

# Object Lessons: Joyce and Things

Alberto Tondello

Submitted for the award of PhD

Dept. of English Language and Literature

UCL

I, Alberto Tondello, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated.

## Abstract

My research project, *Object Lessons: Joyce and Things*, looks at the variety of everyday objects portrayed in James Joyce's works to show how their perception inflects the cognitive and emotional states of both his fictional characters and his readers. At the intersection of philosophical posthumanism, ecology, and literary studies, my thesis analyzes Joyce's works through the lens of such contemporary theories as "Thing Theory", "situated cognition", "waste studies", and "Actor-Network Theory" in order to consider their ability to expose the entanglement between the human subject and non-living entities. Deploying a panoply of approaches to the mundane material things of daily life—which are parsed under such categories as symbols, commodities, stuff, waste, and the substance of art—Joyce's texts investigate and redefine collaborations and dissonances between human and nonhuman agents. Such enquiry is rendered compelling by Joyce's treatment of language, the radical departures of his styles reshaping our conception of what it means to enter into contact with everyday objects.

My work develops along two interlinked axes. On the one hand, it analyzes selected passages from Joyce's texts to explore how things as common as a clock, a collection of diary entries, a rusty boot, and a handkerchief are represented and instigate interaction with human characters. On the other hand, it considers how language itself acquires density, becoming an object amongst objects with a particular texture and qualities liable to provide new ways of engaging with the unobtrusive, often unnoticed stuff of the world. Taking a chronological approach to Joyce's oeuvre, the project follows the evolution of the key concept of "epiphany" in Joyce's body of work. Initially focusing on the achievement of a single moment of revelation, and later

highlighting the multiple relations and correspondences between subjects and objects, the epiphany appears as a mediating link able to chronicle sympathies and hostilities between a subject and its material environment.

## Impact Statement

This interdisciplinary thesis is the first extended study to consider the depiction of inanimate entities in the works of James Joyce. As it reads Joyce's oeuvre through the lenses of contemporary theories such as "Thing Theory", "situated cognition", "waste studies", and "Actor-Network Theory", it is one of the few works marrying Joycean criticism and material ecocriticism. Within the academic context, my approach furthers scholarly understanding in important ways. Framed by the Joycean concept of epiphany, the project revisits this key idea and offers a new understanding of some of Joyce's writing practices. As it puts forward an ambitious set of philosophical reflections on language and the power it has to make us see objects anew, my thesis challenges the vision of objects in literary works as mere backdrop to human actions. In so doing, it highlights the role that material entities play in narrative development and in the mental and emotional processes of human subjects.

My research has the potential to have important ramifications beyond the academic context. In its analysis of Joyce's oeuvre, my work raises significant questions concerning the mutual dependency and interconnection between human and nonhuman entities. Marrying Joyce's works and contemporary theories, my project shows material things to be productive forces contributing to the cognitive and emotional states of subjects, and claims that human subjects should be seen as part of a broader network of entities. These philosophical reflections are particularly topical given the current struggle to positively engage with material things and broader environments, and can initiate a wider reflection on the importance to relate in more harmonious and cooperative ways with living and non-living beings.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	09
List of Illustrations	11
List of Abbreviations	12
Introduction	13
Objects of Modernism	15
Transcending Triviality	21
Turns Towards the Nonhuman	27
Chapter Outline	31
Chapter 1 Part 1: Theory and Practice of Epiphany	36
The Significance of Trivial Things	38
Epiphanies as Collection	43
A Mutual Interaction between Subject and Object	46
The Effect of the Epiphany on the Object and the Subject	51
The Epiphany of Epiphanies: The Thingness of Object-Epiphanies	58
The Material Sensitivity of Epiphanies	61
Chapter 1 Part 2: Words as Things	66
The Value of Words	66
Words as Receptacles: Etymology and the Thingness of Words	68
Relation and Ratio as Rhythm	74
Lyrical Epiphanies as “Memorable Phases of the Mind”	76

Chapter 2: From <i>Stephen Hero</i> to <i>A Portrait</i>	86
A Subjectivity Based on the Theory of Epiphany	86
An Evolving Concept of Subjectivity	87
From the Inward Turn to the Extended Mind	91
Visions of Mind in <i>A Portrait</i>	98
The Material Language of <i>A Portrait</i>	103
Words Inscribed	114
Stephen's Compositions to E.C.	116
The Diary Entries	123
Chapter 3 Part 1: <i>Ulysses</i> and the Waste Material of "Proteus"	128
Epiphanies Criticized and Remodelled	128
The Hybridity of Decaying Matter	139
Corpses and Human Shells: Difficult Boundaries between Entities	142
Natural and Linguistic Hybridity	146
"Quasi-Objects" and "Quasi-Subjects"	151
The Middle Ground of Signatures	157
Chapter 3 Part 2: <i>Ulysses</i> and its Networks of Banal Objects	160
Banality, Naturalism, Symbolism	162
Parallax	175
Circean Hallucinations	184
Ventriloquism and Distributed Agency	191
From Hallucinations to the Imperfection of Scientific Precision	196
Relationality in Phenomena	204

Actor-Network Theory and Banal Objects	208
Chapter 4: <i>Finnegans Wake</i> and Correspondences	214
Epiphany and Correspondences	214
The Language of the <i>Wake</i>	221
Material Words	226
The Growth of Waste-Language	230
The case of the Fluviana as Paratext to the <i>Wake</i>	234
A Revolution beyond Polar Opposites	238
Conclusion	243
Bibliography	249

## **Acknowledgments**

I am deeply grateful to Scarlett Baron for being such an exceptional supervisor. Her meticulous feedback, generous support, and wise counsel helped the project develop as much as it helped me grow as a researcher and a person.

A huge thank you to my secondary supervisor Matthew Sperling for the useful comments on the thesis, and to the rest of the English department at UCL for providing an excellent research environment. In particular, my gratitude goes to Eric Langley and Helen Hackett for their exceptional work as graduate tutors, and to all the members of staff who provided feedback on the thesis at various stages: Hugh Stevens, Julia Jordan, John Mullan, Eric Langley, and Helen Hackett.

I am thankful to LAHP for the generous grant which made this research possible, and to the Dublin James Joyce Summer School, the Trieste James Joyce Summer School, the James Joyce Italian Foundation, and the Zurich James Joyce Foundation for the research grants issued during my PhD. A massive thank you goes to Fritz Senn and the team of the Zurich Foundation—Frances Ilmberger, Ruth Frehner, and Ursula Zeller—for providing an incredibly welcoming environment during my stay. Thank you to the rest of the Joyce community around the world, for being such a friendly and supportive bunch.

I feel extremely lucky to be surrounded by loving and supporting friends. Thank you in particular to Arianna Autieri, Lino Breda, Ruth Bookbinder, Harry Chancellor, Emma Chiplin, Paola Colzani, Denise Fasolato, Valentina Faggin, Zoe Fletcher, Andrea Furlan, Stephen Hills, Lissy Moore, Niall Ó Cuileagáin, Heidi Pointet, Xander Ryan, Francesca Romanato, Manon Rowlands, Anna Tranberg, Anthony Walker-Cook, Savannah Whaley, Nicolás Zaggia, Sophia Zacharaki for sharing literary and non-

literary conversations, lunches and coffee breaks, aperos and cooking sessions, days in the park and evenings at the theatre, and for making sure I maintained a good life-work balance during my PhD. Thanks to family, in particular to my cousin Victoria and my brothers Pietro and Marco. A special thank you to my parents Cristina and Silvio, for having taught me the importance and beauty of learning, and for showing constant interest in my research. Last but not least, a huge thank you to Gaëtan, for having supported me every step of the way with wise words, comfort, and affection.

## List of Illustrations

**Fig.1.** FLUVIANA: Courtesy James Joyce (Photo Fisher, Salzburg), in *transition*, No. 16-17 (Spring/Summer 1929), reproduced from the Bibiothèque National de France website. 234

**Fig.2.** FLUVIANA: Courtesy James Joyce (Photo Fisher, Salzburg), in *transition*, No. 16-17 (Spring/Summer 1929), reproduced from the Bibiothèque National de France website. 234

**Fig.3.** Cover illustration of *transition*, No.26 (Winter 1937) featuring Machel Duchamp's *Comb* (1916). 245

## List of Abbreviations

The following citational abbreviations are used for works by Joyce:

*FW Finnegans Wake*, ed. Robert-Jan Henkes, Erik Bindervoet (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2012). References are given parenthetically in the text in the following form: *FW* page number: line number.

*L1 Letters of James Joyce*, Vol.1, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber and Faber, 1957).

*L2 Letters of James Joyce*, Vol.2, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).

*OCPW Occasional, Critical, and Political Writings*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000).

*P A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000).

*PSW Poems and Shorter Writings*, ed. Richard Ellmann, K. Walton Litz, and Joh Whittier-Ferguson (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).

*SH Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (1944), revd edn incorporating additional manuscript pages from Yale and Cornell University libraries, ed. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1969).

*SL Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

*U Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (New York: Random House, 1986). References are given parenthetically in the text in the following form: *U* episode number: line number.

## Introduction

Writing about *Ulysses* in *Time and Western Man* (1927), Wyndham Lewis vividly describes the experience of reading Joyce's masterpiece, which he compares to venturing "inside an Aladdin's cave of incredible bric-à-brac in which a dense mass of dead stuff is collected, from 1901 toothpaste, a bar or two of Sweet Rosie O'Grady, to pre-nordic architecture. An immense nature-morte is the result".<sup>1</sup> This "amount of stuff" or "unorganised brute material" has for Lewis the effect of slowing down "the more active principle of drama" and results in "a suffocating, moeotic expanse of objects, all of them lifeless, the sewage of a Past twenty years old, all neatly arranged in a meticulous sequence".<sup>2</sup> Lewis's critical assessment reflects the encyclopaedic character of a novel which strives to include not only a great number of references to science, literature and music, but also, as Lewis points out, a gargantuan amount of stuff.<sup>3</sup> The list of objects scattered throughout the novel is undoubtedly long, and takes explicit textual form in many passages of the book—notably, the forty-nine lines enumerating the contents of Leopold Bloom's drawers in "Ithaca" (*U* 17.1775-1823). However, while Lewis's description manages to convey the sheer quantity of things which appear in *Ulysses*, the emphasis he places on their lifeless and asphyxiating character overlooks the dynamism of the object world as presented in the novel.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man* (Michigan: Black Sparrow Press, 1927), pp.107-8.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, pp.107-8.

<sup>3</sup> For accounts on the encyclopaedic character of Joyce's works, see Leo Bersani's "Encyclopaedic Fictions" in *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), Umberto Eco's "Joyce, Semiosis, and Semiotics", in *The Languages of James Joyce*, ed. Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, Carla Marengo, Christine Van Boheeme (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1992), Paul K. Saint-Amour's *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), and the special issue of *The James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.55, No.1-2 (Fall, 2017/Winter, 2018) titled "Encyclopedia Joyce".

This project aims to show how material things in Joyce's oeuvre can be thought as a key aspect of narration. Retracing the depiction and treatment of objects from Joyce's early writings to his final work, it explores the ways in which they inflect the cognitive and emotional states of fictional characters and readers.<sup>4</sup> Appearing as symbols, commodities, waste material, and the substance of art, the objects that Joyce includes in his works are far from being a mere heap of stuff whose effect is to hinder an otherwise fluid narrative development. Described with meticulous precision or simply enumerated as part of a longer list, discarded as useless or cherished as talismans, encountered fortuitously or intentionally scrutinized: in all their manifold variety Joyce's things play an integral role in the articulation of the aesthetic ideas, theories of perception, and practices of representation which define his oeuvre.

In *Stephen Hero*, a clock glimpsed in the streets of Dublin triggers the main character to think about the perception of things and their potential to provide the matter of art. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the protagonist's encounters with written inscriptions modify conceptions of previous actions and behaviours. In *Ulysses*, a shipwreck on the shore confronts Stephen Dedalus with the imbrication of living and non-living bodies, breaking down the standard epistemological binaries between subject and object. Throughout the novel, everyday objects such as a handkerchief, a potato, and a chamber pot oscillate between naturalistic description and symbolic potential, thus creating a new texture of represented reality. During the time of composition of *Finnegans Wake*, a series of driftwood objects known as

---

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the project, the words "objects" and "things" will be employed interchangeably. However, there will be moments in which the two terms will follow the distinction made by Bill Brown in "Thing Theory", *Critical Enquiry*, Vol.28, No.1 (Autumn, 2001), 1-22. Such occurrences will be specified in the text.

“Fluviana” work as a visual paratext to Joyce’s final oeuvre as they present similar ideas fostered throughout the *Wake*.

## **Objects of Modernism**

The twentieth century was marked by the presence of a growing number of mass-produced objects in increasingly dense urban landscapes. Sean Latham suggests that “the experience of modernity [...] becomes defined precisely by the experience of things: the tidal wave of objects, commodities, street signs, maps, headlines, stories, pubs, and even garbage that define nearly each moment of urban life”.<sup>5</sup> From the early twentieth century, the ubiquitous presence of objects led to a rise in systematic thinking about them, as is perhaps emblemized by the works of Walter Benjamin. Delving into the defining characteristics and consequences of mass culture, Benjamin drew together philosophy, cultural and economic theory, history, and aesthetics in his exploration of the object world.<sup>6</sup> The changing material conditions of daily life had clear repercussions in literary representation. In *Everyday Life*, Michael Sheringham considers the impact that “the rise of consumerism in the second half of the nineteenth century” had on fiction, arguing that “the vogue for the inventory and the catalogue in fiction [...] at the expense of plot and character, reflects a fascination with the profusion of objects in modern life, and the new logics of circulation, exchange, and reproduction that these engendered”.<sup>7</sup> In a similar way, Janell Watson contends that “many fin-de-siècle texts challenge” the idea that “persons and events should be

---

<sup>5</sup> Sean Latham, *Joyce’s Modernism, Joyce Studies 2004*, Issue 17 (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2005) pp.15-16.

<sup>6</sup> As Douglas Mao points out, “perhaps no other writer has articulated the claim of the object on the modern subject with greater precision and candor than Benjamin” (Douglas Mao, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p.5).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.62-3.

privileged over things and descriptions”.<sup>8</sup> As objects “multiply and proliferate in the marketplace”, the “literary object [...] multiplies and proliferates in the text”.<sup>9</sup>

The idea that modernity is somehow “defined precisely by the experience of things” finds resonance in Joyce’s letters, which often betray a fascination with objects and material conditions. Featuring precise accounts of expenses, lists of desired and admired objects, and detailed descriptions of rooms, such letters give evidence not only of Joyce’s worries for his often erratic financial situation and “spendthrift habits”, but also of his interest in mundane things and engagement with mass culture and mass-produced objects.<sup>10</sup> Writing from Rome on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1906, Joyce confesses to his brother Stanislaus the request he has made of Aunt Josephine for a rather peculiar Christmas present. “I have written to A.J. asking her [...] to send me a Xmas present made up of tram-tickets, advts, handbills, posters, papers, programmes &c. I would like to have a map of Dublin on my wall. I suppose I am becoming something of a maniac”.<sup>11</sup> The letter gives a first glimpse of the importance of material things—textual objects in particular—in Joyce’s compositional process. From the start, he seems to have been intent on carefully documenting the material condition of

---

<sup>8</sup> Janell Watson, *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Watson, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> See Joyce’s letter to Nora Barnacle dated 29 August 1904, where he complains that his “home was simply a middle-class affair ruined by spendthrift habits I have inherited” (*SL*, 23). In a letter dated 6 December 1902, Joyce tells his family about his new daily life in Paris. Starting with the latest news about his publication projects and the lectures’ organization at the Sorbonne, Joyce goes on to describe his expenses—“I bought an alarm-clock (4 francs) to waken me in time in the morning [...] I can get breakfast for 3d, dejeuner (soup, meat, dessert, coffee) for 8d or 9d and dinner (soup, fish meat and vegetables, dessert, coffee) for 1s/-.”—and ends the letter with the description of “magnificent Norman furniture in a shop here — heavy wooden presses with panelled doors — 5£ for one twice as big as your wardrobe” (*Selected Letters*, pp.9-10). On the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1903 Joyce writes to his brother Stanislaus: “O, I have revelled in ties, coats, boots, hats since I came here—all imaginary” (*SL*, 14). On the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1903 he lists his recent expenses to his father: “I bought a store, a saucepan, a plate, a cup, a saucer, a knife, a fork, a small spoon, a big spoon, a bowl, salt, sugar, figs, macaroni, cocoa &c” (*SL*, 15).

<sup>11</sup> *L2*, 186. (Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 6 November 1906).

Dublin. One of the ways to achieve a precision of detail while away from Ireland was to collect everyday objects in circulation in the Hibernian metropolis, ordinary things that could encapsulate how life in the Irish capital was organized.<sup>12</sup> Joyce's suspicion that he might be "becoming something of a maniac" is suggestive of his almost obsessive striving for precision in the rendition of reality. As Richard Ellmann points out, "his care in ensuring the accuracy of unimportant details argues a love for them which may seem immoderate even in our documentary age".<sup>13</sup> Joyce's precision was particularly admired by Ezra Pound. Confessing that "Mr. Joyce writes the sort of prose I should like to write were I a prose writer", Pound points out that Joyce "writes with a clear hardness, accepting all things, defining all things in clear outline".<sup>14</sup> While the meticulous precision and hoarding disposition shown in his writings might easily lead to the "immense nature-morte [of] unorganized brute material" described by Lewis, Joyce's accuracy does not amount to a dry and lifeless recording of objects.

In stark contrast with Lewis's assessment of *Ulysses*, in *Axel's Castle* (1931) Edmund Wilson underlines the liveliness of Joyce's representation of the material world in his work. According to Wilson,

like Proust's or Whitehead's or Einstein's world, Joyce's world is always changing as it is perceived by different observers and by them at different times. It is an organism made up of 'events' [...] events which make up a 'continuum', but which may be taken as infinitely small. Joyce has built out of these events a picture, amazingly lifelike and living, of the everyday world we know—and a picture which seems to allow us to see into it, to follow its variations and intricacies, as we have never been able to do before.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> L2, 134.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Ellmann, "The Limits of Joyce's Naturalism", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.63, No.4 (October-December 1955), p.567.

<sup>14</sup> Ezra Pound, *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), p.32.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p.178.

Emphasizing the vitality of minute details in constant motion, Wilson's account associates Joyce with those new perspectives on reality which were emerging as ramifications of early twentieth-century scientific discoveries. As Kelly Elizabeth Sultzbach points out, thanks to new studies in physics and biology, "older, prepackaged ways of knowing the world were dismissed in favor of the destabilizing processes of flux".<sup>16</sup> For instance, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (1905) and Niels Bohr's development of quantum theory (1900-1926) allowed material entities to be examined in greater depth, and for scientists to uncover the constant and chaotic movement of the smallest atoms.<sup>17</sup> Research in the realm of social sciences similarly stressed the fluidity of the processes of the human mind and its perceptions. William James's *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) presented thinking as a flowing stream, the processual philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead portrayed subjects and objects as "processes of becoming"; and the vitalism of Henri Bergson drew attention to duration and change.<sup>18</sup> In line with these new theories, Joyce's representation of the

---

<sup>16</sup> Kelly Elizabeth Sultzbach, *Ecocriticism in the Modernist Imagination: Foster, Woolf, and Auden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.4.

<sup>17</sup> According to Thomas Jackson Rice, Einstein's theories brought forward the idea that "all objects in the phenomenal universe are in various degrees of motion, and all objects move at (vastly) slower speeds than this absolute speed of light. Thus, any measurement we might make of space or of time is *relative* to the degree of our movement." (Thomas Jackson Rice, *Joyce, Chaos and Complexity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), p.148). Katherine Hayles points out that "in marked contrast to the atomistic Newtonian idea of reality, in which physical objects are discrete and events are capable of occurring independently of one another and the observer, a field view of reality pictures objects, events, and observer as belonging inextricably to the same field; the disposition of each, in this view, is influenced—sometimes dramatically, sometimes subtly, but in every instance—by the disposition of the others" (Katherine Hayles, *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models & Literary Strategies in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp.9-10). In line with these ideas, Mark Osteen remarks that the reality which Joyce depicts "is not the stable, secure one of many nineteenth-century fictions; it is a world constantly transforming itself" (Mark Osteen, *The Economy of 'Ulysses'* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p.78).

<sup>18</sup> See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (London: MacMillan, 1891); Alfred North Whitehead *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Humanities Press, 1929); and Henri Bergson *Évolution Créatrice* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907). As Steven Shaviro remarks, in *Process and Reality* (1929) Whitehead considers the world as "composed of processes, not things [...] the process encompasses both sides of the bifurcation of nature: it applies equally to what I apprehend and to the manner in which I apprehend it. I am not a subject confronting [...] an object-world that lies outside of me, for both 'subjects' and 'objects' are themselves

details of everyday life is not static but processual. While it “defin[es] all things in clear outlines”, as Pound contends, it also reflects an interest in theories of perception and explore the “variations and intricacies” in play in the encounter between subjects and objects.<sup>19</sup>

Joyce is invested not simply in producing a faithful representation of reality, but also in the conversion of “the daily bread of life into something that has a permanent life of its own”—as Stephen Dedalus imagines himself doing at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.<sup>20</sup> His attention to physical details is part of his project of aestheticizing the ordinary and elevating it above the prosaic through the medium of art.<sup>21</sup> If *Ulysses*, as Evan Horowitz claims, is “the meeting-place of the mundane and the transcendent”, this encounter is underway from the very beginning of Joyce’s writing career.<sup>22</sup> According to Saikat Majumdar, “in Joyce’s fiction, the banality of daily life and the desire for aesthetic transcendence are not so much polarized as held in mutually enabling dialectic”.<sup>23</sup> As early as 1903-4, Joyce had placed the mundane and the aesthetic (seen as the means to transcend the material conditions of life) side by side, wondering in his notebooks whether “houses, clothes, furniture, etc [are] works

---

processes of becoming” (Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), pp.2-3).

<sup>19</sup> Wilson, p.178.

<sup>20</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), pp.103-4. In *A Portrait*, Stephen imagines artistic creation in very similar terms, as he expresses his ambition to act as “a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life” (*P*, 186).

<sup>21</sup> This project characterizes the Symbolist movement of the late nineteenth century. According to Naomi Segal, “the act of creation is seen as a private but religiously significant transmutation of the material world into finer stuff. The poem is artifice and the poet the supreme artificer, and the world of objects is superseded in his act of ‘making’. If we take Mallarmé as representative of the finest potential of Symbolism, we find in his work a subtle dependence on the objects of the material world, which appear in order to be surpassed” (Naomi Segal, *Banal Object: Theme and Thematics in Proust, Rilke, Hofmannsthal and Sartre* (London: University of London Press, 1981), p.12.

<sup>22</sup> Evan Cory Horowitz, “*Ulysses*: Mired in the Universal”, *Modernism/modernity*, Vol.13, No 1 (Jan. 2006), p.870.

<sup>23</sup> Saikat Majumdar, *Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p.38. Fifty years before Majumdar, Richard Ellmann remarked that “for Joyce life *is* charmed; nature is both a sound and an echo, its ordinary details suffused with wonder, its wonderful manifestations permeated by the ordinary” (Ellmann, “The Limits of Joyce’s Naturalism”, pp.573-4).

of art” and claiming that “even the most hideous object may be said to be beautiful”.<sup>24</sup> The concept of epiphany which Joyce developed around the same time encapsulates this duality. Joyce’s idea of epiphany does not escape trivial reality through an aestheticization of the everyday, but constantly oscillates between the mundane and the transcendent.<sup>25</sup> As will emerge in Chapter 1, epiphanies in Joyce’s works are often unachieved or frustrated, as is the case with Stephen’s attempt to see an epiphanized Ballast Office clock in *Stephen Hero*. The importance of the Joycean epiphany lies not so much in the transcendence achieved by an object, as in the process governing its potential aesthetization. Whether this process be ultimately successful or not, an exchange between subjects and objects has thereby taken place. This relation concerns the ways in which objects might be perceived and represented.<sup>26</sup> Bringing together subject and object, mundane existence and aesthetic transformation, the concept of epiphany comprises the key elements which define Joyce’s representation of things throughout his career, and will frame the research presented in this thesis. Starting with *Stephen Hero*, my work will trace the development of these pivotal concepts to reflect on the evolving ways in which Joyce presents everyday objects in his oeuvre. From the possibility of grasping the essence of trivial things in a single instance of revelation—so keen a preoccupation of Stephen in *Stephen Hero*—Joyce’s subsequent works more clearly highlight the mutually shaping interactions at work between thinking and perceiving subjects and material entities including everyday objects, waste materials, words and textual inscriptions.

---

<sup>24</sup> *OCPW*, 104-5.

<sup>25</sup> According to Liesl Olson, “ordinary life becomes the context in which epiphany is subsumed, reconsidered, and assessed” ((Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.8).

<sup>26</sup> According to Majumdar, “the moment of epiphany is one of the most significant sites where modernist experimentation comes together with a radical critique of dominant modes of knowledge” (Majumdar, p.48).

## Transcending Triviality

The combination of triviality and transcendence, which in the literary domain may find expression in the blending of Realism and Symbolism, renders Joyce's portrayal of objects particularly interesting to examine.<sup>27</sup> Simultaneously "extravagant bohemian poet and controlled craftsman", as Mark Osteen puts it, Joyce approaches reality with both objective precision and subjective creativity.<sup>28</sup> For many writers of the early twentieth century—such as Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Djuna Barnes, and Gertrude Stein—the depiction of reality entails a delicate balance between a desire to render the ordinariness of everyday life as such and to examine the human subject. What might at first appear as a collective resolution to dispense with external realities in order to avoid the cluttering of narrative with a "suffocating, moeotic expanse of objects", is in fact an attempt to approach the material reality of things differently.

The key difference between rejection and transformation is clear in Willa Cather's 1922 essay "The Novel D meubl ". As its title suggests, the article calls for a decluttering of the novel, which "for a long time has been over-furnished" since "the importance of material objects and their vivid representation have been so stressed".<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Derek Attridge renders Joyce's ambivalent position towards Realism as he defines *Ulysses* as "both a culmination and a demolition of the realist novel" (Derek Attridge, "Joyce: The Modernist's Novel Revolution in Matter and Manner", in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.592).

<sup>28</sup> Osteen, p.1. Many critics have commented on Joyce's complex relationship with Realism, debating the extent to which Joyce's works should be considered an extension or a rejection of the realist tradition. According to Rice, "Joyce began his career as a realist, emulating his admired Ibsen, and, as much from his aborted medical training as from his reading, accepting the 'scientific' conception of naturalist fiction, 'the experimental novel' tradition of Zola, wherein writing becomes a mix of empirical observation and diagnosis of symptoms." (Rice, p.7). In *Joyce and Reality: The Empirical Strikes Back*, John Gordon sets up the task to explore "the evolution of Joycean reality and the Joycean strategies for expressing and dramatizing it" (John Gordon, *Joyce and Reality: The Empirical Strikes Back* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p.xi). More recent studies include Maria Grazia Tonetto's "Joyce's Vision of Realism: A New Source", *Genetic Joyce Studies*, Issue 12 (Spring, 2012), and issue 15 of *James Joyce Studies in Italy*.

<sup>29</sup> Willa Sibert Cather, "The Novel D meubl ", from *The New Republic*, 30 (April 12, 1922), 5-6.

Against the catalogues and meticulous descriptions which define the realist tradition, Cather imagines “how wonderful it would be if we could throw all the furniture out of the window”.<sup>30</sup> In her much-quoted essay “Modern Novels” (1919)—republished as “Modern Fiction” in 1925—Virginia Woolf expresses herself in very similar terms, contrasting “materialist” writers such as Mr. Bennett and Mr. Wells with “spiritualist” authors such as Joyce. Woolf’s main complaint against the Edwardian Realists is that “they write of unimportant things, that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring”.<sup>31</sup> As Majumdar points out, “Woolf holds the Edwardians guilty of an excessive preoccupation with physical details, which stifles the fiction’s transcendence beyond the material”.<sup>32</sup>

Cather’s article and Woolf’s essay are indicative of a literary period focused on the internal dynamics of human subjects at the expense of material realities. However, both Woolf and Cather’s aversion seems to be aimed at the way in which the object world is represented in the realist tradition, rather than at the object world itself. As Majumdar remarks, “experimental modernist modes of fiction [...] share the physical atmosphere of the ordinary everyday but differ radically in the way they approach the material”.<sup>33</sup> In a similar vein, Vike Martina Plock, commenting on “The Novel *Démeublé*”, points out that “Cather advocates a more balanced subject-object relationship in novelistic representation”.<sup>34</sup> This is clear from Cather’s distinction

---

<sup>30</sup> Cather, “The Novel *Démeublé*”.

<sup>31</sup> Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction”, in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf Vol.4: 1925 to 1928*, ed. Andrew McNeille (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), p.159.

<sup>32</sup> Majumdar, p.8.

<sup>33</sup> Majumdar, p.10. My italics.

<sup>34</sup> Vike Martina Plock, ““Object Lessons’: Bloom and His Things”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.49, No.3-4 (Spring/Summer, 2012), p.557. As one of the very few works focusing on studies of objects in Joyce’s works, Plock’s article provided an important starting point for this thesis. In particular, I am indebted to Plock for the comparison between Willa Cather’s article and Virginia Woolf’s essay. Despite the close similarity between the title of Plock’s essay and of my thesis, my concerns in this project are substantially different from Plock’s. Plock’s article focuses mainly on the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses* to show how the chapter’s “accumulation of things [...]

between Balzac and Tolstoy. Cather finds Balzac's representation of Paris to be "unworthy of an artist" and claims that "the city he built on paper is already crumbling".<sup>35</sup> The "mass of bricks and mortar and furniture" he includes are conceived as mere "material surroundings" and therefore dispensable.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, while Tolstoy "was almost as great a lover of material things as Balzac", his representation of material realities is radically different from the French novelist's.<sup>37</sup> Cather's admiration relates to the fact that "the clothes, the dishes, the moving, haunting interiors of those old Moscow houses, are always so much a part of the emotions of the people that they are perfectly synthetized".<sup>38</sup> Woolf's distinction between the "materialist" and the "spiritual" writer is expressed in similar terms. While the "materialist" takes "upon his shoulders the work that ought to have been discharged by Government officials", she explains, "spiritual" writers such as Joyce "attempt to come closer to life" by striving to "reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain".<sup>39</sup> In Woolf's assessment, the term "spiritual" does not entail a radical break from material realities, but the ability to describe them in a different way—to break with conventions in order to "secure the thing we seek", namely "life or spirit, truth or reality", that "essential thing [which] refuses to be

---

accentuate[s] [Bloom's] emotional attachment to the world in which he lives" (Plock, p.559). Her purpose is to challenge the view that the penultimate episode of *Ulysses* is a sterile and emotionless hoard of things, and to reveal instead how objects are pivotal mediators to the depiction of Bloom's emotional state and of his connections with other individuals. Taking Susan Stewart's *On Longing* as her theoretical backbone, Plock focuses on the role of souvenirs in "Ithaca", showing how they are able to mediate between the conflicting emotions of loss and longing. My work, by contrast, retraces the depiction and treatment of objects from Joyce's early writings to his final work, showing how material things in his oeuvre can be thought as a key aspect of narration in their ability to inflect the cognitive states of fictional characters and readers.

<sup>35</sup> Cather, "The Novel D meubl ".

<sup>36</sup> Cather, "The Novel D meubl ".

<sup>37</sup> Cather, "The Novel D meubl ".

<sup>38</sup> Cather, "The Novel D meubl ".

<sup>39</sup> Woolf, p.159, 161.

contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments” as realist fiction provides.<sup>40</sup> Woolf criticizes the supposedly mimetic quality of realist novels which, in their attempt to provide “the solidity, the likeness of life”, actually capture only the surface of life and provide a misleading image of it, a picture which does not correspond to reality as it is thought, perceived, and lived.<sup>41</sup> Both Cather and Woolf call for a different approach to materiality, for “the accent [to] fal[l] a little differently” on the objects presented in “modern novels”.<sup>42</sup> Both writers advocate a stronger coupling between internal and external realities, a representation of material entities which, far from being merely descriptive, would be in conversation with the thoughts and feelings of the subject.

At times criticized for his fiction’s arid hoarding of things, at times admired for the subtlety of his psychological explorations, Joyce, as portrayed by his critics, “alternates between allegiances to the visionary and to the material, between internal fantasy and external reality” (as John Paul Riquelme says of Stephen Dedalus).<sup>43</sup> If Woolf’s assessment of Joyce as a “spiritualist writer” is certainly justified by his exploration of the human psyche, it is also important to stress that he never abandons the registration of external realities. According to Latham, “what distinguished Joyce’s practice from that of Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, or William Faulkner is his obstinate insistence not simply on the description of consciousness itself, but upon the

---

<sup>40</sup> Woolf, p.160. As the quotation suggests, Woolf employs the term “spirit” and “spiritualist” with no religious connotation, but as a near-synonym for “life” and “reality”.

<sup>41</sup> Woolf, p.160. “The writer seems constrained [...] to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last buttons of their coats in the fashion of the hour [...] Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being ‘like this’” (Woolf, p.160).

<sup>42</sup> Woolf, p.162.

<sup>43</sup> John Paul Riquelme, “*Stephen Hero, Dubliners, and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Styles of Realism and Fantasy*”, in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, 1<sup>st</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.104.

importance of the real physical world".<sup>44</sup> Joyce told Arthur Power, a fellow Irishman whom he met in Paris, that:

[I]n realism you are down to facts on which the world is based: that sudden reality which smashed romanticism into a pulp. What makes most people's lives unhappy is some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable or misconceived ideal. In fact you may say that idealism is the ruin of man, and if we lived down to fact, as primitive man had to do, we would be better off. That is what we were made for. Nature is quite unromantic. It is we who put romance into her, which is a false attitude, an egotism, absurd like all egotisms. In *Ulysses* I tried to keep close to fact.<sup>45</sup>

For all his interest in the "dark places of psychology", Joyce retains an interest in "facts" and the tangible nature of material objects, two elements which are never removed from his writings.<sup>46</sup> While presenting characters who, like Stephen Dedalus, attempt to transcend the mundane and unromantic reality in which they live, Joyce's fiction never fully turns away from the triviality of everyday life. In this tension reside the complexities and richness of his depiction of the object world. On the one hand, the objects in his works often have an impact on the characters' thinking and emotional processes. For instance, Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli points out that the details through which Joyce reconstructs the city of Dublin "are not limited to mere descriptions, but very often constitute starting points for the evocative memories of specific characters, and their interior monologue".<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, mundane and

---

<sup>44</sup> Latham, p.8. Rice summarizes Joyce's preoccupation with both internal and external realities by tracking an evolving conception of Realism through his works: "Joyce wrote his *Dubliners* stories confident that the artist, relying on the traditional strategies of literary re-presentation, could achieve both an objective and, therefore, a 'true' presentment of reality in fiction. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, however, Joyce demonstrates his recognition that the strategies of literary realism offer no more than a convenient 'convention' for representation, a subjective perspective on the real that masks its subjectivity with the illusion of objectivity. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, paradoxically, constitute objective analysis of this inescapable subjectivity of literary representation. Both works curiously affirm a real that, although unreachable and unrealizable through representation, nonetheless exists" (Rice, p.8).

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (London: Millington, 1974), p.98.

<sup>46</sup> Woolf, p.162.

<sup>47</sup> Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, "How Real is 'Real' in Joyce?", in *Joyce Studies in Italy 15, James Joyce: The Recirculation of Realism*, ed. Franca Ruggeri and Enrico Terrinoni (Roma: Edizioni Q, 2014), p.43.

trivial objects are often portrayed in their most unromantic form. They are presented as separate from plot development or characterization, seemingly included to conjure the material world of Dublin in the early twentieth century. However “spiritualist” a writer, Joyce never fully declutters his novels. As Latham remarks, “Joyce scrutinizes both th[e] glowing consciousness [of his characters] and the multi-faceted lives of the objects that it encounters”.<sup>48</sup> Deploying a panoply of approaches to the mundane material entities of daily life, Joyce’s oeuvre lends itself particularly well to the exploration of the ways in which modernism depicts inanimate matter, distributes agency, and chronicles sympathies and hostilities between a subject and its environment. Positioning objects half-way between the mundane and the transcendent, approaching them through unembellished depiction and aesthetization, Joyce’s works engage with the unobtrusive, often unnoticed stuff of the world, in such a way as to reshape some of our conceptions of what it means to live in a world awash with mundane objects.

Joyce’s formal experimentation and linguistic dexterity add important aspects to his presentation of the material world. First, language acquires density in his novels, its scriptural and aural dimensions being so systematically foregrounded that words become objects themselves, with their own particular textures and qualities. In *A Portrait*, for instance, Stephen Dedalus glances at words, pondering their texture and consistency, wondering about their colours and marvelling at their beauty.<sup>49</sup> Second, Joyce’s stylistic experimentation blurs the interaction between inner and outer, often

---

<sup>48</sup> Latham, pp.15-16. In *Prose of the World* Majumdar refers to the modernists’ “perpetual ambivalence between the prosaic materialism of the external world—which is ordinary precisely because it belongs to a realm of common experience—and the poetic interiority of the unique, subjective sensibility, where the ordinary is transformed into the luminous index of inner life”, and asserts that “not giving in fully to either impulse is the peculiar triumph of modernist fiction” (Majumdar, p.13)

<sup>49</sup> See *P*, 150.

destabilizing the opposition between thinking and active subject, and thought and passive object. As Giuseppe Martella remarks, Joyce's work "tends to set itself beyond the classical subject-object opposition through a new treatment of language".<sup>50</sup>

According to Flynn,

Joyce explores an embodied aesthetic practice that undoes the subject and object positions of calculation and control by focusing on ongoing physical processes of sensation, absorption, digestion, and excretion. These processes reveal individuals to be in the midst of multiple processes of formation and suggest new possibilities of co-being and creation.<sup>51</sup>

Joyce's works not only offer a new rendering of the material world of objects, but through their treatment of language raise important questions concerning the relation and interaction between human and nonhuman entities, mapping the possibilities and limitations of perception and interpretation.

## Turns Towards the Nonhuman

In recent years, both the sciences and the humanities have evinced a "nonhuman turn". Considered a "macroscopic concept" intertwining several theories born of divergent objectives and methodologies, the nonhuman turn aims to reposition human subjects within wider networks of nonhuman entities including animals, organic forms such as plants and bacteria, material objects, and ecological environments.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> Giuseppe Martella, "Material and Work", in *Myriadminded Man: Jottings on Joyce*, ed. Rosa Bosinelli, Paola Pugliatti, Romana Zacchi (Bologna: CLUEB, 1986), p.59.

<sup>51</sup> Catherine Flynn, *James Joyce and the Matter of Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p.12.

<sup>52</sup> Richard A. Grusin, ed., *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015) p.ix. Grusin lists some of the "intellectual and theoretical developments" gathered under the nonhuman turn. These include: Actor-Network Theory, particularly Bruno Latour's career-long project to articulate technical mediation, nonhuman agency, and the politics of things; Affect Theory; Animal Studies, as developed in the work of Donna Haraway and others; the Assemblage Theory of Gilles Deleuze, Manuel DeLanda, Latour and others; New Brain Sciences; New Materialism; and New Media Theory.

My project aims to build a bridge between the treatment of objects in Joyce's writing and contemporary theories which are specifically interested in the role of objects—in particular Bill Brown's "Thing Theory", Andy Clark's "situated cognition", "waste studies" as articulated by such critics as Maurizia Boscagli and Tim Edensor, and Bruno Latour's "Actor-Network Theory". Amongst the panoply of studies exploring the nonhuman, these theories pay particular attention to the entanglement between human and nonhuman entities. A similar interconnection, the thesis contends, characterizes Joyce's rendering of the object world.

While a handful of articles published over the last decade have touched upon the place of things in his works, Joyce so far remains a rather marginal figure in enquiries which consider the role of objects in literary works.<sup>53</sup> As John Scholar points out, "while few 'thing theorists' have focused on Joyce, critics have looked at Joycean objects within the context of commodity cultures and everyday studies, while 'Ithaca's' objects, in particular, have been the focus of Marxist and historicist works over the last forty years".<sup>54</sup> My project aims to fill this gap, exploring the manifold ways in which things are represented in Joyce's works without focusing on commodity culture or taking a traditional historicist approach. Guided by contemporary theories, my investigation takes his oeuvre as the material for a case study, exploring how the

---

<sup>53</sup> For instance, Catherine Flynn, "A Brechtian Epic on Eccles Street: Matter, Meaning, and History in 'Ithaca'", *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.46 (Spring/Summer, 2011), 66-86; Lisa Fluett, "Stupidity Tries: Objects, Things, and James Joyce's 'Clay'", *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.46 (Spring/Summer, 2011), 194-223; Vike Martina Plock, "'Object Lessons': Bloom and His Things", *James Joyce Quarterly* (Spring/Summer, 2012), 557-72; Elizabeth Inglesby, "Ferrules of Engagement: The Speech of Unheard Things in *Ulysses*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol.56, No.3 (Fall, 2014), 292-325; Paul K. Saint-Amour, "Symbols and Things" in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Ulysses'*, ed. Sean Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 200-16; Gregory Castle, "The Consolation of Objects in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*", *Twentieth-Century Literature* (September 2017), 267-98. In 2014, Robert Brazeau and Derek Galdwin edited the first ecocritical collection on Joyce titled *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> John Scholar, "Joyce, Heidegger, and the Material World of *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol 54, No.1-2 (Fall, 2016/Winter, 2017), p.120.

analysis of literary texts might enrich theoretical discourse. As it shows rather than tells, literature is often able to showcase ideas which are only theorized at a later stage. Within the context of the nonhuman turn, fiction can provide rich terrain to consider the relationships between animate and inanimate matter. Jane Bennett claims that literary texts help by “rendering human perception more acute”, as well as giving voice to “those bodies whose favored vehicle of affectivity is less wordy: plants, animals, blades of grass, household objects, trash”.<sup>55</sup> Bruno Latour, likewise, claims that “great novels disseminate the sources of actions in a way that the official philosophy available at their time is unable to follow”.<sup>56</sup> While pertaining to the fictional world—presenting characters and objects which are not “real”—Joyce’s ways of approaching and dealing with the material world are still able to highlight important aspects of the relations between animate and inanimate entities. Seeking to avoid both the retrospective imposition of contemporary ideas on Joyce and the presentation of Joyce as a precursor to contemporary theories, this thesis suggests that Joyce’s virtuosic handling of language allows for complexities of meaning and insight lacking in both his literary contemporaries and current theoretical movements.<sup>57</sup>

If “it no longer seems satisfactory to write off this allure [of objects] as wholly a function of the pathetic fallacy or the projection of voice onto some inanimate stuff”,

---

<sup>55</sup> Jane Bennett, “Systems and Things: On Vital Materialism and Object-Oriented Philosophy”, in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard Grusin, p.235. After quoting from Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, Bennett asserts that “the most important stake for me of the nonhuman turn is how it might help us live more sustainably, with less violence towards a variety of bodies. Poetry can help us feel more of the liveliness hidden in such things and reveal more of the threads of connection binding our fates to theirs” (Bennett, p.235).

<sup>56</sup> Bruno Latour, “Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene”, *New Literary History*, Vol.45 (2014), p.9.

<sup>57</sup> Latour points out that in different fields (artistic, scientific, technological), solutions can overlap. For instance, he claims that “the medium of philosophy [...] is pretty good at *intensifying* some of the features that other mediums are also interested in sustaining” (Latour, “Life Among Conceptual Characters”, *New Literary History*, Vol.47 No.2-3 (Spring/Summer 2016), p.470). The same idea can be applied to certain works of literature. According to Gregory Castle, for instance, “to speak of objects and their ‘thingness’ in the context of fictional worlds (the ground of narrative action and affect) is to raise an additional set of questions about the nature and quality of our relations to objects” (Castle, “The Consolation of Objects”, p.273).

Joyce's far-reaching linguistic and formal innovations reveal how objects in literary works are destined to be neither mere background material nor anthropomorphized matter.<sup>58</sup> An analysis of his novels offers the possibility of observing a dramatization of ideas about the relationship of objects and subjects which philosophers and literary theorists have recently postulated. My aim is to emphasize both the polyphony of voices emerging from the object world of his novels, and the impact that everyday things might have for human characters and their approaches to the world around them.<sup>59</sup>

In *New Materialisms*, Diana Coole points out that

the predominant sense of matter in modern Western culture has been that it is essentially passive stuff, set in motion by human agents who use it as means of survival, modify it as vehicle of aesthetic expression, and impose subjective meanings upon it. The view of inert matter as inherently devoid of agency or meaning and as heterogeneous to consciousness [...] seems congruent with, and indeed presupposes, a commonsense, naturalistic attitude which takes for granted a natural world 'out there' as an essentially given collection of objects.<sup>60</sup>

In various ways, the theories employed in this project challenge this "predominant sense of matter", complicating the opposition between thinking, active subjects and thought-about, passive objects. In a similar way, Joyce's works present perception as an activity which does not depend exclusively on the perceiving subject but is influenced by the perceived object. His fictional world is not guided by a "naturalistic

---

<sup>58</sup> Bennett, pp.224-5.

<sup>59</sup> My project is not concerned with the critique of correlationism which sits at the heart of Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Philosophy. Led primarily by Quentin Meillassoux and Graham Harman, the critique of correlationism explores the possibility (excluded by Kantian and post-Kantian thought) of knowing the world "in itself", independently of the subject's relation to it. Rather than wondering whether or not a subject has access to the material world, or whether a world can be said to exist independently of human thinking and perceptions, my project is interested in assessing the role which objects can play within the varieties of possible relations which link them with subjects. In particular, the thesis attempts to debunk the opposition between active subjects and passive objects. I do not exclude that there might be a way to go beyond this correlational dynamic. This problem, however, goes beyond the spectrum of my work.

<sup>60</sup> Diana Coole, "The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh", in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), p.92.

attitude which takes for granted a natural world ‘out there’” but is defined by a process of constant interaction. The objects presented in his works are not presented as “an essentially given collection of objects” but as active forces which have a direct influence on the fictional human characters. With the help of selected contemporary theories, this thesis will bring to the fore this overlooked aspect of Joyce’s works.

## Chapter Outline

This study is organized into four chapters, which broadly unfold in chronological sequence.

The first chapter considers Joyce’s early writings through the lens of “Thing Theory”, drawing on Bill Brown’s distinction between objects and things to explore a first modality of relation between animate and inanimate matter. Reading Joyce’s draft novel *Stephen Hero* alongside his collection of “epiphanies”, the chapter focuses on the concept of epiphany as a “mediating link between subject and object”.<sup>61</sup> In *Stephen Hero*, composed between 1904 and 1906, the process leading to the epiphany of the Ballast Office clock is presented as a series of acts of reading and translation which reimagine the boundaries usually thought to prevail between the human and the nonhuman. The collection of epiphanies written by Joyce between 1900 and 1904 showcases a similar mediation between the inner space of the subject and the environmental space of the object. Marrying close reading and theoretical thinking, the chapter argues that Joyce’s epiphanic fragments can fruitfully be seen as objects

---

<sup>61</sup> David Weir, *James Joyce and the Art of Mediation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.40.

themselves—objects which are apprehended in the same way as the Ballast Office clock of Joyce’s draft novel.

In my second chapter I analyze the language of James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in relation to the anti-Cartesian paradigm of situated cognition. Questioning the separation of mind, body, and external world, research on situated cognition creates a “picture of mental activity as dependent on the situation or context in which it occurs”, stressing the idea that cognitive processes arise within an embodied subject situated in an environment.<sup>62</sup> Drawing on David Herman’s re-evaluation of the “inward turn” in modernist literature, the chapter shows how critical responses to modernist characters are incomplete if they do not account for the role of their material surroundings. Language is one of the key elements in such interactions. In Joyce’s novel, words are not simply signifying entities, but are approached as material objects, endowed with a certain materiality which elicits bodily and emotional reactions in the subject who speaks, reads, or thinks them. The protagonist Stephen Dedalus deduces and elaborates meanings by registering the impact words have on his body, senses, and emotions.

My third chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores the “Proteus” episode of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, to show how in the chapter things routinely deemed to be useless or meaningless hold the potential, in Tim Edensor’s evocative phrase, to “rebuke the normative assignments of things”.<sup>63</sup> As Stephen walks through a landscape marked by signs of decay, he muses about philosophy, perception, and the “ineluctable modality” (*U* 3.1) of our systems of value. “Signatures of all things I

---

<sup>62</sup> Murat Aydede, Philip Robbins, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.3.

<sup>63</sup> Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), p.97.

am here to read” (*U* 3.2), thinks Stephen, setting out on a solitary amble which takes him past a “damp crackling mast” (*U* 3.147), “wood sieved by shipworm” (*U* 3.149), a “porter bottle [...] stogged to its waist” (*U* 3.150) and “a bloated carcass of a dog” (*U* 3.282). Blending close readings of the “Proteus” episode with the discussion of contemporary philosophical theories, the chapter shows how decaying matter—if borne in mind rather than put out of mind—confronts beholders with the imbrication of living and non-living bodies, subjects and objects. Through Stephen’s reflections on the debris on the strand—lumps of matter apprehended in musings which sit at a crossroads between ontology, epistemology, and semiology—Joyce invites us to think relationally.

The second section of the third chapter builds on the significance accorded to waste in “Proteus” to focus on some of the everyday objects presented in the rest of *Ulysses*. Scattered throughout the texts, things such as a bar of soap and paper envelopes are poised between the banality imparted by the everyday context in which they are mentioned, and their potentiality to bear a deeper, symbolic meaning. In *Ulysses*, the chapter argues, the epiphanic attitude which seeks to grasp the essential traits of an object by transcending its triviality is replaced by a parallax attitude, which instead seeks to consider an object from different perspectives without extracting it from the mundanity of its context.<sup>64</sup> This new outlook reaches its most radical forms in the hallucinations of “Circe” and the scientific style of “Ithaca”. In extremely different ways, both chapters flout readerly expectations of a narrative dependent exclusively on the actions of human characters. In lieu of such a narrative, they create broader

---

<sup>64</sup> I derive the term “parallax” from *Ulysses*, where the protagonist Leopold Bloom employs the word in multiple instances.

networks wherein animate and inanimate entities interact, and wherein action is thus “distributed”, to use Bruno Latour’s term, between human and nonhuman characters.<sup>65</sup>

The final chapter turns to *Finnegans Wake* (1939) to show how Joyce’s last work revisits and develops ideas and techniques which the thesis demonstrates he has been exploring from the beginning of his career. The fruit of a compositional method which recalls the early epiphanies, highlights the materiality of language, and pursues the scrutiny of cognitive processes, *Finnegans Wake* marks the culmination of Joyce’s long-lasting interest in the relations between subjects and objects, mind and world. The chapter considers the idea of “correspondences” between subjects and objects in light of Bruno Latour’s reformulation of the concept as “co-response”.<sup>66</sup> Dismantling the idea of a knowing subject and a known object as the extreme poles of an unmediated relation, Latour conceives of “correspondences” as interactions which constantly alter the entities involved. My contention is that Joyce’s final work delineates a similar idea of “correspondences” by employing a language which defies the conventional relations at the basis of syntactical construction, semantic morphology, and representation. The language of the *Wake* ceaselessly emphasizes the sheer number of potential networks which can be established between thinking mind, language, and represented reality. By replacing functionality and unambiguous communication with the potential for new meanings and connections, it conjures a state wherein every-thing has not solidified into one thing, wherein words do not bear fixed meanings, wherein objects do not take on simple forms, and wherein subjects do not have the ultimate power of creation or interpretation. This state of

---

<sup>65</sup> Latour, “Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene”, p.17.

<sup>66</sup> Bruno Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p.86.

inbetweenness highlights the co-responses between different entities whose role or character has not yet settled.

In the conclusion, I retrace my analysis of Joyce's works to demonstrate that neither objects, nor subject, nor words are ever depicted as static, passive entities in his oeuvre. As it highlights the mutual dependence of subjects and objects, the thesis contends that it is precisely when everyday things are not disregarded as trivial, banal, or functionless, that their potential to challenge straightforward signification and generate new meanings is brought to the fore. Joyce's immersion in the world of banal objects and trivial things has the benefit of showing the impact that everyday objects can have on the subject willing to challenge the idea of being the sole supplier of meaning and source of action.

## Chapter 1 Part 1: Theory and Practice of Epiphany

The theory of epiphany presented in *Stephen Hero* gives a first insight into the relation between subject and object as considered by Joyce. In *James Joyce and the Art of Mediation*, David Weir points out that the concept of epiphany might be considered a “mediating link between subject and object”.<sup>67</sup> A close look at the nature of this link in Joyce’s early works shows how the theory shapes the treatment of objects in his published novels. The ideas put forward in *Stephen Hero* are important starting and reference points in considering the complexities attendant upon Joyce’s representations of perception, of the role and constitution of the subject involved in dealing with objects, and of trivial and everyday things. In examining these themes, it is important to consider both sides of what Ilaria Natali defines as an “intrinsic duplicity” characterizing the word “epiphany” in the context of Joyce’s works, in the sense that it designates “both any text included in Joyce’s homonymous collection and an abstract theoretical concept”.<sup>68</sup> This chapter focuses on specific features of the theory as presented in *Stephen Hero*, in particular those pertinent to the relation between subjects and objects. In parallel, it analyzes the style and form of those short pieces of dramatic and narrative writing which Joyce composed between 1900 and 1904 and called “epiphanies”, showing how they can be considered as a particular kind of textual

---

<sup>67</sup> Weir, p.40. Similarly, Michael Sheringham states that “what is involved [in modernist epiphany] is the creation of a frame around reality, which makes something appear—indirectly—by giving it a structure. Modernist epiphany involves mediation” (Sheringham, p.81).

<sup>68</sup> Ilaria Natali, “A Portrait of James Joyce’s *Epiphanies* as a Source Text”, *Humanicus* 6 (2011), p.2. Natali’s article is an important source in considering the relationship between Joyce’s collection of epiphanies, *Stephen Hero*, and *A Portrait*. Natali examines the changes which several of the original fragments undergo when included in a broader narrative. Robert Scholes undertakes a similar enterprise in his essay “Joyce and the Epiphany: The Key to the Labyrinth?”, *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.72, No.1 (Winter, 1964), pp.74-77. More recently, Sangam MacDuff has written a book devoted to “fresh readings of Joyce’s epiphanies, both as distinctive individual texts that question the nature of epiphany as an event and as a genre, and also as an ordered collection or ‘book of epiphanies’” (Sangam MacDuff, *Panepiphanal World: James Joyce’s Epiphanies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020), p.3).

object able to shape the reader's practices of perception.<sup>69</sup> Both the theory in *Stephen Hero* and Joyce's own collection of epiphanies start to explore latent possibilities in everyday objects and to address questions concerning the subject's relation to external realities. The analysis of the theory and practice of epiphany will allow me to take into account the different connotations pertaining to this key Joycean concept. As Michel Delville remarks, the term epiphany "variously refers to the sudden manifestation itself; the written record of the moment of revelation; the verbal strategy used by the artist to find meaning in the seemingly insignificant".<sup>70</sup>

The concept of epiphany has been a controversial one in the history of the critical study of James Joyce.<sup>71</sup> The fact that the theory is presented in the unpublished *Stephen Hero* before appearing in revised form in *A Portrait of the Artist*, with the signal removal of the term "epiphany", has led some critics to argue that the theory should not be seen as fundamental to the development of Joyce's writing. Rather than a conception in which he remained seriously and long-lastingly invested, they contend, it becomes an object of retrospective irony on Joyce's part.<sup>72</sup> Another problem arises

---

<sup>69</sup>Joyce mentions the epiphanies in seven letters written between 1903 and 1907. Stanislaus Joyce refers to these fragments in these terms: "'Epiphanies' were always brief sketches, hardly ever more than a dozen lines in length, but always very accurately observed and noted, the matter being so slight" (Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p.134). Of these fragments, a total of 40 different epiphanies can be found in manuscript form at the Lockwood Collection, University of Buffalo (23 epiphanies), and at the Cornell University Joyce Collection (24 epiphanies, of which 7 correspond to those at Buffalo).

<sup>70</sup> Michel Delville, *The American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), note 7, p.253.

<sup>71</sup> The dispute between Robert Scholes and Florence L. Walzl in "The Epiphanies of Joyce" (*PMLA*, Vol.82, No.1 (March 1967), 152-154) is particularly revealing. Scholes developed ten points of disagreement with Walzl's article, "The Liturgy of the Epiphany Season and the Epiphanies of Joyce" (*PMLA*, LXXX (September 1965), 436-50), to which Walzl answered clarifying her account of the notion of epiphany and the intentions which had motivated her piece. Five years later, Sidney Feshbach returned to Scholes's ten points in "Hunting Epiphany-Hunters" (*PMLA*, Vol.87, No.2 (March 1972), 304-6).

