

Fran O'Rourke's Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas

Thomas J. Farrell

Volume 3, Number 1, Spring 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1097601ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1097601ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

New Explorations Association

ISSN

2563-3198 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Farrell, T. (2023). Review of [Fran O'Rourke's Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas]. *New Explorations*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1097601ar>

Article abstract

In my review, I highlight the Irish philosopher and singer Fran O'Rourke's new massively learned and massively researched and admirably lucid 2022 book *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*. However, I discuss his account of Western philosophy in the larger conceptual framework of media ecology by drawing on the work of the Canadian Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943), the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955), and the American-born Joyce specialist and media ecology theorist Eric McLuhan (1942-2018; Ph.D. in English, University of Dallas, 1982).

© Thomas J. Farrell, 2023



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>



Review: Fran O'Rourke's *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*
Thomas J. Farrell

University of Minnesota Duluth

tfarrell@d.umn.edu

Abstract: In my review, I highlight the Irish philosopher and singer Fran O'Rourke's new massively learned and massively researched and admirably lucid 2022 book *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*. However, I discuss his account of Western philosophy in the larger conceptual framework of media ecology by drawing on the work of the Canadian Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943), the American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955), and the American-born Joyce specialist and media ecology theorist Eric McLuhan (1942-2018; Ph.D. in English, University of Dallas, 1982).

Disclosure: My interest in the Irish literary artist and singer James Joyce (1882-1941) is secondary to my interest in the Canadian Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist and Catholic convert (in the spring of 1937) Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980; Ph.D. in English, Cambridge University, 1943). However, for Marshall McLuhan, James Joyce was his Virgil -- and, figuratively speaking, Roman Catholic tradition was his Beatrice, as, in effect, the young American Catholic journalist Nick Ripatrazone nicely notes in his new 2022 book *Digital Communion: Marshall McLuhan's Spiritual Vision for a Virtual Age*.

Briefly, Marshall McLuhan studied the history of the verbal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic

(also known as dialectic) in his 1943 Cambridge University doctoral dissertation, published posthumously, unrevised, as the book *The Classical Trivium: The Place of [the English Renaissance Writer] Thomas Nashe in the Learning of His Time*, edited by W. Terrence Gordon (2006). The verbal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and logic became known collectively as the trivium; there was also a quadrivium. Regarding logic, the extraordinary ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle invented the formal study of logic. The formal rules of logic are designed to govern philosophical discourse and the use of terms in a univocal way – which is to say that philosophical discourse is not supposed to glory in equivocal uses of terms and plays on words – the kind of plays on words that James Joyce is famous for. (He also famously plays on the sounds of words and the visual conventions of writing such as spelling and punctuation.

Based on James Joyce's plays on certain words, Marshall McLuhan published the article "James Joyce: Trivial and Quadrivial" in the now-defunct Jesuit-sponsored journal *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea* (1953). It is reprinted in the book *The Interior Landscape: The [Selected] Literary Criticism of Marshall McLuhan: 1943-1962*, selected and edited by Eugene McNamara (1969, pp. 23-47)

Certain other selections by Marshall McLuhan are reprinted in the posthumously published book *Media and Formal Cause* by Marshall McLuhan and Eric McLuhan (2011). Formal cause is one of the four causes that Aristotle discusses: (1) material cause (matter); (2) formal cause (form); (3) efficient cause; and (4) final cause. When we think of cause and effect, we tend to think of efficient causality. However, we tend not to think much about formal cause and effect. However, we do speak of formative experiences and of personal and perhaps religious and perhaps professional formation. Form = formative, shaping. Hold that thought

Given my own personal hierarchy of values regarding James Joyce and the self-described Thomist Marshall McLuhan, I readily recognize that the Irish and singer philosopher Fran O'Rourke (born in 1951; Ph.D. in philosophy, University of Leuven, 1986) writes with admirable lucidity and relevant historical contextualization in his massively learned and massively researched new 2022 book *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*. In it, the author ably discusses the sweep of Western philosophy from Heraclitus and Parmenides and Plato and Aristotle onward well beyond St. Thomas Aquinas up to James Joyce's day. No doubt Marshall McLuhan would be impressed with Fran O'Rourke's new 2022 book about three of his favorite authors

