Irish-Israelism: Reconsidering the Politics of Race and Belonging in “Cyclops”

Introduction: Race, Cosmopolitanism and the Problem of Idealism

“Cyclops” offers the most explicit meditation in *Ulysses* on the potential shape of the future Irish state. Scholarly attention to the nationalist discourse embedded in this episode has largely focused on the conflict between the Irish ethnocentrism of the citizen character and Leopold Bloom’s cosmopolitan politics. At the same time, this critical tradition has largely read the conflict at the center of “Cyclops” in ethical terms.¹ Vincent Cheng’s overview of the episode, for example, poses Bloom’s anti-racism against the xenophobic “essentialized community” the citizen makes the center of his ideal Irish state.² While readings along these lines are not wrong, they tend to overlook the more nuanced underpinnings to how each character understands race—and its relation to citizenship—in the first place. Joyce scholars who on the one hand identify the racist overtones of the citizen’s nationalism tend to accept on the other his characterization of Bloom as an idealist unfit for the work of constructing the nation-state. Cheng echoes this sentiment when he goes on to describe Bloom as “a borderless creature of cultural inauthenticity, lacking anything fixed and local about him,” in contrast to the citizen’s “local and national” perspective (56, 59). The dichotomy Cheng presents, between the citizen’s “local” outlook and Bloom’s “borderless” one, is indicative of the canonical interpretation of “Cyclops” and the nationalist politics contained therein. Against this critical tradition, this article makes the case that the citizen’s preoccupation with race is incompatible with any sense of identity that derives from the local context.
Indeed, the citizen’s figuration of the Jew in “Cyclops” in particular delineates the non-local framework that informs his Fenian nationalism. The critical focus on the anti-Semitism in “Cyclops” in particular belies the extent to which the citizen actually appropriates from the discourse surrounding the state of Israel. His notion of Jewish nationalism therefore provides him with a model for constructing the nation-state, even as he specifically disparages the Jewish stereotypes he associates with Bloom. The latter half of this formulation has been at the center of most readings of Joyce’s response to the political situation in Ireland prior to the Free State. Neil Davison, for instance, contextualizes Joyce’s ambivalent reception to the Sinn Fein movement and the Gaelic Athletic Association, the most jingoistic aspects of which are embodied in *Ulysses* in the person of the citizen. But although Davison notes that the connection between these movements and the figure of “the Jew” is “undeniable” in “Cyclops,” he goes on to characterize the connection solely in terms of its overt racism, as evidenced in Joyce’s representation of the xenophobic undercurrent of these nationalist organizations (246).

The dynamic between the citizen’s nationalism and his fixation on Jewish identity involves more than anti-Semitism, however. Rather, the citizen’s description of Ireland’s “lost tribes” looks to the biblical state of Israel by imagining a form of racial identity that endures in spite of colonization. Even as the citizen resorts to specious stereotype, he nonetheless valorizes elsewhere the type of identity that equates (an assumed) racial origin with national affiliation. In other words, his denigration of Bloom’s supposed Jewish identity belies his reliance on a form of nationalism that parallels the stereotypes characterizing the durability of the Jewish race as well as the homogeneity of the Jewish nation-state.

More implicitly, the episode’s preoccupation with the persona of the Jew and the Jewish state delineates an essential idealism to Fenian nationalism, inasmuch as it draws on Israel’s
mythic currency as a self-evident homeland. The appeal of this model is clear for nationalist movements seeking to create a sovereign state on the basis of a shared ethnic point of origin. “To talk of the ‘land of Israel’,” Jacqueline Rose writes in *States of Fantasy*, “is already to start with a politically weighted term, to enter non-neutral ground. What exactly is the land?” Rose’s formulation of Israel in particular builds on Benedict Anderson’s axiomatic description of the nation along the lines of imagined or symbolic bonds that connect otherwise diverse groups across space. According to Rose, the phantasmagoric value of the Jewish nation in particular derives from its representation of a racial and national collectivity, a fantasy of cohesion that forms the “precondition or psychic glue” to modern conceptions of the nation-state (3). The citizen’s sense of the nation is universalizing, then, to the extent that it both appropriates and monopolizes this discourse within the context of Ireland. In short, his conflation of race and nation—using the model of the imagined state of Israel—provides a monolithic picture of the Irish people, what Etienne Balibar describes as a “racist community” that produces “ideals of humanity” that attempt to create local connections between people where none exist. In this light, the citizen looks outside the local context in his imagining of the Irish nation-state—his ultra-nationalist politics notwithstanding.

