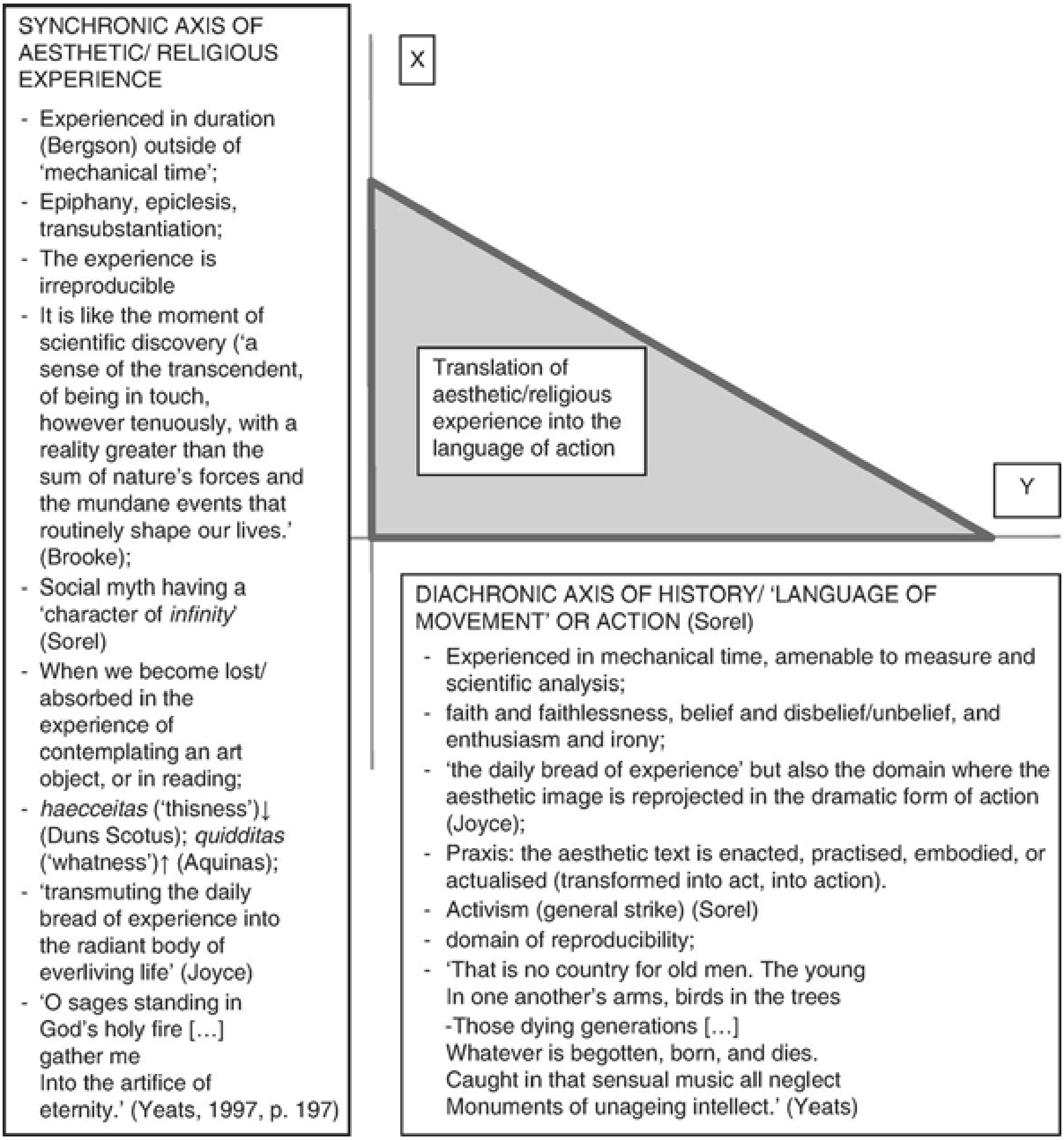
The argument proposed in this book can be summarised as follows, and it is illustrated graphically in the schema offered in Figure 1. The aesthetic experience of an art text takes place in synchronicity, or, in Henri Bergson's terms, in duration, outside of measurable, 'mechanical' time. This synchronic moment of aesthetic experience can be described in Merleau-Ponty's terms as a process of expression which 'brings the meaning [of an art text] into existence as a thing at the very heart of the text, it brings it to life in an organism of words, establishing it in the writer or the reader as a new sense organ, opening a new field or a new dimension to our experience' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 212, brackets mine). It has a religious dimension: aesthetic experience is similar to the experience of epiphany, epiclesis, or transubstantiation. It is a little like the moment of scientific discovery as described, also in relation to religion, by John Hedley Brooke: one experiences 'a sense of the transcendent, of being in touch, however tenuously, with a reality greater than the sum of nature's forces and the mundane events that routinely shape our lives' (Brooke, 2008, p. 4). The synchronic moment of aesthetic experience is also like the experience of social myth as defined by Sorel: it has a 'character of *infinity*' (2004, pp. 45–6, original italics). It is that moment when, absorbed in reading or contemplation of an art object, we forget about the world around us; we are lost to it, and gained for the world set forth in the art text, which absorbs us. Joyce would have said that this is the moment when we experience the *haecceitas* ('thisness') of a thing, when the divine descends into the world, apud Duns Scotus; or the *quidditas* ('whatness') of a thing, when the mundane object 'ascends' to the divine, shining its light in the here and now, apud Aquinas. In Joyce's words, in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience art is 'transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life' (1965, p. 240).

Sorel argues that the experience of social myth, which is like the synchronic aesthetic experience described above, is always translated into the 'language of movement' on the diachronic axis of history (Sorel, 2004, p. 50). Like the language of movement derived from social myth, the language of action derived from synchronic aesthetic experience belongs to the subject of action, the social agent. It is a language measured by mechanical time and amenable to analysis. The epiphany that took place in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience is now translated into attitudes that may have political consequences: faith and faithlessness, belief and disbelief/unbelief, and enthusiasm and irony. This is 'the daily bread of experience' but also the domain where 'the esthetic image' is 'reprojected from the human imagination' in the 'dramatic form' of action (Joyce, 1965, pp. 240, 233). In its translation into the language of action art becomes praxis: the aesthetic text is enacted, practised, embodied, or actualised. Because of that, art can lead to activism for progressive social change, aiming to recreate the world as an art object, or to ideological submission, engendering the reproduction of 'serial' modes of experience and socialisation, with 'art' becoming the cultural counterpart of capitalist means of production. The world of action is, in Yeats's words from 'Sailing to Byzantium', no country for old men:

> That is no country for old men. The young
> In one another's arms, birds in the trees
> – Those dying generations [...]
> Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
> Caught in that sensual music all neglect
> Monuments of unageing intellect.
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 197)

Art as a form of social praxis can transform this mundane world into art text, not by refining nature out of existence through formal aesthetics, but through engendering aesthetically transformative social regeneration. Through art, one finds one's aesthetic self in one's social self.

I will often speak of the joining of the aesthetic self, discovered through aesthetic experience, and social self, which is the self of the social actor, and of the ways in which this is a process that leads to self-transformation and social change. I shall


X
Y
Translation of aesthetic/religious experience into the language of action

SYNCHRONIC AXIS OF AESTHETIC/ RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

- Experienced in duration (Bergson) outside of 'mechanical time';
- Epiphany, epiclesis, transubstantiation;
- The experience is irreproducible
- It is like the moment of scientific discovery ('a sense of the transcendent, of being in touch, however tenuously, with a reality greater than the sum of nature's forces and the mundane events that routinely shape our lives.' (Brooke);
- Social myth having a 'character of *infinity*' (Sorel)
- When we become lost/ absorbed in the experience of contemplating an art object, or in reading;
- *haecceitas* ('thisness')↓ (Duns Scotus); *quidditas* ('whatness')↑ (Aquinas);
- 'transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life' (Joyce)
- 'O sages standing in God's holy fire […] gather me
  Into the artifice of eternity.' (Yeats, 1997, p. 197)

DIACHRONIC AXIS OF HISTORY/ 'LANGUAGE OF MOVEMENT' OR ACTION (Sorel)

- Experienced in mechanical time, amenable to measure and scientific analysis;
- faith and faithlessness, belief and disbelief/unbelief, and enthusiasm and irony;
- 'the daily bread of experience' but also the domain where the aesthetic image is reprojected in the dramatic form of action (Joyce);
- Praxis: the aesthetic text is enacted, practised, embodied, or actualised (transformed into act, into action).
- Activism (general strike) (Sorel)
- domain of reproducibility;
- 'That is no country for old men. The young
  In one another's arms, birds in the trees
  -Those dying generations […]
  Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
  Caught in that sensual music all neglect
  Monuments of unageing intellect.' (Yeats)

Figure 1 Aesthetic experience and the language of action

briefly explain what I mean by this ‘joining’ and transformation, but the reader is warned that a clear understanding of this process might only be gained after reading the entire book. The difficulty in understanding the notion of a joining of aesthetic self and social self, and how this joining is transformative, lies in the fact that the experience of this joining cannot be at present explained by scientific analysis. But every one of us knows what it is. As noted above, this joining takes place in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience, when one becomes lost or absorbed in the world of a book one reads or of a painting one contemplates, and subsequently models on action what s/he has absorbed from that world. The science of bio-aesthetics might eventually explain what exactly happens in material terms. But this is beyond the scope of this book and my qualifications. Nevertheless, one may find useful a quotation from Théodule Ribot’s *Les maladies de la mémoire* (1881):

> it is not enough for impressions to be received, they must become fixed, recorded organically, encrusted; they must become a permanent modification of the brain; it is necessary that the modifications engrained on the cells and nerves, as well as the dynamic relations formed between these elements, remain stable. (Ribot, 1895, p. 156, my translation)[1]

Applying Ribot’s argument to aesthetic experience, one might say that the impressions received from an art text are recorded organically, encrusted on the very core of our material being, and that our subsequent actions are influenced by the dynamic structures thereby formed. Art becomes, as it were, a tool for fashioning and refashioning our social self.

Ribot’s ideas are to an extent confirmed by modern science. I leave to the scientists the task of exploring the frontiers discovered by psychiatry, neuroscience, and bio-aesthetics. I limit my own research to the cultural and philosophical investigation of the relations between aesthetic experience and social action. I hope to discover ways in which aesthetic experience may be seen as a means to reconstruct our selves and our social worlds in progressive, empowering, and self-fulfilling ways.

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1. Yeats's Revolving Gyres

A Metaphorical Language for the Modern Experience of Anarchism, Syndicalism, and Political Aesthetics

I shall begin by outlining a theoretical perspective on the role of art in the production of material reality derived from the anarchist tradition, that may serve as an alternative to Marxist analyses. The anarchist perspective is based on the theorisation of labour as an artisan's work kindred with the creative labour of artists. This kinship prompts the consideration of the view that art is actively implicated in the production of material reality, whereas the Marxist perspective dissociates between the alienated work of the proletariat and its reflection in art in the cultural superstructure. In keeping with the anarchist tradition, I regard art as a means of production of material reality and social subjects.

In the first part of the chapter I examine aspects of the anarchist tradition which suggest a kinship between artistic and non-artistic labour. In the second part I analyse this kinship through using W. B. Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming'. Based on this reading I argue, in the third part of the chapter, that the forces at work in literary narrative shape material relations in a dialectic process through which art and reality recreate each other in unceasing revolution.

The kinship between artistic and non-artistic labour

Modernist literary and anarchist political discourses evince a faith that art should engage the emotions, instincts, feelings, and imagination of readers in order to bring them into shape for action against established authority. Both positions suggest the notion that, metaphorically or even literally speaking, an art text might energise our being for action by conveying in its language a vibration the wavelength of which changes our perception of material reality. For the famous Russian anarchist, Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), the processes of learning and artistic creation should take place in a social system that allows for no central authority, only for fine negotiations of the terms of sociality between oneself and the next man. Only the social group finely attuned is ready for action, and, it is implied, the arts provide a medium for such fine tuning between the individual and the group. In *The Conquest of Bread* (1892), Kropotkin anticipates a social world in which the work of artists 'will be an integral part of a living whole that would not be complete without them, any more than they would be complete without it. [...] Everything that surrounds man, in the street, in the interior and exterior of public monuments, must be of a pure artistic form' (Kropotkin, 1926, pp. 107–8). Consensual social harmony is partly the effect of aesthetic mediation between part and whole, individual and group, in a physical world fully turned into an art text. In 'Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal' (1896), Kropotkin traces developments in astronomy to show how the initial perception of the universe with the Earth at its centre has changed into a perception of the universe as a system of forces that balance each other in an unceasing dynamic of creation and recreation of worlds:

> the center, the origin of force, formerly transferred from the earth to the sun, now turns out to be scattered and disseminated. It is everywhere and nowhere [...] The idea of force governing the world, pre-established law, preconceived harmony, disappears to make room for the harmony that Fourier caught a glimpse of; the one which results from the disorderly and incoherent movements of numberless hosts of matter, each of which goes its own way and all of which hold each in equilibrium. (Kropotkin, 2002, pp. 117–8)

Although Yeats, who met Kropotkin, did not consistently adhere to this paradigm in its relevance for the arts, he did share Kropotkin's hopes that art might achieve attunement of self and other within a shared faith in social and political change. Yeats's letter to the editor of the *United Irishman*, dated 17 October 1903, spells out his political aesthetic thus:

> I would see, in every branch of our National propaganda, young men who would have the sincerity and the precision of those Russian revolutionists that Kropotkin and Stepniak tell us of, men who would never use an argument to convince others which would not convince themselves, who could not make a mob drunk with a passion they could not share, and who would above all seek for fine things for their own sake, and for precise knowledge for its own sake, and not for its momentary use. (Yeats in Kelly and Schuchard, 2003, pp. 448–9)

Yeats's position suggests, somewhat contradictorily, that art serves both individual enlightenment through art for art's sake, and the emancipation of the masses through a shared passion engendered by art, or, rather, that one can only be achieved through the other. As Yeats himself acknowledged in the same letter, these thoughts run through his plays *Where There Is Nothing* (1902), first performed in 1904 by the London Stage Society, and *The King's Threshold* (1904), first performed in Dublin in 1903 by the Irish National Theatre Society. Although Yeats himself grew contemptuous towards *Where There Is Nothing* over the years, and criticised it at length in his autobiography (Yeats, 1938, p. 388), the play found praise in anarchist quarters. The Russian émigré anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940) reviewed *Where There Is Nothing* to conclude that the play 'is of great social significance, deeply revolutionary in the sense that it carries the message of the destruction of every institution – State, Property, and Church – that enslaves humanity. For where there is nothing, there man begins' (Goldman, 1914, p. 260). Indeed, much of the life of the play's protagonist, Paul Ruttledge, is dedicated to enticing the 'mob' to share a passion for life lived against institutional authority and in the embrace of nature, with echoes of the philosophy of H. D. Thoreau (1817–62). But in the end it is the idea of the estranged hero punished by the mob for his progressive ideals which predominates, rather than the idea of harmonious social solidarity which Kropotkin advocated.

In Kropotkin's terms, James Joyce, who read his work and that of Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76), developed an aesthetic of the centre which 'is everywhere and nowhere' in a social world 'which results from the disorderly and incoherent movements of numberless hosts of matter, each of which goes its own way and all of which hold each in equilibrium' (Kropotkin, 2002, pp. 117–8). Thus, while Yeats responded to established authority by seeking to ruin it through a quest for a godly and aesthetic centre situated in a metaphysical otherworld, Joyce responded to it by showing how centres of authority slip and disintegrate in the worldliness of the flux of life in disorderly harmony. However, for both Yeats and Joyce, in its concern with authority, art engenders politics, rather than being subordinated to it. In this, they, like many modernist writers and thinkers, share the ethos of anarchist activism.

For instance, although in his writings Bakunin offered little on the role of aesthetics in social change, he often expressed his political views literarily, the 'I' of his discourse positioned almost as a romantic narrative subject. That is, his activism was governed by an aesthetic. As Andrzej Walicki writes, referring to the Narodnik movement that brought progressive students to the Russian countryside in search of a purer, bucolic, self:

> Of the two factions that took part in the 1873–74 'Go to the people' movement, the Bakuninites were in the majority, representing the 'romantic' side of the movement; they appealed to the *emotions* and *instincts* of the peasants, whereas the Lavrovites (the other faction) wished to *teach* the peasants, to mold their consciousness. (Walicki, 1979, p. 280, original italics)

In the 1830s, Bakunin was a member of the Hegelian circle organised by Nikolai Stankevich (1813–40), taking over its leadership in 1837. There he befriended Vissarion Belinsky (1811–48). Belinsky favoured realism in art, but 'warned against confusing a faithful portrait with a mere copy' and argued that 'the true rendering of reality requires the revelation of the universal in the particular, the portrayal of *typical* phenomena that contain the essence of the infinite variety of life – universality distilled from an apparent chaos of facts.' (Walicki, 1979, p. 127, original italics) According to Walicki:

> Belinsky emphasized that universality in a work of art should not be confused with a 'logical syllogism' or 'schematic abstraction.' This would be transgressing against the nature of art, which he defined as 'thinking in images'. Artistic generalization must obtain its effects through vital, concrete images working directly on the feelings and imagination of the reader, otherwise it is nothing but 'vague rhetoric.' (1979, p. 127)

It is more in this vein that Bakunin and the anarchists envisioned the role of art: yes, in the service of politics, but not merely propaganda or vague rhetoric; rather, art and life create each other in a (Hegelian) way that cannot be but political.

Anarchism and syndicalism as modes of aesthetic self-creation are transnational phenomena, formed from literary and political experiments and activism across the globe. For instance, in Australia, too, aesthetics was seen as driving political and social change in socialist and anarchist circles, as Bruce Scates points out:

> a number of literary devices served to popularise political thought [...] radical writers appropriated work with which the reader was already familiar. Reading George, Gronlund or Kropotkin, one encountered the prose of Carlyle, the poetry of Shelley, the science of Darwin, landmarks which led the reader through new and often challenging terrain. (Scates, 1997, p. 68)

The prominent Australian anarchist J. A. Andrews (1865–1903) 'used utopian literature to visualise a new society' (Scates, 1997, p. 120). An active member of the Melbourne Anarchist Club founded in 1886, Andrews wrote a novel entitled *The Triumph of Freedom* (1892) which promotes the idea that 'only anarchism and a return to life on the land' can save the people from oppression by Government and plutocracy (Scates, 1997, p. 121). Andrews's novel chimes with Yeats's play *Where There Is Nothing* with both carrying echoes of Thoreau's and Kropotkin's philosophies. Andrews was a cofounder of an Isis Lodge in Sidney in 1897, attempting to affiliate it with Helena Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. In 1890 an Irish National League was formed at Godwood, Australia, its founder 'likening the open bush of South Australia to crowded, land-locked Ireland' (Scates, 1997, p. 24). A fellow member of Andrews at the Melbourne Anarchist Club, John William Fleming (1863–1950), invited Emma Goldman to tour Australia in 1907. Goldman reviewed Yeats's play *Where There Is Nothing* in 1914. In Australia, David Andrade (1859–1928), founder of the Melbourne Anarchist Club, published the periodical *Honesty* (1887–1889) modelled on Benjamin Tucker's *Liberty* (August 1881–April 1908). Joyce was inspired by Tucker's political philosophy. The first page of *Liberty* of 28 January 1888 records a donation made in support of its publication and the Proudhon Library by the Peter O'Neil Crowley branch of the Irish National Emergency Association. Tucker reported Irish land agitation in *Liberty*, and was engaged in debates in Dora Marsden's *Egoist*, where Joyce was published. Wyndham Lewis and T. E. Hulme were involved in the *Egoist* circles and both analysed Sorel's work in their writing. In India, the anarcho-syndicalist Bhagat Singh (1907–1931) read Bakunin extensively and in 1928 wrote approvingly of anarchism in *Kirti*, the monthly magazine of the Workers' and Peasants' Party (Grewal, 2007, p. 54). The works of these writers and activists show a marked interest in the idea that art and life create each other, and I shall comment on how this interest is developed in aspects of their poetics and philosophies in due course.

Art and life in Yeats's 'The Second Coming'

Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming' provides the elements of a figurative idiom which we may use to illustrate the proposition that art and life create each other. This poem, written in January 1919, first published in the *Dial* (November 1920) and the *Nation* (6 November 1920), and reprinted in the 1921 volume of poetry, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (Jeffares, 1984, p. 201, Ross, 2009, p. 222), offers one of the most expressive renderings of the sense of change which permeated the modernist worldview, while also suggesting tropes and figures for a discussion of the dynamic relations between art and politics.

As Norman Jeffares points out, Yeats annotated the poem in terms of a story which figures Michael Robartes sharing with Owen Aherne (two fictional characters, but perhaps not quite so to Yeats), in Yeats's own words, 'several mathematical diagrams from the *Speculum* [by Gyraldus, which Robartes found among the Judwalis in Arabia, a fictional tribe of diagrammatists], squares and spheres, cones made up of revolving gyres intersecting each other at various angles'. Robartes conveys the belief of the Judwalis that the living mind has a 'fundamental mathematical movement', the trajectory of which reveals the 'expression of the mind's desire' thus freeing the soul from material bondage. This trajectory is represented in a figure 'frequently drawn as a double cone, the narrow end of each cone being in the centre of the broad end of the other' (Yeats in Jeffares, 1984, pp. 201–2, brackets mine). The figure reveals how:

> the human soul is always moving outward into the objective world or inward into the self; & this movement is double because the human soul would not be conscious were it not suspended between contraries, the greater the contrast the more intense the consciousness. (Yeats in Jeffares, 1984, p. 202)

Thus, on the one hand, for Yeats, the two cones represent contrary tendencies within the self. On the other hand, as Yeats put it, 'this figure is true also of history, for the end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to that of its greatest contraction'. At the moment Yeats was writing he perceived that the life gyre was sweeping outward, having almost reached its greatest expansion: 'all our scientific, democratic, fact-accumulating heterogeneous civilisation belongs to the outward gyre and prepares not the continuance of itself, but the revelation as in a lightning flash, [...] of the civilisation that must slowly take its place' (Yeats in Jeffares, 1984, p. 211). Critics have noted that Yeats's fear of the forthcoming disintegration of human civilisation was brought ashore by 'the blood-dimmed tide' (Yeats, 1997, p. 189) of historical events: 'the grim violence of Easter, 1916, and the attendant civil disorder' (Unterecker, 1996, p. 158); 'the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk of 3 March 1918, which envisaged control of semi-autonomous Baltic states and the Ukraine by postwar Germany'; 'January 1919 [...] was the month in which the Spartakist Uprising was put down with much blood in Germany; civil war raged in Russia with the Franco-British Expeditionary Force enforcing a coastal blockade'; on 21 January 1919 'two members of the Royal Irish Constabulary were murdered in County Tipperary by a group of Volunteers', an event which 'came to be seen as the first blow struck in the guerrilla War of Independence'; and the subsequent retaliatory 'atrocities of the Black and Tans' (Brown, 2001, pp. 270–1). Such frightening falling apart of established authority, mere anarchy loosed upon the world, inspired in Yeats the apocalyptic vision of the beast which struggles to become born in the violence of the world's remaking. But this violence is a whirl of contrary tendencies: even though destructive it is also darkly creative. As Bakunin would have it in 'The Reaction in Germany' (1842), 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!' (1972, p. 57). The revolving gyres unravel the world at the same time as they weave a new one: a terrible beauty is born in which both grace and violence are manifested.

Yeats's 'The Second Coming' is of course but one example, a most expressive one, of the perception of contrary tendencies within the modern consciousness, a consciousness in which grace and violence set each other in motion even as they revolve in opposite directions. Another expression of this dynamic can be found in Georges Sorel's work. Taking cue from 'a single clause in *Reflections on Violence*' (1906) in which 'Sorel says that syndicalism is based on "corporate exclusiveness, which resembles the local or racial spirit"', Michael Tratner argues that literary modernism can be described along two lines of 'national-ism' and 'pluralism' respectively. The pluralists emphasised the idea of the local, that is, of small groups without elites, whereas nationalists emphasised the idea of racial unity, advocating in favour of elites whose role is to provide the myths that unite the masses. According to Tratner, in so far as literary narratives serve as means to negotiate particular social changes, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf 'tried to show that one can have enthusiasm, the joys of group unity, and even myths, without elites, without "common blood", and without violence' whereas T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats 'tried to show that one needs elites and blood ties to have the enthusiasm of group unity, and Yeats defended the necessity of violence' (Tratner, 1995, pp. 38–41). He then goes on to argue that, nevertheless, there is violence in the texts of Joyce and Woolf as they 'recognized the power of violence to express and satisfy the unconscious desires for liberation created by social oppression' (Tratner, 1995, p. 41). In this context Tratner argues that Sorel defined 'the crowd mind as the superior and deeper mind and the conscious personality as a dull complex of habits', with violence and the general strike understood as 'in essence disruptions that cause an intense need for something to happen with no sense of what that something will be' (Tratner, 1995, p. 35). But this is clearly not the case with Sorel. Taking in the events of early Christianity, the Reformation, the French Revolution, and nineteenth-century unification of Italy, Sorel finds that although the myths and visions which animated the faithful and the revolutionary were not realised exactly 'to the letter', that is, exactly as envisioned, whatever has been achieved (in fact a great deal) would not have come to pass had those myths and visions not driven the subject to action (Sorel, 2004, pp. 125–6). It is a strength of Sorel's theory that it accommodates both vision and the possibility of practical results:

> And yet without leaving the present, without reasoning about this future, which seems forever condemned to escape our reason, we should be unable to act at all. Experience shows that the *framing of a future, in some indeterminate time*, may, when it is done in a certain way, be very effective [...] even supposing the revolutionaries to have been wholly and entirely deluded in setting up this imaginary picture of the general strike, this picture may yet have been, in the course of the preparation for the Revolution, a great element of strength, if it has embodied all the aspirations of Socialism, and if it has given to the whole body of Revolutionary thought a precision and a rigidity which no other method of thought could have given. (Sorel, 2004, pp. 124–7, original italics)

It is then not so much the idea of disrupting the economy that matters to Sorel, as the idea of a narrative capable of accommodating those images which best represent the aspirations of social agents in a way that compels a joining of the fictional narrative subject and the subject of action. One finds that Sorel's picture of the general strike has features in common with Yeats's apocalyptic vision of the approaching of a new age, even though, it seems, Yeats feared what Sorel welcomed. While both visions of the future to come are seemingly steeped in violence, this is not merely the violence of force, but also the violence of recreation. Yeats fears the possibility of 'new creation gone wrong', but not the violence of creation. Sorel values the violent break with retrogressive patterns of social action, produced through the rejection of Utopias and consent to participate in the unanalysable unity of vision in which narrative subject and the subject of action inhabit each other, but not destructive violence or mere anarchy loosed upon the world.

Sorel's position regarding the general strike as social myth expresses a movement toward unity at the levels of history and the self which in terms of Yeats's figure of the gyres would correspond to the gyre's movement to its place of greatest contraction.

That would be the place of becoming the subject of a myth expressed in an imaginary picture (of the general strike) which embodies all the aspirations of a social group (the Socialists) giving precision and rigidity, or, rather, coherence and strength, to philosophical and political thought on social change. At the same time, this movement toward unity in the myth involves a movement toward disintegration in the sense that it expresses a complete break away from the tenets of the age which passes. This chasm which widens the opposition between the faithful and the faithless makes visible the contradictions of the established social world, thus fragmenting it and bringing it to a point which in Yeats's figure would be that of a gyre's greatest expansion.

In Yeats's vision of the gyres as figurative of contrary movements within the self, the widening gyre represents a movement toward the social self, toward the objectification of the self as social agent. The tightening gyre represents a movement of withdrawal from the social to a life refined out of existence, a life in which the harmonising rule is that of an aesthetic, enduring eternally, even though such a total withdrawal means the death of the self as social subject. If such a transformation through art should be achieved it would be a kind of transubstantiation of the subject from life in the material world to life in the metaphysical world, of myth perhaps, of aesthetic essences certainly. Yet while living in the material world the subject is torn between the two contrary tendencies, between life as subject of social action, and life as subject of art or myth. For Yeats, the subject of social action and the subject of myth meet in a tense embrace in the dance of life: aesthetics governs the life of the subject of action by shaping it as the subject of myth, as a narrative subject, manifested in the social agent; life is the raw material out of which the subject of action struggles to be born as the subject of art.

Narrative language and the language of action

Reading Sorel's theory of social change through Yeats's vision of the gyres leads us to envision the subject of the myth of the general strike as one who withdraws from the social life as known through the 'dull' discourses of the academic, political, and syndicalist establishments. S/he withdraws into myth, and the language of myth is kindred with the language of art for Sorel, as it is for Yeats. To the widening gyre of history which in Yeats also represents the coming of the subject to the social world, yet one in ruins, corresponds in Sorelian thinking a social world whose unity has been broken, precisely through the withdrawal of the subject in myth, in a contrary movement which sets in motion the very mechanisms that break the cast of norm. The worker who finds himself in the identity of one able to participate in the general strike is full of poetic fervour, and it is precisely because his/her identity is changed through the power of poetical aesthetics, that s/he can bring about the break with existing social patterns; thus Sorel's workers bring themselves to action in the way of myth, living life as art, yet on the plane of material reality.

A similar view of the life of the subject of action in art, and the life of art in the subject of action, was developed by another artist who came to grips with the twinned violence and grace of subjective recreation of world and self through art: Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957). Rod Mengham has explored 'the possibility that Sorel's emphatic recommendations of violence resonate in the various aspects of Lewis's career as editor, entrepreneur and writer' (Mengham, 1994, p. 33). Indeed, Lewis discussed Sorel's ideas extensively in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), and, as Mengham points out, must have found those ideas 'particularly amenable to the practice of an avant-garde [in] their insistence on the need for splinter groups, social fractions, cadres, cells, small nuclei of enemies of the state' (1994, p. 34) Mengham then notes that:

> The avant-gardes of pre-war London tried to preserve the separate identity of artistic values that a mass culture would only ever endure in adulterated form. Both [Lewis's] Rebel Art Centre and the Vorticist project *Blast* conducted their business in a dissident and apocalyptic register that is wholly compatible with Sorel's articulation of the General Strike as the enabling myth of syndicalist activity. (Mengham, 1994, p. 34)

Especially with Lewis, it can be difficult to distinguish grace from violence. In a Vorticist Universe, 'artists put [...] vitality and delight into this saintliness' (Lewis, 1914b, p. 148) of life recreated aesthetically. As a figurative expression of art, history, and the self, Lewis's vortex chimes with Yeats's gyres. As Miranda Hickman notes, the Irish poet referred to Lewis's geometric idiom in the 1937 version of *A Vision* (Hickman, 2005, p. xv). There are other similarities between Yeats's and Lewis's theories of the self. In light of Lewis's 'The Physics of the Not-Self' (1925), the self can be seen as nature imported into design, that is, into the many social masks evincing the memories and anticipations which form the Past and Future sucked in by the Vortex. But, aloof from history, at the apex of the Vortex where the subject of action becomes one with the subject of art, is the not-self, the truer self which masters nature through aesthetic design. Lewis's notions of self and not-self can be translated in Yeatsean terms in the idea that the realisation of the social self in the widest expansion of the gyre along which moves the soul is doubled by an opposite movement into the abstract self achieved through art, with art sliding into myth in Yeats's case. But in both cases, although the true realisation of the self is outside the social self, one cannot exist without the other, together a dancer who cannot be divided from the dance in Yeatsean perspective, or a Master of Commotion who 'is at his maximum point of energy when stillest', that is, realised through art, in Lewisian terms (Lewis, 1914b, p. 148). For both Yeats and Lewis art is the medium in which the self of the subject of action, lost under social masks, is redeemed as the aesthetic self. However, the aesthetic self cannot live for this world except if it is realised objectively in the subject of action, and, hence, it is not outside history.

Central to a discussion of the role of art in engendering social attitudes, and, thus, creating the premises of a language of action, is the question of the relation between art and attitudes of belief and unbelief. Jean-Michel Rabaté focuses on the leading article by Dora Marsden (1882–1960) in the 1 August 1914 edition of the organ of the British avant-garde, *The Egoist*, to show how Joyce's meditations on belief in *Ulysses* may be seen to apply the philosophy of egoism to art (Rabaté, 2001, pp. 45–6). In that article, Marsden defines belief as always having a sacred aspect, although the authority urging belief is not always religious. That is, when she writes that the social subject cries 'I believe, help thou my unbelief' she suggests that, in an inversion of the meaning of that phrase in Mark 9:24, in the modern age the cry is often addressed not to a god, but to the worldly deliverers of 'sluggish-ness, comfort, whatnot'; the latter urge one's belief in one's image of the self created through material attachments by helping one's unbelief in absolutes, or ideals of a truer self (or a god) (Marsden qtd. in Rabaté, 2001, p. 45). Rabaté shows that when Joyce directly quotes Marsden in *Ulysses* through Stephen's words, he playfully suggests that belief depends on the worldly mechanisms that confer social legitimacy; in a writer's case, for instance, that legitimacy depends on whether he gets published: 'Who helps to believe? *Egomen.*', that is, the editors of *The Egoist* in which Joyce's *Portrait* had been serialised; 'Who to unbelieve? Other chap.', that is, possibly, 'George Roberts, who hesitated to publish *Dubliners* and finally destroyed the sheets in 1912' (Rabaté, 2001, p. 45, *U*, 9: 1078–80).[1] Thus, for Joyce, self-realisation through art is a worldly matter, although, of course, that does not mean that the quest for aesthetic self-realisation is not worth pursuing. It is as if Joyce cultivates unbelief to test whether belief is at all possible. If, for Joyce, the subject is set for unbelief and thus set for participation in social change by contesting authority, while at the same time unbelief is a test for the possibility of belief, for Yeats belief is a matter of faith in the subject of myth, and unbelief in the social mask the energy which drives the quest for unity of the subject of action and the subject of myth. It is the same for Sorel, and, if we replace 'myth' with 'art', for Lewis. In the same terms, one could say that Sorel cultivates belief, summoning the power of myth in the manner of Yeats, but demystifies false belief in the manner of Marsden and Joyce, exposing its promoters as politicians 'helping' one to unbelieve by offering ready-made, ideologically fashioned, identities.

Joyce learned from the American Benjamin Tucker (1854–1939) the ethos of individualist anarchism. According to David Weir:

> It is safe to say that early in Joyce's career the word *ego* was a political rather than psychological term and that the art he practiced, or intended to practice, would be a form of iconoclasm. [...] In taking the anarchist as a partial model for the artist Joyce regarded political and aesthetic liberation as congruent and interdependent, and he looked to Tucker as perhaps the principal exemplar of individualist anarchism. (Weir, 1997, p. 213)

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[1] Subsequent references to the Bodley Head edition of Joyce's *Ulysses* are given in parentheses within the text, indicating chapter and line numbers.

Tucker's journal *Liberty* promoted an ethos of self-ownership partly derived from Stirnerite egoism and partly from the anarchist philosophy of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (McElroy, 2003). In the characteristic manner of individualist anarchism, the philosophy promoted by Tucker affirms both Stirnerite unbelief, which is necessary in a world of false belief that makes the profane seem sacred, and, in Proudhon's manner, the possibility of authentic belief in progressive ideals that motivate social action, a possibility engendered by art for Proudhon. Joyce seems to have been a Stirnerite in promoting an ethos of unbelief, and a Proudhonian in his use of art to effect social change.

In her editorial essay for *The Egoist* of September 1916, analysed by Rabaté (Rabaté, 2001, pp. 30–1), Marsden distinguishes between 'Ego', defined as the world inclusive 'I' (the Ego is the entire world) and 'ego', defined as the world exclusive 'I' (the ego is the self). As Bruce Clarke has shown, Marsden's concept of Ego illustrates an idealist strand of anarchism that can be traced to the mystic anarchism and socialism theorised by the influential thinker and writer Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) in *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* (1889). Carpenter draws on nineteenth-century physics, especially thermodynamics, to argue that ancient man was one with the world, but lost this unity with the advent of 'the cultural technologies of writing and government' (Clarke, 1996, pp. 32–8). This split has caused the gradual dissipation of the vital energy of man, so that civilisation has been falling, as if on the Yeatsean widening gyre, into entropy and disunity. The fleeting and perishable self has lost its ties to the true self embedded divinely in nature, but the unity may be re-established through a spiritual recovery of the awareness that individual man is part of an essential divine Man. This unity of social self and essential self can be achieved in Carpenter's vision through the cultivation of an ultimately aesthetic sublimation of the individual self, the subject of action, into the ideal self, beheld communally by all men. As Clarke shows, quoting Carpenter:

> Carpenter couches this argument in political terms by positing socialism as the mass reunion to result from the sum of individual processes of spiritual disentanglement [from worldly attachments]: 'For the true Self of man consists in his organic relation with the whole body of his fellows [...] The mass-Man must rule in each unit-man, else the unit-man will drop off and die' [...] Carpenter founded his mystic anarchism on the conviction that humanity is essentially one substance in the 'divine Man' to which we will return by the overcoming, the transcendental cancellation, of civilization. (Clarke, 1996, pp. 36–7; Carpenter, 2004, p. 28, brackets mine)

Such longing for sublimation in the 'divine Man' is in my terms a longing for sublimation of the social subject in the aesthetic self. David Weir identifies the roots of the philosophy of egoism in contradictory tendencies in the ideologies of Enlightenment and romanticism: 'a child of both the Enlightenment and romanticism' the egoist is 'both progressive and rebellious' (Weir, 1997, p. 169). Carpenter's philosophy illustrates the origins of the romantic strain of egoist anarchism, that strain which has contributed to conceptualisations of an aesthetic self as the totality of the world by, for instance, Marsden and Eliot, as opposed to the individualistic, iconoclastic self defined by Joyce.

As Weir points out, there is little on the aesthetic self in the writings of the founder of egoism, Max Stirner (1806–1856). For Stirner, 'the true man does not lie in the future, an object of longing, but lies, existent and real, in the present' (Stirner, 1907, p. 436). However, this perspective gains aesthetic significance for modernists like Marsden and the artists associated with *The Egoist*. For Ezra Pound, the self living in the present is like the soul of a statue objectifying in its lines and masses the aesthetic self. In *Instigations* (1920), Pound compared Lewis and Joyce through using a passage from Lewis's *Tarr* (1918) which may serve as a kind of shared poetics. The passage quoted from *Tarr* runs as follows: 'Deadness, in the limited sense in which we use that word, is the first condition of art. The second is absence of *soul*, in the sentimental human sense. The lines and masses of a statue are its soul' (Pound and Fenollosa, 1920, p. 22, original italics). The statue can be seen as a metaphor for the aesthetic self. It is dead in the sense that it shows a self withdrawn from history and the social, but, although in this perspective the statuesque aesthetic self doesn't have a soul, it is soulful in its presentation of 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time', to use Pound's words from 1913 in this context (Pound, 1986, p. 60).

The Imagists' investment in the potency of image can be compared with the emphasis on the same in Sorel's definition of the general strike as social myth: 'the general strike is [...] the *myth* in which Socialism is wholly comprised, *i.e.* a body of images capable of evoking instinctively all the sentiments which correspond to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by Socialism against modern society' (Sorel, 2004, p. 127, original italics). However, since Sorel's faith, like Yeats's, is placed in the elect social group, whereas that of Pound, Lewis, and Joyce is placed in the individual, the comparison is only partly justified. Still, Sorel acknowledged the value of individualistic participation in a social group when he argued that 'the general strike [...] is a most striking manifestation of *individualistic force in the revolted masses*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 241–2, original italics). In this context, Pound, Lewis, and Joyce can be said to use art to develop an individualistic force of revolt in the members of their audiences.

In the posthumously published *Speculations* (1924), T. E. Hulme (1883–1917), who translated Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* and Henri Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903), and who was involved in the circles of *Imagisme*, described Sorel's work through an antithesis between romanticism and classicism. Hulme resorts to a diagram which places romanticism and classicism in antithetical positions, arguing that for the one man is by nature good and, for the other, bad. Hulme then develops the argument that Sorel's work sprang from a classical pessimist root in that man can 'only accomplish anything of value by disciplines, ethical, heroic, or political' (Hulme, 1924, pp. 255–6). Hulme's classicism is of Enlightenment inspiration in its emphasis on the painstaking formal achievement of the self through art. The self gains aesthetic coherence through the dispelling of obscurities created by romanticism. The projection of the self as subject for a metaphysical world can be redeemed for the subject of action only if it serves to discipline him/her. This subjection of the social agent to the aesthetic self yields a template for the life of a subject of action who relishes the violent submission of life to the regimen of an aesthetic that serves social change.

Another classicist in the manner of Hulme, T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) was a perfectionist of form as means to control, as he put it in the famous 1923 essay, '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth', 'the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history' (Eliot, 1986, p.103). Michael North argues that Eliot represented a strand of 'conservatism' within modernism in light of his aspiration for achievement of formal perfection. For North, Eliot's praise for the experimental narratives of Joyce and Lewis indicates his expectation of modern writers 'to imply by aesthetic disorder a resolution that cannot be achieved under present conditions' (North, 1991, p. 102). Eliot, then, welcomes the violence of new creation, born from the dislocation of old patterns, even while he expects that synthetic and transformative resolution of tradition and the new art forms in favour of which he argued in his 1919 essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', first published in *The Egoist*. This makes the subject of action amenable to an aesthetic derived from tradition which enriches the subject's awareness, mediating his/her political states of mind and feeling.

Irish culture in the late-nineteenth and the early-twentieth centuries provides illustrative examples of ways in which mythological traditions mediate political states of mind and feeling for the subject of action: art, myth, and politics slide into each other. George Russell, or A.E. (1867–1935), was a mystic in the manner of Yeats, militating for a free Ireland and a new Irish identity to be fashioned out of Celtic mythology. According to Richard M. Kain and James H. O'Brien, 'like Yeats, A.E. searched for dominant images that governed individuals and nations' (Kain and O'Brien, 1976, p. 55), which is what Sorel sought, too, albeit in a different social and political context. Yet both Russell and Sorel saw myth as means to harmonise the social collective, with Russell involved in the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, which he joined in 1897, and, as editor of the *Irish Homestead* between 1905 and 1923, 'exercising an important role in the revolutionary movement as he argued for a co-operative, a self-help society to emerge in the aftermath of independence' (Allen, 2009, p. 12). As George Harper's study of the making of *A Vision* shows (Harper, 1987, pp. 95–7), in the terms of Yeats's philosophical system Russell was, paradoxically, both an 'objective' man, that is, one who lives under a social mask, in Yeats's words (Yeats in Harper, 1987, p. 94) 'born as it seems to the arrogance of belief', and a 'subjective' man – a visionary whose aesthetic self is outside the social, but whose freedom can only be manifested socially once he adopts a social mask. Thus, for Yeats, although Russell was a practical organiser, his actions were an expression of the aesthetic self: the language of art, emphatically of myth, is translated into the language of action in a process not unlike that envisioned by Sorel for the subject of social myth, whose convictions are derived from the myth, but become expressed 'in the language of movement' (Sorel, 2004, p. 50). Political and aesthetic experience are mutually constitutive in the expression of oneself as social agent and art is a principal means to recreate social agents and, implicitly, political agency.

In Sorelian perspective, the power of myth to urge belief, or, on the contrary, to provoke dissent, makes it a valuable concept in the study of the relation between art and life, especially since myth can take many forms: it can be expressed in narrative form, in the language of action engendered by faith, in ideology, and, especially in Ireland, in politics and activism for social, nationalist, and political change. In the context of Irish modernism, myth is the pivotal concept in the triad art, myth, and social change. As I shall argue throughout this book, the study of the workings of myth in relation to social myth in that context should allow us to discover the value of Sorel's concept not only for theories of Irish culture, but for a broader theory of the role of art in social change. Hence the focus in the next chapter is on myth.

But before moving on, let us note that a defining attitude of modernist poetics is also a defining attitude of anarchist politics and philosophies: for both, art and life recreate each other in a process of breaking new ontological ground. In their idealist dimension and rootedness in the social and material experience of the workshop, anarchism and syndicalism participate in both art and politics. The worker's craft and the artist's craft are alike when the worker learns to see his labour as an art, or when the artist sees the power of his art to craft the minds and bodies of social agents. The representational force of modernist art is for the subject of action, not just art for art's sake. For both anarchism and modernist literature, the aesthetic subject is crafted as the kernel of the subject of action, its world overtaking the social world and transforming it in its sweep. Modern literary narrative and the anarchist and syndicalist politics of change share the intertwined forces of grace and violence which set each other in motion. Yeats's representation of the interpenetrating gyres shall provide, as visual metaphor, an imaginative complement to the critical language exploring these forces.

2. Social Myth, Material Reality, and the Aesthetico-Ideological Functions of Art

In his analysis of the modern construction of myth, Andrew Von Hendy argues that beginning with the eighteenth century:

> The romantic inventors of 'myth', theorists and poets alike, consciously construct it as a privileged site in the modern agon between belief and disbelief. And the history of the new concept remains during the nineteenth century largely the record of an intensifying struggle between what Schlegel called 'enthusiasm' and 'irony'. On one hand, the notion of 'myth' as vehicle of access to transcendence becomes increasingly reified in middleclass culture, particularly in literary circles. On the other, this success generates the first major counterattacks, the critiques that culminate in Marx and Nietzsche. (Von Hendy, 2002, p. 49)

The key terms for my arguments in this book are 'belief' and 'disbelief'/'unbelief', and 'enthusiasm' and 'irony'. My main interest is to see how these opposite attitudes are engendered by anarchist and syndicalist ideas, and by the political aesthetics of modernist writers which reflect these ideas, especially W. B. Yeats and James Joyce.

Thus, for instance, Yeats's attitude to myth can be defined in relation to belief and enthusiasm, whereas Joyce's can be described in relation to disbelief and irony. One leads to faith, the other to faithlessness. Enthusiasm for, and belief in, otherworldly essences, as opposed to belief foisted upon social subjects by worldly attachments, accompany the making of the aesthetic self in Yeats's case. With Joyce, disbelief and irony foment anarchic, heteroglossic destruction of mythologising discourses, but this violence, too, forges in the ambers of the world burned out in aesthetic creation the new conscience of an aesthetic self. These attitudes to myth reflect how the romantic view of myth as 'vehicle of access to transcendence' sets in motion a movement of reaction against myth as ideology, with some kind of resolution achieved in the 'view of myth as pragmatically necessary fiction' which Von Hendy terms as 'constitutive' (2002, p. 49). According to Von Hendy: 'This conception of myth differs from its romantic parent and agrees with its ideological sibling in assuming that such fictions are without transcendental sanction. But it differs from its sibling in viewing neutrally, or even positively, their necessary fictivity' (Von Hendy, 2002, pp. 304–5). While Von Hendy's distinctions between the ideological, constitutive, and ontological functions of myth are clearly useful for the historical analysis of the concept, it is worth emphasising that the three functions are often interrelated in the synchronic cultural manifestation of myth. If we take the ideological, constitutive, and ontological functions of myth to cover most of the spectrum of its subjective operations, one of these functions will be dominant in particular instantiations of the concept in modern literary, philosophical, or political discourse.

The notion of social myth developed by Georges Sorel captures in an exemplary fashion the contrary yet interconditioning movements in modernism toward unity, belief, faith, and enthusiasm on the one hand, and anarchy, disbelief, faithlessness, and irony, on the other. In Sorel's definition, a social myth is expressed when one pictures one's 'coming action' in 'groups of images' which 'must be taken as a whole [by the cultural critic], as historical forces' and which cannot be analysed 'in the way that we analyse a thing into its elements' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 41–2, brackets mine). For Sorel, those who picture to themselves their coming action in the language of myth are always 'men who are participating in a great social movement' (Sorel, 2004, p. 41). Sorel's examples of social myths that govern these men's actions include myths 'constructed by primitive Christianity, by the Reformation, by the [French] Revolution and by the followers of Mazzini', but the greatest faith is invested in the general strike as means to break the controlling power of the state and thus enable social change (Sorel, 2004, p. 42).

Sorel did not regard myth as a form of ideology. Rather, a social myth counteracts ideological constructs through the destruction of the illusions engendered by the latter. Disbelief and irony fuel one another in Sorel's discourse on ideology, which he regards as a form of Utopia. In *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel argues that 'liberal political economy is one of the best examples of Utopia that could be given. A state of society was imagined [...] which would exist under the law of the fullest competition; it is recognised today that this kind of ideal society would be as difficult to realise as that of Plato' (Sorel, 2004, p. 50). One's social identity should be born from creative consciousness rather than becoming itself a serial product of the means of production enabled through the introduction of 'something of this ideal of commercial liberty into industrial legislation' (Sorel, 2004, p. 51). The material conditions created by such legislation enable both capitalist and socialist ideologues to continue to fabricate Utopias presenting competing versions of 'a deceptive mirage of the future to the people' (Sorel, 2004, p. 128).

Mikhail Bakunin offers a similar perspective in *God and the State*, translated from the French 1882 edition and published for the first time in English by Benjamin Tucker in 1883. Although for Bakunin myth is a form of utopian ideology, his understanding of the social value of art resembles Sorel's understanding of social myth. For Bakunin, the art of the Hegelian idealists is based on 'false abstraction' created through the repudiation of life in the material world as 'vile matter' (Bakunin, 2008, pp. 12–13). In Sorel's terms, such art fosters Utopias. True art, on the other hand:

> in a certain sense individualizes the types and situations which it conceives; by means of the individualities without flesh and bone, and consequently permanent and immortal, which it has the power to create, it recalls to our minds the living, real individualities which appear and disappear under our eyes. Art, then, is as it were the return of abstraction to life [...]. (Bakunin, 2008, p. 57)

For Bakunin, art adapts aesthetic abstractions to express the life, and life-force, of the individual, which is what social myth does in Sorel's view. Furthermore, Bakunin's reference to individualised types invokes both the autonomy of the subject who finds through art his 'living, real' individuality and a shared set of social and material conditions that produce collective identity. The emphasis on the individual and the process of individualisation of a shared socio-cultural worldview in defining the value of art brings Bakunin close to Sorel in their attack on ideology as spell-binding Utopia that imprisons the social subject. True art adapts culture to express individuality. Ideology merely reproduces set types, constructing the individual as a conformist who serves capitalist culture, a culture which reflects in its subjective operations the objective capitalist processes of mechanical reproduction.

This emphasis on individuality and opposition aligns the ethos of anarchism with the ethos of the artistic avant-garde. Wyndham Lewis, who discussed extensively Sorel's work in *The Art of Being Ruled* (1926), adopted and transformed Sorel's call for wresting an autonomous space of individualistic faith from the sterile, mechanised social forms produced by capitalism. But for Lewis the opposition is not so much between social groups as between the self and the not-self as constituents of subjectivity. According to Rod Mengham, 'Lewis's schedule for the divergence of the self [the social being] from the not-self [the aesthetic self] [...] involves a degree of violence between the constituents of the subject [...] which is a kind of internalisation of the violence among social groups that Sorel conceives of as the condition of moral and political integrity.' (Mengham, 1994, p. 42, brackets mine) Subjectivising social struggle, Lewis valued space over time, as Morag Shiach argued (Shiach, 2004, pp. 236–7). That is, in my terms, Lewis's priority was the formal achievement of the statuesque aesthetic self, whereas Sorel valued the dynamism of the aesthetic self in giving life-force to the social subject. On a subliminal level, however, the two positions are not irreconcilable: the statuesque aesthetic object, if it achieves formal perfection, exists outside time and thus in the infinity of a moment not unlike the moment of faith experienced by Sorel's subject of social myth.