Fran O'Rourke is also the author of the books *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (1992) and *Aristotelian Interpretations* (2016). In short, Fran O'Rourke is a serious philosopher. By comparison, James Joyce was not a serious philosopher; however, he may be characterized as a proto-philosopher who was basically an Aristotelian but also in certain significant ways a Thomist – most notably in his novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922), especially involving the semi-autobiographical character, Stephen Dedalus. But famous doctrines of Aristotle and Aquinas and other notable Western philosophers are not as prominently featured in his novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939), which does not include the semi-autobiographical Stephen Dedalus. However, James Joyce was primarily a literary genius

Not surprisingly, Yale's literary critic Harold Bloom includes James Joyce in his book *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds* (2002, pp. 521-525). In it, Bloom says, "Defining the genius of James Joyce would be an impossible venture: who can define the

genius of Shakespeare or Dante or Chaucer or Cervantes? One might speak of the ‘geniuses’ of Joyce, but that doesn’t help much. Derek Attridge sensibly points out that people read Joyce without knowing it, since all modern genres and media are almost as Joycean as they are Shakespearean. These early years of the twenty-first century, I would have difficulty taking apart the tangle of Shakespeare, Joyce, and Freud that manifests endlessly in our media culture” (p. 522)

Now, we could liken Joyce’s extraordinary exploration of his extraordinary memory in his two novels involving the semi-autobiographical Stephen Dedalus to a kind of Freudian analysis

In addition, we could liken James Joyce’s extraordinary explorations of his extraordinary memory of and sensitivity to languages in *Finnegans Wake* (1939) to a kind of Jungian analysis of our Western collective unconscious

As a kind of analogy with James Joyce’s explorations in *Finnegans Wake*, I would also mention here the dangerous explorations that the Swiss psychiatrist and psychological theorist C. G. Jung (1875-1961) undertook and recorded between 1914 and 1930 in his posthumously published over-sized book *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, translated by Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani; with a contextual essay and notes by Sonu Shamdasani (2009).

I do not want to press the analogy between what Jung refers to as active imagination and the kind of imagined dream world in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* too hard. However, Fran O’Rourke says, “It is no use to appeal to either Aristotle or Aquinas, since concrete facts [in *Finnegans Wake*] give way to the realm of imagination: ‘It [*FW*] is like a dream [says James

Joyce in a letter]. The style is changing, and unrealistic, like the dream world” (p. 114)

Now, in Fran O'Rourke's new 2022 book, he succinctly discusses Aristotle's four causes (p. 222) and also Aristotle on matter and form (p. 70). In addition, Fran O'Rourke says, “In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce refers obliquely – to say the least! – to Aristotle's four causes: ‘Gives there not too amongst us after all events (or so grunts a leading hebdomadary) some togethershush of stillandbutaa-youknow that, insofarforth as, all up and down the whole concreation say, **efficient** first gets there **finally** every time, as a complex **matter** of pure **form**’ (FW 581.26-30)” (p. 223; boldface in O'Rourke's text; the parenthetical reference is to the 1992 Penguin edition of *Finnegans Wake*).

Incidentally, in Fran O'Rourke's new 2022 book, he even refers in passing to the Victorian Jesuit Scotist poet and classicist Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem “That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire” (p. 106). Hopkins (1844-1889) lived and taught in Ireland for a number of years and died in Dublin. Hopkins, who was himself educated at Oxford University, also wrote a poem titled “Duns Scotus's Oxford.” Fran O'Rourke also incisively discusses John Duns Scotus (p. 196; but also see the etymology on p. 147, advanced by Richard Kearney).