<sup>72</sup> Critics have had markedly contrasting views on this matter. Some critics claimed that the theory had a strong impact on Joyce's writing after *Stephen Hero*. Irene Hendry, for instance, considered *Dubliners* as a collection of epiphanies ("Joyce's Epiphanies", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.54, No.3 (July-September 1946), 449-67); and William York Tindall argued that each story in *Dubliners* "may be thought of as a great epiphany, and the container of little epiphanies" (*A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1959), p.11). Similarly, Florence Walzl believed that the concept of epiphany in its religious acceptation shaped the creation

from the general, sketchy, and enigmatic nature of the theory itself, and its amalgamation of connotations derived from religion, ancient and modern philosophy, and aesthetics.<sup>73</sup> Despite these difficulties, the theory of epiphany cannot be ignored or dismissed. It constitutes a key step in Joyce's evolving understanding of art, as well as in his approach to the depiction of the relation between animate and inanimate matter. In a similar way, the short texts collected between 1900 and 1904, while published only posthumously, are important in Joyce's formation as an artist. Claiming that "the collection served him as a sketchbook", Joyce's brother Stanislaus suggests something of the significance of these early writings, and the role they played in the development of Joyce's style(s).<sup>74</sup>

### **The Significance of Trivial Things**

In *Stephen Hero*, the theory of epiphany is first and foremost a theory of perception heavily focused on the interaction between a subject and an object. Stephen's theory, as explained to his friend Cranly, appears to be the fictional

---

and composition of *Dubliners*, claiming that "the basic structure of *Dubliners* is simple—it consists of epiphanies placed in chronological and symbolic arrangements" ("The Liturgy of the Epiphany Season", *PMLA* 80/4 (September 1965), p.440). In "Joyce and the Epiphany", Robert Scholes criticized these views, arguing that the epiphany should be considered exclusively in light of Stephen's definition in *Stephen Hero* and of Joyce's own practice in the short texts he collected as epiphanies.

<sup>73</sup> Several scholars have conducted studies on the theory, focusing in particular on the broader religious, philosophical, and literary tradition of the epiphany. See William T. Noon, *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957); Maurice Beebe, "Joyce and Aquinas: the Theory of Aesthetics", *Philological Quarterly* (October 1957), 20-35; S.L. Goldberg, *The Classical Temper* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961); Morris Beja *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971); Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987); Kim Sharon, *Literary Epiphany in the Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012); Richard Kearney "Epiphanies in Joyce" in *Voices on Joyce*, eds. Anne Fogarty, Fran O'Rourke (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015). In chapter 2 of *Panepiphantal World*, Macduff retraces with precision the history of epiphany from the classical and biblical traditions to Joyce.

<sup>74</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p.123. According to MacDuff, "the epiphanies lie at [the] origin [of Joyce's oeuvre], both temporally and as an originary stage of development" (MacDuff, p.225).

theorization of a process Joyce had already adopted as a writing method between 1900 and 1904: the collection of moments, fragments of experience, gestures and dialogues which, notwithstanding their triviality, attracted his attention. One such instance, a snippet of awkward conversation which triggers Stephen's creative urge ("a trivial incident set him composing some ardent verses"), constitutes the prelude to his presentation of the theory:

A young lady was standing on the steps of one of those brown brick houses which seem the very incarnation of Irish paralysis. A young gentleman was leaning on the rusty railings of the area. Stephen as he passed on his quest heard the following fragments of colloquy out of which he received an impression keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness very severely.

The Young Lady — (drawling discreetly) ... O, yes .... I was ... at the ... cha ... pel ...

The Young Gentleman — (inaudibly) ... I ... (again inaudibly) ... I ...

The Young Lady — (softly) ... O ... but you're ... ve ... ry ... wick ... ed ...

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies.<sup>75</sup>

Here, a conversation similar to those collected by Joyce, and a resolution mirroring the one taken by the author himself around the same time, work as a preamble to Stephen's theory.<sup>76</sup> What is striking about this passage—as is characteristic of Joyce's epiphanies—is how little it actually tells or reveals *in* itself, begging the question as to how and why such a meaningless exchange can possibly "afflict [Stephen's] sensitiveness rather severely".<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> SH, 211.

<sup>76</sup> See, for instance, epiphanies 15, 19, 35. In the chapter, I follow the numbering used by Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz, and John Whittier-Ferguson in James Joyce's *Poems and Shorter Writings*. As only forty numbered epiphanies survive from a series that included at least seventy-one pieces, this conversation might actually have been one of the epiphanies collected by Joyce. In his influential work "The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*", Hans Walter Gabler reconstructs the compositional chronology of Joyce's early works ("The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*", *Joyce Studies* No.15, ed. Luca Crispi and Catherine Fahy (2005)). According to Gabler, the first seven chapters of *Stephen Hero*, now lost, were completed by the winter of 1904. The following chapters, wherein the quoted passage can be found, date from 1904 to 1905. On this hypothesis, they have been written in the years immediately following the recording of the epiphanies and the composition of the "Paris and Pola Commonplace Book" in which Joyce defines his aesthetic theories (James Joyce, "Paris and Pola Commonplace Book: 1903-1904", "Joyce Papers 2000", Dublin, National Library of Ireland, NLI MS 36, 639/2/A).

<sup>77</sup> SH, 211.

Defined as meaning “common, commonplace, ordinary, everyday, familiar, trite”, or as denoting something “of small account, little esteem”, the adjective “trivial” used to describe the moments collected in the epiphanies appears at first in sharp contrast with the etymologically grounded idea of epiphany as an event which “shows forth” and “reveals”.<sup>78</sup> As Don Gifford points out, “the term ‘epiphany’ tends to blur rather than direct answers because its scale as metaphor distracts us from what Joyce is really after—the ‘significance of trivial things’ and the literary techniques involved in developing that significance”.<sup>79</sup> Precisely because it would seem to amount to a confusing oxymoron, the relation between “triviality” and “epiphany” requires further exploration. Such an enquiry stands to shed light on the ways in which something that has no clear or meaningful content can be revelatory, and on how things not immediately apparent to the eye may be nested in the familiar and the everyday.

In the passage from which the statement above is excerpted, Don Gifford quotes from Stanislaus Joyce’s diary, in which the following conversation between Joyce and Stanislaus is recorded: “Do you see that man who has just skipped out of the way of the tram? Consider, if he had been run over, *how significant* every act of his would *at once* become [...] It is my idea of *significance of trivial things* that I want to give to the 2 or 3 unfortunate wretches who may eventually read me”.<sup>80</sup> In his attempt to convey the “significance of trivial things”, Joyce aims to show how instances

---

<sup>78</sup> As Ashton Nichols explains, “the term “epiphany” derives from the Greek *phainein* “to show” and the prepositional prefix *epi*, which means variably “on”, “over”, “at” and “after”. *Phainein* can also be translated “to bring to light”, or “cause to appear”. In this sense it was the root for “fantasy”, “phantom”, and “phenomenon”. The Greek forms *epiphainein* and *epiphaneia* mean “to manifest” and “appearance” or “manifestation” respectively. (Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-century Origin of the Modern Literary Moment* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama Press, 1987), p.5).

<sup>79</sup> Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for ‘Dubliners’ and ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1982), p.xvi.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted in Don Gifford, *Joyce Annotated*, p.3. My italics.

of everyday life can be meaningful in the cognitive process they generate. There are two possible interpretations of Joyce's remark to his brother, each of which depends on one of the two scenarios it outlines: the hypothetical one in which the man is ran over by the tram, and the actual one in which he emerges unscathed. In the hypothetical scenario, the actions of the man, trivial because potentially repeated every day (walking down the street, crossing the road...), acquire retrospective significance in virtue of an unexpected event which interrupts their routine unfolding. The man's death assigns clear boundaries to his life, which becomes legible as a succession of actions which are important in virtue of the final, fatal event which frames them all. An unexpected occurrence has the power to change our perspective on actions or events which were previously dismissed as commonplace or of no account. Therefore, the trivial might be significant precisely because it can lead to unexpected consequences which might not be foreseen, because it has the potentiality for an unexpected futurity. Even the most commonplace of actions, gestures, or conversations should not be discarded—from an aesthetic point of view—because of its seeming meaninglessness in the present moment. In the second scenario, triviality acquires a rather different meaning, referring not to the actions leading to the man's death, but to the alternative scene (the realized scene, in this case) in which no accident happens. In this sequence of events, the triviality of the moment results from a lack of obvious external effects: the man's actions have no unforeseen consequence. Yet they still resonate in the observer (in this case, Joyce) whose attention is suddenly and unexpectedly caught by them. By directing his gaze at the trivial action of a man skipping "out of the way of the tram", Joyce engages in a process

of apprehension and contemplation, singling out a moment because of the effect it has on him regardless of its unsurprising outcome.

The trivial gestures, conversations, and thoughts gathered in the epiphanies acquire importance in virtue of their effect on the apprehensive faculties of the perceiver. Presented with commonplace situations or conversations—such as the description of a room at dusk, short exchanges about poetry, and the anatomy of the human body—the observers are invited to reconsider what they normally deem familiar and commonplace, and to question the motives leading to such judgment. In the context of the theory and practice of epiphany, the attention to the trivial opens up the realm of the aesthetic to what is normally considered to be worthless from an aesthetic point of view, paving the way for the prominence of the ordinary and the everyday in Joyce’s later works. Although Delville considers the epiphanies as texts which “transcend the trivial, prosaic incidents and realities of everyday life into moments of extraordinary aesthetic and spiritual significance”, I do not think that this was Joyce’s ultimate goal in the collection of such moments. Instead of attempting to transcend the ordinary, radically transforming it into a superior aesthetic manifestation, Joyce uses the material provided by everyday situations or objects to challenge aesthetic judgments and alter the approach to the commonplace.<sup>81</sup>

Such a consideration of the trivial in relation to Joyce’s epiphanies calls for a change in the way we engage with these short texts. As a first attempt to convey the “significance of trivial things”, their value is not to be found in the meaning they might communicate, but in the process they initiate. As Nichols claims, “the modern epiphany emphasizes the *perception of significance* rather than the *interpreted meaning of the*

---

<sup>81</sup> Delville, p.23.

*significant moment*".<sup>82</sup> What is revealed, what "shines forth" is not any particular meaning nested within the words that constitute the epiphanies, but the textual fragments themselves.<sup>83</sup> It is for this reason that I propose that Joyce's epiphanies be regarded as a particular kind of textual objects. As I will explain further on, rather than understanding and analyzing these fragments as we would other types of texts, we should attempt to approach them through the same staged process which Stephen, in *Stephen Hero*, sets out as leading to the epiphany of the Ballast Office clock.

### **Epiphanies as Collection**

Not only does the consideration of epiphanies as a special category of material object open up a possible link between the theory and the practice of epiphany, but it also renders apparent the full scale of Joyce and Stephen's plan to "collect many such moments together in a book of epiphanies".<sup>84</sup> Just like objects, these fragments are collected and stored, entering a system involving classification and appropriation. Every collection has a common ground which connects its elements. Triviality, and the fact of having caught Joyce's attention, can be considered the classifying terms at the basis of his collection of epiphanies. Focusing his attention on moments which were part of his (and other people's) everyday life, noticing something in them which remains hidden to other people, Joyce takes possession of these instances, turning a

---

<sup>82</sup> Nichols, p.3. My italics.

<sup>83</sup> As MacDuff remarks, "it is [a] sense of a concealed truth, a hidden meaning, that Joyce's epiphanies tease us with [...] they hint toward an epiphanic revelation, but when we search for it, we find only an absence of meaning" (MacDuff, p.59).

<sup>84</sup> *SH*, 211.

trivial lived experience into a recorded textual inscription.<sup>85</sup> In so doing, Joyce lays claim to these moments and transforms their transience into the permanence of a written text which has the potential to be re-used. In this respect, it is interesting to read of Oliver St. John Gogarty's annoyance at Joyce's practice: "I don't mind being reported, but to be an *unwilling contributor* to one of his "Epiphanies" is irritating".<sup>86</sup>

While it is unclear whether Joyce initially recorded these moments with the idea of including them in his subsequent narratives, he either incorporates or refers to at least fourteen epiphanies in *Stephen Hero*, twelve in *A Portrait*, fourteen in *Ulysses*, and seven in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>87</sup> The use which Joyce makes of them can be regarded as a form of that "renewal of existence" which Walter Benjamin considered intrinsic to the act of collecting.<sup>88</sup> Excerpted from their original context and inserted into a new sequence and a different narrative, these mundane moments become invested with aesthetic purpose. In her book *On Longing*, Susan Stewart defines the action of collecting as

the total aestheticization of use value. The collection is a form of art as play, a form involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context [...] its function is not the restoration of a context of origin but rather the creation of a new context.<sup>89</sup>

This definition seems particularly apt for Joyce's collection. As the pieces of conversation, gestures, or phases of the mind are extracted from a chain of events in

---

<sup>85</sup> As Herbert F. Tucker points out in "Epiphany and Browning: Character Made Manifest" *PMLA* (Oct. 1992), "epiphany [...] names something lived through, yet also something written down" (p.1208).

<sup>86</sup> Oliver St. John Gogarty, *As I was Going Down Sackville Street: A Phantasy in Facts* (London: Sphere Books, 1968), pp.294-5. Epiphany 40 in *PSW* reports a conversation between Gogarty and a chemist's assistant.

<sup>87</sup> See MacDuff for an exhaustive list of epiphanies in Joyce's works (Macduff, pp.233-5). The epiphanies inaugurate one of Joyce's signature techniques for devising and crafting a text: the recycling of previously written material, the insertion of shorter pieces of writing into a more developed structure. See Hans Walter Gabler's "The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*" for an extensive study of this practice.

<sup>88</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking my Library", in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p.61.

<sup>89</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp.151-2.

virtue or in spite of their triviality, their ordinary character is reframed, made available to a wider process of artistic creation which does not necessarily modify their content, but brings their aesthetic potential to the fore. Rather than pertaining exclusively to objects, gestures, or thoughts which are deemed to be aesthetically pleasing, aesthetic value is regarded as intrinsically latent in all objects, its full realization emerging as a consequence of a particular way of looking at even the most commonplace of moments. This is what the collection, in this case of epiphanies, asks of its readers: that they adjust their focus, that they reflect on where the aesthetic value of such moments might lie. Joyce develops a similar conception of art in the entries dated 27th and 28th of March 1903 of his “Paris and Pola Commonplace Book”. Defining it as “the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an aesthetic end”, the writer wonders whether “houses, clothes, furniture etc.” might be considered works of art. The answer given by the twenty-one-year-old Joyce is that “when they are so *disposed* for an aesthetic end they are works of art”.<sup>90</sup> Pointing once more to the extension of the aesthetic to the realm of the ordinary, the act of “disposing” recalls the idea of collecting—of setting a particular arrangement and context which might highlight aspects of the ordinary which would otherwise go unnoticed.

In the case of the epiphanies, the aesthetic latency revealed in the collected moments is double, since they are disposed both as fragments existing as separate entities within a collection, and as material that might be included in subsequent fictions.<sup>91</sup> The theory of epiphany which Stephen sets out in *Stephen Hero* similarly

---

<sup>90</sup> *OCPW*, 104-5. My italics.

<sup>91</sup> Joyce’s holograph epiphanies at Buffalo are numbered and written on single pages. In March 1903 Joyce wrote to Stanislaus: “I have written fifteen epiphanies — of which twelve are insertions and three additions” (*L2*, 35). With this remark, Joyce suggests that he regarded his epiphanies as a collection. In *The Workshop of Daedalus*, Scholes and Kain claim that Joyce’s epiphanies are the “principal building blocks for [*Stephen Hero*]” (Scholes and Kain, p.6). MacDuff points out that “Scholes might be right in stating that the epiphanies provide

suggests a reconsideration of commonplace objects which brings their aesthetic latency to the fore.

### **The Theory of Epiphany: A Mutual Interaction between Subject and Object**

In chapter XXV of Joyce's draft novel, Stephen explains his theory of epiphany to his friend Cranly after remembering the conversation between the young lady and the gentleman quoted above. Claiming that "the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany", Stephen shifts his attention from "the vulgarity of speech and gesture" he discusses in the young couple's conversation to a material object, which he places at the heart of his theory.<sup>92</sup> An analysis of the way in which this object "achieves its epiphany" after having been recognized as "a thing" offers a way to bridge the theory and the practice of epiphany, showing how the treatment of the clock and the epiphanies as objects can be mutually informative and point to a broader consideration of inanimate matter and its meaning in Joyce's works.<sup>93</sup> Much like the moments collected by Joyce, the clock of Dublin's Ballast Office may seem an unimportant object from an aesthetic point of view. Appearing as "only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture" which is seen day after day without giving rise to conscious thought, the clock is a quintessentially everyday object.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the clock is

---

cornerstones for *Stephen Hero*, but since half the original manuscript is lost, his claim is problematic, whereas there is a strong case for regarding them as the key moments in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" (MacDuff, p.53).

<sup>92</sup> *SH*, 211, 212.

<sup>93</sup> *SH*, 213.

<sup>94</sup> *SH*, 211. Hugh Kenner points out that "the Ballast Office clock, an object of no special interest, was perhaps the most looked-at object in all Dublin" (Hugh Kenner, *Ulysses* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p.72).

used as the primary example in Stephen's explanation of how the staged identification of each of Aquinas's three requisites for beauty (*integritas*, *consonantia*, and *claritas*) can lead to an object's epiphany:

[y]our mind to apprehend that object divides the entire universe into two parts, the object, and the void which is not the object. To apprehend it you must lift it away from everything else: and then you perceive that it is one integral thing, that is a thing. You recognise its integrity [...] That is the first quality of beauty: it is declared in a simple sudden synthesis of the faculty which apprehends. What then? Analysis then. The mind considers the object in whole and in part, in relation to itself and to other objects, examines the balance of its parts, contemplates the form of the object, traverses every cranny of the structure. [...] The mind recognises that the object is in the strict sense of the word, a *thing*, a definitely constituted entity. [...] After the analysis which discovers the second quality the mind makes the only logically possible synthesis and discovers the third quality. This is the moment which I call epiphany. First we recognise that the object is *one* integral thing, then we recognise that it is an organised composite structure, a *thing* in fact: finally, when the relation of the parts is exquisite, when the parts are adjusted to the special point, we recognise that it is *that* thing which it is. Its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany.<sup>95</sup>

The process leading to the object's epiphany starts with a separation between the object and "the void" which surrounds it. The term used by Stephen has clear philosophical undertones, recalling philosophy's longstanding attempt to define an object against everything that is not the object. The first step towards the epiphany seems to be the exclusion of the no-thing which does not constitute the object under scrutiny. In his study of Joyce's medieval influences, Umberto Eco is quick to point out the difference between Joyce's idea of *integritas* and what could be considered a more philosophical conception of the term. Eco states that

it is clear that the Thomist *integritas* is not the Joycean *integritas*. The former is a fact of substantial completion, the latter a fact of spatial delimitation. The former is a problem of ontological volume, the latter is one of physical perimeter.

---

<sup>95</sup> *SH*, 212-13.

The Joycean integritas is the result of a psychological focus, it is the imagination that selects the thing.<sup>96</sup>

Rather than designating an ontological entity, the term borrowed by Joyce refers to the outcome of the viewer's ability to focus on a particular object which, much like the moment collected in the epiphanies, is momentarily singled out from the other items surrounding it. Only when the focus has been established and adjusted—both as a function of the physical vision and of the mental concentration of the person—can the subject really start to perceive the object which, from that point onwards, is identified as “a *thing*”, differentiated, and thus primed for the possibility of epiphany.<sup>97</sup>

The vocabulary employed by Bill Brown to distinguish “objects” from “things” in “Thing Theory”, an article first published in 1991, can help cast a light on some of the dynamics at work in the process of epiphany. Drawing from numerous sources spanning philosophy, anthropology, and material and visual culture, Brown claims that “we begin to apprehend the thingness of objects when they stop working for us [...] when the flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested”.<sup>98</sup> As it will emerge in more detail in the following section, the process of epiphany produces a similar kind of interruption, leading the subject to consider the object outside of the normal circuit of apprehension and beyond its potential usefulness.

At first, the nature of a “thing” as conceived by Stephen appears as radically different from the definition offered by Bill Brown in his theory. For Stephen, the term

---

<sup>96</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetic of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, trans. Ellen Esrock (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p.21. Eco affirms that “imagination is only seen as a particular relation between mind and things. As in Aquinas, it is the way the mind looks at things in order to see them aesthetically” (Eco, p.20).

<sup>97</sup> According to Delville, the “heuristic potential” of the epiphany “results from the artist's apprehension of a given object or incident in its irreducible spatial and temporal particularity” (Delville, p.25).

<sup>98</sup> Bill Brown, “Thing Theory”, *Critical Enquiry*, Vol.28, No.1 (Autumn, 2001), p.4.

“thing” underlies a recognition of the object as “one integral [...] definitely constituted entity”.<sup>99</sup> As opposed to this idea of “integrity”, “Thing Theory” presents a “thing” as that “amorphousness out of which the object is materialized by the (ap)perceiving subject, the anterior physicality of the physical world emerging, perhaps, as an after-effect of the mutual constitution of subject and object, a retroprojection”.<sup>100</sup> In spite of what might look like an antithetical constitution of the thing—a solidly defined result for Stephen, and a shapeless origin for Brown—the process which brings it to light in epiphanic theory and in “Thing Theory” presents some similarities. The aim of “Thing Theory” is the identification of the thing as “what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects”.<sup>101</sup> The final outcome of the Brownian process is not the recognition of an object emerging as part of the physical world, but the realization that each object presents a sort of “excess” which lies unnoticed behind its familiar surface, and is not recognized until a light is cast on the mutual constitution of subject and object. This is made clear when Brown states that “the story of objects asserting themselves as things [...] is the story of a changed relation to the human subject, and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation”.<sup>102</sup> The movement from thing to object in “Thing Theory” is ultimately “retroprojected” back onto the thing, onto that amorphousness defined by the interaction between subject and object, by their “mutual constitution”.<sup>103</sup> In both theories, it is this reciprocal relation between subject and object that

---

<sup>99</sup> *SH*, 212.

<sup>100</sup> Brown, “Thing Theory”, p.5.

<sup>101</sup> Brown, “Thing Theory”, p.5.

<sup>102</sup> Brown, “Thing Theory”, p.4.

<sup>103</sup> Brown, “Thing Theory”, p.5.

determines the recognition of a thing, to the extent that Brown recognizes a “thing” as “less an object than a particular subject-object relation”.<sup>104</sup>

As Stephen lays out his theory, the process of epiphany appears to rely upon a mutual exchange between subject and object, an exchange in which a balance is maintained between the active role of the subject and the dynamic contribution of the object. It is the mind of the subject which “divides”, “apprehend[s]”, “lift[s] away”, “perceive[s]”, “recognise[s]”, and “considers”. However, the object “is capable of”, “leaps” and “achieves”.<sup>105</sup> Paying close attention to this series of verbs makes it clear that the epiphany is not a process depending exclusively on the mind of the subject, but an operation which involves the action of subject and object simultaneously, creating a relation of mutual dependence of the one with the other.<sup>106</sup> As Garry Leonard claims, “it is the object that is said to achieve its epiphany, and the presence of the subject is identified as merely the catalyst that allows the object to differentiate itself from all other objects”.<sup>107</sup> In a similar way Kim Sharon remarks that “epiphany must involve both the *quidditas* and the subjective perception, together completing the arc to radiance”.<sup>108</sup> The theory of epiphany can thus be seen to describe a process which has as much of an effect on the subject as it has on the object, producing two results which are themselves underpinned by a mutual exchange between the two elements. Through the process of aesthetic contemplation, the object has the ability

---

<sup>104</sup> Brown, “Thing Theory”, p.5.

<sup>105</sup> *SH*, 211-13.

<sup>106</sup> MacDuff remarks that in *Epiphany and the Modern Novel* Morris Beja “compares Stephen’s aesthetics to Schopenhauer’s Romantic reading of Kant, which ‘does away with the dualism between subject and object’ (Morris Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, p.30)” (MacDuff, p.70).

<sup>107</sup> Garry Leonard, *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p.58.

<sup>108</sup> Kim Sharon, *Literary Epiphany in the Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p.18. In a similar way, Goldberg asserts that epiphany “involves a conjunction of subject and object” (Goldberg, p.214).

to “leap to us”, revealing a potentiality which has aesthetic value but which goes unnoticed if the gaze of the subject stops at the deceptive external appearance of the object as a mere “item in the catalogue of Dublin’s street furniture”.<sup>109</sup> Like the moments assembled in Joyce’s collection of epiphanies, the object is extracted from its original context and re-contextualized, disposed in a different relation with its surroundings and with the apprehensive faculties of the subject. Stephen meanwhile is afforded the chance to recognize himself as subject, able to “adjust [the] vision to an exact focus” and truly perceive the object at hand.<sup>110</sup> Thus, epiphanies can be seen as instances in which both “people and things radiantly betray their distinctive whatness”.<sup>111</sup> It is only natural to wonder, at this point, what exactly the “distinctive whatness” to be found in people and things is, and how the theory and practice of epiphany are able to reveal it. Rather than being shown forth in a final moment of *claritas*, the “distinctive whatness” of observer and thing observed seems to emerge during the process of interaction between the two parts.

### **The Effect of Epiphany on the Object and the Subject**

Stephen himself struggles to understand the meaning of Aquinas’s *claritas*, the third stage in the process of artistic apprehension. While in *Stephen Hero* the protagonist simply states that “the third quality [...] is the moment which I call

---

<sup>109</sup> *SH*, 211.

<sup>110</sup> In “The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*”, Hans Walter Gabler asserts that “Joyce used the epiphanic imaging to release the energies of language to induce insight, and to equally create the consciousness of his characters” (“The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*”, p.30).

<sup>111</sup> Marc A. Mamigonian and John Noel Turner, “Annotations for *Stephen Hero*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No.3 (Spring, 2003), p.477.

epiphany”, and that “*claritas is quidditas*”, *A Portrait of the Artist* provides a more developed explanation of Joyce’s appropriation of this term. In Joyce’s published novel, the theory of epiphany is expressed in very similar terms in spite of the disappearance of what had previously been its key term: “epiphany”.<sup>112</sup> Focusing on a basket rather than on the Ballast Office clock, Stephen remarks that

[t]he connotation of the word [*claritas*] [...] is rather vague. Aquinas uses a term which seems to be inexact. It baffled me for a long time. It would lead you to believe that he had in mind symbolism or idealism, the supreme quality of beauty being a light from some other world, the idea of which the matter is but the shadow, the reality of which it is but the symbol. I thought he might mean that *claritas* is the artistic discovery and representation of the divine purpose in anything or a force of generalisation which would make the esthetic image a universal one, make it outshine its proper conditions. But that is literary talk. I understand it so. When you have apprehended that basket as one thing and have then analysed it according to its form and apprehended it as a thing you make the only synthesis which is logically and esthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic *quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing. The supreme quality is felt by the artist when the esthetic image is first conceived in his imagination. The mind is that mysterious instant that Shelley likened beautifully to a fading coal.<sup>113</sup>

While the idea explored in *Stephen Hero*, that the object’s “soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance”, is very Platonic in tenor, Stephen here seems to keep his distance from a purely Platonic idealism. He rejects the notion of a universal aesthetic image which would consider the physical object as a mere shadow of a transcendental idea of beauty imposed on the object by the mind of the subject, in favour of a process which alters ordinary perception and is rooted in what Richard Kearney calls a “singular event in its carnal and quotidian uniqueness”.<sup>114</sup> On this

---

<sup>112</sup> Because of this omission, MacDuff differentiates between “the theory in *Stephen Hero* and the aesthetics in *Portrait*” (MacDuff, p.45).

<sup>113</sup> p, 179.

<sup>114</sup> Richard Kearney, “Epiphanies in Joyce”, in *Voices on Joyce*, eds. Anne Fogarty, Fran O’Rourke (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015), p.240. Similarly, Goldberg asserts that “the epiphany is the object as the subject apprehends it in the context of his total experience, not a subjective idealization of the object” (Goldberg, p.214), while Thwaites argues that “Stephen is not setting an ideal world of essence against a fallen

account, the recognition of the “*whatness* of a thing” is the result of a process which occurs in a particular moment and which is not simply imposed on but evoked by the object in the first place. Stephen’s understanding of *claritas* is embedded in the actual encounter between the subject and the object, in a gaze which focuses on what it is seeing while the thing which is seen impresses its image on the mind of the observer. The radiance thus perceived becomes the object’s *quidditas*, its “whatness”, corresponding more with the ability to enter into contact with the subject than with some “supposed metaphysical essence” of the object.<sup>115</sup> The “whatness” of the object seems to belong in equal part to the thing itself as “organised composite structure”, and to the imaginative faculty of the artist who is able to adjust its parts “to the special point”.<sup>116</sup> Once we adjust our focus, the object as we think we know it is not modified in any essential way but recedes from view, making way for “a thing” which is not normally recognized by the habitual gaze. The idea of recognizing (and re-cognizing) an object as a thing seems to entail a repetition which nonetheless differs from previous acts of cognition and appears as a calling that something which was missed can finally be seen.

Brown asserts that “it is only in the subject-object nexus where [things] occur, or where they can be *narrated* as the *effect* (not the ground) of an interaction at once physical and psychological, at once intimate and alienating”.<sup>117</sup> The adjustment of

---

world of the material, but explicitly rejecting that way of going about things” (Thwaites, p.144). In *The Dialectics of Sense and Spirit in Pater and Joyce*, Frank Moliterno asserts that “[b]oth Pater and Joyce shun Platonic idealism: the ‘radiance’ or beauty of an object is not the shadow of a Platonic universal, but an impression that one perceives at a certain moment in space and time” (Frank Moliterno, *The Dialectics of Sense and Spirit in Pater and Joyce* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1998), p.63).

<sup>115</sup> Goldberg suggests that the epiphanized object is “not a subjective idealisation of the object, nor some supposed metaphysical essence of the object, nor the object turned into a symbol of some other object or some higher Reality” (Goldberg, p.214).

<sup>116</sup> *SH*, 213.

<sup>117</sup> Bill Brown, *Other Things* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), p.50.

focus in the epiphanic process leads to a similar interaction. Right after the revelation that “the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany”, and before a full description of the theory in *Stephen Hero*, Stephen describes the relation between his gaze and the clock:

I will pass it time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin’s street furniture. Then *all at once I see it* and I know at once what it is: epiphany. [...] Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanised. It is just in this epiphany that I find the third, the supreme quality of beauty.<sup>118</sup>

To “recognise that the object is *one* integral thing”, to “recognise that it is an organised composite structure, a *thing* in fact”, viewers must first of all step out of their familiar perception and acknowledge that their first glimpses at the clock were inaccurate and that a different view is necessary. As Kim Sharon puts it, “epiphany recasts what had previously passed for vision as a false and insufficient perception, a form of *méconnaissance*”.<sup>119</sup> Stephen employs several notable terms in the description of this gaze which supplements an initially insufficient perception. To begin with, “glimpses” give way to “gropings”. While the first term evokes a merely visual apprehension, the second evokes touch. Mingling the ocular and the haptic, Joyce describes the workings of the eye in terms of an action normally ascribed to hands feeling their way in the absence of vision. By associating the hands’ ability to touch and grasp with the visual faculty of the eye, Stephen underlines the involvement of the body in the encounter with the object, the necessity of progressing from an inattentive kind of looking which does not truly engage with the object to the action of a body which

---

<sup>118</sup> *SH*, 211. My italics.

<sup>119</sup> Sharon, p.10. In a similar way, Gregory Castle notes that “epiphany is a sophisticated form of misrecognition, a way of seeing the object as it *really is not*” (Castle, “The Consolation of Objects”, p.280).

cautiously seeks direct contact with it. While both terms express a certain degree of approximation, the tentativeness implied in both actions is very different in nature. If the unreliability of a glimpse is a consequence of a lack of focus on the part of the subject, the uncertainty evinced in the act of groping is an effect of the inability to see clearly. While the groping enacts the seizing of boundaries, recalling the idea of the object's *integritas*, the touching which delineates its contours is not assured but gradual and repeated. The emphasis on the hesitance and imprecision of these successive touches suggests a relation of progressive refinement rather than of mastery and assertive control. In this respect, the gaze required in the moment of epiphany seems to correspond to Merleau-Ponty's description of the human gaze as something that "envelops, palpates, espouses the visible things [...] so that finally one cannot say if it is the look or if it is the things that command".<sup>120</sup>

Just as the visual and tactile qualities of the gaze are metaphorically connected, so the physicality implied by the act of "groping" is paradoxically carried out by a "spiritual eye". Sensual and spiritual, tangible and incorporeal are not considered in opposition with each other but as complementing one another. As MacDuff remarks, "the critical writings that inform *Stephen Hero*, such as Joyce's early essays 'Ecce Homo', 'Drama and Life', and 'James Clarence Mangan', clearly conceive of the spirit in human terms, and there can be no doubt that Stephen's 'spiritual manifestation' is a natural experience, occurring through language, body, or mind".<sup>121</sup> For Joyce, a spiritual experience is not necessarily a religious or transcendental one, but one which is both embedded in the body of the subject and involves its mental faculties.

---

<sup>120</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.133.

<sup>121</sup> MacDuff, p.66.

According to Morris Beja, “whenever he uses the word ‘spiritual’, [Joyce] seems to refer to the world of emotions, art, intuition”.<sup>122</sup> As Frank Moliterno points out in his study of James Joyce and Walter Pater, “a sense/spirit synthesis occurs in the mind during an epiphanic moment”. This synthesis “implies a fused perception of the sensible and the intelligible”.<sup>123</sup> As the identification of a thing in Brown’s “Thing Theory” presupposes “an interaction at once physical and psychological”, the epiphanic process seems to require the simultaneous work of body and mind, involving an eye which is both physical and mental. The emphasis on the terms “apprehend” and “apprehension” in the description of the epiphanic process in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* corroborates the idea of an activity which can be physical and mental. The verb and the noun refer to the act of physically taking hold of a thing, and to an awareness derived from the senses and the intellect. The physical vision of the eye merges with an abstract/intellectual kind of vision, becoming what David Norris defines as “a blended space that integrates a number of cognitive spaces and by extension ways of seeing and knowing”.<sup>124</sup> The clock of the Ballast Office is inserted into a process which can lead to its epiphany, and while the “vestment of its appearance” remains unchanged, its relationship with the subject becomes radically other.<sup>125</sup>

By becoming the thing that it is, the object also becomes something different, in a way “more” than what it looked like at first glance. If the moment of epiphany fixes

---

<sup>122</sup> Beja, p.74. Beja claims that “the phrase ‘spiritual manifestation’ is more a figure of speech than an actual sign of religious feeling” (Beja, p.74).

<sup>123</sup> Moliterno, p.61.

<sup>124</sup> David Norris, “Epiphany as Scene of Performance”, in *A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce’s ‘Dubliners’* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), p.46. In a similar way, Scarlett Baron points out that “it is not simply ocular vision that is at stake, but rather a mental, almost a metaphysical grasp of the essential, ontological nature of the scrutinized object” (Scarlett Baron, “Flaubert, Joyce: Vision, Photography, Cinema”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol 54, No 4 (Winter, 2008), p.692).

<sup>125</sup> *SH*, 213.

the object in its integrity, it also to a certain extent effaces it behind its recognition as “thing”. This does not mean that the object is catapulted again into that “void” from which it was separated at the beginning of the process, but that, recognized and defined in its internal structure and in its relationship with other objects, the object is rendered “unfamiliar”. This is precisely what Victor Shklovsky considers to be one of the purposes of art when he states that “the technique of art is to make objects unfamiliar [...] After seeing an object several times, we begin to recognize it. The object is in front of us and we know about it, but we do not see it—hence we cannot say anything significant about it. Art removes objects from the automatism of perception”.<sup>126</sup>

After Stephen’s presentation of the theory of epiphany, the clock does not, ironically, achieve its epiphany in a final moment of radiance. Finding no support in Cranly’s skeptical comments, Stephen “felt slightly awkward in his friend’s company and to *restore a mood of flippant familiarity* he glanced up at the clock of the Ballast Office and smiled: — It has not epiphanised yet, he said”.<sup>127</sup> However, Stephen’s polite self-irony and concession to Cranly’s dubiousness should not be seen as a complete failure of the theory he has just presented. As I have argued above, both subject and object are somewhat already epiphanized during the interactive activity leading to the final moment of radiance. In the process, the object already shows a potential excess which can be recognized by a gaze in which corporeal, sensible, and intelligible come together and challenge the automatisms of perception.

---

<sup>126</sup> Victor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique”, in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp.3-4.

<sup>127</sup> *SH*, 213. My italics.

## The Epiphany of Epiphanies: The Thingness of Object-Epiphanies

In the following sections, I would like to develop the idea that there are certain similarities to be drawn between the collected epiphanies and the material object at the centre of the theory of epiphany in *Stephen Hero*. This particular approach will reveal in them the same excess which is produced in the recognition of an object as “a thing”.<sup>128</sup> As the object achieving epiphany has to be considered “in relation to [the observing mind] itself and to other objects”, so the short texts named epiphanies can fruitfully be seen as units transcribed on individual pages, and in relation to the passages preceding and following them in the fictional narratives into which they are later embedded.<sup>129</sup> It is the double nature of the object-epiphany as a self-contained short snippet of dramatic or prose writing and as a potential passage in broader narratives which differentiates Joyce’s epiphanies from the notes that any author might jot down as draft material for the composition of later texts. A. Walton Litz asserts that “the epiphanies are like the artist’s *trouvailles*: their significance lies in the writer’s recognition of their potentialities, his faith that a revealing context will eventually be found”.<sup>130</sup> While I agree with this view, I believe that this is but one facet of a more dynamic process.

As the epiphanies are initially collected to fix particular moments, their significance lies in the value detected in the recorded instances. In *My Brother’s Keeper*, Joyce’s brother Stanislaus gives a hint as to what the original common

---

<sup>128</sup> Michael Sayeau claims that “if they are considered as individual pieces, these unconventional texts demand an unconventional mode of reading” (Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: The Everyday and Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (Oxford: University Press Scholarship Online, 2013), p.204).

<sup>129</sup> *SH*, 212.

<sup>130</sup> *PSW*, 159.

denominator determining their value might have been. He describes the trivial moments collected by his brother as “slips, and little errors, and gestures—mere strains in the mind—by which people betrayed the very things they were most careful to conceal”.<sup>131</sup> Befitting the broader concept of epiphany as revelation, an unexpected disclosure nested in an ordinary moment could determine the original value of the epiphanies. Subsequently, we can speculate, Joyce recognized in these “brief sketches” an aesthetic potential which led him to use them as material for his creative works.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, the fragments undergo literary treatment for an aesthetic purpose, becoming units to be potentially inserted into broader narratives.<sup>133</sup> While a wider context can sometimes make the content of the fragments more comprehensible, it usually fails to completely elucidate their meaning. Instead, what is revealed is the aesthetic potential and the linguistic richness of the fragments Joyce collected. As MacDuff points out, “for all the contextual background we can supply, [the epiphanies’] significance remains fundamentally obscure. This opacity draws attention to linguistic form”.<sup>134</sup> The full character and potential of the epiphanies can be grasped if they are

---

<sup>131</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, pp.124-5.

<sup>132</sup> Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother’s Keeper*, p.125.

<sup>133</sup> It is striking, in this respect, to read Scholes’ and Kain’s evaluation of the epiphanies. While they assert that “to call the Epiphany a ‘form’ is perhaps to dignify it beyond Joyce’s intention, since Stephen believed that “it was for the man of letters to record these Epiphanies with extreme care”, indicating that this was not a matter of artistic creation but only of apprehension and recording”, they then admit that “still there are signs that Joyce was not satisfied with mere recording, with observations such as any writer might record in a journal; rather, he seems to have attempted to give shape to the shapeless and substance to the apparently insubstantial in his Epiphanies”. (Robert Scholes, Richard M. Kain, eds., *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for ‘A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.3). In her work on epiphanies, Claude Jacquet argues that Joyce’s epiphanies “are not simple annotations. The epiphanies have an elaborate form and different versions which are testimony to [a] writing process” (Claude Jacquet, “James Joyce: Quelques Épiphanies du Monde Extérieur”, in *Cahiers Victoriens et Édouardiens Vol.14: Studies in Early Joyce*, ed. François Laroque and Pierre Vitoux (October 1981), p.72. My translation). Similarly, MacDuff analyses the draft of the epiphany recording a conversation between Gogarty and The Assistant (epiphany 40 in *PSW*) to point out that “Joyce did not simply transcribe a real conversation: the use of stage directions, speech headings, and lineation create a dramatic sketch, and revisions such as ‘while’ for ‘as’ (presumably for assonance) and the phonetic extension of ‘Ye-es’ reveal the pains Joyce took to construct its effects” (MacDuff, p.56).

<sup>134</sup> MacDuff, p.51-2.

considered as well-defined entities, “definitely constituted”, and dynamic texts that can be placed in relation with others. Inserted into a broader narrative, the epiphany still remains a fragment, but one hidden in plain sight.

As has been suggested, the same idea might be applied to the actual object in the process of epiphany. The “thing” that the object becomes reveals the object as something more than what it was assumed to be. Itself and something more, the object presents the same latency and potentiality which defines the literary epiphany. In *Other Things*, Brown claims that

[t]hingness is predicated as a kind of misuse value. By *misuse value* I mean to name the aspect of an object—sensuous, aesthetic, semiotic—that becomes palpable, legible, audible when the object is experienced in whatever time it takes for an object to become another thing.<sup>135</sup>

The “thingness” emerging from the relation between subject and object goes beyond mere functionality to touch on those aspects—“sensuous, aesthetic, semiotic”—which are normally disregarded in a purely functional dynamic. In this respect, both the Ballast Office clock and the events collected as epiphanies are not used but “*misuse[d]*”, experienced as something different than when engaged with as part of an everyday routine. Both are taken from the everyday context in which they appear to be exposed to textual sites involving new aesthetic possibilities. Thus, they are re-evaluated and “misappropriated”.<sup>136</sup> They remain the same while being transformed into something different, recognized as they had not been before, becoming those “other things” which make their latency emerge. It is precisely this latency which shows

---

<sup>135</sup> Brown, *Other Things*, p.51.

<sup>136</sup> This accords with Beja’s definition of the epiphany as a manifestation which is “out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it” (Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, p.18).

forth their “sensuous, aesthetic, semiotic” value in the process of epiphany, and makes the beholder reconsider what he or she had assumed a particular object to be.

### **The Material Sensitivity of Epiphanies**

In most of the epiphanies collected by Joyce, the language employed by the author in his recording attempts to create a strong link between the material world of objects and the realm of subjective emotions and ideas, between the “world without” and the “world within”, exemplifying the relation between subject and object which is suggested in the theory of epiphany.<sup>137</sup> Several of the epiphanies present what can be termed a material sensitivity, which brings together the material object and the subjective sensitivity. On the one hand, emotions and immaterial traits acquire a more physical dimension, as they are embodied in material objects and physical substances. People hear in the “sorrowful howl” of a dog the “utterance of their sorrow that had now its voice”, while “silence is cloven by alarm as an arrow” and “errors of men go up before them forever as dark vapours”.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, material things are often personified, acquiring emotional features. A town becomes a “wary lover whom no caresses move”, turning “from dreams to dreamless sleep”, while the dancing of a boy “falls again to earth in tremulous sobbing”.<sup>139</sup> The sea “is uneasy, charged with dull anger like the eyes of an animal which is about to spring”, and “gigantic mists are marching” as if they were an army.<sup>140</sup> As roads stretch their arms and ships narrate their tales (“the white arms of roads, their promise of close embrace,

---

<sup>137</sup> Weir, p.40. In his book, Weir recognizes that “epiphany involves some correspondence, or mediation, between the world without and the world within” (Weir, p.40).

<sup>138</sup> *PSW*, 168, 187, 189.

<sup>139</sup> *PSW*, 187, 183.

<sup>140</sup> *PSW*, 188, 197.

and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations”), the human body is transformed, dancing, into “a spider wheeling amid space, a star”, and the eyes of a girl “revealed her—secret, vigilant, an enclosed garden—in a moment”.<sup>141</sup>

A similar treatment of subjects and objects can be distinguished in the broader narratives into which the epiphanies are inserted in subsequently authored texts. Almost all of the passages in which one of the original epiphanies appears, more or less modified according to the individual case, present poignant occasions of exchange between subjects and objects.<sup>142</sup> When placed in the context of *Stephen Hero*, the epiphanies are typically preceded or followed by an instance of personification: “Dublin would lay a sudden hand upon his shoulder”, “the room was tired of games”, “the sunless dusk enwrapped him”.<sup>143</sup> As these examples show, the inanimate seems to come to life in the moment preceding or following an epiphany, creating a particular preamble or sequel to the epiphanic moments themselves.<sup>144</sup> In fact, such personifications do not appear as simple renderings of objects, places, and climate in human form, but convey the impression of an external world interacting with the subject. Hence, Stephen “could feel about him and above him the hopeless house and the decay of leaves”, “cemeteries revealed their ineffectual records to him”, “the rain brought him charity”.<sup>145</sup> It appears as if the “gropings of a spiritual eye” are

---

<sup>141</sup> *PSW*, 190, 183, 184.

<sup>142</sup> See Natali for an analysis of how the actual epiphanies have been slightly or heavily modified when included in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of the Artist*.

<sup>143</sup> *SH*, 38, 42, 162. A total of 12 epiphanies amongst the surviving ones are embedded in the narrative of *Stephen Hero*.

<sup>144</sup> Epiphanies 8, 12, 19 are framed by the quotes given above.

<sup>145</sup> *SH*, 162, 184.

counterbalanced, in the moments preceding or following the epiphanies, by the “wild gaze of the world”.<sup>146</sup>

The passage preceding one of the most dramatic and enigmatic epiphanies gathered in Joyce’s collection and reused in *Stephen Hero* offers a particularly powerful image. In the epiphany 19, Mrs. Joyce interrupts the piano-playing of her son to ask whether he has any knowledge of the body as “there’s some matter coming away from the hole in George’s stomach”.<sup>147</sup> Used in *Stephen Hero* as the passage immediately preceding Stephen’s sister’s death, the reemployed fragment is introduced by graphic images which set the tone for the epiphany which follows. It is as if the house, the piano, the weather, and the general evening atmosphere were participating in the drama of the epiphanized fragment:

[t]he chords that floated towards the cobwebs and rubbish and floated vainly to the dust-strewn windows were the meaningless voices of his perturbation and all they could do was flow in meaningless succession through all the chambers of sentience.<sup>148</sup>

Presented through free indirect discourse, an air made of oxygen and music gives expression to the character’s feeling, drifting purposelessly through those rooms and spaces, both spiritual and material, which are endowed with perception, the capacity to feel things (“chambers of sentience”). Subjects’ emotions, introducing the moment of epiphany, assume a corporeality of their own through the medium of music. Not only the “meaningless voices of his perturbation”, but also “[t]he vision of all those failures, and the vision [...] of congenital lives shuffling onwards amid yawn and howl” are stirred by the music of the piano, as “about him hung the shadow of decay, the

---

<sup>146</sup> *SH*, 183.

<sup>147</sup> *PSW*, 179.

<sup>148</sup> *SH*, 162.

decay of leaves and flowers, the decay of hope”.<sup>149</sup> These expressions, laid out before the moment of epiphany, seem to create precisely that “conjunction of subject and object” which Goldberg recognizes in the theory of epiphany itself, climaxing in the actual moment of epiphany, the moment when Stephen’s “soul commingled itself with the assailing, inarticulate dusk”.<sup>150</sup> As Scarlett Baron claims, the “interweaving of outer world and inner mind is central to Stephen’s conception of the role of the artist as expressed at the beginning of *Stephen Hero*. ‘The artist’, Stephen therein declares, stands ‘in the position of mediator between the world of his experience and the world of his dreams’”.<sup>151</sup> This dynamic, I believe, is as present in *Stephen Hero* as it is in the epiphanies.

If, as the examples above have shown, this intertwining is rendered through the particular treatment of objects and emotions, it is also reached with the help of words which navigate both physical and mental spaces at once. In epiphany 5, a distinction is first established between inner and outer physical spaces: “firelight in the narrow room: dusk outside”.<sup>152</sup> This well delineated physical space begins to blur by the end of the epiphany, as the narrator “wander[s] among the coals, among the ways of adventure”, as though leaving the well-defined physical space of the house to stroll in the imagination of his mind.<sup>153</sup> “Coals” is a key word here, the link between outer material space and the inner realm of the mind. Undoubtedly a reminder of the “firelight” mentioned at the beginning of the fragment, the enigmatic image of a person walking among coals finds a wider resonance in the description of the mind offered by

---

<sup>149</sup> *SH*, 162.

<sup>150</sup> Goldberg, p.214. *SH*, 162.

<sup>151</sup> Scarlett Baron, *Strandentwining Cable: Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.38. Quote from *SH*, 77.

<sup>152</sup> *PSW*, 165.

<sup>153</sup> *PSW*, 165.

Stephen in *A Portrait*. The mind apprehending the “whatness” of a thing “when the aesthetic image is first conceived in his imagination” is for Stephen “the mind in that mysterious instant Shelley likened to a fading coal”.<sup>154</sup> Thus, onto the first and most immediate impression of the coal fuelling the fire is superimposed the image of more insubstantial, mental coals among which the character “Jim” is free to wander and think about the “ways of adventure”.<sup>155</sup> In “A Defence of Poetry”, Shelley claims that “the mind in creation is a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness”.<sup>156</sup> In the essay, examining the role and impact of poetry within society, Shelley gives an account of perception which bears striking similarities to the one conceived by Stephen.<sup>157</sup> Poetry, according to Shelley,

reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to *feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.*<sup>158</sup>

As in the epiphanic process, where the mode of perception and observation of the subject has to be radically recast, Shelley’s creative process changes the way in which the artist is able to approach and consider the world. In both cases, the ability to recognize the “wonder of our being” is strictly linked with the ability of seeing the world from a different perspective, to see it anew, stripped of its familiarity, beyond the “recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration”.

---

<sup>154</sup> P, 231.

<sup>155</sup> PSW, 165.

<sup>156</sup> Percy Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry”, in *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, ed. Donald H Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp.503-4.

<sup>157</sup> In a recent article titled “Joyce Adapting Shelley: The Social Function of Lyric Form”, Tess McNulty analyses in more depth the influences that Shelley’s “Defence of Poetry” had on Joyce. See Tess McNulty, “Joyce Adapting Shelley: The Social Function of Lyric Form”, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.41, No.2 (Winter, 2018), 23-41. Ashton Nichols’ *The Poetics of Epiphany* highlights the similarities between Stephen’s definition of epiphany in *Stephen Hero* and Shelley’s “most delicate and evanescent of moments”. According to Nichols, “Joyce imported Shelley’s ideas directly into his own theory of epiphany” (Nichols, p.104).

<sup>158</sup> Shelley, p.505-6. My italics.

## Chapter 1 Part 2: Words as Things

An analysis of some of the passages from Joyce's epiphanies has shown the double nature of the "object-epiphany", appearing simultaneously as the recording of past events, dreams, or conversations, but also, to borrow the term used by Delville, as small "prose-poems" which are composed and collected, and thus subjected to that "misuse value" which brings their "sensuous, aesthetic, semiotic" aspects—to reprise Brown's triad—to the fore.<sup>159</sup> The language used in some of the epiphanies is able to create an initial connection between "the world within" and "the world without", inviting a reconsideration of the relation between subject and object similar to that generated in the moment of epiphany. A further examination of Stephen's more general ideas of language will reveal how words themselves are approached in a way that asks the reader to reconsider the significance, value, and effects of the most basic units of communication.

### The Value of Words

At the beginning of the surviving manuscript of *Stephen Hero*, Stephen makes two relevant comments on the value of words. One of them foreshadows the theory of epiphany as presented at the end of the manuscript, while the other draws a significant distinction between "the literary tradition" and "the market-place".<sup>160</sup> Anticipating what he will affirm at the beginning of the theory of epiphany, Stephen admits that "his mind

---

<sup>159</sup> See Delville, p.7. The same terminology is used by A. Walton Litz in the introduction to Joyce's epiphanies in *PSW*. Litz divides Joyce's epiphanies into "dramatic scenes, often with place indications and stage directions, and rhythmical prose-poems" (*PSW*, 158).

<sup>160</sup> *SH*, 27.

[...] was often hypnotised by the most commonplace conversation. People seemed to him strangely ignorant of the value of the words they used so glibly”.<sup>161</sup> As common objects are epiphanized—through a process which leads to the reappraisal of their value and, consequently, an awareness of their potential—so the value of words needs to be reconsidered, as their semantic potentialities are acknowledged. The contrast between Stephen’s “hypnotised” mind and the “ignorance” of other people points not only to the heightened sensibility of the artist in the making, but also recalls the difference between concentrated vision and distracted glimpse in the description of the clock’s epiphany. Once again, it is not a question of radically modifying the impressions received from the external world, but of “adjusting the [beholder’s] focus” in such a way as to make manifest the “significance of trivial things”—in this case, bringing out the aesthetic value of words heard in a trivial context. This idea seems confirmed by Stephen’s other thought on the value of words:

[w]ords, he said, have a certain value in the literary tradition and a certain value in the market-place — a debased value. Words are simply receptacles for human thought: in the literary tradition they receive more valuable thoughts than they receive in the market-place.<sup>162</sup>

The idea of the “market-place” as antithetical to the “literary tradition” is particularly striking and, aside from Stephen’s contemptuous elitism, can be illuminating to understand Stephen and Joyce’s approach to words. The term “market-place”, supposedly standing for those “commonplace” conversations in which people use words in a “strangely ignorant” way, highlights how words are often employed as mere exchangeable goods whose value is “debased”. In this context, words form part of a process of exchange which sees them “used so glibly”—abundantly but shallowly. It

---

<sup>161</sup> *SH*, 26.

<sup>162</sup> *SH*, 27.

is when apprehended as part of the literary tradition that words are vested with their “full value”, a value which, contrasting the logic of the “market-place”, is also to some extent a “misuse value” which surpasses the mere functionality of communication.<sup>163</sup> In her analysis of the exchange between Stephen and the dean of studies in *A Portrait*, Walkowitz reflects on the distinction made by Stephen, concluding that the “market-place” represents the “most familiar use” and “banal designation” of words, while literary tradition allows for a use of words “enlivened by thought”.<sup>164</sup> This idea reminds us of the process of de-familiarization at work in the theory of epiphany, and in the transmutation from object to “thing”. Moreover, Walkowitz’s definition brings us back to another important aspect of Stephen’s reflection on words, the idea that “words are simply receptacles for human thought”.<sup>165</sup> Such a description is particularly helpful in understanding Stephen’s view of words, as well as their relation to both the subjects using them and the objects described by them.

### **Words as Receptacles: Etymology and the Thingness of Words**

In his article “Words and the Murder of Things”, Peter Schwenger employs Brown’s distinction between “objects” and “things” to reflect on the ways in which words cause things to become objects, as they are changed from something that cannot be fully determined, to something that is accurately named and subjected to

---

<sup>163</sup> *SH*, 28.

<sup>164</sup> Walkowitz, p.70.

<sup>165</sup> *SH*, 27. Sylvain Belluc sees in Stephen’s definition of words as “receptacles of human thought” the influence of Richard Trench, an Anglican minister who was “often at pains to stress that in each word is encapsulated a deep thought whose preservation in language expanded the store of humanity’s knowledge” (Sylvain Belluc, “Characters’ Lapses and Language’s Past: Etymology as Cognitive Tool in Joyce’s Fiction”, in *Cognitive Joyce*, ed. Sylvain Belluc and Valérie Bénéjam (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), p.89).

human knowledge and mode of representation.<sup>166</sup> In his attempt to prove that words might not “definitely annihilate [the] thing”, Schwenger claims that “either it is argued that words *are* things, partaking in their solidity and presence, or else material things are hollowed out by an awareness that they can never be seen as anything but signifiers in a psychic space”.<sup>167</sup> Words start becoming things when their materiality is recognized, when they are seen not as mere signs, but as entities whose own history, form and relation to other words have as much of a role as the meaning they might try to convey.<sup>168</sup> If “conventional language and habits of perception proceed in parallel toward a facile familiarity that contributes to the death of the thing”, the full value of words in aesthetic contexts might help to bring that thing back, while also highlighting the “thing-like aspect” of words.<sup>169</sup> Schwenger’s argument features allusions to Roman Jakobson’s *Language in Literature*, in which the linguist asserts that verbal signs function poetically “when the word is felt as a word and not as a mere representation of the object being named [...] when words and their composition, their meaning, their external and inner form acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality”.<sup>170</sup> Stephen’s conception of words in the “literary tradition” seems to develop along the same lines, as words are considered as more than mere signs employed in the process of communication. At the same time, the description of

---

<sup>166</sup> While Schwenger does not cite Brown, the distinction between “objects” and “things” in his essay presents affinities with that offered by Brown in “Thing Theory”. Schwenger grounds his own distinction between things and objects more directly in Martin Heidegger’s *What is a Thing?* (1962). The object is that which is represented by a subject, while the thing maintains its independence from the subject.