The first portion of this article returns to the issue of the citizen’s anti-Semitism in the narrative of “Cyclops,” and the nationalist model that shapes this rhetoric. While critics have long recognized the citizen’s scapegoating of Bloom, my reading identifies an underlying valorization of Jewish identity as the citizen and others in the narrative understand it. These characters present a template for the Irish nation that persists despite the lack of political sovereignty on the one hand and an extensive diasporic population on the other. In this context, non-assimilation of cultural practice is crucial to the citizen’s Irish revivalism even as he
disparages Bloom on the assumption that his Jewish roots prevent him assimilating to the
surrounding culture.

Only once we consider this ambivalent rendering of Jewish identity can we begin to fully
explore the dueling conceptions of national identity and citizenship at the center of “Cyclops.”
Although the citizen (and recent critics of Ulysses) decries the cosmopolitan or otherwise non-
local aspects to Bloom, the narrative of this episode effectively flips the terms of the debate
between the two characters. Indeed, as Balibar has explained, racism as a construct relies not on
the particularities of a given race, but on the universalizing logic of the “racist community,”
which constructs the fiction of shared racial bonds as a means for governing society. Ultimately,
the citizen’s reliance on Bloom as a model for nationality dramatizes the central problem for the
Irish state as it appears in the narrative: the emphatic depictions of Irish racial identity are belied
by the distinct lack of any unifying bonds for Ireland as a sovereign entity. In contrast, Bloom’s
formulation of the nation as “the same people living in the same place … Or also living in
different places” (U 12.1424-1429) deftly separates ethnic identity from the question of
citizenship altogether. My reading therefore stresses the extent to which Bloom’s apparent
cosmopolitanism stands in opposition to the citizen’s de-territorialized presentation of Ireland
and Irish people. If critics have long established the nationalist concerns of “Cyclops,” this
understanding of racism as a universalizing force provides a crucial perspective for reevaluating
the notion of citizenship that Ulysses embeds in its narrative.

“The Lost Tribes” Myth and Colonialism
At the time of Joyce’s writing, the notion of a distinctly Irish national community (to say nothing of a sovereign state) was far from certain. Rather, as Cheng explains in *Joyce, Race, and Empire* the “terms ‘Irish’ and ‘Ireland’ as national signifiers are purely retrospective constructs” that rely on “imagining… a historically-continuous community with a homogenous national character” (216). Faced with these political and geographical obstacles, the citizen—along with numerous other characters—appeals to the idea of the Jewish nation as a template for the movement for autonomy in Ireland. Joyce presents this dynamic throughout *Ulysses*, but the scene that most presages the events in “Cyclops” appears in “Aeolus,” when professor MacHugh re-articulates John F. Taylor’s nationalist speech on “the youthful Moses” (*U* 7.835). In this speech, the ancient model of Jewish resistance against the Egyptians is directly analogous to the modern Gaelic revival movement: in both cases, the refusal to assimilate into imperial culture is the first act toward founding a distinct nation. On a figurative level, Taylor and MacHugh seem to make a strong case for a natural affiliation between the Irish and the Jewish peoples. At the same time, Bloom’s position on the margins of the narrative of “Aeolus”—he is absent during the entirety of MacHugh’s dialogue—sets up the problem of self-representation for both Bloom in particular and Jewish identity in general that will come to the foreground of “Cyclops."

The citizen’s anti-Semitism does little to prevent him from making the same connection between the Gaelic and Jewish races that appears in “Aeolus.” Describing what he sees as the condition of the modern Irish nation, he is unable to resist the ancient Jewish parallel:

*Raimeis*, says the citizen. There’s no-one as blind as the fellow that won’t see, if you know what that means. Where are our missing twenty millions of Irish should be here today instead of four, our lost tribes? And our potteries and textiles, the finest in the whole world! […] Where are the Greek merchants that came through the pillars of Hercules, the Gibraltar now grabbed by the foe of mankind, with gold and Tyrian purple to sell in Wexford at the fair of Carmen? (*U* 12.1240-1251).
The depiction of an ancient Ireland here subtly intersects the citizen’s nationalism with a decidedly non-Irish mythology. Specifically, he appropriates the biblical myth of the ten lost tribes of Israel that disappeared from record after the Assyrian conquest of the Jewish homeland. For some critics, the gap between the citizen’s adoption of a Jewish model of the lost tribes and his anti-Semitic confrontation with Bloom is further evidence of Joyce’s ambivalent take on the Gaelic revival movement in his novel. At the same time, the ironic depiction of the citizen should also indicate the extent to which local politics appear inseparable from global concerns in the narrative. Indeed, the myth of the lost tribes enjoyed a prominent place in nationalist rhetoric across Western Europe and the United States during the period in which *Ulysses* is set. Most notably, numerous British writers near the turn of the twentieth century rationalized British colonial hegemony by creating a direct line of lineage between the lost tribes of Israel and ruling dynasties of England.