In Fran O'Rourke's new 2022 book, he astutely examines the literary art of James Joyce through the prism of Western philosophy from ancient times down to James Joyce's time. Moreover, in a personal note, Fran O'Rourke says, “As someone who grew up in the fifties in Ireland and who received that traditional Catholic upbringing of the day, I can from personal experience attest to the importance placed upon the soul. From an early age, we were taught that what mattered in the end was to save one's immortal soul. We were created by God, who

through love made us out of nothing; our entire purpose in life was to know him, so we could spend eternity in his glorious and bliss-filled presence in Heaven. Our soul was our most precious part, and our greatest concern was to keep it clean and pure, the children in the classroom next door. You could not see them, but they were present in your awareness because they needed you, to pray for them so they could soon pass from Purgatory, brightly cleansed, into Heaven for all eternity. They were your neighbors or relatives who had died, your friends who had been kind to you and now it was your turn. This was the religious education received by Irish children for generations, until it was diluted in the sixties, in the wake of Vatican II. It was the education that was received by James Joyce and that, I suggest, best explains his abiding interest in the concept and reality of the soul“ (p. 97).

Now, Fran O'Rourke says, “In broad terms, the central theme of my inquiry is the meaning of identity as it surfaces in recurrent iterations throughout Joyce’s writings. The question of identity is ultimately a philosophical question; the principle of identity is considered the first law of reality” (p. 2)

Fran O'Rourke also says, “Joyce declared that the most beautiful, all-embracing, theme was that of the *Odyssey*, and the subject of Odysseus the most human in world literature.

Odysseus’s character comprises myriad aspects, revealed through a multiplicity of actions; Homer’s success was to shape [= form] this diversity into a coherent unity and identity” (p. 3; also see p. 91)

For the sake of discussion, let’s say that Joyce’s assessments here of the *Odyssey* and of Odysseus are arguably correct. Nevertheless, Odysseus restores proper order in his kingdom

of Ithaca through the slaughter of the suitors. The slaughter of the suitors represents a kind of catharsis – to use the term that Aristotle famously uses in the *Poetics*

Fran O'Rourke says, "Aristotle also appears as an authority in 'The Holy Office,' the famous satirical poem written by Joyce shortly before he left Dublin in 1904 lampooning Yeats and other leading figures of the Irish literary revival; he criticizes their spurious spirituality and false ethereal Celtic mysticism. He asks: 'Ruling one's life by commonsense / How can one fail to be intense?' In a literal interpretation of the doctrine of catharsis, Joyce sees it as his task to cleanse literary Ireland, appealing to Aristotle even in the most inauspicious surroundings" (p. 14)

Questions: Because the *Odyssey* is the story of Odysseus' adventures and his purging of Ithaca in the slaughter of the suitors, does James Joyce aspire to write the greatest story ever told? Or, because the *Odyssey* was a song sung by singers of tales, does James Joyce aspire to write in prose the Song of Songs? Concerning my analogy with the Song of Songs, Fran O'Rourke says, "I propose as a possible unifying motif the *idée mere*, a conceivable 'secret center' of *Ulysses*, the instinct, emotion, and ideal of love in its multifarious, miscellaneous, multiple modes and manifestations" (p. 155).

Now, I would argue that James Joyce explores Western identity in myriad ways, including the ways in which phonetic alphabetic literacy shapes and forms literate Western identity. His ways of exploring literate Western identity include his plays on the sounds of words and on lettering and punctuation, mentioned above. Ripatrazzone, mentioned above, quotes Marshall McLuhan as saying "I am a metaphysician of the media" (quoted on p. 72). Now, just as Fran

O'Rourke says that James Joyce is an "amateur philosopher" (p. 294), so too he might say that Marshall McLuhan is also an amateur philosopher and metaphysician of the media. For the most part, the self-described Thomist Marshall McLuhan was an autodidact in philosophy

However, whatever else may be said about the Irish philosopher Fran O'Rourke, he is not even an amateur metaphysician of the media – for he pays no attention to how communication media, including phonetic alphabetic literacy, form our literate Western identity (but see his reference to "[t]he ancient rhapsode," p. 2). But if it is the case that whatever is in the intellect was first in the senses, then how phonetic alphabetic literacy forms our literate Western identity is an issue that should warrant attention