<sup>167</sup> Peter Schwenger, “Words and the Murder of Things”, *Critical Enquiry*, Vol.28, No.1, Things (Autumn, 2001), p.102.

<sup>168</sup> Offering a synthesis of Schwenger’s main argument, Steven Connor points out that “words, though traditionally thought of as effecting the murder of the thing, also offer a kind of redemption in that words are also things, or can be induced to display a thing-like aspect themselves” (Steven Connor, “Thinking Things”. Available online: <<http://www.stevenconnor.com/thinkingthings/>>, [Last Accessed 18/02/2021]).

<sup>169</sup> Schwenger, p.102.

<sup>170</sup> Roman Jakobson, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.378.

words as “receptacles for human thought” aptly conjures an image of words at the intersection between the world of things and the realm of the subjective mind. Stephen’s definition of words tries to bridge the either/or established by Schwenger, recognizing that words have a particular origin and history, as testified by their etymology; but also aware of the necessary connection existing between these external entities and the internal thinking of human beings. In this context, words, as receptacles and vessels, appear as things which do not simply denote and name, but “gather” thoughts, helping to step out of the circuits of the “market-place” and defamiliarize not only the object but also perception itself.

Stephen’s idea of and approach to words is reminiscent of two paramount aspects of Martin Heidegger’s essay “The Thing”, originally delivered as a lecture at the Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste in 1950. In the essay, Heidegger attempts to define what constitutes the “thingness” of a jug. First, the philosopher recognizes that the jug is a thing, as opposed to an object, because it is “something self-sustained, something that stands on its own”.<sup>171</sup> While it is undeniable that the jug has been created, its nature and function are not a consequence of the material out of which it was made, but of the void within which allows the jug to become a holding vessel. As he states, “the vessel’s thingness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but in the void that holds”.<sup>172</sup> It is this empty space which allows the holding and the outpouring “for which the jug is fitted as a jug”. Having identified the thingness of the jug as a kind of gathering, Heidegger retraces the original Old High German

---

<sup>171</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.166.

<sup>172</sup> Heidegger, p.169.

meaning of the word “thing” (*das Ding*) precisely as gathering. At this point, Heidegger recognizes a potential objection to his reasoning:

[i]t might look as though the nature of the thing as we are now thinking of it had been, so to speak, thoughtlessly poked out of the accidentally encountered meaning of the Old High German *thing* [...] The notion becomes established and is already current that, instead of giving thought to essential matters, we are here merely using the dictionary. The opposite is true. To be sure, the Old German word *thing* means a gathering, and specifically a gathering to deliberate on a matter under discussion [...] but dictionaries have little to report about what words, *spoken thoughtfully*, say. The truth then, here and elsewhere, is *not that our thinking feeds on etymology, but rather that etymology has the standing mandate first to give thought to essential content involved in what dictionary words, as words, denote by implication.*<sup>173</sup>

The words contained in dictionaries may appear as a collection of neutral entries which can be easily appropriated to name and denote objects and concepts, a series of entities used functionally like objects exchanged in the “market-place”. However, when etymology is brought into play, it becomes apparent that a complex history lies behind their most common everyday denotation.

Etymology studies the ways in which words receive and gather thought, and the gradual modifications in their dictionary definitions. In *Cognitive Joyce*, Sylvian Belluc considers etymology as a “cognitive tool deposited in language itself to further readers’ understanding and perception, and shedding light on each reader’s individual store of knowledge”.<sup>174</sup> Like receptacles for thought, words, as Heidegger’s jug once

---

<sup>173</sup> Heidegger, p.175. My italics. Bill Brown compares Heidegger’s essay with Ernst Bloch’s description of a jug in *The Spirit of Utopia* (1921). According to Brown, Bloch’s description of the co-participation between the body of the perceiver and the thing perceived contrast Heidegger’s “metaphysical thingness”. The difference between Bloch and Heidegger “lies most obviously in Bloch’s narrated patience to stare ‘long enough’ at an object described in detail, in contrast to Heidegger’s etymologically derived assertion that the thing gathers earth, deities, and mortals” (Bill Brown, “Materialities of Modernism: Objects, Matter, Things”, in *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2013), p.291-92). Stephen’s conception of the value of words and interest in etymology in *Stephen Hero* seems aligned with Heidegger’s “metaphysical thingness”. However, Bloch’s idea that he becomes “richer, more present, cultivated further toward myself by this artefact that participates in me” will find resonances in *A Portrait* (Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.9, quoted in Brown, p.292).

<sup>174</sup> *Cognitive Joyce*, p.21.

recognized as a thing, present that void which can gather and contain. Thus, they can start to be considered as things themselves, entities with a history of which the subject is potentially unaware. The approach to words as things simultaneously helps to counteract the “murder of things” which words normally enact. When we become aware of the etymological history of words, we not only start conceiving of them in their materiality, as entities with a history, but also become conscious that the familiarity with which we employ words—that familiarity which “contributes to the death of the thing”—is nothing more than the debased value of the “market-place”. The gathering enacted by etymology does not fix words to a particular meaning but opens them to a panoply of different uses and understandings which, in turn, reconfigure the way in which things are conventionally seen and rendered. In *Joyce Effects*, Derek Attridge discusses the new conception of etymology that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century as “a reaction against the speculative, ‘metaphysical’ etymology of the earlier part of the century”.<sup>175</sup> Rather than being considered as a field of study aiming for the “discovery of ultimate origin”, etymology became invested with the role of “trac[ing] the history of change as something interesting for its own sake. The sounds and shapes of words, like those of zoological and botanical species, are physical entities subject to the vicissitudes of time and space”.<sup>176</sup> This new conception of etymology presupposes a novel approach to words, now considered as material entities that change and evolve over time.

From a very early stage of his writing career, Joyce shows not only an interest in etymology but a belief in the interrelation between the history of words and the

---

<sup>175</sup> Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.71.

<sup>176</sup> Attridge, *Joyce Effects*, p.71.

history of humanity. As early as 1899, he claims, in “The Study of Languages”, that “in the history of words there is much that indicates the history of men”.<sup>177</sup> Stephen, who in *Stephen Hero* is described as “read[ing] Skeat’s *Etymological Dictionary* by the hour”, is similarly fascinated by etymology.<sup>178</sup> According to Stephen Whittaker, “Joyce represents Stephen’s early concerns with etymology as part of a larger concern for the mysterious reality beneath or behind the quotidian appearances of language and history”.<sup>179</sup> Right after his comments on the value of words, Stephen goes hunting for words, extracting them from the banality of the “market-place”—the circuits of the familiar—and investing them with “more valuable thoughts”:

[i]t was not only in Skeat that he found words for his treasure-house, he found them also at haphazard in the shops, on advertisements, in the mouths of the plodding public. He kept repeating them to himself till they lost all instantaneous meaning for him and became wonderful vocables. He was determined to fight with every energy of soul and body against any possible consignment to what he now regarded as the hell of hells — the region, otherwise expressed, wherein everything is found to be obvious.<sup>180</sup>

Before starting to collect trivial moments, Stephen seems intent on collecting words “for his treasure-house”. Finding them in Skeat’s *Etymological Dictionary* and in the commonest of places, he tries to store them safely for potential future use. The first step in this attempt is a practice of repetition which, instead of making a word familiar, shatters its instantaneous (“market-place”) meaning, making it “senseless”. The loss of “instantaneous meaning” does not obliterate the word but regenerates it. Fighting against the obvious seems the first move entailed by Stephen’s bid to make the complexity of the word shine forth, to recognize it as a “wonderful vocable”, making space within it for the gathering of new thoughts and meanings. While this mechanism

---

<sup>177</sup> *OCPW*, 15.

<sup>178</sup> *SH*, 26.

<sup>179</sup> Stephen Whittaker, “Joyce and Skeat”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.2 (Winter, 1987), p.178.

<sup>180</sup> *SH*, 30.

will be fully deployed only in *Finnegans Wake*, Stephen's early attempts to prime words for their redeployment in literary contexts is noteworthy. Joyce starts this process as early as *Stephen Hero* and the epiphanies, and gradually emphasizes the materiality of language with wordplays and compounds in *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*.<sup>181</sup>

### **Relation and Ratio as Rhythm**

The style of some epiphanies which have been defined as "lyrical" displays a certain reciprocity between words and thoughts.<sup>182</sup> In these epiphanies, which express dreams or "a memorable phase of the mind itself", words are "enlivened by thought" and placed in a context in which their familiar meaning can expand—in which new connections and associations can be created on the page and in the mind of the reader.<sup>183</sup> These fragments will reveal how thoughts and words might be related through rhythm.

The concept of rhythm, expressed by Joyce as early as February 1902 in his essay "James Clarence Mangan", is developed in the "Paris Notebook", where it is defined as "the first or formal relation of part to part in any whole or of a whole to its part or parts, or of any part to the whole of which it is a part".<sup>184</sup> According to Baron, this definition evidences Joyce's interest in the broader significance of the notion of

---

<sup>181</sup> According to Whittaker, "Joyce has represented Stephen's quest after wonderful vocables in *Stephen Hero* as a plausible commencement of his own lifelong pursuit" (Whittaker, p.179).

<sup>182</sup> See *PSW*, 158-9. Epiphanies 20 to 34 as well as 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 37, 39 are normally considered lyrical epiphanies.

<sup>183</sup> Walkowitz, p.70.

<sup>184</sup> Paris Notebook, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1903. *OCPW*, 103. For a detailed evolution of the term and its classical roots, from Joyce's early writings to *Ulysses*, see Jackson L. Cope, "The Rhythmic Gesture: Image and Aesthetic in Joyce's *Ulysses*", *ELH*, Vol.29, No.1 (March 1982), 67-89.

rhythm, which he considers to be “a structural relation, a function of the relations of parts, or units, to the greater whole of which they are part”.<sup>185</sup> While the word “rhythm” is not specifically used in Stephen’s theory of epiphany, the “relation of part to part in any whole” is a concept which can be directly linked with the apprehension of an object, recognized as “*that* thing which it is” when “the relation of the parts is exquisite”.<sup>186</sup> The epiphanies present a relation of part to part similar to the one described in the epiphanic process. In the epiphanies the rhythm to be identified pertains to the relation between the words inscribed on the page, the atmospheres or things described, and the sensations stirred by them in the observing subject. The importance of rhythm in relation to words expands the conception of words as receptacles for thoughts. If words taken singly are considered as the vessels of human thoughts, words rhythmically disposed encompass both thoughts and the realm of emotions. As Stephen claims, “I know a few elementary things and I express them in words. I feel emotions and I express them in rhyming lines”.<sup>187</sup> When considered in their rhythmic arrangement, words build a relation with the subject which does not simply aim at signifying ideas, but that tries to involve both the mental and sensible faculties of the artist.

In his early experiments with poetry, Stephen

sought in his verses to *fix the most elusive of his moods* and he put his lines together not word by word but letter by letter [...] and even permuted and combined the five vowels to construct cries for *primitive emotions* [...] Stephen [...] strove to pierce to the significant heart of everything.<sup>188</sup>

---

<sup>185</sup> Scarlett Baron, “Joyce and the Rhythm of the Alphabet”, in *New Quotatoes: Joycean Exegesis in the Digital Age*, ed. Ronan Crowley and Dirk Van Hulle (Boston: Brill, 2016), p.26.

<sup>186</sup> *SH*, 213.

<sup>187</sup> *SH*, 176.

<sup>188</sup> *SH*, 32-3. My italics.

This early explanation of his work as an artist elucidates the importance of rhythm, defined by the combination not only of words but of single letters, in the attempt to express the feelings of the writer. Words—on Stephen’s working hypothesis—might be able to “construct cries for primitive emotions”, sidelining the need to make “sense” in favour of expressing “sensation”.<sup>189</sup> In this respect, “rhythm is the esthetic result of the senses, values and relations of the words thus conditioned”.<sup>190</sup>

### **Lyrical Epiphanies as “Memorable Phases of the Mind”**

In *A Portrait*, lyrical form is explicitly linked with the notion of rhythm as expressive of emotions and sensations. According to Stephen, “the lyrical form is in fact the simplest verbal vesture of an instant of emotion, a rhythmical cry such as ages ago cheered on the man who pulled at the oar or dragged stones up a slope”.<sup>191</sup> Slightly paraphrasing the “cries for primitive emotions” which the protagonist of *Stephen Hero* tried to render through the combination of the five vowels, Stephen conceives of the lyrical form as a mode facilitating the inscription of those external stimuli stirring the subject. This form, defined in the “Paris Notebook” as “the form wherein the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself”, seems able to

---

<sup>189</sup> Timothy O’Leary considers sensation as “experience in its raw form [...] our experience is not simply a matter of passive recording, but is a product of our active engagement with the world” (Timothy O’Leary, “The Perils of Experience: Sensation in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”, in *Literature and Sensation*, ed. Anthony Uhlmann, Helen Groth, Paul Sheehan, Stephen McLaren (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp.91, 94).

<sup>190</sup> *SH*, 25.

<sup>191</sup> *P*, 180.

create a rhythm which intensifies the relation between inner realm and external realities.<sup>192</sup> Once again, Stephen's definitions present clear Shelleyan undertones.

In the first part of "A Defence of Poetry", Shelley focuses on the importance of the rhythms and relations built into poetic language and language in general. Starting with the definition of man as "an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven", Shelley focuses on the ways in which the "savage" of primitive times "expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects" through voice and motions, so that "language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his apprehension of them".<sup>193</sup> "In the youth of the world", Shelley continues,

men dance and sing and imitate natural objects, observing in these actions, as in all others, a certain rhythm or order [...] Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations have always been found connected with a perception of the order of the relations of thoughts.<sup>194</sup>

Using strikingly similar terminology, Joyce seems to give textual form to Shelley's theories as he attempts to render the rhythms of thoughts and perceptions in his lyrical epiphanies. The "discontinuous rhythm of consciousness" inscribed on the page is the result of a subjective mind which does not try to express itself logically but sensually, by means of senses enlivened by those external realities with which it enters into contact. Its rhythm is expressed through words, as well as through those outward gestures which seem to embody the "rhythm of consciousness".<sup>195</sup> Thus, the rendering of dreams and scenes in the lyrical epiphanies does not so much aim at conveying

---

<sup>192</sup> *OCPW*, 103.

<sup>193</sup> Shelley, p.481.

<sup>194</sup> Shelley, p.481.

<sup>195</sup> In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen clarifies his own understanding of gesture in contrast to that of "elocution professor[s]". As he explains to Cranly, for them "a gesture is an emphasis. I mean a rhythm". (*SH*, 184).

their meaning, but at expressing the movements and the sensations they trigger on the observer. As MacDuff points out, Joyce's lyrical epiphanies

create memorable images and impressions through carefully wrought poetic language [...] they have the rhythmical and musical qualities of Joyce's lyrics; they can be compared to prose poems that make use of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, rhythm, and the techniques of repetition and variation.<sup>196</sup>

In his analysis of Joyce's "Giacomo Joyce", Delville notes that "the paratactic relationships between and within the prose blocks of 'Giacomo'" give the writer and the reader the freedom to "reproduce the syncopated jolts of the perceiving consciousness, longing for no other form of subjective or narrative coherence than that of the movements of the mind itself".<sup>197</sup> Such a remark can be applied to the early epiphanies, where narrative coherence is replaced by a syntactical movement which seems capable of representing the "movements of the mind itself".

Analyzing some of the lyrical epiphanies, Michael Sayeau convincingly shows that these fragments are often devoid of any clear meaning, stressing that "while it is tempting to argue that Joyce's epiphanies *must mean something*—that is, the scenes must bear within them some deeper significance—close attention to individual examples proves just the opposite".<sup>198</sup> In order to prove the cryptic nature of the lyrical epiphanies, Sayeau centres his analysis on their rhythm and on their repetitive, often aimless and circular movement. Defined by its rhythm, and by the polysemy of certain words, the language of the dream epiphanies seems unable to fulfil its primary function of conveying a precise meaning.<sup>199</sup> If Sayeau wonders "what exactly *to do* with texts

---

<sup>196</sup> MacDuff, p.62.

<sup>197</sup> Michel Delville, "'At the Centre, What?' *Giacomo Joyce*, Roland Barthes, and the Novelistic Fragment", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.36, No.4 (Summer, 1999), p.777.

<sup>198</sup> Sayeau, p.202.

<sup>199</sup> Sayeau notes that epiphanies "are defined by a substitution of repetition for significance, static busyness for developmental progression", and that they "shrug off the task of productive signification". Sayeau, pp.197-8.

such as these—texts that refuse significance from the start in exchange for the repetitive, the empty, and the absurd”, I see the particular character of these fragments as a way in which Joyce begins to blur the boundaries between internal and external realities.<sup>200</sup> While it undermines the logical sense of the epiphanies, the rhythm achieved through repetitions, ellipses, and the absence of straightforward meaning (especially in the dream epiphanies), helps to connect the feelings and sensations of the subjects with an environment which does not simply surround, but seems partly to constitute them. Rather than being composed with a clear narrative in mind, which would see the development of an action from a beginning, through a middle, to an end, these fragments are defined by the rhythmic alternation of pauses and repetitions which connect words and link the internal and external spheres.

For instance, epiphany 20, one of the three concerning the death of Joyce’s little brother, uses repetitions and pauses to create a rhythm consonant with the mood and emotion expressed in the fragment:

[t]hey are all asleep. I will go up now.....He lies on my bed where I lay last night: they have covered him with a sheet and closed his eyes with pennies....Poor little fellow! We have often laughed together — he bore his body very lightly....I am very sorry he died. I cannot pray for him as the others do.....Poor little fellow! Everything else is so uncertain! <sup>201</sup>

Pauses, marked by ellipses, separate the different moments which constitute the epiphany: a minimal description of the situation, a snapshot of the dead body, a short remembrance of the past, the feelings of the “I”, and the final cry of sorrow and uncertainty besides death. Rather than offering an exhaustive description of the

---

<sup>200</sup> Sayeau, p.202.

<sup>201</sup> PSW, 180.

situation, the several parts of the epiphany are suggestive of an emotion, underpinned by the repetition of the emphatic cry “Poor little fellow!”.<sup>202</sup>

In epiphany 3, communication happens mainly through movement and gesture. The children in the epiphany are warned that they are getting the last tram by the horses which “know it and shake their bell to the clear night in admonition”.<sup>203</sup> Two conversations take place, and both of them are defined not by the words exchanged, but by the movements of the speakers: the conductor and the driver “nod[ding] often in the light of the lamp”, while the girl to whom the narrator is speaking, in the movement which more than any other defines the rhythm of the epiphany, moves up and down the step of the tram.

She comes up to my step many times and goes down again, between our phrases, and once or twice remains beside me, forgetting to go down, and then goes down...Let be; let be.... And now she does not urge her vanities — her fine dress and sash and long black stockings — for now (wisdom of children) we seem to know that this end will please us better than any end we have laboured for.<sup>204</sup>

While the conversation which accompanies the motion of the girl is not revealed, her movement is not simply described but seems to be conveyed through the medium of pauses and repetitions. The rhythm is articulated by the words “go down”, which is repeated three times and always followed by a pause mimicking the movement occurring “between our phrases”. Another rhythmical repetition separating the motion of the girl and the final sentence of the epiphany arrests the movement: “...Let be; let be...”. Divided by a semicolon and enclosed within ellipses, the invitation is expressed but not explained, acquiring importance not in virtue of its meaning, but because of its

---

<sup>202</sup> PSW, 180.

<sup>203</sup> PSW, 162.

<sup>204</sup> PSW, 163.

repetition and position. The word “end” at the close of the epiphany also remains unexplained. Repeated twice in the final sentence, the word is left to resonate in all its ambiguity, the reader lacking sufficient information to infer what it denotes.

In epiphany 8, the time of the fragment is dictated by the movement and noises of a dog, which produce both the rhythm and the atmosphere of the scene: “[f]rom time to time he lifts his muzzle in the air and utters a prolonged sorrowful howl”.<sup>205</sup> The dog’s periodic lamentation, taken by William Martin to be a “rhythmic gesture”, determines the movement of the people around him, causing some to “stop to look at him and pass on” while “some remain, arrested”.<sup>206</sup> On top of that, the cry of the dog rings in tune with the general atmosphere of the epiphany, generated by the recurrence of words such as “sorrowful”, “lamentation” and “sorrow”, and by the mention of the “dull clouds” which, menacing at the beginning of the epiphany, release rain at the end of it. The choice to describe the clouds as “dull” is particularly interesting, as the adjective encompasses a multiplicity of meanings which can be related to the scene. If limited to the description of the clouds, the word most likely denotes something “not clear or bright; cheerless, gloomy, overcast” (*OED*). Several different layers can be added to this first designation, connecting the clouds to other elements in the epiphany. Sometimes referring to “a state approaching gloom, melancholy, or sadness” (*OED*), the word allows the clouds to be related to the sorrowful howl of the dog and the people. Finally, the word can describe something “sluggish”, linking the atmospheric condition of the sky with the “swampy beach” on which the scene takes place. Thus, “dull” exemplifies the way in which rhythm, as a

---

<sup>205</sup> *SH*, 168.

<sup>206</sup> William Martin, *Joyce and the Science of Rhythm* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), p.21. *SH*, 168.

relation of part to part, is created not only through sounds and repetitions, but also through connections created on a semantic level, linking the sensations of the subject and the elements of the depicted scene.

In several other epiphanies, semantic ambiguity fosters connections between human and nonhuman beings, all the while creating a particular sound and rhythm. For instance, in epiphany 25 a group of girls moves “with the prattle of trim boots and the pretty rescue of petticoats, under umbrellas, a light armoury, upheld at cunning angles”.<sup>207</sup> In this short description, words are linked by more than simple alliteration on the letters “p” and “r”. The author’s choice of adjectives fosters a comment which pertains to more than their exterior looks and attire. “Prattle” connects the sound of moving boots on the wet ground with the chatter of the girls who wear them. In a similar way, the adjectives “pretty”, to define the action of the petticoat, and “cunning”, to describe the angles of the umbrella, communicate something about the girls as much (if not more) as they do about their garments. An analogous effect is produced through the description of the convent as a space of “demure corridors and simple dormitories, a white rosary of hours”.<sup>208</sup> This time, the word “rosary” catches the attention, potentially referring to the Catholic prayer to the virgin Mary and to a display of roses. While the first denotation could clarify the expression “rosary of hours”, linking the monotonous passing of time with the litany of repeated Hail Mary, the second denotation echoes the “shrub” on which raindrops hang like “a cluster of diamonds”. Thus, the correspondence between the different words creates a description encompassing the religious and botanical dimensions.

---

<sup>207</sup> *SH*, 185.

<sup>208</sup> *SH*, 185.

Epiphany 32 points to another aspect of the dream fragments which emphasizes their rhythmic composition: the almost exclusive use of simple, continuous and present participle tenses. In the epiphany, an assemblage of several activities—the passing of a woman (“[a] fat woman passes [...] her face nozzling in an orange”), the tricks of a young man (“[a] pale young man [...] does tricks in his shirtsleeves”), the charging of a policeman (“a policeman in heavy boots charges down”), the shouting of book makers (“[b]ookies are bawling out names and prices”)—bear no apparent relation to each other.<sup>209</sup> The “dull” characters perform their inconsequential and disparate actions in an “enclosure” characterized by “slush” and “thick ooze”.<sup>210</sup> It is as if the epiphany itself is stuck in the same mud, congealing, much like the “human crowd” and the “human creatures”, into what Sayeau calls “participial standstill”.<sup>211</sup> Contrasting this stagnant movement is the “beautiful brown horse, with a yellow rider upon him” which “flashes far away in the sunlight”.<sup>212</sup>

Commenting on one of final diaries entry in *A Portrait* (an adapted version of epiphany 30), Martin points out that

when Stephen enters thoughts in a more poetic style, the tense of the verb is dropped, and a rhythmic correspondence is established between the sound of the words and the train of images [...] Stephen’s thoughts are now directly *presented* in a language that is freed from the hierarchies of grammar and syntax that characterize traditional narrative forms.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>209</sup> *PSW*, 192.

<sup>210</sup> *SH*, 192.

<sup>211</sup> Sayeau, p.201.

<sup>212</sup> *SH*, 192.

<sup>213</sup> Martin, pp.140-1. “The spell of arms and voices — the white arms of roads, their promise of close embraces, and the black arms of tall ships that stand against the moon, their tale of distant nations. They are held out to say: We are alone, — come. And the voices say with them, We are your people. And the air is thick with their company as they call to me their kinsman, making ready to go, shaking the wings of their exultant and terrible youth” (*PSW*, 190).

A similar process is at work in the dream epiphanies themselves, where thoughts and consciousness are presented through a pattern of “rhythmic correspondences”, as epiphany 6 clearly exemplifies. The epiphany describes “[a] small field of stiff weeds and thistles alive with confused forms, half-men, half-goats”.<sup>214</sup> The actions of these pseudo-mythological creatures are expressed through the use of participial form. They move about the narrator, “[d]ragging their great tails”, “clasping about his body”, “enclosing [him]”, “sharpening their eyes to cruelty”, “swishing through the fields in slow circles”, “thrusting upwards their terrific faces”.<sup>215</sup> Sayeau has noticed that “the climax of the epiphany gets stuck here in a screeching participial holding pattern”, as “these participials seem unable to give away to a finite action, an end of the story”.<sup>216</sup> Undoubtedly, the several participials in the epiphany convey the monotonous, slow, and circular movement of the “confused forms” which menace the narrator without ever attacking him. The verbs also give rise to a phonetic rhythm. “Clasping”, “enclosing”, “sharpening”, “swishing”, “thrusting”: the verbs of the epiphany circle around sibilant and liquid sounds, while the “-ing” endings of these participials produce a recurring internal rhyme.<sup>217</sup> The recurrence of the letters “s” and “i”, in particular, generates a fluidity and insidiousness of movement which finds its outcome in the repeating sounds rather than in the ultimately inconsequential movements of the creatures.

Repetition, freedom from “hierarchies of grammar and syntax”, and a proliferation of meaning thus create a rhythm which does not exclusively involve sounds but can be considered as a structural relation between words, as well as

---

<sup>214</sup> PSW, 166.

<sup>215</sup> PSW, 166.

<sup>216</sup> Sayeau, pp.200-1.

<sup>217</sup> PSW, 166.

between the sensations and thoughts of the subject and the objects and atmosphere he or she beholds.<sup>218</sup> In these early writings, words begin to emerge as things, probing the boundaries between subject and object, building a relation of parts which encompasses both. The movements of mind and external realities become one in the rhythm of these texts.

A consideration of Stephen's early theory of epiphany and Joyce's own collected epiphanies has shown how Joyce strives to establish a different relation between words, subjective mind, and material objects from the very beginning of his writing career. Through the theory of epiphany and techniques used in the composition and collection of epiphanies, Joyce explores the potential link between "inner" and "outer" realms. While in subsequent works such as *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* Joyce would move more explicitly towards the representation of his characters' consciousness, the rendering of the mind remains tied to the representation of material entities and continues to involve the treatment of words as things and not as simple referential tokens.

---

<sup>218</sup> Martin, p.140.

## Chapter 2: From *Stephen Hero* to *A Portrait*

### A Subjectivity Based on the Theory of Epiphany

The theory of epiphany is often considered as a juvenile experiment which did not find a place in Joyce's subsequent works because of the absence of the term "epiphany" from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. While the aesthetic theory as presented in *Stephen Hero* is maintained and expanded in Joyce's radical reworking of his unpublished novel, what is arguably its key term is dropped altogether. This absence, however, should not be taken as a sign that the theory and practice of epiphany are irrelevant to Joyce's first published novel.<sup>219</sup> The exclusion of the term "epiphany" does not involve the discarding of the concepts underlying the theory or the idea of the stages of apprehension which defined it. What seems to be brought into question is the specific moment of revelation, "the moment I call epiphany", that "sudden spiritual manifestation".<sup>220</sup>

Dirk Van Hulle has noticed "a discrepancy between Stephen's abstract definition of the epiphany and his concrete example" in *Stephen Hero*.<sup>221</sup> According to Van Hulle, the inconsistency pertains to the implausible temporality set out in the definition, which appears in stark contrast with the long process involved in the example Stephen gives. While the epiphany is described as a "sudden manifestation", the epiphanization of the Ballast Office clock requires a lengthy procedure demanding repeated encounters with the object and the adjustment of vision "to an exact focus".<sup>222</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup> Joyce's decision to incorporate up to thirteen known epiphanies into *A Portrait* is the first sign of a certain degree of continuity.

<sup>220</sup> *SH*, 213, 211.

<sup>221</sup> Dirk Van Hulle, "Author's Libraries and the Extended Mind: The Case of Joyce's Books", in *Cognitive Joyce*, p.71.

<sup>222</sup> *SH*, 211.

In his analysis, Van Hulle quotes Scott Berkun, who claims that “the effect of the epiphany is comparable to the completion of a jigsaw puzzle. The last piece of the puzzle may seem more significant than the others, because it marks the epiphanic moment, but this effect is only due to the pieces that have been put into place before”.<sup>223</sup> In *A Portrait*, if we follow this metaphor, Joyce continues to assemble a puzzle with a method embedded in the theory of epiphany without ever putting into place the last piece, that radiant moment of completion. The focus shifts from the suddenness of the moment to the procedure leading up to it. While the term is discarded, an omission whose consequences will be further analyzed in the following chapter, *A Portrait* continues to chart the work of mediation between internal and external spheres begun in the epiphanies, and develops an idea of subjectivity which seems to be built on some of the key concepts underlying the theory of epiphany.

### **An Evolving Concept of Subjectivity**

The final form of Joyce’s semi-biographical novel suggests a drastic change in the author’s approach to the subjectivity he sought to present in his work. Joyce gradually abandons the original plan of writing 63 chapters “numerologically related to the periods of life of a man”, in favour of five chapters giving a much more distilled account of the same life.<sup>224</sup> One of the keys to understanding this radical revision might be traced to the author’s conception of artistic subjectivity, and is to be found in “A

---

<sup>223</sup> Scott Berkun, *The Myths of Innovation* (Sebastopol: O’Reilly Media, 2010), p.8. Quoted in *Cognitive Joyce*, p.71.

<sup>224</sup> Gabler, “The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*”, p.3.

Portrait of the Artist”, the 1904 essay which, as Gabler has shown, can be considered a crucial moment in the shift from *Stephen Hero* to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.<sup>225</sup>

Originally submitted for publication to the Dublin review *Dana*, the essay was turned down on the grounds of its incomprehensibility.<sup>226</sup> The rejection gave Joyce an incentive to expand the piece into a novel. The essay’s importance in the development of *A Portrait* is hinted at in a note Joyce wrote to Sylvia Beach, owner of the Parisian bookshop “Shakespeare and Company” and first publisher of *Ulysses*. In the note, Joyce refers to his essay as “a sketch of the plot and characters” of the novel.<sup>227</sup> Words and sentences disseminated through Joyce’s dense and intricate composition turn out to be the seeds of what would become the published novel. Scattered through the essay are some of the themes and attitudes which prove to be central to *A Portrait*, such as the “value of religion”, “ideas of eternal damnation”, “that ineradicable egoism which [Stephen] was afterwards to call redeemer”, the “temperament ever trembling towards its ecstasy”, and the “melancholy and unrest” Stephen feels.<sup>228</sup> At the beginning of the essay, Joyce presents his conception of a developing subject, alongside the description of the kind of portrait that he wishes to present:

the past assuredly implies a fluid succession of presents, the development of an entity of which our actual present is a phase only. Our world, again, recognises its acquaintance chiefly by the characters of beard and inches and is, for the most part, estranged from those of its members who seek through some art, by some process of the mind as yet untabulated, to liberate from the personalised lumps of matter that which is their individuating rhythm, the first or formal relation

---

<sup>225</sup> See Gabler, “The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*”.

<sup>226</sup> In *PSW* John Whittier-Ferguson quotes part of the response that W.K.Magee, editor and co-founder of *Dana*, gave Joyce to reject his essay: “I handed it back to him with the timid observation that I did not care to publish what was to myself incomprehensible” (*PSW*, 203).

<sup>227</sup> Melissa Banta, Oscar A. Silverman, eds., *James Joyce’s Letters to Sylvia Beach 1921-1940* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.133.

<sup>228</sup> *PSW*, 214.

of their parts. But for such as these a portrait is not an identificative paper but rather the curve of an emotion.<sup>229</sup>

According to this quite cryptic pronouncement, the artist seeks to render the subject not through facts of physical and physiological growth (“characters of beard and inches”), as is the case in *Stephen Hero*, but through a mode of artistic scrutiny which recognizes and emphasizes the rhythms of the subject’s psychological evolution. Joyce’s idiosyncratic definition of literary portraiture seems to apply the theory of epiphany to the subject of biography, expanding the early theory to apply it to his self-appointed autobiographical task. Indeed, several elements defining the theory of epiphany are discernible in the account which opens Joyce’s essay.

The theory presented in *Stephen Hero* focused on the phases of perception through which an object can be recognized as “an organised composite structure” whose “parts are adjusted” in a particular way; similarly, the artistic rendering of subjectivity, as Joyce conceives of it in 1904, revolves around the recognition of the “first or formal relation of [the] parts” which compose those “personalised lumps of matter” defining the subject. Just as the epiphanized object is perceived in its thingness through an adjustment of focus, and thereby placed within a different circuit of apprehension, the portrait of a subject is not to be produced through a charting of his or her chronological growth, but through a focus on the relation of part to part.<sup>230</sup> This (artistic) recognition is in turn made possible “by some process of the mind as yet untabulated”. Stephen’s claim that “the apprehensive faculty must be scrutinised in action”, uttered before the enunciation of the theory of epiphany in *Stephen Hero*, is

---

<sup>229</sup> *PSW*, 211.

<sup>230</sup> *SH*, 213.

now applied to the subject itself.<sup>231</sup> The workings of the mind and the stages of perception which in *Stephen Hero* led to the moment of epiphany are still present in Joyce's novel. This time, however, the subject becomes the object of his own theory of epiphany, in a process of self-objectification in which the subject looks back at himself and scrutinizes the stages the mind undergoes in several acts of perception. Developing through a process similar to the one described in the theory of epiphany, the scrutiny of the subject's mind in *A Portrait* preserves that "correspondence, or mediation, between the world without and the world within" which characterized the early aesthetic theory.<sup>232</sup>

In the arrangement which characterizes the artist's development in *A Portrait*, the material world (world without) is in close correspondence with the mind of the subject (world within). According to Weldon Thornton, the style of the novel facilitates this mediation, as "Joyce's distinctive mode of third-person presentation undermines the subject-object distinction that Stephen would read into his experience, thus showing the superficiality of the Cartesian division between mind and matter, inner and outer".<sup>233</sup> As this division is tested and challenged, what emerges from Joyce's novel is a subject whose cognitive processes are inextricable from the realities which could be defined as external to Stephen, but that become much more than an inert environment surrounding him. In *James Joyce's 'fraudstuff'*, Kimberly J. Devlin draws a distinction between the conception and depiction of the artist in *Stephen Hero* and

---

<sup>231</sup> *SH*, 212.

<sup>232</sup> Weir, p.40.

<sup>233</sup> Weldon Thornton, *The Antimodernism of Joyce's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994, p.109). Thornton conducts a stylistic analysis of *A Portrait* and identifies inner and outer dimensions as "narrated monologues" and "narrative context" respectively. His analysis shows how the description of external facts, or "what would be sheer exposition in other novels", is very often intermingled with the description of Stephen's psyche. (See Thornton, p.124).

*A Portrait*. As Devlin points out, “in contrast with the autonomous subject of *Stephen Hero*, the subject of *A Portrait* is relentlessly dependent upon otherness—upon external figures and images—in its attempt to construct a self [...] The revised Stephen is represented as a subject penetrated by sounds, voices, and images”.<sup>234</sup>

### **From the Inward Turn to the Extended Mind**

If it is indeed “an understatement to say that Joyce is interested in cognitive processes”, the writer’s fascination becomes apparent in his first published novel. In *A Portrait*, he starts to explore the cognitive processes defining the experience of the young artist, trying to find a way to render them in written form.<sup>235</sup> The renewed attention which Joyce and other modernist writers give to the inner life of their characters might be seen as a turning away from the external realities within which the subject is located. The much debated but still widespread idea that modernism developed in stark opposition to the realist tradition of the nineteenth century contributes to this idea. As Melanie Conroy states, “the transition from realism to modernism is understood as a rupture with the “external” realities of traditional fiction: social rank and relation, description of physical objects and people”.<sup>236</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, Virginia Woolf was one of the first writers to assess these changes in fiction by differentiating between “materialist” and “spiritual” writers in “Modern

---

<sup>234</sup> Kimberly J. Devlin, *James Joyce’s ‘fraudstuff’, Florida James Joyce Series* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002), pp.8, 14. To back up his claim, Devlin quotes the following passages from *A Portrait*: “He shook the sound out of his ears by an angry toss of his head” (*P*, 147) and “The inhuman clamour soothed his ears in which his mother’s sobs and reproaches murmured insistently” (*P*, 189).

<sup>235</sup> Tim Conley, “‘Cog it out’: Joyce on the Brain”, *Joyce Studies Annual*, 2014, p.31.

<sup>236</sup> Melanie Conroy, “Before the ‘Inward Turn’: Tracing Represented Thought in the French Novel (1800-1929)”, *Poetics Today*, Vol.35, Issue 1-2 (Spring/Summer, 2014), p.119.

Novels” (1919). However, while Woolf praises writers such as Joyce for their attempt to “reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain”, this renewed interest in human psychology should not be equated with a disinterest in the external realities of the subject.<sup>237</sup> In a much-quoted passage of her essay, Woolf sees the mind as receiving “a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms”.<sup>238</sup> The task of the writer, she avers, is to “record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness”.<sup>239</sup> As they explore the intricacies of human psychology, modernist writers highlight the link between subjects and objects, interior and exterior realities.

The shift in focus from external realities to the inner life of the subject does not seem to be based on a mutual exclusion of terms, but on a more nuanced interaction between them. Even the phrase “inward turn”, often employed to characterize modernist writing and the interest it displays in the subject’s inner realm, does not in fact entail a turning away and rejection of external realities but is based on a particular relation between the two terms. In *The Inward Turn in Narrative*, wherein critic Erich Kahler first introduced the phrase, the interest in the workings of the mind does not result in a complete dismissal of external realities, but in a confrontation that leads to their integration into the inner realm of the subject. According to Kahler, “in the course

---

<sup>237</sup> Woolf, p.161.

<sup>238</sup> Woolf, p.160.

<sup>239</sup> Woolf, p.161. In *Strandentwining Cable*, Baron suggests that Joyce was familiar with Woolf’s essay as he “jotted down ‘incoherent atoms’ and ‘poverty of mind’ on a leaf of VI.B.6, and the latter enters *Finnegans Wake* almost verbatim” (Baron, p.251).

of *distinguishing and detaching the self*, the *great confrontation* begins between the inner and the outer world, between consciousness and reality”.<sup>240</sup> Kahler’s idea of an “inward turn” does not simply imply a renewed attention to the inner dimension of the self as opposed to external realities, but involves a “progressive internalization of events, an increasing displacement of outer space”.<sup>241</sup> As Kahler remarks, “man constantly draws outer space [...] into an inner space newly created by consciousness. The world is *integrated* into the ego, into the illuminated self”.<sup>242</sup> According to David Herman, the idea of an “inward turn” as conceived by Kahler rests on the premises of a Cartesian mind seen as an internal space which is entirely separated from the external world. Rather than depicting this model of the mind, modernist narratives by Joyce, Woolf, and James “allow the mind to be imagined as a kind of distributional flow, interwoven with rather than separated from situation, events, and processes in the world”.<sup>243</sup> The mind of the subject does not integrate external realities into a self-enclosed and separated entity, but is in continuous contact with them, as the separation between external and internal realities ceases to be so clear-cut.

In order to develop his argument, Herman draws on a relatively new trend in cognitive science which considers the mind as situated in and distributed among its surroundings. Questioning the Cartesian separation of mind, body, and external world, research on so-called “situated cognition” and “distributed cognition” creates a “picture of mental activity as dependent on the situation or context in which it occurs”.<sup>244</sup> According to Murat Aydede and Philip Robbins, editors of *The Cambridge Handbook*

---

<sup>240</sup> Erich Kahler, *The Inward Turn in Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.5. My italics.

<sup>241</sup> Kahler, p.5. My italics.

<sup>242</sup> Kahler, p.6.

<sup>243</sup> Herman, p.255.

<sup>244</sup> Murat Aydede, Philip Robbins, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.3.

of *Situated Cognition*, three main models of mind can be gathered under the umbrella of situated cognition. First, the embodied mind, which claims that “without the cooperation of the body, there can be no sensory input from the environment and no motor output from the agent”. Thus, “perception, thought, and action are [...] constitutively interdependent”.<sup>245</sup> The second model is the embedded mind, which sees cognition as a partial result of “causal processes that span the boundary separating the individual organism from the natural, social, and cultural environment”.<sup>246</sup> The third and most radical model is the one of the extended mind, which claims that the mind is not simply embedded in the world but “leaks out into [it]” as “cognitive activity is distributed across individuals and situations”.<sup>247</sup> What links these different models of mind together is the idea that cognition is somehow determined or affected by its surroundings, and consequently not fully or always limited to the brain. The embodied, embedded, and extended models of the mind are all built on what philosopher Andy Clark called the “porous” model of the mind, which is based on the idea that “thinking, cognizing, and feeling may all (at times) depend directly and non-instrumentally upon the ongoing work of the body and/or the extra organismic environment”.<sup>248</sup> As a consequence, “the actual local operations that make cognizing possible and that give content and character to our mental life include inextricable tangles of feedback, feedforward, and feedaround loops that promiscuously criss-cross the boundaries of brain, body, and world”.<sup>249</sup>

---

<sup>245</sup> Aydede and Robbins, p.4.

<sup>246</sup> Aydede and Robbins, p.6.

<sup>247</sup> Aydede and Robbins, p.8.

<sup>248</sup> Andy Clark, “Embodied, Embedded, and Extended Cognition”, in *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science*, ed. Keith Frankish and William Ramsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.276.

<sup>249</sup> Frankish and Ramsey, p.277.

As these models of the human mind gain traction, literary critics are beginning to detect a certain similarity between the “inextricable tangle” they describe and Joyce’s attempts to render the workings of the human mind in his writing. Herman sees a direct connection between Joyce’s writing and Clark’s theories, claiming that there is a certain “explicitness with which modernist writers like Joyce anchored world-as-experienced in what Clark terms ‘action loops’ that ‘criss-cross the organism and its environment’, thereby calling into question Cartesian geographies of the mind”.<sup>250</sup> Similarly, Dirk Van Hulle asserts that “Joyce intuited much of what in the last few decades has come to be known as ‘distributed cognition’”.<sup>251</sup> According to Van Hulle, “the extended mind theory not only applies to Joyce’s own daily practice as writer. It also applies to many of his characters”.<sup>252</sup> While Van Hulle is interested in Joyce’s compositional habits as the material of a case study of the extended mind writ large on paper, I will focus on Joyce’s *A Portrait* to consider the similarities between ideas of distributed cognition and Joyce’s depiction of Stephen’s mind. An analysis of Stephen’s interactions with inanimate entities will show the extent to which Stephen’s mind can be said to be situated in his surrounding world. The following chapter will consider embodied, embedded, and extended cognition together, addressing the “broader philosophical issues” that link these models under the broader umbrella of “situated cognition”.<sup>253</sup> According to Keith Frankish and William Ramsey, “sustained attention to embodiment and action renders the bounds of skin and skull increasingly transparent, revealing processes running through body and world as integral parts of

---

<sup>250</sup> Herman, p.260.

<sup>251</sup> Dirk Van Hulle, *James Joyce’s ‘Work in Progress’: Pre-Book Publications of ‘Finnegans Wake’ Fragments* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.3.

<sup>252</sup> Van Hulle, p.5.

<sup>253</sup> See the “Embodied Cognition” entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available online: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/embodied-cognition/>>, [Last accessed 9/11/2018].

the machinery of mind and cognition”.<sup>254</sup> As Joyce puts the artist’s personal thoughts into words, a particular type of thinking begins to emerge, one whose scrutiny reveals a subject who is emotionally and cognitively affected by the material world he inhabits.

While exploring the mind of a fictional character is different from studying the mind of a real person, there is much to be gained from approaching theories of situated cognition from a literary perspective. As Tim Conley claims, “literary criticism of Joyce may be usefully instructed by various theories of mind, and in turn the scientists and philosophers behind those theories may find that Joyce’s own expositions of mind challenge and enrich our understanding of the problem of consciousness”.<sup>255</sup> More specifically, Lambros Malafouris and Colin Renfrew point out that one of the weaknesses of the extended mind theory is that “minds are being recognized and reconfigured as dynamic embodied machinery, but remain, above all *problem-solving* machines” and “overwhelmingly computational”.<sup>256</sup> In order to overcome this limitation Malafouris and Renfrew claim that

a temporal, agentive and affective dimension must be added to the initial spatial metaphor of an inner mind that is being extended in the outside world [...] a notion of mind, even when extended, is not helpful if it does not take under serious consideration the sensual, affective, and emotional aspect of human intelligent behavior [...] the sensual properties and aesthetic experience of things are key elements here.<sup>257</sup>

---

<sup>254</sup> Keith Frankish and William Ramsey, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.288. According to Cleo Hanaway-Oakley, “Joyce was dismissive of the psychoanalytical obsession with the inner workings of the human mind; he was more interested in our immediate, sensuous comprehension of life as it is lived: ‘Why all this fuss and bother about the mystery of the unconscious? What about the mystery of the conscious?’, asks Joyce, rhetorically (in Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of ‘Ulysses’* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1934), p.320)” (Cleo Hanaway-Oakley, *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.1-2). Joyce “is concerned with showing, rather than explaining, the ‘inherence’ of the self in the world [...] he presents human engagement with the world” (Hanaway-Oakley, p.2)

<sup>255</sup> Conley, pp.27-28. The references to James Joyce in Daniel C. Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained* supports the latter hold of Conley’s claim. See Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Hachette Book, 1991).

<sup>256</sup> Lambros Malafouris, Colin Renfrews, eds., *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind* (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archeological Research), p.7.

<sup>257</sup> Malafouris and Renfrews, p.8.

Approaching theories of situated cognition in relation to a literary work provides a way to explore how the “sensual properties and aesthetic experience of things” might shape cognition. Such perspective will extend theories of situated cognition to the affective realm, considering how emotions and moods can also be influenced by and extended to the material environment.<sup>258</sup>

Overhearing “a quartet of young men [...] striding along [...] and stepping to the agile melody of their leader’s concertina”, Stephen notices how “[t]he music passed in an instant, as the first bars of sudden music always did, over the fantastic fabrics of his mind, dissolving them painlessly and noiselessly as a sudden wave dissolves the sandbuilt turrets of children”.<sup>259</sup> In the passage, music has a clear effect on the mind of the listener, a mind which is presented as something simultaneously abstract and tangible, a conglomerate of metaphorical filaments which are woven together and can be unmade by elements which are not solely cognitive.<sup>260</sup> After a general consideration of how the mind is presented in *A Portrait*, I will analyze Stephen’s approach to language. In the novel, language blurs any clear-cut boundary between internal and external dimensions and becomes one of the key elements which helps to situate the subject’s cognition in his or her material environment. In particular, Stephen’s own written experiments in the novel result in a renewal of the bond between body and mind, subject and objects. Stephen’s written compositions show how external realities

---

<sup>258</sup> In “Extending the Extended Mind: The Case of Extended Affectivity”, Roberta Colombetti and Tom Roberts argue that “proponents of ExM (extended mind) should also accept that the vehicles of emotions, moods, sentiments, temperaments, and character traits can extend beyond skull and skin”. According to Thornton, “what we are concerned with [in Joyce’s novel] is the full psychic life of the character, not just its cognitive aspect: what Joyce aims to simulate is not the *flow* of *thoughts* in Stephen’s *mind*, but the *flow* of *thought/feeling/sensation/mood* in Stephen’s *psyche*” (Thornton, p.121).

<sup>259</sup> P, 135.

<sup>260</sup> In his analysis of the “Sirens” episode of *Ulysses*, André Topia remarks that “the fluid circulation of the musical substance seems to break all barriers and to include all senses in the activity of listening” (André Topia, “Sirens’: The Emblematic Vibration”, in *James Joyce: The Centennial Symposium*, ed. Morris Beja, Phillip Herring, Maurice Harmon, David Norris (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p.79).

impact the subject's thinking, becoming a privileged site for the analysis of the "feedback, feedforward, and feedaround loops that promiscuously criss-cross the boundaries of brain, body, and world".<sup>261</sup>

### **Visions of Mind in *A Portrait***

As the "gropings of a spiritual eye" in the theory of epiphany conflated the physical and the mental, *A Portrait* sketches a picture of a mind which is not separated from the physical body of the subject, but is in constant interaction with it.<sup>262</sup> According to Colleen Jaurrette, "Joyce employs a philosophical model that suggests that the perceiving mind accommodates both the physical and the mental, the rational and the non-discursive at the same time".<sup>263</sup> This particular conception helps to redefine the boundaries not only of the subject—considered as a union of body and mind in which thoughts and sensations are strongly interconnected—but also of the subject and the inanimate matter by which he or she is surrounded.

From the beginning of the novel, the action of thinking is associated with bodily feelings and sensations. After being interrogated by his fellow students as to whether he "kisses his mother every night before he goes to bed", young Stephen "felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment" as he wonders "[w]hat was the right answer to the question?".<sup>264</sup> Stephen's reaction makes no distinction between the physical

---

<sup>261</sup> Frankish and Ramsey, p.277.

<sup>262</sup> *SH*, 211. Joyce stresses the interaction between body and mind in relation to later works. Talking about the characters of *Ulysses*, Joyce asserts that "if they had no body they would have no mind" (qtd. in Frank Budgen *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'*, (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1934), p.21).

<sup>263</sup> Colleen Jaurrette, *The Sensual Philosophy: Joyce and the Aesthetics of Mysticism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), p.65.

<sup>264</sup> *P*, 11.

result of embarrassment and the confusion felt for not knowing what answer would forestall laughter. Similarly, throughout the first chapter Stephen's thinking, or inability to think, elicits in him a series of bodily reactions. While thinking about God and the universe wearies him ("[i]t made him very tired to think that way. It made him feel his head very big"), the idea that he cannot understand politics produces pain ("[i]t pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended").<sup>265</sup> On both occasions, Stephen feels "small and weak", as ignorance and physical effort seem to have the same effect on him.<sup>266</sup> If thinking about the cold sheets makes him shiver ("[h]e shivered to think how cold they were first"), the process of day-dreaming about "marshals who had received their deathwound on battlefields far away over the sea" brings about "cold and strange" sensations ("O how cold and strange it was to think of that!").<sup>267</sup> His response to Mr. Tate's accusation of having "heresy in his essay" is imagined in both interior and exterior terms as "he was conscious [...] of the squalor of his own mind and home".<sup>268</sup> The unpleasant emotional state of "failure" and potential shame translates into epidermal irritation, as Stephen feels "the raw edge of his turned and jagged collar" against his neck.<sup>269</sup> In another instance, the mental act of remembering and the somatic act of touching are brought together: "the pressure of her fingers had been lighter and steadier: and suddenly the memory of their touch traversed his brain and body like an invisible warm wave".<sup>270</sup> In order to re-experience E.C.'s touch, Stephen complements the mental act of remembering with a haptic gesture ("he rested the tips of the fingers of one hand upon

---

<sup>265</sup> p, 13.

<sup>266</sup> p, 6, 13.

<sup>267</sup> p, 13, 15.

<sup>268</sup> p, 66.

<sup>269</sup> p, 66.

<sup>270</sup> p, 69.

the palms of the other hand”), simultaneously reconjuring sensations of mind and body.<sup>271</sup>

Not only are the workings of mind and body closely linked, but thoughts are often associated with or considered in relation to the surrounding material environment. In the attempt to reconcile his sinful predispositions with his Christian devotion, to murmur prayers with “lips whereon there still lingered foul and shameful words”, Stephen tries “to think how it could be but the dusk, deepening in the schoolroom, covered over his thoughts”.<sup>272</sup> Thus, the inability to think clearly seems to come as a consequence of the dimming of natural light.<sup>273</sup> According to John Gordon, Stephen Dedalus is an “agent of a mind forever ramifying through the cumulative trial-and-error processing of external environment”.<sup>274</sup> As Gordon remarks,

that the mind was a labyrinth had become a commonplace by Joyce’s day, inspired in part by surgery’s exposure to the brain’s ‘convulsions’ and the microscope’s detection of the tree-like (‘dendrite’, ‘cortex’) branching of its nerves. There was nothing surprising about a one-time medical student like Joyce adopting such a model [...] What does set him apart is his attention to and demonstration of its dynamics, of how it grows into being.<sup>275</sup>

In *A Portrait*, Joyce repeatedly shows how Stephen’s brain “is not shut up in some hardened container [...] The mergings and mutations that typify Stephen’s crucial encounters with experience are [...] a business less of penetration than of interpenetration, dynamically managed through variously permeable surfaces”.<sup>276</sup> For instance, as he listens to Father Arnall’s “Hell sermon” in Chapter 3, Stephen is so

---

<sup>271</sup> p, 69.

<sup>272</sup> p, 88.

<sup>273</sup> Thornton analyses the passage in which Stephen observes the dean of studies lighting a fire as an example of “the inextricability of outer and inward”, emphasizing in italics “those images and metaphors that are engendered in Stephen’s mind by the public objects and events of the scene before him” (Thornton, p.125).

<sup>274</sup> Gordon, p.5.

<sup>275</sup> Gordon, p.5

<sup>276</sup> Gordon, p.7.

affected by the words of the Jesuit father that “[h]is brain was simmering and bubbling within the cracking tenement of the skull”.<sup>277</sup> Faced with nightmarish visions of everlasting fire, Stephen turns the metaphorical image of burning in hell into a sensation affecting his mental faculties. This sensation is expressed through another metaphor—the vision of a brain “simmering and bubbling” as if burned by fire. In a constant oscillation between outward and inward, literal and metaphorical, Stephen develops memories, thoughts, and emotions through a process which blends mind, body, and world, attesting to a mind which is embodied and situated in the subject’s surroundings.<sup>278</sup> It could be argued that Stephen repeatedly attempts to detach himself from the material world around him, as he tries to find refuge in a purely internal mental state. As Archie Loss claims, “Stephen seeks to shelter himself from outer life so that the inner life of the imagination may flourish”.<sup>279</sup> However, even in moments when Stephen expresses the wish to retreat into a solipsistic shell, this inward movement does not seem to be entirely possible. Faced with the economic and social decay of his family, Stephen admits that “[h]e had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without it and to dam up [...] the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Useless. From without as from within the water had flowed over his barriers”.<sup>280</sup>

---

<sup>277</sup> P, 105.

<sup>278</sup> As Esther Thelen points out, “to say that cognition is *embodied* means that it arises from bodily interactions with the world and is continually meshed with them. From this point of view, therefore, cognition depends on the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with particular perceptual and motor capacities that are inseparably linked and that together form the matrix within which memory, emotion, language, and all other aspects of life are meshed”. (Esther Thelen, “Grounded in the World: Developmental Origins of the Embodied Mind”, *Infancy*, Vol.1, No.1 (January 2000), p.5).

<sup>279</sup> Archie K. Loss, *Joyce's Visible Art: The Work of Joyce and the Visual Arts 1904-1922*, (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984), p.2.

<sup>280</sup> P, 82.

Philosopher John Haugeland advances the idea that “the primary division is not into mind, body, and world, but rather into ‘layers’ that cut across these in various ways”.<sup>281</sup> In the novel, Stephen’s actions and feelings similarly encompass mind, body, and landscape, creating different layers of interaction with his surrounding environment. The description of a walk through the city of Dublin confirms this criss-crossing: “[t]he rainladen trees of the avenue evoked in him, as always, memories of the girls and women in the plays of Gerhart Hauptmann; and the memory of their pale sorrows and the fragrance falling from the wet branches mingled in a mood of quiet joy”.<sup>282</sup> Stephen’s mood is generated by an intricate layering of mental, physical, and material elements. In this fashion “[h]is morning walk across the city had begun”. Stephen mentally sketches out a known itinerary which encompasses the material layout of the city and a literary representation:

he foreknew that as he passed the sloblands of Fairview he would think of the cloistral silverveined prose of Newman, that as he walked along the North Strand Road, glancing idly at the windows of the provision shops, he would recall the dark humour of Guido Cavalcanti and smile, that as he went by Baird’s stonecutting works in Talbot Place the spirit of Ibsen would blow through him like a keen wind.<sup>283</sup>

Stephen is not overwriting the physical presence of Dublin with a purely imaginary and romanticized space, drawing outer space into his own inner space as Kahler imagined in his description of the modernist “inward turn”. Rather, he is mixing urban and literary surfaces and rhythms, employing material views to recall literary styles, while using literary styles to determine his path. According to Tony Thwaites, “this Stephen, striding across Dublin, is interpenetrated by words, by places [...] In place of a Stephen

---

<sup>281</sup> John Haugeland, *Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.219.