In one such text, Rev. William Poole identifies the “British Nation” as the modern manifestation of the biblical lost tribes. The evidence of Britain’s divine pedigree, Poole notes in *Anglo-Israel*, is already evident in its imperial supremacy across the globe: the biblical proverbs that presage the rise of a great nation provide Poole with enough to equate Britain with the biblical state of Israel. At the same time, his reading of the lost tribe myth in the context of imperial Britain provides crucial context to the figuration of Jewish identity and Irish nationalism in “Cyclops.” Like numerous characters in *Ulysses*, Poole circulates in his text the stereotype regarding the unassimilable nature of Jewish identity. In a section describing “The Jews,” Poole notes:

> they are distinguishable at first sight, as separate and distinct from all others, and this, not from any choice of theirs, for they cannot help it. This remarkable ethnic phenomenon is a strong point in their history, for in the whole history of our globe, no such fact exists among other people, for no race has ever been dispersed
among other people without losing their national traits of character, and peculiar characteristics. (6)

Poole further implies that the durability of Jews as a race is inversely proportional to their civic prowess, reflected in their marginalization across Europe and their lack of a sovereign homeland. Indeed, Poole goes on to impose a strict separation between the modern Jewish population and the exceptional form of governance he associates with the biblical state of Israel and its lost tribes: “The ten tribes are not addressed as Jews, nor are they known as such. The term Israelite is a general term, including the whole Hebrew race. Every Jew is, of course, an Israelite, but all Israelites are not Jews. All Scotchmen are Britons, but all Britons are not Scotchmen.” (7).

Poole’s text helpfully delineates the governmental significance of the lost tribes myth as it appears in *Ulysses*. His separation of Jews as a race from Israel as a model for the ideal nation-state neatly rationalizes—through the appropriation of biblical precedent—Britain’s continued subjugation of Ireland and any other number of client states. Simply put, his understanding of the lost tribes discredits the value of local identity. In his account, the British Empire thrives as result of its non-monolithic composition of diverse populations. Poole continues: “Britain, like Israel of old, is formed out of many tribes, all resting peacefully under one flag. Her national character is powerful because composite, and England, Ireland, and Scotland equally have contributed to her glory. If England gave Britain a Nelson, Ireland gave Britain a Wellington, and Scotland gave Britain a Colin Campbell. Each country increases the glory of the other” (76). In this description, the Irish people’s strength lies not in the Irish nation but in the umbrella identity that the British state provides.

In view of texts like Poole’s, we should recognize the more ambiguous aspects to the presentation of Jewish identity in *Ulysses*. Poole equates Britons not with Jews as a racial group but with the model sovereignty of the biblical Israelites. The anticolonial discourse contained in
Ulysses, however, takes up this idealistic rendering but redeployes it against imperial Britain. In this rendering, the biblical enslavement of the Jews provides a clear point of affiliation with the plight of the Irish under imperialism. At the same time, this symbolic connection results in a much more contentious account of Jewish identity than what appears in Poole’s defense of British colonialism. For example, MacHugh’s speech favorably alludes to the non-assimilation of the biblical Jews even as the citizen and the other men in the pub attack Bloom on the basis of (what they see as) his distinctly Jewish features. The citizen’s own reference to the lost tribes further amplifies this underlying ambiguity. Poole’s separation of the Jewish people from the state of Israel poses a distinction between the civic institutions of the British state and the tribal characteristics of the English race. The citizen’s ethnocentrism sees no such distinction. Instead, he points to the durability of Irish national identity as a precondition for the establishment of an Irish state.