In Fran O'Rourke's "Introduction" (pp. 1-8), he says that "many studies [of James Joyce] in recent decades [since "William T. Noon's excellent 1957 study of Joyce and St. Thomas"?] have progressed beyond the analysis of sources and influences to an interpretation of a 'meta' character" (p. 1). For Fran O'Rourke, perhaps Marshall McLuhan's media ecology theory about the impact of phonetic alphabetic literacy in ancient and medieval Western culture and, later, the impact of the Gutenberg printing press that emerged in Europe in the mid-1450s would involve "an interpretation of a 'meta' character," albeit not necessarily focused on James Joyce

Now, I have no idea when the centuries-old philosophical axiom that whatever is in the intellect was first in the senses was first explicitly formulated as a philosophical axiom. However, in the opening on the "Proteus" episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, the young Stephen Dedalus reflects in a way that calls this philosophical axiom to mind. Indeed, Fran O'Rourke discusses what two commentators (1957 and 1965) say about the opening lines of the "Proteus" episode

(pp. 66-69; but also see the “Index” entries for Joseph E. Duncan (1957) [p. 310] and John Killham (1965) [p. 312] for further pages references to his further discussion of those two commentators).

Now, the centuries-old philosophical axiom that whatever is in the intellect was first in the senses needs to be paired with the philosophical concept of the sensorium. The American Jesuit Renaissance specialist and media ecology theorist Walter J. Ong (1912-2003; Ph.D. in English, Harvard University, 1955) discusses the sensorium in his seminal book *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (1967), the expanded version of his 1964 Terry Lectures at Yale University.

Without explicitly adverting to the sensorium, Ong, in effect, works with it in his discussion of the aural-to-visual shift in cognitive processing in his massively researched book *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue: From the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (1958; for specific page references to the aural-to-visual shift, see the “Index” [p. 396]). But also pay careful attention to what Ong variously refers to as the corpuscular view of reality, corpuscular epistemology, and corpuscular psychology (pp. 65-66, 72, 146, 171, 196, 203, 210, and perhaps 286). Fran O’Rourke refers to “Locke’s corpuscular theory of ideas” (p.49; also see p. 50). (Subsequently, Ong [1982] revisited and further delineated the history of logic.

In Philip Marchand’s biography *Marshall McLuhan: The Medium and the Messenger* (1989), Marchand says, “Amplifying Walter Ong’s thesis [in his massively researched 1958 book], McLuhan argued [in his densely packed 1962 book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man*] that the invention of print effected a still more profound transformation in the psyche of Western man [sic], leading to an emphasis on the visualization of knowledge and the

subsequent development of rationalism, mechanistic science and industry, capitalism, nationalism, and so on” (p. 155; my bracketed material)

Ah, but to what extent did James Joyce contribute to Marshall McLuhan’s amplifications of Walter J. Ong’s 1958 thesis, as Marchand refers to it? Now, in 2022, we are commemorating the centenary of the publication of James Joyce’s experimental novel *Ulysses* in 1922. In it, young Stephen Dedalus engages in philosophical thought and debate, so Fran O’Rourke’s new 2022 book *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas* is most timely for first-time readers of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Fran O’Rourke’s book is accessible to first-time readers of *Ulysses* as well as to Joyce specialists

Whatever else may be said about James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, it is fair to say that it is a philosophical novel (see O’Rourke’s quotes, pp. 7, 15, and 147) and that James Joyce was a literary genius of a philosophical bent with an extraordinary memory of his life and times in Ireland – which his self-imposed exile from Ireland seems to have strengthened. If all serious literary creation is, in some sense, an autobiography of the author, however transmuted, then *Ulysses* is no exception. Which means that Fran O’Rourke is justified in examining James Joyce’s philosophical formation in Ireland and subsequently in exile, as he does in detail

Because the eighteen episodes in *Ulysses* are somehow supposedly keyed to the Homeric epic the *Odyssey*, we should not be surprised that Fran O’Rourke accentuates the ancient Greek philosophy, including not only Aristotle, but also Plato and Parmenides and Heraclitus (for specific pages references to Plato, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, see the “Index Nominum” [pp. 313, 313, and 311, respectively]). Because Fran O’Rourke routinely refers to the names of

the eighteen episodes in *Ulysses* (1922), using the 1986 Gabler edition, I hope that a second edition of his book includes an “Index of Episodes in *Ulysses*.” In addition, because Fran O’Rourke routinely provides parenthetical page and line references to passages from James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939), using the 1992 Penguin edition, an index to those parenthetical page and line references would be a welcome resource to have. This is a densely packed book.

