

JOYCE STUDIES IN ITALY

13

**WHY READ JOYCE
IN THE 21ST CENTURY?**

Edited by
FRANCA RUGGIERI AND ENRICO TERRINONI

EDIZIONI 
ROMA, 2012

*Volume pubblicato con il contributo
del Dipartimento di Letterature Comparete
dell'Università degli Studi Roma Tre*

TUTTI I DIRITTI RISERVATI

È vietata la traduzione, la memorizzazione elettronica,
la riproduzione totale o parziale, con qualsiasi mezzo,
compresa la fotocopia, anche ad uso interno o didattico.
L'illecito sarà penalmente perseguibile a norma dell'art. 171
della legge n. 633 del 22/04/1941

ISSN 2281-373X

ISBN 9788897831051

© 2012, Edizioni Q – Roma

www.edizioniq.it

e-mail: info@edizioniq.it

CONTENTS

Enrico Terrinoni <i>Preface. Why read Joyce at all?</i>	p. 13
Spurgeon Thompson <i>Returning to political interpretation: a communist Finnegans Wake</i>	» 17
Claire Culleton <i>Strick's Ulysses and war: why we read Joyce in the 21st Century</i>	» 37
Paul Fagan <i>"a mixer and wordpainter": Finnegans Wake in the age of remix culture</i>	» 49
Jonathan McCreedy <i>The Death of a Joyce Scholar and The Further Adventures of James Joyce: the crossroads of two reading publics</i>	» 69
Erika Mihálycsa <i>Horsey women and arse-temises: wake-ing Ulysses in translation</i>	» 79
Benjamin Boysen <i>Joyce's "politicoecomedie": on James Joyce's humorous deconstruction of ideology in Finnegans Wake</i>	» 93
Ilaria Natali <i>Joyce's "corpo straniero": the European dimension of Irishness in four border crossings</i>	» 105

Maria Vaccarella <i>A medical humanistic exploration of James Joyce</i> »	121
Emanuela Zirzotti <i>Have you ever “seen” Joyce? The role of the Internet in the popularization of the man and his work</i>	» 131
Patricia Pericic <i>The limits to literature in Ulysses in the 21st Century</i> »	145
Ivu I-chu Chang <i>Ulysses backed against the sea: Taiwan’s alternative modernity in Wang Wen-hsing’s Backed Against the Sea</i> »	155
Thierry Robin <i>Joyce’s “ghosts”..., Flann O’Brien, Samuel Beckett and John Banville</i> »	169
Maria Grazia Tonetto <i>The body of finitude</i>	» 185
Federico Sabatini <i>Contemporary Joyce: Joycean themes and stylistic techniques in William Trevor’s writings</i>	» 193
Andrea Binelli <i>Joyce and what is to become of English</i> »	209

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 arts¹ 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 or 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 crippling 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 past¹² 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 petrification. 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 fail¹³ 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 choice¹⁴. 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 his 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 artist¹⁵.

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. Her 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 Connulty 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 the 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 back¹⁹; 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.

References

- Adams, Susan J. 2009 “Joyce in Blackface: Goloshes, Gollywoggs and Christy Minstrels in ‘The Dead.’” *De-familiarizing Readings: Essays from the Austin Joyce Conference*, eds. Alan W Friedman and Charles Rossman, Amsterdam: Rodopi. 33-42.
- Beckett, Samuel. 2009. *The letters of Samuel Beckett*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Del Rio Alvaro, Constanza. 2007. “William Trevor’s Felicia’s Journey: Inherited Dissent or Fresh Departure from Tradition?” *Asociación Española de Estudios Irlandeses* (AEDEI, 2007) [[http://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/Issue2/Issue%202/Articles/Trevor%E2%80%99sFelicia%E2%80%99sJourneybyC DelRio.htm](http://www.estudiosirlandeses.org/Issue2/Issue%202/Articles/Trevor%E2%80%99sFelicia%E2%80%99sJourneybyCDelRio.htm)]
- Haughey, Jim. 1995. “Joyce and Trevor’s Dubliners: The Legacy of Colonialism.” *Studies in Short Fiction*, 32, (Summer 1995). 355-65.
- Herr, Cheryl. 1986. *Joyce’s Anatomy of Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Joyce, James. 1996. *Dubliners*. London: Penguin.
- . 1945. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Marengo Vaglio, Carla. 1985. «The Time Theme in *Dubliners*.» *Genèse et métamorphoses du texte joycien*, ed. Jacques, Claude. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne. 46-56
- .1991. “ ‘All the world’s fair’: le mot et le monde dans ‘Nausicaa.’” *De Joyce à Stoppard: Écritures de la Modernité*, ed. Adolphe Haberer. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon. 109-29.
- Power, Arthur. 1975. *Conversations with James Joyce*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books.
- Riquelme, John Paul. 1990. “*Stephen Hero*, *Dubliners*, and *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Styles of Realism and Fantasy.” *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. D. Attridge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 103-130
- . 1994. “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. D. Schwarz. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's. 219-33
- Sabatini, Federico. 2007. *Im-marginable: Lo spazio di Joyce, Beckett e Genet*. Rome: Aracne.
- . 2008. "It can't be all in one language': Poetry and 'Verbivocovisual' Language in Joyce and Pound." *Review of Literatures of the European Union*, (8). 97-114.
- . 2009. "Joyce's Visual Writing: The Symbolic Space of Embrasure." *Joyce in Progress: Proceedings of the 2008 James Joyce Graduate Conference in Rome*, eds. Ruggieri, Franca Ruggieri, John McCourt, Enrico Terrinoni. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 195-206.
- . 2010. Review of William Trevor, *Love and Summer* (Italian translation *L'amore. Un'estate*, Einaudi, 2009). *L'indice*, XXVII (March 2010). 3. 33.
- Schwarze, Tracy T. 2003. "Female Complaints: 'Mad' women, Malady, and Resistance in Joyce's Dublin." *Cultural Studies of James Joyce*, ed. R. Brandon Kershner. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 91-115
- Trevor, William. 2009. *Love and Summer*. London: Viking.