So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be. (U 9.383-385)

So let us not talk falsely now
The hour is getting late.1

Consumers of popular culture have long become accustomed to the eternal return of the 1960s, prepared for another band ringing the changes on the same old pop paradigms. The slightly more rarefied world of literary criticism or English Studies has arguably enjoyed its own hangover from that period in the form of the gradual shift into what we have learned to call ‘theory,’ with philosophical texts from the year of Sgt Pepper setting the agenda for decades of academic work. Fredric Jameson, writing in the early 1980s, suggests a slightly less protracted, but still unusual version of the ‘long sixties’: “the general moment from 1972 to 1974 can be seen as the definitive end of whatever, worldwide, came to be known as the 60s.”2 In between these two estimates, it can probably be agreed that the import and acceptance of new French ideas - ‘Structuralism,’ as they were then often known - was a prolonged and involved business, a translation


and reworking of elements of the 1960s, with a passing resemblance to the earlier struggle for artistic hegemony waged on behalf of another movement of uncertain name and nature, modernism. This essay will deal with the relation between one modernist in particular - James Joyce - and contemporary theory, using the work of Stephen Heath and Colin MacCabe to investigate Joyce’s role in the arrival of theory in Britain, and the implications of this for his audience today. Insofar as the essay has a polemical point, it is that an historical reading of the rise of theory militates against what I term the naturalization of the relation between theory and Joyce.

Along the way I repeatedly pick up on the different forms of ‘belatedness’ that Joyce’s relationship with theory produces. An important contemporary implication of this term has been well summarized by Andrzej Gasiorek: “it is ‘we’ who are doubting, ironic, self-reflexive and detached, whereas ‘they’ are innocent, gullible, benighted...We pit ‘our’ self-reflexive scepticism against ‘their’ naive realism in an act of gross historical condescension.”

In short, belatedness implies superiority on the part of the latecomer, like the partygoer who arrives ‘fashionably’ late. But with Joyce’s audience this situation is reversed: those who come after him display an anxiety of belatedness, more like guests wondering whether there’s anything left to drink. It is to the anxieties and unease of the early days of ‘theory’ in Britain that we can now turn.

**Wind From the East**

- *Moi, je suis socialiste. (U 3.169)*

Jameson’s collapsing of the sixties and early seventies together sanctions an inviting series of period icons, particularly when one is thinking about the dissemination of French ideas: the battered Renault, the Gauloises-smoking intellectual, the Parisian consumer culture and commercial imagery which had saturated Godard’s films. All, to be sure, myths of Frenchness, like the wine analyzed by Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* - a book which finally appeared, to

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