Now, Fran O’Rourke says, “The ancient rhapsode introduced Odysseus to his audience as ‘a man of many turns’: *polutropos*, literally ‘of many tropes’” (p. 2; also see pp. 6, 154, and 276, note 90). In James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the Wandering Jew Leopold Bloom represents the modern Odysseus in Dublin, and so James Joyce represents the modern equivalent in writing of the ancient Greek rhapsode.

Subsequently, Fran O’Rourke says, “In his action and adventure, Odysseus was polytropic, but he had a single focus in mind: to return to Ithaca. In Aristotelian terms, his voyage was *proshen* [in transliterated Greek], it had a solitary goal. Joyce’s language is polytropic, but just as ‘being is said in many way’ [by Aristotle, whose Greek is here translated], there is a commanding unity. Analogy provides the controlling and ordering principle” (pp. 154-155). Fran O’Rourke devotes an entire chapter to discussing analogy (pp. 132-163)

In a nutshell, in Western philosophy from Plato and Aristotle onward for centuries, philosophical discourse requires operationally defined and explained terminology used in a univocal way, not in an equivocal way. Put differently, would-be philosophers could not be polytropic or polysemous, but were obliged to use their key terms in a univocal way. Hence,

the great divide between Western philosophy and poetry.

Now, according to the Irish philosopher Fran O'Rourke, "James Joyce's language is polytropic" (p. 154), which means that we should not read him as though he were a philosopher, even though the semi-autobiographical character Stephen Dedalus engages in philosophical ruminations

In two different places, in connection with James Joyce's experimental novel *Finnegans Wake* (1939), Fran O'Rourke (pp. 24 and 160) succinctly mentions Seamus Deane's lengthy "Introduction" (pp. vii-l) to the 1992 Penguin edition of *Finnegans Wake*. Fran O'Rourke (p. 24) says, "Seamus Deane has remarked, 'In the *Wake*, the Greeks don't get a look-in'" (quoted from Deane, p. xii). Subsequently, Fran O'Rourke (p. 160) says, "Seamus Deane states: 'In the *Wake*, the Greeks don't get a look-in,' which accounts for its anti-nomical and paralogical language and style" (once again quoting Deane, p. xii).

In short, in *Finnegans Wake* (1939), James Joyce explores what he imagines pre-literate consciousness and thought to be like. Because James Joyce studied Aristotelian logic (see O'Rourke, pp. 12, 16, 40, 89, 140, 182, and 224), he proceeded to explore pre-literate consciousness and thought in *Finnegans Wake* by imagining the thought-world not formed by Aristotelian logic. Nevertheless, even though this strikes him as a promising way to explore the pre-literate thought-world, he employs the thought of the German Renaissance philosopher and theologian Nicholas of Cusa (also known as Cusanus; 1401-1464) and the Italian Dominican heretic (burned at the stake) Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and the Italian Renaissance philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) to flesh out, as it were, his portrayal of the imagined pre-literate thought-world (for specific page references to each of them, see

O'Rourke's "Index Nominum" [pp. 312, 309, and 314, respectively]). Because each of them was obviously a byproduct of Western literate and philosophical thought, James Joyce's use of them to help him imagine the pre-literate thought-world before Aristotelian logic emerged in ancient Greek culture is like having your cake and eating it too. (For further discussion of Vico, see Eric McLuhan [1997 and 2015] and John D. Schaeffer [1990].