The narrative’s extensive list of the “many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity” makes plain Joyce’s skepticism in regards to this ideal representation of the nation-state. In this instance in the text, the narrator includes among the list of Irish heroes “Cuchulin, Conn of hundred battles” and “Niall of nine hostages,” as well as “Dante Alighieri, Christopher Columbus,” and “the Last of the Mohicans” (U 12.176-177, 182-183, 184-185). Like its symbolic association with the ancient tribes of Israel, the narrative juxtaposes its depiction of a mythic Irish identity with decidedly non-Irish historical figures. Despite the citizen’s certainty that the Irish race has a self-cohering identity, the narrative of “Cyclops” nonetheless acknowledges the tenuousness of this position in his and his fellow nationalists’ need to look outside of Ireland (and its history) in order to delineate its history.
Along similar lines, the narrative’s circulation of anti-Semitic stereotypes belies its reliance on this national type in its construction of an idealized Irish homeland. The citizen’s perverse figurations of Bloom further emphasize the underlying tension in his attempts at locating a properly local identity for the Irish people. Like his allusion to the “lost tribes,” the citizen’s attacks on Bloom hinges on referents outside the scope of Irish culture. Levi points out that “a colonizing Englishman,” for example, would provide a more logical point of self-differentiation for the citizen in light of his Fenian activism (379). Of course, the citizen does make references to the British colonial class—but in conspicuously atemporal terms: “The strangers, says the citizen. Our own fault. We brought them. The adulteress and her paramour brought the Saxon robbers here” (U 1157-1159). The citizen sees the Irish political crisis in figurative terms, constructing a mythologized history to reflect the fractious present. Of course, he is not alone among contemporary Irish nationalists who articulate their politics in the language of paternity and lineage. At the same time, the citizen’s reliance on this myth leaves him unable to account for the more immediate, local vestiges of colonialism that exist within the pub itself. In fact, Joyce populates “Cyclops” with men closely aligned with the colonial state (if not the English ‘race’). Specifically, the narrative identifies Martin Cunningham, who works in Dublin Castle, and “Crofter the Orangeman or presbyterian” as two men who enter the pub but escape the citizen’s ire (U 12.1636).

As was the case with the discourse of Israel, this fixation on the person of Bloom is a specific instance of the narrative constructing a form of nationalism that hinges on stereotypical renderings of the Jew. To be sure, critics have long established the extent to which the conflict between Bloom and the citizen—and the latter’s xenophobia in particular—is indicative of the colonial condition in Ireland. For instance, Levi suggests that the citizen’s anti-British politics
take a backseat to his anti-Semitism as a result of his overarching desire to find “a concrete embodiment, or, more precisely, a *personification*, for powerful social and economic forces that otherwise lack a material manifestation” (376). The suggestion that Bloom functions in *Ulysses* as the embodiment of a specific moment in the development of capitalist society calls to mind Franco Moretti’s reading of the character, which he argues is Joyce’s “relentless parody of the ‘spirit of capitalism’” at a time when “society no longer seems endowed with an intrinsic rationality.”13 What passes unnoticed in both readings, however, is the extent to which the citizen’s fixation on Bloom derives from his conflation of race with national identity. For the citizen, Bloom is more than a stand-in for the diffuse colonial and economic forces subjugating the Irish nation. Rather, his durable embodiment of ethnic, religious, and political characteristics is a state of being that the citizen wholly wishes to mimic.

This process of appropriation should shape our understanding of the debate over local and non-local conceptions of the nation in “Cyclops” as well. Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* provides a useful framework for reading the citizen’s attack on Bloom as an expression of his attempt at imagining the nation in the chapter. “Perception,” Ahmed writes, refers not only to the way one sees another but the way one orients oneself to see another as well. “I can perceive an object only insofar as my orientation allows me to see it,” she explains, a dynamic that results in an ordering of space that “takes me in some direction rather than others.”14 Accordingly, the act of scrutinizing another’s identity is both a symptom and a cause of a narrow perspective. The subject one chooses to scrutinize—in the citizen’s case, the Judaic other—confirms, in other words, an existing prejudice. By taking up this subject he consequently excludes others from his field of view. In the case of “Cyclops,” the citizen’s preoccupation with Bloom seemingly precludes any concern for Cunningham or Crofter, the more logical targets of
animosity. As Ahmed points out, the process of perceiving objects affects the viewer as much as it does the objects of observation.

This notion of perception offers several immediate insights into the event depicted in “Cyclops.” As the narrative’s embodiment of the Jew, Bloom becomes the idée fixe for the citizen and the rest of the pub as well. Indeed, in light of Ahmed’s text one recognizes the extent to which Bloom provides a physical point of reference around which the pub-goers cohere together as a makeshift national community. Ahmed describes the notion of shared racial bonds as something bodies orientate “around,” which works in conjunction with orientating toward the racial other: “[t]o be orientated around something means to make that thing central, or as being at the center of one’s being or action… to be orientated around something is to make ‘that thing’ binding or to constitute oneself as that thing” (116). In one instance, “Cyclops” foregrounds the way Bloom’s presence in the pub provides a point of scrutiny for the rest of the characters to share. In this case, the citizen alludes to nationalist lyrics—John Kells Ingram’s “The Memory of the Dead” and Timothy Daniel Sullivan’s song “The West’s Awake”—that explicitly stage a conflict between a unified communal force and outside antagonists.15 The narrative continues:

—The memory of the dead, says the citizen taking up his pintglass and glaring at Bloom.
—Ay, ay, says Joe.
—You don’t grasp my point, says Bloom. What I mean is . . .
—Sinn Fein! says the citizen. Sinn fein amhain! The friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us. (U 12.521-526)

If nationalist rhetoric appears at first glance to be the glue that ties together the pub community, the citizen’s outburst quickly disrupts this notion. Instead, he again brings Bloom back to the center of the group’s collective scrutiny. The apparent nationalist fervor becomes particularly pointed insofar as Bloom persists in his role as the orientating object. Bloom is likewise set apart from the men in the scene, providing the literal counterpart to the figurative enemy set “before
us” in Sullivan’s lyric. The citizen finds in Bloom a corporeal analogue to this rhetorical figure, one whose status as the typical outsider figure provides a shared point of reference for the men in the pub. With this gesture, Bloom serves as the binding force for the collective group of onlookers. In this light, something resembling a national community comes together insofar as Bloom embodies the ethno-cultural identity that the Irish nation otherwise lacks in this case. If the mythic discourse of Israel helps shape the citizen’s rhetoric, his attacks on the person of Bloom temporarily succeeds in uniting the pub-goers under the banner of Irish nationalism.

In other words, the citizen looks to the figure of the Jew in order to provide what can be termed a constructive model for imagining the Irish nation-state. Simply put, the citizen proves himself to be well-versed in the discourse of anti-Semitism—so much so that he appropriates these supposed traits into his own nationalist paradigm. His own version of Irish identity mimics the ethno-cultural distinctiveness he associates with Bloom to the extent it refuses any distinction between one’s supposed racial origins and one’s national affiliation. As Joyce’s narrative makes especially clear, however, the citizen and the other men in the pub struggle to identify the distinguishing features of the Irish people. Bloom’s presence is useful for the pub-goers to the extent he embodies in their eyes the stereotypical features of the Jew, a material point of reference for the Judaic discourse that flows throughout the narrative. In the shared act of perceiving Bloom, their otherwise stark political differences fall to the wayside. But inasmuch as this community draws its solidarity from its scrutiny of Bloom, its bonds (and the racial heritage it presumes to represent) are weak. The type of national community that forms when race is at the center of social relationships is inherently tenuous due to what Ahmed argues is the fictive origin of “shared attributes” in the first place (116). “Cyclops” makes this fiction
especially apparent in its frequent displays of cultural appropriation, in its naturalization of non-Irish figures of antiquity as well as its ambivalent reception of Jewish nationalism.

Bloom’s Cosmopolitanism: Separating Nation from Race

Ultimately, it is this conflation of race and nationality that disrupts the conventional interpretation of the racial politics in “Cyclops.” Richard Ellmann’s presentation of Bloom as a subject whose cosmopolitanism ignores “the limits of national life” has long set the terms of this discussion (*JJI* 372). But rather than trouble this reading of Bloom in particular, I wish in these final pages to instead reassess the opposition critics have posed between the character’s cosmopolitanism and the citizen’s nationalism. As I note above, these readings have largely operated on the assumption that Bloom’s cosmopolitan perspective divorces him from the type of local perspective that the citizen embodies. In doing so, however, these critics have overlooked the extent to which the citizen’s race essentialism—rather than Bloom’s bourgeois cosmopolitanism—creates an idealized version of the nation-state. Bloom’s opposition to this figuration therefore takes exception not to the nation per se but the universalizing sense of race and nation that the citizen describes.

Balibar's account of the "racist community" provides an especially useful overview of the universalizing sense of the nation that is present in "Cyclops." By equating racial purity with civic participation, the citizen constructs purely imagined lines of racial kinship. Balibar suggests that the “racist community,” the fantasy of the racially homogenous nation-state, likewise looks to the family as a model for national belonging. In Balibar’s words:

The whole process of racist thinking is about creating lived ties and affects and common evidences among people in a society where, for example, kinship has ceased to be a
central social structure. This might account for the fact that racism in all its historical forms is obsessed with the imagery of kinship, the rules of exogamy and endogamy as applied to entities which are not “families” or tribes, but nations or sections of nations (nationalities). (201)