In the same perspective, Ezra Pound and the Imagists envisioned the aesthetic self as being in tune with the world of the object caught in its image, a transfiguration of the object that recalls Joyce's epiphanies in which the craft of the artist re-produces a framed segment of space, thus saving it from serial reproduction in a mind paralysed by ideology. The common ground shared by the Imagists and Sorel is defined by T. E. Hulme, who reconciled the intensity of time and the intensity of space, and, thus, the dual subjective and objective character of the aesthetic self. For Hulme, the human body as site of consciousness is ‘changing and limited’, but art (Hulme illustrates with examples from Lewis’s work) can turn the organic into ‘something unlimited and necessary’ (Hulme, 1924, p. 106). That something is an abstraction of the represented object, but not a copy. It is the template which encapsulates its dynamics, in the same way a machine is the expression of forces at work, rather than merely a tool. The artistic object obtained through aesthetic abstraction defines the intensity of space, but it is available only through the experience of the intensity of time (or Henri Bergson’s ‘duration’). For Sorel, too, the self of the subject of myth is ‘something unlimited and necessary’: myth recreates the social subject, ‘changing and limited’ by mechanical time, as an art ‘object’. Life is the raw material for art as it is for ideology, but for Sorel the self fashioned through ideologies or Utopias is in relation to the aesthetic self what the serial cheap and unenlightening copy is to the unique original.

For Sorel ‘art is an anticipation of the kind of work that ought to be carried on in a highly productive state of society’ (2004, p. 54). Sorel here understands ‘productive’ as creative in the manner in which a craftsman’s art is when yielding a unique object. Sorel was influenced by the work of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who, as David Weir points out, ‘extends the idea of art to include any type of “human practice” (“la pratique humaine”) that contributes to “the progress of civilization”’ (Weir, 1997, p. 37, Proudhon, 1850, p. 362).[1] Similarly, Sorel argues that one finds in art ‘analogies which make it easier for us to understand what the qualities of the workers of the future would be’ (Sorel, 2004, pp. 54–5). We may look to artistic representations for analogies through which to define and anticipate, being already in a state of high productivity and creativity as we do so, a reality as yet of the future, but which begins to take shape through our activity of definition and anticipation. One actively ‘produces’ the future through aesthetic labour: the worker is an artist and every artist is a worker. The language of art, kindred with the language of myth, seeps into the language of action. In his 1917 review of Hulme’s translation of *Reflections on Violence*, T. S. Eliot claimed that the ideas Sorel discusses and the feelings he attributes to the workers ‘never occur to the mind of the proletariat’ (Eliot, 1917, p. 478). In fact, Sorel’s perspective implies that the notion of worker should be understood in a very broad sense, as referring to one who labours through art to produce social reality in the intensity of both time and space.

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[1] As Proudhon put it in *Système de contradictions economique* (1846), everything a man does is art, so that work and artistic creation become one process of transubstantiation of the material world into art; life, and the material world, are the raw material of artistic ‘production’: ‘L’art, c’est-à-dire la recherche du beau, la perfection du vrai, dans sa personne, dans sa femme et ses enfants, dans ses idées, ses discourse, ses actions, ses produits: telle est la dernière évolution du travailleur, la phase destinèe á fermer glorieusement la cercle de la nature. L’*Esthétique*, et au-dessus de l’esthétique la *Morale*, voilà la clef de voûte de l’édifice économique. L’ensemble de la pratique humaine, le progrès de la civilisation, les tendances de la société, témoignent de cette loi. Tout ce que fait l’homme, tout ce qu’il aime et qu’il hait, tout ce qui l’affecte et l’intéresse, devient pour lui matière d’art. Il le compose, le polit, l’harmonie, jusqu’à ce que par le prestige du travail, il en ait fait, pour ainsi dire, disparaître la matière.’ (Proudhon, 1850, p. 362, original italics).

Art that does not contribute to the recreation of reality in this way is for Sorel sterile, even when produced by professed anarchists and socialists: ‘the most eloquent dissertations on revolt could produce nothing’ and ‘literature cannot change the course of history’ unless ‘art could renew itself by a more intimate contact with craftsmen’ (Sorel, 2004, pp. 54–5). This view of labour through artistic modes of production, that creates the future materially, implies a concept of art as a form of action through which one acts on oneself and on the world, and entices us to look for manifestations of the life of fictional subjects (the subjects of art and myth) in the subject of action (social agents).

There are remarkable similarities between Sorel’s view of social myth as a performative mode of art and avant-garde theatre based on myth. The latter, as Christopher Innes put it, ‘is characterised by the merging of audience and action, by a rejection of language or verbal logic as a primary means of communication’ (Innes, 1981, p. 7). Similarly, Sorel’s social myth ‘is, at bottom, identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement’ (Sorel, 2004, p. 50). However, for Innes, the rejection of language or verbal logic implies a substitution of ‘visual symbols and sound patterns for verbal communication’ as avant-garde plays ‘rely on extreme audience participation in an attempt to evoke subliminal responses and tap the subconscious’ (Innes, 1981, p. 5). His assessment could be compared with an assessment of the performative dimension of social myth only if we replace ‘subliminal responses’ and the ‘subconscious’ with the ‘inner life lived in duration’, a concept developed by Bergson which Sorel used in defining social myth. Nevertheless, the avant-garde primitivism analysed by Innes and Sorel’s social myths share an interest in myth as the medium through which one becomes subject in a language of action, as opposed to language as system of verbal logic that underlies narrative. However, as it is also the case with much avant-garde theatre, narrative is not so much rejected as it is translated into the language of action. Narrative subject, performing actor, and social agent are fused in the performance of the myth. For Sorel, this fusion releases the energy required for social change, engendering a kind of creative enthusiasm and belief that is very much like the experience of artists in moments of intense productivity.

As Innes points out, Yeats used avant-garde techniques to explore myth in his later plays, although he aimed to establish the aesthetic timelessness of the self, rather than seeking the liberation of the irrational energies of the subconscious (Innes, 1981, p. 7). The aesthetic invocation of myth as a domain wrested from the mundane is a feature these plays share with Sorel’s social myth, with the very important corollary that the subject of social myth, while rejecting life lived in mechanical time, aims to transform the life of the self in the material world, rather than to isolate the self from it. One finds, however, a great deal of common elements in the ethos of Yeats’s plays and Sorel’s social myths, both of which aim for a transformation of the subject of action through its aesthetic reconstitution as subject of myth.

According to Michael McAteer, Yeats was inspired by Henrik Ibsen's plays *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, and *An Enemy of the People*, which offered 'a model of revolutionary individualism' and *Peer Gynt* and *The Vikings at Helgeland*, which offered a model of 'revolutionary collectivism' and 'sought to harness these twin energies to Maeterlinckian Symbolism and release them on stage through occult representations of Irish mythology' (McAteer, 2010, p. 68). Since social myth in Sorel's view is derived from grand epics which inspire revolutionary armies to fight for the glory of their nations or faith (Sorel's examples include the Napoleonic wars, the French Revolution, and early Christians defending against persecution), Yeats's myth, derived from the Irish mythology with its traditions of heroism, might be seen as an example of social myth for Ireland. But not solely on account of its root in ancient heroic myth. Both Yeats and Sorel attempted to integrate myth with working-class traditions of cultural and social organisation, which shows that both envisioned the performativity of myth not only as a subjective, but also as a social, process. That is, the experience of myth is not only aesthetic, individualistic, and self-enlightening, but also socially transformative, engaging group consciousness. As McAteer points out, in 1903 Yeats:

> proposed a special free performance of the most popular plays of the Irish Literary Theatre, inviting members of the Dublin Working Men's organisation. Yeats had in mind here the cultivation of a People's Theatre modelled along the lines of Bruno Wille's 1890 *Die Freie Volksbühne* in Berlin, a theatre for the working classes. In the same month that he attended [Ellen] Terry's production of *The Vikings of Helgeland* [in April 1903 at the Imperial Theatre], the string band of the Workmen's Club played a selection of Irish airs at St Teresa's Hall during the interval between the performances of George Russell's version of *Deirdre* and Yeats/Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. (McAteer, 2010, p. 68, brackets mine)

The common elements shared by Yeats's and Sorel's visions of myth are associated with their interest in using art to recreate one's social identity. Both envisioned this transformative process to be based on myth as means to engage social actors by enticing them to discover the measure of their aesthetic self. While this process of engagement is seen as an individual process (one discovers oneself anew in Maeterlinckian fashion for Yeats, and social myth is an expression of individualistic force in the revolted masses for Sorel), it is at the same time a process that brings the individual to the collective, a notion also shared by Peter Kropotkin, whose writing inspired Yeats's *Where There Is Nothing* and *The King's Threshold*.

For Sorel, as for Proudhon, art and work were indissolubly connected and explicitly linked to economics. Analysing Ernest Renan's question of 'what was it that moved the heroes of great wars' and his answer, proposed in *Histoire du people d'Israël* (1887–1893), that it was the sentiment of participating in the grand epic of a national narrative, Sorel asks whether there can exist 'an economic epic capable of stimulating the enthusiasm of the workers' (Sorel, 2004, p. 247). Sorel's argument, taking into account early twentieth-century socio-economic contexts, is that only 'the idea of the general strike (constantly rejuvenated by the feelings aroused by proletarian violence) produces an entirely epic state of mind, and at the same time bends all the energies of the mind to that condition necessary to the realisation of a workshop carried on by free men, eagerly seeking the betterment of the industry' (Sorel, 2004, p. 248). What interests us here is the possibility of comparing Sorel's concept of 'epic state of mind' with the epic national feeling sought by Yeats, and the ways in which the rendering of epic states of mind in art engenders the cohesion of social groups.

In the terms of Edward Carpenter's philosophy developed in *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, both Yeats and Sorel seem to find a sense of healing and wholeness in the experience of faith engendered by myth. Carpenter discusses the notion of health, which he finds to be derived from the perception of wholeness. He concludes that:

> the conception of Disease, physical or mental, in society or in the individual, [...] evidently means [...] *loss of unity* [...] man, to be really healthy, must be a unit, an entirety – his more external and momentary self standing in some kind of filial relation to his more universal and incorruptible part – so that not only the remotest and outermost regions of the body, and all the assimilative, secretive, and other processes belonging thereto, but even the thoughts and passions of the mind itself, stand in direct and clear relationship to it, the final and absolute transparency of the mortal creature. And thus this divinity in each creature, being that which constitutes it and causes it to cohere together, was conceived of as that creature's saviour, healer – healer of wounds of body and wounds of heart – the Man within the man, whom it was not only possible to know, but whom to know and be united with was the alone salvation. (Carpenter, 2004, pp. 11–14, original italics)

In Carpenter's terms, Yeats's perception of disunity and anarchy expressed in 'The Second Coming' might be seen as having been caused by the loss of unity of social self and inner, divine self, which the self is now struggling to rediscover by finding itself in the anti-self, coming through those aesthetic incarnations of the self and avatars of the divine Man, on its path to their final meeting. Similarly, the subject of Sorel's social myth finds 'the Man within the man' for himself, thus saved and healed in the knowledge and unity of the social group, from the afflictions brought on by capitalism, not least important of which is, as Carpenter put it, 'the growth of Wealth [...] and with it the conception of Private Property' which 'destroyed the ancient system of society based upon the *gens*, that is, a society of equals founded upon blood-relationship' (Carpenter, 2004, p. 29). Both Yeats and Sorel promoted the idea of the heroic elite of artists, one emphasising the importance of national art, the other the idea of workers-artists or artisans, united in common faith on a quest for a new social realm. For Yeats, such enthusiasm, belief, and faith lead one on the tightening gyre to the place of the aesthetic self, a place not unlike that in which the Sorelian subject of social myth is born; unbelief and faithlessness are character-istic of the ideologically shaped subject, the unenlightened labourer or artist caught up in the net of worldly attachments, ideology a means of production of subjects which works in the same mechanical ways that yield serial copies of objects in the vast halls of capitalist production.

James Joyce also saw ideology as means of 'mass-production' of social subjects, but, especially as regards Irish nationalism, was attentive to the root of ideology in myth. The classic example is the Citizen in section 12 ('Cyclops') of *Ulysses*. Mark Osteen argues that the Citizen:

> lives inside a national myth of the innocent and exploited Irish, a myth too strong to dislodge [...] alternately cursing whatever he dislikes and sentimentally inflating all things Irish. Like Nameless's, the Citizen's discourse represents a spurious collectivity based on an antagonistic exclusion of all voices but his own. (Osteen, 1995, p. 259)

Osteen argues that the attitude of the Citizen who blames England for Ireland's woes partly reflects some of the public response to the worsening economic conditions of the country, characterised by high unemployment and emigration. The Citizen is representative of those who blamed England for draining Ireland of natural resources. However, maintaining this consolatory view by consenting to signify one's social identity through nationalist discourse which used elements of Irish mythology, also implied, to an extent, subservience to the Church, because populist nationalist discourse blended elements of myth with images of Ireland as an island of saints and sages. As Osteen notes, while 'the long lists of saints and clerics that decorate "Cyclops" [...] present Ireland as an island of saints and sages, the human resources that remain in Ireland – those clerics and saints – cannot replace the natural resources that have been depleted' (Osteen, 1995, p. 261). For Joyce, myth may function as means of production of subjective identities in nationalist configurations to make for a lack of economic production, ideology replacing the assembly lines, enthusiasm, belief, and faith nothing more than worldly attachments fashioned out of myths which lack any transcendental sanction, but are used to urge belief in worldly institutional authority.

Thus, for Joyce, if myth becomes an ossified and reproducible construct in its ideological incarnation, it gives precision and rigidity to sets of beliefs, such as nationalism and religion, which confirm, rather than contest, the ethos of capitalist serial reproduction, merely achieving in the cultural sphere, where subjective identities are produced, what capitalism achieves in the material structure of society, where objects are produced as commodities. In this context, Sorel's social myth might be seen as a tool for legitimating religious, nationalist, and imperialist-capitalist authority: one is mindful of the fact that Sorel praised Lenin and Benito Mussolini praised Sorel (Roth, 1967). However, Sorel's emphasis on defining the experience of myth as an irreproducible epic state of mind counteracts the possibility that Sorel conceived social myth as susceptible to becoming communist or fascist ideology.

Given the overarching theme of Joyce's *Ulysses*, that of a major classical epic, it is worth asking what Sorel's concept of epic state of mind might mean in Joyce's terms. There is a sense that the experience of reading *Ulysses* engenders an epic state of mind, especially if we regard the entire novel as conducive of an epiphany. In *Stephen Hero*, Joyce defined epiphany as the moment when, having recognised integrity and compositional harmony in an object, 'its soul, its what-ness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance' (Joyce, 1944, p. 213). It is perhaps the soul and whatness of The Odyssey that leaps to us upon reading Joyce's *Ulysses*, having examined 'the balance of its parts', contemplated its form, and traversed 'every cranny of the structure' (Joyce, 1944, p. 213). That experience of *claritas* and the epic state of mind as defined by Sorel share a certain grace and transformative power. However, undoubtedly, Sorel would not have accepted the Joycean analysis of beauty in relation to the aesthetic experience of social myth: going any further than 'the sudden synthesis of the faculty which apprehends' (Joyce, 1944, p. 213) with an analytical mind would destroy the myth's 'character of *infinity*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 45–6, original italics) which, because unanalysable, focuses the energies of the social subject on the world to come in a poetry of the future, thus engendering unity, faith, and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, Joyce's and Sorel's approaches to myth are rooted in a partly shared ethos: both reject the ideological functions of myth, and Sorel values the myth's importance, as does Joyce in *Ulysses*, for opening the process of creation 'to everyman within a narrative that remains self-enclosed and autonomous' (Heller, 1995, p. 9). For both Sorel and Joyce that process of creation is also one of refashioning the self through myth, that is, of finding in myth the resources for repositioning oneself in relation to dominant ideologies, thus escaping from stasis. But for Sorel, as for Yeats, this leads to solidarity within the social group, however differently conceived as an elite of the working class or of artists, bearing in mind nevertheless that the worker is also an artist for Sorel. For Joyce, the subject of myth escapes the nets of social groups.

In terms of the three functions of myth identified in Von Hendy's study of the modern construction of the concept, the ontological, the ideological, and the constitutive, it is the constitutive function that is dominant in understandings of myth developed by Sorel, Yeats, and Joyce. This is consistent with Von Hendy's argument that, 'like the ideological', the constitutive conception of myth 'gathers force in the turn-of-the-century shift toward affective and structural explanation', leading to a 'view of myth as pragmatically necessary fiction' (Von Hendy, 2002, pp. 304–5, p. 49). Von Hendy's historical analysis traces the conceptual development of the functions of myth from the ontological to the ideological and the constitutive. In my view, these functions operate simultaneously in any historical period. In this perspective, Sorel's use of myth can be described as favouring its constitutive function while reacting against myth as ideology or Utopia. To an extent, Sorel's myth also fulfils an ontological function, since the experience of faith in social myth is often likened to that of religious faith. The radical anarcho-syndicalist group is compared to the dedicated religious order:

> it is with elite troops, perfectly trained by monastic life, ready to brave all obstacles, and filled with an absolute confidence in victory, that Catholicism has been able, until now, to triumph over its enemies. [...] It would be extremely dangerous for the proletariat not to practice a division of functions which has succeeded so well for Catholicism during its long history [...]. (Sorel, 2004, p. 271)

Social myth, then, like religious myth, is a vehicle of transcendence; however, unlike for religious myth, transcendence is not to a different ontological plane, but to the plane of the envisioned future society, and, hence, within reach in the material world. Social myth is a means of transcending the historical present, making room for the future in the present of experience, and thus making that future happen in the here and now.

While in Sorel's understanding of myth the emphasis is on its use for collective social action, for Yeats the emphasis falls on the elite social group which guides the masses. In this, Yeats's vision is closer to that of Benedetto Croce, whose work he read extensively. Nicola Badaloni argues that Sorel's concept of social myth was approved by Croce in respect of the working class, but not in respect of intellectuals: for Croce 'myth remained subject to this rational control which only the intellectuals of the already hegemonic class were capable of exercising' (Badaloni, 1979, p. 84). Both Sorel and Yeats developed understandings of myth which call for faith in its transformative power, but for Yeats, and Croce, this power is effective as means of transformation of consciousness only when filtered through the intellectual aesthetic of an aristocratic elite.

The elitism of Yeats's art is seen from his first endeavours as poet, as Finn Fordham has shown in his analysis of 'Pan', an unpublished poem from the 1880s, written by a 'pre-Oisin, pre-Irish Yeats' (Fordham, 2010, p. 121). The voice of 'Pan' is that of a poet who, as Fordham shows:

> is a select being, and, though usurped and in exile, presents himself as having an enduring power. The poet defines himself through membership with select and elite groupings, whose time will come. And this elite sense of identity grows [...] in Yeats's case, out of an absorption into the self of an aspect of poetic practice. (Fordham, 2010, p. 113)

The specific poetic practice analysed by Fordham is that of 'selection and rejection of textual matter as it aims for a kind of perfection' and one of the conclusions of this analysis is that 'the priest of Pan in the poem is poet as leader of a secret gang, foreshadowing Yeats's involvements with the Order of the Golden Dawn, the Theosophists, the

Rhymers Club, the Abbey Theatre, and other groups including, ultimately, the Irish Senate' (Fordham, 2010, pp. 113, 121). Yet at the same time Yeats's poetic practice is not dissimilar to that of Sorel's artisan, the worker-as-artist, who labours to bring into being a world as yet existing in aesthetic form, but which should become embodied in the realm of material reality. Yeats's early anarcho-syndicalist inclinations, manifested in his interest for the philosophies of Peter Kropotkin and Sergey Stepniak, and in his efforts to engage members of the working class in a dialogue with the arts, may have given place to elitist affiliation to a poets' aristocracy, but the constitutive dimension of Yeats's myth remains nevertheless rooted in a philosophy of art as means to produce social change.

Joyce likewise shared a view of the artist as able to recreate material reality by refashioning the self through art. David Weir analyses the aesthetic politics of *Ulysses* to conclude that:

> The dynamic balance in Joyce's art of self-effacement and self expression, tradition and innovation, organic structure and atomistic style is consistent with his early interest in socialism and anarchism, but only if socialism and anarchism are recognized as competing political discourses that require some kind of ideological balancing if one is to entertain both. To the extent that Joyce is a socialistic artist, he is a modern, part of that progressive, liberal tradition that American leftists saw personified in Leopold Bloom. To the extent that Joyce is an anarchistic artist, he is a modernist, part of that revolutionary, individualist tradition personified by Stephen Dedalus. (Weir, 1997, p. 226)

Extrapolating, one may argue that Joyce's use of classical myth to give organic structure to *Ulysses* reflects a socialistic faith in myth as means to provide a unifying cultural pattern shared democratically as 'art itself is secularized, becoming available to the Blooms and Mollys of "dear dirty Dublin"' (Heller, 1995, p. 9). However, no transcendence to metaphysical or metatemporal planes is possible in Joyce's poetic universe. The heteroglossia and carnivalesque of *Ulysses*, the province of the anarchist aesthete, Stephen Dedalus, is a realm of contestation of myth as ideology, a realm of unruly disbelief, irony, and faithlessness. One must test the possibility of belief until it settles in epiphanic revelation that constitutes the self as aesthetic self, yet on the plane of historical descriptions. This way one may learn in one's own life 'what the heart is and what it feels', welcoming life as the material for art in order to forge in the smithy of the soul a new conscience (Joyce, 1965, p. 276).

The life of J. A. Andrews, the Australian anarchist, furnishes an interesting example of art transformed into drama on the social stage. In his novel, *The Triumph of Freedom*, set in Melbourne in late-twentieth century, Andrews describes a society burdened by capitalist exploitation. The workers revolt, but the socialist winners end up as new tyrants. Eventually, anarchist communistic settlements subvert the new hierarchy. As

Bruce Scates writes, the message of the novel is that ‘only anarchism and a return to life on the land can save “the liberty loving people of Victoria”’ (Scates, 1997, p. 121). Andrews’s novel is not comparable in its aesthetic presentation with the works of Yeats or Joyce. However, it engendered belief and enthusiasm as it became enacted as the author’s own social drama:

> it was with this vision in mind that Andrews quit the city for the bush in the early 1892 ‘determined to make the earth yield sufficient tucker [...] without calling anyone master’ [...] he carried a bag of oatmeal, a rusty rat trap to catch game, and a swag of revolutionary leaflets. ‘With these’, he proclaimed, ‘I go to conquer nature and instil courage in the hearts of the discontented’. (Scates, 1997, pp. 121–2)

And with words, in addition to these, one might add, as was the case with Andrews’s fellows at the Melbourne Anarchist Club, John Fleming, ‘as determined an orator as a reader’ who ‘hurled literary quotations’ at his audience, and David Andrade whose writing, like that of Andrews, suggests the ‘character and composition of their [social organisation] ventures: it is a compelling case [...] of literature echoing reality’ (Scates, 1997, p. 125, brackets mine). In India, Bhagat Singh created ‘a synthesis of revolutionary praxis and pictorial or slide art in the national movement which with its programme of divergent shades and varieties was fighting against British imperialism’ (Gaur, 2008, p. 99). Such syntheses of revolutionary praxis and art engender belief and enthusiasm in similar ways to Sorel’s social myth.

Sorel’s social myth can be defined as the manifestation of one’s narrative presentation of his/her identity to oneself and to others in the language of action. One’s self is manifested as narrative subject signifying one’s social identity through the symbols provided by an *epos*, be that heroic epic, story, or poem. At the same time one is the subject of action, acting out that identity in the social world. Thus, the subject of social myth is also an artist who crafts himself and the world as aesthetic object: the aesthetic cast of social myth becomes the token of the world to come. To the extent that art fulfils a constitutive function whereby self and the world are placed in a new relation, thereby changed, at first in the mind’s eye, and then in the performance of dramatic act on the social stage, art is also involved in social change whether or not it co-opts a mythological tradition or another.

When myth is represented in the symbols of an art form, those symbols take on something of the power of myth. Art may fulfil the function of myths that hold together social groups. In providing this function, forms of art that work like myth are on par with the forms of reality. As Kenneth Burke argued in ‘Revolutionary Symbolism in America’ (1935):

> ‘Myths’ [...] are our basic psychological tools for working together. A hammer is a carpenter’s tool; a wrench is a mechanic’s tool; and a ‘myth’ is

> the social tool for welding the sense of interrelationship by which the carpenter and the mechanic, though differently occupied, can work together for common social ends. In this sense a myth that works well is as real as food, tools, and shelter are. (Burke, 1989a, pp. 267–8)

In Burke's definition myth is a tool for crafting reality, a notion shared by Sorel. Joyce and Yeats also regarded myth as a force of creative consciousness harnessed to social change. To an extent, art is also a tool for social change, fulfilling a constitutive function that is similar to that envisioned by Sorel and Burke for myth. This is a central concern in this book, and will be addressed in more detailed analyses in the following chapters. I shall begin by focusing on literature, myth, and social change in relation to Yeats's work.

3. The Political Aesthetic of Yeats's Myth in Anarchist and Syndicalist Contexts

In *Symbol and Interpretation*, David Rasmussen argues that in diachronic perspective symbols are instruments of social-political transformation: 'the symbol functions as a change agent, a liberating force, which allows group consciousness to become aware of itself, and to express itself' (1974, p. 92). At the same time, in order to understand the relation of symbols to creative consciousness, they must be considered in synchronicity:

> There is another way [than the diachronic perspective] of looking at the symbol which may shed light on another aspect of the process of [social] transformation, namely, the view of symbol based on the model of synchronicity. [Another] reason for finding the symbol at the center of socio-political processes of transformation is one which addresses the symbol *qua* symbol in terms of *an anthropology of the imagination.* (Rasmussen, 1974, p. 92, original italics, brackets mine)

My analysis of the political aesthetics of W. B. Yeats in this chapter is informed by Rasmussen's distinction between the diachronic and synchronic functioning of symbols as catalysts of socio-political transformation. In diachronic perspective, symbols are cultural nodal points where the tenets of a social group situated in a specific historical context coalesce in emblematic designs. In this perspective, symbols can be analysed on the plane of historical descriptions. On the other hand, in synchronicity, symbols are phenomena best analysed through an anthropology of the imagination, that is, symbols should be seen as catalysts of one's imagination which activate one's faith, belief, and enthusiasm for action. In synchronicity symbols join the subject of action with narrative subjects, signifying one's being for action. On the diachronic axis of history, this joining enables the subject of action, the social agent, to convey the power of symbols in the material and social reality.

Symbols, then, enable both the phenomenon of representation and that of agency, although on different planes along the synchronic and diachronic axes of experience. In diachronic perspective agency is more relevant than the phenomenon of representation, although representations as such, that is, phenomena of representation arrested in the material form of an artefact, are also relevant. In synchronic perspective, representation is the more relevant, while agency is consequential to it. In diachronic perspective it is possible to see the joining of narrative subjects and the subject of action as completed process, whereas in synchronicity the work of joining the narrative subject and the subject of action fills the horizon of experience. Modernist writing and philosophies emphasised either the representational aspect of symbols or the agency enabled by symbols, according to how they valued synchronic or diachronic dimensions of experience over one another. However, even when emphasising in a radical way the representational aspect of symbols it is not possible to ignore the agency they enable, nor is it possible to separate completely agency from representation when the former is the dominant concern. The subject of synchronic aesthetic experience lives in history. The subject of history experiences his/her relation to time and space in the subjective actuality of synchronicity. Art mediates the experience of history for the moment of a subject's presence to itself in the here and now.

Ezra Pound's conceptualisation of 'image' in poetry provides a starting point for the further elaboration of this argument. Pound's Imagist poetics with its emphasis on the synchronic moment of transfiguration of self in the world through art can be traced to the poet's interest in Ernest Fenollosa's study of Chinese ideograms. In Fenollosa's 'The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry', included in Pound's *Instigations*, the former argues:

> Chinese notation is something much more than arbitrary symbols. It is based upon a vivid shorthand picture of the operations of nature. In the algebraic figure and in the spoken word [of Western linguistic systems] there is no natural connection between thing and sign: all depends upon sheer convention. But the Chinese method follows natural suggestion. [...] In reading Chinese we do not seem to be juggling mental counters, but to be watching *things* work out their own fate [...] the great number of these ideographic roots carry in them a *verbal idea of action*. (Pound and Fenollosa, 1920, pp. 362–4, original italics, brackets mine)

Similarly, for Pound, as he puts it in his 1918 'Retrospect' of *Imagisme*, 'the proper and perfect symbol is the natural object' so that art is sustained by life (Pound, 1986, p. 65). Pound, then, emphasises the representational aspect of symbols experienced in synchronicity, in 'freedom from time limits and space limits' (Pound, 1986, p. 60), like Wyndham Lewis in *Blast* and Yeats in the Japanese Noh plays. The sense of liberation, through art, from the constraints of mechanical time and measured spaces regulated by social institutions can be seen as the prelude to reconstructions of the social self that may lead to social transformation. This synchronic moment of the experience of art in which the social self sublimates into the aesthetic self is not unlike that of James Joyce's epiphanies. In synchronicity, symbols are means of bringing life under the rule of art while making art the rule of life. Nevertheless, momentous aesthetic experience substantiates history.

In *On Symbols and Society*, Kenneth Burke argues that the reiteration of a poet's attitude towards the world may assume 'enough prominence [...] to become a pattern of experience.' If the poet 'converts his pattern into a plot [...] he has produced a symbol.' Thus, for Burke the symbol is 'the verbal parallel to a pattern of experience.' The symbol might be extensively elaborated, as is the case with prose (Burke elsewhere in *On Symbols and Society* refers to Joyce's 'elaboration of the Homeric myths'), or 'not so readily summed up in a name [...] pervasive but not condensed', as is the case with lyric. In both cases, however, the symbol may serve 'to force patterns upon the audience', or to awaken audiences to their own patterns of experience now seen in a new light (Burke, 1989b, pp. 109–10, 310).

In relation to poetry one might say that, rehearsing the experience engendered by, for instance, Imagist poems, in reading a number of those poems repeatedly, readers will learn to see the world in light of that experience. If that involves challenge to established patterns, readers will internalise the ethos of that challenge, and may act it out in social reality. In the experience of epic or prose, readers re-enact the associated patterns of action and feeling that the art text conveys. In doing so, they appropriate modes of agency by which a narrative actor completes a fictional action. They may then translate narrative action into social action, both of which Burke regards as equally 'dramatistic' (Burke, 1989b, pp. 135–8). Having learned a mode of agency from a narrative action pattern, social actors enact it in dramatistic manner, actualising it in relation to their specific socio-material circumstances.

Yeats and Pound worked together at Stone Cottage in Sussex from 1913 to 1916. Yeats became acquainted with the Japanese Noh plays as Pound was editing their translations by Fenollosa. The central importance of symbols in Noh stage techniques interested Yeats and he developed his own versions of the plays as vehicles of transcendence from the mundane to aesthetic reality. As Richard Ellmann put it: 'The Yeatsean paradox was to disintegrate verisimilitude by miracle for the purposes of a more ultimate realism' (1969, p. 71). This ultimate realism is that of synchronicity in which aesthetic self and social self are joined outside historical time and space, in duration. But even though the moment of self-creation through art is one of transcendence of history, the experience itself does not last beyond the moment of revelation. Perhaps against the poet's wishes, the self falls back in historical time, enriched through art, yet of the world. And, for Yeats, that world is one of social upheaval, one in which the self must fall for action, yet one in which the self shall know how to govern social change through art.

Thus the self brings forth in the diachronic time and space of history the token of transcendence. For Pound that token is the image as ideographic symbol. But whereas Pound, like Wyndham Lewis, settles for space, Yeats takes in time. In the context of Irish nationalism, that is the time of Celtic myth. The choice is imposed on Yeats in the flow of nationalist currents. Richard Kearney argued:

> By means of a mythological repetition of the 'past' the nationalist leaders [...] sought to redeem Ireland. Incarcerated in a history of intransigent British Imperialism and oppression, the evangelists of the Provisional Republic appealed to a pre-historical mythic power whereby their present impotence might be miraculously transcended. By 'repeating' the names and deeds of the ancient heroes and martyrs of Erin they sought to revive her sacred destiny.
>
> (Kearney, 1999, p. 165)

In light of Mircea Eliade's theory of myth, according to which the experience of myth is both sacred, that is, beyond the time and space of history, and profane, that is, recurring across objective time, Kearney shows how the symbol of the Rose enabled a joining of the spaces of myth and action in synchronic aesthetic experience that gave impetus to social change on the diachronic axis of history. Kearney surveys the 'mythological symbol of the Red Rose' as an 'emblem of Ireland's eternally self-renewing Spirit' in Fenian and 1916 poetics. He shows how, among the Easter 1916 leaders, Thomas MacDonagh's writing on Ireland derived its ethos partly from James Clarence Mangan's poem 'Roisín Dubh', while Joseph Plunkett 'wrote a poem entitled *The Little Black Rose Shall be Red at last* in which he rewords [Aubrey Thomas] De Vere's lyric of the same title.' Mangan and De Vere had been inspired by earlier devotional poetry in which Ireland is envisioned by Spalpín (wandering) poets, such as Aogán Ó Rathaille and Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin, as a goddess manifested in the Rose symbol (Kearney, 1999, pp. 167–8). Yeats, too, used the Rose symbol to enable a mystic perception of Ireland in terms of rejuvenation through sacrifice and rebirth in 'To the Rose upon the Rood of Time' and 'The Rose Tree' (Yeats, 1997, pp. 27, 185). In 'The Rose Tree' only the blood of sacrifice can give life-force to the new Ireland. In Irish nationalist circles, the Rose symbol became over time 'the verbal parallel to a pattern of experience' to use Burke's terms in this context. Shared among the members of nationalist groups, it assumed enough prominence 'to force patterns upon the audience' (Burke, 1989b, pp. 109–10).

With Yeats, the repertoire of nationalist symbols which enabled the joining of narrative subject and subject of action also included clearly defined mythic identities through which the social subject may carry out the action of myth as social action. Cathleen Ni Houlihan and Cuchulain are obvious examples. In 'The Statues', Yeats asks: 'When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side/ What stalked through the Post Office?' (Yeats, 1997, p. 344) While the poem expresses the revelatory experience of myth in synchronicity, in which narrative subject and the subject of action are joined, it also shows the historical agency this joining has enabled: Pearse, signifying himself through the narrative of Cuchulain, was spurred into action, and, together with other nationalist fighters, changed the course of history for Ireland. As John Unterecker points out:

> Yeats's audience saw in Cuchulain a figure half way between myth and allegory, an embodiment of dreams familiar to themselves as well as to Yeats. The more Yeats wrote, the more useful the figure became. Gradually, the wish-fulfilment projection took on new roles, sometimes a figure celebrated, sometimes satirized, finally humanized; for in the character's long career [...] Cuchulain had become as much a part of Yeats's world (and his audience's) as Maud Gonne or Lady Gregory. (Unterecker, 1963, pp. 2–3)

Various symbols derived from myth enabled the revolutionaries to identify with mythic characters inhabiting a mythic space. Kearney identifies 'Oisín, Cúchulainn, Mannanán, Caitlín Ní Houlihán and most importantly Fionn MacCumhaill and his warrior band, the Fianna' from which 'the whole Fenian movement leading up to 1916 took its name and "inspiration"' (Kearney, 1988, p. 211). According to Kearney, the revolutionaries believed that 'the only way to redeem the nation seemed to be the negation of present history in favour of some Holy Beginning, some eternally recurring Past. And this recurrence of the primordial Spirit of Erin would be brought about, following the laws of myth, by blood sacrifice.' (Kearney, 1988, p. 213) In this context, 'it is in Yeats's poetic testimony of the Irish nationalist uprising [...] that the whole *mythos* of sacrifice finds its most eloquent formulation' (Kearney, 1988, p. 216). Kearney points out that Yeats's writing was an inspiration for Padraig Pearse and Constance Markievicz, in turn sanctified by Yeats in 'the cultic immortalization' of the revolutionary act in 'Easter, 1916', to serve as symbols for future generations of nationalists and Republicans.

Thus the action of narrative subjects drawn from myth materialised in revolutionary action during Easter 1916. What was first a faith engendered by the experience of myth through art became action, and changed material reality. Thus, the working of symbols in myth has aesthetic value in the synchronic experience of art that is drawn from myth, and which redraws myth. But it also has political value when that experience is translated into the language of action on the diachronic axis of history. As Kenneth Burke has shown:

> there are two quite different ways of aligning the political (or ideological) with the nonpolitical (or mythic). We may, as with those who tend towards the esthetic myth, treat them simply as *mutually exclusive*, so that we could turn *to* the poetic myth only by turning *from* the political ideology. [...] Or we may treat the mythic as the nonpolitical ground of the political, not as antithetical to it, but as the 'prepolitical' source out of which it is to be derived. [Myth would be] a vision that transcended the political, yet that had political attitudes interwoven with it. (Burke, 1989b, p. 310, original italics, brackets mine)

In this view, myth is valued for what Andrew Von Hendy termed its 'constitutive' function, in an understanding of myth 'as pragmatically necessary fiction' (Von Hendy, 2002, p. 49). Thus, while symbolisation in myth is a representational phenomenon, which positions one against ideology and in favour of art, it is also an act of translating representation into action. We may rephrase this conclusion in relation to art: while symbolisation in art may tend to the representational dimension of experience lived in synchronicity (as is the case, for instance, with Pound and the Imagists, or Wyndham Lewis) it can also translate representation into action (as is the case with Yeats).

This latter argument, however, is based on the idea that art functions like myth, which can be demonstrated in Yeats's case. But even when art is not derived from myth, it is possible to argue that it serves to translate representation into action. Sorel's theory of social myth offers a means to develop this argument. In *Reflections on Violence* Sorel defines myth as the expression of the convictions of a group in the language of movement (Sorel, 2004, p. 50). He argues that those convictions may be derived from a range of epic narratives that symbolise one's *individual* 'will-to-deliverance', so that a social myth is also the 'manifestation of *individualistic force in the revolted masses*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 37, 241–2, original italics). This view suggests that the experience of myth, like that of art, is individualistic and private, while at the same time myth brings the individual to the social group readied for action, without extinguishing one's individuality in the mass. Yeats expressed a similar idea in the introduction to his *Fighting the Waves* (1928), a prose version of the 1919 Noh play 'The Only Jealousy of Emer':

> Here in Ireland we have come to think of self-sacrifice when worthy of public honour, as the act of some man at the moment when he is least himself, most completely the crowd. The heroic act, as it descends through tradition, is an act done because a man is himself, because, being himself, he can ask nothing of other men but room amid remembered tragedies; a sacrifice of himself to himself, almost, so little may he bargain, of the moment to the moment. (Yeats, 1966, pp. 569–70)

In Yeats's case, the moment of experience of the aesthetic self in synchronicity is also often the moment of entering the sacred space of myth, with its own measure of epic time. Yeats, then, brings the a-historical time of myth to the subject of history. That is, a sequence of events belonging to the *illo tempore* of myth is rehearsed through aesthetic experience and may eventually be enacted in social reality, in the time of political history. Similarly, for Sorel, the subject of social myth rehearses the events of a heroic epic. The general strike as social myth 'has a character of *infinity*, because it [...] confronts men with a catastrophe' and thus 'gives to socialism such high moral value and such great sincerity' (Sorel, 2004, p. 46, original italics). In this context, Yeats's distrust of the Irish press as a form of mass culture, a press condemned also by other nationalists 'for its want of political principle in the search of profit' (Dwan, 2008, p. 18), chimes with Sorel's distrust of the 'intellectualist philosophy' as a form of sterile debate: 'As long as there are no myths accepted by the masses, one may go on talking of revolts indefinitely, without ever provoking any revolutionary movement' (Sorel, 2004, p. 49).

For Yeats, only the aristocratic elite capable of taking forward into the social realm the moment of epiphanic revelation through art, and, for Sorel, only the working-class elite capable of translating an epic state of mind into social action, may achieve the intensity of conviction necessary for social change. In his analysis of Yeats's poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', Michael North shows how the concept of freedom aesthetically rendered here is one which 'draws a circle around the individual and forbids entry to others' (North, 1991, p. 24; Yeats, 1997, p. 35). Disenchanted with life in London, Yeats longed to return to Sligo and rendered this longing aesthetically as a political act of challenge to Empire and its mechanised modernity, opposing its capitalist liberalism with an image of Ireland as 'a spiritual and ethical island', but an image which depends also on imagining the self 'as islanded within Ireland' (North, 1991, p. 25). North argues that this choice of discovering oneself in an aesthetic self isolated from the wider social community reflects the very individualism of liberal modernity which made possible mechanised capitalism in the first place: Yeats rejects modernity 'while reasserting the concept of freedom on which modern politics and modern industry depend' (North, 1991, p. 26). However, as with Sorel, this withdrawal from reality into the moment of aesthetic experience need not be seen as an individualistic reimagining of a mythic community, based on the ethos of reproducibility of liberal capitalism, thus distancing oneself from the very social community that is invoked. This individualistic withdrawal is compatible with the anarchist emphasis on individuality manifested through the community, as Yeats's endorsement of Kropotkin's vision of social consensus suggests.

In a note of appreciation upon the death of Major Gregory in the *Observer* of 17 February 1918, Yeats wrote:

> I have noticed that men whose lives are to be an ever-growing absorption in subjective beauty – and I am not mainly remembering Calvert's philosophy of myth and his musical theory, or Verlaine's sensuality, or Shelley's politics – seek through some lesser gift, or through mere excitement, to strengthen that self which unites them to ordinary men. It is as though they hesitated before they plunged into the abyss. (Witt, 1950, p. 113)

Clearly, Yeats distinguishes between the aristocratic Gregory, and implicitly himself, and the mob led by momentary passions. In this he seems to be the opposite of Sorel, who praised the very social classes that Yeats had come to repudiate. However, one must bear in mind that the elite of the working classes Sorel admires is different from the mass spellbound by intellectualist philosophies. As North has shown in his analysis of Yeats's philosophical and poetical meditation on the figure of Major Gregory, 'the one moment of utter integration [of virtue, action, and subjective beauty] enjoyed at the point of death exists only insofar as Gregory cuts all earthly ties' (North, 1991, p. 47). Sorel's elite workers are in fact in many ways like Yeats's aristocratic artists. They too find subjective beauty only by withdrawing into myth, thus cutting earthly ties, and caring nothing for the consequences of their actions for themselves – an attitude Yeats himself praised in the ranks of the aristocracy. As North shows, for Yeats, 'the rakes and duellists of the eighteenth century, in all their wasteful independence, have more true Irish spirit than the mob that stormed Parliament to force on its members an Irish oath' (North, 1991, p. 42).

Yeats's literary use of myth, then, might be said to contribute to the creation of a social myth as understood by Sorel: the faith through which history and reality are sacrificed to the moment lived in aesthetic purity, or in the sacredness of myth, is the moment in which the narrative subject of myth is absorbed into the identity of social actors, who then find communion in the social group sharing the symbols which can enable that experience – 'amid remembered tragedies' in Yeats's case (Yeats, 1966, p. 70) – and may go on to translate the events of sacred myth into social political action.

North argued that in his later years Yeats made contradiction and opposition the underlying condition of history (1991, p. 73). Identifying himself as a member of the excluded Protestant minority of postindependence Ireland, the older Yeats fully developed his characteristic thought 'whereby a part distinguished by its difference from the whole came to represent that whole'; perpetually representing the whole 'by virtue of difference', for the Yeatsean elite group of artists 'force and violence become their own justification' (North, 1991, p. 70). Certainly Sorel's social myth and his band of warriors of the working class can be defined in similar terms. Yet what interests us here is that in both cases that separation is achieved through art, be that the art of an aristocratic elite or of the artisan worker, and thus art becomes implicated in subsequent activism and violence. For Yeats's view of the great artists in 'Hodos Chameliontos', who strive to find behind the veil of daily life their aesthetic selves, is also true of Sorel's artisan who sees the reality beyond Utopias, and strives to meet his truer self in the subject of social myth:

> We gaze at such men in awe, because we gaze not at a work of art, but at the re-creation of the man through that art, the birth of a new species of man, and it may even seem that the hairs of our heads stand up, because that birth, that re-creation, is from terror. (Yeats, 1974, p. 183)

Yeats's allegiance to the aristocratic, elitist, group of enlightened artists is worked out in his poetry through symbols derived from myth. But ultimately, the isolation of the enlightened self from social struggle renders Yeats's aesthetic impractical in political terms, and thus the social myth devised in Yeats's writing ceases to be a social myth as defined by Sorel. However, other Revivalists used Celtic myth to define a social myth that served practical forms social organisation.

For George Russell, change through faith in myth is not effected through the agency of an artistic elite, but through the agency of workers whose labour to recreate themselves and the world is mystically inspired. The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) was founded as an umbrella of small dairy cooperatives which thus organised could get access to modern dairy machines (Kelly, 1998, p. 32). Although the principle upon which the cooperatives were founded was one attuned to capitalist principles of modern mechanised production, the IAOS publication, *The Irish Homestead*, served syndicalist ideals and nationalist emancipation. While Yeats could not, in the end, accept socialism as a solution to the crises of modernity, because he saw in it an extinguishing of that individualism which guarantees the very possibility of aesthetic experience, it is not the case that anarcho-syndicalism cannot enable just such an individualist experience, while empowering the individual both materially and spiritually through the group. Indeed, the emphasis on individualism in the ethos of cooperative organisation is quite clear, as, for instance, evident in the work of the Australian anarchist David Andrade. In his novel, *The Melbourne Riots*, we read:

> True co-operation is that form of labouring where each works with the other for mutual benefit, but not for mutual plunder [...]. That is the true individualism – it is that individualism which exalts the individuality of the labourer to the highest possible point, by making him a truly independent man, one living entirely by his own labours, and not living in any degree on the labours of others; it is that individualism which makes him a real sovereign over his own individuality, and a worthy being to associate with others, equally elevated to the same social, economical, and moral level. (Andrade, 1892, p. 48)

Individualism within the group is theorised precisely against liberal capitalist notions of the individual whose alienating freedom cuts him off from creative social interaction. In Russia, cooperatives were widely regarded as also sites of individualist cultural creativity within the group, threatened when this individualism was extinguished by any kind of authority, capitalist or communist, as Emma Goldman's account of Peter Kropotkin's protest against the monopolisation of cooperatives by the Communist state indicates: 'In this statement [addressed to the Presidium of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets in session in 1920] Kropotkin called attention to the danger of such a policy to all progress, in fact, to all thought, and emphasized that such state monopoly would make creative work utterly impossible' (Goldman, 1924, pp. 58–9, brackets mine). The cultural work carried out by Russell and *The Irish Homestead* to provide an ethos for social change through material change within the framework of the IAOS shows that a similar idea was embraced in Ireland.

Thus, in Ireland, myths of origin, serving the nationalist cause, also serve as myths of social organisation: that is, while functioning as anti-imperialist myths, they also function as anti-capitalist myths in the manner social myths function in Sorel's vision.

The religious sentiment enabled by the experience of myth in synchronicity is compatible with the experience of art in synchronicity. If the former gives impetus to social change by providing the ineffable substance that binds the social group together, be that in the form of cooperative organisation, guerrilla unit, or workers' syndicate, perhaps art is a means to engender that kind of solidarity, too. Accepting this view would mean to blur the distinction between myth and art, and to understand the experience of art as a form of religious experience.

The marrying of religious sentiment and revolutionary social action in the social myth whose symbols are shared by a social group is not a phenomenon made possible only by the specific context of Irish nationalism and anti-imperialism. In India, the manifesto of the Hindustan Republican Association, which the anarcho-syndicalist Bhagat Singh joined in 1924, written by Sachindra Nath Sanyal and distributed in the major cities of Northern India on the night of 31 December 1924 under the title *The Revolutionary*, 'asserted preference for cooperatives over private business, advocated cooperation between different nations and pledged to uphold communal harmony. However, it was also marked by a sense of religiosity and mysticism' (Grewal, 2007, p. 41). Eventually, Singh condemned the mysticism of *The Revolutionary* in his 'Why I am an Atheist', written in jail while awaiting execution for throwing bombs in the Central Assembly (Lal, 2007, p. 17; Singh, 2007, pp. 166–77). But perhaps this condemnation of mysticism only served to strengthen Singh's faith in the anarcho-syndicalist cause, that is, it enabled Singh to signify himself as subject of a social myth as understood by Sorel, and thus to become a kind of mystic atheist.

In a sense, what Russell achieved with *The Irish Homestead* can be regarded as the purpose of art described by Sorel in 'The Social Value of Art' published in 1901 in the *Revue de mètaphysique et de morale*: 'Artistic education, instead of being intended to give pleasure to the leisure class, is becoming for us the basis of industrial production' as 'work carried out with an artistic feeling is [...] closer to perfection' and becomes a non-alienating form of labour (Sorel, 1990, p. 118). In John Stanley's translation of Sorel's essay: 'The mind [*esprit*] works its way into industry and imposes and intellectual [*spirituel*] quality on everything that it touches. All human activities are increasingly disciplined with a view to forming primary matters, but also this fashioning is becoming intellectualized [*se spiritualisé*]' (Sorel, 1990, p. 113). It is worth emphasising that, in this context, the polyvalent meanings of '*esprit*', '*spirituel*', and '*se spiritualisé*', including, respectively, 'spirit', 'soulful', and 'takes on a sacred quality', suggest that material reality is transfigured through art at the same time that the worker is transfigured into artist labouring to reshape the world materially.

As Sorel acknowledges, this view of work as art is partly derived from the anarchist theory developed by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in *Du Principe de l'art* (1865). Proudhon's views on the worker as artist must have influenced the Australian David Andrade who hoped to make a living from literature through a form of economic enterprise that stimulates social change through artistic self-achievement. His Anarchist Bookery, founded in 1887 from the remnants of the Melbourne Anarchist Club's Circulating Library was a vibrant social centre, 'defying [...] the "fragmentation" of public life and literature' (Scates, 1997, pp. 53–4). In fact, one might argue, the Bookery was a veritable 'workshop' in which participants recreated their social identities through reading and discussion, activities that stimulated the cherishing of those symbols which then enabled them to organise as a group and militate for social change. For example, 'the bookshop [...] promised women the status, responsibility and power usually monopolised by their husbands' (Scates, 1997, p. 57).

To the extent that art enables a transcendence of the mundane and the historical in the infinite moment when readers are seduced and carried away to find themselves in the aesthetic self, one may say that the experience of art has a religious character, in the broadest possible sense. If art is derived from myth, or uses myth, and if the symbols of myth are shared by a social group, then the experience of that particular form of art also serves the function of myth to define one as member of a social group – as is the case with Yeats's writing. In both cases, that is, whether or not art is derived from myth, or uses myth, one's experience of art and the consequences of this experience in material reality can be explained through Sorel's concept of social myth.

Sorel's concept of social myth accommodates in non-contradictory ways the notion that re-experiencing oneself as subject of a narrative epic is both individual and collective (if the symbols of that epic are shared in a social group), while at the same time being both infinite on the synchronic axis of experience, and translatable in the language of action on the diachronic axis of history. It is particularly useful to apply Sorel's theory of social myth to the experience of art that is itself derived from a mythic epic. In this application of Sorel's theory to Yeats's writing, one must conclude that Yeats's metaphysics supplies a religious dimension to a social movement, in the same way a social myth does in Sorel's view.

