an unusual command of
ase in abundance" — but he
were as careless of method
a concise and effective plan.
used every legitimate means
t speech is a fine thing but

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MANANAAN MacLIR IN *ULYSSES*

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PHILIP L. MARCUS has cautioned that in studying Joyce, "We must constantly question 'easy' solutions."[1] In this spirit, it will be interesting to pursue an issue which Marcus himself raises: the appearance in *Ulysses* of the Irish sea god, Mananaan MacLir. Marcus ably explicates the significance of Mananaan and his speech in the "Circe" episode, but he does not attempt a full-scale investigation of the three references to the god elsewhere in the book, nor does he trace Mananaan back to Irish mythology, which could help to elucidate the associations Joyce envisioned or intuited in connection with him. Such an investigation does, indeed, suggest that the ancient god carries with him, in *Ulysses*, deep association with the major themes of the book: metempsychosis, the father-son motif, and the regaining of home; these themes are intertwined in and suggested by Mananaan's background in myth and his association with theosophy and AE in the book.[2]

Howard Emerson Rogers suggests that Irish myth should be seen as an important source for *Ulysses*. He demonstrates:

> De Jubainville wrote a study that compared Irish, Greek and Vedic myth. A translation was published in Dublin in 1903. Joyce . . . recalled the book thus: "Mr. Best came forward, amiable, towards his colleague . . . . . I was showing him Jubainville's book." . . .
>
> Shortly before Jubainville's translation appeared an even more significant work was published: Meyers' [sic] translation of *The Voyage of Bran* and Nutt's essay on the Happy Otherworld, in two volumes. This book

1 "Three Irish Allusions in *Ulysses*," *JJQ*, VI, iv (Summer 1969), 299–304, on p. 299.

2 Stuart Gilbert cites Mananaan's association with the Isle of Man and hence the Manx Parliament, or House of Keyes, which the Keyes advertisement alludes to.

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presents strongest evidence as Joyce's chief reference in creating the structure of *Ulysses*.[3]

In *The Voyage of Bran*, the protagonist meets Mananaan MacLir when *Bran is traveling to the land of the gods and Mananaan is visiting* the land of mortals in order to beget a son, Mongan, on Caintigern, wife of Fiachna. Meyer includes five tales of Mongan as appendices to *Bran*. Nutt's accompanying essay discusses the significance of these myths.

Although "Mongan son of Fiachna . . . was the name which would be upon him,"[4] Mongan knows from birth that he is really the son of Mananaan. Even more, he is "a rebirth of Mananaan, and also, by some accounts, of Finn, son of Cumal."[5] The tale relates: "When Mongan was three nights old, Mananaan [6] came for him and took him with him up in the Land of Promise."[7] During Bran's absence, Fiachna the Black kills Fiachna the Fair (Bran's nominal father) and seizes his kingship. When Bran returns, at the age of sixteen, he compromises with the usurping Fiachna and settles for half of Ulster with the hand of Fiachna's daughter. Later, however, Mananaan comes to him in the form of "a dark black-tufted little cleric" and goads him into fighting Fiachna for his entire territory, which he does successfully.

Before the significance of this tale is discussed, one other should be recounted. Mongan is infatuated with the kine of the King of Leinster, and he accepts them as a gift in return for a bond of "friendship without refusal." The king of Leinster soon asks for Mongan's wife, Dubh-Lacha, and he cannot be refused. Mongan suffers "a wasting sickness continually" over the loss of his wife, and he contrives to visit her on several occasions by changing his shape. Using this power inherited from his father (or his birthright if he is a reincarnation of Mananaan), he finally succeeds in tricking the king into returning Dubh-Lacha to him. Mongan is able to transform not only himself, but other people and objects, in any way he chooses.

3 "Irish Myth and the Plot of *Ulysses*," *ELH*, XV (1948), 306–327, on pp. 308–309.

4 *"The Voyage of Bran Son of Febal"* (London, 1895), p. 16.

5 "The Happy Otherworld," *Bran*, p. 139.

6 This is the spelling that appears throughout *Bran*. Joyce apparently adopted the spelling used by AE in *Deirdre*.

7 "Otherworld," p. 73.

The circumstances of Mongan's conception render him particularly apt for consideration in connection with *Ulysses*.[8] Stephen's words are fact for him: "Paternity may be a legal fiction." Instead, "Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, . . . is a mythical estate, an apostolic succession."[9] Just as Mongan is in name the son of Fiachna and claims legal rights to Fiachna's kingship without being actually or spiritually his son, so Stephen does not feel true "sonship" toward his father, Simon Dedalus. Furthermore, Mongan's loss of Ulster to Fiachna the Black is comparable to Stephen's loss of the Martello Tower to Mulligan and Haines.