The citizen himself makes this connection between kinship and his ideal Irish nation especially clear in his identification of the “adulteress and her paramour” as the origin of Ireland’s colonization (U 12.1158). His attempt at articulating this history in the racialist language of the family produces, in Balibar’s terms, “ideals of humanity, types of ideal humanity… which one cannot but call universal” (201). The nationalism that the citizen represents likewise proposes an ideal form of homogeneity that must ignore the diverse bodies that inhabit the nation’s political and geographic borders. Like Ahmed, Balibar convincingly makes the case that the notion of racial solidarity “goes far beyond” the nation “in space and time” (203). In view of these sources, we recognize a nationalist movement in “Cyclops” whose notion of national identity does not, despite its claims, correspond to the racial and historical signifiers present in the novel.

The citizen’s shortcomings along these lines become even more apparent in the face of Bloom’s own definition of the nation. As I have noted, the community that defines itself in relation to a racial other stands on unstable ground: without a clearly defined object of observation, this community falls apart. Shared racial traits form the basis for inclusion, but this model—as Ahmed and Balibar have argued in general, as does Cheng in the case of Ireland—relies on fictive bonds between people and the spaces they inhabit. It is this untenable definition of the nation and citizenship that is the target of Bloom’s speech:

—But do you know what a nation means? says John Wyse.
—Yes, says Bloom.
—What is it? Says John Wyse.
—A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.
—By God, then, says Ned, laughing, if that’s so I’m a nation for I’m living in the same place for the past five years.
So of course everyone had a laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:
—Or also living in different places. (U 12.1420-1429)

The narrator, like the other men in the bar, is quick to attack Bloom’s definition on the grounds of its supposedly naïve inclusiveness. At first glance, he offers an ambiguous rejoinder to the ethnic community the citizen imagines. As we have already seen, however, the narrative casts doubt on any idea of a coherent Irish identity. In contrast, Bloom’s presentation of the nation—as semantically confused as it might appear—does little to hide its flexible sense of national identity. Rather, its ambiguity reflects the more nuanced aspects of state construction in a way that the citizen’s racial fantasy avoids: what first appears as a contradiction, the notion of the “same people” living in “same” and also “different” places suggests instead the need to constantly renegotiate the terms of the nation-state and national inclusion. Bloom recognizes on one level the claims of citizens born inside the geographic borders of Ireland, an idea he makes clear in his own declaration of his Irish identity on the basis of being “born here” (U 12.1433). In addition, his formulation of “the same people” living in “different places” is, as Tobias Boes argues, “genuinely cosmopolitan and diasporic” in its attempt at visualizing the potential for national affiliations that extend beyond geography.¹⁹ In short, his definition accounts for diverse permutations of Irish citizenry that presently (and might possibly) inhabit the Irish land.²⁰ Bloom therefore avoids the citizen’s temporal error of using race to look backward to a fictive, imagined national history for the basis to produce a sovereign community in the present. In this light, one easily sees how this inclusive rendering of nationality further puts the citizen’s conceptualization of the Irish people at risk by decentering race as the glue of civil society.
The flexibility of Bloom’s model for nationality brings into relief in Joyce’s narrative the instability of the citizen’s ethnic community. Bloom’s self-identification as a Jew, the object of fixation in the pub, poses further problems for the nationalists:

—And I belong to a race too, says Bloom, that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant.

Gob, he near burnt his fingers with the butt of his old cigar.

—Robbed, says he. Plundered. Insulted. Persecuted. Taking what belongs to us by right. At this very moment, says he, putting up his fist, sold by auction off in Morocco like slaves or cattles. (U 12.1468-1474)

Following his declamation of Irish identity, Bloom places himself within an ethnic category that spans national borders. Following his representation of himself as Irish, Bloom’s eventual embrace of his Jewishness suggests that this latter form of identity is distinct from and unrelated to nationality. The citizen again superimposes race onto the nation when he asks if Bloom in this instance is “talking about the new Jerusalem” (U 12.1475). Bloom’s answer—“I’m talking about justice” (U 12.1476)—further attacks his continued conflation of race and citizenship. On another level, the underlying sense of violence in this scene indicates the extent to which this self-identification resists the scrutiny he has faced up to this point. Expanding on this last point, Paul Schwaber explains that Bloom’s “Jewish identity opens up every developmental level of his masculinity,” which will reach its climax when his “phallic power and aggression” is on full display at the end of “Circe.”

