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JOYCE'S "CORPO STRANIERO": THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF IRISHNESS IN FOUR BORDER CROSSINGS

> Mr. Daedalus was himself a renegade from the Nationalist ranks: he professed cosmopolitism. But a man that was of all countries was of no country—you must first have a nation before you have art.
> (*SH* 103)

Joycean scholarship is often associated with a sort of "anxiety of belatedness" which, reinterpreting Brooker's metaphor, might be compared to that of latecomer "guests wondering whether there's anything left to drink" (2002, 203). Such anxiety seems unwarranted: the vitality of this field of study has never abated and is in fact constantly providing new insights and analytical tools.

Two aspects, in particular, have contributed towards the impetus for research. In the first place, a bulk of new documentation by and about Joyce has appeared over the last decade, both confirming and upsetting previous assumptions; this is the case of the 2002 National Library of Ireland acquisitions and the 2006 Hans Jahnke bequest to the James Joyce Foundation. In the second place, several aspects of Joyce's figure and works are still object of heated debate, with significant theoretical impact.

Most notably, a favoured academic topic has recently undergone major revisions. The beginning of the twenty first century might be considered a sort of gulf in the critical discourse regarding Joyce's relationship with Ireland. In the mid-1990s, Hofheinz and Williams noted the spread of a non-Irish and a-political idea of Joyce, emphasizing how the writer was often read as a cosmopolitan author who had merely left Ireland behind him. Significant work in a postcolonial perspective flourished with, among oth-

ers, Joseph Valente, Vincent Cheng and Christine van Boheemen. But it was probably in 2006, with Andrew Gibson's *James Joyce* that a new, more radical tendency emerged: the "materialist turn" challenged the cosmopolitan figure of Joyce by means of a "nationalization" of the author, as also discussed in John McCourt's *Questioni Biografiche* (2009). Recently, Gibson provided further explanations of his theoretical stance:

> Historical materialism also presumes that the more we know about the historical relations between the British and the Irish in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the more our grasp of Joyce substantially improves and deepens (2010, 181).

Despite its unquestionable value, a critical "immersion in Ireland" can also present some risks: in extreme cases, an emphatically Irish perspective on Joyce can result in taking the writer out of his actual cultural context, offering a limited angle of the reality he experienced. Joyce's Irish-centred logic is traversed by the multiple influences of its European frame, as part of the same, broad picture; in this sense, his crossing of boundaries is not only a basic trait of his life and works, but also, as I will argue, the essence of his cultural repertoire and of his own Irishness.

In line with the latest scholarly work on cosmopolitism,[1] I propose to emphasize how Joycean studies are part of Irish studies especially because of the European dimension they embrace. With this objective in mind, I will analyze transnational intersections and encounters in a rather unexplored area of Joyce's corpus, the Hans Jahnke collection at the Zurich James Joyce Foundation; the focus will be especially on the 60 documents which testify to the private correspondence between James Joyce and his son, Giorgio.[2] These letters, postcards and notes shed new light on four different boundary

[1] For the question of cosmopolitanism, see for example Binnie *et al.*, 2006; the idea of transnationalism is treated in Ben-Rafael and Sternberg, 2009. My use of the terms 'cosmopolitanism' and 'transnationalism' here conform to the definitions proposed by Alan Latham (2006, 94-5) and Portes *et al.* (2009, 568-9) respectively.

[2] My heartfelt thanks go to the director of the Zurich James Joyce Foundation, Prof. Fritz Senn, who offered me full access to the Jahnke collection. A description of the Hans Jahnke documentation is available in Frehner and Zeller, 2006. The Zurich material is still under copyright and quotations from the manuscripts and typescripts are accordingly limited in this essay. All references to James Joyce's letters to Giorgio Joyce are in parentheses after the quotation, in a day/month/year format. My translations from Joyce's Italian are provided in the footnotes or after the text.

crossings involving linguistic, thematic and textual aspects of the manuscripts and they are worthy of detailed analysis.

I. Italian/English: A linguistic encounter

The first border to be crossed in the Jahnke material is a linguistic one, concerning the English and Italian languages. To be more specific, it occasionally regards dialects, which yield a more composite and complex picture. As is well known, Joyce communicated in Italian with his children, even after leaving Trieste; according to Francini Bruni, he "used to say that the language for family affection could only be Italian" (qtd in Potts 1979, 45). Consequently, the 60 documents which compose the correspondence between James and Giorgio Joyce are mostly in this language, except for a few cases, when father and son are not the only recipients.

It seems unnecessary to dwell upon the subject of Joyce's Italian, since the most groundbreaking views on the subject have appeared in well-known essays by Melchiori (1979 and 1995), Bosinelli (1998), Ruggieri (1992), Vaglio (1994), Lobner (1983) and Zanotti (2004); what I wish to comment on are some specific aspects of the Jahnke papers. The new documentation offers a wider perspective on Joyce's communication modalities with his family than ever before, as well as additional information about Joyce's private use of Italian. We are now allowed a more nuanced and informed view on particular linguistic choices, a view which both confirms and broadens previous assumptions.

One of the most relevant features of the Jahnke letters is that they especially reflect Joyce's split identity as an expatriate. For instance, Joyce's condition of "migrant" or "exile" is unconsciously expressed in a *lapsus*, or revealing mistake, which is also quoted in the title of this essay: in a letter dated 30 August 1932 he complains that a "foreign body" entered his eye, defining it in Italian a "corpo straniero" ("foreigner's body"), instead of "corpo estraneo" ("foreign body").

Indeed, the linguistic encounters between English and Italian, in all their variants, appear dialogic, to the point that the two languages often intermingle. In particular, some letters addressed to both Giorgio and his wife Helen Fleischman are written partly in English and partly in Italian, with the two languages alternating within sentences:

> Mi rallegro della [sic] buone notizie datemi di Stefanuccio and also of the other members of the colony.[3] (19/07/1932)

Language switch within sentences is a rather new phenomenon: available published letters addressed to Giorgio and Helen are usually in English, with possible salutations or postscripts in Italian. A practical explanation of the bilingual writing in the Jahnke material could be that the Italian sections were especially meant for Giorgio, since Helen could not understand them; but this does not exhaust what is involved in such a complex use of code-switching.

The most striking aspect of the bilingual letters is that personal remarks, opinions or emotions are usually expressed in Italian:

> I am waiting [sic] a reply from Collinson about the glaucoma complication, cosa che mi sorprende molto perché non me ne sono mai accorto.[4] (19/07/1932)

Italian is also the language of playful comment or verbal provocation:

> [Brauchbar] wrote [Lucia] a long letter of encouragement but […] quello che fece era un'asineria [...].[5] (19/07/1932)

It cannot be excluded that an emotional linguistic bond underlies the choice of the language of expression. Whereas the second language is generally believed to allow the subject more distance from the topics under discussion (see Pavlenko 2007, 131), in Joyce's case the situation is apparently reversed. As already noted by Melchiori (1979), Bosinelli (1998) and Milesi (2003), Italian represented a "lingua franca" for Joyce and was both "the family lexicon" and the "language of politics, of *Irish* politics" (Melchiori 1995, 22). Evidence in the Zurich documentation both confirms and broadens this idea, highlighting a bilingual affective response where Italian

[3] "I am glad to hear the good news about Stephen and also of the other members of the colony."

[4] "I am waiting [sic] a reply from Collinson about the glaucoma complication, a thing which surprises me very much, since I had never realized it before." Given the syntactic construction of the sentence, the first verb might be assumed to be 'I am awaiting," but the manuscript does not seem to present this reading.

[5] "[Brauchbar] wrote [Lucia] a long letter of encouragement but […] what he did was foolish."

is not only connected to "family affection," but also to emotional expressivity in general.

In the Jahnke material as a whole, the use of Italian is characterised by the combination of different registers and a large use of colloquialisms and idioms, such as "ne ho le tasche piene" ("I am fed up with it," 19/07/1932) and "sangue da una rapa non si cava" ("one cannot get blood out of a stone," 23/04/1935). Set phrases are also occasionally transformed or distorted, thus extending their meaning and expanding the language's horizons.

Indeed, we are well accustomed to both Joyce's switching registers of language and transformations of words and set phrases from his novels. What emerges from the letters is that he adopted these procedures in a continuative way throughout different functions of writing (public and private texts) and in different languages (English and Italian), thus substantiating Melchiori's remarks:

> The whole of Joyce's work is a constant infringement of conventional linguistic structures in order to accommodate not only the creativity of the writer who translates the common idioms, the language of the tribe, into an individual style belonging to him alone, but also to involve the creativity of each individual reader who is invited to translate what he is offered into his own private language (1995, 20).

II. A migrant's-eye view of "Ireland/ Europe/ The World/ The Universe"

Transnational encounters in the Jahnke collection do not only concern Italy and its language, but also many other European countries. From 1930 to 1940, approximately when the Jahnke letters were written, Joyce travelled to various cities, touring France, England, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium, Germany and Denmark. In his letters to Giorgio, Joyce talks about his experiences around Europe, offering an overall rich and cosmopolitan picture.

What appears as the common thread in the numerous perspectives on different countries is Joyce's ironic attitude. His irreverent remarks usually concern those aspects that are considered typical of a certain cultural model, such as beliefs and behavioural distinctions. Conventional national imagery is then de-contextualized and turned to a new purpose, or transformed into something incongruous with the original discourse.

In particular, Joyce often re-employs the most formulaic and grotesque clichés about European national characters. For instance, Joyce thus answers Giorgio's claim that he has no pleasant memory of the years he spent in Europe:

> Però se davo una mano di pittura alla Francia e se arricciavo i baffi degli italiani e se chiudevo le bocche dei tedeschi e se davo una doccia rinfrescante agli inglesi e se solleticavo gli svizzeri sotto le ascelle e se spidocchiavo i russi? Eh? Il quadro forse sarebbe meno orribile.[6] (21/05/1935)

Joyce humorously dismisses Giorgio's unpleasant comments on Europe through inter-discursive irony, thus parodying stereotypes. As Fritz Senn notes, parody is "an inverse form of homage" (2007, 80) and in the Jahnke letters no European population is spared Joyce's particular homage. In 1936, a trip to Denmark was the source of inspiration for a sort of fairy tale which Joyce wrote in English for his nephew, Stephen:

> I cannot send you a Copenhagen cat because there are no cats in Copenhagen. There are lots and lots of fish and bicycles but there are no cats. Also there are no policemen. All the Danish policemen pass the day at home in bed. They smoke big Danish cigars and drink buttermilk all day long. (05/09/1936)

The whole text revisits several clichés about Denmark and its population, including the fact that Danish police were seemingly well-known for undergoing little or no supervision. At the same time, though, this fairy tale is meant to fascinate the child and let his imagination approach different realities, or picture other, foreign dimensions.

Manipulating stereotypes was more important to Joyce than eschewing them: thus, he paid great attention to commonplaces and grotesque reductions about national characters or images, which he playfully captured in his correspondence. He confronted any monolithic conception of otherness on its own terms, in a procedure that is similar to what Paola Pugliatti and Donatella Pallotti define the "unmasking of naturalized discursive practices" in the "Wandering Rocks" episode of *Ulysses* (2004, 152).

[6] "If I had given France a coat of paint, and curled Italian moustaches, and closed German mouths and given the English a refreshing shower and tickled the Swiss under their arms and deloused the Russians? Maybe the picture would be less horrible."

While putting clichés under a magnifying glass, Joyce emphasized their deforming aspect and therefore their improbability; in this sense, stereotypes become platforms from which intercultural prejudice is disarmed. Exaggeration and obvious irony are all ways to reject conventions and make cultural boundaries more traversable. Yet, Joyce's irony is often ironic in its turn. As in Wayne Booth's idea of "unstable" irony (1975, 62), Joyce's humour encompasses multiple dualities, so that there is no certainty that he always means the opposite of what he's writing. In other words, his irony is pervasive but not uniform, as it opens up the possibilities of manifold meanings.

For instance, in a 1938 letter Joyce playfully lists all the people who would be amazed at hearing Giorgio's beautiful singing; his last entry is "i bravi britannici ingoiatori di patate" ('the good British potato-swallowers," 06/01/1938). Joyce uses a stereotype, a perceived dietary habit typically ascribed to the Irish by the English, and applies it to the British people in general. It's the term "britannici" that attracts our attention, because Joyce was very careful in the choice of terms, especially regarding geopolitical matters: in this respect, for example, it has already been noted that in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen locates Ireland in Europe, omitting the United Kingdom (*P*, 12). As far as the above example is concerned, it cannot be excluded that the word "britannici" might be the real source of scorn; at any rate, it demonstrates Joyce's continuative attention to the knots of political tension.

While parodying national stereotypes and received discourse, Joyce also establishes a distance from the objects of his humour; he often speaks as an observer who is foreign to any national context. The Jahnke letters show well Joyce's heterogeneous and ambiguous sense of national belonging, which pivots between different incorporations. His departures are never complete, especially from Ireland: detachment is something that always continues to happen. The new research challenge opened by the Zurich material, thus, is to try and understand the simultaneity of connections and variations in Joyce's cosmopolitan and multilayered reality.

III. Territorial and Mental Otherness: Lucia Joyce

The Janke letters also allude to a third kind of border crossing, which concerns the symbolic spaces of the mind. Lucia Joyce and her psychologi-

cal issues are the main topic of many letters addressed to Giorgio: Joyce often describes Lucia's conditions, gives details about her medical reports and provides his opinion on her treatment.

In some of these letters, Joyce seems to perceive Lucia as a stranger, or rather, as a foreigner; her mental distance from him is worded in terms of physical remoteness. Geography is the metaphor Joyce commonly uses to describe Lucia's divide from him and from the social context at large: she inhabits a faraway foreign country which is hard to reach. For instance, in 1935, while Giorgio was in New York, Joyce suggested that Lucia was located even further away from himself and his son, writing: "Vi è molta acqua adesso tra te e me E ci sono due piccoli mari fra noi e Lucia." ("There's a lot of water now between you and me And there are two small seas between us and Lucia," 23/04/1935).

Joyce's "geographical" metaphors essentially rely on archetypical representations of identity parameters. "Being elsewhere" is a common image adopted in defining mental disorder, but it is interesting to see how this image modulates in a migrant writer's perspective. As might be expected, Joyce seems to perceive a connection between his condition of exile and his daughter's inability to integrate in any social system. Lucia does not live according to conventional order; she is described as escaping all constrictions and transcending all boundaries. This is a sort of freedom Joyce seems to sympathize with:

> Le sue stramberie possono fare soghignare [sic] gli isolani fra i quali per il momento ella ha scelto di vivere. […] A loro ed a se stessa può sembrare una stupidina. A me no però.[7] (21/05/1935)

In this passage, Joyce is referring to Lucia's stay in Ireland. Her reasons for being a stranger there go beyond the questions of homeland and national identity, but Joyce often seems to relate these two aspects. He is also very concerned about other people's views of Lucia; because of her exclusion from any system, she could be thought capable of disrupting order and provoking conflict. In a letter to Giorgio, Joyce indignantly ridicules this idea:

[7] "Her eccentricities can provoke the sneer of those islanders among whom she has chosen to live for the moment. […] She might seem a little silly to them and to herself. But not to me."

> […] noto che mi scrivi che tutto è tranquillo in Irlanda malgrado la presenza di Lucia. Che cosa è il senso di ciò? Perché la presenza di Lucia dovrebbe provocare una ribellione od una guerra civile.[8] (23/05/1935)

Ridicule is conveyed through hyperbolic imagery which widens the family context to that of the whole country. At the same time, Joyce is still relying on traditional *topoi*: political rebellion was historically interpreted as an attack on rationality. The political metaphor replaces the most common geographical ones in alluding to Lucia's mental condition. Incidentally, politics and geography are strictly interrelated in the idea of boundary.

The issue of Lucia's rightful place, both symbolic and physical, was a major preoccupation for Joyce, who constantly tried to "put up a home for her."[9] As can be seen in the history of psychiatry, the apparent increased freedom of the unconventional subject results in experiences of confinement and solitude. Joyce seemed well aware of every aspect of Lucia's personal exile, and most letters testify to his attempts at building a bridge between his daughter and himself, or the world.

IV. The Jahnke material as a place of textual encounter

A common *leitmotiv* of the Zurich letters is music and opera. While encouraging Giorgio to pursue his singing career, Joyce often mentions operatic works and, at times, playfully quotes from their texts. For instance, when defining a common acquaintance "quel moscardino di viscontino" ("that dandy viscount," 31/07/1937), Joyce is referring Puccini's *La Boheme* (Act III, Scene 1). Even the jocoserious complaint "Ma che pena, che tormento, che stento mi sento!" ("What a pain, what an agony, what a misery I feel!" 02/02/1938) might be inspired, among other texts, by Rossini's *Ermione* (Act I, Scene1).

[8] "I notice that you write that everything is calm in Ireland, despite Lucia's presence. What does that mean? Why should Lucia's presence provoke a rebellion or a civil war."

[9] The quotation is taken from the manuscripts of Joyce's letters at the British Library (Weaver Collection), ADD 57351-064, dated 20/04/1932. Further references to this collection will be indicated by the abbreviation BL followed by the catalogue number of the letter and its date. I wish to thank Prof. William Brockman for the useful information and bibliographic references he provided me regarding the Weaver Collection.

Apart from opera, the most relevant source of quotations in the Jahnke letters is Joyce's own work. In particular, he often includes pieces from *Finnegans Wake*:

> Mi cito per finire: "And all the Dunder de Dunnes in Markland's Vineland beyond Brendan's herring pool wears number nine in Yangtsee's hats."[10] (14/05/1935)

Given the highly polysemic nature of the Wakean text, the meaning of most of its passages in the letters is often far from being obvious. Still, Joyce seemed to assume that Giorgio was both familiar with the text and able to catch the sense or implication of its quotations; this certainly reveals a new aspect of the father-son relationship, a sort of literary complicity which could be of biographical interest.

In some letters, Joyce similarly relies on his son's knowledge of *Ulysses*, although the allusions to this novel are definitely less demanding. *Ulysses* is never extensively or directly quoted, but Joyce evokes its text on at least two occasions: when discussing the risk of losing one eye, he compares himself to the Cyclops (30/08/1932), while, in a humorous account of the weather conditions in Paris, he mentions the saints Gervasius, Servasius and Bonifacius (21/05/1935), who also appear in one of the interpolations of the XII episode of the novel (*U* 441,10-11).

The self-quotes in the letters can be connected to a common tendency of Joyce's literary writing processes, which I have elsewhere defined "multiple re-employment" (2008, 150). This tendency consists of constant returns on the "already written," and is based on a concept of text as a dynamic entity that can be re-enacted in the course of time and re-adapted according to different contexts. Citations of and allusions to *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in the letters have, of course, a different function than the "re-employments" in the literary writing process. Yet, even in the letters, when Joyce recalls ideas, emotions and impressions in connection with fresh experiences, he significantly turns to *textual* memory: in other words, he combines personal recollection with what Hughes defines "the memory of words" (1987, 86).

[10] "To finish I quote myself: [...]." The *Finnegans Wake* text reads: "And all the Dunders de Dunnes in Markland's Vineland beyond Brendan's herring pool takes number nine in yangsee's hats" (*FW* 213.34-36)

On the whole, the Jahnke material widely testifies to the use of inter- and intra-textuality in Joyce's writings. Of course, these phenomena also concern the fictional texts contained in the collection, where Joyce's works encounter other works or intersect among themselves. Exemplary in this regard is a typescript that displays the title "Chamber Music" but contains two poems that were published in the collection *Pomes Penyeach*: "Alone" and "Bahnhofstrasse." The origin of this hybridization is not clear; in a purely hypothetical way, it could be connected to the fact that, according to the documents in the Weaver Collection, in 1932 *Pomes Penyeach* was being set to music by Mrs. Piccoli, after her husband, Prof. Piccoli from Cambridge, had translated the whole collection (BL 57351-065, 20/04/1932).

In the intertextual encounter, translation plays a central role. Poetry seems again the preferred space of intersection, since the Jahnke material includes several verse translations. A significant example is the poem "Sulla spiaggia a Fontana", an Italian version of the 1914 poem "On the Beach at Fontana", which was also published in *Pomes Penyeach*. Even in this case, we have no certainties about the origins of the text, which might be Joyce's self-translation (see Natali 2011). What seems certain is that translations, or self-translations, testify that Joyce's intertextuality moves through what Minier defined "interlingual networks" (2005, 81), revealing the "foreign" at different levels.

It is not surprising that the Jahnke material shows how Joyce's texts dialogue with each other and with works by different authors: these phenomena characterize the entire Joycean corpus and have been largely discussed. Rather than providing unexpected vistas, the Jahnke documentation seems to embrace most Joycean features like a sort of microcosm, while highlighting their multicultural context.

New materials certainly add to our knowledge about Joyce, but the main question is not how revolutionary this new knowledge is, but rather how it affects the way we think about Joyce and how it can interact with or encourage new perspectives of investigation and new approaches. In this case, the Zurich letters highlight how Joyce's transnationality is fundamental to both his private and public expression, as it underlies various forms of intertextuality and interdiscoursiveness at different levels.

Joyce clearly cultivated a multiple vision of the border, which he seemed to conceive as a "process" incorporating several realities. Because of its dynamism, Joyce's constant transnational dialogue also acquires a new relevance

in recent scholarly discourse, according to which cosmopolitanism does not arise from a refusal of a specific cultural identity: it develops from an idea of culture and nation as moveable entities which can re-articulate and extend across the globe, while maintaining a connection with an "original position" (See Pearson, 2010; Archibugi, 2003; Cheah, 1998).

Indeed, from his standpoint of a national and cultural "in-betweener", Joyce seemed to perceive borders as places of alternative significations, where no perspective acquired predominant value. In other words, Joyce's cosmopolitism and transnationalism open new possibilities without establishing "alternatives" to Irish culture. His writings show no signs of replacement of a mainstream discourse with another; rather, they question the concept of mainstream discourse *per se* and demystify it through sarcasm and parody. Language, a salient element in this procedure, also escapes any "official" frame with its varying and often distorting shapes.

With these remarks I do not mean to suggest that an Irish-historical perspective on Joyce would be limiting or unproductive; its fruitfulness depends on the meaning we ascribe to signifiers such as "nation" and "culture" in their constantly varying contexts. Indeed, Joyce's writings can prove precious in order to explore the European frame of Irish studies: as shown in previous discussion, they help us identify the possible areas of engagement which bring different cultures together and they question any notion of boundary, reminding us that nowadays, in an age of changing demographics, we should come to think of new spaces which include the emigrant and immigrant peoples of various countries.

Additionally, Joyce's transnational issues are connected to the cultural identity concerns and the challenging of boundaries which characterize contemporary Irish literature, in a continuity that is worth stressing. Multicultural issues and threshold crossings are now central to Irish studies, as seen in recent work on contemporary literature: Amanda Tucker emphasized the conception of Ireland as a multicultural society in McCann's novels (2010), Asier Altuna-Garcìa de Salazar dealt with the "new Irish" in a study on Marsha Mehran (2010), Emilie Pine analyzed the patterns of emigration and return in the plays of Bolger, Devlin, Murphy and Hughes (2008), while the first issue of the new journal *Studi Irlandesi - A Journal of Irish Studies* is devoted to "Italy-Ireland Cultural Inter-relations" and includes Gioia Gamerra's noteworthy investigation of threshold images and intertextuality in McGuckian (2011).

The question of un-reconciled homeland conflating with the world at large represents a constant tension which snakes its way through Irish litera-

ture, a common thread which connects Joyce to the present. "[T]he impetus to flee the land and to flee culture as such," as well as "the 'Irish' search for a different hearing, for a new epistemology, a new mode of representing or mapping the world and thus a new mode of inhabiting it" (Docherty 1996, 222) are commonly considered the main concerns of Irish postmodern literature; this discussion has tried to show how the roots of such concerns can also be traced back to the foundations of Joyce's poetics.