In any event, Fran O'Rourke also says, "Borrowing from Joyce's lecture on the Renaissance (OCPW 189-190), we may say that listening – rather than reading – to the ebb and flux of *Finnegans Wake*, we hear the tumult of voices reverberate as sounds of the sea that resonate in a shell against the ear" (p. 157; OCPW refers to *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writings [of James Joyce]*, edited by Kevin Barry [2000]).⁷

But listening hearkens back to the famous injunction "Hear, O Israel" (Deuteronomy 6:4; quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29)

Now, in Fran O'Rourke's Chapter 2: "Thomist Joyce" (pp. 27-48), he says, "Sharing little by way of personality, St. Thomas and Joyce had in common a deep fear of lightning. . . . As a child, Joyce was taught by his governess, Elizabeth Conway (the fictional 'Dante'), to fear thunder and the wrath of God. . . . To his European friends who did not understand his irrational fear of thunder (closing the shutters and hiding in his bed), he replied that they had not been raised in Catholic Ireland. But as Peter Costello points out: 'The thunder that rolls through *Finnegans Wake* had its remote origin here in the fevered visions of both Mrs. Conway and Francis Danby [the artist of the painting 'The Opening of the Sixth Seal']" (p. 46)

The late American-born Joyce specialist and media ecology theorist Dr. Eric McLuhan

discusses in detail the thunder that rolls through *Finnegans Wake* in his book *The Role of Thunder in "Finnegans Wake"* (1997), a book that Fran O'Rourke does not happen to refer to. In the "Preface" (pp. ix-xiv), Dr. Eric McLuhan (1942-2018; Ph.D. in English, University of Dallas, 1982), the eldest son of Marshall and Corinne McLuhan, says that there are three modes of satire: (1) Horatian; (2) Juvenalian; and (3) Menippean (p. ix). He also says, "As a Menippean satire, [*Finnegans Wake*] is far from alone, for it belongs to a vital tradition of writing that contains similar works and that extends from Homer (*Margites*) through Varro, Seneca, Plutarch, Lucian, Macrobius, Martianus Capella, Alan of Lille, Chaucer, Erasmus, Rabelais, Cervantes, Thomas Nashe, Burton, Swift, Sterne, Mark Twain, Byron, Flaubert, and Ezra Pound, and onward through Flann O'Brien, John Fowles, Don DeLillo, and Italo Calvino, to mention but a few " (p. x; for a more complete listing, also see pp. 254-256). In addition, Dr. Eric McLuhan says, "There are no other studies of *Finnegans Wake* as Menippean [satire], or of Joyce's Menippism in his other major works; and there are no other studies of the ten thunders [in *Finnegans Wake*]. So a fresh approach seemed called for. I will mine here only some of the strata of Joyce's language, and must leave to others better qualified the task of integrating what I have unearthed with the learned corpus of Joyce scholarship" (p. xi)

Questions: Are the ancient Hebrew prophets Amos and Isaiah also, at least in part, Menippean satirists? Is Jesus of Nazareth as portrayed in the four canonical gospels also, at least in part, a Menippean satirist?

Now, in Fran O'Rourke's "Afterword" (pp. 231-234), he says, "The question of the relationship between philosophy and literature has exercised philosophers since the time of Plato (whose own philosophical works were also exquisite works of literature – thereby adding to the irony

that he would banish poets from his republic). A work of literature may spring from a secret truth, but it is better literature if that truth remains hidden, left for the reader to imagine and decipher. The writer who overtly uses his medium to convey a philosophical message will damage his art; his rational methods will intrude and vie with literary tropes. Better to hint by metaphor and symbol at philosophical notions than to expound them. *Ars celare veritatem*. James Joyce achieved this, the amateur philosopher in him served the artist well” (pp. 233-234).

On page 276, in note 93, Fran O'Rourke discusses the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk's 2010 book *The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist*. In it, Pamuk says, “‘The center of a novel is a profound opinion or insight about life, a deeply embedded point of mystery, whether real or imagined. Novelists write to investigate this locus, to discover its implications, and we [novelists] are aware that novels are read in the same spirit. When we first imagine a novel, we may consciously think of this secret center and know that we are writing for its sake – but sometimes we may be unaware of it’” (quoted from Pamuk, p. 153). But “[t]he center must remain veiled,” Fran O'Rourke notes (p. 276, note 93).