<sup>282</sup> p, 147.

<sup>283</sup> p, 147-8.

who in his passage lays claim to Dublin, we have a Stephen traversed by the city, and across whose very body Dublin will write itself".<sup>284</sup> Stephen's artistic development is marked by a similar process.

### **The Material Language of *A Portrait***

In the previous chapter I started to consider the relation between words and thoughts by focusing on Stephen's conception of words as "receptacles for human thought" in *Stephen Hero*.<sup>285</sup> As early as the first draft of his novel, Joyce emphasizes words' tight relation to his protagonist's mental processes while simultaneously stressing their material qualities. According to Andy Clark, in order to understand the implication of language in the subject's thinking process, it is necessary to go from a vision of "words and sentences as items apt only for translation into an inner code to seeing them as inputs (whether externally or internally generated) that drive, sculpt, and discipline the internal representational regime".<sup>286</sup> In *A Portrait*, Joyce conveys this shift as words are not considered to be mere mental constructs, but are approached as if they were material objects in their own right. Words are a source for physical, mental, and emotional response in the subject as they create those "feedback, feedforward, and feedaround loops that promiscuously criss-cross the boundaries of brain, body, and world".<sup>287</sup>

---

<sup>284</sup> Tony Thwaites, *Joycean Temporalities: Debts, Promises, and Countersignatures* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), pp.122-3.

<sup>285</sup> *SH*, 27.

<sup>286</sup> Andy Clark, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.53-4.

<sup>287</sup> Frankish and Ramsey, p.277.

Critics and readers responded to the unusual intensity of the novel's language from its publication in 1916. Several early reviewers commented on its direct, unsettling effect, noting how "coarse, unfamiliar words are scattered about the book unpleasantly", remarking that "certain phrases would be intensely repugnant to some readers", and that "even [Joyce's] most casual descriptions haunt the mind by their vividness. What he sees he can reproduce in words with a precision as rare as it is subtle".<sup>288</sup> In the novel, words are rarely simple denotative entities which can be cast aside once their meaning is understood by the reader or the character. Rather, they become constitutive of mental and physical states. As R.B. Kershner remarks, "Stephen not only thinks but perceives in phrases and sentences".<sup>289</sup> Throughout the novel, Stephen explores the variety of literal and symbolic meanings of words, ponders on their texture and consistency as he wonders about their colours and marvels at their beauty. As they occupy the mind of the character, their meaning gradually changes and develops, modifying the subject's perceptions of events as it does so. According to Kershner, "at each significant stage in the development of Stephen's consciousness, he undergoes a period of painful sensitivity to 'raw' language, language that seems in some respect to lack denotation".<sup>290</sup> Stephen's "mind buzzes with borrowed expressions, languages which he tries on like suits of clothing".<sup>291</sup> Conley claims that "the structural schema of maturation" of *A Portrait* displays the way in which "language is stuff that grows and lives".<sup>292</sup> Maud Ellmann similarly draws

---

<sup>288</sup> Robert H. Demin, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage Vol.1* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970), pp.85-9.

<sup>289</sup> R.B. Kershner, "The Artist as Text: Dialogism and Incremental Repetition in Joyce's Portrait", in *Critical Essays on James Joyce's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'*, ed. by Philip Brandy and J.F. Carens (New York: G.K. Hall, 1998), p.234.

<sup>290</sup> Kershner, "The Artist as Text", pp.233-4.

<sup>291</sup> Kershner, "The Artist as Text", pp.233-4.

<sup>292</sup> Tim Conley, "Language and Languages", in *James Joyce in Context*, ed. John McCourt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.315. Other critics underscoring the materiality of language in Joyce's work include

attention to the generative effects language has in Joyce's novel, showing how it "does not seek to express, represent, reconstitute or describe 'experience' or 'reality' but constructs it".<sup>293</sup> Language is both refashioned by the subject and part of that material reality the subject observes—an object amongst objects, positioned in a hybrid space where interior and exterior realities meet. It becomes a means to situate cognition across the physical body and the material environment. "Coming to grips with our own special cognitive nature", Clark claims,

demands that we take very seriously the material reality of language: its existence as an additional, actively created, and effortfully maintained structure in our internal and external environment. From sounds in the air to inscriptions on the printed page, the material structures of language both reflect, and systematically transform, our thinking and reasoning about the world. As a result, our cognitive relation to our own words and language defies any simple logic of inner versus outer.<sup>294</sup>

In *A Portrait*, Stephen enters more or less consciously into continuous contact with sounds and inscriptions, gradually developing a relationship with language which will in turn determine his way of thinking and acting in the world. During his walks through the streets of Dublin, language is for Stephen a source of wonder, as the words of "every mean shop legend" are "silently emptied of instantaneous sense until [they bind] his mind like the words of a spell".<sup>295</sup> Stephen does not stop at one single meaning or abstract definition but approaches words as things to be interpreted. As Kershner states, "as Joyce's narrative presents the process of Stephen's consciousness, the

---

Guillemette Bolens, who claims that "the physicality of language is of crucial importance in Joyce's art" (*The Style of Gestures* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012), p.190), and Winston Weathers who remarks that Stephen "establishes a language wherein the word has become matter. He establishes a vocabulary of words as physical things, shapes, and forms" ("A Portrait of Broken Words", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.4 (Summer, 1964), p.34.)

<sup>293</sup> Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 189-206.

<sup>294</sup> Clark, p.59.

<sup>295</sup> p, 150.

formation of 'vertical' relationships (between the outer world and his own psyche) is suggested by the boy's mulling upon the universe of given words and phrases".<sup>296</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, describing a game of football young Stephen is desperately trying not to get too involved in, the narrator tells us that he

kept his hands in the sidepockets of his belted grey suit. That was a belt around his pocket. And belt was also to give a fellow a belt. One day a fellow had said to Cantwell:

— I'd give you such a belt in a second.

Cantwell had answered:

— Go and fight your match. Give Cecil Thunder a belt. I'd like to see you. He'd give you a toe in the rump for yourself.

That was not a nice expression. His mother had told him not to speak with the rough boys in the college.<sup>297</sup>

This passage exemplifies a common transition in the first chapter of the book, from action to object, from object to word, from word to associative memory. In thinking about his "belted grey suit", in whose pockets he seeks comfort for his cold hands, Stephen isolates the word "belt". The denotative meaning of the term, indicating a strip of material worn around the waist, is linked with the idiomatic use of the word ("I'd give you such a belt") Stephen has witnessed. The physicality of the belt around his pocket triggers a memory associated with a different meaning of the word. The passage is indicative of Stephen's ways of perceiving the world. Stephen does not attempt to understand the meaning of words by turning to their definitions but tries to unearth their significance by digging into personal experience, simultaneously employing words to bring back memories, and using those memories to understand the implications and effects of such words in his personal reality. According to Kershner, Stephen's words "are embedded in and formative of his perceptions, yet they seem to

---

<sup>296</sup> Kershner, "The Artist as Text", p.234.

<sup>297</sup> *P*, 6-7.

have a large measure of autonomy [...] They can elicit strong emotions from him, apparently through their own magic rather than through their referents; and they reveal strong associations among themselves”.<sup>298</sup> With this insight, Kershner points out the way in which words are at once autonomous and deeply embedded in the subject’s experiences. It is precisely this twofold position which allows words to have a particularly strong effect on Stephen, to restore memories which in turn redefine their potential meaning.

Another instance of Stephen’s school life, centred on his scrutiny of the word “suck”, might help to clarify this idea:

[w]e all know why you speak. You are McGlade’s suck. Suck was a queer word. The fellow called Simon Moonan that name because Simon Moonan used to tie the prefect’s false sleeves behind his back and the prefect used to let on to be angry. But *the sound* was ugly. Once he had washed his hands in the lavatory of the Wicklow Hotel and his father pulled the stopper up by the chain after and the dirty water went down through the hole in the basin. And when it had all gone down slowly the hole in the basin had made a sound like that: suck. Only louder. To remember that and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing.<sup>299</sup>

As in the example above, Stephen starts by associating the word with a lived experience in order to understand its meaning. Soon, however, the significance of the event that could explain the meaning of the word “suck” as denoting “a schoolboy who curries favour with a teacher” (*OED*), is interrupted by a shift of Stephen’s attention from meaning to sound. Seizing on a material aspect which goes beyond mere denotative function, Stephen focuses on the qualitative character the word has for him, as he remarks that “the sound was ugly”. Leaving signification aside, the word is linked

---

<sup>298</sup> R.B. Kershner., “Time and Language in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist*”, *EHL*, Vol.43, No.4 (Winter, 1976), p.607.

<sup>299</sup> *p.*, 8-9.

to the not-so-pleasant experience of seeing dirty water going down the drain. In turn, the memory of the white lavatory brings back the feelings of hotness and coldness which Stephen relates to the action of turning the “hot” and “cold” taps of the basin. Similarly to the ugly sound of “suck”, the labels “hot” and “cold” printed on the taps seem to have a direct role in the sensations produced by the water, as the being “hot and then a little cold” is linked with the visual experience of “the names printed on the cocks”. In both instances, words become connotational rather than denotational. To borrow the words of cognitive scientist and linguist Didier Bottineau, language seems to be “reconsidered in terms of sensorimotor interactions with an environment”, as words are “reconstructed from a phenomenological point of view”.<sup>300</sup> “[S]trongly affected by the word’s physical, acoustic properties” as he is, Stephen re-evaluates the meaning of the word against the events of his life, highlighting the effects that language in its phonetic materiality, and not as a simple collection of abstract symbols, has on him.<sup>301</sup> Producing particular responses resulting from the union of signifying potential and personal experience, language becomes “*instrumental in constituting reflexive consciousness*: it [...] enabl[es] to match immediate, *actual experience* against the [...] sensations and actions retained from previously recorded *virtual experience*”.<sup>302</sup>

---

<sup>300</sup> Didier Bottineau, “Language and Enaction”, in *Enaction: Toward a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science*, ed. John Steward, Olivier Gapenne, Ezequiel A. Di Paolo (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2010), p.267, 281.

<sup>301</sup> Attridge, p.133.

<sup>302</sup> Bottineau, p.282. Interestingly, the passage quoted above has the ability to initiate this process both in Stephen and in the reader. Not only does “suck”, according to Stephen, have an ugly sound, but it is also a “queer word”. While the word “queer”, as Vincent J. Cheng points out, did not have “its current slang meaning” until the 1920s, the presence of words such as “suck”, “queer”, and “cocks” in the passage has become, for the modern reader, suggestive of homosexual undertones. Cheng asserts that “there is something unnamed, perhaps even unspeakable, haunting the margins of the young boy’s discourse. As Stephen’s thoughts run on through the next two paragraphs—to memories of public restrooms and hot and cold ‘cocks’ (with ‘cocks’ a slang term for the penis back into the early seventeenth century)—suck comes to seem a queer word indeed, and the example of Simon Moonan, ‘fagging’ for both his teacher and other students, is Stephen’s first premonition of the abjection of homosocial desire (‘suck’, after all, is associated in Stephen’s mind with the

A similar process is in evidence when Stephen reflects on the expression “Tower of Ivory”—part of the “litany of the Blessed Virgin” recited at the end of the Catholic rosary. While he acknowledges the religious context from which the idiom originates, Stephen links the epithet to a much more personal experience, attempting to understand the meaning of the words through the bodily sensations and qualities they suggest:

Eileen was a protestant and when she was young she knew children that used to play with protestants and the protestants used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin. *Tower of Ivory*, they used to say, *House of Gold!* How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold? Who was right then? [...] Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing tig she had put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*.<sup>303</sup>

Stephen links the expression “Tower of Ivory” to the feelings produced by the touch of Eileen’s hands, forging a personalized definition based on remembered bodily sensations rather than on the epithet’s mystical signification. A similar reasoning is reiterated a couple of pages later, as Stephen reflects once more on Eileen’s hand in relation to the word “ivory”:

Eileen had long thin cool white hands too because she was a girl. They were like ivory; only soft. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory* but protestants could not understand it and made fun of it. One day [...] [s]he had put her hand into his pocket where his hand was and he had felt how cool and thin and soft her hand was. She had said that pockets were funny things to have: and then all of a sudden she had broken away and had run laughing down the sloping curve of the path. Her fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun. *Tower of Ivory. House of Gold.* By thinking of things you could understand them.<sup>304</sup>

---

image of dirty water draining out of a basin)” (Vincent J. Cheng, “Terrible Queer Creatures”, in *James Joyce European Studies 11 James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity*, ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie (Amsterdam: Brill, 2001), pp.143-4). Similarly, Joseph Valente claims that “through the repeated use of terms like suck, queer, cocks, and so forth, [the passage] establishes a psychosymbolic association among Stephen’s developing fever, his long-standing fascination with and aversion to standing water and waste, and an embryonic homosexual possibility and panic” (Joseph Valente, “Thrilled by His Touch: Homosexual Panic and the Will to Artistry in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.50, No.1-2 (Fall 2012/Winter 2013), p.228).

<sup>303</sup> p, 29.

<sup>304</sup> p, 35-6.

In the passage, the actual meaning of “Tower of Ivory” is once more “explained” through the recollection of a lived experience. Finding the meaning of expressions, “thinking about things” in order to understand them, is for Stephen a cognitive experience which is far from abstract. By remembering Eileen’s “long thin cool white hands” and her “fair hair”, Stephen folds symbolic expressions such as “Tower of Ivory” and “House of Gold” into physical attributes. In so doing, he shows once more how language can generate bodily sensations which in turn suggest the ascription of meaning to words, in a process of speculative trial-and-error which mobilizes mental and bodily experiences at once.

In Chapter 5 Stephen thinks again about the word ivory, which “now shone in his brain, clearer and brighter than any ivory sawn from the mottled tusks of elephants. *Ivory, ivoire, avorio, ebur*”.<sup>305</sup> While the reference to the “mottled tusk of elephants” embeds the word “ivory” in its organic source, Stephen seems to discard the colour and sensations which defined the word for him in Chapter 1 to take a more abstract approach. Nevertheless, his responsiveness to the Latin etymology of the word via its French and Italian forms is simply another way to underline its materiality. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Stephen’s attitude towards etymology focuses on the evolving forms and sounds of words and follows a new conception of the study of words developing at the end of the nineteenth century. Having in childhood been led by visual and tactile sensations, this older Stephen focuses his attention on sounds. Right before the word ivory “shines in his brain”, Stephen “glanc[es] from one casual word to another on his right or left in stolid wonder that they had been so silently emptied of instantaneous sense until every mean shop legend bound his mind like the words of

---

<sup>305</sup> P, 150.

a spell”.<sup>306</sup> Stephen approaches the word “ivory” through a similar process. Rather than focusing on its “instantaneous sense”, he evokes the word in different languages and emphasizes the sounds of its etymological evolution. According to Kershner, Stephen’s approach to words in this passage turns them into “unsignifying objects hovering between ‘reality’ and his mind”.<sup>307</sup> Stephen moves beyond the primary meaning of the words he sees and recognizes the power that the conglomeration of letters we call words can have independently from their signification. As Peter Schwenger nicely puts it, “abandoning the senses in which we usually apprehend them, individual words emerge with a material intensity they have not had, perhaps, since one’s first encounters as a child with words on a page”.<sup>308</sup> The realization of this material intensity which Stephen grasps by looking at shop legends, moves from his mind back to the words from which it originated, as “his own consciousness of language was ebbing from his brain and trickling into the very words themselves which set to band and disband themselves in wayward rhythms”.<sup>309</sup> Released from the necessity of signifying something and being “translated into an inner code” which might help identify their meaning, words acquire an almost independent vigour, as they “bind his mind” and seem to, in Clark’s phrase, “drive [his] internal representational regime”.<sup>310</sup> In so doing, words “move according to their own logic and time”<sup>311</sup> and start guiding Stephen in the composition of a set of rather childish verses:

*The ivy whines upon the wall  
And whines and twines upon the wall  
The ivy whines upon the wall  
The yellow ivy on the wall*

---

<sup>306</sup> p, 150.

<sup>307</sup> Kershner, “Time and Language”, p.614.

<sup>308</sup> Schwenger, pp.104-5.

<sup>309</sup> p, 151.

<sup>310</sup> Clark, *Supersizing*, p.54.

<sup>311</sup> Thwaites, *Joycean Temporalities*, p.132.

*Ivy, ivy up the wall.*<sup>312</sup>

Reminiscent of the “Pull out his eyes/Apologise” rhyme at the beginning of the novel, and anticipating the villanelle which Stephen will compose later in the chapter, the verses unfold guided by the sounds of the words, rhythmically moving from ivy to ivy, from wall to wall. The verses direct in turn Stephen’s thoughts as he wonders “[d]id any one ever hear of such drivel? Lord Almighty! Who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall? Yellow ivy: that was all right. Yellow ivory also. And what about ivory ivy?”.<sup>313</sup> Stephen explores the different associations of the words in question, going back and forth between meaningful and meaningless arrangements. Although the fact that the expressions “whining ivy” or “ivory ivy” have no counterparts in the real world may suggest a movement towards abstraction, Stephen’s attention to the material quality of the words seems to suggest otherwise.

Earlier in the novel, Stephen had reflected on his relation to words, bringing together the two different approaches to language which explain his understanding and use of the word “ivory”. Towards the end of Chapter 4, as he thinks about the phrase “[a] day of dappled seaborne clouds”, Stephen reflects that:

[t]he phrase and the day and the scene harmonised in a chord. Words. Was it their colours? He allowed them to glow and fade, hue after hue: sunrise gold, the russet and green of apple orchards, azure of waves, the greyfringed fleece of clouds. No, it was not their colours: it was the poise and balance of the period itself. Did he then love the rhythmic rise and fall of words better than their associations of legend and colour? Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of language many coloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose?<sup>314</sup>

---

<sup>312</sup> p, 150.

<sup>313</sup> p, 150.

<sup>314</sup> p, 140.

As he prioritizes “the poise and balance of the period itself” and the “rhythmic rise and fall of words” over their colours, Stephen seems to drop the material and “sensible world” in favour of a more internalized relation between the “inner world of individual emotions” and a correspondingly “lucid supple periodic prose”. However, Stephen’s internalization should be reconsidered in view of the intimacy it establishes between inner and outer dimensions.<sup>315</sup> The “rhythmic rise and fall of words” which composes the “supple periodic prose” appears to be as embedded in the physical experience of the body as individual words in earlier sections of the novel. As rhythm is for Stephen the “esthetic result of the senses”, the creation of a periodic prose cannot be fully detached from sensible and sensorimotor experiences, in a relationship which once more crosses the boundaries between inner and outer realms.<sup>316</sup> Right before his meditation on words quoted above, Stephen gives a clear example of this interaction, as he walks “planting his steps scrupulously in the spaces of the patchwork of the footpath, then timing their fall to the fall of verses”.<sup>317</sup> In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen rendered the metrical composition of Ariel’s song “Come unto these Yellow Sands” in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* with the movements of his arms, “making a graceful anapaestic gesture with each arm”.<sup>318</sup> Here he marks the rhythm of verses with his walking, conjoining metrical and anatomical feet and reiterating the relationship between abstract and concrete movements.

---

<sup>315</sup> According to Thornton, while “Joyce wants us to understand this exercise on Stephen’s part as an extension of his penchant for dichotomization [...] what we most value and enjoy about such phrases is precisely that they do harmonize phrase (i.e. language), and day (i.e. world) and “scene” (i.e. observer)—medium and world and mind.” (Weldon Thornton, *Antimodernism*, p.116).

<sup>316</sup> *SH*, 25.

<sup>317</sup> *P*, 138.

<sup>318</sup> *SH*, 184. In the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses* Stephen makes a similar measurement (*U* 3-10-3.17). As Conley states, Stephen “measures his steps, one after the other, as Lessing would take the measure of a poem” (Tim Conley, “Non Serviam Non Sequitur: Joyce’s ‘Sequentiality of Improbable Possibles’”, in *Errears and Erroriboose: European Joyce Studies 20*, ed. Matthew Creasy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), p.112).

## Words Inscribed

The effects that words have on Stephen, and the role they play in his cognitive processes, become even more apparent when they are inscribed on material surfaces. Throughout the novel, words are written on, and reverberate from, the most disparate and ordinary of places. Stephen's first attempt at composing a poem for Parnell is written "on the back of one of his father's second moiety notices", while his villanelle is put together "on the rough cardboard surface" of an empty cigarette packet.<sup>319</sup> Once inscribed, words become even more explicitly a part of the material world surrounding the subject and have an even stronger effect on him.

Towards the end of the second chapter, when according to Gregory Castle the "relation between concept and objects, between language and feelings, intensifies [...] when Stephen confronts words *as objects*", Stephen goes on a trip to Cork with his father.<sup>320</sup> At the beginning of the journey, Stephen cannot relate to his father's stories: "[h]e listened without sympathy to his father's evocation of Cork and of scenes of his youth [...] Stephen heard but could feel no pity".<sup>321</sup> As usual, Stephen's moods are affected by the changes in the general atmosphere around him. The "dread" felt during the night is swept away by "[t]he consciousness of the warm sunny city outside his window and the tender tremors with which his father's voice festooned the strange sad happy air".<sup>322</sup> As he walks into the anatomy theatre of Queen's College, where his father had studied, he feels "depressed more than ever by the darkness and silence of the theatre and by the air it wore of jaded and formal studies".<sup>323</sup> However, it is the

---

<sup>319</sup> p, 58, 184.

<sup>320</sup> Castle, "The Consolation of Objects", p.275.

<sup>321</sup> p, 73.

<sup>322</sup> p, 74.

<sup>323</sup> p, 75.

encounter with a written inscription that truly shapes Stephen's experience in Cork, sculpting his thinking process while it redefines his relation to his surroundings:

[o]n the desk before him he read the word *Fœtus* cut several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood: he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk.<sup>324</sup>

The encounter with the word radically changes Stephen's impression of the anatomy theatre, filling the empty and silent space with the presence of the "absent students of the college". Defining the engraving as a "textual object", Gregory Castle considers its effect as "a potent lyrical outcry from the world of objects" as "this carved fragment alters the narrative direction and utterly changes Stephen's perceptions".<sup>325</sup> The written inscription appears as a token-material proof of those stories narrated by his father. More effective than Simon Dedalus's spoken words, the word carved on the desk shakes Stephen's senses and triggers his imagination, summoning scenes which he has not witnessed in person. Stephen sees "a broadshouldered student with a moustache [...] cutting in the letters with a jackknife" while "[o]ther students stood or sat near him laughing at his handiwork".<sup>326</sup>

The written inscription seems to have an intimate relation with Stephen's thinking process, and a direct effect on his emotional state. The word cut in the wood "stared upon him, mocking his bodily weakness and futile enthusiasms and making him loathe himself for his own mad and filthy orgies".<sup>327</sup> They produce a sense of guilt similar to the one he will feel during his religious reawakening in Chapter 3 when, haunted by his "brutelike lust" for E.C., he compares the words of a priest to a knife

---

<sup>324</sup> p, 75.

<sup>325</sup> Castle, p.275.

<sup>326</sup> p, 75.

<sup>327</sup> p, 76.

“prob[ing] deeply into his diseased conscience”.<sup>328</sup> After his visit to the anatomy theatre, Stephen’s bodily and mental states find resonance in one another, as “[t]he spittle in his throat grew bitter and foul to swallow and the faint sickness climbed to his brain so that for a moment he closed his eyes and walked on in darkness”.<sup>329</sup> In his analysis of the passage, Hunter Dukes asserts that the letters carved on the desk “mediate the way in which Stephen views himself—making him loathe his past actions. They even cause an involuntary response, affecting Stephen’s glands, taste buds, and optical perception”.<sup>330</sup> It is not clear why exactly the word “foetus” should produce so powerful a response in Stephen. While it could be that the word brings with it ideas related to sex and conception, the link between Stephen’s thinking and the actual word and its denotative meaning remains a question of speculation.

### **Stephen’s Compositions to E.C.**

In this section, I would like to return to Stephen’s interest, expressed toward the end of Chapter 4, in the “contemplation of an inner world of emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose”.<sup>331</sup> A focus on Stephen’s villanelle will shed light on the extent to which his writing, while presented as an exercise in abstraction focused on the “inner world of emotions”, is still embedded in his body and dependent on the material world around him.

---

<sup>328</sup> p, 97.

<sup>329</sup> p, 76.

<sup>330</sup> Hunter Dukes, “*Ulysses and the Signatures of Things*”, *Humanities* 6.52 (2017), p.1. Available online: <<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/6/3/52>>, [Last accessed 01/05/2019].

<sup>331</sup> p, 140.

One of the first descriptions of Stephen's own writing process is to be found in Chapter 2, in the verses he attempts to write to E.C. after he fails to seize the opportunity to kiss her during a tram ride ("I could easily catch hold of her when she comes up to my step: nobody is looking. I could hold her and kiss her. But he did neither").<sup>332</sup> While the actual verses are not given to us to see in the novel, the process and effects of the action of writing them provide an insight into the role of this textual production. After Stephen has written down "[f]rom force of habit [...] the initial letters of the jesuit motto" and "the title of the verses", his process of composition is interrupted by the recollection of a failed attempt to "write a poem about Parnell" which had ended up being a list of the names and addresses of some of his classmates.<sup>333</sup> The remembrance of this unsuccessful endeavour acts as a spur to his present effort ("by dint of brooding on the incident, he thought himself into confidence"):

[d]uring this process all those elements which he deemed common and insignificant fell out of the scene. There remained no trace of the tram itself nor of the trammen nor of the horses: nor did he or she appear vividly. The verses told only of the night and the balmy breeze and the maiden lustre of the moon. Some undefined sorrow was hidden in the hearts of the protagonists as they stood in silence beneath the leafless trees and when the moment of farewell had come the kiss, which had been withheld by one, was given by both.<sup>334</sup>

Stephen revisits the tram scene, altering its outcome while bringing to the fore and romanticizing the emotions felt in that instant. According to Rossman, "Stephen purges the scene of everything tangible, and little survives beyond a balmy night and a vaguely sorrowful mood of longing [...] Stephen's first poem leads him out of the world. *Psychologically, the poem substitutes for life*".<sup>335</sup> Indeed, with this writing attempt

---

<sup>332</sup> P, 58.

<sup>333</sup> P, 58.

<sup>334</sup> P, 59.

<sup>335</sup> Charles Rossman, "Stephen Dedalus' Villanelle", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.12, No.3 (Spring, 1975), p.282. My italics.

Stephen seems to discard his lived reality to find refuge in his imagination, in a state where, much like his dreamed encounters with Mercedes, he seems to “fade away into something impalpable”.<sup>336</sup> Composing verses which repeat the clichés of romantic poetry, Stephen looks at his life as if it were part of a novel or a poem. He and E.C become the “protagonists” of a scene in which frustration and nervousness are replaced by undefined romantic sorrow, and in which neither “appear[s] vividly”. In the poem, the autobiographical character Stephen creates his fantasies, overcoming his fears to give E.C. the kiss that he had in fact failed to give in real life.

A radically different process is at play when Stephen writes his villanelle in Chapter 5.<sup>337</sup> On the morning of the composition, Stephen slowly reawakens from what some critics have interpreted as a wet dream.<sup>338</sup> The moment of inspiration is described in highly abstract terms. Spirits, seraphim, enchanted dreams and visions populate this “windless hour of dawn”.<sup>339</sup> This metaphysical moment is reflected in the first stanza of the villanelle, which seems to acknowledge this ecstasy as it points beyond it. “Are you not weary of ardent ways/Lure of the fallen seraphim?/Tell no more of enchanted ways”.<sup>340</sup> The abstraction is gradually embodied: “[t]he verses passed from his mind to his lips and, murmuring them over, he felt the rhythmic movement of a villanelle pass through them”.<sup>341</sup> From a state of pure ecstasy, portrayed in lyrical prose, Stephen feels the villanelle developing not just in his mind but also in his body.

---

<sup>336</sup> P, 54.

<sup>337</sup> By looking at Stephen’s poem, I am not interested in the success or failure of Stephen’s poetic endeavour. Rather, I am considering the process of writing itself, to see what happens to the subject when he decides to compose his verses, and to explore the ways in which this process of composition has an influence on his relation to his physical body and material objects. Therefore, the focus will not be on the interpretation of the verses as they stand by themselves, but on their connections to Stephen’s bodily and mental processes as they unfold.

<sup>338</sup> See, for instance, Bernard Benstock’s “The Temptation of St. Stephen: A View of the Villanelle”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.14, No.1 (Fall, 1976).

<sup>339</sup> P, 182.

<sup>340</sup> P, 183.

<sup>341</sup> P, 183.

The words “ways, days, blaze, praise, raise” bind his mind as the words “ivy” and “wall” had previously done.<sup>342</sup> These simple rhymes start to call Stephen’s body into play, as his murmuring lips attempt to catch their movement, “stumbling through half verses, stammering and baffled”.<sup>343</sup> According to David Spurr, such hesitations, quite common in Joyce, attest to “a language that calls attention to its own materiality, as well as to its source in the body as the physical origin of the spoken utterance”, a language that will find its final form in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>344</sup> As Stephen’s body cannot quite keep up with the rhythm of the villanelle, the verbal creation finds itself stuck in a moment of corporeal hesitation, until the rhythm “died out at once”.<sup>345</sup> In order to prevent the full interruption of the verses’ rhythmic movement, and consequently of the moment of inspiration, Stephen writes the verses down. The process is described in meticulous detail, and while it helps preserve the “instant of inspiration”, it also grounds Stephen’s thinking in concrete actions:

[f]earing to lose all, he raised himself suddenly on his elbow to look for paper and pencil. There was neither on the table; only the soup-plate he had eaten the rice from for supper and the candlestick with its tendrils of tallow and its paper socket, singed by the last flame. He stretched his arm wearily towards the foot of the bed, groping with his hand in the pockets of the coat that hung there. His fingers found a pencil and then a cigarette packet. He lay back and, tearing open the packet, placed the last cigarette on the windowledge and began to write out the stanzas of the villanelle in small neat letters on the rough cardboard surface.<sup>346</sup>

Described in such detail, the objects which occupy Stephen’s everyday life, from the soup plate to the candlestick and the cigarette packet, reinsert Stephen’s moment of ecstatic inspiration in the quotidian realities of the room. As “the mind awaken[s] slowly

---

<sup>342</sup> *p*, 183.

<sup>343</sup> *p*, 183.

<sup>344</sup> David Spurr, “Stuttering Joyce”, in *Errears and Erroriboose: European Joyce Studies 20*, ed. Matthew Creasy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), p.122.

<sup>345</sup> *p*, 183.

<sup>346</sup> *p*, 184.

to a tremulous morning knowledge”, the body executes its first movements as Stephen “stretched his arm wearily”, his hands groping and his fingers finding “a pencil and then a cigarette packet”. What began as an inward movement of the mind and the soul is now connected with Stephen’s material surroundings, in the same way as the “small neat letters” which compose the verses of the villanelle encounter the “rough cardboard surface” of the cigarette packet.

Once the first verses are written down, they seem to drive Stephen’s thinking back to those “enchanted days” of which he now wishes to hear no more. “Having written them out he lay back on the lumpy pillow, murmuring them again”.<sup>347</sup> As he softly recites the verses he has just written, going over them once more without stuttering, “[t]he lumps of knotted flock under his head reminded him of the lumps of knotted horsehair in the sofa of her parlour on which he used to sit”.<sup>348</sup> Once again, Stephen’s memories are prompted by his words and stirred by a physical sensation produced by a material object. In turn, the act of remembering stirs in Stephen a “rude brutal anger”, which eventually produces “bitter and despairing thoughts” as he ruminates on his past encounters with E.C.<sup>349</sup> The fourth and fifth verses of the villanelle are thus produced, and while the first verses “passed from his mind to his lips”, these new verses follow the opposite direction: “[h]e spoke the verses aloud from the first lines till the music and rhythm suffused his mind, turning it to quiet indulgence; then copied them painfully to feel them the better by seeing them; then lay back on his bolster”.<sup>350</sup> Starting from the movement of his lips, Stephen feels the rhythm of the verses taking shape in his mind, while he gives them material substance, in a process

---

<sup>347</sup> *P*, 184.

<sup>348</sup> *P*, 184.

<sup>349</sup> *P*, 185-6.

<sup>350</sup> *P*, 186.

which crosses body, mind, and material environment. Steven Connor states that “the linking of hand, eye, and letter in the act of writing by hand intimates the translation from mind to eye and hence from the inward and invisible and spiritual to the outward and visible and physical”.<sup>351</sup> While following this structure, the process of composition of the villanelle does not appear to move in one single direction, from an abstract to a concrete state. Rather, it involves loops which encompass internal and external dimensions: the mind translates itself in the written verses while the written verses in turn influence the mind and the body from which they originate. The verses turn Stephen’s mind “to quiet indulgence”, and almost make him reconsider his relationship with E.C. At the same time, Stephen sees his condition reflected in his lines, as the question “[a]re you not weary of ardent ways?” is answered by the physical exhaustion of his own body. “Weary! Weary! He too was weary of ardent ways” cries Stephen.<sup>352</sup>

According to Robert Scholes, the villanelle “leads Stephen to ‘new understanding and pity’ for innocent E.C. whom he has previously misjudged”.<sup>353</sup> After having written his verses, Stephen “began to feel that he had wronged her. A sense of her innocence moved him almost to pity her”.<sup>354</sup> Giovanna Colombetti and Tom Roberts build the case for the possibility of extending emotional states and processes to the surrounding environment. They point out that

occurrent moods and emotional episodes, unfolding over time, can be realised and structured through acts of musical or written expression, for example, in such a way that it does not make sense to single out the neural constituents as the privileged locus of the episode in question. The agent’s capacities for emotional feeling are enhanced in such an encounter; emotional experiences of hitherto-

---

<sup>351</sup> Steven Connor, “Modernism and the Writing Hand”. Available online: <[stevenconnor.com/modhand.htm](http://stevenconnor.com/modhand.htm)> [Last accessed 11/2018].

<sup>352</sup> *P*, 186.

<sup>353</sup> Robert Scholes, “Stephen Dedalus Poet or Esthete?”, *PMLA*, Vol.79, No.4 (September 1964), p.480.

<sup>354</sup> *P*, 187.

unattainable forms, depths, and clarity are made possible by an individual's world-engaging performances.<sup>355</sup>

Stephen's villanelle, likewise, generates "self-stimulating loops" which expand Stephen's cognitive processes not from a computational, but from an affective point of view, allowing him to consider former emotional states in a new light. Rossman, however, goes against the idea that the villanelle might have actual resonance in Stephen's thinking as he claims that

the poem takes Stephen no closer in understanding to E.C. at all. His feelings about her fluctuate wildly during the few minutes which the scene lasts—from anger to scorn to desire to remorse—yet the innocence or guilt of the real E.C. hardly matters. The villanelle is not a means to understanding, but an outraged cry of protest against the flesh [...] The poem *expresses* and *perpetuates* Stephen's alienation from E.C. as from *all* tangible reality, especially his own body.<sup>356</sup>

While it is true that, during the composition of the villanelle, Stephen starts to see himself as "a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life", this transmutation is never fully accomplished.<sup>357</sup> As he puts down his verses, Stephen's abstractions keep feeding into his actual body, into his lived and recollected experiences, and into the gestures and objects involved in the act of writing itself. Even as Stephen "turned towards the wall, making a cowl of the blanket" in the attempt of "shrinking from that life" awakening with the morning light, his feelings and bodily sensations are inextricably linked together.<sup>358</sup> The blanket is used to simultaneously "warm his perishing joy" and his physical body, as "a gradual warmth, a languorous weariness passed over him, descending along his spine from his closely cowled head. He felt it descend and,

---

<sup>355</sup> Giovanna Colombetti and Tom Roberts, "Extending the Extended Mind: The Case of Extended Affectivity", *Philosophical Studies*, Vol.172, Issue 5 (May 2015), 1243–63.

<sup>356</sup> Rossman, pp.281-2.

<sup>357</sup> *p*, 186.

<sup>358</sup> *p*, 186.

seeing himself as he lay, smiled. Soon he would sleep”.<sup>359</sup> Rather than being alienated “from all tangible reality, especially his own body”, Stephen is constantly aware of it. As his composition draws to a close, Stephen thinks again about those earlier verses which he had composed for E.C., realizing that “he had written verses for her again after ten years”.<sup>360</sup> As he remembers that initial composition, the memory of the tram ride emerges as Stephen had first experienced it. The “lank brown horses”, “the conductor” and “the driver”, all those “common and insignificant elements [which] fell out of the scene” as Stephen attempted to romanticize reality are brought back into the picture.<sup>361</sup> Restored to his mind, they point to his renewed awareness of the material world around him.

### **The Diary Entries**

The last example of Stephen’s own composition is the series of twenty-one diary entries features at the end of the novel. Appearing without any preamble and drastically changing the narrative mode of the novel, these writings differ from the personal creations which the reader has encountered so far. Throughout the novel, the reader has encountered words inscribed on very specific objects (a desk in Cork, a second moiety notice, a cigarette packet), and both the verses and the villanelle dedicated to E.C. were described in the moment of their composition. In the closing pages, there is no mention of where or how Stephen records his diary entries, or even

---

<sup>359</sup> *P*, 186.

<sup>360</sup> *P*, 187.

<sup>361</sup> *P*, 58, 187.

of the fact that he keeps a personal diary in the first place. However, this final form of writing is illuminating as regards the kind of portraiture the novel offers, and the kind of subject which emerges from it. Susan Lasner claims that “now we have Stephen’s words and thoughts in a language which itself seems to embody the search for self-definition that is the focus of *A Portrait as a whole*”.<sup>362</sup> The diary entries bring us back to the concept of epiphany, showing how the act of portraiture which produces *A Portrait* never quite achieves that radiance and completion which Stephen’s theory describes, but focuses instead on the process leading up to it.<sup>363</sup>

If throughout the novel Stephen “is shaping previously encountered words and experiences [...] into new perceptions of his status in the world”, in the diary entries he continues to re-evaluate past moments, using writing as an attempt to understand their relevance and meaning.<sup>364</sup> In several passages Stephen tries to assess his own behaviours or emotions (“Am I alarmed? About what?”, “This mentality [...] is indeed bred out of your mud by the operation of your sun. And mine? Is it not too?”, “A troubled night of dreams. Want to get them off my chest”, “Read what I wrote last night. Vague words for a vague emotion. Would she like it? I think so”, “Yes, I liked her today. A little or much? Don’t know”).<sup>365</sup> According to Thornton, Stephen “is using the diary as a means of reviewing, replaying, coming to terms with, early experiences”, such as the conversation with Cranly, or the argument with the dean of studies, or an encounter with E.C..<sup>366</sup> However, Stephen’s recollection often contradicts the account previously

---

<sup>362</sup> Susan Sniader Lasner, “Stephen’s Diary: The Hero Unveiled”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.4 (Summer, 1979), p.420.

<sup>363</sup> The text also points directly back to Joyce’s own epiphanies, as the entries for 25 March, 10 April, and 16 April are adopted from Joyce’s own epiphanies.

<sup>364</sup> Zack R. Bowen, “Epiphanies, Stephen’s Diaries, and the Narrative Perspective of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.4 (Summer, 1979), p.486.

<sup>365</sup> p, 210-12.

<sup>366</sup> Thornton, p.135.

given in the novel, bringing about a clash that undermines the veracity of the entries and raises the question of manipulation from Stephen's part. The entries thus have the potential to change the reader's perspective on Stephen and his experiences, casting an ironic light on his efforts to become an artist and on the several moments of revelation he has experienced in the novel. For instance, Zack Bowen asserts that "Joyce fosters in the reader an attitude of incredulousness toward the entries which throws the rest of Stephen's judgments and epiphanic utterances into doubt and disbelief".<sup>367</sup> Suspending judgement, Michael Levenson sees the entries in a more positive light, asserting that "each entry brings a new retrospect, inviting a restless process of self-correction and self-revision", so that "the diary reveals a mind increasingly suspicious of its own habits".<sup>368</sup> The novel as a whole presents Stephen following a similar process of "self-correction and self-revision".<sup>369</sup> Rather than providing a final moment of radiance which could illuminate Stephen's character, the entries continue a process of assessment which leaves open a space for that potentiality which defines the process of epiphany itself.<sup>370</sup> As Lasner asserts, at the end of the novel the reader finds "a Stephen who is still very much potential [...] the diary reveals him to be much less blasé or confident than he would have Cranly believe. In short, the diary allows us to see the budding artist from the underside".<sup>371</sup> The entries offer an idea of an evolving subject who, as in the process leading up to

---

<sup>367</sup> Bowen, 487.

<sup>368</sup> Michael Levenson, "Stephen's Diary in Joyce's Portrait: The Shape of Life", *ELH*, Vol.52, No.4 (Winter, 1985), p.1023.

<sup>369</sup> According to Levenson, the workings of Stephen's diary "bear directly on the problem of interpreting Stephen's development" (Levenson, p.1017).

<sup>370</sup> Bowen suggests that "the entries are an attempt to place the whole narrative perspective of *A Portrait* in a new relief and to question the validity of the concept of epiphanies Stephen espoused in *Stephen Hero*: the 'sudden spiritual manifestations' which provide 'the most delicate and evanescent of moments' of truth for the beholders, the readers, the characters and artists who create them" (Bowen, p.485). Similarly, Levenson claims that the diary "is incompatible with an aesthetically or morally satisfying culmination" (Levenson, p.1019).

<sup>371</sup> Lasner, p.421.

the moment of epiphany, has to constantly readjust his focus, a subject who cannot be simply defined for what he is, but has to be taken into account in a process of development and interaction with his surroundings and experiences. According to Levenson, “the reader does not need to ‘take’ Stephen—to wrench him from the dense web that surrounds him, to appropriate him to a single mode, to assimilate him to a controlling myth—but to *place* him, to situate him within a set of concurrent possibilities and to embed him in several modes”.<sup>372</sup> What is asked of the reader, then, as in the process of epiphany, is to recognize the “rhythm” linking Stephen and his language, to hear the echoes that resonate between his present and past experiences, to see a mind opening itself up to the world in a perpetual interchange.

As he presents his aesthetic theory to Lynch in Chapter 5, Stephen reveals that he has a book

in which I have written down questions which are more amusing than yours were. In finding the answers to them I found the theory of esthetic which I am trying to explain. Here are some questions I set myself: *Is a chair finely made tragic or comic? Is the portrait of Mona Lisa good if I desire to see it? Is the bust of Sir Philip Campton lyrical, epical or dramatic? Can excrement or a child or a louse be a work of art? If not, why not?*<sup>373</sup>

These questions, bringing together artistic matters and ordinary objects, seem to counterbalance Stephen’s conversation with Lynch. His theory, to which his exposition to Lynch has given fragmented and confusing form, appears to have been elaborated by formulating answers to questions, by reference to material objects.<sup>374</sup> In a similar

---

<sup>372</sup> Levenson, p.1033.

<sup>373</sup> P, 180.

<sup>374</sup> Eugene O’Brien uses this passage to show “the inclusivity of the aesthetic theory in terms of the human body” and to support his argument that Joyce’s aesthetic theory defies the Cartesian separation between mind and body. As he claims, “Joyce’s more developed aesthetic theory is, in fact, a deconstruction of the mind/body duality, and acts as a call for the primacy of bodily sensation in the aesthetic as a whole” (Eugene O’Brien, “Can Excrement be Art...if not, why not?”, in *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, ed. Robert Brazeau and Derek Galdwin (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2014), pp.201-2).

way, throughout *A Portrait* the work of mediation which Joyce began in his epiphanies continues and intensifies, as the novel presents a subject who initially strives to be completely alone and to detach himself from his material surroundings but fails in this endeavour, remaining highly affected by the world around him. Striving to be the “curve of an emotion” rather than an “identificative paper”, Stephen’s portrait constantly takes into account those external realities which, in the shape of words and in the form of objects, have a direct impact on his bodily and cognitive development.

## Chapter 3 Part 1: *Ulysses* and the Waste Material of “Proteus”

### Epiphanies Criticized and Remodelled

As he walks down Sandymount strand in the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen recollects his youthful epiphanic experiments, and ridicules his personal attitude in composing them:

[r]emember your epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years, a mahamanvantara. Pico della Mirandola like. Ay, very like a whale” (*U* 3.141-4)

The description of his written fragments as “deeply deep” sarcastically assesses the attempt to pierce to the soul of an object in the last moment of epiphanic radiance, and to go beyond the surface and appearance of an event in order to catch its true meaning. Stephen’s comparison of his younger self to the famously arrogant Renaissance humanist Pico della Mirandola makes fun of the self-importance which characterized his attempt to “create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul”.<sup>375</sup> By echoing Polonius as he complies with Hamlet’s mocking remark that a cloud looks like a whale, Stephen emphasizes the personal nature of visual perceptions, and the arbitrariness and absurdity that can characterize them.<sup>376</sup> Despite

---

<sup>375</sup> P, 143. As Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman point out in their note to the text, “Stephen’s pretension is like Pico’s in that Pico at twenty-three is described as ‘full of pryde and desirous of glory and mannes prayse’ (Giovanni Francesco Pico, *Giovanni Pico della Mirandola: His Life by His Nephew*, trans. Sir Thomas More, ed. J.M. Regg (London, 1890), pp.9-10)” (Don Gifford, Robert J. Seidman, *‘Ulysses’ Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’* (California: University of California Press, 1989), p.51).

<sup>376</sup> “HAMLET: Methink it is like a weasel./ POLONIUS: It is backed like a weasel./ HAMLET: Or like a whale./ POLONIUS: Very like a whale.” (Hamlet, III.ii.364-67). In “‘Very Like a Whale’: The Problem of Knowledge in *Hamlet*”, Don Parry Norford analyses the sense of sight and hearing in Shakespeare’s play. According to Norford, the exchange between Hamlet and Polonius draws attention to the fact that “the eye cannot grasp essences” even if it attempts to do so by distancing the observer and the observed. See Don Parry Norford, “‘Very Like a Whale’: The Problem of Knowledge in *Hamlet*”, *ELH*, Vol.46, No.4 (Winter, 1979), p.566.

what might appear as a complete rejection of the theory and practice of epiphany from Stephen's part, Joyce does not abandon the concept altogether.

In his examination of the new Joyce manuscripts acquired by the National Library of Ireland in 2002, Sam Slote focuses on an early "Proteus" draft "which represents the episode in an unexpected configuration".<sup>377</sup> Slote draws a connection between the short units which compose the draft and Joyce's concept of epiphany, proposing that each individual section may be regarded as analogous to the trivial moments which Joyce recorded for his collection of epiphanies. However, while both the draft units and the epiphanies focus on a specific scene or thought, the NLI "Proteus" fragments do not appear as self-contained scenes but as "blocks for a narrative-in-process".<sup>378</sup> Rather than being preserved as individual moments potentially recording or eliciting an epiphany, they are part of a process of rewriting which will eventually erase their originally fragmented character by incorporating them into a new whole. Thus, Slote claims that the early "Proteus" draft "attempts a revision or remaking and remodelling of the epiphany, which had been the central component of Joyce's aesthetic theory in 1904, that is, at the time of Stephen's Sandymount stroll".<sup>379</sup> Echoing Slote's textual analysis in her theoretical reflection, Elizabeth Inglesby defines more precisely what this "remaking and remodelling" of the early theory might entail. According to Inglesby, in *Ulysses* the epiphany "depends not on seeing the object as 'one integral thing', but on picking up on the myriad subtle

---

<sup>377</sup> Sam Slote, "Epiphanic Proteus", in *Genetic Joyce Studies* (Spring, 2005). Accessible online: <[geneticjoycestudies.org/GJS5/GJS5lote.htm](http://geneticjoycestudies.org/GJS5/GJS5lote.htm)> [Last accessed 01.05.2019].

<sup>378</sup> Sam Slote, "Epiphanic Proteus".

<sup>379</sup> Sam Slote, "Epiphanic Proteus".

connections that link one mode of being to others”.<sup>380</sup> As I have shown in previous chapters, this approach was subtly at work from Stephen’s first exposition of the theory in *Stephen Hero*, and exemplified by Joyce’s own epiphanies and by the relation between Stephen and his environment in *A Portrait*. In “Proteus”, this vision of epiphany is explored further and made more explicit, as the walk on the strand seems to have important effects both on the character’s thinking and on his practical approach to the world around him. To assess Ernesto Livorni’s claim that “Stephen Dedalus’s aesthetic conception develops quite thoroughly” in the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*, we need first of all to understand what exactly Stephen is doing, or trying to do, as he walks along Sandymount strand. At the beginning of the episode, Stephen expresses the aim of his walk in a way which is as straightforward as it is enigmatic: “Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot.” (*U* 3.2-3).<sup>381</sup>

### **From Essences to Modalities**

The opening paragraph of “Proteus” lets us believe that Stephen is attempting to approach the world around him through yet another intellectual exercise which involves an array of complex philosophical theories. According to Slote, rather than ‘interpreting the world around him, contemplating the various phenomena disclosed to him by his senses, [Stephen] is interpreting or attempting to interpret *how* his faculties

---

<sup>380</sup> Elizabeth Inglesby, “Ferrules of Engagement: The Speech of Unheard Things in *Ulysses*”, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol.56, No.3 (Fall 2004), p.301. Inglesby uses the expression “mode of being” to refer to the different ways of behaving and communicating of human subjects, inanimate objects, animals, and plants.

<sup>381</sup> While the adverb “here” could refer to Stephen’s more general mission as an artist, I see it as an indication of the “here and now” of his stroll on Sandymount strand.

of interpretation operate'.<sup>382</sup> The theory of epiphany was loosely based on Aquinas's theories; the reflection on different modalities of perception which opens the third episode of *Ulysses* freely combines Aristotle, Aquinas's reading of Aristotle, Berkeley, and Dante:<sup>383</sup>

[i]neluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware of them bodies before of them coloured. How? By knocking his sponce against them, sure. Go easy. Bald he was and a millionaire, *maestro di color che sanno*. Limit of the diaphane in. Why in? Diaphane, adiaphane. If you can put your five fingers through it it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see. (*U*3.1-9)

Expressing his thoughts as he looks around the strand, conflating a cerebral and a sensory activity, Stephen sees his surroundings as the outcome of an intellectual process which can afford or deny him access to the physical world of things. He puzzles over the existence of external realities, juxtaposing Aristotle's theory of vision and colours with Berkeley's idealism.<sup>384</sup> While it is difficult confidently to make sense of Stephen's position, as his thoughts freely jump from one concept and philosopher to another, critics seem to agree that he gradually shifts from solipsism and idealism to a recognition of the existence of objective reality.<sup>385</sup> At first seemingly considering

---

<sup>382</sup> Slote, "Protean Phenomenology and Genealogy", *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, No.2 (2009), p.128.

<sup>383</sup> See Livorni for a clear exposition of how these different thinkers are linked together.

<sup>384</sup> As the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* states, "Berkeley holds that there are no mind-independent things, that, in the famous phrase *esse est percipi (aut percipere)*—to be is to be perceived (or to perceive)". Samuel Johnson (1709-84) refutes Berkeley's theory by kicking a stone. According to Gifford and Seidman, "Aristotle has proven the existence of 'bodies' in a manner similar to Dr Samuel Johnson's" (Gifford and Seidman, p.45).

<sup>385</sup> Thomas Karr Richards claims that "the first five paragraphs of 'Proteus' have no argumentative structure; without a logical sequence, a beginning and a middle, no authoritative conclusion is demonstrable" (Thomas Karr Richards, "Provisional Fixity in James Joyce's 'Proteus'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.20, No.4 (Summer, 1983), p.396). According to Marilyn French, "from an acceptance of solipsism, Stephen moves to rejection of it and an assertion of the existence of objective reality [...] He vacillates between the two poles, shutting out objective reality by closing his eyes, and discovering the 'ineluctable modality of the audible', then opening them to discover again the real" (Marilyn French, *The Book as World: James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994), p.74). James Cappio affirms that "Stephen is a solipsist trying to come to terms with the objective world [...] His change of consciousness, from solipsism to a first tentative acceptance of the objectivity of the world, takes place on Sandymount" (James Cappio, "Aristotle, Berkeley, and Proteus: Joyce's Use of Philosophy",

the Berkeleyan idealist conception that all we can perceive of objects are “coloured signs”, Stephen gradually comes round to an assertion of their material presence. First, he references Aristotle’s theory of vision in *De Anima* and *De Sensu*, and the philosopher’s idea that what constitutes an object is a combination of matter and form. While it is the form of the object which can be perceived through colours in the “limits of the diaphane”, the “*maestro di color che sanno*” does not deny the existence of physical matter.<sup>386</sup> As he states in *De Anima*, “what is visible is (a) colour and (b) a certain kind of object”.<sup>387</sup> Stephen subsequently introduces the senses of hearing and touch, first theoretically, through a reference to Dr Samuel Johnson’s refutation of Berkeley’s idealism “by knocking his scone against” stones; and then practically, as he shuts his eyes and “sees” the physical presence of objects through the senses of touch and hearing. The character starts to walk on the sand, “clos[ing] his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells” (*U* 3.10-11), exploring the ways in which thinking and sensory perception grant him access to the outside world. While it seems

---

*Philosophy and Literature*, Vol.5, No.1, (Spring, 1981), p.21). Pierre Vitoux sees the references to Berkeley as highlighting the philosopher’s negation of solipsism within his idealist system: “this is where Berkeley’s idealism breaks the barriers of solipsism; we know through touch that there is a world outside us, even though its reality for us is the various ideas we have of it. The experience of contact with the tangible, when delayed and made conditional upon the motion of our body, is what creates the sense of distance, and that sense is only later imported into our visual perceptions” (Pierre Vitoux, “Aristotle, Berkeley, and Newman in “Proteus” and *Finnegans Wake*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.2 (Winter, 1981), p.167). According to Vitoux, “in a first reading at least, the opening paragraphs of ‘Proteus’ can be interpreted as a vindication of the Aristotelian conception of substance as matter, actualised in sensible forms and made perceptible to the eye as colours: that is, a reassertion of the common sense refutation of idealism” (Vitoux, p.164). Moliterno similarly asserts that Joyce “does not believe that we are solipsists trapped within the ‘thick walls of personality’. In ‘Proteus,’ Stephen’s declaration that the material world is ‘there all the time without you, and ever shall be, world without end’ reflects Joyce’s Aristotelian preference” (Moliterno, p.64).

<sup>386</sup> Aristotle is described in these terms in Dante’s *Inferno* (4:131). Dante’s reference puts into place a trans-linguistic joke between the Italian “color” [those] and the English “colour”. In “Protean Inglossabilities: ‘To No End Gathered’”, Fritz Senn reflects on the relation between the two terms to point out how “‘Proteus’ is about the treacherous relation between appearance and essence, semblance and reality. The wrong sense of *color* seems to be more vital than the essential one [...] Paradoxically in *color* we might be aware of the erroneous colour before (we are aware of) the functional body.” (Fritz Senn, *Inductive Scrutinies*, ed. Christine O’Neill (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995), p.137).

<sup>387</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), III.vii.418a.27-29.

undeniable that a world exists outside his subjective perceptions and thoughts— Stephen reflects that “[t]here all the time without you: and ever shall be, world without end” (*U* 3.27-28)—the degree to which and the way in which the mind can approach this world has yet to be defined. According to Umberto Eco, the third chapter of *Ulysses* represents “a step towards the modern question of perception”, and points to “the dissolution of old theories of perception in the belief that the world is not constituted according to an unchangeable ontological necessity, but in its relationship with the subject as body and centre of spatio-temporal relationships”.<sup>388</sup> It is at this point that a comparison between the early theory of epiphany and Stephen’s attempt to read the “signatures of all things” on the strand might prove fruitful.

At first glance, Stephen’s approach to his surroundings does not seem to be that different from that described in the theory of epiphany. As with his early epiphanic theory, Stephen focuses on the categories of space and time, and the connected modalities of vision and hearing, in his attempt to understand how the world around him can be perceived. As he starts exposing his aesthetic principles in *A Portrait*, Stephen points out how “an aesthetic image is presented to us either in space or in time. What is audible is presented in time, what is visible is presented in space”.<sup>389</sup> Walking on the strand, he similarly reflects on the “ineluctable modality of the visible” (*U*3.1) and “ineluctable modality of the audible” (*U*3.13). According to Ernesto Livorni, Stephen’s statements concerning space and time in “Proteus” “explain the ‘wholeness’, the ‘*integritas*’ of a thing perceived” and “describe not only the logic behind the first two paragraphs of the ‘Proteus’ episode but most importantly the first

---

<sup>388</sup> Umberto Eco, *Le poetiche di Joyce* (Milano: Bompiani, 1989). p.65. My translation.

<sup>389</sup> *P*, 178.

stage of the three-fold epistemological process” which is at work in the theory of epiphany.<sup>390</sup> As a young Stephen attempted to apprehend an object “as selfbounded and selfcontained upon the immeasurable background of space or time which is not it”, so in the “Proteus” episode he tries to understand how things can be grasped through the same categories.<sup>391</sup> Stephen is “walking through [the strand] howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space” (U3.11-12).