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A MEDICAL HUMANISTIC EXPLORATION OF JAMES JOYCE

The critical interest in James Joyce's appropriation and exploration of medical culture and language in his works has been steadily growing over the past few decades, though not always under the aegis of the medical humanities. This new inter-disciplinary field aims at investigating the complexities of human suffering through analytical frameworks derived from a broad range of humanistic disciplines, while holding a critical perspective on medical practice and education. It is not surprising then that anyone interested in literary depictions of human physiology or pathology will find the Joycean corpus—and the manifold descriptions of the human body in it— a mine worth exploring.

In this essay, I will briefly survey some salient medical-related Joycean studies published thus far, according to their more or less explicit biographic or textual approaches. I will then attempt a medical informed reading of "The Sisters", which is generally regarded as Joyce's most clinical short story. What I hope to illustrate is how an inter-disciplinary view of education can benefit both literature modules, which aim at situating literary products in broader cultural contexts, and narrative medicine workshops for medical students, in which the tools of literary analysis are used to expand future doctors' communicative competence.

J. B. Lyons's volume *James Joyce and Medicine* inaugurated medical-related Joycean studies in 1973. A physician and a medical historian, Lyons maintains that "a clinical examination of the author's life will add to our comprehension of his writings and to a more compassionate understanding of his angularities of personality" (1973, 9). The fine balance between biographical reconstruction and textual analysis in his book will seldom be achieved in future studies on the subject. Lyons reviews and comments on illnesses, doctors, scientists and hospitals, mentioned in Joyce's works.

His book still stands out as a useful reference text almost forty years after its publication, though not without historical bias—for example, it lists transvestitism as one of Bloom's illnesses (*Ibid.*, 81-83). Other biographers and critics suggest that Joyce's health concerns are an erroneously neglected subtext in his fiction. Apart from the strain put on his creativity by, among other complaints,[1] his sight loss and his daughter's mental illness, much of the debate revolves around another mysterious condition, recurring throughout his life and his works. This has been traditionally—and unsurprisingly—described as syphilis, a diagnosis Joyce shares with most men of genius across centuries.[2] In 1995, Kathleen Ferris devoted a whole book to the burden of Joyce's secret disease: in contrast to Richard Ellman's liberated "Sunny Jim", Catholicism and syphilis inescapably oppress her own version of Joyce, a kind of "Gloomy Jim" (1995, 9). In her view, this new approach to the author should engender more sophisticated interpretations of his work:

> And just as our recognition that Keats was a young man dying of tuberculosis and Synge of lymphosarcoma helps us to respond to their sense of the brevity of life and love, just as our knowledge of Milton's blindness enhances our sympathy for *Samson Agonistes*, so too does our understanding of Joyce's illness add a dimension of poignancy to his works which has hitherto been obscured by his humor. (152)

While the eminent examples Ferris lists are quite self-explanatory, at the end of her book we are left wondering what this added dimension of Joycean poignancy actually entails. Her focus on syphilis *per se* is likely to attract the paleopathologist rather than the literary critic.

[1] See also Vike Martina Plock's description of Joyce's health issues and probable hypochondria: "Clearly, some of Joyce's fascination with medicine might have been motivated by his own ill health. As his biographies show, he repeatedly suffered from gastritic pains and rheumatism and was treated for a bout of rheumatic fever in 1907 in Trieste—an illness likely to have been syphilis—related. His correspondence further demonstrates that Joyce was constantly worried about heart defects and that he, by the time he moved to Paris, routinely checked himself for potential cardiac symptoms […]. Another Joycean affliction that certainly had an influence on his writing was the deteriorating condition of his 'wretched eyes' (L III 252). The 'continual pain and danger of loss of sight' (L I 190), which made numerous operations inevitable, explains Joyce's astute sense of acoustics and his growing interest in exploring the musicality of language, especially when writing FW." (2009, 255)

[2] See also Hayden 2003.

In absence of clear evidence, I find Lyons's recent paleodiagnosis of Reiter's syndrome more plausible and far more relevant to literary studies. Reiter's syndrome or reactive arthritis is an autoimmune disease, which mainly affects the patient's joints, eyes and urethra. Though unknown in Joyce's time, it provides a comprehensive framework to accommodate the spectrum of his lifelong complaints: though joint pains and eye diseases are common symptoms of both syphilis and Reiter's syndrome, the latter is usually triggered by genitourinary or gastrointestinal infections, which could explain Joyce's repeated gastritic pains. Furthermore, while syphilitic scleritis is rare—occurring in less than 5% of cases (Holland 2005, 1351)—eye inflammations characterize approximately half of people with reactive arthritis (NIAMS, "Reactive Arthitis").

I insist on eye involvement and visual deterioration, because I believe it should be the main focus of this kind of investigation in a continuum which links Joyce, his impairment and his being a writer "in the great filiation of the night that buries Homer and Joyce, Milton and Borges", as Jacques Derrida wrote (1998, 170). Roy Gottfried's *Joyce's Iritis and the Irritated Text* is just a first—and quite controversial—attempt at explaining the role of Joyce's deteriorating eyesight in the making of his palimpsestic manuscripts: as Gottfried explains, "The eyesight and the writing share a density, an opacity, that destabilizes the text; its surface, in turn, as the reader's object of sight, compromises the act of reading" (1995, 8).

I would also like to point out that the voice of the patient James Joyce is still often unheard, while the subjectivity of his long and complex illness experiences could spur interesting debates. A brief example can be found in *Giacomo Joyce*: the line "[t]he long eyelids beat and lift: a burning needle-prick stings and quivers in the velvet iris" (Joyce 1968, 1) beautifully evokes eye pain. It is worth remembering here that *Giacomo Joyce* was composed around the time of Joyce's first attack of iritis in 1907 (Ascaso and Bosch 2010). A better understanding of how Joyce coped with and made sense of his gradual sight loss could therefore profitably supplement our understanding of his works.

Along a different line of inquiry, other scholars believe that Joyce's attempts at studying medicine and his discomfort with medical authority have significantly influenced his aesthetics. If elements of clinical attitudes contribute to the naturalism of his short stories, medical debates and theories become objects of his creative examination, along with religion and language itself, in his later novels.

Two milestones in this critical tradition are the 2009 special issue of the *James Joyce Quarterly* on "Joyce and Physiology", edited by Vike Martina Plock, and her monograph *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity*, published in 2010. In one of the most illuminating articles in the journal special issue, Valérie Bénéjam explores Gustave Flaubert's influence on Joyce through the medium of a shared fascination with the medical, sometimes strictly anatomical, component of human existence, to conclude that:

> […] Joyce's project on Bloomsday is to turn the body inside out and establish an intimate, interpenetrative connection between physiology and literature. Moving beyond Flaubert's inheritance of medical realism as a cynical view of humanity, he soon developed a physiological concept of aesthetics, a new realism that could produce the insides without the invasive action of surgery (2009, 448).

This valuable insight into Joyce's own writing style exemplifies to what extent his interest in the relationship between literature and the medical sciences and his constant reliance on physiological metaphors are central to his aesthetics. They can be comprehensively grasped only thanks to analytical contributions from history of medicine or cultural studies of medicine, to name a few relevant disciplines.

Plock's monograph *Joyce, Medicine, and Modernity* represents the very first "dissection" of the Joycean corpus. This well-researched book complicates our understanding of Joyce's interest in medicine. Plock highlights that, on the one hand, he perceived medicine as a liberating scientific counterpoint to the Catholic doctrine, but, on the other hand, he was fully aware of the ideological impact of medicine and its prescriptive implications, which he criticizes, for example, in *Ulysses*:

> Medicine was associated and became synonymous with modernity and modernization. For Joyce, a historically conscious writer, medicine therefore formed part of the phenomenology of modernity that was the reference point for his experimental modernist writing. More important though, if medicine was associated with progress, improvement, and above all modernity, Joyce in writing *Ulysses*, the quintessential modernist novel, would not have hesitated to trade on medicine's cultural capital (2010, 23).

The awareness of this tension in Joyce's attitude towards the incorporation of medical themes and language in his fiction will facilitate a medi-

cal humanistic approach to "The Sisters". Critics agree on the foundational role of this short story within *Dubliners* and Lyons appropriately defines it "the most clinical of Joyce's stories" (2004, 375). Joyce had, of course, a standing interest in the analogy between the human body and the city, and both *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* rely on a negative physiological metaphor, which aligns a malfunctioning human body with a destitute society. Furthermore, Plock maintains that the author has a "diagnostic approach to the many ailments that paralyze his home town" (2010, 25).

In "The Sisters", Joyce offers a sophisticated and pathologized version of this underpinning motif. Right from his programmatic letter to his publisher Grant Richards, he describes his collection as centred around a specific metaphorical pathology: "My intention was to write a chapter of the moral history of my country and I chose Dublin for the scene because that city seemed to me the centre of paralysis" (*L* II, 134). Quite interestingly, the collection opens up with Father Flynn's case of literal paralysis, which then resonates throughout the book. Because of its multilayered symbolism, any critical assessment of "The Sisters" can only be tentative: it is my hope to contribute to the ongoing critical debate here with some reflections on the embodied construction of the character of Father Flynn.

However we interpret his relationship with the boy narrator, Father Flynn stands out as a controversial representative of the Church in the story: a learned man, troubled by the burdensome Catholic dogmas, maybe to the point of a softly-laughed apostasy in the privacy of his confessional-box. The first version of the story, published in the *Irish Homestead* in 1904, contains more details about the priest's childhood and we learn that "he was always a little queer" (Joyce 2000, 192): accordingly, Florence Walzl suggests a plausible diagnosis of schizophrenia, with depression and a breakdown in later life (1973, 379). Though silenced in the final version of the story, these elements did play a role in Joyce's creation of a character who was to experience what looks like a "transport", in Oliver Sacks's term: "a manifestation […] of unconscious or preconscious activity (or, in the mystically minded, of something 'spiritual')" (1986, 136), induced by abnormal neural function. Accordingly, Sacks inquires: "If God, or the eternal order, was revealed to Dostoevski in seizures, why should not other organic conditions serve as 'portals' to the beyond and the unknown?" (136). Along similar lines, Father Flynn's neuropathology might have shed light on problematic aspects of Catholicism and prompted his undogmatic spirituality.

Margot Norris maintains that, in the economy of *Dubliners*, "The Sisters" functions "as synecdoche, not for the book as a whole, but precisely for the book *as an un-whole* [...]" (2003, 18). In anticipation of the audacious narrative solutions in his later works, Joyce conveys this concept of "un-wholeness" through the oxymoronic embodied construction of Father Flynn. He is gradually deprived of his wholeness as a human being by three strokes, in parallel with his evolving religious disappointment that threatens the wholeness of his vocation. Paralysis is characterised here as partial loss of mobility, sensitivity and agency, and spreads from Father Flynn's body to other characters' in their reactions to his illness.[3] While contemplating the priest's demise, the boy is "filled with fear" (Joyce 2000, 3). Old Cotter's comments betray his stubborn bias. The Flynn sisters' simplistic resignation nullifies their brother's spiritual legacy. A perfect counterpart to the medicalized incipit "[t]here was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke" (3), the mystical final—"there was something gone wrong with him" (10)—summarizes the clergy's dismissal of Father Flynn; and with the same words the sisters dismiss the reader.

Father Flynn is by no means a modern wise fool. He is more of a paradoxical Christ-like figure, who bears on his body the signs and the consequences of his people's inertia.[4] A body constrained by permanent neurological damage, surrounded by other figures of metaphorical partiality, surrounded by moral gnomons. In the figure of Father Flynn, Joyce merges scientific and religious discourses with unprecedented efficacy, endowing his readers with a tangible, yet evocative representation of the Irish subjugation to the Catholic Church.

The case of "paralysis" demonstrates how an apparently "fearful" Greek word opens up a wide range of critical implications, further multiplied by the insertion of some medical understanding. For example, Waisbren and

[3] It is worth remembering here that Florence Walzl maintains that "paralysis is not a disease, but a symptom characteristic of a number of well defined medical conditions, none identified in the story. There is, therefore, a vacuum as to the specific cause of Father Flynn's various disabilities." (1973, 409)

[4] Though both underline Father Flynn's unsuitability for traditional priesthood, my interpretation here departs from Fritz Senn's, who claims that "[w]hile Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, healed men of paralytic diseases or restored them from death to life with effective words, here, in one paragraph, the word paralysis has the effect of destroying flesh and causing the death of a man who represents, impotently and failingly, Christ on earth." (1965, 69)

Walzl's hypothesis that Father Flynn has central nervous system syphilis—paralysis being a synonym of syphilitic paresis (or general paralysis of the insane) in Joyce's time—supports the depiction of a sexually deviant Father Flynn and of his corrupting influence upon the boy narrator (1974). On the contrary, Lyons' suggestion of generalized arteriosclerosis, which could have triggered Father Flynn's three strokes, highlights his senility and the idea that the priest we encounter in the story is a man who has undergone a complex maturation process (1974, 263).

Some knowledge of medical history and medical theories will also yield a more comprehensive appraising of Joyce's social criticism. Alongside the focus on Irishness and Catholicism, the possibility of discussing how Joyce accepted, rejected or negotiated late nineteenth-century medical debates and theories in his fiction is likely to foster inter-disciplinary reflections in literature classes and greatly extend students' awareness of the specific socio-cultural period.

Moreover, I would like to suggest that medical students, too, can benefit from reading Joyce, for example during those narrative medicine workshops provided by several medical schools in the US and in the UK. Rita Charon coined the term "narrative medicine" to define medicine practised with narrative competence. Narrative skills, such as the capacity to hear, discern, absorb and interpret stories, enhance clinical expertise (Charon 2006, 862). Now that professionals' emotional involvement is no longer perceived as an obstacle to their professionalism, empathy is encouraged as a way of improving clinical performance. Through fictional and semi-fictional narratives on medical themes, health professionals gain access to a multitude of experiences which expands their appreciation of what Oliver Sacks called "that quintessential human condition of sickness" (1986, IX).

While Joyce's extensive use of physiological metaphors can alert medical students to the interplay between medicine and other discourses in society, learning how to interpret those among his texts that challenge traditional modes of processing information can assist students of medical history-taking to refine their analysis of the often fragmentary narratives of patients. Dr Joseph Collins, a New York City neurologist, wrote in an early review of *Ulysses* that he had "learned more psychology and psychiatry from it than [he] did in ten years at the Neurological Institute" (1922). As Stephen L. Daniel highlights in "The Patient as Text", hermeneutical activity, which at first glance is mainly associated with humanistic inquiries, is in fact crucial in key phases of medical practice: diagnosis, prognosis and treatment selection (1986, 196).

In conclusion, I would argue that the medical component in Joyce's work calls for more medical informed readings. As I hope to have demonstrated, they could be profitably integrated in a variety of teaching modules and provide thought-provoking educational material. In addition, they are likely to enhance our appreciation of Joyce's creative process, as well as offer new, inter-disciplinary stimuli to approach the Joycean corpus.

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Emanuela Zirzotti

HAVE YOU EVER "SEEN" JOYCE? THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET IN THE POPULARIZATION OF THE MAN AND HIS WORK

What exactly do you mean by "read" Joyce?
Who can pride himself on having "read" Joyce?
Jacques Derrida, 'Two Words for Joyce'

Popular Joyce

In the opening sentence of his essay "Two Words for Joyce," Jacques Derrida reveals a common anxiety among Joyce scholars: "It is very late, it is always too late with Joyce" (1984, 145). The impression of belatedness of readers' responses to Joyce together with Derrida's definition of his own complex relationship with the Irish novelist's work—the reduction of his own critical writing to a mere "metonymic dwarf" (*Ibid.*, 149) of the gigantic Joycean *oeuvre*—convey the idea of the aura of respect which surrounds the figure of Joyce in the academic world. Hardly any traces of this *sacer horror*, however, can be detected in contemporary readers' responses to Joyce's work and in contemporary representations and reworkings of Joycean references: the "conscious Joyce"—as Vincent J. Cheng terms it, referring to "what Joyce means, if anything at all, in mass culture; Joyce in the popular consciousness" (1996, 180)—reflects a common negative attitude towards the hard task of reading and understanding Joyce's language: "the adjectives appropriate to the 'conscious Joyce' are various but mostly negative in connotation and attitude: obscure; obscene; esoteric; formidable; weird; degenerate; even insane" (*Ibid.*, 180).

In short, to paraphrase Cheng's words, James Joyce seems to get "no respect" (*Ibid.*, 180), since the abundance of intertextual references to his writings in heterogeneous contemporary cultural contexts may be some-

times perceived as a form of "parodic reduction", apt to exorcise the uneasiness which any approach to the Irish author commonly generates. Nonetheless, as Cheng aptly assesses, the variety of approaches, indeed the seeming disrespectfulness of some of them, indicates that Joyce "has come a long way in the popular consciousness": "If imitation and even parody are the sincerest forms of flattery, even if sometimes unacknowledged or perhaps unconscious […] Joyce is obviously getting a good deal of flattery and respect" (*Ibid.*, 192). So much so: paying homage to Joyce entails considering him not only as "a cultural figure within the popular culture of today", but as an *icon*, "whose uses in a postmodern age, within academy as well as without, have been polymorphous, if not downright perverse" (Kershner 1996, 1).

This paper thus looks to that branch of cultural studies which deals with the cross-fertilization of high culture and popular culture. It analyses the impact of Joyce's figure and works on some forms of contemporary mass culture such as the Internet and hypertext fiction, in the attempt both to assess to what extent popular culture uses (and/or misuses) literary tradition and to detect how the Internet challenges the meaning of "popular", particularly when used as a label to describe Joyce's work. My approach seeks to be in line with the recent British perspective on the subject, which, in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's view, considers modern culture as a single intertextual field, "whose signifying elements are perpetually being recombined and played off against each other [in] a growing interchange of forms" (quot. in Kershner 1996, 31). I will adopt the terms "popular culture" and "mass culture", purposefully disregarding any strict definition, though aware of the terminological debate which regards them. This debate aims at reconciling the dichotomy between high culture and popular culture imposed by advocates of modernism, and has attempted to free the term "mass culture" from any ideological and political connotations, carrying with them "the implication that homogeneous masses are being freely manipulated by someone or something" (Kershner 1996, 2). In my review of Joyce's appropriation by contemporary popular culture, the two terms overlap, viewed as they are in the same dialectical/dialogical relationship which links *élite* and popular cultures in his very work (Kershner 1989, 13), thus contributing, to the same extent, to Joyce's broad accessibility by means of general consumption items and the mass media.[1]

[1] I endorse Dominic Strinati's view of popular culture (one which he quotes from Hebdige's *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*—1988—and in which the terms "popular" and

Derek Attridge's explanation of the importance of refusing cultural hierarchies in order to grasp the underlying openness of Joyce's work may be of use in this context; the critic rightly assumes that

> by refusing the cultural hierarchies that most of his readers take for granted, Joyce builds a principle of accessibility into his work; or, to put it another way, there is a whole series of minority audiences, each of which has access to special knowledge that will illuminate one aspect of his writing, but no one of which occupies a privileged position *vis-à-vis* the text's meaning […] Above all, readers would have to give up the fundamental presupposition that reading is an attempt at textual mastery; that is, that the words on the page possess a meaning that can be got from them by the appropriate process of translation, a process that, if successful, entirely exhausts the text's potential meaning […] Acknowledging that texts are always in contexts, that contexts are always themselves contextualized, and that contexts are never exhaustible or predictable is one way of recognizing the inadequacy of the notion of reading as mastery (Attridge 1996, 24-25).

Of course, Attridge is touching on an issue dear to Joyce's readers who try to get to a definite meaning out of Joyce's texts, deeming to master both the man and his work. In particular, his notion of "contextualization" is most relevant here, in so far as it may be applied not only to the texts' interpretation, but also to the readers' perception of the author himself; since in a postmodern age the work of art—as Attridge states elsewhere—is open to the contingencies of the context which makes use of it:

> the fact that the work of art is experienced as a singular *event*, by an individual with specific (and changing) needs, expectations, memories, and associations, at a particular time and place, is not factored out as far as it is possible to do

"mass" cross) as "a set of generally available artefacts: films, records, clothes, TV programmes, modes of transport, etc." Popular culture "can be found in different societies, within different groups in societies, and among societies and groups in different historical periods. It is therefore not to have a strict and exclusive definition" (Strinati 2004, xvi). Perhaps, even distinguishing popular culture in folklore and mass culture according to the level of industrialization attained by modern societies—as some popular culture critics do, in Strinati's summary—would also be improper, since it would imply fixing the "form" of popular culture while denying both its energy and "its constant recycling and bending of the old to newly hybrid purposes" (Kershner 1996, 29).

> so […] but is factored *in* as an essential part of the work's mode of operation (Attridge 2000, 118).

The work of art appears as a "social event" whose fruition and interpretation are susceptible and responsive to the changes occurring within societies and social groups in time and space. Complex as they are, issues of contextualization, interpretation and appropriation are even more complicated in a period in which the web promotes and spreads new sets of ideas and values.[2] As a technology of free communication (and one which has—we may presume—a gradual "democratizing" effect on culture), the Internet provides "convenient, and often inexpensive, access to an unprecedented range of familiar and new kinds of material", thus requiring us to "move away from the 'linear' and hierarchical arguments privileged by print technologies towards postmodern, 'multivocal' networks of meaning" (Browner et al. 2000, 169-70). By imposing a redefinition of both the role of the readers (the whole host of "netizens," the socially and culturally varied group of citizens of the Internet, which form a substantial part of the contemporary reading public), who are empowered with new tools of analysis and interpretation—which obviously modify their "sense of what counts as a text" (*Ibid.*, 170)—and the presence (or absence) of the original author during the process of appropriation, the Internet enters the high culture/popular culture debate, dramatically modifying the meaning of "popular".

Cyber-Joyce

Joyce's ghost haunts the bits and pixels so insistently that reading Joyce in the 21st century necessarily implies "reading Joyce's work online", as attested by recent efforts to transpose Joyce's works digitally as hypertext and hypermedia fictions, which will be the object of my analysis. However, a

[2] In *The Internet Galaxy* (2001), Manuel Castells offers a lucid evaluation of the all-embracing presence of the Internet in modern societies and of its key role in determining and transforming the features of a particular context: "The Internet Galaxy is a new communicative environment. Because communication is the essence of human activity, all domains of social life are being modified by the pervasive uses of the Internet […]. A new social form, the network society, is being constituted around the planet, albeit in a diversity of shapes, and with considerable differences in its consequences for people's lives, depending on history, culture, and institutions" (quot. in Gupta 2009, 77).

discussion of the relationship the web creates with Joyce must include an appraisal of how the Internet appropriates the Irish author as an everlasting source of new imagery. In particular, the Internet exploits the "Joycean vein" to extract new visual images (from cartoons to strips to e-cards); hence, web artists follow the path traced by the earliest cartoonists dealing with Joyce, who often offered satirical accounts of his work focusing on the difficult task of coping with his language.[3] Interestingly enough, however, several contemporary web approaches to Joyce tend to concentrate more on the man than on his work, thus contributing to the consolidation of a "cyber-Joyce myth", which not only confirms Kershner's assessment of Joyce's iconicity but also accounts for the strong influence one's own reading of and response to a text have on the creation of a peculiar image of the author himself. As a result, the underlying mood of Joycean web representations varies according to the authors' particular experience of Joyce's texts and the extent to which James Joyce has penetrated their consciousness.