On page 241, in note 20, Fran O'Rourke also discusses the relationship between philosophy and literature. He says, “In his 1912 Padua lecture, ‘The Universal Literary Influence of the Renaissance,’ having detailed the ‘much trumpeted progress’ of the early twentieth century, Joyce remarks: ‘But in the midst of this complex and many-sided civilization the human mind, almost terrorized by materialist greatness, becomes lost, denies itself and grows weaker. Should we then conclude that present-day materialism [. . .] atrophies the spiritual faculties of man, impedes his development, blunts his keenness?’ (*OCPW* 187). Joyce's assessment of the consequences of the Renaissance is informative: ‘Untiring creative power, heated, strong

passion, the intense desire to see and feel unfettered and prolix curiosity have after three centuries degenerated into frenetic sensationalism. Indeed, one might say of modern man that he has an epidermis rather than a soul. The sensory power of an organism has developed enormously, but it has developed to the detriment of the spiritual faculty. We lack moral sense and perhaps also strength of imagination' (*OCPW* 188-189)."

Notes

¹ Jung himself referred to the dangerous practice of exploring the collective unconscious of the human psyche as using active imagination. His writings about active imagination, in English translation, have been collected together in the book *Encountering Jung on Active Imagination*, edited and with an "Introduction" by Joan Chodorow (1997).

² For further discussion of Hopkins and related matters, see the American Jesuit Walter J. Ong's book *Hopkins, the Self, and God* (1986), the published version of Ong's 1981 Alexander Lectures at the University of Toronto. Among other things, Ong discusses the background of Pope Leo XIII's influential encyclical letter *Aeterni Patris* (1878), which launched the Thomist revival (esp. pp. 94-95). Fran O'Rourke also discusses the background and influence of Pope Leo XIII's 1878 encyclical *Aeterni Patris* on the Jesuit-educated James Joyce's Thomist formation (pp. 31 and 231). For an astute assessment of the literary art of James Joyce, see Walter J. Ong's book *Interfaces of the Word: Studies in the Evolution of Consciousness and Culture* (1977, esp. pp. 230-271).

³ The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in the Roman Catholic Church took place during my years of undergraduate studies in Jesuit institutions of higher education in the United States. For further reading about Vatican II, see the American Jesuit church historian John W.

O'Malley's book *What Happened at Vatican II* (2008).

⁴ Disclosure: When I started teaching at the University of Minnesota Duluth in September 1987, Joseph E. Duncan (Ph.D. in English, Columbia University) was still teaching English there. He died at the age of 69 on January 31, 1991, from injuries sustained when he was hit by a car as he was crossing a street in Louisville, Kentucky, his hometown.

⁵ See Albert B. Lord's classic study *The Singer of Tales* (1960) and John Miles Foley's judicious book *Homer's Traditional Art* (1999). But also see Barry Powell's related scholarly book *Homer and the Origins of the Greek Alphabet* (1991) and Eric A. Havelock's classic study *Preface to Plato* (1963).

⁶ By way of digression, I should say here that poets and philosophers alike employ what the Canadian Jesuit Thomist Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) refers to as the generalized empirical method of cognition and consciousness in his 1957 philosophical masterpiece *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, the fifth edition of which appears as volume three of the *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (1992) – a work that Marshall McLuhan (1987, p. 251) read in 1957.

⁷ For an account of the emergence of silent reading, see Paul Saenger's book *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (1997). Now, Virginia Woolf also experiments with voices in her novel *The Waves* (1931). Yale's literary critic Harold Bloom discusses Virginia Woolf in one chapter in his book *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (1994, pp. 403-415). In it, he says, "Woolf is a lyrical novelist: *The Waves* is more prose poem than novel,

and *Orlando* [1928] is best where it largely forsakes narrative” (p. 406). It strikes me that *Finnegans Wake* can also be characterized as more prose poem than novel.

