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Reading in Theory: Towards a Thematic Stylistics in Joyce Studies

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I have composed this thesis myself, that it is entirely my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified on the title page.
# Contents

Acknowledgements 1

Abstract 2

Abbreviations and Textual Note 3

Chapter One: Aims and Frameworks 5

Chapter Two: Definitions, Criteria and Methods 24

Chapter Three: First Case Study 48

Chapter Four: Thematic Stylistics One: Meta-Language in *Dubliners* 85

Chapter Five: Second Case Study 115

Chapter Six: Thematic Stylistics Two: Atomisation 167

Chapter Seven: Third Case Study 195

Chapter Eight: Thematic Stylistics Three: Prose Patterns 228

Conclusion 258

Appendix 264

Works Cited 266
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Abstract

This thesis presents an account of the relationship between literary Theory and close reading in Joyce studies. Throughout, 'Theory' is understood not in a general, conceptual sense, but as a word we use to refer to certain specified intellectual developments in the literary academy that have taken place over roughly the last half-century.

Working from the basis that little can be deduced regarding the contentious relationship between Theory and close reading as long as the issue remains an abstract one, the thesis works towards a description of that relationship based upon scrutiny of key works in the field. To that end, it performs a series of case studies of some of the more significant attempts to combine a deep Theoretical commitment with rigorous textual analysis. The argument developed is that in a significant number of cases a commitment to reading 'Theoretically' has led the critic into an erroneous reading of the literary text under discussion. The possibility of such error is defined with reference to a set of standards which, the author hopes, will be accepted by most scholars working in the field.

Alongside this primary concern, the thesis sets out a technique of close reading designed to minimise the chances of such errors occurring. This technique is referred to as Thematic Stylistics. Requiring both broad and deep engagement with literary texts, it aims to encourage both fidelity and sensitivity when put into practice, and thereby to act as a balance to the suggested tendencies of Theoretical reading. This technique is not left as a set of bare principles, but is exemplified in alternate chapters with reference to errors discussed during the critique described above. Together, the critique of Theory and the outline of Thematic Stylistics are taken to provide a constructive suggestion for the future of the academy.
Abbreviations and Textual Note


The selection of editions for any thesis dealing with Joyce is a potentially difficult matter. As always, one is caught between two duties: choosing the text one estimates to be most faithful; and choosing a text one's reader is able to procure.

In the case of *Ulysses*, the community of Joyce scholars has, by and large, stuck with Gabler's corrected text of 1984 as the standard edition. Until recently, copies of this text, complete with line numbers, were difficult to find in the U.K. However, the 2008 Bodley Head edition, which is widely available, uses this version and maintains the original line numbers. In the case of *Finnegans Wake* the 1939 Viking Press edition is taken to be standard, and the above Penguin version reproduces that text.
Both *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* present a more complex decision. Generally speaking, the respective Viking Press editions of 1967 (ed. Scholes) and 1964 (ed. Anderson) are considered fairly standard. These have been subject to minor tweaks from various editors over the years, with Richard Ellmann playing a notable part in the history of both texts. Jeri Johnson's recent OUP editions are, it seems to me, both admirable versions of those standard texts. To my knowledge, none of the claims in this thesis depends upon material not found in any major editions of these texts.
Chapter One: Aims and Frameworks

At the time of writing, early 2011, those wishing to undertake the task of analysing the nature and worth of Theory are in an unenviable position. The discussion seems rehearsed to the point of sterility. It is now over a decade, for example, since Martin McQuillan and his co-editors began their *Post-theory: New Directions in Criticism* (1999) with the following vertiginous series of declarations:

This is not the first time that Theory has been reported dead. This is not the first time that Theory has been reported dead. This is not the first time that reporting the death of Theory has been reported dead. This is not the first time that reporting the death of Theory has been reported dead.

However, we believe we are the first to call for an end to reporting the death of reporting the death of theory. (ix)

Their call was, predictably, unheeded. Eight years later no less a critic than Jonathan Culler began his *The Literary in Theory* with the words 'Theory is dead, we are told' (1). I know of at least three works, published over a twenty year span, that rather amusingly share the title 'After Theory' (Eagleton, 2003; Docherty, 1996; Smith, 1984); and two that share the title *Post-theory* (McQuillan et al, 1999; Bordwell and Carroll, 1996). Theory seems to have been past for almost as long as it has been present; indeed it would seem to be one of its distinguishing features that it is constantly ringing its own death-knell.

Still, new works continue to appear from distinguished scholars informing us that now, as never before, the age of Theory is entering into a crisis, and that we must begin (or indeed end) consideration of what the post-Theoretical age will look like. Culler lists several such works on the first page of *The Literary in Theory*, noting as he does a mood of grim delight in the popular press. Colin Davis, in a chapter of *After Poststructuralism* entitled 'Spectres of theory', cites some of the very same works as evidence of this general mood that 'theory may be dead and gone' (152). Interestingly, both give us the same quote from Rabaté by way of suggesting that Theory may not rest quietly (Culler 3; Davis 174): 'If Theory is reduced to the ghost of itself, then this is a very obtrusive ghost that keeps walking and shaking its chains in our old academic castles' (*The Future of Theory* 10). In these and many
other works, the sheer amount of material discussing the death and life of Theory is (again) taken to indicate a seismic shift in the academic climate. Frequently, this is defined with reference to Theory's enemies. Culler posits that declarations of the death of Theory 'have long been attempts by opponents to bring about, performatively, the demise they purport to describe' (1). McQuillan and his colleagues are quick to point out that 'Theory has no shortage of opponents waiting to say I told you so' (1). Eagleton, with typical sobriety, refers to them as 'the old fogeys who work on classical allusions in Milton' (After Theory 3).

Now, coming from the likes of Culler and McQuillan such a proposed antithesis within the academy seems odd. On the one hand we have Theory and, presumably, Theorists; on the other we have its 'opponents'. What sort of opponents? To oppose Theory one would presumably have to be something other than a Theorist. What would that look like? How exactly does one oppose Theory un-theoretically? These are difficult questions, and we can find some rather unexpected illumination when Culler mentions some specific texts:

In recent years newspapers and magazines seem to have delighted in announcing the death of theory, and academic publications have joined the chorus. Articles on "the end of high theory" and books with such titles as After Theory, Life After Theory, What's Left of Theory and Reading After Theory are endemic, with only the occasional optimistic title... (1)

Let us look very briefly at some of these works Culler cites as evidence of the anti-Theory 'chorus'.

Both Eagleton's and Docherty's works entitled After Theory see Theory not as an enemy, but a friend in need of revitalisation. Eagleton states on the first page that 'Those to whom the title of this book suggests that 'theory' is now over, and that we can all relievedly return to an age of pre-theoretical innocence, are in for a disappointment'. Docherty is annoyed with Theory only inasmuch as it has capitulated to the institutional imposition it seeks to decry. His book's project is to 'leave a certain "modernist" project of theory in its wake'; his central proposition that 'postmodernism and postmarxism are called on to "wake" theory and Marxism to a proper vigilance' (1). What's Left of Theory (the subtitle of which is 'New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory') is a collection edited in part by Judith Butler, with an opening essay by Gayatri Spivak, to which Culler himself contributed. Its mood,
unsurprisingly, is not one of rabid Theory-bashing. *Life After Theory* is a collection of interviews with Jacques Derrida, Frank Kermode, Toril Moi and Christopher Norris. Again, hardly indicative of the great anti-theoretical chorus.

These books then, far from being opponents of Theory, criticise it only with a view to making it stronger. The 'opponents' of Theory, the 'old fogeys', the 'chorus' of delighted undertakers turn out to be...well, Theorists. And not just Theorists, but impassioned, forward-thinking Theorists¹. Something peculiar is going on here. These writers have undoubtedly sensed an air of reassessment, a wish to examine Theory and perhaps even move on to something else, whatever that might be. But the very works that give us reason to believe that Theory is, in some sense, over, are the very works that seek to perpetuate it. This paradoxical self-referentiality is disquieting for anyone attempting, as I am, to discuss Theory at this pivotal moment in its history. Is it possible to discuss, even criticise Theory without inhabiting the very thing one is trying study?

*Theory*: A Definitional Aside

This rather metaphysical question – 'Can one criticise Theory without becoming it?' – is, I think, largely a matter of one's definitions. We must attend to this issue right away in order to deal with the most elementary hurdle at which we might fall, namely the idea that Theory is un-critiquable because any such critique would constitute another manifestation of Theory and thereby perpetuate what it sought to terminate. The definitional element to this line of thinking is fairly obvious. Culler, to take a convenient example, thinks of Theory as 'a discursive space within which literary and cultural studies now occur, even if we manage to forget it, as we forget the air we breathe' (3). The debt to the de Manian defence of Theory in such formulations is certain. Consider, for example, 'The Resistance to Theory', with its declaration that Theory 'cannot help but flourish, and the more it is resisted, the more it flourishes, since the language it speaks is the language of self resistance' (20).

¹ Of course, a few books in the After Theory genre are genuinely critical of what they see as Theory's failings, as well praising of its virtues. Cunningham's *Reading After Theory*, which Culler cites, is such a case. Shortly before the completion of this thesis, an admirable anthology entitled *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent* (2005) was brought to my attention, which also takes just such an attitude.
Later on Culler will deliberate that essay's famous phrase, 'Nothing can overcome the resistance to theory since theory is itself this resistance' (83-7), which places the strange self-referentiality of the above-cited works into a useful, if disconcerting light. This contextual understanding of Theory – henceforth, for convenience, the Culler-de Man understanding – does indeed pose considerable difficulties for anyone seeking to get outside of Theory in order analyse it. I say 'understanding' rather than 'definition' because de Man was so sceptical of 'defining' Theory at all, preferring to say that it 'come[s] into being when the approach to literary texts is no longer based on non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic considerations' (7). On such a view one can indeed see how it would be impossible to resist or even criticise Theory without also extending it.

The crucial point to make in response is this. On the Culler-de Man use of the term 'Theory' there is little sense in which we might criticise or abandon 'Theory' per se. On their definition, such notions of critique or abandonment are near-meaningless, as futile as breathlessly announcing one's abandonment of the air one breathes. But we need to make it clear from the outset that this is only true for a certain understanding of the word 'Theory' and, what's more, we are not obliged to use that understanding ourselves. We need to make this clear in order to avoid having what looks like a fruitful conceptual dispute when in fact were are having little more than a futile terminological misunderstanding. Oftentimes scholar A will claim that Theory has been, for example, inattentive to its propensity towards political inertia; and scholar B will repost that, on the contrary, because Theory is an inevitable and indispensable beginning of thought, all political moods, be they inert or engaged, begin with Theory; and neither scholar will notice that their whole disagreement rests on two different usages of the same term. Scholar A probably means something like 'those intellectual trends springing from the crisis of left-leaning intellectualism in late 1960s France', and scholar B probably means something like 'the discursive space within which literary and cultural studies now occur'. Scholar B's understanding of the word 'Theory' is quite coherent, but in order to properly engage with scholar A's arguments he needs to evaluate them via scholar A's own definition of this much-disputed term.
So, I should make it clear from the outset that I will not be leaving my operative definition of 'Theory' up to the reader, and I will not, for obvious reasons, be using the Culler-de Man understanding. I will be restricting my targets (and therefore restricting the relevance and impact of my thesis) in order to generate the analytical space needed for balanced, well-defined argument. I leave the details of my definition of Theory until my definitional section (see chapter two), but for now I would just like to emphasise that this business of definition is the luxury of the proposition, not the refutation. It is up to the one performing the critique to state exactly what it is he is critiquing, and others can then respond to this statement in light of the details of that critique. All too often one gets the sense that, worse than being the ground of a simple miscommunication or a matter of differing terminology, the Culler–de Man understanding of Theory is one to which embattled Theorists retreat as means of self-defence. Defence-by-definition is particularly evident, for example, in Davis's After Poststructuralism, which frequently takes issue with authors' definitions of 'postmodernism' or 'Theory' as a means of critique (see, for example, his critiques of Sokal and Bricmont on 24-5 and Bordwell and Carroll on 164-5). In his favour, I would like to observe that Davis is often justified in his suggestion that many authors pay scant attention to this crucial issue of definition. Still, one often gets the sense that Theory's deeply nebulous quality, and the possibility of defining it as being simply inescapable, are being used as a way of safeguarding the last fifty years of Theoretical developments against thematic discussion and assessment. For my purposes here, the two crucial points to be made are simply that one always has the luxury of specifying one's targets, and that Theory can and will be defined in such a way as to allow the possibility of meaningful assessment. I do not expect this definition to command universal consent as the definition of 'Theory', but, crucially, such is not its aim, and nor does it need to be. I am not interested in proposing a normative definition of the word 'Theory'. As long as my own definition is coherent and comprehensible, it will do the job of identifying those elements of recent intellectual history that I wish to discuss. Henceforth, all references to Theory should be understood as implying 'Theory as defined in chapter two'.

This is also the explanation for my capitalisation of the word Theory. This will doubtless have annoyed some readers, and for this I apologise. It is not intended
to imply homogeneity, and it is not to be seen as reductive. Rather, it is simply a shorthand. By the word 'theory', with a lower case 't', I refer to the Culler-de Man sense of the word. This is how I can refer to my own theoretical disposition without hypocrisy. The capitalised 'Theory', on the other hand, refers to those intellectual trends I wish to analyse and criticise, and should always be understood to refer to the definition of the word in chapter two.

**The Status of Antitheory**

These rather abstract considerations aside, we are in a position to turn from the all-too-metaphysical question of whether it is even possible to criticise Theory, to the rather more concrete question of how Theory has been criticised to date. Taking the broadest view possible, we must note that Theory has been one of the most controversial developments in recent intellectual history, and that this controversy has been linked to Theory's status as part of even broader cultural debate, which we can for convenience term the postmodern debate. While the works discussed in my opening paragraph are largely fairly hospitable critiques, more constructive criticisms than anything else, Theory has also seen many truly excoriating attacks from diverse quarters. A list of these major assaults must include, but would not be limited to: the Sokal affair and its follow up; some of the controversy surrounding de Man's wartime journalism; the great storm in the early nineties over the American university system caused by Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and its progeny, books like Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* (in its third edition in 2008); for those with long memories we might mention Picard's salvo against Barthes in the 1960s. If we include attacks launched from highly specific disciplines the list broadens to include works like Habermas's attack on Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, or John Searle's encounter with the same author in *Glyph*.

From even this most elementary list of but the noisiest encounters, the sheer disciplinary breadth of the attacks on Theory comes squarely into view. Sokal and his subsequent co-author Bricmont are highly qualified scientists, Searle an influential philosopher and linguist, Bloom principally a Classicist of some distinction. Theory being so multifaceted, attacks upon it will necessarily come from
all quarters, including the popular press. We must begin by acknowledging that while Theory has a uniquely close relationship with departments of literature, it is a culture-wide entity. We each necessarily approach it from our own discipline, but we are always engaging with something vastly bigger than its particular manifestation in the domains with which we are familiar. This comes with risks and privileges. The risk is simply that we fail to keep this bigger picture in view, and start talking about Theory as if it were synonymous with Literary Theory. The conceptual problems flowing from such a mistake can be disastrous. The privilege is that in discussing Theory we are partaking in a wonderfully interdisciplinary debate, and that the benefits of our own specialised contributions to this debate can potentially be felt in disparate academic fields. Such an opportunity is rare.

The focus of this study will be Theory as manifested in literary studies, and spatial restraints demand a pretty swift narrowing of our focus. Obviously, it is simply not possible to set aside a certain amount of Theory, and a certain set of responses to it, and designate them as 'literary'. Still, there are certainly anti-theoretical writings that have exerted more influence in the literary academy than others, and a glance in this direction is necessary in order to define my own position. A good milestone here are those anti-Theory texts which might be called representative of those the present academy often recommends to its undergraduates. In this respect, Stanley Fish's radical antifoundationalism is an obvious place to start. Fish's claim, manifest particularly in his work from around 1990 onwards, that Theory always grows from practice, is always 'after the fact', and is therefore inconsequential, is a widely discussed and anthologised critique of Theory in the broadest sense of that word. Gerald Graff's argument in Literature Against Itself to the effect that Theory's linguistic obsession breeds intellectual impotence is another key text here, though one must always consider it in light of his later work. His 1986 presentation to the Association of Departments of English, for example, is a significant qualification to his position. The work of Barbara Christian (for instance her 1988 essay 'The Race for Theory'), with its critique of Theory as a stifling 'set method', is one of the most valuable contributions to this discussion from one of our finest critics of African American literature. In a comparable vein the work of C. D. Narasimhaiah (for instance his 1984 piece 'Towards the Formulation of a Common
Poetic for Indian Literatures Today’), while still highly controversial among Indian writers in English, is a crucial refusal of the application of European Theory to Indian literature in English. Michael Hardt and Atonio Negri's *Empire* (2000) features some of the finest sustained critique yet produced of the political capitulation of postmodern Theory to the very forces it seeks to oppose.

Such are some of the more representative works to which undergraduates are introduced under the heading of ‘antitheory’. They are all of considerable depth and integrity, and they have certainly been widely discussed. However, it is uncontroversial to observe that they have not changed the course of literary academia to a significant degree. They are a challenging and necessary minority, but a minority nonetheless. The reasons for this are, to a significant degree, institutional.

Culler: books and articles that oppose [theory] by criticizing its difficulty, its obscurity, and its many nefarious effects, such as its politicizing of teaching and research or its alleged critique of literary values, have not fared very well, perhaps because all such approaches concede the power of theory as they complain about it, so that theorists have often felt no need to respond but let these attacks peter out in the void. (*The Literary in Theory* 73-4)

Notice that here even Culler ends up describing Theory in terms of a critical orthodoxy. It is something of such power and centrality that its practitioners need do nothing more than let attacks upon it ‘peter out in the void’. But this tells us about more than just the status of Theory in the modern academy. As Culler says, there is something about these kinds of attack that, for all their power and worth, just doesn't stick. I agree entirely with his diagnosis here, but would wish to extend it a little. Before I do so, however, I wish to turn to an instance of antitheory that took an entirely different approach to those listed above.

**Against ‘Against Theory’**

Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels's 1982 essay 'Against Theory' is a wholly different species of antitheory. Knapp and Michaels are not interested in claims of Theory being difficult, obscure, politically impotent or corrosive of literary value. Their project is altogether more fundamental. They claim, in an argumentative feat of all-too-seductive simplicity, that the whole Theoretical endeavour rests upon a
conceptual error, and thus that 'The whole enterprise of critical theory...should be abandoned' (724). Knapp and Michaels seek to substantiate this colossal edict with a two stage argument. First, they define Theory as 'the attempt to govern interpretations of particular texts by appealing to an account of interpretation in general' (723). More specifically, they think that Theory begins with a conceptual separation of the meaning of a text from the author's intended meaning. Interestingly, they include both intentionalist and non-intentionalist (reader-response) accounts of meaning in this category. It is in this negotiation of the space between meaning and intentionality, they claim, that Theory takes place. The second stage of their argument is simple: they attempt to prove that this space does not exist. In their view, to even divide meaning from intentionality is to make a false division, and every intellectual structure based around this divide is doomed to collapse. The problem of intentionality, and indeed other Theoretical problems such as 'the status of literary language' and 'the role of interpretive assumptions' are, for them, problems that 'only seem real' (724). Theory can only take place, therefore, 'when theorists fail to recognize the fundamental inseparability of the elements involved' (724). This bold and clear thesis avoids the pitfall Culler mentions, as he himself points out (73-8). Should such a thesis be successful, its consequences would certainly not peter out in the void.

Knapp and Michaels's essay is still of one of the most widely-anthologised pieces of antitheory, in part for that very reason. Given this, one would be forgiven for wondering at its almost total lack of influence in the modern academy. Though students are often introduced to 'Against Theory', there are no Knapp-Michaelsians working in its shadow – or if they do exist they are keeping very quiet. Judging from even a cursory survey, it would seem that citations of this piece tend to be from essays that define their position against 'Against Theory'. The lines of criticism are well known. Knapp and Michaels's definition of Theory is bizarrely narrow: a set of debates concerning the relationship between intention and meaning. Obviously, great swathes of Theory do not fall under this rubric, although we must leave open the possibility that this was in fact one of the more lasting effects of this very essay. Further, their thesis concerning the synonymy of meaning and intention is simply not very persuasive, especially given their own (repeated) grievance at being
misunderstood by their critics. On this account, Knapp and Michaels fashioned a
dubious critique of a highly specific branch of Theory, and as such their argument's
radical force is largely superficial.

Despite these major flaws, their piece is still held up as a prominent example
of antitheory, as the length of Culler's discussion illustrates. This is a curious
phenomenon: an essay the prominence of which is only matched by the ease with
which one can criticise and dismiss it. This is partly the result of a lack of other
instances of this kind of aggressive, philosophical antitheoretical critique. 'Against
Theory' is highly unusual, and this alone guarantees it a certain significance. A
cynical commentator might also suggest that the weaknesses of this essay are in fact
the very reasons for its prominence, it being in the interest of a critical orthodoxy to
keep a few straw men to hand. It is not my interest here to comment on this issue. I
only wish to note that I take it as illustrative of the weakness of this more
philosophical branch of antitheory that Knapp and Michaels are still at its forefront in
most anthologies. As noted, their approach does not concede Theory's power in the
slightest, and has had an impressive shelf-life. Its near-total lack of influence is
instead down to a more fundamental problem: its argument simply isn't persuasive.

The Status of Antitheory (2)

Two distinct lines of anti-theoretical argument have been outlined and briefly
criticised. First, a strong tradition of opposition to the political, institutional and
cultural dimensions of Theory, which can be and has been largely ignored by the
mainstream of scholarship. We might term this branch of antitheory powerful, but
ignorable. Second, a much smaller tradition of aggressive, philosophical attacks upon
Theory, which again has been largely unsuccessful in its aims thanks to its
straightforward argumentative weaknesses. We might term this branch un-ignorable,
but impotent. Is there a common weakness in these two lines of attack?

I think there is, but to get a sense of it we need to take a step back from the
kind of question we are asking. No matter how we define Theory, one thing is very
plain: it is a massive intellectual entity, and with that massiveness comes diversity on
a similar scale. Obviously, certain common properties or themes must be present
within this huge variety, or else the very term 'Theory' simply becomes meaningless. Many scholars, from Bloom to Knapp, have considered one or other of these themes or properties to be deeply problematic. The most basic question is simply this: how does one go from believing Theory to be so problematic to making a case for its being so?

Two options present themselves. To get a better view of them, let us consider the same question in relation to another, similarly vast subject, for which illustration we might arbitrarily choose the subject of European History. Say we wish to make certain claims not just for a fairly minor part of European History, but for a major swathe of it, or even all of it. Evidently, the task is simply colossal if our claims are to venture beyond the status of truisms. The thesis that European history was something of a violent affair is a large claim but a trivial proof. Claiming that European history features decisive opportunism in a way that the history of other large geographical areas does not is an equally large claim, but detailed and controversial enough to require lengthy exploration. How to go about this? Our two options are these: we might attempt evidential substantiation of this claim, going through a large number of examples of opportunism throughout European history and then illustrating a dearth of similar examples in the history of other civilisational groups, through which comparison we might be said to have attempted a proof of our thesis; alternatively, we might attempt to flesh out a broader, descriptive hypothesis, which is flexible enough to be applied to any moment in European history as a test of its veracity, and leave others to judge its usefulness. We might term the first approach the proof-approach, and the second the hypothesis-approach.

The differences between these two approaches are hugely important. I shall mention three. First, the proof-approach is, provided its argument and evidence are sound, fairly conclusive. A successful employment of it can be said to have demonstrated something. The hypothesis-approach is never conclusive in the same way. It suggests something, and if that suggestion is a good one it trusts to posterity to employ it further, a kind of trial-by-history. The flip side of this is the second key difference: the proof-approach is comparatively easy to disprove. If either the arguments or evidences can be shown to be faulty, or alternatively if large amounts of evidence can be shown to have been ignored, then the proof has simply failed. The
hypothesis-approach is not so easily disproved. Because it does not make its foundations visible, they cannot easily be shown to be faulty. One might try to produce a counter-hypothesis, and hope to see it gain more currency in the scholarly community. Or one might attempt a counter-proof, and flesh out a substantiated, antithetical proof-approach. Finally, there is the very simple question of length. Proof-approaches concerning really big claims require many, many volumes of dense evidence-gathering of the kind usually restricted to the natural sciences. Hypothesis-approaches can be fleshed out in a single journal article, if need be. For this reason, fully-fledged proof-approaches of massive claims in the Humanities are rare. At best, one mostly finds a kind of hybrid of the two approaches, a well-defined hypothesis with some key substantiation.

The application of these approaches to European history is fairly easy to see. They can also be applied to attacks on Theory, though this requires a little more imagination. Imagining a hypothesis-approach attack on Theory is fairly easy. Imagining a proof-approach attack is much harder, if only because even minor subdivisions of Theory are so vast that it is near-impossible to imagine any kind of thorough substantiation of broad, critical claims. Even if our claim were something conceptually easy, such as the claim that Theory is politically emasculating, and even if our chosen field were restricted to literary Theory, a proof-approach would still have to run to tens and tens of volumes, and would still only have scratched the surface of this leviathan topic. Proof-approach attacks on Theory are possible, but not plausible.

This leads me back to the question of why both strands of antitheory – both institutional/political/cultural opposition and philosophical assault – have been unsuccessful in changing the course of the humanities. For it is plain to see that all these approaches are hypothesis-approaches, and that this is their seemingly-inevitable weakness. This means that they might be wholly correct, but that they do not demand attention from a majority opposition. As the term implies, they have not actually proven anything, merely posited a view of things. Now, given that Theory is something of an orthodoxy, this is simply not enough. As Culler goes some way to suggesting, all Theorists have to do is to produce a plausible counter-hypothesis concerning the worth of their discipline, and the critical majority can simply accept
this hypothesis and carry on. Alternatively, à la Culler, they can simply ignore the hostile hypothesis (after all, it hasn't proven anything) and wait for the fuss to die down. The crippling paradox is this: Theory is so vast that critiques of it are forced to take a hypothesis-approach; yet this is the very kind of critical approach that Theorists can ignore. In other words, and this is a crucial reformulation of the same point, critiques of Theory have been unsuccessful for institutional, not intellectual reasons. They are forced into a methodology that may harness considerable intellectual worth, but which prevailing institutional trends are at liberty to ignore. The momentum of literary Theory will not stop for hypotheses, no matter how piercing.

A Proof-Approach to Literary Antitheory

As the reader has no doubt guessed, this thesis will attempt a proof-approach critique of literary Theory. The obstacles to such an approach are formidable, centring on the question of how on earth to include enough evidence to make my attempt persuasive. I do not think that these challenges can be entirely overcome in a single thesis, but I do think that they can be satisfactorily negotiated if one keeps a crucial qualification in mind, which is this. This kind of approach should never try to succeed in isolation. Rather, it should see itself as part of a much larger, collaborative effort to forge a proof-approach critique of literary Theory. Many other writers must contribute their own, small-scale proofs to the bigger picture, until the general proof is broad and solid enough to precipitate change. Taken on their own, the criticisms lodged in this thesis are but a mosquito bite on an elephant. This is only a problem, however, if no other bites follow. Large-scale change in the academy is always a very slow, organic affair, and this thesis aims to be but a first step in this direction. It is to this extent, and only to this extent, political.

This concession will, I hope, go some way to bridging what will seem a serious gap between the scale of my claim and the scope of my evidence. I will make the broadest claim I can, concerning literary Theory in general. I must make this claim, or I have failed to properly contextualise my contribution to the debate. However, though I will make this claim, I do not expect to prove it on my own, but
rather to offer a small piece of a jigsaw which, when seen in its entirety, will constitute a meaningful substantiation. Having said this, I will shortly propose several tactics which will usefully limit the problems posed by the elucidation of vast arguments in a limited space.

Very well, what will my proof-approach look like? Returning briefly to the last section, we might characterise hypothesis-approaches to antitheory by pushing a faint sense of oxymoron out into the open, and observing that they end up saying what's wrong with Theory in theory. A proof-approach, then, will look at Theory in practice. For while we conveniently talk of Theory as if it could exist in isolation, this is by and large not the case: Theory is almost always the Theory of something. Theory nearly always aims to inform some kind of practice, however obscure. For literary scholarship, we might risk a generalisation and say that literary Theory aims to inform the reading of literature, however the words 'reading' and 'literature' end up being defined. So, a proof-approach means looking at Theoretically informed studies of works of literature, and documenting the impact of their Theoretical disposition. We can look at Theory not in abstraction, but on the ground, as it were, and see how it influences literary analysis. I am aware of several pressing definitional issues in such an endeavour, and will be dealing with them in two sections' time.

To prevent any misunderstanding, I should make clear that this thesis will not take the form of a neutral survey of Theory's successes and failures in close reading. On the contrary, it will take the form of sustained criticism. Having studied the evidence at length, I have become convinced that the rise of Theory in literary studies has precipitated the appearance of a series of deeply troubling critical practices on scale that is worthy of very serious attention. I believe that Theory has encouraged interpretive tactics of a kind that the majority of scholars would be happy to view not just as problematic, but erroneous. My thesis, in its most simplistic statement, is simply that Theory has damaged our ability to perform accurate close readings. I will pursue this line of enquiry not in theory, via a discussion of the metaphysical, essential relationship between Theory and close reading, but in practice, via a sustained examination of instances in which critics have tried to marry the two. This, in brief, is my proposed proof-approach to antitheory.
Another interesting distinction between proof-approaches and hypothesis-approaches has to do with causation. Proof-approaches do not need to be interested in issues of causation. It is enough for them to prove that thesis X is true, for example that European history is particularly opportunistic, without needing to demonstrate why this is so. Hypothesis-approaches, however, tend to be more interested in causation. As a hypothesis does not entail proof but does aim to be persuasive, we lend it some measure of credibility if we provide some good reason for thinking that, at some point, this hypothesis could be proven to be true. So the hypothesis that European history is particularly opportunistic might look to issues of, say, geographical position or climate as a putative cause for this being so. Again, this is not a firm distinction, but it serves to provide some explanation of a particular dimension of this thesis's main aims: as this is a proof-approach, I will not be too interested in why exactly Theory has problematic effects upon close reading. This rather metaphysical question is interesting, but I lack space to pursue it fully. It is more important to establish that Theory does have such effects, and then at some later date we can start wondering why. Anything else smacks of putting the cart before the horse.

Still, it will not do to provide no causative framework at all. First, we can be more precise in our proof if we have some sense of why it works. Second, more importantly, we have to deal with what we might call the counter-argument from coincidence. If all we do is demonstrate a large amount of poor close reading in overtly Theoretical works of literary criticism, then we are open to the following rebuttal: "very well, you have shown a large amount of poor close reading, and it has all been in Theoretical texts, but you have not demonstrated a link between these two phenomena: their presence alongside each other could be a coincidence. There could be another reason these close readings went wrong." Countering this criticism can take two forms. The first is simply to show, on a case by case basis, that each critic examined has erred for the sake of a Theoretical conclusion that would have been
otherwise impossible. Throughout the case studies that follow, I have attempted to provide such documentation wherever possible. The second way to deal with counter-arguments from coincidence is to provide a plausible causative link between Theory and poor close reading, and invite a provision of more plausible explanatory model for the mistakes shown. To this aim I shall turn now.

A fairly superficial causative link between Theory and poor close reading is easy enough to conjure, and I think it not without merit. Literary Theory, on most conceivable definitions of the term, is a conceptually complex interpretive framework for approaching literary texts. Different Theories emphasise different conceptual tactics, so Gender Theory brings advanced understandings of gender into play in interpreting literature, Marxist Literary Theory brings advanced ideas concerning economics and politics into play in a similar way, and so on. This description of Theory is so bland that I am happy to proceed with it despite not yet having formulated my own more rigorous definition of Theory (for which see chapter two). One fairly straightforward point to make concerning this relationship is that it is noticeably top-heavy. A journal article that draws upon Lacanian Theory in interpreting the final lines of Ulysses takes as a conceptual given many volumes of fantastically complex Theory, and might only proffer a few pages of textual analysis. The amount of ideas being brought to the text vastly outweighs the amount of analysis dealing with the text itself. This is not in itself problematic. The same could be said, for example, of any prosodic analysis of a poem. The thing we could plausibly say about Theory, however, is that the ideas it brings to the text are not necessarily intrinsically literary. Indeed, they are often highly interdisciplinary. This means that certain ideas have been worked through to a very advanced degree before the literary text has even been chosen – indeed, it is one of the distinctive features of Theory that the very same complex ideas can be used with reference to lots of different texts. The worry we might plausibly have about this is that such advanced ideas might become a kind of sausage machine for literary texts. Frank Lentricchia:

I believe that what is now called literary criticism is a form of xeroxing. Tell me your theory and I'll tell you in advance what you'll say about any work of literature, especially those you haven't read. Texts are not read; they are pre-read. All of literature is x and nothing but x, and literary study is the naming (exposure) of x. For x, read imperialism, sexism, homophobia, and so on. (31)
We don't have to share Lentricchia's fantastically bleak level of generalisation, or his rhetorical stance, to share his concerns about the potential pitfalls of this top-heavy quality of Theory. The intuitive link between Theory and poor close reading, then, is simply this: that something so advanced, so complex, so potent, and so ideologically charged as Theory might have a distorting effect upon the way that a critic sees a text.

I think that this is actually a fairly accurate description of the causative link between Theory and close reading, despite its superficiality. It is, at the very least, a start. Still, for a thesis making the kind of bold claims concerning Theory that I intend this one to make, its superficiality is problematic. We need something a little more complex, a little more precise, to lend my proof credence. For this more complex formula, I shall turn to Thomas Kuhn.

From the early 1960s, which interestingly makes it roughly contemporaneous with the rise of Theory, the concept of theory-laden observation has assumed a place of considerable importance in the philosophy of science. It found its first full statement and exploration in the works of Kuhn and Feyerabend, and to a lesser-known extent in those of Toulmin and Hanson. The basic contours of this idea are well-known. Against the traditional distinction between observation and interpretation, it seeks to establish the notion that any observation already harbours within itself certain interpretive elements, derived from the more general theories held by the observer. So for the rather more radical Feyerabend, 'each theory will possess its own experience' (214). For the somewhat tamer Toulmin, 'we see the world through' fundamental concepts (101). For Kuhn, in his hugely influential *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 'Paradigms determine large areas of experience' (129).

Some immediate qualifications: this concept of theory-laden observation finds different expressions, different levels of stringency, different scopes and, crucially, different explanations in nearly every author who deals with it. It is a distant cousin of metaphysical subjectivism, although the word distant is very important here. This cousinship means that it is also related to the emphasis on various forms of subjectivism in Theory itself. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* has been interpreted in a bewildering number of ways, becoming for some a key-text for a view of science that questions or rejects its status as a neutral,
truth-oriented enterprise. We are, in short, in very deep waters here. Furthermore, with Kuhn we are a long way from literature, or anything like it, and some critical imagination will be required in bridging that gap.

For Kuhn, a paradigm is a basic, pre-observational way of considering reality which influences, in a variety of ways\(^2\), the manner in which we come to a relevant set of data (hence talk of the 'theory-ladenness' of observation). Interpretations function within this paradigm, to the extent that 'the interpretive enterprise...can only articulate a paradigm' (122). Importantly, this enterprise can lead to 'the recognition of anomalies and to crises', and these can lead to a shift to a paradigm that is able to give rise to better interpretations. In making this qualification concerning paradigm shifts, Kuhn is able to criticise traditional, 'neutral' models of scientific endeavour, while also refusing thoroughgoing relativism, according to which any assessment of or escape from paradigms is impossible (206). For him a paradigm can fail, and when it does so, it should be abandoned in favour of a better one.

The basic relevance of such ideas for my thesis I take to be fairly obvious. Theory, in all its vastness, functions something like a paradigm in much literary recent analysis. Obviously, there are many qualifications to be made here, but the basic structural similarities are certainly enough to make the analogy useful. It is, at the least, a way of considering texts, which, crucially, exists before any particular interpretation has taken place. It affects the way in which scholars approach those texts, and is articulated in their readings. Naturally, Theorists would be the first to articulate and defend the existence of such interpretive influence. Such self-consciousness has been one of the great successes of recent intellectual history. Yet we still must ask: has the kind of theory-ladenness of observation we see in Theoretical works improved or worsened the kind of interpretations that take place

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\(^2\) Although the distinction is not made by Kuhn himself, one can easily discern three distinct negotiations of this basic idea. First, the idea of perceptual loading, which is that our very senses are influenced by our pre-existing theories (see, for example, his discussion on 62-5). Second, the idea of semantic loading, which is that theories inform the definitions of the words we use, and that as we understand the world in a linguistic manner, this amounts to a form of paradigmatic perception (127). Finally, the idea of conceptual salience, which is that different paradigms constrain the kinds of observation we consider to be relevant, and thus shape the data by forming its selective criteria (124-5). We should also note a slightly more nebulous theme in Kuhn's work, allied to his notion of Gestalt shifts, which posits a less clearly-defined, more intuitive sense in which paradigms condition what we 'see' (in which regard see, for instance, 111-5).
therein? In short, has Theory been a good paradigm for literary studies, or not? To answer this question, we can study the kinds of interpretation that take place within the Theoretical paradigm, and see if we can detect any consistently problematic trends therein. Clearly, in order to do so I must specify a series of widely-accepted standards against which to measure such interpretations. Such is the main project of my next chapter.

One of the key advantages of such a causative framework is the extent to which it takes the emphasis off the sins and virtues of individual scholars. I am wholly uninterested in the abilities of particular literary critics, and I have no wish to score points or humiliate people. What interests me is the impact of certain intellectual climates on the quality of those scholars' work, which has little to do with their individual merits. Against the background of paradigms and theory-ladenness, I will hopefully be able to 'get behind' individuals, and frame a case concerning the pressures and restrictions that work upon them. This will hopefully function not only as a plausible causative framework, but a professional one too.

Obviously, the application of ideas from the philosophy of science to literary studies has its problems. Bridging the disciplinary distance requires some creativity and lenience, added to which is the undeniable fact that Kuhnian theory has its own rich controversies, into which I lack the space to go here. I am not advocating Kuhn's work as a magic key to recent intellectual history – merely as a useful resource upon which we might draw to offer some account of the trends we see therein. Doubtless, taken too literally, Kuhn's theories will prove more hindrance then help in making sense of my own ideas. Should such prove to be the case, they can be safely abandoned with little impact upon the central ideas I propose.

Before moving on, it will be worth summing up the material covered in this chapter. I have announced my aims, elucidated what I mean by attempting a proof-approach critique of Theory, suggested my means of evaluation, and suggested a causal link between Theory and close reading. In my next chapter, I will need to provide the long-awaited definition of Theory, and spell out my criteria for the assessment of interpretations that take place within the Theoretical paradigm.
Chapter Two: Definitions, Criteria and Methods

In chapter one I laid out my aims, sketched my methodology, and outlined certain necessary hypotheses. This preliminary work done, I will now spell out in detail the nuts and bolts of my approach. I will begin with the essential operative definition of Theory, which will set my sights. Then I will go on to detail the standards of close reading against which I will be measuring Theoretical close readings. Finally, I will detail some necessary qualifications to my thesis, and deal with the issue of evidential scope.

The Definition of Theory

It is worth conceding from the outset that Theory is such a vast development, spanning so many disciplines, that a certain degree of acquaintance with it can and must be assumed between those who wish to discuss it. Definitions of such cultural phenomena always rely on a certain amount of background knowledge. Importantly, this does not mean that we all know exactly what Theory is, but that we have read enough of it to have absorbed its basic characteristics on a fairly intuitive level. Without this level of acquaintance it seems to me unlikely that a compelling definition could be achieved, from which it follows that it would be nigh-impossible to define Theory adequately for someone who had never read any of it.

Assuming this background knowledge on the part of one's readers is not ideal. It should certainly not be used as an excuse for a sloppy or non-existent definition. What it does allow, however, is a certain collaborative spirit when it comes to furnishing a working definition. One must generalise, allow exceptions and take certain things as given. As a result, the definition will not succeed in the abstract, conjuring forth a perfect image of Theory with nothing taken for granted. It will, however, allow those working in the field to have a good grasp of what I, for the purposes of this thesis, will mean when I refer to Theory.

Given such a stance, the phrase 'those working in the field' requires a little expansion. At several points in this thesis I will have cause to refer to the
community of scholars for whom a thesis like this is written. In my own case such references cannot be left entirely vague, especially as, given the above point, that community has a role to play in stabilising my definitions of my key terms. Furthermore, later in this chapter I will specify standards of close reading which are explicitly designed to be as broadly acceptable as possible; significant portions of this thesis will spent elaborating a method of close reading which, I suggest, will be a useful tool; in chapter four I will speak of our relationship with the discipline of Stylistics. All of these projects demand specification, too: acceptable or useful for whom? And who are we who have this relationship with Stylistics? None of these aims will properly cohere unless a sense of the people to whom I am referring can be established.

In the first instance, I am referring to those who take an interest in the professional study of literature at a university level. It is of course true that departments of literature have expanded enormously in recent history, just as it is true that they now have a complex relationship with departments of cultural studies, and other related disciplines. Still, it remains uncontroverted to observe that the literature department is still a distinct presence in most modern universities, and many influential academic journals, from PMLA to the James Joyce Quarterly, can best be described with at least partial reference to this discipline, however graded its borders may be. I wish to stress at this stage that any references to 'most scholars', or any uses of the pronouns 'we' or 'us', or any similar dependence upon the idea of an academic community, do not imply homogeneity at any intellectual level. The community so described is unified by its areas of interest and the institution within which it functions, not by any particular intellectual commitments. When I speak of 'most scholars' I wish to include, and need to include, those against whom this thesis is directed, and those who would strongly disagree with its conclusions.

Alonside this fairly mundane understanding of the community to which I will need to refer, I would also suggest a degree to which my references to that community are self-defining. For example, my defintion of Theory and my standards of close reading carry within them a latent community, namely, those who agree with those definitions and standards as I describe them. This may seem unhelpfully circular, but that need not be a problem. Rather, I see the definitional
phase of my thesis as an exercise in describing those to whom the argumentative phase of my thesis is directed (as in "If you agree with this definition of Theory, and you accept these standards of close reading, then I believe the following arguments can be made"). Naturally, it is in my interest to choose such definitions and standards as will convince the greatest number of readers, and I have borne this principle in mind throughout. Still, the mere possibility of dissenting from the definitional frameworks I offer ensures that my necessary references to a community beyond myself, which I will occasionally cast as a 'we' or an 'us', will not function as vague, generalising or coercive gestures. These are simply the useful markers of an argument directed to those who share enough of my specified paradigm to find my work of interest. With that in mind, I shall begin with a historical definition of Theory.

Few literary scholars, I imagine, would disagree too much with the following description, which will be henceforth referred to as the historical definition. By the mid 1960s a group of thinkers in various disciplines, from philosophy to sociology to psychoanalysis, had begun to write texts which became highly influential outside of their respective subject areas, especially in the Humanities. These texts were frequently interdisciplinary; they were associated with a kind of radical left-leaning politics flowing in part from the French political tumult of recent years; they were highly involved with the so-called 'linguistic turn', placing a certain view of the workings and significance of language at the heart of their enterprise; they frequently endorsed a highly self-conscious approach to human thinking, being hyper-aware of the problems and limitations of all human intellectual and moral endeavour; they were often ferociously critical of traditional norms and conceptual frameworks, placing huge emphasis on the role of ideology and discourse in historically Western intellectual endeavour. The key figures in this movement, though the word 'movement' should not be taken to imply unanimity or even collaboration, were thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan. The impact of these thinkers was particularly felt in literary studies, where the conceptual emphasis they placed upon language provided a fruitful bridge to the analysis of texts, in the broadest sense of that word. Their writings were often used both to re-interpret individual texts, to consider the business of interpretation in the abstract, and thence
to criticise supposedly 'neutral' or 'objective' approaches to literary study, replacing them with a highly self-conscious interdisciplinary methodologies. The style of literary thinking that resulted was frequently opposed to the so-called New Criticism of the 1950s, which it criticised as being superficially apolitical and complicit with an oppressive ideological tradition. This new movement became known as 'Theory', and this word was even adopted by several of its key practitioners. Through the 1970s and 80s this movement began to gain influence outside of Europe, particularly in America, where it flourished under such key figures as Paul de Man and J Hillis Miller. This transatlantic move took place principally in departments of literature, rather than philosophy, which gives some sense of Theory's locus in the academy at that time. Possibly by the late 1980s, and certainly by the mid 1990s, this movement ceased to be an embattled minority in literary studies, with much of its vocabulary and many of its critical norms becoming widespread. At the same time, it experienced a backlash in the form of conservative criticism of its effects on American higher education, the key figure, though he was by no means alone, being Allan Bloom. Since then, the influence and legacy of this movement within literary scholarship has been debated, but it is still true to say that a huge number of literary critics write within its tradition, however they define it.

The details of this overview are perhaps up for debate, but its broad outline should be fairly uncontroversial. Theory, thus understood, is the name given to certain prevalent trends in literary criticism between the 1960s and the present day. This most basic historical definition is a useful first point of differentiation from the more methodological definition of theory as 'inevitable readerly presuppositions'. The purpose of my thesis being to a large degree historical – an assessment of Theory's impact upon literary analysis in recent years – this definition would actually take me quite a long way. The purpose of my thesis, then, would be to study the effects of Theory when understood as the kind of criticism which takes its cue from the kinds of historically-situated thinking described above.

Still, the price one pays for such a definition is threefold, being inflexibility, seeming-arbitrariness, and exteriority. It is inflexible because there might be ideas or writings that don't fit into this historical period but whose influence we want to acknowledge in our idea of 'Theory' (Being and Time, or Das Kapital for example).
Accusations of arbitrariness loom if we simply ignore the Theory that began to rumble before 1960 on the grounds that it is simply too early. The problem of exteriority is simply that a historical definition never really gets at what makes Theory Theory, defining it simply via temporal convenience. We still have no sense of the inner workings of Theory, the conceptual themes that make it a cohesive entity. Without this, we cannot get a real sense of its intellectual relationship with close reading, and the tensions that might exist therein.

So some conceptual definition, some sense of a particular style of thinking, is going to be necessary. "Theory" is a genre because of the way its works function', Culler remarks elsewhere (On Deconstruction 9), and there must be some truth to this if the historical definition is not to seem fatally convenient. Culler's own idea is that Theory can be defined through its interdisciplinary nature. Against its heterogeneity he sets the appealing notion that 'what distinguishes members of this genre is their ability to function not as demonstrations within the parameters of a discipline but as re-descriptions that challenge disciplinary boundaries' (9). I like this definition, largely because it is broad and because it gets at something of the style of Theoretical analysis, that sense of bringing other ideas to the text in order to throw it into a revealing, hitherto unknown light. What this definition misses, or perhaps simply fails to emphasise, is the extent to which the ideas brought to the text often have a determining effect upon its analysis. For example, how many post-structuralist analyses conclude that the text in question imposes stable semantic limitations, and succeeds in restricting the range of interpretation? No, to read something Theoretically can often seem less like bringing a set of questions to a text and more like bringing a set of preoccupations, or even preconceptions.

The interdisciplinary point does go some way to explaining this. Late 20th Century advances in Gender Studies, for example, were not just a set of questions, but a particular evolution of that discipline. Thinkers may have asked the question 'How do we understand the ontology of gender?', but they certainly did not answer 'As a transcendental binary opposition'. We must add to this the fact that, like it or not, some thinkers have particular prominence in certain Theoretical disciplines, no matter how anti-hegemonic they would like to be. These great thinkers of the Theoretical turn, we are frequently told, asked serious questions about the basic
assumptions of post-Enlightenment thinking. This is true, but it is seldom emphasised with the same rigour that they gave individual answers to these questions, too. Those who operate in the same tradition inherit not just the big questions, but the big answers, though they are of course under no obligation to follow in exactly the same vein. So it is that post-structuralist readings do not just ask questions about deferral and logical opposition, but seek to unpack and problematise the text's binary oppositions, or show ways in which the text itself refuses them, or fails to sustain them. Queer readings do not just ask questions about gender boundaries and sexual discourses, but seek to negotiate those moments in the text in which these boundaries and discourses become problematic or uncertain. Marxist readings are a particularly obvious example of interpretations which do not just inhabit a traditional set of questions, but a set of very elaborately defined answers too.

Culler's interdisciplinary definition, then, can be nuanced by the simple acknowledgement that other disciplines are not conceptually or ideologically neutral, and that they will bring with them certain intellectual trends and expectations. This is far from controversial. Such self-awareness is surely at the heart of the Theoretical enterprise. It will, however, considerably improve our definition of Theory by going some way to marking out the extent to which Theory is a thematic entity. When one reads enough of a particular genre of Theory one gets used not only to certain vocabulary and certain modes of analysis, but certain conclusions too. So when Attridge and Ferrer try to define post-structuralist approaches to literature, they highlight, among other things, that such approaches do not try to reconstruct the world of the text, but 'to follow up within it the strategies that attempt a deconstruction of representation' (10). The terms and methodology described are surely familiar, but equally familiar is that goal, the aim of illustrating a 'deconstruction of representation'. Theory is not just a series of concepts or alternative disciplines which fruitfully illuminate literary analysis. It is also a set of ideas which encourage certain kinds of thinking, certain methodologies, certain suspicions, certain claims, and even certain conclusions. When we say that Theory is a way of thinking, this is more than a procedural definition: it is often closer to being an ideological emphasis.
I do not for a moment wish to imply a sense of homogeneity, or that Theory consists in the simple application of pre-existing ideas to literature. Rather, I want to acknowledge that Theory is thematic in its language, analytical tactics and often its goals. This is not to say that Theory *per se* is an ideological force, as some lazy conservative critics have done\(^3\). But it is to point out that ideological currents do circulate within genres of Theory, and orient both their methodology and their praxis. This is going to be fundamental to my proposed relationship between Theory and close reading, because it is precisely these ideological pressures which, I will argue, exert enough force on a critic's analysis to warp its relationship with the text.

My formal definition of Theory, then, is this: *'Theory' denotes certain intellectual trends in literary criticism and other disciplines which have been obvious since roughly the 1960s as outlined in the above historical definition; which trends, while undeniably heterogeneous, can often be characterised as being highly interdisciplinary, and furthermore as often being thematic in their languages, methodologies, aims and ideological emphases.*

**Standards of Close Reading**

Theory has been defined, but what of close reading? For my thesis to carry any weight I must be able to specify in detail what I mean when I say that Theory can have a 'negative' impact upon close reading. Standards of analysis must be specified, else it is meaningless to speak of their violation.

The specification of these standards presents a huge challenge. If they are rejected, then I have no compelling way in which to judge Theory's close readings, and my whole project is doomed. I must avoid the possibility of such rejection to the maximum extent possible while maintaining the integrity of my critique. Kuhn, for example, specified several widely-acceptable standards against which to judge the relative worth of paradigms, from accuracy of prediction to simplicity. In this regard, I will employ a slightly different approach. The specification of certain qualities that good paradigms are likely to induce is bold and admirable, but highly controversial. Far easier, and more likely to induce consensus, is to specify certain qualities that

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\(^3\) See, for instance, Kimball's *Tenured Radicals*, ix-xlvi.
bad paradigms are likely to induce. I will therefore be using certain fairly uncontroversial pitfalls as a negative standard, rather than trying to conjure certain interpretive goods as a positive standard. These will take the form, then, of several problems which the majority of scholars would be likely to regard as things to be avoided in good criticism. My task will be to show that such problems are more common in Theoretical works, and there is a causative element to this phenomenon.

Still, we must not underestimate the scale of this task. To restate: for my argument to have any power, I have to specify negative standards of close reading that the majority of literary scholars, including Theorists, will accept, and then show a systematic neglect of them resulting from Theoretical preoccupation. Ideally, these standards would be so fundamental that they would be assumed by even the most radical of Theorists. In this way, I would be able to ensure a universal applicability for my arguments. I concede from the outset, however, that this will be impossible: some Theorists are so radical as to lie outside the reach of even the most basic criteria of analytical worth. Still, I have devised three categories of error that should be accepted by the vast majority of thinkers in the field as specifying recognisable mistakes. They are: errors of scholarship, errors of description and errors of analysis. In each case I will give an example to help clarify my definition.

Errors of Scholarship

These are cases in which the author has made a mistake at the level of basic scholarly rigour. It might be something as simple as getting a date wrong, misquoting the text, or getting some uncontroversial piece of factual information incorrect. In each case, this error must be traceable to a need to pursue a particular Theoretical interpretation that would be impossible if the facts were not misrepresented. This kind of mistake will, I imagine, be widely accepted as uncontroversially erroneous, and as such does not require a more formal definition.

As an example, I would like to take a single error in a single chapter of a collection entitled *Ulysses: En-Gendered Perspectives*. This collection will be one of my case studies later in my thesis, so a good deal more will be said on it in due course. For now, I would like to jump in with an error in an essay by Colleen Lamos
entitled 'The Double Life of "Eumaeus"'. I have chosen this particular error of scholarship because it takes us through several other scholars' work, and indeed well away from Joyce studies, the generalising implications of which are instructive.

In a footnote to her discussion of the word 'queer' Lamos writes that

*Queer* has for centuries denoted a "strange, odd, peculiar" person "of questionable character, suspicious, dubious," used especially in Ireland and in nautical contexts; its first recorded use to refer to a homosexual person dates from 1922 (OED). Elaine Showalter claims that the term had homosexual connotations before the 1890s (*Sexual Anarchy* [New York: Viking, 1990], 112). (318, n.20)

I take the Theoretical pressure to be fairly obvious here. If 'queer' means simply 'odd' then it does not permit a Gender/Queer Theory reading to take place. If, however, it has homosexual connotations then a whole gamut of Theoretical options is opened up. In this respect Lamos's reference to the OED is accurate, but the extent to which it supports her thesis is limited. In her favour, we should note that dating the genesis of a word with reference to its first printed usage is not an exact science: one has to assume that the word had been in circulation for some time prior to its making its way into published texts. As such, a 1922 date for 'queer' meaning 'homosexual' might conceivably be furnished as a suggestive context for *Ulysses*, though this would necessarily be a little speculative: after all, 1922 was the year *Ulysses* was sent to press, and the book is set some eighteen years earlier.

If such speculation were the limit of Lamos's point here, there would be nothing more to say. Certainly, we would not be dealing with an error, still less an error of scholarship. However, Lamos clearly feels the understandable need to suggest that the first usage of queer-as-homosexual was earlier than the date provided by the OED, so as to provide a more compelling support for her reading of implied homosexuality in Joyce. To this end she turns to Showalter, who, she says, 'claims that the term had homosexual connotations before the 1890s'. Yet when we follow the reference we are given we find it reads 'As a number of scholars have noted, the homosexual significance of "queer" had entered English slang by 1900' (112). So much for Lamos's 'before the 1890s', which was an exaggeration of over a decade.

This is an error of scholarship. Lamos has significantly misquoted Showalter in order to make the first usage for 'queer' as meaning 'homosexual' a decade earlier,
and this is directly traceable to a need to make her reading of 'queer' in the 1904 setting of *Ulysses* as plausible as possible. Still, this case of scholarly errors does not end here. Let us turn to Showalter's claim that the meaning was present 'by 1900'.

Now, Showalter is writing on Stevenson, and so is in even more need of an early date to do a Gender/Queer Theory reading of his use of the word 'queer' in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. As evidence for her 'by 1900' she provides us with a footnote, which refers us to an essay by one William Veeder entitled 'Children of the Night: Stevenson and Patriarchy'. Note, incidentally, that we are now fully two books away from Lamos, neither of which is an etymological dictionary – a strange omission when such an accessible item would settle the matter so quickly.

Still, pressing on, we find that the page referred to in Veeder is a footnote reading: "'Queer' meaning 'male homosexual' has [sic] entered 'general slang' by the early 1900s, according to Spears; Partridge (8th edition) locates the same meaning 'since ca. 1900' (159)." So much for Showalter's 'by 1900': this too was an error of scholarship, a misquotation of Veeder to get the date on the more suggestive side of the turn of the century. Still, Veeder's references, at last, appear to be works of reference.

Alas, Veeder gives us no clue as to which book he means by 'Spears'. Assumedly he means Richard A. Spears, the American slang-collector; but Spears's principal work on the subject, *NTC's Dictionary of American Slang and Colloquial Expressions*, does not give the dates for first usage. We can get a little further with Partridge, which is very widely known. Do we now have a secure reference for this elusive date? Can someone finally show us that 'queer' implied homosexuality since at least the turn of the century?

Well, no. Consulting the entry in the relevant edition of Partridge we find: 'queer, n. ...5. A male homosexual: since Ca. 1920' (947). Further, Partridge notes that the noun was derived from the adjective, in the entry for which we learn that it originated in The United States. So not only are we nowhere near the settings of *Ulysses* or *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in time, we are nowhere near them in place either.

A recap will be worthwhile here. Partridge has 'queer' first connoting a homosexual male in 1920s America. Veeder plainly misquotes him (it stretches credulity to imagine that Veeder managed to misread something he was searching for
so deliberately) as saying it originated in around 1900, and leaves out the crucial matter of its place of origin. Showalter uncritically quotes Veeder, turning Partridge and the elusive Spears into 'a number of scholars', and turning Veeder's 'by the early 1900s' into 'by 1900': a crucial exaggeration. She further obscures the American origin of this usage by simply saying that it had entered 'English slang', although she cannot be blamed for this as she presumably had not read Partridge. Finally, Lamos flatly misquotes Showalter as saying that the connotations existed before the 1890s.

Recall once more that the OED dates the first usage to 1922. It turns out that Lamos's 'before the 1890s' is simply the same date after a series of three very convenient transformations. I say convenient because, in each case, the mistake is traceable to a very basic need for the scholar in question to make it plausible for their text to use the word 'queer' with the connotation of 'homosexual'. It might, incidentally, be objected that we as post-Derrideans do not need the word to have these connotations at the time the novel is set, or even written, to read them back into the text. I submit that this is irrelevant: it is not I, but these critics themselves who have stressed this chronological-semantic point. My issue is not with the potential validity of retrospective semantic readings, but with the propriety of the methods these critics themselves choose to employ, and their evident favouring of Theoretical concerns over historical fact. Equally, let me underline that had the evidence from the OED been the limit of this enquiry, and the point at issue framed as an interesting speculation based on a first usage in 1922, then I would have no criticism to lodge. Finally, it must be observed that the fact that this gradually worsening untruth managed to make it through fully three proof-read, high profile publications suggests an alarming disregard for basic scholarly checks.

This, then, is an error scholarship: an uncontroverted factual mistake made in the service of Theoretical convenience.

**Errors of Description**

Errors of description are cases in which a critic has failed to accurately describe the nature of the text they are reading. These can sometimes be close to being errors of scholarship (as in "Ulysses, being set in London..."). Other examples,
however, are subtler misrepresentations. If, for example, a critic claimed that a certain moment in episode five of *Ulysses* occurred simultaneously with one in episode one, we would be able to accuse them of an error of description: episode five is contemporaneous with episode two, not episode one. Other examples of this type of error rest on a descriptive claim which, while taken for granted, goes against a demonstrably correct description of the text. For example, a critic might rest part of their thesis on the idea that *Ulysses* ends with a mood of bitter negation without providing any good reason to accept such a strange description. Sometimes, demonstrating that a particular claim is an error of description takes some substantial work. For example, if a critic claimed that most of Joyce's characters in *Dubliners* were physically ill, then we would have to check that claim in detail. If enough characters in rude health could be produced then we could say that they had erred in their description of the text. This kind of error is a little less definitive than an error of scholarship, if only because definitions are often open to question. Excepting such instances, I would expect errors of description to be accepted as errors by most thinkers on the subject. My formal definition of an error of descriptions is this: *an error of description is a description of the text which does not answer to any known or demonstrated features of that text, but instead answers to a vision of the text that allows a certain Theoretical reading to take place.*

My example of an error of description comes from Vincent Cheng's *Joyce, Race and Empire*. The Theoretical mandate of this book is not hard to establish. Cheng describes his project as 'presenting Joyce's texts as a strikingly sustained and systematic commentary on the ideologies of racial and imperial politics in Joyce's Ireland' (289). Note that phrase 'presenting Joyce's texts as', as opposed to 'demonstrating Joyce's texts to be', which sets the tone for the following moment from his discussion of 'The Dead'.

Here is Cheng's discussion of the final moments of the story:

Gabriel's final vision of the falling snow which "was general all over Ireland" attempts to break down the barriers of difference constructed by the patriarchal ego he is so deeply (if unconsciously) implicated in, into at least a recognition of generosity and sameness, all shades of equal color, whether these "shades...pass[ing] boldly into that other world" be Michael Furey, Aunt Julia, black opera singers, or himself: "One by one they were all becoming shades...Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes" [D 223] "Generosity" – a charged term in Joyce's
personal vocabulary, suggesting a collective social conscience – allows for the acceptance of others as subjects, breaking down the unified self into a consciousness of a shared or collective subjectivity, allowing the walls of the ego to dissolve and for identities to mix in a vision, however momentary or melodramatic on Gabriel's part, of uncompartmentalized, non-hierarchical sameness – as the snow falls faintly through the universe and faintly falling, equally and non-preferentially, over everyone, living and dead, usurper and usurped."

(146-7)

There are two descriptive problems here. The first is Cheng's suggestion that the shades of various characters are in the business of 'passing boldly' into 'that other world'. In fact, the final paragraphs of 'The Dead' suggest precisely the opposite: that these shades are not in the least bold, but paralysed and inert. The second error is the suggestion that Gabriel's moment of generosity is directed explicitly towards these shades, where in fact it is directed more towards his wife and her dead lover. Cheng needs the shades to be passing boldly and Gabriel to be generous towards them because he is pursuing a thesis in which Gabriel overcomes his patriarchal ego, and these two descriptions fit neatly into that reading. However, they are not true to the text, a fact which becomes very apparent when we look at the quotations Cheng uses to support them.