The analysis of web images appropriating the Irish author may start from a well-known and funny one: *The Creation of Joyce* by Eddie Maloney. It is a postmodern version of Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* in which Joyce's face is boldly set on Adam's body, in the act of receiving God's life-giving touch. The collage is far from being blasphemous since it offers, in my view, an excellent testimony of the meaning of the high culture/popular culture dialogical relationship I have described above. On a higher level, the visual fusion of Joyce and Adam may establish a connection between the two figures and also with God, since the three of them are associated with the performative energy of the "word," though in different ways. God's creation, in fact, is originated by language, His well-known "fiat lux" setting the pattern of His creative act. Adam himself uses lan-

[3] American cartoonist Dan Schiff, for example, gives an account of a drawing appeared in *Dublin Opinion* in January 1924, that Joyce himself described to his brother Stanislaus as "the first caricature of *Ulysses* [he] saw." In a prison cell, an annoyed convict is handing a bulky volume to the warden. The dialogue between the two is set in the caption and it takes a hit at Joyce's book: the perplexed warden wonders what else the prisoner wants, since he has been taken off hard labour and received Joyce's *Ulysses* to read; the convict replies decisively "More oakum!" (Schiff 1992, 202). After only a couple of years since the book's appearance, the common reader could sympathize with the convict's feeling: reading Joyce represented a harder task than hard labour. Schiff himself has contributed extensively to Joyce's re-creation in the visual arts by self-publishing in 1996 his own collection of Joyce cartoons, *Let's All Chortle: A James Joyce Cartoonbook*. Some of his sketches are available online in the electronic journal *Hypermedia Joyce Studies* (http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/archives/v2/schiff/index.html).

guage to master the world around him: his very act of naming living things represents a creative act on a different level, since it implies giving life to things as we know them. Finally, as a master appropriator of language, and one who is always conscious of the wide range of potentialities of the written word, Joyce is able to experiment with English and other languages (Epstein 1983, 58) without submitting to any of them. Like Adam, Joyce gives life to the world of his own imagination through his semiotic way of dealing with things.

The fruitful convergence of high and popular culture emerges more clearly (and, perhaps, more surprisingly) in a recent appropriation of Maloney's image, which is worth noting here. The March 15, 2008 post of *Neidin's Weblog* opens with a picture slightly—but significantly—modifying Maloney's *Creation* with a touch of "additional blasphemy": just behind the two hands that hardly touch, in that blank space between God and Joyce-Adam, Ireland's patron saint makes his appearance in green Episcopal apparel, pastoral and mitre (just as he appears in popular iconography), his own hand stretching out to join the two in front of him as if he wanted to have his share in the creation and also as if he were blessing the union. Indeed, however perplexing, St. Patrick's inclusion in the picture reveals the relationship which binds the three figures on the level of language, evangelization being one of the effects of the energy of the "word". The visual effect is astounding: distinct and one at the same time, God, Joyce and St. Patrick are attached to the same root, just like the three leaves of the shamrock to their stem. The post is significantly titled "Thirteen pieces of advice on St. Patrick's Day" and the blogger (an Irish woman living in Brisbane, Australia) is at pains to explain that St. Patrick's Day as they understand it outside Ireland "is not the St. Patrick's Day of Ireland" and that "not everybody is Irish on St. Patrick's Day"; in particular, she recommends people to "read some Irish poetry before setting out, or Joyce," because they "[get] one in the mood". Thus, religion, literature and folklore smartly blend in one compressed and inclusive view of Ireland, or (rather, in the light of the blogger's instructive pieces of advice) of how Ireland is *perceived* by non-Irish eyes.

Joyce's craftsmanship with language is emphasized in *James Joyce*, a black and white drawing by Pohlenz, uploaded on Toonpool.com—a German website that displays among its portfolios an ample folder with several "famous people cartoons"—on January 8, 2008. The information accompanying the cartoon should be read in sequence with the title; it runs as fol-

lows: "destroying and re-building language". The peculiarity of the cartoon (indeed of the site itself) lies in its being a commodity to be freely shared among the site guests and posted as a link on social networks. Moreover, it can be sent as an e-card to all the contacts on one's mailing list, thus spreading Joyce's "gospel" even to a non-academic audience. Pohlenz's version of Joyce's commitment to language falls within that familiar Joyce iconography which depicts the Irish author wearing a pair of round glasses and a fedora, thus making him a clearly recognizable figure. However, the cartoonist adds an uncommon touch: Joyce is represented as a mason, holding a brick and a trowel, his back leaning against a freshly built capital "J". In the background other bits of brickwork words can be discerned. Joyce seems so fixed in what he is doing that he is not able to notice what is going on at the foot of the "J", where a tiny figure, half Joyce half goblin, is caught in the very act of destrying the mason's creation. One may presume that the goblin figure stands for something more than Joyce's alter ego: it may suggest either the Joyce reader or the Joyce critic, involved in the act of "destroying" language during the interpretive process which should lead them to a full understanding of Joyce's work.

Not surprisingly, some of the images deal with that painful sensation often associated with reading Joyce, that "mixed feeling" of being inflicted a sort of corporal punishment and the frustration at not being able to grasp meanings entirely. Interestingly, however, those sketches do not simply depict the frustration of students and scholars: they also deal with the hard task of "teaching" Joyce to unexperienced young people. The cartoons I have chosen here (both appearing on the Cartoonstock.com website) represent a brilliant example of how the "conscious Joyce" finds in the Internet an excellent mode of expression. Wilbur Dawbarn's sketch is set in a professors' lounge; a man has just entered the room, one hand covering his face in a desperate gesture. The caption relates the character's words and helps the viewer understand his role: he is a professor of English literature who has just introduced Joyce's work to his class. The outcome is unpredictable and depressing: "New career low—gave out a page of *Ulysses* to my freshmen and they thought it was a wordsearch." To a generation of readers, used to receiving explicit messages from mass media, Joyce's language appears obscure, esoteric, his words apparently meaningless; therefore the Irish author is dismissed as a riddle no one really cares to solve. Different scene, same underlying mood: cartoonist Chris Wildt confers on another academic character the right to comment on a student's review of *Ulysses*. The character

ironically stresses the "originality" of the student's interpretation, which, as a matter of fact, in spite of shedding light on the book, clarifies that unkind dismissal of Joyce described above: "Interesting take on *Ulysses* by James Joyce. I've never heard stream-of-consciousness narrative described as 'one long Twitter'." The capital "t" in "Twitter" is, I assume, relevant in this context, since it transposes the word to the semantic field which is proper to the Internet, Twitter being one the most popular social networking and microblogging systems available nowadays. Once again, the Internet proves a profitable mass-marketplace where high culture items can be traded, sometimes providing good bargains. These two Joycean sketches are part of a collection of cartoons that can be bought as such or as decorative elements on a series of artefacts of consumption (such as t-shirts, umbrellas and mugs) which anyone might use in their everyday life. Thanks to e-commerce, Joyce is no longer limited to the bookshelves.

The Joycean web appropriations sometimes reflect the remarkable attraction that the "dark side" of Joyce's language and life exerts on his readers and that has won him a reputation of obscenity, indecency or morbidity. The Internet intrudes upon Joyce's privacy and eagerly exploits his letters to Nora. The images resulting from the reworking of the original text offer an amusing account of the writer's sexual tastes;[4] at the same time they depict the readers' bewilderment towards such letters. One wonders if such a reaction grows out of the discovery that Joyce was not simply a *name* but a *real* human being, after all. The sketch I have selected is particularly interesting in this context since it exemplifies how the contemporary Joyce reader exploits the Internet as a communication tool and as an easy access to his works. In addition, it refers to the possibility of transposing Joyce's letters to Nora into another form, one which, in its immediacy and extreme accessibility, could reach the widest possible reading public: graphic storytelling. It is a four panel strip, posted in a blog in 2009 and bearing a significant title, *History Mysteries*, which does not make the message of the strip any clearer but probably deals with the mysterious ways in which history and literature affect the reader's imagination. The protagonist is presumably a cartoonist and is chatting with a friend of hers, who suggests she should "do a comic" about Joyce's letters. She accepts willingly, but first of all she

[4] See, for example, Robert Goodin's illustration for the New York Press "Joyce getting a face full of fart" (2008, available at www.comicartcollective.com), showing James Joyce's face in ecstasy in front of Nora's bottom.

has to "look those up"; thus, she uses the Internet to access to some online library and get all the material she needs, just like canonical researchers do. The third panel shows her astonished (or, to say it better, disgusted) face fixing the screen, her eyes almost popping out of her head; a reader's reaction to Joyce's explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse could not be better depicted. Apparently, she abandons the project, but it is too late: Joyce's ghost has already penetrated her consciousness, albeit only to haunt her sleepless nights. Thus, in the very last panel another version of the "conscious Joyce" appears: Joyce the "pervert" peeps from a balloon, sneering at the poor cartoonist, and trying to lure her with promising words ("I wrote you a letter"). We cannot but sympathize with our heroine, whose desperate appeal voices many a reader's distress when trying to give sense to Joyce's words: "Get away from me James Joyce". Literature moves through the web in mysterious ways indeed: what the Internet user sees when hitting on the strip is a postmodern graphic reworking of Joyce's "dirty" words. Of course, while it does not respond to the protagonist's abandoned original project of a graphic novel version, it proves more effective in alluding to them rather than in quoting them.

Visual *Ulysses*

The character's trauma in the closing panel of *History Mysteries* offers a good example of how the Joycean text sometimes affects the reader's mind, thus contributing to the creation of what Vincent J. Cheng terms "the Joycean Unconscious", a "culturally constructed consciousness of Joyce and his texts in the psyche of our mass culture" (1996, 182).[5] Moreover, in proposing a feasible re-elaboration of Joyce's work in graphic novel form, the strip also testifies to a recent trend in the creative interpretive approach to the Joycean text. I am referring in particular to the adaptation of *Ulysses* in graphic novel form for the web by the *Throwaway Horse* team, whose

[5] In his essay, Cheng refers in particular to the impact of Joyce's works on other mass culture forms of consumption, pointing out how embedded references to Joyce's work in some famous Hollywood movies and in popular songs have the advantage of "get[ting] high school students interested in Joyce" (192), thus spreading the "Joycean word" and making it more attractive even for a non-academic audience. His definition may be profitably applied to the Joycean images on the web, insofar as, weird as they may appear, they grip the audience's attention and confirm the commitment of contemporary mass culture to our author.

goal is "fostering understanding of public domain literary masterworks by joining the visual aid of the graphic novel with the explicatory aid of the Internet" (Reid 2010), thus pointing out the essential role of the Internet in the popularization of canonical literary texts. Indeed, as artist Robert Berry admits in the "About this comic" section of the site, *Ulysses "Seen"* (an ambitious project available at www.ulyssesseen.com and aiming at reworking the whole novel at a rate of two chapters a year—Reid 2010) is meant as a complement to the experience of *reading* the novel and as such it does not claim to replace it.[6]

The site may be considered a graphic version of "axial hypertext," as David Ciccoricco terms it, indicating a "translation of conventional print texts into digital text, a form of organization in which references, variant readings, and other supplements to the main text radiate from it in the manner of branches from a tree" (2007, 5). In fact, readers can both enjoy Berry's graphic adaptation as it is, without interrupting the linearity of reading, or click on panels (or on links appearing on top of every page) and be redirected to Mike Barsanti's "Reader's guide". Barsanti's guide proves a very useful tool for fostering first-hand readers' understanding of Joyce's novel insofar as it provides references to the corresponding lines in the Gabler's edition of *Ulysses* for every webpage and explains the panels, shedding light on Joyce's literary allusions and historical references and on key concepts of his poetics; moreover, the text is interspersed with hypertextual links and keywords readers can click on in order to delve into the themes Barsanti anticipates. The structure of the guide shows how powerful and empowering a tool the Internet is: Barsanti's analysis is followed by a blog section where users are exhorted to comment on the drawings, give their feedback, or post whatever they feel consistent with the general theme of the page, thus actively contributing to the development of the project. The general impression is one of a constant contact between different users and between users and the *Throwaway Horse* team, a contact which generates a flow of new, stimulating ideas.

Ulysses "Seen" opens with a full page panel depicting a view of Dublin Bay and Martello Tower, Sandycove, an "establishing shot" indicating where

[6] The print and the web texts are curiously related in their being a "publishing event" of their days. *Throwaway Horse*, in fact, encountered severe opposition on part of Apple when *Ulysses "Seen"* was proposed as an application for the iPad because of some nudity (the milkwoman's breasts and Mulligan's penis). Media attention and the reading public pressure were so strong that finally Apple relented and accepted the app (Reid 2010), which came out in 2011.

the action takes place and visualizing the complex set of overlapping references that run through the novel; as Mike Barsanti explains:

> [A] castle overlooking the sea: Hamlet. A castle with a view a port for leaving the island: the Odyssey. And it ties out to a moment [in] Joyce's life, and a moment in Irish history as well. A perfect "overdetermined" multiple overlaying of the personal, the literary, the historical […] and we haven't even talked about the religious elements… and we're just getting started! (http://ulyssesseen.com/landing/2009/04/telemachus-2/)

The panel exemplifies how the artist's imagination has worked to fill the descriptive gaps of the novel (as Berry affirms, *Ulysses* represents Mount Everest for a cartoonist: "[t]he imagery, the phrasing; Joyce wasn't that visual and we didn't take out much of the text"), in the attempt "to capture the book['s] plasticity of time" (Reid 2010). The artist's ability in handling his material and his effort to render that sense of plasticity of time through evocative images unfold in particular when it comes to giving form to Stephen Dedalus' thoughts and recollections. I would like to focus on Berry's adaptation of Stephen's recollection of his dead mother (*U*, 1.102-10, 249-79), an episode the artist lingers over, devoting three full pages to it, thus pointing out its obsessiveness for the protagonist.

A constant feature in the graphic novel, relevant fragments of the original text appear in captions written in the panels, to create a perfect continuum of words and images. Much more than this: the comics form allows one to reproduce the overlapping of narrative past and present in its immediacy in panels which are not distinguished by different frames or any other graphic expedient. Hence, in the very last panels of the pages depicting Stephen's recollection, Berry brings the reader back to the present, shifting to Stephen's pale face (p. 0026), or to his darkened half-length silhouette, standing where we met him first, on top of Martello Tower (p. 0027). Following Joyce's lines, May Dedalus' presence is only hinted at, thus stressing the will to adhere to the original as much as possible; the artist pauses upon the objects that Stephen identifies with his mother (a fan, some powdered ball carnets, a "gaud of amber beads") or that belong to May Dedalus' memories ("a birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl," p. 0027), depicting them in detail. Even when she comes to Stephen in a dream, May Dedalus is identified by objects (the beads her dead hands clasp, or the cameo brooch on her neck). Never does the artist offer a real close-up of her face, never does the reader get a view

of those "glazing eyes" that "shake and bend" Stephen's soul: her image is fragmented, blurred, disturbing. The viewer almost feels the pressure of her gaze on Stephen's bent head and perceives her ghostly presence, as if she were not there to haunt the protagonist only. One cannot but sympathize with Stephen's exasperated dismissal of her, which, in Berry's version ("No, mother. Let me be and live"), omitting the second "let me" of the original text ("No, mother! Let me be and let me live" *U*, 1.279), sounds strangely as a command to her to "live her own life" while leaving her son alone (p. 0028).

The *Throwaway Horse* project, as well as the brief roundup of Joycean web images that I have offered, show to what extent the act of appropriation and re-elaboration both of the bulk of Joycean work and concepts and of the Joyce figure through the Internet narrows the gap between low- and high-profile cultures. Hierarchies no longer exist: re-contextualized as he is in the new media, Joyce enters "the popular conscious at subconscious, subliminal levels" (Cheng 1996, 181), exerting his attraction on whoever happens to cross his path. In representing a strong imaginative resource for our own time, the "cyber-Joyce" may stand for a good starting point to transform persisting opinions regarding the inaccessibility of Joyce's work to an ordinary reader. Joyce's representations on the web respond to the main principles of the appropriation technique. Despite the heterogeneity, irreverence, and even "perversity" in the way it rethinks the Irish author as a new cultural product, the web activates and reactivates Joyce's canonical status as a writer,[7] while at the same time giving evidence of his public availability and relevance to a wide audience.

Back to Derrida, then, the reinterpretation of Joyce's works and figure through mass culture forms of consumption shows that maybe it is not always too late: the scenario of the contemporary cultural market dealing with Joyce, as I have tried to depict it, testifies to a constant effort to read Joyce in new, contemporary perspectives, and to come to terms with his legacy. In this way, he has finally become our contemporary. Perhaps.

[7] "Adaptations and appropriations prove complicit in activating and reactivating the canonical status of certain texts and writers, even when the more politicized appropriation may be seeking to challenge that very status" (Sanders 2006, 22).

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Patricia Pericic

THE LIMITS TO LITERATURE IN *ULYSSES* IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Fundamental to understanding the limits to being in relation to literature in the 21st century is James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In this text, Stephen Dedalus questions the nature of existence as he searches for an origin in the space of literature. Indeed, Stephen demands to know who signs what in the name of the word as he encounters the thought of absence following his mother's death. The thought of absence leads him to step outside the self and compare his disposition with Hamlet's encounter with absence. The subject's inquiry into the name that remains unfolds into a negative dialogic of thought as he is not able to uncover an origin in the text as the truth is not to be found. Hence, Stephen becomes afflicted with the impossibility of knowing his maker that calls his being into question. His being before affliction begs one to ask, how it is possible to respond faithfully to the question of being in lieu of the problem of separation that exists in relation to being before the word. Maurice Blanchot's work on the "limit-experience" will help to shed light on Stephen's being that presents the dialogical thought of being before alterity (2003, 202-217). Also, Blanchot's work on the Jewish ethic of separation in "being Jewish" will help shed light on Stephen's ethical exegesis as he confronts the limits to being in literature (*Ibid.*, 123-130). Iran B. Nadel asserts that while "for some, Joyce as a 'Jew' may only be an alluring myth" for "others, it is a key to understanding his life" and indeed his work on being that stands in relation to the word (1996, 242).

Following his mother's death, Stephen puts his being into question as he turns around and looks for an answer to the final question of being, being before death, as he begs to know: "Who chose this face for me? This dogsbody to rid of vermin" (*U*, 6). The subject demands to know the answer to the first question of being in genesis as he questions existence in the face of absence when all there is is the word. He turns "around to look at what exists before" in the word when all that is left behind is the

dead corpus of the thing missing (Blanchot 1995, 327). Likewise, Blanchot calls being into question as he searches for an origin in the word in his work on the limit-experience. Ostensibly, he affirms "something like a new origin" seen as a "gift [...] (that) affirms Presence without anything being present" in the being at the limit, caught between the clandestine of being between two thoughts, being and nothing (2003, 209). This radical thought stems from the limit experience that is the "response that man encounters when he has decided to put himself radically in question. This decision involving all being expresses the impossibility of ever stopping, where it be at some consolation or some truth" (*Ibid.*, 204). Blanchot proceeds to argue that this "movement of contestation that traverses all of history" is a refusal to stop and believe or "entrusts himself to an absolute term (God, Being, the Good, Eternity, Unity)" because in each case he "disavows" presence itself (*Ibid.*, 204). The refusal of unity begins with the experience of language as man confronts an essential lack in nothing that always comes in question.

From this perspective, Stephen is stigmatised by the affliction of death as he begins to question the origin of the word that fails to embody the real truth. In turn, Haines asks Stephen if he is a believer as he calls him into question from the outside: "You're not a believer, are you [...] I mean, a believer in the narrow sense of the word, Creation from nothing and miracles and a personal God" (*U*, 16). Haines proceeds to interrogate Stephen as he asks him if he believes in the name of God itself: "Either you believe or you don't, isn't it. Personally I couldn't stomach the idea of a personal God" (*U*, 17). Stephen confesses that Haines must see him as an "example of free thought". This liberal thought begins to emerge in the subject's dual way of thinking as he sees himself as being between the "servant of two masters [....] English and an Italian" (*U*, 17). Emerging from the British language and the Roman Catholic Church, Stephen perceives he is divided. However, he also recognises something other that cannot be accounted for in his understanding of being that is seen as being separated by thought. The question of what is present in the word looms in the background as Stephen is compared to Friedrich Nietzsche who also criticised truth in the moral sense as he depicted being as nothing more than a "mobile of army of metaphors" (1976, 47). So too, Stephen faces a parade of letters seen soldiering "across the page the symbols moved in grave morrice in the mummery of their letters, wearing quaint caps of squares and cubes" (*U*, 23).

It should be noted that Stephen is told by Deasy that there is darkness in Jewish eyes, which is comparable with Stephen's dark gaze of negativity. In his work on the question of language in relation to being Jewish, Blanchot asks: "Is there not in Judaism a truth that is [...] important for the thought of today—even if this thought challenges every principle" (Blanchot 2003, 124). He states that Jewish thought begins with Abraham's ethical decision to separate the self in the movement of exodus, byway of "stepping outside" which fathoms a "just relation" (*Ibid.*, 124). This just relation begins with "the exigency of uprooting: the affirmation of nomadic truth. In this Judaism stands in contrast to paganism", meaning to be "fixed" (*Ibid.*, 124). Blanchot recognises a critical justice for the "people without a land and bound by a word" (*Ibid.*, 125). Indeed, the incomprehensible malediction of affliction stages the Jewish presence of non-presence. Thus being Jewish is a being that is seen without origin, as the origin is "a decision to separate the self" and to affirm that being exists as a foreigner that answers an ethical truth (*Ibid.*, 126). This ethical exegesis teaches that negativity finding justice in separation and righteousness is the positive aspect of man's creative co-operation with God. The Jewish God is perceived as pure spirit that "conceives man as having been chosen" as a partner for fulfilment of creation and that the gift of speech and hearing" alone is proof on an all-seeing and all-hearing providence (Epstein 1990, 138).

It is here, in genesis so to speak, that Blanchot formulates the notion of the limit-experience. In genesis "the first words that come to Adam from on high after he has lapsed" are "'Where are you?' It falls to God to express the pre-eminent human question: 'Where is man?'—as though, in some sense, there had to be a God speaking a human language, so that the depth of the question concerning us is handed over to language" (Blanchot 2003, 128). Here emerges a problem for being in relation with a presence that remains at a distance, at a limit. Man's relation with language is according to Blanchot an "impossible relation", and this thought runs head on with the philosophy of negative theology once "what is disappears in what names it" (*Ibid.*, 128). Here, Blanchot's work on negativity extends beyond Jewish thought as the subject's experience with language is seen as being doubly negative, as he incorporates Hegel's thought of death. He argues: "Language is of a divine nature, not because it renders eternal by naming, but because, says Hegel, 'it immediately overturns what it names in order to transform it into something else,' saying of course only what is not, but precisely in the name of this nothingness that dissolves all things, it being the becoming of

speech" in negativity (*Ibid.*, 35). Thus, what is present disappears into what names presence. Indeed Stephen faces' this very problem as he too searches for an origin of truth in Shakespeare's dead name itself.

Beginning with the word, in the Library, Stephen searches for a prior truth as he questions the nature of being in relation to literature. He states that literary:

> Art has to reveal to us ideas, formless spiritual essences. The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring. The painting of Gustave Moreau is the painting of ideas. The deepest poetry of Shelley, the words of Hamlet bring our mind into contact with the eternal wisdom (*U*, 152).

In retrospect, like Nietzsche, Joyce's central experience, as for Romanticism, is concerned with "man's degradation by capitalism, which tended to reduce everything to the mode of the thing" (Blanchot 2003, 142). In his work on the death of God, Nietzsche does not aim, at the "personal phenomena of unbelief" but a challenge of putting to test his trust in humanism seen in negative thought, as Blanchot notes (*Ibid.*, 142). He argues that Nietzsche recognised being freed from "the ideal of some absolute meaning conceived on the model of God, it is man who must create the world and above all create meaning. An immense task, intoxicating task" (*Ibid.*, 143). This task is perceived in the "overman" Joyce adopts in his approach to creation (Davidson 1998, 111). It is in the image of the overman that leads man to surpass himself (Blanchot 2003, 143). The overman is the extreme negation of nihilism, the man that confronts the void in being, in negative thought as he overcomes absence. Blanchot argues that the "overman is he in whom nothingness makes itself will and who, free for death, maintains this pure essence of will in willing nothingness" (*Ibid.*, 148). So too, Epstein argues that man's relationship with God, grounds all knowledge, in the "first instance, intellectual" that includes all "physical and metaphysical sciences—logic, philosophy, medicine [...] which leads to true perception of the being and the essence of God" (1990, 212). By acknowledging being in relation to absence one can justify all relations seen in all.

The limits to knowledge are put to the test as Stephen faces the thought of absence as he is compared to Hamlet's being before the dead ghost.

> In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath bent over

him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wet ashes. Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone [...] all prayed on their knees [...] Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! No, mother! Let me be and let me live (*U*, 9).