However, while the theory of epiphany was ultimately defined by visual perception, by the “gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus”, in “Proteus” the primacy of vision seems to be undermined.<sup>392</sup> Having broken his glasses the day before his stroll on Sandymount, Stephen’s vision is compromised as he walks down the strand.<sup>393</sup> During his stroll, he uses different senses to achieve his objective of reading of the signatures of things. Stephen’s activity is determined by a combination of different modalities of perception. The term “modality”, employed by Stephen at the beginning of his epistemological quest, brings to the fore both the changing character of perception and the provisional nature of the things perceived. According to Thomas Karr Richards, while “a ‘mode’ necessitates a fixed state of being or of perception; ‘modality’ refers to a mode in application, a mode

---

<sup>390</sup> Livorni, p.128. Livorni explains how “Joyce’s critics have explained the two modalities of the visible and the audible that engage Stephen’s mind as emphatic references to Aristotle’s treatises *De Sensu et Sensato* and *De Anima* (Book 2 and 3) and to Berkeley’s *An Essay Towards a New Theory of Vision*” (Livorni, 128).

<sup>391</sup> P, 178.

<sup>392</sup> SH, 211. According to Hans Jonas, “in sight there is a distancing between observer and the observed, subject and object, in which neither invades the sphere of the other, the observer remaining entirely free from causal involvement in the things to be perceived.” (Hans Jonas, “The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses,” in *The Phenomenon of Life: Towards a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1966), p.148. Quoted in Norford, p.560).

<sup>393</sup> In “Circe” Stephen refers to his broken glasses and poor vision—“my sight is somewhat troubled” (U 15.3546-7)—explaining that he “[m]ust get glasses. Broke them yesterday” (U 15.3628-9).

as it is being used”.<sup>394</sup> Focusing more directly on the thing perceived, Sara K. Crangle considers modalities to stand in opposition to essences. As she points out, “distinct from substance and identity, ‘modality’, according to the *OED*, refers to the ‘non-essential aspect or attributes of concept or entity’”.<sup>395</sup> Jean-Louis Giovannangeli similarly claims that in the opening paragraph of “Proteus” Stephen explores his surroundings “not as a reality in itself, as a thing itself, as a substance, but as a modality”.<sup>396</sup> Designating the bond between the action of perceiving and the thing perceived, the term “modality” underlines Stephen’s attempt to understand the relations which can be built between subject and object, rather than the effort to reach a moment of sudden revelation in which the object discloses itself to the subject.<sup>397</sup>

The concept of “signature” has to be clearly differentiated from the idea of “essence”. Jacob Boehme’s *Signatura Rerum* (1621), translated in English as *The Signature of All Things* and part of Joyce’s Trieste library, is most probably the main intertextual reference linked to Stephen’s attempt to read the “signatures of all things” in the third episode of *Ulysses*. Fifty years before Boehme’s work, the Swiss physician Paracelsus was the first to extensively develop the doctrine of signatures in *De Natura Rerum*, a treatise written in 1573.<sup>398</sup> In the ninth chapter of the book, Paracelsus

---

<sup>394</sup> Richards, p.387.

<sup>395</sup> Sara K. Crangle, “Stephen’s Handles”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.47, No.1 (Fall, 2009), p.56. Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman point out that Boehme maintained that “the ‘modality’ of visual experience stands (as signatures to be read) in necessary opposition to the true substances, spiritual identities” (Gifford and Seidman, p.44).

<sup>396</sup> Jean-Louis Giovannangeli, *Détours et retours: Joyce et ‘Ulysses’* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1998), pp.192-3. My translation.

<sup>397</sup> In this respect, “modalities” is not an exact synonym for “senses”. I see “modalities” as defining the “senses” while in operation, as they enter in contact with the thing which is being perceived. As suggested by the revision of the definition of “whatness” from *Stephen Hero* to *A Portrait* analyzed in Chapter one, Stephen here seems to be more interested in the relation between subject and object than in the uncovering of any essence which could be associated with the Kantian noumenon.

<sup>398</sup> Paracelsus is mentioned in “Cyclops” as one of the “heroes and heroines of antiquity” who are “graven” on the “row of seastones” which hang from the citizen’s girdle. (*U* 12.173-199).

presents the doctrine of signatures as a therapeutic method based on the premise that herbs and flowers can cure particular diseases or parts of the body by virtue of their resemblance to those organs or illnesses. For instance, pomegranate seeds and pine nuts were thought to be effective against toothache because of their teeth-like shape, while cardoon was used to cure stinging and piercing pain due to its thorns.<sup>399</sup> According to such a belief system, external appearances mirror internal qualities. Therefore, several critics consider the “signature” of a thing to constitute the manifestation of its essence—rather as the “whatness” of a thing “leap[ing] to us from the vestment of its appearance” in the final stage of the epiphanic process.<sup>400</sup> Richard Ellmann sees signatures as “those ineluctable fusions of form and matter” which, in Aristotelian terms, characterize the “substance” of an object.<sup>401</sup> In a similar way, Gregory Castle claims that Stephen’s use of the “term ‘signature’ suggests an ordered, essentialist nature which articulates itself through the phenomenal world”.<sup>402</sup> However, the analogy between signature and essence takes into account only one aspect of the doctrine of signatures while disregarding its relational character. As Hunter Dukes points out,

at the centre of the *doctrine of signatures* we find two entwined beliefs. First that [...] the interior or unseen world expresses itself through external means. In the nonhuman world, the physical appearance of animal, plant, and mineral entities (colour, form, pattern, and texture) reveal important aspects of their relational character. The second constituent belief is that, since appearance is a manifestation of content and quality, a correspondence between signatures

---

<sup>399</sup> Leopold Bloom’s familiarity with similar therapeutic methods is indicated in “Lotus Eaters”: “[t]hose homely recipes are often the best: strawberries for the teeth: nettles and rainwater: oatmeal they say steeped in buttermilk. Skinfood” (*U* 5.496-7). See Giorgio Agamben, *The Signatures of All Things*, trans. Luca D’Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), p.36 for more examples taken from Paracelsus.

<sup>400</sup> *SH*, 213.

<sup>401</sup> Richard Ellmann, *‘Ulysses’ on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp.17-18. In Aristotelian terms, “substance must be most properly defined as complex: matter, insofar as it is actualised through form (*De Anima* 414). In other terms, substance as matter exists potentially and becomes actual only in the form of an individual essence” (Vitoux, p.164).

<sup>402</sup> Gregory Castle, “‘I Am Almosting it’: History, Nature, and the Will to Power in ‘Proteus’”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.2 (Winter, 1992), p.285.

can reveal other connections and interrelations that are not immediately perceptible or sensuous.<sup>403</sup>

The doctrine of signatures focuses not simply on the relation between the interior and exterior aspect of an object, but also on the particular “connections and interrelations” linking object and subject. More specifically, it seems to entail a relationship between subject and object which is not based on the traditional division of entities.

In Paracelsus’s conception of the natural world, the boundaries between entities appear to be malleable and not fully defined. As Massimo Luigi Bianchi explains in a study devoted to the doctrine of signatures, Paracelsus believed that

a plant was able to cure a part of the body not because it represented it, but because it was already thought to be the healed part of the body. Its healing properties were not attributed to the action of an intrinsic substance but, in general terms, no distinction was made between internal and external features, between an essential nucleus and external appearances.<sup>404</sup>

Different things did not act *on* one another but were seen as blending *into* each other because of their resemblance. As a consequence, “the plant resembling the part of the body becomes both the sign of that bodily part, and the agent which can have an effect on it”.<sup>405</sup> As Stephen tries to read the “signatures of all things” on the strand, it is important to take this particular approach to the natural world into account. The idea of a world which has not yet “settled into a set of autonomous and separate things”, nested in Paracelsus’s medical method, will emerge in “Proteus”. In sharp contrast with the first stage of the theory of epiphany, in which the subject attempts to “lift [the object] away from everything else [to] recognise its integrity”, Stephen’s process of signature-reading does not fully distinguish between a subject looking and interpreting

---

<sup>403</sup> Dukes, “*Ulysses and the Signature of Things*”, p.3.

<sup>404</sup> Massimo Luigi Bianchi, *Signatura rerum: Segni, magia e conoscenza da Paracelso a Leibniz* (Roma: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1987), p.28. My translation.

<sup>405</sup> Bianchi, p.17.

and an object which is passively looked at and interpreted.<sup>406</sup> On the strand Stephen is not searching for essences or signs to be deciphered, but is becoming conscious of a network which is built on the relationality between entities. As Umberto Eco remarks, “the universe of Proteus is [...] a universe where new relations between things are introduced [...] a world dominated by a metamorphosis that constantly produces a new relational nucleus”.<sup>407</sup>

In a study of signatures which ranges across the medical and the linguistic domains, Giorgio Agamben differentiates between “signatures” and “signs”, pointing out that in the doctrine of signatures,

the relationship is not between a signifier and signified (*signans* and *signatum*). Instead, it entails at least four terms; the figure in the plant, which Paracelsus often calls *signatum*; the part of the human body; the therapeutic virtue; and the disease—to which one has to add the *signator* as a fifth term. Signatures, which according to the theory of signs should appear as signifiers, always already slide into the position of the signified, so that *signum* and *signatum* exchange roles and seem to enter into a zone of undecidability.<sup>408</sup>

On Sandymount strand, Stephen is not simply reading the landscape as if it were a text to be semiotically interpreted, a text in which *signans* and *signatums* are clearly defined. Without complying with the necessary resemblance between external object and body part entailed in the pre-modern doctrine of signature as therapeutical method, Stephen’s signature-reading stresses the co-implication between entities at the heart of the original doctrine. As Dukes points out, “signature becomes a form of

---

<sup>406</sup> *SH*, 212.

<sup>407</sup> Eco, *Le poetiche di Joyce*, p.64. My translation.

<sup>408</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Signature of All Things*, trans. Luca D’Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009), p.37. According to Hunter Dukes, “this expanded sense of signature” as described by Agamben “becomes indispensable when thinking about how pre-modern correspondences functioned, and how it recurs in the late nineteenth century. Eyebright does not resemble an eye in a way that implies a hierarchical order of representation. Instead, the herb and the organ together constitute a resemblance, detected and designated through a signature, which in, turn, can lead to other resemblances. It is not possible to alter a signature without also altering the relationship of which it is an expression” (Dukes, p.4)

mediation without equivalence in *Ulysses*, integrating human, animal, and material bodies”.<sup>409</sup> The doctrine of signatures makes explicit those relations between subject and object which were at work in the practice of epiphany from the beginning, but which remained unexplored due to their apparent clash with the theoretical conception of epiphany as involving a final moment of *claritas* by which the “whatness” of a thing is revealed. According to Liesl Olson, the opening passage of “Proteus”

marks Joyce’s critique of Stephen’s attempt to transfigure the ordinary into legible, neatly defined signs, and it reveals nature’s resistance to Stephen’s privileging of distinctly heightened experiences. Stephen cannot control, order, or transform every sensory perception, but rather he is a ‘servant’ to the stimuli that come his way.<sup>410</sup>

Observing subject and observed object come together in a process that goes beyond representation and interpretation and creates a different kind of correspondence between them. On the strand, Stephen focuses on the signatures pertaining to a material category which is particularly effective in highlighting the co-implication between entities: waste and decaying matter.

### **The Hybridity of Decaying Matter**

On his walk along Sandymount strand, Stephen finds himself in a landscape marked by the signs of decay.<sup>411</sup> After the glancing mention of the “rusty boot” in the

---

<sup>409</sup> Dukes, p.2.

<sup>410</sup> Olson, p.45.

<sup>411</sup> While this chapter makes use of theories of “rubbish”, “junk”, and “waste”, I will employ the phrase “decaying matter” to refer to the detritus on Sandymount strand. The term can denote both human and non-human entities and thus appears suited to the description of the predominantly natural debris Stephen encounters. Moreover, the term offers a way of avoiding the risk of romanticizing the presence of waste in natural landscapes. The following reflections on the role and importance of decaying matter on Stephen’s epistemological endeavour are in no way meant to idealize man-produced waste. The philosophical take on decaying matter is meant to offer an alternative understanding on the broader relationship between subjects

opening lines, Stephen continues to come across worn-out materials and discarded objects such as “wood sieved by the shipworm” (*U* 3.149), “a porterbottle [...] stogged to its waist, in the cakey sand dough” (*U* 3.152-3), “[b]roken hoops on the shore” (*U* 3.154) and “[a] bloated carcass of a dog” (*U* 3.285). As Ellmann puts it “Stephen sees all created things in process of decay, every day dying a little”.<sup>412</sup> If, as Agamben points out, in Boehme’s *De Signatura Rerum* a signature becomes “the decisive operator of all knowledge, that which makes the world, mute and without reason in itself, intelligible”, the presence of decaying matter on the strand gives a particular twist to Stephen’s epistemological venture.<sup>413</sup> According to Maurizia Boscagli, the category of discarded objects is particularly interesting

not because it helps us reach any essence of the dysfunctional object [...] Rather, the *hybridity and liminality* of junk allows one to *rethink relationally*, in a way which situates the object *and* myself in a multiplicity of relations – perceptual, bodily, affective, economic, individual, collective – with other materialities, people, discourses, events.<sup>414</sup>

Boscagli’s reflections on junk seem to mirror Stephen’s position on Sandymount strand. The tension between essences and relationality is precisely that which governs his approach to the material environment, and constitutes one of the key differences

---

and objects and does not touch on the problem of waste disposal, or on the dire consequences that an ineffective disposal of waste has on coastal and maritime ecosystems.

<sup>412</sup> Ellmann, *‘Ulysses’ on the Liffey*, pp.24-25. Brian Thill opens his short study on waste by quoting from Paul Valéry’s “Eupalinos”, a short poem in which the French poet imagines a conversation between Socrates and Phaedrus. In the poem, Socrates identifies the seashore as “a special kind of wasteland, a place of derelict things, a gathering-zone for all the detritus of a great and eternal struggle: ‘[...] That which the sea rejects, that which the land cannot retain, the enigmatic bits of drift; the hideous limbs of dislocated ships, black as charcoal, and looking as though charred by the salt tempests from the transparent pasture-grounds of Proteus’ flocks; collapsed monsters, of cold deathly hues; all these things [...] are there carried to and fro; raised, lowered; seized, lost, seized again according to the hour and the day; sad witnesses of the fates, ignoble treasures, playthings of an interchange as perpetual as it is stationary....’” (Brian Thill, *Waste* (London: Bloomsbury Object Lesson Series, 2015), pp.1-2. Quote from Paul Valéry, “Eupalinos, or The Architect”, in *Selected Writings of Paul Valéry* (New York: New Directions, 1964)).

<sup>413</sup> Agamben, p.41.

<sup>414</sup> Maurizia Boscagli, *Stuff Theory* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), p.229. My italics. According to Boscagli, “the materiality indexed by trash is not that of the object vs. the subject, but that of hybridity and its plasticity. Trash theory implies that materiality is [...] a politics of the subject-object relation” (Boscagli, p.232).

between the early theory of epiphany and the endeavour to read the signatures of all things. As the rest of this chapter will show, the landscape of Sandymount strand offers plentiful evidence of the co-implication of living and non-living bodies, and human subjects and more or less natural objects.

The first “signatures” which Stephen attempts to read on the strand introduce ideas of decay and emphasize the multiplicity of subject-object relation. The “coloured signs” which Stephen observes (“[s]notgreen, bluesilver, rust”) balance subjective and objective features, perfectly intermingling bodily, natural, and chemical processes. “Snotgreen” simultaneously suggests the polluted state of Dublin Bay “breathing upward sewage breath” (*U* 3.150-1), and Stephen’s vision of the sea in “Telemachus” as a “dull green mass of liquid” (*U* 1.108). As Stephen had previously compared the bay to “[a] bowl of white china [...] holding the green sluggish bile” (*U* 1.108-9) of his dying mother, so the “seaspawn” of the gulf resembles the mucus produced by the human body. “[R]ust” might at once refer to a colour, to the process of oxidation of metal, and to a “destructive plant disease”.<sup>415</sup> If, according to André Topia, “in the Joycean universe the entire writing process is mimetically contaminated by the imbrications of bodies and things”, this process of entanglement emerges with particular strength in the third episode of *Ulysses*.<sup>416</sup>

After having observed these deteriorating objects on the strand, Stephen spots two human figures:

[t]hey came down the steps from Leahy’s terrace prudently, *Frauenzimmer*: and down the shelving shore flabbily, their splayed feet sinking in the silted sand (*U* 3.29-31)

---

<sup>415</sup> Livorni, p.133.

<sup>416</sup> André Topia, “La Trace et l’embrayage: de Dickens à Joyce”, in *L’Empreinte des choses*, ed. André Topia and Marie-Christine Lemardeley (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2007), p.90. My translation.

A rare example of human presence in the chapter, the description of the *Frauenzimmer* recalls the state of decay which characterizes most of the objects on the strand. Don Gifford points out that the term “Frauenzimmer”, originally denoting “a lady of fashion”, subsequently came to designate “a nitwit, drab, sloven, wench”, suggesting ideas of neglect and shabbiness.<sup>417</sup> The two women seem to lack the strength of healthy people as they almost drag their bodies down the shore. This idea is stressed by the description of one of the two women, Mrs Florence MacCabe, as “relict of the late Patrick MacCabe” (*U* 3.34). While the term refers to a widow, it might also imply something left behind, outmoded, as well as the remnants of a deceased person. As they walk down the strand, “their splayed feet sinking in the silted sand”—recalling the porterbottle “stogged to its waist”—the two human figures become part of that landscape of decay which Stephen observes.

### **Corpses and Human Shells: Difficult Boundaries Between Entities**

Life and death, the animate and the inanimate, start to intermingle in this landscape marked by hybridity. According to Tim Edensor, things in the process of decay

become inseparable from other things in peculiar compounds of matter [...] Thus objects progressively become something else, or become hybrids [...] This hybridization undoes the order of things, transgressing the assigned boundaries between things, and between objects and nature.<sup>418</sup>

---

<sup>417</sup> Gifford and Seidman, p.46.

<sup>418</sup> Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), p.114.

This process is highlighted by the emblematic image of the corpse, an extreme hybrid which generates intimate connections between subject and object in the course of decomposition and death. According to Peter Schwenger,

[d]ebris, that unorganized residue of the physical and metaphysical homes we construct for ourselves, finds its most melancholy incarnation in the corpse [...] It is a peculiarly unique object, an object that *is* a border. A border between [...] subject and object. For if the dead body has now become object, it is not wholly so; it bears the imprint of a residual subjectivity, residue within residue.<sup>419</sup>

A total of three corpses and one carcass are mentioned or imagined in the third chapter of *Ulysses*. While these multiple references to dead bodies may simply be a sign of Stephen's obsession with death and persistent grief and guilt over the death of his mother, they also reflect his approach to the world around him.<sup>420</sup>

The first corpse is pictured in the form of a foetus contained in the bag of one of the *Frauenzimmer* that Stephen identifies as midwives (“[o]ne of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life” (*U* 3.35)).<sup>421</sup> Wondering “[w]hat has she in the bag” (*U* 3.36), Stephen imagines “[a] misbirth with a trailing navelcord, hushed in ruddy wool” (*U* 3.37). From a woman's womb, a foetus is (mis)placed in “ruddy wool”, uselessly safeguarded by a textile wrapping. Its umbilical cord, the first thing to be severed and discarded as waste at the birth of a child, still dangles from the stillborn body, and is reimagined by Stephen as a “strandentwining cable of all flesh” (*U* 3.37) and as a telephone line connecting him to “Edenville” (*U* 3.39). As he starts thinking about his

---

<sup>419</sup> Peter Schwenger, *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p.157.

<sup>420</sup> According to Margaret McBride, Stephen's repeated references to corpses are a sign of “his fear of death at the hands of time” and “Stephen's inability to deal with death” (Margaret McBride, *'Ulysses' and the Metamorphosis of Stephen Dedalus* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), pp.40-2).

<sup>421</sup> It is not clear whether Stephen's recognition is not in fact a misconstrual—whether Stephen actually sees the women or simply imagines them. The image of the midwives carrying a foetus brings to mind the inscription Stephen sees in the anatomy theatre at Cork University in *A Portrait (P, 75)*, and feeds into his interest in birth and creation.

own origin and creation, the second corpse of the chapter—the dead body of May Dedalus—makes its entrance.

From the beginning of the novel, Stephen has been tormented by the memory of his dead mother, for whose dying distress he feels partly guilty. In the first episode, he twice recalled a dream in which the “wasted body” of his mother appeared to him:

[s]ilently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting (*U* 1.102-10)

And,

[i]n a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone (*U* 1.270-4)

Stephen’s thoughts, conveyed through these meticulous descriptions and vivid images, conjure a range of materials appealing to different senses. The smell of wax and rosewood, most likely pertaining to a wooden casket, is mixed with the “faint odour of wetted ashes” exhaled by his dying mother, who seems to have turned to ashes in Stephen’s dream even before her actual death. May Dedalus’s human features mix with other organic materials, from wax, to wood and ashes.<sup>422</sup> These images are echoed in the third chapter, when Stephen’s mother reappears as “a ghostwoman with ashes on her breath” (*U* 3.46-7), while the sea of Dublin Bay, that “great sweet mother” (*U* 1.106-7) which Stephen had previously compared to his mother’s “green sluggish

---

<sup>422</sup> The process of bodies turning into ashes has clear biblical and liturgical undertones. Genesis 3:19 reads: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return” (*The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)).

bile" (*U* 1.109), is referred to as "our mighty mother" (*U* 3.31-32), "breathing upward sewage breath" (*U* 3.150-151). As Gifford and Seidman point out, "much of Dublin's sewage was emptied untreated into the Liffey and its tributaries so that [...] the inshore waters of Dublin Bay, particularly just south of the mouth of the Liffey, where Stephen is walking, were notoriously polluted".<sup>423</sup> The images evoked in the first chapter are materialized in the reality of Dublin Bay, as the bodily effluvia of Stephen's dying mother merge with Dublin's sewage waste. Affected by time and by organic and inorganic substances, the corpse undergoes a slow process of hybridization. According to Edensor, "initial signs of decay, a mild tarnish or rust" coincide with "that period where an object maintains its shape but has become hollowed out or has lost its density".<sup>424</sup> The discarded objects Stephen observes on Sandymount strand offer a similar image. Stephen sees "wood sieved by the shipworm" (*U* 3.149) and "[b]roken hoops on the shore" (*U* 3.154), objects that summon in him the idea of "[h]uman shells" (*U* 3.157).

As he walks down the strand, Stephen recalls "[t]he man that was drowned nine days ago off Maiden's rock" (*U* 3.322). The third dead body of the episode is described as "[a] corpse rising saltwhite from the undertow" (*U* 3.472-3), a "[b]ag of corpsegas sopping in foul brine" (*U* 3.476). The corpse changes colour affected by the water in which it soaks and by which its original shape is deformed. It becomes a perfect image of a "[h]uman shell" (*U* 3.157), a container of gases and other small forms of life—" [a] quiver of minnows" (*U* 3.477)—which find their new home in the lifeless body of the man.

---

<sup>423</sup> Gifford and Seidman, pp.51-2.

<sup>424</sup> Edensor, p.113.

## Natural and Linguistic Hybridity

When he first thinks about the drowned man, Stephen imagines “the tide flowing quickly in on all sides, sheeting the lows of sand quickly” (*U* 3.326-27), and declares “I want his life still to be his, mine to be mine” (*U* 3.327-28). As he asserts his condition as a living being while “[w]aters: bitter death: lost” (*U* 3.330) seem to close in on him, Stephen differentiates his life from that of the drowned man. As “[h]is human eyes scream to me out of horror of his death. I...With him together down...I could not save her” (*U* 3.328-330), Stephen sees himself in the drowned man, who in turn reminds him of his dead mother.<sup>425</sup> His association with the corpse and his sinking are both psychological and corporeal. Jaurrette renders the idea of this dual burden when she points out that, “haunted by the sense that he has sacrificed his mother [...] Stephen is sandtrapped in the darkness of his *‘terribilia meditans’* (*U* 3.311)”, he is “‘vulturing the dead’ (*U* 3.363-4)” as the dog described later on in the chapter.<sup>426</sup> As the constant danger of being engulfed by the sand or the nearing tide suggests, Sandymount is a site where Stephen struggles to maintain definite boundaries between entities.<sup>427</sup> As

---

<sup>425</sup> According to Melissa Edmundson, “Joyce’s recurrent use of the sea and drowning in the descriptions of Stephen’s thoughts connects to Stephen’s fear of death and events outside of himself that he cannot control or understand [...] Stephen uses his fear of water and the sea to indirectly describe the battle within his own mind and the anxiety he feels regarding his relationship with his mother”. (Melissa Edmundson, “‘Love’s Bitter Misery’: Stephen Dedalus, Drowning, and the Burden of Guilt in *Ulysses*”, *English Studies*, Vol.90, No.5 (October 2009), p.545).

<sup>426</sup> Jaurrette, p.94.

<sup>427</sup> According to Inglesby, “Stephen’s ‘readings’ of the ‘signatures of all things’ are for him primarily exercises in defining himself as a subject rather than seeing the objects he reads as separate entities” (Inglesby, p.321). While Inglesby intends this comment to be a remark on Stephen’s inability to consider the world of objects without the mediation of his thinking and personality, I see it as an effect of the proliferation of hybrids emphasized by the presence of waste and corpses on the strand.

Tom McCarthy remarks, Stephen's "crushing of things affords him no domination; the quagmire starts to drag him [...] into its base plane".<sup>428</sup>

The sensation of sinking with and as the drowned man seems to be reiterated on several occasions during Stephen's stroll, as he strives not to physically sink into the shore.<sup>429</sup> Stephen remarks that "[u]nwholesome sandflats waited to suck his treading soles" (*U* 3.150); "[h]e st[ands] suddenly, his feet beginning to sink slowly in the quaking soil" (*U* 3.268); "[t]urning, he scan[s] the shore south, his feet sinking again slowly in new sockets" (*U* 3.270-1); "he lift[s] his feet up from the suck and turn[s] back" (*U* 3.278-9). According to Leonard, Stephen worries about "how not to be reabsorbed unto his surroundings, how to fortify his constantly crumbling walls of identity".<sup>430</sup> The intermingling of entities suggested by the corpses and by the danger of sinking seems to mimic that slippage between subject and object which is at the basis of the concept of *signatura*. This blending is not simply corporeal but extends to the psychological and linguistic realms. Umberto Eco notes that the narrative pace changes when Stephen mentions the drowned man. According to Eco,

the moment [Stephen's] eyes turn towards the sea and discern the drowned man, the rhythm of the monologue becomes more agitated and irregular, as the ordered separations between ideas turn into an uninterrupted flux where things and idea lose their physiognomy and become confused, ambiguous.<sup>431</sup>

In the "Ithaca" episode, the narrator perfectly conveys Stephen's multi-layered fear of water, describing Stephen as a "hydrophobe, hating partial contact by immersion or

---

<sup>428</sup> Tom McCarthy, "Ulysses and its Wake", *London Review of Books*, Vol.36, No.12 (June 2014), p.4.

<sup>429</sup> At the beginning of the episode, Stephen seems flummoxed by the conjunction between his feet and Mulligan's boots (which he has borrowed): "[m]y two feet in his boots are at the end of his legs" (*U* 3.16-17). As Kimberly Devlin points out, "[b]ecause he fantasizes the identity of a sartorial carapace determining, through protean transformation, the identity of the wearer, he imagines his body merging with Mulligan's on account of his borrowed footwear." (*James Joyce's "fraudstuff"*, p.29).

<sup>430</sup> Garry Leonard, "A Little Trouble with These White Corpuscles: Transubstantiation and the Heresy of Masculinity in *Ulysses*", in *'Ulysses' En-Gendered Perspectives: Eighteen New Essays on the Episodes*, ed. Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn Reizbaum (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), p.2.

<sup>431</sup> Umberto Eco, *Le poetiche di Joyce*, p.64. My translation.

total by submersion in cold water [...] disliking the aqueous substances of glass and crystal, distrusting aquacities of thought and language" (*U* 17.236-40).<sup>432</sup> According to Mary T. Reynolds, "in the Ithaca chapter, Stephen's dread of water, his description of himself as a 'hydrophobe', is attached to [...] his sensitivity to *the power of water as a metaphor*".<sup>433</sup> The "Proteus" episode anticipates this idea as Stephen's fear of water impacts his physical and psychological states, as well as the language of the chapter. As Leonard puts it, Stephen's aversion to water becomes a manifestation of his "fear of personal annihilation and a suspicion that the very psychological 'barriers' which permit interiority, in fact offer no permanent or absolute protection from the exterior world they appear to exclude".<sup>434</sup>

On Sandymount, the blending between the corporeal, the linguistic, and the material is emphasized with particular intensity through the description of a dog's carcass, the fourth "corpse" which Stephen sees on the beach:

[a] bloated carcass of a dog lay lolled on bladderwrack. Before him the gunwale of a boat, sunk in sand. *Un coche ensablé* Louis Veuillot called Gautier's prose. These heavy sands are language tide and wind have silted here. And these, the stoneheaps of dead builders, a warren of weasel rats (*U* 3.286-89)

The carcass of a dog, permeated by water after its death, is placed next to the shell of a sunken boat. Useless as an object, the vessel becomes a metaphor to describe "Gautier's prose". The strand is re-imagined as text—a text which is nonetheless subjected to the same natural processes as the objects found in the sand.

---

<sup>432</sup> In *A Portrait*, "a faint throb in his throat told [Stephen] once more of how his flesh dreaded the cold infrahuman odour of the sea" (*P*, 140). In "Wandering Rocks", he imagines his sister's entrapment in poverty as a kind of drowning: "[s]he is drowning. Agenbite. Save her. Agenbite. All against us. She will drown me with her, eyes and hair. Lank coils of seaweed hair around me, my heart, my soul. Salt green death. We." (*U* 10.875-878).

<sup>433</sup> Mary T. Reynolds, *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.145.

<sup>434</sup> Leonard, "A Little Trouble", p.1. Devlin points out that "the watery penetration of bodily orifices during immersion perhaps produces a frightening sense of a loss of self-determination" (Devlin, p.29).

As Sylvain Belluc points out, “in ‘Proteus’, decomposing bodies and the decomposing of words are never too far apart”.<sup>435</sup> Indeed, Belluc considers the “Proteus” episode “a watershed in Joyce’s overall handling of etymology”.<sup>436</sup> Rather than conceiving of etymology as an exact science, Belluc shows that “Proteus” draws attention to the etymological evolution of words as a history made of chance encounters and interactions between words and sounds, of evolving relations which create new links while effacing others.<sup>437</sup> According to Belluc, “Joyce creates metaphors which seem at first sight to be the arbitrary products of Stephen’s unbridled imagination, but are in fact nothing more than the resurfacing of past semantic lives”.<sup>438</sup> For instance, Belluc notices that “the metaphorical network which equates the undulation of water with weaving” in “Proteus” might have been “suggested to Joyce by the link Skeat doubtfully and tentatively draws between the etymologies of ‘to weave’ and ‘to wave’”.<sup>439</sup> Like bodies constantly changing, “aborning and adying”, past and present meanings, dead forms and new compounds resurface in the strand, creating surprising connections between linguistic entities.<sup>440</sup> When Stephen sees or imagines a gypsy girl on the strand he describes her as “strolling mort [...] Loose sand and shellgrit crusted her bare feet” (*U* 3.373-4). While it designates a “promiscuous

---

<sup>435</sup> Sylvain Belluc, “Science, Etymology, and Poetry in the ‘Proteus’ Episode of *Ulysses*”, *Joyce Studies in Italy 12, Polymorphic Joyce*, ed. Franca Ruggeri and Anne Fogarty (Roma: Edizioni Q, 2012), p.21. In a similar way, William Viney states that “Stephen draws an explicit comparison between the nature of language and his immediate physical environment by noticing how the beach appears heavy with linguistic deposits [...] language is a natural object, a material worked upon by processes that are inevitable, continuous, elemental” (William Viney, “Reading Flotsam and Jetsam: The Significance of Waste in ‘Proteus’”, in *Joyce Studies in Italy 12*, p.168).

<sup>436</sup> Belluc, p.15.

<sup>437</sup> “What Joyce does in ‘Proteus’ is give a truer and more faithful picture of the effect time has on language by revealing the mechanisms that lie behind the latter’s evolution. By so doing, he takes on board the advances made in the field of philology in the nineteenth century, highlighting the roles of fiction, error and superstition in relation to language change” (Belluc, p.16)

<sup>438</sup> Belluc, p.13.

<sup>439</sup> Belluc, p.13.

<sup>440</sup> Ellmann, *Ulysses’ on the Liffey*, p.23.

woman, prostitute”, the word “mort” in its French homograph conjures the image of a dead person. Whether or not this connection is intended, the sand which “crusted her bare feet” seems to stress the link between the English and the French “mort” as it recalls “Proteus”’s discarded objects silted on sand. On the strand, “words and things share a potential to be washed up, broken down and discarded into a space that signals their persisting obsolescence”.<sup>441</sup> Stephen walks in a hybrid space occupied by living and non-living, corporeal and linguistic detritus, and recognizes the process of decay which links objects, people, and words. As Joyce remarked to Budgen: “you catch the drift of the thing? [...] It’s the struggle with Proteus. Change is the theme. Everything changes—sea, sky, man, animals. The words change too”.<sup>442</sup>

Ramon Saldivar claims that “Stephen’s failure to discover the essence of nature ultimately leads to the substitution of a metonymic or linguistic reality that defers essence and effectively remakes nature as language”.<sup>443</sup> Yet “Proteus” does not present nature and language as polar opposites or mutually exclusive elements. As William Viney remarks, “Stephen draws an explicit comparison between the nature of language and his immediate physical environment by noticing how the beach appears heavy with linguistic deposits [...] language is a natural object, a material worked upon by processes that are inevitable, continuous, elemental”.<sup>444</sup> In “Epiphanic Proteus”, Sam Slote shows the changes that the passage associating the strand with a text (*U* 3.286-89) underwent before reaching its final shape, observing that “in the first version, language is heavy *on* the sand; if you will, a metaphorical duvet. In distinction, in the

---

<sup>441</sup> Viney, “Reading Flotsam and Jetsam”, p.169.

<sup>442</sup> Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of ‘Ulysses’* (New York: Harrison Smith and Robert Haas, 1934), pp.48-9.

<sup>443</sup> Ramón Saldivar, *Figural Language in the Novel: The Flowers of Speech from Cervantes to Joyce* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.216.

<sup>444</sup> Viney, “Reading Flotsam and Jetsam”, p.168.

second version, language is explicitly equated *with* the shifting sands: ‘The heavy sands *are* language’.<sup>445</sup> In line with the doctrine of signature evoked at the beginning of the chapter, “Proteus”’s approach to language seems to correspond to the sixteenth-century conception of language as a non-arbitrary system: “it has been set down in the world and forms a part of it, both because things themselves hide and manifest their own enigma like a language and because they offer themselves to men as things to be deciphered”.<sup>446</sup> Rather than transforming nature into language, Stephen strolls on sands that are both physical and linguistic, a site of hybrids and mutually forging forms.

### **“Quasi-Objects” and “Quasi-Subjects”**

The idea of the strand as a place of hybrids brings us back once more to the relevance of decaying matter on Sandymount. According to Gay Hawkins, trash is often seen as “the destroyer of the purity of both sides in the conflict between nature and culture. It is the thing that has to be eliminated in order to re-establish the essential identity and difference of each category”.<sup>447</sup> The insight echoes a view of waste advanced by Boscagli in the last chapter of *Stuff Theory*, namely, the notion that waste

---

<sup>445</sup> Sam Slote, “Epiphanic Proteus”. Slote shows that “the first version, on the NLI draft, reads: ‘Heavy on this sand is all language which tide and wind have silted up’. On the Buffalo draft this is changed somewhat: ‘The heavy sands are language that tide and wind have silted here’. On the Rosenbach manuscript, Joyce elided the preposition ‘that’, which improves the overall flow of the sentence at the expense of some syntactic clarity. The basic sense is essentially the same in both versions. Stephen equates the shifting sands with language in that both are continually changing and evolving under the shaping pressure of external forces. Sands shift in reaction to wind and tide and language changes through shifting patterns of usage”.

<sup>446</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002) pp.38-39.

<sup>447</sup> Gay Hawkins, “Sad Chairs”, in *Trash*, ed. John Knechtel (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007), p.57.

is an apt example of what Bruno Latour calls “quasi-objects” and “quasi-subjects”.<sup>448</sup> According to Boscagli, both discarded objects and quasi-objects complicate the categories that humankind has established, assailing the desire for exact and unambiguous classification. As she remarks, “the encounter with the discarded object makes visible how much both subject and object are co-implicated in the networks that produce each of them”.<sup>449</sup> Latour’s considerations in *We Have Never Been Modern* focus on precisely this co-implication.

Latour finds fault with the radical distinction between the activities of subjects and the role of objects in modernity, and calls for a redrafting of what he calls the “modern Constitution”—that symbolic common text first drafted in the middle seventeenth century—which separates “natural and political powers”, objects and subjects.<sup>450</sup> For Latour, being modern means to consider practices of “translation”—creating “mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture”—as entirely different and independent from operations of “purification”—“generating two entirely distinct ontological zones: that of human beings on the one hand; that of non-humans on the other”.<sup>451</sup> As this distinction is never truly possible, Latour claims that we have never really been modern. According to Latour, rather than

---

<sup>448</sup> Interestingly, it was Michel Serres who first introduced the term “quasi-object” in his study on the parasite and on intersubjectivity: “the parasite is always there; it is inevitable. The parasite is the third in a trivial model [...] Here now is the relation that cannot be analyzed; that is to say, there is none simpler. Here then is the beginning of intersubjectivity” (Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p.63).

<sup>449</sup> Boscagli, p.229.

<sup>450</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p.13. “The modern Constitution invents a separation between the scientific power charged with representing things and the political power charged with representing subjects” (Latour, p.29).

<sup>451</sup> Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, pp.10-11. Anthony Giddens points out that modernity, beyond periodicity, “has a set of abstract and concrete features including: (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformations by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy” (Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p.94).

“consider[ing] these two practices of translation and purification separately”, we should “direct our attention simultaneously to the work of purification and the work of hybridization”.<sup>452</sup> “Quasi-objects” and “quasi-subjects” are helpful in this endeavour. “Simultaneously real, discursive, and social [they] trace networks”, indicating an understanding of objects and subjects which does not discard the co-implication of both terms.<sup>453</sup> By paying attention to “quasi-objects” and “quasi-subjects”, Latour attempts to show how the starting point of enquiry should not be the two extremes where the supposedly pure categories of nature and society are separated from each other, but a centre where their entanglement can still be recognized. As Latour explains, “we do not need to attach our explanations to the two pure forms known as the Object or Subject/Society, because these are, on the contrary, partial and purified results of the central practice that is our sole concern”.<sup>454</sup> Thus, “the explanations no longer proceed from pure forms toward phenomena, but from the centre toward the extremes. The latter are no longer reality’s point of attachment, but so many provisional and partial results”.<sup>455</sup> In *The Cambridge Companion to Posthumanism*, Bruce Clarke calls attention to the fact that “to recover our nonmodernity is to reconstitute an affective awareness of our hybridity, of the actual composition of the human [...] out of inexorably impure mixtures of human and nonhuman”.<sup>456</sup> Paraphrasing Latour’s enterprise in *We Have Never Been Modern*, Clarke remarks that “despite modernity’s self-description as having outgrown premodern idolatries and purified its knowledge of natural things from non-natural social and ideological

---

<sup>452</sup> Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p.11.

<sup>453</sup> Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p.64.

<sup>454</sup> Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p.79.

<sup>455</sup> Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p.79.

<sup>456</sup> Bruce Clarke, “The Nonhuman”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Posthumanism*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.142.

artifacts, [modernity] has never actually left behind the ‘ancient anthropological matrix’ that jumbled together human societies and nonhuman natures”.<sup>457</sup> On Sandymount strand, Stephen seems to reach a similar awareness by evoking the doctrine of signatures as he walks down a landscape marked by waste. In fact, the pre-modern conception of things which would emphasize the existence of “quasi-objects, quasi-subjects” shares similarities with the “mythical thinking” at the basis of Paracelsus’s doctrine of signatures, whose tendency was to “blend and overlap the boundaries of things”.<sup>458</sup>

On Sandymount, the hybridity of waste material influences Stephen’s perception of himself as a subject. As Latour’s hybrids challenge “our romantic addiction to a heroic, unrealistic, and self-illusory model of personal agency, making us more aware of the distributed nature of human agency”, so Stephen has to recast his ideas about what it means to be a perceiving subject.<sup>459</sup> According to Slote, Stephen

is being a genealogist of the phenomena and epiphenomena both within and without. He is tracing connections amongst the contingent furniture of the world around him: he absorbs, remakes, and remodels himself [...] Stephen constructs a genealogy of himself, fashioning himself through his partial, delimited perspectives of the world around him, ‘seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot’ (*U* 3.2-3).<sup>460</sup>

Defining genealogy in Nietzschean terms, Slote considers Stephen’s undertaking as the “alternative to ontology [...] The account of each event is to be found in an account of the interrelationship with other phenomena”.<sup>461</sup> Stephen’s understanding of himself

---

<sup>457</sup> Clarke, p.142.

<sup>458</sup> Bianchi, p.28. My translation.

<sup>459</sup> Yves Citton, “Fictional Attachments and Literary Weavings in the Anthropocene”, *New Literary History*, Vol.47, No.2-3 (Spring/Summer, 2016), p.311.

<sup>460</sup> Slote, “Protean Phenomenology”, pp. 139, 140.

<sup>461</sup> Slote, “Protean Phenomenology”, p.138.

is articulated by a reflection on the phenomena occurring around him.<sup>462</sup> By the end of his stroll Stephen comes to ponder his own mortality:

[d]ead breaths I living breathe, tread dead dust, devour a urinous offal from all dead. Hauled stark over the gunwale he breathes upward the stench of his green grave, his leprous nosehole snoring to the sun (*U* 3.479-81)

Shifting from the first to the third person, Stephen seems incapable of maintaining an effective distance between himself and the drowned man and blends the description of the dead body “hauled stark over the gunwale” with his own fear of death. The breath of ashes of his mother, the image of the sunken boat, the discarded objects on the strand and the greenish colour of polluted Dublin Bay reverberate through Stephen’s description. If at the beginning of the episode Stephen suggests the idea of an all-knowing and indispensable subject who creates and re-creates the world around him by dint of thought, by the end of the episode he remarks that “evening will find itself in me, without me. All days make their end” (*U* 3.490). According to James Cappio, Stephen by the end of “Proteus” “has finally attained an attitude from which he can really come to terms with objects, as man and artist, come to terms with change, corruption, and death (the final refutation of solipsism) [...] Stephen accepts his place as a part, not the whole, of the world”.<sup>463</sup>

Far from terminating in a final moment of radiance and revelation, Stephen’s epistemological quest is tentative and ultimately incapable of delineating clear boundaries between subjects and objects. Rather than perceiving objects as “integral thing[s]” and “organised composite structure[s]”, on the strand Stephen recognizes

---

<sup>462</sup> According to Jaurrette, “the failed search for revealed meaning in the casual features of the strand prompts Stephen to wonder at the design of his own nature” (Jaurrette, p.92).

<sup>463</sup> James Cappio, “Aristotle, Berkeley, and Proteus: Joyce’s Use of Philosophy”, *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol.5, No.1 (Spring, 1981), p.31.

that things are in a state of constant transformation.<sup>464</sup> Silvia Annavini and William Viney posit a direct link between Stephen's difficulty in forming a straightforward impression of the material landscape, and the disruptive presence of debris. Annavini claims that the "panorama made of debris" sketched in "Proteus" causes the impossibility "of an immediate revelation or salvation [and] understanding", while Viney observes that "Stephen perceives a confused assemblage of things that does not cohere into a particular whole but rests in fragments, a collage of rats and gold, cadaver and crustaceans".<sup>465</sup> In a letter to Miss Weaver dated 24 June 1921, Joyce confesses that "my head is full of pebbles and rubbish and broken matches and bits of glass picked up 'most everywhere'".<sup>466</sup> Impressions, memories, and events pile up in the writer's mind like a heap of fragmented objects. Stephen's mind seems to be equally crammed with scraps of ideas and theories. As Valérie Bénéjam puts it, referring to the opening paragraph of "Proteus", "Stephen's memories of texts he has read seem to have been broken down, stripped like old cars, the reusable parts have been removed, and fitted again into new sentences [...] words have been shredded, blended, melted down, remixed and recombined with other materials to create new words and a new text".<sup>467</sup>

On Sandymount, thoughts, language, and things remain in a state of unorganized mess. If "in a chaos of shifting impressions, each of us construct a stable world in which objects have recognisable shapes", the "Proteus" episode's multitude

---

<sup>464</sup> *SH*, 212.

<sup>465</sup> Silvia Annavini, "'Proteus': Signs and Signatures of Modern Allegory. A Portrait of the Artist as an Interpreter", in *Hypermedia Joyce*, ed. David Vichnar and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2010). William Viney, *Waste, A Philosophy of Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.113.

<sup>466</sup> *SL*, 284.

<sup>467</sup> Valérie Bénéjam, "The Reprocessing of Trash in *Ulysses*: Recycling and (Post)creation", in *Hypermedia Joyce*, ed. David Vichnar and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2010), p.135.

of shapes, hybrid objects and modalities of vision resist ordering into a single and coherent impression.<sup>468</sup> Yet this jumble of unorganized matter allows for relations and networks between entities to emerge with particular strength. “Consonantia”, the rhythm and relation of part to part which Stephen defined as the second stage of the theory of epiphany, is still apparent in Stephen’s act of signature-reading. Without ever leading to a final moment of radiance, the relations between Stephen and the landscape of Sandymount entail “an ongoing [process of] differentiation and adjustment, a revelation in the making”.<sup>469</sup>

### **The Middle Ground of Signatures**

In his study of signatures, Giorgio Agamben points out a difference, stressed by Foucault in *The Order of Things*, between “semiology—the set of knowledges that allow us to recognize what is a sign and what is not” and “hermeneutics, which consists of the set of knowledges that allow us to discover the meaning of signs, to ‘make the signs speak’”.<sup>470</sup> According to Agamben, the signatures of things “are situated on the threshold between semiology and hermeneutics”, as they “do not institute semiotics relations or create new meanings; instead, they mark and ‘characterize’ signs at the level of their existence, thus actualizing and displacing their efficacy”.<sup>471</sup> By reading the signatures of things on the strand, Stephen does not try to reveal the meaning of

---

<sup>468</sup> Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966), p.49. According to Bénéjam, Stephen’s “extraordinary memory insures nothing gets wasted, and his stream of consciousness supplies a continual output of reprocessed literature” (Bénéjam, p.135).

<sup>469</sup> Andrew Norris, “Joyce & the Post-Epiphany”, in *Hypermedia Joyce*, p.110.

<sup>470</sup> Agamben, p.58.

<sup>471</sup> Agamben, p.64.

things but “characterize[s] signs” by drawing connections between himself and his environment. The objects on the strand make themselves present in their unavoidable decay, an intractable process in which the real emerges independently from any philosophical theory Stephen might look to in his work of interpretation. As Andrew Norris suggests, in “Proteus” Stephen “attempts to penetrate the ‘ineluctable modality of the visible’ only to discover a ‘world without end’ which is independent of his subjective perspective and which insists ineluctably on the material dimension of its existence”.<sup>472</sup>

On Sandymount, the messy and unappealing presence of things in a state of decay invites us to think relationally and emphasizes the presence of hybrids. If the common tendency is to separate things and people, to place “here on the left [...] the things in themselves, there on the right [...] the free society of speaking, thinking subjects, values and of signs”, on Sandymount we find ourselves in the middle, in a place of hybridity where different materials (corporeal, linguistic, intellectual) interact.<sup>473</sup> After having read the signatures of things on the strand, at the end of the episode Stephen leaves his own signature in the form of snot on a rock: “he laid the dry snot picked from his nostril on a ledge of rock, carefully. For the rest let look who will.” (*U*3.500-505). Livorni sees Stephen’s laying of the snot as “a signature [...] which seals the end of a document”, while Ellmann similarly points out that at the end of the episode the character “add[s] his signature to the signatures of all things”.<sup>474</sup> Echoing a previously asked question (“who will read these signs?” (*U* 3.413-14)) with an

---

<sup>472</sup> Andrew Norris, “Joyce & the Post-Epiphanic”, p.117.

<sup>473</sup> Latour, p.37.

<sup>474</sup> Livorni sees the final laying of the snot as “a signature [...] which seals the end of a document” (Livorni, p.137). Ellmann similarly points out that “Proteus” “begins, after all, with Stephen reading, and it ends with his writing a poem, adding his signature to the signatures of all things.” (Ellmann, *‘Ulysses’ on the*, p.25).

invitation (“for the rest look who will”), Stephen’s own signature is a trace at a crossroads between bodily waste, written sign, and material substance which perfectly encapsulates the hybrid signatures of waste he finds on the strand.

### Chapter 3 Part 2: *Ulysses* and its Networks of Banal Objects

During his walk along Sandymount strand, Stephen puts centre stage objects that are discarded, forgotten, and have no function as tools or symbols. According to Inglesby, this is what constitutes “the bedrock of Joyce’s creation, a crucial layer of materiality and linguistic reality”. As she remarks,

[t]o find the deeper foundations of the phenomenal world in Joyce, it is necessary to move beyond examinations of items that Joyce presents as talismans, symbols, or objects that characters respond to with focused, conscious attention, such as the kind Stephen employs when he seeks out an epiphany.<sup>475</sup>

As Stephen’s exercise of signature-reading has shown, the centrality of the discarded matter on the strand is not achieved through “conscious attention” and analysis on Stephen’s part—not, that is, through a process of investigation which could match that leading to the theory of epiphany in *Stephen Hero* or *A Portrait*. Rather, these objects are scattered throughout the chapter, creating a trail which, embedded in the multitude of Stephen’s thoughts and perceptions, can be followed but can also easily be missed. In his analysis of signatures, Agamben links the doctrine of signatures to the “nature of the clues” which forms the basis of, amongst other methods, Freud’s psychoanalysis and Sherlock Holmes’s investigations. According to Agamben, both these methods and the doctrine of signatures rely on small traces or insignificant details which are nonetheless able to put “an insignificant and nondescript object in effective relation to an event or to a subject”.<sup>476</sup> Focusing on Leopold’s Bloom

---

<sup>475</sup> Inglesby, p.292. In a similar way, Garry Leonard notes that “Joyce’s fiction consistently asserts that what is disposable, insignificant, ephemeral, dead, or forgotten may nevertheless influence and shape our sense of reality and self more profoundly than those objects, texts, and images that have been designated as worthy representation of eternal truth” (Leonard, *Advertising and Commodity Culture*, p.34).

<sup>476</sup> Agamben, p.70. Agamben quotes Freud’s claim that psychoanalysis deals with “concealed things from despised or unnoticed features, from the rubbish-heap, as it were, of our observations” (Sigmund Freud, “The

peregrinations in the rest of the novel, part 2 of this chapter will look at the ways in which banal objects are represented in the novel, considering their place in its narrative development, and the kinds of relation which arise between them and human characters. In *Ulysses*, this section will argue, the epiphanic glance which attempts to define an object's essential traits by transcending its triviality is replaced by a parallax view which considers an object from different perspectives without extracting it from its mundane context. Sometimes functioning as naturalistic details and sometimes as symbols, the banal objects of *Ulysses* create a new texture of represented reality which reaches its clearest and most radical forms in the hallucinations of "Circe" and the scientific style of "Ithaca".

Unfolding over the course of a single day and spanning external and internal spaces, from public streets and pubs to private living rooms and drawers, Leopold Bloom's odyssey is embedded in the material world of the everyday. As Henri Lefebvre points out, in *Ulysses* the "quotidian steals the show. In his endeavour to portray [...] everyday life Joyce exploited language to the farthest limits of its resources".<sup>477</sup> Not only does the novel present mundane actions such as eating, walking or defecating in unprecedented details, but it also includes a striking number of banal objects, things which are often taken for granted but that are an essential part of the texture of the everyday. Used handkerchiefs, chamber pots, envelopes, matches, bars of soap, and

---

Moses of Michelangelo," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), Vol.13, p. 222. Quoted in Agamben, p.70). Kenner claims that *Ulysses* resembles a detective story "in which all hinges on postponed revelations. Changing our earlier understanding with late facts" (Kenner, *Ulysses*, pp.80-1).

<sup>477</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p.3.

potatoes are all included in a novel which has been seen as an inventory of the everyday life of Dublin on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1904.<sup>478</sup>

## **Banality, Naturalism, Symbolism**

Banal objects do not straightforwardly find a place in literary texts, as their triviality is undermined by the functional role they acquire when they become part of a narrative.<sup>479</sup> Objects, no matter how useless, are normally included in narrative texts to achieve a particular purpose, and therefore become useful and somehow extraordinary within the fictional work. Focusing on the Naturalist and Symbolist literary traditions, Naomi Segal charts with precision the three main roles which objects typically play in works of fiction. Segal explains that objects are either the basis of a faithful reproduction of the real and are “described for the sheer delight of describing”, or “function as support or ‘anchors’ for plot [becoming] symbols cunningly disguised as part of the ‘realistic’ pattern of cause-and-effect”, or “feature as aids to characterization”.<sup>480</sup> In neither case, Segal concludes, “could such a concept as the banal object have a place in the literary idea: in Symbolism, such objects are excluded, and in Naturalism all objects can be incorporated and are therefore not banal”.<sup>481</sup>

---

<sup>478</sup> On the topic of the inventory in *Ulysses* see in particular Karen R. Lawrence, “‘Aeolus: Interruption and Inventory’”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.4 (Summer, 1980), and John Scholar, “Joyce, Heidegger, and the Material World of *Ulysses*: ‘Ithaca’ as Inventory”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol 54, No.1-2 (Fall, 2016/Winter, 2017).

<sup>479</sup> Raymond Spiteri makes a similar claim about waste as he points out that “on a fundamental level, waste resists representation [...] the moment it is incorporated into literature it assumes use value, and sheds its identity as waste. It accrues symbolic value and meaning within the larger formal system of a novel” (Raymond Spiteri, review of *Consumerism, Waste, and Re-Use in Twentieth-Century Fiction: Legacies of the Avant-Garde* by Rachele Dini, *Modernism/modernity*, Vol.25, No.3 (September 2018), p.620). As my analysis of “Proteus” has shown, the attribution of value to waste is not so straightforward in Joyce.

<sup>480</sup> Segal, pp.10-11.

<sup>481</sup> Segal, p.14.

In *Ulysses*, these two tendencies coexist, as a comprehensive Naturalist propensity is matched by a proclivity for Symbolism. On the one hand, the novel aims at an exactness which invokes the realist tradition. Jennifer Wicke describes the novel as “Joyce’s major work of mass culture”, considering “the wide nets [it] tosses out to draw in flotsam and jetsam of modern mass culture, of an everyday life comprised of shopping, ads, mass entertainment, posters, fashion, spectacle, news, and the information bombarding us from multiple public sources”.<sup>482</sup> The image of ‘wide nets’ offered by Wicke is particularly effective in capturing Joyce’s attempt to leave nothing out of his portrayal of Dublin. With the help of his aunt Josephine and *Tom’s Dublin Post Office Directory* amongst other sources, Joyce goes to great lengths to achieve verisimilitude, including myriad names of streets, shops, and adverts existing in 1904 Dublin.<sup>483</sup>

The same attention to detail seems to motivate the inclusion of everyday objects in the text, as suggested by the description of Bloom’s early morning routine in “Calypso”. Bloom “move[s] about the kitchen softly” (*U* 4.6), preparing Molly’s “breakfast things on the humpy tray [...] Another slice of bread and butter: three, four: right” (*U* 4.7-11), and putting on a “kettle [which] sat there, dull and squat, its spout stuck out” (*U* 4.12-14). As he moves towards the bedroom “on quietly creaky boots” (*U* 4.49), the silence of the house is perturbed by the “loose brass quoits” (*U* 4.59) of the bed “[b]ought at the Governor’s auction” (*U* 4.62) in Gibraltar. Getting ready to go out, Bloom’s “hand took his hat from the peg over his initialled heavy overcoat and his

---

<sup>482</sup> Jennifer Wicke, “Joyce and Consumer Culture”, in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.235.

