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**JOYCE'S FICTION
AND
THE NEW RISE
OF
THE NOVEL**

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Franca Ruggieri*

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“A HANDFUL OF TEA”: MONEY AND MONSTER
NOVELS

In his Preface to *The Tragic Muse*, which began appearing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1889, Henry James ponders on what he memorably calls “large loose baggy monsters” – novels like Thackeray’s *The Newcomes* (1855), Dumas’s *The Three Musketeers* (1844), or Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1869) that take in the sweep of generations and countries, that engage the social, political, historical, religious, and philosophical issues of their day, and that have become renowned for their encyclopaedic marshalling of detail. It is now well-known that if you wish to become minutely informed about early 17th century France you read *The Three Musketeers*; mid-Victorian England, *The Newcomes*; the impact of the Napoleonic Wars on Tsarist Russia, *War and Peace*. But what do these huge works, James asks himself – *War and Peace* runs to some half a million words (587,287 to be exact) – “with their queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary, artistically *mean*?” (James 1937: 84).

James is principally concerned with three issues. The first has to do with unity. He had originally conceived of *The Tragic Muse* as a theatrical story and a political story. But, he explains:

A story [is] a story, a picture a picture, and I had a mortal horror of two stories, two pictures, in one. The reason for this was the clearest – my subject was immediately, under that disadvantage, so cheated of its indispensable centre as to become of no more use for expressing a main intention than a wheel without a hub is of use for moving a cart.

(James 1937: 83-84)

I will return to the issue of “a main intention” when I relate James’s “Preface” to the question of the role money plays in *Ulysses*, but for the present I would like to suggest that James’s “main intention” foreshadows in a general way Stephen Dedalus’s speculations about “wholeness” (*integritas*) in *A Portrait* as one of the “phases of apprehension”, without, as far as James is concerned, the mediating influence of Aquinas.

The second aesthetic issue that James canvasses has to do with “composition” – a trope he employs in many of his Prefaces to give expression to what mysteriously forms on the page from the fusion of the writer as *vates* (or seer) with the writer as *ποιηη* (or maker) (Shelley 1977: 480-508). “I delight in a deep-breathing economy and an organic form”, James assures his reader. In conceiving of *The Tragic Muse*, “[m]y business was accordingly to ‘go in’ for complete pictorial fusion, some such common interest between my two first notions as would, in spite of their birth under quite different stars, do them no violence at all”. “Were there not”, he further observes, “certain sublime Tintorettoes at Venice, a measureless Crucifixion in especial, which showed without loss of authority half a dozen actions separately taking place?” How could the plenitude of “life”, that is life that was valued rather than life that was “wasted” – all those unquestionably enriching but peculiar “elements of the accidental and the arbitrary” – be incorporated in a structure that did not, as a result, turn into a loose baggy monster? (James 1937: 83-84). What again comes to mind, I suggest, are Stephen Dedalus’s speculations about “harmony” (*consonantia*) and his image of the artist as God paring his fingernails behind the scenes, indifferent to the clamorous and seemingly random particularities of his creation.

The third aesthetic principle that James considers is “beauty”. A picture without composition”, he argues, “slights its most precious chance for beauty” (James 1937: 84), by which, I suggest, he is alluding to that capacity for transcendence that great works of art possess and that, as before, foreshadows Stephen Dedalus’s speculations about aesthetics, specifically what he calls “radiance” (*claritas*); beauty for

Stephen, of course, requiring the simultaneous apprehension of *integritas*, *consonantia*, and *claritas*.