Interlaced with these observations, Stephen calls the dead ghost into question as he demands to know who signs what in the remains of Hamlet's dead father: "What is a ghost? Stephen said with tingling energy. One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence" (*U*, 154). The emphasis on absence proceeds as Stephen repeats the question in search of an origin: "Who is the ghost [...] Who is King Hamlet?" (*U*, 154) In lieu of the problem of separation, Joyce foresees Blanchot's dialogic of negativity which coincides with Stephen mimicking Hamlet as he turns to his father, Shakespeare, for a possible answer to question being as he demands to know the answer to the final question in search of an origin: "Is it possible that the player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence, and in vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son's name" (*U*, 155). Nadel argues that Joyce uses the play of Jewish "Maieutic reading" to interrogate the text while "closely studying the language" (1996, 108). Indeed, Stephen searches backward like a crab, interrogating the text, while trying to retrace a prior presence in *Hamlet*. However, all that is left behind is the name in the text where meaning is reconstructed within the boundaries of the re-reading doubling. Hence, there is a sense of a repetition unfolding in the narrative as one name haunts the second, as Shakespeare replaces Hamlet in the search for a prior truth in the word.

To understand Stephen's exegesis, the double act of conception is conceived in the dialogic of death and destruction. Blanchot states that language implies a metaphysic, in order to say, "This woman" for example; one must first "annihilate her" (Blanchot 1995, 322). The absence of the thing is transferred to the presence of language that substitutes being: "The word is the absence of that being, its nothingness, what is left of it when it has lost being" (*Ibid.*, 323). Hence language is understood as the corpse of negativity that embodies the absence of the thing in the trace of the memory. This negative conception of language allows being to establish presence in the blank space because "we cannot do anything with an object that has no name" (*Ibid.*, 322). Likewise, Jacques Derrida argues that "God separated himself from himself in order to let us speak [...] negativity in God is our freedom" (1978, 67). Freedom is embodied in the gift to humanity which

allows man to create presence. This thought runs in accord with Nietzsche who regards the world of man as the text that is open to infinite interpretation. Blanchot notes Nietzsche's "play of endless discontinuity" in "perpetual redoubling" (2003, 164). He recognises that in interpretation there is the source of becoming into existence (Nietzsche 1990, 31). While Nietzsche regards the act of interpretation as being multiple he disregards the "who" that interprets. Blanchot, however, does not, as he questions the world of the text that refuses all unity in the text: "text back to text that refers the world back to affirmation of the world" that is not (2003, 167).

The infinite thought of negativity is put into play as Stephen falls pray to "things that were not" as he too repeatedly questions an origin in "possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known". Indeed, "Coffined thoughts" surround his being in "mummycases" as he tries to prove that Shakespeare is Hamlet (*U*, 159). The question of being is described as a double material cloth, or textile tissue that Derrida compares to language: "if *text* [*texte*] means *cloth* [*tissue*]: the word *texte* is derived from the Latin *textus*, meaning cloth (*tissu*), and from *texere*, to weave (*tisser*); in English we have *text*" (1978, xii). Stephen pre-empts Derrida's myriad of intertextuality as he foresees the word shuffle as a double:

> As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, Stephen said, from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image [...] my body has been woven of new stuff time after time, so through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unloving son looks forth. (*U*, 159-160)

By stepping outside the self, Stephen recognises the movement of separation that casts a different perspective on being as he proceeds to argue that the mind in the "intense instant of imagination [...] Shelley says, is a fading coal, that which I was is that which I am and that which in possibility I may come to be. So in future [...] I then shall be" (*U*, 160). Stephen's method of reversing perspectives evokes an ethical strategy seen in his vision of stepping outside the self in the act of separation and difference.

Seen in this light, the subject foresees positions reflected back not only from his own perspective but he is able to judge difference in being an absent presence. This stance stands close to Blanchot's thought on the limit-experience because the subject is witness to being "between two" separated. This logic opens up thought at both ends. Hence, in the movement of de-

flection, Stephen questions plural perspectives as he responds to a double movement that exceeds common measure. He states that: "there can be no reconciliation […] if there has not been a sundering" (*U*, 160). Hence the strategy of breaking up the text via separation paves the way for opening up the reading of being multiple. He states that "all sides of life should be represented" as the narrator brings the reader to the image of sacrifice: "He Who Himself begot, middler the Holy Ghost, and Himself sent himself, Agenbuyer, between Himself and others, Who, put upon by His fiends, stripped and whipped, was nailed to a bat to barndoor, starved on crosstree, Who let Him bury, stood up, harrowed hell" (*U*, 162). The image of death can also be compared to the act of reading intertextual references of being in relation to language as creator faces destruction. The subsequent, reversal of perspectives in the dialogue between text and reader perceives old "nobodaddy" at the limit "unknown".

> Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the Madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably [...] like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood [...] subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him? (*U*, 170)

Clearly, what is at stake in the subject's relation with separation from the maker is non-knowledge itself. Stephen recognises the impossibility of the dialectical reversal as he faces the creator separate to the name of the father. He recognises that "being is an empty fiction", as he follows Nietzsche's strategy of breaking up relations through separation and negativity as he searches for a hidden truth (1990, 46). This reversal is according to Blanchot, "the principle feature of the new sciences. Foucault significantly calls it the redoubling of the empirical into the transcendental. Redoubling-repetition-is the important word here" (Blanchot 2003, 249). It is possible to compare the thought of redoubling with Stephen's interpretation of his being seen in the image of the dead. However, his dark gaze that recognises the self in the piece of fiction remains unknown apart from the work. Blanchot goes further into his inquiry into the relationship between being and language as he asks: "How is the 'repetition' that opens this very possibility itself possible? How can the empirical redouble itself and, in so doing, be-

come possibility? To say this differently, how does rebeginning—the non-origin of all that begins—found a beginning?" (2003, 249). Pertinent to this question is the fact that not only is God displaced when we go looking for him, but "where is man when we encounter a man?" (*Ibid.*, 249). Both are absent in the form of an alterity that cannot reduce being to nothing. Being refuses to remain silent in the space of language.

It is precisely the space of language that is put on trial as Stephen singles out "names" in his search for an origin. He proceeds to interrogate the word that is lacking: "what's in a name? That is what we ask ourselves in childhood when we write the name that we are told is ours" (*U*, 172). The critic uses the dialogical practice of reversal and displacement to justify his position in relation to the limit: "He has hidden his own name, a fair name, William, in the plays, a super hero here, a clown there, as a painter of old Italy set his face in a dark corner of his canvas" (*U*, 172). Hence, Hamlet, the black prince, is also seen as "Hamnet Shakespeare" as the subject steps outside the self to question the real author. However, each time the position is reversed the question remains unanswered because truth is seen "midway". Stephen argues that ultimately, he is all in all: "The boy of act one is the mature man of act five. All in all. In Cymbeline, in Othello he is bawd and cuckold. He acts and is acted on" (*U*, 174). Ironically, each time Stephen makes a comparison, he interrupts the relation that is "without reference to the same" as "language now represents. It does not exist, but functions" as Blanchot would say (2003, 257). Therefore in this thought itself literature turns away from what it names in the "reverberation of space opening to the outside" as the limits to experience spill outwards, anterior to the text without content that affirms itself in relation to infinity.

The revelation of being in relation to infinity as perceived by Joyce heralds the affirmation of presence that returns in the difference of repetition that unwinds itself. Stephen sums up this "unworking" of negativity" that exceeds the limits to being a unified presence, in the life which stands in relation to all (*Ibid.*, 205).

> Every life is many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves. The playwright who wrote the folio of this world [...] (and the) hangman god, is [...] all in all in all of us, ostler and butcher, and would be bawd [...] (and even seen as) wife unto himself (*U*, 175).

There is little doubt that Eglinton fails to comprehend Stephen's negative philosophy that sees a fragment not part of all, as the subject maintains a dark gaze in his refusal to believe in the word. The word is "not" being. He cries out: "I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief [...] Who helps to believe? Egomen. Who to unbelieve? Other chap" (*U*, 176). Stephen's ethical exegesis remains faithful to the question of language he sees in the open play of fragmentation. He is ultimately left standing with no relation even to himself. Blanchot states that "Nietzsche's project of tearing apart—the breaking up—of Dionysus [...] in the discontinuous" is a play with the text seen as a sign of overcoming the absence in being (Blanchot 2003, 157). Here too, "fragmentation is this god himself, that which has no relation whatsoever with a centre and cannot be referred to an origin" (*Ibid.*, 157). Indeed, Stephen confronts the extreme limit to being as he overturns being in language as he interrogates the name that refuses to speak back. The subject encounters the limit to presence that is fundamental to the subject's displaced position that occupies a dual existence, situated between being and nothingness, at the limit. Ironically, the limit reveals the lack of an origin as the text keeps "unworking" itself, revealing something that cannot be accounted for in the silence that calls Stephen into question. His response seen in the strict refusal to unity maintains pure negation in negativity that carves up being open to the thought of becoming exterior into infinity itself.

Joyce's contribution to the field of knowledge is invaluable for scholars of the 21st century because he gives us an insight not only into the power of death and negativity seen in Stephen's theorising Hamlet's dead ghost, but he also gives us an insight into the limits of literature itself. By reading critically and reading ethically, Joyce recognises being is twofold, infinitely separated from God. Hence the task of creation is left to man to work on in the space of literature that is seen as the gift to being in relation to humanity, a huge ethical task. He takes the risk of challenging the thought of being as he questions the word. In doing so, he reveals the creative act of negation that unfolds in the theme of separation pertinent to Jewish thought. Indeed, by stepping outside the self to the exterior, being the subject is able to justify relations seen in the image of the other. He reveals that infinite separation is union with the infinite. Moreover, infinite thought exposed in the redoubling effect shows the limitless possibilities of becoming otherness. The fragmentation of being leads to the multiplicity of being seen from a myriad of textual positions that always return to the same question, the question of being. Admittedly, the desire to know who signs the text

remains in the clandestine unworking of the word that is forbidden knowledge. However, Joyce's ethical strategy shows a just critical literary model that can be adopted for future readings of being a gift in relation to literature in the 21st century.

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ULYSSES BACKED AGAINST THE SEA: TAIWAN'S ALTERNATIVE MODERNITY IN WANG WEN-HSING'S *BACKED AGAINST THE SEA*

I. James Joyce's influence on Wang Wen-hsing: a comparative study of *Ulysses* and *Backed Against the Sea*

James Joyce's great influence on the Chinese novel can be best exemplified in Wang Wen-hsing's *Backed Against the Sea*. The book shares many stylistic similarities with *Ulysses* typical of literary modernism: interior monologue, stream of consciousness, antihero, anti-romanticism, elaborate imagery, and symbolic structure. While Joyce spent eight years completing *Ulysses*, it took Wang Wen-hsing 24 years to complete the two volumes of *Backed Against the Sea*, with each volume focusing on the protagonist Ye's life on a specific day in a isolated fishing village on Taiwan's east coast. No less than Joyce's idiosyncratic approach, Wang's maze-like rhetoric devices cryptically hide meanings that could have been conveyed in easier ways, by challenging readers to put together the pieces of puzzle as in a state of semi-consciousness. Being obsessed with wordsmith and the acoustic effect of writing, Wang devises a psycho-acoustic system of signifying symbols by systematically employing graphic variation with a massive use of underscore, punctuation, typesets, as well as the repeated use of particle and syntactical manipulation. In so doing, he intends to simulate the tone, emotion, voice modulation, and speaking habits of individual characters of different ages, genders, classes, and ethnicities. All these voices are orchestrated into the protagonist Ye's one-night monologue that combines his self-entertaining word juggling and mumbling with contradictions, paradoxes, and insights. This seduces the readers with the pleasure/pain of wordplay and role play. In the vein of mockencyclopedia, Ye, a mainlander veteran and pseudo-

intellectual who makes a living as a fortune teller, blends theological interrogation, Chinese aphorisms, mockery of local bureaucracy and the burlesque of his perverted desires and pathetic love affairs, undercutting the literary traditions and paradigms of the novel.

Comparing Joyce's creative efforts in *Ulysses* with those of Wang Wen-hsing's *Backed Against the Sea*, Tzeng Li-ling points out that the decade-long writing process, the time lapse and the time-space distantiation in both writers' works not only mark the routes of modernist literature respectively in Dublin and Taiwan, but also result in the stylistic versatility and multiple narrative voices in both novels (2001, 171). Joyce's self-imposed exile in Trieste, Zurich and Paris allowed him a prismatic projection of his experience of urban flaneur onto Bloom's adventures as an ad canvasser in Dublin. Time-space distantiation compels Joyce to meticulously embroider the tapestry of Dublin and mock the epic of everyday life. Similarly, the writing of *Volume I* of *Backed Against the Sea* was begun in 1974 and accomplished in 1981, while *Volume II* was completed in 1999. In those twenty five years, Wang was well-known for his idiosyncratic and fastidious writing habits: being obsessed with the innovations of literary style, he only managed to write 70-80 words per day. Though he spent a total of twenty five years writing the two volumes, the plot of *Backed Against the Sea* spans only two days, with Volume I focusing on Ye's interior monologue from midnight on February 12 to the early morning of February 13 and Volume II from midnight on February 20 to the early morning of February 21, 1962.

Backed Against the Sea has been considered the Chinese counterpart of *Ulysses* not only because Joyce's trademark stream of consciousness and the aforementioned modernist literary techniques were intensively employed by Wang Wen-hsing, but also because Wang shares Joyce's concern with questioning the mimetic convention and the linguistic transparency of the realistic novel. Like Joyce, Wang arbitrarily alters the association between signifier and signified as well as between word and world. With different typesets, underscores, and phonetics, Wang aims at deconstructing the Chinese literary tradition while constructing polyphonic narrative voices through performance and difference in language. As Chang Sung-sheng notes, Wang Wen-hsing "widens, in a sense, the space between language and its referents. This approach easily jeopardizes the basic mimetic function of fictional language as conventionally understood, a not uncommon phenomenon in late modernism" (1993, 75). Wang arbitrarily distorts lan-

guage to create peculiar sound patterns that either please or annoy the ear, creating "an effect of libidinal gratification" (*Ibid.*, 75).

The pleasure/pain of reading both novels derives from the dynamic of narrative and heteroglossia composed of psycho-acoustic signifying systems. Joyce's *Ulysse*s consists of eighteen chapters, each one a parody of those in Homer's *Odysseus*, in turn narrated by Stephen, Bloom, Molly, and anonymous narrators, interweaving stream of consciousness, interior monologues, dialogues, catechism, and pseudo-scientific accounts. Similarly, Wang's *Backed Against the Sea* consciously incorporates various speech genres as Ye's interior monologue delves into the voice modulations and emotive qualities of characters of different ethnicity and class. Sharing Joyce's authorial manipulations, Wang claims that his language is intended to "capture the subtle essence of speech manners with its peculiar accents" rather than superficial mimesis. In other words, he strives at "*shen-ssu*, a likeness in spirit or essence, rather than *hsing-ss*u, a likeness in form" (*Ibid.*, 76). As a result, his experimental language is characterized by "repetition, distortion of syntax, graphical alteration of ideograms, use of sound symbols or onomatopoetic words, and coinage of new word combinations" (*Ibid.*, 113). As the narrative goes on, the awkward and idiosyncratic language style "aggravates" with the increasingly troubled mental state of the tormented hero.

Both the protagonists of *Ulysses* and *Backed Against the Sea* are wandering outsiders, which allows them to scrutinize their surroundings with detachment, ambivalence and critical attitudes, and hence to generate alternative cultural visions. The fundamental absurdity of life, this "wandering at home" without having a proper homeland, and the discrepancy between the center and the margin, are obliquely implied in the use of elaborate images, metaphors, symbolic structures, and dynamic narrative discourse rather than direct thematic formulation. In "Wandering Rocks," Joyce attempts to paint a vivid portrait of the city of Dublin and its people. An episode revolving around Irish politics, the rock imagery symbolizes futility and doom, implying that the Dubliners wandering here are not really "at home". Furthermore, Bloom's Jewish identity simultaneously marginalizes him as a wandering outsider while allowing him to retain his independence from the failed Irish struggle for Home Rule as well as from the "shadows" of British hegemony represented by the Earl and Lady of Dudley in the episode.

In *Backed Against the Sea*, Ye is also a "wandering rock" in Shenkeng'ao (Deep Pit Harbor), a destitute fishing village on Taiwan's east coast. Ye

is a middle-aged mainlander veteran representing the middle- and lower-class émigrés who followed the KMT regime in retreating to Taiwan after the KMT army was completely defeated by the Communist army in the 1949 Civil War. Settling in Taiwan, Ye's only social connection is with the people from his own province. In 1962, ten days prior to his night-long monologue, he flees from Taipei—the center of Taiwan's modernization—to Shenkeng'ao to escape the adverse consequence of his embezzling and gambling. Shenkeng'ao is a fictional village modeled on Nanfang'ao on Taiwan's east coast, where Wang Wen-hsing fulfilled his compulsory military service. Unlike Joyce's meticulous portrait of Dublin, Wang Wen-hsing's depiction of Shenkeng'ao resembles Nanfang'ao more geographically than topographically (Lin Hsiu-ling 2001, 50). However, it represents the impoverished villages in Taiwan's marginal rural area during the economic take-off in the 1960s, where Ye's solitude and alienation allow him to contemplate the meaning of materialism and poverty in all their coarse vitality, piquant wit, and childlike fascination. The harbor is a pit with mountains on three sides, and the only modern-looking architecture is a Catholic church on the top of the mountain, contrasting with the wooden cottages and straw huts underneath. A Matsu (Protective Goddess of Fishermen) Temple is located on the mountainside, and down in the valley are groceries, food vendors, teahouses and brothels. Living a penniless life, Ye learns to appreciate the art of minimalism: his only furniture is a bathtub which can be converted to a desk, a bed, and maybe a coffin and a tomb awaiting his departure.

In the village, religion, food and sex are three major trades. Food and sex are the most genuine and straightforward pursuits of happiness, enjoyed by poor and rich alike. He disapproves of the American life style and materialistic culture, ridiculing Americans who spend their life time working hard in order to purchase machines—car, television, freezer, washer, film projectors, lawnmowers. He reaches the conclusion that life is not to be "used" but to be "cherished" and appreciated with leisure. Ye's criticism of materialism might provide a philosophical basis for his decision to settle among poverty and unemployment. However, shortly afterwards, he admits that "I am a big, big, big contradiction", confessing that he is also fascinated with wealth, fame and beautiful women. Complaining that everything good has been packed and shipped to Taipei—delicious seafood, fruit and even good looking girls, Ye regards "pastoral" and "primitive" as euphemisms of "poverty" and romantic imagination as the result of sheer ignorance.

Compared to Bloom, Ye in *Backed against the Sea* is a more self-contradictory double: he combines the "Noman" status of Bloom and the self-righteousness and menace of the Citizen, an anti-Semitic Irish patriot. In "Cyclops", the anonymous narrator ironically recounts Bloom's altercation with the Citizen. As the drunk Citizen continues his verbal attack on him on account of his Jewish identity, Bloom is forced to defend himself and his Irishness, as Noman-Odysseus confronting Polyphemus. Bloom's "Noman" status implies that he is both a wandering outsider and a man emasculated by his wife's adultery.

Combining the characteristics of both Bloom and the Citizen, Ye in *Backed against the Sea* is more capricious and dubious than Bloom. Wang recapitulates Ye's cacophonous night-long monologue for the readers to peep into his inner labyrinth, innate perversity, shaky good intentions and self-justified vicious attacks. Ye's "Noman" status as a wandering outsider is compounded with his status of a penniless "nobody". The protagonist has no name and "Ye" is his self-designated address, meaning "master" in Chinese, in ironic contrast to the "Noman" status of an underprivileged mainlander émigré and escapist to a fishing village. Moreover, his alienation from the local society is aggravated by his quasi-intellectual background combining Chinese and Western learning. This seems incongruous with life in the fishing village. In a sense, his exposure to the "enlightenment" of western modernity is suggested by the four western masterpieces he carries in his luggage: Dostoevsky's *Note from the Underground*, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Gide's *Fruits of the Earth* and Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. In addition, his familiarity with the Chinese classics has been displayed by his fluent recitation of Chinese poetry or improvised euphemism. However, the gap between his self-referential knowledge and the local milieu provides him with no exit but leads to his further alienation and degradation.

Ye's self-contradiction and cultural schizophrenia are exemplified in the monologue's incessant oscillation between his rationalist religious quest and his barking and swearing with biting sarcasm and frenzy. Being aware of the fact that his words won't change the world one bit, Ye compares his murmurings to a dog's barking. His rationalist religious quest is revealed by a series of paradoxical questions posed by him as an excuse to approach a Catholic father in order to borrow some money. Having not done away with his instrumental rationality, Ye is skeptical about God: if God is almighty, why does he let the poor suffer? If everything is destined, what is the meaning of free will? Are disasters and catastrophes made by God or the Devil?

In Wang Wen-hsing's *Backed Against the Sea*, the curious and skeptical Ye poses questions using specific terms, jargon, and nouns in parenthesis, with marked stress and punctuation, which makes his narration redundant and sound like pseudo-scientific discourse. This over-precision impoverishes the meaning of words and reduces Ye's spiritual conundrums to neat formulas and observations. This reminds us of what happens in "Eumaeus". The dissipated, wandering style of the narrative evokes the listlessness of the weary travelers. The sentences are long and winding, fragmented with parentheses and accentuation, as in pseudo-scientific texts.

As Molly in *Ulysses* likes to question the use of words in everyday language in advertisements, politics, religion and medicine, Ye in *Backed Against the Sea* also derives pleasure from making fun of maxims, distorting idioms, twisting set phrases, deliberately naming and misnaming the situations. Ye ridicules the obsession of the bureaucracy with identification of human beings designed to prove one's existence. Recalling that once he begged the poker-faced staff for a medical certificate documenting his ulcer in order to relieve himself from military service, Ye sarcastically makes fun of the situation: "it's just as if a baby had to have a birth certificate tucked in its tiny fist when it first comes into this world whining and crying before it could be recognized as born." (Wang Wen-hsing 1981, 11)

In "Penelope", the obsolescence of epic and heroism is depicted as the decline in sexual purity and devotion in marriage. Molly's monologue is the closest approximation to the stream of consciousness, with the narrative skipping from fragment to fragment without punctuation. Joyce's avant-garde style deeply influenced Wang Wen-hsing. In an interview with Shan Der-hsing, Wang recalled that he had originally attempted to make *Backed Against the Sea* a novel without any punctuation (Shan 2000, 184; Tzeng 2001, 166).

Bureaucracy and the passive victims of institutions are criticised by both Joyce and Wang as they paint the larger-than-life-size portrait of the trivial and tedious office routine in modern life. This happens in "Aeolus", a chapter divided into sixty three sections with a hyperbolic headline for each section to exaggerate the narrative action. Similar to Joyce, Wang Wen-hsing makes use of the technique of hyperbole to depict the Dialect Bureau Office where Ye eats regularly and attempts to get a job. In Ye's words, the employees of the bureau are mostly those unqualified staff "dispersed" by the Central Bureau in Taipei. Ye describes how the staff in the Dialect Bureau keep create jobs in order to survive—their jobs even include compiling

the history of their own bureau. With a sense of superiority, Ye amusedly depicts in detail how those despicable creatures kill time by childishly fighting and attacking one another, routinely turning the office into a madhouse. Not without disdain, he exaggerates every trivial and tedious detail until the whole farcical spectacle turns to be slapstick and burlesque.