Yeats's figure of the interpenetrating gyres in 'The Second Coming' represents the pulling of the self in opposite directions and also the uneasy balance of the self torn between the realm of the aesthetic self and the realm of the social self. In the development of his politics, poetics, and philosophy, Yeats increasingly veered toward the aesthetic self, like Pound and Eliot. As North convincingly argued, 'Yeats's aristocrat, Eliot's man of letters, Pound's scholar of the luminous detail – all achieve political relevance by asserting and maintaining their difference from the mundanely political' (North, 1991, p. 187). In the perspective developed in this chapter, they favour the representational dimension of art, dominant in the synchronic experience of art, against the agency enabled through art, dominant in art's diachronic manifestation as reiterative experience for the subject of action. This is not to say that they ignore the latter, but that they tend to subordinate action to representation.

Quite the contrary, men like George Russell veered toward the social and agency, subordinating representation to action. Defined in *The Candle of Vision* (1918), Russell's religious beliefs, influenced by Hindu and Celtic mysticism, are centred on the idea that the world is the material manifestation of a divine mind, and that all men share its consciousness, first manifested in the idea of the Heavenly Man, Aeon (Russell's pseudonym, A.E. is derived from Aeon's name) (Russell, 1920, pp. 72–6). Perhaps the relation of Russell's mysticism to social action is best understood through Edward Carpenter's mystical socialism. In his *Towards Industrial Freedom* (1917), Carpenter praised Russell's book *The National Being* and his achievements as a cooperative organiser (Carpenter, 1924, p. 107). He also shared some of Russell's friends, including George Bernard Shaw (Allen, 2003, p. 267). Like Russell, Carpenter was inspired by Hindu mysticism and believed that all forms of religious faith confirm the need for the man living in the here and now to reconnect with the 'divine and universal Man who also forms a part of our consciousness' (Carpenter, 2004, p. 13). For Carpenter, the reunion of the isolated individual with the collective is possible only if each individual acknowledges the divine Man. Inasmuch as this faith in the divine Man is also the means of breaking with the individualism of liberal capitalism, it resembles the faith required of the subject of Sorel's social myth: it is perhaps the case that faith in the universal divine Man and divine mind define Carpenter's and Russell's social myth. In any case, in his autobiographical notes, *My Days and Dreams*, Carpenter shows his belief that he was witnessing 'the inception of a number of new movements or enterprises tending towards the establishment of mystical ideas and a new social order', and offers as examples 'Hyndman's Democratic Federation, Edmund Gurney's Society for Psychical Research, Mme. Blavatsky's Theosophical Society [...] and many other associations of the same kind' which 'marked the coming of a great reaction from the smug commercialism and materialism of the mid-Victorian epoch, and a preparation for the new universe of the twentieth century' (Carpenter, 1916, p. 240).

Thus, both Russell's and Carpenter's activism and involvement with progressive workers' associations are governed by religious faith, and both strove to represent their experience in their art and writing, that is, to discover those symbols which would enable others to experience the need of collective communion with a divine consciousness. While this can also be said about Yeats, with Russell and Carpenter the emphasis falls on art as a means to enable the agency of the individual within the social group, rather than on art as means to discover one's aesthetic self in isolation from the group, as was increasingly the case with Yeats as he grew older. The difference between Yeats and Russell or Carpenter is the difference between the mystical socialism accessible to every man, and the secret mystical doctrine accessible only to the initiated member of an aristocratic elite.

In both cases, however, the experience lived by the subject of action in its actions is one of aesthetic import in a two-way traffic: this experience imports aesthetics into action, and it is in turn material for an aesthetics of representation. In both cases, art serves as a medium through which narrative subjects join the subject of action. In this context, Sorel's concept of social myth as the medium through which the epic represented in the language of action, promises in the language of art is translated into the language of the reconciliation of the perpetually warring opposites of modern societies: a reconciliation of the individual experience of mysticism and perhaps art, with one's belonging to a social community, manifested in practical forms of social organisation, and, thus, the reconciliation of the spiritual life of the individual with the material conditions of the group that places one above and beyond the atomistic, liberal philosophy of a mechanical individual disintegrated from society. In the following chapter I shall spell out more clearly the connections that can be established, through using the philosophical concept of social myth, between the political aesthetics of art and practical politics.

4. Social Myth, Literary Narrative, and Political Aesthetics

In this chapter I will examine the ways in which Georges Sorel's theorisation of social myth can be seen as a theory of political aesthetics. This examination will also show that anarchist and syndicalist ideas provide a framework for a theory of art that takes into account both art's value as an individualistic experience lived in the here and now of one's moment in time, and its value for practical politics, that is, the value of that experience of art as a medium conducive of transformations of narrative language into the language of action. Sorel's concept of social myth accommodates most of the terms enunciated above in a unified theory. This theory is concerned with the passage from principles to actions, as Sorel put it in his *Introduction à l'économie moderne* (1903, revised edition 1922), a passage which Sorel saw as impossible to describe without appeal to myth.[1] In applying this theory to art, one is concerned with the passage from narrative symbols, which express the principles of identity and action, to actuality, that is, to act and action in the material world. As with social myth, the passage from art to action may imply one's engagement in practical politics. In this perspective, myth and art mediate a transformation of consciousness, and the translation of this transformation into socially transformative action.

For Sorel, a social myth is both representational and performative. The representational dimension of a social myth consists of pictures 'people had formed for themselves before action' (Sorel, 2004, p. 42). In terms of Andrew Von Hendy's definitions of the modern conception of myth, a social myth falls within the category of myth 'as pragmatically necessary fiction' (Von Hendy, 2002, p. 49). However, Sorel warns that 'we should be especially careful not to make any comparison between accomplished fact and the picture people had formed for themselves before action' (Sorel, 2004, p. 42). While the picture formed by the subject of social myth is derived from an epic or various forms of literary or other kinds of art, its translation into action will be shaped by specific material circumstances. What does get carried from art into social myth and then into reality is one's conviction that the fictional world and one's imagined identity in such a world can be made to happen as material reality. This conviction engenders agency and action and is therefore a historical force. In short, social myth, like art, engenders a transformation of consciousness which channels the energies of the social agent, creating the state of mind required for engagement in practical politics.

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[1] 'Je me demande s'il est possible de fournir une exposition intelligible du passage des principes à l'action sans employer des mythes.' (Sorel, 2003, pp. 214–6).

In comparing social myth and art in a Sorelian framework, one must grapple with the question of the difference between the two. Sorel acknowledges accusations that:

> I had made a most unfortunate [terminological] choice, for while some told me that myths were only suitable to a primitive state of society, others imagined that I thought the modern world might be moved by illusions analogous in nature to those which Renan thought might usefully replace religion. (Sorel, 2004, p. 43, brackets mine)

In his response to such accusations, Sorel distinguishes between certitude and conviction (Sorel, 2004, p. 45). While certitude is amenable to historical description on the diachronic axis, conviction is born in the moment one becomes a subject of myth in synchronicity: what is seen of conviction is a historical force, whereas certitude refers to accomplished fact.

Sorel argues that 'all that is best in the modern mind is derived from this "torment of the infinite"', that is, the intensity of the experience in which social agents and the subject of myth coalesce, which is also a process of transformation of consciousness (Sorel, 2004, p. 46). Defining this process in relation to Henri Bergson's theory of time and duration, Sorel's theory implicitly also points toward the common ground shared by art and social myth, for Bergson saw art as a means to access the inner being lived in duration beyond the outer being lived in mechanical time. Hence, in a Sorelian frame of mind, art and myth function in similar ways. If myth is conviction, so is art, with conviction understood as belief, or suspension of disbelief, but also as repudiation of the false, mechanical outer being shaped in the isolation of capitalist liberalism.

It is particularly appropriate to consider the relevance of Sorel's thought for an analysis of the writings of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce, given their interest in kinds of certitude and conviction, and given that their texts emerged within a culture of revolutionary action oscillating between certitude and conviction, a culture of revolutionary action whose hopes had been dashed after the fall of Charles Stewart Parnell, but which gained new impetus as Yeats and the Irish Revival scholars and activists were rewriting it into being, while Joyce was harmonising it with European internationalist and cosmopolitan culture. Furthermore, as Robert Klawitter points out, Yeats 'read Bergson thoroughly and seriously' and the work of the French philosopher influenced Joyce indirectly (Klawitter, 1966, p. 429).

In Sorel's terms, Yeats's writing can be seen as having provided a basis for those 'groups of images' (Sorel, 2004, p. 41) that helped social actors to picture themselves to themselves and to others as subjects coming to action. It is relatively easy to see how figures drawn in Yeats's writing, such as Cathleen ni Houlihan or Cuchulain, one a euhemerised goddess, the other a mythic warrior, helped to form groups of images which inspired the subject of action to take arms against the status quo. However, Yeats's writing engaged the consciousness of the subject of action in myriad more subtle ways. The question carried in the voice of Yeats's poem 'Among School Children' – 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?' (Yeats, 1997, p. 221) – is a question of metafictional relevance, for the figure of the dancer may be taken to stand for the social actor as well as the narrative subject, and the 'dance' may be seen to refer to the aesthetic harmony of poetry as well as to the actions and patterns of movement of the subject of action. In these terms, the question posed in Yeats's poem can be rephrased in two ways, on the two levels of fictional and metafictional reality: is it possible for the poetic voice and the narrative subject to exist apart from the aesthetic unity in which their life is given? Is it possible to divorce social identity from the actions in which it is forged? Thus, in the same way in which the dancer cannot be divided from the dance, the narrative subject cannot be excised from the aesthetic text whence it draws its life force. Similarly, the subject of action cannot be divided from the actions through which it defines itself. But the two worlds of fictional and metafictional reality can be cross-referenced if, as I argue in Sorelian perspective, the aesthetic text is seen as providing an experience through which the subject of action rehearses a mode of being in the world that s/he may bring into action in social reality. The narrative subject participates in the 'dance', understood as patterned movement, of the subject of action, and the experience lived by the subject of action in its actions is one of aesthetic import.

In terms of Bergson's distinction between the outer social being, who lives in mechanical time and is amenable to analysis, and the inner being abiding in duration in states that are not amenable to measure, Yeats's tropes of the dancer living through the dance refer to the inner being which lives in a state of constant becoming. For Bergson the inner being can be known only through deep introspection. For Yeats, the means of introspection are provided by poetry. Through poetry, we reach the inner being by knowing it anew. This process is similar to that of Joyce's epiphanies. Joyce's *claritas* defines the integrative moment when the inner being and the outer being meet with the effect that the material world is seen in a new perspective. For Bergson, the creative consciousness fulfils its potential only through the return of the outer, social being, into the inner being in a moment of epiphanic revelation.

Sorel used Bergson's philosophy to clarify his concept of social myth. For Sorel:

> this psychology of the deeper life must be represented in the following way. [...] To say that we are acting, implies that we are creating an imaginary world placed ahead of the present world and composed of movements which depend entirely on us. [...] These artificial worlds generally disappear from our minds without leaving any trace in our memory; but when the masses are deeply moved it then becomes possible to trace the outlines of the kind of representation which constitutes a social myth. (Sorel, 2004, pp. 48–9)

For Sorel, the moment of manifestation of the creative consciousness is that in which the material world and the world invented by us for action are joined, and thus the inner being enriches the subject of action, recreating social actors in a new configuration. When Sorel argues that the imaginary worlds we constantly figure for ourselves as agents ‘generally disappear from our minds’, he refers to those imaginary worlds that are defined in non-poetic discourse, and which are simply means of orientation in practical, daily living. These individual imaginary worlds do not eventually become the domain of a social myth. The imaginary worlds that last are those shared by the masses, by social groups. In my view, literature as a repository of shared cultural representations is one of the means by which imaginary worlds are made to last, thus becoming the potential material for the formation of a social myth. This social myth at first given in narratives is eventually translated into a language of action. Thus, for Sorel, the language of action is one governed by an aesthetic that is first rendered in a narrative which may capture the imagination of social actors. Rehearsing and thus appropriating the subjective mode of the aesthetic, social actors then enact and demand a transformation of the material reality accordingly. The representational and the performative are imbricated dimensions of social myth, and social myth is a form of art.

Alfred Richard Orage (1873–1934) described the relevance of poetry for practical politics in similar terms. As Tom Gibbons has shown:

> The critical applications of Orage’s evolutionary mysticism are best seen in his two articles for *The Labour Leader* on Edward Carpenter’s *Towards Democracy.* In the first of these he defends Carpenter’s use of free verse on the grounds that it embodies the rhythms of the life which pervades the universe, and that it consequently enables the poet of democracy to integrate men more closely into the universal self to which he and they belong [...] [For Orage, Carpenter’s] poetry creates social wholeness, knitting closer together men who have been disunified and set against each other [by the competition engendered in the capitalist system]. (Gibbons, 1973, pp. 103–4, brackets mine; Orage, 1896, p. 197)

In a Sorelian framework, poetry for Orage works in many ways as social myth does. Poetry is a means to attain conviction rather than certitude, and conviction sustains one’s effort to overcome the capitalist Utopias which have set men against each other. For Orage and Carpenter, the social subject who gains an aesthetic self through art becomes divine and manifested as an aspect of group consciousness affiliated to the universal consciousness of the divine Man, an affiliation lost in capitalism. For all its mysticism, however, the subject of action defined by Orage and Carpenter remains tied to the social world, as with Sorel. The wedding of aesthetic self and social agent focalises social forces with effects in historical reality, however differently envisioned as general strike or living in back-to-nature communes. The political aesthetics correspondingly envisioned as suited to these two different kinds of action are differently conceived. For Sorel, epic is the dominant narrative genre from which one learns one’s being for action in the general strike, whereas for Orage and Carpenter it is poetry in free verse that awakens one to the life of nature and the divine self. One is suited to the warrior, the other to the contemplative. Yet in both cases the experience of art lived in synchronicity is transformed into a historical force which shapes confrontational action for Sorel, and boycotting of capitalist liberal lifestyles for Carpenter and Orage.

For George Russell (AE) the transformation of consciousness engendered by art is confluent with the transformative and revelatory power of spiritual vision. In *The Candle of Vision*, Russell writes:

> We are overcome when we read Prometheus Unbound, but who, as he reads, flings off the enchantment to ponder in what state was the soul of Shelley in that ecstasy of swift creation. Who has questioned the artist to whom the forms of his thought are vivid as the forms of nature? [...] Yet it is reasonable to assume that the highest ecstasy and vision are conditioned by law and attainable by all, and this might be argued as of more importance even than the message of the seers. I attribute to that unwavering meditation and fiery concentration of will a growing luminousness in my brain as if I had unsealed in the body a fountain of interior light [...] the luminous quality gradually became normal in me, and at times in meditation there broke in on me an almost intolerable lustre of light, pure and shining faces, dazzling processions of figures, most ancient, ancient places and peoples, and landscapes lovely as the lost Eden. (Russell, 1920, pp. 27–8)

Russell is thus able to walk into a realm 'radiant with actuality', the realm of the aesthetic self now joined with the subject of action in the acknowledgement that 'all I saw in vision was part of the life of Earth' (Russell, 1920, pp. 28–9). Russell describes here an experience that is not amenable to analysis in scientific terms, like the experience of social myth for Sorel. Yet it is an experience which can be translated into the language of action, into forces that produce historical change.

At least this is the conviction formed upon acquaintance with Russell's work by Henry Agard Wallace, Vice President of the United States from 1941 to 1945 in Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration and Secretary of Agriculture from 1933 to 1940. As Mark Kleinman shows, Wallace first met Russell in 1912 in Dublin and later in his career referred to AE's '"practical" mysticism' as the basis of a political doctrine of cooperative organisation and return to the land that, although not wholly accountable to scientific analysis, can provide a 'means to lessen America's social and economic ills' (Kleinman, 2000, pp. 29–31). Russell's combination of mysticism and practical organisation helped Wallace to realise the need for a 'new religious longing' that would make sense of the economic chaos unleashed in the 1930s as 'the world was collapsing economically in global depression' (Kleinman, 2000, p. 31). In Sorelian terms, the faith engendered by this new religious longing is similar to the faith engendered by social myth. Russell's is an example of how a form of art drawn from an experience of the sacred engendered by myth provided the conviction required for social action, and was translated into the language of action. As Kleinman put it: ‘This fundamental idea, that a return to the earth as a spiritual fountainhead could lead to the new era of human existence, supported the other major facet of Russell’s life, his activities as a leader in the Irish agricultural cooperative movement’ (Kleinman, 2000, p. 29). In specific geographical and cultural contexts, those pictures derived from Russell’s visions, that he ‘formed for himself before action’, to adapt Sorel’s phrase, provided the conviction, if not the certitudes, required for social action, and can be seen as the ingredients of a social myth as conceived by Sorel (2004, p. 42).

Gibbons has shown that the kind of faith in a universal divine mind and divine self harboured by Orage and Carpenter, and, we might add, Russell, is kindred with the mystic belief in ‘the universal consciousness which [Arthur] Symons puts forward as “the central secret of the mystics” in *The Symbolist Movement*’ (Gibbons, 1973, p. 105, Symons, 1899, p. 146). The notion of a universal consciousness shared by symbolists and mystical socialists is also one shared by the Egoists, even though they conceptualise it differently. As Jean-Michel Rabaté points out, Dora Marsden, in her editorial for *The Egoist* of September 1916, theorised the notion of the Ego as a world-inclusive ‘I’ (Rabaté, 2001, p. 31). Rabaté argues that for Marsden ‘the ego is allowed to expand so fully that it comprehends the “universe”’, a notion that puts her ‘in close proximity to T. S. Eliot, whose “Tradition and the Individual Talent” was published for the first time in the pages of *The Egoist*. Both Eliot and Marsden believe that since the ego includes the universe, death is not a fact to be feared, but a return of the individual mind to the continuous tradition that precedes it and will survive it’ (Rabaté, 2001, p. 31, Eliot, 1919, 1986). Thus, if for Carpenter, an important contributor to *The Egoist*, and Russell the universal consciousness is, in the fashion of Buddhism, the ultimate expression of the collective (all things, people, and phenomena are manifestations of the divine mind), in Marsden’s understanding of egoism this universal consciousness is the ultimate expression of individualism. However, a common ground can be found for these positions if we define their relation to the notions of aesthetic self and practical organisation within the same framework of thought.

For Marsden, as for those individualist artists in her circle, Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, or T. S. Eliot, art and social action are means to discover and assert one’s power to reconstruct oneself and the entire world in the aesthetic image of one’s vision. The emphasis is on individual autonomy gained through the discovery of one’s aesthetic self. For Carpenter and Russell, the emphasis is on the discovery of one’s aesthetic self through the collective conceived as itself a form of art. The collective as art text makes possible the aesthetic experience of one’s social self as a form of religious or mystic experience. That a strong emphasis on individual autonomy is less practical in political terms was imputed to Marsden by, for instance, the American Benjamin Tucker, also a Stirnerite egoist, who was regularly engaged in debates in *The Egoist* and the earlier journal from which it developed, *The New Freewoman* (De Angelis, 2004, p. 206). Sorel’s conception of social myth as the expression of individualist force within the collective provides a conceptual middle ground that accommodates both the autonomy of aesthetic self-perception and the translation of aesthetic experience into collective social action. In a Sorelian perspective which values foremost the transformation of conviction into historical forces, both Marsden's and Carpenter's vitalism, although placing the emphasis on different forms of manifestation of the life force, can be seen as catalysing the formation of a social myth.

In Sorelian perspective it would not matter whether the divine mind or universal consciousness exist. What matters is that envisioning their existence engenders conviction. The conviction born in the moment art, vision, or myth wins the subject of action for its world is subsequently translated into the language of action which speaks of certitudes. The moment of aesthetic experience is not amenable to measure, but it produces tangible effects in the material reality. In this view, the experience lived by the subject of myth is both an aesthetic experience and a historically transformative force.

Other anarchists developed their thinking and organising work along similar lines. In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902), Peter Kropotkin argued that 'in the ethical progress of man, mutual support not mutual struggle – has had the leading part' (2008, p. 181). Kropotkin developed a view of social life and art as interconnected forms of spiritual and material progress, derived from his analysis of medieval society in which:

> we see not only merchants, craftsmen, hunters, and peasants united in guilds; we also see guilds of priests, painters, teachers of primary schools and universities, guilds for performing the passion play, for building a church, for developing the 'mystery' of a given school of art or craft [...] all organized on the same double principle of self-jurisdiction and mutual support. (Kropotkin, 2008, p. 109)

In terms of practical politics, Kropotkin's argument endorses cooperative organisation. In aesthetic terms, the practice of mutual aid reflects the kind of harmony and consensus that is achieved in a completed work of art. The harmonising law of an art object is an aesthetic, and the harmonising law of the social collective is mutual aid. The work of mutual aid carried between the parts of an art object is the same kind of work as that carried between the members of the collective. In short, life is art, and the labourer in the collective is an artist who creates material and social reality as a work of art, discovering that which can bring consensus and harmony, finding an aesthetic for life as one finds for art. For Kropotkin, as for Sorel, social practice is implicitly artistic practice.

The aesthetic and transformative experience lived by the subject of a social myth is a form of labour in the sense which can be derived from H. D. Thoreau's philosophy. According to Alfred Tauber, the philosophy of Thoreau was:

> a complex amalgam of aesthetic empiricism, Eastern mysticism, poetry, and manual labor. Each was marked by deliberate purpose, self-reflection,

> and most important, the self-conscious effort of *doing*. Those inspired by Thoreau may not be taken by any of his particular pursuits, but they see in his life a steadfast moral commitment of seeking and affirming personalized meaning and signification.
>
> (Tauber, 2001, p. 21, original italics)

Subordinated to the imperative of action as the labour of aesthetic creation of the self for the world, and of the world for the self, Thoreau's philosophy, like the philosophy of Sorel's social myth, is based on an understanding of representation and action as forms of manifestation of the same phenomenon: conviction made concrete in action, in doing. Conviction or faith are the effects of artistic labour, and befit an ethos of the working man seen as essentially an artist.

If for Thoreau the labour of artistic doing is done on nature and the self who finds its nature seeping through the land, for Benedetto Croce the material for art is history itself. History is not merely a record of facts but an interpretation of the past for the present moment which leads to action. The material for art in this case is the past, not as past, but as an art object experienced in the synchronicity of the present. As Douglas Radcliff-Umstead points out:

> all history for Croce is contemporary history where the past affects us now. There then exists a unity across time as historical events from the past reverberate in the present. [...] Thus, history, as a movement of spirit, always precedes chronicle, which resembles a lifeless recording. [...] The thinking mind transforms chronicle into the vivid events of history. (Radcliff-Umstead, 1987, p. 31)

Yeats, who read Croce, adopted a similar ethos, transforming chronicle, or, if not chronicle, at least the events of myth chronicled by Lady Gregory and himself, into art, and almost simultaneously into the vivid events of revolutionary action.

In Sorel's terms, the conviction engendered by faith in a social myth gives precision and rigidity to a philosophy of action which, when practiced, gives substance and solidity to the subject of myth, such substance and solidity as would grant that fictional subject access into the material reality of the social actor. Another example of how such conviction materialised into the certitudes that emerge when conviction happens as reality is that of the Australian anarchist David Andrade, a contributor to Tucker's anarchist journal *Liberty* and founder of the Melbourne Anarchist Club, among whose membership was J. A. Andrews, an advocate of Kropotkin's anarcho-communism. Andrade's novel, *The Melbourne Riots*, ends by proclaiming the necessity of an absolute faith and conviction, of the kind required by religion, in the struggle for social change. The main characters, the anarchist Harry Holdfast and his friends sacrifice their lives in the cause of the workers' emancipation, and Andrade's phrasing resembles that used in reference to the martyrs of Easter 1916: ‘Harry Holdfast and his friends had sacrificed themselves for humanity. They had consecrated their lives to the martyr’s cause of Freedom. The Workers were at last emancipated!’ (Andrade, 1892, p. 67). Holdfast is an advocate of cooperative organisation and something of his faith must have been materialised in Andrade’s own lifestyle. A year after the novel was published he bought a piece of land and lived much like Thoreau and Carpenter.

The faith in social myth is guided by such visions as art can offer in the moment of synchronicity that unites a social actor with an aesthetic self. That this has practical results in terms of social organisation is once more seen in the story of the New Australia experiment in Paraguay, which Kropotkin endorsed. However, this is also a story that warns against the dangers of faith that ends up harnessed to totalitarian and oppressive forms of social organisation. New Australia is the name of a colony founded by the Australian syndicalist William Lane (1861–1917). Together with other radicals, Lane set out for Paraguay in 1893 to create a new Australia of his heart’s desire as an alternative to capitalist society and British imperialism which he and his group perceived as having permeated the social structures and mentalities of the people of ‘old’ Australia. Eventually, Lane abandoned New Australia and founded another colony, Cosme, in 1894, but gave up the entire project in 1899. Both projects failed in their aim to achieve economic equality among the members of the communes, which would have also led to sexual equality, a declared aim of the project as seen from writings by the Australian Mary Gilmore (Scates, 1997, pp. 188–90). However, this is not to say that the vision shared by the colonists failed to translate into the language of action. The colonies became a space for cultivating faith and conviction through art in a manner that also ensured the social cohesion of the group. Ernest S. Wooster’s *Communities of the Past and Present* (1924) offers an account of William Lane’s philosophy described by his brother, John Lane:

> I should like you to get in true vision William Lane’s idea of the life he was striving for, of the right-living he so earnestly advocated, of the underlying religion which was the basis of all his teachings, whether applied to social reform in Queensland or to social living in Paraguay. I give you his own words: – ‘God speaks in the springing of the corn, in the march of the stars, in the movements of peoples, and in the wondrous justice which underlies the pains and pleasures of our lives. Never yet has chaos been; never yet disorder. Never has the wrong really triumphed; never in all the ages has the right really gone down.’ (Wooster, 1924, p. 50)

The vision that inspired Lane’s effort as a social organiser was one imbued with religious sentiment, kindred with that envisioned by Sorel for the subject of social myth. This religious aspect of social action is different from institutionalised religion, a sophistry by Sorel’s standards, and it is connected to an aesthetics of the life of nature in man and of man in nature in a manner that reminds us of Thoreau. As John Lane’s account, rendered by Wooster, points out:

> In Cosme there was no church, no priest, no ritual, and no recognized religion in the common meaning of the word, implying as it does, belief in certain dogmas and conformity to certain routine observances. But I found Cosme a very religious place; for there religion in its highest sense – the uplifting of man's moral nature in the everyday tendencies of living – was always present.
>
> One of the most noticeable effects of communal living was the constantly rising standard of art as shown in music, drama, and literature. The early concerts tended to crudeness. With few exceptions the items were dreary and the audience bored. But a singing class was formed. Almost everybody tried to join. The toneless and tuneless were weeded out, and singing forged ahead. The dreary, many-versed old-time songs gave way to minstrel melodies with harmonized choruses; then the minstrels developed into gleesingers, and later on into performers in opera and oratorio. Musical folk who could not sing took to instrumental music. The non-musical took to plays. At first the screaming farce was the vogue; then came the Sheridan and Goldsmith comedies, leading up to Shakespeare, the final favorite.
>
> The same growth in appreciation of good literature was just as marked. (Wooster, 1924, p. 53)

Art at Cosme is the glue that holds the community together, and a medium in which socio-political tenets are rehearsed. Collaborative forms of performance develop from individual forms in a process that enables the individual to find his/her place in the harmonised social collective in a manner Kropotkin would have approved. In the performative aspects of art and literature, the aesthetic of the art text is translated into social life, whether or not the piece of literature is of high aesthetic order (as is the case with Shakespeare, for instance) or a popular form (such as ballad singing). A world in dissolution, the 'old' Australia, is recreated in unity in a new configuration, the New Australia.

In this context, it is well worth noting William Lane's racism and his infatuation with Anglo-Saxon racial purity. The danger with faith in social myth is its propensity to condone, in the extreme, an ideology. Lane's discourse, although promoting communist and socialist ideals, sometimes sounds uncannily like a Nazi Socialist discourse *avant la lettre*:

> We Germanic peoples come into history as Communists. From our communal villages we drew the strength which broke Rome down, the energy which even yet lets us live. Not where men beg landless for work in electric-lighted factories, not where women, poverty-fearing amid heaps of riches, shrink from child-bearing, was the courage born that still keeps the drum-tap beating with the sun. It was from wife-kept homes in free villages,

> where the land was common and all were equal, and only the sluggard and the criminal were outcast, where every man had friends to stand by him in his need.
>
> (Wooster, 1924, p. 50)

William Lane's discourse also strikes a note with Irish nationalist discourses, and in this context Yeats's later fascism cannot go unnoticed. Yet what matters for the present analysis is that social organisation requires a form of faith that is similar to religious faith, but also similar to the experience of art in the instant of the revelatory union of social self and aesthetic self shared within a social group. That social myth can become an ideology is not questionable. But, unlike ideology, which pre-exists the social subject, social myth is the medium in which the social subject is endowed with agency by appeal to a form of spiritual experience that is in many ways like the experience of art.

In this sense, in a Marxist perspective, literature and art are forms of production of the material reality, rather than being merely part of a cultural superstructure. They play that part, too, but the moment of reflection on the state of the material is also a moment in which germinate new possibilities of production of the material in new configurations. Literature and art function like social myth in many ways, because they demand belief, enthusiasm, conviction, and surrender of the social self to the aesthetic self. Equally, any form of art and any form of social myth demand a harmonisation of elements found scattered, or forcibly disentangled from other harmonising wholes and reassembled in new aesthetic wholes. In their representational dimension, because they demand faith and unity, art and social myth have a monoglossic dimension as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin: they accomplish 'the task of cultural, national and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels' of a social group whether or not that group has actually seized power from the politically dominant group (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273). On the other hand, as Bakhtin argues:

> at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the coexistence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These 'languages' of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying 'languages'. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291)

Thus, even as social myth and art demand faith and conviction, a contrary tendency emerges from the required distance that is created between one faith and other possible faiths. The possibility of faithlessness is nested in one's faith even as faithlessness is being repudiated. In the following chapter we will look at how Joyce examines precisely this dynamic of the aesthetic of art and myth. For now, let us conclude that the experience of faith and unity demanded in the moment one surrenders one's self to the world set forth in an art text is transposable in the language of action in forms of social organisation: communal living (Kropotkin, Lane), labour in close contact with nature as an otherness taken to heart, and as a life-force (Thoreau, Carpenter), cooperative organisation (Russell, Andrade), resistance to alienation of one's labour (Tucker), dissemination of the idea of unity in a conceptual form or another as universal or divine mind, or all-encompassing Ego through publications (Marsden, Russell), or group solidarity in revolutionary action (almost all of the above including Yeats, Sorel, and Croce). This experience of faith and unity, when shared and cherished, is also the medium of bonding between the members of a social group, and the space of labour of recreation of one's self for a new world, on which the real world will be eventually modelled, successfully or not. Both individualistic and a catalyst of group solidarity, art becomes transubstantiated in a social myth. At the least, it is one of its ingredients as its aesthetic drive for unity in the synchronic moment of experience drives the faith for unity in the social group, and joins in the labour of vision new meanings of self, the next man, and the worlds in which they can belong.

5. Social Myth and James Joyce's Political Aesthetic

This chapter focuses on Joyce's political aesthetic in relation to the concept of myth. This relation is analysed through using Georges Sorel's theorisation of social myth. The analysis is developed in terms of discursive subjection and desubjection, which are defined through Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of monoglossia and heteroglossia.

The analyses offered so far have suggested a close knit relation between discourse and material reality, insisting that, to put it simply, art is a means of production of material reality. That is to say that the processing of art in reading, viewing, contemplating, and so on, is a form of labour which recreates reality. This recreation of reality takes place on both the synchronic and diachronic axes of experience. The subjective identity of the perceiving subject is enriched in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience. The subject reaches beyond itself in longing to meet the aesthetic self set forth in the art text, and, in the resolution of their meeting, finds him/herself anew. Subsequently, the subject is compelled to re-conceive his/her relation to social reality on the diachronic axis of history and thus becomes an agent of social change. The work of representation is done and lived in the infinite moment of synchronicity in which the subject of action is joined with the aesthetic self in a process which re-signifies the identity of the subject of action (the social agent). This joining redefines the life of the social agent, lived in the material world of action, and engages his/her energies in the work of translation of the space-time of art into the space-time of historical reality.

My use of the term 'space-time' echoes Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. For Bakhtin:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)

While Bakhtin acknowledges that 'we must never confuse [...] the *represented* world with the world outside the text' he also argues that it is 'impermissible to take this categorical boundary line as something absolute and impermeable [...]. The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers' (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 253–4, original italics). Bakhtin conceives art as a form of performance of historical relations. The representational quality of art, itself a result of the creative consciousness of authors and artists, engages the creative consciousness of readers or those who signify themselves through the art text, and this creativity in turn engages the energies of social actors in material ways. The representational force of art is thus carried into material reality as historical force: the representational becomes performative.

The passage from Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* quoted below defines sensually the meeting of the aesthetic self and the subject of action, and the ensuing dynamic of change:

> He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld. He did not know where to seek it or how, but a premonition which led him on told him that this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him. They would meet quietly as if they had known each other and had made their tryst, perhaps at one of the gates or in some more secret place. They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and in that moment he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment. (Joyce, 1965, p. 65)

The meeting of the aesthetic self and the subject of action takes place in a moment of supreme tenderness and overwhelming emotion which is ambiguously described as an erotic encounter. That meeting is dramatised through using the scenario of a youthful fantasy as Stephen's train of thought originates in a fancy based on Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Stephen fantasises himself as the Count and longs to meet a Mercedes of his heart's desire. Stephen meets his aesthetic self by meeting an aesthetic recreation, on his terms, of characters from another art text. The meeting 'in the real world' of 'the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld', that is, the meeting of social self and aesthetic self is both erotic, like wedding, and trans-figurative, as in the gaining of a new identity through communion.

Both Mercedes and the Count are internalised as aspects of Stephen's aesthetic self. On the one hand, Stephen meets himself as an aesthetic self by becoming one with a narrative character, the Count of Monte Cristo, and, on the other, represents to himself that meeting through the meeting between the Count and Mercedes: 'The personality of the artist [Stephen's] passes into the narration itself [Stephen's recreated narration of the Count's meeting with Mercedes], flowing round and round the persons and the action like a vital sea' (Joyce, 1965, p. 233). That is, while Stephen uses a concrete literary narrative to define an aesthetic self, imagining that he would become that self and meet Mercedes, the entire process illustrates the general principle of a marriage between social self and aesthetic self, whether or not derived from Dumas's scenario. In fact, this scenario is transcended as the new individuality Stephen has acquired in the marriage of the subject of action and the aesthetic self of the narrative subject places him firmly back into the world of action. He is now ready to translate 'that magic moment' of transfiguration through art, lived in synchronicity and not amenable to analysis, into action on the plane of historical descriptions: 'weakness and timidity and inexperience' had fallen from him (Joyce, 1965, p. 65).

Thus, in the terms of the arguments in this book 'the unsubstantial image' which one's soul constantly beholds is the aesthetic self. In Sorel's understanding of social myth, the myth is born from such unsubstantial images, pictures one forms for oneself before action (Sorel, 2004, p. 42). The ensuing action prefigured in the quotation from *A Portrait* is rather different from what Sorel has in mind for the subject of myth, the general strike for instance, yet it is no less heroic, world shattering, and radical: it will eventually become specified in the famous penultimate paragraph of the novel as the determination 'to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' (Joyce, 1965, p. 276).

The meeting of the aesthetic self and the social self described in the quotation from Joyce is defined by Sorel in his theory of social myth in rather similar terms. Drawing on Henri Bergson's distinction between duration and mechanical time, Sorel describes the moment of creative consciousness as one in which we endeavour to create a new individuality in ourselves. In Bergson's words from *Time and Free Will* (1889), quoted by Sorel, the inner being lived in duration is glimpsed in 'those moments of our life when we made some serious decision, moments unique of their kind, which will never be repeated – any more than the past phases in the history of a nation will ever come back again' (Bergson, 1959, p. 239). Sorel comments that:

> It is very evident that we enjoy this liberty pre-eminently when we are making an effort to create a new individuality in ourselves, thus endeavouring to break the bonds of habit which enclose us. It might at first be supposed that it would be sufficient to say that, at such moments, we are dominated by an overwhelming emotion; but everyone now recognises that movement is the essence of emotional life, and it is, then, in terms of movement that we must speak of creative consciousness. (Sorel, 2004, p. 48)

Where Joyce speaks of transfiguration Sorel speaks of creating a new individuality in ourselves. Where Joyce speaks of supreme tenderness, Sorel speaks of overwhelming emotion. Stephen's experience of communion between social self and aesthetic self releases the dynamism of creation. As in Sorel's terms, 'movement is the essence of emotional life, and it is, then, in terms of movement that we must speak of creative consciousness' (Sorel, 2004, p. 48). The representational, the narrative language, is translated into the performative, the language of action.

If Joyce sees this process as achievable through art, Sorel sees it as achievable through social myth. However, for Sorel a social myth engenders group solidarity (Sorel, 2004, p. 50), whereas for Joyce the experience of art is an inalienable individual experience. Even so, one could compare the experience of art as envisioned by Joyce with the experience of social myth defined by Sorel, for a social myth is also the 'manifestation of *individualistic force in the revolted masses*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 37, 241–2, original italics). But Joyce always defied affiliation of any kind under the banner of *Non Serviam*. Thus, one could say that art functions for Joyce in the same way social myth functions for Sorel, but Joyce denies any narrative the power to subject. At the same time, both Joyce and Sorel share an ethos of desubjection, of liberation from the sophistries of institutionalised discourse of any kind. In that, Joyce's ethos of desubjection also shares a common ground with the ethos of subjective liberation from capitalism and imperialism which was engendered in nationalist and anti-colonial debates. This ethos of desubjection is one shared, for instance, by George Russell, whose style is nevertheless parodied by Joyce in *Ulysses*, W. B. Yeats, whose nationalism is likewise explored, or by mystical socialism of the kind developed by Edward Carpenter. However, while both Sorel and Joyce contest institutionalised authority, Sorel's path leads through belief, faith, and enthusiasm, whereas Joyce's leads through unbelief, faithlessness, and irony.

Sorel has no difficulty in holding that the moment of magic trans-figuration of social self into aesthetic self or the subject of myth is of a religious kind. Drawing on Bergson's philosophy, he argues that:

> It has been observed also that Christianity tends at the present day to be less a system of dogmas than a Christian life, *i.e.* a moral reform penetrating to the roots of one's being; consequently, a new analogy has been discovered between religion and the revolutionary Socialism which aims at the apprenticeship, preparation, and even reconstruction of the individual, – a gigantic task. But Bergson has taught us that it is not only religion which occupies the profounder region of our mental life; revolutionary myths have their place there equally with religion. (Sorel, 2004, p. 52)

Belief, faith, and enthusiasm derived from myth are harnessed to social change, and, importantly, any narrative that leads the subject of action to the overwhelming experience of his/her meeting with the aesthetic self, can be seen as both art and social myth. Although Joyce's declaration of *Non Serviam* places the subject of action outside the ring of power of any myth as defined by Sorel, both he and Sorel sought means of 'moral reform penetrating to the roots of one's being': in a letter to Grant Richards, dated 23 June 1906, Joyce explained that he intended *Dubliners* (1992a) to function as a looking glass 'wherein the Irish could view their shortcomings, namely those religious, political, economic and sexual issues contributing to intense paralysis' (Murphy, 2003, p. 39; Ellmann, 1975, p. 90), and Sorel thought that the image of the general strike might provoke a similar response from the wider society, in the context of French politics and culture. And both assumed the 'gigantic' task of the 'reconstruction of the individual', for Joyce no less than the task 'to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' (1965, p. 276).

Thus, although the subject of Joyce's texts is placed in opposition to social myths as understood by Sorel, Joyce's work does cultivate a sense of art as engendering epiphanic revelation in the same way Sorel's social myth does. This contradiction can be explained by comparing Sorel's and Joyce's understanding of the subjective experience of myth through using Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of monoglossia and heteroglossia. The following passage from Bakhtin's essays on the dialogic imagination defines the discursive and social value of heteroglossia:

> At the time when poetry was accomplishing the task of cultural, national and political centralization of the verbal-ideological world in the higher official socio-ideological levels, on the lower levels, on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all 'languages' and dialects; there developed the literature of the *fabliaux* and *Schwänke* of street songs, folksayings, anecdotes, where there was no language-centre at all, where there was to be found a lively play with the 'languages' of poets, scholars, monks, knights and others, where all languages were masks and where no language could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273)

Analysing Sorel's concept of social myth in this theoretical framework yields contradictory claims. On the one hand, social myth may appear as the expression of 'political centralization of the verbal-ideological world'. For Sorel, the 'imaginary picture of the general strike [...] has given to the whole body of Revolutionary thought a precision and a rigidity which no other method of thought could have given' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 126–7). And, clearly, social myth is not for 'the stages of local fairs' and 'buffoon spectacles' where 'the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all "languages"' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273), although Sorel does ridicule bourgeois sophistries. However, like Bakhtin, Sorel acknowledges the heterogeneous character of one's worldview at any given point in time, where monoglossic and hetero glossic languages compete for the consent of the subject of action to being signified in a legitimate or subversive way: 'by the side of the Utopias [i.e. monoglossic discourses] there have always been myths capable of urging on the workers to revolt' (Sorel, 2004, p. 52, b rackets mine). And, in relation to 'the higher official socio-ideological levels' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273), Sorel's workers are placed in the same marginalised and peripheral position where contestations of dominant discourses may gain momentum:

> a study of the phenomena of the Socialist world would often furnish philosophers with an enlightenment which they do not find in the works of the

> learned. I do not believe, then, that I am labouring in vain, for in this way I help to ruin the prestige of middle-class culture, a prestige which up to now has been opposed to the complete development of the principle of the 'class war.' (Sorel, 2004, p. 54)

This suggests that although social myth evinces a tendency towards monoglossia, it achieves the same effect of contestation of authority that is achieved on the carnival square in Bakhtin's terms. Ultimately, however, Sorel's workers oppose the centralised power of official socio-ideological levels with faith and conviction, whereas Bakhtin's participants at the carnival of subversion oppose it with laughter and irony.

As critics have remarked, although 'Joyce is the striking absence in Bakhtin's work [...] all of Bakhtin's major concepts seem best and most obviously illustrated by *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*' (Kerhsner, 1989, p. 17). But any Bakhtinian reading of Joyce's oeuvre must take into account the writer's aesthetic theory in addition to his narrative techniques. According to Joyce's definition of epiphanies in *Stephen Hero*, aesthetic experience leads to the revelation of an object's 'soul, its whatness' which 'leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance' in the moment art gives it to our perception anew (Joyce, 1944, p. 213). The possibility of such an experience derives from the recognition of that object's integrity followed by its abstraction into a set of relations which express the harmony between the parts within the whole.

To an extent, this conception of aesthetic experience can be explored through Bakhtin's notion of monoglossia. Joyce's *consonantia* evokes, within the terms of Aquinas' scholarship, the conduit of God's grace, fully revealed in the *claritas* of understanding the essence of an object, a *claritas* which might be rendered artistically in literary discourse. Thus Stephen ponders that Aquinas' *claritas*, as a term which he finds inexact:

> would lead you to believe that he had in mind symbolism or idealism, the supreme quality of beauty being a light from some other world, the idea of which the matter is but the shadow, the reality of which it is but the symbol. I thought he might mean that *claritas* is the artistic discovery and representation of the divine purpose in anything or a force of generalisation which would make the esthetic image a universal one, make it outshine its proper conditions. (Joyce, 1965, p. 231)

To the extent that Joyce's work aspires to become the conduit of that grace that would enable readers to experience *claritas*, it tends towards monoglossia, that is, towards a discourse bearing 'a light from some other world', a discourse conveying a reality of ideas and symbols which, as with Plato, stand in a transcendental relation to the mere shadows that are the realisations of ideas and symbols as material reality. Such a discourse is one that, in Bakhtin's terms, 'could claim to be an authentic, incontestable face' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273). In Richard Kearney's words, from Aquinas, Joyce 'seems to have gleaned an understanding of epiphany as "whatness" (*quidditas*), meaning an experience of luminous radiance (*claritas*) wherein a particular thing serves to illuminate a universal and transcendental Form.' However:

> From Duns Scotus, another medieval metaphysician, Joyce learned of a somewhat different notion of epiphany as 'thisness' (*haecceitas*), namely the revelation of the universal in and through the particular. The distinction is subtle but by no means irrelevant. And this second reading – where the divine descends into the world rather than have the world ascend towards it – is, I submit, the one that the later Joyce favoured in *Ulysses* (1986) and *Finnegans Wake* (1992b). (Kearney, 2006, p. 132)

In relation to monoglossia and heteroglossia, Kearney's argument defines what might be seen as two contrary movements within Joyce's discourse. One tends towards monoglossia, seeking the experience of ascension from the world to the divine, as with Aquinas. The other tends toward heteroglossia, seeking the experience of a reality 'where the divine descends into the world' (Kearney, 2006, p. 132).

In the first case, discourse is seen as a site of revelation of universal and transcendental Forms. This, to paraphrase Bakhtin, would be a discourse accomplishing the task of 'centralization of the verbal-ideological world', although, for Joyce, not 'in the higher official socio-ideological levels' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 273), but on the higher levels of aesthetic experience: the subject reaches beyond the world of discourse, ascending on a plane of experience which, in Sorel's terms, has a 'character of *infinity*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 45–6, original italics). In Aquinas' terms, as in Plato's, this is a state in which one experiences the divine. For Joyce, it is a state of experiencing the divine as a form of aesthetic experience. In Sorel's terms, it is a form of religious experience, but not necessarily in a traditional sense since 'revolutionary myths have their place there equally with religion' (Sorel, 2004, p. 52). However, unlike in religious experience as understood by Aquinas, in the experience of social myth and art as understood by Sorel and Joyce the subject is returned to the mundane as the representational is translated into the performative. In this, Sorel and Joyce subscribe to an ethos Bakhtin would have endorsed.

As Kearney put it, ultimately, for Joyce, 'the divine descends into the world rather than have the world ascend towards it' (2006, p. 132). By contrast, for someone like Yeats, poetry is ultimately a means of transcendence of the mundane through ascending to a plane of pure essences and universal forms, even though Yeats also acknowledged the contrary movement whereby the divine is manifested in the avatars of the self, masks obstructing access to the transcendental plane of the divine. The figurative idiom provided in Yeats's poem 'The Second Coming' (1997, p. 189), of the interpenetrating revolving gyres, one expanding, the other contracting, but setting each other in motion, may be used to interpret Joyce's poetics. The contracting gyre would illustrate the process of aesthetic perception whereby one reaches *claritas* in a movement of ascension from the mundane to the divine, from the particular instantiations of grace in mundane events to universal forms. The expanding gyre would illustrate the process of aesthetic perception whereby one may discover the *haecceitas* or 'thisness' of everyday reality in a descending movement from the divine to the mundane, from the essential moment of contact with the divine to the heteroglossic entropy of history. However, for Yeats, the expanding gyre that defines a movement within the self towards the social and the movement in history towards anarchic dissolution hampers the desired ascension of the self to the plane of universal forms, of pure aesthetic existence, whereas for Joyce, ultimately, the opposite is true: faith in universal forms, which is perceived as being, more often than not, harnessed to political or ideological beliefs, obstructs the epiphanic realisation of the self on the plane of history.

Thus, Sorel, Joyce, and Yeats sought the experience of the divine through an aesthetics of myth in different yet related ways. Yeats ultimately sought to transcend material reality through myth. Sorel sought this transcendence but only as a means to break with existing patterns of material life, so that although the subject of social myth uses myth to transcend the present, s/he always returns to the material world. For Joyce the subject contests myth, although not the possibility of divine revelation, and changes reality by disseminating faithlessness within the aesthetically contained myth, yet on the plane of material reality, in Bakhtinian manner. As for Bakhtin, the participants to the carnival need not be excluded from the experience of the divine. After all, medieval carnivals were expressions of 'pagan' beliefs derived from ancient mythological traditions. But it is in the nature of those traditions to call on the subject to enact in this world the myth scenario, rather than to transcend the material world, and this is precisely what Joyce's Bloom is set to do in *Ulysses*: enactment of the classical myth without transcendence of the material reality. The same could be said about the subject of social myth defined by Sorel. The moment of epiphanic revelation lived by the subject of myth is translated into the language of action on the plane of material reality, and not gathered 'into the artifice of eternity' (Yeats, 1997, p. 197), which is the purpose of art for Yeats. In these terms, Sorel's subject of social myth, through his absolute faith in the myth, lives like the subject of myth for Yeats. But the subject of social myth also lives like the subject of Joyce's aesthetic, that is, for the social rather than for the divine. Furthermore, Sorel's social myth can be any narrative, not only traditional myth or religion. This novelisation of myth, whereby any narrative can enter the domain of myth and place the subject against ossified official discourses brings Sorel's philosophy closer to that of Bakhtin.

In any case, for all three authors, the reconstitution of identities in synchronic aesthetic experience is performative. In this respect Sorel's views on art anticipate those of performance theory derived from postmodern theatre. Those who work with performance theory will be familiar with Richard Schechner's landmark study in this field.

Schechner argues that:

> Aesthetic drama compels a transformation of the spectators' view of the world by rubbing their senses against enactments of extreme events, much more extreme than they would usually witness. The nesting pattern [of the drama within the performance] makes it possible for the spectator to reflect on these events rather than flee from them or intervene in them. That reflection is the liminal time during which the transformation of consciousness takes place. (Schechner, 2003, p. 193, brackets mine)

This passage summarises Schechner's general argument that the spectator who witnesses the dramatic enactment of events also becomes a reflection of those events and of the actors enacting them. The transformation of consciousness takes place when the fictional subject acted by the actor comes to inhabit the spectator, with the spectator imagining a mode of being for him / herself as that fictional subject, but as if the fictional reality were the 'real' reality of one's own life. Similarly, Sorel attempted to theorise a unity, rather than division, between spectators and participants in an artistic event. According to John Stanley, quoting Sorel, 'in music and theatre Sorel sees the audience as being increasingly in the position of the ancient choir that participated in dramatic action. "Officially we are not participants, but, in fact, we discuss and act in ourselves as the drama develops"' (Stanley, 2002, p. 188; Sorel, 1901, p. 267). These are, of course, theorisations that apply mainly to theatre performances. As such, they can be fruitfully applied in analyses of Yeats's drama, but most of the tradition of critical theory teaches that they are not easily applicable in analyses of other forms of text, such as Yeats's poetry or Joyce's prose.

However, one is mindful of the fact that Yeats intended some of his poetry to be read aloud (and some of his own recorded readings have the quality of invocation as in a religious ritual), and some of Joyce's prose, especially *Ulysses*, is narrated in a dramatic imitation of epic time. Furthermore, Joyce's poetics, as defined by Stephen Dedalus in the exposition of his aesthetic theory in *A Portrait*, calls for an understanding of the drama of life and forms of art expressing that drama as reciprocally constitutive: 'The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination' (Joyce, 1965, p. 233). This formulation suggests that prose, which purifies and re-projects life in the aesthetic image, is as performative as theatre performance, with both giving dramatic form to the aesthetic image of life. We absorb what we experience through art and then model on action what we absorb.