In support of his first point Cheng quotes the text as reading "shades...pass[ing] boldly into that other world", in which the ellipsis is Cheng's. This quote implies that the shades are in the business of transcendence, moving on to bolder and stronger existence. It only achieves this meaning, however, by inaccurate selectiveness. Let us turn to the full text. The sentences from which these words are taken occur in the third last paragraph. To get a sense of narrative context, here are some illustrative words from the fourth last:

Poor Aunt Julia! She, too, would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing Arrayed for the Bridal.

(175)

Note the implied significance of the word 'shade' here. It is a state arousing sadness and pity ('Poor Aunt Julia!'). Patrick Morkan, another shade, was the man carried futilely around a statue by an old and feeble horse. Gabriel gets the impression that Julia will 'soon be a shade' because of a 'haggard look upon her face'. Being a shade, it seems, is an unequivocally bad thing, associated in particular with Patrick
Morkan's pointless, circular motion on his horse. Now, here are the lines Cheng quotes, with the words from the ellipsis restored:

One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. (176)

Here it is clear that the phrase 'pass boldly into that other world' is set up in contrast with the idea of being a shade. Gabriel thinks of his and their fate as shades, and then thinks that it would be 'Better' to 'pass boldly into that other world'. Recall that Cheng has to change the conjugation of 'pass boldly' to 'pass[ing] boldly': he must do so because in Joyce's text the shades do not operate that verb, and it is the whole point that they do not: not for them to pass boldly, but rather to 'fade and wither dismally with age'. In order to describe the text in the way he wishes, Cheng has to censor parts of it, and reorganise the syntax into a convenient form.

Turning now to Cheng's other contention, which is supported by the quote 'One by one they were all becoming shades...Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes'. Note again the ellipsis, which is Cheng's, for it will be crucial. Cheng's quote strongly implies causation: Gabriel weeps because they were all becoming shades, which effect is achieved by a simple juxtaposition of the two events. But in the original text these two events are not juxtaposed. They are not even in the same sentence, and indeed, not even in the same paragraph. The first half of the quote is found in this context:

One by one, they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live. (176)

At this point Joyce starts a whole new paragraph, and that new paragraph begins with the words in question:

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. (176)

The content of that ellipsis is substantial, and has a serious impact on the way we read the emphasis of the quotation. Gabriel's tears do not, as Cheng implies, focus on Gabriel's friends and family becoming 'shades'; they focus on Michael Furey's love for his wife and her treasuring of that love. They are generous because crying for another man's feelings towards one's wife requires a certain spirit of magnanimity.
The ramifications here are serious: the original text lacks the emphasis of Cheng's quote. Again, Cheng can only describe the text in the way he wishes by being misleadingly selective.

It should be noted further that Cheng's two misreadings hang together, reinforcing one another. Having misrepresented what the text means by 'shade' – reading it as a transcendent state rather than a state of paralysis – he can then coherently imply that Gabriel's 'generous' tears focus on his friends and family inheriting the state of transcendence implied by that word. Had Cheng accurately represented what it means to be a shade in 'The Dead', then his second reading would make no sense: why would tears over the disintegration of one's loved ones into deathly shades be 'generous', rather than, say, 'sorrowful'?

This, then, is an error of description. Cheng has misrepresented two aspects of the text – the concept of being a 'shade' and the nature of Gabriel's tears – and in doing so has twisted the quotations he uses to support himself. His own description rests on no known features of the text, he has not demonstrated such features to exist, and indeed his description runs counter to the plain sense of Joyce's words. Instead, his description of the text both springs from and supports his thesis concerning Gabriel's transcendence of patriarchy and assent to 'collective subjectivity'.

**Errors of Analysis**

This last category will be the most controversial, so it will require the most definition. My first drafts of this section sought to define not errors of analysis, but what I called errors of interpretation. This choice of phrasing sought to engage with debates concerning 'the limits of interpretation' like those found in the excellent *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992), a collection of essays from thinkers as diverse as Umberto Eco and Richard Rorty. It seems to me, however, that the problem with this word is definitional, and can be conveniently expressed with reference to the *OED*, which defines the primary sense of the verb 'to interpret' thus:

1. **a. trans.** To expound the meaning of (something abstruse or mysterious); to render (words, writings, an author, etc.) clear or explicit; to elucidate; to explain. Formerly, also, To translate (now only contextually, as included in the general sense).
The third inflection of this primary sense is:

c. In recent use: To bring out the meaning of (a dramatic or musical composition, a landscape, etc.) by artistic representation or performance; to give one's own interpretation of; to render.

And finally, the secondary sense reads:

2. a. To give a particular explanation of; to expound or take in a specified manner. Also, To construe (motives, actions, etc.) favourably or adversely.

The sense, then, ranges from the purely objective meaning implied by 'elucidation' to the purely subjective meaning implied by 'take in a specified manner' – and this is, in brief, the problem of 'interpretation'. It is made particularly acute by those thinkers who would simply deny that the word has any sense other than sense 2. a. It is understandable to want to place limits upon legitimate interpretation, to combat the feeling that 'anything goes', as Eco himself tries to do in the above-referenced collection. My own sense of the issue, however, is that this definitional question is basic to all discussions of 'interpretation', and that it is, at base, irresolvable. One cannot persuasively criticise others for their failure to live up to one's own sense of 'good interpretation'. I have stated my intent to find a set of critical criteria, and a set of terms in which to express them, which will enjoy maximum consent from the critical community. With this in mind, 'interpretation' is precisely the kind of term I want to avoid.

This is a great shame, because the question of 'good interpretation' is one with which we all feel a natural wish to engage. In an effort to retain the core of this issue, while hopefully losing the definitional issues, I propose to substitute the term 'errors of analysis'. This term the OED defines, in the fifth sense, thus:

5. Literature. The investigation of any production of the intellect, as a poem, tale, argument, philosophical system, so as to exhibit its component elements in simple form.

The shift in emphasis I wish to effect is, I hope, fairly plain. Simply, analysis is the kind of thing upon which one rests one's interpretation. It is investigative, that is, it deals with evidence culled from the object of analysis and seeks to elucidate it. Based on the products of analysis one forms an interpretation.

This definition is necessarily a little provisional, but the emphases it seeks to highlight will be understood, I think. For example, one might have an interpretation of *Finnegans Wake* to the effect that it charts the death and resurrection of language
itself. As an interpretation this is difficult to discuss, let alone challenge, for it might simply be the 'specified manner' in which one has taken the book. However, in a scholarly context one would expect a certain degree of analysis of *Finnegans Wake* to justify this claim, which might focus on the model of semantics Joyce's book implies, for example. This analysis could and should be scrutinised for its persuasiveness. We could look at the semantic model as it is defined, and the quotes from *Finnegans Wake* as they are explicated, and see if there are any contradictions between the two, or if the former does indeed follow from the latter. Simply, has the critic investigated the text well, or is their thinking on the subject highly problematic? How good is their detective work?

My formal definition of an error of analysis runs thus: *an error of analysis is an analytic claim or set thereof which either a) fails to observe, understand or meaningfully engage with aspects of the text which, if noticed, understood or meaningfully engaged with would demand substantive revision of said analytic claim(s), b) is self-contradictory, or internally inconsistent to a problematic extent, or c) demonstrably fails to support any broader statements for which said analytic claim(s) provides sole or principal support.*

My example of an error of analysis comes from Maud Ellmann's essay 'Disremembering Dedalus: "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"'. Ellmann is analysing the following quotation: 'Stephen was once again seated beside his father in the corner of a railway carriage at Kingsbridge'. She writes:

'Once again' is a curious sleight of hand: Stephen has never shared a railway carriage with his father in the text before. This is a first time masquerading as a repetition...we begin to suspect some relation between the father and false starts; and to suspect, perhaps, the very notion of beginning. (195)

This feature of the text is problematic enough for Ellmann to search around for a less obvious referent for the phrase 'Once again', which she finds in Stephen's dream of a train journey home while he is a student at Clongowes, so that, in her own words 'This passage does not repeat a real event, but a dream' (195). This move from dream to reality under the guise of repetition is enough for Ellmann to claim that 'the real train evolves out of the dream' and that 'This order makes a fiction of experience' (196). From this claim, so clearly indebted to post-structuralist lines of analysis, she concludes that
'What the reader undergoes, through the repetition of the dream-sequence, is the constitution of his own memory...it takes the second episode to activate the scar left by the first. This, perhaps, is why the text cannot begin...text and reader are deprived of their originality...we too are disremembering.' (196).

Let us return to the text. Ellmann thinks that 'Once again' is a 'curious sleight of hand' because 'Stephen has never shared a railway carriage with his father in the text before'. The presumption behind this is that fictional characters cannot legitimately refer to past events that have not been explicitly described by the narrative. This presumption is not articulated or defended and is, I think, highly dubious. Imagine, for example, a text which began with an unpleasant scene to which the narrative voice responded 'Once again he was forced to deal with...

Would we be forced to question the potentially fictional status of the protagonist's experience? Surely not: texts can imply undescribed events, just as plays can refer to events offstage.

Still, this is not enough to accuse Ellmann of a full-blown error of analysis. For she has provided an analysis of 'Once again' – that it refers to a dream and not reality – which could be sound and persuasive despite the fact that 'Once again' does not necessitate such an explanation. However, if that analysis were to be found wanting or erroneous, then the existence of another, simpler and adequate analysis of these words – that they refer to implied events – would be enough to indict her thinking on the subject.

Therefore, let us return to Joyce's phrase: 'Stephen was once again seated beside his father in the corner of a railway carriage at Kingsbridge'. Now, to what elements of the scene do the words 'Once again' refer? To three things: that Stephen is seated beside his father, that they are in the corner of a railway carriage, and that the railway carriage is at Kingsbridge. It could be argued that 'Once again' refers only to the first of these, but this ambiguity is unproblematic for my critique. Let us now turn to the dream Stephen has at Clongowes (P 16), and ask how many of these three qualities can be said to apply to it. The answer is none: Stephen is not seated beside his father (indeed he is going home to see his family), he is not mentioned as being in the corner of the railway carriage, and the train is not at Kingsbridge. There are only two points of similarity: that both passages are concerned with trains, and that in both passages 'telegraph poles' are described as 'passing'.
This is highly problematic for Ellmann's thesis. The 'Once again' cannot refer back to the dream for the simple reason that its referents do not occur in the dream. Under these circumstances, the simple explanation that 'Once again' refers to extra-textual events is to be preferred. This is an error of analysis: Ellmann has either not noticed or not understood particularities of the text which demand substantive revision, even abandonment, of her analysis. In simple terms, her investigation has gone awry, and has led her down a track which can be shown to be a false one. The link between this error and her Theoretical predisposition is fairly clear. Consider, for example, her claim that 'these two journeys do not precisely represent events, but passages between events: interstices between the present and the past. They have no content: none, that is, but the passing and the missing of a content' (196). In a move to interpret the text as having 'no content', an almost prototypical post-structuralist manoeuvre, she has engaged in highly problematic analytical tactics.

It will be observed that the above categories are not perfectly distinct. Some errors of description, such as misquotation, would be so blatant as to qualify as errors of scholarship. Some errors of analysis fail to engage with the text so obviously that they might qualify as errors of description. These terms represent points on a scale not sets in a group. My aim is not to provide a taxonomy of scholarly errors, but to define my parameters for poor close reading. The critiques contained within this thesis will all fit into one of these categories, and any exceptions or points of obscurity will be clarified as they arise. I will not, however, divide my thesis into sections based on the categories given above. This would render the whole thing unforgivably tedious, and what's more would be quite unnecessary. Furthermore, I will not point out the category into which every single error should be placed, for similar reasons. This discussion provides an explicit standard against which I am measuring the works examined; to turn it into a roadmap would, I think, be unnecessary.

**The Proposed Relationship between Theory and Close Reading**

There is a crucial qualification to my thesis. I am not claiming that Theory inevitably leads to poor close reading as defined under the above categories. Such a
claim would be self-evidently stupid. I am indeed making a claim for a certain causal link between Theory and erroneous reading, but the limits of this causation require definition.

Any literary scholar, no matter what their Theoretical disposition, is capable of sound close reading. My argument is that a certain kind of Theoretical mandate does not necessitate but does encourage certain kinds of error. If this is true, we can expect to see a suggestive proportion of Theoretically inclined scholars making these kinds of error. The key word here is proportion: to make my case I do not have to show an iron-clad link between Theory and poor close reading, and indeed the existence of excellent Theoretical close readings is perfectly consistent with my argument. Instead, I only have to show that suggestive numbers of scholars are making these mistakes for the reasons outlined.

As a result, I aim to show a probabilistic link between Theory and poor close reading. This means that a Theoretical mandate has increased the likelihood of scholars making a certain kind of error, but no more. Note the words 'has increased', rather than 'must increase'. This is not a metaphysical claim about the nature of Theory as an idea, or even about its intrinsic relationship with close reading. Such claims are too abstract, too Platonic to be demonstrated via analysis of recent critical history. This thesis is not a claim about what must happen, or about what must probably happen, but about what has happened, and the probable reasons for it. I leave every room for Theoretical scholars to henceforth produce nothing but perfectly attuned close readings, entirely free from error, and indeed such would be my sincerest wish. In truth, this thesis is envisaged as a call for precisely such a development; as such claims for the inevitably corrupting nature of Theory are far from my intent. My only claim about the nature of Theory is not that it always does lead to poor close reading, but that it can and has.

Formalised, my proposed relationship is this: Theoretical forces in literary analysis need not but can have demonstrably negative effects on the quality of close reading; and furthermore have had such effects in a suggestive proportion of recent scholarship.
There remains but one issue with which I need to deal before I can begin my case. As noted, a book-length proof-approach critique of Theory suffers from an inevitable disconnection between the scale of its claim and the scale of the evidence it can bring to bear. I cannot study more than the tiniest fraction of Theoretical close readings. How, then, to make claims concerning Theoretical close reading *per se*? Part of my response to this has already been discussed, being my vision of a much larger, collaborative project of which this thesis is only a part. I mentioned, however, other tactics I will employ to limit this problem, and to these I will now turn.

The question, in its simplest form, is this: how does one go about choosing a truly representative sample of a very diverse field? The temptation, in writing this thesis, has naturally been to choose those Theoretically-inclined texts which best exemplify my claims. This would create a striking thesis, superficially plausible, but ultimately not very relevant, and for this reason. If we base our choice of texts on the fact that they support our conclusions, then they tell us nothing about the larger category of texts from which they have been drawn, and whether or not it supports our conclusions. If we have a group of one hundred critical texts, and we wish to assess whether on the whole they commit fallacy X, then it is no good just choosing six of them and conclusively demonstrating that they commit that fallacy. This tells us nothing about the remaining ninety-four, nothing about the overall percentage of fallacious texts, and in the end nothing much about the group of one-hundred. Obviously, with Theory the number of texts is so utterly vast that just choosing those which happen to support your conclusion tells you pretty much nothing at all about the overall set. To be at all effective, we need to find a way around this problem.

The solution is, of course, well known to all scientists, and indeed all those involved in statistics or surveys. The key is to eliminate, as far as possible, the factor of conduciveness from one's choice of case studies. One must choose one's data sets on grounds principally other than the extent to which they support one's conclusions. Then, if those conclusions are borne out in this otherwise random sample, there is a good likelihood that they are true of the set at large. Naturally, the idea of a random sample is rather foreign to literary studies, and I do not propose to import it here.
The conceptual apparatus required to make such random choices of text is hard enough to envisage, let alone implement. Rather, I propose three selective limitations, one general and two specific, via which to limit my evidential selection. The only requirement for these criteria is that they be indifferent to my conclusion that Theory has produced poor close readings. Other than this, they can be and probably must be fairly arbitrary.

My first selective limit is designed to simply cut away as large a chunk of the field as possible, leaving a more manageable sample. How to do this? I propose that a good way to proceed is to examine the criticism surrounding the work of a single author. On the assumption that the critics working on a particular author are on average as intelligent as any others, and that no authors somehow encourage poor close readings, this selection can have no conducive effect upon my conclusions. Furthermore, it massively limits the number of texts available, which is very useful. Next, which author? Obviously, we need someone whose work has been extensively read from overtly Theoretical points of view. We also need someone whose critical heritage might be said to be microcosmic of the academy as a whole, or at least part of the avant-garde, and as such indicative of future trends. For preference, we need someone who has attracted the best and brightest of Theory's close readers, so as to be able to look at the strongest thinkers available. Finally, we need someone whose work is complex enough to require substantial amounts of analysis before interpretation can take place, so as to be able to examine my third criteria of poor close reading successfully.

The author I have chosen in light of these needs is James Joyce. The Joyce industry, perhaps more than any other, has been at the cutting edge of Theoretical developments in literary studies. It offers, therefore, an excellent case study concerning their effects. I also make no apology for a certain personal element to this selection. Being a devoted Joycean myself, I have been very keen to study some of the highs and lows in the criticism of his work.

This still leaves us with one of the largest critical fields in existence with which to deal. How to choose amongst its thousands of members? For this, I appeal to my two secondary selective limits, which operate independently. The first offers an interesting example of unconducive criteria. This is the idea that, while choosing
case studies because they are conducive to one's conclusions weakens those same conclusions, choosing case studies that are probably unconducive to one's conclusions strengthens them. If we pick a series of cases which are, at face value, unlikely to feature the trends we wish to examine, and we do indeed find those trends in evidence there, then the chances of the overall set featuring those trends is comparatively high. In this case, I propose to look at those Theorists who are held up as the benchmarks for their peers, and those texts that have become landmarks in Joyce criticism. I wish to look at the kinds of author of whom Eagleton writes 'Most [major theorists] read quite as tenaciously as non-theoretical critics, and some of them rather more so' (After Theory, 93). In doing so, I am imposing a very serious limitation upon myself. I shall be looking for uncontroversial errors in some of the most influential criticism of recent decades. Had I aimed at less prominent critics, my job would have been easier, my findings more striking, but my conclusion would have been less firmly supported. Given the assumed quality of my targets, and the reverence with which they are discussed, my conclusions will be comparatively strong. If even critics of this stature have fallen prey to these errors, then the implications are far-reaching.

My second selective limit will be outlined in more detail when I come to the relevant section of my thesis. For now, suffice it to say that it seeks to find as representative a sample as possible of what we might call 'minor-criticism', journal articles and the like, and thereby to make a claim for more pervasive problems in the field. The key point to remember throughout is that my selection criteria are either indifferent to my conclusions, or they militate against them. In this way, I hope to have prevented any accusations of having loaded the dice in my favour.

The Positive Case

A final point before I begin. Despite the aims I have outlined in this introduction, my thesis will not be exclusively a negative assault on Theory. Having discussed the issue with others, I have decided that a book-length catalogue of errors would be, for most sane individuals, unreadable. This is something of a
disappointment, as obviously the more time spent on such a task the stronger my conclusions will be. Still, while the practical element of kindness to readers is sufficient to motivate this decision, there is an argumentative support for it too. The negative case having been made, there still remains the question: so what? Given that I do not endorse the elimination of Theory from the academy, but rather a renewed attention the textual practices that undergird it, what do I propose we do next?

As this aims to be as practical a thesis as possible, I have decided to set out a usable method of textual analysis which will, I hope, help in this regard. Using it would, I think, prevent many of the mistakes I will be discussing here. It is a kind of close reading which will allow Theorists to avoid the pitfalls towards which their Theory might well push them. It is called thematic stylistics, and I leave discussion of it for a later chapter, if only to shorten this already substantial introduction. I will briefly outline its techniques, which are by no means revolutionary, and I will exemplify them in a series of interludes from the main discussion. These examples will take their cue from the mistakes uncovered in the previous chapter, so I will in essence be showing how this method could have been used to avoid these specific errors, and thereby achieve a better understanding of the text in question. This will also, I hope, provide some more pleasant relief from my main project, and make the whole thing a little more readable.
Chapter Three: First Case Study

My first critique will try to achieve maximum breadth, given the evidential limitations I have set out. Rather than deal with one notable Theorist at great length, I will be dealing with two notable Theorists under one critical rubric. My intention is that their differences and similarities will allow for a qualified generalisation based on the evidence I find in their work.

Ideally, these Theorists should both come from a similar Theoretical field, as this will allow me to search for a common Theoretical root when discussing their errors. This in turn is important in making the case that these errors are indeed due to a Theoretical disposition, and not merely incidental mistakes. However, within that field, maximum diversity is preferable. Discussing two mid-1990s, French, Lacanian gender Theorists tells us a lot about mid-1990s, French, Lacanian gender Theory, but little about gender Theory as a broader phenomenon. Two critics with entirely different styles, approaches and backgrounds, yet both operating in a similar field with reference to similar issues, will ensure a high level of generalisability, especially if their errors turn out to be connected in some way. Furthermore, the field from which these Theorists write should preferably be as significant and widely practised as possible, for obvious reasons. Finally, these two critics should for preference be dealing with the same Joycean text, as this will allow comparisons to be made far more concretely between them. Given these restrictions, the more reputable these critics are the better, for reasons discussed at the end of my last chapter.

With the above in mind I have chosen to examine the work of Colin MacCabe and Hélène Cixous. I take their status as Theorists of enormous repute to be in little need of reinforcement here. Both are early, trend-setting Theorists in the field of Joyce studies, and their work continues to exercise considerable influence down to the present day. They can both be considered under the same Theoretical heading, namely Post-Structuralism, which is a set of ideas in no danger of being considered marginal or unimportant. However, within that field, they are as different as can be. Broadly speaking, Cixous comes from the French school, MacCabe from the British school, and while that abstraction may seem unhelpful here, the practical
differences between their methods will soon give it useful substance. Their attitudes towards close reading, argumentative structure and scholarly language are as different as could be, yet they are both clearly operating within a common disciplinary emphasis. Finally, they have both treated the collection *Dubliners* at some length, which will allow me to focus my cross section of their work.

Given the limits of a thesis such as this, I hope that the provision of such a comparison will go some way to ensuring the broader relevance of my work. If two such prominent academics, so unlike in critical temperament, can be shown to have significantly erred in a comparable manner, then the importance of that fact for the Theories they espouse will, I hope, at least merit further investigation.

*How Do You Read The Unreadable?*

My scope duly narrowed, we must attend to a preliminary difficulty, which is this. Specifying exactly what a post-structuralist close reading looks like can be surprisingly difficult. Luckily, in this regard Joyceans have at their disposal a most useful resource: Attridge and Ferrer's introduction to *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, the collection so heavily responsible for introducing French post-structuralist readings of Joyce to an English-speaking audience. For my purposes here the most illuminating section comes when they try to navigate the conceptual minefield engendered by the mere juxtaposition of the words 'post-structuralist' and 'reading'.

We must abandon, for example, the simplistic notion that Joyce's texts might 'illustrate' post-structuralist theory, for it is one of the tenets of that theory that 'there is no possible application of a theory to a text: the text reads the theory at the same time as it is read by it'. In contrast to what they later refer to as 'orthodox' criticism, the aim of their chosen post-structuralists is not to search for authentic meaning but to 'look at the mechanisms of [the text's] infinite productivity'; not to explore the psychology of author or character but to 'record the perpetual flight of the Subject and its ultimate disappearance'; not to reconstruct the world of the text, but 'to follow up within it the strategies that attempt a deconstruction of representation'. Most interestingly, they go so far as to say that the authors they have collected do not aim to produce any 'reading' of the text, but rather to 'confront its unreadability' (10).
Over twenty-five years later such a manifesto does not strike us as particularly unusual, which is a mark only of our having grown profoundly insensitive to such claims. But let us, if only for the sake of argument, treat textual unreadability as a very peculiar place to begin the project of literary criticism, and then ask what dangers there might be in such an approach. In my own case, this issue is very pressing indeed. If these essays disavow their own status as any kind of 'reading' then what is there for me to appraise? Must I simply concede that essays such as these are simply off-limits to my kind of analysis?

This is one of those cases in which it is essential not to let the introduction get the better of you, and to go and see how these lofty aims actually pan out. Leafing through the essays in the collection one sees, without feeling too much surprise, lengthy discussions of etymology and syntax, together with complex disquisitions on the 'function' of particular words and images within the Joycean text; and having seen all this it is hard not to come to the conclusion that some kind of 'reading' must be taking place here, and that it must in principle be possible to assess its worth. In this respect a rather edifying aside can be had by re-examining the language in which Attridge and Ferrer make their claims. To repeat, they say that these critic's aims are not to 'read' but to 'confront', not to 'search' but to 'look at', not to 'explore' but to 'record', not to 'reconstruct' but to 'follow up'. Note the passivity and abstraction of the terms they use. We are surely within our rights to wonder precisely what 'confronting', 'looking at', 'recording' and 'following up' look like in critical practice. If any textual engagement is to be had at all, then these terms must surely end up looking very like those things we would normally call 'reading', 'analysing' or 'interpreting'. Such would at least make sense of the large amount of undisguised literary excavation that takes place in the collection that follows.

To their credit, Attridge and Ferrer do seem aware of this, indicating that 'It is not possible to dismiss altogether meaning, character and referential value' (10), which would be more reassuring if it sounded less like a concession, and later tell us that 'the new readings of Joyce are perhaps not as utterly divorced as one might think from some apparently more orthodox approaches' (11). This, one assumes, is the Theoretical mandate for the suspicious amount of very conventional-looking reading that follows.
Fundamentally, therefore, we are left with a conflict. It has not been made to any degree plain how these more orthodox discussions of things like referential value can be made to co-exist with the 'deconstruction of representation'. Given that 'reading' so manifestly takes place, what are we to do with that 'confrontation of unreadability'? This, it seems to me, is the unavoidable fault line of all that flows from this Theoretical brief, and it is to some specific consequences of this seemingly unresolvable tension that I now dedicate myself.

Colin MacCabe

Unreadability and Meta-language

MacCabe's *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* occupies a special place in the last few decades of Joycean scholarship. Rarely has a work proved so quickly divisive, or been so comprehensively imitated. It is a large and dense book, so here I choose to limit myself to its first chapter, entitled 'The End of a Meta-Language: from George Eliot to Dubliners'. This will also facilitate comparison with Cixous, who also concentrates on Dubliners.

That MacCabe's project fits comfortably into Attridge and Ferrer's understanding of post-structuralism will, by now, be something of a truism. Still, it is worth spelling out the common ground. Here is MacCabe's credo, as spelled out in his opening chapter, 'Theoretical Preliminaries':

The reason for the failure of the critics to give an account of Joyce's texts is not some congenital inability on their part but that literary criticism itself cannot cope with Joyce's texts because those texts refuse to reproduce the relation between reader and text on which literary criticism is predicated. The literary critic labours under the same delusion as Professor Jones in *Finnegans Wake*. He is unable to decipher the letter because he mistakes its very constitution; his error is not that he cannot find the right interpretation but that he tries to interpret at all' (3)

For MacCabe, as for Attridge and Ferrer's chosen few, interpretation itself is the mistake, because Joyce's texts disrupt the framework of literary criticism upon which interpretation itself depends. Indeed, the vocabulary of this kind of criticism is limited enough to afford some startling crossovers. Recall, for instance, Attridge and
Ferrer's saying that such post-structuralists 'follow up within [the text] the strategies that attempt a deconstruction of representation'. Here is MacCabe: 'Ulysses and Finnegans Wake are… [concerned with] experiencing language through a deconstruction of representation' (4).

Despite, or perhaps because of its clarity, MacCabe's understanding of what Attridge and Ferrer call 'unreadability' is considerably subtler and more powerful than Cixous's will be. MacCabe sees this phenomenon as a kind of narrative stance, a refusal on the part of the text to tell us how to read or understand it. His thesis here is complex and well worth properly understanding. By contrasting George Eliot's narrative techniques in Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda with Joyce's in Dubliners, MacCabe brings out what he sees as the fundamental difference between them: that Eliot's narratives feature a controlling discourse which grants both author and reader a position of privilege from which to judge those narratives' contents, and that Joyce's narratives lack precisely that feature. I will begin by restating MacCabe's thesis and defining his key terms.

Crucially, this thesis rests upon his most important term, 'meta-language'. This MacCabe defines succinctly: 'A meta-language 'talks about' an object-language' (13) – a definition he goes on to refine and specify throughout the chapter. Thus we find that the easiest way for a meta-language to talk about an object language is by placing it in inverted commas, an act which connotes a degree of privilege: quoting something allows you to have an attitude towards it, a relationship that obviously does not work both ways. For MacCabe, a meta-language claims to reveal truth, and is therefore able to discuss the relationship of other linguistically-expressed viewpoints (what MacCabe calls 'discourses') to that truth. As MacCabe's thesis gets more specific, so does his definition of meta-language. As it is such an important term, I will try to do justice to the breadth of its application. We find it referred to as: a narrative that interprets the discourses it quotes (17), a form of narrative that affords a 'position of dominance' (25), 'a fixed sense conveyed by the text' (29), a narrative that 'assumes a degree of control' over the discourses within it (29), 'a position from which to read the text' (30), a 'discourse shared by author and reader' (30), and even a moment in which the narrative decides to 'go behind a set of actions and explain them' (30).
As will now be apparent, this is a definition both broad and deep. On MacCabe's account, any narrative that assumes some degree of control, be that explanatory or interpretative, has assumed to the same degree the role of a meta-language. As his archetype of a novelistic meta-language, MacCabe chooses the scene in *Middlemarch* in which Mr. Brooke visits Dagley. Here, MacCabe says, there are two discourses: the 'educated, well-meaning, but not very intelligent discourse of Mr Brooke' and 'the uneducated, violent and very nearly unintelligible discourse of the drunken Dagley'. However, 'the whole dialogue is surrounded by a meta-language (which being unspoken is also unwritten) which places these discourses in inverted commas and can thereby discuss their relation to truth – a truth illuminatingly revealed in the meta-language' (16). More specifically, the meta-language provides an interpretative frame showing us that these two discourses spring 'from two types of ignorance which the meta-language can expose and reveal', for example when 'Mr Brooke's attitudes to his tenants [are] contrasted to the reality which is available to us through the narrative prose' (17).

It is of the highest importance to stress how broad this definition is, potentially referring as it does to anything except pure quotation of speech or pure description of action. The breadth of MacCabe's terminology is so important because we need to understand just how radical a claim MacCabe goes on to make for *Dubliners*: namely, that it lacks a meta-language altogether. This is a very serious claim, a very substantial claim, and I want to emphasise that it is made unequivocally. MacCabe claims that Joyce's texts 'lack any final and privileged discourse within them which dominates the others through its claim of access to the real' (27); that *Dubliners* 'works paratactically, simply placing one event after another, with no ability to draw conclusions from this placing' (28); that we find 'the specific refusal of a fixed sense which is conveyed by the text' (29); and that we are 'forced to rely on our own discourses to re-write and order the text' (31). There is no room for misunderstanding here: MacCabe is claiming that there is absolutely no meta-language to be found in *Dubliners*.

MacCabe does consider two potential problems for his thesis. The first is the obvious point that the narrative is forced to take a certain amount of control when it is not directly quoting someone (an illuminating concern: that MacCabe even
considers this to be a problem is a measure of how seriously he takes his terminology). MacCabe's response here is to claim that while this is true, the narrative also contains methods 'with which it interrogates and negates that control', which result in a 'process through which the possibility of a meta-language is systematically ruined' (29). The second problem is that when compared with MacCabe's chosen *Dubliners* case study, 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', other stories in the collection use 'more traditionally realistic devices' in which 'the narrative will go behind a set of actions and explain them'. However, MacCabe responds to this by saying that 'these explanations use the same cadences and oppositions that characterise some character's speech and they thus refuse any hierarchy of dominance into which the reader could comfortably insert himself' (30-1). These objections thus dismissed, the ubiquity of MacCabe's thesis rests.

*An Aside*

With this elaboration of meta-language complete, we can begin to see the shape of MacCabe's argument. His task now is to go through *Dubliners* and illustrate the absence of meta-language with some close readings. So far, so plausible. MacCabe's understanding of 'unreadability' is subtle and well-defined enough that it might, in principle, be possible for him to substantiate it here by illustrating the absence of any interpretative footholds within the text. My task, then, is equally simple: to show the extent to which this would be an inaccurate characterisation of Joyce's book.

I shall be exploring the underlying reasons for the problems in MacCabe's readings later, but it will be helpful to have some idea of them in mind when reading my critique. A brief aside MacCabe makes right in the middle of his chapter on *Dubliners* is illustrative here. It reads: 'To break with [classical realism] is a contemporary struggle in which we must attend to those images from the past which are summoned in response to the dangers of conformism. That Joyce is the most necessary of those images is the thesis of this book' (27). It is essential to note what MacCabe's central preoccupation is here: the struggle with classical realism, which is a struggle MacCabe's thesis frames in terms that are overtly political, deeply
conceptual, and unashamedly psychoanalytical. Joyce is figured merely as one of the 'images' to which he will attend as part of that struggle. In other words, MacCabe's critical ends are explicitly ideological, and Joyce is explicitly being used as a means to those ends. This ideological emphasis is the clue to MacCabe's analytical errors. For it is easy to see how, in his ideological struggle, MacCabe might distort the 'most necessary' of his 'images' to support his conclusions. Put another way, MacCabe's conclusions are already decided: he wants to break with classical realism (or, in the terminology of his first chapter, he wants to sketch out the death of meta-language, one of classical realism's principle tools). James Joyce's texts are his way of expressing that conclusion, which has been arrived at before any analysis has taken place. As I will here try to demonstrate, the propensity towards distortion in such a methodology is very real indeed.

**General Flaws in MacCabe's Analysis**

Looking over MacCabe's thesis one finds oneself having actively to remember that his claims refer to the whole of *Dubliners*. Had one not recently read that collection, one could be forgiven for getting a very peculiar idea of it from MacCabe's discussion. For example, he only makes mention of two stories, 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' and 'The Sisters' – while *Dubliners* of course contains some fifteen stories. One could also be forgiven for imagining there to be a deep consistency of style, for in support of his thesis MacCabe only feels the need to directly quote from the text five times, and one of those times he is quoting, by way of drawing a contrast, from the 1904 *Irish Homestead* version of 'The Sisters'. Even the briefest reading of *Dubliners* will I imagine detect a variety of style that could not possibly be captured in four quotations: the swings from first to third person narration, the move from the sparseness of 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' to the lyrical ending of 'The Dead'.

Why such slim analysis of the source material? The decision becomes comprehensible when we see the problems MacCabe gets into when he does seriously consult the book he is discussing. His central text is 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', of which he claims that the narrative does no more than 'report
spatial positions' and 'give information strictly relevant to what is happening from moment to moment', which leaves the dialogue 'suspended in a vacuum of sense' (29). There are some very straightforward, *prima facie* objections to this claim. How would it account for descriptions such as '[Keon's] face...had the appearance of damp yellow cheese' (97), or '[Crofton] had a big face which resembled a young ox's face in expression' (100)? These are surely more than a report of position, and are not in the slightest relevant to what is happening from moment to moment. Rather, they are two charged ways of evoking facial features: gratuitous, a little cruel, and delightful as a result. Nor do these descriptions 'use the same cadences and oppositions that characterise some character's speech'. Quite the reverse, the elegant syntax and underdone imagery are nothing like any character's speech. These quotes, I contend, clearly fit into MacCabe's earlier definition of meta-language.

Still remaining at the fairly general level, we might observe that MacCabe's reluctance to acknowledge such elements of the story leads him to make some rather peculiar claims. For example, almost the first thing he says of 'Ivy Day' is that 'The story opens with a banal description of a committee room...' (29). This is surely a very odd thing to say of such a fine story. For notice that MacCabe's sentence implies not that the committee room is banal, but that Joyce's description of it is banal. Of the nature of the committee room, MacCabe tells us nothing: it could, for all he says here, be a very banal description of a hugely exciting committee room. Of course, to readers of this cold little story, it makes much more sense to describe the committee room as banal, and Joyce's description of it as rather evocative, albeit in a forensic kind of way. But of course, MacCabe cannot say that, because if he did then this would imply that the narrative had passed a value judgement on its subject matter, which would imply that there was present a subtle form of meta-language. So instead he shifts what is obviously a quality of the thing being described back onto its description, which in this case is at best an unusually derisive judgement, and at worst a spurious one.

*False Dichotomies*

This leads us to one of the most significant ways in which MacCabe misreads the story, which arises out of the following consideration: as the plausibility of any
steady interpretation would suggest the presence of a legitimating meta-language, MacCabe denies that any such reading is possible by trying to prove that the narrative is in fact radically ambiguous. While this appeals to our sense that this story is a little less straightforward than many others in the collection, it is, I think, a misleading description.

This tactic can be seen at three points in the chapter, perhaps most clearly in MacCabe's examination of the last line: 'Mr Crofton said that it was a very fine piece of writing' (105). This refers to a poem on the loss of Parnell that has just been recited by another member of the company, Hynes. MacCabe claims that this final line 'reproduces the whole ambiguity of the text', because 'If we knew whether the poem should be read as yet more cliche in the eternal barrenness of Irish politics or whether it testifies to the enduring reality of Parnell as Ireland's only vital political force then we should know how to make sense of the text' (31). As we do not know this, he argues, we lack 'a position from which we can read Hynes' poem' and 'This inability to read the poem' is also 'the inability to read the story' (31).

There is a serious problem with this. MacCabe has taken two interpretations of the poem, and on the basis that a) they are incompatible, and b) we have no good reason to think that one is right and the other wrong, he concludes that the poem incarnates a systematic ambiguity of meaning. The basic conceptual mistake in this analysis, however, is that it is only legitimate if the two interpretations are genuinely incompatible. Now, not only do I think them compatible, but I believe that we only contemplate their being incompatible because of MacCabe's framing of the issue. He presents these two readings of the poem – the barrenness of Irish politics vs. a testimony to Parnell's legacy – and implies in the grammar of his presentation ('whether the poem should be read as...or...') that these two are somehow mutually exclusive. He provides no argument that they are so, and indeed we can entirely dissolve this apparent dilemma by simply refusing to accept MacCabe's diagnosis of them as such. The poem can testify with its sincerity and its audience's applause to Parnell's status as Ireland's only recent politically vital force; and also testify, with its hearers' evident inability to escape their crippling nostalgia, to the paralysis of contemporary politics. MacCabe's analysis is a lack of critical imagination: something can represent a vital force and be a paralytic; indeed it is common
experience that the more vital a memory, the more paralysing its remembrance can be.

Furthermore, MacCabe ignores what is surely the most elementary 'position from which we can read Hynes' poem', which is this: it is clearly terrible. It features (103-5) wrenched rhyme ('kiss/his' – lines 22/24, or 'strove/loved' – lines 18/20) and forced metre ('For he lies dead whom the fell gang/ Of modern hypocrites laid low – 3 and 4, which the poem's otherwise heavy, regular iambic tetrameter renders very awkward indeed). Further, it is melodramatic ('He dreamed (alas, 'twas but a dream!)' – 17), clichéd ('But Erin, list, his spirit may/ Rise, like the Phoenix from the flames' – 38/39), and it hopelessly romanticises and sentimentalises what was a rather tawdry fall from grace ('He fell as fall the mighty ones, / Nobly undaunted to the last' – 29/30). The interpretation of this is surely clearer than many other things in Dubliners: it is a parody of the kind of awful sentimental verse that was spawned by the blinkered nationalist politics of the early 20th century, trapped in its longing for a hopelessly idealised past.

As such, the story's final words – 'Mr Crofton said that it was a very fine piece of writing' – do anything but 'reproduce the whole ambiguity of the text', and MacCabe's dictum that 'this inability to read the poem is, also, the inability to read the story' is the very opposite of the truth: the comparative ease with which we can read this poem is, also, the comparative ease with which we can read this story. They are both depictions of the paralysis wrought by crippling nostalgia for a vital memory. And once we understand how MacCabe's framing of the issue as either crippling nostalgia or vital memory is a distortion that serves to legitimate his thesis concerning meta-language, we start to see instances of the same misleading technique elsewhere.

We can see the second instance in his examination of the ivy leaf lapel badges. We expect these, he claims, to 'provide a hermeneutic basis for a controlling political discourse', as the reasons for their being worn will 'give meaning to the events in the committee room'. He concludes, however, that the text 'refuses to offer any explanation which transcends the ordinariness of the room and all discussion of politics is locked within the same confines. Nobody will tell us whose side we should be on' (29-30). Notice again the implied dichotomy: we are not told if we should be
on side A or side B, therefore the text must be radically ambiguous. This is another false opposition. A narrative which refuses to align itself with any of the sides it presents does not automatically become side-less; it will often, for instance, have the unified perspective of a satirical narrative, namely that both the viewpoints presented here are flawed. Take, as a classic example of this, the climactic scenes of *Madame Bovary*, in which Homais and Bournisien sit squabbling over theology while at Emma's death bed. Flaubert presents these men not that we should agree with either one, and not that we should sit paralysed because we can't decide whose side to take, but that we should recognise their insensitivity and obtuseness – though one searches in vain for the passage wherein this interpretation is made explicit. And this is where we can find a political explanation of 'Ivy Day' should we want one. It is simply this: every political force presented here is already dead, and whatever life it has is post-mortem.

The third example of false dichotomy is MacCabe's work on the following quotation: 'Mr Crofton... was silent for two reasons. The first reason, sufficient in itself, was that he had nothing to say; the second reason was that he considered his companions beneath him' (146). This is a narrative commentary on a character's actions, and as such a prime candidate for being thought of as a kind of meta-language. MacCabe recognises this, and in defence he claims that it 'does not provide a position from which to read the story, for if the other characters mouth the worn slogans of paralysed politics, Crofton's silence does not offer an alternative for it is, itself, the stereotyped response of a Conservative' (30). The mistake here is of just the same kind: just because the narrative gives us no reason to be on either Crofton's side or the others', there is no reason to conclude that it leaves us without a side at all.

Indeed, one can be even more forceful here. MacCabe goes on to claim on the back of this last analysis that 'it is in terms of the nature of stereotype that we can situate the ambiguous nature of *Dubliners*. These short stories function as collections of stereotypes without any discourse that will contain or resolve them' (30). But let us go back and look at MacCabe's identification of those stereotypes. The very fact that MacCabe identifies certain characters as 'mouthing' the 'worn slogans of paralysed politics' indicates that, for all his protestations, there has to be some kind of meta-narrative going on here, for how else have these characters been presented to
him in such a value-laden way? The very act of recognising a stereotype presupposes that author and reader share an understanding of cliché, which in turn implies a shared understanding of cultural values and aesthetic judgements. That shared understanding constitutes a form of meta-language by MacCabe's own definition of the word: a positioning of certain discourses in relation to a truth shared between author and reader. The use of stereotype cannot be part of the refusal of meta-language, for it constitutes just such a language itself.

By way of reinforcing that point, we might return to MacCabe's analysis of *Middlemarch*. Eliot presents Mr Brooke's and Mr Dagley's discourses, but of course we are not expected to adopt either of them. Instead, exactly as MacCabe points out, we take the position that the discourses spring 'from two types of ignorance which the meta-language can expose and reveal'. MacCabe claims that *Dubliners* is radically different, but I do not see how this distinction can be upheld. Where in Eliot the meta-language revealed ignorance as the source of a particular discourse, in Joyce it reveals sterility and cliché in the same position. The only difference is that in Joyce the meta-language is embedded in the very nature of clichéd discourse, because the mere apprehension of cliché necessitates what in MacCabe's terms would be a meta-linguistic judgement on the part of both author and reader. What in Eliot was overt exposition is in Joyce the knowing smile of one who shares our understanding of stagnation and stereotype. And just in case we were to find ourselves forgetting this, the narrative will occasionally describe someone's face as looking like a piece of cheese. In its contrast with Eliot this is a difference of degree, of stridency, but not of practice.

Interestingly, at one point in this chapter MacCabe does show awareness of this critique. 'It could be reasonably objected,' he writes, 'that the persistence of the "odour of corruption" remains unintelligible in this account of *Dubliners*. But the odour of corruption is the result of the dominance of stereotype' (32). At this point, one might expect some elaboration of the concept of stereotype which denies its function as a kind of meta-language. Instead, we read:

But if, in the fixity of stereotypes, we can locate the source of that odour of corruption…the reader is not placed within those stereotypes but moves across their contours and this movement, this experience of language, provides the experience of perversion, the reverse coin of
neurosis. Freud often talked of neuroses as the negative of perversions and Joyce's early writing is perhaps best defined as perverse. MacCabe's language is a little opaque here. It is unclear, for example, precisely what he means by 'moving across the contours' of stereotypes. It seems clear, however, that he thinks a shared recognition of stereotype between author and reader, resulting in an "odour of corruption" and an experience of perversion on the part of the latter, is quite in line with his thesis concerning the absence of meta-language in *Dubliners*. As will be obvious from my argument above, I would disagree very much on this point, and would only refer the reader to MacCabe's own denial of any 'position from which to read the text' (30) and any 'discourse shared by author and reader' (30) as evidence for my position. Finally, even if the reader is more convinced by MacCabe's treatment of stereotype here, it should be noted that this has little impact upon the criticisms I lodged in the previous section, and that the main difficulties for his thesis are still to come.

Beyond 'Ivy Day': Meta-Language in the Rest of Dubliners

Before moving on, it should be noted that MacCabe chose well which piece to analyse in support of his claims. 'Ivy Day' is unusually sparse, unusually free of narrative, and MacCabe's thesis resonates with the reader's quite natural sense of distance from the events described, even if it does not really match up to the details of the story. But what of the applicability of his ideas to the rest of *Dubliners*? It is here, I think, that the shortcomings of his analysis really begin to show. They can be divided into a number of sections.

1. The narrative offers frequent commentary and insight on its subject matter

Remembering that MacCabe claims that there is simply no meta-narrative in *Dubliners per se*, and that whatever appears to be so is undercut by its similarity to the cadences of a character's speech, I submit the following quotations for examination. For thoroughness, I have taken one from each story that uses third person narrative, with the exception of 'Ivy Day'.
1. 'As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother's life laid its spell on the very quick of her being – that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness' ('Eveline', 28)
2. 'That night the city wore the mask of a capital' ('After the Race', 33)
3. 'His harp too, heedless that her coverings had fallen about her knees, seemed weary alike of the eyes of strangers and of her master's hands' ('Two Gallants', 40)
4. 'She dealt with moral problems as a cleaver deals with meat: and in this case she had made up her mind' ('The Boarding House', 47)
5. '[Little Chandler] felt warm and excited. Three small whiskies had gone to his head and Gallaher's strong cigar had confused his mind' ('A Little Cloud', 60)
6. 'O'Halloran...told the story of the retort he had made to the chief clerk when he was in Callan's of Fownes's Street; but, as the retort was after the manner of the liberal shepherds in the eclogues, he had to admit that it was not so clever as Farrington's retort' ('Counterparts', 71)
7. 'His wife was a little sharp-faced woman who bullied her husband when he was sober and was bullied by him when he was drunk' (74)
8. '[Maria] ferreted her way quickly among the crowds' ('Clay', 78)
9. 'A mediaeval doctor would have called him saturnine' ('A Painful Case', 82)
10. '[Miss Devlin] sat amid the chilly circle of her accomplishments, waiting for some suitor to brave it and offer her a brilliant life' ('A Mother', 106)
11. 'After three weeks [Mrs Kernan] had found a wife's life irksome and later on, when she was beginning to find it unbearable, she had become a mother. The part of mother presented to her no insuperable difficulties...' ('Grace', 121)
12. 'His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead...His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world...' ('The Dead', 176)

These quotations have been chosen to offer a glimpse of the different kinds of meta-narrative offered in Dubliners. In each case, one can detect a meta-linguistic presence in the text which cannot be attributed to a particular character's words or mind, and which therefore transcends the confines of the narrative. (Although in
many other places, we must note, that narrative can and does take on the spiritual
caracteristics of the Dubliners it describes. The tension between such free indirect
style and the meta-linguistic tropes discussed here will be dealt with in the fifth
section of the next chapter, entitled 'Hypnotic Prose Patterns'.

It will be worth briefly underlining the meta-linguistic qualities of each of
these quotations. In the first, the phrases 'commonplace sacrifices' and 'final
craziness' indicate a slightly judgmental detachment which Eveline herself
manifestly lacks; in the second, the phrase 'mask of a capital' can only be interpreted
as a barely-disguised narrative stance concerning Dublin's status as a European
capital; in the third the lyrical, metaphorical quality of the prose, together with the
sharp cultural suggestions of words such as 'master's hands', are clearly
unattributable to Lenehan's point of view; in the fourth the fairly brutal simile is
hardly flattering to Mrs Mooney, reserving as it does a deeply ironic judgment upon
her moral sensibility; in the fifth the narrative clearly enters Little Chandler's
thoughts and explains his feelings and actions with reference to external standards; in
the sixth the reference to the liberal shepherd from the eclogues is surely rather
startling, and quite dissociated from the temperaments of any of the men present; in
the seventh the syntactic symmetries play against the lexical antitheses in a witty
balance clearly indicative of a cool, meta-linguistic authority; in the eighth the word
'ferreted' is flatly derogatory, as is the unexpected medieval diagnosis in the ninth; in
the tenth the 'chilly circle of her accomplishments' has connotations suggestive of
precisely the manner in which Miss Devlin cannot see herself; in the eleventh the
phrase 'no insuperable difficulties' bespeaks such an arch view of Mrs Kernan's
motherhood that we can only ascribe it to a certain disdain for the formulas of her
existence; and finally the very beautiful lyricism of the last lines of the collection is
surely meta-linguistic control at its very finest.

In summary, then, these quotations testify to consistent intrusions by a
narrative which explains the characters' feelings and actions, and is further prepared
to comment upon them, ironise them, or even render them hauntingly beautiful.
2. *Dubliners* employs allegorical structures which provide strong interpretative frameworks

That Joyce later decided against 'After the Race' was the result, one suspects, of its being too straightforwardly allegorical: the characters each represent their nations, with the Hungarian being poor but talented, the American rich but coarse, and the Irishman secretly punching far above his weight, poor and getting poorer, drunk, thoroughly taken advantage of. Its not-so-hidden structure is a parable on the position of Ireland in turn of the century Europe. This is serious problem for MacCabe, who needs to disclaim any sense of inherent textual meaning, and deny any position afforded by the text for its own interpretation.

We find exactly the same problem in 'Grace'. Since Stanislaus Joyce's verdict that it was really a modern, ironic rendering of Dante's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* critics have been unable to avoid what is clearly an important structural support for the story. The story is bitterly ironic, ineluctably critical of Dublin's spirituality, and these facts arise directly from an intertextual framework that offers us a privileged understanding of the events described. I see no way for MacCabe to deny this, or assimilate it into his thesis.

We see here the fatal narrowness of MacCabe's close readings. He limits his analysis to finding a character's views with which we can unproblematically identify (Crofton's or the Nationalists'), and even without taking into account the problems with that dichotomy already discussed, we can see here that it is far too narrow an area of enquiry. Joyce's meta-narratives are often matters of structure, sequence, or reference. But these are no less difficult for a thesis that denies their existence.

3. *Dubliners* employs unambiguous undertones

The first sentence of 'The Boarding House' is 'Mrs Mooney was a butcher's daughter' (46). On one level, of course, a straightforward description of her father's profession. On another level, beloved of anyone who loves Joyce, it is an utterly perfect summation of her character: the unobtrusive invitation of cleavers, pieces of

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4 See his letter of 16th of November, 1906 (Letters II, 151).
5 In 'My Brother's Keeper', 228.
meat and practical business into the narrative give us exactly the right frame of reference for her dealings with her daughter and the unfortunate Mr Doran. In 'Two Gallants' we read that Corley 'aspirated the first letter of his name after the manner of the Florentines' (38), which to begin with sounds like a plain description of a slightly pretentious habit. However, digging a little deeper than that, it turns out that the Florentines aspirated a 'c' to sound like an 'h', as such Corely pronounces his name 'Horely', or, 'Whorely'. A more perfect window onto the story's undertones of sexual exploitation and prostitution could not be imagined. Once we have noticed this, we will never see Corely in the same way again.

Halfway through 'A Painful Case' we read of Duffy that 'his father died; the junior partner of the bank retired' (86). Seemingly a straightforward parataxis of two events, as MacCabe might say. But this is surely parataxis with a difference. The brevity and flatness of these two phrases, together with their connecting semicolon, imply an equality of significance that speaks volumes for the state of Duffy's soul. On pages 130-1 the characters in 'Grace' discuss, with much weighty dissent, the late Pope's motto. This discussion, along with pretty much every other discussion of Catholic history and dogma in the chapter, is carnage, really. Geert Lernout writes that Popes do not even have mottoes (125), and the very existence of that idea is down to an Irish forgery that gives every Pope a motto until the end of times. The subtext is clear, and bitterly satirical. As Lernout aptly says, 'Joyce appears to have had considerable fun in exposing the ignorance of these supposedly pious men' (125).

To be consistent, MacCabe would have to deny the presence of an unambiguous subtext in each of these passages. For these subtexts all provide us with ways to read and interpret the stories, and as such function as a kind of meta-narrative, albeit a subtle one.

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6 For a fuller exploration of this and many other deliberate errors present in this story, see Lernout, 125-8.
4. **Dubliners has a stylistic core, which is the basis of all thorough interpretation**

In my next chapter I will introduce my own method of close reading, thematic stylistics, which is designed as a prophylactic against the kinds of error I am discussing here. More specifically, I will be studying several types of stylistic meta-language in *Dubliners*, both as a further refutation of MacCabe, and also as an independent contribution to the scholarship on that collection. It is important to look forward to this later chapter at this point, for, as will become clear, I believe this stylistic meta-language to be the most powerful meta-language of all, and as such the most telling observation one can make *contra* MacCabe. Unfortunately, to treat it at any length here would be an impractical duplication of material. Accordingly, I will merely indicate that my case against MacCabe can only be considered complete once chapter four has been read and placed in the context of the arguments made here. It forms, in many ways, the strongest piece of evidence in their favour.

**Conclusions on MacCabe**

I have presented two central criticisms of 'The End of Meta-Language'. First, that MacCabe's discussion of his principal text, 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', is selective, misleading and at times simply inaccurate, especially thanks to its false interpretative dichotomies; second, that his elision of the rest of *Dubliners* is the only thing that disguises the inability of his thesis to accommodate itself to the majority of its primary text.

Simply, *Dubliners* is stuffed with meta-language, and this fact accounts for much of its charm. In lieu of the more detailed discussion to come, I submit the following conclusion. The misrepresentations of *Dubliners* in MacCabe's work coincide exactly with the needs of his over-arching concerns, which are largely theoretical and ideological in nature. Whenever the text does not fit this thesis concerning meta-language it is misread or ignored altogether.
Turning now from MacCabe to Hélène Cixous, we find a writer with very similar pre-occupations – primarily the problems, even the impossibility, of reading and criticism in the face of Joyce's work – but with a methodology and a style that are a far cry from that found in *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*. Cixous has written more than once on Joyce, but the essay chosen for introduction to English-speaking readers in the benchmark collection *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, entitled 'Joyce, la ruse de l'écriture', will be my focus in this critique. It originally appeared in *Poétique* in 1970, with Attridge and Ferrer releasing it for the English-speaking world in 1984. Their description of the post-structuralist project, it will be recalled, was written as an introduction to *Post-Structuralist Joyce*. As will soon become apparent, it describes very neatly Cixous's main concerns in this essay.

Despite certain similarities in their themes, her work is very different to MacCabe's, and demands a wholly different approach. In MacCabe we found a central, testable proposition concerning meta-language in *Dubliners*. The worth of his thesis rested on the accuracy of that proposition, which was substantiated with readily digestible close readings. Cixous's essay affords us no such critical luxury. It can best be characterised as a series of frenetic encounters with small passages of Joyce, each one revolving around some key ideas: the impossibility of reading/criticism, textual silences, the instability of signification, an assault on 'the subject'. The result of this is that one does not have a central proposition the truth of which might be assessed, but instead a mass of smaller interpretations along a few basic themes. The worth of Cixous's essay, therefore, relies upon the adequacy of those interpretations, which makes it both easier and harder to criticise. Easier because one has little in the way of broad conceptual duelling to get out of the way, but harder because it is manifestly implausible to trudge through every one of those interpretations and give an estimate of its worth. The process is not helped by Cixous's analytical tactics which are, to say the least, unorthodox.

The essay can be divided into two sections. The first half is a broad series of highly Theoretical meditations, interspersed with occasional interrogations of Joyce's prose. The second half, however, is about as close as close reading gets. It takes the
form of an analysis of the first paragraph of 'The Sisters', the first story in *Dubliners*, and nearly half of this is dedicated to just the first sentence: 'There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke.' For my purposes, this is the interesting bit, and it is upon this that I shall ultimately concentrate. Cixous clearly feels prepared to demonstrate the utility of her position through a series of admirably minute close readings, and this is what will allow me to assess the impact of her conceptual predisposition.

I think these close readings fail, and for the most basic of reasons: they fail to make any serious contact with the text they are supposed to describe. They are pungently expressed, highly evocative, detailed and lengthy; all of which qualities co-exist peacefully with the fact that they say next to nothing about the first paragraph of 'The Sisters'. They are readings, yes; but they do not engage, they do not interpret, they do not really read. Now, if it were the case that these were simply lyrical ejaculations prompted by Joyce's writing then there would be little more to say. But such is not the case. Cixous does try to read Joyce, in that she discusses features of the text, draws them out, and extrapolates from them; her only problem is that these discussions are flawed and misleading. Cixous, for all her talk of the impossibility of interpretation, does offer us a detailed reading of Joyce. For my part, I aim to show that reading to be inadequate.

As Cixous does not offer me a central claim to prove or disprove it follows that my critique has no central thesis other than a gradual demonstration of the various ways in which Cixous's close reading goes wrong. I have organised my criticisms around the central idea of the so-called bloated conclusion, that is, a gap between the scale of claim made, and the evidence brought to bear in its favour. However, in order to approach this idea, I will need to start from a different place altogether.

One final note before I begin. I will be dealing with Cixous in the original French in order to eliminate any potential difficulties arising from the use of translations with regard to such a challenging author. In case of any queries, I recommend the reader consult the translation of Cixous's essay available in *Post-Structuralist Joyce*, which seems to me accurate enough to provide a solid understanding of any challenging passage.
On page 425 Cixous proposes that there is a kind of 'gratuitousness' in Joyce's early works, which 'fait frémir la signifiance comme si elle était le rire nerveux de l'écriture'. Her point of reference here is Stephen's nervous laughter after he has told his class his impossible riddle in episode two of *Ulysses*, a fact which in no way prepares us for even the first part of the sentence that follows:

"Rire", qui s'oppose aussi par son éclat à l'horrible et silencieux sourire du mort; inscription sous l'insidieux son S du vice indiscible, du péché (*sin*) suggéré, "murmuré" mais inaccompli, de la perversion des rapports entre sujet et objet, entre corps et âme, vie et mort, son et sens, travail et magie, rapports de renversement et de franchissement tels que les propriétés d'un terme glissent sur l'autre dans le sens d'une matérialisation effrayante du pouvoir de la lettre... (425)

There is no mistaking what is being suggested here: Cixous unambiguously claims that the items on this decidedly wide-ranging list – from inexpressible vice to the perversion of relations between subject and object – are in fact the 'inscription' beneath the insidious sound of the letter 's'. That the casual craziness of this remark does little to make it stand out against the rest of Cixous's discussion will be of note in considering the worth of her essay in more general terms. For at the very least this is surely a remarkable phonological claim, with profound implications for all manner of literary analysis. Alas, it is not expounded upon in the rest of the essay, but happily the reader in need of some elucidation upon this point can turn to a footnote which reads thus: "Cf. Mallarmé, 'Les Mots Anglais', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Pléiade, p. 947, sur S seule et S avec l'adjonction de w, h, c, l, m, n, etc."

Though its author is famous, *Les Mots Anglais* (1878) remains obscure, doubly obscure for an English audience thanks to the lack of an available translation. The reasons for this are not difficult to discern. Mallarmé himself referred to it in a letter as 'a job and no more, about which it is better not to speak' (quoted in Genette, 257), and later as 'one of those books which one puts at the bottom of one's library, rarely leafing through it for fear that only boredom would result' (*Correspondance*, 3:394). Its central premise is that each letter in the English language has a particular character, discernible by an examination of words beginning with that letter, and

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7 My translation
8 My translation
Mallarmé's goal is to make a systematic study of each letter's particular connotations. The critical consensus, such as it is, is that Mallarmé lifted great chunks of his work from a contemporaneous English study entitled *The Philology of the English Tongue*, written in 1871 by a man named John Earle.9

For scholars standing on this side of modern linguistics *Les Mots Anglais* is of largely historical interest, throwing at best an interesting side light on Mallarmé's poetic technique. What else can one do with a work which claims that the letter 'b' conjures up 'production and child-bearing, fertility, amplitude, swelling and curvature, boastfulness; also mass or boiling and sometimes kindness and blessing' (929)? The principles, methodology, evidential basis and logical consequences of such work are hopelessly flawed and naïve by contemporary standards. Jacques Garelli and Lois Oppenheim seem to speak for the scholarly consensus when they modestly conclude that 'It is evident that one cannot, in all sincerity, credit these analyses with an objective or scientific truth' (457). Amusingly, in a move to preserve Mallarmé's reputation as a serious linguist, one scholar goes so far as to suggest that *Les Mots Anglais* is in fact a work of fiction.10

So it is to this work – part plagiarised, potentially fictional, disowned first by its author and later by scholars, for which no one claims any serious linguistic import – that Cixous refers us when she claims that the letter 's' has all those dark and complex undertones. This is surely worse than baldly making the claim without any visible means of support. At least if Cixous had simply asserted that 's' meant all those things we could have given her the benefit of the doubt and put it all down to the poetic licence she employs so readily elsewhere. The presence of this footnote means that we have to take her literally, and worse, that we must conclude one of two equally worrying things: either she herself considers *Les Mots Anglais* to be a serious source; or she knows it to be nothing of the kind, but hopes that we will simply be taken in by a footnote referencing Mallarmé.