To be sure, this reading of Bloom’s reparative masculinity is viable so long as the citizen and the narrator of “Cyclops” understand dehumanization in terms of emasculation. More implicitly, however, it is Bloom’s agency in taking up and wresting away the discussion of race from the barflies that ultimately subverts their objectification of him along the lines of what Ahmed describes above. To the extent Bloom assumes a hybrid identify for himself, he precipitates the collapse of the pub’s makeshift nationalism that had formed around the stereotype of the Jewish other.
Bloom’s separation of race from nationality immediately reacts against the forces of normativity that the citizen and the men of the pub represent. To this end, he draws together a roll call of historical and religious figures that depicts race in less than monolithic terms:

“Mendelssohn was a jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza. And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God” (U 12.1806-1807). In view of this list, Marilyn Reizbaum helpfully points out that the “men to whom Bloom compares himself are converts, revaluers of the faith,” and “apostates in one sense or another.”

Bloom in this instance explicitly parallels the narrator’s earlier list of heroic (and largely factitious) Irishmen with his own list of hybrid or non-racial Jews. The heterogeneity of these latter figures destabilizes the sense of racial identity that the previous list of mythic Irishmen had attempted to create. Bloom’s recollection of this scene to Stephen Dedalus in “Eumeaus” further emphasizes his interest in a fluid concept of race: “He called me a jew, and in a heated fashion, offensively. So I… told him his God, I mean Christ, was a jew too, and all his family, like me, though in reality I’m not. That was one for him” (U 16.1083-1086). Bloom confounds any attempt at reifying race into one, immutable form of identity by representing his own ambivalent relation to Judaism as something that is at once intimately personal and socially malleable.

In clear opposition to the citizen’s universalizing concept of race, Bloom’s model of inclusive citizenship values proximity over idealism. As we have seen, the citizen’s brand of nationalism is nothing if not idealistic in it is presentation of a racially homogenous state. For the nationalists in “Cyclops,” the project of building a nation likewise involves crafting a history of the Irish race that is as symbolically potent as the model of the Jewish homeland. Given the figurative parallels between Israel and Ireland that the characters in “Cyclops” in particular strive to articulate, Joyce’s frequent allusions to the contemporary debate surrounding the Zionist
movement at numerous points in *Ulysses* is unsurprising. Specifically, Bloom’s connection of nationality to the place of birth explains his own incredulous take on the modern state of Israel, as he makes emphatically known in “Calypso.” If Bloom sees race as an identity that has no bearing on citizenship, then any movement to conflate the two is obviously problematic. In response to an ad for land shares in what would become modern Israel, Bloom balks: “Well, I am here now. Yes, I am here now.” (*U* 4.232-233). In this light, his cosmopolitanism does little to stand in the way of his attempts to integrate himself more fully into society on the most local level. For his part, he acknowledges the global underpinnings to local constructions of identity—but while still attending to the subjects who inhabit these local spaces.  

The discussion about the relationship between birthplace and citizenship in “Cyclops” is emblematic of a much larger legal debate that has stretched into the present day. Citizenship and nationality as they relate to Ireland has been historically complicated due to overlapping claims regarding national status among the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Britain. Legislation passed in 1935 helped clarify this issue by enshrining the principle of *jus soli* citizenship given on the basis of one being born within Irish territory.  

Legal codes enacted in 2001 further established the right of citizenship to people born anywhere on the island of Ireland. A popular referendum in 2004 imposed new restrictions on the *jus soli* policy, however, by limiting citizenship to those born to a parent who is already an Irish citizen. In addition, numerous scholars have identified the role racial stereotyping played in the build-up to this recent amendment. As they point out, the policy revisions were in part motivated by concerns over the problem of “citizen tourism,” in which pregnant migrants—mainly from Nigeria, according to popular perception—would come to Ireland for the purpose of giving birth, taking advantage of the country’s relatively open immigration rules in order to gain citizenship.
and entry into the European Union. Although the revised Irish citizenship law applies in theory to any set of migrants, it nonetheless took shape in response to the embodied threat posed by one specific population. The reaction against “citizen tourism” provides just one recent example of the gap between the presumed equality of civil law and codes enacted in view of a particular, racialized threat.