W. B. Stanford has shown that through "consubstantiality of the Father and Son," Stephen shares the qualities of another mythic figure, Ulysses, with his spiritual father, Bloom.[10] He also shares Mongan's qualities, as Mongan's loss of his wife parallels Bloom's loss of Molly to Boylan. Thus the Irish myth may harbor implications that Bloom will regain sexual prerogatives with his wife just as Mongan finally does.[11]

With the Mananaan-Mongan tales as background, and an understanding of the broad parallels as basis, it will now be worthwhile to examine the specific occurrences of references to this figure in *Ulysses*. The first appears in the Proteus chapter. This is particularly fitting since Mananaan is also a shape-changer, "the equivalent of Proteus in the Greek myth."[12] This chapter takes place on the strand, its symbol is the tide, and in it Stephen muses about the sea. Mananaan is the Irish god of the sea so his presence in the chapter would be felt even if it were not explicit. However, the association is quite explicit:

> Airs romped around him, nipping and eager airs. They are coming, waves. The whitemaned seahorses, champing, brightwindbridles, the steeds of Mananaan.[13]

8 Mongan appears in a similar context in *Finnegans Wake* (New York, 1963), p. 41, l. 4: "Lisa O'Deavis and Roche Mongan . . . one sweet undulent mother." It is clear, then, that Joyce knew of Mongan and thought of him in this way.

9 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, 1961), p. 203.

10 "Ulyssean Qualities in Joyce's Leopold Bloom," *Comp. L.*, V (Spring 1953), 125–136, on p. 128.

11 There is other internal evidence for this optimistic interpretation, but it has been discussed elsewhere.

12 Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in Ulysses* (Chapel Hill, 1968), p. 46.

13 *Ulysses*, p. 38.

Just as Bran saw "a man in a chariot coming towards him over the sea,"[14] Stephen imagines Mananaan in his traditional guise, a searider. The vision comes to Stephen immediately after his thoughts about Arius, the "important heresiarch who denied the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son."[15] The father-son significance of the Irish myth is thus functioning simultaneously with the sea image.

Gilbert notes that "esoteric doctrines, notably that of metempsychosis," make up one of the "directive themes" of this chapter.[16] He explains, "In esoteric writings the name *Proteus* has been aptly applied to the primal matter," because of its shape-changing properties.[17] Here again, the Irish god is as apt as the Greek. Furthermore, it will be shown later that Mananaan is inextricably intertwined with the character AE, who was in Joyce's Ireland and is in his *Ulysses* the most prominent believer in theosophic lore.

Awareness of the Irish myth lends further significance to another reference in this chapter. Stephen pictures the "Galleys of the Lochlanns" landing on the beach and muses: "Their blood is in me, their lusts my waves. I moved among them on the frozen Liffey, that I, a changeling . . . ."[18] Stephen's intimation that he was there thousands of years before is another element of theosophic lore, the immortality of the spirit. Calling himself "a changeling," he also resurrects ancient Irish lore. But there is special significance to the "Lochlanns," the invading "Danevikings," for they were the enemies fought by Mongan. Stephen becomes Mongan as he fights them in his imagination.

Just as the entire Proteus chapter centered on an aspect associated with Mananaan, so the Scylla and Charybdis chapter focuses on another; the Shakespeare discussion which takes place in this chapter is concerned with the father-son theme. A reference to "Jubainville's book," which has been cited as one of Joyce's main mythical sources, suggests the parallel in a covert yet quite plain manner,[19] as do the remarks about Haines' journey in search of a book by Douglas Hyde, another prominent Irish folklorist.

The ghost of Hamlet's father and the presence of AE (George Russell) in the library combine to create an ambience of theosophy in this

14 *Bran*, p. 16.
15 *Allusions*, p. 25.
16 *James Joyce's ULYSSES* (New York, 1952), p. 119.
17 Gilbert, p. 121.
18 *Ulysses*, p. 45.
19 *Ulysses*, p. 186.

is a ghoststory."[20] He explains that a ghost is "One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners."[21] Although Stephen continually ridicules AE's theosophical beliefs, Stephen's theory reflects the theosophists' belief in the immortality of the spirit. Again, the emphasis is on "change," so that "nature is not dead but living,"[22] or, as Madame Blavatsky (the theosophist writer) puts it, the immortality of "the divine spirit."[23]

As Stephen merged with Mongan, he now merges with Shakespeare when he describes the bard in a walk similar to the one he took in Proteus: "Shakespeare has left the huguenot's house in Silver street and walks by the swanmews along the riverbank."[24] This also suggests reincarnation.

In AE's play, *Deirdre*, the druid invokes Mananaan to swallow up Deirdre and *Naoise.* When Stephen is opposed by AE on the subject of literary biography, he repeats the poet's own lines to call for Mananaan MacLir to *"Flow over them."*[25] Immediately after this he remembers his debt to AE and considers whether he is still responsible for repaying it: "Molecules all change. I am other I now."[26] Mananaan's connection with changing is still strong. Yet another connection may underlie his reference to AE's *Irish Homestead* as "The pigs' paper," since it was through the feeding to them of pig that Mananaan imparted immortality to the gods.[27]

The Irish sea god is subtly mentioned again when Cordelia is called "Lir's loneliest daughter," recalling Thomas Moore's "Silent, O Moyle!"[28] and thus moving from King Lear to Lir, the father of *Mananaan. A later mention of Tir na n-óg* has the same connotation, for this is the "land of Promise" which Mananaan presides over. The quotation which ends the chapter ("Laud we the gods") fixes the gods as the forces which dominate the chapter.