In this view, Sorel's social myth is both a form of artistic expression and, for the subject of myth, a form of action in material reality. Given Sorel's insistence that myth engenders an epic state of mind, we might explore this joining of narrative subject and the subject of action through Bakhtin's reflection on the genre of epic. Bakhtin explains such joining in the following terms:

> 'I myself,' in an environment that is distanced, exists not *in* itself or for *itself* but for the self's descendents, for the memory such a self anticipates

> in its descendents. I acknowledge myself, an image that is my own, but on this distanced plane of memory such a consciousness of self is alienated from 'me.' I see myself through the eyes of another. This coincidence of forms – the view I have of myself as self, and the view I have of myself as other – bears an integral, and therefore naive, character – there is no gap between the two. [...] The one doing the depicting coincides with the one being depicted. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 34, original italics)

It is the same for the subject of social myth in Sorel's perspective. 'I myself' is the utterance of an aesthetic self speaking in the voice of the social agent in the 'distanced environment' of a fictional reality, yet 'for the memory such a self anticipates in its descendents', that is, for the future social world that the social agent, spurred into action through its substantiation of a fictional, aesthetic self, bequeaths. In this sense, Sorel's social myth is monoglossic in Bakhtin's terms, for there is no gap between the 'other' self of fiction and the social self. Bakhtin acknowledges 'the homogenizing power of myth over language' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 60), a power Sorel celebrates, for such power can give 'to the whole body of Revolutionary thought a precision and rigidity' that cannot be gained otherwise (Sorel, 2004, p. 127). However, as we have seen, Sorel also emphasises the performative character of the myth when he says that, as members in the audience of a dramatic performance: 'Officially we are not participants, but, in fact, we discuss and act in ourselves as the drama develops' (Sorel, 1901, p. 267). Sorel emphasises the importance of an internal dialogue between the spectator and the character which the spectator welcomes in his / her heart and mind as him / herself. In Bakhtin's terms, the process Sorel describes is one of 'novelisation', understood as the renewal of one's worldview in the process of interaction with competing worldviews, such as one encounters in the experience of art.

In this perspective, Sorel's position is perfectly compatible with militant social activism and also with the experience of art, as interrelated processes. Bakhtin's monoglossia would be characteristic of the moment of recreation of oneself in the aesthetic experience when 'the one doing the depicting coincides with the one being depicted' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 34). But, because this meeting of the subject of action and the subject of art is outside history, a mere fraction of time in which conviction takes hold, and not a historical moment in mechanical time (although it becomes manifested as a historical force) it does not translate into ideology, as is the case with monoglossic epic as understood by Bakhtin. Quite the contrary, it prepares the ground for action that dislodges and contests official authority and the languages in which this authority is consecrated. The moment of monoglossic binding of social self and aesthetic self anticipates a heteroglossic manifestation of creative consciousness enabled through the dialogue of the social self with his / her fictional avatar. As with Yeats's gyres that move in opposite directions, with the apex of the contracting gyre touching the base of the expanding gyre, the climactic moment of monoglossic contraction reveals the character of the next stage of one's becoming, enriched through the climactic moment of the meeting between the social self and the aesthetic self, but also defined through the heteroglossia of dialogue between the social self and the aesthetic self.

Contradictorily, Joyce's discourse achieves a similar effect. The route to desubjection and subversion, however, is different. For Sorel, the subject passes through the experience of monoglossia in a moment void of time, to reach a world of heteroglossic contestation of authority. For Joyce, too, the social agent wants to meet 'in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld' (Joyce, 1965, p. 65). However, because Sorel accepts the possibility of an epic state of mind as a route to the social, the subject of social myth welcomes the integrative power of monoglossia. Because Joyce denies that an epic state of mind is other than imprisoning, the subject of myth is always present in the vestment of parodic-travestying forms, welcoming the disintegrative power of heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin, speaking here of the parodic genres of classical antiquity:

> These parodic-travestying forms [...] liberated the object from the power of language in which it had become entangled as if in a net; they destroyed the homogenizing power of myth over language; they freed consciousness from the power of the direct word, destroyed the thick walls that had imprisoned consciousness within its own discourse, within its own language. A distance arose between language and reality that was to prove an indispensable condition for authentically realistic forms of discourse. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 60)

Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* achieve precisely what Bakhtin attributes here to the parodic genres of antiquity. Using Bakhtin's words to define Sorel's concept of social myth, one might say that a social myth has a homogenising power over language and the subject who expresses his/her identity through it. It subjects one's consciousness to the direct word imprisoning consciousness within its own discourse, its own language, closing the gap between the social subject of material reality and the fictional subject of myth. However, for Sorel, the subject of myth does not remain within the thick walls of an ossified reality, as is the case with the subject of nationalist epic to which Bakhtin refers. The subject of myth translates this experience of 'subjection', in fact, an experience of recreation of one's subjective identity, into a language of action for social change. For Sorel the meeting of the subject of action and the aesthetic self is also a climactic moment of manifestation of the creative consciousness, for it is through this meeting that the social agent gains a new horizon of awareness. In this case, monoglossia in fact provides the required focus for engaging the social subject in action for change and regeneration, albeit in a heroic mode of confrontation with authority rather than in a carnivalesque subversion of authority. This heroic mode is one that was contested by Joyce, but adopted by Yeats and other Irish nationalists.

Thus, the dominant tendency in Joyce's work is toward heteroglossia, in contradistinction with, for instance, the dominant tendency in Yeats's work towards monoglossia. These are, however, only predominating tendencies. More likely, heteroglossia and monoglossia are simultaneously present and set each other in motion in the discourses of both Joyce and Yeats. That is why Joyce's political aesthetic can be explored through Sorel's concept of social myth, even though one would be right in saying that Joyce deals with myth in an 'anti-Sorelian' manner. Both Joyce's and Sorel's myth subscribe to an ethos of quest for epiphanic revelation through the meeting of the subject of action and the subject of myth. This meeting yields a regenerated social agent who is enabled to reinterpret the world and resituate him/herself within it in a process that can be adequately described through Paul Ricoeur's words:

> Interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being – or, if you prefer Wittgenstein to Heidegger, of new forms of life – gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself. If the reference of the text is a project of a world, then it is not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself. (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 94)

In this perspective, social myth enables a novel worldview as the subject of social myth receives a new mode of being from the myth. With Joyce, this moment is the moment of epiphanic revelation in which the material is transubstantiated, through art, into aesthetic material. Whereas for Sorel aesthetic material is the matter of epic, for Joyce it is the matter of carnivalesque participation of the subject on the plane of history. Because Sorel's subject is acting in the way of epic heroes, it is a more suitable avatar for the subject of action engaged in struggle for social change, an assessment that could also adequately describe the situation of Yeats's subject. It is no surprise, then, that syndicalist anarchists, who rely on the collective for social organisation in opposition to capitalism, find themselves more true to their goals in the attitude of the epic hero, the one who, in Bakhtin's terms, 'exists not *in* itself or *for* itself but for the self's descendants, for the memory such a self anticipates in its descendants' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 34, original italics). That is, the revolutionary exists through the social collective and for the social collective, like the epic hero. But s/he becomes a conduit for the hero's power, bringing him down from the distanced environment of myth upon the enemy sighted in the present, carrying that hero into oneself and transforming that power into historical force. By contrast, the individualist anarchist truly finds himself on the carnival square. The hero of myth in Joyce's *Ulysses* is less an epic hero than a comic hero, yet no less effective in engendering in readers an attitude of protest and sub version. Thus, somewhat contradictorily, both Sorel and Joyce participate in an ethos of desubjection, and both social myth and Joyce's rewriting of myth can make the divine shine through the here and now. Yet while social myth gives impetus to social drives, Joyce's writing gives impetus to anti-social drives in the subject of action. This contradiction is the subject of the next chapter.

6. Social and Anti-social Aesthetic Drives in Joyce, Yeats, and Sorel

Georges Sorel's theory of social myth offers an opportunity to reintegrate myth, narrative or any kind of art text, and social action in a unifying perspective. The main points in Sorel's understanding of social myth which allow us to achieve such integration are: the view that any kind of text can be regarded as a myth, provided that it serves, for the subject of myth, as a means to envision a new and desired world to come in a revolutionary way (Sorel, 2004, p. 52); this world is defined in pictures formed for action, that is, in a narrative language which is translatable into the language of movement and action so that, as in traditional myth, social agent and the narrative subject through which the social actor signifies himself are fused (Sorel, 2004, pp. 46–50); and this process manifests both aesthetic creativity and a material reproduction of the world, not in the serial mode of capitalism, but in the mode of artisans and craftsmen, that is, preserving the individuality and uniqueness of the subject recreating himself and of the world which he has recreated (Sorel, 2004, pp. 54–5).

For Sorel, myth is a means of reconstruction of the self and of society, helping the proletariat to picture action against capitalism and bourgeois liberalism, and in this specific application of the concept, myth becomes a useful theoretical tool for examining other related forms of social organisation, such as anti-colonialism, and corroborating artistic practices, such as avant-gardism. In *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel asserts that: 'Moreover, so little did I think of asking the *École des Beaux-Arts* to provide a teaching suitable to the proletariat, that I based the *morale* of the producers not on an aesthetic education transmitted by the middle class, but on the feelings developed by the struggles of the workers against their masters' (Sorel, 2004, p. 55, original italics). In an Irish context, the struggles of the workers against their masters were intertwined with the struggles of the nationalists against their colonial masters. These struggles were in turn assumed within the struggles of modernist artists against authority of various kinds, as is the case with W. B. Yeats and James Joyce.

As Michael North has shown, Yeats's political aesthetic places the subject (the reader) against capitalist liberalism, although not in the position of a member of the solidary socialist group, in spite of earlier interest in emancipating the working class. Analysing Yeats's 'Genealogical Tree of Revolutions', North argues that for Yeats 'fascism resolves the antinomies left in modern politics by dissolving the liberal opposition of individual and community, but not by dissolving it completely into a mere undifferentiated whole, as Yeats felt communism did' (North, 1991, p. 72). However, although Yeats rejected communism whereas Sorel embraced it, Yeats's use of action scenarios derived from Irish myth is similar to Sorel's use of the general strike scenario derived from the

working-class ethos of resistance, so that Yeats's myth can be seen as absorbable in a social myth enabling, as for Sorel, both aesthetic experience and determination to act, and a dialectic relation between the two.

As North points out, in the 'Genealogical Tree of Revolutions', below both the Italian philosophy and communism, Yeats placed 'A Race Philosophy' acknowledging that the antinomies between the individual and the racial 'family' cannot be resolved and thereby concluding that conflict is the eternal condition of humankind (North, 1991, pp. 72–3). The conflict between individual and family referred to here is a reflection of the conflict between the enlightened artist and the uncomprehending mob, with the artist struggling against a capitalism identified in colonial terms as thoroughly British and fighting both capitalism and colonialism from the fortress of an unadulterated, rural Ireland, perceived through the lens of its traditional Celtic myths. Thus, conflict becomes the 'sanctified' condition (North, 1991, p. 73) of the progressive artist engaged in anti-capitalist and anti-colonial struggles.

In this, Yeats's use of myth is precisely like Sorel's, for in Sorel's case conflict is the precondition of the manifestation of the power of social myth, as seen in the example of the general strike.

North argues that:

> Yeats sees clearly the results of the modern project, as they have been seen since Hegel, but he interprets these results as an unchangeable, almost biological situation. For all his fanaticism, then, the real danger of Yeats's politics is that they will merely confirm the status quo. Though the table professes to provide the genealogy of revolution, though it ends by enshrining conflict as its one constant, by that very sanctification it solidifies the liberal system Yeats hated more than anything. (North, 1991, p. 73)

However, in a theoretical framework derived from Sorel's theory of social myth, it is possible to see productivity where North sees defeat. For Yeats, the visionary individual separated from the masses provides the myths that might move the masses. The labour of the artist is not alienating like the labour of workers in capitalism, but productive in the sense that it offers an exemplary way of preserving the uniqueness, originality, and singularity of one's aesthetic self, in the way an artisan would, in the creation of an artefact. The creative process of Yeats's artist resembles that of Sorel's artisan worker who transforms the raw material of reality into art in the alchemic laboratory of the workshop, and both Yeats and Sorel saw this creative process as paradigmatic of processes of social change: aesthetic practice and social praxis are homologised.

The ways in which Joyce's art opens a world of possibilities for social change can be seen in the same perspective. One example is that of the epiphanies triggered in the joining of social self and aesthetic self, as in *Dubliners*. Another is the aesthetico-political stance invited by the heteroglossic aesthetic practice of *Ulysses*. As Andrew Gibson argued, the 'Telemachiad' prepares the ground for Stephen's admission that:

> A historical actuality (the colonial history of Ireland, for example) was one possibility among others (like the free development of Irish society through history). These other possibilities cannot be granted the same status as an actuality. But that does not mean that they were without value, nor does it render them null and void. They are still available *to thought* (and therefore to art). Possibility is not merely the negative where actuality is the positive term. This is the liberating recognition on which Stephen builds, in 'Proteus' [...] its repercussions for *Ulysses* as a whole go far beyond that chapter. (Gibson, 2002, p. 38, original italics)

Precisely Sorel's position in relation to social myth where he argues that 'we should be especially careful not to make any comparison between accomplished fact and the picture people had formed for themselves before action' (Sorel, 2004, p. 42). The difference between Joyce and Sorel in thus conceiving the relation of art to material reality, of possibility to actuality, is that for Joyce the revelation of a new mode of being in the world does not lead the subject of action to the social group, as is the case with Sorel. For Joyce, the expression of conflict is not, as in Sorel and Yeats, a reflection of irreconcilable oppositions between the enlightened sect and either the mass lost to intellectual sophistries, or the capitalist-imperialist classes, and Joyce's art does not sanctify this conflict. Instead, the expression of conflict in Joyce's art is similar to that identified by Mikhail Bakhtin in the novelistic mode of dialogue between worldviews rendered in stratified and secular languages.

For Bakhtin, a novelist offers images of languages. This novelisation of ossified, authoritarian worldviews may yield the kind of images that, in Sorel's perspective, the social agent appropriates for the signification of the self before action. To the extent that such images take hold of the subject of action, Joyce's art functions in the same way art functions, as social myth, for Sorel. However, a social myth developing from Joyce's art might be more properly termed 'anti-social', for it creates for the subject of action a subjective position from which it is possible to contest, in the anti-social and subversive mode of the carnival, both any discourse's claims to authority, and the political agenda of the group that claims the individual's faith for concerted action. In Bakhtin's terms, the subject of social myth as defined by Sorel, or the subject of nationalist myth as defined by Yeats, lives the experience of art, and the conflict that ensues between self and the world, now perceived as needing change, in poetic mode, the mode that confers authority to the social group. In the same Bakhtinian terms, for Joyce, the subject of action lives myth (the myth of Ulysses, for instance), the experience of art, and the conflict between possible identities in prosaic mode, the mode of contestation of the authority of a social group.

In order to illustrate this argument, which, in due course, will be further developed with references to Bakhtin's theorisation of poetic and prosaic modes, I shall refer to Gibson's reading of the ninth chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses* ('Scylla and Charybdis'). Gibson shows that 'one paradigmatic instance of major importance to "Scylla" is the Irish literary controversy of the 1890s' and focuses on the Dowden controversy of those years between Yeats and the Trinity College Shakespeare scholar Edward Dowden (Gibson, 2002, pp. 60–6, p. 60). According to Gibson, the presence at the beginning of 'Scylla' of T. W. Lyster, a disciple of Dowden who encouraged Yeats to write, indexes a set of conflicting positions and divided loyalties symptomatic of wider debates on the role of Irish literature in relation to the British tradition (Gibson, 2002, p. 62). Gibson points out that Yeats knew Dowden through his father, but reacted strongly against Dowden's adoption of 'middle-class, utilitarian, Victorian English assumptions' of the superiority of a British literary tradition seen through those assumptions as engendering the Protestant Unionist virtues of thrift, entrepreneurial spirit, industry, and commonsensical reason (Gibson, 2002, pp. 62–4). These values Dowden promoted through his scholarship on Shakespeare. By attacking Dowden's claims that Shakespeare's identity and work illustrated these values, Yeats challenged both capitalism and British colonialism. As Gibson points out, the debate 'has a clear political structure' pitting the nationalist poetic fervour of the Revivalists against the unionist prosaic coldness of pro-British cultural ideologies (Gibson, 2002, p. 64). To the utilitarian Shakespeare envisioned by Dowden, Yeats opposes a Shakespeare seen, as in a Celtic twilight, in the image of a dreamer misunderstood by the mob and the State, a wandering bard who lives off his own spiritual abundance (Gibson, 2002, p. 64).

We then have two worldviews attributed to Shakespeare and the poet in general, two language images that offer contesting positions for the subject of action: a language image that can be read as a pro-capitalist sophistry legitimating imperial power (Dowden's) and a language image that can be read as tributary to an anti-capitalist and anti-colonial social myth of Celtic inspiration (Yeats's). In Sorel's terms, 'the *morale* of the producers' (workers as artisans or artists as workers) that these competing languages engender would be based, in Dowden's case, on 'an aesthetic education transmitted by the middle class' (yielding Utopias or sophistries which promote the values of capitalism), and in Yeats's case 'on the feelings developed by the struggles of the workers against their masters', although, of course, Yeats might have sneered at the notion that an enlightened elite could be born from the working class (Sorel, 2004, p. 55, original italics). Nevertheless, even though Yeats's myth is for the initiated rather than for the masses, both the Revivalist artistic elite and the mob are subordinated to dominant British elites. In this perspective, the Irish at any level of class, education, or wealth play the part of the 'working class' to the British at any of those levels, who play the part of the 'bourgeois class' by virtue of imperial domination. Because of this colonial relation, a class relation can also be seen as underlying the Irish-British relations.

Thus, in Sorel's terms, Yeats's aesthetic practice is consistent with the creation of a social myth, and the reader is positioned against capitalism and imperialism in the same manner in which the subject of social myth is positioned against those same evils. Furthermore, within the subordinate categories, the members of aristocratic artistic elites and the members of the enlightened working-class sect experience conflict and alienation from the masses in similar terms: the artist is alienated from the 'mob' in Yeats's view, and the progressive worker is alienated from those workers who buy into the moderate syndicalist and capitalist sophistries, in Sorel's view. Both experience this conflict in poetic mode, envisioned by Sorel as underpinning the experience of social myth.

In his reading of 'Scylla and Charybdis', Gibson shows that Stephen's account of Shakespeare's work manages to navigate the straits guarded by Yeats and the Revivalists and Dowden's kind of Unionists in a manner that exposes them as myths. For Joyce, the Revivalist position is hopelessly flawed by their reliance on empowerment through faith that, born from a poetic mode of envisioning the self and the world, engenders a monoglossic discursive regime in the sphere of politics, what Joyce perceived to be a 'mixture of snobbery, elitism, and political unreality' (Gibson, 2002, p. 66). At the same time, as Gibson shows:

> Stephen [...] turns Dowden's case on its head. In setting Shakespeare in a historical, economic, and political context, Stephen also develops a critique rather than a celebration of Shakespeare and his world. He sets him in certain proportions, even diminishes his stature, though not as a 'lord of language' (9.454). He strips Shakespeare of the cultural eminence and centrality which Dowden takes for granted. He emphatically resists Dowden's conflation of Shakespeare with an auratic Englishness. He counters Dowden's Protestant Shakespeare by repeatedly linking Shakespeare to Catholic writers and understanding him in Catholic terms. (Gibson, 2002, p. 67, *U*, 9: 454)

This, Gibson argues, is Joyce's way of developing a '"fenian" subversion' of Shakespeare without participating in the poetic mode of the Revivalists, and also without sharing 'the assumptions – of unity, homogeneity, self-identity, the purity of "the original" – that are fundamental to the work of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Shakespeareans' (Gibson, 2002, p. 79). In doing so, Joyce creates a subject position from which it is possible to contest social myths as defined by Sorel, yet at the same time preserve the conflict between the individual and the dominant elite, in which germinate historical forces of change. Thus Joyce constructs 'anti-social' myths, in that the subject of action is distanced from social groups, ever a subject engaged in dialogue and never a voice in a monoglossic chorus.

However, it can be argued that Joyce's narratives bring one to action in a process Sorel defined for the subject of social myth, but in prosaic rather than poetic mode. According to Sorel:

> And yet without leaving the present, without reasoning about this future, which seems forever condemned to escape our reason, we should be unable to act at all. Experience shows that the *framing of a future, in some indeterminate time*, may, when it is done in a certain way, be very effective, [...]; this happens when the anticipations of the future take the form of those myths, which enclose with them, all the strongest inclinations of a people, of a party or of a class, inclinations which recur to the mind with the insistence of instincts in all the circumstances of life; and which give an aspect of complete reality to the hopes of immediate action by which, more easily than by any other method, men can reform their desires, passions, and mental activity (Sorel, 2004, pp. 124–5, original italics).

For Joyce, both the Revivalists and the Unionists sought to create in their discourses 'anticipations of the future [...] which enclose with them' what each side perceived in different and opposing ways as 'the strongest inclinations of a people, of a party or of a class' (Sorel, 2004, p. 125). This mastery of discourse over the life of the subject of action is monoglossic in the creation of patterns of perception that enforce an official worldview. Their force has 'the insistence of instincts' which 'give an aspect of complete reality' to a social subject's 'hopes for action', disciplining and reforming 'their desires, passions, and mental activity' (Sorel, 2004, p. 125). While these Revivalist and Unionist social myths also open up worlds of possibility for the subject of action, they do so by recruiting the subject into militant social groups. Joyce does not reject the possibilities opened for the subject of action in his/her framing of the future in the images gained from the fusion of self and aesthetic self in poetic, epiphanic mode. But he does reject the patterns that emerge when this transformation of the self becomes institutionalised and monoglossic. This prosaic quality of discourse in Joyce is different from the prosaic quality of Unionist discourse: the former acknowledges the unresolved character of language as a vehicle of competing worldviews, whereas the latter is prosaic in the Protestant sense of entrepreneurial economic materialism. The language of Unionist discourse, like that of the Revivalist and nationalist discourses, is in fact monoglossic, often expressed in epic-poetic mode, the mode of a social myth. Dowden's discourse on Shakespeare is glorifying, inviting patriotic pride and the exhilarating conviction in the righteousness of the Unionist cause (Gibson, 2002, p. 64), and nationalist discourse can be equally so in spite of aiming to institutionalise an opposing worldview.

Thus, as Gibson argues:

> The Shakespeare of 'Scylla' is profoundly pluralized, multi-purpose if you like, a Shakespeare with whom it is always possible to play, a plaything but also a playfellow. It is through the principle of play – the production of a multiplicity of contexts that is also a multiplicity of mind – that Joyce's chapter decisively progresses, not only beyond Scylla and Charybdis, but beyond the very mode of formulating political and cultural issues symbolized in the Homeric choice. (Gibson, 2002, pp. 79–80)

To an extent, Sorel's subject of social myth is one for whom the myth imposes the Homeric choice by engendering an 'epic state of mind' (Sorel, 2004, p. 248). By contrast, Joyce makes it possible for the subject of action to internalise a heteroglossic state of mind and thus to formulate a political and cultural identity that contests social myths. The subject of action becomes aware, in Bakhtin's terms, of a 'multi-languagedness' that:

> strengthens and deepens the internal contradictoriness of literary language itself; it undermines the authority of custom and of whatever traditions still fetter linguistic consciousness; it erodes the system of national myth that is organically fused with language, in effect destroying once and for all a mythic and magical attitude to language and the word. (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 368–9)

In Bakhtin's terms, Joyce's writing is anti-social in the same way the language of the novel is anti-social by subverting the monoglossia of the direct word, the word of poetic discourse that gives precision and rigidity to political and cultural formulations. Using Bakhtin's distinction between the poetic and the prosaic mode of discourse, one monoglossic, the other heteroglossic, Yeats's and Joyce's poetics can be easily played off against each other. In Bakhtin's view:

> If the art of poetry, as a utopian philosophy of genres, gives rise to the conception of a purely poetic, extrahistorical language, a language far removed from the petty rounds of everyday life, a language of the gods – then it must be said that the art of prose is close to a conception of languages as historically concrete and living things. The prose art presumes a deliberate feeling for the historical and social concreteness of living discourse, as well as its relativity, a feeling for its participation in historical becoming and in social struggle; it deals with discourse that is still warm from that struggle and hostility, as yet unresolved and still fraught with hostile intentions and accents; prose art finds discourse in this state and subjects it to the dynamic-unity of its own style. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 331)

In these terms, Yeats's poetic language is extrahistorical in its appeal to myth, and certainly 'far removed from the petty rounds of everyday life', indeed a 'language of the gods'. Quite the contrary, Joyce's prosaic language evinces a 'feeling for the historical and social concreteness of living discourse', for its conflicting, unresolved intentions and accents which result from the clash of worldviews in the Ireland of his time.

There is then a case for arguing that whereas Yeats's writing can be seen as aiding in the construction of a social myth, Joyce's writing appears to be anti-social in creating subjective positions from which it becomes possible to contest social myths. However, this argument is troubled by Sorel's emphatic statement that 'the *best way* *of understanding any group of ideas in the history of thought is to bring all the contradictions into sharp relief* ' (Sorel, 2004, p. 230, original italics). This is precisely what Joyce does, so it would seem legitimate to argue that, contradictorily, Joyce's writing, too, contributes to the construction of a social myth, even while subverting other social myths. In order to understand this contradiction we might resort to Bakhtin's description of the dynamic relations of heteroglossia and monoglossia in discourse:

> It is our conviction that there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of direct discourse – artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday – that did not have its own parodying and travestying double, its own comic-ironic *contre-partie*. What is more, these parodic doubles and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctioned by tradition and just as canonized as their elevated models. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 53)

Bakhtin's argument here and elsewhere shows that any discourse is sustained through conflicting forces operating simultaneously. A centripetal force imposes a centralisation of the verbal-ideological world in monoglossic language, the language of poetry, engendering what Sorel refers to as an epic state of mind. A centrifugal force opens up discourse to different languages, that is, possibilities of different world-views, the language of prose contesting accepted, official, and dominant ways of seeing. However, such bringing of all contradictions into sharp relief achieves the purpose of social myth as defined by Sorel (Sorel, 2004, p. 230).

In this perspective, in any cluster of signification and action one is compelled to see manifested simultaneously two opposing and conflicting tendencies. The contrary tendencies can be defined through a series of terms that are antithetical, yet dialectically related. The series corresponding to the centripetal force contains the terms social myth, conviction, belief, monoglossia, actuality, and epic state of mind. The series corresponding to the centrifugal force contains the terms anti-social myth, certitude, disbelief, heteroglossia, and possibility. The series are dialectically related, which is to say that there cannot be a manifestation of the contrary forces which the series define, including art texts and therefore literary narrative, in the appraisal of which we could completely disentangle, except for analytical purposes, social myth from anti-social myth, conviction from certitude, belief from disbelief, monoglossia from heteroglossia, actuality from possibility, and epic state of mind from the state of ironical fancy. Depending on which force temporarily wins over the other, we could define the dominant quality of a text through the terms of one series rather than through those of the other, while acknowledging that the dominant mode of expression is developed at the expense of the repudiated mode.

Thus Yeats's literary discourse is predominantly poetic, and, as Bakhtin noted, the mode of poetry is particularly suited to the manifestation of monoglossia, the pathos of conviction and belief, as in certain epic forms and as in art texts that demand of those who respond to the text to lose themselves in the actuality of art's style (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 272–5). This actuality is that of the meeting of the subject of action and the narrative subject in which the subject of action discovers his aesthetic self. At the same time, Yeats's texts create an anti-social position for the subject of action. On a primary level, this anti-social position is one of contestation of British materialism, at the expense of which the poetic world of a traditional spiritual Ireland is created, with the effect that, on a secondary level, the subject of action is positioned anti-socially in opposition to the unenlightened mob as his/her aesthetic-political consent is won for the Anglo-Irish elite group. In the actuality of aesthetic experience the subject of action internalises the image of a language in which a traditional spiritual Ireland can exist, and subsequently jostles that language image against other possible languages engendering different worldviews, such as that of materialism. In this, Yeats's poetics preserves a measure of heteroglossia. However, Yeats eventually sanctifies that very conflict as the condition of the progressive artist, so that contradiction itself drives the subject to faith in poetic mode, as with social myth. Conflict, contradiction, and the isolation of the elite social group from the mob as well as from the tide of materialism define a nationalist social myth.

Joyce's writing dislocates the possible languages and worldviews of the social subject from the poetic mode of social myth, from the actuality demanded by the poetic mode, and returns them to the actuality, pregnant with possibility, of concrete social experience. Hence, Joyce's writing leads to engagement in 'historical becoming and in social struggle' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 331) in prosaic mode. Joyce's writing is for the individual engaged in historical becoming and social struggle on his own terms, opposing the terms of the poetically defined group, finding his way between the Scylla and Charybdis guarded by various ideologies. But Joyce's writing is also amenable to a poetic mode of experience in epiphanies. The experience of the divine in the mundane, of the thisness and whatness of the world, is a poetic experience. Thus, while *Ulysses* is a novel of competing language images and world-views, it is also, taken in its entirety, an epiphany that transforms the wandering social subject into the wandering hero of epic, of myth. This transformation, however, is one in which 'the divine descends into the world rather than have the world ascend towards it' (Kearney, 2006, p. 132). This fusion of social self and the aesthetic rendering of the heroic self derived from classical myth never does bring about, in the terms of Bakhtin's criticism of epic as poetic genre, a 'coincidence of forms – the view I have of myself as [social] self, and the view I have of myself as other [epic hero]', never closes the 'gap between the two', so that it becomes impossible for 'the one doing the depicting' (the self signifying his/her identity through the identity of the epic hero) to coincide 'with the one being depicted' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 34, brackets mine). Hence, while it is possible to read *Ulysses* as participating in a social myth of resistance on Sorel's terms, for it brings '*all the contradictions into sharp relief*' (Sorel, 2004, p. 230, original italics), the dominant tendency in Joyce's writing here and elsewhere is centrifugal, heteroglossic, undermining the faith, belief, and enthusiasm which Sorel sees as characteristic of the subject of social myth.

These considerations suggest that every literary discourse has a social and an anti-social dimension. In every discourse, the conflict between its social and anti-social tendencies brings to light a plethora of conflicts between antithetical yet dialectically related terms: between social myth and anti-social myth, between conviction and certitude, between belief and disbelief, between monoglossia and heteroglossia, between actuality and possibility, and between epic state of mind and prosaic state of fancy.

However differently these conflicts are managed by Yeats, Joyce, and Sorel, for all three authors, in Hegelian perspective, the subject of action finds a new social self through meeting his/her aesthetic self in the actuality of aesthetic experience. But this actuality does not remain an ideal, Hegelian reality. The social agent translates aesthetic experience into social action, and ultimately creates a new reality in the material world. Marxist theory entices one to regard these acts of translation and creation as forms of labour, but the problem is its emphases on the masses and on the idea of alienated, rather than individually empowering, labour. Sorel's anarchist theory reconciles Hegelian idealism and Marxist materialism. Its main protagonist is the individual as artisan, rather than the anonymous worker. The worker is an artist, constantly labouring to recreate his/her identity and the material world.

Other modernist writers and philosophers can be analysed in terms of a Sorelian, anarchist dialectic of social and anti-social forces manifested in the labour of art. The work of Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound is developed in poetic mode, and its dominant aspect is actuality understood as the concrete representational taking over of the social subject by the aesthetic self. Their poetry implies a positioning of the social subject against existing norms, with the social subject rehearsing the possibility of rejection of these norms in its surrender to the Vortex that sucks in past and present, or to the stillness of the statuesque self caught in an image out of social, mechanical time. In this, the subject's experience is akin to the experience of the subject of social myth. As Rod Mengham pointed out, in reference to Lewis's Vorticism:

> the individuality of the artist defines itself against the claims of extraneous energies rushing through it and round it, just as for Sorel, the highest endeavour that humanity is capable of must stand the test of opposition and conflict. There is a structural parallel between the formal perfection that Lewis imagines at the heart of motion and the moral perfection that Sorel believes can only be generated from within a context of prolonged antagonism. (Mengham, 1994, p. 37)

Thus, in the translation of the synchronic experience of Lewis's art into the language of action the social subject expresses heteroglossic forces of opposition and conflict. This expression is akin to what Sorel called a '*manifestation of individualistic force in the revolted masses*', although, of course, for Sorel, the translation of the language of art into the language of movement leads the subject of action to the social group, whereas the purpose of establishing individual freedom prevails in Lewis's case (Sorel, 2004, pp. 241–2, original italics). Yet at the same time, this anti-social, centrifugal drive promoted in Lewis's art and philosophy is counteracted by the centripetal drive to define a programme, a manifesto, to institute a centralised verbal-ideological world shared by the avant-garde group, however insurrectionary and de-institutionalised.

For Edward Carpenter in *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, one's joining his/her self to the self of the divine Man leading to the healing of rifts and fragmentariness caused by capitalism is a process in which the subject of action is surrendered to the aesthetic self in the same manner in which it would be surrendered to the fictional self set forth in a social myth. The anti-social self is the one for whom the relation to the divine remains unrevealed. At the same time, the union of the alienated self and the divine Man would lead the social subject to an 'anti-social' position in relation to capitalist society, to lifestyles that require withdrawal from, and boycott of, capitalist lifestyles.

H. D. Thoreau's writing has both monoglossic and heteroglossic aspects in Bakhtin's terms, and both social and anti-social aspects in Sorel's. In his entry for 2 September 1851, from Thoreau's Journal first published in 1906, the American philosopher defined a sensuality of the word that resonates with that of the body, and of nature:

> We cannot write well or truly but what we write with gusto. The body, the senses, must conspire with the mind. Expression is the act of the whole man, that our speech may be vascular. The intellect is powerless to express thought without the aid of the heart and liver and of every member. [...] A writer, a man writing, is the scribe of all nature; he is the corn and the grass and the atmosphere writing.
>
> (Thoreau, 1962, p. 441)

This manifesto of Thoreau's poetics promotes a unity of language and active processes of nature that chimes with Sorel's vision of a unity between narrative and action in the subject of social myth. The ways in which language sits with the sensuality of the body in Thoreau's visions can be compared with Bakhtin's notion of embodied language. In Thoreau's writing, however, the dominant mode is poetic, not carnivalesque. Hence, the sensual union of narrative subject and the subject of action has a monoglossic character. However, the heteroglossic voices of nature are always heard and sensed, forming a kind of bedrock to the flowing discourse. It is perhaps appropriate to speak of a poetic heteroglossia as opposed to a parodic one in Thoreau's case. Joining the voices of nature, the subject of action is inspired to withdraw his consent for capitalist ideology, and to manifest their heteroglossia in the anti-social form of isolation in nature.

In Ireland, George Russell translated the language of vision into the language of action in a similar way. The social myth derived from visions of mythical Ireland engendered the faith which guided Russell's activities as organiser involved in the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. The dominant poetic mode of Russell's writing and actions makes these amenable to analysis as monoglossic in Bakhtin's terms.

Russell re-signified social experience by subordinating it to vision, so that a worldview developed in poetic mode wins over a worldview that acknowledges the heteroglossia of social experience. At the same time, that vision, in its nationalist character, is subordinated to the social myth of an independent Ireland. This social myth forms an anti-social undercurrent within another social myth, that of a united Great Britain, so that in Russell's case a social myth can be seen to function as anti-social myth within its overlappings with another social myth. That is, of course, the case with the social myth of Irish nationalism in all its aspects, so this perspective could be equally applied in Yeats's case.

In Russia, Peter Kropotkin, whom Yeats read, envisioned a society of the harmonious collective, its unity ensured by faith in a shared social myth of opposition to capitalism and closeness to nature. This social myth can be seen as manifesting an anti-social tendency within a more encompassing myth of progress, breaking the capitalist version of the myth of progress by opposing its dominant voice, and, hence, its world-view, with a voice setting forth a competing worldview, thus bringing dialogue into the monoglossic space of capitalist ideology. A social myth developed in poetic mode opens the entrenched worldview engendered by ideologies to possibility and change by offering the experience of an alternative mode of being in the world, which may lead to progressive social change. For Sorel, it did not matter whether the vision of a social myth became social fact, but it mattered that different worldviews were jostled against each other (Sorel, 2004, pp. 125–6). Within the poetic mode of social myth runs a heteroglossic undercurrent.

Thus, any form of experience can be seen as born from conflicting tendencies which in political terms can be defined as social and anti-social, and these political attitudes can be engendered by art, which engages the creative consciousness of the subject of action and, when the experience of art becomes translated in the language of action, his energy as social actor in the material reality. Conviction, belief, monoglossia, actuality, epic state of mind may win over certitude, disbelief, heteroglossia, possibility, parodic state of mind, or the other way around. But the terms define forces that are simultaneously present in the reality of experience, including the experience of art. Yet it is possible for one term to become dominant in relation to its opposite, and then we could say that, as regards the political stance of the subject of action, that term defines one's subjection to social myth or de-subjection.

The prominent anarchist Mikhail Bakunin famously wrote that 'the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too!' (Bakunin, 1972, p. 57). In the terms of this chapter's argument, passion drives the joining of the narrative subject and the subject of action in the experience of art in synchronicity. Translating this experience into the language of action on the diachronic axis of history, the social subject negotiates his/her political position in a whirl of contrary forces, one destructive, the other creative, but inextricably bound up with each other. Giving a mode of being in the world to the subject of action, art steers social agents through the Scylla and Charybdis of social and anti-social action, conviction and certitude, belief and disbelief, monoglossic and heteroglossic domains of discourse and social experience, actuality and possibility, epic and ironic, and poetic and prosaic sense of the world. As subject to the dialectic of these opposing forces the social agent finds through art his/her avatar, attempting to resolve their conflicting impulses by negotiating an uneasy alliance between his/her asymmetrical social and anti-social selves. This perspective will be developed at length in the following three chapters.

7. W. B. Yeats, Social Myth, and Monoglossia

This chapter focuses on the ways in which literary narrative may be seen to sustain social myths. By showing how literature may nourish social myths, I seek to show how narrative is a means to create new forms of material life, indeed, a means of production of material reality. Social myth has been theorised by Georges Sorel as a form of experience in which narrative subjects join the subject of action. The subject of action or social agent uses myth to devise for him/herself a guide to action. The guide to action derived from the myth consists in images one forms for oneself before action in the material reality. Living the myth in one's thought and actions, one is changed utterly through the enrichment of one's identity as it is refigured through the myth.

The experience of social myth is a form of religious experience. The moment of experience is characterised by a sense of contact with infinity, by great sincerity and ethical fervour, by conviction and faith harnessed to action. At the same time, the experience of social myth is seen by Sorel as a form of aesthetic experience, in keeping with the anarcho-syndicalist tradition from which Sorel's work developed. The subject of myth is three things: the character who abides in the fictional reality of myth, the social agent who acts out the myth in the social, historical, and material reality, and an artist, artisan, or craftsman who creates himself and crafts the material world in a new, unique, and original configuration. The distinctions between artists, artisans, and craftsmen are blurred with Sorel: workers are artists and artists are workers, and idea inherited from Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Aesthetic experience is lived in synchronicity, in the moment of subjection to social myth. But it also becomes a historical force in the moment of its translation into the language of action on the diachronic axis of history.

The theorisation, derived from Sorel's philosophy, of a dual character of the experience of art, synchronic and amenable to an 'anthropology of the imagination' (Rasmussen, 1974, p. 92), and diachronic and amenable to historical analysis, provides a critical tool for the analysis of much modernist poetry. An illustrative case is the analysis of W. B. Yeats's poetry.

Yeats was an admirer of the 'Russian revolutionists' Peter Kropotkin and Sergey Stepniak (Yeats in Kelly and Schuchard, 2003, pp. 448–9), although perhaps Yeats was more attracted to the idea of the artist as prophet whose writing should move the masses, rather than being a practical organiser of the social collective as was, for instance, George Russell (AE). But there is a subtle affinity between Yeats's and Sorel's ideas of the role of art and myth in social change. Sorel did not exclude the possibility that not only the working class, but also the bourgeoisie, could be inspired by the power of a social myth. Worker or aristocrat alike are capable of experiencing the union between their social self, signified as subject of action in the language of movement, and aesthetic self, signified as narrative subject in the languages of art, including myth. The experience of an epic state of mind is available to everyone, as suggested in *Reflections on Violence*:

> The ideology of a timorous humanitarian middle class professing to have freed its thought from the conditions of its existence is grafted on the degeneration of the capitalist system; and the race of bold captains who made the greatness of modern industry disappear to make way for an ultra-civilised aristocracy which asks to be allowed to live in peace. [...] [The role of the French Parliamentary Socialists] would vanish if they were confronted with a middle class which was energetically engaged on the paths of capitalistic progress, a class that would look upon timidity with shame, and which would find satisfaction in looking after its class interests. (Sorel, 2004, p. 86, brackets mine)

Sorel's conception of an elite 'race of bold captains' of industry who dwarf what Yeats might have regarded as 'middle class mobs' (North, 1991, p. 37) is rather similar to the poet's conception of the aristocratic elite of visionary artists. Michael North traces the development of Yeats's faith in the aristocratic elite to his early career dominated by the cultural nationalism of Thomas Davis, spokesman for Young Ireland (North, 1991, p. 27). John O'Leary, a leading Fenian and member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood had introduced Yeats to Davis's poetry in a political context in which, as North points out, Irish nationalism had developed in two incompatible directions:

> Ireland could either claim its share of the material progress made by the industrial state and demand its rights on the abstract principle of equality, or it could assert its separation on the grounds of its historical uniqueness as a culture, worthy of self-rule precisely insofar as it rejected the model of material progress invented by its powerful and successful neighbour. (North, 1991, p. 27)

One path to freedom, championed by Charles Stewart Parnell, led through 'traditional liberal questions of franchise and representation' (North, 1991, p. 28); the other pointed to indigenous traditions recreated imaginatively in epic-poetic mode, leading, in Yeats's case, to a characteristically Celtic 'revolt against the despotism of fact' and against 'political and moral materialism' as Yeats put it in his positive review of Lionel

Johnson's second collection of poetry, *Ireland and Other Poems* (1897) (Yeats, 1898, p. 244). That review, which praises Johnson's ability to use poetry to engender passion at the expense of didacticism, is representative of Yeats's growing interest in the power of the imagination to lead to 'the revolt of the soul against the intellect', to quote from his letter to O'Leary of 23 July 1892 (Yeats in Kelly and Domville, 1986, p. 303).

In Sorel's terms, the political doctrinaire passions of Young Ireland members were born from 'a middle class which was energetically engaged on the paths of capitalistic progress, a class that would look upon timidity with shame, and which would find satisfaction in looking after its class interests' (Sorel, 2004, p. 86). By comparison, Parnell and his supporters, being engaged in negotiations with the ruling British administration, would have seemed to Sorel an 'ultra-civilised aristocracy which asks to be allowed to live in peace' (Sorel, 2004, p. 86). In a brief comment on Parnell's politics, Sorel reasserts the idea of the purity and absolute character of social myth as opposed to Utopias developed in intellectual sophistries, an idea that resembles Yeats's faith in the necessity of the revolt of the soul against the intellect. Sorel comments on the recommendation made by 'the principal theorist of the Guesdist party', Charles Bonnier, who:

> would like the [French] Socialists to follow closely the example of Parnell, who used to negotiate with the English parties without allowing himself to become the vassal of any one of them; in the same way it might be possible to come to an agreement with the [French] Conservatives, if the latter pledged themselves to grant better conditions to the proletariat than the Radicals (*Socialiste*, 27 August 1905). This policy seemed scandalous to many people. Bonnier was obliged to dilute his thesis. He then contented himself with asking that the party should act in the best interests of the proletariat (17 September 1905); but how is it possible to know where these interests lie when the principle of the class war is no longer taken as your unique and absolute rule? (Sorel, 2004, p. 83, brackets mine)

Thus, in Sorel's case, the revolt of the soul against the intellect is projected in the historical desiderate of a revolt of workers for whom social myth provides the absolute rule, liberating them from the subject positions defined in intellectual sophistries or Utopias. In Yeats's case it is the artists who look for unique and absolute rules or measures of the self beyond political doctrine. The personality of artists Yeats has in mind resembles the personality envisioned by Sorel for those of the 'race of bold captains who made the greatness of modern industry' (Sorel, 2004, p. 86). If 'industry' is replaced with 'culture', it becomes clearer that Yeats's philosophy, although now overcoming earlier socialist infatuations, can be read as an endorsement of an idea very similar to that of social myth as developed by Sorel.

North points out that in developing the idea of the revolt of the soul against the intellect Yeats:

> enlists himself in the movement Davis had discovered in Germany. The revolt of the soul against the intellect, of the German Romantics against the Enlightenment, appears here as the revolt of individual historical nations against a doctrine that would make all nations the same by making all individuals equal. Nationalism of this kind bases its claims on the belief that humanity is naturally divided into unique communities, all of whose distinguishing characteristics are ultimately derived from a common essence. (North, 1991, p. 29)

The Romantic idea that the unique forms of social and material life of communities and nations are ultimately derived from a common essence underlies the vision of the socialist Edward Carpenter, whose work Yeats knew. For Carpenter, man separated himself from the divine essence of the universal Man. However, each isolated individual manifests an aspect of the divine Man, and instinctively seeks wholesome reunion with it in collective awareness of its trans-individual essence (Carpenter, 2004, pp. 28–9). In *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, Carpenter takes cue from H. D. Thoreau to develop the idea that man can find communion with the divine essence by returning to nature:

> It can hardly be doubted that the tendency will be – indeed is already showing itself – towards a return to nature and community of human life. This is the way back to the lost Eden, or rather forward to the new Eden, of which the old was only a figure. Man has to undo the wrappings and the mummydom of centuries, by which he has shut himself from the light of the sun and lain in seeming death, preparing silently his glorious resurrection [...]. He has to emerge from houses and all his other hiding places wherein so long ago ashamed (as at the voice of God in the garden) he concealed himself – and Nature must once more become his home, as it is the home of the animals and the angels. (Carpenter, 2004, p. 35)

Thus the Romantic idea of a commonly shared universal essence gains the form of a political manifesto. In other words, a philosophical idea conceived aesthetically in the language of art is translated into the language of action: in 1883 Carpenter retreated to Millthorpe, Sheffield, living on the land, promoting manual work and vegetarianism, an artisan who transmuted art into material life. For Carpenter, the revolt of the soul against the intellect is accompanied by one's 'unclothing' (Carpenter, 2004, p. 36), one's shedding the vestments of material attachments. This unclothing evokes the great sincerity required of the subject of social myth by Sorel, and a similar conviction, faith, and belief as that sustained by social myth in poetic mode.

The main features that permit one to identify a text as being tributary, or the fomenting ingredient, of a social myth are the text's dominant poetic character (as opposed to prosaic or novelistic, that is, in terms of process, poeticising as opposed to novelisation), its configuration of the subject position of the reader as one of belonging to a social group, often an enlightened elite rather than a dulled mass or mob, and the kinship felt to exist, in whatever degree, between the aesthetic experience triggered by the text and religious experience broadly understood. At the level of the text's management of meaning, these features are often conveyed by images that suggest transcendence of the mundane (universal essence, divine consciousness, wholesomeness, or wholeness) even though the historical effect of the experience engendered by the text, or the result of the translation of the aesthetic experience lived in synchronicity into the language of action on the diachronic axis of history, is social action that can be 'measured' in material terms: nationalist or socialist revolution, withdrawal from society in solitary life, or the organisation of a commune.

When art functions as social myth, or as the ingredient of social myth, it demands from the reader consent to the purification of the self by withdrawal from worldly space and time and into an absolute moment of identification of the fictional world of the text and the material world audiences inhabit. In that sense the experience of art is a form of religious experience by which one transcends one's worldly self. This transcendence is not to be seen as ascension to another, metaphysical plane of existence. What is transcended is the linear, mechanical time of social life. What is acceded to is the unmeasurable yet material actuality of the present as the aesthetic-synchronic sense of a diachronic process (history, revolution, natural change, and so forth). Perhaps religious experience is nothing more than aesthetic experience.

As Carpenter put it:

> But the instinct of all who desire to deliver the divine *imago* within them is, in something more than the literal sense, towards unclothing. And the process of evolution or exfoliation itself is nothing but a continual unclothing of Nature, by which the perfect human Form which is at the root of it comes nearer and nearer to its manifestation. (Carpenter, 2004, p. 36, original italics)

Interpreting this passage as a poetics, the aesthetic self would be the divine imago, hidden from view because clothed in the vestment of material forms, caught as it is in the space and time of prosaic, mundane history of materialistic, capitalist design. Poetry liberates the social self, momentarily withholding it within the actuality of the aesthetic self. However, released again into the world of action and history, social actors may translate aesthetic experience into historical forces of social change.

The experience of art as a form of religious experience is conducive to the creation of a social myth through which aesthetic experience is translated into the language of action. If Sorel's social myth of the general strike re-imagines an epic battle in terms of contemporary historical and social settings, Yeats's social myth imagines contemporary Ireland, its re-missionary elite, and the revolutionaries in terms of a national mythology with roots in the ancient culture of Ireland. However, we should distinguish between the religious aspect of myth in general and the religious aspect of a modern social myth like that of the general strike or of an Ireland worthy of self-rule on account of its unique mythological traditions. Social myth may feed on the faith engendered by traditional myth, integrating core motifs of a given mythological tradition (as is the case with Yeats), or it may not (the myth of the general strike has no ancient roots). Furthermore, the reworking of a mythological tradition into a social myth is a process of recrafting the traditional myth in the manner of the artisan who may shape an object as an artistic impression of a folkloric mythological motif. Except that, in the case of social myth as a tool for such recrafting, the object is one's self and the material reality that self inhabits.

In Yeats's case, the role of art in recreating the social self as subject of a social myth can be best analysed by focusing on his poems of the Rose. In 'To Ireland in the Coming Times', first published in 1892 in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics* under the title 'Apologia Addressed to Ireland in the Coming Days' (Ross, 2009, p. 256) Yeats defines his art as means to change social reality through the aesthetic enrichment of the subject of action. The poet begins by defining himself as member of an elite group, the charismatic sect of a warrior brotherhood of artists:

> *Know, that I would accounted be*
> *True brother of a company*
>
> *That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong,*
> *Ballad and story, rann and song;*
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 46)

This company of brothers advocating the nationalist cause can be easily compared with Sorel's brotherhood of workers-artisans whose aspirations touch the future in poetic longing for a new self. This longing, answered by art, sets forth the subject of action to its meeting with the aesthetic self in the synchronic moment of the experience of myth. That moment is for Yeats one of 'measured quietude' nested in the tumult of historical forces manifested on the diachronic axis of time which 'rants' and 'rages', yet time that gains its rhythm from the flaring moments of aesthetic illumination: the fusion of social self and aesthetic self engenders the energy that '*Made Ireland's heart begin to beat*' – a phrase suggesting the physicality of the language of action into which the language of art has been translated in the joining of social self and aesthetic self (Yeats, 1997, p. 46).