References

- Bloom, H. (1994). *The western canon: The books and school of the ages*. Riverhead Books.
- Bloom, H. (2002). *Genius: A mosaic of one hundred exemplary creative minds*. Warner Books.
- Deane, S. (1992). Introduction. In J. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (pp. vii-l). Penguin.
- Duncan, J. E. (1957). The modality of the audible in Joyce's *Ulysses*. *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 72, pp. 286-295.
- Foley, J. M. (1999). *Homer's traditional art*. Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Havelock, E. A. (1963). *Preface to Plato*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Joyce, J. (2007). *A portrait of the artist as a young man* (J. P. Riquelme, Ed.). W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1916)
- Joyce, J. (1986). *Ulysses: The corrected text* (H. W. Gabler, with W. Steppe and C. Melchior, Eds.). Random House/ Vintage. (Original work published 1922)
- Joyce, J. (1992). *Finnegans Wake*. Penguin. (Original work published 1939)
- Joyce, J. (2000). *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writings* (K. Barry, Ed.). Oxford World Classics.
- Jung, C. G. (1997). *Encountering Jung on active imagination* (J. Chodorow, Ed.). Princeton University Press.
- Jung, C. G. (2009). *The red book: Liber novus* (S. Shamdasani, M. Kyburz, J. Peck, Trans.; S. Shamdasani, Ed.). W. W. Norton.
- Killham, J. (1965). "Ineluctable modality" in Joyce's *Ulysses*. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 34, pp. 269-289.
- Lonergan, B. (1992). *Insight: A study of human understanding* (5th ed.; F. E. Crowe & R.

M. Doran, Eds.). Vol. 3 of the *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan*. University of Toronto Press. (Original work published 1957)

Lord, A. B. (1960). *The singer of tales*. Harvard University Press.

McLuhan, E. (1997). *The role of thunder in "Finnegans wake."* University of Toronto Press.

McLu

an, E. (2015). *The sensus communis, synesthesia, and the soul: An odyssey*. BPS Books.

McLuhan, M. (1953, Spring). James Joyce: Trivial and quadrivial. *Thought: A Review of Culture and Idea* (Fordham University), 28(serial number 108), 75-98.

McLuhan, M. (1962). *The Gutenberg galaxy: The making of typographic man*. University of Toronto Press.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill.

McLuhan, M. (1969). *The interior landscape: The literary criticism of Marshall McLuhan 1943-1962* (E. McNamara, Ed.). McGraw-Hill.

McLuhan, M. (1987). *Letters of Marshall McLuhan* (M. Molinaro, C. McLuhan, W. Toye, Eds.). Oxford University Press.

McLuhan, M. (2006). *The classical trivium: The place of Thomas Nashe in the learning of his time* (W. T. Gordon, Ed.). Gingko Press.

O'Malley, J. W. (2008). *What happened at Vatican II*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1958a). *Ramus, method, and the decay of dialogue: From the art of discourse to the art of reason*. Harvard University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1967). *The presence of the word: Some prolegomena for cultural and*

religious history. Yale University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1977). *Interfaces of the word: Studies in the evolution of consciousness and culture*. Cornell University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1982). Introduction. In John Milton's *A fuller course in the art of logic* (1672) in volume eight of the *Complete prose works of John Milton: 1666-1682* (pp. 139-407; Ong's introduction, pp. 144-205; M. Kelley, Ed.). Yale University Press.

Ong, W. J. (1986). *Hopkins, the self, and God*. University of Toronto Press.

O'Rourke, F. (1992). *Pseudo-Dionysius and the metaphysics of Aquinas*. Brill.

O'Rourke, F. (2016). *Aristotelian interpretations*. Irish Academic Press.

O'Rourke, F. (2022). *Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas*. University Press of Florida.

Powell, B. B. (1991). *Homer and the origins of the Greek alphabet*. Cambridge University Press.

Schaeffer, J. D. (1990). *Sensus communis: Vico, rhetoric, and the limits of relativism*. Duke University Press.