If we look into the personal history of the bureau members, we find that more or less everyone suffers from some chronic illness—mental or physical. Among the staff, Yu Shih-liang seems to deserve some sympathy. Yu Shih-liang's story is narrated by himself as his words in quotation interrupt Ye's account of the routine farce in the bureau office. Like Ye, Yu is also a mainlander émigré who married a local Taiwanese girl in an arranged match by paying the girl's family a large sum of money. Not knowing why, Yu's wife has been insane for years and he has had to send their four children to different orphanages. Yu recalls that once his wife was so worried about the shortage of food at home that she wielded a kitchen knife at their third child, the plumpest one of all the children, claiming that she'd chop him up to make some sausages for Chinese New Year. Fortunately the child was saved by the eldest son, who stood between his mother and younger brother, offering to be killed in place of his brother. This ended up awakening her maternal love. Yu's life is full of regrets and sorrows: he betrayed his wife by losing the borrowed money through gambling instead of purchasing the blood needed to save her life; he stealthily buried the miscarried infant at the Moon Festival while other families were enjoying family reunions and moon cakes. Yu's mishaps were not uncommon to many mainlander émigrés at that time. The contrast between the gravity of the matter and the contained narrative tone reinforces the black humour of the tragic-comedy, adding a somewhat unbearable lightness. Hyperbole and humour used in both Joyce and Wang in portraying this farcical bureaucracy and its passive victims are not only the sarcastic commentary of the absurdity and the misfits of modern institutions, but also test the readers'/bystanders' moral decency.

II. Taiwan's Modernist Trend and the Literary Movement

Since the publication of *Volume I* (1983) and *Volume II* (1999), *Backed Against the Sea* has provoked criticism and debates along two main axes: some scholars analyze its form and style with an emphasis on the influence

of western modernism, while others attempt to explore the vernacular features and place-based consciousness of the novel. The polarized responses to this novel reflect Taiwan's multiple colonization in the past as well as the consequences of multiple modernity introduced from the West, mainland China and Japan. Under such circumstances, the retrospection of the creative transformation of *Ulysses*' legacy will provide us with the vantage point of the rooting and routing of Taiwan's modernist literature as well as the co-existence of pre-modern, modern and post-modern conditions in Taiwan.

With regard to the history of Taiwan's modernist literature, Wang Wen-hsing is one of the pioneers who introduced western modernist literature to Taiwan. Wang began to publish short stories in *Literary Magazine* in the late 1960s and co-founded *Modern Literature* with Pai Hsien-Yong in the 1970s, introducing and translating the works of Kafka, Thomas Mann, Joyce, Henry James Camus, Hemingway and so on. Sparing no effort, Wang and his literary colleagues were engaged in employing modernist literary techniques in their creative works, in which they explored the existentialist status of human beings, the fundamental absurdity of life, the rationalist conception of moral relativism, and the individual's futile rebellion against family, society and even destiny. Aside from the influence of these pioneers, a mushrooming number of publishers, like New Wave (*Xinchao*), Buffalo (*Shuiniu*) and Literary Star (*Wenxing*), which systematically published Chinese translations of western literary and philosophical works of modernism, existentialism, and liberalism, were also greatly influential for college students and intellectuals. As a consequence, many scholars and intellectuals regard this wave of modernist literary movement as a movement of enlightenment, linked to western modernity, which carved the way out of the dominant anti-communist literature and propaganda promoted by the KMT government after the KMT government's retreat to Taiwan in 1949.

Examined in Taiwan's socio-political context, the emergence of this modernist trend in the 60s and 70s was magnified by Taiwan's economic take-off, the back-flow of emigrated intellectuals, the lack of "high culture" in the Taiwan's cultural desert and a need for a radical intellectuals forum in the post-1949 era. Given that the KMT ideological state apparatuses banned leftist Marxist works or those Taiwanese works bearing the legacy of the former Japanese colonizer, the modernist literary project inspired by a broadly defined-liberalism was tolerated by the KMT government, though with many restrictions. In a stagnant cultural context over-saturated with political propaganda, the modernist project breathed a liberal spirit with a

notion of emancipation into the cultural landscape. As Chang Sung-sheng points out, the modernists are cultural elites who "challenged the excessive neo-traditionalist moralism with iconoclastic individualism" and whose galvanized quest for professionalism, artistic as well as institutional, was the reaction against "the perceived lack of 'high culture' under the destitute cultural environment of the 1950s and 1960s" (Chang 1993, 4).

Nevertheless, Taiwan's modernist trend began to ebb in the 1979 Nativist Literary Movement, which arose as a reaction against the KMT government's losing its political legitimacy in the international community: in 1978, The United States severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan and normalized their relationship with the PRC in mainland China; in 1979, ROC in Taiwan was forced to withdraw its membership from the United Nations. Given a series of diplomatic setbacks and the backward legitimization of the KMT state, some intellectuals and literary people called for a looking inward to think about the people, the living and the land in Taiwan. Nativist literature, represented by a style of social realism, was regarded as a counter movement to government-supported anti-communist literature and modernist literature. The Nativist Literary Movement of the late 70s emphasized anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism; it included workers and farmers as its social base; it was rooted in the love of the people and the land in Taiwan. Under such circumstances, progressive intellectuals subscribed to the Nativist verdict of modernist literature as reactionary in relation to Marxism or neo-Marxism. In the heated debates of the Nativist Literary Movement during 1978 and 1979, Wang Wen-hsing and his "modernist" peers were stigmatized as "cultural comprador" by the Chinese and Taiwanese leftist intellectuals. The discontent even lasted until the mid-1980s. Lü Cheng-hui, in an essay entitled "The Tragedy of Wang Wen-hsing" written in 1986, identifies Wang as a member of Taiwan's most westernized generation of the 1960s, who voluntarily submitted to the Western cultural imperialism, a consequence of the KMT government's dependence on the United States. Lü distinguishes Wang from those western modernists, who distanced themselves from the highly materialistic capitalist society. Wang's self-imposed alienation from Taiwan's society, Lü asserts, is caused by Wang's elitist self-image of a progressive and westernized intellectual in the third world milieu (1986, 113). Turning to the mid-1980s, at the peak of the Opposition Movement and the Nativist Movement advocating Taiwan's self-determination or independence from mainland China, though Wang Wen-hsing and his modernist colleagues were still the targets of at-

tack, Modernism's alleged affiliation with capitalism was no longer a critical issue. Instead, Wang and his peers, of whom most were mainlander writers, were citicised because the political contest was "primarily targeted at the Sinocentric cultural narrative of the mainlander-controlled Nationalist government" and intended to "reconstruct a Taiwan-centered literary genealogy" (Chang 1993, 6).

III. *Ulysses* Backed Against the Sea: the Allegory of Taiwan's Modernity

If we take into account James Joyce's influence on Wang Wen-hsing, Wang's pioneering status in Taiwan's modernist literature, and his ambivalent relationship with Taiwan's literary movement, we are intrigued to read *Backed Against the Sea* and its cultural phenomenon as an allegory of Taiwan's modernity. Among those essays investigating the relationship between modernist literary styles and Taiwan's multiple modernity in Wang's novel, Edward Gunn's "*Backed Against the Sea*: the Principles of Translation" and Liao Ping-hui's "Four Modes of Modernity in Taiwan's Literature: in the Case of *Backed Against the Sea*, *Volume II*" are most noteworthy. Gunn, an English translator of *Backed Against the Sea*, notes that the heterogeneity inherent in the novel's hybrid language and the Bakhtinian heteroglossia deriving from the competition of various signifying systems (image, graphics, geography, terminology and archaism) not only deconstruct the totality of rationality and the vision of a united nation-state but also reflect the protagonist Ye's diasporic status as a mainlander in Taiwan as well as his intellectual oscillation between his westernized and non-westernized selves (Edward 2001, 132-133). However, eventually, the polyphonic narrative and heteroglossia are subsumed by Ye's self-referential monologue, which connotes the existential no-exit or de/ontological closure.

As critic Liao Ping-hui points out, *Volume II* of *Backed Against the Sea* represents four modes of modernity: the alternative modernity, singular modernity, multiple modernity and repressive modernity which co-exist in Taiwan (2001, 83). Liao associates Ye's Sinocentric mindset to "singular modernity" which excludes others and leads to Ye's degradation. Ye, a mainlander veteran and wandering outsider, is a misfit in the fishing village. Being Sinocentric, he has a sense of superiority when facing local villagers. In his love letter to the prostitute Red Hair, he refers to himself as a royal persona in search of beauty, which is a cliché in Chinese classical romance.

He considers Chinese civilization the only modern civilization. Ye despised his admirer Tsai Su-chen, a Taiwanese girl, because he considered himself an intellectual who deserved something better: his ideal wife should at least be a primary school teacher. On the other hand, he was in love with Red Hair, belittling himself in a masochistic way to beg for her love. As Liao indicates, Ye's symptomatic behaviour in dealing with women is indicative of "repressive desublimation" as he uses Red Hair to relieve his own repressed sexual desire and to project his yearning for intimacy, love, and identity. Through the psychic mechanism of "repressive desublimation", Ye transfers his frustrated heroism and sense of loss caused by his marginalized social status to out-of-proportion romance and fantasy. With Ye's "singular" modernity and his sense of superiority, he is alienated from society and it is difficult for him to get along well with people around him; he becomes jobless and gets involved in gambling, theft, and extortion. As Ye's inflated self-image is contradictory with his increasingly degraded social status, he introjects his anxiety, depression and melancholy, losing himself in metaphysical contemplation, posing endless theological, metaphysical and personal questions. He finally acts out his repressed desire and anxiety by joining the members of Cao's Family in killing a stray wolf hound, with the dog's death ominously foreboding Ye's own death in a surprise ambush shortly after. The repressed desire and violent ending of Ye's life allegorize the epistemological violence of his exclusive "singular" modernity.

Taiwan's "repressive modernity" compounded with capitalism is embodied by Dong Yu-tang's exploitation of local labor. Dong Yu-tang is a new acquaintance of Ye and a mainlander veteran who traveled from Taipei to Shenkeng'ao, looking for opportunity to expand his business. Like Ye, Dong followed his uncle to Taiwan after the 1949 Civil War. Having learned how to make use of dehumanizing military-style management in running his two "grand systems" of manufacture and distribution in a rice ball business, Dong becomes a millionaire. Ye's recount of Dong's success implies the author's comments on Taiwan's economic take-off with family-run factories and hard-headed entrepreneurs whose success was based on the exploitation of rural regions.

Dong's story suggests that Taiwan's "repressive modernity" has been intertwined with the capitalist exploitation of local labor. In addition, Taiwan's "repressive modernity" was supported by martial law from 1949 to 1987, and aided by an extensive network of overt and covert quasi-military security agencies to repress "cacophony" and to persecute dissidents and

intruders. The "cleansing-off" and political persecution is allegorized in the hyperbolic dog-killing scene. The grotesque atmosphere, the excessive cruelty and the serious and acquiescent attitude of the participants elevate the dog-killing scene to the symbolic level of a ritual act that reinforces the cohesion of the community and family through the subjugation and disposal of any dangerous intruder and threat from outside. Literature scholars and critics such as Liao Pinghui regard the dog-killing scene as the allegory associated with the White Terror persecution, the February 28 Massacre and the ubiquitous quasi-military security agencies.

Moreover, the complex and contradictory co-existence of four modes of modernity is embodied by the hybrid style of the novel and Ye's ambiguous identities, his precarious conditions and cultural ambivalence. Through Ye's monologue, the author Wang Wen-hsing subtly and vividly delves into the tone, voice, and emotive qualities of prostitutes, fishermen, bureaucrats, Catholic priest, scholars, entrepreneur, vendors, money mongers etc, portraying a great diversity of life styles, attitudes, and values, with their dialogues interweaving "multiple modernity" as the consequence of multiple colonization. This linguistic hybridity combines Mandarin, Taiwanese dialect, Chinese written with English syntax, Japanese, aboriginal dialect, punctuation, and signifying systems; the Bakhtinian heteroglossia is made possible by the presence of various narrative discourses within and outside the novel, employed to lay down the routing of Taiwan's "alternative modernity".

Lin Hsiu-ling, a student and fan of Wang, though acknowledging Wang's artistic achievement in terms of modernist literary techniques, attempts to deconstruct the dichotomy between modernism and Nativism. Calling for "re-politicizing modernism", she works as a guest editor of the special issue on Wang Wen-hsing and his works (*Chung-Wai Literary Monthly*, Vol. 30, No.6, November 2001). She also made a special field trip to Nanfang'ao (the model of Shenkeng'ao), interviewing local people and collecting local documents in order to identify the local customs, landscape, grassroots culture and vernacular consciousness reflected in *Backed Against the Sea*. At the end of her essay, she even wishes for the invention of a literary tradition named "Ye's day" in Nanfang'ao, an imitation of "Bloomsday" on June 16 in Ireland in memory of James Joyce, with literary tours and marathon recitals of *Backed Against the Sea* by Wang Wen-hsing's fans.

Wang Wen-hsing's *Backed Against the Sea* and its impact over the years not only mark the development of Taiwan modernist literature in a crea-

tive transformation of James Joyce's legacy, but also exemplify the predicament and possibilities Taiwan has faced when emerging from colonialism in search of alternative modernity.

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Thierry Robin

JOYCE'S "GHOSTS"…, FLANN O'BRIEN, SAMUEL BECKETT AND JOHN BANVILLE

Joyce is still in 2012 the source of a critical divide when dealing with Irish literature. Ambivalence characterizes his legacy. This is particularly visible in three writers who wrote about or after Joyce, acknowledging more or less directly the quintessential not to say overbearing part he played in their career as writers or in their relationship towards the very act of writing. A chronological perspective to assess this legacy within an Irish context should make things easier to understand. The authors under scrutiny in this essay, to analyze the ebb and flow of the Joycean influence in modern literature, are Flann O'Brien (1911-1966), Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), John Banville (1945-)

Through these three instances, what is striking is that one actually travels through the history of literature but also through the evolution of moral and aesthetic standards, from modernism to postmodernism, from a raw brand of censorship to a more liberal conception of literary creation. O'Brien, Beckett, Banville all tackled the same primordial issue of representation and its aporias, in a way which remains to refine in its definition. But my contention is that with Flann O'Brien, who was contemporary with James Joyce, we still find judgments somewhat resentful and excessively redolent of the original whiff of scandal which Joyce's works were surrounded with in addition to a virulently subjective critical assessment of the great man, as an Irish artist, as an exile, as an unwieldy arch-paragon of the creator. With Beckett, the situation is different since despite his friendship and personal acquaintance with Joyce, the core problem almost turns out to be linked to an abstract philosophy of writing and its tenets, in a context of emergence of a relativistic exhaustion of absolute values. This questioning of the motivations for the act of writing is probably further developed by John Banville who, while using Joyce's example as an initial springboard, defines a new relationship to issues which are now, 70 years

after *Finnegans Wake*, definitely outside the possibility to alter the novel as a literary medium.

In any case, the first element of an answer to the obviously rhetorical question 'why read Joyce in the 21st century?' might well be that his oeuvre still disturbingly condenses and transcends all these theoretical questions. Secondly, in a genealogical approach, reading Joyce now allows readers and critics to understand how major writers in the Irish literary landscape, such as O'Brien of course, Beckett and also Banville structured—and for the latter the process is still in progress—their approach to literary creation, and possible innovation, since, as I am going to demonstrate, all these authors entered the field of literary endeavor because of James Joyce. This analysis may partly sound like an investigation into a complex family history including elements such as symbolic parricide, irony and Irishness. In any case Joyce's ghost, so to speak, prevails and seems to be lurking in the authors' minds on a quasi permanent basis. This rather aptly illustrates the concept of hauntology[1] forged by Derrida according to which, beyond ontology, half-way between being and non-being, there is the possibility of interfering with ideas through a spectral presence.

I. Flann O'Brien: oscillating between envious awe and rejection?

Doubtless a *ghost*, or *hauntological* presence so to speak, can haunt a mind before the culprit's actual demise. O'Brien seemed simply obsessed with James Joyce and his international success. You find a considerable number of references to Joyce in Myles'column written in *The Irish Times* from 1940 till 1966, under the penname of Myles na gCopaleen,[2] in some short essays and also in most of his novels. It is worth noticing that his metaphysical masterpiece *The Third Policeman* begins with what a sarcastic reader might view as a piece of wishful thinking, namely the symbolic murder of a father figure, that of an old man called Mathers: "Not everybody knows

[1] Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*. Derrida's analysis provides powerful insights into the ontological status of both political *and* literary texts.

[2] A quick look at the titled contributions of Myles is proves revealing: "J. A. Joyce" in July 1955, "Take your Joyce" in August 1956, "Ulysses" in December 1957, "Finnegan" in December 1957, "Joyce and others" in July 1958, "That man Joyce" in December 1965, to name but a few.

how I killed old Phillip Mathers […] (1967b, 7)."[3] As Myles na gCopaleen, O'Brien never missed an opportunity to sneer at Joyce's transgressive skills, more or less cryptically, underscoring the alleged obscurity of his prose disparagingly. For instance, we can read the following excerpt from Myles, published in the *Irish Times* on March 21, 1944: it is entitled rather vaguely "On the Artist", but its target is obvious:

> Imagine anyone reading Mr Joyce in order to clarify the contemporary situation – or clarify anything! […] Nowadays your "artist" is a neurotic imbecile; he has the cheek to discern in his own dementia the pattern of a universal chaos and it is no coincidence that most of his books are dirty and have to be banned. Beware of 'culture', reader; of 'art' and artists, be careful and apprehensive […] People who call to my lodgings for advice often ask me whether being Irish is itself an art-form. I am not so sure that the answer can here be yes. One asks oneself whether the state of being Irish is characterized by the three essential requisites of James Aquinas Joyce – integritas, consonantia, claritas. (1999, 121-122)

The semi-ironic accusation of neurosis might sound gratuitously outrageous. Yet more seriously, one can but only remember Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical work on Joyce's writings in the 1960s and early 1970s, diagnosing a potential psychosis overcome by literary creation. As regards O'Brien, we are definitely dealing with a no-nonsense, skeptical, and also rather conservative approach to what literature should essentially boil down to. If Joyce's irony aims at eliciting pleasure, O'Brien's more aptly debunks that of alleged complacency, humbug theory and obscure criticism in a malcontent fashion. Let us note in passing the reference to Aquinas, usually associated with Joyce. In this neurotic portrait of the artist drawn by O'Brien, one has to recognize an ironical reference to chapter 5 in *A Portrait of the Artist as a young man*: "Aquinas says : *ad pulcritudinem tria requiruntur integritas, consonantia, claritas* […] *three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance* (1992a, 211)."

Strangely enough though, despite O'Brien's dismissal of Joyce's 'lunatic' achievements, Joyce remained one of the main sources of inspiration for O'Brien, who may well be dismissive at times but still owes a large debt

[3] Even if it was eventually published posthumously in 1967, *The Third Policeman*, like *At Swim-Two-Birds*, was written before Joyce's death in January 1941.

to Joyce's alleged neurosis as the initial matrix for his impetus to write. It is a fact that *At Swim-Two-Birds*, O'Brien's first novel, was a painstaking though brilliant parody of Joyce's *Portrait*. In this book, O'Brien both tries to imitate Joyce while keeping a sarcastic stance, and paradoxically transcend, surpass his example, pushing as far as he could the logic of an internal psychic world described through interior monologues, eminently self-conscious reflections and intricately embedded stories revolving around a self-centered narrator inventing a caricature of an artist, namely Dermot Trellis. In other words, it basically features the same kind of *Künstlerroman-like* male protagonist informed by Stephen Dedalus, "an antisocial being all wrapped up in himself (1992a, 177)." And let it be clear paradoxically that O'Brien's literary ambitions were ignited, so to speak, by Joyce, whose hovering presence and influence can be felt throughout O'Brien's palimspestic texts. The second element which characterizes O'Brien is that of bitterness or resentment, feelings which are all the more unexpected from someone who contributed to the invention of Bloomsday in Dublin in 1954. This sarcasm stems from a disbelief as regards avant-garde creation at large, an ambivalent brand of skepticism echoing more Pascal's philosophy than Thomas Aquinas'. You find traces of this ambivalent skepticism throughout Myles' column:

> What's this I have in my pocket? Dirty scrap of paper. Some newspaper heading I cut out. 'LANGUAGE IN DANGER' […] Being an insulated western savage with thick hair on the soles of my feet I immediately suspect that it is that fabulous submythical esperantique patter, the Irish, that is under this cushion—beg pardon—under discussion […] Poor Jimmy Joyce abolished the King's English, Paulsy Picasso started cutting out paper dolls and I […] I founded the Rathmines branch of the Gaelic league. Having nothing to say, I thought at that time that it was important to revive a language in which absolutely nothing could be said. (1968, 102-103)

In this extract, you find the same ambivalent treatment of Joyce as elsewhere in O'Brien's prose. O'Brien posits and acknowledges Joyce's achievement as an avant-garde writer, comparable to Picasso in visual arts, while remaining tongue-in-cheek skeptical of the whole experimental aspect of his writings. Simultaneously what he asserts is a deeply self-conscious Irish relationship to writing and creating, a relationship fraught with both an implicit inferiority complex originating in a Gaelic background and the contradictory conviction of a unique privileged status of Irish writers. This

strange combination accounts for the love-hate relationship with Joyce and experimental writing. Let us quote rapidly this column to illustrate O'Brien's contradictory stance:

> [THIS is the first time a newspaper article was started in brackets. Innovation, you see. The Homeric task of creation. Bringing into being a thing hitherto not here, much more exhausting than building pyramids in Egypt. Please remind me to close the bracket at the end of the article. (1968, 211)

Even in this short excerpt, Joyce is alluded to through the adjective "Homeric". *Finnegans Wake* and the absence of apostrophe between the two words was also a staple *leitmotiv* in Myles' column. This position chosen by O'Brien is to be found again in this extract from *The Irish Times*: "The essentials of life do not –indeed cannot– vary from one century to another, for life itself means reproduction and repetition; to hold otherwise is to confuse life itself with the temporary vessels which contain it very temporarily (1999, 122)."

To summarize the ambiguous controversy between O'Brien and Joyce, one could venture the idea that the former was concerned with a closed eternal hellish truth made up of repetition (including Joyce as a favourite motif), whereas the latter was more interested in the open dynamic concept of beauty and form. This deep schism between the two explains the choice of topics in novels which was radically different. In Joyce's novels, nothing actually momentous is to take place historically, what matters may be purely anecdotal, trivial, sensuous, bearing on the notion of beauty, seen as deeply idiosyncratic and joyfully accepted as such in all its ambivalence and all this happens at the individual level, that, for instance, of epiphanies. In O'Brien's novels, be they minor, there is always an impending general catastrophe or potential collective apocalypse or hellish outcome to expect, as in *The Third Policeman* set in hell, or *The Dalkey Archive* where de Selby, a mad scientist, contemplates destroying the world with his DMP gas, or even *At Swim-Two-Birds* which ends on a threefold *memento mori* and suicide etc. To O'Brien what prevails is derisive futility, the rest is pure entertainment and vanity not to say treachery as in this extract from *Further Cuttings*: "Are we all liars and humbugs and if so, why not? Are we national exemplars of Vico's theory of ultimate chaos (1976, 158)?" Even in this short quote, the reader will find an implicit personal indictment of Joyce through Vico, whose cyclical theory supposedly informed *Finnegans Wake*. One could

eventually refer to "A Bash in the Tunnel", an essay published in *Envoy* in April 1951, in which James Joyce is portrayed through a strange parable, namely that of an alcoholic drinking whiskey secretly locked up in the toilet of a railway dining car itself locked up and permanently shunted here and there in the same Dublin train station. The parable elaborates on hubris, and lashes at Joyce:

> Funny? But surely there you have the Irish artist? Sitting fully dressed, innerly locked in the toilet of a locked coach where he has no right to be, resentfully drinking somebody else's whiskey, being whisked hither and thither by anonymous shunters, keeping fastidiously the while on the outer face of his door the simple word, ENGAGED? I think the image fits Joyce. (1973, 175)

Joyce positively continued to haunt O'Brien's world long after he died, in the same way Old Mathers' ghost nags at the narrator in *The Third Policeman* long after his skull was smashed with a spade. If de Selby's illegible manuscripts in that work may be sarcastic allusions to the obscurity of *Finnegans Wake*, O'Brien's last novel in 1964 *The Dalkey Archive* features a narrator who encounters an elderly and slightly deranged James Joyce (who dismissively refers to his work by saying "I have published little" and, furthermore, does not seem aware of having written and published *Finnegans Wake*) working as an assistant barman. O'Brien is the only writer in our trio who uses prosopopeia to make a dead Joyce speak. The hauntological process here reaches a paradoxical acme through vengeance by fictional resurrection. So much for resentment, be it as talented as O'Brien's.