Sadly, it doesn't stop there. Even if we ignore all this, and grant that in *Les Mots Anglais* Mallarmé saw right to the heart of English phonology in a way that was unjustly ignored for over a century until Cixous's essay and has been unjustly

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9 For a critical study of this claim see Jacques Michon's work on the question of plagiarism in *Les mots Anglais: Mallarmé et Les Mots Anglais*.
10 Edouard Gaède, 'Le problème du langage chez Mallarmé'.
ignored ever since, we are still faced with a serious problem, which is this: Mallarmé does not ascribe to the letter 's' the meanings given to it by Cixous. He points out (929) that 's' has exceptionally varied connotations, depending on the letter that follows it, and groups them as follows: 'sw' indicates quickness, inflation or absorption; 'sc' a split, dissipation, a scrape, a scrap, or strong shaking; 'sh' distant throwing (jet lointain), shade, shame, shelter or showing; 'st' stability, frankness, hardness or mass; 'str' shooting pain (élancement), force, wandering, or being strewed upon (joncher); 'sm' smiles and honest work; and 'sp' work well done, and thereby rest. There are only two pairs of letters, 'sc' and 'sn' which have largely negative connotations, including feebleness, cowardice, leaning, sliding, splitting, crime, 'rampant perversity as in the snake', traps and false laughter. Of all the connotations of 's' these are perhaps the least dissimilar to Cixous's; yet even they cannot be said to have anything to do with perversion of the relations between life and death, or those between work and magic for that matter. Mallarmé himself points out that 'perhaps the principal sense' of the letter 's' is the sense of incentive or an incitement, which, it will be needless to recall, was little-emphasised by Cixous.

The fact that any impartial reading of this source material must conclude that it does nothing but undermine Cixous's preposterous claim is really of secondary importance here. Primarily, this grim little episode indicates that this is simply not very serious scholarship. The idea is farcical in the first place; the source to which we are referred is not serious; and this is only compounded by the fact that it doesn't actually support Cixous's claims. Yet while in terms of its falsity this claim is truly mountainous, in terms of the emphasis placed upon it this is but a molehill on the lawn of Cixous's thesis. This triviality is part of the reason it is so upsetting. Cixous did not have to make this claim; she was not forced to mislead us for the sake of a vital component of her thesis. She did so for the sake of a quite unimportant aside.

Cixous's essay is full of minor, incidental claims. Once we have been alerted to the possibility that they are not necessarily to be trusted, it is well worth taking the time to check through them. Three others can be usefully dissected here. First, Cixous gives a false etymology of the word 'dismay' (424). The 'dis-' is not privative, as she claims, and therefore does not indicate 'division' or 'dispersion en tous sens'. In
fact the word does not come from 'dis-' at all, but from the intensifier 'de-' and the Vulgar Latin 'exmagare', via the Old French 'esmaier' meaning to trouble or disturb.

Second, Cixous has a misleading understanding of metonymy, culminating in her claim that because metonymy 'works both ways' (*opère en ses deux sens inverses*), then 'si la maladie *est* Dublin, Dublin *est* la maladie' (429). I submit that this is simply untrue: metonymy is one-way only. To take a classic example, the word 'tongue' can metonymically stand in for 'language', but never the other way round. You can learn a tongue, but you cannot lick something with your language.

Finally, Cixous obscures discussion of the text through sleights of translation. For example, she takes the sentence "Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of the window" and asks us to note "la scission violente du sujet : J'étais passé (-- et j'avais étudié. Coupé par *and*; coupé par (--)' (428). In her translation of Joyce's phrase as 'J'étais passé (-- et j'avais étudié' there might be an argument for saying that the subject is somehow split, for it is repeated on both sides of the conjunction/parenthesis. But it is crucial to return to the original text here, which reads 'I had passed (-- and studied'. Here, parenthesis and conjunction split only the compound predicate and not the subject, which remains happily singular and unified. The 'violent splitting of the subject', therefore, is a quirk of the French translation, and cannot be said to have any bearing on Joyce's original phrase. The reason for this peculiarity of translation, besides the fact that French is not as comfortable with compound predicates as is English, is that the verbs *passer* and *étudier*, when in the pluperfect, take different auxiliary verbs. Accordingly, one simply cannot form Joyce's original compound predicate without forcing the latter verb to use the wrong auxiliary, and as a result one has to reiterate the subject and the relevant auxiliary on the far side of the parenthesis. This foible of translation would be unworthy of note were it not for the fact that Cixous has based a not insubstantial commentary upon it, which might be relevant to *Dublinois* but has nothing whatever to do with *Dubliners*.

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11 Synecdoche, on the other hand, might be a more forgiving term for Cixous here. As synecdoche demands that the symbol in question is an actual part of the symbolised thing (as in "mouths to feed"), there is perhaps a more plausible case for saying that what is true for one must also be true for the other – though this would still not constitute 'working both ways'.

12 This is translated title Cixous herself uses, as opposed to the more common *Gens de Dublin*. 
It might be possible, if excruciatingly dull, to mount a critique based solely on the number of factual inadequacies in Cixous's essay. For my purposes, however, this would not be enough. I need to get deeper, to the more fundamental methodological problems that prompt her to make such errors.

To that end it should be observed that all the above points – from the meaning of 's' to the translation of compound predicates – are points of close reading. They deal with questions of phonology, etymology, metonymy and syntax, such things as are the very bedrock of close textual analysis. While it should be of great concern to us that such moments go so consistently awry, it should be of greater concern still that these errors seem to be all of a type. I submit that they all stem from a deeper mistake, namely a kind of interpretative overload, whereby the thing analysed cannot support the weight of the critic's analysis. This is easiest to see in the case of the letter 's', in which a single letter is not only said to have a set of connotations, but such an extensive and elaborate set of connotations that no linguist, now or in 1970, could consent to them. In the case of the etymology of dismay, the accurate 'de-' prefix, which acts as an intensifier of little significance, is transformed by Cixous into 'dis-', which she can describe as being not only 'privative' but other, more imaginative things too. It is easy to see how the claim that metonymy works both ways allows extra interpretative weight to be applied. Finally, in the case of the split subject, Cixous's misleading translation allows her to make some remarkable claims about schisms in the narrative self, which are far more impressive than schisms in a compound predicate. In each case, the basic problem is one of grossly bloated conclusions: in charging these fragments with so much interpretative significance Cixous is forced to mutilate either the propriety of her own method, or the text itself.

This means that each of these examples is really a kind of double error. Each is a specific mistake (as in a false etymology), but also a manifestation of the kind of deeper methodological error that I wish to go on to discuss. Indeed, one might say that these particular errors are simply the moments at which her faulty methodology forces Cixous to ride roughshod over some uncontroversial principle of analysis, the
pressure points at which the deeper mistake becomes visible. It is to that deeper mistake that I now turn.

**Bloated Conclusions (i)**

In looking for bloated conclusions, we are looking for a problematic disconnection between the evidence brought to bear and the scale of the claim made. This obviously rules out more general critical ruminations ('Joyce lost his religion yet kept his categories') on the grounds that such are not the kind of claim of which we demand lengthy substantiation. Rather, they will be judged on the extent to which they confirm our own sense of the matter. Bloated conclusions are really a phenomenon to be observed in the business of close reading, where the whole point is to pull out chunks of text that support certain conclusions. Here, any bloatedness can be a real problem.

Cixous gives us general ruminations aplenty, and these are the focus of neither this section nor my thesis in general. Yet she also gives us, in the second half of her essay, something that takes the form of a fantastically close set of analyses of the first paragraph of *Dubliners*, broken down right to the level of individual words and grammatical units. It is here that we must search for bloated conclusions, and even on a general inspection the diagnosis looks probable. Despite her microscopic focus, Cixous's conclusions are truly staggering in their scale; often she moves from a single word to a distant conceptual entity in a matter of a sentence or two. So we get from the single word 'no' to the 'play between being and non-being' (*le jeu entre être et n'être pas*) in under ten words (427); from 'no hope' to the 'cancellation before the letter which from thenceforth does violence to the very time of writing' (*annulation avant la lettre qui fait dès lors violence au temps même de l'écriture*) in just over ten (427). Let us focus in on a single instance of this process.

Cixous spends a good deal of time looking at the opening sentence of Joyce's story, which, it will be worth remembering, reads 'There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke' (*D 3*). Cixous asserts that in this phrase 'un jeu sur la fixation' is brought into being, which allows the first sentence to be spoken. She then
arranges the 'éléments' of that sentence, and analyses them, which analysis is a little over a page long. It begins:

_There was_: type neutre, le neutre s'annonçant, à l'ouverture, comme sujet (chaîne : personnalisation du sujet/animation/mort). L'effet du neutre comme sujet est double : renforcement vers la personnalisation d'un non-humain, amortissement de l'humain. Le sujet personnel s'enfouissant en complément d'objet (for him). D'où _l'attente_ du sujet (him) en tant qu'il est un personne. (426)

As is often the case, we need to get a factual point out of the way before we can concentrate on the deeper problem. Cixous's final sentence here might be translated as 'The personal subject buries itself as a complement to the object (for him). Hence the waiting for the subject (him) in as much as he is a person'. However, the briefest consultation of the phrase in question ('There was no hope for him') reveals that 'for him' is not a 'buried subject' – whatever that might be – but a very straightforward indirect object. This point is fallacious on the most elementary linguistic grounds.

That out of the way, we can get on with the search for bloatedness, which surely has to begin with the first couple of sentences in the quote above. It can be a little difficult to know what to do with them, so it is worth breaking them down into their components. First, only two words are being discussed and extrapolated from, which are 'There was'. Second, we must note that these words are not considered as part of a broader trend or context, but are analysed in isolation. That is, Cixous is not performing a full study of Joyce's prose, nor even a general characterisation of Joyce's grammar. There has been no quantitative study of personal versus impersonal subjects in Joyce, or even in just 'The Sisters'\(^\text{13}\). Third, their significance is purely linguistic, specifically that they are 'type neutre'\(^\text{14}\). As is often the case with this essay the mere act of paraphrasing what comes next can constitute an unintentional parody, but there is no way around it: from the solitary linguistic observation that 'There' is not a personal subject, Cixous goes so far as to posit the idea that it amounts not only to a personalisation of a non-human, but further to a 'writing off of the human'

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\(^{13}\) Which is a shame, because the results are instructive. A count of personal versus impersonal subjects in the story is necessarily a little subjective – when a corpse is the subject do we count it as personal or impersonal? – but by my count, generally leaning in favour of impersonal classifications, there are roughly 138 personal subjects to 46 impersonal. The consequences of this for Cixous's emphasis on the story's privilege of the impersonal and its writing off of the human, are, to my mind, very problematic indeed.

\(^{14}\) Which is to be understood as 'impersonal'. 
(amortissement de l'humain). Notice that there is no argument here: all this is simply claimed to be the 'effect' (L'effet) of an impersonal subject.

Before continuing with my critique, a few important qualifications must be made in Cixous's favour. I will argue in chapter six of this thesis that something similar to Cixous's conclusion does indeed hold true here: specifically, that as a result of a technique I call atomisation, the priest in this story does indeed have his subjectivity elided to a very notable extent. His humanity is, to a significant degree, written off. Next, we must be charitable and see this discussion of 'There was' in the context of the grammar of this first sentence as a whole. Cixous points out that the sentence features an indirect object (although her characterising this as a 'buried subject' is misleading, as noted above), and we must duly recognise that this indirect object is indeed the principal human focus of this story. In sum, I am sympathetic to at least one aspect of her conclusions here, concerning the inhumanity of the narrative's presentation of the priest, and I am also quite prepared to recognise that there are interesting grammatical forces at work in this opening sentence.

The problem comes not when we consider either of these points in isolation, but when we put them together as Cixous does. I believe it is the case that this character is dehumanised; and it is the case that he occupies the position of indirect object in this sentence; but I do not see that the former is linked to the latter in this directly causal manner. In other words, there mere presence of an impersonal subject and a human being in the position of indirect object does not produce this effect, and indeed is quite compatible with antithetical effects. Consider, for example, the sentence "There was no bad news for him that day", in which the same grammatical structure is upheld, but no comparable effect is produced. Indeed, this kind of grammar is compatible with much more light hearted effects than these: "There was no brandy for him yet, which was odd, because it was already mid morning".

Another way of approaching this issue is to look at the opening lines of another story which features similar syntactical structures. Consider, for example, the opening lines of H. G. Wells's story 'The Crystal Egg' (The New Review, 1987): 'There was, until a year ago, a little and very grimy-looking shop near Seven Dials, over which, in weather-worn yellow lettering, the name of "C. Cave, Naturalist and Dealer in Antiquities," was inscribed'. Here, we see the same impersonal subject
announcing itself, and indeed the subject of the story is 'buried' much deeper than in 'The Sisters', being merely a name once attached to a now-vanished shop, which is in turn the direct object of the sentence. Despite all this, there is clearly no suggestion of a personalisation of the inhuman here, or indeed a writing off of the human, the story in question being about a crystal egg which serves as a window onto Mars.

The point at issue, then, is not whether the priest's humanity is, in the end, written off; neither is it whether, given the above qualifications, the grammatical basis of Cixous's discussion is sound; the point is that these two phenomena are not related to each other in the way Cixous suggests. It might be that when we return to this opening sentence in light of a close reading of many other aspects of 'The Sisters' we see in his position as indirect object a trace of the priest's inhumanity. Indeed, I would be quite receptive to such a claim. The serious problem comes when this mere grammatical fact is used as sole or principal support for that weighty characterisation. Impersonal subjects together with grammatically obscured humans do not carry intrinsic interpretive weight, as the above examples suggest. On their own, they are not the kind of evidence Cixous needs them to be, and to move between them and such drastic conclusions as we see here is not sound analysis. Such conclusions are, in the context of this discussion, very badly bloated, even if in another, more detailed analysis, they would be quite reasonable.

**Bloated Conclusions (ii)**

It will doubtless be of some consolation that I do not intend to perform such a study for every bloated conclusion in Cixous's essay. The examples are too numerous, and the degrees of bloatedness vary. So, using the above as my template, I will now broaden my scope. I have made the claim that the rest of Cixous's analysis of Joyce's opening sentence does not reinforce her analysis of 'There was' because it remains equally bloated throughout. Let me now substantiate that claim, and in the process make a case for the bloatedness of Cixous's conclusions being an endemic problem within her essay.

In this section I will be categorising four principal techniques through which Cixous smuggles unwarranted concepts into her discussion: what might be called the
Chinese Whispers technique; the use of emotive or loaded descriptive terms; the use of charged Theoretical vocabulary; and subtly begging the question. We will also see some more misuse of straightforward technical terms.

The analysis of the opening sentence continues:

(3) There was – it was : anaphore indice de la répétition dès la première phrase : il y a eu succession, *involu*<sup>15</sup>tion, referement de la répétition sur l'identité (*this time, third stroke*, cette fois encore une fois, la troisième la même), au lieu d'évolution. Clôture dès l'ouverture, temps suspendu. (426)

Quite apart from the fact that 'There was...it was...' is not really anaphoric<sup>15</sup>, the conclusion that time itself has been 'suspended' is surely not justified here. It only maintains a superficial plausibility because it seems to flow out of Cixous discussion. This is the first technique I wish to discuss, which closely resembles a controlled game of Chinese Whispers whereby Cixous paraphrases herself in such a way as to tilt the discussion in a particular direction. She begins with a descriptive phrase that is superficially close to what is going on in the text: anaphora and repetition. Next, she provides a rough synonym of it (succession), and then a rough synonym of that synonym (involution), then a creative interpretation of that synonym (re-closing of repetition in identity in place of evolution) then a creative summary of that interpretation (closure from the outset, suspended time). We have here fully four degrees of creative removal from her original description of the text, which was itself misleading. At each of these degrees a new element is introduced into the description, so that by the end we have moved far, far beyond the idea of simple repetition to a new concept which is almost entirely Cixous's. Obviously, the same technique could be used to propel the discussion to an antithetical conclusion, as in 'There has been a succession, multiplication, sense of growth and forward- progress (*this time, third stroke*, onwards, again, more), inevitable evolution, the march of history'.

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<sup>15</sup> The *OED* defines 'anaphora' in two relevant ways: '1. a. *Rhet.* The repetition of the same word or phrase in several successive clauses' and 'b. *Gram.* The use of a word which refers to, or is a substitute for, a preceding word or group of words.' On the first definition the only candidate in Joyce's phrase is the word 'was', which cannot plausibly be considered anaphoric because if it were then anaphora would simply be a mark of writing in the past tense. Nor is the phrase an instance of the second definition, for 'it' does not refer to the same thing as 'there'. Less technically, anaphora is generally understood as a fairly heavy rhetorical tool whereby a notable phrase is repeated in neighbouring clauses, which understanding only underlines its absence from Joyce's sentence.
Cixous's next commentary is on the single word 'paralysis'. As I intend to return to this section of her essay later I shall forbear repeating my discussion, and merely submit the following extract as a fairly straightforward example of the same game:

Paralysie inscrit l'impuissance sous l'espece du << faux movement >> dans le texte. Le mot de paralysis inscrit tout le texte en tant qu'analysis – paralysis (relâchement des muscles, jeu des contraires, raider/fixité/non-contrôle) comme une texte miné par l'énigme qui le produit dans son involution. (426 – italics original)

Cixous's analysis of the rest of the story's first sentence is introduced with the question 'Comment le mot paralysis fonctionne-t-il dans ce text?' This context set, she turns her attention to the single word 'no', which she interprets thus:

(5) No : le négation à l'attaque de la phrase, déclenche le jeu entre être et n'être pas dont le paralysis est l'arbitre, la paralysis étant à la limite le n'être pas de l'être... (427)

Cixous provides no grounds for her decision to see this very basic word as some kind of linguistic agent of paralysis. We see here a classic example of the second technique I mentioned, namely the biasing of a discussion through the use of emotive language (negation 'attacking' the sentence) as if it were neutrally descriptive. Having subtly designated certain textual phenomena with such loaded terminology, she can then discuss undertones that she herself has introduced as if they were inherent to the text. For it is quite clear that the solitary word 'no' cannot do anything so grand as trigger 'le jeu entre être et n'être pas', but describing it as an 'attack' gives it enough impetus to make such an attribution seem less implausible. Again, we can simply reverse the process, as in 'No: negation slips in barely noticed, its effect as yet indiscernible'.

Cixous's next target is the phrase 'No hope':

(6) No hope : l'attente, l'espoir, un espace à venir : la sortie? No. Pas d'espoir dans cette annulation avant la lettre qui fait dès lors violence au temps même de l'écriture... (427)

I take the first sentence here to be a creative summary of the meaning of the phrase 'no hope'. What follows is the third dubious technique: the use of charged semi-Theoretical vocabulary which does the job of interpretation while masquerading as purely descriptive terminology. Here, the idea of 'annulation avant la lettre' clearly draws on post-structuralist notions of semantic gaps. This Theoretical basis, however, does not grant the term automatic legitimacy: its suitability must be demonstrated,
not assumed. I suggest that this phrase functions as highly interpretative language, and as such stands in double want of justification. Note, furthermore, that this 'annulation' becomes the very subject of Cixous's analysis, quite taken for granted, and used as the sole platform for what follows. Without substantiation, such language cannot be meaningfully differentiated from the straightforwardly emotive language discussed above, and suffers from the same problems. We might just as easily have 'No hope against the narrative's mastery over life and death, always immune from the moment of its conception'.

Cixous's next 'élément' is 'It was the third stroke':

(7) It was the third stroke: Absence – et juxtaposé : la répétition : le troisième coup, figure de la répétition au niveau de ce qui est signifié, doublée de la répétition au niveau du signifiant; multipliée par la répercussion du temps qui marque le texte d'une manière ininterrompue : (often, every night, night after night) et qui se réinscrit en projetant par le biais l'espace produit par la pulsion dans son mouvement vers:

I longed: où par le désir temps et lieu sont articulés, tension qui de hope à fear fait trembler ce texte. (427)

There are two problems here, minor and major. The first, with regard to Cixous's analysis of 'It was the third stroke', is the unexplained separation of the 'figure' of repetition (for which I read something like the 'trope' of repetition) into two distinct entities: repetition on the level of that which is signified and repetition on the level of the signifier, which distinction allows the further claim that the latter somehow 'doubles' the former. Rather than accepting this Theoretical footwork at face value we might ask the following question of it: do these two levels of repetition exist simply in virtue of a split into signified and signifier, or do they exist because of something unique to the phrase 'It was the third stroke'? If the former, then the same could be said of any piece of language, and we learn nothing by applying it to this particular quotation. If the latter, then Cixous does not show what it is about this particular phrase that warrants this kind of distinction. This before we have even considered the (unmentioned) conceptual difficulties raised by the notion of signifieds 'doubling' signifiers. This is another example of the third technique of assumed technical vocabulary.

Second, more seriously, we must consider Cixous's contention that the reverberation of time which marks the text also 'se réinscrit en projetant par le biais
l'espace produit par la pulsion dans son mouvement vers 'I longed'\textsuperscript{[2]}'. The remarkable thing about this statement is that Cixous neither explores nor substantiates it, but simply uses it as a kind of discursive bridge between her discussions of 'It was the third stroke' and 'I longed'. In other words, the legitimacy, even the truth, of this cryptic idea is taken for granted in lieu of progressing towards a deeper conclusion. Interestingly, upon examining that conclusion we see that it is much less controversial than its premiss, consisting in the observation that there is a tension between hope and fear in the text (tension qui de hope à fear fait trembler ce texte). The effect is subtle: once we accept this fairly harmless conclusion, we have also tacitly accepted whatever route Cixous has taken to arrive at it. Given the strangeness of that route, however, this is actually a subtle way of begging the question, for all the most controversial parts of this discussion remain unjustified. This is the fourth way Cixous bloats her conclusions, by smuggling them in as steps in an argument towards a comparatively unproblematic goal. As always, this could work the other way: 'The reverberation of time fails to perpetuate in the painfully homogenised space produced by the unified movement towards "I longed!"'.

Cixous's final point of analysis is the sentence's last word, 'stroke':

\textit{Stroke} : retombée de la phrase sur le coup mortel. Fatalisation du << troisième >>, comme si sous le 3 se glissait le maléfice, car pourquoi le troisième serait-il plus meurtrier que le deuxième ou le quatrième. \textit{Third} pointe vers quelque triangle occulte qui d'ailleurs se faufile par la ponctuation – leurre << : >> : subrepticement l'indice de l'affrontement jamais plus explicite entre les sujets rivaux devant le verbe... (427)

In what is now becoming something of a refrain, the words 'maléfice' and 'triangle occulte' are being used here as if they simply designated some obvious feature of the text, whereas they are clearly interpretative vocabulary which stands in want of substantiation. This trick alone supports what would otherwise be a genuinely bizarre discussion of the fact that this is the third stroke. Finally, we return to the same strange use of technical vocabulary with which we began. Just as 'There was – It was' is not really anaphoric, we should be highly dubious of Cixous's designation of Joyce's simple colon as a 'punctuation – lure'. This is especially true as the sentence under discussion makes no sense of her strange idea of rival subjects confronting each other before a verb. We might wonder which verb she means, as there are two: one before the colon and one after, each with its own, perfectly unconflicted subject.
This is certainly not the end of the bloated conclusions in Cixous's essay. However, rather than continue with my objections at length here, I have compiled an annotated list of examples of these four categories of bloated conclusions, and included it as an appendix.

**Conclusions on Cixous**

I take it as basic to the business of close reading that one is trying to say something specific about the text under scrutiny. Clearly, the above citations are not general ruminations, nor are they purely emotive responses to Joyce's writing. These passages take the form and structure of fairly orthodox close readings. The mere fact that Cixous (ab)uses tools like etymology and metonymy, together with her undeniable bent for syntactical study, demonstrates beyond doubt that, at least on some level, she is reading Joyce. Post-structural considerations aside, the form and method of her work unproblematically denote a standard critical intent: she wants to say 'the text is like this', even if 'this' happens to be something as unorthodox as 'unreadable'.

My conclusion on the strength of the forgoing discussion is that Cixous fails in that intent. The radical nature of her conclusions aside, the methods she uses to support them do not hold water. Cixous seems to draw conclusions from aspects of the text, seems to make claims for its grammar and narrative structure, but these claims have only the appearance of close reading. In fact, the conclusions they reach are subtly bloated via the means discussed above, and as such cannot be said to be supported by the text upon which they claim to draw. In each case there are ideas, implications or simply undertones in the discussion that are not there thanks to any legitimate interpretation, but have been smuggled in through a dubious rhetorical device. To that extent there is an unbridged gap between Cixous's claims and Joyce's text, and this is fatal to the plausibility of her discussion. It should be remembered that such tactics constitute the methodological crisis that gave rise to the four serious errors with which I began this section.
Conclusion: The Problem of Reading the Unreadable

The time has come to draw my threads together. To summarise my case so far: I have claimed that post-structuralist criticism, as described by Attridge and Ferrer, suffers from a fundamental conflict in its paradoxical attempt to prove that texts are unreadable by reading them; I have argued that Colin MacCabe's first chapter of *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word* makes a case for a specific kind of unreadability in *Dubliners*, and in the process perpetrates a systematic failure of close reading; finally I have argued that in a different way Hélène Cixous makes another case for unreadability in 'The Sisters', and that her close readings are critically flawed on the grounds that their conclusions are bloated. This slew of detail out of the way, what conclusions can be drawn?

Both writers fail, it seems to me, because they cannot cross an obstacle of their own invention, namely the impossible question of how one goes about reading something as unreadable. If one decides to use fairly orthodox interpretative modes then the problem becomes one of obvious self-contradiction. The only solution to this is to define unreadability as a certain kind of unresolvable narrative stance, and go on to illustrate it. This is MacCabe's solution, but it soon runs aground: he has to commit himself to proving the absence of a narrative technique that is not only present, but present in abundance. To do this he must first massively limit his evidence (five quotes!), and second misconstrue what evidence he has by framing it in a deeply misleading fashion. Under the weight of these flaws, his thesis must collapse.

Cixous's approach is perhaps the more radical. It seems to me that she wishes to hold to a more stringent account of unreadability, but that doing so leads to her draw inferences that are not valid given the evidence she provides. Again and again, we find an unwarranted excess of critical assertion, statements that seem to describe the text, but when prodded bear little or no relation to it.

This, it seems to me, is a perfectly logical response to a prior commitment to a text's unreadability. Cixous cannot actually engage with the text, because to do so would prove that valid interpretation is to some degree possible. Still, she cannot simply assert that 'The Sisters' is unreadable. Therefore, she must perform a reading
that says lots of things about the text without ever falling into the paradox of actually engaging with it. To do this, she must claim things without actually deriving them from anything, so that a 'reading' (of sorts) can take place, and yet no real reading can be detected. In this way she can claim things without demonstrating them; represent a text without interpreting it; read a text without seeming to compromise its unreadability.

In the final analysis, however, even Cixous cannot escape contradiction. She wants to do more than simply yell things at Joyce's prose. She wants to say something about Joyce's prose, even if what she wants to say is that nothing can be said. And this is where she must come unstuck, for her thesis suffers from such basic analytic flaws that its comments on Joyce's story hold no sway whatever. Caught somewhere between the irrelevance of mere assertion and the compulsory rigour of real analysis, her thesis too must crumble.

It is not my contention that such is the inevitable fate of all post-structuralist criticism. My critiques are individual, not generic, and I am of course open to the possibility of some such thesis being successful. What these remarks illustrate, I hope, is that very serious interpretative challenges await those who attempt such readings. Truly post-structuralist commentaries face great difficulties when it comes to close analysis, and Cixous and MacCabe are two highly esteemed critics who fail to solve those problems, and whose work suffers greatly as a result.
Chapter Four

Thematic Stylistics One: Meta-Language in *Dubliners*

At the end of chapter two I briefly discussed my intention to form not just a critique of Theory, but a positive case for a certain kind of close reading. The purpose of this positive element to my thesis is twofold. First, it aims to respond in depth to the particular errors discussed in my negative chapters. It is all very well to say that this understanding of a word, phrase or chapter is wrong; it is quite another to suggest what kind of understanding should take its place. Yet this is surely necessary, lest the whole affair fail to seem constructive. Obviously, this task will serve to deepen the critique, too. A good understanding of something cannot fail to put a parallel but problematic understanding into sharp relief.

More important than any of this, however, is the need for a positive case as a constructive suggestion regarding future work in this field. I believe that all the errors I discuss in this thesis were far from inevitable, and that there were Theoretical forces at work which made them more likely. Accordingly, it seems to me that an attempt to outline some form of prophylactic methodology would be a useful counterbalance to my negative case. Simply, this would be the kind of close reading technique that would make errors of description and analysis harder to commit (errors of scholarship, being matters of scholarly practice, are unfortunately beyond the reach of any such method). In the next section, I will outline my close reading methodology, which I call thematic stylistics.

Obviously, there should be no essential, insurmountable methodological conflict between Theory and intense close reading. As long as we avoid any problematic definitions of good close reading, conceptual tension between good analytical practice and Theoretical enquiry will be entirely avoidable. Happily, having defined bad close reading, an appropriate definition is easily furnished, for I now have the simple luxury of defining good close reading as its opposite: a reading which makes no errors of scholarship, description or analysis. Obviously, this is a

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16 The limited applicability of this concept should be stressed here. It refers simply to a description that makes no mistakes with regard to the things it describes, rather than a ‘perfect’ or ‘complete’ description in some higher sense of the term. The former is easily imaginable, and, one would hope,
wide field, but that need not be problematic. Within this field there will be better, or more useful readings than others, but establishing criteria for measuring such qualities is unnecessary here. As long as I can define and exemplify close reading tactics which operate within this broad field of 'good close reading', I can leave it to others to judge just how good my own readings are. As long as these methods would manifestly make errors of description or analysis unlikely, their essential purpose here will have been fulfilled.

Finally, I would like to emphasise a third purpose behind my positive close readings. Simply, I wish to contribute to stylistics in Joyce studies. As I am outlining what we might call 'pure' close readings, that is, readings which have no object other than the study of style, I also have the unusual opportunity to contribute to what might seem to some a rather old-fashioned field. Books that deal with nothing other than style are rarer today than in the days of Hugh Kenner and others like him. Whether or not one considers this a shame matters little: I myself consider this chance a privilege, and look forward to producing something that others may find interesting or valuable.

Thematic Stylistics

Thematic stylistics is the name I choose to give to very old branch of literary study. Its definition will, I hope, be something of a disappointment to the reader, as it is little more than a combination of methods so elementary that every analyst of literature will be familiar with them. In most cases their practice is intuitive, but here it will benefit from being made explicit, briefly conceptualised, and used in a more deliberate manner. Simply defined, it is the study of stylistic trends within works and oeuvres, necessitating both deep and broad study of a given text.

For my present purposes, I am happy to let the word 'style' receive so broad a definition as 'the particular way in which a person uses language'. What makes the study of style thematic is a question of the breadth of one's focus. The student of style might be happy to look at a particularly epic sentence of Dickens's and ponder

fairly common. The latter, especially of something as complex as Ulysses, is obviously an unattainable ideal of no relevance here.
its significance; the thematic student of style will seek to place this sentence in a stylistic context to better understand its significance. For example, if Dickens has used a very similar syntactical construction elsewhere, then studying both together will potentially be more illuminating than studying either in isolation. It will, if nothing else, tell us more about Dickens's style as a general phenomenon. If several similar sentences were studied, and were found to be used in very similar contexts, then our individual interpretation of each would become a little more secure. Seeing a given syntactical structure as a particular manifestation of a broad grammatical strategy gives us a very strong interpretive position: our interpretation has all the force of a very broad study, and can bring that force to bear on a single moment of the text. Another way of putting this is to say that the more detailed an interpretive context one provides for, say, a given phrase, the more constructively limited our interpretations of that sentence will be. This is particularly useful in studying Joyce. Joyce's stylistic oddities are often weird enough to suggest innumerable interpretations, and placing them in their stylistic context can give us a very useful means via which to discriminate between different readings.

Of course, pretty much any dimension of an author's style can be studied thematically, from syntax, to rhythm, to the nature of their metaphorical comparisons, to the structure of their novels – the list is as long as literary study. In particular, the study of motif naturally fits under the rubric of thematic-stylistics, as motifs are little more than stylistic themes. Something so well worn as the study of the green light motif in *The Great Gatsby*, then, can be classed as (fairly straightforward) thematic-stylistics. This serves to illustrate, incidentally, why I began by emphasising that this method is far from original. The study of motif and theme is as old as literary criticism; indeed it is hard to imagine literary criticism without such study. It is perhaps less common to study purely verbal themes, as in the Dickensian syntax, but this too is surely a well-established practice. The essence of the method is simply to place all stylistic observations in as broad a context as possible, and to use this broader context as a much more stable base for one's interpretation.

An important distinction to cover at this point is that between thematic-stylistics and Stylistics\textsuperscript{17} proper. The latter is now a venerable member of the

\textsuperscript{17}To differentiate between them neatly, the discipline of Stylistics will always receive a capital letter.
academy in its own right, and I consider many of the analytical tools it provides us to be useful. Still, except for a few specific cases which I will discuss as they arise, my own approach to thematic-stylistics will not draw upon Stylistics. This is not a prescriptive decision. Thematic-stylistics could easily and fruitfully be combined with its namesake. I have chosen to keep them largely distinct in my own work because of the nature of my broader argument in this thesis. As I am making a case for certain kinds of error being unfortunately prevalent in a certain kind of criticism, I want to avoid any suggestion that in order to solve this problem we need to incorporate the insights of other disciplines into our own. These errors, in short, did not occur because literary studies has not learned enough from Stylistics. They occurred because the Theoretical turn has resulted in the dilution of certain standards of close reading in Joyce studies. The crucial point, however, is that these are our own standards, and solving this problem means returning to ourselves, not borrowing from others. Close reading does not need to be rescued by a flowering of Stylistics in the literary academy (although this might happen anyway, and would doubtless be a good thing). Close reading is our own possession, and errors of scholarship, description and analysis can be eliminated by a return to it. This is why thematic-stylistics is not in the least innovative, and will hopefully strike the reader as being a perfectly obvious and well-trodden approach. It deliberately avoids being new, aiming instead to be a collection of well-known methods, because in part it aims to show that all the tools for avoiding these kinds of error are already ours.

Thematic stylistics, as outlined here, makes errors of description and analysis very hard to commit. Not only is it a form of very close reading, but crucially it is a form of very wide reading too. Its twin emphases of style and theme achieve depth and breadth respectively. Having studied many related moments in a text to great depth, with every interpretation refining and strengthening every other, it is understandably more difficult to then describe that aspect of the text in an inaccurate way. Equally, the basis for analysing any one of those moments will be manifestly strong. In this way, thematic stylistics militates against the kinds of error I defined in chapter two, and thereby satisfies my need for a methodology of good close reading.

For the sake of completeness, a formal definition of thematic stylistics might be useful: thematic stylistics is the study of style across a text or oeuvre; that is, it is
a method whereby the study of a particular moment in a text is informed and strengthened by the study of other stylistically related moments.

Many of the stylistic themes I will be studying in this thesis are not merely individual responses to the individual errors of the preceding chapters. Many are to a degree linked together, and can be usefully viewed under a single, broad aim, which is to study those various dimensions of Joyce's evolving technique that partake in the general category of free indirect style. I will not be emphasising the unity of this aim as I proceed, partly because some of the techniques I will discuss have nothing to do with free indirect style, but mainly because I do not wish to distract from my primary task of elucidating a practical technique of close reading in response to the problems of Theoretical close reading. This thesis is not an investigation of free indirect style, though an awareness that such is one of its consistent preoccupations may lend cumulative force to its constructive chapters.

Equally, I will not be emphasising the relevance of the term free indirect style, though this is for quite different reasons. One of the great problems with this phrase is that it implies homogeneity, that there is simply 'a' technique known as 'free indirect style'. This is certainly not the case. Free indirect style is a loose family of related techniques, unified by the fact that they all complicate the relationship between narrative voice and the consciousness of characters within that narrative. Indeed, it it perhaps one of the consequences of the various applications of thematic stylistics in this thesis that the enormous diversity of free indirect style comes squarely into view. At certain points I will situate a technique under discussion with reference to free indirect style, and following my last use of thematic stylistics I will briefly outline the shared import of the various techniques I have discussed for the study of free indirect style in Joyce. Other than this, it is my hope that knowledge of the broad narratological field within which I am working will lend a background cohesion to my stylistic work, while not distracting from the primary goal of my thesis, which remains a constructive critique of Theory.
In forming a positive response, based on thematic stylistics, to the critiques I formed in chapter three, several questions must be answered. First and foremost among them, can the same response serve as a reply to both MacCabe and Cixous? The answer to this is straightforward: it cannot, because they offer such different studies in themselves. As I pointed out in turning to Cixous from MacCabe, she offers no central claim that might be evaluated, which also means that it is very difficult to frame a positive response to her essay: what would it aim to show, and in reaction to what claim of Cixous's? Her errors, as I defined them, were too unsystematic, and too fragmentary, to suggest the plausibility of a unified counter-study. This is not to say that thematic-stylistics would have nothing to say in response to her work. It surely would, but such a response would have to be just as fragmentary, and just as step-by-step, as my purely negative critique, and this would not be a good introduction to the method I espouse.

Turning to MacCabe, the situation could not be more different. He makes a very straightforward claim, to the effect that there is no meta-language in *Dubliners*. The possibility for a thematic-stylistic response to this is quite tangible: simply, it would aim to bring out some of the stylistic tactics Joyce employs in the creation of a meta-language. As suggested above, this would have both negative and positive functions. It counts as a further criticism of MacCabe's thesis, for obvious reasons. Perhaps more importantly, however, it provides not just the suggestion, but the exemplification of the kinds of tactics we can employ in order to avoid errors of description and analysis as a critical community. Finally, this will hopefully be a meaningful contribution to stylistics in Joyce studies. In studying meta-language in *Dubliners*, I will be looking in detail at certain stylistic subtleties which have not, so far as I know, been treated at length in Joyce scholarship. This contribution will, I hope, be worthy in and of itself.

In responding to MacCabe's claim in my last chapter, I drew attention to three aspects of *Dubliners* that constitute forms of meta-language: overt commentary and insight, allegorical structures, and unambiguous undertones. I also suggested that *Dubliners* has a stylistic core which creates a certain mood throughout the collection,
and that this too forms a kind of meta-language. Let us briefly remind ourselves of the broad definition of this key term: a narrative that interprets the discourses it quotes (17), a form of narrative that affords a 'position of dominance' (25), 'a fixed sense conveyed by the text' (29), a narrative that 'assumes a degree of control' over the discourses within it (29), 'a position from which to read the text' (30), a 'discourse shared by author and reader' (30), and even a moment in which the narrative decides to 'go behind a set of actions and explain them' (30). My position is that, on this multifaceted understanding of the term, Joyce employs a kind of stylistic meta-language in order to provide an insight into and critique of Dublin life as he saw it. Simply, this collection is not a neutral description of a city and its people. It is a withering portrait of a society, a form of social critique that is implicit, unambiguous, and unavoidable.

A brief reminder of the terms in which Joyce described his own achievement will be useful here. Of his aims he wrote that 'I call the series Dubliners to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city' (Letters I, 55), that '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' (Letters II, 134), and that 'I believe that in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country' (Letters I, 62-3). Of the manner in which he achieved these aims he wrote that 'The Dublin papers will object to my stories as to a caricature of Dublin life... At times the spirit directing my pen seems to me so plainly mischievous that I am almost prepared to let the Dublin critics have their way' (Letters II, 99), that 'I think people might be willing to pay for the special odour of corruption which, I hope, floats over my stories' (Letters II, 122-3) and, most famously, that 'I have written it for the most part in a style of scrupulous meanness' (Letters II, 134). Dubliners, then, is for Joyce a chapter in a moral history, a diagnosis of paralysis, and a move towards the spiritual liberation of Ireland. In this project, the two key stylistic terms are an 'odour of corruption' 'float[ing] over' the stories, and 'a style of scrupulous meanness'. 'Odour of corruption' is fairly straightforward, but attention should certainly be paid to the term 'floating over'. It suggests a certain indirectness, the odour not being an explicit point of description in the stories themselves, but
created by them nonetheless. The judgement of corruption, then, is seldom to be found in anything so blunt as a didactic apostrophe from the narrative voice, but more often in the effects produced by a style of 'scrupulous meanness'.

I take it that the opposition between these aims and MacCabe's view of the collection will be clear. A moral history will rarely benefit from the absence of 'a fixed sense conveyed by the text'; a spiritual liberation will not often be effected by short stories which lack 'a position from which to read the text'; similarly, Dublin reviewers will seldom be incensed, one feels, by a narrative that refuses to interpret the discourses it quotes; and of course, an odour of corruption is not often to be found in a story that denies a 'discourse shared by author and reader'. My argument has been that Joyce was successful in these stated aims, indeed more so than is often credited as being the case, and that his principal method in that success was stylistic. My positive case, then, will be a detailed exploration of those stylistic means. The betrayal of paralysis, the odour of corruption, the scrupulosity and the meanness: these are all functions of style, and to the intimate study of certain aspects of that style I will now turn. There are many such aspects, but here I will focus on three which have received comparatively little attention to date: physical environments; hypnotic prose patterning; and logopoeia, or semantic association.

**Physical Environments in Dubliners**

In the interests of providing an accessible but thorough introduction to the method, my first use of thematic-stylistics will be comparatively straightforward, but still possessed of noteworthy interpretive power. It will be in essence a study of a certain motif in *Dubliners*, in which characters are consistently placed in revealing dynamics with their physical environments. As is so often the case with Joyce, this effect depends for its power upon both our ability to concretely visualise a given scene, and our sensitivity to very subtle grammatical facts.

I submit the following sentence for examination as an introduction to the motif under consideration: 'She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue' (25). Thus begins the story 'Eveline', with one of those Joycean phrases that seem at first glance to be quite inauspicious but which, when examined closely, yield all sorts of weirdness. In this case, we are presented with the peculiar contrast
between a person who is quite static, and a time of day which is 'invad[ing]' her street. The verb merits close attention. While such tropes as morning 'rushing in' and evening 'falling' are familiar enough, in what sense does a period of the day 'invade' anything? The answer is surely that as the arrival of evening is a fairly consistent phenomenon, using the verb 'to invade' as opposed to, for example, the verb 'to fall', does not really refer to an objective visual fact about the scene in question. We can better explain this verb choice, then, with reference to the condition of our protagonist. For while 'to invade' connotes hostility, control, and most of all activity, Eveline herself is merely sitting, which connotes a quite different attitude. We might even choose to explain 'to invade' with reference to free indirect style, suggesting that the effect of this sentence is something close to 'She sat at the window watching the evening seem to invade the avenue'. However we deal with the details of this, the basic contrast between a strangely aggressive time of day and a notably stationary human being should be abundantly clear.

The paragraph continues: 'Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne' (25). The grammar of this sentence is most illuminating: Joyce manages to accomplish a physical description of a person without once making them the subject of his sentences. 'Her head was leaned' is a passive construction, despite the fact that one would expect quite the reverse here (as in 'She had leaned her head/ She was leaning her head…') because, after all, leaning requires some degree of activity. Just how odd this formulation is can be clearly seen if we re-insert the assumed subject in the appropriate position for the passive voice ('Her head was leaned by her…'), in which the voice's passivity becomes more obviously inappropriate. Next there comes a description of Eveline being able to smell cretonne, except that Joyce again refuses to make her the subject of such a proactive verb as 'to smell'. Instead he makes 'the odour' the grammatical subject, and Eveline's nostrils the prepositional object of the verb 'to be'.

Joyce is performing grammatical acrobatics to keep Eveline away from the syntactic responsibility of leaning her own head or using her own nose, and we are only looking at the second sentence. We must remember, further, that Eveline's passivity does not exist in isolation, but rather in contrast with the activity of 'the evening', which straightforwardly operates the verb 'to invade' in the previous
sentence. The picture, grammatically speaking, is one of an inhuman, abstract entity that is dynamic and hostile, and a human being who is passive to the point of not even operating her own body.

This relationship is extended throughout the story. A most significant but seldom-noted fact about Eveline is that not once, in the whole course of the narrative, does she physically move a single step in any direction. We are told she 'looked round the room' (25), 'continued to sit' (27), 'lean[ed] her head' (27), 'inhal[ed]' (27), 'trembled' (28), and finally, in a burst of activity, that she 'stood up in a sudden impulse of terror' (28). Every other movement in this part of the story is either recollection or musing. Later, at the docks, we are told she 'stood among the swaying crowd' (28), 'caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat' (28), 'kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer' (28), and then, when Frank grabs her hand, that she 'gripped with both hands at the iron railing' (28) and that 'her hands clutched the iron in frenzy' (29).

As such, her most physical activity is standing up in horror, and she spends the rest of the story almost entirely stationary. This leads us to a most remarkable conclusion. If we compare those verbs that Eveline operates during the course of her story (excluding those that she merely remembers or imagines operating) with that single verb, 'to invade', we see that Joyce does not describe her in a single term as dynamic as that which he uses to describe the action of the evening. This is truly unsettling. Joyce's syntax and verb choice not only rob Eveline of her subjectivity, but reduce her to immobility before the approach of an explicitly hostile environment. In truth, there was never any chance of Eveline's making a decision, for passivity is hardwired into the very language that creates her. One might even suggest this is a kind of metalinguistic device, giving the reader an interpretive foothold in this story – but let us continue our thematic examination for the moment.

Let me now examine 'Two Gallants', a story that describes very different events to those found in 'Eveline'. Here, a significant part of the story concerns Lenehan's peregrinations through central Dublin while Corley whisks his latest conquest off to destinations unknown, so the characters are manifestly not static in comparison to their environment. Despite this, a relationship emerges between the characters described and the world around them that bears striking resemblances to
that between Eveline and her invasive evening. Here is the much discussed opening paragraph:

The grey warm evening of August had descended upon the city and a mild warm air, a memory of summer, circulated in the streets. The streets, shuttered for the repose of Sunday, swarmed with a gaily coloured crowd. Like illumined pearls the lamps shone from the summits of their tall poles upon the living texture below which, changing shape and hue unceasingly, sent up into the warm grey evening air an unchanging unceasing murmur. (36)

We should note immediately that the story begins at the same time of day, and with essentially the same observation – the fall of evening – as does 'Eveline'. The various foibles of this remarkable paragraph have been so commented upon that I feel no need to rehearse the obvious here, except to stress a very plain but very essential point. It is not at all easy as one reads this to hold in one's mind exactly what is being described – namely, a warm, lamp-lit summer evening in Dublin streets packed with happy, brightly dressed people.

The reason this visual actuality seems so distant from Joyce's description of it is again question of grammatical prioritisation, via which method the people in this scene are reduced to being qualities of their physical environment. Consider, for example, the unobtrusive strangeness of the phrase 'The streets…swarmed with a gaily coloured crowd'. To put this into perspective, we need to ask some very basic questions about what is actually happening, principal among them: what, exactly, is doing the 'swarming'? The answer is surely the crowd, yet look again at the grammar: in Joyce's version, it is the street that is actually the subject of the verb 'to swarm'. The phrase 'A gaily coloured crowd swarmed in the streets', in which the crowd is prioritised as the subject and the streets are included as their location, would surely be more natural. But in Joyce the street is the grammatical subject of the sentence, and human beings are only introduced as a specification, being 'that with which the street swarmed'.

Even the conjugation of the verb contributes to this effect of making the people a function of their environment. For instance, Joyce could have written that the streets 'were swarming' with people. This would be far more natural. In such a case the verb 'to swarm' is being used as an attributive verb and is not being forced into a straightforward predicate with the subject 'street'. The street is being attributed this participle, 'swarming', by something plural and animate, 'a crowd', which is,
therefore, the technical operator of the verb 'to swarm'. However, Joyce chooses the other, more surreal formulation. He forces the words 'street' and 'to swarm' together in a predicate in the simple past, with the unnerving consequence that the streets, apparently, are actually swarming, and the sentence, if read literally, has to go something like this: 'the streets…moved in large numbers with ['as a consequence of'] a gaily coloured crowd'.

Of course, I do not suggest that we slavishly read the sentence in this literal way. We should understand it to indicate that 'the streets were swarming with a gaily coloured crowd'. But we should remain alert to the fact that the grammar here is pushing us in another direction, towards a description of streets that are more alive and more dynamic than the humans within them, who in turn are reduced to little more than a grammatical necessity. However we choose to understand the sentence when we actually read the story, the fact remains that it has been conscientiously designed to keep the environment as the only grammatical subject, and the human beings within it as not much more than a descriptive qualifier.

If, as I suggest, we acknowledge that this sentence encourages us to see the streets as the descriptive priority and the crowd as a necessary detail, then the peculiarities of next sentence fall into place very naturally. What else could explain so neatly why the people have by then become a 'texture'? As a texture is only a quality of an object and never an object in itself, this word fits very well with an understanding that the previous sentence saw people as a physical property of the true focal point, which was the urban environment. In the paragraph's final moments, Joyce capitalises on the inanimateness of a 'texture' by discussing its 'shape' and 'hue', each of which moves us further away from what these words actually describe, a crowd of human beings, and closer to considering those people as an inanimate property of a physical environment.

At this moment Joyce immediately starts a new paragraph, and introduces his two protagonists. These two men do seem to some degree dynamic and independent for the rest of the story, but it is absolutely crucial to remember the background from which they have just come into focus. When seen from above, the mass of people to which these two men belong has been dehumanised to the point of being a mere quality of the city, on a par with the shuttered windows and the lamps. Though
Corley and Lenehan appear to be independently mobile and possessed of individual wills, Joyce has, even before their story begins, assimilated them into an inanimate texture on the surface of the city of Dublin. We may follow them and become involved in their exploits, we may even be encouraged to believe in them as individuals, but we must always bear in mind that the opening paragraph has established a narrative context which distinguishes them only as one particular detail on a quite insentient urban pattern.

Later, while Lenehan is on his walk, we read that 'The air which the harpist had played began to control his movements' (41). Other than this, he is described as walking 'listlessly' – literally 'without desire' (41). In moments such as these, we are reminded of that initial paragraph. We see Lenehan as a puppet of his environment, his movements controlled by it, often explicitly so, and in the absence of such puppetry we see him as a man with no desires of his own. To reinforce this impression Joyce keeps him meandering through the streets for what would otherwise be a peculiarly long time: if his author had given him a more specific task it would have made him seem more autonomous. As it is, 'He could think of no way of passing [the hours] but to keep on walking' (42), and when he does go to a café for some food he leaves 'to begin his wandering again' (43).

The story's final touch, the gold coin (45), completes this picture. When it is revealed as the narrative's climax, and we recognise it as the great success Lenehan has been anxiously anticipating, every twist of the narrative that has led up to it takes on the character of a business transaction. The reason Lenehan hung around with Corley, flattered him, waited for him all afternoon, and indeed experienced many of the various thoughts and desires he did – in short the motivation for his actions throughout the story – has been his need to be part of a tawdry and formulaic commercial transaction. Having oriented his thoughts, words and deeds around the promise of a lump sum, he is the very picture of a man without meaningful subjectivity, or to use the story's own language, he is a mere shape giving hue and murmur to a city's texture.

I have examined two such different stories with the aim of demonstrating a surprising degree of commonality in the manner with which they deal with the relationship between Dubliners and their city. Despite the obvious differences in
character, subject matter and narrative, both stories are concerned with people whose environments overmaster them to a disturbing extent, with the consequence that they seem robbed of free will, prostrate before the time and place in which they find themselves. Many of the stories in *Dubliners* contain similar situations. One could examine Mr. Doran's entrapment within Mrs. Mooney's Boarding House ('He longed to ascend through the roof... and yet a force pushed him downstairs step by step' – 51), Farrington's utter dependence upon his proximity to a pub ('He felt his great body again aching for the comfort of the public-house' – 71), or Mr Duffy's complete passivity to the will of his workplace ('At four o'clock he was set free' – 83). These, however, are too similar in effect to either 'Eveline' or 'Two Gallants' to significantly advance my analysis of this technique.

Let me briefly return to MacCabe's own terms. Stylistically, Joyce's narrative is interpreting the discourses it quotes; affording a 'position of dominance' over its characters; conveying 'a fixed sense'; assuming rather more than a 'degree of control' over the discourses within it; giving us 'a position from which to read the text', a 'discourse shared by author and reader', and even a moment in which the narrative decides to 'go behind a set of actions and explain them'.

**Hypnotic Prose Patterns in Dubliners**

The physical environments motif in *Dubliners* is, as noted, largely a matter of visualisation and grammar. Let us turn, then, to a different aspect of fictional prose: its sound.

Anyone who undertakes to read 'An Encounter' closely will be struck by the similarities found in the following two phrases, which occur some 300 words apart: 'magnetised by some words of his own speech, his mind was slowly circling round and round' (16) and 'His mind, as if magnetised again by his speech, seemed to circle slowly round and round' (17). The phrases are both sixteen words long, and ten of these words are to be found in both. The only substantive difference in their structure is the inversion of the subject and subordinate clause in the former. If we examine the final words of both on standard prosodic lines, we will see they fall into very similar, alternating rhythms:
'his mind was slowly circling round and round'

'seemed to circle slowly round and round'

The near-identical vocabulary and structure, together with the parallel development of steady rhythms, form an inescapable effect: the prose is taking on the very quality of steady circularity it describes.

There is a larger pattern here, which is much more interesting than this particular instance, though rather harder to spot. The overall effect, of which the above phrases are just a small part, begins as soon as the man begins to affect a sympathetic relationship with the narrator to the exclusion of Mahony. Thereafter we find a restriction in vocabulary, as the prose immediately starts picking up certain words and using them repeatedly. Here are the first few sentences exemplifying this effect, in which I have placed in bold the appropriate words and phrases:

He said he had all Sir Walter Scott's works and all Lord Lytton's works at home and never tired of reading them. Of course, he said, there were some of Lord Lytton's works which boys couldn't read. Mahony asked why couldn't boys read them… (15)

In this passage, nearly half (22/44) of the words used are duplicates, and this figure excludes very common words such as 'and' and 'of'. This is a remarkably high proportion, and the trend continues. Once the prose picks up a word that features heavily in the man's highly dubious obsessions it reuses it to a disconcerting extent. For example:

He began to speak to us about girls, saying what nice soft hair they had and how soft their hands were and how all girls were not so good as they seemed to be if one only knew. There was nothing he liked, he said, so much as looking at a nice young girl, at her nice white hands and her beautiful soft hair. (16)

Again, I have omitted common minor words to highlight the conscientiousness of the design. When reading the passage aloud, however, such words undoubtedly contribute to its hypnotic circularity. If these too are highlighted, the effect becomes very pronounced indeed, with over half the passage consisting of duplicated words:

He began to speak to us about girls, saying what nice soft hair they had and how soft their hands were and how all girls were not so good as they seemed to be if one only knew. There was nothing he

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18 Here, and elsewhere, I have highlighted different conjugations of the same verb, unless their form is so different that it does not contribute to the effect.
liked, he said, so much as looking at a nice young girl, at her nice white hands and her beautiful soft hair.

Given the subject matter here the effect is truly unsettling, and moreover it is repeated, on the same kind of scale, for about two and half pages. To take just one example, as soon as the man begins to speak of 'chastising boys' we find, all within the space of a paragraph and a half, 'to whip' used eight times, 'boy' seven times, 'girl' four times, 'in this world' three times in just four sentences, and, ironically, 'good' three times in very quick succession.

Aside from these instances of concentrated repetition, the pages under discussion (15-18) also exhibit a broader circularity. This consists in the repeated use of the following words: 'magnetised', 'monotonous', 'monologue', 'mystery/iously', and 'Mahony', where this last could often have been replaced with a pronoun. These words are all relatively unusual: 'monotonous' and 'monologue', for example, are only used once more in the whole collection; they all contain three syllables or more, which makes them stand out in a passage which contains comparatively few long words; they are all, with the exception of 'Mahony', words that describe precisely the kind of effect they are in the process of creating; and finally, they alliterate. These facts combine to produce a kind of mesmeric backbone in the prose, which evokes, in both subject matter and style, the steady orbit of a perverted mind.

The disturbing focus of this circularity, emanating as it does from a man who dwells lovingly over whipping young boys, makes the fact that this same technique is carried forward into the rest of collection more unsettling than it would otherwise be. Let us examine another example of the same device, this time from 'A Painful Case':

He entered the Park by the first gate and walked along under the gaunt trees. He walked through the bleak alleys where they had walked four years before. She seemed to be near him in the darkness. At moments he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear, her hand touch his. He stood still to listen. Why had he withheld life from her? Why had he sentenced her to death? He felt his moral nature falling to pieces.... He gnawed the rectitude of his life; he felt that he had been outcast from life's feast. One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness: he had sentenced her to ignominy, a death of shame. He knew that the prostrate creatures down by the wall were watching him and wished him gone. No one wanted him; he was outcast from life's feast. (89-90)

Here the mere recurrence of such elaborate phrases as 'outcast from life's feast' and 'sentenced her to death' is enough to establish that same sense of circularity, of a
mind inescapably returning to same mental grooves. This is quite apart from other repeated words, such as 'life' and 'to feel', which form the cardinal points of Duffy's despair and regret.

There are many examples of this kind of effect in *Dubliners*, though going through each one would add little to the strength of our analysis. However, one more example taken from 'Eveline' will usefully illustrate this stylistic principle at work in another very different context:

*Escape!* *She* must *escape!* *Frank would save her*. *He would* give *her life*, perhaps love, too. *But she* wanted *to live*. Why should *she* be *unhappy*? *She* had a right *to happiness*. *Frank would* take *her in his arms*, fold *her in his arms*. *He would save her*. (28)

In this instance I have highlighted pronouns because the repetition is so concentrated (over two thirds of the words are duplicates) that even these relatively minor words contribute to the effect of circularity.

Very well, we can observe isolated instances of dense verbal repetition, which consequently produce a very particular aural effect. What to make of this? I have chosen these three uses of the technique because they are found in very different contexts: the first, as discussed, is the perverted obsession of an old man; the second is the settling despair and guilt of an egotistical man whose life has all but bled away; the third is the desperate hope of a trapped young woman. The obvious point that all three are people under extreme psychological pressure centred on a particular issue is not enough. A deeper similarity can be grasped by first noting that these psychological grooves illuminate the basic existential condition of the character in question. In Duffy's case this is the damage he has done to himself and others, and the despair and loneliness which have resulted. In Eveline's case this is her very real need to escape her mundane existence, set against her chronic passivity (manifested as her frenzied desire that Frank 'save her', 'give her life', 'take her' and 'hold her'). As for the old man, the extent to which he is ruled by his dark desires is clear from his forcing them upon young strangers in a lonely field. These obsessions, and the verbal circles they generate, are not accidental, but give way to the very core of each character's being. Finally, we should observe that not only does each passage illuminate the fundamental state of each character, but that each of these states has the quality of being prison-like. Whether the character is trapped in a perversion, a mixture of loneliness and despair, or a fatal passivity, the key is that they are trapped
there, and not just for the duration of a moment, a scene, or a story – in each case they seem imprisoned there quite indefinitely.

When we combine these attributes – a deep psychological groove, illuminating the central existential crisis of a character, and acting as a kind of prison – we get, it seems to me, an archetypal rendering of spiritual paralysis. This kind of prose patterning, then, constitutes a dimension of Joyce's moral diagnosis. Although the aural dimension of this effect is the most obvious way to approach it – the techniques described do make the prose sound very peculiar – there is something subtler still going on here. It is as if the prose itself is succumbing to paralysis; lexically restricted and trapped in the same cadences, it manifests the very condition afflicting its characters. Joyce has created a hemiplegic style for his hemiplegic Dubliners, a stylistic commentary on their spiritual condition.

If this is so, then we must briefly return to an issue that arose during my critique of MacCabe. Specifically, might it be argued that should Joyce's prose manifest such paralytic tendencies then any 'reliable' meta-language therein will be compromised by association, and as a result unable to offer an exterior or objective view of narrative events? This would not be a sound conclusion for three reasons. First, these prose patterns are isolated, and cannot be found in the majority of the text of Dubliners. As I suggested in my last chapter, meta-linguistic mechanisms operate at many levels in Joyce's prose, from allegorical structures to unusually lyrical interjections (recall 'as the retort was after the manner of the liberal shepherds in the eclogues…' (71)), and many of these are found in parts of the text that display none of the hypnotic prose patterns discussed here. Second, these prose patterns are associated with the psychology of particular characters, forming a kind of free indirect style (of which more will be said later), and as such do not display the totalising qualities necessary to disrupt the meta-linguistic structures of the text as a whole. These points can be brought together under the notion that this technique is limited and specified, and therefore not destabilising of broader or unrelated narrative phenomena. From this follows the third reason that this is not a viable argument, which is that the recognisable existence of these prose patterns demands a common meta-linguistic understanding exist between author and reader, just as the political implications of 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' are best understood from
the unified perspective of a satirical narrative stance. In other words these prose patterns are limited and specified by certain consistent narrative forces, and they are limited and specified in a way that we can comprehend and appreciate. As such, while they may initially seem disruptive of meta-linguistic structures, they are in the final analysis a part of them.

**Logopoeia in Dubliners**

I trust that the above two sections have, though admittedly in a fairly simple way, sufficiently demonstrated what it is I mean by thematic-stylistics. I hope it will also be clear that by paying attention to fairly accessible matters of repeated grammar, visual motif, limited vocabulary or repeated cadence we can get a long way into Joyce's early style, and that we can certainly operate within a critical methodology that makes errors of description and analysis much less likely. Having gone through these more straightforward uses of the method, I now intend to increase the level of complexity a little by introducing a new category of stylistic effect, one which thematic-stylistics is in a good position to detect and appreciate. I take the name of this effect, logopoeia, from the critical work of Ezra Pound.