<sup>483</sup> Joyce famously expressed the desire to “give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book” (See Budgen, *The Making of ‘Ulysses’*, p.69).

lost property office secondhand waterproof" (U 66-7). The text zooms in to focus on "[t]he sweated legend in the crown of his hat" (U 4.68-9) as Bloom "peep[s] quickly inside the leather headband" (U 4.70) to make sure a "[w]hite slip of paper" (U 4.70) is still there "[q]uite safe" (U 4.71). In this scene, the meticulous description of Bloom's household objects can be seen as part of a Naturalistic attempt to faithfully reproduce a scene and an atmosphere. However, this Naturalistic attention to details is matched, in other parts of the novel, by the strong symbolic valence which trivial objects often acquire. Over the years, scholars have repeatedly returned to a handful of objects from the mass of material in the novel, emphasizing their status as symbols and their impact on characterization.<sup>484</sup> For instance, Bloom's potato and bar of lemon soap, Stephen's ashplant, and Mulligan's razor and mirror, have been at the centre of several articles probing their symbolic significance beyond their ostensible everyday banality.<sup>485</sup>

According to Segal, it is precisely at the crossroads between Naturalism and Symbolism that the banality of an object can emerge. As she remarks,

the existence of the banal object begins only when the two extremes are brought up against one another and come into conflict. The encounter with the banal is the challenge that the Naturalist assumption makes to the Symbolist assumption, when objects which have no place in the poet's world intrude and make their claim.<sup>486</sup>

---

<sup>484</sup> Some of the most recent works focusing on the symbolic meaning of objects include Marjorie Howes's "Joyce, Colonialism and Nationalism", in which Howes points out that "in the 'Wandering Rocks' episode of *Ulysses*, Father Conmee's 'ivory bookmark' (U 10.190) establishes further links between Jesuit missionary works and British imperialism" (Marjorie Howes, "Joyce, Colonialism and Nationalism" in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.256).

<sup>485</sup> See, for instance, Stephen Whittaker's "Joyce's Umbrella: The Pattern of Created Things", *Studies in the Novel*, Vol.18, No.1 (Spring, 1986), 36-50; Hye Ryoung Kil's "Soap Advertisements in *Ulysses*: The Brooke's Monkey Brand Ad and the Capital Couple", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.47, No.3 (Spring, 2010), 417-26; Robert Merritt's "Faith and Betrayal: The Potato in *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.1 (Fall, 1990), 269-76; Daniel Moshenberg's "The Capital Couple: Speculating on *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.25, No.3 (Spring, 1988), 333-47.

<sup>486</sup> Segal, p.14.

Joyce's *Ulysses* stages this conflict, and if individual scenes affiliate objects to either Naturalist description or Symbolic evocation, a consideration of several passages involving the same object complicates easy categorization.<sup>487</sup> According to Robert Martin Adams,

the choice between surface and symbol is the most important one a reader of Joyce must make. Surface in fiction invites us to repose in the object itself as represented; symbols invite us to transpose, to see the object as a key to some meaning other than itself [...] It is perfectly clear that surface and symbol are not exclusive alternatives [...] a literary element's existence as symbol does not rigidly preclude its existence as surface, or vice versa.<sup>488</sup>

In the novel, a great variety of objects are poised between a banality determined by the everyday context in which they are mentioned, and their potentiality to bear a symbolic meaning. Derek Attridge notices this ambivalence when he points out the often mischievous nature of Joyce's Symbolism. As he points out,

Joyce scatters tempting clues to large symbolic structures [...] the question is whether [...] what is being offered is a temptation itself, a desire to invest quotidian reality with deeper significance. If this is so, then what is equally important is the failure of such symbolic reductions, since quotidian reality—and the openness of the text to interpretation—will always exceed them.<sup>489</sup>

The oscillation between Naturalism and Symbolism is precisely what allows the banality of everyday object to emerge and find its place—as banality—in the text.

According to Saikat Majumdar, “in Joyce's fiction, the banality of daily life and the desire for aesthetic transcendence are not so much polarized as held in mutually

---

<sup>487</sup> A. Walton Litz points out that “[i]t has often been noted that the two lectures Joyce gave at the Università Popolare of Trieste in 1912 established the twin frontiers of his art and looked forward to *Ulysses*. He chose as his subjects Defoe and Blake, treating them as the ultimate masters of painstaking realism and universal symbolism” (A. Walton Litz, “Ithaca”, in *James Joyce's 'Ulysses' Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), p.387).

<sup>488</sup> Robert Martin Adams, *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Oxford: Galaxy Books, 1967), pp.83-4.

<sup>489</sup> Derek Attridge, “Joyce's 'Clay' and the Problem of the Referent”, *Tropisme No.6, Le dit et le non-dit* (Paris: Université Paris X-Nanterre, 1993), p.123.

enabling dialectic. Nowhere is it brought out more famously than in *Ulysses*, where the aesthetic is indeed embodied *through* the banal”.<sup>490</sup>

One of the first objects to appear in *Ulysses*, apart from Buck Mulligan’s razor and shaving bowl, is a used handkerchief.<sup>491</sup> Drawing to the end of his mock service in “Telemachus”, Mulligan “frowned at the lather on his razorblade. He hopped down from his perch and began to search his trouser pockets hastily” (*U* 1.64-65). Not finding anything fit to wipe the blade

He came over to the gunrest and, thrusting a hand into Stephen’s upper pocket, said:

— Lend us a loan of your noserag to wipe my razor.

Stephen suffered him to pull out and hold up on show by its corner a dirty crumpled handkerchief. Buck Mulligan wiped the razorblade neatly. Then, gazing over the handkerchief, he said:

— The bard’s noserag! A new art colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen. You can almost taste it, can’t you? (*U* 1.67-74)

Mulligan mockingly transforms Stephen’s handkerchief from a used object into a potential symbol for Irish art. Turning Stephen’s snot into an emblem for both poetry and nationality, Mulligan’s sentence highlights the way in which the banal object might transcend its triviality and be aestheticized into a symbol. Yet this potential for epiphanic elevation is evoked only to be derided. Not only does Mulligan’s ironic tone make fun of Stephen’s symbolizing urges, but the potentially symbolic meaning of the handkerchief’s colour is brought back to its corporeal dimension by being named (“snotgreen”) for the mucus it contains. In a similar way the symbolic value of the handkerchief continues to be questioned throughout the rest of the novel, when Stephen’s used handkerchief returns in all its materiality as a used “noserag”. At the

---

<sup>490</sup> Majumdar, p.38.

<sup>491</sup> For an examination of the ways in which Mulligan’s razor and bowl might also resist mere symbolism, see Paul K. Saint-Amour in *The Cambridge Companion to ‘Ulysses’*.

end of the third episode Stephen, looking for his handkerchief, mentally recapitulates Mulligan's actions: "My handkerchief. He threw it. I remember. Did I not take it up? His hand groped vainly in his pockets. No, I didn't. Better buy one" (*U* 3.498-99). Having been the object of Mulligan's mocking and ironic attempt to invest a dirty handkerchief with new artistic meaning, the object is returned to its practical function of "rub[bing] off the microbes" (*U* 8.712). Its absence demands a new purchase, a new economic transaction—"Buy a pair. Holes in my socks. Handkerchief too" (*U* 9.948), which will ultimately be made unnecessary by Bloom's "gift to his guest of one of the four lady's handkerchiefs" (*U* 17.375).

André Topia claims that "the dissociation between potential elaboration and emergence to actualization is the essential ontological mode of *Ulysses*".<sup>492</sup> If "nothing can appear in [the novel] without having already acquired, sometimes in zones far remote from the world of the book, an elaborate charge or existence in an underlying potential network", this network, being only a potentiality, is as easily overthrown as it is respected.<sup>493</sup> Thus, the potential elevation of some objects to precise symbols is often defied by their reappearance in situations or functions which negate the "potential network" of which they seemed to be a part. Used, discarded, absent, offered, the handkerchief is both a mundane object and a potential symbol. As the text foregrounds either its real or symbolic aspects, the handkerchief's banality is emphasized, emerging most vividly in those moments where it serves no function as either symbol, descriptive detail, or aid to plot development.

---

<sup>492</sup> André Topia, "Narrative as Potential: The Virus and the Term", in *Joyce in Trieste*, ed. Sebastian D.G. Knowles, Geert Lernout, John McCourt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), p.74.

<sup>493</sup> Topia, p.74.

Majumdar considers one of the most talked about objects in *Ulysses*—Bloom’s bar of lemon soap—as “the perfect example of a banal object which resists epiphanization”.<sup>494</sup> Without denying its role as symbol and its impact on characterization, Majumdar retraces the appearances of the soap throughout the novel to show that Bloom is often reminded of its presence by mere chance. The bar of lemon soap is felt as he sits on it on his way to Dignam’s funeral (*U* 6.21-22), is remembered as he smells a handkerchief with a similar fragrance (*U* 7.226), is touched as he rummages through his pockets (*U* 8.1191-92). In all of these instances, the soap re-emerges without fulfilling any symbolic role and without adding anything to plot development. According to Majumdar, “the manner in which the soap appears throughout the novel ensures that it accumulates a certain epistemological opacity that frustrates the easy attachment of aesthetic and cultural significance”.<sup>495</sup> The innovation of modernist narratives, claims Majumdar,

involves a radical shift from the merely functional use of everyday details for the empirical production of setting and context, as seen in more traditional form of realism [...] The radical modernist response to this problem is [...] to invest fragments of this ordinary life with the libidinal energy of the banal haunted by the unfulfilled promise of transcendence. Through this narrative innovation, the banal, in a radical turn of cultural history, becomes an affirmative narrative force.<sup>496</sup>

As is the case for Stephen’s handkerchief and Bloom’s bar of lemon soap, several banal objects reappear at different points in *Ulysses*. In most instances they do not contribute to plot development. Their triviality is preserved as their reappearance goes beyond functional verisimilitude, being charged with a potential for symbolism which is as often unrealized as it is achieved.

---

<sup>494</sup> Majumdar, p.52.

<sup>495</sup> Majumdar, p.52.

<sup>496</sup> Majumdar, p.12.

The objects in Leopold and Molly Bloom's bedroom, first mentioned in the morning scene of "Calypso", are examples of recurring mundane objects which have potential symbolic significances but never fully adhere to them. In the fourth episode, the marital bed is heard as the "loose brass quoits of the bedstead jingle[s]" (*U* 4.59) under Molly's movements. The same old bed makes another appearance in "Penelope", when Molly reflects that its noisy joints might have revealed her affair—"this damned old bed too jingling like the dickens I suppose they could hear us away over the other side of the park" (*U* 18.1130-32)—and sparks a memory—"the lumpy old jingly bed always reminds me of old Cohen I suppose he scratched himself in it often enough" (*U* 18.1212-13). At the side of the bed lies an "orangekeyed chamberpot" (*U* 4.330), whose use is imaginatively referred to by way of a pun in "Sirens":

[c]hamber music. Could make a kind of pun on that. It is a kind of music I often thought when she. Acoustics that is. Tinkling. Empty vessels make most noise. Because the acoustics, the resonance changes according as the weight of the water is equal to the law of falling water. Like those rhapsodies of Liszt's, Hungarian, gypsyeyed. (*U* 11.979-83)

The chamber pot is conjured as an "empty vessel" producing sound as people urinate in it, while at the same time humorously hinting at the title of Joyce's own collection of poems published in 1907.

As he brings breakfast to his wife, Bloom notices that "[a] strip of torn envelope peeped from under the dimpled pillow" (*U* 4.308). The envelope containing Boylan's letter, personified and hinting at the peepshow in "Circe", stirs in Bloom a touch of jealousy, instigated by the "bold hand" (*U* 4.311) which took the liberty of addressing the letter to "Mrs. Marion Bloom" rather than to "Mrs. Leopold Bloom" as etiquette

dictated at the time.<sup>497</sup> Torn envelopes make several appearances in the novel, retaining an association with naming and potential love affairs. In “Lotus Eaters”, Bloom receives a love letter from a woman named Martha. Later in the episode, Bloom tears the envelope to pieces: “[g]oing under the railway arch he took out the envelope, tore it swiftly in shreds and scattered them towards the road. The shreds fluttered away, sank in the dank air: a white flutter, then all sank. Henry Flower” (*U* 5.300-4). Despite getting rid of it, Bloom is concerned about the envelope, later wondering whether he: “tore up the envelope? Yes. Where did I put her letter after I read it in the bath? He patted his waistcoatpocket. There all right. Dear Henry fled. Before my patience are exhausted” (*U* 6.168-170)). Again in “Sirens”, Bloom recalls “two envelopes” he, or better “Henry Flower bought” (*U* 11.295-96), quoting a line Martha wrote to him in one of her letters, thereby linking the envelope to the idea of being unhappy in marriage: “Are you not happy in your home?”. In all these objects, banality and symbolism somehow coexist. Loose quoits, chamber pots, torn envelopes keep reemerging throughout *Ulysses*, becoming part of the novel’s narrative texture as they form a network of allusions. However, their symbolic potential never fully transcends their banality. Squeaking, tinkling with the sound of urine, shredded to pieces and cast away, they remain tangible material objects that have been used, broken, neglected, or discarded.

Objects in *Ulysses* follow what Hugh Kenner defines as Joyce’s “aesthetic of delay”, his “way of drip-feeding information about a person, event, or thing into the text so dispersedly that only a perfectly retentive reader could gather it all”.<sup>498</sup> Not only are

---

<sup>497</sup> See *‘Ulysses’ Annotated*, p.76

<sup>498</sup> Kenner, p.76.

they typically mentioned on several occasions and in different contexts, but they “take on a surprising range of significance in every single episode”.<sup>499</sup> The description given at a particular moment constitutes only a piece of the more comprehensive picture the reader will have by the end of the novel. According to Majumdar, this fragmentation is what prevents Bloom’s soap from taking on “transcendental significance”:

this life [of the lemon soap] teases but never quite gives in to Symbolism’s urge to elevate such objects into a transcendental significance. It continues to be variously symbolic of Bloom’s day and his character, his fears and his fetishes, yet it does so in such a fragmented, transitory manner as to fall far short of the symbolic grandeur of Stéphane Mallarmé’s flower or W.B Yeats’s swan.<sup>500</sup>

Starting with Mulligan’s black mass, which mocks the elevation and transubstantiation of bread and wine at the heart of Catholic communion, the novel repeatedly deflates potential moments of transcendental elevation.

Timepieces and clocks in *Ulysses* provide an apt example to illustrate this process. In “Nausicaa”, Bloom remarks that his wristwatch is broken, thinking “[f]unny my watch stopped at half past four. Dust. Shark liver oil they use to clean. Could do it myself. Save. Was that just when he, she? O, he did. Into her. She did. Done” (*U* 13.846-9). Later on, Bloom brings his attention back to the watch, thinking “[v]ery strange about my watch. Wristwatches are always going wrong. Wonder if there is any magnetic influence between the person because that was about the time he. Yes” (*U* 13.983-5). If these two quotes are considered on their own, it is almost impossible to get the full significance of Bloom’s thinking process, and the purport of the two remarks remains limited to a useless object which does not work, and which Bloom could try and fix. It is clear, however, that there is an additional layer of significance to Bloom’s

---

<sup>499</sup> Plock, p.559.

<sup>500</sup> Majumdar, p.57.

observation, a meaning which emerges only if other passages in the novel are taken into account. What Bloom finds “funny” is the coincidence which made his watch stop shortly after the time of Boylan’s visit to Molly and therefore at the likely time of the consummation of their love affair. Just before Bloom’s reflection about the watch, Boylan is indirectly mentioned as the “bold hand” addressing a letter to “Mrs Marion” (U 13.843). The reference clarifies the identities of the persons designated by the pronouns “he” and “she” in Bloom’s interior monologue. At the same time, it sheds light on the parallelism Bloom draws between the influence of magnetic fields on the workings of clocks, and the (magnetic) attraction between two people.

Clocks are connected to the time of Molly’s infidelity at other points in the novel. As in the case above, the links between them emerge only by piecing together different moments of the text. At the end of “Nausicaa”, Bloom hears the sound of another clock:

[t]he clock on the mantelpiece in the priest's house cooed where Canon O'Hanlon and Father Conroy and the reverend John Hughes S.J. were taking tea and sodabread and butter and fried mutton chops with catsup and talking about

*Cuckoo.*  
*Cuckoo.*  
*Cuckoo (U 13.1292-8)*

In “Circe”, the same clock is heard chiming once again:

*([t]he very reverend Canon O'Hanlon in cloth of gold cape elevates and exposes a marble timepiece. Before him Father Conroy and the reverend John Hughes S.J. bend low.)*

#### THE TIMEPIECE

*(unportalling)*

*Cuckoo.*  
*Cuckoo.*  
*Cuckoo. (U 15.1128-34)*

In both instances, the striking of the timepiece does not simply reproduce the sound of a cuckoo clock but is also evocative of Bloom’s cuckoldry. The elevation of the timepiece immediately follows a reference to the “*Messenger of the Sacred Heart* and

*Evening Telegraph* with Saint Patrick's Day supplement. Containing the new addresses of all the cuckolds in Dublin" (U 15.1124-26) and is in turn followed by "[t]he brass quoits of a bed [which] are heard to jingle" (U 15.1135). The potential symbolic meaning of timepieces is disseminated in small occurrences which never manage to fully take the attention away from the banality of the object. As the two quotes from "Nausicaa" show, Bloom's broken watch remains a useless object stopped by dust if other elements scattered in the novel are not taken into account.

A box of matches sits at the centre of another such scattering of clues. In "Aeolus", a conversation between J.J. O'Molloy and Stephen is interrupted by a simple gesture:

Pause. J.J. O'Molloy took out his cigarette case.  
False lull. Something quite ordinary.  
Messenger took out his matchbox thoughtfully and lit his cigar. (U 7.760-62)

As he observes this simple action, Stephen develops a rather peculiar thought, which cannot be explained by this passage alone:

I have often thought since on looking back over that strange time that it was that small act, trivial in itself, that striking of that match, that determined the whole aftercourse of both our lives (U 7.763-65)

According to Gifford and Seidman, this passage "echoes the Dickens of *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*".<sup>501</sup> There is, however, a crucial difference between Stephen's thoughts and the passage from *David Copperfield* in which the main character looks back on Peggoty's and Barkis's wedding.<sup>502</sup> While David Copperfield's reflection is simply an afterthought on a particular event, in *Ulysses* Stephen's rumination does not clarify anything, as there is no immediate explanation

---

<sup>501</sup> *'Ulysses' Annotated*, p.146.

<sup>502</sup> Gifford and Seidman quotes from Ch.10 of *David Copperfield*: "I have often thought, since, what an odd, innocent, out-of-the-way kind of wedding it must have been! We got into the chaise again soon after dark, and drove cosily back, looking up at the stars and talking about them" (*'Ulysses' Annotated*, p.146)

as to how the striking of the match “determined the whole aftercourse of both our lives”. At this point, Stephen is simply imagining how a trivial moment might be retrospectively written up in fiction. Joyce fulfils Stephen’s fantasy, writing that “small act, trivial in itself,” at a later stage in the novel. After another quick apparition in “Wandering Rocks”—a “vesta in the clergyman’s uplifted hand consumed itself in a long soft flame and was left fall” (*U* 10.403-4)—matches are mentioned again in “Circe”, in a moment which could retrospectively elucidate Stephen’s thinking. A box of matches falls from Stephen’s pocket and is picked up by Bloom.

STEPHEN

[...] (*He fumbles again in his pocket and draws out a handful of coins. An object falls.*) That fell.

BLOOM

(*stooping, picks up and hands a box of matches*) This.

STEPHEN

Lucifer. Thanks.

(*U* 15.3593-99)

A trivial moment and a box of matches prod Stephen’s first encounter with Bloom, and could therefore explain how the striking of a match “determined the whole aftercourse of both our lives”.<sup>503</sup> As Patrick W. Moran suggestively states, the interpolations of matches themselves work as “fallen matchsticks, lacking any textual value when they drop into the novel but flaring into light at the moment when Stephen makes his first real contact with Bloom”.<sup>504</sup>

According to Moran, “the spectacle of a multiplicity of objects forces one to interrogate the singularity or quiddity of each item”.<sup>505</sup> In my opinion, the recurrence

---

<sup>503</sup> To deflate this potential interpretation, matches are simply used by Bloom in “Ithaca” to lit a candle: “ignited a lucifer match by friction, set free inflammable coal gas by turning on the ventcock, lit a high flame which, by regulating, he reduced to quiescent candescence and lit finally a portable candle” (*U* 17.106-8).

<sup>504</sup> Moran, p.440.

<sup>505</sup> Moran, p.441

of trivial objects in the novel does not invite the reader to find the specific or privileged angle that could reveal the symbolic or aesthetic valence of a thing in a single moment of radiance. Rather, the novel encourages the reader to pay attention to the several ways of looking at a particular object. According to Ellmann, Joyce was interested

in the cubist method of establishing differing relations among aspects of a single thing, and he would ask Beckett to do some research for him in the possible permutations of an object. That the picture of Cork in his Paris flat should have, as he emphasized to Frank O'Connor, a cork frame, was a deliberate, if half-humorous, indication of this notion of the world, where unexpected simultaneities are the rule.<sup>506</sup>

The presentation of banal objects in *Ulysses* follows a similar cubist method. As the symbolic elevation of objects is often matched by their deflation, what is emphasized is their “possible permutations”. The gaze required in *Ulysses* is not an epiphanic one aiming at a single moment of revelation, but a parallaxic one involving the juxtaposition of different perspectives.

## **Parallax**

Defined by the *OED* as the “difference or change in the apparent position or direction of an object as seen from two different points”, the concept of parallax is derived from astronomy to signify “a difference or change in the position of a celestial object as seen from the different points on the earth’s surface or from opposite points in the earth’s orbit around the sun”. In true parallaxic fashion, in *Ulysses* the term is not only used in its original astrological connotation. It also refers to the ability to entertain different perspectives on things and on language. According to Kenner,

---

<sup>506</sup> Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.551.

“parallax makes possible a stereoscopic vision [...] and the uncanny sense of reality that grows in readers of *Ulysses* page after page is fostered by the neatness with which versions of the same event [...] reliably render one another substantial”.<sup>507</sup> The first parallactic vision in *Ulysses* involves a cloud spotted by Bloom and Stephen from different parts of Dublin. The experience is expressed in the exact same words in “Telemachus”, when Stephen notices “a cloud [which] began to cover the sun slowly, wholly, shadowing the bay in deeper green” (*U* 1.248), and in “Calypso”, when Bloom sees that “a cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly. Grey. Far” (*U* 4.218). Not only does the narrator of “Ithaca”, possessing encyclopaedic knowledge, confirm that the two characters have seen the same cloud, but a stark narrative interruption sees “Calypso” open at the same time as “Telemachus”.<sup>508</sup> Rupturing the chronological flow of the first three episodes, “Calypso”—as the schema makes clear—turns back the clock to 8 am, starting the day again to follow the actions of Leopold Bloom.<sup>509</sup>

The term “parallax” is explicitly mentioned for the first time in “Lestrygonians”:

Mr Bloom moved forward, raising his troubled eyes. Think no more about that. After one. Timeball on the ballastoffice is down. Dunsink time. Fascinating little book that is of sir Robert Ball’s. Parallax. I never exactly understood. There’s a priest. Could ask him. Par it’s Greek: parallel, parallax. Met him pike hoses she called it till I told her about the transmigration. O rocks!

Mr Bloom smiled O rocks at two windows of the ballastoffice. She’s right after all. Only big words for ordinary things on account of the sound. She’s not exactly witty. Can be rude too. Blurt out what I was thinking. Still, I don’t know. She used to say Ben Dollard had a base barreltone voice. He has legs like barrels

---

<sup>507</sup> Kenner, *Ulysses*, p.75. C.M. Lerm-Hayes similarly points out that the “notion of telling things twice, hundreds of pages apart, could be called parallax” (C.M. Lerm-Hayes, *Joyce in Art: Visual Art Inspired by James Joyce* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), p.223)

<sup>508</sup> “The collapse which Bloom ascribed to gastric inanition and certain chemical compounds of varying degrees of adulteration and alcoholic strength, accelerated by mental exertion and the velocity of rapid circular motion in a relaxing atmosphere, Stephen attributed to the reappearance of a matutinal cloud (perceived by both from two different points of observation, Sandycove and Dublin) at first no bigger than a woman’s hand” (*U* 17.36-42)

<sup>509</sup> Arnold Goldman points out that the fourth chapter is “in all but pagination, a new beginning to the novel. The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters retrace the first, second and third in time [...] and this is the only time in the novel which such chronological retracing occurs” (Arnold Goldman, *The Joyce Paradox: Form and Freedom in his Fiction* (Oxon: Routledge Library Editions, 2016), pp.79-80).

and you'd think he was singing into a barrel. Now, isn't that wit. They used to call him big Ben. Not half as witty as calling him base barreltone. Appetite like an albatross. Get outside of a baron of beef. Powerful man he was at stowing away number one Bass. Barrel of Bass. See? It all works out (*U* 8.109-16)

Bloom passes the same clock as was at the centre of Stephen's theory of epiphany in *Stephen Hero*—an object which, as Hugh Kenner remarks, is here “not manifesting ‘the third, the supreme quality of beauty’ [...] but [is] still embedded with ambiguities of perception”.<sup>510</sup> Looking at the timeball, Bloom expresses his confusion concerning the term “parallax” as found in *The Story of the Heavens* (1893) by Sir Robert Ball, a “fascinating little book” which is part of his personal library as recorded in “Ithaca”.<sup>511</sup> As he tries to uncover the meaning of “parallax” by splitting the word into its constitutive elements, Bloom embarks on a series of reflections centred on linguistic confusions and puns which seem to mimic the “change in apparent position or direction” which the term itself describes.<sup>512</sup> These remind Bloom of another “big word” derived from Greek which he discussed with Molly earlier in the morning: “metempsychosis”. Unaware of its meaning, Molly had focused on the sounds of its letters, transforming the original word into a series of terms—“met him pike hoses”—which preserve the sound of the word but which makes the retrieval of any etymological meaning elusive.

---

<sup>510</sup> Kenner, *Ulysses*, p.73.

<sup>511</sup> The book is part of the “several inverted volumes improperly arranged and not in the order of their common letters with scintillating titles” (*U* 17.1358-59) which are listed in “Ithaca”. In the book, Sir Robert Ball offers the following example to “explain clearly the conception which is known to astronomer by the name of *parallax*”: “[s]tand near a window whence you can look at buildings, or the trees, the clouds, or any distant objects. Place on the glass a thin strip of paper vertically in the middle of one of the panes. Close the right eye, and note with the left eye the position of the strip of paper relatively to the objects in the background. Then, while still remaining in the same position, close the left eye and again observe the position of the strip of paper with the right eye. You will find that the position of the paper on the background has changed. As I sit in my study and look out of the window I see a strip of paper, with my right eye, in front of a certain bough on a tree a couple of hundred yards away; with my left eye the paper is no longer in front of that bough, it has moved to a position near the outline of the tree. This apparent displacement of the strip of paper, relatively to the distant background, is what is called parallax.” (Robert Ball, *The Story of the Heavens* (London, Paris, & Melbourne: Cassell & Company, 1890), pp.151-2).

<sup>512</sup> The passage quoted above is itself preceded by an instance of parallactic variation, as “POST NO BILL” is transformed in “POST 110 PILLS” (*U* 8.111).

Molly's way of playing with the word leads Bloom to recognize that her phonetic approach might bear some insight—"She's right after all. Only big words for ordinary things on account of their sound".<sup>513</sup>

Following this train of thought, Bloom shifts his attention from the words "parallax" and "metempsychosis" to another play on words of Molly's. Once again, different perspectives, and a rather original view on things, are required to appreciate Molly's description of Ben Dollard's voice. Mixing tonal and physical elements, Molly produces a witty play on words resulting in the description of Dollard's voice as a "base barreltone voice". Simultaneously describing his baritone voice and his "legs like barrel[s]", Molly's nickname also refers to Dollard's failure in the "ships' chandler's business" (*U* 11.1013) as a consequence of his drinking barrels of "Number one Bass" (*U* 11.1015). Molly's play on words offers an example of how *Ulysses* often projects "themes and lexical motifs from an original context [...] onto a different but intersecting plane where their meanings are deflected and redeployed".<sup>514</sup> In true parallaxic fashion, the reader is asked to connect these different planes in order to recognize the valence of the joke.

The word "parallax" reappears in "Circe", pronounced by Virag Lipoti, Bloom's grandfather who "*chutes rapidly down through the chimneyflue*" (*U* 15.2305) in the middle of the carnivalesque and hallucinatory scenes set in Nighttown. With an attentive eye, Virag scrutinizes the dresses of the prostitutes in Bella/o's brothel. While looking at Zoe he notices how "[i]nadvertently her backview revealed the fact that she

---

<sup>513</sup> Bloom explains the process in "Ithaca", where he states that "[u]nusual polysyllables of foreign origin she interpreted phonetically or by false analogy or by both: metempsychosis (met him pike hoses), alias (a mendacious person mentioned in sacred scripture)" (*U* 17.685-87).

<sup>514</sup> Laurent Milesi, "Joyce's Anamorphic Mirror in 'The Sisters'", in *European Joyce Studies 7: New Perspectives on Dubliners*, ed. Mary Power and Uli Schneider (Amsterdam: Brill, 1997), p.111.

is not wearing those rather intimate garments of which you are a particular devotee. The injection mark on the thigh I hope you perceived? Good” (*U* 15. 2313-16). As he congratulates Bloom for noticing that “she is rather lean” (*U* 15.2327), Virag focuses his attention on

those pannier pockets of the skirt and slightly pegtop [whose] effect are devised to suggest bunchiness of hip. A new purchase at some monster sale for which a gull has been mulcted. Meretricious finery to deceive the eye. Observe the attention to details of dustspecks. Never put on you tomorrow what you can wear today. Parallax! (*with a nervous twitch of his head*) Did you hear my brain go snap? Polysyllabax! (*U* 15.2329-2335)

The word “parallax” is here linked to both visual perception and lexical changes, echoing Bloom’s reflections in “Lestrygonians”. On a visual level, the term is preceded by Virag’s scorn for deceptive clothing which transforms the perception of the (female) body, and his injunction to Bloom to pay attention to details as minute as a speck of dust. On a lexical level, the word is preceded by the slight alteration of the proverb “never put off tomorrow what you can do today” to fit the sartorial context, and is followed by the enigmatic term “polysyllabax”. The word, which resembles the puns and portmanteau words of *Finnegans Wake*, can be seen as a deflection of the word ‘polysyllable’ mixed with the word “parallax” through phonetic resemblance.<sup>515</sup> According to Benoit Tadié, Virag Bloom is a character “defying and perverting the will to put things in order, to classify them” since “the linguistic compounds and portmanteau words which pervade his speech are symbolic of the hybridization of

---

<sup>515</sup> In *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext*, Garrett Stewart reflects on the enigmatic word coined by Virag, and points out that “polysyllabax” suggests “the zone of shifting evocalized bonds: the apparent spread of functional sound units across the space between words. Like parallax, this phonemic drift is in fact a difference at the point of perception, of reception” (Garrett Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), pp.236-7).

separate categories”.<sup>516</sup> As in “Lestrygonians”, the word “parallax” is associated with an approach to perception and to language which is multifaceted and precarious, open to changes and imaginative twists. The moment the word “parallax” is mentioned, Virag’s “brain go[es] snap” as he produces a “*nervous twitch of the head*”. Virag’s bizarre question—“Did you hear my brain go snap?”—has been linked to the hypnotic practices of Mrs. Leonora Piper, a spiritualist medium active in Boston at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Stuart Gilbert, “one of Mrs. Piper’s frequent remarks when ‘coming out’ of trance was, ‘Did you hear something snap in my head?’”.<sup>517</sup> The image of a nervous twisting and the idea of a brain snapping can also be considered as an extreme literal rendition of a process requiring the adoption of several perspectives. Fritz Senn’s description of parallax as “an instance of sending the observant mind in two, or more, different positions and having it compare notes” effectively conveys this idea.<sup>518</sup>

The word “parallax” returns one last time in “Ithaca”, this time being directly related to the movements of planets. Bloom meditates on “the parallax or parallactic drift of so-called fixed stars, in reality evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures in comparison with which the years, threescore and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity” (*U* 17.1052-56). After appearing in the linguistic context of “Lestrygonians” and the fashion context of “Circe”, the term is used in yet another domain and in service of a different purpose: to point out the relative futility of human matters when compared to

---

<sup>516</sup> Benoit Tadié, “‘A Diabolic Rictus to Black Luminosity’: Exploring the Lipoti Virag-Dracula Connection”, in *European Joyce Studies 22, Joycean Unions: Post-Millennial Essays from East to West*, ed. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Meksnober (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), p.134.

<sup>517</sup> Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’* (New York: Vintage, 1952), p.332.

<sup>518</sup> Fritz Senn, *Joyce’s Dislocutions: Essays on Reading as Translation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p.79.

the movements of stars. Bloom's attention seems next to be drawn towards the infinitesimally small forms of life on earth rather than to the movements of the universe. The passage on parallax is followed by "meditations of involution increasingly less vast" (*U* 17.1057), with Bloom thinking:

[o]f the eons of geological periods recorded in the stratifications of the earth: of the myriad minute entomological organic existences concealed in cavities of the earth, beneath removable stones, in hives and mounds, of microbes, germs, bacteria, bacilli, spermatozoa: of the incalculable trillions of billions of millions of imperceptible molecules contained by cohesion of molecular affinity in a single pinhead (*U* 17.1058-63)

The sentence brilliantly moves from the macroscopic to the microscopic. From the grandiose relevance of the "geological period", the "incalculable trillions of billions of millions of imperceptible molecules" gathered in a single pinhead bring the vastness of universal formation and evolution to a trivial and everyday object.

Pieced together, these three occurrences offer three different yet somehow related points of view on the word "parallax". As Andreas Fischer points out, "parallax"

encapsulates a very basic, essential principle of vision and thus of cognition: In order to 'see,' that is, to understand, an object of any kind in its fullness one has to change one's own position, one's point of view, one's angle of vision. From a fixed point of view one has only one, necessarily limited view, but when one moves, perspectives multiply and one's view necessarily becomes multidimensional.<sup>519</sup>

In all three passages quoted above a shift of point of view is required from Bloom. Valérie Bénéjam points out "how extremely careful we have to be in interpreting anything in *Ulysses*, and how useful it can be to consider several perspectives at the same time".<sup>520</sup> *Ulysses* is interested in a kind of vision requiring multiple glances, each

---

<sup>519</sup> Andreas Fisher, Foreword to *Parallaxing Joyce*, ed. Penelope Papparuna, Frances Ilmberger, Martin Heusser (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2017), p.11.

<sup>520</sup> Valérie Bénéjam, "Parallax Opoponax", *Hypermedia Joyce Studies*, Vol.7, No.1 (2005-6). Available online: <<http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/archives/v7/main/essays.php?essay=benejam>> [Last accessed 15.12.2020].

one slightly different than the previous one. In *The Parallax View*, Slavoj Žižek presents the idea of a “minimal difference” which defines the experience of parallax. A “minimal difference” is for Žižek “a difference which is no longer between two positively existing objects, but a minimal difference which divides one and the same object from itself”.<sup>521</sup> This fostering of a minimal difference seems to be at play in the presentation of objects in *Ulysses*. Their reappearance in the novel dictates slight changes in perspective which multiply the possibilities in which they are perceived, conceived, and employed, ultimately destabilizing their ascription to a particular role or category. According to Bénéjam, Bloom presents an “innovative way of looking at objects [due to] his capacity to change the habitual, established viewpoints on them, to picture them in different contexts than their natural ones, in different positions, shapes, or uses”.<sup>522</sup> The parallax view employed in the scrutiny of objects whose role, function, and point of view could change at any moment, leads to a more tentative relation between subjects and objects. The most eccentric example of this process might be the “Circe” episode, wherein parallax viewing is heightened to the point of hallucination, and wherein the lines between subjects and objects are so blurred that objects themselves start to talk and act like human characters.

Before entering the hectic carnival of Nighttown, a final remark on banality is called for. The representation of banality in fiction is often considered as a way to get closer to the material world, and to allow the real to speak for itself. While the object of realist fiction “is human-centred, imbued with the significance of a perceiving consciousness”, the banal object of modernist literature is for Segal a representation

---

<sup>521</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge MA: MIT University Press, 2009), p.18.

<sup>522</sup> Valérie Bénéjam, “The Reprocessing of Trash in *Ulysses*”, p.132. Bénéjam studies the various uses Bloom makes of the *Freeman’s Journal* he carries around with him.

of Robbe-Grillet's idea that "[l]e monde n'est ni signifiant ni absurde. Il est, tout simplement".<sup>523</sup> As we have started to see, and as will become clearer through an analysis of "Circe", this does not seem to be exclusively the point for Joyce. Robbe-Grillet's formula of 1963 anticipates a concept developed more extensively by Roland Barthes in an article titled 'L'Effet de Réel' (1968). Focusing on a barometer which appears in Flaubert's short story "Un cœur simple" (1877), Barthes points out that "no purpose seems to justify the reference to the barometer, an object neither incongruous nor significant, and therefore not participating, at first glance, in the order of the *notable*".<sup>524</sup> Remarking that "futile details" abound in modern literature, Barthes wonders "what is ultimately, so to speak, the significance of this insignificance" and reaches the conclusion that objects such as the barometer in Flaubert "say nothing but this: *we are the real*; it is the category of 'the real' (and not its contingent contents) which is then signified".<sup>525</sup>

Taking into account Barthes' notion of the "reality effect", Jacques Rancière extracts the idea from Barthes' structuralist context to explore it under a slightly different light. While Barthes attempted to make sense of each and every detail of the story to establish a coherent structure, Rancière considers the intrusion of banal objects and useless detail into narrative as a process of democratization in literature.<sup>526</sup> As Rancière remarks, this democratization entails "the equality of all

---

<sup>523</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1963) p.18. Quoted in Segal, p.11.

<sup>524</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect", trans. Richard Howard, in *The Rustle of Language*, ed. François Wahl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p.142.

<sup>525</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect", p.142. While for Barthes the 'effet de réel' implies a general rendition of reality as a category, according to Tomaso Kemeny, the effet de réel is "an act of writing which imposes maximum prominence on the thing named. It might be said that it is an effect which 'makes existence speak for itself' (McLuhan, 1969)". Tomaso Kemeny, "The 'Unreal' Effect in *Dubliners*", in *Myriadminded Man: Jottings on Joyce*, ed. Rosa Bosinelli, Paola Pugliatti, Romana Zacchi (Bologna: CLUEB, 1986), p.25.

<sup>526</sup> In this context, the term 'democratization' is detached from its political connotation. It is intended to designate a process which ascribes the same novelistic importance to different entities and stands in opposition to the idea of a hierarchical order.

beings, things, and situations” and “does not leave room for the selection of significant characters and the harmonious development of plot”.<sup>527</sup> As “the most humble and ordinary being” can become the protagonist of a story, so trivial objects such as the barometer can find their place in the novel even if they have no clear repercussion for its plot development or characterization.<sup>528</sup> In Flaubert’s story the barometer is not simply evidence of the category of the real but forms part of “a new texture of reality produced by the transgression of the borders between forms of life”.<sup>529</sup> For Rancière, the reality effect of banal objects abolishes the hierarchization of people, things, or actions, and places the meaningful and the meaningless, the noble and the vulgar, the ordinary and the extraordinary on the same level. While for Rancière this new texture has socio-political implications, leading to the inclusion into the narrative text of different social classes—the working and lower classes rejoining the aristocracy and bourgeoisie—I believe that this organization of reality has important effects on the representation of the relation between human and nonhuman entities. In *Ulysses*, the presence of banal objects plays a part in the creation of broader networks which emphasize the interaction between animate and inanimate entities. The actions at the basis of narrative development are “distributed”—to use a key concept in Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory—between human and nonhuman characters.

### **Circean Hallucinations**

---

<sup>527</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Le fil perdu: Essais sur la fiction moderne* (Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2014), p.23. My translation.

<sup>528</sup> Rancière, p.26. My translation.

<sup>529</sup> Rancière, p.28. My translation.

The fifteenth episode of *Ulysses* can be considered as that whose mode of narration most obviously departs from the kind of objective representation of reality dictated by the Naturalist tradition. Adopting what the Linati schema refers to as a hallucinatory technique, the chapter mixes dreams and reality, facts and desires. Objects come alive and speak like human characters, images are conjured and disappear as quickly as the characters change roles and costumes.<sup>530</sup> As Finn Fordham remarks, “[a] distinguishing feature of the episode is the existence of multiple parallel worlds, each one an ‘alter’ of the real one, or of some posited ‘realistic level’ of the episode”.<sup>531</sup>

From the outset, the episode blends accuracy and fantasy, as a precise location and recognizable objects are described in dreamlike terms. Before “[t]he Mabbot street entrance of nighttown” (*U* 15.1), where the action takes place, “stretches an uncobbled tram siding set with skeleton tracks, red and green will-o’-the-wisps and danger signals” (*U* 15.2-3). Rabaiotti’s ice cream cart becomes an “ice gondola” (*U* 15.6), whose “swancomb [...] highreared, forges on through the murk, white and blue under a lighthouse” (*U* 15.7-8). Objects pertaining to the cityscape seem to acquire a life of their own, moving at different paces and becoming menacing fantastic animals populating a surreal environment. A sandstrewer which almost runs Bloom over becomes “a dragon sandstrewer, travelling at caution, slew[ing] heavily down upon him, its huge red headlight winking, its trolley hissing on the wire” (*U* 15.185-87). Much as the rest of the novel blends Naturalism and Symbolism, “Circe” does not seem to

---

<sup>530</sup> Albeit other episodes in *Ulysses* also present talking inanimate things. In “Proteus”, the sea intones “a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, oos” (*U* 3.456-7), while in “Aeolus” the creaking sound of a door leads Bloom to reflect that “everything speaks in its own way” (*U* 7.177).

<sup>531</sup> Finn Fordham, “‘Circe’ and the Genesis of Multiple Personality”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.45, No.2/3 (Spring/Summer, 2008), p.511.

oppose realistic details and dreamlike visions but invests realistic details with dreamlike qualities.

In spite of its seeming distance from conventional Realism, Joyce considered the episode as one of those which came closest to his idea of reality. He remarked to Arthur Power that “I approached reality closer in my opinion than anywhere else in the book, except perhaps for moments in the last chapter. Sensation is our object, heightened even to the point of hallucination”.<sup>532</sup> As I have explored in Chapter 1, sensation is a key element in the interaction between the subject and the external world. If the lyrical epiphanies attempted to express the sensations arising from the encounter with the world through the rhythm of their prose, “Circe” pushes the effects that the world might have on the subject “to the point of hallucination”. Here, sensation is shown to be a network of feelings, perceptions, and words which, in line with the parallax viewing the novel fosters, pushes and pulls the mind in different directions at once (to reprise Senn’s definition of parallax as “an instance of sending the observant mind in two, or more, different positions and having it compare notes”<sup>533</sup>).

Realism gives way to what Attridge calls “pararealism, taking advantage of all the adverbial senses of the prefix *para-* listed by the *OED*, ‘to one side, aside, amiss, faulty, irregular, disordered, improper, wrong’”.<sup>534</sup> To explain this concept, Attridge focuses on the exchange between Lynch and Zoe, showing how the episode’s stage directions often transform the reality they are describing. For instance, Zoe’s naked flesh (“*Bare from her garters up her flesh appears under the sapphire a nixie’s green*” (*U* 15.2291-92)) “is portrayed as if it were a lurid transformation of the human form”,

---

<sup>532</sup> Power, *Conversations with James Joyce*, p.86.

<sup>533</sup> Senn, *Joyce’s Dislocutions*, p.79.

<sup>534</sup> Derek Attridge, “Pararealism in ‘Circe’”, in *Joycean Unions: Post-Millennial Essays from East to West*, ed. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Meksnober (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), pp.119-20.

while her garment “becomes liquid” (“*Blue fluid again flows over her flesh*” (*U* 15.2301)).<sup>535</sup> Linking the literal with the metaphorical, excessive precision with incredible descriptions, Attridge’s concept of “pararealism” rings in tune with the concepts of hallucination and parallax. In fact, “*Circe*” takes the concept of parallaxic vision to its extreme, to the extent that the entire narrative representation—events, characters, objects, places—is affected. As Marco Camerani demonstrates by focusing on the influence of early cinema on Joyce’s works, the episode presents “several layers of figurative and visual juxtapositions with the reappearance of elements or characters” from earlier episodes.<sup>536</sup>

According to Ronan Crowley, “a salient feature of the episode [is the] frenetic redeployment of fragments and half-phrases from *Ulysses*”. As Crowley points out, “Joyce once told Jacques Mercanton that such ‘hallucinations’ were ‘made up out of elements from the past, which the reader will recognize if he has read the book five, ten, or twenty times’”.<sup>537</sup> However, such intrusions are not mere repetition but, to use Fritz Senn’s words, “provection[s]”. Senn defines the term as a

characteristic Joycean movement [which] consists of both augmentation and distortion, of hypertrophy and deviation [...] There will be more of the same thing, and it will acquire a different quality, often a parodic reflection on its origin.<sup>538</sup>

In order to back his claim, Senn retraces the evolution of the word “*Chrysostomos*” (*U* 1.26), and the reappearance of a “*toraloom*”, a little rug associated with Corny Kelleher

---

<sup>535</sup> Attridge, “Pararealism in ‘*Circe*’”, p.121.

<sup>536</sup> Marco Camerani, *Joyce e il Cinema delle Origini* (Firenze: Cadmo Editore, 2008), p.81. My translation.

<sup>537</sup> Ronan Crowley, “Fusing the Elements of ‘*Circe*’: From Compositional to Textual Repetition”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.47, No.3 (Spring, 2010), p.341.

<sup>538</sup> Fritz Senn, “‘*Circe*’ as Harking Back in Provective Arrangement”, in *Reading Joyce’s “Circe”*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), p.65. Daniel Ferrer notes how “the episode appears as a rewriting of *Ulysses*’ previous chapters, or a more radical deformation of them” (Daniel Ferrer, “Archéologie du regard dans les avants-textes de ‘*Circe*’”, in *Scribble 1: Genèse des Textes*, ed. Claude Jacquet (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1988), p.95. My translation.

in “Lotus Eaters” which returns towards the end of the fifteenth episode and “goes on to affect a whole passage [...] infiltrat[ing] words and grammar”: “*Corny Kelleher again reassuralooms with his hands. Bloom with his hand assuralooms Corny Kelleher that he is reassuraloomtay. The tinkling hoofs and jingling harness grow fainter with their tooralooloo looloo lay*” (U 15.4917-20).<sup>539</sup> Other such reappearances abound in the episode. The “pork kidney” (U 4.46) mentioned in “Calypso” as one of Bloom’s favourite breakfast dishes recurs in connection with “*the new Bloomusalem [...] a colossal edifice with crystal roof, built in the shape of a huge pork kidney, containing forty thousand rooms*” (U 15.1548-49). The discrepancy between Bloom’s Judaism and taste for non-kosher meat is stressed by the kidney-shaped building representing Bloom’s very own version of the Jewish holy city.

The juxtapositions and distortions of images extend beyond the bounds of the novel itself, creating intertextual links with Joyce’s earlier works. Towards the end of *A Portrait*, Stephen presents his aesthetic theory to a skeptical Lynch, whose “long slender flattened skull beneath the long pointed cap brought before Stephen’s mind the image of a hooded reptile”.<sup>540</sup> Lynch interrupts Stephen’s disquisitions several times, and reacts to his theory twice with a mocking “[b]ull’s eye!”.<sup>541</sup> In “Circe”, Stephen starts to philosophize in a way which recalls his earlier disquisition. This time, it is not Lynch but Lynch’s cap which interrupts him and mocks his philosophical reflections:

#### THE CAP

(*with saturnine spleen*) Ba! It is because it is. Woman’s reason. Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet. Death is the highest form of life. Ba! (U 15.2096-9)

---

<sup>539</sup> Senn, p.66.

<sup>540</sup> p, 173.

<sup>541</sup> p, 178-9.

and again

STEPHEN

[...] (*he frowns*) The reason is because the fundamental and the dominant are separated by the greatest possible interval which...

THE CAP

Which? Finish. You can't. (*U 15.2104-9*)

These “augmentation[s] and distortion[s]” produce a humour dense with Joycean intertextuality.<sup>542</sup> Everything, from plot to characters and objects, seems to have gone astray. Yet the hallucinations of “Circe”, seen as an extreme example of parallax vision, raise fundamental questions about the notion of reality and its representation. While banality as representation of the real “in itself” is completely lost in the phantasmagoria of the chapter, the episode seems able to emphasize that “new texture of reality produced by the transgression of borders between life forms” which, according to Rancière, is the most significant result of the reality effect and the inclusion of banal objects in modernist fiction.<sup>543</sup> Even more than in earlier chapters, verisimilitude gives way to bizarre visions, and a fixed point of view and linear development is replaced by a multitude of confused impressions. According to John Paul Riquelme, “Circe” is a chapter which “constantly fractur[es] any sense of conventional continuity and coherence”: “the realistic style that includes direct discourse has now become one of many styles in a proliferating sequence of contrasts and modulations”.<sup>544</sup>

Before entering Bella Cohen’s brothel, where the main action of the episode unfolds, Bloom is seized by “[t]wo raincaped watch” (*U 15.674*). The scene quickly

---

<sup>542</sup> Senn, “‘Circe’ as Harking Back in Propective Arrangement”, p.65

<sup>543</sup> Rancière, p.27. My translation.

<sup>544</sup> John Paul Riquelme, *Teller and Tale in Joyce’s Fiction: Oscillating Perspectives* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), p.136, 139.

shifts from the streets of Dublin to a courtroom, where Bloom is cross-examined, accused of inappropriate flirtatious behaviour by Mrs Bellingham and Mrs Yelverton Barry, and almost put to death. During the trial, Bloom's clothes change according to the development of the case, as he goes from wearing "*red fez, cad's dress coat with broad green sash [...] a false badge of the Legion of Honour*" (U 15.728-29), to being dressed in a "*housejacket of ripplecloth, flannel trousers, heelless slippers, unshaven*" (U 15.875-76), to being "*[b]arefoot, pigeonbreasted, in lascar's vest and trousers, apologetic toes turned in*" (U 15.957-58). The scene reads as a visualization of the sense of guilt induced by his epistolary correspondence with Martha. Indeed, several elements recall Martha's letter in "Lestrygonians"—he is referred to as "Henry Flower" (U 15.733), Martha herself appears in court (U 15.751), and he is accused by Mrs Bellingham of writing to her "in several handwritings with fulsome compliments" (U 15.1045-46). The constant shifts of clothing and the reappearance of previously mentioned characters produce sudden changes of narrative direction. Disorienting though it undoubtedly is, this hallucinatory method is nothing more than a heightened version of a process which is at work in *Ulysses* as a whole. Rather than following an ordered sequence of events governed by logic and causality, Bloom and Stephen's night at Bella's brothel is an experience made up of plausible and imagined encounters produced by projections of fears and desire. In "Circe", Rancière's description of fictional reality as a "chain of perceptions and affects that weave [the] thoughts and [the] wishes" of characters seems to acquire visible textual form.<sup>545</sup>

---

<sup>545</sup> Rancière, p.27.

## Ventriloquism and Distributed Agency

Several critics have highlighted the similarities between “Circe” and the cinematic art which was developing at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>546</sup> According to Keith Williams, “[f]ilmic ‘spacetime’ was perhaps more able than any other narrative medium hitherto to visualize magical and instantaneous shifts and metamorphoses”.<sup>547</sup> More recently, Camerani has uncovered a plethora of parallelisms between “Circe”, the films of Georges Méliès, and the theories of Sergei Eisenstein. In particular, Camerani shows how the fifteenth episode of *Ulysses* mimics the “attractions” which were at the basis of early cinema.<sup>548</sup>

Defining an “attraction” as “a moment of ‘pure visual representation [and] immediate presence’”, and as “an element that appears suddenly, attracts the viewer’s attention and then disappears without developing any narrative path”, Camerani contends that “Circe” reproduces in textual form the same sudden materializations of characters and objects displayed by the camera tricks and effects of early cinema.<sup>549</sup> In the courtroom scene mentioned above, Molly Bloom’s association with “the Levant” (*U* 4.212), first introduced in “Calypso”, is reiterated through her clothing.<sup>550</sup> She appears beside “a camel, hooded with turreting turban” (*U* 15.313-14) and dressed in a “Turkish costume” (*U* 15.297-98). Later on, a beagle

---

<sup>546</sup> Joyce was notably passionate about cinema. He opened the first cinema in Ireland and was a regular cinema goer in Trieste.

<sup>547</sup> Keith Williams, “Ulysses in Toontown: ‘vision animated to bursting point’ in Joyce’s ‘Circe’”, in *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing after Cinema*, ed. Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) p.100.

<sup>548</sup> The episode’s “apparitions are there for no apparent reason, following each other and interacting with Bloom and Stephen, in a similar way to the attractions of early cinema” (Camerani, p.19). My translation.

<sup>549</sup> Camerani, p.16. My translation.

<sup>550</sup> In the fourth episode Bloom imagines “Molly in Citron’s basketchair. Nice to hold, cool waxen fruit, hold in the hand, lift it to the nostrils and smell the perfume [...] Coming all that way: Spain, Gibraltar, Mediterranean, the Levant” (*U* 4.206-212). The last sentence can refer to both the lemon and Molly, who was born and brought up in Gibraltar.

turns into the deceased Paddy Dignam, whose funeral Bloom attends in “Hades” (“*The beagle lifts his snout, showing the grey scorbutic face of Paddy Dignam [...] He exhales a putrid carcased breath. He grows to human size and shape*” (U 15.1204-6)). In “Circe” as in early cinema, “causality and rationality become less important than the delight of apparition, the grotesque, the deformed, the caricature”, so that “the logic of the trick coincides with the status of reality: the two levels blend into one another and create an organizing principle based on accumulation”.<sup>551</sup> As the reality of the chapter is determined by visual tricks rather than by logic and causality, the objects of “Circe” acquire special prominence in a very peculiar way.

In *A Sense of Things*, Bill Brown mentions Louis Aragon’s 1918 essay “On Décor”, in which the poet “describes how cinema invigorates ‘common objects’, how ‘each inanimate object’ can become ‘a living thing’”.<sup>552</sup> A similar process is at work in “Circe”, as several objects are, like Lynch’s cap, granted the faculty of speech. Other such talking objects include the bar of soap (U 15.338-9), a marble timepiece (U 15.1131), the quoits of Bloom’s bed (U 15.1138), the chimes (U 15.1363), the bells of St. George’s church (U 15.1186), bronze buckles (U 15.2009), a gramophone (U 15.2210), a gasjet (U 15.2280), a flybill (U 15.2632), a fan (U 15.2754), a dummy of Bloom rolled in a mummy (U 15.3377), a button (U 15.3440), a pianola (U 15.4051), and some bracelets (U 15.4085). While some of their addresses are simply onomatopoeic reproductions of the sounds they make—such as the timepiece’s “Cuckoo. Cuckoo. Cuckoo” (U 15.1133-35), the quoit’s “Jigjag. Jigjag. Jigjag” (U 15.1138) or the bells’ “Heigho! Heigho!” (U 15.1186)—others utter actual words and

---

<sup>551</sup> Camerani, p.21, 19. My translation.

<sup>552</sup> Brown, *A Sense of Things*, p.187.

sentences. For instance, the pianola sings the popular song *My Girl's a Yorkshire Girl* (U 15.4052-53), the chimes exclaim "turn again, Leopold! Lord mayor of Dublin!" (U 15.1363), and the fan entertains an actual conversation with Bloom.

The objects' ability to speak in "Circe" does not seem to be a new kind of autonomy which places them on the same level as the human characters, but a sort of ventriloquism which instrumentalizes them even further. Saint-Amour, for instance, claims that

what we are encountering is a world of objects not run amok in nonhuman agency but instrumentalized all the more through the trick of ventriloquism. For what they say is always ancillary [...] to the human actors around them.<sup>553</sup>

Steven Connor seems to share Saint-Amour's view, stating that the "coming into speech of objects is thus always a kind of attributed speech, which tends to confirm the [...] dominion of the ventriloquizing subject".<sup>554</sup> Linking the objects' ventriloquism with their status as fetishes, Connor remarks that they are "broadly fetishistic in that they speak with an utterance that is projected on to and through them".<sup>555</sup> Latour explains that a fetish is "something that is nothing in itself, but only the screen on which we have projected, by mistake, our fancies, our labour, hopes, and passions".<sup>556</sup> As fetishes, the objects disappear as soon as they are mentioned, their presence as material entities replaced by the projected desires of a neighbouring subject. For instance, the fan moving sensually between Bella Cohen's hands gives voice to Bloom's insecurities as a man and a husband:

## THE FAN

---

<sup>553</sup> Saint-Amour, "Symbols and Things", p.211.

<sup>554</sup> Stephen Connor, "'Jigajiga...Yummyyum...Pfuuuuuuu!...Bbbbbblllllbblllbblobschb!' 'Circe's' Ventriloquy", in *Reading Joyce's 'Circe'*, p.112.

<sup>555</sup> Connor, "'Circe's' Ventriloquy", p.112.

<sup>556</sup> Bruno Latour, "A Few Steps Towards the Anthropology of the Iconoclastic Gesture", *Science in Context*, Vol.10, No.1 (1998), p.65.

*(flirting quickly, then slowly)* Married, I see.