The conflict in “Cyclops” continues to offer insight into this dynamic so long as the debate over the parameters for citizenship and civic inclusion are subject to revision. Iseult Honohan notes that the 2004 amendment restricting citizenship was ratified the same week as the centennial Bloomsday celebrations in Dublin (69), a useful marker of the close proximity of Joyce’s novel to matters of Irish policy. Indeed, as Honohan reminds us Ulysses has never been far removed from the debate over citizenship as it relates to the Irish state. But if “Cyclops” is a microcosm of Irish politics of its time, its nuanced examination of the role of stereotype in nation-formation continues to prove instructive. The case of Bloom and the citizen exposes how ethnic nationalism both vilifies and appropriates from migrant stereotypes. The citizen’s anti-Semitism is especially telling of this reasoning because it hinges not on any specific aspect of Irish identity but rather on the universalizing, trans-historical notion of identity that the citizen associates with Bloom’s Jewishness. The idea that Bloom retains this identity regardless of where he resides is, at its core, wholly essential to the ethno-cultural identity the citizen imagines for himself. His attacks on the basis of Bloom’s race therefore undercut at every turn his own attempt at delineating a homogenous Irish population. But while Joyce foregrounds this irony, he is also careful to underscore the extent to which these stereotypes manage to unite—if only briefly—the otherwise disparate collection of people in the pub against the threat Bloom is supposed to represent. “Cyclops” thus anticipates the enduring debate over Irish citizenship
insomuch that it foregrounds the fundamental ambiguity of the racialized body as a sign of national belonging and civil inclusion.

Notes

7 The connection between this specific myth and Ulysses is made in David L. Jeffrey, A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), p. 463.
8 See Emer Nolan, James Joyce and Nationalism (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 100. To be sure, the citizen is emblematic of Joyce’s own ambivalent reaction to budding Irish revivalism movements (and what he sees as their underlying xenophobia) at the time of his writing. In this sense, the citizen is a local figure insofar as he is indicative of contemporary Irish politics. The reading I offer here, while acknowledging this history, provides further insight into how Joyce embeds this criticism in his text by highlighting the
universalizing—or, in other words, non-local—ideological basis for this local political movement.

9 For an example of British Israelism during this period, see John Garnier, *Israel in Britain* (London: R. Banks & Son, 1890). Texts of this sort strive to produce evidence that links the genealogy of a given group (in this case, the ruling classes of Britain) back to one or more of the lost tribes of Israel—and, in doing so, affirming the right of this group to share with the ancient Israelites the mantle of the ‘chosen people’.

10 William H. Poole and William Henry Withrow, *Anglo-Israel, or the Saxon Race Proved to be the Lost Tribes of Israel* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1879). Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

11 The extent to which the barflies circulate Jewish stereotypes is made apparent not only by the citizen, but by the nameless narrator of the episode as well. “I’m told those Jewies does have a sort of queer odour coming off them for dogs,” the narrator says, “about I don’t know what all deterrent effect and so forth and so on” (U 12.453-455). For more on how this language of speculation informs the narrative structure of “Cyclops,” see Margot Norris, "Fact, Fiction, and Anti-Semitism in the 'Cyclops' Episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*," *The Journal of Narrative Theory* 36, no. 2 (2006).

12 See David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 106, 226. Lloyd argues that the theme of adultery that, as he points out, the citizen re-articulates in “Cyclops” ties back to a larger anxiety about cultural adulteration more generally among Irish nationalist circles.


17 Ahmed provides an outline of this process of appropriation, which relies on a maintained distance between the subject and object of observation. “The familiar is ‘extended’ by differentiating itself from the strange,” she argues, “by making what seems strange ‘just about’ familiar, or by transforming ‘what is strange’ into an instrument (117).

18 Ellmann’s depiction of Bloom as a borderless character is also present, for example, in the excerpt from Cheng above as well.


20 Cheng argues in *Joyce, Race, and Empire* that Bloom actually resorts to racial essentialism when he assumes that Joseph Patrick Nannetti, despite being a native of Ireland, “never saw” Italy, his “real country” (187). While Bloom on this point is inconsistent on applying his own model of nationality by birth place, it is important to note that he consistently
avoids defining race as the precondition for citizenship, as his “new Bloomusalem” makes vividly clear in “Circe” (U 15.1546).

21 Paul Schwaber, The Cast of Characters: A Reading of Ulysses (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 120.

22 Marilyn Reizbaum, James Joyce's Judaic Other (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 73.

23 Indeed, Bloom’s role by the end of Ulysses largely revolves around helping Stephen Dedalus. Along similar lines, Bloom is initially in the pub in “Cyclops” to see Martin Cunningham about assisting Dignam’s widow manage her late husband’s mortgage (U 12.762-766).


27 Honohan helpfully approaches the conflict between the citizen and Bloom from the perspective of the current controversy surrounding Irish immigration and citizenship law. The conflict contained in “Cyclops,” he argues, reduces this issue down to its essential cores, between the “ethno-cultural” model the citizen espouses and Bloom’s jus soli approach (82).