Logopoeia first appeared as a critical term in March 1918 in a piece Pound wrote for the *Little Review* entitled 'A List of Books'. In trying to find a way of describing the work of Mina Loy, he coined a three-part taxonomy of poetic effect that ignored issues of history and genre in favour of deciding whether the work depends upon sound and rhythm (melopoeia), visual imagery (imagism), or a subtle kind of verbal play (logopoeia) (57-8). It was this last category that for Pound best described Loy's effects, an achievement which united her to some degree with Pope, Laforgue, Browning and Eliot in having created 'poetry which is akin to nothing but language'.

Before proceeding to define and apply logopoeia, some qualifications are in order. The terms and definitions of Pound's three-part scheme would subtly change over the rest of his career (in 1923, for example, 'imagism' was renamed 'phanopoeia'), and one must be aware of this before applying them consistently. It must also be pointed out that critics (e.g. Ruthven, 1969) have noted the similarity between Pound's tripartite scheme and one we find in Coleridge's essay 'On the
Principles of Genial Criticism' (1814), which describes 'poetry of the ear', 'poetry of the eye', and 'poetry of language'. Of Pound's three terms it would seem only logopoeia has been novel or useful enough to receive much subsequent critical use.

Of the various explanations of this scheme one can find over Pound's vast corpus, I shall take as my reference the one that we find in his 1929 essay 'How to Read', reprinted in Polite Essays (1937):

...there are three 'kinds of poetry':
MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.
PHANOPOEIA, which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination.
LOGOPOEIA, 'the dance of the intellect among words', that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the word, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play. It holds the aesthetic content which is peculiarly the domain of verbal manifestation, and cannot possibly be contained in plastic or in music. It is the latest come, and perhaps most tricky and undependable mode. (169-70)

On the above and similar definitions, logopoeia has been resurrected by a few critics down to the present day, though more often as a part of a study of Pound's criticism than as a critical tool in its own right. I am far from being the first to see its relevance for Joyce. Interestingly, several critics have seen logopoeia as a proto-Theoretical idea.

We can best approach this by glancing to a series of related concepts in Stylistics: internal and external norms, and deviation. Brooke-Rose is one of the few students of logopoeia to point out this link to Stylistics, noting that logopoeia 'prefigures the modern notion of écarts or deviation, not from a non-existent 'norm' in everyday language, but from the expectation aroused syntactically with in the text' (129), and going on to mention several relevant views of deviation in a footnote. As

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19 See, for example, Jed Deppman's 'The Return of Medievalism: James Joyce in 1923', 69-73.
20 Ruthven (1990) sees it as a 'proto-deconstructive term' (121), Sieburth more generally as a moment in which language becomes concerned with itself (66). I do not find these interpretations of the term to be very helpful. Neither do I find that those who, like Deppman, try to apply logopoeia in general terms to Finnegans Wake, substantially improve our understanding of either this subtle term or that profoundly difficult text.
Brooke-Rose was writing forty years ago, her survey of deviation is necessarily a little dated. Still, her comparison is essentially correct.

Since the mid 60s, and particularly since an influential 1965 paper by S. R. Levin entitled 'Internal and external deviation in poetry', Stylisticians have differentiated between internal and external stylistic norms. External norms are, broadly speaking, the norms of a given language, ranging from fairly obvious norms like the rules of spelling and grammar, to subtler and more contentious norms such as dialectical tendencies, to matters of generic convention such as capitalising the beginnings of lines of poetry, to statistically adduced facts concerning the language, such as average sentence length (most often for a certain genre or during a particular period). Internal norms are not found in the language as a whole, but are created in certain textual contexts. To give the classic example, an internal norm of Hemingway's prose is that he uses shorter rather than longer sentences, and few adjectives. Deviation is simply the business of ignoring internal or external norms for effect, or what Stylisticians call foregrounding (essentially, making something stand out). Hence, we can speak of internal and external deviation.

The relationship between deviation and logopoeia as Pound himself understood it is somewhat opaque, and need not be the subject of detailed exegesis. Brooke-Rose clearly thinks that logopoeia is the same thing as internal deviation, that is, deviation 'not from a non-existent 'norm' in everyday language, but from the expectation aroused syntactically in the text'. Incidentally, I do not think that this was Pound's understanding of his term: when he refers to a word's 'usual concomitants' and its 'known acceptances' he seems to be talking about what we would now call external norms, those other parts of the language with which this word is 'known' to be associated. Further speculation on this point is unnecessary. The point is not to decide what this term 'really' means, but to see how we can best mobilise the concepts described above to study Joyce.

My thesis concerning logopoeia in *Dubliners* is that Joyce consistently uses certain words in a very limited context. Crucially, this context is not an intrinsically peculiar one for these words. Rather, what is peculiar is that we only find them in this context, and no other, with the result that they build up a kind of associative weight. In Pound's terms, Joyce has developed particular 'habits of usage' with regard
to certain key words, such that he has created a particular 'context we expect to find with the word'. Rather than leave these words' 'concomitants' and 'known acceptances' to be defined by their standard English usage, Joyce has carefully limited them to only a small part of that usage, such that, in the context of *Dubliners*, they carry a specific semantic emphasis. One might argue that this restricted usage really does create an automatic response in the reader, such that he or she will bring certain expectations to what would otherwise be perfectly ordinary words – rather as if Joyce were to his readers what Pavlov was to his dogs. The creation of such an effect in any given reader, however, is slightly conjectural. If one were sceptical about it, one could content oneself with the conclusion that Joyce's use of these words is thematic, in that their referential scope is consistently limited in an interesting and revealing way.

Briefly returning to the issue of definitions, it will be clear that this effect does not fit into logopoeia as Pound originally understood it. Joyce is not using the word out of its usual context, or ignoring its concomitants or known acceptances. Rather, he is unnaturally restricting its context, and using only a few of its concomitants, and this is a subtly different tactic. Similarly, this effect is not well described by the relevant Stylistic terms. Joyce is not really 'deviating' from an external norm so much as being very selective with regard to which external norm he chooses to obey. While one could relax one's definition of deviation to accommodate this, it is fairly clear that the emphasis of the term is not appropriate, and its standard usage in Stylistic theory does not encompass this kind of effect. Equally, while Joyce does create an internal norm, this internal norm is never really broken\(^\text{21}\), so one cannot speak of internal deviation, and furthermore referring to it as such does not give us any sense of how Joyce is modulating the word's general usage. For these reasons, then, I shall refer to the technique as logopoeia, and understand this term with reference to the foregoing discussion. This theoretical wrangling out of the way, let us turn to the literature.

Throughout *Dubliners* we find ourselves grappling with a sense of characters benumbed to their own mental and physical deterioration, as well as unable to

\(^{21}\) Although obviously this does not necessarily go for any other internal norms Joyce creates aside from logopoeia.
establish any felt connection with each other. This is in line with one of the effects of paralysis, which can be a numbness or loss of sensation in the affected part of the body. This tendency is absolutely central to Joyce's depiction of his Dubliners' spiritual state: they are numb, physically and mentally, to themselves and each other.

The logopoeic aspect of this depiction under examination here is built around his use of the verb 'to feel', than which there can be few more fundamental verbs in the expression of human emotion, thought and physicality. We feel emotions, physical sensations, perceptions (as in 'I felt it unwise to continue'), as well as feeling in the sense of 'being conscious of' (as in 'I felt his presence'). This word is the principal way of denoting a sensed relationship with the world around us, as well as the primary way of emphasising an emotional state. In *Dubliners* Joyce undertakes to use the verb 'to feel' within a very restricted semantic context, with the end result being a systemic relationship between 'feeling' and negativity.

The first time the verb occurs is in the first story, thus: 'I felt that his little beady black eyes were examining me' (4), which is swiftly followed by 'I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region' (4) and 'I remembered that it had died of paralysis and I felt that I too was smiling feebly as if to absolve the simoniac of his sin' (4). This trio establishes precedents for a large number of the uses of 'to feel' in the collection. The first two instances deal first with physical then spiritual feelings, both of which are either unpleasant or unnerving. The third denotes a belated realisation of a disquieting fact: he 'feels' as in 'becomes conscious of' a disturbing parallel between himself and the disembodied head of a dead paralytic.

First, I wish to take the most straightforward meaning of 'to feel', which is to feel physically. Of all the ways in which 'to feel' can be used we would expect this to be the most associatively neutral, because whether people are elated or depressed those things which they physically touch ought to be the same. In Joyce, this is not so. It is first used in this physical sense to describe the old man in 'An Encounter': 'I wondered why he shivered once or twice as if he feared something or felt a sudden chill' (16). Whether we side with critics who see the man as a pervert or those who consider him a paedophile, the sudden chills that he feels in the presence of small girls...
boys are a particularly horrible thing to be invited to contemplate. The other examples of characters physically feeling things are not so unpleasant as this, but throughout every story they are uniformly negative: Eveline 'felt her cheek pale and cold' (28), just as later on we are told that Little Chandler 'felt his cheeks suffused with shame' (65).

Those moments when characters physically feel each other are either semi-violent (as when Eveline 'felt [Frank] seize her hand' (28) to try and pull her away from the railings), or suffused with sadness (as when Doran 'felt against his shirt the agitation of [Polly's] bosom' (50), when Polly is (possibly) having a hysterical fit). The moments when characters feel parts of themselves are indeed rare, but this bleak example from 'A Little Cloud' is representative in its quiet sadness: 'He bent his head and felt with two sympathetic fingers the thin hair at the crown' (56). Finally, we might mention that awful moment when, in 'Clay', Maria unknowingly 'felt a soft wet substance with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage' (80). Here, as has been often observed, the clay which one of the young girls has smuggled onto the table represents, in the rules of the game they are playing, death. I can find no example of any character physically feeling something which does not conform to these patterns.

What, then, of those instances in which people 'feel' emotions? A similar pattern will be seen to prevail. The first instance of this kind of usage is again in The Sisters: 'I felt even annoyed at discovering in myself a sensation of freedom' (5), which is not only a negative emotion, but a negative emotion directed toward the experience of freedom, reinforcing the boy's deeply unsettling attraction towards states of paralysis. There are many such straightforward examples: we read that Farrington 'felt humiliated and discontented' (74), 'did not even feel drunk' (74), and furthermore 'felt savage and thirsty and revengeful' (70); in 'After The Race' Jimmy's father 'may have felt even commercially satisfied at having secured for his son qualities often unpurchaseable' (32), where the father-son relationship is not only considered in commercial terms, but is 'felt' in them too; in 'A Little Cloud' Little Chandler conceitedly 'felt himself superior to the people he passed' (55); in 'Clay' Maria refuses a place in a family because 'she would have felt herself in the way' (76);
and finally, at the end of 'The Dead', 'Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony' (173).

Even those instances in which characters seem to feel positive emotions are almost always problematic. We read that Lenehan 'felt more at ease', but only when he was in 'the dark quiet street, the sombre look of which suited his mood' (42). Later we read that 'He felt better after having eaten than he had felt before, less weary of his life, less vanquished in spirit' (43), which seems faintly positive until we see what it implies, which is that Lenehan's experience of much-needed self-doubt has been little more than the grumblings of an empty stomach. Of Mr. Duffy we read that: 'He dined in an eating-house in George's Street where he felt himself safe from the society of Dublin's gilded youth' (83), in which the positive feeling of being safe results only from misanthropy. Sometimes characters' feelings are straightforwardly positive, but only memories, as when Gabriel ponders that 'He had felt proud and happy then' (169). At other times, positive feelings are only the result of temporary distractions, which clearly hide deeper insecurities, as when we read of Gabriel that 'He felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver' (155), or 'When they were together again she spoke of the University question and Gabriel felt more at ease' (148). Finally, the verb can be used to denote an unhappy absence, as in '[Gabriel] had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love' (176). I can find only one instance of a character 'feeling' a positive emotion that does not fit into any of these categories. This is found in 'Eveline': 'she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him', which is followed by 'when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused' (27). Though not as dismal as all the other examples, it will be conceded that this is not much of an emotional zenith for the entire collection.

Finally, I would like to look at uses of 'to feel' in the sense of 'be conscious of', which is perhaps the most interesting category. Here the final words of 'A Painful Case' give us an archetypal example: '[Duffy] felt that he was alone' (90). This is an instructive phrase because, as is clear to even the most casual reader of the story, Duffy has been alone for a very long time. It is only with Mrs. Sinico's death, however, that he 'feels' this to be the case. The verb, more than anything else, has illuminated not that he 'feels' his loneliness now, but that he didn't feel his loneliness
beforehand, and so rather than highlighting his present sensitivity, it highlights his prior numbness to his own isolation. Another example comes from 'Eveline', in which we read that 'she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence' (26). Here, her father's violence is presented as a constant, the only variable being the degree to which she feels endangered by it. Most importantly, there is no indication of the extent to which she is actually in danger, which leaves open the possibility of a worrying numbness on her part towards her domestic situation. We might also turn to 'A Little Cloud', in which Little Chandler 'felt how useless it was to struggle against fortune' (53), which assumes that the struggle has always been useless, and that only sometimes is he conscious of this fact. The most powerful instance, however, comes again from 'A Painful Case': 'He felt his moral nature falling to pieces' (89). Duffy's moral nature has been falling to pieces for years. Yet it is only now, when it is far too late, that he actually feels the irrevocable damage that he has already done to himself.

My examination of these three usages should be enough, I hope, to convince the reader that Joyce builds up a systemic association with the verb 'to feel'. Throughout the collection the word becomes correlated with a variety of deeply negative experiences, some merely sad, others violent, others lugubrious. Further, it is essential to point out that there are descriptions of happiness in *Dubliners*, just as there are congenial moments in the lives of its characters. This is an important issue, because if it were the case that there were never any moments of positivity in *Dubliners* then Joyce's use of the verb 'to feel' would be rendered uninteresting, being simply one unexceptional dimension of a much broader (and less subtle) tactic whereby no character ever experienced anything but unhappiness. It is crucial to emphasise, then, that characters do experience all sorts of happy moments (just think of Eveline's memories, or parts of Farrington's pub crawl, or the early stages of Duffy's romance with Mrs Sinico: the examples are numerous). This fact makes it interesting, indeed significant, that none of these happy moments are 'felt'. Joyce has imposed a stylistic boundary between this verb and the many more joyful moments in the stories.

To get a sense for this, let us briefly look at some of those happy moments. Indeed, let us examine some of those times when Joyce uses the word 'happy' in a quite straightforward way: 'I was very happy' ('An Encounter' – 13), 'Perhaps they
could be happy together....' ('The Boarding House' – 50), '[his] admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair' ('The Dead' – 142). Or we might take instances from just one story, 'A Mother', in which people are 'content': 'Mrs. Kearney was well content at this' (107) and 'the men went out for the interval, content' (114). These emotions could so easily have been 'felt', yet not a single one of them is.

The reason for this, I suggest, is that it enables Joyce to preserve the stories' emotional range and depth while still making his characters' lives seem uniformly bleak. They do experience highs and lows, just as one would expect. But every time a character's emotions are focused upon, every time the impingement of their experiences upon their psychological state is actually made explicit and tangible with this simple verb 'to feel', the experience in question is at best gloomy, and at worst dangerous. The overall result of this tactic is that within a very broad range of feeling, so essential for the creation of emotive dynamics, Joyce has crafted a way of making all his Dubliners seem depressed without making the whole enterprise seem monotonous. Over fifteen stories, this correlation between feeling and negativity manifests itself as a sense of inescapable gloom in the characters' lives, yet never once does this suffocate the emotional range of the stories.

Let us situate this stylistic phenomenon in terms of logopoeia. In this case, the process is threefold. First, we observe that Joyce has created a certain pattern in his use of this particular verb, such that it is always associated with a sense of negativity. In Pound's terms, Joyce's 'habits of usage' in the case of verb 'to feel' create a very specific 'context in which we expect to find it', which in this case is the context of (at best) unhappiness. The second point is to compare this with the 'habits of usage' we associate with this verb more generally in order to find its 'known acceptances' in ordinary English usage. The expectations we bring to the text are highly significant, and the answer in this case is surely that we expect diversity in the use of this verb. People 'feel' happiness just as they 'feel' sadness, and at other times they 'feel' physical objects or perceptions that are emotionally neutral. The result of this variation is that we as English speakers have very few, if any, specific emotional associations with this verb. The crucial point to make about Joyce's use of logopoeia, then, is there is a contrast between the
associations he consistently develops around this word, and the associations we would normally have concerning it. It is this contrast which results in the effect we see in *Dubliners*. The third and final stage of this process is to place this contrast in the context of the collection's overall emotional range. For while the characters experience a good many emotions, some good and some bad, the only ones they 'feel', that is, the only ones with which they have an explicit connection, are negative. The result of this is that the logopoeia in question does not flatten the stories out into a panorama of negativity, but operates subtly to tilt what appears to be a diverse emotional range towards its negative end.

This approach, the search for logopoeia in *Dubliners*, has more uses than the understanding of paralysis implied by the single word studied here. I will give one other example, as a suggestion of the further possibilities of this kind of study, which is the word 'shadow'. There are thirteen instances of this word in the collection and, most fascinatingly, every time a shadow is mentioned someone is standing in it. From the first use of the word in 'Araby' ('If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow' – 19), through Lenehan ('he took his stand in the shadow of a lamp' – 43), Little Chandler ('he picked his way...under the shadow of the gaunt spectral mansions' – 54), Farrington ('he steered his great body along in the shadow of the wall' – 74), right through to Gretta ('A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow' – 165), every shadow in Dublin seems to contain the dim outline of a human figure. The word is also used more figuratively, without breaking the pattern. This is especially true of 'The Dead', in which we hear of Aunt Julia that 'Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face' (141), and of Gabriel that 'A shadow passed over his face as he remembered her sullen opposition to his marriage' (147). This is another kind of bleak expectation fostered by Joyce's associative consistency: in Dublin, people are always to be found in the darkness.

Returning to MacCabe, I take the meta-linguistic content of this associative link to be fairly clear, along much the same lines as techniques discussed in the preceding section. Most clearly, the narrative is asserting a 'position of dominance' over its characters; assuming a 'degree of control' over the discourses within it; and going 'behind a set of actions and explain[ing] them'.
Conclusion: on Meta-language in *Dubliners*

These are not the only three varieties of stylistic meta-language one finds in *Dubliners*. In chapter six I discuss, in a very different context, a technique I call atomisation, which could be understood in the same terms. I take these three as sufficient, however, to both provide a thematic-stylistic response to MacCabe, and to count as a minor contribution to stylistics in Joyce studies. Joyce's presentation of his characters as tarnished and paralysed at almost every level of their being is as powerful a self-interpretive manoeuvre as we could hope to find. It is so much more powerful, for example, than the kind of obtrusive didacticism Joyce so eschewed, because the self-interpretation lies just below the surface of the stories, and it requires work to uncover it. It would be possible to read 'Eveline' several times with only an enigmatic sense of sadness – and this might seem rather close to the kind of emotive discourse that MacCabe thinks we are tempted to force onto stories, which refuse, in their turn, to give that discourse any meta-linguistic textual purchase. Such a sense is surely common among first-time readers of *Dubliners*. With careful attention, however, we can see that far from having no textual foothold for this interpretation, we have instead a stylistic achievement which forces this interpretation upon us. The stories only look as if they refuse to grant the reader a position from which to interpret them: in fact, they do all our interpreting for us. There is, simply, no other way to convincingly read them than as moral diagnoses of a condition Joyce called hemiplegia.

Techniques such as these push *Dubliners* much closer to straightforward social critique than we are often prepared to realise. The idea of the author of *Ulysses* having anything to do with that genre of politically engaged social documentary is, for some Joyceans, a difficult one to swallow. Naturally, his approach is subtle, unobtrusive, scrupulous. Still, these qualities are quite compatible with it also being unambiguous, forceful, and indeed ethically engaged. That Joyce's moral history is effected via exquisite stylistic balance makes it no less moral, and no less a history. Equally, that this kind of literary project was one that Joyce (at the least) substantially modified in his later works is a thesis I find attractive. Still, it should be
clear that this most subtle and powerful of meta-languages is both a very serious problem for MacCabe's thesis, and a worthy field of study in its own right.
Chapter Five: Second Case Study

As I pointed out in chapter two, one of the great difficulties for any thesis which attempts to make a claim concerning a trend so broad as the Theoretical turn in literary studies is that of coverage. The sheer amount of scholarly material implicated by my thesis is far too large to be actually discussed and, as I have taken others to task for their conclusions being bloated, it is particularly important that I do not succumb to the same tendency. Ways of getting around this problem were discussed at the end of chapter two, and I refer the reader back to that discussion before continuing here. At the end of that chapter I looked forward to a final way in which I would usefully limit my selection of evidence in order to maximise applicability, to which I shall turn in detail now. Thus far I have concentrated on some of the most famous and celebrated literary Theorists/critics, taking them as sophisticated exemplars of their field. It will not be enough, however, to remain at this level of the most reputable scholars. In order to give my case broader relevance, I will need to deal with less exceptional criticism, and make a case for the wider academic community. Again, the question of scope returns with full force.

A series of questions now pose themselves. First, should I study monographs or journal articles? The emphasis, surely, should be on articles, which will allow me a vastly greater and more suggestive coverage. Second, how should these articles be chosen? Obviously, I cannot just cherry-pick articles that support my thesis, because that is precisely the kind of evidential selection that begs the question, telling us nothing about the vast majority of articles that I had no space to treat. Again, I need a way of having my articles chosen for me on entirely unrelated criteria: if such a neutral selection of articles betrays the problems I predict this will be highly suggestive. My proposal, therefore, is to study a published collection of articles. These will have been chosen for their breadth and quality by a team of qualified editors, which eliminates any possibility of cherry-picking to suit my thesis. Next, this collection should really have been convened around an explicitly Theoretical/ideological issue, which will coincide it neatly with the basic question of my study.
Now, some further qualifications. It would be no good conveniently selecting a collection that had been universally reviled by the academic community for its poor close readings and then treating it as representative. The collection must, therefore, have been very well reviewed. Should it err in the way predicted, the fact that it is of supposedly excellent quality will be highly revealing, not least in respect of the wider community's critical blind spots. Next, the collection must preferably contain academics with good reputations, which eliminates the chance of my picking those of ill-considered worth. They should be well-reputed enough to invite questions should they seriously err. Finally, to really make things interesting, these critics should have published non-ideological close readings of an excellent quality elsewhere. This provides a controlled comparison: it suggests that the reason for any errors is not in their close reading ability, but in the constraint of a Theoretical/ideological mandate for those readings.

These criteria stack the cards against me, effectively removing any chance I have to select my evidence based on its convenience to me. The offset for these self-imposed limitations is greater scope. Should a collection meeting all these criteria still prove to contain the errors I suggest then the implications will, I hope, be considered to be as wide as possible.

There are not too many collections that satisfy these demands. However, based on these criteria, the collection I have chosen is *Ulysses – En-Gendered Perspectives* (1999), which was edited by no less than Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum. This is a large collection of some eighteen essays, one for each episode, obviously centred upon a gender-led perspective. The critics collected are a veritable guest list of first-division Joyceans: Gary Leonard, Robert Spoo, Cheryl Herr, Maud Ellmann, Karen Lawrence, Bonnie Kime Scott, Marilyn Reizbaum, Margot Norris, Christine van Boeheemen, and several others. Many of these critics have elsewhere published 'pure' close readings of admirable quality.

This collection was, to put it mildly, well reviewed. The review in the *James Joyce Quarterly*, written by the celebrated Suzette A. Henke, begins with the words 'Every few years, an extraordinary critical study offers the Joyce community radically new perspectives and cutting-edge criticism in the field of Irish Modernism' (841). The essays are called 'Theoretically informed, innovative, and risk-taking'
'brimming with dazzling sidereal sidelights', 'a welcome source of scholarly illumination' (844). In the *James Joyce Broadsheet* Jolanta Wawrzycka was similarly effusive. She called the collection 'remarkably executed', 'an important event in the field of Joyce studies' written by 'an impressive group of Joyce scholars' (2). Where possible, I will introduce each essay with a quote from one or both of the reviews, which will serve as a useful indication of the ways in which the critical community judged these pieces.

My method will simply be to move through each chapter of the book, in order, and see the extent to which my predictions for this kind of criticism are borne out. As each one is a fairly substantial piece of criticism in its own right, however, I will obviously be unable to perform an exhaustive appraisal of every article. Rather, I will limit myself to finding at least one or two instructive errors in each, trying along the way to demonstrate a useful variety of problematic tendencies in this kind of criticism. In some cases this will result in a fairly brief discussion, in others I will take more time to explore a particularly instructive mistake. The point, of course, is not to perform a full dissection of a particular anthology, but to demonstrate a general trend via analysis of its most pertinent individual manifestations.

From the outset I wish to exempt three of the essays from what follows: having studied them, I find them to be of an exemplary quality as regards their close readings. These are the essays by Kimberly J. Devlin, Bonnie Kime Scott and John Bishop. I shall return to these essays in my conclusion, and consider the reasons for their success.

**Garry Leonard: "A Little Trouble about Those White Corpuscles":**

*Mockery, Heresy, and the Transubstantiation of Masculinity in "Telemachus"*

'Garry Leonard reads the "Telemachus" episode thorough a sharply focused Lacanian lens'

- Henke, 841

Garry Leonard seeks to demonstrate of the first episode that it 'presents a detailed display of modern masculinity in crisis', in which endeavour he will be
building on 'the Lacanian assumption that there is no foundational basis to identity' (6). With only these two facts at our disposal, we can make a few observations that it will be useful to bear in mind when we come to the close reading. These follow from the fact that the truth of Leonard's thesis is safely built into his assumptions, and that given this there is really nothing to prove. If identity is without foundation; and if, as he will go on to expound, we have only 'performance', 'masque' and 'illusion'; then by necessity all sense of masculine identity in every time and place is in a perpetual state of crisis. This is a key point. Leonard has designed a thesis that, given his assumptions, is true by default, which means that he is under no obligation to demonstrate anything.

There are more than a few logical quibbles to be had with such a procedure, but these are not my concern here. His, after all, is an essay about literature, and Leonard is still obliged to convincingly apply his rather circular logic to the text. I will examine this application shortly, but throughout the following should be borne in mind. Leonard writes as if he is showing us something about the first episode of *Ulysses*, as if he has discovered something about it. This is by definition not so. In truth the basic structure of Leonard's essay is this: 'if we assume that all identity and therefore all masculinity is in crisis, then it follows that the masculinity of those characters in the first episode of *Ulysses* is in crisis. Given this, to what extent can that crisis be observed?' This, of course, tells us little if anything about *Ulysses*. Note the difference between this and 'if we assume such an idea, do we find support for it?', which would be a more compelling mode of enquiry. The security of Leonard's assumptions is, in this respect, fatal to the usefulness of his thesis: he is only looking for what he has already found.

Bearing this in mind can make sense of instances such as the following, in which Leonard asserts without any support, and without any quotation, that

Stephen is both fearful and scornful of Mulligan because, on the one hand, he envies the verve with which Mulligan attracts notice as a "real man", but, on the other hand, this very enthusiasm, and its evident success, makes it that much clearer to Stephen that masculinity is an effect of acting and performing rather than a result of being. (3)

The logic goes: masculinity is a performance; Mulligan is (performatively) manly; Stephen is less so; Stephen resents Mulligan; Stephen must be uncomfortable with
the performative nature of gender as made plain to him by Mulligan. No reference to
Stephen's own thoughts or behaviour is necessary to cast him in this light; all that
matters is that Leonard's Theory of gender is, for the purposes of this essay at least,
held to be universally true, so it must be at the bottom of the characters' feelings and
behaviour. This is not so much bad close reading as the complete absence of close
reading – which is just as interesting. In this case, the Theoretical model adopted
simply makes close reading unnecessary.

Leonard does give us some close analysis, however, and it is illustrative.
Rather than tackle his more extensive portraits of Stephen and Mulligan, I would like
to briefly look at the way he analyses Haines's character. For Leonard, Haines's
status as an 'Oxford man' is wholly constitutive of his character, as 'An Oxford
education "packages" an individual the way an advertising campaign packages a
product' (5). Given Leonard's assumptions about identity, Haines becomes an
archetype of a 'manufactured Britisher...the sort of unreflexive automaton that is
produced when the foundational illusions about identity, gender, and nationality
are...thoroughly naturalised' (5).

As evidence for this, Leonard turns to Haines's own supposed perception of
this kind of brainwashing as 'a natural and organic maturation, allowing him to use
the royal "we" in casual conversation: "We feel in England that we have treated you
rather unfairly"' (5). It is a small point but it must be made: this is not an example of
the royal "we". The royal "we" is rather like using the second person plural as a
polite form of the singular in languages like French: it is a polite way of referring to
yourself, and can always be reduced back the first person singular ('we are in the
garden' = 'I am in the garden'). If this were an instance of the royal "we" Haines
would be saying "I feel in England that I have treated you rather badly". There is no
need to invoke such oddness; this is perfectly standard "we", as in "we English as a
group feel".

Leonard also claims that Haines 'explains his emotions as, "naturally", the
predetermined consequence of his nationality: "Of course I'm a Britisher, Haines's
voice said, and I feel as one"' (5, italics Leonard's). This is surely far too heavy an
interpretation of those final four words. Haines is discussing Britain's relationship
with Ireland, and acknowledging the inevitable bias brought by having grown up on
one side not the other. Had he not said this, but considered such feelings to be somehow neutral, we could of course accuse him of unthinking nationalism. His actual words, it seems to me, imply quite the reverse. Even conceding this, it is quite illegitimate to infer that his 'emotions' per se are nationally conditioned: he is obviously discussing a particular issue, and to move from such self-awareness to the idea of a wholly culturally-conditioned automaton is perhaps ideologically, but not textually, authorised.

Finally, we must turn to the words 'Haines's voice said' in the above quotation, which Leonard italicises and interprets thus: 'Stephen hears this pronouncement as no more than a voice speaking through Haines' (5, italics original), by which Leonard means that Stephen hears only the voice of British imperialism speaking through the automaton Haines. This is an odd reading of these words. First, if anything they emphasise that this is Haines's voice rather than someone or something else's: it is not clear how Leonard takes this phrase to mean that 'a' voice, not Haines's, is speaking. This issue dissolves when we set the phrase in context. Immediately before Haines's words Stephen's mind has been elsewhere for fully fifteen lines, doing a quick tour of the major heresies of Christian history. The reason Haines's voice rather than Haines himself does the speaking is that Stephen has forgotten altogether that Haines is even there, and it is only the sound of his voice, and not his physical presence, which breaks in on Stephen's reverie.

I intend to return to this moment in Leonard's analysis later in my thesis, but some anticipation of that discussion will serve to reinforce the point here. Joyce very frequently defers a verb from the subject who would normally operate it to the body part that allows it to happen. So voices speak, ears hear, eyes see and tongues taste. This is a very interesting stylistic trick, which happens in both Dubliners ('the shrill voice cried' – 65) and especially in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man ('his eyes which still saw the image of his mother's face' – 189). Proper understanding of this device would have given Leonard a much firmer basis for interpretation and prevented such an unnatural reading of these words. I will return to this in much more detail in chapter six.

Finally, we might ask ourselves if Leonard's portrait of Haines rings at all true, or if it is just an ideological extension of one part of his character? Yes Haines
is an irritating British man, educated at the heart of the establishment, intellectually a little simple and a bit condescending to boot. This does not make him an allegory of unreflexive imperialism. For one thing, it would be entirely against the depth and quality of Joyce's artistic project to paint so flat a character, which alone should put us on our guard. But more than this, any broad and detailed look at the information we are given about Haines only undermines such ideological airbrushing. For one thing, rather than staying in cosy Oxford Haines has come to strange and foreign Ireland, and decided to live not in town but in a disused military tower with Buck Mulligan and Stephen Dedalus, of all people. It is more than once implied that he is gay, or at least has feelings for other men (9.1210-12, 15.4704-06). His father must have been the kind of faintly unhinged character who would make his money selling a South American drug to Africa's most famously war-like tribe (1.156-7) – hardly a complacent aristocrat. He sometimes raves in the night, having nightmares about panthers, and keeps a gun with him (1.57-8). Recently, at a party in George Moore's home, Haines slid back a secret panel beside the chimney, holding a portfolio about Celtic literature and a bottle\(^{23}\), and began to rave about, among other things, crimes and retribution (14.1010 – 1027). He also claims to shoot rooks for fun (14.1022). This man may be culturally naive, but he is so much more complex than Leonard's reductive ideological rendering\(^{24}\).

Leonard has only been dealing with a few lines of the episode, the analysis I have described takes less than a paragraph, and yet almost every point within it is to some degree problematic, contributing in the end to a rather two-dimensional depiction of Haines's character. The source of this reductiveness is, I think, fairly plain. It is conceptually convenient for Leonard to cast Haines in the way he does, portraying him as ideology made flesh. This allows him to reinforce his thesis concerning performance and identity, but it has little to do with Joyce's work, which is sadly misrepresented in the process. This, together with the phenomenon I discussed earlier whereby Theory eliminates the need for close analysis, suggests an unhealthy relationship between Theory and close reading in this essay.

\(^{23}\) 'a phial marked *Poison*'[italics original]. Kenner thinks this is Irish Whiskey (*Ulysses*, 115).

\(^{24}\) For a far more complex and sensitive treatment of Haines, see John Gordon's article 'Haines and the Black Panther'.
Robert Spoo: 'Genders of History in "Nestor"

'Spoo, in 'Genders of History in "Nestor"', exposes that history [is] an ominous "night-mère"

- Henke, 841

'an ingenious reading of the episode'

- Wawrzycka, 2

By just the second paragraph of his essay Robert Spoo is at a conceptually advanced stage of analysis, discussing the female gendering of history in Joyce's work:

History...is consistently gendered as female in his fictions.... History is what hurts in Ulysses, as in Irish history generally, but it is also what haunts... The various discourses of history in Ulysses are haunted at their core by a restless latent content that plaintively asserts a lost female principle... Repressed female agency returns again and again in the form of uncanny metaphors, images and allusions...

"Here [is] great loveliness of ghosts," as Homer says of the female shades surging forward to drink from Odysseus's sacrifice. But here is horror as well. (21, italics original)

I am sceptical of many of these generalisations, but they remain at a level so non-specific that their worth is hard to assess. There is a charming point of detail in the quote from Homer, however – yet when this is examined more closely this turns out to be quite problematic.

Spoo is quoting the Fitzgerald translation of 1962, and this is a grave mistake. Fitzgerald brought Homer to a wide audience with his accessible translation, but as far as serious scholarship is concerned it is probably to be avoided. Here is Fitzgerald's rendering of the lines in question, which are found in Book Eleven, at line 235. I shall give a couple of lines either side, for reasons that will become clear:

...so it fell
that each declared her lineage and name.

Here was great loveliness of ghosts! I saw before them all, that princess of great ladies, Tyro, Salmoneus' daughter, as she told me... (184)
Here is the original Greek:

…αἱ δὲ πομνηζηναι ἐπήζαυ, ἢδὲ ἐκάζη 
ὁν γόνον ἐξαγόπεζεν ἐγὼ δ᾽ ἐπέεινον ἀπάζαρ.

"ἔνθ᾽ ἦν πτώςην Τξάω ίδον ἐοπηζηειν, 
ἡ θάρο Σαλμυνήρ ἀμύμονορ ἔκγονορ εἶναι…

- in which there is simply no mention whatever of lovely ghosts, the verse moving straight from the description of the questioning to the sight of Tyro. Lest there be any doubt on this point, let us go back to the translation Joyce himself used, Butcher and Lang's prose version:

So they drew nigh one by one, and each declared her lineage, and I made question of all.

Then verily did I first see Tyro, sprung of a noble sire, who said that she was the child of noble Salmoneus... (179)

I have checked the translations of Murray, Lattimore, Rieu and Shewring on the offchance that any of these esteemed Classicists have seen fit to insert similar lyrical apostrophes into line 235 for reasons we mere Joyceans might be unable to fathom. The results are unsurprising: 'Here was great loveliness of ghosts!' was written circa. 1962, by Robert Fitzgerald.

Given that Joyce's own choice of translation is well known, why choose the Fitzgerald? It was published over twenty years after Joyce's death, and has no support from Classics departments to recommend it as the best guide to Homer's poem – the reasons for which are not hard to fathom. In truth, I have no interest in speculating upon critical motivation, though in this case we must lean that way a little. Fitzgerald's translation provides Spoo with material that neither Homer, Butcher and Lang, nor any other translation provides. This material is available in Fitzgerald by virtue of a very free approach to the art of translation. All of this is outweighed, however, by the fact that it rhetorically supports Spoo's suggestion that 'Repressed female agency returns again and again in the form of uncanny metaphors, images and allusions'.

25 All quotations from the Greek text in this chapter are taken from the Perseus Digital Library: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0135>

26 For a neat proof of Joyce's choice of this translation, see R. J. Schork's Greek and Hellenic Culture in Joyce, 120-3.
Let us get back to Spoo's thoughts on history in Joyce, recalling his claim that 'History...is consistently gendered as female in his fictions'. It is something of a surprise to find this sweeping claim supported by little more than a discussion of just two points in *Ulysses*: Deasy's sexist history lesson (2.389-95) and Stephen's recurrent visions of his mother. Both of these textual supports are problematic. In the case of Deasy's speech, Spoo's difficulty lies in moving from a sexist discussion of women's role in history to the idea that history itself is feminine, a leap he never quite effects. We can quite happily concede that for Deasy 'History is made and marred by the cunning of female unreason' (22) without seeing his vision of history itself as gendered; and even if we did make that jump, how does one move from Deasy's vision of history to the idea that Joyce's fiction itself has a gendered vision of history? No answer to these basic questions is forthcoming.

Spoo's discussion of Stephen is weak, too. Details are often hazy, as in the following analysis: 'Stephen wonders if *amor matris* is alone "real" (2.144) [sic], the true ontological ground of masculine narratives' (23). The passage from episode two in question, a meditation on Stephen's pupil Sargent, reads:

> Yet someone had loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. Was that then real? The only true thing in life? (2.140-3)

Mention, even implication, of the ontological ground of masculine narratives is conspicuously absent here. It fits well within Spoo's discussion, but what of Joyce's scene? The 'real' here seems to me to be referring to unconditional love and care, 'true' as in 'faithful'. It is legitimate to wonder, I think, if Spoo is fully aware of the meaning of the word 'ontological', and how distant it is from this tortured little meditation on filial love. The only reason his reading doesn't jar is that Spoo has eliminated the context from his quotation, quoting only the word 'real', a classic instance of distortion by omission.

Perhaps more striking is that Spoo leaves unevidenced such assertions as 'in [Stephen's] guilty imagination May Dedalus becomes indistinguishable from the motherland' (23). 'Indistinguishable' is the strongest word he could have used here – surely it requires some support, if only to counterbalance the numerous times Stephen thinks of his mother without thinking of the motherland, and vice versa (e.g.
1.198-9 and 3.226)? That the two thoughts sometimes overlap is obviously true, but Spoo's claim is an over-exaggeration in the service of a conceptual need to unite discussion of gender and politics at the level of the text.

It should be noted that it is not for want of space that Spoo leaves such claims so free from subtlety or substantiation. His essay features several tangential discussions of, among other things, Yeats, Ibsen and the history of Joyce criticism – all of which are surely secondary to the proper authentication of his central textual claims. Of this latter enterprise there is surprisingly little besides the discussion of Mr. Deasy and May Dedalus. Bearing this in mind, recall that Spoo is making big claims for the whole of *Ulysses*, even the whole of Joyce's oeuvre. There is a classic disconnection here between the grandeur of the claim and the breadth and quality of the readings that support it.

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**Cheryl Herr: 'Old Wives' Tales as Portals of Discovery in "Proteus"***

'Herr suggestively positions "Stephens's thoughts within a larger epistemological context"'

- Henke, 842

'Herr's essay...is well-grounded in, among others, Irish feminist philosophy'

- Wawrzycka, 2

While preparing episode three, Cheryl Herr observes, Joyce made the following notes:

- deal logically with the unknown
- working hypothesis
- reductio ad absurdum
- prod. elim. of some elements of complexity

1) state of ignorance
2) respect for the as yet unknown
3) never shirk absurd

Upon which Herr writes:

The reader has to grant Joyce as many degrees of irony in his notebooks as in his narratives, but it seems likely that at some level of
the *Ulysses* experience, in one of its narrative registers, a patriarchal logic can be found struggling toward "the as yet unknown". (32)

One might question the legitimacy of implicitly privileging Joyce's intentions by quoting his notes only to then define his terms in a way that would have been utterly alien to him ('a patriarchal logic'). More problematic, however, is Herr's notion of such logic 'struggling toward' the unknown. Now, for Herr's Theoretical purposes this makes perfect sense. If logic is intrinsically patriarchal then there is much to be made of its confrontation with its antithesis, which can be read as 'feminine': such a tension gives license for a great deal of ideological investment in otherwise inconspicuous areas of Joyce's work. But look again at the first of Joyce's notes: 'deal logically with the unknown'. It must be pointed out that if the unknown can be dealt with logically this presupposes that it is amenable to logic, or, more simply, that it is logical. Put more technically there is no sense in which Joyce treats the limits of knowledge as synonymous with the limits of logic, which indeed would be a fairly common stance. But in Herr's reading, those little words 'struggling towards' upend the whole picture, portraying the unknown as being somehow without logic – a misconstrual, which makes sense only as an attempt to force Joyce's thoughts into a convenient ideological relationship.

An interesting aside can be had in examining a mistake of a more trivial, but equally suggestive kind. On the next page Herr writes of 'Stephen's crying out for "Naked women!" under the Howth tram' (33). One need not even have read *Ulysses* to wonder about that word 'under': why is Stephen under a tram? Sure enough, the relevant passage reads: 'On the top of the Howth tram alone crying to the rain: Naked women!' (3.133-4). There is, I would argue, a kind of indifference to the text here. This is not a minor error, and it is not difficult to spot. It is not as simple as a slip or an accidental misquotation: the original even emphasises Stephen's location with not just 'on' but 'on top of'; and more crucially still Herr's rendering makes no sense. Being under a tram is, one feels confident in observing, quite conclusively fatal, and it requires an odd set of critical priorities to fail to notice this. Obviously, one cannot trace this error back to a Theoretical mandate, but it is indicative of the kind of critical practice we are examining.
Another example of a similar mistake: 'when Stephen thinks he sees a midwife's bag he assumes the presence of a misbirth' (38). Note that 'assumes', which gives Herr a window into Stephen's unconscious prejudices about the world. But the passage (unquoted by Herr) reads: 'Creation from nothing. What has she in the bag? A misbirth with a trailing navelcord, hushed in ruddy wool. The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh.' (3.35-7). Stephen does not 'assume' the presence of a misbirth; he imagines it, a crucial difference. The image springs not from his assumed view of the world, but from his slightly morbid imaginings on creation and the linkage of all humanity, which, of course, is not as convenient for Herr. The misrepresentation is subtle, but significant. Unlike the last example, this can be traced back to Theory. Assuming the presence of a miscarried foetus is so much stronger, and therefore more useful, than merely imagining it, as it cries out for psychoanalytical interpretation to a higher degree.

Another, more amusing example, can be found when Herr brings Luce Irigaray into the discussion, quoting her Marine Lover at length:

had I never held back, never would you have remembered that something exists which has a language other than your own...Yes, yes, yes...I hear you. And I do not hear you. I am your hearing. Between you and yourself, I ensure the vocal medium. A perpetual relay between your mouth and your ear...How I should love you if to speak to you were possible. (40)

This, Herr claims, 'sounds a bit like Molly Bloom' (40). I wish Herr had demonstrated this a little more closely. True, the 'Yes, yes, yes' is a similarity in vocabulary, though the tone is very different. Irigaray's is short, impatient; Molly's often lyrical, accepting. The rest is manifestly different from Molly's soliloquy. Irigaray uses disconcerting, paradoxical formulations ('I hear you. And I do not hear you. I am your hearing'), oddly technical vocabulary ('I ensure the vocal medium') and is constantly addressing herself to a 'you' figure, which traits serve to place her style a long way from Molly's.

What links these critical problems is, I would argue, Theoretical pressure. The question of patriarchal logical in Joyce's notes, the mis-contextualisation of key images, the comparison with Irigary: these are attempts to read the text in a distinctively Theoretical manner, all of which come at the expense of a certain standard of close reading.
Carol Shloss: 'Milly, Molly, and the Mullingar Photo Shop: Developing Negatives in "Calypso"

A 'revealing snapshot'

- Henke, 841

'Reading against the grain continues in "Milly, Molly, and the Mullingar Photo Shop"

- Wawrzycka, 2

Carol Shloss's essay, 'Milly, Molly, and the Mullingar Photo Shop', begins with the following words:

Calypso's island in The Odyssey is an enclosure near the western edge of the world, and its name, Ogygia, Victor Berard [sic] tells us in Les Pheniciens et l'Odyssée, means "ocean" (42)

This will come as a surprise to Classicists, who will know that the Greek word for 'ocean' is Ὠκεανός. Still, the reference to Bérard is not to be brushed aside so easily, so the matter is worth investigating. Shloss's footnote refers us not to Bérard but to Seidel's Epic Geography, where the same claim is repeated. Oddly, no page reference is given there, but after hunting through the rest of Seidel's book we can find one to the first volume of Bérard, p292. This reads:

Mais ce prétendu nom propre n'est qu'une épithète: l'île est Ὠγύγη, ogygienne, comme telle porte de Thèbes en Béotie est ogygienne. Cette épithète, que présente aucun sens en grec, et pourtant fréquente dans la Grèce préhellénique...Il est impossible de dire ce que peuvent signifier cette épithète et ce nom. Mais il semble bien que ogygienne, Ὠγύγα ne soit que l'épithète formée du nom Ogygos, Ὠγύγος, lequel est peut-être un synonyme de Ὠκεανός, océan: l'île ogygienne, νησιος Ὠγύγα signifierait donc une île Océanide, une île voisine de l'océan ou entourée par l'océan.

Bérard identifies Ὠγύγη as an epithet, but quickly remarks that this epithet had no meaning in ancient Greek ('préente aucun sens en grec'). It did, however, have some meaning in pre-Hellenic Greece. Observing that it is impossible to say what the name signifies ('Il est impossible de dire ce que peuvent signifier cette épithète et ce nom') he ventures that it is 'perhaps a synonym for ocean' ('peut-être un synonyme de Ὠκεανός, océan').
This is not a definition, not even an etymology. It is a speculation, and a hundred-year old speculation at that. The first question for any modern scholar approaching such a passage must be whether the relevant contemporary scholarship has substantiated this claim. A convenient and fairly definitive measure is the still-current project to translate and upload *Der Neue Pauly*, the entry in which reads:

(Ὤγυγος; Ὠγύγης; Ὠγύγη). The name O. is probably pre-Greek, and may derive from the Lydian-Carian migrations; at that time, O. was worshipped as a god. The Boetian goddesses of oaths, the Praxidikai, were said to be his daughters (Paus. 9,33,5; Suda s.v. Ππαξιδίκη; Steph. Byz. s.v. Ππεμίλη). Ancient king of Boeotia (the adjective Ὠγυγιος/ὦγυγιός is used for 'Boeotian' and 'ancient': Suda s.v. Ὠγύγια κακά; Ὠγύγιον).

Note that some of Bérard's work has been borne out. The word is indeed pre-Greek, and its meaning is indeed hazy. But aside from this, Pauly indicates that Bérard's musings on the subject have not been taken up by the Classical community, noting only that the adjective was used to denote both 'Boeotian' and 'ancient'. There are dozens of classical dictionaries with an entry for Ὠγυγος or Ὠγυγιος; I have found none that supports Bérard's claim.

To significantly understate, this is shaky ground indeed – and recall Shloss's breezy claim: Bérard simply 'tells us' what this word means. The claim is not that Joyce had read Bérard and therefore may have had this in mind, but that Bérard, as an authority, can be relied upon for matters of ancient Greek vocabulary. This is, I submit, a misrepresentation of the true situation. If one is going to refer without qualification to the meaning of Greek words one is simply not at liberty to ignore the truly vast scholarship on the subject and jump back a century until one finds someone making a speculation that suits. A classicist who began their essay with this kind of footwork would be held to account for the misleading selection of antiquated, speculative sources over modern consensus, and I see no reason not to do the same here. At the very least, a proper reference to the Bérard, together with an indication of current scholarly opinion would be appropriate. This, however, would not be to Shloss's purpose, which is to foreground her discussion by Theorising this oceanic nomenclature:

Not only is it a place of mythic captivity, but it is a place identified by its surrounding form. Its land is named by the sea; that which is signified takes its signifier from the context of its occurrence... (42)
Shloss's opening is slick, convenient, and it allows her to move straight into conceptualising the issues at hand. But before all this it is not strong scholarship, a fact which, alas, is apparently secondary.

**Maud Ellmann: 'Skinscapes in "Lotus-Eaters"'**

A 'prickling meditation'

- Henke, 841

Remarkably, pursuing the same interest in proper reference to the *Odyssey* takes us right into the second paragraph of Maud Ellmann's piece. Here she writes:

> Within a few lines, Odysseus has seen enough of the effects of lotus-eating on his crew to drag them weeping back into the ships, "for fear / someone else might taste of the lotus and forget the way home." (51)

Ellmann is not, mercifully, using the Fitzgerald translation, but the considerably more serious Lattimore version. In this instance it is not precisely literal, but the sense is fairly exact. Here, however, is where Ellmann takes us in the comments immediately following:

> Odysseus fears the lotus because it makes his men forget their home and everything that home entails about their obligations to their origins. "Home is where one starts from," in Eliot's deceptively transparent phrase: home stands for all the bonds to place, to persons, to the past, that determine our identity within society. By forgetting home, the lotus eater is liable to forget himself: forget his origins, his name, his race, his gender. Most perilous of all, he may forget the rules of narrative, forget to bring the story to its end... (51-2, italics original)

Notice the key shift in the first sentence here: whereas in Lattimore's version the men might forget 'the way home', in Ellmann's next sentence they are made to forget 'home' wholesale, and then on top of that 'everything that home entails about their obligations to their origins'. This is, needless to say, not at all the same thing:

Ellmann is talking about identity, Lattimore about a sense of direction. Yet it is only through this kind of move that Ellmann can proceed in the fashion she intends, for only by subtly changing the sense of the words in this way can she introduce the idea that lotus-eaters might forget such remarkable things as their own gender or the rules of narrative (!). Now, Ellmann is quite within her rights to suggest that forgetfulness
of gender and narrative is a key issue in Joyce's work – but this is not what she is doing. She is deriving these issues – or at least seeming to derive them – from Homer himself. Yet even following her own quotation this derivation is illegitimate. Odysseus's men are simply not said to forget 'home', but rather the way home. Ellmann is moving into a Theoretical gear very neatly here, but I fear that Homer is suffering in the process.

Let us turn to an example of Ellmann's close examination of Ulysses itself:

This pattern of projection recurs throughout the chapter. When Bloom is "fingering" Martha Clifford's letter, with its innuendoes of castration ("Remember...I will punish you...you naughty boy"), he draws a pin out of the pocket in which it is concealed... (62)

Notice the way Ellmann pushes a fairly serious claim – that Martha Clifford's language plays with the idea of castration – into a parenthesis, thereby eliding discussion of its legitimacy. Unless every instance of sexual power play is to be interpreted as an innuendo implying castration I see no good reason to make this leap. Clifford has never met Bloom, nor does Bloom seem to want to arrange a meeting (5.270-1), though she obviously wants to meet him: the neediness is all hers, and on that count it is Bloom not Martha who is the one calling the shots. Similarly, she displays a sad desperation in her letter ('I am sorry you did not like my last letter...I do wish I could do something for you. Please tell me what you think of poor me...I feel so bad about...O how I long to meet you...I have such a bad headache. today' – 5.242-265). We should remember that the correspondence started after Clifford responded to an ad Bloom posted for a 'smart lady typist to aid gentleman in literary work' (8.226), so she hardly came to him as a threatening dominatrix. In my view, there is a certain sadness and neediness to Clifford's semi-literate attempts to arouse Bloom, her condescending foreplay a thin attempt to cover psychological need. Given these facts, I find the notion that for Bloom her words contain innuendoes of castration to be at best an insensitive reading. It is useful for Ellmann, however, because castration has a rich Theoretical resonance.

Ellmann continues by quoting the following passage:

Fingering still the letter in his pocket he drew the pin out of it. Common pin, eh? He threw it on the road. Out of her clothes somewhere: pinned together. Queer the number of pins they always have. No roses without thorns. (5.275-8)

On which she remarks:
Thus Bloom responds to the threat of castration, implicit in the letter as well as in the pin, by imagining the female body as a garment loosely "pinned together" and about to split apart. By fetishistic logic, he transfers his own anxiety about dismemberment onto women's detachable parts, especially their underclothes, which are neither clothes nor skin but represent precisely the ambiguity between the two.

Notice how, without argument, Ellmann has transformed her suggested 'innuendoes of castration' into an outright 'threat of castration'. How the pin threatens castration is never explained, or even hinted at, and I see no obvious link. Next, Ellmann's claim that Bloom imagines 'the female body as a garment loosely "pinned together" and about to split apart' is, I think, simply false. Bloom guesses that the pin came from her clothes, notes that these are often pinned together, and finds it strange how many pins women employ in this regard. He is not imagining bodies, and nothing at all is described as being about to split apart. I see no evidence of 'fetishistic logic' in this.

Recall, furthermore, the shift from 'innuendoes of castration' to 'threat of castration': now we have another unevidenced shift from this to Bloom's having an 'anxiety about dismemberment', an even more remarkable elaboration. He does not imagine clothes being somehow the 'detachable parts' of women. Finally, the notion that he is focusing 'especially on their underclothes' is unwarranted. Women's underclothes did not require pins. Apart from being painful this would have been unnecessary: they were usually a simple garment that required neither reinforcement nor fitting, the latter being important only on the fancier outer layers. The logic of Ellmann's discussion is Theoretical, drawing on objectification Theory and psychoanalysis, but it is not textual.

Notice, incidentally, Ellmann's slightly odd contemplation on the subject of underclothes, that they are 'neither clothes nor skin but represent precisely the ambiguity between the two'. In response one can only insist that, in the absence of compelling reasons to believe otherwise in a particular case, the default classification of underclothes should be as a type of clothing. Ellmann's clarification that they are not a kind of skin is, one is forced to concede, sound enough, but perhaps muddies rather than clears the waters with its implication that, in some ineffable sense, they could be. Notice also the carefree assumption that there is an 'ambiguity' between skin and clothes – a point which, I feel, it would not be hard to contest. Again,
Ellmann is hiding remarkable claims in the assumptions of her work. Finally, most starkly, consider the use of the word 'precisely' in the above quotation.

Next Ellmann accurately describes how Bloom misses the innuendo of pin/erection. However, she goes on calmly assert that Bloom's 'next gesture is to tear up Martha's envelope, which is analogous to tearing off her clothes or skin' (62). I can see no reason to think this analogy credible.

Ellmann's next words are:

This chain of thought, like many others, suggests that Bloom's fears about his penis are a decoy, deflecting his (and our) attention from a vast unnameable anxiety extending over the entire surface of his flesh. (62)

Recall once more Ellmann's remarkable shifting from 'innuendoes of castration' to 'threat of castration' to 'anxiety about dismemberment'. This has now become 'Bloom's fears about his penis', again with no explanation of the change. More importantly, Ellmann gives no clue as to how Bloom's chain of thought 'suggests' this vast unnameable anxiety over his skin. I can see no such suggestion, and I find it odd that so fantastical a phobia should be so difficult to see. We can only wish that Ellmann had elaborated the point with one of the 'many other' chains of thought that illustrate it. With this in mind, Ellmann's final claim that 'In his imagination, the penis, like the pin, is that which "keeps it up," prevents the skin from falling off' looks groundless. Again we are only given assertion, where what we need is tightly evidenced argument.

**Patrick McGee: 'Machines, Empire, and the Wise Virgins: Cultural Revolution in "Aeolus"'

McGee proposes two substantial readings in this essay which exemplify the errors under discussion. The first is that the project of the seventh episode is to 'dissect…the concept of the machine that fosters the mechanical reproduction of imperialist culture' (89). The second is that, via the use of key examples, he can demonstrate a secret, problematic self-identification of the colonial subject with the imperial culture it resists. For spatial reasons, I will consider only the second claim, but recommend the first as an object of further examination.
In his own words, McGee claims he has found three instances of 'nationalist rhetoric that harbor a secret identification of the colonized or subaltern subject with the culture of imperialism' (92). Let us look at each in turn.

The first is Dan Dawson's hymn to the 'peerless panorama of Ireland's portfolio' (7.320), which conforms to every sentimental condescension of Ireland one can imagine. Still, as McGee notes, the assembled company are not taken in by this, in fact they actively ridicule it, so this cannot be their 'secret identification' with imperial culture. McGee does, however, claim that the men 'are impressed by the various alibis imperialism uses to promote its own cultural authority'. Instructively, McGee provides no reference or evidence for this claim, and I am unsurprised by this: I can find nothing in the episode to support it. The mood is led by Simon Dedalus, whose charming little ejaculation – 'shite and onions!' (7.329) – is about as 'impressed' as he gets.

But McGee is not done. He continues:

> The professor may hate the "material domination" of the British, but he inadvertently accepts their cultural domination with something like Mulligan's call for the hellenization of Ireland: "The Greek!...Kyrios! Shining word! The vowels the Semite and the Saxon know not. Kyrie! The radiance of the intellect. I ought to profess Greek, the language of the mind." Mulligan's experience at Oxford would suggest that Greek culture is no more unfamiliar to the British than anti-Semitism; and the language of the mind...may be precisely the means by which the empire interpellates the subaltern subject (witness Matthew Arnold).

The argument would appear to be that by celebrating Greek the professor is somehow sympathising with British imperial culture. This is palpably superficial, relying exclusively on a vague association between supposedly high culture and political power. Go any deeper, and the professor's meaning turns out to be the reverse. First, McGee's point that the British are familiar with Greek misses the point entirely. The Professor is referring to the vowel in the word Kyrie, the Greek upsilon, for which there is an equivalent in neither Hebrew nor English. But second, more deeply and crucially, he is referring to the word kyrie itself, which means 'lord' or 'guardian'. His point is that neither the British nor the Jewish people 'know' masters: the British because of their imperial supremacy, the Jewish because of their eternal resistance to and rejection of political subjugation. The professor's words both highlight the significant absences in overtly nationalised cultures (the absence of the
upsilon), and suggest the possibility of refusing lordship even in instances of political oppression (Jewish people refuse lordship despite their lack of empire). In no way does this 'secretly identify' with imperial culture.

McGee's next example is J. J. O'Molloy's recitation of Seymour Bushe's speech at the Childs murder case. McGee notes that 'Strictly speaking, this speech is not nationalist in content' (93). That 'strictly speaking' is misleading: it is not nationalist at all. McGee does not quote the speech in full, so I submit it for consideration here:

that stony effigy in frozen music, horned and terrible, of the human form divine, that eternal symbol of wisdom and prophecy which, if aught that the imagination or the hand of sculptor has wrought in marble of soultransfigured and of soultransfiguring deserves to live, deserves to live. (7.768-771, italics original)

How, then, is McGee going to show the 'secret identification'? He discusses 'citationality', Derridean iterability, and the way that Bushe's words 'dramatize the violence of quoting', and the trace of aestheticism and decadence in the language of Bushe's speech – none of which I am keen to dispute, only it should be observed that none of it contributes to McGee's case for 'secret identification'. Finally, he observes that 'The phantasm that captures and derails subaltern desire in this case is the seduction of art itself, or at least the aesthetic effect of language' (93). Rather than explain this, he comments that Stephen's blush (at the beauty of Bushe's language)

aligns him with the greatest Irish decadent of all, Oscar Wilde, who could be said to have fused Caliban and Ariel in the construction of an Irish subject-position that attempted to transcend subalternity through art. Wilde failed because in privileging homosocial desire across national and class boundaries he failed to take into account the material relations that actually shape and enforce social hierarchy. The social order he desired, wooed, critiqued, and transfigured through art could only read his desire as the ground of criminal action. (93)

The language is technical, but the argument is strikingly thin. The case seems to be that Stephen's love of this language 'captures and derails' his desire as a subaltern because it aligns him with Oscar Wilde, who was condemned for being homosexual by the social structures he had treated in his artwork. Assumedly, McGee is implying that somewhere in Wilde's complex relations with British imperial society there is an identification in which Stephen shares via his blushing at Bushe's words. I do not believe this to be a forceful case, not least because the link between Stephen and
Wilde seems so very thin. Bushe's words do not strike me as very typical of Decadent style, not least in their celebration of the worthiness of humanity over artistic representation, and their use of elaborate compound nouns. Further, why link Stephen with Wilde in particular, and not another, English Decadent writer? This seems so arbitrary and convenient that I can only credit it to McGee's need for a neat ideological link. Finally, even if this link is made, why would Stephen's liking of this language contain within it the trace of Wilde's imperial relations? A case must be made for this, and McGee provides none. McGee's remarkable claim that Bushe's speech exposes a secret identification with imperial culture cannot be supported by such stretched comparisons.

Promisingly, McGee says his third example of Irish rhetoric 'transcends the first two', and I would agree. The kernel of his case is that the words 'Israel is weak and few are her children: Egypt is an host and terrible are her arms' (7.856-8, italics original) are ironically placed in relation to the historical event of the British state being forced to negotiate by Irish rebels. This is a fine observation, bettered by his next that the words 'Why will you Jews not accept our culture, our religion and our language?' (7.845, italics original) cut the other way with their irony, for the language of John F. Taylor, and indeed the language of Ulysses, is English. This does seem to me to be an example of the implication of Irish nationalists with the culture of the imperial state they resist. It does not, I should add, seem to me to be in the least an 'identification': it might just as easily be a resentful reflection on an unhappy state, resisting the identification implied by the shared language. But this is, comparatively, a niggle. In this case I feel it important to show McGee's argument succeeding to highlight its failure in the first two examples, which seem to me to be very good instances of an ideological pressure crippling the efficacy of close reading.
Karen Lawrence: 'Legal Fiction or Pulp Fiction in "Lestrygonians"'

A 'succulent morsel...'  
- Henke, 842

'[Lawrence] ingeniously reads 'Lestrygonians'...'  
- Wawrzycka, 2

For the student of close reading, Karen Lawrence begins her essay well. While discussing the opening of episode three she does not fall into the trap, as a surprising number do, of thinking that Bloom is actually eating the 'inner organs of beasts and fowls'. Her emphasis on unspoken interiority here is spot on, marking out a keynote of Bloom's character.