I have offered these parallels between Henry James's musings and Stephen Dedalus's speculations to provide criteria for proposing one possible solution to the aesthetic problem of whether or not *Ulysses* is a "loose baggy monster". In conceiving and writing *Ulysses*, or what he himself once called his "damned monster novel" (Ellmann 1972: 187),¹ Joyce faced issues similar to those James discusses in his "Preface". There is the problem of the main intention – something Joyce pondered during the seven years it took him to write the book; and something that has preoccupied many critics since. Is the main intention of *Ulysses* heroism, forgiveness, domesticity, modernity, colonialism, the representation of consciousness or of the unconscious, or something else? Did Joyce have a "main intention"? Then there is the issue of composition: two seemingly incompatible stories – a realist bourgeois Edwardian novel of adultery (Kuch 2017) that somehow needed to be seamlessly joined to the tripartite Homeric epic of the *telemachia*, the *odyssey*, and the *nostos*. Embedded within this is the problem of detail – those elements of the "accidental and the arbitrary" that engender verisimilitude (whether psychological, sociological, political, spiritual, or historical) – that were they to be incorporated would not only need to be meaningful, need to relate to the main intention, but would also need to be organic elements of the composition. Finally, there was the question of beauty, of aesthetic value. What, in its conception and composition, would prevent *Ulysses* from becoming a loose baggy monster; or is it, according to James's criteria, indefensibly one?

The representation of money in *Ulysses*, I suggest, provides one way of answering these questions. My first proposition is that Joyce's main intention, whether presupposed or discovered, was to write about

¹ However, the letter referred to in "*Ulysses*" on the Liffey is to Carlo Linati, 21st September 1920. Stuart Gilbert, ed., *Letters of James Joyce* (London: Faber, 1958), 146-47, translates the phrase from the Italian as "my three times blasted novel".

fidelity. If it is agreed that Homer's *Odyssey* affirms certain forms of fidelity, then Joyce's *Ulysses*, as it were, deconstructs them. For Joyce fidelity became the axel, to use James's metaphor, that united and supported the epic and the novel of adultery, that enabled him seamlessly to compose what at first seemed two incompatible stories. The Latin root of fidelity is *fidēlitāt-em*, < *fidēlis* faithful, < *fidēs* faith. The word comes into Middle English at the beginning of the 16th century through the French *fidélité*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives three pertinent senses of the word:

1. The quality of being faithful; faithfulness, loyalty, unswerving allegiance to a person, party, bond, etc. Const. *to*, *towards*.
2. Conjugal faithfulness" in the sense: "to make fidelity: to take an oath of fealty.
3. Strict conformity to truth or fact" in the sense "Of persons: Honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, veracity (*obs.*).²

The first two have been thoroughly investigated by Joyceans. It is the third that interests me here, particularly as it relates to the plural "persons". What does the depiction of money in *Ulysses* tell us about fidelity, specifically the conflicted fidelities central to *Ulysses* – Molly's sexual infidelity; Bloom's numerous psycho-sexual infidelities; the Blooms' fidelity as parents – and to what extent can the depiction of money in the book indicate whether or not *Ulysses* is a "loose baggy monster"?

Two documents from the second drawer of the walnut bureau in No. 7 Eccles Street provide one way of considering these issues. The first is the "certificate of possession of £900, Canadian 4% (inscribed) government stock" purportedly yielding four per cent interest (*U* 17.1864-65),³ commonly, though not universally, considered by Joyc-

² *OED* online edition, s.v. "fidelity".

³ Danis Rose, "The Source of Mr. Bloom's Wealth", *James Joyce Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1987): 129, notes that "'The most valuable of Bloom's assets, the Certificate of possession of £900, Canadian 4% inscribed government stock (free of stamp duty)' was added to

eans to guarantee the Blooms a measure of financial security. But as I have shown elsewhere, by examining the stock market reports of the day and by looking at the advice to investors offered by Lord Dunraven in the columns of the *Freeman's Journal* of 9th March 1904,⁴ the very newspaper for which Bloom canvasses, this particular Canadian stock was problematic. It did not yield 4% as has been commonly assumed,⁵ and Bloom's principal, his £900, was not secure, despite the stock being described as "guaranteed" in the newspaper and market reports of 1904, and in *Ulysses*. By 1920, when Joyce was writing "Ithaca", the Canadian Government had nationalized the assets associated with the stock with the result that Bloom would have lost his £900. The second document in the walnut bureau is "an endowment assurance policy of £500 in the Scottish Widows' Assurance Society", a financial institution that was and still is regarded as impeccably sound (Mormont, 2011-2012).⁶ As Mark Osteen has conclusively shown, Bloom's approach to spending and saving is governed by the strategy of covering risk with security (Osteen 1995: 72-74), and it is this risk/security binary that enables Joyce seamlessly to blend the two incompatible money stories, the Canadian stock and the Scottish policy, within his elaboration of his main intention, his exploration of fidelity.

