I. “Thinking with/out History”

In a comparative study of the conflicting attitudes of the culture of the nineteenth-century and of the twentieth-century towards history, the historian Carl E. Schorske asserted:

In most fields of intellectual and artistic culture, twentieth-century Europe and America learned to think without history. The very word “modernism” has come to distinguish our lives and times from what had gone before, from history as a whole, as such. Modern architecture, modern music, modern science — all these have defined themselves not so much out of the past, indeed scarcely

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against the past, but detached from it in a new, autonomous cultural space. The modern mind grew indifferent to history, for history, conceived as a continuous nourishing tradition, became useless to its projects. (1-2)

The nineteenth-century "historicism in culture" — its way of "thinking with history" — was succeeded by the twentieth-century "modernism in culture" with its way of "thinking without history." Undoubtedly the greatest master of Modernism, James Joyce thus expressed the Zeitgeist of his day through the voice of a young hero in *Ulysses* (1919): "History is a nightmare from which I'm trying to awake" (34).

Modernist ahistoricism took diverse forms, from haughty elitism distanced from the culture of the masses to egotism to insistence on the autonomy of art. Most importantly, in representing the chaos of modern life and history the most celebrated modernist writers appropriated myths. T. S. Eliot proclaimed in "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" (1923) that his much worshipped "classicism" — "a goal toward which all good literature strives" — was gloriously manifested by Joyce's adoption of a "mythical method," in which the petty daily occurrences in the life of a modern Dubliner are paralleled with a Homeric saga, over a traditional "narrative method":

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is