Sadly, this precision does not last. Having made accurate reference to the emphasis on gestation in Bloom's psyche, and announced her aim of tracing 'the displacements and realizations of orality' (103) in episode eight, she comes to Bloom's entrance to the Burton restaurant (8.650). She observes Bloom's revulsion at what he finds there, quoting these passages (note the ellipsis in her quotation, which will be significant):

Smells of men. Spatton sawdust, sweetish warmish cigarettesmoke, 
reek of plug, spilt beer, men's beery piss, the stale of ferment. 
His gorge rose. 
Couldnt eat a morsel here...
He came out into the clearer air and turned back towards Grafton street. Eat or be eaten. Kill! Kill! (8.670-3, 8.701-3)

Of this Lawrence asks 'Why is his reaction so violent? Why does the lover of inner organs of beasts and fowls, the man who likes the urinous tang of kidney, have such a strongly emetic response?' (104-5). She then pursues this line of enquiry for several pages of her essay, with the strangeness of Bloom's reaction having to bear considerable interpretive weight. Lawrence is sceptical of 'the complacency of humanistic accounts of Bloom', and is keen to emphasise instead his discomfort with flesh when it is simply dead matter: 'he has...trouble facing the nonsublimated version of incorporation, the atavistic image of the body wholly devoid of spirit.' She postulates that 'At all costs Bloom attempts to avoid the taste of death' (105).

The Theoretical strain here is fairly clear: an antagonism to humanistic readings, a psychoanalytical reading of sublimation, suggestions of the fear of death.
Furthermore, she links Bloom's supposed repulsion to 'the traditions that cling to this fallen-away Jew'. She cites Kristeva as saying that for Jews a corpse is 'a body without soul...it must not be displayed but immediately buried so as not to pollute the divine earth.' So for Lawrence, Bloom is confronting 'the unredeemed and unredeemable corpse' (105), a notion she spells out with nearly half a page of quotation from Kristeva (105-6). At this point her discussion expands, but Bloom's Jewish revulsion at unredeemable corpses continues to play a role and be elaborated upon throughout the rest of her piece.

The Theoretical weight resting on this single reading, then, is considerable. All of it depends, moreover, on the supposed peculiarity of Bloom's reaction: because he loves eating and community, the source of this revulsion must be elsewhere, which opens the door to all of Lawrence's elaborate suggestions.

But look again at Lawrence's quotation: it elides some thirty lines of the episode, and indeed there are another twenty lines before the start of her quote that deal with Bloom's reaction to the scene in the Burton. Might we not look here for illumination before concluding that Bloom's response is so odd that we have to consult the Jewish fear of the corpse for explanation?

Before that we can make a preliminary observation concerning the material Lawrence has brought to light. She follows Nolan in questioning Bloom's comfort with 'masculine community', but even the quotation given suggests that this is a very flawed reading. Bloom is horrified by the selfishness of what he sees ('Every fellow for his own, tooth and nail') and the lack of shared human spirit ('Kill! Kill!'). A better reading, surely, is that it is precisely the lack of community in this scene that so upsets Bloom? The passage, then, does not undercut but reinforces Bloom's attachment to decent community. One has to seriously twist the quotation to get it to imply the opposite.

Now, let us look at those omitted lines. They are too long to quote in full, but here are some revealing excerpts:

at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling...their eyes bulging...A pallid suetfaced young man polished his tumbler knife fork and spoon with his napkin. New set of microbes...A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: gums: no teeth to chewchewchew it...Sad booser's eyes...Hungry man is angry man.
Working tooth and jaw...Give me the fidgets to look. Safer to eat from his three hands...Out. I hate dirty eaters. (8.654-696).
The obvious, recurring theme here is hygiene, culminating in the words 'Out. I hate dirty eaters.' The second obvious theme is Bloom's dislike of selfishness and conflict, and its relation to bodily needs ('Hungry man is angry man. Working tooth and jaw'). Between them, these two themes more than adequately explain Bloom's swift departure, and what is more they are perfectly compatible with Bloom's fondness for both food and decent community. Indeed, they are far more compatible than Lawrence's convolutions: Bloom's love of food leads him to desire good hygiene, and his liking for community leads him to fear and loathe the feral behaviour of these men. Finally, the length of time Bloom spends contemplating the scene accounts for the severity of his reaction when he does decide to leave: but then, Lawrence's abridged version gives no sense of that either.

In light of this I find Lawrence's thesis that 'At all costs Bloom attempts to avoid the taste of death' in the form of corpse/meat unpersuasive. The supposedly inexplicable revulsion from which she derives this idea is not really inexplicable; and what is more Lawrence does not begin to reconcile this conclusion with the many obvious instances of Bloom very much enjoying the taste of corpse/meat.

Finally, Lawrence's reliance on Kristeva here must not go unchallenged. Why is Julia Kristeva her source for Jewish views of the corpse? Why does she fail to support this section on Judaic belief and practice with a reference to a single Jewish writer or text? This is particularly pressing in light of how questionable her facts are on this point. Together with Kristeva, she suggests that Jews behold the corpse with a sense of horror, and that they bury it to escape its ability to 'pollute'. One does not have to go far to call this into question. The Mosaic imperative for speedy burial can be found in Deuteronomy 21: 22-23:

And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. (KJV)

This explicitly refers to those who have been hanged, and are therefore 'accursed', which is why they would defile the land. This is not to do with corpses per se. Indeed the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 47a: 8-15) says that if the corpse is not that of an executed person, then it is acceptable to keep it overnight in order to
prepare for a proper burial: 'for all that he does is only for the honour of the deceased!' (13). That the Jewish reverence for the body in fact extends beyond its death also finds very practical support in, among other things, the reluctance of observant Jews to allow autopsy. This discussion of Judaism is highly questionable; but of course, very convenient for Lawrence's thesis.

**Joseph Valente: 'The perils of Masculinity in "Scylla and Charybdis"'**

'The argument developed by Joseph Valente...is marvellously tantalizing and ingenious...a sinuous psychoanalytic interpretation...'

- Henke, 842

We have already seen one critic come unstuck when dealing with Homer. This, alas, is but a minor glitch compared to Joseph Valente's reading of the Scylla and Charybdis section in Book XII of the *Odyssey*:

Odysseus must negotiate the monumental double bind of Scylla and Charybdis, the gendered outlines of which anticipate the topographical symbolism of *Finnegans Wake*. Although the monsters are both nominally feminine, their respective aspects differ along sexual lines. The more purely feminized construction, Charybdis constitutes "a whirling maelstrom", hidden by a "shaggy mass of leaves." Scylla features a set of similarly engorging maws, but also a set of patently phallic tentacles. She occupies a gynemorphic "cavern," but it is lodged within a "sharp" phallomorphic rock. (114)

Note the word 'nominally' in the second sentence. If we remove it, the analysis becomes oxymoronic: 'although the monsters are both feminine, their respective aspects differ along sexual lines'. The question is, what does the word 'nominally' denote? I confess ignorance on this point, but would like to note that it could be replaced with the word 'explicitly', which would probably be more accurate. Homer genders both entities as female. They are both 'she'. In the light of this simple fact, talk of Charybdis being the 'more purely feminized construction' looks odd.

But in truth, this is a secondary point. For, following the footnote we find ourselves referred to the Fitzgerald translation, and this should be a cause of great concern. Let us begin with Charybdis. In Fitzgerald, the passage reads:

The opposite point seems more a tongue of land you'd touch with a good bowshot, at the narrows. A great wild fig, a shaggy mass of leaves,
grows on it, and Kharybdis lurks below
to swallow down the dark sea tide. Three times
from dawn to dusk she spews it up
and sucks it down again three times, a whirling
maelstrom; if you come upon her then
the god who makes earth tremble could not save you... (202)

Let us be explicit about Valente's analysis of this passage. He picks up on two points:
the 'whirling maelstrom' under the 'shaggy patch of leaves'. His implication is
obviously vaginal: the maelstrom being the vagina, the shaggy leaves a reference to
pubic hair. Making such readings explicit, in both senses of that word, can sensitise
us to their radical nature, which will be useful when we return to the Greek. This
reads:

᾽ηὸν δ’ ἔηεπον ζκόπελον σθαμαλώηεπον ὅτει, ᾿Οδξζζεῦ.
πληζίουν ἀλλήλων’ καὶ κεν διοφζεῦεζεῖαρ.
ηὸ δ’ ἐν ἕπινεδρ ἔζηῃ μέγαρ, θὐλλοιζη ἥεθηλὼρ’
ηὸ δ’ ὑπὸ δία Χάπζβοίρ ἀναποιβδεῖ μέλαιν ὤδει.
ηπὶρ μὲν γὰς ἦ’ ἀνήζχιν ἐπ’ ἱμαμη, ἦπὶρ δ’ ἀναποιβδεῖ
δεινόν: μῆ ζῦ γε κεῖθη ἡῦσοιρ, ὅηε ροβδόηζεῖεν’
οὗ γάς κεν ῥοζίαιρ ζ’ ὑπὲκ κακοῦ οῦδ’ ἐνοζίζθων.

There is absolutely no ambiguity here. Nowhere are any words resembling 'whirling
maelstrom' to be found. The place in Fitzgerald where the phrase is found does not
exist in the Greek, which moves straight from Charybdis terribly sucking the water
down three times (ηπὶρ δ’ ἀναποιβδεῖ δεινόν) to the warning that not even the
Earthshaker could save Odysseus from such a fate (μῆ ζῦ γε κεῖθη ἡῦσοιρ, ὅηε ροβδόηζεῖεν’ οὗ γὰς κε πο ῥοζίαιρ ζ’ ὑπὲκ κακοῦ οῦδ’ ἐνοζίζθων.) Here is how
Murray translates this section:

Thrice a day she belches it forth, and thrice she sucks it down terribly.
Mayest thou not be there when she sucks it down, for no one could
save thee from ruin, no, not the Earth-shaker. (439)

And, here, just for completeness, is the Butcher and Lang version Joyce would have
used:

Thrice a day she spouts it forth, and thrice a day she sucks it down in
terrible wise. Never mayest thou be there when she sucks the water,
for none might save thee then from thy bane, not even the Earth-
Shaker! (195)

So, once again a critic has trusted Fitzgerald when the latter was simply
inventing whole phrases. But worse is to come, for Fitzgerald's 'shaggy patch of
leaves' is equally illusory. His handling of this section is bizarre, and reads very
peculiarly. He seems to have been confused regarding the word θὐλλοιζη,
understanding it as simply meaning a patch of leaves, and thought the uncomplicated
word ἐρινεὸς, which simply means a wild fig tree, instead meant a 'great wild fig'. Of course, the leaves belong to the missing fig tree, which is simply a 'great fig tree with dense foliage'. Here is Murray:

But the other cliff, thou wilt note, Odysseus, is lower—they are close to each other; thou couldst even shoot an arrow across—and on it is a great fig tree with rich foliage (439)

And here is the Butcher and Lang version:

But that other cliff, Odysseus, thou shalt note, lying lower, hard by the first: thou couldst send an arrow across. And thereon is a great fig-tree growing, in fullest leaf (178)

So there is no shaggy patch of leaves, and there is no whirling maelstrom. There is simply a poor rendering of a blooming fig tree standing atop a cliff, under which Charybdis sucks down and spews forth water. The distinguishing features Valente highlights are again to be dated circa 1960.

So much for Valente's Charybdis, but what of his Scylla? I have no idea as to what he means by Scylla's having 'engorging maws'. The word 'engorging' does not even apply to a phrase in the Fitzgerald, and it has no relevance whatever to the Greek. Its purpose seems to be exclusively to suggest an erection, though at the cost of having anything to do with Homer, and indeed of making any sense: just how could a mouth be engorged? Let us turn to those 'patently phallic tentacles'. Here is the Fitzgerald to which Valente refers:

...Her legs –

And there are twelve – are like great tentacles, unjointed... (202)

Immediately we can see that Valente is misrepresenting this, which is why he does not quote from Fitzgerald when discussing the tentacles. Fitzgerald does not describe Scylla as having tentacles, but merely legs that are 'like' tentacles. Still, we would be foolish to take his word for this. Here is the Greek:

ηῆρ Ἄη ηνὶ πόδες εἰςὶ δὲσδεκα πάνηρ ἄωροι,

- in which there are no tentacles at all, and indeed no legs either. Fitzgerald seems to be somehow confused over the word πόδες, meaning not legs but feet. Then there is just the question of the adjective applied to them, ἄωροι. This is unclear. Murray gives us 'She has twelve feet, all misshapen,' with a footnote reading 'The word is a doubtful one. Others render, "dangling down," and indeed this is exactly what Butcher and Lang give: 'Verily she hath twelve feet all dangling down'. Neither Murray, nor Butcher and Lang, nor indeed any translator other than Fitzgerald, has
anything to do with tentacles. So, Fitzgerald again mistranslates the phrase, and then Valente misrepresents Fitzgerald's metaphor as a literal description.

To summarise: Valente has picked up on several words and phrases which suggest a binary gender opposition between Scylla and Charybdis, but virtually none of them are in Homer, Butcher and Lang, or any respectable translation. Instead, they all come from a much later and highly inventive version. I repeat: Fitzgerald was writing decades after Joyce's death, and knowledge of Joyce's choice of translation is common. There can be no reason whatever to use Fitzgerald over the vastly superior Butcher and Lang, unless Fitzgerald provides some convenient inaccuracies, as he does here. Just as with Cixous and her quote from Mallarmé, at this point one has stopped doing really serious scholarship, and has entered into very murky territory indeed. Finally, this is an especially clear instance of the pressure to employ dubious scholarly methods having come straight from a Theoretical/ideological mandate, in this case to make a case for allegorical gender binaries.

**Jules Law: 'Political Sirens'**

An 'intriguing interpretation'

- Henke, 843

In Jules Law's piece on episode eleven a very prominent place is given to that episode's famous overture. This Law sees as 'an extravaganza of material signifiers cut loose from their once and future narrative context'. Beneath layers of visuality and aurality Law will place great emphasis on what he calls the 'display of pure signifiers' (151). He argues that the overture organises the narrative's structure in a 'three-ringed circus' (151), that it both defamiliarises us and refamiliarises us to linguistic signs (152), that it 'attempts to set free the materiality of language' (153), and that it 'indulges in the fiction of a pure materiality' (153). As part of Law's broader thesis he will argue that the overture 'invites us to think of the chapter as centrifugally, rather than centripetally, oriented' (154), which notion will play a key role in his study of national and gender identity in the episode, what he calls 'the inextricability – and tactical intertranslatability – of two of the most vexing identities
in modern identity-politics' (165-6). The Theoretical import of such claims will not need to be underlined.

Given this importance of the overture to this thesis, it is perhaps surprising to find Law opening his discussion of it with the following words:

Let us assume for a moment that the overture unfolds synchronously with the passage of the viceregal cavalcade and with Bloom's tour of the Liffesyside shop windows ("Moulang's pipes," "Wine's antiques," and "Carroll's dusky battered plate") – the two parallel events with which the chapter's narrative proper begins. (151)

I would suggest that this statement is very close to being nonsensical. The confusion all hinges on Law's use of the word 'unfolds'. The viceregal cavalcade, being an actual event in the novel's plot, does indeed 'unfold' in time. But to use the same word to describe the overture ignores the irreconcilable differences between these two entities. The overture cannot be said to 'unfold' at a moment in the novel's chronology, for it is, fairly clearly, atemporal. It is not an event; it takes up no time on the day of June the 16th, 1904. True, it 'unfolds' at a textual level, inasmuch as it can be read from beginning to end, but this is entirely different. The overture is a collage of bits and pieces from the rest of the narrative, drawing together keynotes into an independent creation, much like the overture of many operas. Indeed, to emphasise the position of the overture outside the novel's plot, it concludes with the word 'Begin!' (11.63), whereupon the narrative resumes. The idea, therefore, that it could be somehow 'synchronous' with the cavalcade is very difficult to render sensible, let alone applicable.

Even if we forget this most basic fact about the overture, Law's claim is still bizarre. The overture draws from passages across the chapter, right up to Bloom's final act of breaking wind ('Pprpffrrppff. / Done.' – 11.1233-4) which, together with his thoughts on epitaphs, it renders as 'My eppripfftaph. Be pfrwritt. / Done' (11.61-2). So even if we do think that the overture is an event in the novel's chronology, it must be one that happens synchronously with the whole of episode eleven, and not just the cavalcade.

Is Law's mistake related to his Theoretical disposition? I believe so. The notion of the overture being simultaneous with the cavalcade and Bloom's tour of the shops lead Law to see the chapter as a 'three ringed circus', with the barmaids watching the cavalcade, Bloom surveying commodities, and the reader beholding
'phrases and strands' from the chapter 'in all their material splendor' (151). This is a crucial platform for his idea that 'Language here is just one more commodity on display, like antique plate or the viceregal wardrobe' (151), which in turn sets him up for much of the overtly Theoretical analysis I began by summarising. The plausibility of this view of language in this chapter is entirely up for debate; what is also clear, however, is that it has lead Law to make certain narratological claims which possess a superficial plausibility, but do no justice to the details of the chapter.

Just over the page Law announces his intent of seeing what a 'formalist reading' has to offer his analysis. Expectations of sound close readings will be frustrated by the beginning of the next paragraph:

The first characteristic we notice about the stylistic ethos cultivated by the overture is that it is essentially Bloomian. Though it might be argued that many of the stylistic devices developed here – free association and the plasticity of the signifier in particular – are the signatures of stream of consciousness more generally, the overture still places us firmly within the hypotactic, ever-condensing bricolage of Bloom's mind... (152)

In support of this hypothesis Law brings to bear three references:

Blew. Blue Bloom is on the. (11.6)


Coincidence. Just going to write. Lionel's song. Lovely name you have. Can't write. Accept my little pres. (11.713-4)

With the above as his support, Law goes on to treat the hypothesis that the overture is Bloomian as established, and indeed it will play a significant role in his thesis more generally.

There are quite a few problems here, but beginning with the obvious point: only one of the quotes provided even comes from the overture. The others are from Bloom's stream of consciousness elsewhere in the chapter. This means that the only evidence Law has provided for the overture being centred in Bloom's consciousness is a quote of six words: 'Blew. Blue Bloom is on the.' Three points follow: this is an insufficient level of quotation to support such a claim; no effort has been made to mention or accommodate those parts of the overture that are distinctly un-Bloomian; and finally, these words are not Bloomian. Stylistically they are in no way to be distinguished from many fragments of Joyce's corpus, and the mere fact that they
refer to Bloom in the third person distinguishes them from the vast majority of his own stream of consciousness.

A casual look through the rest of the overture confirms our suspicions that it is not, in fact, very Bloomian at all. For example, the very second line reads 'Impertinent insolence' (11.99), and he retorts 'Impertinent insolence' (11.100). Bloom is not present at this point, nor does this strike one as in any way Bloomian. It can be explained without any reference to Bloom, and to bring Bloom in only obscures matters: just how would these words have anything to do with him? Two lines later we find the words 'Horrid! And gold flushed more.' (11.4). This is a rendering of Miss Kennedy's protests at Miss Douce's words, 'I feel all wet': '-O, miss Douce! Miss Kennedy protested. You horrid thing!/ And flushed yet more (you horrid!), more goldenly' (11.183-4). Again, how could one plausibly introduce Bloom into this phrase? Indeed, here we have an even stronger case for saying Bloom has nothing to do with it: Bloom would surely have focussed on the erotic connotations of 'wet', and found himself fantasising over Miss Kennedy's blushes. This is not just non-Bloomian, it is distinctly un-Bloomian.

There are many phrases in the overture that could have been part of Bloom's stream of consciousness, if only because he is aware of the events described (e.g. 'Jingle jingle jaunted jingling' (11.15)). But this is not enough to say that they are centred in Bloom's mind. They could just as easily emanate from Simon Dedalus's mind, for he is in a position to hear them too. As a result of all this, I see nothing at all to support Law's radical narratological interpretation that the overture is distinctly Bloomian. Finally, I would like to dispute the comment that the overture 'develops' the technique of 'free association': the associations here are anything but free. At the risk of sounding repetitive, this is a collage of other material, not an instance of stream of consciousness in its own right.

Seeing the overture as deeply Bloomian, I would like to stress, is important for Law's conclusion:

Bloom gazes at the barmaids (while both imperial hoof-beats and Irish patriotic songs echo about him), and...the whole schema begins to collapse when we realize that neither Bloom (who is the ultimate,
interiorized subject of this drama) nor the cavalcade (which is at the drama's furthermoremost horizon) are really present – not consistently present throughout the chapter, anyway, and certainly not present to each other. One can see here what Eagleton, Lloyd and others have analyzed as Ulysses's destruction or decentering of the Kantian subject – that paragon of autonomous, self-consistent, self-present consciousness. (166)

For Law, the fact that Bloom is both present and absent leads to deeply theoretical questions about the stability of the Kantian self. This is the kind of theoretical pressure that has led Law to make these narratological claims. Such theoretical questions can only be raised if Bloom is present and absent at the same time, which idea in turn depends on whether we accept Law's problematic thesis concerning the overture's Bloomian centre of consciousness.

Marilyn Reizbaum: 'When the Saints Come Marching In'

'Reizbaum...demonstrates her expertise on the topic of Joyce and Judaism'
- Henke, 843

A 'profound study'
- Wawrzycka, 2

Marilyn Reizbaum's essay offers an interesting study in a particular relationship between Theory and close reading. To see this quickly and clearly, let me begin with an abstract point: bad arguments can have true conclusions. We might, for example, conjure any number of silly arguments to the effect that the world is roughly spherical. The conclusion would still be perfectly true, and the arguments would still be very poor reasons for believing it to be so. The application of this rule to literary analysis is fairly straightforward. I might claim, for instance, that Molly Bloom is an unfaithful wife, but take as my evidence the first sentence of Ulysses. I have still made a mistake, and this is still a serious problem, even though my basic claim concerning the novel is true. We have to distinguish between a critic's claims and their evidence for them if we are to be able to dissect such fallacies. Finally, consider the following. A critic might make a true claim about a text, for example that a certain character could well be gay, and allow the relative certainty of this position to cloud their judgement when it comes to the evidence for it. They might
see evidence for this position where there is none or, worse, distort other pieces of
evidence to support their conclusion. This latter case is particularly difficult to spot,
because the truth of the overall thesis encourages us to think that this must be some
new discovery about the passage in question. At least we are able to spot wholly
false arguments by their false conclusions; when we lack that luxury, we have to be
very much on our guard.

On page 181 of her essay Marilyn Reizbaum makes the claim that other
characters in episode twelve see Bloom as unmanly. This is perfectly true. She
focuses on this aspect of the episode as part of her project to study the ways in which
'Bloom has become the marker against which the forces of colonization
(canonization) and nationalism must be measured, the stranger who permits the men
in the pub to be men as he assumes the position, however parodically, of the
crucified' (182). This seems to me to be a perfectly reasonable Theoretical
interpretation of the episode. However, the trap into which Reizbaum falls is to let
this relative security compromise her ability to discriminate good and bad readings of
the text.

Bloom, as is well known, affirms love as being 'that that is really life'
(12.1483). Reizbaum: '...by proclaiming it, he at once pronounces himself, yet again,
unmanly, as the immediate display of Gertyesque prose suggests' (181). For this
claim she references 12.1493-1501, the famous paragraph beginning 'Love loves to
love love'. There are two problems with using this paragraph as evidence for this
claim. First, the passage in question is simply not 'immediate' upon Bloom's
affirmation of love. Bloom declares love as the centre of life at line 1485, and the
passage in question only begins some eight lines later. More importantly, in those
intervening eight lines Bloom leaves the room. As such, Reizbaum's suggestion that
the narrative progression itself implies Bloom's womanliness is clearly wide of the
mark: it would have to follow on pretty well straight away to seem to be a
development of or comment upon Bloom's remarks, and this is straightforwardly not
the case. More troubling still is Reizbaum's casual reference to the lines in question
as 'Gertyesque'. Here they are in full:

Love loves to love love. Nurse loves the new chemist. Constable 14 A
loves Mary Kelly. Gerty MacDowell loves the boy that has the
bicycle. M. B. loves a fair gentleman. Li Chi Han lovey up kissy Cha
Pu Chow. Jumbo, the elephant, loves Alice, the elephant. Old Mr Verschoyle with the ear trumpet loves old Mrs Verschoyle with the turned-in eye. The man in the brown macintosh loves a lady who is dead. His Majesty the King loves Her Majesty the Queen. Mrs Norman W. Tupper loves officer Taylor. You love a certain person. And this person loves that other person because everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody. (1493-1501)

Earlier we saw Cheryl Herr get into some trouble by casually referring to Irigaray's prose as sounding a bit like Molly Bloom. A similar problem arises here. It is surely startling that Reizbaum sees fit to make this claim without giving us at least one exemplary 'Gertyesque' quality of this prose. As it is, I see very few, if any. Gerty's prose can be briefly characterised by three principal qualities: it is cliché-ridden; it is primarily concerned with sex and cloying romance; and its sentences are extended, associative, and flowing, a kind of legato style that Joyce probably associated with specifically female thought. On this most basic definition it is difficult to see the link with the above passage. This is not at all legato, but quite the reverse, a kind of frantic staccato. It is not associative, but unified around a single theme of which it produces many instances. It is not particularly clichéd. The only example might be the closing words, 'everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody', but the rest draws on no standardised expressions or sentimental stock phrases. Indeed, the very opening words are the opposite of cliché. Finally, what are we to make of the fact that the passage refers to Gerty in the third person? This surely distances it from her own very introspective style. Reading through episode thirteen, I find no passages that resemble this at all closely, except in a most general concern with love. Stylistically, the comparison is extremely weak.

Reizbaum's double error is to see a causal narratological link between Bloom's words and the above passage, and to see the above passage as Gertyesque, or indeed overtly feminised at all. Of course, the company at Barney Kiernan's do see Bloom as feminine and themselves as masculine, and they do see this as linked with their love of 'manly' conflict and Bloom's rejection of it. Reizbaum's ultimate conclusion is correct; the problem is that she has arrived at it via fallacious means. She feels justifiably confident with some of the basic textual supports of her gender analysis, but this has led her to casually force it onto the text when it is wrong to do so. Again, the problem is one of conclusions preceding arguments, and the results are not strong.
One final example. Reizbaum makes much of the great procession of saints towards the end of the chapter (12.1676 – 1712), because the final fourteen are female. This is a hugely pleasing component of her thesis, as she delves into the specifics of several of these figures with a good respect for detail. As far as I know, such analysis of this passage is unique. Reizbaum does note that she does not have time to analyse every saint in detail, and proposes a representative cross-section (174). But there is a serious problem here, which is that her cross-section is simply not very representative.

Reizbaum is quick to emphasise the themes of 'self-mutilation and abnegation', focused particularly on sexuality and often genital mutilation (174). She also picks up on themes of covert menstruation (177), the eschewal of worldly love and marriage (176), and even, in the case of St. Theresa of Avila, blurred gender boundaries (175). In short, and I think one can be fairly plain about this, Reizbaum emphasises all the tortured sexual implications conducive to a fairly evocative Theory-led gender study. But there are several saints Joyce lists who fail to fit into this picture27. What of Saint Attracta, the Irishwoman who left home despite parental disapproval to set up hospices for travellers? Or Saint Scholastica, the sister of Saint Benedict of Nursia, who seems to have spent her life in contemplation and looking after a community of women near Plombariola? Or Saint Rose of Viterbo, the holy recluse and ascetic who preached repentance to Viterbo? Or Blessed Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus, who spent her life as a Carmelite nun and died tragically young of tuberculosis? Or Saint Ita, the school-founder and prophet?

In the context of a thorough and neutral examination of all the female Saints Joyce lists, Reizbaum's decision to focus very largely on Saint Theresa of Avila and Saint Ursula looks less like a representative abridgement and more like a distorting act of censorship. Reading the three or four pages Reizbaum devotes to this subject one would easily get the impression that the female saints mentioned in episode twelve are all incarnations of bodily harm, sexual repression and rather perverse modes of execution. These elements are present, to be sure, but they are far from the defining notes, and to represent them as such is a serious distortion. By the final paragraphs of her essay Reizbaum is happy referring to these saints' 'ecstatic rise' as a

27 Details of all these saints can be found in Herbermann and Pace's *Catholic Encyclopedia*. 
'bloodstone sacrifice' (184), in which remarks her misrepresentation has consolidated itself and become clearly visible. Such metaphors are a categorically misleading way of describing the group of saints Joyce mentions when that group is taken as a whole. Particularly regrettable is Reizbaum's constant emphasis on the theme of martyrdom, which at times nearly implies that all these saints were also martyrs (see, for instance, her discussion on 180). In fact, only four of the fourteen mentioned were martyrs.

Again, this is not a question of fabrication. Reizbaum could quite legitimately have discussed the themes of mutilation, repression and martyrdom in these saints; not content with this, however, she has inflated these themes into a position of predominance, and ignored the more prominent themes that do not fit as well with her thesis. Her case is an interesting one, because her errors are not primarily factual: at the core of each point she makes there is a good deal of truth. She illustrates, however, the damage that can be done to even potentially sound close readings by the pressure of an ideological mandate. The temptation to exaggerate for the sake of conceptual clarity, it seems, is hard to resist.

**Enda Duffy: 'Interesting States'**

A 'fascinating chapter'

- Wawrzycka, 2

Thus far I have tended to focus on the details of each critic's analysis, for this is where the most illuminating errors can often be found. Every now and then, however, the mistake lies at a slightly broader level, and is more a question of holding the overall picture of an episode in one's head with sufficient clarity to notice a subtly skewed perspective taking shape. This larger question is equally an integral part of good close reading, and Enda Duffy's essay allows me to examine it.

In episode fourteen Stephen, Bloom and several others have gathered at the maternity hospital. The reason for their having gathered there is that Mina Purefoy is giving birth. The action of the episode, however, is twofold: partly it follows the men's slightly unsettling whirlwind of banter and intellectual disputation; and partly
it stylistically brings the English language into being through chronological parodies of its major exemplars. Mina Purefoy's labour is a very minor element in the chapter proper: it convenes the episode in place, time and theme, and serves as thematic counterbalance to Dignam's funeral earlier in the day. The chapter's real subject matter, however, is the heady unity of style and substance that is Joyce's presentation of the men's discussion. I take this to be a relatively neutral sketch of the episode.

Enda Duffy takes it upon himself to examine the women of the scene, who are largely pushed to the margins. This is a laudable aim, but it carries a risk. If a critic spends several pages looking at the margins of an episode, then the attention he has lavished upon them can lead him to forget that they are still, after all, marginal. Their significance in his eyes, and for the purpose of his thesis, may elide the fact that, as far as the episode is concerned, they are not the principal action. Let us take a look at this process.

Duffy spends some time considering the episode's seeming-indifference to Mrs. Purefoy's labour. On page 220 he holds it in its proper narrative place, saying that 'the birth take[s] place offstage', and that it is 'drown[ed] out' by the various competing discourses of the episode. This is, I think, accurate, for the birth's status as marginal is being properly held in view. But just a page later, in the conclusion to this section, Duffy writes:

What the episode has given us, then, is an account of an actual birth and a range of alternative discourses, beyond that of Catholically inflected nationalist iconography of motherhood, to represent it; these alternative discourses, whether of population growth or of birth control, turn out, however, to be so thoroughly male directed that they contribute to the abstraction and almost total erasure of the mother as subject altogether. (221)

A very important shift has taken place here. Duffy is no longer viewing the birth as entirely subordinate to the main action of the chapter: he makes the mistake of calling the episode an 'account' of the actual birth of Purefoy Junior. This is simply not so: the episode is an account of what happens in the waiting room while Purefoy Junior is being born. Similarly, the episode does not employ a 'range of alternative discourses' to 'describe' the actual birth. These discourses describe different events altogether. The offstage event has been pushed right to the centre.

This is an ingenious but misleading tactic. By taking a very marginal event and declaring it the subject of the chapter, Duffy can then speculate upon the 'failure'
of the chapter to come to terms with its subject matter! But of course, the birth never was the subject matter, so the narrative cannot 'fail' to deal with it. This is like referring to black as white and then discussing its failure to be 'properly' white: it is a trick of one's presentation, but no more. Duffy has introduced the idea of the centrality of the actual birth in order only to comment upon its absence, a kind of analytical misdirection allowing him to shape our sense of the chapter's 'real' focus.

There are perhaps interesting questions to be raised as to why Joyce keeps the birth in the wings and off the stage, or, to use Duffy's terms, why the chapter is precisely not an 'account' of the birth. Had Duffy limited himself to such issues then there would have been no comparable problem. As it is, he goes much further, and loses sight of the bigger picture in the process. The reason for this is, I think, discernible. Without this kind of analysis there is no way to claim that the 'male directed' discourses are incapable of handling the 'mother as subject', for without Duffy's misdirection it is fairly evident that they do not even try to do so. This is, in short, a function of a particular Theoretical perspective on the episode.

Margot Norris: 'Disenchanting Enchantment'

A 'riveting essay'

- Henke, 843

Margot Norris on Florry, one of the prostitutes in episode fifteen:

Florry is obese, torpid, and prone to infection – the sty on her eye perhaps a sign of an upward displacement of a downward infection, like the catarrh of Freud's Dora. The threat of venereal disease decodes their seeming foreplay... (239)

Now, it is certainly true that Florry has 'a heavy sty' which 'droops over her sleepy eyelid' (2076-7). Styes, it is commonly and unambiguously known, are the result of blocked orifices in the oil glands of the eyelid. As has been known for a long time, they are usually the result of poor hygiene, but can in some cases be the result of an infection of the eye. There are certainly questions we might ask of the legitimacy of Freudian interpretations of widely understood medical phenomena (would we, for example, allow a similar interpretation of a broken leg if Freud had happened to speculate on this?). Happily, however, we need ask none of those questions here.
For one of the central points of *Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* is Freud's hypothesis that Dora's catarrh is precisely not an 'upward displacement' of venereal disease transmitted to her by her father, but an outer manifestation of guilt over masturbation. As it is, Norris's interpretation falls for much neater reasons than we might have guessed: a misrepresentation of her secondary material.

This consideration of the role of sexually transmitted diseases in episode fifteen is part of Norris's larger project to study 'the palimpsestic body of the prostitute, costumed for her work' as it 'writes its own narrative of medical peril and neglect' (239). A worthy aim, but not one that permits misleading presentations of the text. Continuing on from the last quotation:

The threat of venereal disease decodes their seeming foreplay ("Has little mousy any tickles tonight?...A hand glides over his left thigh") into covert medical inspections ("[in sudden alarm] You've a hard chancre"… (239, italics original))

Again, Norris's casting this as a 'covert medical inspection' is misleading. Note, for example, that Florry makes her discovery not just with 'alarm' but with 'sudden alarm'. Why sudden? Someone carrying out an inspection for such signs of infection would surely not be caught off guard were they to find them. The answer is that she is suddenly genuinely surprised, which suggests that she was not looking for what she found. Also, Norris conveniently omits the fact that this turns out not to be a chancre at all, but Bloom's lucky potato (15.1309-10), which rather alters the tone of the moment.

Elsewhere, Norris is spot on with her analysis. Her highlighting of the story of Mary Shortall at 15.2578-81 as an example of the awful underside of prostitution is right on the mark, and doubly worthy in that this vignette is often neglected. But Norris's problem is that her ideological concern is so pronounced that it needs more than just this fragment to support it. She needs to make it seem as if the chapter is full of such fears and sicknesses, and to do this she has to start twisting parts of the text. This kind of over-extension is a very interesting phenomenon. At its heart lies a true observation, in this case the spectre of sexually transmitted disease hanging over the prostitutes. Still, this observation is clearly felt to be insufficient ground upon which to build the larger thesis, which here is a gender-reading of sexual exploitation

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28 Found in *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, 1-111.
in Joyce. The result is still misreading, but not in the sense of pure fabrication. Rather, this is a kind of exaggeration, a way of making a particular evidential ground seem much stronger than it actually is, until it is strong enough to support the heavy political implications of one's thesis. This is a cousin of the problems we saw in Reizbaum, above. This essay is a very noteworthy expression of the power of strongly ideological analyses to warp proper close reading, as I have found examples of this type to be very common.

Norris's essay is a good example of some other common issues with this kind of analysis. The first is simply a question of internal consistency. Early in her essay she is keen to associate the episode with pornography by definition: "Circe" follows the logic of pornography's etymology when its prostitional setting evokes the Greek *pornographios*, or writing about Harlots' (232). Three pages later this definitional linking of pornography and harlot-writing is forgotten when Norris introduces the notion of 'a nonpornographic...writing about harlots' (235). Similarly, Norris refers to the 'unpornographised space of the brothel' on the same page that she claims that 'the brothel is overwritten by pornography' (236). No doubt these concepts could be expanded and redefined to escape the contradictions, but one must ask whether these ideas are being deployed with the aim of increasing analytical power, or at the convenience of the critic's ideological needs. I submit that the latter better explains their rather peculiar usage here.

In a similar vein, Norris betrays a very unsettling critical disposition when she refers to the way in which 'pornography's power to appropriate, parody, and sexualise social institutions and discourses – for example, infantile toilet training...exposes their own hypocritically masked libidinal aims' (234). The hypocritically masked libidinal aims of toilet training are perhaps a strange assumption to build into one's thesis, but it is not my purpose to debate such matters here. Yet it is certainly open for debate when later in her essay Norris refers to Bella Cohen and the 'non-erotic cruelties she may visit on the women who work for her' (239). How is it that toilet training is furtively libidinal, but the cruel attentions of a brothel madam are simply 'non-erotic'? What standard is being used to adjudge the presence of these hidden, erotic motivations? The answer, I think, is simply convenience. Norris can read any social institution as hypocritical and libidinal when
it supports the ideological drive of her thesis, but is at liberty to deny obvious candidates for the same charge when it suits. No useful information can be gleaned from such *ad hoc* analytical standards.

**Colleen Lamos: 'The Double Life of "Eumaeus"'**

'Lamos...is well-positioned to unravel the errant language and deliberate reader traps craftily set by Joyce...'

- Henke, 844

For my discussion of Lamos's piece and its speculations on the etymology of 'queer' see my section 'Errors of Scholarship' in chapter two.

**Vicki Mahaffey: 'Sidereal Writing'**

A 'wonderfully incandescent essay'

- Henke, 844

Vicki Mahaffey spends a good deal of her essay discussing Bloom's relationship with Molly, of which she has a very extreme view. For Mahaffey, that relationship is both 'immaterial and overly material' (258), a mixture of lofty idealism and almost anatomical materialism. Bloom has an 'inability to see her without the telescope of idealisation or a microscope for examining her biologically' (258), as represented both by his seeing her in celestial terms and by his kissing her backside before he falls asleep. Mahaffey then spends two pages discussing Bloom's idealisation of his wife (258-9). Bloom's comparison of women and the moon is examined, as is Bloom and Stephen's observation of Molly's lamp in the second storey window, and also Molly's status as 'the principle of both luminosity and clarity'. Mahaffey's thesis here is radically put. Molly is 'for Bloom both mysteriously remote and utterly legible; she is ancient and ubiquitous and at the same
time fragile', and furthermore she is 'both transparent and a screen for his desire' (259).

For those familiar with the terminology of gender Theory and criticism this kind of language will be very familiar. Indeed, Mahaffey paints so strident a picture of Bloom's view of Molly that she can comment in summary that:

Bloom has tautologically constructed Molly in the way that patriarchal society at large constructs women: Molly is Jacques Lacan's l'objet a; she is both the source of and the answer to a man's desire. This is why it can be said that for Bloom, as for Lacan, "la femme n'existe pas". (259)

The fierceness of Mahaffey's study of Mr and Mrs Bloom becomes clear: she has painted them as an archetype. They are a figure for the way patriarchal society functions, and even, astonishingly, a paradigm in Lacanian psychoanalysis: Molly just 'is' Jacques Lacan's l'objet a. The conceptual neatness of simply defining literary characters as sociological functions is doubtless considerable. Our question must be, however, whether any subtleties of close reading have been lost in the process. Let us go back over the commentaries that have led Mahaffey to this point. Alarm bells should sound from the outset:

Bloom's propensity to substitute a moon goddess for Molly is highlighted in "Circe," when his first actions as "serene and potent and very puissant ruler" of the realm are to choose his horse, Happy Copulation (Copula Felix), as grand vizier and to repudiate his former spouse in favor of "the princess Selene, the splendour of night," "in moonblue robes, a silver crescent on her head". (258, italics original) Mahaffey's decision to translate Copula Felix as Happy Copulation counts heavily against her plausibility here. In Classical Latin copula simply means a tie, or a bond. It could be used of a ship's rigging, or a harness, or a friendship, or a marriage, very much like the English word 'bond'. It had no sexual connotations, except those implied when it was used metaphorically as indicating marriage. Indeed, sexual connotations were only attached the English word 'copulate' from around the 1630s. Joyceans have no excuse for this erroneously sexual translation of the phrase, not least because the ubiquitous Gifford quite reasonably translates it 'the fortunate bond or tie (of love)' (474).

This aside, Mahaffey's reading of this scene from episode fifteen is still very peculiar. Consider, for example, that the text says that 'The former morganatic spouse of Bloom is hastily removed in the Black Maria' (15.1508-9) before Bloom
adopts the princess Selene as his new partner. How is this to be reconciled with Mahaffey's view of 'Bloom's vision of Molly as moon goddess'? Surely, the scene is making a very harsh *distinction* between Molly and the moon goddess, in that Molly, 'the former morganatic spouse of Bloom', is physically removed in order to make way for the 'princess Selene'.

Next Mahaffey discusses the moment immediately following Bloom's thoughts on the moon, when he and Stephen see the light behind the blind on the second storey that indicates Molly's presence therein. Much is made of this play of light and shade, and the fact of 'projection': 'so seen, Molly represents a felicitous cooperation of extremes...that like fortune is also blind', and further, 'Joyce uses the image of projection...to suggest that Bloom projects his desires onto Molly...Molly is the equivalent of a screen star: her light shines from above...Molly as Bloom worships her was designed to be seen rather than to see' (258-9).

Such excitable reading, however, is made rather problematic when one considers the very next words in *Ulysses*, which Mahaffey conspicuously omits:

> How did he elucidate the mystery of an invisible attractive person, his wife Marion (Molly) Bloom, denoted by a visible splendid sign, a lamp?

> With indirect and direct verbal allusions or affirmations: with subdued affection and admiration: with description: with impediment: with suggestion. (17.1177-1181)

Consider, for example, that single word 'subdued': 'subdued affection and admiration'. This, I suggest, is incompatible with Mahaffey's declaration that Bloom 'worships' Molly. Bloom does no such thing; or if he ever did, he does so no more. Bloom loves Molly (something else entirely), and is painfully aware that just earlier in the day she had sex with another man. His feelings towards her are, I think, painfully down to earth: subdued, both direct and indirect, alluded to, suggested. Note too that 'impediment': his intimate knowledge of his wife's betrayal weighs heavy upon him, and he cannot shrug it off in favour of seeing her as some kind of 'screen star'. Mahaffey's analysis works only by omitting all of this crucial information, none of which is at all difficult to discover. Yes, Bloom sees Molly as a light in darkness; yes, he compares her gender to ideals like the moon; but only with grossly imbalanced analysis could one get the impression that this is the whole story, or that this implies
that Bloom has a naive, idealised, patriarchal view of his wife. If anything, I would argue that precisely the reverse is true.

In the next paragraph Mahaffey does something rather unexpected, declaring in passing that to Bloom Molly represents 'the shared principle of glass, luminosity and water' (259). Now, Mahaffey has already discussed Molly as an emblem of luminosity thanks to her position somewhere behind the window blind, but what are we to make of her being the principle of glass and water? Her arguments here are weak, and I will take as representative their culmination:

Joyce presents the clearness of glass and water and the luminosity of heavenly light as versions of one another, a conjunction which may be etymologically motivated. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "glass" is related to "glow," especially in its relation to amber, which was believed to glow when rubbed (the word "lamp" has a similar etymology, deriving from a word meaning "to shine"). (259-60)

Of this we need only ask the following: where does Joyce present 'the clearness of glass and water and the luminosity of heavenly light as versions of one another'? This cannot be simply asserted. It must be shown, even if only indirectly. As it is, while she has briefly treated the theme of water, in the preceding discussion Mahaffey hasn't even mentioned Joyce's presentation of glass, which word, Hanley informs me, occurs forty-six times in Ulysses (132). This 'conjunction' is, as yet, purely speculative. This makes Mahaffey's etymological discussion seem weak. Here is what the OED says on the subject, in a subnote under the entry for glass (n.1):

A related word is prob. OE. glr (masc., if the pl. glæsas 'sucina' be miswritten for *giras) amber, representing the OTeut. word (*glzo-,*gl zi-) adopted in Latin as gls(s)um, glæsum. The OHG. glas occurs as a gloss to electrum amber. The ultimate root may be OTeut. gl -, gl - ablaut-variant of glô- to shine: see GLOW v.]

Note the qualification: it 'may' share an 'ultimate' root with glô-. In short, we are being asked to swallow the following: that despite the fact that Mahaffey has undertaken no relevant discussion of water in Ulysses, and despite the absence of any discussion of glass in Ulysses, and despite the fact that the very words 'glass' and 'water' do not occur in the passage under discussion, still Joyce has presented 'the clearness of glass and water and the luminosity of heavenly light as versions of one another'; and that furthermore, Joyce's motivation for this supposed 'conjunction' may have been that the word 'glass' might share an ultimate root in Old Teutonic not with
'light', not with 'luminous', but with the word 'glow'. This house of cards must fall under even the gentlest scrutiny. Finally, I can make no sense of Mahaffey's assertion that the word 'lamp' has a 'similar' etymology to 'glass': it comes very straightforwardly from the Greek λαμπάς, a lamp or torch.

I began by asking whether, in her move to see Bloom's view of Molly as a patriarchal construct and Lacanian archetype, Mahaffey had sacrificed the integrity of her close reading. In conclusion, I hope I have shown that what close reading there is can be characterised as selective and tenuous.

Christine van Boheemen: 'Molly's Heavenly Body and the Economy of the Sign'

'Van Boheeman deconstructs Joyce's ingenious invention of gender'
- Henke, 844

The eighth page of Christine van Boheemen's essay is, for me at least, a very instructive moment. This is half way through her piece, and she has already covered a huge amount of ground. She has argued for an association between episode eighteen and pornography; argued that the episode should be seen as the product of Molly's 'confessing vagina'; studied 'Joyce's obsessively voyeuristic use of sexual difference in relation to representation and its media' (268); claimed that the episode is 'the projection upon the screen of representation of the unconscious content of the masculine mind' (269); argued that Joyce had a phobia of literary endings, which was linked to fears of death, the feminine and castration; claimed that Joyce undid the threat of death implied in the feminine by 'writing the feminine' (273); and concluded that the very writing of episode eighteen 'neutralised the threat of castration implied in [Penelope's] Medusan figure' (274).

I find this moment so illuminating because, despite having made this battery of very serious claims over eight very dense pages, van Boheemen has only quoted from *Ulysses* twice. Both these quotes are essentially ornamental, adding nothing to the essay's analytical force:
If Leopold Bloom is accused of not being able to "put it out of sight", Joyce cannot "put it out": hand over his text to the publisher… (271)

If Joyce saw Molly Bloom as a castrating female who threatens to "cut them off him so I would"...he also saw the figure of Molly as the instrument of escape... (272)

Neither quote is studied, and neither can be said to actively support the point being made: the first is Joe talking about Bloom's memories of Rudy's death, the second Molly's threat to those who attack defenceless old women. These are convenient phrases to introduce or encapsulate van Boheemen's ideas, not evidence in themselves.

Now, I freely admit that this does not necessarily degrade the first half of van Boheemen's essay. It is possible, at least in theory, to securely make all those claims without once critically consulting the language of the text in question. Either way, it is surely an interesting phenomenon that van Boheemen does not feel the need to study quotations from *Ulysses* to talk about *Ulysses*. Joyce's style, his craft, even his novel itself – these are palpably secondary here. Critical apparatuses exist that allow discussion to take place in the absence of these things and, as such, there is really little for me to analyse. Van Boheemen combines quotes from Joyce's letters, Ellmann's biography, one passage from *Finnegans Wake* and other non-Ulyssean sources, together with a heavy Theoretical-ideological framework (Freud to Cixous), and proceeds to reach her conclusions regarding episode eighteen of *Ulysses*. Close reading, even the felt need for close reading, has, for this whole section of analysis, simply been abolished.

Still, let us at least focus on some fairly tangible claims van Boheemen makes, and see how they stand up with no close reading to support them. On pages 270-1 we find a section entitled 'The Threat of an Ending', in which van Boheemen argues that Joyce felt a fear of endings, related to the fear of death, which led him to neutralise the endings in his fiction. 'All his major works', she declares, 'connect the end with the beginning, bending the linearity of narrative into the circularity of myth' (271). This is obviously, trivially true of *Finnegans Wake*. But what of the others?

Van Boheemen claims that "The Dead" finishes when Gabriel's consciousness merges with the dream of an Ireland unified by snow, awaiting a new dawn' (271). Now, even the most rosy-spectacled of critics have limited themselves...
to talking here of a sense of unity, epiphany, or peace. No one, to my knowledge, thinks that those final words – 'the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead' (176) – imply a new dawn, not least because of that unambiguous phrase comparing the snow to 'their last end'. Indeed, I find it hard to imagine a more conclusive ending, a more definitive rejection of circularity and rejuvenation, than ending one's book not with an end, but with a 'last' end.

Of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, van Boheemen says that 'A Portrait recirculates itself as a textual system, enclosing experience and identity, in framing beginning and end as fairy tale and diary' (271). In this phrase I find three entirely separate claims: that the book 'recirculates itself as a textual system', that it encloses experience and identity, and that it begins as fairy tale and ends as a diary. I do not see how these lead on to or even support each other, and van Boheemen does not explain how they do so. Of them, only the first claim seems even vaguely approximate to the idea of refusing an ending in favour of re-beginning, but as van Boheemen provides no explanation of it or evidence for it we must treat it as, at best, still debatable. We might, of course, return to the ending of *A Portrait*, and remind ourselves of Stephen's intentions: 'Away! Away!..Welcome, O life! I go to...forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race' (213). I find it very difficult to see how such expansive intentions, finally shaking free the bonds articulated by the rest of the book, return us to the infant cradle at its beginning. If anything, it seems quite the reverse, being the start of the next, new chapter.

Of *Ulysses* itself van Boheemen refers only to 'the recirculation of *Ulysses* (through the initial and final "s" of "stately" and "yes")' (271). This is more plausible, but still a long way from 'bending the linearity of narrative into the circularity of myth'. Obviously, it does not bend the narrative at all, and it cannot realistically be said to transpose *Ulysses* into a mythic structure. The basic question must be whether the final "s" returns us to the initial "s", and I think this is probably debatable. For my money, this is much more like a composer beginning and ending his opera on the same chord – think of Wagner's 'Tristan Chord', especially recalling Joyce's regard for Wagner. It does not imply recirculation but unity, a sense of the beginning being audible in the ending, and vice versa. If we consult the 'mythic' precedent of *Ulysses*,
Homer, then naturally the mythic element comes through very clearly, but the sense of circularity is notably absent. The *Odyssey* is a story of homecoming, a tale of a man who labours over twenty-four long books to refuse entirely the situation in which he finds himself at the start of his story. This strikes me, at least, as a distinctly linear framework, and I would suggest that if the parallels between this work and *Ulysses* can be said to hold at all, then this linearity is equally true of Joyce's novel. Whatever one's view of this, it is very shaky ground on which to base claims regarding Joyce's fear of all endings/death/castration etc.

Finally, van Boheemen's thesis is obviously perfectly sound regarding *Finnegans Wake*, and indeed its plausibility here only makes apparent its thinness when applied to the other books. But of course van Boheemen needs to make an *oeuvre*-wide statement if she is to support the idea that 'Joyce cannot "put it out": hand over the text to the publisher and declare it finished, as if concluding were "un petit mort," "a little death" like the surrender to orgasm' (271). And she needs such an idea upon which to build her thesis concerning Joyce's fear of death/castration and its consequence for his view of the sexual other. What has happened, I suggest, is that van Boheemen has made a perfectly obvious observation about *Finnegans Wake*, seen its potential as an ideological platform, and extended it across the rest of Joyce's work with a view to using this supposed universality as a base for making claims about *Ulysses*. The results for her characterisation of the other books, especially *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, however, are disastrous, which is probably why she doesn't attempt any close reading of them.

**Conclusion**

Let me begin my conclusion by returning to the subject of the essays of Devlin, Scott and Bishop, which are so worthy of praise, and by briefly trying to see what they get right. These essays analyse episodes six, ten and thirteen respectively.

Let me begin with the obvious but essential point that all three critics quote plentifully from *Ulysses* to support their analysis. Devlin is happy to spend half a page listing relevant quotations (69), and Bishop's level of quotation is also particularly dense. This elementary point is crucial. Errors of description and analysis are harder to perpetrate if the text is represented in abundance, for fairly obvious
reasons. Next, this level of textual attention gives them a platform for episode-wide stylistic analysis. The above-cited page in Devlin's essay, for example, is a fascinating study of the various uses of the word 'passed' in episode six. Scott's tracing of various minor female characters through the maze of episode ten illustrates an attentiveness on a par with Hart's original minute by minute schema. Bishop's tracing of Gerty's steadily blushing countenance in episode thirteen (193) is marvellous, a genuinely significant thematic discovery. Finally, all three critics develop their Theoretical conclusions from these stylistic discussions. We must be clear in our acknowledgement that all three are full-blooded Theoretical pieces. Devlin studies the way in which 'up until Finnegans Wake, Joyce's works may imitate cultural praxis insofar as they tend to marginalize female work – particularly feminized work such as laundering; yet he records simultaneously the palpable economic effects of this problematic patriarchal devaluation' (85). Scott's essay is a textbook example of an analysis which, to use her own phrase, is 'repositioned for sensitivity to gender and marginalization' (149). Bishop's essay takes the title 'A Metaphysics of Coitus in "Nausicaa"', and comprises, in part, a study of the way in which episode thirteen's 'two parts (and partners) draw out an immense field of tensions and contrasts – between femininity and masculinity, youth and age, culture and nature, conventionality and idiosyncrasy, idealism and practicality, fate and chance; between tumescent idealization and detumescent letdown...' (209). As should be clear, I have not simply chosen the least Theoretical essays and exempted them from critique. These essays are just as Theoretical in their stated goals, but they manage to couple this Theoretical mandate with excellent close readings, and are very strong as a result. I can find no errors of scholarship, description or analysis in any of them.

The key achievement of these essays, I think, is their determination to develop their Theoretical interests from textual analysis, and not the other way round. They begin with certain well-evidenced analyses of the episode in question, and then place these in a relevant Theoretical light, as opposed to beginning with a fully operational Theoretical paradigm and then simply forcing bits of text into connection with it. The other essays in the volume, however, are more likely to take this latter approach. In some cases, they begin with such well-established Theoretical
frameworks that close analysis is largely a formality, and therefore largely neglected (Leonard), in some cases their Theoretical frameworks are so prevalent they see barely any need to study the text closely in order to make claims about it (van Boheemen), in other cases the particularity of the Theoretical framework ends up determining what primary texts should say and ignoring what they do say (Valente), in others still the sheer force of the Theory in question leads to scholarly fudges in order to carry out a certain kind of close reading (recall Lamos – see chapter two). The patterns are familiar, and to some degree predictable. In each case Theory has exerted such force upon the critic's methodology that the text has been treated with a certain disrespect, and certain kinds of error have resulted. This mechanism is unsurprising. What is perhaps more surprising, however, is the frequency with which this Theoretical distortion has resulted not just in unconvincing readings, but in genuinely problematic or erroneous ones.

The final point to make is simply a numerical one. In this collection, fifteen essays make the kinds of error I defined in chapter two for the sake of their Theoretical impulses, and three do not. The percentage is not favourable: over eighty percent of these essays make Theory-led errors. Let me repeat, for they are deeply significant, the criteria upon which this collection was chosen. This is a Theoretically mandated collection of eighteen independent scholars' essays, the scholars having been selected by independent editors on lines that have no tendency to support my conclusions. These scholars are possessed of excellent reputations, and have also produced excellent non-Theoretical close readings elsewhere. The collection, furthermore, received glowing reviews. Under these conditions, the possibility of my having cherry-picked a sample of convenient but unrepresentative essays is effectively abolished. Indeed these requirements militate against my conclusions being borne out. That they have been borne out in over four out of five cases is, I think, highly suggestive of the potential Theory has had to warp close reading.

A brief coda to this study. This collection sets itself up as the descendent of Clive Hart and David Hayman's *James Joyce's "Ulysses": Critical Essays* (1974). That hugely successful collection was also comprised of eighteen essays by different scholars, one on each chapter of *Ulysses*, however it had no Theoretical mandate. It is interesting to note that, having spent a lot of time with this collection, I have found
barely any errors within its pages. This comparison is a little anecdotal, and obviously I cannot go on to demonstrate a lack of errors, but I can invite my readers to make the comparison themselves, and see what they make of it.
Chapter Six

Thematic Stylistics Two: Atomisation

Having discussed every problematic chapter of *Ulysses: En-Gendered Perspectives* and briefly stated my conclusions I will now make my positive response, which will provide a necessary counterweight to my critical conclusions regarding this collection. As with MacCabe and Cixous, I am going to take an error which could have been avoided, exemplify the kind of stylistic analysis which would have prevented it, and in the process make a contribution to our stylistic understanding of Joyce's work. This time, however, my approach is going to have to be slightly adjusted to the different kind of criticism I have been discussing. As MacCabe's work came from a monograph, and consisted of a unified chapter making a single claim, I was at liberty to pursue a stylistic approach that responded to that general claim and MacCabe's substantiations of it. This time, I am approaching a collection of eighteen different scholars studying eighteen different episodes in eighteen different ways. Obviously, I cannot make a stylistic response to each of them, as such an endeavour would require a whole thesis to itself. Instead, I must discuss a single author, and treat that discussion as representative.

So, which author? As I stated in my response to MacCabe and Cixous, errors of scholarship and description do not permit much in the way of stylistic response; it is errors of analysis that I must concentrate upon. Furthermore, I would like to choose an error which will allow me to make a significant contribution to Joyce studies in response. Obviously, not all errors of analysis afford such an opportunity. One that does, however, is Leonard's analysis of the words 'Haines's voice said' in the first essay of this collection.

A brief summary of that analysis will be necessary here. Leonard, we recall, thought that that 'Stephen hears this pronouncement as no more than a voice speaking through Haines' (5 – italics original). This voice, for Leonard, is the voice of British Imperialism. I showed that this reading was problematic on several grounds, not least of which is how reductive a picture it paints of Haines. The crucial problem, however, was stylistic. The reason Haines's voice, rather than Haines
himself, does the talking, is that Stephen has altogether forgotten that Haines is there, and as such it is only the sound of his voice that intrudes upon his distracted consciousness. The odd phrasing 'Haines's voice said' is a stylistic reflection of this.

It was my contention that a thorough stylistic analysis would have prevented Leonard's misreading, and such an analysis is what I now intend to conduct. As I suggested, this kind of stylistic trick is to be found throughout Joyce's work, from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake*, although it is employed to many different effects throughout. A good stylistic understanding of not only his chosen quotation, but its broader context, was essential for Leonard's thesis. In providing that broader understanding here, I will also be trying to flesh out a contribution to Joyce studies in the form of a particular stylistic nuance which has hitherto been largely unnoticed. This technique, which I will call atomisation, has significant implications for our understanding of Joyce's style.

**Atomisation in *Dubliners***

The principal method of atomisation in *Dubliners* is Joyce's choice of grammatical subjects. Rather than define this process in the abstract, I will elucidate the first and archetypal use of the trope, which is found in the opening story:

>'In the dark of my room I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic. I drew the blankets over my head and tried to think of Christmas. But the grey face still followed me. It murmured; and I understood that it desired to confess something. I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me. It began to confess to me in a murmuring voice and I wondered why it smiled continually and why the lips were so moist with spittle. But then I remembered that it had died of paralysis and I felt that I too was smiling feebly as if to absolve the simoniac of his sin.' (4)

To understand how unsettling the grammar in this passage is, we need to examine the quite innocent statement that the boy saw not the paralytic, but the *face* of the paralytic – which is an entirely natural thing to do when imagining someone in their absence. The notion that a picture of someone's face is somehow a picture of them, in a way that a picture of their feet or torso is not, is so natural to us that it needs no further comment. It is just this easiness with this kind of synecdoche that Joyce exploits.
When the boys try to retreat from his vision of the paralytic, Joyce extend the synecdoche. We are told not that the paralytic followed him, but that his face does ('the grey face still followed me'). This is not altogether bizarre, after all, disembodied heads are a staple ghostly cliché, and the boy imagining all of this is still young. But this sets us up for what comes next, which really is peculiar, but which we do not immediately notice. The next sentence begins 'It murmured', where the 'it' in question is, of course, the man's face. Now, although this statement is grammatically correct and makes a superficial kind of sense, it has taken us into the realm of the deeply surreal. Faces don't murmur things: people do. It would be just as odd to say 'It [my hand] has written this'. Joyce relies upon our easiness with the kind of synecdoche mentioned above to make 'face' the legitimate subject of all of these sentences, and this in turn allows him to use the same subject with a verb that it could not normally operate. We are left with the disorienting sense that a man's face, and not the man himself, is murmuring something.