the text (and placed in the 2nd drawer) on a gathering of page proofs dated January 27, 1922. This last minute insertion, I submit, was a hasty compromise reached after several months of indecision occasioned by Joyce's knowledge of Bloom's past". See also Joyce 1975: 675.

⁴ See also "Lord Dunraven on the Land Act", *Freeman's Journal*, 30 May 1904, 5: "The Canadian Guaranteed 4 per Cent are not a trustee security at all, as they are redeemable in 1908, 1910, 1913, and are always above par; also the three classes yield respectively £2-10s-9d, £3-1s-6d, £3-6s-9d according to Coates's list".

⁵ *The Stock Exchange Official Intelligence*, published annually by the London Stock Market, shows that this "book value" was rarely if ever achieved. As Davis and Gallman point out, "Canadian government 4 per cent stock offered British investors a return of 3.1 per cent" (Davis and Gallman 2001: 379-83).

⁶ *Every Man's Own Lawyer* carried advertisements for the Scottish Widows. The amount for Milly was raised from £100 in the *Little Review* to £500 for the first edition; also "coming into force at 21" raised to "coming into force at 25" (Joyce 1975: 675).

The first observation that I would like to make about these two documents is that they are more closely woven into the texture of *Ulysses* than the way money is depicted in many of the monster novels of the 19th century – and I would instance all of Jane Austen, much of *Middlemarch*, particularly book VI, all of Proust’s *a la Recherche* and much of Dickens, especially *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Little Dorrit* (O’Gorman 2007). In all of these money appears and disappears in terms of thrift or spending, inheritance or property, fortune or crime – free of the processes and exigencies of contemporary financial institutions and local, national, and international economics, *Bleak House* and the machinations of Chancery being perhaps the notable exception. In *Ulysses* both the Canadian stock and the Scottish policy are firmly grounded in the financial practices and institutions of the day.

Furthermore, they are not simply employed as plot devices, as class markers, indices of fortune or symbols of morality, but relate in complex, quintessential ways to the main intention of deconstructing fidelity. The endowment assurance policy of £500 in the Scottish Widows’ Assurance Society “intestated Millicent (Milly) Bloom” offers a case in point (*U* 17.1857). Aware for some time that Molly is unsettled in their marriage, Bloom has privately made provision for his daughter. The policy, with the best agency of the day, ensures she will have an independent income, or sufficient means to secure one, should he pre-decease her. The policy is in Milly’s not Molly’s name. The fidelity here is to his daughter and to his conception of himself as her father rather than his fidelity to Molly as husband and provider. Knowing, as I have conclusively proved elsewhere, that it is possible for Molly to divorce Bloom and for him to divorce her, the assurance policy is one form of fidelity to Milly that Bloom places beyond Molly’s reach.⁷

The Canadian stock is equally if not more complex. It is not clear how Bloom has acquired the £900 to buy the stock. It is hardly

⁷ Peter R. Kuch 2017.