The central symbol that enables two-way traffic between material and fictional reality, the threshold between the two worlds, is the Rose. Poetry is seen as enabling this traffic across the border between fiction and reality: '*the red-rose-bordered hem/ Of her, whose history began/ Before God made the angelic clan,/ Trails all about the written page*' (Yeats, 1997, p. 46). The poet emphasises that the moment of aesthetic enrichment of the self, although drawn out of time, is not outside history. The poet would not be 'any less' a member of the brotherhood elite because of it: '*Nor may I less* *be counted one/ With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,/ Because, to him that ponders well,/ My rhymes more than their rhyming tell/ Of things discovered in the deep,/ Where only body's laid asleep*' (Yeats, 1997, p. 46). In the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience time and space lose dimension (the body is laid asleep) while perception is directed towards the abyss of '*unmeasured mind*'. In duration, rather than in mechanical time, as Bergson theorised it, one discovers a new mode of being which in Yeats's case is a mode of being in myth, a mode of being in which the border between the space of myth and that of reality is momentarily abolished: '*For the elemental creatures go/ About my table to and fro*'. But in order to enable the translation of that experience into the language of action, the elemental chaos unleashed in the dissolution of material reality and fictional reality into each other must be mastered in poetic mode: '*Yet he who treads in measured ways/ May surely barter gaze for gaze*' (Yeats, 1997, p. 46). The measured ways of an aesthetic allow one to look into the world of myth, to return the gaze of the selves (elves?) found there, and to trade the world-view of the social self for the world-view of myth, that is, to look upon social reality from the point of view established in myth. Once this experience has taken place, the creatures of myth become part of one's social self engaged on a shared journey: '*Man ever journeys on with them/ After the red-rose-bordered hem.*' The poet is like a druid able to travel between mythic reality and social material reality, translating aesthetic experience into action, casting his heart into his rhymes to set forth a template of action for future generations: '*I cast my heart into my rhymes,/ That you, in the dim coming times,/ May know how my heart went with them/ After the red-rose-bordered hem*' (Yeats, 1997, p. 47). The poem expresses a longing to see embodied in one's will and actions the patterns of myth, and to see how they measure up to aesthetic experience. It is a challenge to stillness and death: the '*truth's consuming ecstasy*' is life itself, enriched by the aesthetic experience of myth. The ecstasy of truth is born in the joining of social self and aesthetic self, and both are consumed in this joining, or, rather, sublimate into a new self. The aesthetic dimension of this new self is perceived in the synchronic experience of art, gathered 'into the artifice of eternity' (Yeats, 1997, p. 197); its social dimension is lived in history.

Thus traditional myth is transformed into social myth through its purification in aesthetic sublimation. The myth's religious dimension is now enabled by aesthetic experience, and it can therefore be socialised in material historical contexts. That this process really does affect social actors in a physical and material sense worried Yeats. In 'The Rose Tree' he brooded on the role of his art in creating the pathos that led to the execution of Patrick Pearse and James Connolly following the defeat of the Easter Rising: 'There's nothing but our own red blood/ Can make a right Rose Tree' (Yeats, 1997, p. 185). In a comparison of Yeats's and Sorel's conceptions of myth and its social value, Pearse and Connoly are not unlike the soldiers of Napoleon's armies who, as Sorel put it, quoting from Ernest Renan's *Histoire du peuple d'Israël*, are ready to sacrifice their lives 'in order to have had the honour of taking part in "immortal deeds" and of living in the glory of France' (Sorel, 2004, p. 43). Sorel compared the proletarian social group sharing a social myth with the brotherhood of monastic orders, those 'elite troops, perfectly trained by monastic life, ready to brave all obstacles, and filled with an absolute confidence in victory' (Sorel, 2004, p. 271) and Yeats was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In order to understand how the experience of art may become a form of religious experience, one must understand the nature of its poetic modes, for, as I shall now argue, aesthetic experience as a form of religious experience depends on the poetic structure of the text, and on the text's power to recreate the reader's subjective state as a poetic or epic state of mind.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of monoglossia and heteroglossia as, respectively, poetic and novelistic modes of the text allows us to explain what makes aesthetic experience a form of religious experience. For Bakhtin, monoglossia is a characteristic of poetry, with poetry understood as the form of epic. According to Bakhtin: 'The epic world knows only a single and unified world view, obligatory and indubitably true for heroes as well as for authors and audiences' (1981, p. 35). Elsewhere, Bakhtin argues that:

> The language in a poetic work realizes itself as something about which there can be no doubt, something that cannot be disputed, something all-encompassing. Everything that the poet sees, understands and thinks, he does through the eyes of a given language, in its inner forms, and there is nothing that might require, for its expression, the help of any other or alien language. The language of the poetic genre is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed. The concept of many worlds of language, all equal in their ability to conceptualize and to be expressive, is organically denied to poetic style. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 35)

Throughout his work, Bakhtin emphasises that the language in which one shows oneself to oneself and to others is more than style: it informs one's worldview, that is, it both fills one's horizon of awareness with 'the world', and it forms one's identity in and for that world. Thus art substantiates experience, shaping its raw material aesthetically. The world that fills the poet's horizon of awareness in 'To Ireland in the Coming Times' is that of the elemental creatures of Irish traditional myths, that hurry into awareness from unmeasured mind, from the deep well of collective consciousness – the love the poet lived, the dream he knew. There is a suggestion in the poem that subjective time is momentary, enclosed within the inner being in the winking of an eye, although vision is seemingly continuous on the diachronic axis of historical events unfolding in objective time. The suggestion that subjective time is not amenable to measure as is the case with mechanical time, is consistent with the view that aesthetic experience, in which we surrender the social self to the aesthetic self, is synchronic and has no dimension on the diachronic axis of history, until it is translated into the language of action whereby one takes one's place in the pantheon of heroic historical figures (in Yeats's case beside a Davis, Mangan, Ferguson, or a Pearce or Connolly). All these emphases on synchronicity, on ‘a single and unified world view, obligatory and indubitably true for heroes as well as for authors and audiences’, and on rendering aesthetic experience in a poetic language ‘about which there can be no doubt, something that cannot be disputed, something all-encompassing’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 35), suggest that the experience of art in poetic mode is a form of religious experience.

When Bakhtin discusses the language of traditional myth and magical thought, his reflections come close to equating myth with poetry:

> Mythological thinking in the power of the language containing it – a language generating out of itself a mythological reality that has its own linguistic connections and interrelationships – then substitutes itself for the connections and interrelationships of reality itself (this is the transposition of language categories and dependences into theogonic and cosmogonic categories). But language too is under the power of images of the sort that dominate mythological thinking, and these fetter the free movement of its intentions and thus make it more difficult for language categories to achieve a wider application and greater flexibility, a purer formal structure (this would result from their fusion with materially concrete relationships); they limit the word’s potential for greater expressiveness. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 369)

Although Bakhtin underlines that ‘the absolute hegemony of myth over language’ is a thing of the ‘prehistorical [...] past of language consciousness’, he points out that even in the ‘historical epochs of language consciousness – a mythological feeling for the authority of language and a faith in the unmediated transformation into a seamless unity of the entire sense, the entire expressiveness inherent in that authority, are still powerful enough in all higher ideological genres’ to exclude the possibility of an aesthetic that values heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 369–70). It is also important to point out that in the above passage ‘expressiveness’ qualifies the ability to set forth an other’s point of view in language, and not poetic expressiveness; and the formal structure referred to is not poetic structure in the structuralist sense, but structure that formalises sets of ‘materially concrete relationships’ such as those of the social or the political. The aesthetic beauty and the value of aesthetic experience lived in the synchronic moment in which the perceiving subject, or the social subject, becomes one with the aesthetic subject, are of great value in the enrichment of the self through art, even if they are conducive of monoglossia. But what worries Bakhtin is the possibility that the translation of poetic experience into the language of action might yield normative patterns of action, that is, ideologies.

Poetry may contribute to the creation of a social myth when the aesthetic experience lived by the subject of action is shared and gives rise to a pattern of feeling associated with a set of images that social subjects form for themselves before action. It is possible that the social myth born from aesthetic experience becomes an ideology, as Sorel explained with reference to the turbulent period in France that led to the charter of 1814 which ‘incorporated in the national tradition, the Parliamentary system, Napoleonic legislation, and the Church established by the Concordat’ (Sorel, 2004, p. 100). Sorel argues that: ‘Protected by the prestige of the wars of liberty, the new institutions had become inviolable, and the ideology which was built up to explain them became a faith which seemed for a long time to have for the French the value which the revelation of Jesus has for the Catholics’ (Sorel, 2004, p. 100). In Sorel’s view, this ideology was born from a social myth of its time:

> its cause lies simply in the epic of the wars which had filled the French soul with an enthusiasm analogous to that provoked by religions.
>
> This military epic gave an epical colour to all the events of internal politics; party struggles were thus raised to the level of an Iliad; politicians became giants, and the revolution, which Joseph de Maistre had denounced as satanical, was made divine. The bloody scenes of the Terror were episodes without great significance by the side of the enormous hecatombs of war, and means were found to envelop them in a dramatic mythology; riots were elevated to the same rank as illustrious battles; and calmer historians vainly endeavoured to bring the Revolution and the Empire down to the plane of common history. (Sorel, 2004, p. 101)

Precisely what nationalism achieved in postindependence Ireland, at least on the level of popular culture, although on a different scale and, naturally, in a different context. In this perspective, it is not difficult to see how poetry such as Yeats’s may have contributed to the monoglossia which always characterises nationalism, and how the religious character of aesthetic experience may be transmuted into ideology.

It is true that for Sorel ancient epic cannot have become the material of social myth in post1870 France: ‘There can be no national epic about things which the people cannot picture to themselves as reproducible in a near future; popular poetry implies the future much more than the past; it is for this reason that the adventures of the Gauls, of Charlemagne, of the Crusades, of Joan of Arc cannot form the subject of a narrative capable of moving any but literary people’ (Sorel, 2004, pp. 102–3). Yeats’s appeal to Ireland’s own versions of ‘the adventures of the Gauls’ may have not been at first grounded in a popular belief that these adventures could be enacted in the near future, and may have not initially yielded narratives capable of moving any but literary people. But the entire enterprise of the Irish Revival did, in the end, bring down to the level of popular belief just such a possibility of the revolutionary finding himself in the figure of Cuchulain, or of Cathleen Ni Houlihan.

Thus, in the context of Irish and French modernism, the faith required to change the material and social reality is manifested in poetic mode at the level of the text, where it is sustained by textual monoglossia; at the level of philosophical reflection, where it sets forth the idea of art as means to reconstruct one’s self in the monoglossic convergence of social self and aesthetic self in myth or forms of text that acquire the value of myth; at the level of experience, where aesthetic experience achieves the kind of conviction characteristic to religious experience; and at the level of action, where one's identity as social actor finds its manifestation in the identity of the social group legitimated and defined in poetic aesthetic terms.

However, one remains aware that pure monoglossia at any of these levels is impossible. Literary narrative may supply the religious nature of a social myth, as Yeats's writing did, but there will always exist a conflict between revolutionary ideals of freedom from subjection and the power of social myths to subject, which revolutionary myths nevertheless employ. Freedom from subjection may be understood as being engendered by the anti-social character of a social myth, which throws into sharp relief the conflicts between worldviews legitimated in established, institutionalised discourses, such as those of 'the Parliamentary system, Napoleonic legislation, and the Church established by the Concordat' (Sorel, 2004, p. 100) in France, and those worldviews set forth in the contestatory elite revolutionary sect of Sorel's enlightened anarcho-syndicalist. In Ireland, a social myth derived from the national mythological traditions throws into sharp relief the conflict between worldviews established through 'traditional liberal questions of franchise and representation' (North, 1991, p. 28) premised on the validity of capitalism, questions partly resolved by Parnell, and the worldviews of visionary poets such as Yeats. In an argument on the value of conflict for anarcho-syndicalism, which can also be applied to the ethos of the Irish Revival movement, Sorel emphasises that:

> Oppositions, instead of being glozed over, must be thrown into sharp relief if we desire to obtain a clear idea of the Syndicalist movement; the groups which are struggling one against the other must be shown as separate and as compact as possible; in short, the movements of the revolted masses must be represented in such a way that the soul of the revolutionaries may receive a deep and lasting impression.
>
> (Sorel, 2004, p. 122)

Bakhtin shows that a tendency towards monoglossia is doubled by a tendency towards heteroglossic dissolution and recreation of a worldview at the level of embodied language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291).

A similar acknowledgement of this co-existence of contrary forces is expressed by Yeats in his poem 'The Second Coming' in the image of the intersecting gyres. The revolutions of the tightening gyre express a tendency towards monoglossia, whereas the revolutions of the widening gyre express a tendency towards heteroglossia at the levels of the self and also of history. And similarly, for Sorel, the bringing into sharp relief of contradictions between opposing social classes yields 'a body of images' which serves to evoke, in the synchronic experience of social myth in the way of art, '*by intuition alone*, and before any considered analyses are made [...] as an undivided whole the mass of sentiments which corresponds to the different manifestations of the war undertaken by Socialism against modern society' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 122–3, original italics). Sorel's Syndicalists 'solve this problem perfectly, by concentrating the whole of Socialism in the drama of the general strike' so that there is 'no longer any place for the reconciliation of contraries in the equivocations of the professors' and 'everything is clearly mapped out, so that only one interpretation of Socialism is possible' (Sorel, 2004, p. 123). The elite artists envisioned by Yeats solve the contradictions between collusion in the liberal systems of franchise and representation and the autonomy of indigenous culture by concentrating the whole of anti-colonialism in the dramas of epic struggles depicted in traditional Irish myth, so that there is no longer any place for the equivocations of Parnellites or Young Irelanders, and everything is clearly mapped out with only one interpretation of authentic Irishness possible.

Thus monoglossia wins over heteroglossia, the poetic over the prosaic. This process at the level of the text governs the aesthetic experience of readers and audiences: the actuality of aesthetic experience in which social self and aesthetic self are fused in monoglossic poetic mode takes precedence over heteroglossic possibility, even though it does not, nor indeed can it, foreclose heteroglossia. In the consciousness of the subject of action faith defeats faithlessness, belief defeats unbelief, enthusiasm defeats irony. However, a consequence of this is the introduction of a different voice in the dominant chorus, one that challenges established ways of imagining the self, and so the joining of aesthetic self and social self in poetic mode is ultimately conducive of heteroglossia.

Envisioning literary narrative as a tool in the hands of the artist, who therefore is in a material sense a worker, if more an artisan or craftsman than an alienated labourer, is consistent with anarcho-syndicalist theory. That theory offers an excellent framework for working out the relations between art texts, aesthetic experience, social reality, and social change. As Joseph Beuys put it:

> Only on condition of a radical widening of definitions will it be possible for art and activities related to art [to] provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline: to dismantle in order to build A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART [...] EVERY HUMAN BEING IS AN ARTIST who – from his state of freedom – the position of freedom that he experiences at first-hand – learns to determine the other positions in the TOTAL ART WORK OF THE FUTURE SOCIAL ORDER. (Beuys and Tisdall, 1979, pp. 268–9, original capitals)

Sorel's theory of social myth allows us to examine the mechanisms through which art in poetic mode contributes to determining the configuration of material reality. There is, of course, another kind of art, art in prosaic mode, dialogical or novelistic art as Bakhtin refers to it, which plays an equally important role in recreating the social self and material reality. Sorel's theorisation of social myth will again be useful in an analysis of dialogical, heteroglossic aesthetic experience, although that kind of aesthetic and art is more consistent with individualist anarchism. In the following chapter I will attempt such an analysis focusing on James Joyce's work.

8. James Joyce, Social Myth, and Heteroglossia

In this chapter I shall examine some of James Joyce's narrative strategies and poetics as means to recreate social agents in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience of an art text. I will use Mikhail Bakhtin's theorisation of heteroglossia and monoglossia in defining and analysing the process of recreation of social agents through synchronic aesthetic experience. In order to show how such recreation is related to social change, I will use the theory of social myth developed by Georges Sorel.

The interpretation of the performative effects of Joyce's texts, or of any text amenable to a similar poetics, through Sorel's concept of social myth, poses something of a paradox. Sorel was concerned with the role of social myth in engendering group solidarity, whereas Joyce was concerned with the role of art in disentangling the individual from the nets cast by various social groups held together by various traditions, such as those of religion and nationalism, traditions which might provide the bases of social myths in Sorel's view. I shall explore ways of resolving this paradox, demonstrating that it is but an apparent one. For one thing, both Sorel and Joyce claimed an anarchist identity, even though the former identified his politics with anarcho-syndicalism, whereas Joyce's artistic practice can be identified as a political practice consistent with individualist anarchism. Nevertheless, Sorel's social myth and Joyce's art share the anarchist aim of desubjection, that is, of liberation from the monoglossic ideologies of capitalism.

These ideologies are geared to the legitimation of the economic, serial reproduction of objects to the purpose of marketing them and thus increasing capital. However, they also lead to the creation of a state of mind or mode of being which resembles the product and pro cess of capitalist reproduction, and which thus takes on the attributes of serially reproduced material objects. Serially reproduced states of mind or modes of being are identified by Sorel as sets of dull habits, and by Joyce as ossified patterns of experience and action that lead to paralysis. Ideologies, sets of dull habits, and ossified patterns of experience represent the cultural counterpart of material serial production on assembly lines. Both Sorel and Joyce oppose to the monoglossic centripetal force of various ideologies manifested diachronically on the axis of history, the moment of aesthetic experience lived synchronically. But even on the synchronic axis of experience a form of monoglossia takes hold. That monoglossia is born in the moment of the experience of art, to the extent that the experience of art becomes a form of religious experience: through epiphanies for Joyce, and through social myths for Sorel.

In fact, both monoglossia and heteroglossia are manifested as contrary forces holding the subject in uneasy balance in the experience of art and social myth. However, while for Joyce heteroglossia wins over monoglossia, for Sorel monoglossia becomes the dominant of the experience of art as social myth, even though the effect of the translation of that aesthetic experience in the language of action on the diachronic axis of history is heteroglossic: the subject of action enriched through its joining with the subject of art is inspired to challenge the patterns of experience hitherto engendered by the capitalist drive to produce and reproduce one's self as a serial object, that is, as an objectified social subject.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the narrator describes a perception of Stephen's state of mind which could be easily characterised as heteroglossic in Bakhtin's terms:

> While his [Stephen's] mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms and turning in irresolution from such pursuit he had heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic above all things. These voices had now come to be hollow-sounding in his ears. When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school. And it was the din of all these hollow-sounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades. (Joyce, 1965, pp. 86–7)

The passage registers a number of voices competing for the mastery of Stephen's subjectivity. These voices seek to subject Stephen to various forms of authority: religion ('urging him to be a good catholic above all things'), Revivalist nationalism (bidding him to 'be true to his country and help to raise up her language and tradition'), and social convention ('urging him to be a gentleman above all things', 'strong and manly and healthy'). This state of mind merely registered in *A Portrait* will be eventually rendered aesthetically in *Ulysses* in a narrative form which calls for a heteroglossic-iconoclastic state of mind in readers. The method whereby this heteroglossia is achieved in *Ulysses* can be described in Bakhtin's words, here referring to the work of Rabelais:

> The essence of this method consists, first of all, in the destruction of all ordinary ties, of all the *habitual matrices* [*sosedstva*] of things and ideas,

> and the creation of unexpected matrices, unexpected connections, including the most surprising logical links ('allogisms') and linguistic connections (Rabelais' specific etymology, morphology and syntax). (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169, original italics)

As with Rabelais, with whom he has been compared, Joyce's specific etymology, morphology, and syntax in *Ulysses* work to challenge, and wreak heteroglossic havoc upon, habitual matrices derived from the discourse of religion, nationalist traditions (Irish and British), or social conventions.

The heteroglossia of *Ulysses* results from '*artistic* use of linguistic speech diversity' in literary form (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 370, original italics). The 'hollowsounding voices that made [Stephen] halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms' are explored in *Ulysses* as voices belonging to a speech diversity the experience of which engenders, in Bakhtin's words, 'an acute feeling for language boundaries (social, national and semantic)'. Language thus reveals 'its essential *human* character; from behind its words, forms, styles, nationally characteristic and socially typical faces begin to emerge, the images of speaking human beings' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 370, original italics). This union of the subject of action (the reader, or social agent) and the aesthetic or narrative subjects (speaking in the voices of nationally characteristic and socially typical 'faces') makes it possible for the subject of action to hear an other speaking in his/her voice, to inhabit its world, and to assume its worldview. For Bakhtin, this is 'a characteristic human way of sensing and seeing the world. Language, no longer conceived as a sacrosanct and solitary embodiment of meaning and truth, becomes merely one of many possible ways to hypothesize meaning' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 370). By comparison, for instance, with the writing of W. B. Yeats, Joyce's writing achieves a 'verbal-ideological decentering' of 'literary and language consciousness' made possible for Bakhtin when 'a national culture loses its sealed-off and self-sufficient character, when it becomes conscious of itself as only one among *other* cultures and languages.' While Yeats's writing aimed to create a sealed-off and self-sufficient national culture, Joyce's writing engenders in the subject of action an awareness of heteroglossia that is a 'knowledge that will sap the roots of a mythological feeling for language, based as it [the mythological feeling] is on an absolute fusion of ideological meaning with language' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 370, original italics, brackets mine).

Yeats's writing contributed to the creation of a social myth as understood by Sorel. For Sorel, a social myth consists of a group of images formed before action and in order to lead to action. Any narrative may function as social myth when it gives precision and rigidity to shared ideals, making them possible for action. The art text thus comes to embody the aspirations of a group, rallying together those who experience in the same way the transformation brought about in the fusion of social agent and aesthetic subject. One would then be entitled to argue that Joyce's writing, which 'saps the roots of a mythological feeling for language', positions the reader against social myths.

However, the heteroglossia of Joyce's writing is not wholly incompatible with social myth. As Bakhtin argued:

> Amid the good things of this here-and-now world are also to be found false connections that distort the authentic nature of things, false associations established and reinforced by tradition and sanctioned by religious and official ideology. Objects and ideas are united by false hierarchical relationships, inimical to their nature; they are sundered and separated from one another by various other-worldly and idealistic strata that do not permit these objects to touch each other in their living corporeality. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169)

Joyce's writing does expose the various other-worldly and idealistic strata that distort and falsify the authentic nature of things, that is, their living corporeality in the here-and-now world. But such is the purpose of social myth as well. Sorel often argued that 'religion is daily losing its efficacy with the people', and his understanding of religion in such critical statements is, like Bakhtin's, that religion has come to function like an ideology. What Bakhtin calls 'other-worldly and idealistic strata' Sorel calls Utopias. Utopias are contrasted with social myths, and social myths are clearly connected to the here-and-now of experience, of living corporeality engaged in action:

> the myths are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act. A Utopia is, on the contrary, an intellectual product; it is the work of theorists who, after discussing and observing the known facts, seek to establish a model to which they can compare existing society in order to estimate the amount of good and evil it contains. (Sorel, 2004, p. 50)

Thus Utopias can be counted among Bakhtin's various other-worldly and idealistic strata which establish false connections that distort the authentic nature of things. For Sorel, Utopias fulfil the functions of ideologies, whereas social myths in fact introduce heteroglossia in the world held together ideologically, and are the only means of changing ideologies as well as the material world befallen under their spell. Utopia is the work of theorists who seek to establish a model as standard for judging social experience:

> It is a combination of imaginary institutions having sufficient analogies to real institutions for the jurist to be able to reason about them; it is a construction which can be taken to pieces, and certain parts of it have been shaped in such a way that they can (with a few alterations by way of adjustment) be fitted into approaching legislation. While contemporary myths lead men to prepare themselves for a combat which will destroy the existing state of things, the effect of Utopias has always been to direct men's minds towards reforms which can be brought about by patching

> up the existing system; it is not surprising, then, that so many makers of Utopias were able to develop into able statesmen when they had acquired a greater experience of political life. (Sorel, 2004, p. 50)

By breaking the cast of ideologically driven discourses, artistic, philosophical, or legal, social myths achieve for Sorel what political aesthetic achieves for Joyce, although by different means. Joyce's narrative techniques favour heteroglossia and challenge Utopias by showing their constructed character and taking this construction to pieces in a process that engenders a heteroglossic state of mind in the subject of action. In Sorel's case (and also in Yeats's case) the falsehood of Utopias is counteracted by an experience of art that welds the subject of action and the narrative or aesthetic subject in a monoglossic state of mind, an 'epic state of mind' (Sorel, 2004, p. 248) shared by a social group, an elite caste of artisan labourers for Sorel or aristocratic poets for Yeats.

The Stephen of *A Portrait*, too, longs for an aesthetic experience that should destroy ideologically created Utopias while at the same time having a religious character. Stephen is repelled by the hollow-sounding voices of religious worshippers, giving themselves to themselves in images derived from what Sorel might have called Utopias and Yeats intellectual falsities, 'morally present at the mass which they could neither see nor hear' (Joyce, 1965, p. 109). Stephen stoops 'to the level of hypocrisy with others, sceptical of their innocence which he could cajole so easily' but longs for a form of religious experience that might facilitate the fleshly embodiment of the divine:

> The glories of Mary held his soul captive [...] If ever he was impelled to cast sin from him and to repent the impulse that moved him was the wish to be her knight. If ever his soul, reentering her dwelling shyly after the frenzy of his body's lust spent itself, was turned towards her whose emblem is the morning star, *bright and musical, telling of heaven and infusing peace*, it was when her names were murmured softly by lips whereon there still lingered foul and shameful words, the savour itself of a lewd kiss. (Joyce, 1965, p. 110, original italics)

Often analysed in relation to the stages of the development of Stephen's eroticism, this passage may also be read as a poetic manifesto, with political implications, and sharing with social myth a similar ethos. The union of the subject of action (Stephen) with a fictional subject (a knight of Mary) is a moment of aesthetic experience as a form of religious experience, a moment *bright and musical, telling of heaven and infusing peace*, yet of earthly beauty, a position Joyce adopted from Cardinal Newman, referenced by the text in italics (Joyce, 1965, p. 110, original italics).

As with social myth, this experience carries echoes of political struggle and contributes to establishing a political position. There is a hint of Stephen's identification as martyr for his art with Charles Stewart Parnell, whose 'sin' led to his political downfall. As, for instance, Zack Bowen pointed out in relation to the earlier Christmas dinner scene in *A Portrait*: 'Stephen's distrust of the institutions of both church and state initiated at the Christmas dinner scene manifests itself later in Stephen's identification with the Parnell martyrdom and his refusal to do his Easter duty [...] The ritual of transubstantiation will be his and the power of recreating life will be his, but as high priest of art not the church' (Bowen, 1974, pp. 32–3). The emphasis in Joyce's philosophy and poetic art on attaining the divine in profane terms makes the writer's vision compatible with Sorel's vision of social myth as a mode of aesthetico-religious experience that does not promise transcendence unto an otherworldly plane, but instead has its redeeming effects in the material historical reality, once that experience is translated in the language of action.

The high priest of art envisioned by Joyce would be in Sorel's terms an enlightened worker as craftsman of a new world, forging it in the fire of aesthetic creation through social myth. Although Joyce's high priest of art remains outside any social group, whereas Sorel's enlightened workers can only effect change when joining in solidarity the social group, the aesthetic filtering of reality required of the subject of social myth could be described in Joyce's terms: the worker is, like Joyce's artist, 'a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life' (Joyce, 1965, p. 240). Discussing Gustave de Molinari's *Science et religion* (1894), Sorel argues that out of the four motives identified by Molinari as assuring the accomplishment of social duty – the power of society invested in governmental institutions, the power of public opinion, the power of individual conscience, and the power of religion – 'for the workers the last two motive forces are alone effective' (Sorel, 2004, p. 219–20). However, as for Joyce, it is not institutionalised religion, such as that of the Catholic church, that Sorel has in mind, but aesthetico-religious sense that forms the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of images capable, in Sorel's perspective, of inspiring in the individual within the group the vision and anticipation of a new world to come. There is then a tendency toward monoglossia in Joyce as there is in Sorel, manifested in the union of the subject of action and the subject of art or myth in synchronic aesthetic experience, although, clearly, the monoglossia Bakhtin repudiated, the monoglossia of ideology, is likewise repudiated by Joyce and Sorel.

Bakhtin distinguishes between 'the authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness' while acknowledging that both external, socially institutionalised authority and internally sensed persuasiveness 'may be united in a single word – one that is *simultaneously* authoritative and internally persuasive – despite the profound differences between these two categories of alien discourse [i.e. discourse that readers encounter in the first instance as not their own]' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342, brackets mine). That kind of unity is more readily achieved in the mode of discourse of poetry, and it is perhaps the simultaneity of authority and persuasiveness that someone like Yeats would have sought in his efforts to create an Irish identity derived from myth that is both legitimate, having authority, and persuasive, appealing to one's inner world of archetypal, deeper and profound, emotion. However, as Bakhtin argued:

> such unity is rarely a given – it happens more frequently that an individual's becoming, an ideological process, is characterised precisely by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one, the authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all [...]. The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342)

It is precisely the struggle and dialogical relationship between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse that makes the aesthetic experience of narrative (in Joyce's case) and social myth (in Sorel's) heteroglossic. To apply this insight to the passage from *A Portrait* commented upon earlier, in Joyce's case the authoritative word of religion ('urging him to be a good catholic above all things'), of Revivalist nationalism (bidding him to 'be true to his country and help to raise up her language and tradition'), and of social convention ('urging him to be a gentleman above all things', 'strong and manly and healthy') are not internally persuasive; they are 'hollowsounding' (Joyce, 1965, pp. 86–7), and counteracted with narrative capable of provoking aesthetic-religious experience. Similarly, for Sorel, the sophistries in which various Utopias are created ('religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.') are counteracted with the persuasiveness engendered in the experience of social myth. In order to understand better this coexistence of monoglossia and heteroglossia, of religious and prosaic experience, in Joyce's narrative and Sorel's social myth, we may resort to Roman Jakobson's theorisation of metaphor and metonymy and its roots in Russian formalism, whose representative theoreticians were contemporaries of Joyce, Yeats, and Sorel.

In 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances' (1956), Jakobson identified two orders of discourse: in the metaphoric order of discourse 'one topic may lead to another [...] through their similarity' whereas in metonymic discourse the basis of discursive construction is a relation of contiguity (Jakobson, 1990, p. 129). But both semantic processes are simultaneously present in any discourse. Thus, any discourse has a poetic (metaphorical) dimension and a prosaic (metonymical) dimension. In the context of Russian formalism, the critical tradition in which Jakobson worked, the terms 'poetic' and 'prosaic' are loaded with a range of critical nuances. The prosaic is the realm of reality, of creative social interaction, as in the workshop. This point is debated by Viktor Shklovsky in 'Art as Device' (1916) in an argument that 'the rhythm of prose [...] eases and automatizes the work' whereas the rhythm of poetry 'is the rhythm of prose *disrupted*' (Shklovsky, 1990, p. 14, original italics). In these terms, Sorel's social myth achieves the function of poetry.

However, Joyce's prose can be said to achieve the same function, not only in the monoglossic moment of epiphanic revelation which renders the world anew, but also in the heteroglossic play that jostles ossified worldviews against one another. As in Bakhtin's theory, it is prose that achieves the disruption of institutionalised and ideological discourse so that, as Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson point out in relation to Bakhtin's main focus, 'the everyday is a sphere of constant activity, the source of all social change and individual creativity. The prosaic is the truly interesting and the ordinary is what is truly noteworthy' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 23). In an analysis framework derived from Jakobson's and Shklovsky's theories mentioned above, it can be argued that, to the extent that prose achieves a disruption of monoglossic discursive patterns, it fulfils its poetic dimension. The world set forth in such prose is envisioned through a relation of similarity with a desired world to come: it is the metaphor of that world. To the extent that such 'poetic' prose or, indeed, poetry itself, fails to defamiliarise the world for the reader, they fulfil their prosaic dimension, positioning the reader in contiguity with the familiar patterns of experience: the world disclosed in such poetry is a metonymy of consecrated worldviews.

Interpreting this analysis framework in Bakhtin's terms, it can be seen that monoglossia and heteroglossia are manifested both in the metaphoric (poetic) and metonymic (prosaic) orders of discourse. In the metaphoric order of discourse monoglossia is characteristic of those patterns of poetry that have become authoritative, such as epic, whereas heteroglossia is an effect of setting forth a new possible worldview in contradiction, yet necessarily in dialogical relation, to the familiar world that the newly envisioned world must supplant. In the metonymic order of discourse, monoglossia is characteristic of prosaic rhythms that automatise experience, as in Shklovsky's perspective, whereas heteroglossia is the effect of disruptive prose as envisioned by Bakhtin. Sorel's social myth, like Yeats's poetry, demands that the recreation of the social subject takes place in poetic mode, even though, for Sorel, a prosaic kind of discourse (such as that about the general strike) can also become resource for those images that heighten the subject's consciousness in poetic mode. And one might say that the monoglossic tendency engendered by the religious experience of art and social myth can take hold not only in poetic mode, as is the case with Yeats, but also in prosaic mode, as is the case with Joyce.

The monoglossia engendered in the poetic order of discourse enhances the monoglossia engendered in the prosaic order of discourse: the authority of linguistic expression possessed of high prestige, its epic dimension, provides the rhythm of set and reproducible patterns of experience, the rhythm of the work song applied to routine tasks of production, a kind of hypnotic chant that recalls ritualised patterns of social life based on an unromantic myth that fails to provide any opening unto a different plane, locking one's heart and mind within ideological absolutes. The heteroglossia engendered in the poetic order of discourse enhances the heteroglossia engendered in the prosaic order of discourse: the disruption produced through an epiphany or the apocalyptic faith born in the subject of social myth further a dialogical creative mode of being. Myth can only be art in this case.

Poetry and prose, metaphor and metonymy, monoglossia and heteroglossia are the vehicles, instruments, and effects of contrary forces manifested in any form of text, and in any aesthetic experience. They are born from, and in turn drive, the whirls of lived experience in which sorrow and fear can be uncannily carnivalesque, and laughter uncannily tragic, as Flann O'Brien remarked in reference to Joyce's writing:

> Humour, the handmaid of sorrow and fear, creeps out endlessly in all Joyce's works. He uses the thing, in the same way as Shakespeare does but less formally, to attenuate the fear of those who have belief and who genuinely think that they will be in hell or in heaven shortly, and possibly very shortly. With laughs he palliates the sense of doom that is the heritage of the Irish Catholic. True humour needs this background urgency: Rabelais is funny, but his stuff cloys. His stuff lacks tragedy. (Nolan, 1951, p. 11)

In Joyce's texts, the carnivalesque of heteroglossia attenuates the monoglossia of belief. The narrative undermines the conviction required for faith in social myth as understood by Sorel, the genuine experience of conviction which makes the experience of social myth of such 'high moral value and such great sincerity' (Sorel, 2004, p. 46). It does so because Joyce feared the paralysis he perceived as born from unquestioned conviction, but it aims precisely at achieving the same goal as Sorel's, except that high moral value and great sincerity are sought by different means. Joyce's work would not lead readers to faith in social myths, but it would position them in opposition to the destructive monoglossia of what Sorel called Utopias. Lives lived in monoglossic submission are the stuff of tragedy, but the tragic hero seeks to transcend the destiny laid out by received or imposed convictions and beliefs. Art offers the opportunity of such transcendence. Both the prosaic and the poetic can be modes of creativity, or modes of experience that lead to paralysis, convention, and automatism.

In their rebellious religiosity Joyce and Sorel are alike, with the exception that the former, in keeping with the ethos of individualist anarchism, celebrates the subject's individuality, whereas the latter, in keeping with the anarcho-syndicalist tradition, celebrates the individual as member of a social group. For Joyce, the moment of aesthetic experience is lived in poetic mode, as is the experience of social myth in Sorel's theory. Thus, although at the level of narrative technique *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* promote heteroglossia, the texts as a whole function like a metaphor. The classical myth and Joyce's novel are the terms of an encompassing metaphor, and the relation of similarity governs the metonymical textual arrangements or, rather, is interwoven with those. In Sorel's case, the narrative which becomes a social myth (such as, for instance, a heroic tale of the deeds of Napoleon's soldiers) and the derived images one forms for action (as when the worker sees himself in epic poetic mode as a soldier engaged in battle, and the battle is the general strike) are the terms of an encompassing metaphor that governs the imagination of the subject of action, and is interwoven with the metonymical expression of his/her action strategy.

The experience of reading triggered by *Finnegans Wake* can also be seen to take place between the terms of an encompassing metaphor. These terms are reality itself and the subjective experience of reality. *Finnegans Wake* 'takes place' in the space between those terms, the very space of fusion between the subject of action, narrative subject, and the worlds they inhabit. For Sorel, that experience is unanalysable, whereas Joyce does 'analyse' it by placing it on the plane of narrative description. However, in Joyce's text the unity between subjective experience and the reality which is experienced, sensed metonymically as based on a relation of contiguity, is simultaneously ordered metaphorically, in the way of an epiphany, which makes it amenable to comparison with the experience Sorel envisioned for the subject of social myth.

It is now appropriate to sum up the convergences and divergences identified in this chapter between the experience of social myth as envisioned by Sorel, and aesthetic experience as envisioned by Joyce, keeping in mind that for Sorel the experience of social myth is ultimately an aesthetic experience. This comparison shall involve the following terms: heteroglossia and monoglossia, poetic and prosaic dimensions of discourse and modes of experience, metaphoric and metonymic order of discourse, religious and profane, and synchronic aesthetic experience and diachronic unfolding of the language of action.

The synchronic aesthetic experience is the experience in which the subject of action and narrative subject become one. Aesthetic experience is monoglossic and takes place in poetic mode, even though it may be triggered by prosaic discourse. It has a religious dimension that is born in the moment when the high priest of art transmutes the profane daily bread of experience into a radiant reality, or the worker-artisan, swept off his feet in his enrapture as subject of social myth, finds himself in the identity of a protagonist of the myth, and lives that identity with conviction, faith, belief, sincerity, and enthusiasm.

The translation of aesthetic experience into the language of action is the setting forth of the subject of aesthetic experience into the material reality as a subject of action. The language of action expresses this synthesis of aesthetic subject and the subject of action performatively. If the worldview gained in poetic, metaphoric mode, is brought to bear on the dialogic relations established among the subjects of action, it gains what Bakhtin called '*obraz*', a face, an embodied form. That embodied form comprises the subject of action who sees the world in a new way, and the material actions s/he may undertake in making that world material. The aesthetic image gains dramatic form as Joyce's Stephen understood it:

> The dramatic form is reached when the vitality [transferred from the artist to the narration and thence to persons in the material world] which has flowed and eddied round each person fills every person with such vital force that he or she assumes a proper an intangible esthetic life. [...] The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the

> human imagination. The mystery of esthetic, like that of material creation, is accomplished. (Joyce, 1965, p. 233, brackets mine)

Several elements in Stephen's assessment of the power of art to shape social subjects make possible a comparison with Sorel's concept of social myth. In interpreting the passage from *A Portrait* in this way I am taking into account the etymological meaning of 'person', which derives from the Latin *persona*, meaning mask, and I connect this meaning with the notion of social mask which defines a social agent's identity, and at the same time with Bakhtin's notion of mask, which defines one's identity as participant in the carnival-like subversion of authority in embodied, dialogical interaction.

For Joyce, the mystery of aesthetic is accomplished in poetic mode in what may be regarded as the fulfilment of a monoglossic tendency of discourse. It is accomplished in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience, which is a poetic mode of experience, grounded in the metaphoric order of discourse, and having a religious character. For all these reasons, it can be said to manifest the monoglossic tendency of discourse. But Stephen's poetic manifesto is developed from the position of a high priest of art who rebels against established authority and therefore the language of action into which the envisioned aesthetic experience can be translated has a heteroglossic character. The language of action in this case is the language of the action of writing, as well as the possible action of rebellion, an individualist anarchist language of action that Joyce's discourse makes available to the social subject. Hence the heteroglossia of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, which can be seen as the translation of the aesthetic experience envisioned by Stephen in *A Portrait* into the language of the action of writing. Yet, as argued above, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* preserve in their metaphoric order the tendency towards a poetic, epiphanic, religious mode of aesthetic experience. Thus, the subject of action born from the experience of reading Joyce's texts is both a participant in the carnival of subversion, and, paradoxically, an epic hero testing the possibility of faith as s/he is engaged on a quest to discover the mystery of divinity as manifested in mundane life.

Clearly, the subject of Sorel's social myth is not a participant on Bakhtin's carnival square. But he is a participant in embodied, dialogical interaction as he expresses his identity in the language of action, wearing not a carnival mask but the very 'face' of a character substantiated (made real for social identity) in the social agent's epic state of mind. His identity is expressed in poetic mode, assuming, to use Joyce's words in this context, 'a proper an intangible esthetic life'. The images s/he forms for him/herself before action are 'purified in and reprojected from the human imagination' and gain 'dramatic form' in the language of action. To paraphrase Stephen, the mystery of the transubstantiation of social subject into the subject of myth, like that of material creation, is accomplished, and it has an aesthetic dimension. And the newly formed identity is for one poised against established authority.

Thus, for both Joyce and Sorel the translation of aesthetic experience into the language of action leads to rebellion, yet for both the synchronic aesthetic experience is monoglossic. The similarities can be better explained if we take into account Joyce's affinities with Cardinal John Henry Newman. As Jill Muller points out:

> Stephen Dedalus's eagerness to claim descent from Cardinal Newman is not confined to his theories of literature and religion. While his teachers conflate Catholic piety with patriotism, Stephen claims the Cardinal as a fellow rebel against the entanglement of religion and nationalism, emphasizing Newman's rejection of the insular tradition of the Church of England in favor of a Catholicism that transcends national boundaries. It is with Newman the cosmopolitan rebel and exile that Stephen (and Joyce) chooses to identify. Joyce's autobiographical novels, in which Stephen sacrifices familial and national allegiances in order to dedicate himself to a religion of art, carry strong echoes of Newman's fictionalized account of his conversion to Rome in *Loss and Gain*. Using *Loss and Gain* as a model, Joyce presents Stephen's education as a process of conversion. (Muller, 1996, p. 594, Newman, 1966)

Thus, while the synchronic aesthetic experience has a monoglossic character, the language of action into which it is translated is heteroglossic, against the entanglement of religion and nationalism. Similarly for Sorel, while the synchronic experience of social myth has a monoglossic character, the language of action into which it is translated is heteroglossic, poising the subject of action in opposition to Utopias such as ideologically instituted religion and nationalism.

It is true that the same religion and nationalism which Sorel would regard as Utopias can be nevertheless studied as forms of social myth in the very terms which Sorel used to challenge Utopias. The subject of action whose conviction and sincerity is invested in what Sorel called Utopias would not perceive those Utopias as ideological sophistries. It may even be the case that a high form of art such as poetry as understood by Bakhtin, with its monoglossic power of subjection, conditions an experience of Utopia that can be described in the terms Sorel used to describe the experience of social myth. Perhaps that was indeed the case with readers of Yeats's poetry, a poetry whose monoglossic tendency strengthened for some their faith in ideological nationalism. There is of course a heteroglossic tendency in Yeats's work manifested in a heteroglossic language of action that pulls one off the orbit of English nationalism and its entanglement with capitalist liberalism. It is then worth emphasising yet again that monoglossia and heteroglossia are simultaneously present in the experience of art, as they are present in discourse. These contrary drives manifested in the same text and implicitly the aesthetic experience which it triggers may give impetus to contrary sets of attitudes. After all, these attitudes are not solely the product of aesthetic experience, but grow from the convergences of several kinds of discourse, including besides the literary also the political, philosophical, scientific, and so forth.

To capture better the political value of the manifestation of the contrary tendencies of monoglossia and heteroglossia in Joyce and Sorel, we might employ a term used to define the identity of the Indian anarchist Bhagat Singh: 'mystical atheism'. Singh developed his own brand of anarchism in the context of anti-colonial movements in India led by Gandhi and partly in relation to Irish anti-imperialism. Singh read anarchist philosophy extensively and translated Daniel Breen's *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (1924) under the name of Balwant Singh (Dublish, 1982, p. 54). In his 'Why I am an Atheist', written in jail awaiting execution, Singh reflected on the role of religious belief in producing the romantic conviction required of the revolutionaries, but reasserted his faith in reason:

> If I were a believer, I know in the present circumstances my life would have been easier; the burden lighter. My disbelief in God has turned all the circumstances too harsh and this situation can deteriorate further. Being a little mystical can give the circumstances a poetic turn. But I need no opiate to meet my end. I am a realistic man. I want to overpower this tendency in me with the help of Reason. (Singh, 2007, p. 171)

Perhaps Joyce and Sorel were mystic atheists on their own terms. Mystic in their understanding of aesthetic experience as a poetic mode of being; yet atheists in challenging the ideological consequences of the extension of this poetic mode as a mode of social life. Neither Joyce nor Sorel saw art or aesthetically formed social myth as an opiate for the masses, but as a realistic means of engendering social change. Thus strategies of desubjection, engendering heteroglossia, and belief in aesthetic vision, tending to draw the streams of experience into the monoglossic state of mind in a subject's poetic mode of being, sit together in anarchist understandings, whether individualist or syndicalist, of the relations between art and social change. Indeed, they make possible the very use of art as means of social change. This is a subject developed in the following chapter.

9. Heteroglossic Desubjection and Monoglossic Subjection in Joyce, Yeats, and Sorel

Social Myth, Anarchy, and Syndicalism

In this chapter I focus on aspects of narratives by James Joyce and W. B. Yeats to explore, in the context of George Sorel's theory of social myth, the ways in which monoglossia and heteroglossia are effects of competing forces which act simultaneously to stabilise or recreate subjective identity. I show how Sorel's theory can be used to extend the applicability of Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of monoglossia and heteroglossia from narrative language to the language of action. This leads to the definition of art as praxis in which material reality is the object of praxis, aesthetics a means of production of material reality, and the material relations between social subjects and reality the end product.

Several elements of Sorel's understanding of the concept of social myth allow us to derive an aesthetic theory from it. First, Sorel's anarcho-syndicalism is kindred with that of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. For both Proudhon and Sorel, the identity of the worker is never fully dissociated from that of the artisan. The worker's identity is shaped by his position as a member of the guilds of craftsmen which, in Marxist terms, constituted a 'pre-class' form of workers' organisation. Since the artisan was not only a producer of goods, but also an artist shaping each object in unique form, the ethos of Sorel's workers is not clearly distinguishable from the ethos of artists.

The distinction between the artisan worker and the alienated worker of modern, industrial capitalism, becomes clearer if we examine the concept of social myth in light of Bakhtin's assessment of the transformations which occurred in the passage from pre-class to class societies in the ancient world. While in the excerpt quoted below Bakhtin refers to the dissolution of ancient communities in their transition to slave society in the Greco-Roman world, his terms are contemporary, suggesting that he interpreted those political-cultural events of the ancient world through using the experience of modern age transition from agricultural to industrial society. In such a transition:

> The gross [both 'total' and 'mundane'] realities of the ancient pre-class complex [...] are dissociated from each other, and undergo an internal bifurcation and sharp hierarchical reinterpretation. In ideologies and in literature,

> the elements of the matrix are scattered throughout various planes, high and low, and throughout various genres, styles, tones. They no longer come together in a single context; they do not line up with one another since the all-embracing whole has been lost. All that has already been severed and disunified in life itself is now reflected in ideology. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 213, brackets mine)

The analytical perspective revealed in this passage is developed in different terms in various aspects of Bakhtin's theorisation of monoglossia and heteroglossia. The dissolution of the matriceal world of the pre-class complex leads on the one hand to the repudiation of the lived experience of dialogical engagement with the world and the next man, a dialogical engagement which is a form of creative labour, recuperated in later ages in Rabelaisian literary narratives, like those of Joyce. On the other hand, this dissolution leads to the sublimation of dialogical relations, through metaphorical representation, into poetry, an authoritative genre disconnected from direct experience, and oftentimes lending its authority to ideology. The matriceal bonds survive in epic, as a genre suited to the celebration of social unity, but also in comedy or ritual parody as a genre suited to the carnivalesque celebration of the immediacy of the dialogical relations that existed in the matriceal worldview, but which are now officially repudiated and representationally sublimated in poetic discourse (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 218).

Bakhtin understands the term 'poetry' in its denotative sense as the discourse of a poem, but also in a wider sense as discourse of authority, a view perhaps derived from the classical philological tradition. The myth theorist Bruce Lincoln argues that in classical antiquity:

> *logos* denoted not rational argumentation but rather shady speech acts: those of seduction, beguilement, and deception, through which structural inferiors outwitted those who held power over them. *Mythos*, in contrast, was the speech of the preeminent, above all poets and kings, a genre (like them) possessed of high authority, having the capacity to advance powerful truth claims, and backed by physical force. (Lincoln, 1999, p. x)

For Bakhtin poetry functions like *mythos*, engendering monoglossia, whereas parodic genres, engendering heteroglossia, could be said to develop from carnivalesque, shady speech acts of 'seduction, beguilement, and deception, through which structural inferiors outwitted those who held power over them'. In these terms, Sorel's theory of social myth would be one that inverts the hierarchy of power. *Mythos* becomes a means of expression for the working class, whose members are, in the image of the artisan, capable of becoming preeminent artists, and, through the conviction engendered by faith in social myth, also able to advance powerful truth claims backed by physical force. By contrast, *logos* is a means of deception employed by the capitalist middle class. Social myth is, like *mythos*, poised against a form of *logos* defined by Sorel as comprising intellectual sophistries through which, unlike in the classical antiquity, those in power, rather than structural inferiors, create Utopias. Through these Utopias, which develop into ideologies, those in power seek to outwit the working class through seduction, beguilement, and deception.

For Bakhtin, if narrative is experienced in poetic mode, it is susceptible of strengthening the authority of an ideology. Quite the contrary, for Sorel, although myth can only be experienced in poetic mode, it is not a form of ideology. The moment of synchronic experience of social myth is lived in poetic mode, much like *mythos*, although, instead of possessing hierarchical authority, the workers possess moral authority, nevertheless being in many respects like an elite sect of poets and kings, similar to the Yeatsean aristocratic brotherhood. The ossification of myth on the diachronic axis of history yields ideologies, that is, Utopias, and a monoglossic language of action. In its propensity to become ideology, social myth is like Bakhtin's poetry in the service of institutionalised authority. But, more importantly for Sorel, the synchronic experience of social myth can also be translated into a language of action that contests ideologies and the 'direct word' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 53) of monoglossic discourse. In that, social myth leads not to subjection, but to desubjection, to a recuperation of embodied, immediate, dialogical experience that, like 'prose art' for Bakhtin, 'presumes a deliberate feeling for the historical and social concreteness of living discourse, as well as its relativity, a feeling for its participation in historical becoming and in social struggle; it deals with discourse that is still warm from that struggle and hostility' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 331). Like 'the literary-artistic consciousness of the modern novel, sensing itself on the border between two languages, one literary [that is, 'completed, dominant'], the other extraliterary' that is, 'outside the centralizing and unifying influence of the artistic and ideological norm established by the dominant literary language' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 67, brackets mine), the consciousness of the social subject enriched through the experience of social myth senses itself on the border between the monoglossic language of action derived from ideological Utopias and the heteroglossic language of action challenging the former.