Joyce does not leave it there, however. Having achieved this substitution, he sustains it through the whole paragraph. We are told that 'It murmured', 'it desired to confess', 'it [was] waiting', 'It began to confess', 'it smiled', and finally that 'it had died of paralysis'. This last statement – that a face, not a person, has died of paralysis – is particularly strange and disquieting. In order to make any sense of it at all we must filter it back through two substitutions: first, the substitution of the pronoun 'it' for the noun 'face', and second, the synecdochic substitution of a face for a person. As these substitutions took place near the beginning of the paragraph it is remarkably difficult to associate the final verb used, 'to die', with a subject that would make it remotely meaningful. This gradual slide away from meaningful subjectivity is facilitated by the verbs Joyce chooses: he begins with 'It murmured', which isn't an overtly surreal verb to use when the 'it' in question is a face. But as the paragraph concludes, Joyce strays away from verbs that have something to do with the face (i.e. 'to confess' or 'to smile'), and uses 'to die', which makes no sense at all with the subject in question. But by the time Joyce uses this verb, we are too distant from its original subject to notice how odd all this really is.
The effect of this dual substitution and increasingly surreal verb choice is to divorce the priest from the event of his own death. It is essential to note in this regard that not once in the story does the narrator or any of characters actually state that 'he is dead'. The statement is always either relativised ('If he was dead' – 3), turned into a question ('Is he dead?' – 3), turned into a metaphor ('your old friend is gone' – 3), or omitted entirely ('Did he...peacefully?' – 7, where the ellipsis is Joyce's). The only time the verb 'to die' is straightforwardly applied to the man whose death suffuses the entire narrative is in this paragraph, and here the verb is so comprehensively divorced from its subject that we quite forget who, or what, that subject is.

The same process is repeated, to varying degrees, throughout the collection, and always with the same effect of separating people both from the things they do and the things that are done to them. For example, take the following lines from 'A Painful Case':

he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognised as his own, insisting on the soul's incurable loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own. (85)

Here the sleight is subtle enough to be easily missed. As ever, we should be on the lookout for inanimate subjects, in this case 'it said'. Here 'it' is Duffy's voice, and it is only on reflection that we note that voices do not say things: people say things using their voices. This might seem like pedantry, but its consequences are of great interpretative significance: Mr. Duffy's soul truly is incurably lonely, for it is separated even from its verbal expressions of itself. His voice speaks, and he hears it, but Mr. Duffy himself remains quite silent.

Here is another example of the same method, taken from 'Grace':

A powerful-looking figure, the upper part of which was draped with a white surplice, was observed to be struggling up into the pulpit. Simultaneously the congregation unsettled, produced handkerchiefs and knelt upon them with care. Mr. Kernan followed the general example. The priest's figure now stood upright in the pulpit, two-thirds of its bulk, crowned by a massive red face, appearing above the balustrade. (135)

Joyce's grammatical trick in this passage is made possible by the word 'figure'. This word, although it is technically an inanimate noun, is often used as a synonym for 'person', especially if that person is in some way obscured or anonymous. But although the referent of 'figure' in this case is indeed a person, and therefore
distinctly animate, the word itself remains grammatically inanimate, so when Joyce describes it further in a subordinate clause it is designated not by a 'whom' but by a 'which'. Only after he has thereby rendered the sentence's subject inanimate, and as such divorced it from the priest it is supposed to represent, does Joyce introduce the sentence's very animated verb, 'struggled'. When the priest is again mentioned, it is in the same way: his figure stands upright, and two thirds of 'its' bulk is visible.

The effect here is grotesque, as the priest's body appears to have a lumbering life of its own, quite apart from the priest himself. Such corpulence and gracelessness are entirely appropriate: until now, the story has built toward much-needed regeneration, and it is fitting indeed that the grimly materialistic sermon which brings all such hopes to ruin should be preached not by a man but by his figure, and not by a 'him' but an 'it'.

These three examples show this technique at its most direct, but with these as our model we can go on to observe a subtler variant of it at work throughout the collection. The above examples are so vivid because having represented a person with an inanimate synecdoche, Joyce goes on to reduce the noun in question to a pronoun, which in such cases will be 'it'. The dehumanising move from a living person all the way to an 'it' is disconcerting, and noticeably so. Without the final move to a pronoun, the effect would be less intense, and less obvious; but not, it should be noted, less real.

With these observations in mind, I submit the following sentence from 'The Boarding House' for examination:

Her eyes, which were grey with a shade of green through them, had a habit of glancing upwards. (47)

This sentence is easily overlooked. It is constructed to draw attention to its perfectly normal subordinate clause, and otherwise reads very like one of the descriptions of individual mannerisms we find so much in Joyce. This obscures a central fact, which becomes obvious if we remove the subordinate clause and the final three words: 'Her eyes...had a habit'. Now, no matter how unconsciously one lives, it is never one's eyes that form habits. Rather, we ourselves form habits with our eyes. Yet even without this issue of eyes forming habits on their own, the phrase 'Her eyes glanced upwards' is still a subtle kind of nonsense, because eyes do not glance anywhere, rather people glance upward with their eyes.
Another interesting subordinate clause can be found in the following example: 'Mr. Kernan's tongue, the occasional stinging pain of which had made him somewhat irritable during the day, became more polite' (122\textsuperscript{29}). This time, if we get rid of the clause in question the sentence becomes a straightforward one – 'Mr. Kernan's tongue became more polite' – in which 'tongue' is simply a synecdoche for 'speech' or 'manners' (as in 'mind your tongue'). But the subordinate clause, when included, eliminates the possibility of 'tongue' being figurative in this way, because it specifies that it has been stinging from the chunk of it Mr Kernan has already bitten off in the first scene. We are therefore clearly dealing with a very literal tongue, and are left with a sentence in which a very literal tongue, with a piece missing, somehow becomes 'more polite' without reference to the manners or mood of the man whose tongue it is.

Sometimes, though more rarely, atomisation takes place via the choice of grammatical objects. The best example of this is a remarkable passage in 'A Little Cloud' (63), which occurs when Chandler observes a photograph of his wife. It begins with the sentence 'He looked coldly into the eyes of the photograph and they answered coldly'. We should already note something strangely inhuman here: these are not the eyes 'in' the photograph, but the eyes 'of' the photograph, or, more plainly, 'the photograph's eyes' (and by implication not his wife's!). This is odd enough, but more is to come. There follows a meditation on the nature of these eyes ('They repelled him and defied him'), and their deficiency when compared with the eyes of 'rich Jewesses', all of which makes sense as long as the eyes take a synecdochic function. But the passage concludes with a question that pushes any such synecdoche past its limits – 'Why had he married the eyes in the photograph?' – and Joyce's work here is done.

Other examples of this technique are plentiful. Sticking with eyes: in 'Two Gallants' Lenehan's 'bright, small eyes searched his companion's face' (39); in 'The Dead' Gabriel's eyes, irritated by the floor…wandered to the wall above the piano' (146); and in 'A Painful Case' we are told of Mrs Sinico's eyes that 'their gaze began with a defiant note' (83-4). As for tongues, we also find: 'While her tongue rambled on Gabriel tried to banish from his mind all memory of the unpleasant incident with

\textsuperscript{29} The italics here, and throughout this section, are mine.
Miss Ivors' (150) and 'his tongue had found a felicitous moment:' (70). Many more examples could be furnished, but I take these to be illustrative.

We are now in a position to formulate Joyce's sleight of style. He takes a verb, for instance 'to call', and instead of applying it to a person, applies it to the part of their anatomy they use to perform that verb. By attributing the verb to the part of the anatomy associated with it, Joyce can subtly eliminate the person's agency and replace it with the respective body part's, which reduces the person in question to a collection of independently operating mechanisms, rather than a unified human being. The overall effect is to achieve what I have called 'atomisation', or the dissolution of a person into several independent components, with the consequent elimination of true subjectivity. Joyce's characters do very little indeed, while their bodies seem to do most things all on their own. This disintegration of the self is part of what makes Joyce's characters seem so like automata. In Joyce's own terms regarding *Dubliners*, the restriction of a person's ability to act both physically and consciously is a symptom of paralysis.

**Atomisation in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man***

When we get to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we find Joyce using precisely the same technique, but in the majority of cases for quite different ends. There are a couple of instances, to be sure, where the same effect of debilitating paralysis is achieved. Consider the following description of Mike Flynn, an old friend of Simon Dedalus and Uncle Charles, and Stephen's rather pathetic 'trainer':

Stephen often glanced with mistrust at his trainer's flabby stubble-covered face, as it bent over the long stained fingers through which he rolled his cigarette, and with pity at the mild lustreless blue eyes which would look up suddenly from the task and gaze vaguely into the blue distance while the long swollen fingers ceased their rolling and grains and fibres of tobacco fell back into the pouch. (51)

The fingers are initially just fingers 'through which he rolled' his cigarette, which maintains Flynn's own subjectivity. But by the end of the passage we get 'the long swollen fingers ceased their rolling'. Here the verb, in its gerundive form, has been attached solely to the fingers: they, not Mike, are carrying out the operation. Not too noteworthy on its own – rolling a cigarette is a very automatic activity – but when combined with Flynn's 'lustreless blue eyes which would look up suddenly from the
task and gaze vaguely into the blue distance we have a perfect instance of atomisation à la Dubliners. His eyes look up and gaze, his fingers roll: his subjectivity is elided entirely.

But consider the most substantial artistic development between Dubliners and A Portrait, the advent of a single, sympathetic protagonist, treated at length, whose role in the novel is to eventually escape from precisely the paralysis depicted in the earlier collection. Obviously, the paralysing form of atomisation we saw in Dubliners cannot, ultimately, be the way in which his interactions with the world are represented. Instead, Joyce uses the same stylistic principle to variously characterise Stephen's developing consciousness. Aside from the Dubliners-style moments, there are four kinds of atomisation in A Portrait.

The Limits of Perception and Narrative Localisation

The first instance of the technique in the book is this:

A voice cried far out on the playground:
—All in!
Then other voices cried from the lower and third lines:
—All in! All in! (8)

Why 'A voice cried', rather than 'Boys cried', or 'Others cried'? No sense of automation or paralysis is obvious, for these are active children playing football. To get a sense of why Joyce should have employed the trick here, consider the following, near-identical passage, which we find some thirty pages later:

A voice from far out on the playground cried:
—All in!
And other voices cried:
—All in! All in! (38)

Four small changes have been made. The verb 'cried' has been moved to the end of the first and third sentences; the word 'from' has been introduced into the first line; 'then' has been changed to 'and' in the third line; and the specifier of 'from the lower and third lines' has been removed.

The shift from 'then' to 'and' is neat, injecting a sense of familiarity to the response from the other voices (Stephen has been at the school for a while now). This, however, is not the real point here. The crucial difference between these passages is that in the first Stephen is actually on the playground with the boys,
getting involved, whereas in the second he is inside, in a writing lesson. 'far out on the playground' allows for Stephen to be on the playground too, for no other place is mentioned or implied. But 'from far out on the playground' implies that Stephen is somewhere else: the noise has come 'from' that place, so that place cannot be here. Similarly with the move of the word 'cried': in the first version the structural emphasis is on the cry, because it is more immediate; in the second version the structural emphasis is on 'from far out', because the immediate fact about the cry is that it is not taking place in this writing lesson, but elsewhere.

The reason for these differences, then, is in our protagonist. He experiences the cries as different, so they are described slightly differently. We can apply this insight in order to understand the use of atomisation: the voices do the crying because these words are all limited to the sphere of Stephen's experiences. Put another way, he simply cannot see who cries, but is aware only of the sound. In the first instance, the boys are so far away ('far out on the playground') that Stephen cannot see who is shouting; in the second, Stephen is inside, and the boys in question are similarly invisible to him. Hence, in both cases the cry is an anonymous sound attached to no person, a voice in isolation from its owner: 'A voice cried'. Atomisation is sketching the limits of Stephen's senses, reflecting what he can and cannot perceive about his surroundings.

This makes sense of a good deal of charming moments in A Portrait. 'A voice bade the boys in the dormitory good night' (15): it is night, so it is dark, and Stephen can hear but cannot see the voice's owner; 'A voice at his bed said' (17): Stephen is ill, and only dimly aware of his surroundings, so he is only aware of the voice and not the physical presence; 'Wells's face was there' (17): just Well's face, because he is leaning over Stephen, who can't see the rest of him; 'The face and the voice went away' (17): which is self-explanatory in light of the above; 'The prefect's shoes went away' (15): the prefect has just left the room, so cannot be seen or experienced himself, but his shoes' impact on the floor is audible, so his shoes, not he, go away; 'Tomorrow, sir, said Tom Furlong's voice' (41): a nice touch this, as Stephen is too scared to look up, but can recognise Furlong's voice; 'He knocked again more loudly and his heart jumped when he heard a muffled voice say: C—Come in! (47) ': the Dean of studies is on the other side of the door; 'he listened distractedly to the voice of the
plump young Jesuit' (71): the key word here is 'distractedly', which tells us why the Jesuit is invisible to Stephen, whose mind is on the girl in the audience; 'Voices spoke near him:—On hell' (105): this is a clever one: the atomised 'voices' tells us that Stephen is again not really paying attention to his surroundings, which explains the absence of the question 'On what did he speak?', the answer to which is 'On hell', whereupon Stephen tunes into the conversation.

Atomisation, in this context, is the narrative's representation of the limits of Stephen's perception. It happens most commonly with voices, as these are most easily sensed when their owners are not visible.

This has serious narratological consequences, because it indicates that the limits of the narrative are synonymous with the limits of Stephen's consciousness. This is an idea familiar to adept readers of the novel, but this is a particularly important expression of it. *A Portrait* is, with the exception of the final diary entries, a third person narrative seriously complicated by free indirect style. Atomisation is a part of that complication, though not necessarily a part implied by the term 'free indirect style' as it is normally employed, even with the crucial nuance of Kenner's Uncle Charles Principle. In rendering the narrative organisation of a passage synonymous with Stephen's apprehension of the world around him, atomisation represents an unusually potent form of free indirect style. As such, atomisation in *A Portrait* is not just a pretty linguistic device; it is a structural principle, and one of Joyce's key novelistic innovations. I will return to atomisation's relationship with free indirect style once I have discussed its role in *Ulysses*.

**Atomisation as Characterisation**

If atomisation is one of the principle means by which Joyce links his narrative to Stephen's perception, then we can use it to enhance our understanding of Stephen himself. As a basic example, the sheer number of times that people's voices are atomised tells us something about Stephen: his eyesight is poor, and he often hears people before he sees them, or instead of seeing them at all. We know he wears glasses and that he cannot work without them. Sometimes his poor eyesight is subtly

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30 See *Joyce's Voices*, 15-38, for a full explanation of this important technique.
31 In my final chapter I will discuss another, related technique, which perhaps forges an even stronger link, not just between Stephen and the narrative voice, but between both these two and the reader.
referenced, as in 'before he reached them he had recognised Heron by his voice' (63). More potent than either of these, however, is the idea that the very shape of the narrative has been altered by Stephen's less-than-perfect vision.

On another note, consider the following sentence, from Stephen's thoughts on his potential life as a priest: 'He would know the sins, the sinful longings and sinful thoughts and sinful acts, of others, hearing them murmured into his ears in the confessional under the shame of a darkened chapel by the lips of women and of girls' (134). The atomisation is in the lips of the women and girls, which murmur sinful thoughts all on their own. At first glance this is a peculiar instance of atomisation, because Stephen would be unable to clearly see their lips in a confessional. Why then make these his perceptual focus? Because this gives a clue as to Stephen's barely repressed sexual longing. His thoughts concerning confession focus not just on the sinful thoughts of the females he would encounter, but upon their lips. Here, atomisation belies Stephen's spiritual focus.

In a similar vein, take Stephen's encounter with the prostitute:

His lips would not bend to kiss her. He wanted to be held firmly in her arms, to be caressed slowly, slowly, slowly. In her arms he felt that he had suddenly become strong and fearless and sure of himself. But his lips would not bend to kiss her. (85)

This is comparatively simple. Stephen himself is the one who is going to have to bend down and kiss this woman, but he has no idea what to do. Until now the only woman he has actually been described as kissing is his mother. As a result, he defers all responsibility onto his lips, which, unsurprisingly, don't do much on their own. To be sure, his encounter with the prostitute has given him a new found sense of masculinity, but this goes together with his sexual naivety, shyness and nervousness. This is why, after we hear of his feeling 'strong and fearless and sure of himself' we read 'But his lips would not bend down': that 'but' opposes his confidence with an underlying uncertainty, as implicitly expressed through atomisation.

There are many other examples of atomisation performing such a characterising function. Indeed, in principle most instances of the technique that give a sense of Stephen's perception should give us some clue as to his character, even if this is only telling us what he does and does not perceive.
Atomisation and Thomism

The following is by far the most speculative of my thoughts concerning atomisation in *A Portrait*, being more a suggestion for further study than a case in itself. Aquinas, as we hear more than once in this novel, wrote that *pulchra sunt quae visa placent*32. Here is the beginning of Stephen's exposition of this statement to Lynch: 'He uses the word *visa*, said Stephen, to cover esthetic apprehensions of all kinds, whether through sight or hearing or through any other avenue of apprehension' (174). The idea, it seems, is that our senses, our 'avenues of apprehension', can be pleased or displeased with those things apprehended: those things which pleasure them we call beautiful, those things which do not we call ugly. Notice, in this formulation, the priority given to the senses as distinct from the self. Consider, with that in mind, Stephen's thoughts on his own wandering eyes: 'The eyes see the thing, without having wished first to see. Then in an instant it happens. But does that part of the body understand or what?' (117). Consider too the seeming autonomy of his senses in seeking out certain things:

his senses, stultified only by his desire, would note keenly all that wounded or shamed them; his eyes, a ring of porter froth on a clothless table or a photograph of two soldiers standing to attention or a gaudy playbill; his ears, the drawling jargon of greeting... (86)

These passages, it seems to me, support a kind of primitive Thomism with regards to aesthetic perception. Stephen's vision perceives the world ('The eyes see the thing') and then he responds to the nature of the perception ('then in an instant it happens'). His modes of apprehension themselves are pleased or displeased ('his senses...would note keenly all that wounded or shamed them'), to which displeasure he has a reaction.

Crucial for my suggestion here is the point that these processes are being represented via atomisation. His eyes, not he, see the thing; his senses, not he, seek out what shames not him, but them. Atomisation in this sense emphasises the autonomy of our relationship with the sensible world (think of the 'ineluctable modality of the visible'). It places Stephen's senses as the mediators between him and the world, and emphasises his own position with regard to their aesthetic input. The

32 Although it should be observed that this is not exactly Aquinas's phrasing, *contra* many articles on Joyce's aesthetics. Aquinas wrote *pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent*; beauty is said to be that which pleases the vision (*Summa Theologica*, 72 (I, Qu V, Art IV, Ad 1)).
Thomistic undercurrent of such implications is certainly worthy of further research. Consider, in this regard, that *pulcra sunt quae visa placent* could be expressed as an atomisation: 'the eyes/senses were pleased: therefore it was beautiful'.

Take as an example the phrase 'his eyes had wandered from one sober picture to another around the walls' (130). This is barely even atomisation, for the notion of eyes wandering on their own is something of a metaphorical given. Still, we can consider it in Thomistic terms. His eyes are apprehending the world around him, and from this most elemental relation basic value judgements arise, in this case that the pictures apprehended are 'sober'. From this sensory apprehension aesthetic judgements can be made. The key is that notion of the most fundamental stage of pure sensory access and the sense of corresponding pleasure or displeasure – and this is precisely what atomisation emphasises. How much more, then, can we expect to see this effect come into play when the atomisation is stronger than here?

There are difficulties with such a thesis, and to properly assess its worth would require far for space than I have here, not least because a detailed look at Thomistic aesthetics would be needed. For example, what are we to do with the fact that the majority of the atomised eyes in *A Portrait* belong not to Stephen but some other character? And how easily can we accommodate the fact that Stephen is only formulating his Thomistic theories for a relatively small portion of the book? There are plenty of issues, but much to be discussed at the least. A final, rather charming point on this issue can be found in Stephen's mention of Aquinas's artistic creations (174). Stephen quotes the first three words of Aquinas's hymn for Maundy Thursday, which reads 'pange lingua gloriiosi corporis mysterium', or 'Sing, (my) tongue, the mystery of the glorious body'. 'Sing, my tongue': a 13th Century atomisation.

*Atomised Voices as Duty and Despair*

When I analysed the voices in the playground crying 'All in!' I wrote that no sense of automation or paralysis is obvious in this atomisation. Having got to grips with the principal forms of atomisation in *A Portrait* let us now look past the obvious, and ask whether there is anything sinister in these lines after all. Remembering that Stephen's quest in the novel will ultimately be to fly the nets his upbringing throws
over him and forge his own spiritual independence via the act of artistic creation, we can perhaps detect something deeper going on here. The cry of 'All in!' is precisely the impulse to conformity that Stephen will labour to escape later on: these cries prefigure the forces around him that will seek to make Stephen merge himself with one or other paralysing social institution. We might simply note this as a thematic development, and leave it there, yet the atomisation surely lends a certain power to this interpretation. The fact that anonymous voices are the source of these cries lends the incident resonance, because the abstraction of their calls to join in suggests precisely the generalised nature of the underlying cultural pressure that Stephen feels.

With this in mind, here is Stephen pondering that same cultural pressure more consciously later in the novel:

While his mind had been pursuing its intangible phantoms and turning in irresolution from such pursuit he had heard about him the constant voices of his father and of his masters, urging him to be a gentleman above all things and urging him to be a good catholic above all things. These voices had now come to be hollowsounding in his ears. When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her fallen language and tradition. In the profane world, as he foresaw, a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his schoolcomrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school. And it was the din of all these hollowsounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades. (70)

We must begin by noticing the atomisation: not people but voices 'urge' and 'bid' Stephen to enact certain cultural codes. Note too that these voices begin by being specified as those of his father and his masters, but end by being pretty abstract ('a worldly voice'), and then entirely abstract ('hollow-sounding voices'). These two stylistic tricks combine to personify the very cultural pressures that Stephen faces in the least obtrusive way possible. Here, Joyce suffuses the general, stylistic principle of atomisation, which exists for quite independent reasons (the limits of perception and narrative localisation), with the added significance of embodying the paralysis Stephen must escape. In passages such as this, Joyce adds an undercurrent to every
instance of vocal atomisation in the novel. It can be something as harmless as 'he listened distractedly to the voice of the plump young jesuit', which can and should be explained with reference to Stephen's lapse of concentration: with the above passage in mind, even this straightforward atomisation becomes a marker for sinister, cultural impositions.

Even when we read relatively simple lines like 'The voices that he knew so well' (106), we can now read them in light of much more complex moments such as 'His father's whistle, his mother's mutterings, the screech of an unseen maniac were to him now so many voices offending and threatening to humble the pride of his youth'. Every voice in the novel takes on ghoulish significance, especially those separated from people, acting independently, as in '-Here comes the noble Dedalus! cried a high throaty voice' (63). When Stephen does begin to escape from the nets cast around him, he does so in the precisely the terms of these atomised voices: 'This was the call of life to his soul not the dull gross voice of the world of duties and despair, not the inhuman voice that had called him to the pale service of the altar' (143). The voices hitherto can all be retrospectively understood as 'the voice of the world of duties and despair'. Atomisation is, in a move reminiscent of Dubliners, being used to incarnate the paralysis of Dublin life.

**Atomisation in Ulysses**

When we come to Ulysses we again find an evolution in the way in which Joyce employs atomisation, though interestingly not such a difference in kind as we find between Dubliners and A Portrait. In examining this development, however, we are in slightly different position. Atomisation, considered as a device that spans Joyce's whole oeuvre, has received no critical attention that I can find. The same can be said of atomisation as specifically employed in Dubliners, A Portrait or Finnegans Wake. However, I have found two critics, indeed two such critics as Gottfried and Attridge, who have discussed the phenomenon in certain parts of Ulysses.

Gottfried's discussion is limited to a few brief sentences during his discussion of fragmentation and mechanisation in The Art of Joyce's Syntax in Ulysses:
The activities of the body are stressed by the patterns of the language to such an extent that Bloom appears fragmented, alive only in his moving parts, almost a passive object: "His hand took his hat from the peg"; "His hand accepted the moist tender [pork kidney]"; "His slow feet walked him riverward". (70)

Gottfried has neatly delineated the device, and provided a plausible interpretation of it. His conclusion is perhaps a little too heavy thanks to a lack of technical context, but this can easily be forgiven. He has already established the presence of fragmentation and mechanisation through the study of syntactic techniques entirely other than atomisation, and the quotes he provides in the above passage slot fairly neatly into this interpretive context. When we study atomisation at a broader level, I think there are better interpretations of these lines, but there is little point in quibbling here.

Attridge's discussion of the technique is far more substantial, taking up half a chapter of his *Peculiar Language: Language as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (158-172). I consider Attridge's discussion of the technique to be, for the most part, excellent. Before turning to it, however, I wish to indulge in a historical point. Gottfried and Attridge are the only two relatively modern scholars to discuss atomisation; but Gottfried was not the first ever to document it. Going all the way back to the 1940s, we can find Vladimir Nabokov putting his finger on this stylistic nerve:

> From Nelson's Pillar Bloom walks south, riverward. A somber YMCA man places a leaflet, "Elijah is Coming," "in a hand of Mr Bloom." Why this odd construction, "in a hand of Mr Bloom"?
> Because for the distributor of leaflets a hand is merely a hand into which to place something: that it belongs to Mr Bloom is incidental. (320)

This is a perfect window into the evolution of the technique in *Ulysses*. Several points stand out. First, in a move reminiscent of the passage from 'A Little Cloud' I studied earlier, the atomised body part is no longer the subject of the sentence, but the object. From this, it follows that we now have to be on the lookout for unusual possessive constructions as potential instances of atomisation. Further, consider the narrative locus of this construction. In *A Portrait* we saw atomisation being used to simultaneously define the limits of both Stephen's consciousness and the limits of the narrative itself, but crucially it was only ever Stephen's consciousness that performed this organising function. Now the narrative is far, far more versatile. Here, it
momentarily glides into and occupies the consciousness of a passing pamphleteer, a wholly minor character, before returning to Bloom. This is a crucial development: atomisation now allows Joyce's narrative to range quite through the consciousnesses of his entire cast. This now fundamental flexibility of atomisation, which can be most securely held in view by following its development through the early fiction, must be borne in mind throughout what follows.

Happily, I consider Attridge's discussion of atomisation in *Ulysses* to be so strong that it saves me the necessity of spending a great deal of time on it myself. For the record, I also consider it to be a near pitch-perfect integration of Theory and close reading. The Theoretical slant to Attridge's thinking is quite manifest:

> One way of regarding the variously busy lips of "Sirens," therefore, is as a more literal rendering of human vocal activity than is normally promulgated by the linguistic convention of representing all conscious human behavior as if it were the product of a single, coherent subjectivity and by the ideology that this convention serves and promotes. (166-7, italics original)

This is classical Theoretical territory: linguistic deviance questioning the integrity of subjectivity and exposing the ideological underpinnings of so-called 'conventional' prose. However, this conclusion flows from some excellent close readings, and is fully integrated into that analysis. It is, therefore, very strong.

Attridge discusses atomisation with an awareness that it is used throughout *Ulysses*, though his discussion is limited principally to episode eleven, in which it finds a particular intensity of usage. He does not mention atomisation in any of Joyce's other works, although it cannot be doubted that he is aware of its presence there. Obviously, he does not use the same term to describe the effect.

I find four interlinked theses regarding atomisation in this chapter. We can begin, however, with the overall picture granted us by Attridge's conclusions:

> What we have seen in this discussion is how one aspect of the linguistic deviation of "Sirens" works to explore and test assumptions about the relationship between parts of the body and the individual subject, assumptions coded in the language we habitually employ... The result of this process, however is not to reinforce the stability and certainty of the norm, and the sharp distinction between literary and nonliterary language that depends upon it, but to put in question the norm itself. (172)

Attridge's thesis is a very logical response to the technique under discussion, and I have no criticisms whatever to lodge against what he calls this 'possible way of
reading the chapter' (172). He has already expressed his desire to move beyond Gottfried's explanation of atomisation as 'having a traditional expressive function, aimed at representing human behaviour as mechanical' (162). When Attridge considers the various manifestations of the technique, he concludes that 'There is clearly too much vocal and emotional energy of different kinds being expended here to allow "mechanical behaviour" to stand as a satisfactory explanation' (163). Under the general conclusion quoted above he forges, as I have said, broadly four different theses.

First, he sees atomisation as a kind of narratological joke, a way of undermining the authority of omniscient narration. His example here is from the first chapter in which Haines, who thus far has only been addressed by Mulligan, is not allowed subjectivity with regard to his own speech: '-Have you the key? a voice asked' (U 1.322). This, for Attridge, 'points up the faint absurdity of an apparently omniscient narrator having to feign ignorance of the names of characters merely because they have not yet been introduced to the reader' (164). Second, he sees such lines as 'He saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him' (1.106-7) as a way of introducing Stephen's critical view of his companions into the flow of the narrative voice. Third, he analyses atomisation as a species of synecdoche, which discussion leads him to the more Theoretical considerations quoted above (166-7). Finally, he treats the sexual undercurrents of atomisation at some length, including discussion of its status as a kind of transference (168), and as a kind of substitution (169-70). This last treatment of atomisation is particularly successful, and can be seen as an inventive extension of the kind of sexual undercurrents to atomisation I discussed in A Portrait. I have nothing to add to this, and so only need refer the reader to Attridge himself. The discussion of atomisation-as-synecdoche is also strong, though perhaps not as original. Attridge's first two points, however, require a little qualification, and this will lend further substance to my discussion here.

Let us take a little more time to look at the passage Attridge quotes concerning Haines's voice:

-We'll be choked, Buck Mulligan said. Haines, open that door, will you?
Stephen laid the shavingbowl on the locker. A tall figure rose from the hammock where it had been sitting, went to the doorway and pulled open the inner doors.

- Have you the key? a voice asked. (U 1.318-322)

- on which Attridge comments: 'It is as though the narrator, in spite of Mulligan's address, remains in ignorance of Haines's identity (and even gender: the "figure is scrupulously referred to as "it")' (164). Thus, for Attridge, this is one of Joyce's playful overextensions of narrative form. In light of the forgoing discussion of atomisation as a form of narrative localisation in *A Portrait*, however, we can perhaps nuance this view. Just as with the voices on the playground in the earlier work, we can see this instance of atomisation as a kind of narratological anchor, imprisoning the text within the boundaries of Stephen's consciousness. Haines is called by name because it is Mulligan speaking, and Stephen can of course hear him. When it comes to Stephen's impressions of what follows, however, we are forced to rely upon his poor vision, and of course they are inside, in a dark room. (The Martello tower has only a few, very small windows, and the door is closed. The room would surely be very dark indeed.) So, Stephen is able to make out a figure, and is able to make out its size, but more than this he simply cannot see. Consequently, while he hears Haines's words, he cannot actually see him speaking them, and the words are attributed simply to 'a voice' which he can hear. Of course, Stephen is aware of the identity of the figure, and knows who spoke the words, but that is beside the point: the narrative takes nothing for granted, and faithfully represents not what Stephen knows, but what he perceives.

This explanation of the phrase 'a voice asked' obviously precludes any of the playfulness that Attridge sees in the narrative. This is no joke at the expense of an 'apparently omniscient narrator'. Such a view gets rather ahead of itself by assuming the presence of an omniscient narrator and then finding moments that don't make sense on that assumption. Better to abandon that assumption altogether, and use these moments to inform our view of exactly what kind of narrator Joyce is employing here. The limits of the narrative voice, synonymous with the limits of Stephen's senses, are being precisely illuminated through lines such as these. Building on this, we can accordingly adjust, or rather expand, Attridge's second point regarding atomisation. This is much more than a way of carrying over Stephen's harsh views of his fellows as an inflection in omniscient narration. Such would really be a kind of
indirect discourse, and while atomisation thus employed is obviously a relative of that technique, it is far stronger.

Let me repeat, lest these remarks seem too critical, that I think Attridge's work on this subject is first rate, and that many of his interpretive emphases are pitch-perfect. My point is simply that he does not fully articulate the narratological consequences of this technique. This is probably because he looks at it in quite an isolated sample – most of his discussion works on episode eleven of *Ulysses* – and in this rather narrow context it is difficult to see the link between atomisation and macrocosmic narratology. With that link obscured, Attridge's conclusions are perfectly natural, but would obviously benefit from the broader view offered by a study of atomisation through Joyce's early works. This is why I place such emphasis not just on stylistics, but on thematic stylistics: the evolution of stylistic trends can often give invaluable clues as to their interpretation.

Let me conclude by trying to define the major development we find in *Ulysses* in Joyce's use of atomisation. I agree with Attridge's view of atomisation as synecdochic and eroticising, but these are really quite natural extensions of the kind of uses we saw it put to in *A Portrait*: they are stronger here, to be sure, but they are unchanged in essence. The major innovation is to be found in atomisation's narratological function. In *Ulysses*, atomisation still gives the same clues as to the limits of the narrative being a certain character's perceptive limits, but now these clues are found with reference not only to the limits of Stephen's perception, or even Stephen and Bloom's perception, but with reference to the perception of any character Joyce chooses, right down to walk-on parts such as Nabokov's pamphleteer.

This has some profound consequences for the study of narrative in *Ulysses*. When I introduced thematic stylistics in chapter four, I mentioned that the techniques I would be examining illustrate a diversity in Joycean narratology that is not captured by using the umbrella term of 'free indirect style'. The use of atomisation in *Ulysses* is just such a technique. It goes much further than inflecting the narrative with the thoughts or linguistic habits of a character, which are the usual point of reference for free indirect style. Here, it is the character's perceptual limits that anchor the narrative voice, and this is a quite different point of contact. The presence of free indirect style, even with the nuance of Kenner's 'Uncle Charles Technique', is not
enough in itself to claim that the narrative's perceptual limits are fully synonymous with a particular character's; and *a fortiori* it is not enough to ground the narrative voice not just in a particular consciousness, but in a particular consciousness in a particular place at a particular time. Atomisation, however, is grounds for suggesting all of these things. And of course, we must add to this the fact that this narratological anchor is conspicuously mobile, such that we must discuss *Ulysses* in terms of a series of perceptive loci, and be ready for the presence not only of various straightforward perceptual limits in the narrative voice, but for a wide variety of value judgements too.

As a coda, let me just address the question of why I specify the first half of the novel as the half in which atomisation is more common. Simply, the narrative postures in the second half allow for it less and less. Attridge, incidentally, is aware of this:

quote

the antinovelistic style used for the representation of Molly's thoughts in "Penelope" does not permit [this technique] at all. In [this] case, although the word "lips" occurs several times, only once does it act as a subject, and then to describe what is presumably an involuntary action: "didnt I cry yes I believe I did or near it my lips were tittering when I said goodbye" (165)

With the above view of atomisation in mind, we can usefully reformulate this point. Atomisation is a way of joining the limits of the narrative with the limits of a character's point of view, and in fully-fledged stream of consciousness this achievement is obviously redundant: the narrative is already manifestly imprisoned within a certain character's mind, to the extent that it is no longer in the third person, and as such the room for atomisation ceases to exist.

**Atomisation in *Finnegans Wake***

Consider the phrase 'Mr Televox, Mrs Taubiestimm and invisible friends!' (*FW* 546.29). We should begin by noting the presence of two words – the Latin 'vox' and the German 'Stimme' – both meaning 'voice'. Adding a little colour, we should also observe that the German word Taubstumm, meaning deaf-mute, is the closest referent of 'Taubiestimm', and that the Greek prefix 'tele-', meaning 'far off', makes 'Televox' a distant voice, an estranged cousin of a television. The personification of
these vocal compounds under the titles Mr and Mrs is what leads me to consider these words under the rubric of atomisation, for it seems to me that here diverse, intermingled senses of 'voice' are being given a distinctly anthropomorphic existence, addressed by name and, significantly, grouped with other 'invisible friends'. This single phrase is enough to tell us that we have come a long, long way from atomisation in *Ulysses*. These voices are closer to being personifications of 'voice', rather than actual voices in themselves. These are pure voices, entirely abstracted, supplied with titles, complicated by the rather oxymoronic ghost of 'deaf-mute', and, weirdly, not themselves speaking, but being spoken to. Len Platt sees references to Theosophy in these distant voices and invisible friends (297), and this seems very plausible to me.

This phrase can profitably be seen as a faintly unhinged extension of the techniques hitherto considered. This is surely a kind of atomisation, a part functioning in place of the whole, but it is so extreme that it stretches the definitions implied by its predecessors. This should come as no surprise. Of course the *Wake* was going to wreak havoc upon whatever well-defined stylistics we had pursued through the earlier works. There are, to be sure, easier examples than the above. Take, for instance, 'Our eyes demand their turn. Let them be seen!' (52.18-19), which can be analysed along fairly familiar lines. Still, by and large, the *Wake*’s unique style means that atomisation, while it is present, has to be approached rather differently. There are several basic narrative features which will help us to see why this is the case.

First, to the extent that the *Wake* eschews conventional plot, characterisation, physical description and dialogue it also eschews the potential for atomisation, which relies on a relatively tangible sense of physicality and character. For example, in order to atomise a 'voice', as we have seen Joyce do so often thus far, we need at least a faintly conventional representation of speech. We need, at the minimum, the opportunity for a phrase like 'she said', so that we might have 'her voice said' instead. The *Wake* commonly resists even such basic novelistic habits as these. Similarly, it resists spending much time on physical description – it is, after all, a book of darkness and mutation. Just as episode eighteen of *Ulysses* eliminated the possibility for atomisation with its extreme formal innovation, so the *Wake* drastically limits it.
A corollary of this issue is the question of narrative localisation in the *Wake*. This was the great function of atomisation in *Ulysses*, but is it even conceivably applicable to the *Wake*? In the absence of obvious speech (as in the washerwomen's dialogue), how are we to pin down the narrative voice at all, let alone tie it to one of the *Wake*’s infinitely mutable characters? Furthermore, the illimitable wordplay in the *Wake* means that potential atomisations can spring up in the most unlikely, most ambiguous places. For example, the phrase 'With earnestly conceived hopes' (617.27-8) could conceivably be regarded as a distant cousin of the technique: these hopes are, after all, 'earnestly conceived'. Such instances must be interpreted on a case by case basis, obviously, but the problem for the analyst is obvious. There is also a problem of comprehension here: analysis of this technique in the *Wake* is so demanding that we must be modest about our hopes of compelling success.

Finally, there is a simple linguistic problem, common to all analyses of the *Wake*, concerning its multilingualism. Say we wanted to follow voices in the *Wake*, and see if any of them were atomised. We could begin with straightforward phrases such as 'You should have heard the voice that answered him!' (154.28-9), which are fairly accessible. Before long, however, we are going to come up against phrases like 'I heard a voice, the voce of Shaun, vote of the Irish, voise from afar' (407.13-4). This seems simple, with 'voice' going through two variations in the sentence, until we see that 'voce' is Italian for 'voice'. Now we have to be on the look out for cases like 'Mr Televox, Mrs Taubiestimm and invisible friends!', and they are not always so easy as this. Take, for example, 'Ourselves, oursouls alone. At the site of salvocean' (623.28-9), where 'salvocean', as well as being 'salve', 'ocean' and 'salvation', also contains 'voce'. As the language becomes more obscure, so we become more concerned about our abilities to spot relevant examples. The word 'whaannever' in the phrase 'whaannever his blaetther began to fail off him' (77.14-5) has always puzzled me. One option is to see the Finnish word 'ääni', also meaning voice, in 'whaannever', which would tie in nicely with the 'blaetther'. Or take the phrase 'the core of his cushlas' (203.23-4). Are we to see the Czech word for voice, 'hlas', in 'cushlas', the Anglo-Irish word for 'pulses'? If we include the Greek θυνή then the problem becomes one of superabundance: from 'optophone' (13.16) to 'the phoney habit (it was remarkable) in his clairaudience' (533.30-1), the potential atomisations are
legion.

All this is a way of saying that, as was inevitable, *Finnegans Wake* is going to be a nigh-impossible challenge for the student of style. Still, it is worth understanding the exact contours of the problem. The crucial thing to take from this list of difficulties is that, aside from the more practical problems, there is a sense in which the *Wake*, like the latter episodes of *Ulysses*, has moved into a stylistic framework which is rarely conducive to the deployment of atomisation (with certain important qualifications). Still, there are a few themes I would like to discuss, and a more general conclusion I would like to draw. Naturally, these are all a little provisional, more in the vein of suggestions for further study than fully-fledged analyses in their own right.

My first observation is that atomisation in the *Wake* is not restricted to what we would, in another book, call third person narrative. I am aware that the question of narrative voice in the *Wake* is a vexed one, but we can still easily distinguish between something closer to third person narrative ('Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's maurer, lived in the broadest way immarginable' (4.18-9)) and the speech of certain characters ('Yes, of course, we all know Anna Livia' (196.4-5)). This relative distinction is all that is needed in order to make the observation that in the *Wake* atomisation occurs in the latter category, and that this is a new departure in the technique. In all the other works, atomisation was a distinctively narratological technique, used to push the narrative voice into a particular person's consciousness. Naturally, people do not tend to atomise themselves, or others for that matter. Still, in the *Wake* we get 'Our eyes demand their turn. Let them be seen!' (52.18-19), and 'Your delighted lips, love, be careful' (148.6-7). This is peculiar, implying a rather disconcerting view of subjectivity on the part of the speaker. To understand it, we have to hold a broader view of character in the *Wake* in mind. While the *Wake* does feature broadly delimitable characters, and indeed tells stories regarding them, these are not characters in any conventional sense of the word. Obviously, they are highly fluid, often assuming the status of mythic archetype, but the main point here is the adjusted sense of character voice that this entails. Part one concludes with the dialogue of the washerwomen on the banks of the Liffey, but these are the kind of washerwomen who can happily mutate into a stone and an elm tree in the space of a paragraph. Their speech is, we must concede,
often washerwomen-ish: 'Tell me all. Tell me now. You'll die when you hear' (196.4-5). Still, it is also infected with the particular brand of verbal schizophrenia unique to Joyce's final work: 'a guillotine shirt for Reuben Redbreast und hempen suspendeats for Brenan on the Moor' (211.26-8). And at times it assumes a wonderful lyrical quality, and indeed provides us with one of the most famously beautiful lines in the book: 'the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night!' (216.4-5). Within this fantastically complex rendering of voice, we can easily find a place for first-person use of atomisation, as strange as it may seem in isolation.

My next point concerns the kind of thing that happens to body parts when they are placed in the *Wake*'s linguistic system. To illustrate, consider an atomisation we get on the first page: 'nor avoice from a fire bellowsed mishe mishe' (3.9). The most obvious reference is clearly the burning bush in Exodus, but we should not get too comfy with this tidy explanation. After all, Joyce's 'avoice' is not 'God's voice', and crucially, while the former clearly draws upon the latter, it cannot be reduced to it. This is not least because the *Wake* supplies us with another, equally plausible referent for this phrase, which is Issy's voice coming down the chimney (many critics have noted that Issy's bedroom is directly above HCE's, and they are connected via their fireplaces). Obviously, the first stage in analysing the *Wake* is to lose the need for the phrase 'avoice from a fire' to 'mean' either God's voice or Issy's voice. Rather, it holds both referents within itself, and more besides. One of the results of such multivalence is that 'avoice' exists independently of any of its particular referents: it always contains the idea of 'voice', but that voice has no single, stable speaker. In any other piece of prose the human subject precedes their component parts: we need to have someone before we can have their voice. In one of the *Wake*'s more disconcerting inversions, we find that in this text the order is reversed: first comes the voice, existing independently of any speaker, and then come a variety of potential speakers.

What to do with this? I think there are two relevant consequences here, both stemming from the fact that we can understand this phenomenon as a species of atomisation. Just as we have seen in our studies of atomisation thus far, this is another way of giving a body part a curious level of autonomy. The difference here is that this body part is so autonomous that it has escaped the need to belong to an
individual. The sheer multivalence of the *Wake* has liberated voice from particularity and posited it as an entity in itself. Another example might be the phrase 'The fourscore soculums are watchyoumaycoddling' (346.25). 'soculums' appears to be a cross between 'speculum' (Latin for 'mirror') and 'oculus' (Latin for 'eye'), 'coddling' is Irish slang for fooling someone, and watchyoumay obviously infuses 'watch' into 'what you may'. The context for this line is Taff the comedian's dialogue with Butt in chapter three of part two, though this is unimportant for my point here, which is simply that those eighty 'soculums' function quite happily on their own. Inasmuch as this word implies 'eyes', these eyes are atomised, and though their owners are a logical necessity, they are nowhere to be seen in the text. This is a new level of independence, and therefore a new level of atomisation.

The second consequence of this point is to do with scope. As I have claimed, the multivalence of 'avoice' in 'avoice from afire' means that the voice cannot be attached to a single speaker. This kind of voice is therefore *intrinsically* atomised; because it is prior to any of its potential speakers, it cannot be said to belong to any one of them, which grants it precisely the kind of independence that lies at the heart of atomisation. The consequence of this is that multivalent body parts are always to some degree atomised. As long as we cannot decide whose body part this is, there is always an extent to which it is more textually present than any of its potential owners. This link between multivalence and atomisation is a serious issue: given the degree of multivalence we see in the *Wake*, this means that atomisation is more of a presence than we might first expect.

It would be easy to take this too far too quickly, so let me immediately qualify the above by saying that many of the body parts in the *Wake* are not multivalent in this way, and so are not intrinsically atomised. When Anna Livia says 'My lips went livid for from the joy of fear' (626.29) we know whose lips these are, however complicated our understanding of her character may be. Similarly, phrases such as 'All ears did wag' (496.15) and 'Never let the promising hand usemake free of your oncemaid sacral' (433.27-8) are not susceptible to this kind of analysis: the ears in the former being straightforwardly ascribed to 'all', the hand in the latter being a generic type, the sly seducer. Discussions of multivalence in the *Wake* can
sometimes be too quick to assume that their conclusions apply to every corner of the text. In this case at least, such would be a mistake.

I will conclude this section with a general remark. In *Finnegans Wake* we see language stretched sometimes beyond recognition; this naturally stretches style in the same way; and this in turn means that atomisation is stretched, often quite out of shape. The *Wake*'s style both prohibits and extends the deployment of atomisation, so that rarely if ever can it be considered along the same lines as in Joyce's other works. This was inevitable, and indeed appropriate. Joyce's book of the night, written in his 'nat language' (83.12), naturally obscures whatever human forms might be tentatively discerned within it. Voices come to us, though we are often unsure just whose they are, just as we see eyes ('We are all eyes' – 443.1) without necessarily seeing faces. To speak of atomisation under such circumstances is a little odd, perhaps a little inappropriate. With characters so nebulous, what is there to atomise? Still, echoes of the same technique we have examined elsewhere can doubtless be heard amid the din, and the stylistic continuation is worthy of note in itself – even if it does not yield a powerful analytical tool when it comes to this particular text.

**Conclusions**

Having looked at atomisation in all four major works, I am in a position to draw together some conclusions. I hope the above discussions have provided a meaningful contribution to stylistics in Joyce studies, for such was, in part, their aim. In the context of this thesis, however, they serve another purpose too, which is to stand as a response to Leonard's analysis of 'Haines's voice said' in *Ulysses: En-Gendered Perspectives*. Naturally, considered in this capacity alone, a lengthy study will seem a little excessive. As before, however, this length is justified not only because I am trying to make a contribution to Joyce studies as I go along, but also because I wish to illustrate a technique, and this takes time. I want to provide an analytical tool which can act as counterbalance to Theoretical frameworks, and in such matters it is important to do more than just point others in a noble direction. One must go as far as one can in that direction oneself.

Let us briefly return to 'Haines's voice said'. As will be obvious, I consider this to be an instance of atomisation as narrative localisation, as discussed in the
second and third sections above. I do not find the idea of imperialism's 'voice' 'speaking through' Haines an equally plausible suggestion. On this point, one clarification needs to be made. One of the points I made with regard to A Portrait was that atomised voices are sometimes used there as a way of characterising cultural claims on Stephen's identity. Is this a plausible way of interpreting 'Haines's voice said'? Can we accept my discussion of atomisation, and still see some version of Leonard's view – Haines's voice as cultural claim – as an interesting alternative view? I don't think this is at all viable, for these reasons. First, recall that Leonard wants to see this as a voice coming through Haines, and not as Haines's own voice. To repeat my earlier objections to this, the atomisation of his voice still emphasises that this is Haines's voice, and no one else's, and furthermore this point relies upon an inappropriately reductive understanding of Haines's character. Second, the abstract-voice-as-cultural-claim theme, while strong in A Portrait, receives little or no treatment in Ulysses, so there isn't really good ground for interpreting atomisation in that light here. Finally, perhaps most conclusively, we need to remember the kinds of voice that made those claims on Stephen. From parents to priests, the voices that spoke to Stephen in so sinister a manner were all voices that had laid a kind of claim upon his soul. They were all things he had, at some point or another, loved or respected, and whose claims upon him he had now, with difficulty, to escape. This is a deeply inappropriate context in which to place Haines's voice. Stephen has only known him a short while, holding Haines in a mixture of fear and contempt, and in no way could the latter be said to lay a claim on his soul.

I take it as read that this kind of stylistic study provides an antidote to errors of this variety. Obviously, I would not demand that Leonard engage with atomisation on this very large scale during the course of his essay. Rather, I simply wish to observe that Leonard was making a stylistic analysis of a very noteworthy feature, and that his analysis would have been considerably better if he has seen that feature in context. As it is, I see no meaningful way in which his chosen quotation could support his thesis. It doesn't militate against it, either; it simply has nothing much to do with the study of imperialism in this chapter.
Chapter Seven: Third Case Study

My final chapter to mount a critique of Theory will deal with probably the most famous Theorist of them all, Jacques Derrida. The sheer scale of his reputation and influence, together with the controversy they generated, need not be rehearsed here. Suffice it to say that in approaching him, we are approaching something of an emblem of the Theoretical turn, and not just in literary studies, but in history, philosophy, law, theology and still other subjects.

Criticisms of Derrida have been mounted from a great many angles, from the opacity of his style\(^{33}\) to his supposed nihilism\(^{34}\). Though I do consider many of these questions to be worth pursuing I will not focus on any of them here except where they touch on my own lines of inquiry, which will deal exclusively with his status as a reader of literature. By way of clearing the ground, let me briefly say that a great many of these assaults on Derrida's quality, status and integrity seem to me to be dealing with a straw man. The questions are worth asking, but we must ask them of Derrida himself, in all his complexity, and not of a caricature we have built for convenience in his place.

In criticising Derrida as a reader of literature, we are dealing with him on what many would consider to be his strongest front. In his defence to his thesis jury in 1980 he said 'my most constant interest, coming even before my philosophical interest I should say, if this is possible, has been directed towards literature, towards that writing which is called literary' ('This Strange Institution Called Literature' 33). This literary preoccupation was not simply a matter of self-perception. To return to and extend an edict from Terry Eagleton:

> English senior common rooms are full of self-righteous blather about thinkers like Derrida being more interested in abstract theories than in close reading. In fact, he read works of art and philosophy with a stunning originality and intricacy beyond that of most of his critics. ('Don't Deride Derrida')

Stunning originality and intricacy are quite a reputation to meet, and Eagleton is far from alone here. J. Hillis Miller has suggested with equal confidence that Derrida, as

\(^{33}\) For instance Searle, 'The World Turned Upside Down', 77-8.

\(^{34}\) For a treatment of some such claims see Rayment-Pickard's 'Derrida and Nihilism'. Pickard's focus is principally on the theological debates generated by Derrida's thought.
'one of the great literary critics of the twentieth century', has presented 'detailed, persuasive, and brilliantly original readings of literary works' ('Derrida and literature', 58).

For this reason I consider my own criticism of Derrida to be an appropriate climax for this thesis. I have dealt thus far with Cixous and MacCabe as representatives of the French and English versions of post-structuralist thought, and subsequently with a more contemporary representative of Theoretical analysis, which was specifically oriented towards dissection of a particular text, in the form of *Ulysses: En-Gendered Perspectives*. Derrida is a thinker without whom it may plausibly be said that none of these works would have taken the shape they did. His influence on Theory is without question. Not only this, but he is for many *the* Theoretical close reader, the great moment of intersection between Theory and minute textual analysis. If any of my standard criticisms can be brought to bear against him then this will be both a fitting conclusion for my own work, and a point of considerable relevance for studies of Theory more generally.

### Some Preliminaries

Still, coming to Derrida presents difficulties as well as potential rewards, and first among these is that it is not really plausible to examine an example of Derridean reading in isolation. While I think it would be possible to simply look at certain of Derrida's claims regarding a text and assess their validity, the fact that those claims form a connected part of a vast intellectual project, a fifty-year career spent developing a complex and multifaceted approach to textuality (among other things), means that to pursue such an isolated analysis would leave one open to charges of problematic decontextualisation. Simply, Derrida's thought is interconnected to an unusual degree, and we need to respect this if our criticisms are to have any purchase.

Let us begin then with the primary challenge we face in coming to Derrida's work, which is surely comprehension. This basic difficulty of knowing exactly what is being said needs to be admitted right from the outset lest serious misunderstandings follow. If Richard Rorty was even half right when in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (124, n.6) he suggested that Derrida makes certain of his terms simply indefinable (*Différance* being the key example), then we need to begin with
this very basic question: can we understand enough of Derridean thought to critically
analyse it?

Let us begin, then, not with anything so controversial as the question 'what
are the characteristics of Derridean reading?', but with the more modest 'can we
know what the characteristics of Derridean reading are in the first place?'. In order
to bring the issue into as sharp a focus as possible, I will take my lead from the
admiringly clear Derek Attridge. His introduction to the collection *Acts of Literature*
is concerned with bringing to our attention the most significant dimensions of
Derrida's readings of literature. Furthermore, it is in this collection that we find the
translation of the essay on Joyce to which I shall turn later in this chapter, so one can
rely upon a certain relevance from whatever general remarks we find therein.

Beginning, then, with something fairly easy:

Derrida's acts of reading literature impinge directly upon philosophy,
and are closely connected with his readings of philosophical,
linguistic, theological, constitutional, judicial, aesthetic, and other
kinds of nonliterary text. (3)

That phrase 'acts of reading' demands attention, and Attridge obliges in a footnote:

To call Derrida's engagements with texts, literary or philosophical,
"readings" is inadequate to the extent that this term suggests a
traditional interpretive project; like any alternative term one might use,
it needs to be understood in the light of Derrida's practice (which is
different for every text he "reads"). (3, n.4)

This seems to me to be a methodological claim of the utmost significance. It is not
isolated:

"philosophical" deconstruction can work only through particular acts
of reading... [and] *there is no abstractable or applicable argument,
concept or method which could be laid out independently of such
readings*. (This, of course, is precisely the deconstructive quarrel with
philosophy, which is based on the principle of abstraction away from
particular acts of language, and responses to language, towards
transcendent meaning, truth, or instrumentality.) (14, my italics)

This is not a minority position in studies of Derrida. J. Hillis Miller:

Sentences of the form "deconstruction is so and so" are a
contradiction in terms. Deconstruction cannot by definition be defined,
since it presupposes the indefinability or, more properly,
"undecidability" of all conceptual or generalizing terms.
Deconstruction, like any other method of interpretation, can only be
exemplified, and the examples will of course all differ. (*Theory Now
and Then*, 231)

Julian Wolfreys introducing his collection *The Derrida Reader:*
[This introduction] is not – and cannot be for all the reasons discussed by Derrida – a summary or potted version; there is not a question here of joining dots and getting a complete picture, for there is no complete picture to be had, and, anyway, the dots can always be joined in different ways. (5)

Tom Cohen:

If reading Derrida entails a labyrinthine movement, then, it is as a performative and at times vertiginous mobility where strategies and logics replicate in explosive variants and viral elaborations. One may choose, as a reader, one among other threads to hold in entering these translational scenes. (6)

Christina Howells in her chapter on literature and philosophy in Derrida:

Deconstruction from Phenomenology to Ethics:

My account of Glas is intended to give some impression of the confusing complexity of Derrida's text. It may, of course, still leave readers with a misleading impression of readability. (94)

One finds this attitude applied right down to individual terms. Hence, Christopher Norris in Derrida:

this is precisely what Derrida intends: that différance should not function as a concept, not as a word whose meaning could finally be "booked into the present"... (15)

– by which rather gnomic phrase I take Norris to be saying that we can't know what différance means.

We are coming up against something of a recurring theme here. Derridean reading, be it in the form of deconstruction, the mere use of Derridean terms, or just Derrida's 'readings' per se, is fairly consistently presented as defying any attempt at definition. Attridge's terms, italicised above, are the most convenient: 'there is no abstractable or applicable argument, concept or method which could be laid out independently of such readings'. I shall refer to this assertion that the methodology of Derridean reading is not abstractable, or indeed applicable, as the refusal of positive definition. By this I simply mean the idea that Derrida's approach to texts cannot be defined in positive descriptive terms, but must apparently be experienced 'in the act'. I would like to underline here, as it will be crucial later, that negative definition – as in 'Derrida's approach is not a traditional interpretive project' – is apparently acceptable.

To return to the question at hand, it would seem that if we do ask 'Can we know what the characteristics of Derridean reading are in the first place?' the answer we get is 'No, at least not in any terms that are abstractable or applicable'. Now, it
seems to me that the refusal of positive definition is about as radical a claim as can be made for a thinker. To say, as Attridge does very clearly, that someone's reading practices feature no arguments, concepts or methods that can be abstracted or even applied is to abolish altogether one of the principal conceptual spaces in which discussion of their work would normally occur. If this is true, then all the books written against Derrida's approach to literature have missed the point altogether. Even to speak of a 'Derridean approach' in any detail, it seems, is to have made a statement of disqualifying ignorance.

One interesting dimension of this view deserving of immediate attention is that it brooks no argument or discussion: is quite unfalsifiable, and on two levels. The first level is obvious: the position that a certain approach features 'no abstractable or applicable argument, concept or method' denies us any possibility of challenging its conceptual coherence, legitimacy or consequences. However, this statement is also beyond contention on a second, deeper level. For it also denies us the option of challenging whether Derridean readings have an 'abstractable or applicable argument, concept or method' in the first place, because in order to do so we have to assume precisely what is being denied, namely, that principled discussion of this reading practice is possible. So even to deny Attridge's position here is to miss the point. As a description of Derridean analysis, it cannot be denied, because it is precisely a refusal of the only ground upon which any denial or even engagement could take place.

Two Consequences of the Refusal of Positive Definition

This fairly unpromising start does not improve when we look at the first of two questions it raises for our analysis of Derridean close reading, which is this: by what standards are we to judge a Derridean reading? As Attridge's claims here deny the possibility of abstracted, conceptual engagement with Derrida's 'acts of reading', they advise us to understand (and, presumably, criticise) Derrida's approach 'in the light of [his] practice (which is different for every text he "reads")'. This sounds fine, the kind of refusal of transcendence in favour of particular, linguistically situated thinking with which we have become familiar. However, following the logic, it will
be seen that the total refusal of abstraction and application makes critical engagement with a reading 'practice' impossible.

Consider, for example, that the very word 'practice' makes no sense in isolation: it must be a practice of something. When we come to Derrida's reading 'practice' we need at least some abstracted methodology against which to judge it, otherwise we have no way of knowing whether it is good or bad practice. Obviously the standards of 'a traditional interpretive project' have been explicitly denied, so we cannot judge any instance of Derridean reading against them. The crucial development, however, is that other, particularly Derridean standards are not only unspecified (which would not be a serious problem: we could infer them), but are apparently unspecifiable. As such, we cannot know whether this is good or bad Derridean reading practice, because we cannot know what that would look like. The only rules to which we can hold such readings are the rules that we observe them to be following, and this, by definition, means that we cannot observe those rules being broken. What standards, then, can we use in a chapter such as this? In the absence of any abstractable method, it seems the very notion of 'practice' begins to collapse, or at least becomes impossible to engage.

Sticking with Attridge for the moment, let us briefly see how this plays itself out. One of the key ideas in the essay I shall be examining is that, to quote Attridge, 'Every utterance involves a kind of minimal "yes," an "I am here"...an affirmation that "precedes" (not temporally or logically) even the utterance "I," whether vocalized or silent' (254). The moment in question is easy to miss: this affirmation 'precedes' even the utterance 'I', but it does so neither temporally nor logically. Our reaction to this should surely be 'How, then, does it do so?'. What meaning of the word 'precedes' can be furnished that makes reference to neither temporal nor logical sequence? Of course, according to the above foregrounding, neither Derrida nor Attridge are obliged to provide this information. The conceptual supports of such assertions are, apparently, not abstractable or applicable. I would hasten to suggest that this is not much use to the reader of such claims, for whom, as far as I can tell, the word 'precedes' is being used in a manner that explicitly denies any of its known definitions.
To find a way around this we must attend to the second consequence of refusing positive definition, which turns out to allow us to deal with some of the issues raised by the first. I began this chapter by suggesting that we cannot jump straight into an instance of Derridean reading, because of the level of interconnectedness we find in Derrida's writings. The above discussion has demonstrated this initial caution to be justified on one level, but, intriguingly, unnecessary on another. For we have learned that what we certainly cannot do is to preface our analysis of a Derridean reading with an abstracted discussion of the rules upon which that reading operates with a view to seeing if it breaks any of them. Instead, we need to pay close attention to Derridean reading in action, and work from there. The most important preliminary claim to make about Derridean reading, it seems, is that one cannot really make any detailed preliminary claims about Derridean reading. With that in mind, I will draw these threads together and suggest a method for approaching Derrida.