II. Samuel Beckett: companionship, filial admiration, final opposition?

As regards Beckett's relationship to Joyce, there is a major shift from skepticism or the outdated semi-ironical accusation of obscenity underlined by O'Brien, to questions which focus more amply on style and form. O'Brien saw Joyce as emerging "through curtains of salacity and blasphemy, as a truly fear-shaken Irish Catholic" ("A Bash," 1973, 174) and these moral quasi theological preoccupations could not be further from Beckett's mind. With Beckett, we are dealing with a closer, less ambivalent companionship between two fellow writers. Even though, of course, the initial difference in age may account for certain variations of feelings as time went by. It was

originally a rather young Beckett who met, thanks to his friend Thomas Mac Greevy's connection, a living literary monument in the person of James Joyce in Paris in 1928. Joyce was already famous and 46, Beckett was only 22 and had hardly considered publishing anything. Perhaps it took several years after Joyce died before Beckett actually managed to find the adequate distance from the master, as he acknowledged over sixty years later in an interview imbued with Joyce's ghostly presence:

> I realized that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, [being] in control of one's material. He was always adding to it; you only have to look at his proofs to see that. I realized that my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in substracting rather than in adding. (Knowlson 1996, 352)

In other words Beckett became Beckettian after getting rid of all pretence to erudition and infinite culture and learned winks as displayed in early poems or novels—such as 'Whoroscope' or *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, or even *Murphy*. In the interview with James Knowlson, which took place a few weeks before Beckett himself died, Beckett clearly acknowledged his debt to Joyce though, going so far as to declare:

> When I first met Joyce, I didn't intend to be a writer. That only came later when I found out that I was no good at all at teaching. When I found I simply couldn't teach. But I do remember speaking about Joyce's heroic achievement. I had a great admiration for him […] But I realized that I couldn't go down that same road. (1996, 105)

Knowlson also aptly remarks:

> Although there are entire passages in *Dream of fair to Middling Women*, that either imitate or parody late Joyce […] Beckett certainly felt, from early on in their relationship, that it was essential for him to separate himself and establish a distance between himself as a writer and Joyce. Yet the basic impetus in his early writing remained accretive and accumulative, just as Joyce's art was based on absorbing everything into itself. (1996, 106)

Beckett eventually found his writerly way in March 1946, according to literary legend and through an almost too good to be true sort of epiphany, while he was back in Ireland and turning 40. Beckett from then

on, explored madness, failure, ignorance, impotence, rejecting the Joycean principle that knowing more was a way of creatively understanding and controlling the world. There remain striking similarities and contrasts between Joyce and Beckett. Both were Dubliners and finally exiles, living most of their lives abroad, notably in France, but only Beckett actually adopted a foreign tongue as a direct and principal medium of creation namely through French, even though Joyce's vast knowledge of languages was visible in his works. Moreover, Beckett explored dramatic writing and is best remembered for his plays such as *Waiting for Godot* or *Endgame*, even though his novels and short stories eventually met with critical acclaim. Joyce went the other way and his little known play *Exiles* tends to prove so. Eventually and thematically, Beckett focused on poverty, failure, exile and loss, on man "as non-knower or non-can-er," (Knowlson 1996, 353) whereas Joyce, through his cunning narratorial voices actually appears as a positive combiner of words and worlds, epitomized by the accumulation of *yesses* at the end of *Ulysses*. So many yesses which could be contrasted with the conclusion in *The Unnamable*: "[…] where I am, I do**n't** know, I'll **never** know, in the silence you do**n't** know, you must go on, I ca**n't** go on, I'll go on" (1959, 418). Beckett's final equivocal position ends up being radically different from Joyce's, notably through his minimalist aesthetics, and final emphasis on solipsism and silence as in *The Unnamable* (1959) or *How It is* (1961), which are made up by monologues delving into the questions and puzzles intertwining the concepts of impossible identity, language and being without any elaborate plot in sight. This somewhat painfully restrictive approach to language and creation is made luminously blatant through the following statement on art made by Beckett in *Disjecta*, echoing the conclusion of *The Unnamable,* a few years later: "The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, nothing from which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express (1983, 139)." [4]

This apparent dead-end still displays a good amount of humour though, as in this self-conscious dialogue between father and son figures in *Endgame*:

[4] Much useful information about Beckett's literary philosophy and indirectly about his relationship with Joyce can be retrieved in a collection of essays by Beckett dealing with literature, aesthetics and painters. See Beckett *Disjecta*, including the "Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit". See also Cronin's analysis of the same quote on the impossibility to express: "It could be—it is—a description of *The Unnamable*" (Cronin, 1996, 398).

HAMM : We're not beginning to… to… mean something ?
CLOV : Mean something ! You and I, mean something ! [brief laugh] Ah that's a good one ! (1958, 22)

Let us note in passing that the treatment of the father figure symbolically echoing that of James Joyce in this play is, to say the least, negative, the father being an "accursed progenitor" or an "accursed fornicator" doomed to end up rotting in a dustbin. The central motif described in Beckett's plays or novels becomes eminently internalized, that of the self, or that of consciousness not to say self-consciousness or self-exhausting and questioning linguistic processes. The comparison between *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and Samuel Beckett's actual last full-fledged novel *How It Is* (1961) reveals the chasm between the two writers. If both novels are cyclical in their general structure, Joyce's numbers more than 600 pages milling with intertextual references constituting a perfect loop whereas *How It is* is barely 150 pages of unpunctuated lines focusing on the narrator's tormented monologue fragmented into paragraphs. Joyce's novel may be said to focus on a family saga whereas Beckett's only depicts the narrator's return to his initial formless solitude. In Joyce, you find movement and space while in Beckett you end up with terminal stasis, mud and closure. Even if both books may be regarded as highly experimental investigations into the narrative voice, they delineate two opposing directions: Joyce being the seminal father/writer/multiplier, Beckett the terminal son/silencer/reducer in a Hamm/Clov-like complementary dialectics.

III. John Banville's Joycean ghosts

With John Banville, Man Booker prize winner in 2005 for his novel *The Sea*, we reach the third and last stage in our short survey of Joyce's ambivalent literary legacy. A pattern begins to emerge: that of Joyce as the one who lies at the origins of the desire to write and who subsequently turns out to be somehow cumbersome and has to be left behind, albeit symbolically, in aesthetic terms, despite remaining an implicit haunting authority. In various interviews, Banville clearly acknowledged a debt to Joyce, asserting that he embarked on his literary career because of him or more precisely "thanks to" *Dubliners* which he tried to emulate as a young man. Some details in the interview Banville given to Mark Sarvas in September 2005 for his literary

blog called *The Elegant Variation* are revealing enough. Talking about his aspirations as a young man and how he came to writing, this is what Banville said rather bluntly:

> We all wanted to get a short story published in a good magazine. So everybody started out by writing short stories. It wasn't a medium that I particularly liked, although I suppose I still hearken back to *Dubliners*. I put together this rather inept book. [*Long Lankin*, (1970)] (Sarvas, 2005, part 3)

Banville further develops this reference to *Dubliners* in the same interview:

> Well, I started writing when I was about twelve. My brother […] sent me *Dubliners*. And I was bowled over by this because here was a book that wasn't about cowboys and Indians, or murder at the vicarage […] It was about something else. So I started writing dreadful imitations of *Dubliners*. I threw them all away but I remember the opening sentence of one of them, which was something like: "The white May blossom swooned slowly into the open mouth of the grave." *laughs delightedly* (Sarvas, 3).

Beyond the grave motif, the reader is glad to know *Dubliners* is not "about cowboys and Indians, or murder at the vicarage." Banville has always shown some ambivalence as regards Joyce. His famous essay revealingly entitled "The Dead Father" that he published in the *Irish University Review* in 1982 is a masterpiece of ironical ambiguity.

> There may be many things left to do *in* the novel, but after him [Joyce], there is nothing left to do *to* it […] Literary nineteenth century's will to progress achieved total entropy in *Finnegans Wake*. As T.S. Eliot, with characteristic ambiguousness, remarked: one book like this is enough. No longer required, then, to make it new, we are free to play with the old things, the wrack and the wreckage, the pretty shells. (1982a, 64)

In his analysis, Banville definitely takes after T. S. Eliot and his ambiguity. The main problem Banville claims he encountered while reading Joyce is that of saturation:

> At the level of technique alone he is incomparable […] But […] I think Joyce knew too much for his own good […] Most artists manage to keep down this

> rich food. Beckett, we are told, must have large and frequent doses of pure knowledge —yet the only "fact" I can recall being offered in his work is that constipation is a sign of good health in Pomeranians. Joyce, however, wants to tell us everything he knows —and he wants to know everything. (1982a, 64-65)

This strongly echoes Beckett's view that Joyce is a great modernist, accumulator and expander, whereas Banville or O'Brien would probably head in the *postmodern* more fragmentary direction. In addition to this regrettable blatant excess of knowledge displayed by Joyce according to Banville, yet another fault plagues Joyce's writings, namely their paradoxically simultaneous obscurity: as Kersti Powell asserted in her article very revealingly entitled: "'Not a son but a survivor': Beckett... Joyce... Banville":

> Banville has also acknowledged rather complex filial feelings towards Joyce, declaring: "When I think of Joyce I am split in two. To one side there falls the reader, kneeling speechless in filial admiration, and love; to the other side, however, the writer stands, gnawing his knuckles, not a son, but a survivor." (13) This intricate relationship with his literary "forefather" is apparently due to the impenetrability of Joyce's work […] His texts are "mysterious at their core" and seem self-generated, as they are "created out of nothing by some secret, unknowable means." This impenetrability has encouraged critics to associate Banville with Beckett, and deem Joyce to have been a negative influence. (Powell 2005, 202)

Excess of referential knowledge and obscurity are just like the two poles between which hauntology oscillates: being and non-being, the past and the future. Joyce is both excessively present and concretely absent.

Beckett's writings though, are far from being crystal-clear either. Yet again, one recognizes the fatal trace left on the master's legacy by his last cryptic work. Contrary to Beckett, Banville has always stuck to the form favoured by Joyce and that he claims he dislikes so much, namely the novel.[5] It is also strange that Banville should assert so vehemently his allergy to knowledge, given he produced some masterpieces strongly informed by a reality swarming with data and facts, historical reality at that. One could quote *Doctor Copernicus* based on impressive scholarly research, *Kepler* or even *The Un-*

[5] Rather unexpectedly though revealingly, John Banville added in the same interview: "But I did dislike—I still dislike—the novel form. It annoys me."

touchable, which he wrote after gathering an impressive collection of facts on the British spy Anthony Blunt and the Irish poet Louis MacNeice. But one may retort that contradiction is dynamic and compatible with a postmodern ethos, yet one cannot help but remark, as Elke d'Hoker did, that Banville's florid and sensuous style is on the whole rather different from Beckett's sparse prose, especially Beckett's prose after March 1946.

So if knowledge and its apparent saturation is not what actually makes the difference between Joyce and Banville, surely enough apparent philosophical concerns differentiate the two. A rather cold epistemological approach to science and arts seems to lie at the heart of Banville's preoccupation with the authentic essence of things, "the thing itself, the vivid thing," (1976, 3) the process of discovery or invention which seems to be ever-elusive, be it in his science tetralogy [*Dr Copernicus*, (1976) *Kepler*, (1981), *The Newton letter*, (1982), *Mefisto*, 1986)] or in his art trilogy [*The Book of Evidence* (1989), *Ghosts* (1993), *Athena* (1995)]. In a word, Banville, playing the part of the bold adventurous son, explores fields very seldom trodden by Joyce, the more classically flamboyant forefather.

And other parallels with Joyce's works, *pace* John Banville, loom large. Banville's literary investigations concentrate on the narrating voice and its avatars, its flaws, its dead angles, its unreliability, be it the voice of a Greek God as in his novel *The Infinities* (2009) or that of an unreliable narrator as in *Ghosts*, in the same way that Joyce also blurred the lines between third person narration and the unfolding of the self through various techniques including streams of consciousness, thus initiating, or prolonging a long problematic investigation into the way a narrating voice appropriates, distorts, projects ideas and external perceptions. Joyce's work also elaborates on the possibilities opened by a narrating voice interacting with the voice of various characters, a whole range of variations between (free) direct speech and indirect speech co-exist in *Ulysses* for instance (1992b). Similar preoccupations dealing with narratorial reliability or linguistic referentiality, as problematic mirrors of experience and reality, can be observed in the works of both writers. To be convinced, one simply has to read the incipit of *Doctor Copernicus* and that of *The Portrait*, in which the same theme of the emergence of consciousness develops through a focus of narration provided by a baby:

> BANVILLE
> At first it had no name. It was the thing itself, the vivid thing. It was his friend. On windy days it danced, demented, waving wild arms, or in the silence of

evening drowsed and dreamed … Wrapped in his truckle bed, he could hear it stirring darkly outside in the dark, all the long night long. There were others, nearer to him, more vivid still than this, they came and went, talking, but they were wholly familiar, almost a part of himself … Look, Nicolas, look! See the big tree!
Tree. That was its name. And also: the linden. They were nice words. He had known them a long time before he knew what they meant … That was strange (1976, 3)

JOYCE
Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo….
His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.
He was baby tuckoo…
O, the wilde rose blossoms
On the little green place
He sang that song. That was his song. […]
When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell (1992a, 7).

Let us note in passing the converging conclusion through the adjectives "strange" and "queer" to qualify the nascent narrator's sensorium. This concern about narrating voices examined by Hugh Kenner for instance[6] along with that of self-consciousness has also lain at the heart of Banville's fiction since the 1970s according to critics such as Seamus Deane, John Kenny and Rüdiger Imhof.[7]

The anatomizing of writing may display similarities with the study of the way genes are reshuffled and transmitted. But literature does not, and cannot produce cloned monsters. Contrary to what Flann O'Brien asserted, repetition and reproduction can only occur with a difference.[8] Joyce seems

[6] See Kenner, *Joyce's Voices*.
[7] See Seamus Deane, "'Be Assured I Am Inventing': The Fiction of John Banville"; John Kenny, *John Banville*; Rüdiger Imhof, *John Banville: A Critical Introduction*.
[8] As a matter of fact, O'Brien wrote with a sense of wit not devoid of sarcasm: "The essentials of life do not—indeed cannot—vary from one century to another, for life itself means

to have established an enduring branch in Irish not to say world literature. His offshoots are numerous, his influence more or less conscious but undoubted. His ghost will continue to haunt Irish literature precisely because his writing is based on a tantalizing specter, that of meaning, which still remains to unveil. In that perspective, he is quite Derridean: literature hides a secret, its implicit secret is that deciphering is endless, in other words its secret is that there is no (fixed) secret.[9]

An important trait inherited from his work revolves around the exploration of self-consciousness, perfectly illustrated by Beckett's solipsistic texts, O'Brien's mordant reflexive irony and Banville's careful dissection of the narrator's wavering or manipulative voice. These three writers in turn have developed their own aesthetics based on parody for O'Brien, minimalism for Beckett and a wistful elegant sophistication for Banville. Their works like Joyce's are going to be endlessly altered by new generations of readers, critics and scholars, thus taking part in the neverending cycle of the creation of meaning. The same cycle which can be found in *The Third Policeman*, *How It is*, *The Infinities* or *Mefisto*, echoing Derrida's words: "T*he circle of the return to birth can only remain open*, *but this is a chance, a sign of life*, and a wound" (Derrida 1995, 340).

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reproduction and repetition; to hold otherwise is to confuse life itself with the temporary vessels which contain it temporarily (*O'Brien At War*, 122)."

[9] See *Papier machine* by Derrida, the original French quote reads thus : «La littérature garde un secret qui n'existe pas, en quelque sorte. Derrière un roman, ou un poème, derrière ce qui est en effet la richesse d'un sens à interpréter, il n'y a pas de sens secret à chercher. Le secret d'un personnage, par exemple, n'existe pas, il n'a aucune épaisseur en dehors du phénomène littéraire. Tout est secret dans la littérature et il n'y a pas de secret caché *derrière* elle, voilà le secret de cette étrange institution » (Derrida 2001, 398, emphasis in original).

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Maria Grazia Tonetto

THE BODY OF FINITUDE

According to Michel Foucault the threshold between our prehistory and what is still contemporary was crossed "when finitude was conceived in an interminable cross-reference with itself" (2002, 346). One of the major consequences of that great discontinuity was the disappearance "of the old concept of man, in its correlation to the […] retreat of the divine" (Badiou 2007, 166). Trying to define the 21st century, Alain Badiou writes that our cultural situation is dominated by "a bad Darwin", meaning that the waning of metaphysics has reduced man to a species, to "the animal datum of a body". Accordingly, he has labeled the present age as that of "animal humanism" (175).

One sentence would be enough to lay the claim for Joyce's contemporary relevance: "*It's only Dedalus, whose mother is beastly dead*" (*U* 8). Dying *as* an animal, that is, outside any metaphysical project, was the previously unthinkable concept which became the legacy of the twentieth century. In *Ulysses*, Joyce confronts the passage of human life from what "belonged to God as creaturely life" (Agamben 1998, 75) to bare animality, from *bios*—a category capable of being refined into "human existence"—to *zoe*. And nowhere does he express that insight more clearly than in endowing Buck Mulligan with the attributes of Father Flynn, a religious minister (Melchiori 1995): in "the age of patent medicine" (*U*, 689), the "medecineman" was rapidly supplanting the priest in dictating the meaning of death and, therefore, in defining life. To Mulligan, death is only a mechanical failing of the brain, a wrong performance of the "cerebral lobes" (*U*, 8). The concept of brain death was legally introduced in 1968, with the motivation that "the brain is the one organ that can't be transplanted", which actually turned death into "an epiphenomenon of transplant technology" (Agamben 1998, 93). However, the complete coincidence of personal identity with the brain, considered as a material organ, could be thought only after the traditional entities "soul", "mind"

or "conscience" were regarded as a direct resultant of the disposition of cerebral matter.

Undeniably, the departure from metaphysics unhinged the idea of the immortal, substantial soul as the main foundation of subjectivity. In Michael Maher's *Psychology* (Rickard 1999), Joyce could find a synthesis of contemporary monistic theories. Father Maher analyses recent theories concerning the soul, wondering whether it should be considered "the brain […] or a pure spirit" (1895, 2). This evokes the debate between Stephen and Bloom on the issue of "body and soul" in "Eumaeus":

> - You, as a good Catholic, he observed, talking of body and soul, believe in the soul. Or do you mean the intelligence, the brainpower as such, […] I believe in that myself because it has been explained by competent men as the convolutions of the grey matter […]
> - They tell me on the best authority it is a simple substance and therefore incorruptible. It would be immortal, I understand, but for the possibility of its annihilation by its First Cause, Who, from all I can hear, is quite capable of adding that to the number of His other practical jokes, *corruptio per se* and *corruptio per accidens* both being excluded by court etiquette. (*U* 732)

"Beastly" reductionism seemed to be the only alternative left in the waning of a religious frame, and is indeed the dominant position in contemporary discourse, where the body is a biological entity and a field of medical management. Although the decline of a theological frame for considering body and soul is Joyce's historical starting point, he refuses a purely biological interpretation of incarnated existence.

It is noteworthy that Stephen lays emphasis on the soul's incorruptibility. Indeed, in what Foucault terms Classical thought, the modalities of finite existence—such as the body as opposed to the immortal soul—were conceived as the mere negative correlation of the infinite, manifesting man's imperfection. According to St. Thomas, the resurrection is the state in which human nature will be restored to its *perfection*, as God created it without defects (*Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 81, a. 1). On the contrary, proudly choosing as its central tenet that "nature abhors perfection" (*U*, 267), *Ulysses* emancipates man's incarnated condition from its traditional metaphysical signature.

In analyzing the traditional identification of the subject with the soul, Foucault remarks that the two symbolical axes of self-knowledge were that of *concentration within* and *elevation above* the material universe (2005, 43-

79), both entailing a fundamental detachment from the external world. In *Ulysses*, Elijah repeats to his audience "you have that something *within*, the *higher* self" (*U*, 625, my emphasis). For a "self" conceived as a "shesoul" or a "hesoul", the body is no more than a "fleshcase" (*U*, 245): it's no essential part of the spiritual, eternal essence that it momentarily houses. In *Ulysses*, while retrospection and subjective appropriation are still performed by the soul, the emphasis on Aristotelian "form," existing only in matter and enfranchised from "insignificant […] musings about the afterlife" (*U*, 237), advocates the central role of the body in the actualization of a *finite* subject.

Discarding the interpretation of the material world as "the kingdom of the soul's malady" (*CW*, 94), Joyce discards the canonical representation of an absolute selfhood in a body immune from alteration and decay, which is symbolically achieved in salvation.[1] When Stephen contrasts the land of Phenomenon with the "land of promise […] where there is no *death and no birth neither wiving nor mothering*" (*U*, 517, my emphasis), mortality and connection are acknowledged as the main qualities of earthly existence. Therefore, *Ulysses* figures an ecstatic and relational subjective body as the incarnation of a human being emancipated from the transfiguring correlation to the infinite, to "the land of promise".

In Joyce's writings the body first appears in connection with finitude. In *Stephen Hero*, as in one of the *Epiphanies*, the question "Do you know anything about the body?" (*SH*, 168) is addressed to Stephen by his mother when Isabel is about to die. Death comes to Isabel through "the hole" in her stomach, which, like the umbilical cord in *Ulysses*, intrinsically connects the birth in the flesh to the state of the carcass. As Bloom enounces in his "law of falling bodies", bodies "all fall to the ground. The earth" (*U*, 87). Later, the body's weight will be denoted as "dead weight" (*U*, 127). Joyce plays with the Church Fathers' maxim that "the flesh […] is overthrown in death" and is "thereafter described as *cadaver,* from *cadere"* (Evans 1960, 51). The essence of the flesh is its being bound to fall.

According to Jacques Lacan, in the dualistic, Cartesian notion of human nature the soul is meant to perform the "function of synthesis", as the

[1] Michel Foucault writes that "salvation is the vigilant, continuous, and completed form of the relationship to self closed in on itself. One saves oneself for the self, one is saved by the self, one saves oneself in order to arrive at nothing other than oneself." (*The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, New York: Palgrave, Macmillan 2005. 184-185). For instance, the novelistic concern with virginity, a bodily figure for self-preservation and purity, is viewed by Foucault as the embodiment of an immunological notion of selfhood.

unifying entity which supports the imaginary viability of a "moi ideal […] projection de notre totalité" (1981, 167). By means of Molly, Joyce mocks the idea that "in the other world" they will be "tying ourselves up" (*U*, 917): making us "entire" from a previous fragmentation and subjection to loss; moreover, the possibility that on the last day Lazarus found "his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps", that "all of himself" should be re-synthetized "that morning", becomes a joke. Instead, *Ulysses* posits as real the fact that Dignam's flesh is always materially changed into something else. The difference between the two carnalities called into play—Lazarus's, traditionally transfigurable, and Dignam's, joyously metamorphical—is marked by the twelve grams (at least according to Bloom) that stand for the weight of the immortal soul. Indeed, Bloom calls it "powder in a skull", implying the alienation of the body from the salvation scheme.