The effect of novelisation theorised by Bakhtin can be explored in Sorel's terms because the experience of social myth is lived in an 'epic state of mind' (Sorel, 2004, p. 248). The epic genre being ambiguously situated on the border between poetry and prose, its discourse can engender an experience lived either in poetic mode or prosaic mode, and sometimes in both modes, as Joyce's oeuvre, especially *Ulysses*, amply demonstrates. Sorel's theory emphasises the poetic epic mode of action as a form of engendering heteroglossic contestation of authority, whereas Bakhtin emphasises the prosaic aspects of epic life. Sorel's social myth is lived in the poetic mode of an epic state of mind, the mode of myth, religious belief, or poetic fervour. For Bakhtin, the epic dimension of experience is lived in prosaic mode, the mode of the carnival, prosaic disbelief, or novelistic dialogism, with poetic epic either relocated to the domain of poetry, and, hence, to ideology, or left aside as a 'complicated question': 'the epic [...]

achieves a penetration of historical time that is in its own way unique and profound, but nevertheless localized and limited' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 218).

Thus, for Sorel, the basis of social myth is a worded narrative text, usually an epic, such as the Bible or tales about the heroism of the French revolutionaries. However, the social myth itself is a syncretic social text: it includes words, the images one forms for oneself before action, and dramatistic scripts. In relation to Socialism, the social myth of the general strike is the only 'text' that embodies perfectly the aspirations of the Syndicalists:

> Strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess; the general strike groups them all in a co-ordinated picture, and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum of intensity; appealing to their painful memories of particular conflicts, it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness. We thus obtain that intuition of Socialism which language cannot give us with perfect clearness – and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously. (Sorel, 2004, pp. 127–8)

Compare this with Stephen's reflections on Aquinas' term, *claritas*, in relation to the final stage of aesthetic perception in the theory of aesthetics outlined in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Having apprehended an object of reality in its wholeness, and then in its relation to the material world, one makes:

> the only synthesis which is logically and esthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he [Aquinas] speaks is the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing. This supreme quality is felt by the artist when the esthetic image is first conceived in his imagination. [...] The instant wherein the supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony is the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure, a spiritual state very like to that which the Italian physiologist Luigi Galvani [...] called the enchantment of the heart. (Joyce, 1965, p. 231, original italics, brackets mine)

It is worth reading Sorel's description of his understanding of social myth and Joyce's description of Stephen's understanding of art through each other. Sorel defined artistic creation as a form of labour connected to artisans' industry. Joyce used terms related to artisans' industry in the famous statement of Stephen's poetic manifesto: 'I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' (Joyce, 1965, p. 276). The soul is the workshop wherein one forges a new reality, contemplating its possible shapes as yet undiscovered in the raw material of experience in the manner an artisan might contemplate the uncreated form 'hidden' in the material on which he will work.

In ‘The Social Value of Art’, Sorel argues, on the one hand, that:

> In a society of workers occupied with ensuring industrial progress and arriving at a full understanding of what is happening around them [...] art will have to be the adornment which will serve to show the importance of careful, conscientious and scholarly execution; art will be, in some way, the means by which the workers will understand the infusion of intelligence into manual work [...] the young man [the apprentice] must not find in the practice of his profession less dignity than in the science taught to him, and for that to occur, his work should appear clothed in an aesthetic charm. [...] Thus, in the last analysis, the mission of art seems to be to ennoble manual work and to make it the equal of scientific work. (Sorel, 1990, p. 118, brackets mine)

On the other hand, like social myth, ‘the work of art is the result of the explosion of latent forces which have accumulated in the soul of the author under the influence of the general sentiments of his time’ (Sorel, 1990, p. 99). In *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel argues that the general strike manifests ‘the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that [workers] possess’ (Sorel, 2004, p. 127, brackets mine). The general strike is the result of the explosion of latent forces that have accumulated in the soul of the worker under the influence of his peers’ noble, deep, and most moving sentiments. The general strike as defined in *Reflections* is like the work of art defined in ‘The Social Value of Art’. Since the general strike is lived in the language of action, it follows that the social actors engaged in it themselves are part of an art text. ‘Clothed in an aesthetic charm’, the general strike is, in the last analysis, ennobled in a labour of action that is both aesthetic and material. That is, Sorel asks one to see oneself as an art object in one’s labour of self-creation through social myth. To use Joyce’s words in this context, the social subject, the worker, ‘is first luminously apprehended as selfbounded and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it’ (Joyce, 1965, p. 230). The *integritas* of the subject of action as subject of social myth is not only manifested materially in the action of the strikes, but is also ethical. The worker is perceived against the background of mechanical time in what Henri Bergson called ‘duration’. He is perceived as such by Sorel or anyone who witnesses the action inspired by social myth, but the subject of social myth should also perceive himself in this aesthetic manner.

That return to duration makes possible for Sorel’s social subject ‘the analysis of apprehension’ which follows ‘the synthesis of immediate perception’ of which Stephen speaks in terms of an aesthetic. That is, although ‘the details of the composition [derived from social myth] presented to consciousness’ (Sorel, 2004, p. 127, brackets mine) make up a ‘complex, multiple, divisible, separable’ (Joyce, 1965, p. 230) image of the aesthetic subject of myth and the social subject of action, the experience of social myth, like that of art, ‘groups them all in a co-ordinated picture’ (Sorel, 2004, p.

127), 'the result of its parts and their sum, harmonious' (Joyce, 1965, p. 231). 'That is *consonantia*', we might say, substantiating Stephen's words.

Perceiving one's self in the way of art, or, rather, through the art of social myth, one obtains an intuition of one's self 'which language cannot give us with perfect clearness – and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously' with 'maximum of intensity', coloured 'with an intense life' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 128, 127). Similarly, Stephen's artist perceives 'that supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image [...] apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony' in 'the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure, a spiritual state' we might call 'the enchantment of the heart' (Joyce, 1965, p. 231). In Sorel's understanding of how social myth works, the subject of action undergoes a transformation which for Stephen is of aesthetic nature: the subject of action is enriched through its encounter with the narrative subject of social myth, whose stance he has inhabited, and in which stance the subject of action now carries on. Social myth, like art, is a means of production of the social subject out of the raw material 'of the reality of experience', endowed with a conscience that befits the social collective, or the 'race' in Joyce's terms (Joyce, 1965, p. 276), forged in the smithy of one's soul as an alloy of aesthetic self and social self.

It is true that Stephen speaks of an object, a mere basket, and therefore the application of his aesthetic method to the social subject may seem uneasy. But as a narrative subject Stephen is the result of Joyce's application of his aesthetic method to himself. Stephen is, ultimately, James Joyce as an art text or an art object. The subject of action (James Joyce) used what might be termed a social myth of art as resistance and non-compliance (art as general strike?) to recreate himself as Stephen (an art object), meeting in him his aesthetic self, and carrying on together the stance thus found. The concept of social myth of art as resistance and non-compliance is difficult to apply in Joyce's case because in Sorel's view a social myth is for the individual *within the group*, whereas Joyce's artist is one against any social group. Yet both shared the anarchist ethos of self-empowerment through the manifestation of creative power in labour that is not alienating, but is like artistic creation. And, Sorel did emphasise that 'the general strike [...] is a most striking manifestation of *individualistic force in the revolted masses*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 241–2, original italics).

For Sorel, the embodiment of the narrative subject as subject of action takes place in the synchronic moment of the experience of social myth. This moment is not amenable to analysis, because it is an instant out of mechanical, measurable time: it is an 'intuition', obtained 'as a whole', and 'perceived instantaneously', as in 'the "global knowledge" of Bergson's philosophy' (Sorel, 2004, p. 128). However, as Stathis Gourgouris noted, Sorel conceptualises social myth as praxis: 'It is praxis, more than theory, that "takes place" in the domain of myth', in 'an irrevocable present whose potential future as analytical plan is irrelevant' (Gourgouris, 1997, p. 143). Such praxis befits not the alienated worker, whom Sorel sees as caught up in the net of 'comfortable Utopias', or ideologically defined social worlds and identities, 'which present a deceptive mirage of the future to the people', a worker who is 'credulous enough to believe every promise of future bliss' made in the discourses of 'sociologists', 'fashionable people who are in favour of social reforms', and 'Intellectuals who have embraced *the profession of thinking for the proletariat*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 129, 128, 138, original italics). Social myth as praxis is for a worker who, like an artisan, is also an artist. Thus, Utopias drive processes of serial reproduction of identities, whereas social myths drive one's unique and irreproducible recreation of oneself as both aesthetic subject and subject of action.

Social myth as praxis implies two intertwined kinds of non-alienating labour. There is the labour of action, driven by faith in the myth, which reshapes material reality, with reality itself the product of that labour. And there is the labour of artistic creation, whose product is the social self, without which the regenerated social agent could not be inspired to undertake the labour of action. Yeats's lines form 'Among School Children' come to mind:

> Labour is blossoming or dancing where
> The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
> Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
> Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
> O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
> Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
> O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
> How can we know the dancer from the dance?
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 221)

In a reading of these lines in Sorel's anarcho-syndicalist perspective, one may argue that the kind of labour rejected in the poem is that driven by Utopias, carried out by those who 'worship images' created by 'self-born mockers of man's enterprise' (Yeats, 1997, p. 221), instead of learning the passion of engagement in the aesthetic recreation of the world. This kind of engagement was experienced by the 'sixty-year old smiling public man', whose visit to the school triggers the recollection of youthful days in which life, art, and the passions of the heart were flowing in the same stream:

> I dream of a Ledaean body, bent
> Above the sinking fire, a tale that she
> Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event
> That changed some childish day to tragedy
> –Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent
> Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,
> Or else, to alter Plato's parable,
> Into the yolk and white of the one shell.
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 219)

The lines refer to Yeats's love for Maud Gonne, recreated in these lines as an art object, 'made mythical and eternal, made immortal in the figure of the Ledaean body, the body visited by the gods, by Zeus himself' (Snukal, 1973, p. 201). Yet this art object is not one that can be reproduced serially, for it captures, indeed it is born from, the fire of conviction kindled by faith in what might be termed the social myth of a new Celtic Ireland. Maud Gonne played the part of Cathleen Ni Houlihan in Yeats's eponymous play, depicting the call to arms and revolution attributed to the mythical figure of the sovereign goddess of Irish myth and folklore. To use Sorel's terms in this context, the myth of Cathleen Ni Houlihan is seen to engender in the Irish revolutionaries 'the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess'; the play rendering the myth 'groups them all in a co-ordinated picture, and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum of intensity; appealing to their painful memories of particular conflicts, it colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness.'; we thus obtain that intuition of Irish Revivalism 'which language cannot give us with perfect clearness – and we obtain it as a whole, perceived instantaneously' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 127–8). The joining of the subject of action (Maud Gonne) with the narrative subject, the protagonist of a social myth (Cathleen Ni Houlihan), set forth through the aesthetic of an art text (Yeats's play), is epiphanic. In Joyce's terms, this joining shows forth the envisioned, although not the actual, '*whatness*' of the social subject in the 'instant wherein the supreme quality of beauty, the clear radiance of the esthetic image, is apprehended luminously by the mind which has been arrested by its wholeness and fascinated by its harmony' in 'the luminous silent stasis of esthetic pleasure' (Joyce, 1965, p. 231, original italics). However, Joyce's Stephen is keen to point out that it is not through the aesthetic of Revivalist myth that he seeks the regeneration of Ireland, not through seeking, like Yeats's avatar, Michael Robartes, 'the loveliness which has long faded from the world' but 'the loveliness which has not yet come into the world' (Joyce, 1965, p. 274).

Thus Yeats's 'Among School Children' sets in contrast the ideologically driven subject of Utopias as defined by Sorel and the true artist's ability to transform the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience, in which, for instance, someone like Maud Gonne shows to the mind's eye as a Leda, into the language of action, represented by the dancer lost in the dance in what Joyce might call 'the enchantment of the heart' (Joyce, 1965, p. 231). Yeats, like Sorel, was aware of the possibility that aesthetic experience may be harnessed to ideology, placing the subject of that experience not in duration or myth, but in an ideologically defined, sterile world. Maud Gonne was not spared the admonishment Yeats addressed to those surrendering to ideological abstraction. In 'Easter, 1916', he refers to Maud Gonne in the following lines:

> Hearts with one purpose alone
> Through summer and winter seem
> Enchanted to a stone
> To trouble the living stream.

> (Yeats, 1997, p. 182)

As Edna Longley has shown:

> Years before reinventing Cathleen ni Houlihan as Medusa, Yeats had associated stone with opinion, abstraction and his own temptations thereto. [...] In the context of Irish Nationalism Yeats came to identify himself, the natural world and poetry with the female principle, and Maud Gonne (Cathleen), mechanism and opinion with the male. (Longley, 1994, p. 63)

The image of Maud Gonne has become a reproducible object, with ideology as its means of production, troubling the living stream of artistic labour, of the 'dance' that allows one, as in Bergson's philosophy, to replenish and regenerate one's identity through meeting one's aesthetic self, mediated through art. Against the mechanisms of ideology that stone the heart and mind of the social subject, Yeats sets the living stream of poetry, yet poetry that, drawing on myth, creates an epic state of mind for the social subject. In that, Yeats's art functions like Sorel's social myth.

In his own revolt of the soul against the intellect, Sorel argues that commentaries and analyses of art texts, the 'science of art', are rendered in impotent speech:

> The impotence of speech is due to the fact that art flourishes best on mystery, half shades and indeterminate outlines; the more speech is methodical and perfect, the more likely is it to eliminate everything that distinguishes a masterpiece; it reduces the masterpiece to the proportions of an academic product. (Sorel, 2004, p. 144)

The synchronic moment of aesthetic experience, an unanalysable experience flourishing on 'mystery, half shades and indeterminate outlines', is contrasted with its analytical representation as a disharmonious sum of parts on the plane of description, that is, on the plane of history. It is the same, Sorel argues, with religion and science. He concludes:

> We are led to believe that it is possible to distinguish in every complex body of knowledge a clear and an obscure region, and to say that the latter is perhaps the more important. The mistake made by superficial people consists in the statement that this second part must disappear with the progress of enlightenment, and that eventually everything will be explained rationally in terms of the *little science*. This error is particularly revolting as regards art, and, above all, perhaps, as regards modern painting, which seeks more and more to render combinations of shades to which no attention was formerly paid on account of their lack of stability and of the difficulty of rendering them by speech. (Sorel, 2004, p. 144, original italics)

The experience of social myth, then, is like the experience of art, and both share the ethos of religious experience without being completely incompatible with science. The problem for Sorel is that rational analysis seeks to devalue this experience, relegating art and religion to the position of an other against which rationality can define its privileged position as social force. Sorel's concept of social myth reinstates aesthetic experience (engendered by art, social myth, or religion) as social force: the synchronic experience of art, myth, or religious faith can be translated into the language of action, while the scientific language of description, which is also the language of Utopias, cannot do it sufficient justice.

Nevertheless, the experience of social myth is also an experience of subjection. The social subject consents to being signified through the subject of myth. S/he becomes the tenor of the aesthetic self recollected from an art text in a metaphorical relation between the fictional actor and him/herself. The social agent expressed through, and expressing, the fictional identity relayed by an epic, or any art text or myth, projects this metaphorical relation on the syntagmatic, diachronic axis of the language of action, carrying it into his/her (epic) deeds in material and social reality in poetic mode. Of the various discourses developed during the 'wars of Liberty', Sorel finds that:

> Revolutionary literature is not entirely false, when it reports so many grandiloquent phrases said to have been uttered by the combatants; doubtless none of these phrases were spoken by the people to whom they are attributed, their form is due to men of letters used to the composition of classical declamation; but the basis is real in this sense, that we have, thanks to these lies of revolutionary rhetoric, a perfectly exact representation of the aspect under which the combatants looked on war, a true expression of the sentiments aroused by it, and the *actual accent of the truly Homeric conflicts* which took place at the time. I am certain that none of the actors in these dramas ever protested against the words attributed to them; this was no doubt because each found beneath these fantastic phrases, a true expression of his own deepest feelings. (Sorel, 2004, pp. 239–40, original italics)

Thus, while the narrative subjects of the texts, their characters, are fictional, their rhetoric presentation renders the pulse of actual events, the actual accent of the 'truly Homeric' actions that took place, expressing not necessarily historical fact, but the mood and essence of the reality of what happened. It is the same with social myth: the narrative of the myth may be fictional, but it governs the mood and essence of the experience of the subject of action, lived in material reality. It thus creates premises for action for the social subject, that is, the premises for the translation of synchronic aesthetic experience into the language of action on the diachronic axis of history.

For Sorel, revolutionary literature is full of epic heroes because the reality it represents was itself lived in an epic state of mind. The reason why that reality was experienced in an epic state of mind is that the combatants saw themselves in the image of 'Homer's Archaean type, the indomitable hero confident in his strength and putting himself above rules' (Sorel, 2004, p. 232). In light of Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Sorel argued that the Homeric narrative type, that is, narratives of any heroes that follow the Homeric pattern, appeal to the revolutionary. Art forms the 'will to power' of the subject of action. However:

> The philosophers are little disposed to admit the right of art to support the cult of the 'will to power' [...]. Like industry, art has never adapted itself to the demands of theorists; it always upsets their plans of social harmony, and humanity has found the freedom of art far too satisfactory ever to think of allowing it to be controlled by the creators of dull systems of sociology. The Marxists [...] should look upon art as a reality which begets ideas and not as an application of ideas. (Sorel, 2004, pp. 232–3)

Sorel then criticises Nietzsche for 'piling up much invective' against the sacerdotal castes and defends their determination to action, inspired by social myths (Sorel, 2004, p. 233). That is, Sorel reconciles the idea of subjection through the religious experience of social myth, and the notion of art as means to attain the satisfaction of the will to power. He sets forth the argument that art is a means to will into material existence on the plane of history, through action, the aesthetic experience lived in the synchronic moment of subjection to social myth or art, an experience that has a religious dimension. Art, 'like industry', is a means of transforming material reality: while industry begets new products, 'art begets ideas', that is, it reconstructs the identity of the subject of action, and, in the translation of the experience of art into the language of action, it reconstructs material reality, for it leads to action in ways that have material effects.

The industry that Sorel has in mind here is that of the creative artisan, as opposed to that of the alienated labourer. Sorel's worker 'begets' objects, it nurses them into being, instead of merely applying himself to serial production tasks devised by people whom he shall never know. Similarly, creative art begets ideas instead of being the result of ideologically driven 'application of ideas'. If industry produces objects, artists who labour in the fashion of artisans produce a language of action through which the social subject is desubjected, even though in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience the one who experiences art, or social myth, is subjected in consenting to being signified through the fictional subject set forth in the art text. By contrast, the art of the artists who labour in the fashion of the alienated workers produces a language of action through which the social subject remains subjected and imprisoned within the monoglossic direct word of a poetically sustained centralised verbal-ideological world. His language of action in this case is but a 'practical' application of the ideas of ideologists and theorists.

As forms of labour, Joyce's and Yeats's art can be explored as engendering subjection and desubjection in the same way a social myth does. Both art and social myth are tools for creating the subject of action in the fashion of an art object, an argument that refers not only to readers or members of an audience but also to the artists-labourers themselves. For Joyce, the artist contemplates the completed work of transubstantiation of material reality into its aesthetic form in the same way an artisan might contemplate an object s/he has just finished creating: 'The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails' (Joyce, 1965, p. 233). This is not to say that the artist is coldly contemplating his creation, but rather that as a physical being he is no longer relevant as individual creator of a particular reality: his personality 'impersonalizes itself', that is, it is diffused first into a 'fluid and lambent narrative' and then into the objective (impersonalised) reality that narrative helped bring about (Joyce, 1965, p. 233). Although the artist's personality no longer matters, as social subject s/he is susceptible to the impression of the shaping force of his/her creation, belonging himself/herself into the art text. Joyce, in Stephen's image, is a high priest of art that transforms the mundane world but also himself: both walk together henceforth.

It is the same with the subject of social myth: the worker and the epic hero walk together in the manifestation of their will to power as an aesthetic recreation of social identity for action. And it is the same with the social subject experiencing the 'enchantment of the heart', to use Joyce's words in this context (Joyce, 1965, p. 231), through Yeats's poetry. As the poet asked in 'The Statues': 'When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side/ What stalked through the Post Office?' (Yeats, 1997, p. 344). The subject of myth, turned into the subject of art, joins the social subject, is summoned to his side through the power wielded by the high priest of art. In their walking together the social subject is changed, recreated through the power of an aesthetic. Translating this regenerative experience into the language of action, the social subject proceeds to shape the material world accordingly, making the vibration of aesthetic experience resound through the wavelengths of material reality.

It is confounding to an extent to treat both Yeats's poetry and Joyce's prose as amenable to an analysis through Sorel's concept of social myth, in light of Bakhtin's distinction between monoglossia and heteroglossia. The easy way would have been to treat Yeats's poems as manifesting monoglossia, and Joyce's prose as manifesting heteroglossia. After all, there is plenty of carnivalesque in Joyce, whereas there is little in Yeats, and Yeats was much more authoritarian than Joyce. But that would mean being unable to account for Joyce's religiosity, if it may be thus described, manifested in his conviction that art is epiphanic, like poetry and myth. And it would mean being unable to reveal the heteroglossic dimension of Yeats's work, that is, the heteroglossic character of the language of action the social subject can derive from his poetry. For, like the language of action derived from social myth, it is a language of contestation of monoglossic, ideologically conditioned worldviews.

One may do better to acknowledge, with Bakhtin, the inherent complementarity of the two forces of monoglossia and heteroglossia, which hold together literary texts and social subjects in the patterned movement of an aesthetic 'dance', through which an aesthetically shaped reality is willed into being in the synchronic experience of art, and then made material in the derived language of action. There is monoglossia in the experience of subjection whereby one, almost literally, or, should we say, both literally and literarily, lends one's self to the narrative subject, inhabiting its posture and mode of action, and drawing the narrative subject into the 'dance' of social action. But the dialogue thus initiated between one's self and the self set forth in the art text, or in the social myth as a form of art, is heteroglossic in Bakhtin's terms, leading to embodiment in the language of action, a manifesting of a feeling for the self's 'participation in historical becoming and in social struggle' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 331).

The language of action into which synchronic aesthetic experience is transformed on the diachronic axis of history is likewise both hetero-glossic and monoglossic. If the worldview born from the experience of art or of social myth becomes ossified and normative, it becomes part of an ideology, and, hence, the language of action will be monoglossic, engendering submission, its authority sustained through the prestige of poetry or an epic poetic saga (of national, or imperial, or class relevance, or of relevance to the social group withholding authority). But if the accents of the language of action do not fall into normative patterns, into mechanical order, and heteroglossia is preserved, worlds of possibility remain open and inspire the subject of action in his/her labour of refashioning the material world.

Anarchism, whether individualist (as with Joyce) or syndicalist (as with Sorel), or nationalism (as with Yeats), or any social and political movement, establish their own myths while contesting already established social myths. The power of heteroglossia and monoglossia, engendered at the level of the discourse in which one presents oneself to oneself and to others, spills over into social action. Art participates in the life of the subject of action, and, in this way, in the shaping and reshaping of material reality. Far from being immaterial and merely fiction, narrative subjects come to inhabit the subject of action, driving his/her actions and thus making the world possible for art, while at the same time making art possible for the world.

In engendering forms of monoglossic subjection and heteroglossic desubjection, art participates in the violence of subjection and in the violence of desubjection. The implication of narrative and art into violence and the social relevance of this implication will be explored in the following chapters.

10. Modernism, Myth, Violence, and Social Change

In this chapter I discuss the implication of modernist literary narrative, and, more broadly, of art, in violence and social change. In developing this discussion I shall draw on Georges Sorel's theory of social myth. For Sorel, the experience of social myth is an aesthetic experience translatable into the language of action. The language of action yielded by aesthetic experience is also a language of violence, although violence is conceived in subtle ways as something other than raw violence. Sorel defines violence through a distinction between social classes:

> It is very difficult to understand proletarian violence as long as we think in terms of ideas disseminated by middle-class philosophers; according to their philosophy, violence is a relic of barbarism which is bound to disappear under the influence of the progress of enlightenment. (Sorel, 2004, p. 80)

Violence is different for members of the proletariat who define themselves through social myth. They are not spellbound by Utopias created by middle-class philosophers. For the latter, the progress of enlightenment leads to nothing less than an ironing out of all contradictions. By comparison, social myths help social subjects to bring into relief contrasts and contradictions, yet within a unified picture expressed in the social myth. For Sorel:

> the myths are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act. [...] A myth cannot be refuted, since it is, at bottom, identical with the convictions of a group, being the expression of these convictions in the language of movement; and it is, in consequence, unanalysable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical descriptions. (Sorel, 2004, p. 50)

The myth harmonises the elements of experience within a unified picture presented to consciousness as a guide to action. But the resulting action does not lead to loss of the social subject within the mass, a loss imputed to socialism by W. B. Yeats. Social myth 'is a most striking manifestation of *individualistic force in the revolted masses*' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 241–2, original italics). If the synchronic experience of social myth requires monoglossic subjection (the experiencing subject becomes one with the aesthetic subject of myth), the language of action into which this experience is translated on the diachronic axis of history is heteroglossic, allowing for the manifestation of individuality as a force of change. This individuality is born from the joining of the social subject of the reality of action and the fictional subject of myth, which gives the social subject a new identity, worldview, and mode of self-perception in relation to material and social spaces. Social myth is a means of production of the social subject in its concrete relations to material and social reality.

And so is art. For Sorel, 'art is an anticipation of the kind of work that ought to be carried on in a highly productive state of society' (Sorel, 2004, p. 54). Sorel's definition of art reflects the distinction between social myth and Utopias, that is, between creative aesthetic experience and ideologically binding representations that lead to dull habit and unenlightening routine. In this context, he criticises the traditional canons of art, which he perceives as Utopian and ideological:

> the art that we possess today [around 1906, the year of serialised, first publication of *Reflections on Violence*] is a *residue* left to us by an aristocratic society, a residue which has, moreover, been greatly corrupted by the middle class. (Sorel, 2004, p. 54, original italics, brackets mine)

That art 'has used up the greatest geniuses without succeeding in producing anything which equals what has been given us by generations of craftsmen' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 54–5). The identities of artist and worker are linked in the identity of the craftsman, the one who labours creatively, expressing his individuality in the uniqueness of the object he produces (Sorel, 1990, pp. 117–18). For Sorel:

> Genius is too personal to fall under a law; there is no science of chance; finally, *art appears almost always to have a close connection with manifestations of force.* The whims of princes, military triumphs, heroic legends, play a very great role in the history of art. While claiming to have found laws, Taine stressed [in *The Philosophy of Art* (1866)] (more than anyone) the enormous influence of Italian anarchy on the Renaissance. (Sorel, 1990, p. 100; Taine, 1867, original italics, brackets mine)

In other words, like social myth, art gives expression to contradictions. Art is, on the one hand, the manifestation of individuality seeking expression, and on the other, the manifestation of dislocating forces of change, whether in the individual or in history. Herein might be found the violence theorised by Sorel. It is a violence Nietzsche defined as will to power. But while Nietzsche believed that he lived in a society which lacked heroes of the Homeric Archaean type, Sorel finds these, especially, although not only, among those workers whose labour is like that of the artisan or artist. Indeed, for Sorel, 'Many moral evils would for ever remain unremedied if some hero of revolt did not force the people to become aware of their own state of mind on the subject. And art [...] would lose the finest jewel in its crown.' (Sorel, 2004, p. 232)

Ultimately, Sorel is 'not at all concerned to justify the *perpetrators of violence*, but to inquire into the function of *violence*' (Sorel, 2004, p. 59, original italics). The function of violence as manifested in art and social myth is ultimately social change. The violence that is manifested in the experience of art is the violence of dislocation from ideological worldviews that determine one's social identity, a violence which manifests one's *élan vital* (Henri Bergson's term), one's vital force, leading to the experience of the sublime and to conviction. That conviction is carried into the language of action, as is the force of dislocation, running along ruptures in the historical continuum (determined by whims of princes, military triumphs, occasions for the birth or revival of heroic legends), exploiting those to channel in the rifts created through the destruction of normative patterns the energies unleashed in the fusion of social self and aesthetic self, in order to produce the world anew and engender social change.

Like Sorel, whose work he used in *The Art of Being Ruled*, the avant-gardist Wyndham Lewis sets conflict and contradiction as the irreconcilable conditions of art, with both connected to revolutionary social change.

Analysing Lewis's *Blast* manifesto, Scott W. Klein shows that:

> In rejecting the failed transcendence of the naturalist and abstractionist projects, he denies that art is validated either by the pure surface of the image or by the essence of the represented object. Significantly, he locates value instead in the tensions generated by oppositions. [...] In place of art's traditional striving for transcendent unity Lewis offers the artist the new goal of manufactured doubleness. He suggests that art should turn away from reconciliation towards the compensatory frictions of intentional difference. (Klein, 1994, p. 38)

The tension between the representational and essence also preoccupied Sorel. In his terms this conflict underlies one between the aesthetic experience of social myth manifested in action (expressing the essence of reality) and ideology (re-presenting reality in a deceiving manner). While art or social myth express the essence of reality, they are also 'a true expression of the sentiments aroused' by the conflict between essential reality and ideological reality, a conflict which in socialist activist terms spells class war, the '*actual accent*' of this conflict (Sorel, 2004, p. 240, original italics). The essence and vision glimpsed in synchronic aesthetic experience gain material concreteness as they are translated into the language of action, which has a heteroglossic aspect, challenging the monoglossic language of ideology. By contrast, Lewis seeks a form of absolute, aestheticised, heteroglossia in which essence and representation are constantly at war with each other. In *Blast*, the dominant concern is with the vitality of the life force as it might be imagined beyond its representational and its performative aspects; however, as all movement is sucked into the Vortex, the life force itself is compressed into stillness by the Vorticist who 'is at his maximum point of energy when stillest' (Lewis, 1914b, p. 148). Hence, the representational perhaps prevails over the performative, the synchronic over the diachronic, whereas for Sorel that compressed energy of the Vortex would be valued only as spring of social change.

The violence advocated by Sorel is a violence of dislocation from legitimated socialisation patterns on the plane of history, and therefore it is a violence of desubjection. But in the synchronic experience of social myth, a different kind of violence is advocated: subjection of social agent to aesthetic texts, which requires a fusion of social and narrative subjects. Yet this drive to subjection is counteracted by a drive to desubjection as the essence of the self discovered in the union of the subject of action and fictional subject cannot be contained in any existing forms. Similarly, the desubjection achieved on the plane of history also contains the ingredients of possible subjection, as one may easily imagine a social myth becoming ideology or, as Sorel calls it, Utopia.

The power of these drives can be distinguished also in T. S. Eliot's philosophy. Eliot reviewed Hulme's 1916 translation of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* in the July 1917 issue of the *Monist*, praising Sorel's theory as insightful in relation to modernist directions (Eliot, 1917, p. 478). Eliot's vision of a Christian society has much in common, at the level of principles, with Sorel's vision of socialism. For both Sorel and Eliot, social change requires religious sentiment and conviction. For Eliot, the 'direction of religious thought [...] must inevitably proceed to a criticism of political and economic systems', as he put it in *The Idea of a Christian Society* (Eliot, 1939, p. 4). This statement agrees with Sorel's vision of social myth as means to challenge those same systems, although for him not only Christianity, but any set of beliefs, including, for instance, the ethos of the general strike, can function like myth in a religious sense.

There is violence in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience as envisioned by Eliot. As with Sorel, the drives to subjection and desubjection are both present. Desubjection is aided by the formal qualities of the poem. For example, readers of 'The Waste Land' (first published in October 1922 in *The Criterion*) internalise a mode of questioning the possibility of institutionalised, ideological, or, indeed, mythological meaning. As Harold Bloom put it: 'The fragmentation of the poem reflects the fragmentation the poet [and his reader] experiences – the fragmentation of human consciousness, of human faith, of the time and of the culture in which the poet lives' (2007, p. 27, brackets mine). Subjection also occurs in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience, in the case of 'The Waste Land', through the grace of an epiphany. This epiphany is but the revelation of the inadequacy of any possible constructions of one's self, if these are shored up through using the 'broken images' left after the shattering of conviction and belief following the carnage of WWI. The epiphany could be described using Bloom's words thus:

> And there are ruins, the poet's ruins, the edifice of himself that is no longer whole, perhaps identical to the edifice of a culture which stands only in decay. The fragments, the broken images are the remains of something that was once, presumably, solid, but is now in ruins. The poet sees himself as a fragmented man, as ruins not reconstituted but 'shored up', supported

> in his ruined condition and kept from crumbling entirely by the fragments he has gathered in the poem. (Bloom, 2007, p. 28)

While the realisation that one's self is but the collection of scattered reflections in the pieces of a broken mirror (that contemporary institutions and ideologies might have held up to social agents in order to represent society to its members) in the same way in which 'The Waste Land' is a reflection of the poet's self, has the effect of desubjecting readers, it is also the means of preparing the ground for a language of action that entails the possibility of subjection. The desubjection is but the precondition of faith and conviction, the kind required for Eliot's Christian society theorised in the wake of WWII in *The Idea of a Christian Society.*

In the first note added when the poem was published in book form, Eliot claims that a good deal of the poem's symbolism was suggested by Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, emphasising that the poem contains references to vegetation ceremonies. Leaving aside Eliot's later repudiation of these statements, the note does offer a possible interpretative framework consistent with Eliot's interest in myth and religious beliefs. Weston and Frazer argued that ancient communities valued the regenerative cycles of nature's fertility, internalising those as modes of socialisation expressed metaphorically in ritual and myth. The sacred patterns of myth are enacted in various ways in scenarios of socialisation. In this perspective, the waste land of Eliot's poem is only a stage in the process of regeneration of self and the world. The epiphany provoked by the poem is connected to faith and conviction in that it positions the reader in the heartlands of a mystery that is to be unveiled through the ensuing quest. As Bloom put it, quoting from the poem, '*The Waste Land* is a riddle the reader must unravel in a quest to find "roots that clutch" and something that is more than "a heap of broken images"' (Bloom, 2007, p. 28). Even though the poet had no reason, at the time the poem was written, to think that such a quest might be successful, it can be argued that Eliot's later infatuation with Christianity is in fact where the quest led in his case. In light of Weston's and Frazer's theories, the readers of 'The Waste Land' gain access through the art of poetry to a mode of experience that has a religious dimension similar to the experience of myth, in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience. This experience is translatable into the language of action, for example, the kind of action required by Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society.*

In Sorelian terms, Eliot's poem creates the possibility for readers to eventually experience the faith and conviction engendered by social myth. The heteroglossic drive to desubjection and the monoglossic drive of subjection are both present in Eliot's poem, as they are in the experience of social myth as envisioned by Sorel. But in Eliot's case, heteroglossia and desubjection prevail in the synchronic experience of his art, whereas in Sorel's case monoglossia and subjection prevail in the synchronic experience of social myth. Yet one drive never completely wins or subdues the other. Eliot's poetry and Sorel's social myth both evince a tension between heteroglossia and monoglossia, between subjection and desubjection, which is transmitted into the world of action in the translation of aesthetic experience into the language of movement on the diachronic axis of history. Eliot's Christian society is one in which social agents question and view critically institutionalised ideologies. Sorel envisions socialist society as one in which social agents contest ideological Utopias. Yet the faith and conviction engendered in both cases may become the force that sustains monoglossic forms of expression in the language of action: in both cases social agents may succumb to ideologies, Christian or socialist, if the experience of art or social myth becomes itself institutionalised within those ideologies.

In the leading article of *TheNew Freewoman* of 1 November 1913, entitled 'The Art of the Future', Marsden wrote:

> There is, about artists when asked to define their business, a coyness which would be exquisitely ludicrous if it were evinced by chemists or mathematicians, by carpenters or brick-layers. This coyness, and the vague waving of hands to give the expression of helplessness, in-a-sort, in the grip of some high force, which if not divine, is at least too much above the common level to be comprehended by the Philistine, or common-sense man – these are quite sufficient to place art as we now know it, in its sub-conscious period. There is nothing to be gained by calling out against artists: their lack of comprehension as to what they are about, is a matter for regret rather than reprehension. They are in the position the alchemists and astrologers were, before alchemy became chemistry, and astrology astronomy. (Marsden, 1913b, p. 181)

Thus Marsden deplores the idea that the moment of aesthetic experience is unanalysable, which is what Sorel advocated. Her position is clearly opposed to that advocated by Sorel in his criticism of Utopias, which for Sorel are defined and promoted by the professors of the '*little science*'. The professors rationalise the 'obscure region' existing 'in every complex body of knowledge' which Sorel regards as 'the more important' (Sorel, 2004, p. 144, original italics). In Marsden's philosophy prose wins over poetry and is seen as its precondition, as it can be superseded by a poem which presents the formula of that which is experienced in prose (Marsden, 1913b, p. 183). That is, Marsden advocates in favour of art lived in a prosaic state of mind, whereas Sorel advocates for art lived in an epic or poetic state of mind. For Marsden, the violence of desubjection prevails over the violence of subjection and it is translated into the direct action of the individualist anarchist. The language of action of the individualist anarchist is different from that of the anarcho-syndicalist although both derive from a common ethos. Benjamin Tucker reproached Marsden for her individualism, invoking Proudhon's notion of a social contract established not between individuals and the state, but between the members of a social community alone, a notion Proudhon developed in *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century* (1851) (Tucker, 1913b, p. 157; Tucker, 1913c, pp. 254–5; Proudhon, 2007). Tucker's position suggests an acknowledgement of the violence of subjection (through the contract that binds together the members of the social group) and the violence of desubjection (by rejecting the contract between individuals and the State) as competing drives in radical art and politics everywhere. For example, a note from 'The Radical, Australia', entitled '"Jumping" the True Solution', published in Tucker's journal *Liberty* on 26 May 1888, shows the anarchist resistance to politics of subjection carried out by monopoly capitalists in Britain and Australia, arguing that capitalist policies of land nationalisation have led to 'the same horrors which today Land Nationalists say Socialists and Free Communists are endeavouring to bring about' (p. 1). The language of action for Australian anarchism was one of desubjection in relation to the state, but the drive to subjection was also manifested, for instance, in the alternative vision of cooperative organisation. The language of action of desubjection is rooted in subjection through the faith of the individual in the ideals shared by the social group.

The relations established in forms of anarchist social organisation are mirrored in the relations established in avant-garde forms of aesthetic organisation of the elements of an art text. In 'What Is Communism' (1889), the Australian anarcho-communist J. A. Andrews argued that property and rights may be retained by individuals to the extent that they need them, but not beyond the satisfaction of their need (Andrews, 1984). In a pamphlet entitled 'Decision-Making' (1896) he also argued in favour of decision-making by consensus rather than by majority winning (Andrews, 1979a, p. 93). In terms of an aesthetic, this political praxis would be translated as a heteroglossic narrative, much like that of James Joyce, in which no central authority holds the reigns. In a Bulletin from 12 October 1895, Andrews published a poem entitled 'Invicta Spes' (Invincible Hope) in which his rendering of his anarchist philosophy sounds almost like an aesthetic manifesto by Wyndham Lewis, James Joyce, or even H. D. Thoreau:

> To drive no religious consolation
> Take I the pen; no gods or creeds I own,
> No ghostly faith supplies my inspiration,
> No metaphysic lore of things unknown,
> This much I know: I live and all things being
> Join for my life, live in my thought, my act;
> One dust-mote strikes the sea – the ripples fleeing
> Speed to Infinity: who notes this fact
> Knows that all things, all thought, all time, all space,
> Live in him now and he in them doth blend
> Each moment. Lo! his universal race
> Changes in form and sense, but has no end!
>
> (Andrews, 1895, unpaginated)

The violence of desubjection from authority (be that, we might say, political or of an author) in the language of political action is rooted nevertheless in a moment of faith, lived in synchronicity in a vision of harmonious interconnections of parts within the whole, as in aesthetic perception. And this synchronic experience needs be lived in poetic mode, that is, in a moment of subjection with its own measure of violence, or, rather, vitality that knows but its own possibility and energy.

A similar sense of aesthetic harmony in the language of action and socio-political organisation is revealed in the anarcho-communism of Peter Kropotkin. In *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, first published in 1902, Kropotkin argued that mutual aid – the basis of guilds, federations, and unions – allowed for the harmonious integration of the individual as a unit within the harmonious whole of the social community. In medieval times, when guilds, federations, and unions flourished through the work of artisans and craftsmen:

> each monument was a result of collective experience, accumulated in each 'mystery' or craft [...]. Like Greek art, it sprang out of a conception of brotherhood and unity fostered by the city. It had an audacity which could only be won by audacious struggles and victories; it had that expression of vigour, because vigour permeated all the life of the city. [...] After having achieved its craft revolution, the city often began a new cathedral in order to express the new, wider, and broader union which had been called into life. (Kropotkin, 2008, pp. 129–30)

The violence of subjection of the individual within the group is transmuted into creative vigour, the kind which Sorel identified in 'The Social Value of Art', published in 1901, as 'the infusion of intelligence into manual work [...] work should appear clothed in an aesthetic charm [...] the mission of art seems to be to ennoble manual work and to make it the equal of scientific work' (Sorel, 1990, p. 118). For Kropotkin, the political union achieved in the medieval city is of an aesthetic nature. The city itself is a work of art in which the inhabitants figure as dynamic elements in its tapestry. The violence of subjection in the synchronic experience of the city as an art text is translatable into the language of action of socio-political organisation. In Australia, even the political speeches of the anarchists John Fleming (who read Kropotkin's work) and Ernie Lane are embedded in a setting that resembles Kropotkin's aesthetically unified and harmonious medieval city: 'Fleming's rhetorical flourish, Lane's loving recitals, looked back to an age before the printing press and the rise of popular literacy, when a few treasured texts were memorised verbatim' (Scates, 1997, p. 42).

A similar idea of communal life lived aesthetically was developed in a different way by Edward Carpenter. In his case the violence of subjection through a social myth of the divine Man, operating at the level of aesthetic experience (the divine Man is the aesthetic self, common to all), is sublimated into the vital force which, according to Carpenter, was once shared with the divine Man, but is now being dissipated, and must be recreated through socialist communities. The synchronic aesthetic-religious experience of the divine self is an experience of subjection, but one which transmutes the violence of subjection into vital force. Translated into the language of action, it should lead to a melting of energies into the bonds of communal living, thereby achieving desubjection from centralised authority.

The nature of the political forces of subjection and desubjection operating simultaneously in society is captured in Mikhail Bakunin's vision of anarchism as stateless socialism:

> [The ideal of the people] of course appears to the people as signifying first of all the end of want, the end of poverty, and the full satisfaction of all material needs by means of collective labor, equal and obligatory for all, and then, as the end of domination and the free organization of the people's lives in accordance with their needs – not from the top down, as we have it in the State, but from the bottom up, an organization formed by the people themselves, apart from all governments and parliaments, a free union of associations of agricultural and factory workers, of communes, regions, and nations, and finally, in the more remote future; the universal human brotherhood, triumphing above the ruins of all States. (Bakunin, 1953, p. 298, brackets mine)

In Bakunin's vision of the future all the constituent elements of humanity, material achievements, work, endeavours, become part of a subsuming and inclusive art object: the vision of universal human brotherhood, triumphing over the waste lands of the state, be that communist or capitalist. This was pictured by Carpenter in the vision of the melting of hitherto sundered consciousnesses in the Universal mind of the divine Man. In these visions, the future is swept into the vortex of a moment's absolute, a moment like that of synchronic aesthetic experience, with religious overtones.

The kind of religious sentiment engendered by such visions is very unlike that promoted by institutionalised religion, and more like that found in forms of non-violent direct action developed by Mahatma Gandhi in India, based on Buddhist principles. Yet Gandhi's vision, translated into the language of action of non-violent resistance within the Indian Independence Movement, advocates its own measure of subjection. Relocating the subject from the realm of time and history to the realm of timeless, universal truth, that is, the being true to one's self in one's actions whatever those may be, is advocating for life in the realm of synchronic experience, in which one's relations to material reality are measured by, and subjected to, the terms of vision (truth, an irreproducible perception) rather than the terms of actuality (in which perceptions are reproducible). For Gandhists, however, this option itself is an act of desubjection, liberating the one who practices it from the contingencies of the material world.

These confluences of aesthetic and religious kinds of experience were variously translated in Western terms, for example in Aldo Capitini's *Elementi di una Esperienza Religiosa* ('Elements of a Religious Experience'), influenced by Gandhi and evoking the idea of a brotherhood of nations characteristic of much anarchist thought (Rizi, 2003,

p. 221). Capitini's book was published in 1936 by Benedetto Croce, whose aesthetic of history, seeking the truth rather than the actuality of an event, is fully compatible with Sorel's understanding of French revolutionary literature as the basis of social myth. That literature does not necessarily present the events that passed with historical accuracy, but renders 'a perfectly exact representation of the aspect under which the combatants looked on war, a true expression of the sentiments aroused by it, and the *actual accent of the truly Homeric conflicts* which took place at the time' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 239–40, original italics). Sorel and Croce exchanged letters, and Sorel exemplifies the efficacy of social myth with a reference to the teachings of Giuseppe Mazzini, the central figure of Risorgimento, who organised the nationalist society Young Italy in 1831, and who influenced Croce significantly. Croce's aristocratic aestheticism chimes with Yeats's, and the middle-class Young Ireland was as idealistic as Young Italy, both suggesting the personification of a nation and its land as a 'character' in an aesthetic text to be translated into political action.

In Ireland, George Russell (AE) found the violence of subjection to the aesthetic vision of truth to be a form of energy that engenders social cohesion. In a paper read before the Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society on 15 September 1894, entitled 'How Theosophy Affects One's View of Life', Russell discusses Theosophy as an encompassing religion, speaking to both Catholic and Protestant, and to everyone in between and beyond. Russell connects religious feeling with Symbolist art and then with forms of social organisation:

> What of the soul which, feeling compelled by its intuitions to recognise the essential divinity of man yet finds no expression in the churches which will fit into its emotional nature? What of him whom, for want of a better word, I shall call a Symbolist, who is always striving to express in some form of art or thought, that divine energy which is wisdom, consciousness, and energy all in one? Does not Theosophy afford the very best outlet for his soul force? Are not its ideas on a level with, if not higher than, what his most sublime moments of feeling can bring before him? (Russell, 2007, unpaginated)

Russell's terms relate to violence in a sublimated way. He speaks of 'divine energy' and 'soul force' striving to find expression in 'some form of art' born from faith and conviction in a synchronic moment of aesthetic experience that is pervaded by religious feeling. The symbolist, both priest of the imagination and artist, shall find through this experience 'the True, the Beautiful, which are, after all, but a second reflection of the Higher mind' (Russell, 2007, unpaginated). Translated into the language of action, this experience can but lead to forms of social organisation that value, as with Carpenter, Kropotkin, and Andrews, the unity of the social group that forsakes central authority ('fatherhood') in favour of anarchist consensus ('brotherhood'):

> And now, changing from particular types, how do we look upon Theosophy as a power in Ethics? We find the elimination of the selfish instinct insisted upon as necessary for the progress of the Ego through its material envelope to a full and complete knowledge of its higher self; we find the doctrine of Brotherhood put forward in its noblest aspects [...]. Then cannot we get the idea of universal brotherhood firmly fixed in our consciousness as an actual reality to be attained, and always act upon that basis. To me, the thought of the absolute unity of all life, affords as high an ideal for putting into practical shape as my deficient development allows me. Cannot we get this ideal or some other ideal so essential a part of our thought that it colours all our feelings, emotions and actions? (Russell, 2007, unpaginated)

And it did, especially in Russell's practical work with the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. The subject of action is enriched through religious experience, but this experience is also of aesthetic nature. If for Sorel 'strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess' and the social myth of the general strike 'colours with an intense life all the details of the composition presented to consciousness' giving 'maximum of intensity' to those sentiments (Sorel, 2004, pp. 127), for Russell, Theosophy as a power in ethics is the basis for 'the doctrine of Brotherhood put forward in its noblest aspects' through making the ideal of universal brotherhood 'so essential a part of our thought that it colours all our feelings, emotions and actions'. Both the social myth of the general strike, in its religious dimension, and Theosophy, as applied in an ethics for cooperative organisation, ennoble the labourer through an experience that is of aesthetic nature. Attributes of, and terms specific to, aesthetic experience, such as 'colours', 'maximum of intensity', 'composition', are used to express states of feeling envisioned for social activism and collective organisation, lending their semantic power to terms such as 'strikes', 'universal brotherhood', 'actions', and 'proletariat'. For Russell, as for Sorel, the labourer is an artist and the artist is a labourer.

Violence is manifested on different planes which are apparently incommensurable: there is the violence of subjection of social agent to the textual subject, be that a character from myth or the poetic voice. And there is the violence of desubjection on the diachronic axis of history, be that through strikes, non-violent direct action, or forms of social and economic organisation in opposition to capitalism. But, contradictorily, the latter is the result of the former. This apparent contradiction can be resolved in a Sorelian framework: art is a form of social praxis. The violence of art is the violence of social energies. Different facets of violence become manifested in these intertwined processes of subjection and desubjection.

One could look at Yeats's 'Leda and the Swan' as representing, through a motif from the Greek tradition, the violent yet creative and revelatory subjection of flesh and blood mortal to the power represented by mythic knowledge (Yeats, 1997, p. 218). But the rendering of this kind of subjection in Yeats's poem invites critical reflection on the mundaneness of politics in Yeats's contemporary world, and its forms of sterile, ideological subjection that have led to entropy and war. Devolving from a moment of synchronicity between the world of myth and the world of humans, Yeats's contemporary society, it is suggested, has reached the final stage of disintegration, decayed through materialism and capitalist liberal individualism.

However, other poems show that the widening gyre and the violence of sterile subjection through capitalist and imperialist ideology is counteracted by the violence of desubjection from those same evils, made possible through the subjection of the social self to the aesthetic self, as in 'Sailing to Byzantium':

> Once out of nature I shall never take
> My bodily form from any natural thing,
> But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
> Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
> To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
> Or set upon a golden bough to sing
> To lords and ladies of Byzantium
> Of what is past, or passing, or to come.
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 197)

In the union of the subject of action, living in the material reality of nature, with the fictional self of an art text (abiding in an art text, such as, for instance, Grecian goldsmiths 'make/ Of hammered gold and gold enamelling'), the subject of action becomes itself an aesthetic object. It also becomes integrated in a network of texts which in this case includes a legend of the bard who sings 'Of what is past, or passing, or to come' in the eternity of the synchronic moment of his new awareness of himself made possible through art. The translation of this union between social agent and the aesthetic self recollected from the experience of art, into the language of action, yielded for Yeats the identity of the bard who '*sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong,/ Ballad and story, rann and song;*' (Yeats, 1997, p. 46) thereby contributing to the creation of the identity of the nationalist activist for his audience. In the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience there is the violence of subjection through which one consents to being signified through the art text; and there is the violence of desubjection through which one is dislocated from the reproducible patterns of becoming made possible through capitalist materialism. Yeats's goldsmith in 'Sailing to Byzantium' is like Sorel's artisan: both are labourers engaged in the praxis of art. Life itself becomes the object of that praxis and thus life becomes an art text.

In his essay on Henry James in *Instigations*, Ezra Pound notes that:

> I take it as the supreme reward for an artist; the supreme return that his artistic conscience can make him after years spent in its service, that the momentum of his art, the sheer bulk of his processes, the (*si licet*) size of his

> fly-wheel, should heave him out of himself, out of his personal limitations, out of the tangles of heredity and of environment, out of the bias of early training, of early predilections, whether of Florence, A. D. 1300, or of Back Bay of 1872, and leave him simply the great true recorder. (Pound and Fenollosa, 1920, pp. 112–13)

What the artist records is reality as an art text, perceived in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience when he is heaved out of himself as mere social agent and joined with the aesthetic self discovered through art. Desubjection from history, however, implies subjection through art. One kind of violence begets another. Both kinds of violence define the intensity of life.