**A Suggested Method for Analysing Derridean Practice**

Our first instinct in this situation might be to breathe a sigh of relief and get on with studying an example of Derridean reading, hoping to extract some rules upon which it can be seen to operate and judge their validity. Of course, to do this would be to miss the point of the above discussion altogether, for it is precisely the point that acts of Derridean reading cannot be reduced to abstracted methodological principles. What to do then? Here, we must go back to an aside I made earlier, concerning the difference between positive and negative definitions. It is crucial to always bear in mind that the word 'negative' here is not a value judgement, but a technical term, referring to a description that takes the form 'P is not an instance of Q'. Recall that while Attridge and the other scholars I mention all refuse statements of positive definition, they are all quite happy with statements of negative definition along the lines of 'Derridean reading practice is not a traditional interpretive project'. We could of course add other statements to this list, such as the claim that Derridean acts of reading do not take binary conceptual oppositions as stable. Indeed, there are a potentially infinite number of negative descriptive claims we can make about Derridean acts of reading (or anything else for that matter – such is the nature of
negative description). This list of negative descriptions therefore cannot be exhaustive, and so cannot finally tell us what the Derridean method *is* – which is, I imagine, precisely the reason that Derrida scholars are comfortable with it: it makes no pretense of finality, abstraction or control over the Derridean project. Despite this lack of conclusiveness, negative definition can still tell us a lot about the kind of reading that Derrida performs.

This seemingly minor point can give us a way into the discussion. The conclusion of my last section was that we needed to experience Derridean reading 'in the act' rather than as an abstracted method. The problem with this was seen to be that any attempt to deduce a methodological principle from such an act of reading is, apparently, automatically invalid, and that in the absence of such principles we have no way of judging the legitimacy or quality of that act of reading. Negative definition can break into this unhappy circle. It gives us a way to make very limited, open-ended descriptive claims regarding acts of Derridean reading. Such negative definitions have been seen in the writings of highly-qualified Derrida scholars, which gives them a certain legitimacy in the field. My plan in this chapter is simply to make certain negative descriptions of the methodology of a certain act of Derridean reading, and subject those descriptions to proper scrutiny.

It is worth thoroughly underlining that negative descriptions of Derridean methodology are, judging by the standards of Attridge, Miller and others, perfectly acceptable. Consider, for example, that when Attridge writes that 'To call Derrida's engagements with texts, literary or philosophical, "readings" is inadequate to the extent that this term suggests a traditional interpretive project' he is making a negative definitional claim that Derrida's readings are not a traditional interpretive project. All of the claims I will be making in this chapter will use this same structure.

*Ulysses Gramophone*

These preliminaries out of the way, which instance of Derridean reading to examine? There are two principal works on Joyce, 'Deux mots pour Joyce' and 'Ulysses gramophone'. I have chosen to deal with the latter for three reasons. First, it is often held up as a prime example of Derridean reading at its best. When J. Hillis
Miller is looking for an example of Derrida's irreverent version of *explication de texte* he chooses this essay:

> It is as though he had said, "You want *explication de texte*, unfolding of what is latent in semantic and syntactical details? I'll show you what really happens if you do that conscientiously." What happens is, for example, eighty-six pages devoted to the word "yes" in Joyce's *Ulysses*. ('Derrida and literature' 75)

Later Miller calls this essay 'one of Derrida's most wonderfully exuberant, outrageously inventive, prolonged, and even comic essays' (79). Choosing an essay esteemed this highly precludes any chance of my having stacked the cards in my favour. Incidentally, I wish to draw attention to the notion of conscientious unfolding of what is latent in semantic details, as the precise wording of this phrase will prove instructive later on.

My second reason is that, thanks to this prestige, this essay enjoys considerable influence. When Margot Norris edited *A Companion to James Joyce's Ulysses*, a collection of essays designed to introduce readers to the key interpretive areas in *Ulysses* criticism, she chose this essay to represent 'A Deconstructive Perspective' (69-90). The collection *A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory*, which is an introduction to literary Theory in general, chooses *Ulysse Gramophone* as its sole Derridean text. This essay is a key text in both introductions to Joyce studies and introductions to Theory *per se*, and the status this grants it, not least among the undergraduate community, qualifies it for proper scrutiny. My third reason is that this essay's key textual preoccupation, the word 'yes' in *Ulysses*, allows for a particularly useful and interesting close reading response in my next chapter.

The text of the essay has a notable history. It was first delivered, in French, as the opening address at the Ninth International James Joyce Symposium, held in Frankfurt in 1984, and subsequently published in 1987, along with 'Deux mots pour Joyce' in *Ulysse gramophone: Deux mots pour Joyce*. It first made its transition into English in the 1988 volume *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, the proceedings of the 1984 symposium. In that edition the essay was translated by Tina Kendall and revised by Shari Benstock. The essay's next important incarnation was in 1992, when Derek Attridge included it in *Acts of Literature*, a highly influential collection of Derrida's writing on literature. There, Attridge uses the Kendall/Benstock translation,
but notes that it has been 'editorially modified in light of the published French text' (256).

In fact, these modifications are more than merely cosmetic, and constitute a significant improvement on the original. For example, in the Kendall/Benstock translation we find the phrase '[Molly] gets high on everything (s'envoyer), through the post' (67). In Attridge's version this has become '[Molly] dispatches herself to herself [s'envoyer] through the post' (303). The French "s'envoyer" is difficult to translate, meaning literally 'to send oneself [something]', but having the colloquial meaning of 'having it off', as in "s'envoyer quelq'un" (to have it off with someone). Here, Derrida is referring to Molly's phrase 'not a letter from a living soul except the odd few I posted to myself with bits of paper in them' (678), so we can see that Attridge made the more appropriate choice.

This is actually an important point. When John Gordon reviewed *The Augmented Ninth* in ELT\(^3\) he criticised Derrida for saying that Molly got high on everything, writing

> Molly Bloom does not send herself everything, and she certainly does not get high on what she does send: on the contrary, she corresponds with several people, and the high point of her Gibraltar memory is of a letter from her first lover. It is the absence of such letters, for which her own to herself are a sorry substitute, that makes the "days like years". (502)

Alas, Gordon's point turns out to have been based on a fluke of translation (although his point that Molly does not send herself everything still stands, I think). Furthermore, while Attridge's translation is a better one, it is still not perfect. Sticking with this same phrase, which he renders as '[Molly] dispatches herself to herself [s'envoyer] through the post', we find the following when we turn back to the original French: '[Molly] s'expédie aussi elle-même à elle-même par les poste des bouts de papier' (134), in which the crucial "s'envoyer" does not even occur, and we have the addition of 'bouts de papier' [*pieces of paper*], which both translations miss out altogether.

For all these reasons I have decided in every case to quote the French text in full, and to provide my own translation in italics beneath. In an English critique of this essay, this is the only way to ensure fidelity. Unlike my treatments of Cixous or

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\(^3\) I commend this review to the reader, as it provided me with a very useful starting point in approaching Derrida's essay.
even the Greek texts of Homer, there are no widely accepted translations of this essay to which I can refer my reader, and so my own understanding of the original French must somehow be made plain and open to scrutiny.

Another very important point is that I have chosen, for the purposes of this chapter, to use the same edition of *Ulysses* that Derrida used for his own essay, the Penguin edition of 1968. This is a change to my policy in all my other chapters of using the Gabler text. I have done this not only in order to avoid potential misconstruals of Derrida's own quotations and analysis, but also for the sake of the reader, who will need to be able to move back and forth between Derrida's quotations and my own.

**Six Negative Descriptions of Derridean Reading Practice in 'Ulysse Gramophone'**

In what follows I will employ the strategy outlined above, namely that of making certain negative descriptive claims of Derrida's reading practice in 'Ulysse Gramophone', and substantiating them with close scrutiny of that essay. As has been stressed, the word negative is here being used in a technical sense, referring to a description of what something is not, as opposed to what something is. At the end of this chapter, I will draw together these negative descriptions and make my conclusions regarding them. Two final qualifications must be made before I proceed.

As discussed, negative descriptions avoid the qualities of abstraction and totality involved in positive descriptions. However, if we are not careful with our phrasing, we can still lose these qualities, for there are two types of descriptive claim, be they in positive or negative form: intrinsic claims and extrinsic claims. Intrinsic claims say that 'P always is/is not Q', whereas extrinsic claims say that 'P sometimes is/is not Q' (or 'P is compatible with being/not being Q'). Plugging this distinction into our negative descriptions of Derridean reading, we might consider, for example, the difference between 'Derridean reading practice does not describe the text properly' and 'Derridean reading practice does not necessarily describe the text properly'. The first is an intrinsic negative description, and it suffers for it. As well as being obviously false (of course there are lots of moments in which Derrida describes
the text properly), it has slipped into the kind of abstracted, generalising tendencies that Attridge and others warn us against by making claims about the inner, intrinsic nature of Derridean reading practice. The second description avoids this problem by remaining an extrinsic. It could be rephrased 'Derridean reading practice is not incompatible with failing to describe the text properly', which, while a clumsy phrase, serves to emphasise the qualities that make this a potentially valid description of Derridean reading. Obviously, it remains a serious problem for Derrida if it is true: good reading practice should surely be incompatible with erroneous descriptions of the text in question. All six claims, therefore, will take an extrinsic structure.

**Derridean Reading Practice Does Not Exclude Dependence on Inaccurate Citation**

In such a textually-oriented approach as Derrida's, we would expect incorrect citation to be non-existent or very rare, and if it did exist we would expect it to be accidental and not a part of the argument at hand. However, this is not what we find. On at least three occasions that I have found, Derrida either misquotes or seriously misrepresents the text for the purposes of supporting a point. The points under discussion may seem trivial, but this is of course irrelevant. What is important is simply that Derrida is happy to misrepresent the text in order to support them. That they are minor points makes this practice if anything more alarming than if they had been crucial argumentative supports. The three tactical misquotations I have found occur during the treatment of 'essential' contiguity on page 115, the discussion of 'self-sending' on page 132, and the comparison of postcards and publications on page 63. For spatial reasons I shall consider only the second of these, which is representative.

This occurs towards the end of his essay, when Derrida turns his attention to a phenomenon he calls "s'envoyer"^{36}, writing:

> la scène du << s'envoyer soi-même à soi-même >>, nous la voyons jouée à maintes reprises dans *Ulysse* sous la forme littéralement postale. (133)
> [we see the scene of "sending oneself to oneself" played out

^{36} For a discussion of the complexities of this French word, see the fifth section of this chapter.
repeatedly in Ulysses in a literally postal form.]
This is clear enough: we can expect to see lots of quite literal instances of someone
sending some form of post to themselves. Next Derrida says that for want of time he
will draw on only three examples of this ('Je n'en prendrai, faute de temps, que trois
examples' (133)). Let us examine them in turn:

D'abord celui de Milly qui à 4 ou 5 ans s'envoyait à elle-même des
mots d'amour la comparant d'ailleurs à un << looking glass >> (Ô,
Milly Bloom...<< you are my looking glass >>). Elle déposait à cet
effet des << pieces of folded brown paper in the letter box >>. C'est
du moins ce que dit la traduction française (<< Elle s'envoyait >>. Le
texte anglais est moins net, mais laissons). (133)
[First that of Milly who, aged four or five, sent herself love letters
comparing herself, moreover, to a "looking glass" (O, Milly
Bloom..."you are my looking glass"). She left, to this end, 'pieces of
folded brown paper in the letter box'. At least this is what the French
translation says ("Elle s'envoyait". The English text is less clear-cut,
but let that pass).]

Very little of this is true. Firstly, and most relevantly here, Milly does not send
herself anything at all, love letters or otherwise. The quotation of 'pieces of folded
brown paper in the letter box' is a deliberate misrepresentation, omitting three crucial
words: 'Putting pieces of folded brown paper in the letter box for her' (65, my italics).
These are Bloom's thoughts and past actions, not Milly's. It is he who would put
these bits of paper in the letter box for Milly, so any talk of self-sending has no basis
here. I also cannot see why Derrid
a characterises these pieces of brown paper as love
letters, as their nature remains entirely unspecified. (Perhaps he is trying to make
them sit well with the colloquial meaning of "s'envoyer".) Furthermore, the idea that
these 'letters' are ones in which Milly compares herself to a looking glass is flatly
untrue. The quote Derrida gives to this effect ('O, Milly Bloom...you are my looking
glass' (65)) is part of a song that Bloom would sing to her, and has nothing to do with
the brown bits of paper at all. Finally, the notion that the English text is somehow
'less clear-cut' (moins net) than the French is not valid. It is simply not true that the
English text is somehow ambiguous and the French text more specific. The English
is quite clear that Bloom sends these bits of paper (for what reason the French
version says otherwise is not known). Furthermore, the French text is also perfectly
clear in its omission of any talk of love letters, and the placing of the words 'you are
my looking glass' in Bloom's song.
Derrida's next example of postal "s'envoyer" is perfectly fine, being the moment in episode eighteen in which Molly does indeed remember an act of self-sending: 'the days like years not a letter from a living soul except the odd few I posted to myself with bits of paper in them' (678). Then at the start of the next section we get a mention of a humorous discussion on the self-begetting nature of the first two persons of the Christian trinity:

Mon troisième exemple le précède de peu et il vient aussitôt après le Was Du verlachst Du noch dienen : << He Who Himself begot, middler the Holy Ghost, and Himself sent Himself, Agenbuyer, between Himself and others, Who... >>. Deux pages plus loin :
<< Telegram! he said. Wonderful inspiration! Telegram! A papal bull!
<< He sat on a corner of the unlit desk, reading aloud joyfully :
<< – The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done. Signed : Dedalus >>. (135-6)

[My third example precedes it [the second] and comes immediately after Was Du verlachst Du noch dienen : "He Who Himself begot, middler the Holy Ghost, and Himself sent Himself, Agenbuyer, between Himself and others, Who...". Two pages later:
"Telegram! he said. Wonderful inspiration! Telegram! A papal bull! 
"He sat on a corner of the unlit desk, reading aloud joyfully: 
"-The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done. Signed: Dedalus".]

Of course, the quotes on the Trinity, while relevant, again do not count as an example of literal, postal self-sending. The telegram appears to, however. It is signed by Dedalus, after all. However, on consulting the passage in question, we see that while Stephen wrote and signed it, he did not send it to himself. He sent it to Mulligan, and it is Mulligan who is reading it out, and indeed going on to ask Stephen whence he had sent it:

Buck Mulligan's again heavy face eyed Stephen awhile. Then, his head wagging, he came near, drew a folded telegram from his pocket. His mobile lips read, smiling with new delight.

-Telegram! he said. Wonderful inspiration! Telegram! A papal bull!
He sat on a corner of the unlit desk, reading aloud joyfully:
- The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done. Signed: Dedalus. Where did you launch it from? The kips? No. College Green. Have you drunk the four quid? (199)

37 The odd formatting is Derrida's.
So this too is not an example of "s'envoyer", but rather a fairly straightforward case of sending. It only appears to be self-sent because of highly selective (mis)quotation. As such, of the three examples of postal "s'envoyer" Derrida promises us (only three, for lack of space, we recall), just one is legitimate. The other two rely on misrepresentation via omission of crucial information.

**Derridean Reading Practice Does Not Exclude Dependence on Casual False Claims**

Derrida is fond of making detailed textual claims very casually in the midst of his arguments. This gives the impression of a very great knowledge of the text. These claims are not necessarily true, however. During his contemplation of the role of Elijah in *Ulysses*, for example, Derrida briefly makes the following claims:

Par deux foix au moins *Ulysse* évoque le << collector of prepuces >> (<< The islanders, Mulligan said to Haines casually, speak frequently of the collector of prepuces >>, ou << Jehovah, collector of prepuces >> (<< What's his name? Ikey Moses? Bloom. << He rattled on. << – Jehovah, collector of prepuces, is no more. I found him over in the museum when I went to hail the foamborn Aphrodite >>). Chaque fois, et souvent près d'une arrivée de lait ou d'écume, la circoncision est associée au nom de Moïse, comme dans ce passage où, devant << the name of Moses Herzog >>,

<< – Circumcised! says Joe. -Ay, says I. A bit off the top". (105-638) ['At least twice in *Ulysses* there are references to the "collector of prepuces" ("The islanders, Mulligan said to Haines casually, speak frequently of the collector of prepuces", or "Jehovah collector of prepuces" ("What's his name? Ikey Moses? Bloom. He rattled on.

-Jehovah, collector of prepuces, is no more. I found him over in the museum when I went to hail the foamborn Aphrodite").

Each time, and often near the arrival of milk or foam, circumcision is associated with the name of Moses, as in this passage before "the name of Moses Herzog": "Circumcised! says Joe. /-Ay, says I. A bit off the top"

There are two independent claims here: the first is that 'Each time ('Chaque fois')...circumcision is associated with the name of Moses', and the second that

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38 The rather peculiar formatting here, including the parenthesis that is opened but never closed, is all Derrida's. I have reproduced it as faithfully as possible.
mentions of circumcision are 'often near the arrival of milk or foam'. These are very
detailed points to make, suggesting considerable intimacy with the minutiae of
_Ulysses_. Let us see if they stand up to scrutiny.

Beginning with the suggestion of a consistent association of circumcision and
Moses. There is a slight ambiguity here, in that Derrida's 'Chaque fois' might merely
be referring to the two examples he gives of the 'collector of prepuces' (as in "Each
[of those two] time[s]"), or might be making a broader claim for all the mentions of
circumcision in the text, of which the quote from episoe twelve is taken to be
representative (as in "Each time circumcision is mentioned [more generally]"). I
would argue he means the latter, broader claim, for three reasons. First, the grammar
of the phrase 'Chaque fois…la circoncision' introduces circumcision as the broader
category to which the two preceding mentions of the 'collector of prepuces' belong,
and if this is the case then it is for the broader category that Derrida is making the
claim. Second, the introduction of a new example from episode twelve suggests that
there is a broader set than the two given examples to which Derrida is now referring
(the use of 'comme dans' to introduce that example is also suggestive of a broader
grouping to which 'ce passage' belongs). Third, following on from this, the example
from episode twelve does not refer to the 'collector of prepuces', but merely to
circumcision, and this suggests that Derrida's 'Chaque fois' applies to 'each' reference
of the text to that latter, broader category. Should these arguments, however, fail to
convince my reader that 'chaque fois' refers to references to circumcision generally,
rather than just to the first two examples Derrida gives above, then the argument that
follows is quite groundless.

This broader claim does have an initial plausibility, because we can at least
imagine references to deliberately Jewish aspects of the text being found near each
other. But looking back even at the references to circumcision Derrida has provided
we can already see a problem with this. He has given three: Mulligan's references to
the collector of prepuces in episodes one (20) and nine (201), and Joe's reference to
circumcision in episode twelve (290). Now, in the latter two of these Moses is
indeed mentioned nearby as Derrida shows. But what of the first, Mulligan's
reference in episode one? Turning to this passage, we find that the nearest reference
to Moses is some fourteen pages away, in the next episode. This is not a promising start.

What of other mentions of circumcision in *Ulysses*? There are five further uses of this word. The next two, taking the form of 'the circumcised', are in close proximity, in episode fifteen:

...*Darkshawled figures of the circumcised, in sackcloth and ashes, stand by the wailing wall, M. Shulomowitz, Joseph Goldwater, Moses Herzog, Harris Rosenberg, M. Moisel, J. Citron, Minnie Watchman, P. Mastiansky, the Reverend Leopold Abramovitz, Chazen. With swaying arms they wail in pneuma over the recreant Bloom.*

THE CIRCUMCISED: *In dark guttural chant as they cast dead sea fruit upon him, no flowers) shema israel adonai elohenu adonai echad.*

(496)

Here we see another reference to Moses Herzog, which supports Derrida's claim that circumcision is linked with the name Moses in the text. However, the next three mentions of circumcision do not lend any support to this idea. Here they are:

To Stephen: the problem of the sacerdotal integrity of Jesus circumcised (624)

The prohibition of the use of fleshmeat and milk at one meal: the hebdomadary symposium of incoordinately abstract, per fervidly concrete mercantile coexreligionist excompatriots: the circumcision of male infants: the supernatural character of Judaic scripture: the ineffability of the tetragrammaton: the sanctity of the sabbath (645)

I was dying to find out was he circumcised he was shaking like a jelly all over (667).

None of these is anywhere near a reference to Moses. (The closest is the second, which is still fully five pages distant from an unrelated reference to Moses on page 450, the famous 'Where was Moses when the candle went out?'.)

In total, we have looked at seven references to circumcision in *Ulysses*, and only three of them are plausibly linked with the name of Moses. Given that both of these words belong to the Jewish lexicon in *Ulysses*, and are therefore liable to be used in the same contexts, such a level of association would be inevitable, and fairly uninteresting. Derrida's claim is for a systematic level of association ('chaque fois'), which would be very interesting, if it were true.

Let us turn to the notion that references to circumcision are 'often near the arrival of milk or foam'. This is an odd claim. Beginning with foam, which is rarer
and therefore easier to examine, we can count one use of the word 'foam' in *Ulysses*, and eight inflected or compounded versions of it (foaming, formborn, etc.). These are found on pages 44, 55, 169, 201, 298, 323, 340, 482 and 511. Recall that the references to circumcision, including those to the collector of prepuces, are found on pages 20, 201, 290, 496 (twice), 624, 645 and 667. It will be seen by comparing these lists that the only mention of foam that is at all near a mention of circumcision is the one Derrida has already listed, on page 201. The idea that foam is 'often near to' (souvent près de) circumcision, then, is fabricated, based on only one example from a set of eight.

Very well, what of milk? This word is certainly far more common. Including inflected and compounded forms we can list at least sixty-five uses, or between three and four uses per episode. Derrida bases the claim that milk and circumcision are often close together on the reference to the 'collector of prepuces' in episode one, which comes immediately after the entrance of the milkwoman. Furthermore, the reference to circumcision on page 645 (quoted above) is right next to a reference to milk, with both forming part of a list of Jewish 'beliefs and practices'. However, of the other six references to circumcision, three are nowhere near any mention of milk (201, 645, 667), and the other three are at best three pages away from such a mention, and quite unconnected to it. Again, Derrida's claim is untrue.

There is something very peculiar going on here. Derrida's mixture of nonchalance, precision, breadth and depth cannot stem from having taken great care with his textual research, because none of his claims are true. His claims evidently fit with his overall thesis, and one is forced to conclude that it is from this consideration alone that they are developed.

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39 When doing such searches accurately, one should not rely exclusively on concordances. Hanley, for example, lists 'moonfoaming', but as his list is alphabetical, there is no way of finding it if one is only looking for 'foam'.
Derridean Reading Practice Does Not Necessarily Preserve Accuracy In Favour Of Interpretive Convenience

We might also measure Derrida's interest in textual precision by following an analytical theme through his essay, and seeing if he is happy to commit any inaccuracies in its name. I have already mentioned Derrida's interest in postcards in my section on misquotation. But Derrida's fascination with postcards, of course, is not limited to *Ulysses*. He has written a whole book entitled *La carte postale : de Socrate à Freud et au-delà*, in which, to quote his self-summary in 'Ulysse Gramophone':

j'avais tenté de remettre en scène la babelisation du système postal dans *Finnegans Wake*. (62)

*I have tried to restage the babelisation of the postal system in Finnegans Wake.*

In the present essay Derrida even sees *Ulysses* as a form of postcard ('*Ulysses*, une immense postcard' (63)), by which association he is trying to imply a certain view of Joycean textuality. This figure of the postcard also naturally opens out onto a certain view of language (think of the Derridean emphasis on meaning being 'sent'), and a certain view of authorship, too. In short, we encounter here one of those very pregnant figures of speech with which Derrida weaves his interpretive webs. The question is: will Derrida's interest in postcards, and the substantial weight they carry in his interpretive system, lead him to misrepresent their undoubted presence in *Ulysses*? This being an interpretive paradigm that Derrida had established before he wrote 'Ulysse Gramophone', will it lead him to misrepresent his primary text in order to make it fit? Let us offer a few predictions of the kinds of mistakes to which this would lead, and see if any of them are borne out.

Prediction one: we might expect to find Derrida seeing postcards where there are none in the original text. It is surely not unreasonable to insist that for Derridean scholarship, supposedly so dependent on textual detail, the differences between, say, postcards and letters are crucial. Yet it is precisely these that Derrida ignores:

le nom de Bloom, Flower, pseudonymisé sur la carte postale en poste restante, s'évapore ici (129)

*Bloom's name, Flower, in pseudonym form on the postcard in the poste restante, evaporates here*
Of course, the correspondence from Martha Clifford that Bloom has waiting for him in the post restante is not a postcard, it is a letter. Furthermore, she does not use his fictional surname, Flower, in this letter, only his fictional first name, Henry.

Prediction two: we might expect to find Derrida imbuing the postcards in *Ulysses* with qualities that are interpretively convenient, but which have no basis in the text. For an example of this, we can turn to Derrida's twice repeated claim that the sailor's postcard in episode sixteen has a phantasmal or fictional address:

> 'des cartes postales...sorti de la poche d'un marin, n'exhibe qu'un fantasme d'adresse' (66-7)
> [postcards...taken out of a sailor's pocket, which exhibit nothing but a phantasmal address]

> 'Quant à l'adresse, elle est fictive, aussi fictive que *Ulysse* (68).
> [As for the address, it is fictitious, as fictitious as *Ulysses*]

Actually, this subtly misrepresents the text. Here is the relevant quote:

> Though not an implicit believer in the lurid story narrated... having detected a discrepancy between his name (assuming he was the person he represented himself to be and not sailing under false colours after having boxed the compass on the strict q.t. somewhere) and the fictitious addressee of the missive which made him nourish some suspicions of our friend's *bona fides* (546-547).

We know only that the sailor's stated and written names do not match (Bloom assumes the addressee is the fictitious name), and this doesn't tell us anything about the address itself, which could be real or fake.

Prediction three: we might expect Derrida to make casual remarks concerning postcards that falsely elevate their significance in the text. We can see this occur when Derrida claims that the 'address-less' postcard is the only thing this sailor has in his pocket ('c'est la seul chose que cet *Ulysse* ait dans la poche' (68)). This again is simply untrue: he also has a document ('he extricated from an inside pocket and handed to his neighbours a not very cleanlooking folded document' (545)), and a knife ('he produced a dangerouslooking claspknife...he snapped the blade to and stowed the weapon in question away as before in his chamber of horrors, otherwise pocket' (549). Cumulatively, I take the fulfilment of these three predictions to have serious implications for the priorities of Derridean reading practice.

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40 I am indebted to John Gordon's review, cited above, for the following point.
One further aside on this question of convenience and accuracy will be worthwhile. A great deal is made in 'Ulysse Gramophone' of what Attridge calls Derrida's 'painstaking counting of the yeses in the text' (254). Three times\(^\text{41}\) Derrida draws our attention to the circumstances and nature of his 'compte mécanique' (138) of the number of yeses in *Ulysses*, after which he arrived at the figure of 222. Indeed, he was so confident with this number that he was prepared to state that a much higher figure, arrived at by another scholar, must have been the result of counting all the uses of 'aye' as well (74, n.1). In fact, Derrida didn't even find two thirds of the yeses in *Ulysses*. In the 'original' version there were 354; in the Gabler text, 359. What is so problematic here is not so much the error in Derrida's count\(^\text{42}\), but his repeated insistence on its accuracy. Again, his confidence and authority are not supported by any credible level of accuracy, and as such are left looking rather hollow.

**Derridean Reading Practice Does Not Exclude Reliance on Conceptual Confusion**

This section is going to deal at some length with Derrida's central textual theme in his essay, the yes of *Ulysses*. This idea is of absolutely foundational importance for his analysis, and is also, one feels, quintessentially Derridean: taking a seemingly minor textual theme, Derrida places it in a startling array of different contexts until its once straightforward meaning becomes diverse and elusive, which process in turn opens up onto some very substantial questions that touch upon the very foundations of linguistics, philosophy, literary scholarship, and even, in this case, the industry of Joyce studies. This sense of playful instability, and a rapidly widening sphere of consequences of that instability, is something even the most cursory reading of Derrida will surely yield. This criticism, therefore, forms something of a crux for my critique of Derrida. This is much deeper, though no less problematic, than a factual error or a misquotation. To use my own terminology from chapter two, these latter are really errors of description or scholarship, whereas this is

\(^{41}\) Specifically on 73-4, 109 and 138.
\(^{42}\) Although Hanley's index, with its perfectly accurate figure, was published thirty-three years before Derrida's lecture.
much more like an error of analysis. Far from being a point of crucial detail sacrificed to make his thesis work, this is the suggestion that the inner workings of that thesis are profoundly broken.

To get to the heart of Derrida's study of the word "yes" we need to attend to a putative duality in its identity: Derrida sees it as always a precondition of language, and yet always a response to something or someone else. These two seemingly contradictory roles are fertile ground for Derrida's trademark linguistic fireworks, for within and between them we find difference, deferral, the impossibility of self-contained identity, and a variety of other features which offer themselves very readily for Derrida's project. However, rather than rely on my own representation of this idea, I shall let first Attridge and then Derrida address it in their own words. First, Attridge's presentation of it in his introduction to the essay:

Every utterance involves a kind of minimal "yes," an "I am here"...an affirmation that "precedes" (not temporally or logically) even the utterance "I," whether vocalized or silent. But the other crucial feature of "yes" is that it is always a response, strikingly dramatized in the words of Molly Bloom that bring *Ulysses* to a close, and this remains true even if it is a response to oneself; that is to say, it always involves a relay through an other. (254)

If this is the conceptual basis, these are the rather startling consequences:

"Yes" breaches time as well as space, as it always involves a commitment, a willingness to say "yes" again. With this relay, this differing and deferring, this necessary failure of total self-identity, comes spacing (space and time), gramophoning (writing and speech), memory, recording, computers, and ultimately the whole Joyce megamachine. In other words, the very possibility of a Joyce industry...stems from the distance established within the apparently simple "yes"; it is this that provides it with its tools (which are essentially those of the Western philosophical tradition) and its materials. At the same time, because its projects – totalization, theorization, formalization, explication, archeology, instrumentalization – all demand the abolition of that self-difference and spacing, it is the "yes" that renders its task incompletable, and the notion of a "competent" scholar in Joyce studies impossible. (254-5, italics original)

Turning now to Derrida, here remarking on the first characteristic of the word 'yes', that it is fundamentally responsive:

Or s'il est très difficile de dire quoi que ce soit de très sûr, et de sûrement métlinguistique, sur ce mot singulier, oui, qui ne nomme rien, qui ne décrit rien, dont le statut grammatical et sémantique est des plus énigmatiques, on croit pouvoir au moins en affirmer ceci: *it*
must be taken for an answer\textsuperscript{43}. Il a toujours la forme d'une réponse. Il survient après l'autre, pour répondre à la demande ou à la question, au moins implicite, de l'autre, fût-ce de l'autre en moi, de la représentation en moi d'une autre parole. (70, italics original)

[Now if it is very difficult to say anything very sure, and certainly metalinguistic, on this singular word, yes, which names nothing, which describes nothing, whose grammatical and semantic status is most enigmatic, we can at least say this: it must be taken for an answer. It always has the form of a response. It comes after the other, to answer a demand or a question, at least implicit, of the other, even of the other in me, the representation in me of another speech.]

This is the first pole of Derrida's study of the word 'yes', that it 'always has the form of a response'. I will refer to this as the idea that "yes" is fundamentally responsive, and return to assess it in detail a little later on.

The second pole of Derrida's study of 'yes' is more complex, and is drawn out over several pages. The key idea is that there exists a kind of pre-linguistic yes, an affirmative gesture that takes place before any linguistic act. We get to the heart of it in the following passage, which it is necessary to quote in full:

Mais repartons du \textit{phénomène oui}, du \textit{oui} manifeste et manifestement marqué en tant que \textit{mot}, parlé, écrit ou phonogrammé. Un tel mot dit, mais ne dit rien par lui-même si par dire on entend désigner, montrer, décrire quelque chose qui se trouverait hors langage ou hors marque. Ses seules références, ce sont d'autres marques, qui sont aussi les marques de l'autre. Dès lors que \textit{oui} ne dit, ne montre, ne nomme rien qui soit hors marque, certains seraient tentés d'en conclure que \textit{oui} ne dit rien : un mot vide, \textit{à peine} un adverbe, puisque tout adverbe, selon la catégorie grammaticale sous laquelle on situe le \textit{oui} dans nos langues, a une charge sémantique plus riche, plus déterminée que le \textit{oui}, même s'il le suppose toujours. En somme le \textit{oui} serait l'adverbalité transcendantale, le supplément ineffaçable de tout verbe : au commencement l'adverbe, oui, mais comme une interjection, encore tout près du cri inarticulé, une vocalisation préconceptuelle, le parfum d'un discours. (124-5, italics original)

[But let us start again from the yes phenomenon, from the yes that is manifest and manifestly marked as a word, spoken, written or phonogrammed. Such a word says, but says nothing in itself if by saying we mean designating, showing, describing some thing which one finds outside of language or outside of marking. Its only references are other marks, which are also the marks of the other. Since yes doesn't say, show or name anything which is outside marking, some might be tempted to conclude that yes says nothing: an empty word, barely an adverb, as all adverbs, in which category we

\textsuperscript{43} The phrase is in English because Derrida is playing on the title of a book he has recently been discussing: \textit{Never take yes for an answer}.}
place yes in our languages, have a semantic charge that is richer, is more determined than the yes, even if it presupposes it. In short yes is transcendental adverbiality, the ineffacable supplement of every verb: in the beginning the adverb, yes, but as an interjection, still close to the inarticulate cry, a preconceptual vocalization, the perfume of a discourse.

Derrida takes this pre-linguistic yes very seriously, as can be seen here:

Le concept d'activité ou d'actualité ne me paraît pas apte à rendre compte d'un oui. Et on ne peut remplacer ce quasi-acte par << approbation >>, << affirmation >>, << confirmation >>, << acquiescement >>, << consentement >>. Le mot << affirmatif >> dont se servent les militaires pour éviter toutes sortes de risques techniques ne remplace pas le oui, il le suppose encore : oui, je dis bien << affirmatif >>. (125, italics original)

This is the second pole of Derrida's understanding of "yes": 'yes is transcendental adverbiality', 'the ineffacable supplement of every verb', 'preconceptual vocalisation', and 'the perfume of a discourse'. This second pole is obviously rather more complex than the first idea that "yes" is fundamentally responsive, and for shorthand I shall, with the foregoing discussion in mind, refer to it as the category of 'transcendental adverbiality'.

The importance of this double-sided 'yes' for Derrida's thesis can only be grasped by reading the final two sections of his essay. Attridge's description of the consequences of this conceptual work, quoted above, seems to me just. For Derrida, in studying this yes-as-transcendental-adverbiality,

Nous nous tenons ici en un lieu qui n'est pas encore l'espace où peuvent et doivent se déployer les grandes questions de l'origine de la négation, de l'affirmation ou de la dénégation. (126, italics original)

We stand in a place which is not yet the space in which the big questions of origin and negation, of affirmation and denial, can and must be unfolded.

We stand, in other words, anterior to even the most fundamental questions it is possible to ask. We are dealing with

Le oui minimal et primaire, allô téléphonique ou coup à travers le mur d'une prison, marque, avant de vouloir-dire ou de signifier, << je-là >>, écoute, réponds, il ya de la marque, il ya de l'autre. (126)
Deeper waters can scarce be invoked. But let us return to the categories that have been presented to us: two dimensions of the word 'yes' have been elucidated, and the relationship between the two contemplated. These are the primary moments of Derrida's analysis of "yes", from which some very serious and very perplexing questions will arise.

On the basis of this discussion, two interpretations of Derrida's thesis can be advanced, one simple, one more complex. The basic idea, upon which both rest, is that the qualities of responsiveness and transcendental adverbiality, if both present in this single linguistic unit, create a kind of schism, from which Derrida's great linguistic 'play' can take its cue (for a flavour of which, recall Attridge's talk of 'this relay, this differing and deferring, this necessary failure of total self-identity' (254)). The reason we find two different interpretations of this idea is that there is more than one way of understanding the notion that both these qualities are somehow 'present in' the word 'yes'. We will need to deal with both.

The first interpretation can be dealt with fairly swiftly. This is the idea that both responsiveness and transcendental adverbiality really are intrinsic features of the word 'yes', which leads to the kind of identity crisis discussed. Interestingly Attridge, a very able reader of Derrida, certainly takes this line when he refers to one of them as 'the other crucial feature of "yes"' (my italics), a phrase which implies that both of these things really are features, and indeed crucial features, of this word. There is surely an intuitive difficulty here. Responsiveness might seem to be an intrinsic feature of this word (what linguists call an intensional quality), but transcendental adverbiality would appear to have a very different relationship with "yes". Whatever it is, it is clearly not an intensional part of the definition of "yes", for this is simply to say that it is not a necessary component of the meaning of "yes", that is, we can imagine uses of the use of the word "yes" which do not include the quality of transcendental adverbiality. The relationship here, rather than being an intensional defitional one, seems to be a kind of referential relationship, in which

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44 It is worth recalling here Miller's emphasis on Derrida's version of explication de texte being an 'unfolding of what is latent in semantic and syntactical details'.

45 I avoid using the usual antithesis of intension, extension, for reasons that will shortly become plain.
"yes" can refer to transcendental adverbiality, but does not always do so. This fact is fatal for this, the simple version of Derrida's thesis, because if one of the two specified 'qualities' of "yes" is not really a basic quality at all, then no schism or tension has been opened up in its identity, and the interpretive space for Derrida's reading has collapsed.

Let us turn therefore to the second interpretation of Derrida's analysis. Let us say that we accept that responsiveness is an intensional definitional quality of "yes", whereas transcendental adverbiality is merely a possible referent. Very well, the defender of Derrida's thesis might say, if responsiveness really is an intensional part of "yes", and if "yes" really can be used to refer to transcendental adverbiality, then it follows that some part of transcendental adverbiality must be responsive. In other words, if every possible use of "yes" is responsive (which is entailed by an intensional definition), then transcendental adverbiality, which is a possible use of "yes", must be responsive. But if this is so then we still have the same tension we thought we had before, because this "yes", this transcendental adverbiality, both precedes everything, and yet is still responding to something. Attridge's 'relay', 'differing and deferring' and 'necessary failure of total self-identity', it seems, are back in play.

To fully treat this second interpretation, we will need to carefully examine its two central claims: that "yes" is always responsive, and that transcendental adverbiality is one of its possible referents. The first point can certainly be challenged. Consider, for instance, the function of the word 'yes' in the following two sentences: "Yes, I will" and "Did he say 'yes' when you asked?" In the first, "yes" takes on a truly responsive function, as it constitutes an answer to a question. But in the second something subtly different is happening. There is nothing here to which the word "yes" is responding. The question has already been asked, and a response has already been given. In this sentence, the word "yes" only refers to that previous response, and, as such, is not performing a responsive function itself, merely a referential function. In short, a responsive "yes" can subsequently be quoted, which quotation will not sustain the responsive quality of the "yes" it quotes. If this is accepted, then the exemplification of a non-referential "yes" undermines the intensional claim upon which this interpretation of Derrida's thesis rests.
What of the second claim, that transcendental adverbiality is a possible referent of "yes"? The problem with this is that it depends upon a very particular understanding of the word 'referent'. The idea, recall, is that if we accept responsiveness as an intrinsic quality of the word "yes" then it will be found in all its referents, including transcendental adverbiality. It will be seen from this restatement that the notion of reference that is being invoked is a very strong one, namely, that the referent possess all the intrinsic qualities of the word in question. Now, sometimes this is clearly the case. When I say 'Fido is a dog' this is a kind of reference, and we expect Fido to possess all the intrinsic qualities of dogs. Sometimes, however, we see a much weaker form of reference at work. For example, consider the phrase 'love is sunlight'. Here love still refers to sunlight, but we do not expect it to possess all the intrinsic qualities of sunlight. We might expect it to be warm, but we do not expect it to move through outer space at colossal speeds. This kind of much weaker reference is, of course, metaphor.

The question, then, is what kind of reference we find in "yes" is transcendental adverbiality'. I submit that it is clearly that latter, weaker variety. We might expect "yes" to possess some of the features of transcendental adverbiality (they are both, it seems, positive gestures), but not all of them ("yes" is not always, or perhaps ever, pre-linguistic). However, if we accept that this looser reference is being employed, then it is fatal for the second interpretation of Derrida's thesis. For even if we had accepted that responsiveness was an intrinsic quality of "yes", which we have not, we would not be obliged to carry that quality over such a loose form of reference onto something like transcendental adverbiality, particularly as the latter seems so unresponsive in itself.

Both interpretations of Derrida's analysis of "yes", therefore, are unsustainable in the face of a linguistic study of the claims involved. Simply, on no account of responsiveness and transcendental adverbiality can both terms be found housed within the fabric of the word "yes". Attridge's 'necessary failure of total self-identity' can find no purchase as a result, and the very substantial interpretive weight that Derrida himself places upon such a possibility is, as such, misplaced. The consequent results for the analytical depth of his thesis are very serious indeed, as
this implies a much more fundamental logical weakness than a straightforward misquotation, or casual false claim.

_Derridean Reading Practice Does Not Necessarily Respect Important Conventions Concerning Translations_

In the Attridge version we can find the following interesting passage:

I could follow the sons of Hely (Bloom's old boss), threading them through all sorts of genealogies. Rightly or wrongly, I judge it more economical here to rely on the association with the prophet Elijah, to whom a good many passages are devoted, or rather whose coming at regular intervals can be foretold. I pronounce _Elie_ in the French way, but in the English name for Elijah, Molly's _Ja_ can be heard echoing … (277)

Thanks to the dense and faintly hypnotic qualities of Derrida's style, it is very easy to pass over that 'association' without questioning it. A link is being postulated here between Hely and Elijah, a link strong enough to function as the sole bridge between them in Derrida's interpretive project – but what is it? What is this 'association'? It turns out to be very difficult to see in the English translation. Here is the original French:

Je pourrais suivre les fils de Hely's [sic], l'ancien patron de Bloom, dans toutes sortes de généalogies. À tort ou à raison, je juge ici plus économique de me fier à ce qui l'associe avec le nom du prophète Élie dont les passages se multiplient ou plutôt dont le venue se voit régulièrement promettre. Je prononce Élie à la française, mais dans L'Elijah anglais vous pouvez entendre résonner le _Ja_ de Molly... (91)

The mysterious 'association' becomes plain: in French, 'Hely' and 'Élie' are homophones. This is how Derrida moves so comfortably between them, but it naturally begs the question of what this means for the original text of _Ulysses_. There we surely cannot speak of such an association between Hely, (a version of the common Irish name Healy, and therefore pronounced to rhyme with 'freely') and the biblical name Elijah. Yet Derrida simply refers to 'the association', with no qualification that it is a feature only of the translated text, and proceeds to move his argument concerning the original version forward on this basis.

(We might, as a revealing tangent, scrutinise this idea of Molly's _Ja_
'resonating' in the English word Elijah. The German word for 'yes' is pronounced, roughly, 'yah', a syllable which does not occur in the word Elijah, where the same two letters are pronounced 'zhuh' (as in the second syllable of 'pleasure'). Of course, the two words contain the same two letters in the same order, but then so does the word 'jacket' (which actually occurs once more than 'Elijah' in *Ulysses*). More than this not much can be said. If there is a link, it is the following: the word 'Elijah' features the letters 'ja', pronounced 'zhuh'; these two letters, in other circumstances, can also be pronounced 'yah'; 'ja' is the German word for 'yes'; Molly says 'yes'. This is the only sense in which we can hear Molly's 'yes' resonating in the name of Elijah.)

Important conventions concerning the treatment of translated texts are being ignored here. One of these is the following: semantic features uniquely possessed by a translation cannot be used to tell us things about the original text. For example, say a translator renders the English word 'fresh' as 'frais'. It would not be a legitimate move to say that, as 'frais' rhymes with 'abstrait', abstraction is subtly invoked at that point in the original text. At best, if one were treating the translation as an independent text, one might make this claim of it alone. But nothing about the original word 'fresh' implies abstraction. I take this to be a fairly uncontroversial rule for literary analysis, and interestingly other aspects of Derrida's essay imply that he would agree. On page 119 he refers to a phrase in the French version having been translated 'terriblement et didactiquement' [*terribly and didactically*]; on page 130 another part of the translation is labeled 'très déficient' [*highly deficient*]. These judgements imply at the least a sense of priority, that is, that the translation has a duty of fidelity (however we go on to understand that word) to the original. If this relationship is admitted, as it surely would be by most scholars, then the rule that a translation cannot be the sole evidence for claims concerning the original text seems to follow very naturally.

**Derridean Reading Practice Is Not Necessarily Sensitive To Textual Nuance**

Derrida is often praised for his attention to detail and sensitivity with regard to textual minutiae, but this is not a consistent aspect of his critical practice. Consider the following:
s'il y a un rêve de Bloom, c'est de faire entrer Stephen dans la famille et donc, par voie de mariage et d'adoption, de circoncire l'Hellène. (106)

[if there is a dream of Bloom's, it is of bringing Stephen into the family and therefore, by way of marriage and adoption, of circumcising the Greek.]

I would emphasise first the implications of the phrase 'If there is a dream of Bloom's...', the suggestion being that this is Bloom's central hope for the future. Is this really a fair description of Bloom's main dream in life? What about Molly being a faithful wife, to give just one possible alternative? Surely, to see the adoption of a young and difficult man whom he barely knows as his principal desire is to misread Joyce's deep and broad characterisation of this man in favour of a quick and easy reference to broader cultural and historical terminology. And what of this business of circumcising the Greek? There could be few less appropriate terms in which to consider Bloom's feelings towards Stephen than this combination of high religious appropriation and classical allusion. For proof of this we need only reflect that Bloom himself is not circumcised. Of course, there is nothing factually inadequate about this reading, but it is not sensitive, appropriate or just.

Or take the casual assertion that in episode fifteen 'Élie, ce n'est qu'une voix, un écheveau de voix' (92) [Elijah is just a voice, a skein of voices]. This sounds plausible, until we examine episode fifteen in more detail, and see that when Joyce wishes to represent someone as 'just a voice' he makes this quite explicit, as when, on page 500, we hear from 'The voice of Kitty', 'The voice of Florry', 'The voice of Lynch', 'The voice of Zoe' and 'The voice of Virag'.

For another example, we might look at what Derrida does with Elijah's command to 'save your stamps' (472):

Donc ne m'écrivez pas de lettres, économisez votre timbres, vous pouvez les collectionner comme le père de Molly. (93)

[So do not write me letters, save your stamps, you can collect them like Molly's father.]

It sounds so neat, this reference to Molly's father's stamp collecting. But the phrase 'save your stamps' had nothing to do with stamp collection. It refers to the habit of saving up one's stamps for donation to the church in order that they could be sold on for supplementary funds. Of course, the bare meaning of the words supports Derrida's link, but a nuanced, contextualised reading makes that same link seem rather flat-footed.
Derrida on Bloom in episode seven:

Il avait répété un peu mécaniquement, comme une disque, cette prière, la plus grave pour un Juif, celle qu'on ne devrait jamais laisser se mécaniser ou gramophoner, <<Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu>>.

(79)

[he repeated a little mechanically, like a record, this prayer, the most serious for a Jew, that which must not be allowed to become mechanised or gramophoned: "Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu".]

Here it sounds for all the world as if Bloom has semi-consciously repeated, in an automatic fashion, prayers that were once more alive to him. Here is the original passage:

He stayed in his walk to watch a typesetter neatly distributing type. Reads it backwards first. Quickly he does it. Must require some practice that. mangiD kcirtaP. Poor papa with his hagadah book, reading backwards with his finger to me. Pessach. Next year in Jerusalem. Dear, O dear! All that long business about that brought us out of the land of Egypt and into the house of bondage Alleluia. Shema Israel Adonai Elohenu. No, that's the other. Then the twelve brothers, Jacob’s sons. (124)

Bloom is not ‘repeating’ (‘répéter’) this prayer in any usual sense conveyed by the phrase ‘répéter une prière’. He is merely recalling it, which is altogether different, as can be deduced from his introduction of it with the lightly mocking words 'All that long business about…' This is not a dead recitation of a once living prayer; it is a lightly derisive memory of a prayer he no longer says at all. And in any case, Bloom here is precisely not like a record or a gramophone, because he gets his prayers wrong. The prayer concerning 'All that long business about that brought us out of the land of Egypt and into the house of bondage' is of course the Haggadah, whereas Bloom here remembers words from a different prayer, the Shema – and indeed Bloom recognises this mistake ('No, that's the other'). Again, the bare facts of the matter are being represented, but the emphasis is quite inappropriate.

Conclusion

I have brought out six characteristics of Derridean reading practice, expressed in negative descriptors, which I believe most literary critics will take to be problematic. If these are accepted as accurate descriptions of 'Ulysse Gramophone' then two responses are possible. The first is simply to accept that these are indeed
dimensions of Derridean reading practice as manifested in this essay. Importantly, this would not necessarily constitute the final straw for that reading practice. It is a commonplace that Derrida has taken literary criticism into new territory, and it would be perfectly consistent to hold that certain values of 'traditional' literary criticism are naturally going to be transcended if we are to go with him. If such a position is taken then this chapter of my thesis is of no importance at all, except in that it illuminates certain aspects of Derridean thought. Taking this position comes at a price, however, which is namely that these 'traditional' values we are encouraged to transcend – things like avoiding incorrect citation, not making casual false claims, valuing accuracy over convenience, being precise when one can be, using one's conceptual frameworks in a way that does not depend upon confusion, preserving otherwise universal conventions concerning translations, and being sensitive to textual nuance – are for many scholars the very prerequisites of professional credibility. The consequences of this are obviously profound, and must be squarely faced.

The second possible response is more interesting. It would attack what might seem to be an implausible and vindictive assumption of my chapter, namely that my six descriptions really are aspects of Derridean reading practice, rather than unfortunate mistakes that do not reflect Derrida's actual methods of reading. The defender of Derrida could, for example, say something like this: 'Very well, these are indeed problematic moments in Derrida's work. However, they are not to be taken as parts of Derrida's actual method – to do so is an uncharitable conceit and quite unconvincing in dealing with someone of this stature. All scholars make mistakes, and we do not take these to be fatal for their overall enterprise. Perhaps this essay is flawed in places, but of course these cannot be taken as self-conscious aspects of Derrida's methodology. They are mistakes, that is all, and we can choose to forgive them or not as we see fit.' This response picks up on what might appear to be a sort of rhetorical trick in my treatment of Derrida, whereby I am treating fairly obvious errors as deliberate aspects of Derrida's methods in order to illustrate their weakness. I do not, however, intend this is as a rhetorical gesture, but as a serious part of my argument.
It is at this point that the considerable efforts to which Derrida scholars go in order to portray Derrida's methods as unabstractable come back to haunt them. For at this point I would argue that these errors cannot be shown to be separate from the core principles of Derridean reading practice, because that is precisely the kind of reasoning that Derrideans have already abandoned when they refuse to treat Derridean reading practice as abstractable or applicable. Consider that even to utter the words "these mistakes are not to be taken as parts of Derrida's actual method" assumes that Derrida's 'actual' method can be known, expressed, and indeed defined against any errors committed in its name.

As such, when Attridge writes that 'there is no abstractable or applicable argument, concept or method which could be laid out independently of such readings' he is saying something that cuts both ways, and is in the end quite fatal to Derrida's position. If no argument, concept or method can be abstracted from Derrida's readings, then there is no ground upon which these errors and scholarly malpractices can be said to be separate from Derrida's core methods of reading. The Derridean is faced with a choice: either accept that in this essay Derridean reading practice involves things which are unacceptable to the vast majority of scholars; or, alternatively, cut against the trend of Derrida scholarship and define a methodology against which these errors and malpractices can be seen to be as problematic as they self-evidently are. The latter option also comes at great cost for 'Ulysse Gramophone', for it leaves Derrida rather cynically employing methods which are demonstrably erroneous by the standards of his own methodology.
Chapter Eight

Thematic Stylistics Three: Prose Patterns

My response to 'Ulysse Gramophone' will examine Derrida's key motif, the word 'yes' in Ulysses, and particularly its function in Molly's monologue. In accordance with the principle of thematic stylistics I will attend first to the context of Molly's 'yes', which process will take me back to the beginning of Joyce's oeuvre. My analysis will have five stages: first, a study of the Joycean precedents for the kind of patterns in Molly's monologue, of which 'yes' is such an integral part; second, an analysis of the substantial reorientation of such patterns from their earlier uses in Dubliners and A Portrait to their function in Molly's monologue; third, a brief examination of the nature and meaning of the word 'yes' as Molly uses it; fourth, a look at the details of the yes-patterning in Molly's monologue; and finally a suggestion of an interpretive subtlety that might be added to the forgoing discussion.

Precedents for the Verbal Patterns in Molly's Monologue

The noteworthy traits of Molly's monologue are so well-known as to need little preliminary discussion. Let me focus in on just a few characteristics of its conclusion:

and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (18.1605-9)

How to explain in brief the peculiar effect of these lines? First, most obviously, we have the increasing frequency of the 'yes' that has been a motif running right through the whole chapter. Next, we have a very tangible increase in pace, manifested via three principal means: the settling of the narrative into a particular, linear episode with a narrative climax; an increase in the use of conjunctions; and, most crucially, a very clear establishment of a regular prose rhythm. Finally, we have a certain density of reference. The scene Molly is rehearsing is navigated through an unusual concentration (unusual even for Molly) on body parts. Thus in just four lines we have
'my eyes', 'my arms', 'my breasts' and 'his heart'. We also see a noticeable increase in the use of the personal pronoun in contrast to the previous lines: in the final seven lines Molly says 'I' nine times, whereas in the preceding sixteen lines she does not say it once. I will be returning to these lines in a good deal more detail, but this preliminary sketch will serve for my present purpose, which is to study the larger Joycean precedent for such a stylistic feat.

Happily, I have already discussed in an earlier chapter a simple example of this technique in Joyce's early work, and that discussion can save a lot of time here. In chapter four I analysed a fairly straightforward technique in *Dubliners* which I labelled hypnotic prose patterning. The key text for this was found in 'An Encounter' in phrases such as these two:

'his mind was slowly circling round and round' (*D* 16)

'seemed to circle slowly round and round' (*D* 17)

The two key elements of this style were described as near-identical vocabulary and structure, together with the parallel development of steady rhythms consisting of alternating stressed and unstressed syllables. Other quotes were culled from 'Eveline' and 'A Painful Case' to the same effect, with the overall impact being described as a kind of stylistic hemiplegia. In what follows, I will take the details of that discussion for granted.

If we forget for a moment the deeply unpleasant connotations of this technique as we find it in *Dubliners*, we will be able to see that it is related in a very tangible way to the style we find at the end of Molly's monologue. Three key ingredients are present in both cases: steady prose rhythms in (largely) alternating syllables, a restriction of vocabulary, and a consequent increase in pace. This is a stylistic link of the utmost importance. Too often Molly's monologue is treated in isolation, a beautiful freak in *Ulysses* and indeed Joyce more generally, sometimes considered in relation to serious precursors like Dujardin (or more rarely Tolstoy), but little more. The first stage of this chapter's argument, therefore, will be the situation of Molly's monologue as the culmination of a detectable strand of Joyce's evolving style, which context will be essential for the further consideration of its most important lexical motif, the word 'yes'. Just as in chapter six we saw Joyce's use of atomisation evolve and dramatically change function as his career developed,
so this chapter will see the very considerable development of what could initially be described as the fairly simple 'hypnotic prose patterns' of chapter four into something altogether richer and stranger.

The sinister monologue in 'An Encounter' is, as I have said, the natural source text for the technique under discussion. It is not, however, the first major instance. Consider the following passage, which has already been discussed under the rubric of atomisation. I will highlight the relevant vocabulary:

'In the dark of my room I imagined that I saw again the heavy grey face of the paralytic. I drew the blankets over my head and tried to think of Christmas. But the grey face still followed me. It murmured; and I understood that it desired to confess something. I felt my soul receding into some pleasant and vicious region; and there again I found it waiting for me. It began to confess to me in a murmuring voice and I wondered why it smiled continually and why the lips were so moist with spittle. But then I remembered that it had died of paralysis and I felt that I too was smiling feebly as if to absolve the simoniac of his sin.' (D4)

The effect of stylistic hemiplegia is nearly as strong here, and is naturally reinforced by the subject matter. (One cannot help but note in passing how dense Joyce's style is, this single short passage being such a keystone for both atomisation and the present technique.) I think one can even detect this same approach in the opening paragraph of the collection, where we find the repetition of phrases such as 'night after night', and key words such as 'lighted', 'candles', 'word', and 'sounded', together with the pronoun 'it' standing in for 'paralysis' five times in the final three sentences.

These passages lack the rhythmic qualities of the other passages quoted, yet the straightforward, repeated syntax, restricted vocabulary, sonorant consonance ('to me in a murmuring'), sibilance ('soul receding into some') and long vowel sounds ('was smiling feebly, as if to absolve the simoniac') produce a strong hypnotic quality nonetheless. As I have suggested, one can find examples of this style throughout Dubliners, with many of the collection's key passages manifesting these symptoms. I use these two as illustrations simply in order to locate the present technique as early as possible in the Joycean corpus. I find no example of this technique in Dubliners which does not produce this distinctive effect of rather suffocating, hypnotic prose.46

46 A possible exception might be the final paragraph of 'The Dead'. I myself would argue that this can still be read under these terms, especially given the preponderance of the other meta-narrative techniques (discussed in chapter four) therein.
In other words, like atomisation, prose patterning in *Dubliners* is marshalled solely towards Joyce's stylistic documentation of urban paralysis. Also like atomisation, by the time we reach *A Portrait*, Joyce has significantly expanded his horizons. And finally, just as with atomisation, there have been those who have studied this technique before, but not quite in the breadth and depth it deserves. This time, instead of Nabokov, Gottfried or Attridge, I turn to Frank O'Connor.

O'Connor treated Joyce in all three of his major works of criticism, *The Mirror in the Roadway* (1956), *The Lonely Voice* (1962) and *The Backward Look* (1967). The first two, studies of the novel and the short story respectively, are of particular importance here, and seem to me to be worthy of serious consideration more generally. In the latter we find, with reference to the first paragraph of 'Two Gallants', O'Connor's description of an 'incantatory writing [which] is something entirely new in English prose' (119):

> some of the words are being deliberately repeated, usually in a slightly different order and sometimes in a slightly different form to avoid giving the reader the effect of mere repetition and yet sustain in his mind the hypnotic effect of repetition. (118)

This is clearly a very neat description of precisely the effect with which we are dealing here. In *The Mirror in the Roadway* O'Connor discussed this at more length, still taking his *Dubliners* example solely from 'Two Gallants', but crucially extending his analysis to *A Portrait*. Of the former we here find the important phrase 'a deliberately produced hypnosis' (296). Of *A Portrait* O'Connor comments

> The first thing to notice is that the peculiar style used in the opening of *Two Gallants* is now a regular device. It can best be described as "mechanical prose," for certain key words are repeated deliberately and mechanically to produce a feeling of hypnosis in the reader. (301-2)

For reasons that I have already made plain, I would disagree with O'Connor's emphasis here: this kind of patterning was a regular device right from the beginning of *Dubliners*. But the soundness of the observation is beyond dispute. O'Connor thought that this technique was not only to be found in single paragraphs but in a larger form across the entire book. He writes:

> I have an impression that Joyce wrote with a list of a couple of hundred words before him, each representing some association, and that at intervals the words were dropped in, like currants in a cake and
O'Connor's two small-scale examples from A Portrait are perfectly chosen and analysed, and I commend them to the reader. Well-judged, too, is his point that this technique 'is not an attempt at communicating the experience to the reader…but at equating the prose with the experience. Indeed, one might say that it aims at replacing the experience by the prose' (304). With this surprisingly early and highly perceptive analysis duly honoured we can now turn to A Portrait ourselves.

As this technique requires fairly lengthy quotation, I must be selective. One sees glimpses of it from the outset of the novel, just as we did with Dubliners: '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…' (5). Here, however, a very different effect is being produced. There is no trace of spiritual hemiplegia in this passage. Joyce's style does not seem to mimic paralysis, despite that same level of semantic restriction we saw earlier. We might say the effect is still hypnotic, but in a different way altogether to the vision of the dead priest's grey face in 'The Sisters'. How then to interpret this?

I think the best reading of this effect will begin with some general observations concerning the nature of the opening section of A Portrait. This is well-trodden but essential ground. These opening lines represent what will be the formative encounter of Stephen's life, the meeting of the artist-to-be and his medium, language. The very beginning of his consciousness, as far as the novel is concerned, is that moment when he is presented with an act of storytelling, one of the foundational acts of human artistic achievement. These truisms laid down, we must go a little further, and observe that in these lines we see a complex relationship develop between what we might call incantation, imagination and representation. Take, for example, the phrase 'coming down along the road'. This clearly has the qualities of a chant, for it is repeated twice in this exact form in the first sentence: language as incantation. It is also an act of pure creation. There never was a road with a moocow, for this is a fairly tale: language as imagination. Note, however, that just a few lines later we get 'The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt'. Gifford tells us that 'Thom's Official Directory…lists an Elizabeth Byrne as a grocer at 46 Main Street in Bray (where the Joyces lived at 1
Martello Terrace, 1887-92)' (Joyce Annotated 133). Quickly, Stephen's mind has associated the road in his father's imagination with a real road: language as representation. There are other functions of language represented in these opening lines (language as self-discovery being perhaps the most important), but these three are the most relevant for me here. Language, for Stephen, can bridge in a single phrase the chasm between the world of the imagination and the world of the senses, which dichotomy can be tweaked and rephrased in a number of instructive ways: mind/body, spirit/material, art/life – the list is long. The crucial point here is that language is the bridge between these antitheses, and that as such, in anticipation of the religious theme, it takes on the mystical role of mediator between the inner and outer life. (Indeed, one might describe one of the book's key themes as Stephen's realisation that language alone can fulfil this priestly office, and that in order for it to do so he must free himself from the shackles of his church.) It is this essential role as mystical bridge between the imagination and the senses that is reflected in the incantatory nature of the language of the book's opening, in the simple story of the road, the moocow, and Betty Byrne with her lemon platt.