likely that Bloom inherited it from his father, as his father's suicide appears to have been associated with a failed business venture (*U* 18.982-83). It is also unlikely that Bloom could have saved such a large amount of money since he started working twenty-five years ago, in jobs ranging from door-to-door salesmanship to being employed as a tally clerk in the cattle yards.⁸ To include the £900 in a statement of assets, as Osteen does, is to assume that Bloom has saved the entire sum; he might equally have borrowed some or all of it at an interest rate lower than the interest he is receiving from his Canadian bonds. If there was a call on borrowings – something not unknown in the stock market debacles of the eighteen-nineties and early nineteenth-hundreds – then selling his Canadian stock could also prove problematic. Authoritative sources, such as *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*, and financial columns, such as the *London Times's* "Finance and Commerce" and the *Daily Mail's* "Chat on Change", record the extreme volatility of the Canadian market throughout the first half of 1904. As one investment analyst noted in 1908, "the lowest price at which its 4% guaranteed stock has sold in four years was 95½ in 1904" (Snyder 1907: 329). That Bloom has chosen to invest in risky stock, even if, as some critics have speculated, it is to cover his rent at No. 7 rather than purchase a house for himself and Molly in town or in one of the new suburbs, is not a decision that generates confidence in Bloom's financial acumen or in his commitment to Molly. It is a decision, however, that chimes with his characteristic strategy of offsetting risk for himself and Molly by providing security for Milly.

There is also a further aspect of Bloom's investment in Canadian stock that, to my knowledge, has not been noted. As Lord Dunraven pointed out in his detailed warning to small time investors in the *Freeman's Journal* in May 1904, "The Canadian Guaranteed 4 per Cent are not a trustee security at all, as they are redeemable in 1908,

⁸ To save £900, Bloom would have had to put aside £36 per year every year since he began working, assuming that he bought the Canadian stock in 1903.

1910, 1913”.⁹ Has “slyboots” Bloom invested all his life savings in a high-risk/high-yield investment that he can redeem within a few years if it turns out that Molly’s relationship with Boylan does not progress beyond their single encounter on 16th June 1904? Fidelity here is fidelity to himself in terms of “strict conformity to truth or fact” in the sense “Of persons: Honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, veracity” – that is, Bloom facing the fact that Molly might very well cheat on him. But it also signals his fidelity to Molly in the broad sense of “Conjugal faithfulness” “to make fidelity: to take an oath of fealty”. It seems Bloom has decided he will try to make as much money as he can from his savings by investing in stock he can either sell or redeem should his marriage withstand the likelihood of an adulterous affair.

But what about Molly and the “handful of tea”? You may recall that during her early morning reverie Molly’s irritation at their straightened circumstances provokes her into thinking about some of the ways her affair could change her life: “sure you cant get on in this world without style all going in food and rent when I’ll get it I lash it around I tell you in fine style I always want to throw a handful of tea into the pot measuring and mincing” (*U* 18.467-69). Is this merely one of those “elements of the accidental and the arbitrary” that Henry James identified as characteristic of the “loose baggy monster”? To propose that it is not, I would draw attention to Bataille’s observation about the psychological impulse driving the erotic: “We want to feel as remote from the world where thrift is the rule as we can:– that is hardly strong enough; we want the world turned upside down and inside out. The truth of eroticism is treason” (Bataille 1962: 170-71). While it is only after Molly has seduced Boylan that she begins to commodify her sexuality in terms of money, presents, travel and a career, the handful of tea nevertheless belongs to the same feelings of irritation that have led her to think about money and that are partly responsible for her embarking on her affair. The handful of tea is not “accidental and arbitrary”; it is a psychologically realistic response to

⁹ “Lord Dunraven on the Land Act”, 5.

a sexual impulse that is in revolt against a penny-pinching domestic economy that has become unendurably burdensome.

Much has been made of Joyce's preoccupation with betrayal; but its binary opposite is fidelity, and *Ulysses*, it seems to me, is not a "damned monster novel" or a "loose baggy monster" given the way its main intention, Joyce's exploration of fidelity, seamlessly blends the twin stories of the novel of adultery and the epic within a sequence of narratives that incorporate all the accidental and arbitrary elements of life in Dublin in 1904. To use the seemingly "accidental and arbitrary" to argue that *Ulysses* is not a "loose baggy monster" is also, to use Henry James's words, to pay tribute to Joyce's "valour" and to "recognise" that for him "sundry things had begun much further back than he had felt them even in their dawn" (James 1937: 84).

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