Joyce also longed for subjection to the absolute aesthetic self: 'Thought is the thought of thought. Tranquil brightness. The soul is in a manner all that is: the soul is the form of forms. Tranquility sudden, vast, candescent: form of forms' (*U*, 2: 74–6). As with Carpenter, the violence of subjection is sublimated into the 'sudden, vast, candescent' tranquillity of the aesthetic self, here identified as the soul, form of forms. Tranquillity is the state of completed revelation, but also the starting point of the dynamics of creativity, the setting off of violence manifested in creation of new forms. The soul is like an artisan's workshop. The artist is a goldsmith giving material form ('forms') to the aesthetic self (the 'form of forms'). Recreating mundane reality as aesthetically epiphanic, thus dislocating the social subject from set patterns of experience, art finds nevertheless a historical setting wherein such desubjection can be expressed as social action with its measure of violence: 'Three nooses around me here. Well? I can break them in this instant if I will' (*U*, 2: 234–235). The remaking of one's self through art is an awakening from the nightmare of paralysing forms of action engendered by given historical circumstances (*U*, 2: 377): British imperialism, Irish nationalist ideology with its quest for the loveliness of an ancient realm 'long faded from the world' (Joyce, 1965, p. 274), English nationalist ideology which condemns the Irish and the Jews in the name of progress founded on capitalist mercantilism (*U*, 2: 345–63), or religion that positions one towards a transcendent realm but fails to acknowledge the value of religious experience for this world – the sensual embodiment of religious and aesthetic experience in the vitalism of, for instance, 'a shout in the street' (*U*, 2: 380–6).

The experience of subjection to an absolute aesthetic self in Lewis's work is kindred with the experience of the sublime. In 'Enemy of the Stars', published in the first issue of *Blast*, the absolute self, sought by Arghol, can only be found by complete abstraction from the social relations into which Hanp is drawn and thus has his individuality extinguished. The process of abstraction is of course an aesthetic technique and therefore the self that obtains and the practice of the self by abstraction from social relations should lead to the remaking of oneself as an art object, however sublimely drawn out of nature's materiality to exist as pure energy, perceived through the dynamism and violence of its power. Arghol believes that:

> Self, sacred act of violence, is like murder on my face and hands. The stain won't come out. It is the one piece of property all communities have agreed it is illegal to possess. The sweetest-tempered person, once he discovers you are that sort of criminal, changes any opinion of you, and is on his guard. When mankind cannot overcome a personality, it has an immemorial way out of the difficulty. It becomes it. It imitates and assimilates that Ego until it is no longer one... This is success.
>
> Between Personality and Mankind it is always a question of dog and cat; they are diametrically opposed species. Self is the ancient race, the rest are the new one. Self is the race that lost. But Mankind still suspects Egotistic plots, and hunts Pretenders. (Lewis, 1914a, p. 66)

The recreation of the self through abstraction is a sacred act of violence through which one may transcend the material. In that, Lewis's poetic manifestoes diverge from Sorel's position in relation to the social value of art, as for Sorel transcendence of the material is neither sought nor required. Art is for this world, and not for one of essences. However, as Scott Klein has pointed out, Lewis seemed to be aware that the translation of the aesthetic experience he proposes into the language of action is an impossibility. Arghol's story is one of failure:

> Arghol's theories foreshadow his destruction, for he can no more overcome the material world than he can be consistent with himself. [...] 'Enemy of the Stars' therefore occupies a problematic position within *Blast*. Where the manifestos insist that the autonomous self is the basis of the artist's power, the play both rejects the efficacy of that philosophy and exposes the vorticist self as a divisive delusion. Arghol's theories serve only to divide him from himself, and he and Hanp can only be united in their mutual obliteration. The play's content is therefore opposed to that of the manifestos. (Klein, 1991, p. 232)

However, the play can be read as an acknowledgement of the contrary forces of desubjection and subjection, manifested both in worlds of heteroglossia and of monoglossia simultaneously. The experience of aesthetic abstraction is also one of desubjection from social and material reality. The subjection through the art text yields a monoglossic self, but it is also a process of gaining a new worldview, and hence, it is a process of novelisation making heteroglossia (or dialogic engagement with the world) possible in the social domain. Heteroglossia is also visible at the level of the text in its techniques, but the experience demanded of the reader would place him/her in the monoglossic domain of absolutes. While the play seems to offer the argument that it is not possible to translate aesthetic experience into the language of action, it in fact shows the necessity of such a translation by showing that a self withdrawn from the social and arrested in aesthetic form cannot live.

These analyses show that art, politics, and social change share in various forms of violence. This violence is not to be understood as ‘a relic of barbarism’, as Sorel pointed out (Sorel, 2004, p. 80). It is the manifestation of contrary forces at work in human consciousness, torn between contrary drives of subjection and desubjection which are simultaneously present both in the narrative language through which one shows oneself to oneself and to others, and in the language of action that is derived from narrative language.

Art is implicated in violence both on the synchronic axis of aesthetic experience and on the diachronic axis of the language of action. The recreation of the self as an art text in the joining of social agent and narrative subject is an act of violence for it requires subjection to the art text in consenting to being signified through it, and desubjection from set patterns of self-signification. However, subjection on the synchronic axis of experience yields a language of action in which social agents contest existing, normative patterns of socialisation and experience, leading to desubjection in the social realm. The force of desubjection in the social realm is grounded in the dislocation from mechanical time and social experience produced through subjection in the synchronic experience of art, because this same subjection is what allows the subject of action to explore and find a new worldview and sense of self as social agent. To the extent that this worldview is co-opted in an ideology, it may lead to subjection in the language of action. In this case, the poetic mode of synchronic aesthetic experience is transformed into the poetic mode of authority. The subject lives in epic mode a commodifiable version of the epic mode experienced in aesthetic synchronicity, as Mikhail Bakhtin argued:

> The individual in the high distant genres is an individual of the absolute past and of the distant image. As such he is a fully finished and completed being. This has been accomplished on a lofty heroic level, but what is complete is also something hopelessly ready-made; he is all there, from beginning to end he coincides with himself, he is absolutely equal with himself. He is, furthermore, completely externalized. There is not the slightest gap between his authentic essence and its external manifestation. All his potential, all his possibilities are realized utterly in his external social position, in the whole of his fate and even in his external appearance; outside of this predetermined fate and predetermined position there is nothing. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 34)

In the poetic mode of authority, which is the mode of ideology as opposed to the mode of social myth, the social agent remains implicated in the art text, but the art object s/he may have become in synchronic aesthetic experience is no longer like the object produced by an artisan. Instead, it is a reproducible and commodifiable ‘art’ object, ‘something hopelessly readymade’. The poetic mode of ideology smothers ‘all his potential, all his possibilities [...] in the whole of his fate and even in his external appearance.’ The violence of subjection is an oppressive one in this case, and its oppressive character is directly linked to the capitalist ethos of reproducibility and commodification.

However, even in this mode of oppressive subjection, the poetic and aesthetic potential of novelisation makes possible the dislocation from reproducible patterns of experience. The same violence which subjects in ideological poetic mode can be channelled into alternative modes of subjection, available only in synchronic aesthetic experience. Because only available in this mode, art texts whose meaning is opposed to the meaning legitimated by commodifiable 'art' objects will also require that aesthetic experience is lived in a state of faith, enthusiasm, and conviction in the novel worldview which avant-garde art makes available. Hence, progressive and liberatory aesthetic experience can be seen as a form of religious experience, which is also the experience of social myth as defined by Sorel. And since social myth is the medium in which aesthetic experience is translated into the language of action, art that functions like social myth, or lends its text to the texture of social myth, is deeply implicated in anti-capitalist and anti-imperialism. Beyond the specific contexts of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century modernism, art will always provide the drive to desubjection, even though it has the power to subject. An examination in this perspective of Yeats's and Joyce's art in the context of broad European and transnational anarchism provides a test case for this argument. The following chapters explore in more depth the ways in which violence is engendered and channelled in the dynamic relations between modernist art, politics, and social change.

11. Modernist Art, Politics, and Social Change

A Sorelian Perspective

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which art engenders social change. Georges Sorel's theory of social myth provides a framework for linking social change, which takes place in material reality, with the action scenarios presented in an art text, and with the ethos of that art text. Developed around the turn of the nineteenth century, Sorel's concept of social myth is a representative example of the interest of modernist philosophies in art as a form of social praxis. Not only can we use Sorel's theory to analyse artistic and literary production, but the ethos of this theory can provide the basis for understanding the ethos of modernist art work, and the ethos of the artists as labourers. An analysis of the artistic labour of James Joyce and W. B. Yeats in this perspective provides a test case for a more encompassing understanding of art as a form of praxis deeply implicated in social change, and of the links between the energies mobilised by aesthetic recreations of the world and the violence of action.

Sorel's theory of social myth provides an understanding of art texts, which he sees as functioning in similar ways to social myth, not solely as texts which can be elucidated through analysis, but as also textures of 'warmly-coloured and clearly-defined images, which absorb the whole of our attention' (Sorel, 2004, p. 148). Through the power of these images the subject of action is drawn (in both senses of 'pulled' and 'depicted') into the art text as one of its constitutive elements. Thus, although Sorel's theorisation of social myth is primarily developed in relation to the idea of the general strike, the concept underpins a theory of art as praxis. In his 'Letter to Daniel Halevy', which serves as the introduction to *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel quotes the following passage from Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent* (1870):

> It will be our wisdom to avail ourselves of language, as far as it will go, but to aim mainly, by means of it, to stimulate in those to whom we address ourselves, a mode of thinking and trains of thought similar to our own, leading them on by their own independent action, not by any syllogistic compulsion. Hence it is that an intellectual school will always have something of an esoteric character; for it is an assemblage of minds that think, their bond is unity of thought, and their words become a sort of *tessera*, not expressing thought but symbolising it. (Sorel, 2004, p. 29; Newman, 1903, p. 310)

Having praised Newman's book, Sorel is quick to add that intellectual schools 'have hardly ever resembled this ideal' (2004, p. 29). For Sorel, it is the workers, rather than the members of intellectual schools, who are united by faith in a social myth as 'an assemblage of minds' whose 'bond is unity of thought' and whose 'words become a sort of *tessera*, not expressing thought but symbolising it' (Newman, 1903, p. 310) in action or 'the language of movement' (2004, p. 50). Actions inspired by social myth are symbols functioning as the constituent elements of an art text. Individual 'enacted words', or socially performed symbols become a sort of *tesserae* integrated in a fluid mosaic. The mosaic is social reality itself, perceived as an aesthetic object or an art text. Sorel's affiliation to the anarchist tradition of offering the identity of the artisan or craftsman as an alternative to that of the alienated labourer of capitalism is frequently expressed in his theory in those images that suggest the uniqueness and also the public relevance or utility of an artisan's work. Just as an ornamental mosaic is the result of the collective work of a guild of craftsmen, the 'mosaic' of material reality is the result of the collective work of society's members in which the aesthetic dimension of labour governs the creation of social-material forms. As a proletarian ethos, this vision of art as praxis leads to forms of social and material life that are empowering and fulfilling, whereas the capitalist ethos, an ethos derived from Utopias, leads to stasis, perceived as routine repetition of set patterns of social and material life, as if the very reality of experience were a serial product manufactured in the vast halls of production of the capitalist machine.

The re-creation of reality as an art text was a lifetime concern for James Joyce, no stranger to Newman's work. However, for Joyce, it is the creative power of the individual, unaffiliated artist which has an esoteric character, rather than the power exercised by a school of intellectual thought, as envisioned by Newman, or the power exercised by a social group, as envisioned by Sorel. Nevertheless, this esoteric creative power leads to a fusion of social self and aesthetic self, as with Sorel. The esoteric character of this process distinguishes the one who experiences epiphanies from the one caught in paralysing forms of social life. The epiphany is a means of revelation of the world as art text through joining one's self with the aesthetic self which the epiphany reveals. In *Ulysses*, Stephen ponders: 'Remember your epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? [...] When one reads these strange pages of one long gone one feels that one is at one with one who once...' (*U*, 3: 141–6) The last sentence refers to the fusion of social actor (who reads the epiphanies) and the aesthetic self. To change material reality through the power of epiphanies, however, implies breaking with any pattern that evokes serial reproduction, an ethos consistent with Sorel's anti-capitalist view on the social value of art. Thus Bloom reflects jocularly on the identity of soldiers, the guardians of imperial order and the ideals of capitalist progress: 'That must be why women go after them. Uniform. Easier to enlist and drill' (*U*, 5: 69–70). The image of the royal troops gathers, in an illustrative example, the interconnectedness of notions of serial reproduction, imperial order, and set patterns of social life: 'Half baked they look: hypnotised like. Eyes front. Mark time. Table: able. Bed: ed. The King's own. Never see him dressed up as a fireman or a bobby. A mason, yes' (*U*, 5: 73–5). The esoteric character of 'an assemblage of minds that think' and whose 'bond is unity of thought' (Newman, 1903, p. 310) is alluded to ('A mason, yes') but the soldiers represent the serially manufactured copies that derive from a prototype, or an ideal, devised through the myth of the heroic redcoats. Its translation into the language of action is the sterile transformation of one's social self through ideology. Ideology itself is art gone into serial production.

In between his reflections on the military parade, Bloom's train of thought registers the nationalist effort to disrupt the ethos of serial reproduction of social identities through imperial capitalist ideology: 'Maud Gonne's letter about taking them off O'Connell street at night: disgrace to our Irish capital. Griffith's paper is on the same tack now: an army rotten with venereal disease: overseas or halfseasover empire' (*U*, 5: 70–2). The issue of reproduction is present. The image of the imperial soldiers disseminating venereal disease among Irish women evokes the image of Britain raping Ireland in order to replicate or reproduce itself serially in the embodiment of yet another province, a child in the likeness of Britannia. This process of reproduction is demonised by Griffith: this imposition is a disease. For Gonne and Griffith, not only Irish women become diseased through contact with imperial soldiers, but, metaphorically, a pure, unique, and irreproducible Ireland, an art text yielded through work like that of artisans, is adulterated through the dissemination of imperialist and capitalist ideologies of reproduction which transform the Éire of myth and art into a cheap copy obtained through labour like that of the alienated worker in capitalism.

Thus, an aesthetic vision of Ireland may be seen to lead to social action (in this case, Maud Gonne's and Griffith's) and this aesthetic vision may also be seen as the ingredient of a social myth as defined by Sorel. However, Joyce's text seemingly counteracts the power of such a social myth repeatedly throughout *Ulysses.* For instance, in the seventh section, Ned Lambert's reading of a typical patriotic text is met with scorn and laughter on all sides:

> As 'twere, in the peerless panorama of Ireland's portfolio, unmatched, despite their wellpraised prototypes in other vaunted prize regions, for very beauty, of bosky grove and undulating plain and luscious pastureland of vernal green, steeped in the transcendent translucent glow of our mild mysterious Irish twilight... (*U*, 7: 320–4)

Other examples of such texts are shown in the chapter (*U*, 7: 243–7, 321–2). But it is not so much the power of social myth that is undermined here, as it is the power of social myth turned into ideology. For Sorel, the experience of social myth is irreproducible in the same way in which religious experience or genuine aesthetic experience is irreproducible. The language cited by Ned Lambert is not really the language of social myth, but the language of ideology in which social myth is reproduced as a serial ‘object’ for mass consumption. This is underscored at the level of narrative technique: Lambert cites, that is, reproduces the ‘original’ text printed in a newspaper. Within the world of *Ulysses* that ‘original’ discourse is itself a citation of tropes that might have been originally crafted in an aesthetic text that was not ideological, but which is the source of ideology (such as Yeats’s poetry). Lambert’s discourse is a citation or reproduction of a discourse which is itself a serial reproduction of an original discourse, of a genuine ‘artefact’ like that produced by artisans. In the passages cited by Lambert, the poetic mode of aesthetic revelation is reproduced in the poetic monoglossic mode of ideology. In the end, then, Joyce’s text, in this case at least, does not subvert a social myth, such as the one which energised Maud Gonne’s and Griffith’s faith and conviction, but the serial reproduction of such a myth in the mode of ideology. This is not to say that Joyce’s *Ulysses* in any way condones nationalist social myths. But what it condemns more strongly is the possibility, illustrated in Ned Lambert’s citation, of nationalist ideology reproducing Ireland as a kitsch art text.

A social myth for Ireland, developed in nationalist circles, would be the basis of Gonne’s and Griffith’s actions. In analysing some of the threads of this social myth, one must take into account the Irish Revival movement with its emphasis on recuperating a distinct Celtic identity for Ireland. One might say that texts, manuscripts, and collected folk tales of Celtic inspiration were the tools with which Ireland was recrafted as an art object, sometimes through aesthetic labour like that of artisans and craftsmen, and at other times through serial reproduction of patterns and clichés in labour like that of the alienated worker in capitalism, driven by hope in the fulfilment of what Sorel called Utopia, a deceptive mirage created through sophistry (the quotation from *Ulysses*, of Ned Lambert’s newspaper reading, is an example of such Utopia).

For Sorel, the subject of social myth is a social agent in the world of action who identifies him/herself and his/her actions with a fictional actor and its appropriate fictional action scenarios. The state experienced by the social agent is defined by Sorel as an ‘epic state of mind’ (2004, p. 248). On account of Sorel’s association of social myth with epic, one may argue that the subject of social myth is subjected to a monoglossic discourse as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin:

> Both the singer and the listener, immanent in the epic as a genre, are located on the same time and on the same evaluative (hierarchical) plane, but the represented world of the heroes stands on an utterly different and inaccessible time-and-value plane, separated by epic distance. The space between them is filled with national tradition. To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one’s contemporaries (and an event that is therefore based on personal experience and thought) is to undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of epic into the world of the novel. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 14)

However, Sorel’s theory makes possible the envisioning of a bridge between ‘the represented world of the heroes’ located on the ‘utterly different and inaccessible time-

and-value plane' of the past, and 'the same time-and-value plane as oneself and one's contemporaries', the plane of the present. The fusion of the two time-and-value planes takes place in the synchronic moment of the experience of social myth. This is also a moment of aesthetic experience, as the time-and-value plane of narrative becomes one with the plane of personal experience and thought of the social agent, the moment when one's world becomes an art text. Sorel's vision is congruent with Joyce's on epiphanies and with his envisioning the artist as a high priest whose power transubstantiates mundane reality into aesthetic text. For Sorel, as for Joyce, this experience of aesthetic transubstantiation is lived in the epic state of mind of synchronic experience, but it is translatable on the diachronic axis of history and mundane experience: for Joyce, the epic of Ulysses, for example, is shown in the wanderings of Bloom, the mundane hero, so that the character of Ulysses steps 'out of the world of epic into the world of the novel' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 14).

The world of the novel as understood by Bakhtin is one of dialogical exchanges in which different worldviews are brought to dialogue. The reader of Joyce's *Ulysses* rehearses precisely the scenarios of such dialogical exchanges, experiencing a process of novelisation (making novel, new) of his/her worldview. The ancient epic is made new and its fit with contemporary experience is revealed to the reader. That revelation is the moment when readers see their own mundane wanderings as elements of an art text (the art text of classical epic interwoven with the text showing a contemporary fictional protagonist), exploring its congruencies and incongruencies with the 'text' of non-fictional reality. However, whereas Sorel's social myth leads the subject of action, in an epic state of mind, to heroic clashes that highlight sharp differences between opposing worldviews, enhancing one's experience of oneself as the aesthetic experience of heroic myth, Joyce's art leads the subject of action to an exploration of 'highly specific political and philosophical actuality' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 219) in epic comic mode, that is, not in the mode of heroic myth, but in the mode of what Bakhtin termed, in reference to the comedy of Aristophanes, 'a peculiar heroics of the comic, or, more precisely, a *comic myth*' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 219).

In other words, for Sorel the synchronic experience of the joining of social self and aesthetic self is unanalysable and lived in high epic-poetic mode, even though its translation on the diachronic axis of action may be a process of novelisation in Bakhtin terms, whereas for Joyce the synchronic aesthetic experience is lived in epic-comic mode, analysable on the plane of historical experience. The experience of myth in epic-poetic mode leads to conviction, faith, and enthusiasm, and to an individual's joining the social group which shares these. The experience of myth in epic-comic mode leads to contestation, disbelief/ unbelief, and irony, and to an individual's questioning the righteousness of the social group.

Art as praxis in Sorel's understanding is expressed in attitudes of conviction, faith, and enthusiasm, whereas for Joyce it is expressed in contestation, disbelief/unbelief, and irony. These two sets of attitudes, once born in social subjects, affect their actions in material reality, and represent in the broadest possible sense the tools with which social agents recraft that reality in the manner of the artisan who creates an original, unique, and irreproducible art object. Thus, although Sorel and Joyce envision aesthetic experience in different ways, both share the ethos of the artisan, and, hence, both create in readers and audiences a state of experience that necessarily places them in opposition to capitalism.

It is well worth reading Bakhtin's analysis of Aristophanes' comedies as one that also applies in significant ways to Joyce's *Ulysses*:

> A huge sociopolitical common pool of symbols has its images organically linked with comically everyday private features. But these features, clustered together on one symbolic base that is lit up by cultic laughter, tend to lose their limited, personal ordinariness [*bytovizm*]. On the level of individual artistic achievement we have, in Aristophanes' image, the evolution of an ancient sacral mask in a vivid shorthand (a sort of 'philogeny recapitulating ontogeny'), from its primitive purely cultic significance to the private everyday type of commedia dell'arte (with its own Pantalone and Dottore). (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 219, original italics)

Bakhtin's interpretation of Aristophanes' comedies sees the origin of comedy in rituals of death and rebirth: 'cheerful death is always surrounded by food, drink, sexual indecencies and symbols of conception and fertility' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 219). That Homer's *Odyssey* might have been rooted in a death and resurrection ritual is highlighted by Charles Segal in his 'Transition and Ritual in Odysseus' Return'. For Segal, Penelope and Odysseus are 'the archetypal king and queen, the partners in a sacred marriage [...] their union symbolizes the ever-renewed fertility of the earth and the fruitful harmony between society and cosmos' (Segal, 2007, p. 20). Segal finds that there is 'cooperation of matter and style' in Homer's story as narrative formulas underlie a cultic, ritualic mode of relating to reality in the ancient world:

> These [experiences of narrative and ritualic 'texts'] are modes of thought in which recurring cycles of loss and regeneration, alienation and rediscovery, and death and rebirth are celebrated as the fundamental facts of existence and form an organic link between human life and the natural world. Such cyclical patterns are both metaphor and reality; and the ritual patterns discussed here help unite the two, for ritual itself partakes of both play and seriousness, both imaginary projection and realistic confrontation. (Segal, 2007, pp. 20–1, brackets mine)

Joyce's *Ulysses*, too, has a narrative and a ritualic dimension. It is both metaphor and reality, partaking of both seriousness and play. In its metaphoric dimension, it invokes a cultic transubstantiation of social agent and narrative hero (Odysseus), inviting an epiphanic revelation of the Ulysses in one's mundane self. It is difficult to say when such an epiphany might occur. Most likely it is triggered by Molly Bloom's final affirmation of the power of life (*U*, 18: 1605–9), which constitutes the threshold between, on the one hand, loss, alienation, and death, acknowledged but left behind in the same way in which in regeneration rituals the passing year is left behind, and, on the other hand, anticipated regeneration, rediscovery, and rebirth, a world of possibilities and energy that engenders a social agent's impulse to recreate him/herself with a new identity. That final 'Yes' and all its cultic meaning is experienced by readers in a synchronic moment of revelation in which the divine descends into the world of action. It has both a religious and an aesthetic dimension, and perhaps ancient ritual also evinces both. The social subject experiences himself as a possible Ulysses, but also as an object of art, which is what Odysseus is, for, of course, a historical warrior who might have inspired the character of Homer's epic was also transfigured into an object of art, into art text, through the versions preceding and following Homer's.

That moment of epiphanic revelation is experienced in epic poetic mode, which is also the mode of experience for the subject of Sorel's social myth, engendering conviction, enthusiasm, and belief. However, the language of action into which it is translated on the diachronic axis of history flows into a 'huge sociopolitical common pool of symbols [...] organically linked with comically everyday private features' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 219). Just as the epiphanic moment of aesthetic-religious experience in ancient ritual is preceded by carnival, the breaking of established order and authority to make room for new possibilities and reorderings, so is the affirmation of life called for in the novelistic (made novel) representation of the union between Odysseus and Penelope through the union of mundane Leopold and Molly Bloom preceded by carnivalesque recreation of socio-political symbols. Joyce's text offers to social agents the experience of carnivalesque contestation of authority as the prelude to genuine regeneration and reconstruction of one's social identity. The tendency towards monoglossia, which c haracterises religious-aesthetic experience, is rooted in the heteroglossia which makes possible the repudiation of paralysing patterns of socialisation to make room for new possibilities.

On a meta-level of analysis, the carnivalesque subverts serial modes of production as material and spiritual practices. The narrative scenario of the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope is reproduced in the anticipated reunion of Leopold and Molly Bloom, and in the action scenarios of social agents who, in the joining of their social self and the aesthetic self set forth in Joyce's text, find possibilities of regeneration. But this process also implies one's perception of oneself as an aesthetic object. For a Leopold or Molly to become an Odysseus or a Penelope, an aesthetic transfiguration is required, and it is unique and irreproducible for each and every reader, just like an art object produced by an artisan. Implicitly, then, the ethos of Joyce's *Ulysse*s is a nti-capitalist. An anti-capitalist position is rehearsed by readers in recreating their identity as an art text, with art as praxis offered as a positive and life-affirming alternative to alienated labour.

The difference between Joyce's and Sorel's ethos of art as praxis is that whereas for Joyce the alternative to capitalist alienating socio-economic praxis is the aesthetic praxis of carnivalesque contestation, which, in its rootedness in cultic ritual, does not exclude the possibility of an experience of art as a form of religious experience, such as epiphany, for Sorel the alternative to capitalist praxis is the poetic mode of heroic confrontation. In Bakhtin's terms, Joyce's aesthetic is manifested in the prosaic mode of the carnival, of dialogic imagination, in a discourse in which heteroglossia wins over monoglossia, whereas aesthetic experience as envisioned by Sorel is manifested in the poetic mode of the direct word, grounded in a discourse in which monoglossia wins over heteroglossia. However, as Bakhtin acknowledged, monoglossia and heteroglossia are simultaneously manifested in discourse, and, we might add, in socio-aesthetic experience. Thus, even though developed in prosaic mode, Joyce's aesthetic is connected to epiphany, and, hence, to monoglossic poetic experience, although not to monoglossic discourse. And, for Sorel, the language of action into which aesthetic experience is translated is a language of heteroglossia, although the discourse of social myth is a monoglossic text. With Sorel, one must bear in mind that social myth is a syncretic 'text', including both words and actions. As a discourse characterised by monoglossia, the discourse of social myth is susceptible to becoming an ideology, and, hence, susceptible to engendering a monoglossic language of action. But although the possibility of the transformation of social myth into ideology is acknowledged by Sorel, who, for instance, criticises Ernest Renan for regarding Socialism as a Utopia (Sorel, 2004, p. 52), it is nowhere condoned. Only a heteroglossic language of action can bring about social change.

Other modernist writers believed in art as a means to break with the capitalist ethos of reproduction, in the material domain, of serial objects, and its reflection in the capitalist ideology of individualism through which social agents are reproduced serially. As Michael North has shown in his analysis of the political aesthetic of W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound:

> The three poets share an aspiration to disentangle actual individuals from theoretical individualism [...]. Instead of capitalism, with its merely mechanical organization, and liberalism, with its formal guarantees, the three hoped to achieve a community based on shared values. [...] If liberalism had devalued both individual and community, anti-liberals like Yeats, Eliot, and Pound hoped for a system in which 'the wholly personal' would be connected to 'a multitude now and in past time.' (North, 1991, pp. 4–5; Yeats, 1973, p. 268)

Like Yeats, Eliot, and Pound, Sorel hoped 'to disentangle actual individuals from theoretical individualism' which produces ideological Utopias. For Sorel, the state of mind of the subject of social myth is like the state of mind of the artist and 'This state of mind is, moreover, exactly that which was found in the first armies which carried on the wars of Liberty and that possessed by the propagandists of the general strike [...] [a state of] passionate individualism' (Sorel, 2004, p. 243, brackets mine). Sorel distinguishes between the extraordinary artist and the 'ordinary artisan' who labours like the modern worker of capitalism:

> Whenever we consider questions relative to industrial progress, we are led to consider art as an *anticipation* of the highest and technically most perfect form of production, although the artist, with his caprices, often seems to be at the antipodes of the modern worker. This analogy is justified by the fact that the artist dislikes reproducing accepted types; the inexhaustibly inventive turn of his mind distinguishes him from the ordinary artisan, who is mainly successful in the unending reproduction of models which are not his own. The inventor is an artist who wears himself out in pursuing the realisation of ends which practical people generally declare absurd [...]. (Sorel, 2004, p. 243, original italics)

The worker as artist recreates himself and the world in the shape of an art object and an art text instead of becoming a serial product of capitalism in an ideological mode of self-understanding and self-identification that is an 'unending reproduction of models which are not his own.' Because he 'dislikes reproducing accepted types', he introduces hetero-glossia at the heart of the capitalist body politic, that is, new ways of looking at oneself and the world, bringing those to dialogue with established patterns of seeing, engendering heteroglossia in a process which Bakhtin termed 'novelisation'. But this heteroglossic drive is rooted in the predominantly monoglossic poetic mode of social myth. Like social myths that engender cohesion and solidarity in the social group, the poetry of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound aims to achieve unity among individuals in 'a multitude now and in past time' (Yeats, 1973, p. 268). Different social myths might be said to be strengthened by the art of the three poets: a particular form of critical Christianity for Eliot, the community of scholars 'of the luminous detail' (North, 1991, p. 187) – an enlightened sect who have mastered the secret of arresting time and space in the revelatory image – for Pound, and a Celtic Ireland for Yeats.

Yeats's poem, 'A Coat', shows a similar distinction to that defined by Sorel between the artist-artisan and 'ordinary' people who turn an original artefact into commodified serial product:

> I made my song a coat
> Covered with embroideries
> Out of old mythologies
> From heel to throat;
> But the fools caught it,
> Wore it in the world's eyes
> As though they'd wrought it.

> Song, let them take it,
> For there's more enterprise
> In walking naked.
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 127)

The song is like an object produced by an artist labourer: 'a coat with embroideries/ Out of old mythologies'. At the same time, the song signifies aesthetic experience translated into the language of action, the joining of the dancer (social agent) and the dance (language of movement governed by an aesthetic) that can no longer be divided from each other. The song is a coat one wears 'in the world's eyes', that is, it defines one's social identity gained in the joining of social self and aesthetic self. This social identity is itself an art text in which one might read old mythologies, and, implicitly, the actions of the 'wearer' follow the patterns of myth embroidered on the material texture of his/her self. Dance and dancer, text and texture are interwoven so that the social agent becomes part of an art text, and may set out to bestow aesthetic grace unto the world. That is, of course, unless the identity gained in the synchronic moment of aesthetic experience is not commodified, 'caught by fools' and turned into ideology. If that were the case, the new self gained through aesthetic experience would become but a serial copy with ideology its means of production. Thus, in Bakhtin's terms, while there is monoglossia in the submission of the social subject to the direct word of poetry, the language of action which develops from this submission is one that engenders heteroglossia, for its contests ideologies. However, this same heteroglossia, whose energy comes from poetic fervour, may engender the monoglossia of ideology: one cannot deny poetic feeling to those spellbound by ideology, and whose faith and conviction, however misguided by Yeats's and Sorel's standards, resembles the faith and conviction engendered by myth.

In different ways, then, in a Sorelian frame of mind, for both Yeats and Joyce art is praxis, or, in other words, a means of recreating, as opposed to reproducing, oneself and material reality as an art object or an art text. And this recreation process gives impetus to social change, making available new worldviews and new ways of seeing oneself, as well as engendering the drive to make the desired, novel world envisioned in its aesthetic form, 'happen' materially. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen explains:

> The [aesthetic] image, it is clear, must be set between the mind or senses of the artist himself and the mind or senses of others. If you bear this in memory you will see that art necessarily divides itself into three forms progressing from one to the next. These forms are: the lyrical form, the form wherein the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself; the epical form, the form wherein he presents his image in mediate relation to himself and to others; the dramatic form, the form wherein he presents his image in immediate relation to others. (Joyce, 1965, p. 232, brackets mine)

The lyrical form takes hold in the synchronic moment of the joining of social self and aesthetic self. This aesthetic experience is then related to action, and gains epical form; this is the stage in which aesthetic experience is translated into the language of action. And finally, aesthetic experience gains dramatic form, being expressed in the 'language of movement' (Sorel, 2004, p. 50), on the diachronic axis of history. The lyrical form evinces a tendency towards monoglossia, but this is counteracted by a tendency toward heteroglossia in the next stage, when the epic form of the image gains contour through a process of mediation between novel and established worldviews. In its dramatic form, in which the art text is enacted in material reality, one may speculate in Bakhtinian key that to the extent that the novel worldview is itself transformed into norm, thereby losing its novel character, it becomes an ideology, and, hence, monoglossia prevails in the language of action of the social subject. Or, it can lead to heteroglossic language of action if it preserves its power to disrupt set patterns.

Similarly, a two-way traffic between aesthetic vision and action in material reality is defined in Yeats's philosophy, and, likewise, the monoglossia and heteroglossia of the languages of art and action are yielded by contrary forces of subjection and desubjection. In 'The Tables of the Law', that aspect of Yeats's psyche named Aherne is described thus:

> He was to me, at that moment, the supreme type of our race, which, when it has risen above, or is sunken below, the formalisms of half-education and the rationalisms of conventional affirmation and denial, turns away, unless my hopes for the world and for the Church have made me blind, from practicable desires and intuitions towards desires so unbounded that no human vessel can contain them, intuitions so immaterial that their sudden and far-off fire leaves heavy darkness about hand and foot. He had the nature, which is half monk, half soldier of fortune, and must needs turn action into dreaming and dreaming into action; and for such there is no order, no finality, no contentment in this world. (Yeats, 1914, p. 2)

In the synchronic experience of art, the social subject turns away from the practical, material world, and steps out of him/herself to meet his aesthetic self. That is, s/he steps out of 'the formalisms of half-education and the rationalisms of conventional affirmation and denial', denying the mirages of what Sorel called Utopias, and experiences what only the fictional aesthetic self can offer: unbounded desires and immaterial intuitions. Translating these into the language of movement, one turns dreaming into action. The subject of this turning is the social agent recreated as an art object, aiming at aesthetic perfection perhaps only truly achieved when, as Yeats put it in 'Sailing to Byzantium', 'once out of nature' one 'shall never take' one's 'bodily form from any natural thing,/ But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make/ Of hammered gold and gold enamelling' (Yeats, 1997, p. 197). In political terms, this synthesis of aesthetic realms and the material domain leads the subject of action to an anti-capitalist stance, as North argued: ‘Instead of capitalism, with its merely mechanical organization, and liberalism, with its formal guarantees, [Yeats, Eliot, and Pound] hoped to achieve a community based on shared values’ (North, 1991, p. 4, brackets mine), in Yeats’s case, a community based on the Irish Celtic heritage set against both capitalism and British imperialism and colonialism.

Likewise, for Wyndham Lewis, aesthetic experience leads to the experience of the not-self, that part of the social subject disentangled from reproducible patterns of thought and action internalised by the social self. The not-self, or, in my terms, the aesthetic self, is for Lewis ‘the form, or abstract, of the human being’, as Geoffrey Wagner put it (Wagner, 1957, p. 40). As such, the not-self, however, is not amenable to myth. Lewis’s view on myth can be inferred from his analysis of the distinction between poetry and prose, which resembles Bakhtin’s own theorisation of the same. Lewis regards traditional poetry as engendering a synchronic enhancement of the self through communion with godly absolutes, and argues that the language of action into which this experience is translated is monoglossic, like ideology and religion or mysticism, whereas the aesthetic experience of the not-self is prosaic:

> And Poetry is, at the same time as it leads to an enhancement of the self, an act of communion with God or nature or ‘space-time’ or whatever your particular Absolute may be termed. So in this description of the difference between Prose and Poetry it is worth noting that the impulse towards the Not-self (which is supposed to rest with Prose) must really be taking you towards the *concrete*: it is seen as the pagan, non-mystical impulse. The *personal* emotion is always that of the mystic or religionist, the *non*-personal (or that in which you are taken out of yourself) also is what ‘time,’ or mental, expansion, cannot provide. (Lewis, 1968, pp. 154–5, original italics)

In Lewis’s terms both Joyce’s and Yeats’s aesthetic, leading one out of mechanical time and into the duration of synchronic aesthetic experience, is a form of art as praxis that leads to ideology, to a poetic state of being that Bakhtin identified as a manifestation of monoglossia. However, while there is monoglossia in the synchronic experience of art, the language of action into which it is translated is heteroglossic. For both Joyce and Yeats that language of action is in fact prosaic in the same sense in which it is for Bakhtin and Lewis: art is made concrete, non-mystical, although for Joyce and Yeats the possibility of epiphany is not thus foreclosed.

What Lewis proposes is that the aesthetic self (the not-self) is found in synchronic aesthetic experience like that engendered by Yeats’s poetry, or by Joyce’s epiphanies, while conceiving that synchronic experience in the concrete terms of prosaic action. That is, Lewis aims to make synchronic aesthetic experience concrete, not translatable into a language of action, but itself the language of action, or, rather, an abstraction of the language of action that should function as if it was not an abstraction but something concrete. Lewis envisions the impersonal thought of the not-self as concrete, but opposed to sensation, which defines the social self (Lewis, 1968, p. 176). The not-self cannot experience duration, whereas the social self can, but for Lewis the experience of duration is not connected to true aesthetic experience. However, in spite of Lewis's animosity toward Bergsonian aesthetics, there are similarities in the philosophies of art developed by Yeats, Joyce, and Lewis. Lewis's not-self is indeed an aesthetic form of the self, irreproducible in the same way in which an art-object crafted by artisans is unique, or Yeats's anti-self is the unique counterpart of the self, or Joyce's object is apprehended in its *claritas* in the unique experience of epiphany. In that, the not-self inhabits the monoglossic world of synchronic aesthetic experience. However, for Lewis, its translation into the language of action does not take place on the diachronic axis of history; the language of action itself is stylised and made spatially concrete in the forms of art. The not-self contains action, the possibility of novel worldviews, and, hence, of heteroglossia, in pure, concrete, spatial, stylised form: the not-self 'is at his maximum point of energy when stillest' (Lewis, 1914b, p. 148). It is as if the competing drives toward monoglossia and heteroglossia present simultaneously in any art text, or, to borrow a visual metaphor from Yeats, the widening and tightening gyres of history and the soul, one leading to heteroglossia, the other to monoglossia, are compressed in pure aesthetic experience. Translated nevertheless into the language of action, this aesthetic experience can lead to alienation through disengagement from any social contact or process, a difficulty Lewis acknowledged in 'Enemy of the Stars'.

The emphases on the value of synchronic aesthetic experience in Yeats (who longs to be taken out of nature and into a world of essences), Joyce (whose epiphanies bring the divine into the everyday), Sorel (whose experience of social myth is lived in a moment out of time and is unanalysable), or Lewis (who hoped to make abstraction a form of lived experience, and the aesthetic technique of abstraction a form of social praxis), to mention but these few examples, reflect a European-wide spirit of contestation of the perceived nightmare of materialist capitalist ideologies and practices of sterile reproduction. This was manifested in all the branches of the arts. An illustrative example is offered by Stephen Kern in an analysis of the breakthrough in painting achieved by Wassily Kandinsky:

> Kandinsky began and ended up with mere colored forms, representing on canvas nothing but his inner spiritual life. He saw his work as the triumph of art over the tyranny of the external object as he explained in his book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1911). The contemporary age, he wrote, is a 'nightmare of materialism.' Art imitates nature, the spirit is muted, and modern man is seldom capable of feeling emotions. But painters can retrieve the inner spirit and give it some objective representation by utilizing the natural association between colors and spiritual states. (Kern, 1983, p. 203, Kandinsky 1970)

In other words, Kandinsky attempted to objectify synchronic aesthetic experience, to give material form in some way to those experiences enabled by mysticism and myth for Yeats, social myth for Sorel, abstraction for Lewis, or epiphany for Joyce. In Sorel's terms, a materialisation of such states of the subject can only be seen in the language of action into which synchronic aesthetic experience is translated. But it is interesting to note how, with Kandinsky, spirit itself is only visible through the sublimation of social self and aesthetic self in the simultaneity or synchronicity of aesthetic experience. In short, spirit is itself an art text, unique and irreproducible.

As Kern shows, the emphases on forms of experience related to simultaneity in the arts of modernism were to an extent responses to experiences enabled by technological progress before World War I: 'Telephone switchboards, telephonic broadcasts, daily newspapers, World Standard Time, and the cinema mediated simultaneity through technology' (Kern, 1983, p. 314). I would add that these experiences mediated by technology gave intensity and specific modality to older questions about the role of art in enabling individual transformation and thus social change. For Yeats, the liberation of Ireland's future was based on a squatting of the space of the experience of simultaneity, enabled by capitalist progress, and on recreating that space in the configuration derived from ancient Celtic myth. In the specific political contexts of modernism, the aesthetic modality of simultaneity also implied an anti-capitalist stance, a reaction against, for instance, the diminishing of 'the factory worker's active control over the immediate future in the productive process' and his/her relegation 'to an expectant mode, waiting for the future to come along the line, at the same time increasing the manufacturer's control' (Kern, 1983, p. 92). For Sorel's artisan-worker the aesthetic experience of social myth leads to an active appropriation of the future which is itself transformed into the end result of the aesthetic productive process, into art text. In the British dominions and colonies, the aesthetic modality of simultaneity implied a reaction against 'the expansive ideology of imperialism' which were 'spatial expressions of the active appropriation of the future' as in the address before the Colonial Institute in 1893 by the Liberal-Imperialist Foreign Minister Lord Rosebery who conceived the appropriation of territory as the precondition of shaping the world in the progressive (or such perceived) mould of British capitalism (Kern, 1983, p. 92).

In the colonies, nationalism and anti-capitalism were attitudes simultaneously enabled by taking over the space of simultaneity in aesthetic experience similar to that provided by Yeats's poetry in Ireland. In Australia, where relocated Irish workers inspired an anti-imperialism born from the wedding of nationalism and anti-capitalism (Berger and Smith, 1999, p. 26, Irving, 1999, p. 208), a poem by the Australian Henry Lawson, entitled 'Coralisle' (1893), shows a philosophy that is similar to that of Yeats in its quest for a space liberated from mechanised reproduction:

> But men grew wiser in the north
> And lost their faith in fairy lore,
> And all the fairies driven forth

> Were fain to seek a foreign shore.
>
> They left a northern harbour's mouth
> And sailed for many an ocean mile,
> Until they reached the sunny south,
> And made their home in 'Coralisle'.
> But now their hearts are ill at ease,
> They cannot keep their southern home,
> For steamships sail across the seas,
> And traders round their islands roam,
> And progress – fatal to the bard –
> Is fatal to the fairy band.
>
> The world must roll but yet 'tis hard
> That they must leave New Fairyland.
>
> (Lawson quoted in Stafford and Williams, pp. 88–9)

The poem was written by Lawson during his stay in New Zealand, where he had hoped to find a happier marriage between tradition and modernity than could be found in Australia. The poem expresses both a longing for liberation from the 'nightmare of materialism', and disappointment at experiencing the incongruence between 'the myth of Maoriland progressiveness' and colonial reality (Stafford and Williams, p. 89).

Thus, in the simplest terms, I would argue that any art text produces states of grace and states of violence which engender attitudes of faith, belief, enthusiasm, conviction, or faithlessness, disbelief/ unbelief, irony, certitude. These attitudes determine a social agent's actions in material reality. Introducing an edition of Lewis's *Tarr*, Scott W. Klein points out that:

> the manifestos of *Blast* declared that the Vorticist would extoll intellect over emotion, form over (or in conjunction with) nature, space over time, balance over movement, and contemplation over action. Rather than declaring a straightforwardly singular aesthetic, Vorticism would erect in the place of Futurism a rhetoric of opposition and paradox, turning Marinetti's call to total war into an aesthetic alarum aimed at both the academicism of British art and Marinetti's then pervasive influence. Vorticism would be both coruscating and objective, destructive and intellectually creative. (Klein, 2010, p. xix)

The pairs of opposites identified by Klein as framing the Vorticist project can be organised along the axes of synchronic aesthetic experience and diachronic language of action, to describe the conflicting tendencies of modernism more generally. On the synchronic axis there would belong form, space, balance, contemplation; on the diachronic we would find nature, mechanical time, movement, action. While for Lewis the language of action is determined by the same terms which determine synchronic aesthetic experience, with Joyce and Yeats, however different their narrative techniques, form, space, balance, and contemplation are ultimately lost to action. Different kinds of action are engendered by the different narratives, but in both cases the aesthetic experience is translatable into the language of action in the manner of the translation of the experience of social myth into the language of movement theorised by Sorel.

As Frank Lentricchia argued:

> The main line of aesthetic theory since Kant develops from its accurate reading of the alienating message of capitalist hegemony. Kantian, symbolist, and aestheticist patterns of thought, all of which father modernist political refusals, originate in gestures of worldly negation which are political through and through. (Lentricchia, 1985, p. 98)

In this chapter I sought to show that modes of aesthetic experience are not only developed from reactions against capitalism and imperialism, but they in turn engender anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist language of action. Yeats's poetry galvanised the Irish Revival Movement, strengthening social attitudes and ways of seeing oneself as social agent, being implicated in this way in a chain of events that led to the creation of the Irish Free State on 6 December 1922. George Russell's mysticism kindled nationalist attitudes and was reflected in the development of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. Lewis and Joyce, opening up the possibility for readers to recreate themselves with an anarchist worldview, gave impetus to activism such as that associated with Dora Marsden's publications *The Freewoman* (1911–1912), *The New Freewoman* (1913), and *The Egoist* (1914–1919). Art was implicated in creating the conditions for envisioning oneself with the power to redefine one's identity as social agent. These changes at the level of the self made possible constitutional changes such as the women's right to vote, fully granted in Britain in 1928. The writings of the mystical socialist poet Edward Carpenter and the Scottish anarchist John Henry Mackay made possible an empowering understanding of queerness and set the basis for political changes that led much later in the twentieth century to non-discriminatory politics. Yet Carpenter's activism is based in an aesthetic understanding of oneself as part of the aesthetic whole experienced in the synchronic moment of the fusion of social self and aesthetic self envisioned as the divine Man.

It is worthwhile to understand the relation between art and social change through Sorel's theory of social myth. Sorel's anarcho-syndicalism was debated in socialist circles and gave impetus to progressive social action, even though also to retrogressive politics (such as Benito Mussolini's). Nevertheless, in understanding Sorel's theory as a theory of art as praxis, one may agree with John Stanley in saying that 'Sorel's sociology of virtue has a utility that goes beyond historical investigation and bears on the politics and social practices of Western culture in general, not just of his own generation' (Stanley, 2002, p. 164). This sociology of virtue is inextricably linked to the moment of great sincerity in which one meets one's aesthetic self as defined in narratives that can form the basis of social myth, and, thus, of social action. Even for readers of Joyce, through whose texts one's faith in any social myth is undermined, the moment of epiphanic revelation is not so different from the moment of great sincerity that preconditions, for Sorel, one's engagement in art as social praxis. Both poetic texts, like Yeats's, and prosaic texts, like Joyce's, while reflecting social changes, also serve as means to effect them.

12. Modernism, Narrative, and Violence

In this chapter I draw on Georges Sorel's theory of social myth in order to sketch a theory of the relations between narrative and violence. Following the leads provided by Sorel makes possible the extension of his theory into an encompassing vision of the role of art in producing social change. In developing this argument I will use Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and monoglossia. The analytical framework thus defined will be tested through analyses of the ethos engendered by the literary narratives of W. B. Yeats and James Joyce, and by the work of some of their contemporaries.

The theory I propose is summarised thus: social myth is produced through a convergence of various discourses (literary, political, philosophical, etc.) into a monoglossic discourse, yet discourse in which heteroglossia is also present. The monoglossic dimension of social myth is manifested in the synchronic experience of the myth. This experience is always also an aesthetic experience that engenders a joining of social agent and narrative subject through which the former gains a new world-view. Situated at the centre of this novel worldview, the social subject is dislocated from set and reproducible patterns of seeing and understanding him/herself in relation to other social agents and the material world, and is therefore dislocated from set patterns of socialisation. In other words, the subject finds him/herself as the 'I' of a new language, and brings this language into dialogue with established languages of authority, in a heteroglossic mode of self-presentation. From this dislocation and dialogue there is born a form of violence which is transmitted into the material world of action. The dissemination of this violence into social action is theorised by Sorel as the translation of the experience of social myth, which is also an aesthetic experience, into 'the language of movement' (Sorel, 2004, p. 50). Consequently, Sorel's vision allows us to understand the identity and actions of the social subject as themselves art objects, or syncretic, performative, art texts, rooted in the aesthetic experience of the joining of social self and the aesthetic self.

The experience of this joining is suitably described by one of the characters in William Lane's novel *The Workingman's Paradise* (1892), published under the pseudonym John Miller:

> I recollect the Venus in the Louvre [...] When I saw it first it seemed to me most beautiful, perfect, the loveliest thing that ever sculptor put chisel to. But as I saw it more I forgot that it was beautiful or perfect. It grew

> on me till it lived. I went day after day to see it, and when I was glad it laughed at me, and when I was downhearted it was sad with me, and when I was angry it scowled, and when I dreamed of Love it had a kiss on its lips. Every mood of mine it changed with; every thought of mine it knew. (Lane, 2009, pp. 93–4)

As social self and aesthetic self (in this case the spectator's fictional self who shares a fictional space of myth with the living Venus) become one, elements of the art text come to inhabit material reality until it is difficult to distinguish which is 'properly' art text and which reality. The material world itself becomes an art text through the grace bestowed in the experience of aesthetic interaction with the Venus of myth. Furthermore, this aesthetic experience appears to be accompanied by religious feeling, broadly understood. For Sorel, such aesthetic-religious transubstantiation of the material world into an art text has social value, for, in the case of social myth, it leads to social action. It is the same with *The Workingman's Paradise.* Although the quoted passage seems to value art for the pleasure of contemplation and divination which it offers, rather than for readying the viewer for action, the entire novel is an argument in favour of socialist and anarchist revolution, and was written partly in response to the defeat of the 1891 Australian shearers' strike.

Another description of the joining of social self and aesthetic self is offered by Flann O'Brien in reference to Joyce's work. As O'Brien puts it:

> Joyce spent a lifetime establishing himself as a character in fiction. Joyce created, in narcissus fascination, the ageless Stephen. Beginning with importing real characters into his books, he achieves the magnificent inversion of making them legendary and fictional. (Nolan, 1951, p. 9)

O'Brien's comments come in the context of reflections on Joyce's religiosity:

> He [Joyce] declared that he would pursue his artistic mission even if the penalty was as long as eternity itself. This seems to be an affirmation of belief in Hell, therefore of belief in Heaven and God. [...] Yet it is still true that all true blasphemers must be believers. (Nolan, 1951, p. 5)

The ultimate purpose of Joyce's writing is to bring the divine into the mundane. But in order to do so, Joyce must test the possibility of belief.