A very important development of the technique can be found in a passage at the end of chapter two (83-4), when Stephen is gearing up for his first full sexual encounter with a prostitute. I lack the space to quote the passage in full and properly dissect it, but its most important features can be discussed. As well as the repetition of key terms47, we find that this chapter has a very heavy alliterative backbone: brutal/ brain/ blood/ baffled/ beast, flood/ filling, murmur/ multitude, sleep/ subtle/ streams, clenched/ convulsively. We find too a certain density of reference (it begins with 'slimy streets' and ends with an 'oozing wall'), an emphasis on body parts (blood, ears, hands, teeth, arms, throat, lips), and the manifestation of fleeting regularities in rhythm ('His blood was in revolt. He wandered up and down', 'some multitude in sleep; its subtle streams'). We are tangibly closer to Molly Bloom here.

Furthermore, we find certain linguistic shifts that are worthy of note. We find 'sin' twice used as a verb, but just as its identity seems to have settled it changes to a noun. When Stephen feels 'some dark presence moving…from the darkness', the adjective 'dark' changes into a noun, as if the presence has impressed its central

47 In this case: dark, presence, murmurous, penetration, sin, wail, and cry.
quality onto its surroundings, making it the environment's defining feature, and all within a single short clause. That sentence ends with the phrase 'a presence subtle and murmurous as a flood filling him wholly with itself'. When the next begins however, the subject of the last sentence ('presence') is forgotten, and replaced with one of its own adjectives, murmurous, which has therefore to become a noun: 'Its murmure besieged his ears like the murmur of some multitude'. These syntactical shifts are a way of foregrounding the explicitly linguistic nature of this experience. Our attention is being drawn to these words' status as words, and the best explanation for this, I would suggest, can be found in the mind of our protagonist. These are the kinds of repetitions and syntactical shifts that a young poet will naturally explore, which suggests that it would be a serious error to regard this is a purely representational prose, as simply Stephen-in-Joyce's-words. Rather, these words are to a significant degree Stephen's own.

Neither are these shifts exclusively linguistic. Towards the end of the passage, Joyce executes perhaps his most telling verbal evolution: we read that 'the cry he had strangled…broke from him like a wail of despair'. The word 'like' is highly significant here, because it makes the 'wail of despair' a simile. By the end of the sentence however, the same cry 'died in a wail of furious entreaty', a phrase which has no metaphorical signs: the 'wail' is to be interpreted literally. Such is the intensity of Stephen's experience that the same cry can, in the course of its birth and death, transgress the boundaries between metaphor and literality, unreal and real, and, most tellingly for the artist-to-be, the line between the strictly literary (a figure of speech), and the concretely real. This transgression is a precise illustration of the mystical, incantatory qualities of language in Stephen's world. Most beautifully of all, just as Stephen's own figures of speech make the journey from literary artefacts to real physical experiences, so we are here dealing with prose that makes the very same journey: not content to remain merely representational, this prose insists on becoming that which it describes. Hence my very high regard for O'Connor's sense that 'one might say that [this technique] aims at replacing the experience by the prose'. Beckett's dictum that Joyce's 'writing is not about something; it is that something itself' (14) can be applied far earlier than Finnegans Wake.
My next, and for want of space, final example comes from Stephen's moment of artistic creation in chapter five. Here the restriction in vocabulary is so great that, when one concentrates upon it, it all but obscures the sense of the prose:

Towards **dawn** he **awoke**. O what **sweet music**! **His soul** was all **dewy wet**. Over his limbs in sleep pale **cool** waves of light had passed. He lay still, as if his soul lay amid **cool** waters, conscious of **faint sweet music**. His mind was **waking slowly** to a tremulous **morning** knowledge, a **morning inspiration**. A **spirit** filled him, **pure** as the **purest** water, **sweet** as **dew**, moving as **music**. But how **faintly** it was **inbreathed**, how passionlessly, as if the **seraphim** themselves were **breathing** upon him! **His soul** was **waking slowly**, fearing to **awake** wholly. It was that windless **hour** of **dawn** when madness **wakes** and strange plants open to the **light** and the moth flies forth silently.

An **enchantment** of the heart! The night had been **enchanted**. In a dream or vision he had known the ecstasy of **seraphic** life. Was it an **instant** of **enchantment** only or long **hours** and days and years and ages?

The **instant** of **inspiration** seemed now to be reflected from all sides at once from a multitude of **cloudy circumstance** of what had **happened** or of what might have **happened**. The **instant** flashed forth like a point of **light** and now from **cloud** on **cloud** of vague **circumstance** confused form was veiling softly its **afterglow**. O! In the **virgin** womb of the imagination the word was made flesh. Gabriel the **seraph** had come to the **virgin's** chamber. An **afterglow** deepened within his **spirit**, whence the white flame had passed, deepening to a **rose and ardent light**. That **rose and ardent light** was her **strange wilful heart**, strange that no **man** had **known** or would **know**, wilful from before the beginning of the world: and **lured** by that **ardent roselike glow** the choirs of the **seraphim** were **falling** from heaven.

**Are you not weary of ardent ways,**
**Lure of the fallen seraphim?**
**Tell no more of enchanted days.**

The verses passed from his **mind** to his lips and, murmuring them over, he felt the **rhythmic** movement of a villanelle pass through them. The **roselike glow** sent forth its **rays** of rhyme; **ways**, **days**, **blaze**, **praise**, raise. Its **rays** burned up the world, consumed the hearts of **men** and angels: the **rays** from the **rose** that was her **wilful heart**.

**Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze**
**And you have had your will of him,**
**Are you not weary of ardent ways?**

**And then?** The **rhythm** died away, ceased, began again to
move and beat. **And then?** **Smoke**, incense ascending from the altar of the world.

*Above the flame the smoke of praise*
*Goes up from ocean rim to rim*
*Tell no more of enchanted days.* (182-3)

Here we get the wholesale repetition of certain phrases – 'waking slowly', 'rose and ardent light', 'rose-like-glow', 'wilful heart', 'And then?' – amid the same kind of linguistic shifts already described. The word 'virgin' is used in both 'virgin womb' and 'virgin's chamber', shifting from an adjective to a possessive noun. 'Dew' moves from the position of adjective ('dewy wet') to a noun forming the crux of a metaphor ('A spirit...sweet as dew'). Verbs change from the passive voice ('It was in breathed') to the active voice ('breathing upon him'). Counting all the examples of such shifts here would be a substantial endeavour; these should suffice, I hope, for a demonstration of the same technique. And the result of Stephen's inspiration? A villanelle, a verse form which relies upon the same terms and phrases shifting position and meaning with both their various contexts and their gradual evolution over the poem. Here Joyce is putting these same techniques to work in order to represent a remarkable process, namely the very texture of artistic creation, in which the raw material of Stephen's consciousness at first suggests, and then is moulded into, a verse form by the will of the artist. In terms of technical ability and overall effect, this is a significant development from *Dubliners*.

The sheer intensity of the effect here is explicable in terms of the significance of the moment. We are here precisely in that peculiar state between the world of dreams (imagination) and reality, spirit and body, art and life. Not only this, but this is a moment of genuine creation, the beginnings of what Stephen hopes to be artistic liberty. This is, I think, the climax of this technique in the novel as a whole. Here, the mystical, incantatory role of language first glimpsed in the opening paragraph takes its fully-realised form, and we find the distinctions between imagination and reality, as well as those between fancy, incantation and representation, thoroughly compromised. Is this a description of Stephen's experience, or is it the very linguistic form of his experience? Is the latter meaningfully distinguishable in this case from his experience itself? The chain of thoroughly blurred distinctions we can build up here is impressive: Stephen's words are not distinct from his experience, but in a very
real way constitute it; this passage is not distinct from Stephen's words, but is
tangibly constructed from them; our experience of this passage is not one of mere
representation, but a peculiar incantatory unity with the subject matter. This
closeness with Stephen is unprecedented: the only distinctions separating his
experience from our own are unstable at best. We are, in a very powerful way, inside
him, and he is, in a very peculiar way, inside us.

(Before leaving this passage, I would like to briefly examine an interpretive
subtlety not directly relevant to the technique under discussion, but important for a
good understanding of this section of A Portrait nonetheless\(^48\). While, as I have
argued, the verbal patterns here are pushing towards a closer and closer identification
with Stephen's experience, there is another narrative factor in play which militates in
precisely the opposite direction: irony. Bluntly, Stephen's verse and prose here do not
come to us value-free: his language is purple, hyperbolic, sentimental. Joyce, it
seems, will not allow us the indulgence of pure identification. While he does
eourage us to tangibly experience an aesthetic encounter here, he also frames that
encounter in language which undermines the credibility of the very aesthetic upon
which our experience is based. After all, it is strongly implied that Stephen's poetic
epiphany is also a wet dream, which realisation deftly undermines any purely
'aesthetic' investment we may have had in it. The result is disorienting, to say the
least, and would certainly merit further study.)

The above qualification notwithstanding, we can still say that this strange
closeness with his protagonist is the goal towards which Joyce reoriented his
technique of verbal patterning between Dubliners and A Portrait. From being a fairly
straightforward evocation of paralysis in the former, it here becomes a way of
collapsing the gap between us and Stephen Daedalus – just as atomisation was
reoriented from an evocation of paralysis to a force of narrative localisation. The
parallel between the two techniques is close indeed. And now we have studied the
way in which this technique can bring us into unprecedented contact with the interior
of a character's mind, we are ready to turn to Molly Bloom.

\(^{48}\) I am entirely indebted to my supervisor, Dr Lee Spinks, for the following observation.
The Evolution of the Function of Such Verbal Patterns in Molly's Monologue

A necessary qualification to what follows is that Molly's chapter is far from being the only place in Ulysses in which this kind of verbal patterning is observable. Consider, for example:

Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels dullthudding out of Prince's stores and bumped them up on the brewery float. On the brewery float bumped dullthudding barrels rolled by grossbooted draymen out of Prince's stores. (7.21-4)

The charming repetition here clearly manifests the same kind of lexical restriction and rhythmic attention we have seen elsewhere. It is, indeed, incantatory, seeking to replicate as far as possible in prose the scene described. This kind of fun is just one use to which Joyce was putting this technique by the time he was writing Ulysses, and all such uses deserve extended study. However, my main goal here is to study Molly's 'yes', and spatial considerations demand that I only study this kind of patterning inasmuch as it bears on that goal.

I wish to postpone detailed examination of the patterns of Molly's monologue for the moment, and try to consolidate what we have learned from the foregoing examination of the stylistic precedent for this technique. The first point to underline is that between Dubliners and A Portrait we see the same kind of lexical patterning redeployed to give us not just a sense of the way in which a character thinks but the actual verbal content of their thoughts. In 'An Encounter' the dense prose patterns reflected, even embodied, the sinister revolutions of the old man's thoughts and words. Importantly, however, those patterns did not fully manifest his thoughts and words, which is to say that the old man was not actually repeating words like 'mind', 'slowly', and 'circle'. In A Portrait, however, this is exactly what we do find. The words that make up the patterns there really are Stephen's words, words which he goes on to use in a poem, and their infusion throughout the passage manifests for us the linguistic process of poetic creation. The former case, then, was incantatory in the sense that it conjures up the very mood and texture of the man's thought. The latter case does that too, but is also incantatory in a stronger sense, as it conjures up the very linguistic material that constitutes that thought. We are, in a tangible way, thinking Stephen's thoughts after him.
It is of basic importance to note that the passage of artistic creation in *A Portrait* is not written in the stream of consciousness style. This is easy to forget, as the hypnotic qualities of the language bring us so close to the atmosphere of Stephen's thoughts. Nonetheless, the passage is consistently third person. The effect of such incantatory prose patterns, then, is another kind of very powerful free indirect style. While remaining narratologically distinct from Stephen's point of view, the narrative voice takes on not only the kind of language he would use, and not only the kind of attitude he would adopt, but the very ebb and flow of his mind as it revolves around the raw material of a new poem. This is free indirect style at its limits, pushed as close to a character's mind as it can go while still remaining at least grammatically distinct from it.

Turning now to Molly Bloom we find we are in a different position, and we face a very serious question as a result. These prose patterns cannot function as free indirect style because we are dealing with interior monologue, which is resolutely first person. This is a subtle but crucial development. By the end of *A Portrait* one of the main jobs of these prose patterns was to narrow the gap between the narrative voice and Stephen's mind. Here, that job is entirely fulfilled by another device, interior monologue – so what job are the prose patterns performing? This is the basic question we must ask before we deal with the specifics of Molly's monologue. Before I answer it, however, I wish to arrive at the same question from another angle, which will shed some further light on the issue.

I have argued that the later prose patterns in *A Portrait* are made up of Stephen's own thoughts as expressed in Stephen's own words, and that we are therefore thinking his thoughts after him. An obvious question poses itself: why is Stephen thinking in this extraordinary manner? Why have his thoughts taken on the qualities of a dense verbal incantation? And second, why should these particular words be repeated, and not others? Now, in Stephen's case answers to these questions are not difficult to find. In the first case, this highly repetitive language is the business of poetic creation. Stephen is trying these words out in different forms and contexts, exploring their associations and relations to each other, and, crucially, bringing out their musical qualities. O'Connor found this kind of style too self-conscious (304), and I would contend that it is probably supposed to give precisely
that impression. Stephen, as a young and tentative poet, is profoundly aware of the nature of the words he uses, and passages such as these give us a kind of insider's view of that awareness.

Very well, why these particular words? Many of them seem to deal with the kind of ecstatic pleasure Stephen takes in the business of poetic creation. Words such as 'enchantment', 'sweet', 'inspiration', 'waking' and 'music' seem to suggest his delight in the liberating potential of poetic craftsmanship. Still others seem to suggest the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, a factor which must also be recognised as a contributing to the incantatory style of Stephen's thoughts in the first place. In particular words such as 'virgin', 'seraphim', 'spirit', 'pure', and 'light' seem to support this interpretation, not to mention phrases like the 'smoke of praise' and 'incense ascending from the altar of the world'. Others – in particular 'dewy wet', 'afterglow', 'virgin', 'wilful heart' and 'rose and ardent glow' – we can safely attribute to the deep sexual undercurrents of this whole section. Some, such as 'instant', 'dawn', 'awoke' and 'morning', seem to arise fairly straightforwardly from Stephen's direct circumstances. Doubtless other currents could be traced in this lexical set, but the overall emphasis is clear: this is a self-conscious process of artistic exploration, dealing with some of the key influences upon and desires of Stephen's character.

This interpretation is strong when it comes to Stephen, but what of Molly? Whatever else Molly is, she is not preoccupied with finding a sovereign form of artistic self-fulfilment in which language will bridge the gap between mind and matter. And yet, we find very similar kinds of prose pattern in her monologue. Questions of characterisation, it seems, lead us to the same question: what job are these prose patterns performing this time round?

I think there are two ways to answer this question. The first is initially seductive, but ultimately false, and it needs to be tackled straight away. This is to claim that the narrative stance of Molly's monologue differs crucially from Stephen's thoughts. Might we not suggest that, while Stephen really does think in words, and those words really are patterned in this way, Molly's monologue is more like a verbal representation of non-verbal thoughts? These verbal patterns, on this account, are not actual linguistic motifs in Molly's mind, but more like her central preoccupations as
represented in appropriate language\textsuperscript{49}. The problem of Molly's verbal patterns dissolves as a result, as does the \textit{prima facie} oddness of Molly's constant inner flow of fully articulated language.

I recognise this as a tempting option, and it is perhaps easy to slip into this kind of thinking without realising it. Still, I think there are very strong arguments against this being the case. First, Molly gets words wrong. For example, she twice refers to 'Sinner Fein' (18.383, 1227). If this were not a properly realised verbal thought, if Molly were simply thinking of the idea of Sinn Fein, then there would be no reason to get the spelling wrong in representing this pre-verbal impression. In a similar vein, while we might explain the lack of sentences as a representation of the pre-grammatical nature of raw human thought, what about the lack of possessive apostrophes? Molly's consistent omission of these suggests that these words are in some sense her own, for if these were merely Joyce's words representing non-verbal entities in Molly's mind, what reason could we adduce for the absence of such harmless syntactic markers? Next, Molly uses heavily onomatopoeic language, as in her rendering of a train's whistle as 'frseeeeeeeefronnnng' (18.596) and later as the subtly different 'Frseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeefrong' (18.874). This amusing verbal invention suggests a fidelity to the linguistic nature of her thought. If her monologue were simply a representation of sense impressions, then why resort to these kinds of verbal acrobatics? Why not just have 'there's a train whistling'? Further, Molly has fun with language, as when, shortly after the latter rendition of the train, she thinks 'ere oer the world the mists began I hate that istsbeg comes loves sweet sooooooooooong' (18.875-6). Finally, some of Molly's mental links depend upon fully verbal articulation. Consider, for example: 'they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head' (18.1571-3). Here it is crucial that the first mention of the sun is a fully articulated word in Molly's mind, because if this were not so, if it were merely a way of expressing a pre-verbal sentiment, then the

\textsuperscript{49} A technical framework could easily be furnished for such a position. See, for example, Lawrence Bowling's 1950 article 'What is the Stream of Consciousness Technique?'. For Bowling, the phrase 'interior monologue' refers only to thoughts which have already taken explicitly verbal form, those moments in which we quite literally 'speak' to ourselves. However, sensations and images are not verbal phenomena, and the mind 'does not translate [them] into language'. These can, however, via artistic convention, be represented in language, which representations he calls 'sense impressions'. 

link to Bloom's words on Howth Head would be lost. If these arguments are accepted then we must always be sure we are treating Molly's monologue as a fully verbal phenomenon, an actual stream of language running through her mind.\footnote{Importantly, this does not preclude Molly having non-verbal thoughts on top of what we read here. Assumably she feels all sorts of things that are not made explicit in the words we read. The only crucial point is that, on top of whatever pre-verbal processes we allow, we acknowledge that all of these words really do move through her mind.}

The question now returns more forcefully than before. If these patterns are really to be situated in their fully verbal form in Molly's mind, then what on earth are they doing there? They are not helping with narrative localisation, as this is a first person narrative. They do not represent any acts of conscious poetic creation, as Molly is no poet. To get as quickly as possible to the bottom of this, I would like to begin with Joyce's own explanation of his chapter, which will take us straight to the heart of issue:

> It begins and ends with the female word yes. It turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning, its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words because, bottom (in all senses bottom button, bottom of the class, bottom of the sea, bottom of his heart), woman, yes. Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent Weib. Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht. (Letters I, 169)

This is, as we would expect, a far cry from being artistic or creative in the Stephen Daedalus sense of those words. Molly is not controlling and shaping language, or even desiring to so master it. Stephen's repeated words were integral, conscious aspects of an act of creation. Molly's, on the other hand, are ascribed to her very nature as a woman. They are simply 'female' words, 'expressing' the female 'breasts, arse, womb and cunt'. Their frequency and patterning, it seems, are not a function of some artistic act or process of Molly's, or part of a narratological method, but a natural consequence of the kind of being Molly is.

Here we must recognise a point of great interpretive contention surrounding the obvious misogyny of Joyce's intentions in the above quotation, and indeed elsewhere. Simply, do we identify Molly's great, rambling monologue, along with all its points of individual characterisation, with Joyce's view of womanhood? Difficult questions abound, not least of which are what we do with Joyce's extra-
textual comments on the subject, and whether the material in question allows for a fully textually grounded response to this issue. In their famous 1985 article 'Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality' Gilbert and Gubar framed the now touchstone case for the prosecution, charging Joyce's portrait of Molly with misogyny, and 'refus[ing] to be Mollified' by what they saw as 'feminologist reJoyceings' (519). The other side has had its equally esteemed proponents, from Karen Lawrence's thoughtful, qualified article 'Joyce and Feminism' in the first edition of *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce* (1990), to Vicki Mahaffey's treatment of the issue in *Masculinities in Joyce: Postcolonial Constructions* (2001), in which she declares quite flatly her belief that 'Molly was never designed to "represent" Joyce's idea of womanhood' (154). Clearly, I cannot hope to negotiate this critical minefield in a tangent to my thesis, and happily that is not really necessary for my argument to function. Whether one thinks that 'Molly' is really code for 'Womankind', or that 'Molly' is merely code for 'Molly', the fact remains that the remarkable circulation of repeated words and verbal patterns in her monologue is not some deliberate or even particularly conscious effect on her part, but is instead an emanation from her very nature. The extent to which that nature is bound up with her gender can be left to others to decide for themselves.

This is the proper context for the immaculate patterning we see in Molly's chapter. The distance between character and narrative voice having been abolished by the use of interior monologue, Joyce was free to use these verbal patterns to attempt an unprecedented form of characterisation. Not the characterisation of a formidable articulate young poet whose own verbal dexterity could best be presented in these terms; but rather the characterisation of a 'perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent Weib'. Joyce takes his rather marvellous but obviously limited Molly, and writes a kind of incantation of the focal points of her being. This, then, is the evolution in prose patterning between *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*: no longer a mere manifestation of thought, it is now a manifestation of those basic, essential characteristics by which a person's thought is shaped and guided, the core from which a character's thoughts emanate. One is reluctant to quote Whitman here for fear of seeming a little dewy,
but this is in a surprisingly literal way Molly's Song of Myself, and like Whitman's self she is large, and contains multitudes.

The Nature and Meaning of Molly's 'Yes'

This fairly substantial context established, let us place into it Molly's 'yes'. This seems to be the most important of the four keywords Joyce gives us (the others being 'because', 'bottom' and 'woman'). It is the most frequently used in the chapter, and it is both the start and the end of Molly's monologue. Its final use is capitalised, and the concluding moments of the chapter see it used in a manner that has been justly immortalised. The supremacy of this word seems beyond reasonable doubt. The others, I would emphasise, are very worthy of study. That I shall not undertake that study here is regrettable, but a necessary consequence of properly focusing my work as a response to 'Ulysses Gramophone'.

The question of how to interpret this 'yes' is more fraught than might be imagined. It would be easy to assume that it is unambiguously seen as a gesture of assent, a grand affirmative finale to the novel as a whole. In fact, many critics have departed from this view. The earliest dissent I have found is in Kenner's 1956 Dublin's Joyce: 'Molly lies still at the warm dead womb-like centre of the labyrinth of paving stones. Her "Yes" is confident and exultant; it is the "Yes" of authority: authority over this animal kingdom of the dead' (262). Twenty-four years later in Ulysses he was less gloomy, but still keen to resist the 'expositor's cliché, that Molly rises to a fervent Affirmation of Life' (146). Robert Boyle twice voiced his scepticism towards any optimistic interpretation of Molly, once in his 1965 article "Ulysses" as Frustrated Sonata Form', and again in his contribution to Hart and Hayman's landmark 1974 volume James Joyce's Ulysses: Critical Essays. In the latter he writes quite flatly of his earlier article that 'Molly's 'Yes' I saw as a negative thing, and, indeed, I still do' (431). Elsewhere, Mitchell Morse wrote in 1959 that 'Molly's soliloquy is the bitterest and deadliest thing that Joyce ever wrote' (149). Most damning of all, perhaps, was Robert M. Adams in James Joyce: Common Sense

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51 I get the following figures: 'yes' 91 uses; 'because' 48 uses; 'bottom' 19 uses; 'woman'/ 'womans'/ 'women' 71 uses.
Defenders of Molly and her spirit of affirmation are more numerous, and need not be exemplified in detail. They include such distinguished figures as Ellmann and Budgen. Most rousing of all is Daniel Schwarz in Reading Joyce's "Ulysses", in which he writes "Yes" is an affirmation of Bloom's and Molly's mutual acceptance of one another on the [sic] Howth. Despite her spitefulness, she affirms her belief in passionate love (272).

This is an interpretive divide of the utmost significance, for upon it depends the manner in which we read the central verbal motif of this chapter. If, as I have argued, the verbal patterns surrounding the word 'yes' are a kind of incantation of Molly's being, then the way in which we read those patterns becomes a question of foundational importance. My own response to this issue will rely upon clarifying a certain ambiguity in the notion of affirmation.

To begin, we must observe that the word 'affirmative' has two relevant meanings here, which are easily blurred together. The first is a more technical sense, meaning something like 'agreeing with a statement or question'. The nature of the statement or question is not relevant to this definition. The second sense is more widely used in daily life, meaning something like 'hopeful, encouraging, positive'. This is roughly what we mean when we say 'she is a really affirmative person', or 'an affirmative atmosphere'. The difference between these senses is crucial. If we imagine someone who is being affirmative in the second sense, then we are liable to have a good or happy response towards them, for that is the nature of such affirmation. However, if we imagine someone who is being affirmative in the former sense, then our response to them will depend upon the nature of the thing to which they are being affirmative. If they are affirming their children's happiness, then we are liable to feel good about them. If, on the other hand, they are affirming their children's unhappiness, then we are liable to feel very differently towards them.

A good many critics who wish to see the final words of Ulysses as a rousing finale have tended to think of Molly's 'yes' as being affirmative in the second sense of

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52 See, for instance, Ulysses on the Liffey, 169-72.
53 See James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses, 270.
the word, that is, as something expressing hope, encouragement, or positivity. This, I take it, is the sort of conclusion Kenner is describing with his 'expositor's cliché, that Molly rises to a fervent Affirmation of Life'. In response to this interpretation other critics have quite reasonably pointed out that there is much in Molly's monologue we might find less than hopeful, encouraging or positive. They choose, therefore, to see Molly's 'yes' as affirmative only in the first sense of agreeing with something, and to see that agreement as a bad thing. Consider, for example, that Boyle's statement that 'Molly's 'Yes' I saw as a negative thing' only makes sense if Boyle is restricting 'yes' to mean solely 'in agreement with', and using 'negative' as a value judgement on that agreement. Once 'yes' has been taken to be affirmative only in this limited first sense, then one's interpretation can emphasise Molly's bad points as much as one likes, to the point of Adams's 'unconsciousness of evil'.

The problem with many such interpretations, and certainly all the ones referenced above, is that they swing too far in attempting to correct the naively positive interpretation, and end up being naively negative instead. They are right to point out that Molly's rather chequered consciousness does not permit us to read her 'yes' as straightforwardly positive, but they make the mistake of ignoring all the times when there is genuine positivity to be found in her affirmations. We can chart a course between these equally problematic extremes by paying close attention to the various things to which Molly says 'yes'. Part of the problem with many more positive views of Molly's 'yes', like Schwarz's above, is that they tend to focus on her final 'Yes' to Bloom's proposal on Howth Head, and ignore the other ninety uses of the word in the chapter, many of which are rather less edifying. To this thematic stylistics can prove a useful counterbalance by treating 'yes' as a motif to be studied in all its variations.

Consider, for example, the following use of the word, which is one of its last uses before the final crescendo: 'I'll let him know if that's what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck nearly not by him' (18.1510-11). This certainly affirms something, but we would hesitate to call it affirmative in any fuller sense of the word. We might add to this the following: 'yes its some little bitch hes got in with' (18.1256); 'yes now wouldn't that afflict you of course all the poking and rooting and ploughing he had up in me now' (18.1105-6); 'yes and she
[Milly] didn't even want me to kiss her at the Broadstone going away' (18.1047-8); 'yes because it grigged her because she knew what it meant' (18.214). On the other hand, we have many examples which do seem affirmative in the more general, positive sense: 'yes because a woman whatever she does she knows where to stop' (18.1438-9); 'yes I'll get a nice piece of cod' (18.943); 'yes the sea and the sky you could do what you liked lie there for ever he caressed them outside they love doing that its the roundness' (18.795-7); 'of course he'd never find another woman like me to put up with him the way I do know me come sleep with me yes and he knows that too at the bottom of his heart' (18.232-4). To this second list we could of course add much of the climax of the chapter.

The balance seems to be fairly clear. Molly says 'yes' to a great many things, some of them rather beautiful, some of them, like the nice piece of cod, cheerfully mundane, others rather sad, others undeniably unpleasant. Some of her yeses seem to bridge very negative and very positive thoughts, as in: 'you'd think they could never go far enough up and then they're done with you in a way till the next time yes because there's a wonderful feeling there so tender all the time' (18.806-9). Others seem to start out positively, but are swiftly undercut with some rather more trivial, negative sentiment: 'yes by God I'll get that big fan mended make them burst with envy' (18.901-2). These only underline the basic point here: Molly's yes always affirms, in the strict sense of agreeing with or being in accordance with something, though naturally our response to that affirmation varies as much as the thing being affirmed. Finally, perhaps the most important consideration in underlining the variety of Molly's affirmations is simply that a lot of the yeses we find in this chapter are remembered. That is, in many cases Molly is merely recalling her own or someone else's 'yes' (the final 'Yes' being the best example) – and of course the particular content of those widely varying memories will dictate the manner in which we read the 'yes' in question.

So we must disagree with those who see Molly's yes as a negative thing, and indeed those who see it as a positive thing. Molly's yes is merely a yes, and its nature changes depending on that to which it is directed. As I have pointed out, one of the great temptations in studying Molly's yes is to focus too heavily on its final manifestation on Howth Head. This is certainly a very positive use of the word, but
within it we can hear all of its predecessors echoing, and many of them are very negative. Molly said yes to Bloom on Howth, and evidently says yes to him as he sleeps beside her, but she also said yes to Boylan earlier in the day, and said yes to several much less flattering memories earlier in the night. So while Molly's yes clearly is an affirmation of Bloom and his love for her, it is also, in the long run, an affirmation of her betrayal of him, and much more besides. Molly says yes to Bloom, but she also says yes to just about everything else. That Bloom comes out on top, that her yes to him is deeper and more lasting, just as her feelings towards Boylan are noticeably lukewarm, cannot really be doubted. But those other yeses cannot be erased, and we should not feel the temptation to decide one way or the other. If nothing else, Molly is capable of sustaining contradictions.

I shall therefore speak of Molly's affirmation, and indeed her spirit of affirmation, but only in this restricted sense. Kenner's scorn for the 'fervent Affirmation of Life' interpretation is well justified, but only if we have let ourselves slip into thinking of that Affirmation as an unequivocally joyful sense of resolution and redemption into which the great tumult of the preceding chapters can sink without trace. That really is a cliché, and a wildly inappropriate one at that. Molly does affirm life, but the life in question includes adultery, pain, indifference, pettiness, vanity and much else. When we factor in all these disparate elements of her continual 'yes' we can come much closer to understanding its nature, which is just as multifaceted as the life to which it responds.

Yes-Patterns in Molly's Monologue

Have considered the relevant stylistic precedents in Joyce's early work, their development in *Ulysses*, and the nature of Molly's 'yes', I am now in a position to discuss the point at which these intersect: the yes-patterning in Molly's monologue. This is a surprisingly little-studied aspect of this well-trodden chapter. It is a commonplace that the chapter culminates in a string of climactic yeses, and that the word is strewn throughout the chapter in anticipation of this grand finale. Studies of this motif, including all those referenced above, tend to stick at this fairly general level, offering interpretations in broad thematic terms. This misses out on much that
can be learned from closer scrutiny of this word's exact placement in Molly's verbal stream.

Considered in abstract terms, this is actually something of a conundrum. Given that Molly isn't speaking to anyone, and that the majority of ways in which the word 'yes' can be used are to some degree responsive, it is not immediately obvious how it might occur in her stream of thought fully ninety-one times. After all, Molly has only her own mind to which she can respond at this late hour: how, then, does Joyce work in this particular motif?

Some usages are fairly self-explanatory. Sometimes, for example, Molly is remembering an actual 'yes' that she or someone else uttered at some time in the past: 'I said yes I will Yes' (18.1608-9). Sometimes she uses it as an exclamation: 'he liked me too I remember they all do wait by God yes wait yes hold on...' (18.1313-4). Most of the time, however, 'yes' is used in neither of these ways. To understand its predominant usage, we have to take a step back and answer a different question, which is this. In the absence of any punctuation, how does Joyce organise or link Molly's thoughts, or introduce new ideas into her mind?

The most straightforward way is via simple conjunction: 'either it was one of those night women if it was down there he was really and the hotel story he made up a pack of lies' (18.36-7, my italics), where the 'and' gets Molly from Bloom's potential infidelities back to the story he has told her before falling asleep. A similar function can be performed by one of Molly's key words, 'because': 'after all I tried with the Banana but I was afraid it might break and get lost up in me somewhere because they once took something down out of a woman that was up there for years covered with limesalts' (18.803-6, my italics). Obviously, this kind of link only works for thoughts that are relatively close to each other in subject matter. At the other end of the spectrum, Molly is quite capable of noticeable changes of subject matter with little or no link at all: 'he meant the shoes that are too tight to walk in my hand is nice like that if I only had a ring...' (18.260-1). A subtle variation on this can be found when there appears to be nothing acting as a link between two thoughts, but on closer inspection the thoughts turn out to be linked thematically. The best example of this has already been quoted in another context, but will bear repetition:
'they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head' (18.1571-3).

The most important way Joyce gets between Molly's thoughts for us here, however, is perhaps a little unexpected: it is the word 'yes'. In the majority of instances, this word is used as a sort of self-confirmation, which then propels Molly onto her next thought. Ignoring for the moment the initial use, let us take the first five instances in the chapter and go through them. In each case, I will place 'yes' in italics:

1. …I suppose Id have to dring it into him for a month yes and then wed have a hospital nurse next thing on the carpet have him staying there till they throw him out…(18.19-21)
2. …like the smutty photo he has shes as much a nun as Im not yes because theyre so weak and puling when theyre sick… (18.22-3)
3. …of course the woman hides it not to give all the trouble they do yes he came somewhere Im sure by his appetite… (18.33-5)
4. …Hynes kept me who did I meet ah yes I met do you remember Menton… (18.38)
5. …if they only knew him as well as I do yes because the day before yesterday he was scribbling something… (18.45-7)

It will be seen that only number four is not a linking 'yes' of this kind, and that is because she is quoting Bloom's story to herself, including his 'ah yes'. The others all stand more or less between different thoughts, offering a form of psychological bridge between them. The most powerful example above is number three, where Molly's thoughts switch abruptly from women's ability to hide pain to Bloom's having had an orgasm earlier that day, with only the 'yes' in between. Interestingly, the 'yes' could be attached to either thought, functioning as a final, concluding sense of self-confirmation after the former, or as faintly incensed, self-assuring introduction to the latter. This kind of referential ambiguity is a common attribute of these linking yeses.

This is a point of considerable importance. Molly's yes, it seems, is an essential part of the grammar of the chapter, moving Molly between ideas, confirming prior thoughts and establishing new ones. It acts as a kind of punctuation, organising the flow of her mind with reference to a constant framework of affirmative gestures. 'Yes', it appears, is less something that Molly thinks, and more a way in which Molly thinks. If it is indeed true that Molly's 'yes' is a kind of verbal window onto her essential being, then this is how that rather abstract point plays out...
stylistically: 'yes' is quite literally the psychological bridge between her thoughts, the part of herself that gives her thought direction and energy.

At this point, I would like to draw together the four arguments I have presented thus far, and present them as a fully articulated interpretation of Molly's 'yes'. Thereafter, I will present one further subtlety of interpretation which might be fruitfully added to this picture.

I began by documenting the kinds of verbal patterning in Joyce's early work which are relevant here. By the end of *A Portrait*, I was able to characterise these patterns as a certain incantatory style, designed to significantly abridge the distance between character and reader. Stephen's thoughts cannot be neatly differentiated from the very words of the passage in question, which in their turn, thanks to their peculiarly hypnotic style, are not merely representative for us as readers, but an oddly incantatory manifestation of Stephen's creative processes. This I characterised, for shorthand, as the strange experience of thinking Stephen's thoughts after him.

Next, I argued that while many points of similarity can be found between these techniques and those of Molly's monologue, their contexts are as different as can be, both in terms of the characters in question, and the shift from third person narrative to first person. This indicated a significant reorientation of these techniques. I claimed that rather than giving us a way to get closer to Molly as they had with Stephen, they are being used to invoke the basic qualities of Molly's nature. The incantation, in this context, is intended to be an emanation from Molly's being, so that this chapter does more than simply represent Molly's nature, but gives us a much more tangible experience of that nature being verbally played out. Molly's 'yes' was then argued to be more than either the negative or positive phenomenon many critics have claimed it to be. As a stance of pure affirmation it is capable of affirming very dubious things as well as very beautiful things, and this complexity must be held in mind if we are to understand the patterns surrounding this word. Lastly, I characterised Molly's various yeses as the most important of several ways Joyce moves between Molly's thoughts, such that they function as a kind of organisational force, being not just something that Molly thinks, but a manner in which she thinks. Naturally, though I have treated these arguments separately and sequentially, they must be viewed cumulatively, as a composite portrait of Molly and her Yes.
One might try to bring the sheer scale of Joyce's achievement here into view by juxtaposing two previously-quoted statements. The first is O'Connor's keen sense of Joyce's method: 'at intervals the words were dropped in, like currants in a cake and a handful at a time, so that their presence would be felt rather than identified'. The second is Beckett's well-worn edict that Joyce's writing 'is not about something; it is that something itself'. O'Connor's feel for how this technique works was first rate: Molly's yes-patterns are a form of subtle incantation; and like those found in the monologue in 'An Encounter' or in Stephen's moments of introspection in A Portrait, they are tangible, in the sense that we tend in the first instance to feel them rather than contemplate them. The consequences of this were in turn well understood by Beckett, who was, of course, discussing what was then called Work in Progress, though the lesson can and should be applied in this context too. These incantatory patterns, with their peculiarly tangible effects, do not so much describe or represent something as become something, or manifest something. In the case of the old man in 'An Encounter' they manifest the perversion of his thought; in Stephen's case they manifest, among other things, the business of artistic creation; in Molly's monologue, they manifest not just what she thinks, but how she thinks, and so, in the end, the kind of being she is.

A Further Interpretive Subtlety

We might leave it there: such a conclusion is a useful and fairly self-contained employment of thematic stylistics. There are however a few observations we can make on top of this, using the above as our stylistic model for the chapter, as it were, and these are not only interesting in themselves, but provide indirect confirmation of the analysis upon which they depend. In particular, I recommend the worth of a study which I lack the space to include here, of the impact of the word 'yes' on the chapter's rhythm as a whole. Instead of such, I have chosen to include a shorter study of an equally intriguing phenomenon, concerning a verbal motif running through the rest of Ulysses.

I have already outlined some of the ways in which Joyce moves from one thought to another in Molly's monologue, the most important for our purposes being
that rather remarkable 'yes' link. The first kind of link I mentioned was the pure conjunction, as in 'either it was one of those night women if it was down there he was really and the hotel story he made up a pack of lies'. In my characterisation of the culmination of Molly's monologue at the beginning of this chapter I stressed that conjunctions play a vital role in bringing the narrative to a sense of climax. This suggests that these two words, 'yes' and 'and', share two crucial features: they are both organising principles of Molly's verbal flow, and they are both used much more frequently at the end of her monologue as a means of turning up the intensity of the prose.

The most interesting aspect of the increasing frequency of 'and' and 'yes' is the relationship between them: the combination 'yes and' appears fourteen times in this chapter, and with half that number occurring in the last 410 words we can once again see a marked increase in density as the chapter proceeds. The effect of this phrase is that the thought following it, here italicised, seems to flow directly from the nature of a 'yes':

…the old castle thousands of years old yes and those handsome Moors all in white… (18.1591-2)
…the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets… (18.1599-1600)
…the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall… (18.1603-4)
…I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes… (18.1605)
….say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me… (18.1606-7)
…he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad… (18.1608-9)

This is something of a turning point in the episode, as the links between thoughts become more intensely influenced by Molly's sense of affirmation than they have been hitherto. There is a potent sense of affirmative confidence to be found in introducing a new thought with the phrase 'yes and'. More explicitly than before, the transition from one thought to another is seen to be somehow motivated or caused by an escalating chain of affirmative sentiment.

However, an analysis of the phrase 'yes and' restricted to the final episode provides only half the story. The rest of the book provides an illuminating insight into the way these two words interact not by the way they are brought together, but
by the way they are not. Throughout the preceding seventeen episodes, with their 268 yeses, the two words are never once directly juxtaposed. More revealing still is the reason for this, for there is but one: they can never come together because all of the preceding chapters are narrated, and every time a character's speech brings these two words together the narrator's intrusion forces them apart. The first time this happens is in episode six: 'Yes, Mr Bloom said, and another thing' (6.405). Other examples include: 'Yes, Mrs Breen said. And a houseful of kids at home' (8.284) and 'Yes, says J.J., and every male that's born they think it may be their Messiah' (12.1646). It is not even true to say that the mere presence of a narrator precludes the 'yes' and the 'and' being brought together, for this could just as easily have read 'Yes and another thing, Mr Bloom said'. Instead, we must conclude that the peculiarly Joycean narrative style, which almost always intrudes to introduce the speaker after a single word, or at most a clause, is what prevents the combination of these two words.

This poses a question: what happens in episode fifteen, where the dramatised prose prevents such an intrusion? Here, 'yes' and 'and' are forced apart not by overt narratorial intervention, but by a more subtle variety. For though the scripted dialogue renders any mid-line introductions of speaker unnecessary, there is still the question of how the words of the characters, which are spoken, are represented in written text – and the answer is that this representation always separates the two words with a full stop, which definitively breaks the rhythm. For instance: 'Yes. And Molly was laughing' (15.570); or 'Indeed, yes. And at the same time' (15.4445); or 'Sister, yes. And on our virgin sward' (15.3346). Spoken language obviously does not include punctuation: this is the result of that language being put onto the written page, and therefore a function of the same narrative forces that broke apart the 'yes' and the 'and' in Bloom's speech.

That Joyce delayed bringing these words together until the last episode, and that within that episode he largely concentrated his use of 'yes and' into the final four-hundred or so words, is a decision that remains somewhat opaque to me. It seems to derive from narratological considerations, such that only when the distance between reader and character has been reduced by eliminating any intermediary consciousness can this grammar of affirmation begin to influence the flow of the text. Doubtless he wished to maintain the integrity and uniqueness of Molly's contribution.
to the novel. His memorable words, 'The last word (human, all too human) is left to Penelope. This is the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity' (*Letters* 1:160), seem to suggest some such motivation. Still, there seems to be more here, and further research on the subject would doubtless be worthwhile.

So much for the combination 'yes and', but what of 'and yes'? Here the results are more remarkable still. We can begin by pointing out that the 'and yes' at the end of the episode ('and yes I said yes I will Yes') is the only one in Molly's entire monologue. This is a most significant fact. Given the constant flow of Molly's mind, 'yes and' indicates that the following thought stems from the spirit of the word 'yes'; 'and yes' on the other hand indicates the opposite, namely that the preceding thoughts have at last given rise to a sense of pure affirmation (and indeed this is the last use of conjunction in the chapter). In this way Molly's thoughts end not just powerfully, but conclusively: the stream of her consciousness has not just ended in, but resulted or culminated in her final assent: 'and yes I said yes I will Yes'.

We can make this conclusion more intriguing still by looking through the rest of the book for instances of 'and yes', for, remarkably, we do so in vain: the only instance of this phrase in the whole novel is that last moment of Molly's monologue. Neither is this a function of narration: there are absolutely no examples of this phrase, whether broken in the middle by a full stop or not. In this sense, the clause that is affirmed by that final 'and yes' is in fact made up by the seventeen chapters that precede it: the vast panorama of Dublin life is presented, and finally tapers down to a single, simple, affirmation of that vast and complex experience.

Such are some of the considerations one might develop from the analysis of Molly's monologue I outlined above. Doubtless there is more to be gleaned, but this should suffice to give some depth to the interpretation of Molly's 'yes' I have advanced here.

*Thematic Stylistics, a Coda: Meta-Language, Atomisation, Prose Patterns and Free Indirect Style*

On introducing thematic stylistics I suggested that many of the techniques I would be discussing in this thesis could be usefully understood as various species of
free indirect style, while noting the homogenising problems associated with that term. I would now like to briefly draw together this thread of my analysis.

In chapter four I looked at two techniques which I called hypnotic prose patterns and logopoeia. Both, in their way, function as forms of free indirect style. The former infuses the syntactic patterns and lexical poverty of a character or mood into the narrative voice, while the latter restricts the semantic reference of certain key terms with reference to the thoughts and experiences of the characters in *Dubliners*. In chapter six I examined atomisation in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, and made clear that this very powerful method of limiting the narrative voice with reference to the perceptual limits of a character also functions as a potent form of free indirect style. Finally, in chapter eight I looked again at prose patterning, and made the case that it has the power to elide if not abolish the space between one of Joyce's characters' consciousness, the narrative voice, and indeed the reader's experience. While other sections of my thesis – from physical environments in *Dubliners* to atomisation in *Finnegans Wake* – have little or nothing to do with free indirect style, the four sections listed above deal consistently enough with this narratological force to deserve some sort of conclusion, however brief.

In her formidable work on fictional presentations of consciousness, *Transparent Minds*, Dorrit Cohn redeploys a term from Leo Spitzer to describe a particular dimension of Joyce's method: 'stylistic contagion' (33). This she uses, in reference to Stephen's villanelle in *A Portrait*, to 'designate places where psychonarration verges on the narrated monologue, marking a kind of mid-point between the two techniques where a reporting syntax is maintained, but where the idiom is strongly affected (or infected) with the mental idiom of the mind it renders' (33). I do not wish to borrow Cohn's term wholesale (I believe, for instance, that the analyses mentioned above do not leave room even for a 'reporting syntax'). However, the notion of contagion is a very fruitful one. Unlike the term free indirect style, it is not monolithic. It does not suggest a single method or technique, but rather a tendency, or a guiding principle. It captures the usefully vague sense that there are at least two stylistic systems at work at the same time, one being the 'host', the other the 'contaminant'. It also has the pleasing etymological resource of 'contāgio', meaning contact or touch. For these reasons, I would like to suggest stylistic contagion as a
good paradigm for viewing those parts of this thesis that deal with Joycean narratology.

When discussing prose patterns or logopoeia in *Dubliners* the idea of stylistic contagion is particularly useful, suggesting as it does that the prose has caught the characters' disease: it too is paralysed – syntactically, lexically, even semantically. Contagion also helps to make sense of atomisation as a species of free indirect style in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, as it suggests that the narrative has 'caught' the perceptual limitations of the characters. It is, in a way, 'touching' them, as it inhabits their position in thought, time and space. Finally, the remarkable prose patterns I studied in this last chapter are not only a species of 'contagious' writing inasmuch as they follow the very mental contours of the characters they describe; they are contagious in a more profound sense still, because they are contagious for *us*: they tend towards manifesting those characters' intensely linguistic experiences in the mind of the reader, who, in thinking the character's thoughts after them, has 'caught' their modes of thought in a very intimate manner.

Free indirect style, if understood as a very loose term indeed, can accommodate such diverse techniques as these. Still, we gain much by putting this convenient term to one side, and examining from scratch the technical subtleties it hides. Such an examination is, I repeat, far from the main project of this thesis. The success of thematic stylistics, however, is an integral part of my overall project, and by underlining its potential in specific areas – in this case in narratology – I hope to reinforce its plausibility as a useful analytical tool.
Conclusion

The aims of this thesis have been deliberately restricted, and conceptually fairly straightforward. The need for any substantial conclusion, therefore, is limited. Still, some measure of restatement in light of the completed arguments will no doubt be of use. I would also like to underline several possible misunderstandings of my basic claim, and suggest some slightly more speculative links between the nature of Theory and poor close reading which I have lacked the space to treat in any detail.

First, to attend to the inevitable possibilities for misunderstanding in dealing with issues as contentious as these, some prophylactic work will be in order. I do not here claim any of the following views for my own, and have defended none of them in this thesis: that Theory is weak, wrongheaded, or intellectually damaging in any general or intrinsic sense; that Theory is evil, or has any moral dimension whatsoever; that Theory has any problematic political dimensions whatsoever; that Theory should be in any sense abandoned as a project in literary studies; that the so-called New Criticism was in any way a golden period of literary study, or that it did not suffer at a general level from flaws comparable to those discussed here; that literary analysis can be 'simple', 'objective', 'neutral' or function without any theory (note the lower case 't') at all; that nothing of use has come from Theory; or that Joyce scholars have been more or less capable of combining Theory and close reading than scholars in any other field.

Naturally, for a detailed exposition of my claims, readers should return to my first two chapters. The following summary deliberately lacks any methodological detail, and is intended solely as a means of drawing together my threads now the dust has settled. Throughout, the distinction between 'theory', which denotes only 'a manner of reading' (and which we all possess) and 'Theory', which denotes the kind of post-sixties intellectual trends I have been examining here, is assumed.

Theory being an entity of colossal intellectual breadth, it can exist and be developed outside of any discussion of particular literary texts. Major Theorists tend to be interdisciplinary in their scope, bringing work on philosophy, politics, history, linguistics, gender, and many other disciplines besides to their treatment of literary texts. Theory also has the capacity to make claims the scope of which reaches well
outside the academy, and indeed some Theorists (and one cannot help looking to Derrida here) have become cultural icons. All this goes to demonstrate a fairly obvious truth, which is that Theory is much more than a system of close reading, and that much of its intellectual scope is to be found outside of that restricted activity.

The question must be then be posed as to what happens when this colossal intellectual movement, or more appropriately a particular slice of it, is brought to bear on a specific moment of close reading. How do these two very different things interact? We can now, I hope, afford to make this question a little less generalised, and a little more tangible, to which end it might be posed in the following manner: if one has spent a good deal of one's time studying Lacanian theories of sexuality, with all the work on psychology, linguistics, philosophy and gender studies that entails, and if one has finally mastered this intellectual labyrinth enough to effectively navigate it in one's own manner, and if, finally, one is then presented with a chunk of *Ulysses* and told to analyse it with reference to one's specialisation, what is likely to happen?

Note the probabilistic thrust of this question. It might happen, of course, that such vast erudition is promptly combined with a comparable knowledge of Joyce and his style, and that the resulting interdisciplinary feast compromises standards in neither of its parent disciplines while achieving a new and valuable renegotiation of both Lacan and Joyce. No doubt this has happened many times in the last few decades. Still, another possibility must be countenanced. It might happen that such huge investment in the nuances of Lacanian thought, investment in terms of both time and intellectual space, would lead the analyst to sacrifice the integrity of their approach to Joyce. Rather than attempt to do *Ulysses* full justice as an entity in its own right, they might cherry pick elements of it that work well in this Lacanian framework, and, working them together, produce something of great import as far as their negotiation of post-Freudian psychoanalysis is concerned, but fail to produce an equally coherent reading of Joyce. Simply, the huge conceptual burdens of such an analysis might obscure the need to do full justice to one's primary text, which could in turn become little more than a springboard for an intellectual project which no longer takes that text as its principal focus.
This final framing of the problem is deliberately anecdotal. Discussing these as abstract, probabilistic issues is necessary for proper evaluative balance, but has its problems, too. One of these is that it can make the thinkers one criticises into little more than data points on some graph of intellectual sin, with little sense of how such unfortunate practices might develop in the real world. To state the excruciatingly obvious, no one wants to publish erroneous readings of great literature, but academic contexts can be furnished which have the capacity to produce them nonetheless.

In treating this issue via a proof-approach I hope to have contributed a very particular point of view to the debate. The question of the actual interaction of Theory and close reading is not, I emphasise, one that I believe we can answer in the abstract. If we acknowledge the possibility that combining Theory and close reading can go very right and very wrong, it is simply no good continuing to deal in possibilities. Piling up conjecture, referencing isolated instances of strong theoretical close readings, or making guesses based on the general nature of either Theory or close reading – none of this will get us anywhere, or convince anyone to change their mind. Equally, and this is really important, suggesting that there is no intrinsic conflict between Theory and the best literary analysis is to say something in equal parts obviously true and obviously useless. Of course Theory can be used to inform excellent literary analysis. The question is rather this: has it been so used, what does this tell us about what tends to happen when this project is attempted, and how can we respond to this? My own answers to all three questions will no longer bear repeating; instead let me restate my desire for this thesis to be part of a collaborative reassessment of Theory along proof-approach lines. I have done my best to maximise the relevance, applicability and generalisability of my studies here. Naturally, this has not been enough to consider the case closed. If we can consider the case definitively opened, however, I will have done enough.

Finally, let me suggest four general ways in which I have perceived Theory to have a negative impact on close reading. These are offered as an afterthought, because they are not the kind of claim I am in a position to demonstrate securely. They are not intended to be a diagnosis, rather a helpful suggestion of the ways in which I have perceived others going wrong, in the hope that these traps be avoided. They are tentative, and generalising, being based solely on my sense of some of the
trends in the more problematic literature I have read. Should they prove to be inadequate, or unhelpful, they can be safely discarded with little consequence.

Number one: over-extension of a limited thesis. Theory tends towards the general rather than the specific, and it seems to me that this encourages a similar trend in claims about literature. Theorists will tend to move from a limited set of evidence (say, a line, passage, or chapter) to a very general conclusion (about a novel, collection, oeuvre or style in general), and this move can have disastrous consequences. In the worst cases, Theorists will make a fairly convincing analysis of a very specific text or part thereof, and then, not content with this modest claim, seek to make the same analysis apply to a much larger target, which fails to support it in the slightest. Perhaps Theorists, who spend so much time dealing with fundamental abstractions, are uncomfortable with making very specific, localised claims, and will naturally seek to extend them into more foundational assertions about the 'nature' of a whole text or a whole author. For examples of this, one might turn to MaCabe's analysis of meta-language in *Dubliners* (chapter three), or van Boheemen's claim about the circularity of all of Joyce's major works (chapter five). Both, it seems to me, have begun with a claim that is clearly applicable to *Finnegans Wake*. In that book it is indeed hard to isolate a meta-language, and we are obviously dealing with something circular in nature. Neither critic, it seems, was happy with these fairly straightforward analyses, and both sought to make them more exciting via extension, the results of which are dealt with in the relevant chapters.

Number two: exegetical mania. Theorists are very used to digging up the latent significance of things that are supposed to be 'neutral' or 'unimportant'. As soon as any pretence of objectivity or straightforwardness is offered, they can often have great fun exposing the hidden biases and agendas therein. Doubtless this process of sceptical exegesis has often proven invaluable. Still, it can lead to interpretive problems. If any statement, no matter how plain, can mask a problematic discourse, then one risks building one's analysis on a series of suspicions and extrapolations, which sooner or later will come into conflict with a more robust reading. Examples of this are littered throughout this thesis. For two convenient instances, see Leonard's discussion of 'Haines's voice said' (chapter five), or Lamos, Showalter and Veeder's combined speculations on the etymology of 'queer' (chapter
two). In Leonard's case the phrase in question was taken to be a vestige of all sorts of imperial mind-control, when a less suspicious approach would have led him to a stylistic interpretation of considerable breadth and strength. In the case of the word 'queer', it seems to me that these critics were not happy with the idea that this word, so latent with potential for Theoretical excavation, meant nothing more than 'odd' in this context. In both cases, the need for a deeper, more Theoretically-congenial significance to be lying under the surface meaning led to serious interpretive difficulties.

Number three: associative mania. This is linked to exegetical mania. Theorists tend to be trained to see the links between things others do not, to apply frameworks and methodologies others would not consider, and to notice similarities between ostensibly disparate things or ideas. This is doubtless a useful set of skills, but it can lead to Theorists seeing links where there are none, and combining ideas that really are distinct. Often one gets a sense of an argument built along a chain of mental connections between ideas or entities which, while related in the most general terms, are not close enough in any of their specifics to provide much argumentative force. For examples of this see the Chinese Whispers problem in Cixous (chapter three), or Spoo's discussion of Amor Matris in Ulysses (chapter five).

Number four: poor use of secondary sources. Theory being so interdisciplinary, one might expect Theorists to be experts in using the work of others in an intelligent and respectful manner. Oddly, this is not so, in my experience. I confess I struggle to explain this, but I can offer a speculation. It may be that Theorists are so concerned to locate their thesis in a Theoretical tradition, and perhaps to align themselves with the key texts of their discipline, that they sometimes reference, say, Freud or Marx in a situation which is only tenuously appropriate. For examples of this, see Norris's reference to Freud (chapter five) or Cixous's use of Mallarmé (chapter three).

I would like to conclude by returning to and underlining those even-numbered chapters in which, by espousing thematic stylistics, I have tried to give as much cause for hope as for gloom. Doubtless, ending a largely negative thesis on a positive note would seem rather false. Still, my aim has not been to score points, poke fun or fault the work of others without reason. I aim to contribute to the
continual process of internal scrutiny, and as such, my goals are in the end constructive.
Appendix: List of Bloated Conclusions in 'Joyce, la ruse de l'écriture'

Chinese Whispers

i. In the discussion of 'I had thought his words idle' we find the following parenthetical glide: 'idle, vide – puis vain, sans fond; manquant; manquant d'occupation; inoccupé → ne travaillant pas'. (427)

ii. From the narrator's fearful standing outside the window we get the following meditation on his repressed desire: 'je ne peux pas le voir parce qu'il n'est pas mort, parce qu'il va mourir. S'il était mort je pourrais le voir; quand il sera mort, je le verrai; je veux qu'il meure pour le regarder; je veux qu'il meure' (428). Amusingly, Cixous then comments 'That is not said' (Cela ne se dit pas).

iii. From the same twosome of the boy's gaze and the closed window we get the following: 'opposition de cet œil, qui veut moins voir que savoir, avec blind (le store, la jalousie, l'aveuglement) lumière mais aussi cécité; rapport symbolique immédiat avec la vie qui s'éteint, la mort qui va venir; au-delà avec l'interdit, le regard sur la mort; et au-delà avec la zone où se joue l'aveuglement et la castration' (429). Particularly noteworthy is that final stream, taking us from a 'symbolic relationship with the fading life' to the 'zone where blinding and castration are at play'.

iv. The following speaks for itself: 'Its deadly work : son œuvre de mort. Ainsi c'est le nom qui tue : empire du signifiant qui va s'étendre par la suite jusqu'à produire Finnegans Wake en se jouant à l'infini du contrôle consciencieux du scripteur. Mot maître de ses grammes autofécondant par l'introduction dans son corps de la lettre L, qui lui donne pour dimension l'infini concret, word, world, work, lapsus à la source d'Ulysses, égairement comique du signifié qu'appelait le scripteur dès l'ouverture, en Dubliners, du lieu de la jouissance dans la région du sacré' (430). I for one find particularly startling the stage at which the word 'word' is self-inseminated by the introduction of the letter L into its body (autofécondant par l'introduction dans son corps de la lettre L).

Emotive Terms

i. In 'There was' Cixous claims that the impersonal is 'announced' (s'annonçant – 426)

ii. The word paralysis is said to 'inscribe' (inscrit) various things, especially on p.426.

iii. 'No' also 'triggers off' (déclenche – 427) the play between being and non-being.

iv. The desire expressed in 'I longed' articulates (articulés – 427), it transpires, space and time.

v. Breaking down the phrase 'It was vacation time' Cixous gives us 'it : neutre; was : état exposé; vacation : vide; time. Neutre, vide, état, temps' (428).

vi. A subtler example can found in the following: 'Square of window : le carré lumineux dit le miroir; les bougies cachées; le désirable (l'anéantissemement) barré'. How much less plausible this all becomes if we replace the subtly emotive 'speaks of' (dit) with the colder 'indicates'.
**Charged Theoretical Vocabulary**

i. Of the phrase 'I said softly to myself the word paralysis' we read: 'Le sujet <<dit>> seulement le mot, les yeux tournés vers le carré de lumière. Le mot et la maladie : un couple dangereux si l'on découvre que le signifié investit le significant en réalité, le nom de la maladie étant la maladie dans son efficacité...' (428). Again the distinction between signified and signifier is doing a suspicious amount of work here, and we can ask the same question as before: does this go for all signifieds and signifiers? If so then the relevance is unclear; if not, then why for this particular word?

ii. Having observed the three words 'gnomon', 'simony' and 'catechism' Cixous gives us the following: 'Soit trois modes d'échange, d'information, un niveau d'un savoir qui se donne comme absolu et révélé, mais qui échappe au sujet, lequel ne les reprend que par l'écoute, d'où le déplacement du pouvoir de l'esprit à la lettre' (429-30). Notice in particular the function of the the words 'modes', 'savoir...qui échappe le sujet', and 'déplacement du pouvoir de l'esprit à la lettre'.

iii. On the narrative form in relation the those same three words: 'Impossible pour le narrateur se constituer comme unité imaginaire en prenant son assurance dans la langage qui échappe à la maitrise...' (429). The very idea of the narrator needing to constitute himself as an imaginary unity is, I think, imported exclusively to dwell on yet another Theoretical idea, that of language escaping mastery. Again, this seems like very neutral, descriptive language, while in fact it is importing needs and crises otherwise absent from the text.

**Begging the Question**

i. 'Qui parle : I, it, I, I, Je, Il neutre. Brèche du sujet au cœur de la texte, mais : en quel temps reculé plus-que-fini, et désignant sa propre fin. Où l'énonciation s'enroule, ce-sujet-là (him) ne parle pas. Il reste objet muet...' (427) Notice the way that Cixous begins with fairly unambiguous description, and ends with what seems a reasonable observation of the priest's silence. It would be easy to miss the strange conjurations concerning more-than-finite time that take place in between.

ii. Here are Cixous's thoughts on Joyce's '(it was vacation time)': '(vacation time, temps vacant), temps sans travail. Signe d'un mouvement de dénégation, d'excuse, soudain fléchissement du discours, indice de la mauvaise conscience qui est la source du texte et des...et des silences, et des équivoques qui constituent le <<mauvais>> tour du discours du prêtre' (428). The final thought, that certain ambiguities in the priest's manner form the darker side of the story, seems plausible enough. The route taken to it, with its great list of inventive extrapolations, does not.

iii. 'Le jeu évident de la lumière et l'ombre est mis en question par le trouble du texte, vacillant, comme tous les couples logiques qui fonctionnent en insubordination, dans la marge grise du doute (vie/mort, espoir/crainte, vrai/vide)' (427). That these pairs of words are indeed relevant to the story is of course true; yet the obviousness of this point only disguises its bizarre preamble. Particularly worth questioning are the grand metaphysical speculations on logical pairs functioning in an insubordinate manner.
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274