The next mention of Mananaan is in "The Oxen of the Sun." After

20 *Ulysses*, p. 187.
21 *Ulysses*, p. 188.
22 Marcus, "Irish Allusions," p. 302.
23 *The Key to Theodophy* (Adyar, Madras, India, 1953), p. 80.
24 *Ulysses*, p. 188.
25 *Ulysses*, p. 189.
26 *Ulysses*, p. 189.
27 Charles Squire, *Celtic Myth and Legend, Poetry and Romance* (London, n.d.), p. 60.
28 "Lir's lonely daughter/ Tells to the night star her tales of woes."

hand to heaven, murmuring: The vendetta of Mananaan!"[29] Although several critics mention this reference, none explains what the "vendetta" might be. Since Haines is the foreign invader, the "vendetta" is Mananaan's urging Mongan to retrieve Ulster from Fiachna the Black. This is reinforced by the words, "Lex talionis," the law of retribution

Immediately after this comes the expected "changing" which is associated with Mananaan. The "soul of man" is characterized as "the chameleon to change her hue at every new approach," "her age changeable as her mood." Thus Bloom becomes "young Leopold," and he recalls (or rather, relives) his youth until it leads him to "the paternal ingle," his father. But "Now he is himself paternal, and these about him might be his sons." The son is also the father. Bloom's vision (under the influence of shape-changing Mananaan) continues to encompass his daughter who "follows her mother with ungainly steps, a mare leading her fillfoal." Just as the Irish god could assume animal shape, the women become horses. The "phantoms" from Bloom's life gather until the women (together) become "ever virgin" through "metempsychosis," a goddess "coifed with a veil" which becomes "mysterious writing till after a myriad metamorphoses of symbol, it blazes, Alpha, a ruby and triangled sign upon the forehead of Taurus." The "sign" is the theosophic "signatures of all things" that Stephen contemplates in Proteus, "Alpha," the first letter and hence primal matter.

Stephen immediately explains what has just happened to Bloom: "You have spoken of the past and its phantoms. . . . If I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts troop to my call?" Mulligan recommends a "druid silence" (the invocation of ancient magic is explicit), and it is explained that "Any object, intensely regarded, may be a gate of access to the incorruptible eon of the gods." Bloom has indeed been "staring hard at a certain amount of number one Bass." Stephen completes the explanation:

> Theosophos told me so, Stephen answered, whom in a previous existence Egyptian priests initiated into the mysteries of karmic law. The lords of the moon, Theosophos told me, an orange-fiery shipload from planet Alpha of the lunar chain, would not assume the etheric doubles and these were therefore incarnated by the ruby-coloured egos from the second constellation.

29 *Ulysses*, p. 412.

Bloom's, explaining that both have engaged in theosophical communion with the primal matter.

There is certainly an element of parody in these theosophical transports. The parody is unmistakable when Mananaan appears in the "Circe" chapter as AE, wearing a "druid mantle" and carrying "a bicycle pump" and "a huge crayfish." The bicycle pump is suggested by AE's earlier appearance in the book with his bicycle, and the crayfish may be a symbol of the sea god. He chants a combination of theosophic words and nonsense syllables mixed with talk about his *Irish Homestead* dairy cooperatives: "I am the light of the homestead, I am the dreamery creamery butter."[30] But beyond the parody, there is significance in his appearance.

Thorton cites Oliver Gogarty's recollection that AE appeared in his own play, *Deirdre*, as the head of Mananaan. This is reminiscent of the theory that Shakespeare played the ghost in *Hamlet*, suggesting the father-son motif associated with the ghost. But whether or not Gogarty is correct, Marcus points out that Mananaan-AE's words, "Dark hidden father," come from AE's poem, "The Children of Lir," which combines theosophy and myth to tell of Lir's children's search for and final reunion with their father. In that poem, the children's "Spirits through love and through longing made one in the infinite Lir."[31] Marcus explains the "basic parallels: one's mortal father is not one's real 'father,' and one's life on earth is a period of wandering and of separation of parent and child. The dramatic appropriateness of its utterance at this point then becomes obvious: it is a hint to Stephen, an identification of Bloom, and a fore-shadowing of the return and the reunion to follow."[32] This interpretation is further supported by the appearance of the next figure in "Circe" — Virag, Bloom's father.

Thus the final appearance of Mananaan MacLir is the culmination of his function throughout *Ulysses* as a symbol of shape-changing, theosophical metempsychosis, the father-son relationship, and the regaining of the true home.

30 *Ulysses*, p. 520.
31 Quoted in Marcus, p. 302.
32 Marcus, p. 403.