It has been argued that in the Christian tradition the human body achieves the fullness of its functions only after the Fall, so that physiological activities intrinsically connote the body as mortal (Agamben 2009). Aquinas writes that Adam would eat in a way that would produce no indecorous waste, while generation would occur by "*nulla corruptione integritatis*", with no corruption of Eve's bodily integrity (*Summa Theologiae* I, q. 98, a. 2). Obviously, the Edenic body was immune from decay and every lesion of its wholeness, such as wounds (*Summa Theologiae* I, qq. 97-98). If the state of innocence includes some animal functions, albeit with "*nulla* […] *indecentia*", the resurrection will entail the suspension of every natural activity. Thus, nutrition, evacuation, and reproduction are shameful because they only belong to the fallen condition and to the state of mortality. They are indeed "obscene" and must be hidden from the public gaze: to Gerty, eating is in fact a shameful activity—"she didn't like the eating part when there were any people" (*U*, 458). The passage from S. Augustine in the 1904 *Portrait*, where Joyce declares his search for a "philosophy of reconcilement" between corruptibility, beauty and goodness, with a view to reveal the "beauty of mortal conditions" (Scholes and Kain 1965, 65), re-appears in *Ulysses*. Here, the corruptibility of the body is intentionally foregrounded as a mark of its radical finitude: through defecation, micturition, "life with hard labour" (*U*, 204), and menstruation. The human gallery of *Ulysses* foregrounds the flawed and the deformed: a "blind stripling" (*U*, 230), a "onelegged sailor" (*U*, 288), men with a "ruined mouth" (*U*, 302) and "a misshapen gibbosity" (*U*, 533), bodies corrupted by illness and death. More importantly, though, *Ulysses* presents

humanity as the "asymmetrical" (*U*, 831), with a significant deviation from the "theoretical restriction of beauty to formal symmetry" (Bosanquet 2005, 131), symbolic of reason and divinity, which represented the aesthetic legacy of Platonism to Christendom.

On the other hand, Joyce extensively satirizes the "soultransfigured" (*U* 177) canon of bodily beauty, which banishes whatever is connected to alteration and corruption. According to the Church Fathers, *integritas*, also meaning immunity from corruption, is the fundamental feature of the "soultransfigured" or glorious body, while Thomas Aquinas posits it as the basis of beauty: "Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidam *integritas*, sive perfectio: quae enim *diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt*" (*Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 39, a. 8, my emphasis). What is not *integer*, or *diminutus*, is also ugly. By shifting the aesthetic focus on man's inherent "diminuteness", Joyce discards an idealizing canon that would propose the incorruptible body as the *ontological mode of beauty*. His shift towards the obscene, deformity and dis-integrity should not be viewed as the cloacal obsession of "a hater of his kind" (*U*, 49), but as a deep meditation of aesthetic canons in relation to their metaphysical implications, first of all the opposition "nature versus grace" (Aubert 1992, 109).

In *Ulysses*, indeed, only the immortal body is a whole, such as the one that cannot die because it has already died: "Quite right to close it. Looks horrid open [...] Much better to close up all the orifices. Seal up all. (*U* 123)." By sealing up the horrid uncleanness of mortality, our culture strives to exorcise the body's perturbing and ego-deflating ugliness.[2] With a relieving effect diametrically opposed to the hypogean incubism of "Hades", in "Nausikaa" the emphasis on bodily wholeness proceeds from a latent identification of the self with "her very soul" (*U*, 456), consistently with the vertical tension of this "chapter of culminations" (Senn 1977, 277). While the perfect wholeness of the skin manifests the original cohesion of the subject as a spiritual entity, Gerty's "glorious rose" (*U*, 469) stands for the sexual excitement which is banished by the rhetoric of spirituality. Gerty and Bloom are presented as two nimble spirits going forth to one another with the eyes

[2] cf. "[Bodily] wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit-cadaver. If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. It is no longer I who expel, "I" is expelled." J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, Transl. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press 1982, p. 4.

only; in the episode, "their souls" (*U* 478) are often the grammatical subjects of action. Joyce chooses "glorious" as an epithet of Gerty's imaginary body, while everything connected with reproduction, feeding or evacuation becomes "the unmentionables" (*U*, 451). In Gertys' imagination, a spiritual self would not really eat, go to the toilet, have *pudenda*, like in the state of innocence and glory. On the contrary, Gerty's real body is dis-integral, both by diminution—"She's lame!" (*U*, 479)—and by excess: "those discharges she used to get" (*U*, 452).

Joyce ironically represents the body whose natural functions Gerty would like to hide as a form not made for action but for showing an ideal: "Her wellturned ankle *displayed* its *perfect proportions*" (*U*, 455, my emphasis); Gerty's body shares this ostensive and inactive quality with the "naked goddesses," whose nudity is for "All to see" (*U*, 224)[3]. When first defining Gerty's beauty, Joyce blended Christian and classical references:

> Gerty MacDowell […] was pronounced *beautiful* […] Her figure was... *graceful*, […] the *waxen pallor* of her face was [...] *spiritual* in its *ivorylike purity* though her [...] mouth was [...] *Greekly perfect*. Her hands were of finely veined *alabaster.* (*U* 452)

She is indeed like a statue. Bloom repeats the analogy when he pairs the Virgin with the "Goddesses of Greece" (*U*, 334). Greek perfection meets the spiritual transfiguration of the body, since both "romantic" patterns present beauty as the perfection of the thing in the mind of the maker. In the Christian tradition, this identifies the body in the Edenic and *graceful* states, not in its earthly and corruptible quality. Thus, "Nausikaa" unveils the angel-like body as the foundation of the beautiful, in comparison with which Gerty's actual, performing and mortal body—the lame and crippled one—is neither beautiful nor good: it belongs to the de-formed which the aesthetics of integrity banishes as obscene.

The representation of an incorruptible body misses the vital human quality that Joyce aims at epiphanizing, the constitutive incarnation in time through action:

[3] See G. Agamben, *Nudità*, Roma: Nottetempo, 2009, p. 139: "The glorious body is an ostensive body, which does not perform its vital functions but only displays them as potencies; from this perspective, glory goes hand in hand with inoperativeness" (my translation). See also G. Agamben, "Physiology of the Blessed," in *The Open: Man and Animal*, Stanford University Press, 2004.

> Beauty, it curves, curves are beauty. Shapely goddesses, Venus, Juno: curves the world admires. [...] All to see. Never speaking… Mortal! [...] Immortal lovely. And we stuffing food in one hole and out behind (*U* 224-225)

The corporeal beauty defined only by the outline ("curves") and by a surface without orifices (goddesses have no mouth to speak nor to eat, nor anus for defecating, as Bloom wishes to verify) belongs to an "immortal" body, displaying perfection ("admires [...] All to see"). The human body, the mortal one and paradoxically the living one, is defined by the shape of an open circuit, active and deep ("we stuffing food in one hole and out behind"). Joyce's strategy in *Ulysses* is to shift the core of corporeal beauty from the *image* of a physiologically inactive body, to its *performative* quality in earthly existence, from the wholeness of an impassible body to the openness of connection and temporal unfolding. In contrast with the nymph's immortal body, Molly's flesh incarnates "the beauty of mortal conditions" in a body that eats, menstruates, urinates, and farts, whose corruptibility is exposed without shame, since it is no longer bound to the normative power of immortality. This is the body "of a new humanity, *active* […] and *unashamed*" (*U* 199): one that proudly acknowledges that physiological activeness with which the Western tradition identified the shame of fallen nature. If in 1902 Joyce wrote that "beauty is the splendor of truth" (*CW*, 60), in *Ulysses* the obscene becomes a truth programmatically staged as a radiant manifestation of human, that is finite, *quidditas*.

Thus, to come back to the subject of Joyce's contemporary relevance, it should be clear that while the emancipation of the body from its traditional theological apparatus is common to Joyce and Mulligan's biological reductionism, the latter only *reverses* the traditional antinomy of matter and spirit, whereas Joyce *overcomes* it by stressing the vital role of the body in subjectivation. The paradigm of subjectivation in *Ulysses* is indeed the traversing: "What went forth to the ends of the world to traverse not itself. [...] Having itself traversed in reality itself, becomes that self" (*U*, 623). The body allows the traversing to take place both as an ecstatic tension, a going out of oneself ("went forth"), and as a passage within oneself of otherness, the "not itself." "That self" is created by such mutual crossing. Contrary to the millennial association of spiritual growth with a process of detachment from the material universe, Joyce posits the material world as the only possible means of self-actualization. Consequently, in *Ulysses* the body can never be completely reduced to its material limits as it is always engaged in an outward projection. Therefore, in the 21st century, while giving a new, post-metaphysical mean-

ing to incarnation, *Ulysses* also provides a model of intellectual resistance against "the animal humanism that besieges us" (Badiou 2007, 178), which would reduce a living being to his/her naked biological life.

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Federico Sabatini

CONTEMPORARY JOYCE: JOYCEAN THEMES AND STYLISTIC TECHNIQUES IN WILLIAM TREVOR'S WRITING

Among the numerous writers who have followed the path of Joyce, William Trevor is a particular case, since his writing is both similar to and very dissimilar to Joyce's. Although there is no sign of Joyce's late experimentalism, in Trevor's novels it is possible both to discern Joycean themes and, to an extent, Joyce's "intermedial method", namely the concoction of writing and visual arts[1] and the cinematic construction of scene and plot.[2]

Trevor himself has acknowledged his Joycean legacy and made numerous references to Joyce, both in his interviews and in his works: the story "Two More Gallants" is an ideal continuation of "Two Gallants"; in *The Ballroom of Romance* he portrays the theme of escapism by means of the (very Joycean) depiction of a dancehall;[3] one of his early novels is entitled

[1] Having worked as a sculptor, Trevor himself connects his writing to visual arts: "It's what I tell all the young writers who write to me and ask me how to, how they should do it, I do remind them that you, you need to have something as a kind of a jungle to make your way through and to find out what you want and what you don't want, and that's very, very like the journey of a, a sculptor, and indeed to some extent a painter" (William Trevor, "The John Tusa Interviews," *BBC Radio 3*;
http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/trevor_transcript.shtml)

[2] For a more extensive treatment on the subject see F. Sabatini "'It can't be all in one language': Poetry and 'Verbivocovisual' Language in Joyce and Pound." *Review of Literatures of the European Union*, no. 8 (2008): 97-114; F. Sabatini, "Joyce's Visual Writing: The Symbolic Space of Embrasure." *Joyce in Progress: Proceedings of the 2008 James Joyce Graduate Conference in Rome*. Ed. Ruggieri, Franca; McCourt, John; Terrinoni, Enrico, 195-206 (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

[3] See Cheryl Herr, *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986; Carla Marengo Vaglio Marengo. "'All the world's fair': le mot et le monde dans 'Nausicaa,'" in *De Joyce à Stoppard: Écritures de la Modernité*. Ed. Haberer, Adolphe, 109-29 (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1991).; Federico Sabatini *Im-marginable: Lo spazio di Joyce, Beckett e Genet*. Rome: Aracne, 2007 (chapter II); Adams, Susan J. "Joyce in Blackface:

The Boarding House and in his last book *Love and Summer*, the one I would like to focus on, the protagonist significantly quotes Gabriel Conroy. In addition, some of the recent criticism on Trevor has underlined such a connection with Joyce, especially in terms of their similar views on colonialism and on the exploitation of Ireland, stressing a similar kind of Irishness that is noticeable in their works.[4] As it has been argued, Trevor seems to be closer to the literature of the past than to his contemporaries, showing a fervid interest in authors such as Dickens, George Eliot, Jane Austen, Hemingway and Carson McCullers. Critic Del Rio Alvaro remarks that among Irish writers, Trevor "is fond of George Moore and James Stephens, and particularly of the early Joyce" (see also Stout 1989, 133-34) and others have compared his narratives with the work of the "Cork realists" Frank O'Connor and Sean O'Faolain (Howard 2001, 164; Sampson 2002, 287-88) and with the Russian writers Chekhov and Turgenev (Mackenna 1999, 134). Nonetheless, as his last novel discloses, Joyce seems to be the most enduring legacy he has accepted. This is evident not only because both writers are self-exiles who managed to write about Ireland "from a distance" (Trevor has been living in England for a long time) but, more poignantly, because their visions of Irishness bear striking similarities despite the century that separates them. Like *Dubliners*, Trevor's narratives deal with the theme of "paralysis," conceived in all of its nuances of meaning. His characters are all confined in repetitive and monotonous lives, they oscillate between states of apathetic isolation and sparks of epiphanic revelations that only ephemerally reveal fragments of truth about their lives. From a narrative point of view, both writers embrace the technique of "authorial unobtrusiveness" and impersonality, "skilful creation of atmospheres and psychological characterisation" (Del Rio Alvaro 2007, 3), as well as an acute attention to "naturalistic and realistic external detail as a tool to illuminate psychological and ethical scenarios and to write about human situations in which characters move towards a revelation or epiphany which is moral, spiritual or social" (Mackenna 1999, 134). In his nonfiction writing, Trevor often mentions the importance of story-telling as part of a national heritage; he asserts that "stories of one kind or another have a way of pressing themselves into Irish conversation,

Goloshes, Gollywoggs and Christy Minstrels in 'The Dead.'" *De-familiarizing Readings: Essays from the Austin Joyce Conference*. Ed. Friedman, Alan W.; Rossman, Charles. European Joyce Studies, 18, 33-42. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009).

[4] See Jim Haughey. "Joyce and Trevor's Dubliners: The Legacy of Colonialism." *Studies in Short Fiction*, 32, (Summer 1995). 355-65.

both as entertainment and as a form of communication" (Trevor 1989, ix). As John Kenny has noted, Trevor considered story-telling as "a repetitious business":

> Writing short stories is a repetitious business anyway, if you write as I do, in order to experiment, and I consider myself, as all fiction writers, *an experimentalist*. I find out that in a lot of my stories I'm investigating the same theme to see what happens a second or third, even a fourth of fifth, time (Kenny 2008, 485).

Besides Trevor's habit of "rewriting" that famously pertains to Joyce as well, the fact that he considers himself as an experimentalist may seem as an odd statement, given his traditional, almost old-fashioned, prose style. In another interview, in fact, Trevor revealingly describes himself as "the least experimental of writers" (Schirmer 1990, 9), so as to present a seemingly contradictory statement which, however, eventually reveals itself as coherent. As a matter of fact, Trevor does not pay attention to Joyce's later style but he rather indulges on the narratives of *Dubliners*. More interestingly, he never quotes *Finnegans Wake* and he regards *Ulysses* as Joyce's masterpiece, especially when compared to *A Portrait* which he considers "heavily autobiographical". He then connects *Ulysses* to Dickens' literary method by stating that Joyce "worked very much like Dickens, he used lots of acquaintances and turned them into characters in the book but, again like Dickens, he wrote at a distance" (*Ibid.*, 3). Such a provocative statement reveals Trevor's obsession with "authorial distance", with a distance that, according to him, must be achieved even when the writer deals with themes he's profoundly acquainted with. This also brings us back to Trevor as both an "experimentalist" and as "the least experimental of writers". As Ben Howard has noted, Trevor's example appears as strikingly "different" from the ostentatious and often flashy displays of narrative or lexical innovations in contemporary literature, and his position as a somewhat conservative and conventional "storyteller"[5] looks as an apparent anomaly or anachronism:

[5] Trevor doesn't describe himself as a novelist but as "storyteller": "My fiction may, now and again, illuminate aspects of the human condition, but I do not consciously set out to do so: I am a storyteller."
http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth122

> In Irish letters, in particular, the century that began with a publisher objecting to James Joyce's use of 'bloody' in *Dubliners* ended with the novels of Patrick McCabe and Roddy Doyle, where immediacy, bluntness and vivacity of expression are prized more highly than subtlety or indirection. Reticence and reserve are conspicuously absent, both in content and expression, and any word is fit to print. Within this context the equable, tempered fiction of William Trevor is something of an anomaly, if not an anachronism (Howard 2001, 164, qtd in Del Rio Alvaro 2007).

It is in this light that Trevor might be considered as an experimental writer, as a writer who turns to aesthetic principles which are nowadays considered as old-fashioned and which, on the contrary, reveal authenticity and awareness of the literary discourse. As he proclaims, again by connecting his writing to visual arts, his experimentation is "hidden":

> I think all writing is experimental. The very obvious sort of experimental writing is not really more experimental than that of a conventional writer like myself. I experiment all the time but the experiments are hidden. Rather like abstract art: you look at an abstract picture, and then you look at a close-up of a Renaissance painting and find the same abstractions (in Stout 1989, 125).

Trevor's writing may thus be compared to *Dubliners* thanks to its precise attention to detail and to the apparently most insignificant aspects of human character, those which, through the lens of aesthetic perception, may uncover unexpected and extra-ordinary psychological truths. By turning his attention to the Joyce of *Dubliners*, Trevor also puts forward that the state of paralysis that opens and pervades Joyce's collection may be seen as a timeless feature of the Irish community, so as to eliminate all historical borders and ultimately to reveal that such a paralysis is to be seen as inherent in the human condition (of which the Irish become only a metonymic fragment). As a consequence, Trevor's style and especially his narrative structures (slow and evocative, relying on narrative pauses more than on plot advancement) appear as a stylistic reproduction of the same paralysis that permeates his characters lives.

Like *Dubliners*, Trevor's stories "tend to be rather bleak; characters rarely discover the means to overcome their feelings of alienation or the cripping illusions they rely on to mask their inadequacies" (Schirmer 1999, 7). In recreating such a desolate condition that prevents any moral redemption for the characters, Trevor absorbs several techniques that pertain to modernist

experimentation, including the early ones employed in *Dubliners*. Besides the aforementioned distrust for authorial omniscience, his stories present what Schirmer calls "multiple centers of consciousness", so as to produce narratives that are constructed upon "many segments, each of which is associated by one character's perception" (*Ibid.*, 9). The result, as argued by Schirmer, is a "mosaic of different points of view, relying heavily on juxtaposition and parallelism", a technique that Trevor inherits from those modernist and pre-modernist authors who believed that "limited points of view embodied in formal terms a philosophical scepticism" (*Ibid.*). The depiction of multiple centres of consciousness through juxtaposition and parallelism in order to form a mosaic of narrative segments is discernible in Trevor's latest novel *Love and Summer*, a story set in the fifties in the rural town of Rathmoye, where all the people seem to reiterate the same actions since time immemorial. Feelings appear as communally shared, lacking of individuality and weakened by the frightful monotony and repetition that characterize their lives. The novel opens with the funeral of Mrs Connulty, a well-off and respected lady who was known and looked up to by everybody despite her intolerant and bigoted behaviour. Her daughter, Miss Connulty, is in fact the only person who doesn't mourn her mother's death. For her, as her thoughts will extensively reveal throughout the novel, her mother's passing represents an unconscious and irrepressible sense of liberation and a relieving and somewhat exciting feeling of change. Everybody attends the funeral, including the female protagonist Ellie Dillaham, a romantic and lonely woman who has married Dillaham, a widower who lives in regret for the tragic deaths of her previous wife and daughter and who has remarried in order to escape solitude. During the funeral, Ellie sees an out-of-the ordinary stranger (his looks are defined as "contradictory") while he is taking photographs. His name is Florian, the main character of the novel, a young man from a nearby village who's attempting to become an artist. He was there to take pictures of an old abandoned cinema and stopped to see the funeral. The story develops by following the two main characters' encounter, their first conversations and approaches, the thoughts and feelings of mutual loneliness and their final passionate idyll. The novel's rhythm itself, however, communicates that such a romantic feeling is far from being authentic and genuine but it is rather constructed upon a sense of alienation and a longing for escapism. When the two meet, at the beginning of the summer, Florian has lost his parents and inherited their house. He is now selling it in order to leave his village and move to another place (possibly Scandinavia)

and fulfill his artistic ambitions. Henceforth, the plot continues by exploiting Ellie's tormented choice between remaining faithful to her ordered and secure marital life or following Florian in what seems an adventurous life in an unknown place. Also due to a direct reference to Gabriel Conroy (quoted as one of the heroes of the stories read by Florian,)[6] Florian strongly calls to mind the protagonist of "The Dead", the only *Dubliners*' character who partially realizes his condition of stagnation and paralysis.[7] Concurrently, as I will argue, his exile implicitly reveals itself as a failure, so as to mirror Stephen Dedalus' destiny at the end of *A Portrait*. In addition, as I have argued elsewhere,[8] the story of Ellie convincingly reads as a rewriting of Joyce's "Eveline", being both centered on a sentimental female character who is called to leave the emptiness of a monotonous, dusty and domestic life and move adventurously abroad with her lover. Like Eveline, Trevor's heroine eventually decides not to leave her husband and she remains faithful to a destiny which seems more and more ineluctable and impossible to change.[9] Inasmuch as the characters' destinies appear as if "paralysed", the effect of paralysis seems to insinuate in all events and features of their lives. The town itself is firstly said to be born "for no reason that anyone knew or wondered about", it is "compact and ordinary" and all of its inhabitants are

[6] "He couldn't have burned the books, he couldn't have so casually destroyed the pages on which he had first encountered Miss Havisham and Mr Verloc, and Gabriel Conroy and Edward Ashburnham and Heathcliff, where first he'd glimpsed Netherfield Park and Barchester". (Trevor 2009, 60)

[7] Many theories have developed about the personality of Conroy as a "Dubliner". I am here following John Paul Riquelme. "*Stephen Hero*, *Dubliners*, and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Styles of Realism and Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*. Ed. Attridge, Derek. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 103-130; John Paul Riquelme. "For Whom the Snow Taps: Style and Repetition in 'The Dead.'" *The Dead: Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical and Historical Contexts, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Ed. Schwarz, Daniel R. Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1994. 219-33.

[8] Federico Sabatini, Review of William Trevor, *Love and Summer* (Italian translation *L'amore. Un'estate*, Einaudi, 2009), *L'indice*, XXVII (March 2010), 3, 33.

[9] As Del Rio Alvaro rightly notices "although the ending of "Eveline" has traditionally been taken as symbolizing the moral paralysis that Joyce identified with Dublin, Eveline's final response, or rather lack of response, to Frank's offer, it has also been differently interpreted. For Schwarze, for example, it signifies Eveline's acknowledgment that her relationship to Frank is just a romantic fiction and that marriage will not liberate her from patriarchal oppression (Schwarz 2003, 108-10; Del Rio Alvaro 2007, 6). Schwarz's position is here debatable, and yet it takes into account a plausible interpretation of the deep sense of paralysis as being "understood" by the characters of *Dubliners* in their epiphanic moments of revelation.

described as a mass of identical individuals, doing exactly the same things, acting the same way and feeling the same (lack of) emotions:

> Compact and ordinary, I was a town in a hollow that had grown up there for no reason that anyone knew or wondered about. Farmers brought in livestock on the first Monday of every month, and borrowed money from one of Rathmoye's two banks. They had their teeth drawn by the dentist who practiced in the Square, from time to time, consulted a solicitor there, inspected the agricultural machinery at Des Devlin's on the Nenagh Road, dealt with Heffernan the seed merchant, drank in one of the public houses. Their wives shopped for groceries from the warehouse shelves of Cash and Carry, or in Mc Govern's if they were economizing (Trevor, 2009, 2)

The town's life is so bleakly monotonous that people say that "nothing happened" there:

> *Nothing happened in Rathmoye*, its people said, *but most of them went on living there*. It was the young who left – for Dublin or Cork or Limerick, for England, sometimes for America. *A lot came back*". (*Ibid.*, 3)

The passages, besides summarizing those people's attitude, ominously announce Florian's destiny after his decision to leave Ireland. Although he is a sensitive artist (or, as I will argue, a "sentimental artist") the narration implicitly reveals that he's also suffering from the same paralysis that affects everybody and everything. Like its fellow citizens, paralyzed in the same repetitive deeds**,** Florian is entrapped in a static temporal dimension which prevents any modification. He is sometimes epiphanically aware of the importance of time, but ultimately unable to change the course of events:

> When he [Florian] *procrastinated* it felt right to do so, yet he knew that what he *withheld* did not belong to him and *would happen anyway*, brushing him aside […] he became more *urgently* aware of that, and Ellie's lateness brought *time's dominance* to mind: there was less of it left than he'd imagined" (*Ibid.,* 134).