As O'Brien argues:

> It seems to me that Joyce emerges, through curtains of salacity and blasphemy, as a truly fear-shaken Irish Catholic, rebelling not so much against the Church but against its near-schism Irish eccentricities, its pretence that there is only one Commandment, the vulgarity of its edifices, the shallowness and stupidity of many of its ministers.
>
> (Nolan, 1951, p. 10)

In that, Joyce's faith in the power of art is similar to the faith and conviction of the anarchist who challenges all authority in the name of a social ideal. In Australia, responding to workers' agitation in June 1891 during elections in Sydney, the socialist poet Henry Lawson declared, as Manning Clark put it, that 'the workers' new religion was about to hurl vice and Mammon from their pinnacles' (Clark, 1997, p. 391). While neither seeking to provide a new religion, nor advocating violence, Joyce did believe that the experience of epiphany through art could help the Irish to transcend the economic and social conditions leading to paralysis.

The centrifugal and the centripetal drives of heteroglossia and monoglossia are both present in the experience of social myth and art, as well as in the language of action derived from that experience. Discussing the general strike as social myth, Sorel points out that its translation into the language of action may yield not only 'revolutionary movement', that is, heteroglossia, but also conformism through ideological subjection: 'One of the chief means employed by them [the critics of the general strike as social myth] is to represent it as a Utopia [i.e. ideology, in Sorel's understanding of the term]; this is easy enough, because there are very few myths which are perfectly free from any Utopian element' (Sorel, 2004, p. 49, brackets mine). This perspective is better understood by reading Bakhtin's and Sorel's theories of the relation between text and its embodiment in action, through each other's terms.

For Bakhtin, heteroglossia characterises a necessary process of destruction of 'religious and official ideology' which have created associations of objects and ideas within 'false hierarchical relationships', separating the world of fiction from that of material reality by introducing 'various other-worldly and idealistic strata that do not permit these objects to touch each other in their living corporeality' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169). For Bakhtin, the syntagm 'these objects' refers to '(on the one hand) good material words, and (on the other) authentically human ideas' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169). This view is rather like that developed by Sorel. For him social myth is made material 'in the language of movement' (Sorel, 2004, p. 50), with the myth functioning like dramatic text in which 'officially we are not participants, but, in fact, we discuss and act in ourselves as the drama develops' (Sorel in Stanley, 2002, p. 188; Sorel, 1901, p. 267). That is, for Sorel, officially we are not narrative subjects, but in fact we embody in our words and actions their character, making the words good in material sense, allowing narrative subjects to inhabit us and speak in our voices and thus reuniting 'good material words' with 'authentically human ideas' in spite and against 'various other-worldly and idealistic strata that do not permit these objects to touch each other in their living corporeality' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169). However, whereas for Bakhtin those 'other-worldly and idealistic strata' include the high discourse of poetry and myth, Sorel groups them under the umbrella of the term 'Utopia'. There are subtle resonances and dissonances between these two understandings of the strata that separate the identity of the social subject from his/her aesthetic character.

As previously hinted, Utopia is for Sorel a form of oppressive ideology. In that, Sorel's Utopia is like Bakhtin's 'poetic genres that coalesced in the channel formed by those same centripetal forces of verbal-ideological life' which included, as exemplified by Bakhtin, the poetics of Aristotle and Augustine, of the medieval church, 'the Cartesian poetics of neoclassicism', or 'the abstract grammatical universalism of Leibniz' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 271). In opposition to Utopias, Sorel places social myth which, in terms of experience, has a 'character of *infinity*', 'produces an entirely epic state of mind', and even 'the sentiment of sublimity' (Sorel, 2004, pp. 45–6, original italics, pp. 248, 228). Contradictorily, although Sorel's understanding of Utopia is similar to Bakhtin's understanding of poetic genres as forms of ideology, Sorel holds that ideology cannot be challenged except through an attitude towards it born in a poetic mode of experience. That is because Sorel distinguishes between the poetic mode of ideology leading to subjection in a monoglossic language of action, and the poetic mode of social myth which engenders in social subjects an 'epic state of mind' (Sorel, 2004, p. 248) leading to heteroglossia in the language of action, whereas in Bakhtin's terms, both ideology and epic are monoglossic discourses that subject.

Sorel explains his understanding of the poetic mode of ideology in reference to the history of French revolutionary movements. On the one hand, he criticises the first democratic constitutions of France as founded on rationalising ideals, rather than experience and, hence, as defining Utopias; on the other hand, he praises the heroic struggles against the ancient regime for being founded on conviction, faith, and enthusiasm engendered by social myths. Thus, the poetic mode of ideology is engendered by a 'combination of Utopias and myths. [...] With these Utopias were mixed up the myths which represented the struggles against the ancient regime; so long as the myths survived, all the refutations of liberal Utopias could produce no result; the myth safeguarded the Utopia with which it was mixed' (Sorel, 2004, p. 51). This position suggests that the poetic fervour engendered in the synchronic moment of aesthetic-religious experience of social myth may be harnessed to ideology, safeguarding it.

In the poetic mode of ideology, aesthetic experience, such as it may be, is exactly reproducible. The language of action into which it is translated will be imbued with the ethos of reproducibility. The social subject is positioned as a reproducible object him/herself, an effect of capitalist economy carrying out the work of serial reproduction through ideology. By contrast, in the poetic mode engendered by social myth and art, a subject's response to genuine, irreproducible, 'good material words' manifesting 'authentically human ideas' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169) – or, to use Sorel's phrase in this context, manifesting 'high moral value and such great sincerity' (Sorel, 2004, p. 46) – engenders the need, carried out in the social subject's language of action:

> to destroy and rebuild the entire false picture of the world, to sunder the false hierarchical links between objects and ideas, to abolish the divisive ideational strata [...] to liberate all these objects and permit them to enter into the free unions that are organic to them, no matter how monstrous these unions might seem from the point of view of ordinary, traditional associations. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 169)

Viewed in the context of Sorel's writing, Bakhtin's discourse in this passage evokes the language of social activism while at the same time being primarily about aesthetic experience. The terms used are loaded with political significance that evokes anarchism and syndicalism: 'false hierarchical links', 'to liberate', 'free unions', 'organic' links between experience and ideas. Social myths achieve heteroglossic effects that are similar to those theorised by Bakhtin as being achieved by prose, although not in a similar manner. The experience of social myth as a form of aesthetic experience would be engendered by monoglossic discourse in Bakhtin's terms. But in Sorel's terms, although this experience is lived in the poetic mode of epic, the sublime, the unanalysable, it is also an experience of dislocation from set patterns of experience.

Bakhtin's emphasis on the embodied character of discourse and Sorel's emphasis on the translatability of social myth and art into action make possible the argument that the two thinkers shared a fundamentally similar view of the ethos of art. This common view of the ethos of art shows art as always performative, transforming subjective experience into social event, and thereby always being implicated in social change. If the poetic mode of ideology is conducive of actions establishing authority, with ideology understood as a reproducible form of art, like serially produced kitsch, the poetic mode of social myth is conducive of contestation of authority. Thus, the poetic mode of social myth or art also has a prosaic dimension. The prosaic dimension of aesthetic experience in poetic mode is what links that experience to actuality, to embodied social interaction, to 'the historical and social concreteness of living discourse' and to 'participation in historical becoming and in social struggle' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 331).

In an analysis of myth, ethos, and actuality in fifth-century BCE Athens, David Castriota argues that '*ethos* was the essential variable in the equation or analogy between myth and actuality' (1992, p. 12). Ethos connects words with action. In his argument, Castriota refers to ancient, classical myth. For Sorel, any narrative can function like myth. If it does, it becomes social myth. In a Sorelian framework, we may extend Castriota's argument to say that ethos is the variable that links in different possible ways fiction and actuality, and that this variable is defined in different ways by different readers or audiences, yet always within the limits set by a given art text. Faith, belief, enthusiasm, and faithlessness, unbelief/disbelief, and carnivalesque, ironic contestation are the elements of an ethos born in the translation of fiction into actuality. And what is translated is the synchronic aesthetic experience, the events of subjection and desubjection that take place in the consciousnesses of readers or audiences. The violence of subjection and desubjection engendered in synchronic aesthetic experience is disseminated into the world of social action through the ethos engendered by an art text, that is, through attitudes of faith, belief, and enthusiasm, or faithlessness, unbelief/disbelief, and carnivalesque contestation.

While these attitudes are engendered by art, they can also be engendered by ideology. However, while the dominant effect of art is aesthetic perception, the dominant effect of ideology is rhetoric persuasion. Because of that, art is more like myth. Kenneth Burke distinguishes between ideology and myth by showing that, in its rhetoric of persuasion, any text is ideological. But in successive negotiations of the competing worldviews of 'rhetorical partisans' within a meta-text, a set of generalisations emerges which makes possible a 'vision of the ideal end in such a project'; this vision becomes the support of a myth (Burke, 1989b, p. 207). Myth transcends ideology because the motive of the myth lies '*beyond the motivational order treated in the competing ideologies*' (Burke, 1989b, p. 210, original italics). Ideology cannot engender in social actors 'a *mode of transcendence*' of their socio-material conditions except in an 'inferior' way (Burke, 1989b, p. 200). The Sorelian perspective allows us to argue that, as with Burke's myth, art enables a transcendence of socio-material conditions which ideology cannot offer. Ideology operates through the same attitudes as art, attitudes of faith, belief, and enthusiasm, or faithlessness and unbelief/disbelief. But while art achieves concreteness in the particular instantiation of 'a *mode* of a social actor's socio-material conditions, ideology *of transcendence*' achieves concreteness in their reproduction. Rather than being merely represented for the contemplative, reality can be transubstantiated through the power of aesthetics into an art text. Transcendence through aesthetic experience must be understood in material terms. It leads not to a transcendental realm, but to an ethos of action and ethical life in the material social world, as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon argued:

> The object of art is not merely to make us admire beautiful things. [...] There are the variety of human actions and passions, prejudices, beliefs, conditions, castes, family, religion, domestic comedy, public tragedy, national epic, revolutions. All that is as much matter for art as for philosophy.
>
> Art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative. (Proudhon qtd. in Hamerton, 1871, p. 317)

Yeats concluded 'Ego Dominus Tuus' from *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919) with a reflection on the dynamic relation between one's social self and one's aesthetic self:

> *Ille.* [...] I seek an image, not a book. [...]
> I call to the mysterious one who yet
> Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
> And look most like me, being indeed my double,
> And prove of all imaginable things
> The most unlike, being my anti-self,
> And, standing by these characters, disclose
> All that I seek [...]
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 163)

The anti-self is the aesthetic self defined in earlier, more youthful, poems as spirit dwelling in, or arising from, Celtic mythology. The anti-self or the aesthetic self from myth in which the social self finds 'indeed' one's 'double', is summoned from the narrative text ('a book') to come and 'walk' in the material world, no longer a mere representation but one who, 'standing by these characters' may disclose new worlds of possibility for the social self and perhaps also for Ireland.

That experience of a meeting between self and anti-self, between social subject and the aesthetic self of a being from myth, is perhaps best described by one of Yeats's alter-egos, Michael Robartes, in the poem 'The Phases of the Moon'. The poem is primarily a synthetic presentation of Yeats's philosophical system defined in *A Vision* (1962), and it refers centrally to the cycles of reincarnation throughout the ages of history, to the corresponding phases in one's own life, and to the aesthetic dimensions of these transformations. In reference to Phase 14, a phase of bodily beauty in which the wise seek to give aesthetic form to their emotional will, so that physical beauty becomes the effect of creative intellect, Robartes says that:

> All thought becomes an image and the soul
> Becomes a body; that body and that soul
> Too perfect at the full to lie in a cradle,
> Too lonely for the traffic of the world:
> Body and soul cast out and cast away
> Beyond the visible world.
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 166)

The being of the coalescing social subject and aesthetic self is 'too lonely for the traffic of the world'. This being cannot be contained in the cradle of the material body; it only exists in the fraction of time in which epiphanic revelation takes place, 'beyond the visible world.' In the perspective of Yeats's occult system from *A Vision*, one could say that beauty becomes embodied as the fictions born from the creative mind are willed into material existence, but although this embodiment will have consequences in the material social world, its material actuality (the 'physical' moment when it happens) remains hidden and otherworldly. That is to say that the experience of the joining of social self and aesthetic self takes place in the instant of the present, which is part of the material reality, yet which is unanalysable and not amenable to measure.

In the stanza quoted above the violence of subjection of the social self to the aesthetic self is not overtly expressed. However, it is more clearly described in *A Vision.* In Phase 14, if one is in phase, or, in my terms, if the subject of action is in phase with the aesthetic self, 'the images of desire, disengaged and subject to the *Mask* [the image of oneself which is visible in material, social reality], are separate and still (*Creative Mind* from a phase of violent scattering)' (Yeats, 1978, p. 66, brackets mine). Through an 'act of the intellect', 'the aim of the being should be to disengage those objects which are images of desire from the excitement and disorder of the *Body of Fate* [physical drives to which one is subject], and under certain circumstances to impress upon these the full character of the *Mask*', which is one of serenity, or, in my terms, of aesthetic harmony (Yeats, 1978, p. 66). Thus the social subject gains, in his/her joining with his/her aesthetic self, the character of an art text. S/he becomes itself an art object.

Subjection through aesthetic experience is simultaneous with desubjection, with a dislocation of the self from mundane, as opposed to aesthetic, material reality and individual physicality: the joined social subject and aesthetic self, body and soul, are 'cast out and cast away' from the profane material world. They are seen in the material world by others as inspiring people of great beauty, like Helen of Troy (Yeats, 1978, p. 67), but they also seem otherworldly, perhaps like the fairy creatures of Celtic myth:

> *Robartes.* When the moon's full those creatures of the full
> Are met on the waste hills by countrymen
> Who shudder and hurry by: body and soul
> Estranged amid the strangeness of themselves,
> Caught up in contemplation, the mind's eye
> Fixed upon images that once were thought.
>
> (Yeats, 1997, p. 166)

Thus, Yeats's writing defines aesthetic experience as synchronic, of a religious, occult, nature, and as an experience of dislocation from the set ways of the world, but a dislocation that can only occur through the subjection that takes place in the joining of social self and aesthetic self. What this experience yields is a social self that is no longer mundane, but, enriched through art, becomes itself an art text or an art object. As such, it is a social self that can only be revealed through an epiphany, that capitalism cannot replicate mechanically. At the same time, to the extent that synchronic aesthetic experience redefines one's identity as distinctly Irish, drawn from Celtic myth, it positions the social subject in opposition to British imperialism. The violence engendered by the contrary forces of subjection and desubjection enabled by synchronic aesthetic experience is transmitted into the world of action.

The poem 'Leda and the Swan' provides an example of how the experience of violent subjection lived in the moment of synchronic aesthetic experience engenders both creation and destruction on the axis of history. The knowledge gained through the aesthetic experience of myth, symbolised by the violent yet sensual subjection of Leda by Zeus, is materially embodied in Helen of Troy, one of the creatures of the full Yeats associated with Phase 14 in *A Vision*. For Yeats, Maud Gonne represented a historical parallel to the Helen of myth, also identifiable as Cathleen ni Houlihan, with both perceived as an embodiment of the aesthetic self found in Greek and Celtic myth in a social agent full of poetic fervour, faith, belief, and enthusiasm. Maud Gonne herself defined her identity as a servant of the Irish sovereignty goddess-queen. On the one hand, the violence of such subjection born in the joining of social agent and aesthetic self derived from myth contributed to nationalist violence as the monoglossia of the poetic mode of synchronic experience became the monoglossia of nationalist ideology on the axis of history. However, having thus become reproducible, aesthetic experience loses its regenerative power and only the violence of subjection remains. On the other hand, the violence of subjection in synchronic aesthetic experience is also accompanied by the heteroglossia born through dislocation from previously set, reproducible patterns of experience. In the language of action, this violence of dislocation can be given potency by the violence of monoglossic ideological subjection; but it can also be the precondition of aesthetic recreation of the material world as an art text, and, hence, the prelude to new forms of aesthetic (and not ideological) subjective states of mind and matter. As monoglossia and heteroglossia whirl in the language of action as they do in discourse, the world as art text is threatened by its reproduction in ideology – this means of capitalist serial reproduction of reality and social identities.

The predominating tendency in Yeats's narratives is their partaking in the violence of subjection that unites deed and word, violence which seeps into action in the social world, in the manner envisioned by Sorel for social myth, and which leads to the recreation of the world as an art text in the terrible beauty of the epic poetic mode. By contrast, the predominating tendency in Joyce's narratives is to recreate the world as an art text through the regenerative power of desubjection in the carnivalesque of the epic-comic mode. The heteroglossia of desubjection, rather than the monoglossia of subjection, drives the act of aesthetic creation.

Throughout *Ulysses* the reader comes across passages such as the one in the seventh chapter, where Joyce belittles the mysticism kindled by Madame Blavatsky in George Russell or Yeats (*U*, 7: 783–8, also see *U*, 8: 526–32, *U*, 8: 544–50). Elsewhere nationalism is challenged (*U*, 8: 457–74). Joyce's reader learns from the text a dialogical world-view as understood by Bakhtin. The translation of synchronic aesthetic experience into the language of action yields a social identity that is like that of the participant in the Bakhtinian carnival: the aesthetic self one may derive from myth or other kinds of text is poised against established authority, and the language of action of the social agents recreated in the dialogical process of novelisation is an anarchist language of contestation of authority. However, the religious dimension of aesthetic experience is not completely absent. The overarching ethos of *Ulysses* is in many ways of the kind of regeneration rituals, with their carnivalesque warding off of death and celebration of the regenerative re-embodiment of social subjects with a new identity. The artist as a high priest of art mediates this ritualic transformation. The heteroglossic iconoclasm engendered in readers is the prelude to a monoglossic moment of faith, affirmed in *Ulysses* in the final 'Yes' (*U*, 18: 1609), which readers utter with conviction along with Molly Bloom, a mundane version of the sovereignty goddess. The possibility of faith is a precondition of the celebratory, cultic ritual of death and rebirth, but, unlike in Yeats and Sorel, narratives that these two might have regarded as conveying mythic truths are divested of the power given them in their epic-poetic rendering. Yet the moment of Joycean epiphanies is no less poetic in making possible a new worldview in which the divine shines through the mundane. The monoglossic and heteroglossic drives are both present in Joyce's work, as they are in Yeats's, but the trans-formative powers of art are harnessed in different ways.

The violence of desubjection in Joyce would befit a social subject who does not seek conflict of epic proportions, a mythical clash between opposing worldviews, as is the case with Yeats and Sorel, but a social subject whose dislocation from set patterns involves rationalisation of faith, without excluding the possibility of sacred experience, but testing this possibility through irony in the service of reason. In political terms, this attitude is best represented by Charles Stewart Parnell, as Andrew Gibson noted:

> The emphasis on the refusal to serve, on the annihilation of the ruler within, on the 'forging' or 'reawakening' of an Irish conscience: Stephen Dedalus shares all of them with the mythic Parnell. These concerns were central to Parnell's political practice. They made him an immensely subtle and skilful harasser of English interests [...]. Joyce's work partly represents a continuation in the cultural sphere of the mythic Parnell's political project. (Gibson, 2002, pp. 5–6)

The violence of heteroglossia in Joyce's writing makes possible the identity of a social subject for whom boycott, a form of subversion of authority encouraged by Parnell as president of the National Land League and leader of the Irish nationalist movement, is a possible political practice. The recreation of the social agent in its subjective internalisation of heteroglossia as tactic for recreating his/her social identity may lead to peaceful protest of the kind advocated by Parnell, who in 1882 called for Irish land tenants to stop paying rent. But along the violence of heteroglossia, of dislocation from set patterns of socialisation, there is born the possibility of violent subjection, as elements of the new identity begin to be reassembled into the art text of a social myth, and this art text becomes ideology. It was nationalist ideology, with its power of monoglossic subjection, that led on 6 May 1882 to the Phoenix Park murders of Lord Frederick Cavendish, Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the Irish Office Permanent Under Secretary, Thomas Henry Burke, by members of the Irish National Invincibles. Thus a social myth turned into ideology can lead to the violence of war and murder. But ideology has little in common with art. The identity of the subject of ideology may be lived in poetic mode, but this form of reproducible 'aesthetic' experience constructs the subject rather like a serially reproducible object, defined by automatism, habit, and a lack of originality. These are aspects of socialisation sharply challenged in Joyce's writing. This writing challenges perhaps not so much the social myth *per se*, as the possibility of its becoming ideology.

Thus, in the joining of narrative subject and the subject of action, both the violence of subjection and that of desubjection are present. In epic poetic mode, the mode of poetry and social myth, of Yeats's and Sorel's writing, the dominant tone of synchronic aesthetic experience is that of monoglossic subjection, but this implies desubjection in the language of action into which synchronic aesthetic experience is translated. In epic comic mode, the mode of carnivalesque contestation of social myth turned into ideology, the mode of the novel, of Joyce's writing, the dominant tone of synchronic aesthetic experience is that of heteroglossic desubjection, but this can only be enabled by an underlying faith in the eventual epiphanic revelation that is de facto monoglossic: faithlessness is only a test for the possibility of belief, a tactic for enabling the epiphanic revelation of the world as art text.

For Ezra Pound, the moment of synchronic aesthetic experience is, as for Sorel, the moment when faith, conviction, and enthusiasm are born. Like Sorel, Pound believed that debates are sterile and that logic weakens faith, asserting in *Il Meridiano di Roma* in 1942 that 'Faith is totalitarian. The mystery is totalitarian' (qtd. in North, 1991, p. 154). While such assertions seem to legitimate the fascism which Pound supported at the time, providing an example of how the violence of subjection leads to ideological monoglossia and to violence in the social realm, it must be emphasised that the mystery Pound refers to in the above statements is the mystery of the joining of social self and aesthetic self in the contemplation of an art text, which leads to the transformation of the material world itself into an art text. As Tim Redman has shown, Pound's vision of the transformative role of art in society embraces the idea that art and culture should lead not to the abuses of fascism, but to anti-capitalist efforts to create 'the collective state' as 'cultural product, to which everyone had a right', to 'a humane and worthy vision of an ideal social order' (Redman, 1991, p. 199). The birth of a new world is the ultimate purpose of art for Pound with art seen, as another imagist, T. E. Hulme, put it in his 'Lecture on Modern Poetry' at the Poets' Club in 1908, as 'a tool which we want to use ourselves for definite purposes' (Hulme in Roberts, 1938, p. 259).

T. S. Eliot also regarded art as a tool for the recreation of social and material reality, and was aware of simultaneous manifestations of the centralising and decentralising forces of monoglossia and heteroglossia in narrative language and in the language of action. As North points out, Eliot:

> was an urban expatriate who prescribed for others a settled life on the soil, a cosmopolitan, famed for garbling together half the languages of humankind, who preached the virtues of a rooted tradition, and a painfully private religionist who saw religion as a cohesive social force. Eliot's genius was to insist that these apparent contradictions are in fact identities, that community can only come about through detachment, tradition only through the individual talent, ethics only through specific historical facts. (North, 1991, p. 74)

Translated in a political language of action, Eliot's poetics would lead to faith and enthusiasm, and to social myth (Eliot promoted Sorel's work), and thus possibly to the monoglossia of ideology in a Christian Society, but only after the heteroglossia of disbelief and faithlessness has cleared away the remnants of false belief and faith reproduced through capitalist ideology. This ritual of regeneration is rather like the one that comes into view by reading Joyce's *Ulysses*. In Dora Marsden's terms, the social agent who finds power in a Cause is one caught in its ideological net, an agent whose 'concern lies somewhere with a Cause outside themselves' (Marsden, 1913a, p. 64). Such an agent is ideologically reproducible. But the one who uses art to test the possibility of belief, including art as a formula of reality, is one who shall become aware that 'while dignity and freedom are myths, power is a reality and that it comes from within' (Marsden, 1913a, p. 64).

This ethos of regenerative destruction, which should lead to the reconstruction of the world as art text, is one shared by the father of modern anarchism, Mikhail Bakunin. In 'God or Labour. The Two Camps' (1871) Bakunin contrasts the ideals of the International and of anarchism, and declares his own 'Non Serviam' in trenchant terms:

> Atheism is Truth – or, rather, the real basis of all Truths.
>
> We do not stoop to consider practical consequences. We want Truth above everything. *Truth for all*! [...] You jump to the conclusion that we can have neither love nor respect for mankind, inferring that all those great ideas or emotions which, in all ages, have set hearts throbbing are dead letters to us. [...] Do you want to know to what an extent we love the beautiful things that you revere? Know then that we love them so much that we are both angry and tired at seeing them hanging, out of reach, from your idealistic sky. We sorrow to see them stolen from our mother earth, transmuted into symbols without life, or into distant promises never to be realised. No longer are we satisfied with the fiction of things. We want them in their full reality. (Bakunin, 1947, pp. 37–8, original italics)

Here is a call for the recreation of the world as an art text in material terms. Ideas, emotions, symbols without life need to be translated into their full, material reality, even though this means enabling an experience of dislocation which in the language of action involves violence. But what should be eventually achieved is no less than the revelation of the world as art text:

> By the words *matter* and *material*, we understand the totality of things, the whole gradation of phenomenal reality as we know it, from the most simple inorganic bodies to the complex functions of the mind of a man of genius; the most beautiful sentiments, the highest thoughts; the most heroic deeds; the actions of sacrifice and devotion; the duties and the rights, the abnegation and the egoism of our social life. The manifestations of organic life, the properties and qualities of simple bodies: electricity, light, heat, and molecular attraction, are all to our mind but so many different evolutions of that totality of things that we call *matter*. These evolutions, are characterised by a close solidarity, a unity of motive power. (Bakunin, 1947, p. 39, original italics)

That motive power and solidarity unites the constituent elements of the world in social harmony of aesthetic nature, sustained by love, and made possible by transformative social action. As Bakunin's close friend, Alexander Herzen, put it in 1851, 'The man of the future in Russia is the moujik, just as in France he is the artisan' (Aldred, 1920, p. 20).

For Edward Carpenter, socially transformative aesthetic experience leads not to epic poetic clashes between revolutionaries and established authority, but, in Alfred Orage's words, to 'affiliations in directions now [1926] quite disowned – with theosophy, arts and crafts, vegetarianism, the "simple life"' (qtd. in Gibbons, 1973, p. 101, brackets mine). The dislocation from capitalist reproducible patterns of socialisation is a form of regenerative heteroglossia internalised and reflected within the social group in its forms of organisation of labour, decision-making, and so forth. The social group, constituted as an art text, signifies in its texture the dialogical opposition between itself and capitalism. But this heteroglossia is manifested in a text whose constituent units are nevertheless held together through the harmonising aesthetic of an overarching identity such as, in Carpenter's case, an aesthetically conceived Divine Mind.

One wonders, with Benjamin Tucker, whether it is possible at all to gain freedom without a measure of subjection. In *TheNew Freewoman* of 15 July 1913, Tucker offered a translation from an article by Georges Clemenceau, in reaction to Dora Marsden's egoist philosophy, with which Tucker disagreed. In the passage translated by Tucker from Clemenceau's *L'Homme libre*, the latter addresses Abbé Lemire, a proponent of *catholicisme social* in France, thus:

> We both are victims, I tell you. You, because, aspiring to liberty, you can find it only in yourself, outside the support, on which you had counted, of a faith freely accepted, freely practised, which ends in imposing a constraint upon you. I, because, wishing to liberate in my turn, and clashing with the formidable opposition of a past of violence, I see myself condemned to impose constraint, not on those who must face history under the weight of deviations disastrous to humanity, but on unfortunates who have received the sad inheritance and are bound to suffer, whether they repudiate it or choose to enwrap themselves alive in the winding-sheet of the things that have been. (Tucker, 1913a, p. 48)

In this perspective, to test the possibility of belief through destroying the ruler within, like Marsden or Joyce did, leads to a heteroglossia that is politically useless (the first kind of constraint mentioned by Clemenceau) unless it also eventually leads to a form of revelation that has value for the next man, and, thus, to a form of shared faith and therefore of subjection. For those who already have that faith, the faith naturally imposes constraints yet for Tucker (and Clemenceau) those are needed to eventually liberate one from the 'sad inheritance' bequeathed by history. The violence of subjection and the violence of desubjection set each other in motion.

In his 1849 essay on the duty of civil disobedience H. D. Thoreau wrote: 'The authority of government, even such as I am willing to submit to [...] is still an impure one: to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed' (Thoreau, 2008, p. 26). It is likewise with aesthetic experience: the authority of the text is an impure one. Readers or audiences must consent to being signified through the text. If the discourse evinces the monoglossia of ideology, it then subjects readers to an authority like that of the capitalist state. But if the experience of the text is one of irreproducible, 'pure', revelation of the world and self as art text, even though this experience is monoglossic in the moment of the joining of social self and aesthetic self, its translation into the language of action will lead to the heteroglossia of, for instance, boycott and disobedience of ideological authority. If that aesthetico-political experience is shared among social subjects, that is, if a number of individuals experience a joining of social self and aesthetic self in similar ways, it leads to the formation of a social group in solidarity, such as the strikers for Sorel, a commune for Carpenter, or a cooperative for Peter Kropotkin. If that is the case, the relations between the members of the group and the material world are of the same kind as the relations between the elements of an art text. But even though harmony reigns within the group, its spirit demands a dislocation from set patterns of socialisation. As Kropotkin put it in *The Conquest of Bread*, 'this new spirit must now break its bonds by violence and realize itself in a revolution' (Kropotkin, 1926, p. 17).

In Australia, J. A. Andrews also regarded ideological authority as means of serial production of social agents. In a pamphlet issued in October 1895, entitled 'Authority, Law and the State', Andrews wrote:

> If there are duties, the first duty of every man is, to be true to himself. [...] But that he may so be true to himself, he must be independent; his will must be free. He cannot be true to his own nature when he is the mere obedient puppet of another. In giving up his conduct to outside dictation, he becomes a mere machine – an idiotic body, to move at the command of another's brain, or of brainless blind custom – a voluntary lunatic. [...]
>
> Authority is the vested privilege of being obeyed. It means that the choice of your conduct and the voice of your conscience, are the choice and the voice of someone else. 'The right of a man of having a life of his own to lead' is denied by this pernicious principle, which imposes conformity to itself as the first purpose and condition of human activities. Men are mere clay to be moulded in its machinery. It knows no good but obedience, no evil but failure to obey its dictates. (Andrews, 1979b, p. 90)

In the joining of social self and ideological self, 'men are mere clay to be moulded' by the capitalist machinery of serial production. This serial production of social subjects leaves no room for personal or group authenticity. With Britain a major industrial force during the heyday of Empire, it is no surprise that anti-capitalism took the form of anti-colonialism, as in India where Bhagat Singh noted in his jail notebooks that British imperial ideology was a means to reproduce social subjects by suppressing not only the liberty, but also the aesthetic self-expression of the governed: the governed 'become subjects who obey, not citizens who act. Their literature, their art, their spiritual expression go' (Singh, 2007, p. 32). However, the recognition of colonial ideology as means of reproduction of social agents need not lead to nationalism in anarchist and socialist circles, where nationalism is often recognised as itself an ideology. In Australia, Mary Gilmore, a fervent member of Lane's New Australia and Cosme socialist colonies 'went beyond class and nation to humanity', as her poem entitled 'Nationality' demonstrates (Moore, 1971, p. 232).

Andrews's close friend, John Fleming, shared his view of capitalism as providing the means to mould social subjects through ideology, and his anarchist activism can be traced to his experience as member of a collective of craftsmen threatened by the advent of serial production. Fleming was a bootmaker. As Raelene Francis points out, he, like other craftsmen, was deeply affected by the 'widespread introduction of specialised machinery into Victorian factories in the early 1890s' which 'imposed regular hours, set tasks and other kinds of factory discipline on a group of male workers who possessed recognised skills and a high degree of independence.' (Frances, 1993, p. 44) Neither Fleming nor Andrews were great theoreticians of art or aesthetics. But, in the perspective developed in this book, their ideas illustrate the kind of political attitudes and action which Sorel saw as engendered by social myth, and by forms of aesthetic self-creation. For Fleming, the means to preserve the craftsman's world included 'Direct Action, the General Strike and the Social Revolution', as he put it in a 1910 report on May Day in Melbourne for the British anarchist fortnightly *Freedom*, founded by Kropotkin (Fleming 1910). In light of Sorel's theory of social myth, with social myth seen as a form of aesthetic experience, direct action, the general strike, and the social revolution are tools for recreating the world as an art text.

Genuine aesthetic experience as opposed to ideologically mediated aesthetic experience resembles the experience of anarchist political action. In an article on anarchism as political action, 'What Is Anarchy?', published in Tucker's *Liberty* of 28 May 1887, the Australian David Andrade compares it with atheism understood as a reaction, not against religious experience *per se*, but against institutionalised religion:

> Anarchy, in short, is to politics what atheism is to theology. Atheism says: defy the priest, who robs you under the authority of a god; Anarchy says: defy the ruler who robs you under the authority of a State, as well. Atheism says: be free in your thoughts; Anarchy says: be free in your thoughts and actions too. Atheism says: face the gods like a man; Anarchy says: face all existence like a man. Atheism says: from the gods be free; Anarchy simply says: BE FREE! (Andrade, 1887, p. 6, original capitals)

In Joycean perspective, Andrade's words can be rephrased thus: defy the author who robes you under the authority of tradition; defy the narrative identity that is foisted upon you by discourses legitimated through the ideologies of the state; find freedom in the moment of aesthetically guided dislocation from patterns of thought, action, religious and spiritual experience.

A reader and friend of Sorel, Benedetto Croce expressed the relation between aesthetic perception and action in his *Philosophy of the Practical* (1908) in the following way:

> From the aesthetic apprehension of reality, from philosophical reflection upon it, from historical reconstruction, which is its result, is obtained that knowledge of the actual situation, on which alone is formed and can be formed the volitional and practical synthesis, the new action. And this new action is in its turn the material of the new aesthetic figuration, of the new philosophical reflection, of the new historical reconstruction. In short, knowledge and will, theory and practice, are not two parallels, but two lines, such that the head of the one is joined to the tail of the other; or, if a geometric symbol also be desired, such that they constitute, not a parallelism, but a *circle.* (Croce, 2004, p. 300, original italics)

In this book, my argument, inspired from the anarchist intellectual tradition, has been that art is a form of praxis and a means to recreate oneself as social agent at the same time as one recreates the world as an art text. The volitional and practical in the reality of action are the result of a translation of aesthetic experience into the language of action, and, as Croce argued, the language of action is in turn of aesthetic import. This circle or spiral evolution of the individual and the social group eventually leads to the reconstruction of one's entire life, including material and social relations, as an object of art, not in fictional, but in material, terms. The spiral trajectory is stabilised by the contrary forces of subjection (to the aesthetic self in aesthetic perception) and desubjection (in aesthetic perception, through gaining a new worldview, and in the language of action, through the translation of that dislocation from set patterns into social action). Such subjection and desubjection can be theorised at the level of the aesthetic text in relation to the text's contrary drives towards monoglossia and heteroglossia. These, in the moment of synchronic aesthetic fusion of social self and aesthetic self, are experienced by readers as forms of violence. In the translation of synchronic aesthetic experience into the language of action on the diachronic axis of history, that violence first experienced at the level of the self seeps into forms of social action (such as strikes, revolution, or other direct action), or is sublimated into less radical forms of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist resistance (such as communes, co-operatives, or civil disobedience). In both cases, the violence of desubjection introduces heteroglossia at the heart of the body politic sustained through monoglossic ideology.

One's social fulfilment depends on whether one manages to create one's life as an art text; if one finds for oneself the aesthetic thread or rule that harmonises all of one's experiences, material and spiritual, within the tapestry of social-material-cultural life, reality itself becomes an art text; one then finds the truth of one's existence, the graceful coherence of the world, as in religion, but without subjection to its institutional authority, all complete, ineffable, infinite, and all there for oneself. But to achieve the creation of that art text, one must grapple with the manifestations of grace and violence, both within oneself, and outwith, in social reality. The work and craft of this artisan, the socio-aesthetic praxis which it requires, is like the work of a high priest of art, or like the work of the inspired striker, or like the work of the participant in the Bakhtinian carnival, or like the work of organising a cooperative in like manner to the composition of a harmonious aesthetic whole – it has taken and it can take many forms. But the recreation of oneself and the world as an art text can provide a means to challenge the isolation of economic materialism, to define an ethics of satisfaction that does not relate to capital modernity, and to create collective relations necessary for social change in global capitalism.

Conclusion

For Ernesto Laclau, the Sorelian conception of myth implies that the social world is not in itself an objective world. The world of action is revealed as a social world in the mythical reconstitution of identities and relations through the violent confrontation of groups (Laclau, 2003, p. 70). However, Georges Sorel's concept of social myth also allows us to see the social world as an objective one to the extent that it is the shape taken by the material world reconstructed as an art text. Sorel distinguishes between the violence of creation and 'creative hatred': social agents wield words as tools or weapons to make contradictions material in various forms of social action, but these are always governed by an aesthetic (Sorel, 2004, pp. 275–6).

In this view, art is praxis. This praxis is a form of non-alienating labour: an act of reinterpretation of the world induced by the literary text, which leads to a recreation of the world and the subject of action in a material sense. The art text is an event in which the subject of action is resituated and reconstructed in the world of material experience through its enrichment in the joining with a narrative/textual subject. Thus, the experience of participating in the event of reading a literary text, or contemplating a painting, or attending a drama performance is not only an aesthetic experience, but also leads to a transformation of consciousness, a transformation which can be seen in a Sorelian framework as consequently leading to transformations of the material world.

In his analysis of the modern construction of myth, Andrew Von Hendy compares Joyce's work *on* myth with the work *of* myth in the writing of Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and D. H. Lawrence, 'the post-Frazerian group', and argues that:

> In certain respects in *Ulysses*, and completely in *Finnegans Wake*, [Joyce] undercuts the signifying reliability of myth just as he does the stability of all other forms of verbal and narrative construction. Where the others are most in earnest, he is ironic and playful. In comparison to them he flattens, secularizes, and demystifies the concept of 'myth.' (Von Hendy, 2002, p. 136)

In this perspective, and in reference to Sorel's concept of social myth, Yeats's writing can be seen as participating in the construction of a social myth, whereas Joyce's writing offers opportunities for contesting social myths. The two kinds of engagement with social myths allow us to envision the joining of narrative subject and subject of action as having different effects in terms of social action. In Sorel's words, we 'want to find out how the feelings by which the masses are moved form themselves into groups'

(Sorel, 2004, p. 58), with the understanding that those groups of feelings stem from the groups of images in which social myths are expressed, and that they affect the ways in which an individual is moved as a member of a collective social formation. Yeats's writing contributes to developing the religious dimension of a social movement, that is, the faith required for one's acting in concert with other members of a social group. Joyce's texts play ironically with this faith. In the joining of the Joycean narrative subject to the subject of action, the reformed subject comes to action endowed with a flair for contestation not harnessed to the purpose of radical overturning of an existing social order, but to the purpose of a radical, anarchist freedom of the individual. The Joycean subject is more of an anarchist than a revolutionary of conscience.

One may discern in Yeats's and Joyce's writing two contrary tendencies in Irish modernism. On the one hand, there is a tendency toward faith in a social myth, toward finding a resolution of conflicting forces in the harmonising rule of an aesthetic, and toward subjective unity. On the other hand there is a tendency toward scepticism and schism, toward recounting the variety and the mask in an aesthetic of the free spirit, and toward subjective disunity or, indeed, desubjection.

Both tendencies are manifested in different ways and at different levels in Yeats's and Joyce's work. In different ways, the two writers' texts suggest a view of literature as an instrument of grace and as an instrument of violence. It would be difficult to separate completely grace from violence in an analysis of literature as a means to an end, that is, as engendering a transformative experience with effects in material reality. Yeats's writing opened reality to grace through an anti-materialist aesthetic, that is, through positioning his readers on a quest for a reality beyond that of the mundane. To an extent, this is a liberatory experience, awakening in the subject of action a freedom of spirit that positions him/her in opposition to the daily grind of mundane routine and dissolution. But it also tends to be a religious experience, one that may inspire such a strong faith in a social myth that the subject, locked within the regulating forms of a monoglossic discourse, may be spurred on to participate in a social or political crusade, with very tangible material effects.

Joyce's aesthetic reflects an interest in writing as an act of recreation of one's relation to the material world through the experience of epiphanies. However, Joyce is more strongly concerned with the worldly experience anchored in the reality of mundane fact, playfully engaging its dissonances and scattered common-places. This aesthetic of the carnivalesque is regenerating, not only for the protagonists of his novels, but also for the readers who rehearse a mode of being in the world that makes sense of its worldliness, rather than seeking meaning in otherworldly, metaphysical spaces. Joyce's aesthetic values heteroglossia and readers, learning to participate in it, gain a sense of freedom from social myths, or, rather, from their ideological versions. Joyce's recording of myriad experiences of the man of no importance finds grace in the lapsing details of his draining life. But there is violence in the shattering of convention 'on the carnival square' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 123). This is a violence of contestation of ideological norms that can be derived from social myths.

In the coming to action of the narrative subject through the trans-formation invited by literary discourse, there is both violence and grace. Have we ever been graceful without being also violent? Is there beauty in violence? Are these questions relevant for today in the form in which they are born from a particular historical context of a specific geopolitical space? In this day and age, do we need, or indeed position ourselves in relation to, the transformative power of art and social myths? I argue that we do. For instance, the call for the war against terror sought to mobilise energies in the language of action, and studying this language one could trace the outlines of a social myth, soon to become ideology, finding traces of art texts reproduced as ideological topoi. Discourses of various kinds, from pop songs to journalism and political philosophy coalesced into the aesthetic form of a social myth, eventually transformed into ideology. The violence of dislocation from ideological patterns could have served as prelude to the recreation of 'America' as art text; instead, this power was used to safeguard ideology. The violent reconstitution of identities engendered the formation of new social groups within the military, the public, or, indeed, political oligarchies, but the identities of these groups remained subordinated to capitalist concerns. It would be interesting to compare the post 9/11 war on terror with the war on what was perceived as the terrorist IRA during the Irish Civil War of 1922–1923, not in terms of historical specificities, which of course are wildly different, but in terms of the ways in which the two forms of violence were part of a language of action expressing a social myth, and in terms of how this language of action succumbed to ideology.

It would be interesting to see how an analysis of the ways in which Yeats's writing contributed to the revolutionary moment in the Ireland of the turn of the twentieth century is relevant to a discussion of the role of literature in engendering contemporary religious experiences, for instance those of the suicide bombers of present wars. No easy parallels could be drawn, but the common ground would be one on which to build a theory of the role of literature in shaping the forms of social action. Certain kinds of literary discourse enhance the sacredness of the experience of social belonging, be that to a destructive or constructive purpose.

But in order to use Sorel's concept of social myth in analyses of late twentieth-century culture it is necessary to qualify and reconstruct it. Sorel's concept was meant to describe the possibilities for action of the revolutionary working class engaged in changing an unjust social order. Hence, Sorel envisioned the violence engendered by social myths as having a positive outcome. However, the conditions for the creation of a social myth as Sorel theorises it also take place outside the social groups of the working classes. In the Ireland of the Gaelic Revival, the process of the reconstitution of identities was initiated in the circles of an educated, enlightened, and in many ways progressive (and in other ways retrogressive) bourgeois elite. Thus, not only those struggling in the margins may find themselves united in the faith that holds together the brotherhood (or, indeed, sisterhood) of social groups expressing in the language of action a social myth. A social myth may find root in any social group at any hierarchical level of society.

However, while the Irish cultural experience show us that literature can serve the language of action in which a social myth is expressed, it also shows us that literature can serve the language of protest against the power gained in the convergence of several kinds of discourses into a social myth. Nicholas Allen's reading of the cultural contexts that informed, in an oppressive manner, the first production of Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* emphasises the ways in which the performance of the play also reformed, with liberating effects, those same contexts (Allen, 2009, pp. 46–53). Ranging 'a broken territory through the play and the riots that followed it', Allen reads 'protest and cabaret as forms of performance critical to the conduct of political culture' (Allen, 2009, p. 46). Placing Joyce's work in context of the modernist avant-garde, Allen argues that his writing, along with that of other Irish experimentalists, including Yeats:

> formed an alternate public sphere whose instruments were not the court and parliament, but the theatre, protests, open letters, visions, broadsides and little magazines that gave the *avant-garde* spectral life in the controversy that was Ireland after empire. (Allen, 2009, p. 88)

In my view, this avant-gardism of the off-centre spectral is similar to the Bakhtinian carnival. Their subjects share a spectral quality in two senses: their spectral quality refers to a position outside the domain of the legitimate subject, inhabited by the spectres that are repudiated in order to confer realness to the legitimate subject; at the same time, this spectral quality is derived from manifestations of a religious ethos connected to the carnival that precedes a ritual of regeneration. This religious ethos in Bakhtin's and Joyce's writing and philosophies is different from that of Yeats's occult mysticism. The mask that hides the god, the avatar, is as different from the carnival mask of those participating in a ritual of regeneration as Yeats's writing is different from Joyce's.

There is violence on the carnival square. This violence is both the violence of an aesthetic and a form of social and political violence. Joyce's writing invites us to stay decentred in the spirit of individualist anarchism. Eventually, a set of other myths may take over the space opened up by heteroglossia. Or, elements of the deconstructed myths may stay in the mind, to disseminate differently, through the untraceable dispersals of language acts, and to coalesce in social myths of contestation of the old myths.

On another level, this aesthetics of heteroglossia can help us to find orientation in a postmodern world in which social myths have become items of serial consumption. Joyce was aware of the new global circuits of capitalism as spaces of transactions of deadening empty forms. As Allen points out:

> Leopold Bloom sold advertising, manipulating desire to reconfigure the modern social subject, mass consumption a new and dislocating experience.

> Bloom works between form and aspiration, clinging to a belief in the human in face of serial exclusion. (Allen, 2009, p. 159)

Through the violence of desubjection the scattered narrative subject still guides the subject of action to a position from which to become aware of a humanity born from aspiration to reform as opposed to the passivity of the subject who is read into the homological fabric of commercial society. The violence of desubjection may throw one off the orbit of commodification and consumption, steering one towards the lost humanity of forms of community that accept and cherish the carnivalesque of heteroglossia.

Yeats's work too stands in opposition to capitalism and commodification, but in a different way. His aesthetic is one which invites readers to seek a reality beyond that of the material world, thus inviting them to reject materialism including economic materialism. With Yeats, there are many possibilities of individual spiritual redemption in the religious experience of social myth, even though the religious experience invited by Yeats's writing often also presupposes one's admission to the elect sect, with all the political effects such belonging implies. Rejecting materialism in favour of religious experience, Yeats's aesthetic may provide a framework for exploring in ourselves the implications of material attachment, and the value of spiritual detachment, with a view to finding a sense of collectivity that is not subject to material economic forces.

The violence engendered by Yeats's writing rippled on the mirror of the self in different directions: on the one hand, this violence is one of abstraction from material reality; on the other, Yeats's writing engendered, along with other kinds of writing, the violence of subjection to ideologies derived from social myths which led some of his contemporaries to political violence. Like Sorel, Yeats dissociated himself from political violence without, however, repudiating the violence of recreation of the world through aesthetic experience lived in the 'living stream' of creative consciousness (Yeats, 1997, p. 182). Ultimately, the social self should be utterly transformed into an aesthetic object, as defined in 'Sailing to Byzantium': 'Once out of nature I shall never take/ My bodily form from any natural thing' (Yeats, 1997, p. 197). As noted, this withdrawal from reality was in an important sense, for Yeats, connected to withdrawal from the violence of politics and revolution. In that sense, it could also imply a call for taking distance from the ideologies that engender such violence. It would therefore imply an act of desubjection in relation to those ideologies. But often the process of self-discovery leads out of the material reality, so that detachment from the worldly violence of the social world can be seen itself as a form of violence. This form of violence is one of abstraction in the etymological sense of the term: a withdrawal and separation of the self from the material world, in which they are dragged away from each other. Thus, transcendence of worldly ideological subjection may empower the subject of action to position themselves against violence but only because the subject of action consents to participate in the violence of otherworldly aesthetic subjection. However, the benefit of otherworldly aesthetic subjection over worldly ideological subjection lies in that in the former case the subject can be eventually reconstructed as an irreproducible art text, in the manner of Sorel's unified subject of social myth. Even though at first dislocated from the mundane, reproducible material reality, the subject is returned to the material world as one who henceforth lives its aesthetic, irreproducible reality not outside, but within, the living stream of history.

Sorel's concept of social myth is useful in an analysis of modernism relevant for today. There is grace in discovering ourselves as subjects in the language of action derived from social myths and art; and there is violence. The graceful reconstruction of oneself through art that works like Sorel's social myth implies the violence of desubjection, of protest in ourselves against a reproducible version of our self, before protest in the world; but it leads to one's progressive and fulfilling resituation within a world whose new ontological horizon is established aesthetically. Even when the subject is called to action against social myths, as is the case with Joyce, through the experience of heteroglossia on the carnival square, this experience of the meltdown of hierarchy precedes the clarity of a single moment that draws the mundane fragments into a kind of unity of being; different from Yeats's, but enlightening in a spiritual dimension of experience, and translatable into a language of action which expresses an aesthetic recreation of the world.

In his *Public Philosophy in a New Key*, James Tully argues that: 'Civic empowerment and enchantment do not come from grand narratives of universal progress but from *praxis* – actual participation in civic activities with others where we become the citizens we can be. But this response raises the question of the motive for participation in the first place' (Tully, 2008, p. 308, original italics). Tully gives Mahatma Gandhi's blend of action and spiritual reflection as an illustrative example of praxis that inspires participation in progressive civic movements, emphasising the value for such participation of 'a spiritual relationship to oneself in one's relationships with others and the environing natural and spiritual worlds', and pointing out that 'similar practices are available in every culture' (Tully, 2008, p. 309). In the perspective developed in my study, literature serves a similar function, although the subjective processes triggered by literary narrative call for complex analyses of interrelated grace and violence. The motive for civic participation, as I have theorised it here, is born in aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience is a form of religious experience in a broader sense than particular understandings of religious practice, such as Gandhism, allow. It provides the energy manifested in the engagement of the social subject with the world, that is, manifested in his/her faith, belief, enthusiasm, but also faithlessness, unbelief/disbelief, irony as preconditions of epiphanic revelation. Aesthetic experience makes possible the creation for oneself of an 'existential project which merges into our way of patterning the world and co-existing with other people' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, p. 520) and in this it also makes possible a form of creative, non-alienating labour of materially reconstructing the self and the world as art text.

Literature then is an instrument of making and remaking ourselves anew as social agents empowered to change material reality. Literature engenders agency in the joining of narrative subject and the subject of action. Literature is praxis. Literature is not for the solitary contemplative taking himself out of the material reality, but for collective participation, willingly or not, in full awareness of, or unaware of, the aesthetic self who comes, gracefully or violently, to dwell in our being for the world.

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