BLOOM

Yes. Partly, I have mislaid...

THE FAN

*(half opening, then closing)* And the missus is master. Petticoat government.

BLOOM

*(looks down with a sheepish grin)* That is so.

THE FAN

*(folding together, rests against her left eardrop)* Have you forgotten me? (*U* 15.2754-64)

Nevertheless, Connor admits that

it is also the case that, at a certain extreme of fetishistic involvement of the self with the objects that it ventriloquises, the self becomes lost or distributed among the effects of attribution, speaking to itself via a set of detours that may be so elaborately interlaced as thoroughly to separate the self from the projective sources of its speaking authority.<sup>557</sup>

While it is true that the speech of objects is “ancillary to the human actors around them” as a projection of their desires and fears, the fact that speech is distributed amongst human and nonhuman entities should not be overlooked or dismissed as mere instrumentalization. As fetishes, such objects materialize the fears and desires of the human characters. As ventriloquized fetishes in the carnival of Nighttown, their role in the characters’ elaboration of feelings is emphasized. Bloom’s sexual insecurities become an actual conversation with the fan as the fan literally speaks to Bloom about his insecurity, becoming an interlocutor through which the acknowledgement of such feelings can take place. In this respect, the self is indeed “distributed among the effect of attribution”.<sup>558</sup> To exemplify his point, Connor quotes the fan as it asks “[i]s me her

---

<sup>557</sup> Connor, “‘Circe’s’ Ventriloquy”, p.112.

<sup>558</sup> In her article “‘Object Lessons: Bloom and His Things’”, Plock similarly refrains from opposing ventriloquism and the potential for objects to acquire agency and autonomy. In her article, Plock remarks that “objects suddenly obtain sentience, a voice, and independent agency. In ‘Circe’, objects synecdochally represent and ventriloquize their possessor’s subjectivity and desires” (Plock, p.559).

was you dreamed before? Was then she him you us since knew? Am all them and the same now me?" (*U* 15.2768-69). Disregarding standard syntax, the fan's questions can be seen as a representation of the extreme intermingling between subject and object which takes place in the chapter. Grammatical subjects and objects follow each other without being clearly related to a main verb, so that it becomes difficult to identify the source of the action in the sentence. It is unclear who dreamed of what or whom, and who or what knew what about whom.

While so marked a confusion between objects and subjects does not arise again so explicitly in the chapter, the objects' ability to speak has an important impact on narration. Even if necessarily mediated by human language, the objects' utterances play a similar part in the drama of *Nighttown* to those of human subjects.<sup>559</sup> The stage directions introducing their lines support this idea, presenting them as if they were speaking, human subjects.<sup>560</sup> For instance, before the gasjet goes "Pooah! Pfuuiii" (15.2280), the stage direction states that "*the gasjet wails whistling*" (*U* 15.2278). The pianola "*with changing lights plays in waltz time the prelude of My Girl's a Yorkshire Girl*" (*U* 15.4026-27), and the yews are introduced with "*their leaves whispering*" before uttering "Sister. Our Sister. Shh" (*U* 15.3238). According to Camerani, the stage directions

put on the same level, 'objectively', the reality of Bloom walking in the red light district of Dublin and entering in the brothel of Bella Cohen, and the apparitions which take on a life of their own and follow each other without a clear criteria, establishing a sort of equal legitimacy of existence: reality and apparitions have

---

<sup>559</sup> See Attridge, "Literature as Imitation: Jakobson, Joyce, and the Art of Onomatopoeia", in *Peculiar Language. Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (London: Routledge, 1988). Staten points out that "the isolated signature, onomatopoeia, name, or demonstrative adjective suggests the encounter with the real by denying the mediating medium that nevertheless [...] hovers in the background and makes that suggestion possible" (Staten, 382).

<sup>560</sup> According to Attridge, "[i]n 'Circe', Joyce plays with the curious relationship between stage directions describing utterances and the utterances themselves" (Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, p.147).

the same right to be born and die, the real and the hallucinatory are equivalent.<sup>561</sup>

In “Circe”, an episode unfolding according to the logic of dreams and in emulation of the techniques of early cinema, it is almost irrelevant to determine who or what is the subject of an action, who or what speaks and who or what is acted upon. Rather than seeking “what makes and what is made, the active and the passive”, the task becomes that of “pursu[ing] a chain of mediators [...] each enabling the next to become, in turn, the originator of action”.<sup>562</sup>

This idea seems not only to capture the quick movements of scenes, characters, and objects through which Joyce mimics cinematic techniques, but also to be nested in Stephen’s description of dramatic form. In *A Portrait*:

the dramatic form is reached when the vitality which has flowed and eddied round each person fills every person with such vital force that he or she assumes a proper and intangible aesthetic life.<sup>563</sup>

The dramatic form complicates the idea of an agency stemming from a single source, as it develops from a shared creative energy. In a similar way, the carnival of “Circe”, is made up of hundreds of micro-narratives consisting of temporary subject-object relations. In line with the hallucinatory aesthetic of the episode, the dramatic form as described by Stephen is pushed to its extreme, as the “vital force” does not simply flow from person to person but encompass inanimate objects as well.

## **From Hallucinations to the Imperfection of Scientific Precision**

---

<sup>561</sup> Camerani, p.19. My translation.

<sup>562</sup> Bruno Latour, “Factures/Fractures: From the Concept of Network to the Concept of Attachment”, *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetic*, No.36 (Autumn, 1999), p.26.

<sup>563</sup> p, 219.

“Ithaca” is radically different in style from the world of Nighttown. It is the chapter dedicated to Bloom’s homecoming, his return to the place most often associated with the everyday. Embedding Bloom in a banal homely realm, the penultimate chapter explores different ways of representing the networks which constitute fictional reality and redefine subjective agency. While in “Circe” the technique of hallucination starkly distances the narration from conventional realistic depiction, “Ithaca” makes use of a seemingly rigorous mode of narration to suggest a striving for objective presentation. Unfolding in what Joyce called a “catechistic” style, the episode treats events as mathematical formulae, expresses processes in scientific language, and goes to great lengths in enumerating the vast number of objects to be found in the Blooms’ household.<sup>564</sup>

Segal points out that “the Naturalist subordinates man to a vast and complex material world to whose laws he is subject [and] maximizes [the range and number of objects tolerable in literature]”.<sup>565</sup> Both of these observations seem true of “Ithaca”, as the episode describes ordinary actions such as climbing a fence, washing one’s hands, or boiling water, in minute detail, and enumerates the objects of Bloom’s household in long lists. Yet if the Naturalist “tries to make the abstract—the literary work—concrete, by dispensing with all admission of fictionality”, Joyce fosters the opposite effect in the episode.<sup>566</sup> As Harold D. Baker points out, in “Ithaca” “style is no

---

<sup>564</sup> The Gilbert schema names “Catechism (impersonal)” as the technique of the episode. In *James Joyce’s Ulysses: Critical Essays*, A. Walton Litz points out that the term should not necessarily be linked to its religious meaning, but to the broader practice of instructing through a series of questions and answers. See A. Walton Litz in *James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’: Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), pp.385-406.

<sup>565</sup> Segal, p.14.

<sup>566</sup> Segal, p.14.

longer set off from realistic representation [...] instead, realistic representation is itself revealed as an aspect of style".<sup>567</sup>

The Naturalist elements in the episode end up yielding quite different effects from those conventional to Naturalism, making the chapter seem more like a parodic version of the Naturalist endeavour than a precise execution of it. Take, for instance, the passage which describes Bloom washing his hands:

Having set the halffilled kettle on the now burning coals, why did he return to the stillflowing tap?

To wash his soiled hands with a partially consumed tablet of Barrington's lemonflavoured soap, to which paper still adhered (bought thirteen hours previously for fourpence and still unpaid for), in fresh cold neverchanging everchanging water and dry them, face and hands, in a long redbordered holland cloth passed over a wooden revolving roller (*U* 17.229-35)

The abundance of detail causes the sentence to teeter on the brink of comedy, crammed as it is with adjectives and compound words—"halffilled", "stillflowing", "lemonflavoured", "neverchanging everchanging", "redbordered holland"—which in their sheer excess estrange objects and processes rather than depicting them in a recognizable way.

As John Scholar remarks, "the narrator's scientific scrutiny of the material world transforms the familiar objects of 7 Eccles Streets into bizarre, esoteric devices".<sup>568</sup> In order to describe a burning piece of incense, the narrator invokes a "diminutive

---

<sup>567</sup> Harold D. Baker, "Rite of Passage: 'Ithaca', Style, and the Structure of *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.3 (Spring, 1986), p.278. While this idea is not confined to "Ithaca", it seems to unfold more explicitly in this episode. Litz remarks that "both the action and the stylistic development of *Ulysses* reach a climax in 'Ithaca'" (Litz, p.386), while Baker points out that, if "in 'Ithaca' the function of style rises to a level of complexity not found in any previous episode of *Ulysses*", the way style is presented in the episode "is being prepared throughout *Ulysses*" (Baker, p.277, 279). Karen Lawrence, for her part, states that "Even in the first chapter of the novel, Joyce begins to turn novelistic convention into novelistic cliché" (Karen Lawrence, *Odyssey of Style in 'Ulysses'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p.45). Scarlett Baron similarly points out that "naturalism and parody, as [Kenner shows in *Joyce's Voices*], are in tension from the start (*Voices* ix). The initial style, whilst seeming to be merely naïve and derivative [...] is in fact already knowing, sophisticated, parodic" (Baron, "Beginnings", in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Ulysses'*, pp.57-8).

<sup>568</sup> Scholar, p.119.

volcano” whose “truncated conical crater summit [...] emitted a vertical and serpentine fume redolent of aromatic oriental incense” (*U* 17.1331-32). Bloom’s “collar (size 17) and waistcoat (5 buttons)” are referred to as “two articles of clothing superfluous in the costume of mature males and inelastic to alterations of mass by expansion” (*U* 17.1431-33). A kaleidoscope becomes “a rondel of bossed glass of a multicoloured pane” (*U* 17.498-99) through which Bloom observes “the spectacle offered with continual changes of the thoroughfare without, pedestrians, quadrupeds, velocipedes, vehicles, passing slowly, quickly, evenly, round and round and round the rim of a sound and round precipitous globe” (*U* 17.499-503).

As in many other instances in “Ithaca”, this description of objects and processes departs from scientific diction to cultivate alliterative patterns which produce a comedic effect. Such departures undermine the episode’s objectivity by making it obvious that even a seemingly neutral description is the outcome of stylistic choices. According to Liesl Olson, the language of “Ithaca” “seems generated to amuse a reader by emphasizing the strong distinction between language and actual experience, by defamiliarizing the ordinary in Shklovsky’s sense”.<sup>569</sup> Indeed, the episode’s eccentric descriptions are often seen as having an alienating effect. In *Joyce’s Paradox*, Arnold Goldman quotes from S.L. Goldberg’s *The Classical Temper* and Hugh Kenner’s *Dublin’s Joyce* to show that both critics see in “Ithaca” “an emphasis on isolation, a separation between persons and things”.<sup>570</sup> Goldman himself considers the technique of “Ithaca” as “the logical extremity of the separation of subject and object which, in one manner or another, has become increasingly prominent since Chapter Seven”.<sup>571</sup>

---

<sup>569</sup> Olson, p.50.

<sup>570</sup> Goldman, p.107.

<sup>571</sup> Goldman, p.107.

By analyzing some passages of “Ithaca” in light of Bruno Latour’s *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, the rest of this section will argue that defamiliarization in “Ithaca” does not in fact lead to alienation and to an irreconcilable separation between subjects and objects. While familiar perspectives on objects and everyday processes are forsaken, the circumlocutory language of the episode has the effect of bringing animate and inanimate entities into close interaction, generating networks comparable to those of “Circe”.

In *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, Latour explores “the correspondence between the world and statements about the world”, analyzing and questioning the idea that there is “an equivalence between a knowing mind and a known thing” (what Latour terms “the famous *adequatio rei et intellectus*”).<sup>572</sup> An epistemological model such as the Cartesian one, based on the resemblance between *res cogitans* (subject/mind/thinking substance) and *res extensa* (object/extended substance), conceals the trajectories at work within the networks—or “chains of reference”—linking subjects and objects. Only when it is recognized that several entities are at work in even the most common interactions between subject and outside world can these “chains of reference” begin to appear. Offering the example of a hiker walking in the mountains with the help of a map, Latour points out that the hiker’s gain in knowledge “stems precisely from the fact that the map *in no way* resembles the territory [...] It is through *loss* of resemblance that the formidable effectiveness of chains of reference is won”.<sup>573</sup> A loss of resemblance, the acknowledgement that the map represents the territory but is not a full-size copy of it, is helpful in foregrounding the ways in which

---

<sup>572</sup> Latour, *Inquiry*, p.71.

<sup>573</sup> Latour, *Inquiry*, p.78.

different entities (the hiker, the map, the landscape) all contribute to the hiker's successful orientation. By following the particular trajectory linking hiker, map, and landscape in spite of their obvious differences we become aware of the "chain of reference" existing between them.

The language of "Ithaca" achieves a similar effect. By defamiliarizing the recognizable world of an ordinary household, the episode paradoxically highlights the links between subjects and objects which are at play in everyday actions and processes. In a review of *Ulysses* published in *The Evening Union* (Springfield, MA) in 1928, Norman MacDonald pointed out that Joyce's literary experiment "is a realism that is so undiluted that it seems wholly artificial on first sight".<sup>574</sup> This description is particularly pertinent to "Ithaca", where conventional expectations regarding representation are unsettled. By dissecting everyday processes, the chapter reveals some of the overlooked interdependencies between the actions of subjects and the roles of objects. As Scholar points out, "beyond alienation, 'Ithaca's' relentless search for relations presents a world in which everything owes its existence to everything else".<sup>575</sup> Lawrence likewise asserts that the chapter "conduct a search for the *relationship* between events or objects. Especially in the first half of the chapter, many of the questions seek to organize the world of facts into a series of relationships".<sup>576</sup> To borrow Felski's words, the everyday which characterizes Bloom's homecoming in

---

<sup>574</sup> University of Buffalo Clippings, James Joyce Collection (Poetry Collection). Clipping 68:826. Quoted in Van Hulle, *Joyce's 'Work in Progress'*, p.93.

<sup>575</sup> John Scholar, "Joyce, Heidegger, and the Material World of *Ulysses*: 'Ithaca' as Inventory", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol 54, No.1-2 (Fall, 2016/Winter, 2017), p.119. While Scholar develops his argument through a comparison between Joyce and Heidegger's philosophy, I will try to explore this idea of relationality by focusing on the mutual exchanges between objects and subjects in the episode.

<sup>576</sup> Karen R. Lawrence, "Style and Narrative in the 'Ithaca' Chapter of *Ulysses*", *ELH*, Vol.47, No.3 (Autumn, 1980), pp. 567-8.

“Ithaca” is presented “not [as] an objectively given quality but [as] a lived relationship”.<sup>577</sup>

“Ithaca” alternates between microscopic and macroscopic views, considering minute elements and their place in processes of universal scale.<sup>578</sup> Bloom goes from meditating on the movements of stars and planets to listing the objects contained in a single drawer; from considering “the special affinities [...] exist[ing] between the moon and woman” (*U* 17.1157-58) to observing “the light of a paraffin oil lamp with oblique shade projected on a screen of roller blind supplied by Frank O’Hara, window blind, curtain pole and revolving shutter manufacturer, 16 Aungier street” (*U* 17.1173-76). Litz suggestively remarks that “it is as if we were viewing Bloom and Stephen from a great height, against a vast backdrop of general human action and knowledge, while at the same time standing next to them and observing every local detail”.<sup>579</sup> As Bloom enters the marital bed towards the end of the episode, the narrative voice imagines him smiling and wonders:

If he had smiled why would he have smiled?

To reflect that each one who enters imagines himself to be the first to enter whereas he is always the last term of a preceding series even if the first term of a succeeding one, each imagining himself to be the first, last, only and alone whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity (*U* 17.2126-31)

While these reflections hint at Boylan’s usurpation of Bloom’s marital bed, they also express a process which takes place throughout the episode. With its concatenation of descriptions and lists, “Ithaca” seems to stress the idea that everything is, to a

---

<sup>577</sup> Rita Felski, “The Invention of the Everyday”, in *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), p.95.

<sup>578</sup> Litz sees this alternation as another example of the parallaxic view which the novel solicits: “[i]t is this ‘parallax’ achieved by the macrocosmic-microcosmic point-of-view which gives the episode [...] the grandeur and sweep that Joyce certainly intended” (Litz, p.396).

<sup>579</sup> Litz, p.396.

certain extent, interconnected, part of a chain whose links are sometimes evident and sometimes hidden. Considering a Dublin household alongside universal phenomena, marrying attention to ordinariness and potentiality, or “domesticity and strangeness”, as Scholar puts it, the episode exemplifies the approach to reality depicted in the novel as a whole.<sup>580</sup>

### **Relationality in Phenomena**

Relationality seems to be one of the governing concerns of the penultimate episode of *Ulysses*. As both Stephen and Bloom agree on “[t]he influence of gaslight or electric light on the growth of adjoining paraheliotropic trees” (*U* 17.44-5), and Bloom wonders about “[w]hat relation existed between their ages” (*U* 17.446), most of the processes presented in the episode are described as chains of interconnected elements whose presence or actions determine others. Thus, the simple acts of boiling water and shaving are presented as the sum of different material forces.

Bloom’s filling the kettle with water—“He removed the saucepan to the left hob, rose and carried the iron kettle to the sink in order to tap the current by turning the faucet to let it flow” (*U* 17.161-62)—is presented as the latest stage in a much larger process which sees water flow “[f]rom Roundwood reservoir in county Wicklow [...] percolating through a subterranean aqueduct of filter mains of single and double pipeage [...] by way of the Dargle, Rathdown, Glen of the Downs and Callowhill to the 26 acre reservoir at Stillorgan” (*U* 17.164-68). The movement of water is determined

---

<sup>580</sup> Scholar, p.119.

by both manmade construction and natural phenomena: as its journey through pipes “constructed at an initial plant cost of £5 per linear yard” (*U* 17.165-67) is interrupted by a “prolonged summer drouth” (*U* 17.171). Having outlined its course in and around Dublin, the narrator proceeds to list the qualities which Bloom admires in water. Starting by pointing out “[i]ts universality: its democratic equality and constancy to its nature”, the 43-line list goes on to survey its presence in oceans and seas, “its imperturbability in lagoons and highland tarns” (*U* 17.201), “its vehicular ramifications in continental lakecontained streams and confluent oceanflowing rivers” (*U* 17.202-3), and “its metamorphoses as vapour, mist, cloud, rain, sleet, snow, hail” (*U* 17.216-17). According to Fritz Senn water, in this episode, “does not equal ‘water’. It is many things and processes”.<sup>581</sup> While chemically composed of “two constituent parts of hydrogen with one constituent part of oxygen” (*U* 17.211), the appearance and valence of water change according to the places where it is found, metamorphosing according to the elements and phenomena with which it comes into contact.

Other actions and processes in the chapter seem to abide by the same logic. The phenomenon of ebullition—which takes place after Bloom has filled the kettle and placed it on the stove—is a case in point:

What concomitant phenomenon took place in the vessel of liquid by the agency of fire?

The phenomenon of ebullition. Fanned by a constant updraught of ventilation between the kitchen and the chimneyflue, ignition was communicated from the faggots of precombustible fuel to polyhedral masses of bituminous coal, containing in compressed mineral form the foliated fossilised decidua of primeval forests which had in turn derived their vegetative existence from the sun, primal source of heat (radiant), transmitted through omnipresent luminiferous diathermanous ether (*U* 17.255-63)

---

<sup>581</sup> Fritz Senn, “‘Ithaca’: Portrait of the Chapter as a Long List”, in *European Joyce Studies 6: Joyce’s ‘Ithaca’*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Amsterdam: Brill, 1996), pp.57-8.

The narrator of the episode meticulously examines the component parts and interactions of the process of boiling water, highlighting the elements, visible and invisible, which contribute to the unfolding of the phenomenon. An action routinely performed by Bloom—and described in much simpler terms in “Calypso”—is set in a prehistoric context (“foliated fossilised decidua of primeval forests”).<sup>582</sup> While the arbitrary nature of the elements included in the account generates a certain humour, the combination of detail and scale inserts Bloom’s act of putting a kettle on the fire into a much broader network involving factors far beyond his knowledge or control. In Lawrence’s terms, in “Ithaca” “the details of the plot move outward from the actions of the characters”.<sup>583</sup>

In a similar way, the process of shaving seems to alternate between individual actions and broader circumstances.

What advantages attended shaving by night?

A softer beard: a softer brush if intentionally allowed to remain from shave to shave in its agglutinated lather: a softer skin if unexpectedly encountering female acquaintances in remote places at incustomary hours: quiet reflections upon the course of the day: a cleaner sensation when awaking after a fresher sleep since matutinal noises, premonitions and perturbations, a clattered milkcan, a postman’s double knock, a paper read, reread while lathering, relathering the same spot, a shock, a shoot, with thought of aught he sought though fraught with nought might cause a faster rate of shaving and a nick on which incision plaster with precision cut and humected and applied adhered: which was to be done (*U* 17.277-87)

As it considers the advantages of “shaving by night”, the passage takes into account seemingly unrelated factors which nonetheless impinge on the process. Intentionally executed gestures (leaving the brush in its “agglutinated lather”), interactions between

---

<sup>582</sup> In “Calypso” Bloom is described “lift[ing] the kettle off the hob and set[ting] it sideways on the fire. It sat there, dull and squat, its spout stuck out. Cup of tea soon” (*U* 4.12-14).

<sup>583</sup> Lawrence, p.566

different materials (brush and leather), potential thoughts (“quiet reflections upon the course of the day”), and routine “matutinal noises” are all involved in the choice of when to shave.<sup>584</sup> As Bloom’s thoughts about the act of shaving by night merge with a mental catalogue of its likely framing context, the action is figured as the result of a multiplicity of mutable elements rather than the outcome of an individual’s volition. The passage’s language and syntax brilliantly mimic this assemblage of variables.

Towards the end of the description, the list of elements contributing to a better shave dissolves into an alliterative and assonantal series—“with thought of aught he sought though fraught with nought”—which marks a skidding away from the precision of the impersonal scientific style. This reshuffling of sounds disrupts clear sequentiality and renders the sentence’s subject, object, and action very difficult to discern. The application of a plaster on a cut is depicted by way of impersonal passives and past participles, and Bloom’s firm touch is seen as the product of a “full masculine feminine passive active hand” (*U* 17.289-90): “a nick on which incision plaster with precision cut and humected and applied adhered: which was to be done” (*U* 17.287).<sup>585</sup> Elizabeth Anker considers Bloom’s passivity in Spinozian terms, as “an active receptivity”.<sup>586</sup> A similar weakening of the active subject takes place in “Aeolus”, “Sirens”, and “Circe”. In all of these episodes the clear-cut separation between an active subject and a passive idea is complicated. According to Staten, the “reversibility of activity and

---

<sup>584</sup> According to Latour, “action is not what someone does but the ‘fait-faire’, the make do by others in an event, at the occasioned circumstances” (Latour, “A Few Steps”, p.13).

<sup>585</sup> For other passages in which Bloom acknowledges his own quality of passivity, see Elizabeth S. Anker, “Where was Moses when the Candle went out: Infinity, Prophecy, and Ethics in Spinoza and ‘Ithaca’”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.44, No.4 (Summer, 2007), p.662. One of the most notable examples of Bloom’s passivity is rendered in “Circe”, in the sense of his violation by Bella/o (*U* 15.3089).

<sup>586</sup> Anker, p.662.

passivity is in *Ulysses* not one grammatical transformation among others but the formal matrix of its mimesis”.<sup>587</sup>

In *Ulysses*, and particularly in “Ithaca”, the subject emerges as an amalgam of thoughts, affects, and words in which the action of the subject intermingles with forces external to him/her.<sup>588</sup> As Fritz Senn remarks, in the penultimate episode “all events are [...] dissected, ‘decomposed’ (*U* 17.1952) into parts, segments, replies, queries”.<sup>589</sup> In turn, decomposition and dissection reveal the networks in which subjects and objects are implicated, blurring the clear-cut boundaries which are normally established between them. As Latour points out in considering the trajectories linking subjects and objects (hiker, territory, and map in his main example):

paradoxically, either one concentrates on the extremes (a known thing and a knowing subject) and sees nothing of the chain [...] or else one concentrates on the chain: the known thing and the knowing subject both disappear, but the chain itself can be extended.<sup>590</sup>

As Joyce’s representation of the process of water-boiling shows, the act of filling the kettle and putting it on the stove is only the very last stage in a much longer chain, a process of interaction between different elements which allows the water to flow around Dublin and come out of Bloom’s kitchen tap. Subject and object “disappear” in the sense that the active action of the subject and the passive role of the object are intermingled in a network in which the hierarchy between subject and object is unsettled. While it is still Bloom who places the kettle on the stove and shaves by night, these actions are presented as an amalgam of a number of complex interactions.

---

<sup>587</sup> Henry Staten, “The Decomposing Form of Joyce’s *Ulysses*”, *PMLA*, Vol.12, No.3 (May, 1997), p.383.

<sup>588</sup> Rowlands, “Enactivism and the Extended Mind”, *Topoi* (2009), p.58.

<sup>589</sup> Fritz Senn, “‘Ithaca’: Portrait of the Chapter as a Long List”, p.40. According to Lawrence the episode “shows what the stream-of-consciousness revealed in the early chapters, that reality is infinitely expandable by being infinitely divisible” (Lawrence, p.565).

<sup>590</sup> Latour, *Inquiry*, p.81.

## Actor-Network Theory and Banal Objects

This emphasis on interaction has obvious ramifications for determining what constitutes an action. Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) rejects the idea that an action is exclusively the product of a subjective intention, considering it instead to be the product of a network of entities and forces, a "node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled".<sup>591</sup> This view contends that objects participate in what are normally seen to be purely human actions. As Latour points out, boiling water, hitting a nail, and fetching provisions are all activities carried out by human subjects. Yet they are unthinkable without the simultaneous actions of objects such as a kettle, a hammer, or a basket. According to ANT,

in addition to 'determining' and serving as a 'backdrop for human action', things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on. ANT is not the empty claim that objects do things 'instead' of human actors: it simply says that no science of the social can even begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored [...] The project of ANT is simply to extend the list and modify the shapes and figures of those assembled as participants.<sup>592</sup>

The scientific "catechism" of "Ithaca" seems to explore this idea by bringing to the surface those networks of relation which are normally concealed behind the idea that

---

<sup>591</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.44.

<sup>592</sup> Latour, *Reassembling*, p.72. According to Latour, "[m]odern humanities are reductionists because they seek to attribute action to a small number of powers, leaving the rest of the world with nothing but mute forces" (Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, p.138). In "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene", Latour points out that "[i]t is not that we should try to puff some spiritual dimension into its stern and solid stuff—as so many romantic thinkers and Nature-philosophers had tried to do—but rather that we should abstain from de-animating the agencies that we encounter at each step" (Latour, "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene", p.15).

actions are carried out by human actors. As in the hallucinatory world of “Circe”, in “Ithaca” human and nonhuman entities are placed centre-stage, with both contributing to the actions and narrative of the episode.

Along with “Circe”, the penultimate chapter of *Ulysses* is probably that which contains the highest number of everyday objects. Just as universal phenomena involving substances such as fire and water are inserted into broader networks, so the objects in Bloom’s living room are presented in tight relations with the subject—tight relations which muddle a clear separation between active subject and passive object:

[i]n what way had he utilised gifts (1) an owl, 2) a clock), given as matrimonial auguries, to interest and to instruct her?

As object lessons to explain: 1) the nature and habits of oviparous animals, the possibility of aerial flight, certain abnormalities of vision, the secular process of imbalsamation: 2) the principle of the pendulum, exemplified in bob, wheelgear and regulator, the translation in terms of human or social regulation of the various positions of clockwise moveable indicators on an unmoving dial (*U* 17.909-16)

Items which could be seen as simple decorative objects with no particular value are here considered in a perspective which looks beyond the limitations of their immediate functionality, and sees them as able to provide “object lessons” about the habits of humans and animals.<sup>593</sup> An “object lesson” was a popular form of pedagogy in the second half of the nineteenth century and which, as Sarah Anne Carter explains, “assumed that material things had the potential, at least in part, to convey information”.<sup>594</sup>

---

<sup>593</sup> Plock invokes the same passage to show how “Bloom connects with his environment by relying specifically on material things” (Plock, p.562).

<sup>594</sup> Sarah Anne Carter, “On an Object Lesson, or Don’t Eat the Evidence”, in *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol.3, No.1 (Winter, 2010), p.7. For more information about object lessons, see Sarah Anne Carter’s *Object Lessons: How Nineteenth-Century Americans Learned to Make Sense of the Material World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Placed within a network in which the animate and inanimate play interconnected roles, Bloom's household objects are presented in an almost intimate relation with Bloom, as testified by the exchange of glances between the character and the objects lined up on his mantelpiece:

What interchanges of looks took place between these three objects and Bloom?

In the mirror of the giltbordered pierglass the undecorated back of the dwarf tree regarded the upright back of the embalmed owl. Before the mirror the matrimonial gift of Alderman John Hooper with a clear melancholy wise bright motionless compassionate gaze regarded Bloom while Bloom with obscure tranquil profound motionless compassionated gaze regarded the matrimonial gift of Luke and Caroline Doyle (*U* 17.1340)<sup>595</sup>

The quotation seems to give a visual representation of the kinds of interaction which abound in "Ithaca"—unfolding precise descriptions which alternate between factual and emotional elements. The passage presents an interaction in which Bloom and the mantelpiece objects are so equally involved—so the syntax suggests—as to make it difficult to distinguish the active from the passive parties. For Flynn, "Bloom in this exchange is more acted upon than acting".<sup>596</sup>

While the connections between Bloom and his household objects are made explicit in some passages, the long lists in which most of the chapter's objects appear might seem at odds with the idea of networks of entities. As William H. Gass points out, "the list detaches objects from their place in the world".<sup>597</sup> Yet what might seem an arid enumeration has in itself the potential to seed further connections. According

---

<sup>595</sup> Other moments of close attachment include the consolation provided by "[t]he candour, nudity, pose, tranquillity, youth, grace, sex, counsel of a statue erect in the centre of the table, an image of Narcissus purchased by auction from P. A. Wren, 9 Bachelor's Walk" (*U* 17.1426-29), and the description of Bloom's sensations in contemplating the furniture of his living room. Bloom deals with his household objects "with attention" (*U* 17.1312), "with solicitation" (*U* 17.1313), "with amusement" (*U* 17.1314), and "with pleasure" (*U* 17.1317).

<sup>596</sup> Flynn, "A Brechtian Epic", p.77.

<sup>597</sup> William H. Gass, "I've Got a Little List", *Salmagundi*, No.109-110 (Winter/Spring, 1996), p.22.

to Senn, “as in a Greek play the action takes place outside of the stage, in ‘Ithaca’ the life of objects is only suggested [...] Each object potentially contains a story that can be partly unfolded”.<sup>598</sup> As Plock remarks, the objects in Bloom’s drawers “account for and bring to life visions of Bloom’s past”.<sup>599</sup> The lists of “Ithaca” are not a simple hoarding of lifeless material, but amount to an important “conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies” with the potential to generate broader associations.<sup>600</sup> For instance, the “3 typewritten letters, addressee, Henry Flower, c/o P.O. Westland Row, addresser, Martha Clifford, c/o P.O. Dolphin’s Barn” remind the reader of Bloom’s pseudonym and his affair with Martha Clifford. The “Vere Foster’s handwriting copybook, property of Milly (Millicent)” (*U* 17.1775) underlines Bloom’s nostalgia-infused attachment to his daughter, while the “two partly uncoiled rubber preservatives with reserve pockets” (*U* 17.1804) reinforce the fact that Bloom and Molly have not had intercourse since the death of their son Rudy, as intimated by Bloom’s thought that he “[c]ould never like it again after Rudy” (*U* 8.610) in “Lestrygonians”. The narrator of “Ithaca” confirms Bloom’s suggestion a fact when it states that “there remained a period of 10 years, 5 months, and 18 days during which carnal intercourse had been incomplete, without ejaculation of semen within the natural female organ” (*U* 17.2282-4).

According to Sheringham,

[t]he abundance of ‘stuff’ [...] becomes ‘romanesque’ not by virtue of an ‘effet du réel’ enabling the novel to simulate reality, nor because of the various objects serving as indexes of characters [...] but because, by dint of being embedded in a web of infinitively interlocking stories, this material draws attention globally to the everyday in which we are enmeshed.<sup>601</sup>

---

<sup>598</sup> Senn, “‘Ithaca’: Portrait of the Chapter as a Long List”, p.51.

<sup>599</sup> Plock, p.560.

<sup>600</sup> Latour, *Reassembling*, p.44.

<sup>601</sup> Sheringham, p.47.

Rather than pointing to a “real” conceived as a category which, as Barthes saw it, is signified by material objects but appears as static and featureless, the lists of banal objects in “Ithaca” suggest “a web of infinitively interlocking stories” and relations. “Circe” and “Ithaca” feature objects which might in less experimental fiction be relegated to background material, but which Joyce renders as active sources of information, connecting different parts of the novel, and thus shaping narrative development in non-linear, fragmental, parallax fashion. While they are of course selected and arranged by the author, they have the potential to create new links which are not fully controlled by either author or narrator. These associations are hidden in plain sight, emerging more or less clearly depending on the attention and memory of the reader, or on the knowledge he/she accrued about text. The length of the lists in “Ithaca” and the abundance of objects contained within them ensure that no object is singled out. According to Olson, “[t]he onslaught of lists in *Ulysses*, especially in [...] ‘Ithaca’, attempts to equalize all of the items listed. The equality of the list works against the desire to read and interpret particular elements of the novel as more or less important”.<sup>602</sup> The list becomes the final textual example of what one might call the “epiphanic resistance” of *Ulysses*—a resistance which does not negate further or deeper meaning, but which emphasizes the importance of networks and relations rather than the essence of individual objects. Kenner remarks that the universe of *Ulysses* is “internally consistent but never to be grasped in one act of apprehension; not only because the details are so numerous but also because their pertinent interconnections are more numerous still”.<sup>603</sup> Calling for a parallax view and inciting

---

<sup>602</sup> Olson, p.35.

<sup>603</sup> Kenner, *Ulysses*, p.81.

exploration of the networks which link the innumerable entities it features, Joyce's novel resists the temptation to conjure an ultimate moment of radiance. The networks created in "Circe" and "Ithaca" further continue to probe the connection between subject and object Joyce set out in Stephen's theory of epiphany, while dispensing with any final moment of epiphanic radiance.

## Chapter 4: *Finnegans Wake* and Correspondences

### Epiphany and Correspondences

In a chapter exploring the theme of “correspondences” in his book *Structure and Motif in ‘Finnegans Wake’*, Clive Hart claims that “there can be little need to insist on the importance of correspondences in *Finnegans Wake*”.<sup>604</sup> In seeking to elucidate Joyce’s handling of the idea in his final work, Hart reaches back to Stephen’s early theory of epiphany in *A Portrait*: “by denying that *claritas* implies a showing forth of divine essence”, he argues,

Stephen dismisses all talk of art’s penetrating to a different order of reality, but in developing his own theory of *claritas*, or the ‘epiphany’, Stephen merely substitutes horizontal for vertical correspondence. If the work of art no longer works as a catalyst between man and divine revelation, it is still able to perform an analogous function for man and for his potential insight into the world around him.<sup>605</sup>

As the previous chapters have explored, Hart’s insight seems to be valid for *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, wherein thematized theories of perception and constantly evolving writing styles enact ceaseless explorations and renegotiations of the relations between words, characters, and the world around them, repeatedly revisiting ideas nested in Stephen’s theory of epiphany. By focusing on the epiphany as a “mediating link between subject and object”, this thesis has considered the development of Joyce’s horizontal correspondences and the “potential insight into the world” they offered.<sup>606</sup> Rather than pitting a static mind against a pre-given world as two distinct terms,

---

<sup>604</sup> Clive Hart, *Structure and Motif in ‘Finnegans Wake’* (London: Faber & Faber, 1962), p.145.

<sup>605</sup> Hart, p.149. Stephen’s theory of epiphany as expounded in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait* develops according to Aquinas’s three requisites for beauty: ‘integritas’, ‘consonantia’, and ‘claritas’. In *Stephen Hero* Stephen defines ‘claritas’ as “the moment which I call epiphany” (*SH*, 212). As I explore in Chapter 1, this idea is complicated in *A Portrait*, where Stephen changes his view on what ‘claritas’ might mean.

<sup>606</sup> Weir, p.40. Hart, p.149.

Joyce's works highlight the co-implication of thinking mind and external world, emphasizing some of the "practices, mediations, instruments, forms of life, engagement, involvements" which link and constantly alter subjects and objects.<sup>607</sup> In this respect, the relation between subject and object can be considered as a "co-response" in Latourian terms: a "tense, difficult, rhythmic correspondence, full of surprises and suspense" which recasts the opposition between active subjects and passive objects by re-distributing agency.<sup>608</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, in order to grasp this co-response it is necessary to acknowledge "chains of reference", those mental and material trajectories linking a subject and an object which are normally concealed by the assumption that a knowing mind (*res cogitans*) can have unmediated access to a known or knowable object (*res extensa*). As early as *Stephen Hero*, the theory of epiphany begins to chart these complex relations, outlining a process of mediation between subject and object based on mutual involvement—one which, however, might not reach an ultimate moment of "radiance" wherein the subject gains full knowledge of "[t]he soul of the commonest object" or its hidden essence.<sup>609</sup>

In *A Portrait* the co-implication of subject and object is even more apparent, as the relationality at the heart of the theory of epiphany is explored in connection with the growth and portrayal of the main character. Words, in the novel, are shown to be more than merely denotative entities. As they shape the cognitive faculties of Stephen from boyhood to adulthood, they highlight the way in which the mind of the character is embedded in and extends into his surroundings, unsettling simplistic views of mind and world as fully formed entities—static and distinct from each other.

---

<sup>607</sup> Bruno Latour, "The Promises of Constructivism", in *Chasing Technoscience: Matrix for Materiality*, ed. Don Ihde and Evan Selinger (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), p.39.

<sup>608</sup> Latour, *Inquiry*, p.86.

<sup>609</sup> *SH*, 213.

*Ulysses*, as Chapter 3 explored, revises the original theory of epiphany through its depiction in “Proteus” of Stephen’s walk along Sandymount strand and his attempt to read the “Signatures of all things” (*U* 3.2). Rather than involving a search for essences, the doctrine of signatures brings to the fore the relationality of subject and object. Through the representation of waste material on Sandymount strand and the parallax technique governing the rendition of banal objects, *Ulysses* stresses the necessity of “picking up on the myriad subtle connections that link one mode of being to others”.<sup>610</sup> This idea is emphasized throughout the novel by the multitude of trivial objects which contribute to the creation of a texture of reality rich in echoes and associations.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce revisits and develops ideas and techniques which he started to explore at the beginning of his writing career, pushing the notion of horizontal correspondence to its extreme to give an unprecedented form of “insight into the world”.<sup>611</sup> Following a compositional method which recalls the early epiphanies, and highlighting the materiality of language while pursuing the exploration of cognitive processes, *Finnegans Wake* can be seen as the culmination of Joyce’s long-lasting exploration of the relations between subjects and objects, mind and world.

The idea of “correspondences” intrigued Joyce from a very young age, as

---

<sup>610</sup> Inglesby, p.301.

<sup>611</sup> In Chapter six of *Structure and Motif of Finnegans Wake*, Hart points out that the idea of horizontal correspondences “is true of the large body of externally oriented correspondences in *Finnegans Wake*” but it is not true “of the equally important narcissistic correspondences which function entirely within the book” (Hart, 148). Hart analyses these internal cross-correspondences by focusing on the language of the *Wake* and its ability to generate sensual correspondences (which for Hart are based on the Rimbaldian idea of correspondences), and psychological correspondences (which Hart considers to be influenced by the theories of the Society of Psychical Research and the writings of Alice Johnson). My chapter does not focus on the correspondences between the various chapters of the *Wake*, but on the language and compositional methods used by Joyce in relation to some tropes which can be recognized in the *Wake* but are not exclusive to it. By paying attention to ideas of collection, recycling, and waste, I hope to bring to the fore some of the “externally oriented correspondences” which Hart does not take into account.

attested by his memorization of poems such as Baudelaire's 'Correspondances' (1857) and Rimbaud's 'Voyelles' (1871).<sup>612</sup> It is from these texts that Joyce seems to have developed a conception of the correspondences at work between poetic language, the world, and the human senses which emerges with particular force in *Finnegans Wake*.<sup>613</sup> Baudelaire's sonnet links words and natural environment, as it conceives of Nature as a temple producing "confusing speech", and as a forest of symbols wherein "perfumes, colours, sounds may correspond".<sup>614</sup> Rimbaud's mystical poem echoes Baudelaire's synaesthetic vision, as it associates the five vowels with colours, objects, and other substances: "A, black fur-clad brilliant flies", "E, black spread of mists and tents", "I, purples, blood spat, lovely lips".<sup>615</sup> As Baron remarks, the sonnet "ascribes all sorts of metaphorical values to individual vowels: chromatic in the first line, phonetic, olfactory, and symbolic in subsequent lines".<sup>616</sup> By the time he came to compose *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce seems to have moved on from the mysticism of Symbolist writers such as Rimbaud and Baudelaire. Nevertheless, he retained an interest in the evocative combinations of words and letters. As Baron points out, "Joyce [...] gradually forsook the unbounded idealism of his youth in favour of, in his brother's phrase, 'the minute life of earth'".<sup>617</sup>

In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce continues his exploration of the combinational potentiality of the alphabet to reinforce the idea that alternative representations of

---

<sup>612</sup> According to Mary Colum (*Life and the Dream* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1947), p.392) and Constantine Curran (*James Joyce Remembered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.29) Joyce knew both poems by heart. William York Tindall points out that "it is likely that Joyce [...] encountered the literary correspondence in Baudelaire's famous sonnet 'Correspondances', a kind of manifesto of poetic method" (William York Tindall, *The Literary Symbol* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), p.47).

<sup>613</sup> See Scarlett Baron, "Joyce and the Rhythms of the Alphabet" in *New Quotatoes* for an analysis of Rimbaud's impact on Joyce's early writings.

<sup>614</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.19.

<sup>615</sup> Arthur Rimbaud, *Collected Poems*, trans. Martin Sorrell (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2001), p.135.

<sup>616</sup> Baron, "Rhythm of the Alphabet", p.23.

<sup>617</sup> Baron, "Rhythm of the Alphabet", p.25. Quote from Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, pp.54-5.

reality can be achieved through the particular arrangements of letters. According to William York Tindall, “Joyce used correspondences to show the connection between man and man, man and society, man and nature [...] To provide an image of this world, to present the feeling of it”.<sup>618</sup> For Tindall, these connections are not created for their own sake, but are conceived of as “an evocative agreement among things, one more or less related to others. ‘Evocative’ because *this arrangement of things shows another forth*”.<sup>619</sup> Tindall’s notion hints at the original conception of epiphany as a showing forth of a hidden reality. There is, however, a key difference between the two concepts, and this lies in the relational aspect of the revelation yielded by the detection of correspondences. It is not a matter of piercing to the essence of a single thing by isolating it from its surroundings, as Stephen’s theory suggests, but of exploring the potential meaning of networks involving multiple entities. A similar shift is suggested by the way in which the concept of epiphany is treated in the *Wake*.

Sangam MacDuff has meticulously identified those passages in the *Wake* in which the epiphanies Joyce wrote between 1900 and 1904 are recycled, and those in which the word “epiphany” is employed.<sup>620</sup> As MacDuff points out, most of the epiphanies “recycled” in the *Wake* consists of “little more than passing references, a particular word or phrase Joyce echoes from his earlier work”.<sup>621</sup> One of the few passages in which a version of the word “epiphany” is mentioned is that narrating the

---

<sup>618</sup> William York Tindall, *The Literary Symbol* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), p.59.

<sup>619</sup> William York Tindall, *A Reader’s Guide to James Joyce* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), p.82. My emphasis.

<sup>620</sup> MacDuff, p.182.

<sup>621</sup> The only exception is epiphany 34 (‘She Comes at Night’). According to MacDuff, “[a]s with *Ulysses*, the most striking epiphany in *Finnegans Wake* is ‘She Comes at Night,’ recording a dream in which Joyce was visited by the spectre of his mother—Joyce echoes the epiphany in Shem’s response (as Mercurius) to Shaun (Justus) at the end of I.7” (MacDuff, p.183). MacDuff rightly points out that “the fact that Joyce reused at least seven [original epiphanies], decades after they were written, demonstrates his continued interest” (MacDuff, p.183).

debate between “St. Patrick and the druid” in Book IV (*FW* 611.4-613.12). In this passage, described by Finn Fordham as “an argument about vision and colour between a practically minded Catholic and an idealist (Berkeley)”, “Balkelly, archdruid of islish chinchinjoss” (*FW* 611.5) presents the “all too many much illusiones through photoprismic velamina of hueful panepiphanal world” (*FW* 611.12-13). Placing the word “epiphany” in the context of a conversation about theories of perception, Joyce seems to echo Stephen’s theory of epiphany while offering a new perspective on it:

all too many much illusiones through photoprismic velamina of hueful panepiphanal world spectacurum of Lord Joss, the of which zoantholitic furniture, from mineral through vegetal to animal, not appear to full up together fallen man than under but one photoreflexion of the several iridals gradationes of solar light, that one which that part of it (furnit of heupanepi world) had shown itself (part of fur of huepanwor) unable to absorbere, whereas for numpa one puraduxed seer in seventh degree of wisdom of Entis-Onton he savvy inside true inwardness of reality, the Ding hvad in idself id est, all objects (of panepiwor) allside showed themselves in trues coloribus resplendent with sextuple gloria of light actually retained, untisintus, inside them (obs of epiwo). (*FW* 611.12-24).<sup>622</sup>

The passage calls to mind Stephen’s philosophical disquisitions on perception and colours at the beginning of “Proteus”, which sees the character muse about the “ineluctable modality of the visible” (*U* 3.1) by combining Aristotle’s theory of vision and colours with Berkeley’s idealism. In *Finnegans Wake*, the archdruid’s theory is based on Newton’s *Optiks*, in which the philosopher asserts that “bodies become coloured by reflecting or transmitting this or that sort of rays more copiously than the rest”.<sup>623</sup>

---

<sup>622</sup> According to MacDuff, the image of Berkeley’s “hueful panepiphanal world” “reaches back to the original meaning of epiphany as literal illumination later generalized to an apparition, manifestation, or showing forth” (MacDuff, p.191).

<sup>623</sup> Quoted in Pierre Vitoux, “Aristotle, Berkeley, and Newman in “Proteus” and *Finnegans Wake*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.2 (Winter, 1981), p.171. See also MacDuff, p.190.

The passage differentiates between two figures: the “fallen man”, and the “paradoxed seer”. For both, the act of perception effects an illusory shift from the manifold to the singular. In the case of the “fallen man”, the “several iridals gradationes of solar light” falling on an object are seen as one individual colour which, in line with Newton’s theory, is not absorbed by the object. On the other hand, the “paradoxed seer” is able to perceive the “true inwardness of reality, the Ding hvad in idself id est”. With a clear reference to Kant’s noumenon (Ding an sich) and a likely pun on the Danish word for “what” (“hvad”), the “seer”’s knowledge of beings (“wisdom of Entis-Onton”) recalls the last moment of epiphany—the perception of the “quidditas” of an object, the recognition of a thing as it truly is. Not only is this final stage unachievable to the common man, but the text suggests that this essence is not a singular entity but consists instead of the manifold colours absorbed by the thing, its “trues coloribus resplendent with sextuple gloria of light actually retained”.<sup>624</sup> In spite of the difference in their perceiving abilities, the misconception presented to both the fallen man and the seer is that of singularity (one colour for the fallen man, one singular essence for the seer). Even if pervaded by illusions, the world is rendered here as “panepiphanal”: singular essences (or noumena) are replaced by manifold impressions. In the passage above, the words “furniture”—supposedly employed to represent the material world “from mineral, through vegetal to animal”—and “panepiphanal world” are repeated four times in brackets.<sup>625</sup> Each time, the letters composing the words are differently combined, offering a fragment of the original concepts of “furniture” and “panepiphanal world” without yielding any new insight as to their relevance to the archdruid’s theory.

---

<sup>624</sup> This might indeed be one of the paradoxes of the ‘paradoxed seer’. To see a paradox is to see two things or to see from two angles at once.

<sup>625</sup> MacDuff remarks that “Berkeley referred to the totality of material objects as the ‘furniture of the earth’” (MacDuff, p.190).

This repetition seems to work as a constant reminder of the combinatorial power of letters and words. Against the supposed ability of the “paraduxed seer” to perceive the essence of a thing, the repetition underlines the multiple associations which are possible within the “panepiphanal world”. According to MacDuff, archdruid “Balkelly”’s theory of colours

is analogous to Joyce’s Wakean language: polychromatic, shimmering, and playful but also elusive and perhaps illusory, veiling words in a ‘heptachromatic mantle’, so that any interpretation we might wish to impose is [...] subjective.<sup>626</sup>

The possibility of perceiving “the true inwardness of reality” is undermined by a language whose component parts are constantly changing. Abandoning the idea of showing forth any ultimate essence or truth, *Finnegans Wake* asks the reader to embrace the fact that language does not give access to any single pre-existing meaning but unfurls an almost infinite series of interpretative possibilities. Epiphany, originally the showing forth of a single essence, gives way to the potential revelation of a series of relations constituting the “panepiphanal world”.

My contention is that the language of Joyce’s last work puts forward an idea of correspondence which highlights the processes of mediation at play between subject (thinking mind) and object (represented reality). This co-response is “evocative”, to reiterate Tindall’s description, because it shows forth new connections and arrangements at work in the “furniture” of the “panepiphanal world”.

## **The Language of the *Wake***

While composing *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce explained to Max Eastman that:

---

<sup>626</sup> MacDuff, p.192. MacDuff points out the importance of this passage as “one of the earliest sections Joyce composed [in 1923] for *Work in Progress* and a key stage for the evolution of Wakean language” (MacDuff, 190).

[i]n the writing of the night, I really could not, I felt I could not, use words in their ordinary relations and connections. Used that way they do not express how things are in the night, in the different stages—conscious, then semi-conscious, then unconscious. I found that it could not be done with words in their ordinary relations and connections. When morning comes of course everything will be clear again...I'll give them back their English language. I'm not destroying it for good.<sup>627</sup>

After writing a book focusing on the waking perambulations of Bloom and Stephen, Joyce continues his exploration of the human psyche by turning his attention to the night.<sup>628</sup> *Finnegans Wake* attempts to present a more inclusive picture of the mind's workings, a portrait which does not limit itself to consciousness but that extends to "semi-conscious" and "unconscious" states. Indeed, Joyce's last work "is more complex than an evocation of the mind in a somnolent state".<sup>629</sup> As Dirk Van Hulle points out, "[i]t imaginatively asks the question how imagination works".<sup>630</sup> Stretching language to accommodate the unconscious, *Finnegans Wake* simultaneously poses wider questions concerning the workings of the mind and the representation of reality.

As Thomas Jackson Rice remarks,

Joyce seems to have viewed his novel interchangeably as a dream work [...] and as a presentation of 'waking' reality, possibly because he conceived of the dream not in Freudian terms, as overdetermined by the consciousness, but as analogous to a reality possessing an immanent design as yet unformed by a mediating consciousness.<sup>631</sup>

While it is true, as the following pages will show, that the agential role of the subject is destabilized in the night of the *Wake*, I disagree with Rice's invocation of an "immanent

---

<sup>627</sup> Max Eastman, *The Literary Mind: Its Place in an Age of Science* (New York, London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), p.101. Quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p.546.

<sup>628</sup> Joyce often refers to this transition in his letters: "Having written *Ulysses* about the day, I wanted to write this book about the night"; "The action of *Ulysses* was chiefly in the daytime, and the action of my new work takes place chiefly at night. It's natural things should not be so clear at night isn't it?" (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p.590).

<sup>629</sup> Van Hulle, *Joyce's 'Work in Progress'*, p.117.

<sup>630</sup> Van Hulle, *Joyce's 'Work in Progress'*, p.117.

<sup>631</sup> Thomas Jackson Rice, "The Complexity of *Finnegans Wake*", *Joyce Studies Annual*, Vol.6 (Summer, 1995), pp.96-7.

design” for reality. Rather, the *Wake* seems to present its reality as constituted by the co-responses between world, words, and a more or less conscious mind. The adoption of the “aesthetic of the dream” enables Joyce to bring these co-responses to the fore, and to explore reality from a different perspective.<sup>632</sup> As Harriet Weaver points out in a letter of 1954, the “dream form” was for Joyce a “convenient device, because of its shifting and changes and chances...allowing the freest scope to introduce any material he wished”.<sup>633</sup> The night setting and dream work allow for new combinations of words and material, bringing forth unexpected combinatorial possibilities. According to Stuart Gilbert, “[t]here is a literature of the day, and a literature of the twilight or the night. The word that hallucinates (to employ Rimbaud’s apt description) belongs to the latter class. Acting by suggestion, not by definition, it touches the intangible and grasps the inapprehensible”.<sup>634</sup> As the hallucinations of “Circe” in *Ulysses* created a new texture of reality, so the hallucinatory language of *Finnegans Wake* defies the conventional relations which underpin syntactical construction, semantic morphology, and representation, generating new kinds of co-responses between words, subjects and objects, creator and creation, reader and text.

In 1928 Eugene Jolas, editor of *transition* magazine in which instalments of *Finnegans Wake* were published between 1927 and 1938, pointed out that Gertrude Stein and Joyce “give words a more compressed meaning through disassociation from their accustomed connections”.<sup>635</sup> In the *Wake*, puns and portmanteau words become the norm. Compressing different objects, images, and ideas into individual words, they

---

<sup>632</sup> Edmond Jaloux, “James Joyce”, *Le Temps* (Paris), January 30, 1941.

<sup>633</sup> Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p.544. Quoted in Rice, p.96.

<sup>634</sup> Stuart Gilbert, “Joyce Thesaurus Minusculus”, in *transition*, ed. Eugene Jolas, No. 16-17 (June 1929), pp.15-16.

<sup>635</sup> Eugene Jolas, “The Revolution of Language and James Joyce”, in *transition*, ed. Eugene Jolas, No. 11 (February 1928), p.110.

proliferate relationality at the level of individual linguistic units. In the passage quoted above, for instance, the word “spectacurum” merges the word “spectrum” with the Latin word for play (spectaculum), while the adjective “puraduxed” features at least the words “paradox”, “pure”, and the Latin word for “leader” (dux). Instead of having a clearly ascertainable single meaning, these words are matrices of possibilities set in motion by the alternative arrangement of letters, the mixture of languages, and the context in which they are placed. As David Lodge remarks, “the pun *fuses* two terms that are phonologically or visually similar, but different in meaning to create a new word in which different meanings are present at the same time”.<sup>636</sup> Portmanteau words, created by the blending of two or more words, can be considered as particularly ambiguous and destabilizing puns. As Attridge remarks, the portmanteau word “combin[es] the power of the pun with those weaker effects of polysemy and patterning [thus] bringing into the foreground [...] otherwise dismissable associations”.<sup>637</sup> For this reason, Attridge considers the portmanteau word to be “a monster, a word that is not a word, that is not authorized by any dictionary, that holds out the worrying prospect of books which, instead of comfotingly recycling the words we know, possess the freedom endlessly to invent new ones”.<sup>638</sup> Yet the unsettling effect of portmanteau words comes from the fact that their invention involves practices of recycling and recombination. The words of the *Wake* still resemble, in most cases, known English

---

<sup>636</sup> David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.133-4.

<sup>637</sup> Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, p.194.

<sup>638</sup> Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, p.189. The urge to catalogue and assign precise meanings to the “monster” words of the *Wake* became apparent from the beginning of the text’s publication in *transition*. In *transition* 16-17 (June 1929), Stuart Gilbert published a “little treasury of Joycean neologisms” (*transition* 16-17, p.15). Gilbert selected a long passage from the fragment of ‘Work in Progress’ published in *transition* 13 (Summer, 1928) and produced a glossary of some of the words featured in it. Gilbert proffers that “certain interpretations as merely tentative” and remarks that “one of the fascinations of reading *Work in Progress* is that as a treasure-house of suggestion an allusion it is practically inexhaustible” (*transition* 16-17, p.18).

words—both acoustically and visually—while being different from the standard words found in dictionaries.<sup>639</sup> Words “by the coincidence of their contraries reamalgamerge in that identity of undiscernibles” (*FW* 49.36-50.1), showing how identity is a matter of merging and amalgamating without ever perfectly making two things coincide.

