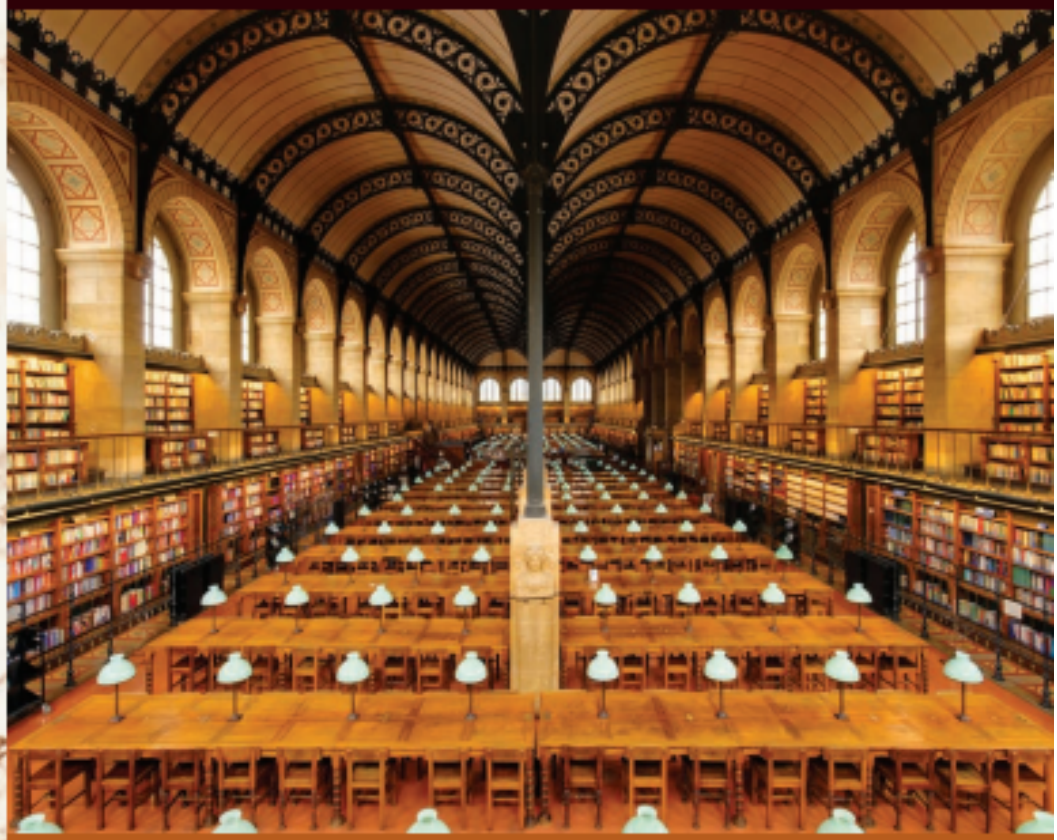
JOYCE, ARISTOTLE, AND AQUINAS

Fran O'Rourke



THE FLORIDA JAMES JOYCE SERIES

JOYCE, ARISTOTLE, AND AQUINAS

Fran O'Rourke
Foreword by Michael Patrick Gillespie

University Press of Florida
Gainesville · Tallahassee · Tampa · Boca Raton
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To my nieces Maeve and Aisling,
great-great-granddaughters of "Molly Bloom,"
and Saoirse, her great-great-great-granddaughter

From Introduction:

I should explain the dedication of the book to my adorable nieces Maeve and Aisling, and to Aisling's baby, Saoirse. In October 1858, Saoirse's great-great-great grandfather, nineteen-year-old Bernard Connor from Gorey, enlisted in the Royal Artillery in Dublin. In March 1861, he sailed on H.M.S. Megaera to Gibraltar, where he served for six years. On October 1, 1863, he married Amelia Capacete from nearby San Roque. Having served in Jamaica and Kent, he retired in 1879 at the rank of Brigade Sergeant Major and returned to live in Clonmel. In 1891, Bernard and his Spanish wife moved to 113 North Strand Road, Dublin, where they were near neighbors of Joyce's favorite aunt, Josephine Murray. Joyce was a frequent visitor to 103 North Strand Road; in September 1904, he wrote two letters to Nora Barnacle from that address. We may assume that Joyce not only heard of Amelia Connor but more than likely met her. Joyce characteristically based his literary inventions upon actual fact, and Amelia provided him with the minimal biography for the female protagonist of Ulysses. Their names even sound alike. In the Penelope monologue, Molly says that she "saw the Spanish cavalry at La Roque" and recalls the moods of Gibraltar. I am most grateful to Barry Sheehan for generously sharing the results of his research into the Connor family.

Endorsements

"Aristotle and Aquinas are ubiquitous ghostly presences in Joyce's work. With meticulous and wide-ranging scholarship, Fran O'Rourke provides readers with a treasure trove of insights into these appearances, touching on issues as diverse as identity, stability through change, the nature of beauty, and love. He makes a powerful case that understanding these references is crucial to understanding Joyce."

Martha C. Nussbaum, The University of Chicago

"We have long realized the importance to James Joyce of both Aristotle and Aquinas, but O'Rourke elucidates that significance with notable scholarly and critical insight and genuine brilliance. Without turning the artist Joyce into a philosopher, he takes him seriously as a thinker."

Morris Beja, author of *James Joyce: A Literary Life*

From the Foreword

Reading Fran O'Rourke's Joyce, Aristotle, and Aquinas is akin to listening to Debussy's "The Girl with the Flaxen Hair," a beautifully constructed work, seemingly straightforward while full of complexities that convey the exuberance of the creation with grace and pleasure. Professor O'Rourke has written a marvelous scholarly study that offers, in lucid prose, profound insights into an important portion of the intellectual, imaginative, and creative contexts that inform the writings of James Joyce. O'Rourke disclaims direct interpretive intentions and instead makes the modest, though in my view quite important, assertion that his work is "concerned exclusively with philosophical themes which are of material significance for Joyce's writings, or which provide inspiration for their artistic construction; it is not concerned with the literary character or merit of the application in the writings of Joyce" (1). The pages that follow do just that, but in the process they provide the intelligent reader with a range of important explanations for the influence on Joyce of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. From this, one has the ability to construct one's own interpretation, as we all do anyway, based on philosophical perspectives quite familiar to Joyce but, given contemporary intellectual tastes and current university syllabi, foreign to most modern readers. It would be easy to sum up this project by saying that it offers useful additional information to supplement current interpretations of Joyce's works. That would be true, but it would also run of risk of oversimplifying its impact. O'Rourke's study produces the same effect that Keats describes in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." The careful explanations of key philosophical positions held by Aristotle and Aquinas and the erudite delineation of how Joyce encountered these views open for readers narrative perspectives and dialogic nuances imbedded in the canon that would otherwise go unnoticed. This is not a polemic study attempting to proselytize a critic's ideology. This is a scholarly work that respects the intelligence of its readers and acknowledges the range of interpretive possibilities that can be supplemented by a greater sense of the elaborate and at times conflicted intellectual context from which Joyce's writing emerged.

Michael Patrick Gillespie, Florida International University