As in *Dubliners*, time is immobile,[10] it is never suspended as in real epiphanic and enlarged moments of perception; on the contrary, it only

[10] See Carla Marengo Vaglio. "The Time Theme in *Dubliners*." *Genèse et métamorphoses du texte joycien*. Ed. Jacquet, Claude. Langues et langages, 11. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne,

moves forward on the surface of their lives, projecting them very rapidly towards old age. Many passages in the novel reproduce the same temporal stagnation in the characters' lives, a stagnation that is juxtaposed, via parallelism, to an astounding velocity towards death.[11] All the people share the same traditional experiences within the village, and they also share the same memories of a communal past[12] that seems to repeat itself endlessly into the present and to project itself towards a static and stagnant future. Everything in Rathmoye is sluggishly petrified or, as Joyce had it, "*perpetrified*" (*FW*, 23-29), i.e. "perpetrated" and "perpetuated," "perpetually petrified", i.e. habitually and constantly repeating the same petrifaction. This also applies to the highly significant theme of exile as experienced by Florian. Trevor takes the Joycean notion of exile even further, revealing, though silently, that Florian is destined to fail[13] as his exile is not even the product of his real will. Unlike Stephen Dedalus, Florian does not choose exile to react against his society or to put into practice his luciferian "non serviam", but he inactively accepts the exile out of lack of courage and because he doesn't have any other option:

> *Had the circumstances been less difficult*, Florian would have remained for ever at Shelhanagh, but since there was *no indication that anything would change* and since he knew *he did not possess the courage* to suffer the indignities of poverty on his own, *he had decided to take the advice* he was offered, to sell the house and – *child of exiles as he was* – to become an exile himself" (*Ibid.*, 27)

Florian is passively "destined" to be an exile because his parents were exiles, in order to unconsciously repeat the same family history without

1985. 46-56.

[11] The temporal paralysis is evident, for example, in Ellie's preoccupation with "eternal" separation ("'Is it for ever you'll be going?," 'It is for ever'" (134) or with Miss Connulty's regret of time passing: "Less tall than her mother […] Miss Connulty retained *the shadow of a prettiness* that had enlivened her as a girl. Grey streaked her hair, darkening its fairness, but few lines aged her features. Even so, *she often felt old*, and resented this reminder that *in reaching middle age and passing through most of it she had missed too much of what she might have had*" (9)

[12] In a significant passage, Florian tells Ellie about Orpen, a strange-looking and mentally disturbed man who lives in Rathmoye: "It's the past that has him I grip". (69)

[13] Besides the aforementioned quotation about young people leaving the village and then coming back, even Florian's ideas about leaving are always expressed without firm conviction. After selling the house, he reflects, "there would be enough to live on, if not in splendor at least in comfort for a while. Enough to be a stranger somewhere else, although *Florian didn't yet know where*. *He had never been outside Ireland*" (28).

committing to a really personal choice[14]. It is also evident that, as an artist-to-be, he is driven by a sense of decadence that does not pertain to an aesthetic view but rather conforms to the same paralyzed consciousness that pushes him to become an exile. In his first attempts at art Florian

> …photographed Shelegham, its disrepair and melancholy atmosphere an attraction that afterwards in is photography he invariably sought: today he intended to return to the burnt out cinema where he'd been reprimanded for trespassing. *Decadence and melancholy are within himself*, *ineluctably* (*Ibid.*, 32)

The adverb "ineluctably" is here a paramount semantic vehicle to express inactivity and impossibility to change, and it summarizes the whole of Florian's life as an artist[15].

This has happened throughout his life, even when he was younger and used to keep a diary and to write stories in it. Isabella, his girlfriend at the time, urged him "to make something out of it", but he "knew he couldn't":[16]

> Surely, Isabella said, he could make something of that, since he had made a little already? […] He knew he couldn't (*Ibid.*, 146)
>
> […]
>
> Reading and rereading the scraps he had given up on, *Florian did not readily conclude that time, in passing, had brought perception*, only that his curiosity

[14] Everybody in the village inherits exactly the same characteristics of their parents' personalities. Even Miss Connulty, as noted by her brother, slowly becomes identical to her mother although she despised her: "An extraordinary thing, Joseph Paul considered, his breakfast getting cold. *It might be her mother talking*, expressions used he hadn't heard since the time of the trouble. The two red spots had appeared high up on her cheeks and he remembered them from childhood. *She*'d pick up a handful of slack and throw it at you" (27). The last "she" is ambiguous as it could refer both to his mother or to his sister, Miss Connulty: the two have apparently become the same person.

[15] It was a place he might have come to when he *fumbled* with photography, Florian thought. But memory would more tellingly preserve it" (137). Apart from the evident negative connotation in the verb "fumbled", Florian's belief that memory is stronger than photography in capturing feelings and emotion is a paradoxical and bitterly ironical affirmation, given the nature of his memory.

[16] Such an artistic inability connected to an artistic ambition also links Florian to Little Chandler, the main character of "A Little Cloud."

> was stirred by the *shadows and half-shadows imagination had once given him*, by the unspoken, and what was still unknown. He added nothing to what was written, only murmuring occasionally a line or word that might supply an emphasis or clarify a passage (*Ibid.*, 147) .

Again, time does not provide his perception with that expansion of knowledge which should be the nucleus of aesthetic creation. His epiphanic moments are only able to stir his curiosity and to present "half-shadows" produced by his defective imagination. Although he defines himself as a "sentimental reader",[17] one can also argue, in this light, that he is a "sentimental artist", referring to the same negative connotation that Joyce conferred upon the term:

> Sentimentalism is never firm, nor can it be; it is a trend of warm comfortable fog […] Passion creates and destroys, but *sentimentalism is only a backwash* into which every kind of rubbish has been cluttered, and I cannot think of a single sentimental work which has survived more than a couple of generations. Crude force is better; at least you are dealing with something primary (Power 1975, 68).

Inasmuch as Florian is a sentimental artist, Ellie is a sentimental woman: she sentimentally recreates her feelings by surrendering to the illusion of a strong passion and, by doing so, she strikingly resembles Joyce's Eveline. Ellie cannot even decipher her feelings ("She *hadn't been aware* that she didn't love her husband" (Trevor 2009, 91) and so one can argue that she wrongly interprets her passionate sentiment for Florian as real. On the contrary, she is only reconstructing a fake feeling in order to fill her existential void. The result is a blurred condition of reality and fantasy that she cannot possibly understand. The same impossibility of disentangling the two (or to make them whole) is further explained by his husband's thoughts, which are reproduced through the (Joycean) technique of free indirect discourse. Although he refers to his personal experience, his words may easily apply to Ellie or to Florian, so as to reinforce the idea of a global and collective consciousness erasing all individual differences**:**

[17] "He couldn't have burned the books, he couldn't have so casually destroyed the pages on which he had first encountered Miss Havisham and Mr Verloc, and Gabriel Conroy and Edward Ashburnham and Heathcliff, where first he'd glimpsed Netherfield Park and Barchester. '*I'm a sentimental reader,"* he admitted to the visitor (60).

> Dillaham *tried to make sense of it* […] He went through it all again, every word that had been spoken, *even by himself*, his interruptions, his *effort to lead a conversation* into areas that might be fertile enough *to nurture reality in the morass of confusion*. He went back, in his thoughts, to other times, *searching* them in turn *for a connection* with what had been said, *threading fact and fantasy* and finding in their conjunction *the blemished truth*. For *everything was blemished* in the talk there'd been, and *at its best the truth itself might also be* (*Ibid.,* 190).

Truth is "blemished" for Dillahan but also for the other characters. They can't really find a "connection" and only endeavor to connect "fact and fantasy" in the most plausible way, without ever achieving a real recreation or a real knowledge.

In order to depict such a precise nature of a collective consciousness divided into multiple centers of consciousness, Trevor employs the cinematic technique of reproducing the same scene seen or perceived by different characters simultaneously. The most striking example presents Florian as he suddenly sees Ellie (almost as a vision, again mixing reality and fantasy), approaches her and starts a conversation:

> Florian saw the girl then. She was cycling slowly across the Square in the distance. He blue dress drew his attention, the same dress she'd been wearing before and *when he dreamed of her*. She passed Bodell's bar and turned into a street a few yards on. (*Ibid.*, 79-80)

A very laconic conversation between the two follows: Florian invites Ellie for a coffee, she hesitates, blushes, and finally refuses. The dialogue continues about irrelevant trivialities and abruptly stops, at the very end of the chapter, when he admits that he has dreamt of her. The following chapter begins with Miss Connnulty looking at the same scene from her window above the square, so as to offer another vantage point of observation, one from which nothing can be heard:

> Resting after her morning's work, idling at the window from which so often she viewed the Square, Miss Connulty had noticed the two when they appeared there from Magennis Street. She had seen them hesitating before walking on, seen them stop again, seen Ellie Dillaham eventually scuttling off. Miss Connulty used that word to herself, for scuttling was what Ellie Dillahan's abrupt breaking away had looked like, a sudden, awkward movement forced

> upon herself, reluctant yet urgent. She hadn't mounted he bicycle but had dragged it with her, and the man who'd taken the photographs at the funeral stood where she had left him, taken aback by her nasty departure. Then he rode across the Square and disappeared on to Castledrummond Road. (*Ibid.*, 87)

Besides offering another vantage point, the passage also offers another perspective, though biased by Miss Connulty's feelings of jealousy. The scene also cinematically provides (as it follows her visual perceptions) a continuation to the previous depiction, i.e. it makes the reader "see" the moment when the two lovers part and disappear from the square. Miss Connulty then goes on to speculate about their relationship and about their dialogue. Trevor superimposes the same scene but he eliminates all sounds in the one perceived by Miss Connulty. While the reader has been previously allowed to listen to the two lovers' dialogue, Miss Connulty must fill the silence with her speculative imagination. The technique is definitely meta-narrative and points towards the overlapping of "fact and fantasy". More poignantly, it strongly connects to the above-quoted passage where Dillaham was desperately trying to interpret his own thoughts, his words and even his "interruptions," i.e. his silences.

As I have argued, the scene is cinematically recreated by following the characters perceptions and also by fuelling skepticism about the same "blemished truth" which can/must be seen from several different perspectives at once. However, as Florian says about his own memory, images are "like a film carelessly projected"[18] (*Ibid.*, 199). In Rathmoye, images and feelings have to remain as simple and straightforward as possible and whenever they acquire an existential depth and complexity they result in a (fictitious) film badly assembled:

> But what *he had failed to anticipate* was the depth of disappointment its inevitable end would bring. *He had allowed the simple thing to be complicated*" (*Ibid.*, 139).

Such an attitude results in Florian's sense of a guilty conscience: to make simple things complicated and to accept the subtle ambivalences that life offers is blameworthy, something to feel ashamed and remorseful about.

[18] "Walking the next day, Florian was first of all aware that his dog was dead, and then the day before came jerkily back, *like a film carelessly projected*" (199).

Trevor evocatively draws on the modernist assumption that life is "complex" and that its artistic recreation, as Joyce proclaims, is a "concreation", "a complex matter of pure form" (*FW*, 581.30) that must take into account such a complexity in order not to become only a "poor trait of the artless"—"just *a poor trait of the artless*, its importance in *establishing the identities in the writer complex"* (*FW*, 114.33). Feelings and emotions are thus intricate and multifaceted but they mustn't be so in Rathmoye. The result, otherwise, becomes a punishment, a Dedalus-like self-exile which is destined to fail. Such a failure, which was ominously announced at the beginning of the novel ("It was the young who left—for Dublin or Cork or Limerick, for England, sometimes for America. *A lot came back*") is again tacitly suggested by the very last image of the novel, as Florian finally leaves Ireland. His epiphanic vision is full of gloomy omens that anticipate his failure:

> "On the streets of darkened town, on roads that are often his alone, *bright sudden moments pierce the dark*: *reality at second hand spreads in an emptiness* […] you know what you'll remember, he reflects, you know what fragile memory'll hold […] *The last of Ireland is taken from him*, its rocks, its gorse, its little harbours, the distant lighthouse. *He watches until there is no land left*, only the sunlight dancing over the sea" (*Ibid.*, 211-212).

By thinking that he already knows what he will remember from his past, Florian reveals that his is not a "journey to" but a journey back";[19] his past is already with him influencing and overwhelming his present, and he can't possibly move forward nor can things really change. The final scene subtly presents him as a passive character since he leaves Ireland with a sense of melancholy which does not apply to a courageous choice. More significantly, he is not renouncing Ireland according to his own will but "Ireland is taken from him". The scene is also very cinematic for the reader but it is not for the character. While we see him standing and watching as the ship moves away from the Irish shore, his own vision is more similar to "a film carelessly projected" rather than to a vibrantly visual scene of an unknown but stimulating future. The end of the novel thus presents Trevor's bleak vision of the paralysis that saturates all of his characters, including Florian, the most sensitive and ambitious. From his thoughts, we understand that Florian's previous moments of revelation were so ephemeral as to reveal only

[19] The expression is by Samuel Beckett (In *The Letters of Samuel Beckett*, 2010)

a "reality at second hand". Paradoxically, he is also very similar to Joyce's Eveline (and so to Ellie, so as to reinforce again the idea of a single collective consciousness): like him, Eveline, at the end of the short story, is described with her "hands clutching the iron", a "helpless animal" inescapably caught in her past.

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Andrea Binelli

JOYCE AND WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ENGLISH

The fact that the title of this book is a question arguably exempts the contributors from explaining the reasons why one should read Joyce in the 21st century, as it would have actually been the case if there had been no question mark in the same title. In the latter case, contributors should have not avoided providing an answer to the question under scrutiny. In fact, a book, an essay, any research revolving around an interrogative can legitimately tackle it by exploring data and ideas, facts and hypotheses that better illustrate the rationale, context, and circumstances of such interrogation, without daring to answer it in the first place. It is presumably in this understanding that not few articles within this collection and much writing in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences are not so likely to answer queries and to solve issues as to posit further questions. And to be sure, a note of pride can easily be distinguished whenever a novel, thought-provoking question is intriguingly formulated. Accordingly, the number of hopefully constructive doubts and unanswered questions increases as a scholarly tradition of genuine and healthy skepticism is confirmed in its essential respects.

Nobody should deny that such a critical approach has historically ushered in innovative perspectives and sensibilities, ground-breaking debates and methodological developments, thus shaping a theoretical awareness to which the progress of human thought and knowledge owes much. And to acknowledge this obviously does not mean to argue that answers are never welcome. As a matter of fact, when I first thought about how I could contribute to this collection, I was initially taking into consideration matters and viewpoints that would have done pretty much the same job described above: I was starting from a question to end with another. To simplify and possibly cheapen it, I was going to recapitulate and examine several scholars' ideas about how and why a literary author like Joyce is and will be appreciated on account of linguistic and semiotic factors we are still at pains to define. And yet, at some stage I realized what I was doing and I reckoned

that, for a change, I could have taken that sentence, "Why should one read Joyce in the 21st century?" for what it really was: a question.

Much of what I had already written and several notes were thus thrown, as I eventually grasped that, as far as my experience as a reader of Joyce was concerned, the title of this book was actually not so difficult a question. And this was not so because it enabled several possible answers. Actually, even though one answer only had been allowed, i.e., if I had had to point out the main reason why I keep on taking *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake* down from the shelf, the question would have not turned into a troublesome one. Then, why? Because of the expressive means in which the characters' perception and experience of place, time, events and people around them are couched in those books. In other terms, it is my contention that Joyce's literary works, and his mature production in particular, could and should be read before going to bed and during the weekends of the years to come on account of their language. Again, the reasons for this answer are diverse and all worth considering in their own right. Moreover, they are answers, not questions. So, the present essay is no more than a quick-and-dirty attempt at listing these reasons.

A good reason to read Joyce today and to take pleasure and benefit from his language is that during the last three decades a wealth of studies has been published which investigated Irish English and brought our knowledge of it to unprecedented levels. The advancement was made possible by the rejection of ideological biases and hazy methods of linguistic analysis which had quite often jeopardized the objectivity of the previous research. As Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh argued in "Language, Ideology and National Identity", "[l]anguage has operated as a vehicle for debates concerned with cultural identity and political legitimacy in Ireland", thus proving a key factor of "cultural discrimination" and identity formation (Ó Tuathaigh 2005, 42). Likewise, Tony Crowley began his *Wars of Words. Politics of Language in Ireland 1537-2004* by warning that the history of language in Ireland is concerned with "proprietorship, sovereignty, cultural struggle, progress, purity, racial identity, authenticity", and, as a consequence, it has too often turned into a story of these 'causes': "the history" he asserted, "has suffered greatly in the past from simplification" (Crowley 2005, 1).

As regards linguistics, ideological problems were therefore likely to arise, for instance, when it came to interpreting the sources of the features of the Irish variety of English. Scholars tended to split up when they had

to decide whether these features derived from language contact, primarily between local vernaculars and Lowland Scottish, West/North Midland and South/west regional varieties of English (superstratum hypothesis), or from the retention of inherited Irish vernacular input, which was recorded to prevail in substratumist interpretations (Hickey 2005, 19-23). In this respect, one should not forget that for decades, not even the name of the language spoken in Ireland was a peaceful matter. Anglo-Irish (derived from literary studies), Hiberno-English (erudite and obscure), Brogue (a derogatory term for the accent to be heard in certain rural areas of the Republic of Ireland), and Irish English (more neutral) are just some of the many labels alternatively used according to the speaker/writer's beliefs regarding certain political and social issues (Kallen 1997, vii). Moreover, this area of research has been gaining much from the potentialities of machine-readable corpora and electronic resources in general. The works by Raymond Hickey, Marku Filppula, John M. Kirk and Jeffrey L. Kallen and are good cases in point.

What is of interest here is that drawing from these fruitful works it is increasingly possible to investigate and weigh the contribution of Irish English to Joyce's language. The awareness as to the peculiarities of Irish English can help us gain a better understanding of which stylemes may be regarded as distinguishing traits of an individual *écriture* and which of them are rather the outcome of "the most neglected major element of James Joyce's style: his use of the Anglo-Irish dialect of English", as Richard Wall had to observe only twenty-six years ago (Wall 1986, 9). In fact, Irish English has often been pointed out as a potential source of estrangement in Joyce's writing. Initially it is employed as a narrative device of characterization. For instance, in "The Dead" Greta's western speech is particularly marked when she tells her husband about Michael Fury and this is presumably meant to differentiate her from the Dublin context with which her husband can be identified and to deepen the distance between them. Subsequently, the influence of the Gaelic lexicon, syntactical patterns and dominant rhetorical figures actually grew into a powerful semiotic means, especially in his last masterworks. More specifically, according to Katie Wales, the influence of Irish on Joyce's style becomes evident in his inclination to alliterations, figures of sound repetition, distinctive rhythms, hyperbolic statements and ironical understatements, the frequency of topicalisations and noun-centred constructions, idiomatic expressions and lexical items (Wales 1992, 7-25), some of which can hardly be understood by British and American readers with no background in Irish English.

Those who are familiar with Joyce's biography and 'character' may well argue that the likelihood of misunderstandings of this kind was probably not a side effect of his choice, nor something he was not expecting. Among many others, C. George Watson concentrated on the thematisation of such a problematic relationship with English—so foreign and so familiar—in the P*ortrait* and on the many references to it in Joyce's letters, and concluded that he was "obsessed with the sense of a gapped and fractured culture, arising from the dispossession of a language" (Watson 1979, 152). According to Seamus Deane, in response to the lack of a native language that could articulate his attachment to his own culture, Joyce eventually opted for a style which seems to bring a rhetoric of familiarity and a rhetoric of estrangement together and "eloquently represents aphasia" (Deane 1999, 96). Like Stephen Dedalus, who tried to shape an identity of his own by refusing most of the material forces he experienced in life (England, Ireland, church and mother), Joyce escaped a national character by consistently mediating his narration "through a recourse to the phantasmal", because, in Deane's words again, "the real subject and the real country are, in Irish conditions, representable only as the unreal" (*Ibid.*, 97).

Phantasms and mental images are crucial to Joyce's style. In this respect, literary critics and scholars from several areas including Sociology and Geography, Semiotics and Sociolinguistics, Cultural Studies and Media Theory, have focused on the importance of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* for what can be broadly defined the verbal representation of the cognitive processes which are part of the human experience of the Real. Their interest seems to be stirred by Joyce's ability to update a medium which had grown distant from the modern and urbanized world of perception and, as Stephen Kern pointed out, to tune it to a revolutionized phenomenological landscape. This revolution arguably accounted for Joyce's elaboration of a "new mode of textuality" (Rabaté 2001, 196). Reformulated within the framework of literary studies, this means to say that Joyce's achievements were made possible by and sometimes coincided with an aggressively modernist experimentation of narrative techniques and modes of representation.

This process of formal renewal was in fact to exert a crucial influence over our understanding of literature as well as over the writing of generations of authors. Small wonder that, as soon as *Ulysses* was published, it was its very literariness that was immediately questioned: "It was not at all clear what kind of book it was," Hugh Kenner had to recall, "*Ulysses* seemed […]

as featureless as a telephone directory" (Kenner 1987, 2). Any time the literary canon is stimulated, and maybe defied, by the appearance of a captivating, socially relevant, and yet apparently amorphous work, a new idea of literature becomes necessary to make sense of the more or less radical formal changes that the new work entails. Declan Kiberd may have acknowledge this very state of affairs when he went so far as to argue that "Joyce may have exploded the novel, much as Cervantes did the epic and romance […] and it is very likely that *Ulysses* is cast in a form for which, even yet, there is no name" (Kiberd 1992, lxxx).

A most appealing perspective on the history of literature can in fact be enjoyed if we look at it as the history of literary forms, of genres and styles. In a similar vein, Franco Moretti's geographical approach to literature holds that literary forms, conceived as abstracts of social relationships and tensions, are subject to evolutionary dynamics whereby only those forms that transform so as to suit the always changing epistemologies can survive. The others are deemed to perish. Heteroglossia and the stream of consciousness—of which Joyce was a master—have not only survived, they have increasingly become effective communicative tools and expressive means in the twentieth century novel.

Joyce mastered them to give a voice to torn identities and fragmented spirits, to express the rupture of space and time, and to find correspondences between a character's mind and the rain of stimuli assailing him/her in a European metropolis. According to Philip Fisher, Joyce inaugurated a post-Romantic poetics suitable to represent the shift from narration to tabulation, from memory to information, from the psychological experience of 'looking at' to that of 'looking around'. The need to account for "a multiple, distracted, interrupted spatial experience" (Fisher 2006, 668), one which "encourages a scanning and leveling of reality" (*Ibid.,* 669) brought him to inaugurate a defamiliarized language of distraction. So familiar and so foreign, one is tempted to say again. It is not by chance that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* feature many more occurrences of Irish English expressions than Joyce's earlier works. Arguably, the necessity to locate the chaotic fragmentation in the characters' mental life accounted for superficial, transitory and disconnected communicative forms that seem to anticipate Twitter messages. The following quotation reproduces Stephen's train of thoughts and it could easily be disguised as a collection of short, sprawling, and incisive tweets he may be posting, one after the other, while walking on Sandymount strand:

> Reading two pages apiece of seven books every night, eh? I was young. You bowed to yourself in the mirror, stepping forward to applause earnestly, striking face. Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hray! No-one saw: tell no-one. Books you were going to write with letters for titles. Have you read his F? O yes, but I prefer Q. Yes, but W is wonderful. O yes, W. Remember your epiphanies on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years, a mahamanvantara. Pico della Mirandola like. Ay, very like a whale. (2000, 123)

And the same applies to Bloom while he is eating at Davy Byrne's:

> Touched his sense moistened remembered. Hidden under wild ferns on Howth. Below us bay sleeping sky. No sound. The sky. The bay purple by the Lion's head. Green by Drumleck. Yellowgreen towards Sutton. […] Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. Soft, warm, sticky gumjelly lips. Flowers her eyes were, take me, willing eyes. Pebbles fell. She lay still. A goat. No-one. High on Ben Howth rhododendrons a nannygoat walking surefooted, dropping currants. Screened under ferns she laughed warmfolded. (2000, 283)

Wittgenstein believed that the limits of language match those of our world. In *Ulysses*, and even more in *Finnegans Wake*, a similar fascination with language turns into a challenge to expand the dimensions of our world. Rather than complaining about the impossibility of communication, Joyce won that very challenge by developing new communicative possibilities and creating beforehand expressive means that were to characterize Twenty-First century media services. My final contention—and my answer to the question of the title—is therefore that Joyce's books should be read because in them there is still much to be found about what is to happen to English in future.

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