According to Yee, Joyce’s new language “leads to a breakdown of the linguistic system of correspondences”.<sup>640</sup> This, however, is true only if correspondences are considered (as Yee considers them to be), as “one-to-one correspondences between words and things in the world”.<sup>641</sup> The language of *Finnegans Wake* puts forward an alternative view of relationality in which, as Tim Conley asserts, “positive identification (X=Y) is supplanted by negative correspondence (X≠Y, but Y in *not altogether unlike* Y)”.<sup>642</sup> Baron suggests a similar idea when she states that the *Wake* is “all at once old and new, full of *déjà-lus*, and yet brimming with meanings that go beyond—and often do not depend on—recognition”.<sup>643</sup> Joyce’s final work is an unprecedented exercise in decomposition and recombination, one which creates a vast network of “negative correspondences” based on interrelationships which constantly swing between contrariness and undiscernibility (“contraries” and “undiscernibles”). In the *Wake*,

every person, place and thing in the chaosmos of Alle anyway connected with the gobblydumped turkery was moving and changing every part of the time: the travelling inkhorn (possibly pot), the hare and turtle pen and paper, the continually more and less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators,

---

<sup>639</sup> Joyce is of course not the first author to have included puns and portmanteau words in a literary work. Renowned forerunners include Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear. What appears to be unprecedented, however, is the scale of Joyce’s employment of such forms. In “Joyce y los neologismos” Borges identifies Laforgue, Whitman, and Rabelais as Joyce’s precursors, and observes that “the most distinctive feature of *Work in Progress* [...] is the methodical profusion of *portmanteau words* [...] in this profusion lies the novelty of James Joyce” (Jorge Luis Borges, “Joyce y los neologismos”, *Sur* (1939)). My translation.

<sup>640</sup> Cordell D.K. Yee, *The Word According to James Joyce: Reconstructing Representation* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997), p.70.

<sup>641</sup> Yee, p.75.

<sup>642</sup> Tim Conley, “Playing with Matches: The *Wake* Notebooks and Negative Correspondence”, in *New Quotatoes*, p.172.

<sup>643</sup> Baron, *Strandentwining Cable*, p.268.

the as time went on as it will variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns (*FW* 118.21-28)

Exploring unconventional connections between the words, ideas, people, and objects which make up the “chaosmos of *Alle*”, Joyce’s final work debunks standard codes of representation, stripping away language’s functionality as an efficient and straightforward means of communication. Everything (“*Alle*”) in the *Wake* changes and has the potential to be decomposed, recombined, and recontextualized at every turn, and thus to become part of a network created by words “variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled”, and guided by possibilities and suggestions.

## Material Words

While basic syntax and grammar are still recognizable in the *Wake*, puns and portmanteau words replace the standard link between word and individual referent with a multiplicity of possible connections. As Attridge observes, this substitution undermines the “communicative efficiency” of language.<sup>644</sup> Portmanteau words highlight that materiality of language which Joyce, as I claimed in Chapter 2, was exploring from the beginning of his writing career. Shown to be compounds of other words whose meaning cannot be definitely identified, their presence becomes more apparent. As Jed Rasula puts it, *Finnegans Wake*

activat[es] the letters of the alphabet, make[s] their physical presence visible and noticeable: they constitute the stuff to which the reader is awakened *prior* to any awareness of the cover story [...] To adhere to any presumed

---

<sup>644</sup> Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, p.189.

transparency of the signifier here is to ignore the flagrantly protuberant texture of the work itself.<sup>645</sup>

Each individual word becomes a “phonemanon” (*FW* 258.22), simultaneously an utterance and an event. Words are spelled and merged in unfamiliar ways, so that the smooth passage from signifier to signified is constantly undermined. Stripped of their conventional functionality, the words of the *Wake* are not neutral signifiers simply evoking objects in the world, but their correspondence with objects and external realities becomes a matter of visual and auditory combinations, of play and contextualization.<sup>646</sup> Shem’s house, a “Haunted Inkbottle” (*FW* 182.31), is described as a “stinksome inkenstink” (*FW* 183.6). This agglomeration of letters highlights the idea of Shem’s house as an inkbottle, while also suggesting an insalubrious stinking place due to the repetition of “stink” and the image of bowels summoned by the similarity of sounds between “inkenstink” and “intestine”. To a Danish reader, the sentence might also convey the uniqueness of Shem’s house, a “ting som ingen ting” or “thing like no other thing”.

Ruben Borg notes that “as we observe its internal disjuncture, the word, made object, becomes a record—a documentary narrative, so to speak—of its own coming into form”.<sup>647</sup> In Chapter 1, I explored how the Stephen of *Stephen Hero* was fascinated by etymology, and how his growing awareness of their history brought into focus their materiality, emphasizing how they serve as “receptacles for human thought”.<sup>648</sup>

---

<sup>645</sup> Jed Rasula, “*Finnegans Wake* and the Character of the Letter”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.34, No.4 (Summer, 1997), p.522, 524.

<sup>646</sup> “As Joyce recognized, to spell is to ‘speel,’ a Phonetic Anglicization of the German word for play, *spiel*. The text is not a collection of words to be read but rather a score of letters or notes to be played” (Rasula, p.521).

<sup>647</sup> Ruben Borg, “Neologizing in *Finnegans Wake*: Beyond a Typology of the Wakean Portmanteau”, *Poetics Today*, 28:1 (Spring, 2007), p.152.

<sup>648</sup> *SH*, 27.

*Finnegans Wake* goes a step further, as the “coming into form” of words is determined not just by their etymological evolution, but also by their playful combinations and by the contexts in which they are placed. Thus, words are not simply “receptacles for human thought” but have the potential to create new thinking, to continue a process of potential signification which cuts across different languages and other semiotic domains. As William V. Costanzo remarks, “[w]hen Joyce calls his book a ‘meanderthalltale’ (19.25) [...] the combination of *neanderthal*, *meander*, *me* and *tall tale* challenges the mind to make connections, to synthesize the seemingly unfamiliar into concepts that have yet to be explored”.<sup>649</sup>

The obscurity of the text and the new ways in which language signifies within it make the reader aware of those mental and linguistic processes which are activated by any encounter with words. Borg notes that “[t]he portmanteau as a compound of ill-fitted elements—as an excess of data that disables communicative protocols [...] compels us to look at the word [...] with a renewed awareness of the effort we put into visualizing it, hearing it, and deciphering its meaning”.<sup>650</sup> The *Wake* encourages the reader to pay attention to those cognitive processes which Joyce foregrounded in his portrayal of Stephen in *A Portrait*.<sup>651</sup> As Stephen encountered words and discovered the shaping influence they exerted on his mental activities, so the reader of *Finnegans Wake* is made aware of the processes mobilized by a language which does not seek simply to convey a message, and by words which appear to be more than abstract symbols. Readers are invited to uncover potential meanings by exploring associations

---

<sup>649</sup> William V. Costanzo, “Joyce and Eisenstein: Literary Reflections of the Reel World”, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.11, No.1 (March 1984), p.179.

<sup>650</sup> Borg, p.152.

<sup>651</sup> Van Hulle claims and shows in his work how *Finnegans Wake* “is not merely a result of Joyce’s imagination; it performs ‘imagination’, it enacts the working of a mind”. See Van Hulle, *Joyce’s ‘Work in Progress’*, p.117.

between words and ideas. They might be frustrated by the unfamiliarity of certain words, comforted by the recognition of an idiom within a longer compound, amused by the repetition of certain sounds. These processes and reactions, operating in the background of most acts of reading, are constantly brought to the fore in the *Wake*. The invitation which is addressed to the reader is to “be on anew and basking again in the panorama of all flores of speech” (FW 143.3-4)—to take pleasure and “bask” in this unfamiliar and aromatic “field” of language wherein words are figures of speech but also flowers of speech, abstract signs yet also material entities. By accruing materiality, language also acquires a certain autonomy. Towards the beginning of the *Wake*, the reader is requested to “(Stoop) if you are abcedminded, to this claybook, what curios of signs (please stoop), in this allaphbed! Can you rede (since We and Thou had it out already) its world? It is the same told of all” (FW 18.17-20). Paradoxically, as the subject is made more aware of his/her mental processes, the language of the *Wake* decentres the agential role of both author and reader. Both have to relinquish some of their assertive control over meaning and interpretation, to bow down (“Stoop”) to the fact that the text is neither fully under the control of the author nor completely graspable by the reader.

### **The Growth of Waste-Language**

Hilary Clark points out that “[c]lose readers of the *Wake* have an often disturbing sense that this machine of text production [...] is bigger than the writer, surpassing the

individual or historical Joyce”.<sup>652</sup> Meticulously composed by Joyce over 17 years, the *Wake* is a work which was designed to exceed the intention and planning of its author, as the proliferation of meaning generated by its words prevents the written text from assuming an identifiable form. Norris remarks that “Joyce often spoke of *Finnegans Wake* as though it had an independent life of its own, as though it achieved its form without his direction or intervention”.<sup>653</sup> Rather than comparing Joyce’s work to that of an engineer “with a fully conceived project [or] a detailed model”, Norris describes Joyce as a “*bricoleur*” whose “project proceeds like an organic growth”.<sup>654</sup> Employing the distinction between engineer and bricoleur drawn by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1966), Norris observes that Joyce, like Lévi-Strauss’s *bricoleur*, follows “the practice of using bits and pieces of heterogeneous materials without regard to their specific function [...] collecting and saving things on the principle that ‘they may always come in handy’”.<sup>655</sup>

In order to create *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce filled 50 notebooks with words, sentences, notes, newspaper clippings and information taken from a vast number of miscellaneous sources, from pamphlets to encyclopedias. In an article devoted to Notebook VI.B.4, which Joyce compiled in 1929, Conley asserts that “the author’s habit of collecting all sorts of bric-a-brac from various and often unexpected sources [was] well established”.<sup>656</sup> This found material seems to have been gathered with no

---

<sup>652</sup> Hilary Clark, “Networking in *Finnegans Wake*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.27, No.4 (Summer, 1990), p.754.

<sup>653</sup> Margot Norris, *The Decentered Universe of Finnegan's Wake: A Structuralist Analysis* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), p.137. See *L1*, 204.

<sup>654</sup> Norris, p.137. Andrew Gibson offers a similar view, stating that Joyce “partly built *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* like a *bricoleur*, putting hosts of incidental little finds in useful places within a massively coherent structure” (Andrew Gibson, *James Joyce* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005)).

<sup>655</sup> Norris, pp.130-31. Quote from Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.18.

<sup>656</sup> Conley, “Playing with Matches”, p.174. Crossing out notes in different coloured crayons as he inserted them in his work, Joyce left a manuscript trail which is enabling researchers to examine the evolution of his work, even at the level of individual passages and sentences. The notebooks allow us to see how Joyce modified certain

particular purpose in mind, but with a view to potential future uses which might emerge once the collected items entered into contact with existing notes and drafted sentences. According to Baron,

[t]he notebooks betray no attempt to summarize a storyline or encapsulate an argument. Words and phrases are extracted from bizarre-sounding books according to a logic that almost always remains elusive [...] Many of the words Joyce chooses to extract from his sources are unaccountably banal [...] The aim seems to have consisted entirely in the accumulation of a stockpile of words and phrases for redistribution across *Work in Progress*.<sup>657</sup>

Once accumulated, words and sentences are “allow[ed] to enter into new and unexpected combinations with each other”.<sup>658</sup> The connections which the author knowingly sets into play are only a small number of those which will be generated by the associations of words themselves.<sup>659</sup> Jed Deppman encapsulates this idea in claiming that Joyce’s language is often “pregnant with meanings to which he himself was or would become blind”.<sup>660</sup> If Joyce is the original *bricoleur* of the *Wake*, the final product exceeds his planning, as the possibilities of uncovering new meanings and associations are never exhausted.

This idea brings us to another similarity between Joyce’s oeuvre and Lévi-Strauss’s idea of *bricolage*: the centrality both grant waste material in the process of creation. In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss associates the *bricoleur* with mythological thought (as opposed to scientific thought). According to Lévi-Strauss: “the characteristic feature of mythological thought, as of ‘bricolage’ on the practical plane,

---

words, phrases, or concepts, and reveal how much material, having been recorded in note form, was not included in the final version of the work. As Van Hulle points out, “the *undeleted* entries are of interest, as they show what caught Joyce’s attention in the first place” (Van Hulle, *Joyce’s ‘Work in Progress’*, p.5).

<sup>657</sup> Baron, *Strandentwining Cable*, pp.258-9.

<sup>658</sup> Norris, p.131.

<sup>659</sup> Norris remarks that the technique of *bricolage* “allows Joyce to liberate materials from their old contexts, to juxtapose them freely, and allow them to enter into new and unexpected combination with each other” (Norris, p.131).

<sup>660</sup> Jed Deppman, “A Chapter in Composition: *Chapter II.4*”, in *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake: A Chapter-by-Chapter Genetic Guide*, ed. Luca Crispi, Sam Slote (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), p.335.

is that it builds up structured sets [...] by using the remains and debris of events”.<sup>661</sup>

Using tools and materials which he/she has at his/her disposal, the bricoleur re-invents their meaning and devises new functions in order to create alternative structures. The *Wake* is organized around a similar process. Not only is scrap material re-used to compile the novel, but in the book language itself is often seen as waste material. In

### *Finnegans Wake*

[c]ountlessness of livestories have netherfallen by this plage, flick as flowflakes, litters from aloft, like a waast wizzard all of whirlworlds. Now are all tombed to the mound, isges to isges, erde from erde (*FW* 17.26-30).

The “lifestories” which make up the *Wake*, constantly changing and developing, are likened to “litters from aloft”, waste material which is not an endpoint but the starting point of new developments. Transmuted from “letters” into “litters”, the words of the *Wake* are fortuitously disseminated like snowflakes (“flowflakes”) by whirlwinds (“whirlworlds”). Employed to denote both debris and a number of animals brought forth at a birth, the term “litter” evokes the “organic growth” mentioned by Norris. Moreover, the consideration of language as waste material matches a common vision of puns as disturbing factors which have to be discarded in order for the linguistic system to work effectively. According to Bates, the pun is “the leaky element in the linguistic structure”.<sup>662</sup> As it confuses sense and sound and complicates the functionality of language, the pun “does what other words are presumed not to do and is therefore cast off as a hopeless liability”.<sup>663</sup> Joyce crams his last work with this disposable element of language, highlighting the playful potentialities of this “linguistic anomaly” rather than discarding it as a worthless hindrance.<sup>664</sup>

---

<sup>661</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp.21-2.

<sup>662</sup> Catherine Bates, “The Point of Puns”, *Modern Philology*, Vol.96, No.4 (May 1999), p.424.

<sup>663</sup> Bates, p.423.

<sup>664</sup> Attridge, p.189.

According to Patrick W. Moran, by accumulating a vast number of trivial objects in his ink-house, Shem “has converted something valueless into something potentially valuable through *associative networks*”.<sup>665</sup> A similar idea can be applied to Joyce’s notebook-based collections of sentences, words, and newspaper clippings. While they are extracts of other texts, their value increases when they are placed in a different context and associated with new words. The “plage” where these “lifestories” fall brings back to mind Sandymount strand and the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*. As the waste on the strand was part of a continuous organic process of flux and metamorphosis, so the *Wake*’s “litterish fragments” do not “lurk dormant” (*FW* 66.25-26). The same linguistic and material hybridity as characterized the “heavy sands” (*U* 3.288) of Sandymount seems manifest again in the *Wake*’s reference to “jetsam litterage of convolvuli of times lost or strayed, of lands derelict and of tongues laggin too” (*FW* 292.16-17). The *Wake* becomes a “middenhide hoard of objects! Olives, beets, kimmells, dollies” (*FW* 19.08-09) wherein the most banal objects are made to sound like the letters of the Greek alphabets (aleph, beth, ghimel, daleth), and where “current puns, quashed quotatoes, messes of mottage” (*FW* 183.22) defy the boundaries between objects and words, and between natural and linguistic objects. In “Dante...Bruno.Vico...Joyce”, Samuel Beckett notices how in the *Wake* “[t]here is an endless verbal germination, maturation, putrefaction, the cyclic *dynamism of the intermediate*”.<sup>666</sup> Its waste-language conjures a state wherein everything has not solidified into one thing, in which words do not assume fixed meanings, and wherein subjects do not have the ultimate power of creation or interpretation.

---

<sup>665</sup> Moran, p.441. My italics.

<sup>666</sup> Samuel Beckett, “Dante...Bruno.Vico...Joyce”, in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* (London: John Calder, 1983), p.29. My italics.

## The Case of the Fluviana as Paratext to the *Wake*

Between April 1927 and May 1938, Joyce published excerpts from *Finnegans Wake*, at the time known as “Work in Progress”, in a literary magazine called *transition* and edited by Eugene Jolas, an American expat living in Paris and enthusiastic supporter of Joyce’s experimentations. *transition* was one of the major periodicals for experimental writings and artworks in this period. Advertised as “an International Quarterly for Creative Experiment”, and publishing works by writers and artists such as Gertrude Stein, Henri Michaux, Man Ray, and Constantin Brancusi, the magazine provided Joyce with a vehicle for the promotion and dissemination of his writing.<sup>667</sup>

Apart from the instalments of “Work in Progress”, Joyce’s only other contribution to the magazine was a rather peculiar set of pictures representing pieces of driftwoods shaped in the forms of animals and body parts and known as Fluviana (Fig.1-2). Published in *transition* 16-17 (Spring/Summer

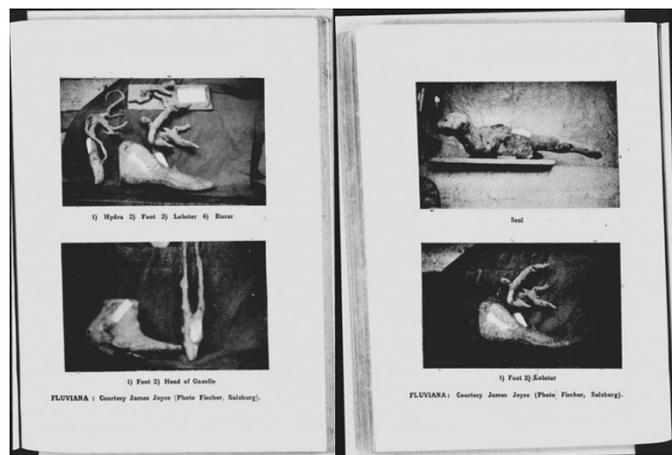


Fig. 1 FLUVIANA: Courtesy James Joyce (Photo Fisher, Salzburg), in *transition*, No. 16-17 (Spring/Summer 1929).

Fig. 2 FLUVIANA: Courtesy James Joyce (Photo Fisher, Salzburg), in *transition*, No. 16-17 (Spring/Summer 1929).

Issue 1929) in the section dedicated to photography and sculpture, the four pictures

<sup>667</sup> The critic Marcel Brian conveys the importance that Joyce’s writing had for the magazine (and vice-versa) when he claims that *transition* became “la maison de Joyce” (quoted in Dougald McMillan, *Transition 1927-38: The History of a Literary Era* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), p.179). See Dirk Van Hulle’s *Joyce’s ‘Work in Progress* for a detailed account of the reception of Joyce’s extracts as they appeared in *transition*. Joyce published excerpts from his work in the following issues: issue 1 (April 1927), issue 2 (May 1927), issue 3 (June 1927), issue 4 (July 1927), issue 5 (August 1927), issue 6 (September 1927), issue 7 (October 1927), issue 8 (October 1927), issue 11 (February 1928), issue 12 (March 1928), issue 13 (Summer 1928), issue 15 (February 1929), issue 18 (November 1929), issue 22 (February 1933), issue 23 (July 1935), issue 26 (February 1937), issue 27 (April-May 1938).

were no original artwork. As McMillan explains, “Joyce had seen the collection [of driftwoods] when visiting Raitenhaslach in Austria in August 1928 and had purchased the photos of them”.<sup>668</sup> The four pictures, titled “FLUVIANA: Courtesy James Joyce (Photo Fisher, Salzburg)”, are accompanied by the names of the mythological figures, animals, or parts of the body they were taken to resemble by the person who found them (“Hydra”, “Foot”, “Lobster”, “Racer”, “Head of Gazelle”, “Seal”). The only additional information about the pictures is to be found in the “Glossary” section at the end of the issue, wherein Jolas explains that:

[t]he river pictures published in this number were discovered by Mr. James Joyce during a visit in Raitenhaslach, Austria, last summer. They represent tree-roots collected by a resident from the mass washed up in the Salzach River. Some of the names he has given these curious formations of nature are: “Serpent which seduced Eve”; “Nine-headed Hydra”; “Seadog”; “Sea-Spider”; “Leech”; “Gazelle-Head”; “Mammoth-Head”; “River Eel”; “Club-Foot”; “Flat-Foot”; “Staff of the Wandering Jew”; “Lizard”; “Sand-Viper”; “Snail”; “Nail of Noah’s Ark”; “Sea-Miss”; “King Serpent with Little Golden Crown”; “Pig’s Ear”; “Pincers”; “Sea-Lobster”. He also collected stone formations washed up in the river and gave them such names as these: “Adam’s Shoe-Last”; “Eve’s Flat Iron”; “Heart (Lost in Heidelberg)”; “Stone of the Wise”. They were photographed by Adolph Fischer of Salzburg.<sup>669</sup>

While Jolas’s glossary entry sheds light on the origin of the Fluviana, it does not offer any indication as to why Joyce requested their publication in *transition* or why Jolas himself assented.

In one of the few studies mentioning the Fluviana, Christa Maria Lerm-Hayes attempts to draw a link between the photographs and Joyce’s “Work in Progress”. According to Lerm-Hayes, the Fluviana might give “a better understanding of the fragments of *Work in Progress* which were published in *transition*”.<sup>670</sup> However, the

---

<sup>668</sup> McMillan, *Transition 1927-38*, p.192.

<sup>669</sup> *transition* 16-17, p.328.

<sup>670</sup> Christa Maria Lerm-Hayes, *Joyce in Art: Visual Art Inspired by James Joyce* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004), p.17.

identification of a connection between the Fluviana and Joyce's "Work in Progress" must necessarily be speculative. Joyce's lack of pronouncement as to whether and how the photographs were meant to comment on his work teases the reader with the challenge of making sense of them. Nevertheless, while they raise more questions than they provide answers, Joyce's bizarre contribution to *transition* evinces some of the same dynamics as are writ large in *Finnegans Wake*. Specifically, the Fluviana can be considered as a visual paratext involving the same kind of co-responses and correlationality as are represented and fostered throughout the *Wake*.

First of all, it is important to acknowledge that the Fluviana seem stubbornly to defy interpretation, and that, like Stephen's account of his own failed epiphany in *Stephen Hero* and the language of the *Wake*, they do not seem to allow for a final moment of "radiance" in which the object could be cognitively grasped once and for all. In *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle*, Phillip F. Herring points out that in Joyce's works "we normally find that an essential piece of evidence is missing that would allow us a measure of security in interpretation; readers are invited to fill the gap by speculating about what is missing".<sup>671</sup> Joyce creates texts which resist easy reduction to singular readings, and which invite the reader to establish tentative networks, to follow clues which ultimately do not lead to a final answer or solution. This principle seems to be encapsulated in both the *Wake* and the enigmatic insertion of the Fluviana in *transition*.

The way in which the Fluviana were included in Jolas's magazine recalls the processes of collection, recording, and displacement which are at play in Stephen's theory of epiphany as explored in Chapter 1, and in the compositional method of *Finnegans Wake*. Trivial in nature, without purpose or value, the pieces of driftwood

---

<sup>671</sup> Phillip F. Herring, *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p.xii.

presumably caught Joyce's attention in the same way as those snippets of conversation and paper clippings he started collecting in his youth. While they are printed "courtesy of James Joyce", the process which led to the pictures appearing in *transition* magazine was a collaborative one, including the moulding action of the Salzach River on some pieces of wood, the action of the person whose hands removed these pieces of wood from the river, and that of the photographer who took pictures of them. Far from being exclusively Joyce's creation, the pictures of the Fluviana, like the language of the *Wake*, are the result of a number of heterogeneous connections. Moreover, like the hybrid, repurposed, germinating language of the *Wake*, they represent objects caught in an in-between state—simultaneously natural, artistic, and linguistic. As Lerm-Hayes remarks, "[t]he *Fluviana* assume an interestingly fleeting/floating place".<sup>672</sup> They are, in the literal sense of the expression, objects in transition.

Lerm-Hayes identifies a similarity between the pictures and the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" section of *Finnegans Wake*:

[t]he metamorphosis of the washerwomen on the banks of the Liffey into tree and stone, aided and represented by the rhythmically flowing language of the river, finds an ideal, visual, and haptic correspondence in driftwood pieces in the shape of a racer or lobster. Tree and water combined to shape these objects which resemble living creatures.<sup>673</sup>

Joyce found the pictures of driftwood in the summer of 1928, a couple of months after the publication of the "Anna Livia Plurabelle" instalment in *transition* (Issue 8, November 1927), and soon before the publication of the chapter as an individual book by Crosby Gaige in October 1928. It is plausible that Joyce became interested in

---

<sup>672</sup> Lerm-Hayes, p.16.

<sup>673</sup> Lerm-Hayes, p.16.

Fisher's pictures because they reminded him of the linguistic experiments which characterized a chapter in which he was particularly invested.<sup>674</sup> In "Anna Livia Plurabelle", two washerwomen on the banks of the river Liffey metamorphose into a tree and a stone. The Fluviana are characterized by a similar natural environment (the banks of a river) and ideas of flux and metamorphoses (from driftwood to mythological figures). Extremely different in nature, the words of the *Wake* and the Fluviana are guided by similar processes and underpinned by ideas of co-responses and relationality between different entities.

### **A Revolution Beyond Polar Opposites**

For Eugene Jolas, Joyce's "Work in Progress" was not simply an eccentric literary experiment but represented a perfect manifestation of ideas concerning language and reality by which he was himself enthralled in the 1920s and 30s. At the beginning of the Spring/Summer issue of 1929, Jolas published a section titled "The Revolution of the Word", consisting of a twelve-point "proclamation" followed by a series of experimental pieces by other writers. The "proclamation", subscribed to by the editors of *transition* and fourteen other signatories, delineated the main ideas of a project which aimed to fight against "the hegemony of the banal word, monotonous syntax, static psychology, descriptive naturalism, and desirous of crystallizing a viewpoint".<sup>675</sup> For Jolas, it was crucial to resist the "banal and journalistic fashion" of

---

<sup>674</sup> By 1928, Joyce had been working on the "Anna Livia" passage for at least three years. This is the only section of the *Wake* of which Joyce made a recording. See Van Hulle, *Joyce's 'Work in Progress'*, Chapter 4 for the precise and complete publication history of "Anna Livia Plurabelle".

<sup>675</sup> *transition* 16-17, p.13.

recent and contemporary literary writing in order to nurture a different approach to reality, and to develop alternative ways of rendering it in prose and poetry.<sup>676</sup> Against the tyranny of naturalistic description, he claims that the “literary creator has the right to disintegrate the primal matter of words imposed on him by text-books and dictionaries” and “to use words of his own fashioning and to disregard existing grammatical and syntactical laws”.<sup>677</sup> Jolas considered Joyce’s “Work in Progress” to be one of the best examples of this necessary revolution. In an insight which recalls Rimbaud and Baudelaire’s synaesthetic conception of words, he remarks that “James Joyce gives words odors and sounds that the conventional standard does not know. In his super-temporal and super-spatial composition, language is being born anew before our eyes”.<sup>678</sup> For his ability to use words in radically innovative ways, Jolas hails Joyce as an example for “the epic writer of the future [who] will not copy reality” but instead “will create, with the material he possesses, another world in which he will make his own laws”.<sup>679</sup>

In spite of his association with Jolas’s revolution of the word by virtue of his work’s serialization in *transition*, Joyce never subscribed to the manifesto published in 1929. Looking into the possible reasons for Joyce’s choice, Andrew Mitchell outlines a fundamental difference between Jolas’s and Joyce’s revolutions. According to Mitchell, Jolas’s ideas are based on a kind of binary, oppositional thinking which pits words against reality, poet against philistine, and which ultimately “prevents the very

---

<sup>676</sup> Eugene Jolas, “The Revolution of Language and James Joyce”, in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), p.79. As Andrew Mitchell points out, for Jolas the “transmutation of reality is accomplished through a transformation of the word” (Mitchell, “Eugene Jolas and the Joycean Word in Transition”, in *Joyce’s Disciples Disciplined: A Re-Exagmination of the ‘Exagmination of Work in Progress*, ed. Tim Conley (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010) p.47).

<sup>677</sup> *transition* 16-17, p.13.

<sup>678</sup> Jolas, *Our Exagmination*, p.89.

<sup>679</sup> Eugene Jolas, “Literature and the New Man”, *transition* 19-20 (June 1930), p.19.

revolution he would seek”.<sup>680</sup> Joyce’s innovations in *Finnegans Wake*, by contrast, bring about a different “revolution of the word”.<sup>681</sup>

Jolas’s vision of the artist as an individual who “seeks a redefinition of the things themselves: Not the registering, but the transmutation of the universe” seems to share similarities with Stephen’s early vision of the artist as one who is able to transmute the “daily bread of life into something that has a permanent life of its own”.<sup>682</sup> The artist as conceived by Jolas—a “discreet entity, isolated, one pole of an opposition”—resembles Stephen walking down Sandymount strand and attempting to separate himself from the world around him—the nearing tide and the swallowing sands.<sup>683</sup> As my analysis of “Proteus” in Chapter 3 has shown, Stephen’s attempt to mark himself off as a separate entity is destined to fail. Over the course of his works Joyce gradually presents another way for the artist to position him/herself in the world and interact with it. The artist is not one “pole of an opposition” anymore but is immersed in that world, tracing the outlines of the myriad networks that constitute it and in turn creating new ones. For Mitchell, Jolas’s oppositional thinking is a “failure to think in terms of relationality” and “a failure to see the world in the splendor of its interconnections”.<sup>684</sup> On the other hand, “[r]ather than flee the world into isolation, *Finnegans Wake* is located in the midst of relations beyond opposition, amidst contextuality, and surrenders itself to it”.<sup>685</sup> As I have shown in this chapter, the co-responses created in and by *Finnegans Wake* do not cast entities—be they words, material objects, or subjects—into fixed antithetical positions, but explore the complex relations between

---

<sup>680</sup> Mitchell, p.48.

<sup>681</sup> Mitchell, p.48.

<sup>682</sup> Eugene Jolas, “Transatlantic Letter”, p.275. *P*, 186.

<sup>683</sup> Mitchell, p.51.

<sup>684</sup> Mitchell, p.50.

<sup>685</sup> Mitchell, p.50.

them and the ways in which they mutually influence each other. As Mitchell remarks, “[a] world apart from dichotomous opposition is shown to us [...] Joyce’s revolution is this entry into relationality and non-identity”.<sup>686</sup>

Several critics have considered the *Wake* to be an epiphanic work, its language producing an unprecedented vision of reality and showing forth the hidden mechanisms of our shared system of communication. Eco, for instance, claims that “*Finnegans Wake* is that great epiphany of the cosmic structure resolved into language”.<sup>687</sup> According to Melchiori, “[t]he language of *Finnegans Wake* is a constant epiphanization of the current, familiar, obvious everyday language, by a process of translation that intensifies to the utmost its semantic values, so that the banal becomes memorable, the common word becomes a wonderful vocable. *Finnegans Wake* is a single, gigantic epiphany, the epiphany of the human language”.<sup>688</sup> Lucia Boldrini similarly contends that “in the language of the *Wake*, every word, theme, motif, and the book as a whole can be the occasion of an epiphany, the revelation of the essential nature of what is known, what pertains to everyday reality, to history, to myth”.<sup>689</sup> But this “essential nature” does not in fact appear to be an essence or an ultimate truth but a set of relations which exceed the potential boundaries of any individual entity. While an ultimate grasp of the object might be lost, what emerges is a plethora of intricate and dynamic relations between subjects and objects, a series of ‘co-responses’ which undermine any opposition between an active thinking mind and a passive represented reality. A passage from the beginning of the *Wake* seems to

---

<sup>686</sup> Mitchell, p.52.

<sup>687</sup> Eco, *The Aesthetic of Chaosmos*, p.77.

<sup>688</sup> Giorgio Melchiori, *Joyce Studies in Italy 4, Joyce’s Feast of Languages: Seven Essays and Ten Notes*, ed. Franca Ruggeri (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995), p.4.

<sup>689</sup> Lucia Boldrini, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in ‘Finnegans Wake’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.138.

illustrate this idea, and to encapsulate the evolution of the epiphany from Joyce's earliest writing to his final work:

I quizzed you a quid (with for what?) and you went to the quod. But the world, mind, is, was and will be writing its own wrunes for ever, man, on all matters that fall under the ban of our infrarational senses (*FW* 19.34-20.01)

Over the course of Joyce's writing career, the search for a "quid", for the essential nature of an object (its "*quidditas*", as Stephen defines it in *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait*), is reshaped by the recognition of the co-implication of mind and world, subjects and objects. What shines forth is a world which can appeal to the "infrarational senses" of subjects even if it often escapes their notice ("fall[s] under the ban"). A world written and "for ever" rewritten by subjects and objects which has the potential to appeal to the senses, the rational faculties and the unconscious of the subject.

## Conclusion

This thesis has sought to draw lessons from the objects which proliferate in Joyce's works. Looking at these material things through the lenses of "Thing Theory", "situated cognition", "waste studies", and "Actor-Network Theory", it has brought into question the notion that such objects merely provide a backdrop to the depiction of human actions. Considering Joyce's writing alongside such new materialist theories has enabled me to shine a spotlight on the author's enduring fascination with the interactions that bind and mutually define animate and inanimate entities. The theory of epiphany, which Joyce articulates through Stephen Dedalus and puts into practice in his own writing from as early as 1903, is the most obvious manifestation of the centrality and dynamism of subject-object relations to his oeuvre.

The Joycean theory of epiphany triangulates the act of perception, the realm of ostensibly trivial objects and mundane moments, and a conception of the purpose of aesthetic creation. Following the Romantic tradition, Joyce secularizes the concept of epiphany, replacing a moment of divine revelation—central to the Christian religious tradition—with the artist's relationship with the ordinary. In opposition to the Romantics, however, Joyce resists making his "epiphany" a moment of sublime manifestation in which the ordinary is rendered transcendent. Indeed, if the epiphany is, according to Beja, "the most famous of James Joyce's methods of converting the bread of everyday life into art of permanent value", it is important to note that in the works themselves this conversion is never fully accomplished in the sense set out in Stephen's theory.<sup>690</sup> Repeatedly redefined over the years, the epiphany becomes

---

<sup>690</sup> Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, p.71.

untethered from Stephen's seminal theorization in *Stephen Hero*. Rather than staging "sudden spiritual manifestation[s]" in which the object's "soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance", the "epiphanies" featured in *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake* can, more modestly, be said to uncover potentialities latent in the mundane realm from which they originate.<sup>691</sup> In so doing, they highlight mutually formative interactions at work "between the world and the mind", constantly re-assessing the importance and meaning of particular objects.<sup>692</sup>

Joyce's particular approach to epiphanic revelation brings to light an altered relation between the subject and the objects it perceives. In his texts, objects are not presented as bundles of inert matter to be defined by the subject. Instead, they are rendered as entities contributing to the subject's thinking processes and partaking in the formation of the meanings bestowed upon them. Far from being the sole agents and suppliers of meaning, human subjects are figured as belonging to a series of networks, the very existence of which challenges notions of "active subject" and "passive object". As well as being promulgated through Joyce's rendering of objects, this perspective is also conveyed through his treatment of language. As I have argued throughout this thesis, Joyce consistently foregrounds language as an object amongst objects, systematically emphasizing its material qualities in ways which undermine any sense of separation between work and world. As Attridge points out, "[c]ontrary to the assumption governing the realist tradition—that to draw attention to the language as such is to divert attention away from the reality it is attempting to represent—Joyce

---

<sup>691</sup> *SH*, 213.

<sup>692</sup> Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany*, p.11.

showed that an even stronger sense of the physically and emotionally real can be created in language that foregrounds its own materiality”.<sup>693</sup>

Neither objects, nor subjects nor words are ever depicted as static, passive entities in Joyce’s works. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen’s feelings and thinking processes are constantly mediated by material objects—a belt, a washbasin, a “little silk badge”, pieces of coloured tissue paper, a blanket—and written inscriptions—the word “foetus” inscribed on a wooden desk, a poem written on moiety notices, a villanelle composed on an empty cigarette packet. In the “Proteus” episode of *Ulysses*, Stephen’s attempt to read the signatures of all things as signs waiting to be deciphered is complicated by his immersion in the decaying matter of the beach, and by the recognition that he is part of a web of organic things “aborning and adying”.<sup>694</sup> Over the course of his walk along Sandymount strand, his musing about waste material leads to the breakdown of the standard epistemological categories of subject and object. Elsewhere in *Ulysses*, banal objects—a handkerchief, the “loose brass quoits of [a] bedstead” (*U* 4.59), torn envelopes, timepieces—appear poised between their material actuality and their inferable symbolic meanings. Stephen’s “noserag” is at once an object used to “rub off [...] microbes” (*U* 8.712) and a mock symbol for Irish art; Bloom’s broken watch is at once an object in need of repair and an indicator of his cuckoldry. The novel is rife with trivial things whose potential meanings never fully transcend their mundane context. In *Finnegans Wake* puns and portmanteau words destabilize straightforward communication and radically emphasize the materiality of language. The reading subject is plunged in a

---

<sup>693</sup> Attridge, *Joyce Effects*, p.72.

<sup>694</sup> Ellmann, *‘Ulysses’ on the Liffey*, p.23.

“panepiphanal world” (FW 611.13) of ever-changing significations wherein singular essences are supplanted by a panoply of impressions. Instead of fostering illusions pertaining to the possibility of unequivocal perception (in life) and unproblematic linguistic understanding (in reading), *Finnegans Wake* embeds its subjects in a world where both are radically stimulated and challenged by the combinatorial possibilities of objects, letters, and words.

Referring to Marcel Duchamp’s ready-made *Comb* (1916), a photograph of which featured on the cover of the Winter 1937 issue of *transition*, Joyce remarked that: “[t]he comb with the thick teeth shown on the cover was the one used to comb out *Work in Progress*”.<sup>695</sup> Joyce’s remark is characteristically mischievous in its open-ended suggestiveness. Does the action of disentangling refer to the writing and revision processes which underpinned the creation of *Finnegans Wake*? To the exegetical comments Joyce asked several



Fig. 3. Cover illustration of *transition*, No.26 (Winter 1937) featuring Machel Duchamp’s Comb (1916).

of his supporters to publish in *transition*?<sup>696</sup> Or does it refer to the labour involved in reading his final work? For all its playful ambiguity—a trait quite in keeping with the polysemy of the *Wake*—the idea of using a material object to disentangle a literary work wittily encapsulates Joyce’s approach to words and things. Joyce’s quip situates the comb at the crossroads between the material and the figurative. The comment invokes the object’s basic function while reimagining its application to an unusual kind

<sup>695</sup> Sarat Mahaj, “Typotranslating the Green Box”, in *The Duchamp Effect*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999), p.68. Quote from Sylvia Beach, “Les écrivains américains et leurs amis 1920-30”, in *Les Années Vingt* (Paris: Centre Culturel Américain, 1959), p.79.

<sup>696</sup> The critical essays were collected in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, first published by Faber and Faber in 1929. Amongst the contributors were Samuel Beckett, Frank Budgen, Eugene Jolas, and William Carlos Williams.

of mess—*Finnegans Wake*'s “messes of mottage” (*FW* 183.22-23)—arguably impossible to comb out. Joyce's remark continues a chain of Duchampian material and verbal puns which accumulate without generating a final moment of epiphanic clarity, effecting an aesthetic defamiliarization rooted in the ordinary. The comb retains its material banality even as it is inserted in a new context which promotes a plethora of new concrete, abstract, and linguistic associations. As my examination of the objects in Joyce's oeuvre has demonstrated, it is precisely when everyday things are not disregarded as trivial, banal, or functionless, that their potential to challenge straightforward signification and generate new meanings is brought to the fore.

Joyce's writings have rarely been examined for their innovative ways of presenting material objects. By focusing on the importance of trivial things in his theory of epiphany and in his works as a whole, this thesis has shown that Joyce plays with language and stylistic conventions to reveal the “material intimacy of words and things”.<sup>697</sup> Joyce never tires of exploring ways of representing things, and of displaying language's ability to cast objects in a new light. By underlining the interconnection between Joyce's fascination with the ostensibly trivial, with the act of perception, and with the writing processes, this project has stressed the centrality of objects in his oeuvre, and the impact they have on human characters and their behaviours. “[I]nsignificant gestures, transitory attitudes, insignificant objects, redundant words” constitute the bedrock of Joyce's fictional world.<sup>698</sup> If we are willing, as Joyce's prose teaches, to direct more than a fluctuating glance at them, and to challenge our familiar point of view, we might still never achieve the kind of epiphany Stephen describes in

---

<sup>697</sup> Gerald Bruns, *The Material of Poetry: Sketches for a Philosophical Poetics, Poetics* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2005), p.88.

<sup>698</sup> Barthes, *The Reality Effect*, p.146.

*Stephen Hero.* What will emerge, however, is the richness of those co-responses which always shape subject-object relations even when we are not aware of them.

## Bibliography

### Primary Works

- Joyce, James, *Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (1944), revd edn incorporating additional manuscript pages from Yale and Cornell University libraries, ed. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1969).
- . *Poems and Shorter Writings*, ed. Richard Ellmann, K. Walton Litz, and Joh Whittier-Ferguson (London: Faber & Faber, 2001).
- . *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol.1, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: faber and Faber, 1957)
- . *Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. 2, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber Adams, 1966)
- . *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Viking, 1975).
- . *James Joyce's Letters to Sylvia Beach 1921-1940*, ed. Melissa Banta, Oscar A. Silverman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).
- . *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writings*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000).
- . *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2000).
- . *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler, Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior (New York: Random House, 1986).
- . *Finnegans Wake*, ed. Robert-Jan Henkes, Erik Bindervoet (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2012).

### Secondary Works

- Adams, Robert Martin, *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Oxford: Galaxy Books, 1967).
- Agamben, Giorgio, *The Signatures of All Things*, trans. Luca D'Isanto with Kevin Attell (New York: Zone Books, 2009).
- Anker, Elizabeth S., "Where was Moses when the Candle Went Out: Infinity, Prophecy,

and Ethics in Spinoza and 'Ithaca'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.44, No.4 (Summer, 2007), 661-77.

Annavini, Silvia, "'Proteus': Signs and Signatures of Modern Allegory. A Portrait of the Artist as an Interpreter", in *Hypermedia Joyce Studies, Special Prague Symposium Issue*, ed. David Vichnar and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2010).

Aristotle, *De Anima*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956)

Attridge, Derek, *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* (London: Routledge, 1988).

———. *Joyce Effects: on Language, Theory, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

———, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, 1<sup>st</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

———, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

———. "Joyce: The Modernist's Novel Revolution in Matter and Manner", in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 581-95.

———. "Joyce's 'Clay' and the Problem of the Referent", *Tropisme No.6, Le dit et le non-dit* (Paris: Université Paris X-Nanterre, 1993), 113-30.

———. "Pararealism in 'Circe'", in *Joycean Unions: Post-Millennial Essays from East to West*, ed. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Meksnober (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 119-25.

Aydede, Murat, Robbins, Philip, eds., *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Baker, Harold D., "Rite of Passage: 'Ithaca', Style, and the Structure of *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.23, No.3 (Spring, 1986), 277-97.

Ball, Robert, *The History of the Heavens* (London, Paris, Melbourne: Cassell & Company, 1890).

Baron, Scarlett, "Flaubert, Joyce: Vision, Photography, Cinema", *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol 54, No 4 (Winter, 2008), 689-714.

———. *Strandentwining Cable: Joyce, Flaubert, and Intertextuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

- . “Joyce and the Rhythm of the Alphabet”, in *New Quotatoes: Joyce Exegesis in the Digital Age*, ed. Ronan Crowley and Dirk Van Hulle (Boston: Brill, 2016), 18-45.
- . “Beginnings”, in *The Cambridge Companion to ‘Ulysses’*, ed. Sean Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 51-68.
- Barthes, Roland, “The Reality Effect”, trans. Richard Howard, in *The Rustle of Language*, ed. François Wahl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).
- Bates, Catherine, “The Point of Puns”, *Modern Philology*, Vol.96, No.4 (May 1999), 421-438.
- Baudelaire, Charles, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- Baudrillard, Jean, *Le système des objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).
- Bauman, Zygmunt, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).
- Beckett, Samuel, “Dante...Bruno.Vico...Joyce”, in *Disjecta: Miscellaneous Writings and a Dramatic Fragment* (London: John Calder, 1983), 19-34.
- Beebe, Maurice, “Joyce and Aquinas: The Theory of Aesthetics”, *Philological Quarterly* (October 1957), 20-35.
- Beja, Morris, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971).
- Belluc, Sylvain, “Characters’ Lapses and Language’s Past: Etymology as Cognitive Tool in Joyce’s Fiction”, in *Cognitive Joyce*, ed. Sylvain Belluc and Bénéjam Valérie (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 83-103.
- . “Science, Etymology, and Poetry in the ‘Proteus’ Episode of *Ulysses*”, *Joyce Studies in Italy 12, Polymorphic Joyce*, ed. Franca Ruggeri and Anne Fogarty (Roma: Edizioni Q, 2002), 9-25.
- Bénéjam, Valérie, “The Reprocessing of Trash in *Ulysses*: Recycling and (Post)creation”, in *Hypermedia Joyce*, ed. David Vichnar and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2010).
- . “Parallax, Opoponax”, *Hypermedia Joyce Studies*, Vol.7, No.1, <http://hjs.ff.cuni.cz/archives/v7/main/essays.php?essay=benejam> (2005-06).
- Benjamin, Walter, “Unpacking my Library”, in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 59-67.
- Bennett, Jane, “Systems and Things: On Vital Materialism and Object-Oriented

- Philosophy”, in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. Richard A. Grusin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 223-240.
- Benstock, Bernard, “The Temptation of St. Stephen: A View of the Villanelle”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.14, No.1 (Fall, 1976), 31-38.
- Bergson, Henri, *Évolution Créatrice* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1907).
- Bersani, Leo, *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- Berkun, Scott, *The Myths of Innovation* (Sebastopol: O’Reilly Media, 2010).
- Bianchi, Massimo Luigi, *Signatura rerum: Segni, magia e conoscenza da Paracelso a Libniz* (Roma: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1987).
- Bloch, Ernst, *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).
- Boldrini, Lucia, *Joyce, Dante, and the Poetics of Literary Relations: Language and Meaning in ‘Finnegans Wake’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- Bolens, Guillemette, *The Style of Gestures* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012).
- Bolletieri Bosinelli, Rosa Maria, “How Real is ‘Real’ in Joyce?”, in *Joyce Studies in Italy 15, James Joyce: The Recirculation of Realism*, ed. Franca Ruggeri and Enrico Terrinoni (Roma: Edizioni Q, 2014), 41-54.
- Borg, Ruben, “Neologizing in *Finnegans Wake*: Beyond a Typology of the Wakean Portmanteau”, *Poetics Today*, 28:1 (Spring, 2007), 143-64.
- Borges, Jorge Luis, “Joyce y los neologismos”, *Sur* (1939).
- Boscagli, Maurizia, *Stuff Theory* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).
- Bottineau, Didier, “Language and Enaction”, in *Enaction: Toward a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science*, ed. John Steward, Olivier Gapenne, Ezequiel A. Di Paolo (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2010), 267-307.
- Bowen, Zack R., “Epiphanies, Stephen’s Diaries, and the Narrative Perspective of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.4 (Summer, 1979), 485-88.
- Brazeau, Robert, Galdwin, Dereck, eds., *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2014).

- Brown, Bill, "Thing Theory", *Critical Enquiry*, Vol.28, No.1, Things (Autumn, 2001), 1-22.
- . *A Sense of Things* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- . "Materialities of Modernism: Objects, Matter, Things", in *A Handbook of Modernism Studies*, ed. Jean-Michel Rabaté (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2013), 281-96.
- . *Other Things* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).
- Bruns, Gerald, *The Material of Poetry: Sketches for a Philosophical Poetics* (Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, 2005).
- Budgen, Frank, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'* (London: Grayson and Grayson, 1934).
- Camerani, Marco, *Joyce e il cinema delle origini* (Firenze: Cadmo Editore, 2008).
- Cappio, James, "Aristotle, Berkeley, and Proteus: Joyce's Use of Philosophy", *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol.5, No.1, (Spring, 1981), 21-32.
- Carter, Sarah Anne, "On an Object Lesson, or Don't Eat the Evidence", *The Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, Vol.3, No.1 (Winter, 2010), 7-12.
- . *Object Lessons: How Nineteenth Century Americans Learned to Make Sense of the Material World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- Castle, Gregory, "The Consolation of Objects in Joyce's: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*", *Twentieth-Century Literature* (September 2017), 267-98.
- . "'I Am Almosting it': History, Nature, and the Will to Power in 'Proteus'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.29, No.2 (Winter, 1992), 281-92
- Cather, Willa Sibert, "The Novel D<sup>e</sup>meubl<sup>e</sup>", *The New Republic*, 30 (April 12, 1992).
- Cheng, Vincent J., "Terrible Queer Creatures", in *James Joyce European Studies 11: James Joyce and the Fabrication of an Irish Identity*, ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie (Amsterdam: Brill, Rodopi, 2001).
- Citton, Yves, "Fictional Attachments and Literary Weavings in the Anthropocene", *New Literary History*, Vol.47, No.2-3 (Spring/Summer, 2016), 309-29.
- Clark, Andy, "Embodied, Embedded, and Extended Cognition", in *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Science*, ed. Keith Frankish and William Ramsey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 275-92.

- . *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
- Clark, Hilary, "Networking in *Finnegans Wake*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.27, No.4 (Summer, 1990), 745-58.
- Clarke, Bruce, "The Nonhuman", in *The Cambridge Companion to Posthumanism*, ed. Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- Colombetti, Giovanna, Roberts, Tom, "Extending the Extended Mind: The Case of Extended Affectivity", *Philosophical Studies*, Vol.172, Issue 5 (May 2015), 1243-63
- Colum, Mary, *Life and the Dream* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1947).
- Conley, Tim, "'Cog it out': Joyce on the Brain", *Joyce Studies Annual*, 2014, 25-41.
- . "Language and Languages", in *James Joyce in Context*, ed. John McCourt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 309-20.
- . "Playing with Matches: The *Wake* Notebooks and Negative Correspondence", in *New Quotatoes: Joyce Exegesis in the Digital Age*, ed. Ronan Crowley and Dirk Van Hulle (Boston: Brill, 2016), 171-81.
- . "Non Serviam Non Sequitur: Joyce's 'Sequentiality of Improbable Possibles'", in *European Joyce Studies 20: Errears and Erroriboose*, ed. Matthew Creasy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011).
- Connor, Steven, "Thinking Things", *Textual Practice*, 24:1, <http://www.stevenconnor.com/thinkingthings/> (2010).
- . "Modernism and the Writing Hand", <http://www.stephenconnor.com/modhand.htm>.
- . "'Jigajiga...Yummyyum...Pfuiiiiiii!...Bbbbllllbbllblblobschb!'" 'Circe's Ventriloquy", in *Reading Joyce's "Circe"*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994).
- Conroy, Melanie, "Before the 'Inward Turn': Tracing Represented Thought in the French Novel (1800-1929)", *Poetics Today*, Vol.35, Issue 1-2 (Spring/Summer, 2014), 118-71.
- Coole, Diana, "The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh", in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), 93-116.

- Cope, Jackson L., "The Rhythmic Gesture: Image and Aesthetic in Joyce's *Ulysses*", *ELH*, Vol.29, No.1 (March 1982), 67-89.
- Costanzo, William V., "Joyce and Eisenstein: Literary Reflections of the Reel World", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.11, No.1 (March 1984), 175-80.
- Crangle, Sara K., "Stephen's Handles", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.47, No.1 (Fall, 2009), 51-69.
- Crowley, Ronan, "Fusing the Elements of 'Circe': From Compositional to Textual Repetition", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.47, No.3 (Spring, 2010), 341-61.
- Crowley, Ronan, and Van Hulle, Dirk, eds., *New Quotatoes: Joycean Exogenesis in the Digital Age* (Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2016).
- Curran, Constantine, *James Joyce Remembered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).
- Delville, Michel, *The American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).
- . "'At the Centre, What?' Giacomo Joyce, Roland Barthes, and the Novelistic Fragment", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.36, No.4 (Summer, 1999), 765-80.
- Demin, Robert H., ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage Vol.1* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1970).
- Dennett, Daniel C., *Consciousness Explained* (New York: Hachette Books, 1991).
- Deppman, Jed, "A Chapter in Composition: *Chapter II.4*", in *How Joyce Wrote Finnegans Wake: A Chapter-by-Chapter Genetic Guide*, ed. Luca Crispi, Sam Slote (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007).
- Devlin, Kimberly J., *James Joyce's 'fraudstuff'. Florida James Joyce Series* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).
- Douglas, Mary, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge, 1966).
- Dukes, Hunter, "Ulysses and the Signatures of Things", *Humanities* 6.52 (2017).
- Eastman, Max, *The Literary Mind: Its Place in an Age of Science* (New York, London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931).
- Eco, Umberto, "Joyce, Semiosis, and Semiotics", in *The Languages of James Joyce: Selected Papers from the 11<sup>th</sup> International James Joyce Symposium Venice 1988*, ed. Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli, Carla Marengo, Christine Van Boheeme (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1992), 19-38.

- . *Le poetiche di Joyce* (Milano: Bompiani, 1989).
- . *The Aesthetic of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, trans. Ellen Esrock (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- Edensor, Tim, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetic, and Materiality* (Oxford: Bergs Publishers, 2005).
- Edmundson, Melissa, "'Love's Bitter Misery': Stephen Dedalus, Drowning, and the Burden of Guilt in *Ulysses*", *English Studies*, Vol.90, No.5 (October 2009), 545-56.
- Ellmann, Richard, *James Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).
- . "The Limits of Joyce's Naturalism", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.63, No.4 (October-December 1955), 567-75.
- . *'Ulysses' on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).
- Felski, Rita, "The Invention of the Everyday", in *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2000).
- Ferrer, Daniel, "Archéologie du regard dans les avants-textes de 'Circe'", in *Scribble 1: Genèse des Textes*, ed. Claude Jacquet (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 1988).
- Feschbach, Sidney, "Hunting Epiphanies Hunters", *PMLA*, Vol.82, No.2 (March 1972), 304-6.
- Fisher, Andrew, Foreword to *Parallaxing Joyce*, ed. Penelope Papparuna, Frances Ilmberger, Martin Heusser (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2017), 11-12.
- Flynn, Catherine, "A Brechtian Epic on Eccles Street: Matter, Meaning, and History in 'Ithaca'", *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.46. Issue 1&2 (Spring/Summer, 2011), 66-86.
- . *James Joyce and the Matter of Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- Fluet, Lisa, "Stupidity Tries: Objects, Things, and James Joyce's 'Clay'", *Éire-Ireland*, Vol.46. Issue 1&2 (Spring/Summer, 2011), 194-223.
- Fogarty, Ann, and O'Rourke, Fran, eds., *Voices on Joyce* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015).
- Fordham, Finn, "Circe and the Genesis of Multiple Personality", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.45, No.2/3 (Spring/Summer, 2008), 507-20.
- Frawley, Ooana, ed., *A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce's 'Dubliners'* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004).

- French, Marilyn, *The Book as World: James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1994)
- Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002).
- Gabler, Hans Walter, "The Rocky Road to *Ulysses*", *Joyce Studies No. 15*, ed. Luca Crispi and Catherine Fahy (2005).
- Gass, William H, "I've Got a Little List", *Salmagundi*, No.109-110 (Winter/Spring, 1996).
- Gibbs, Raymond W., Pelosi Silva de Macedo, Ana Cristina, "Metaphor and Embodied Cognition", in *Delta*, Vol.26 (Sao Paulo, 2010).
- Gibson, Andrew, *James Joyce* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005).
- Giddens, Anthony, Pierson, Christopher, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
- Gilbert, Stuart, *James Joyce's 'Ulysses': A Study* (New York: Vintage, 1952).
- . "Prolegomena to *Work in Progress*", in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 25-38.
- . "Joyce Thesaurus Minusculus", in *transition*, ed. Eugene Jolas, No.16-17 (June 1929), 15-24.
- Giovannangeli, Jean-Louis, *Détours and retours: Joyce et 'Ulysses'* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1998).
- Gifford, Don, *Joyce Annotated: Notes for 'Dubliners' and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).
- Gifford, Don, Seidman, Robert J., *'Ulysses' Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
- Gogarty, Oliver St. John, *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street: A Phantasy in Facts* (London: Sphere Books, 1968).
- Goldberg, S.L., *The Classical Temper* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961).
- Goldman, Arnold, *The Joyce Paradox: Form and Freedom in his Fiction* (Oxon: Routledge Library Editions, 2016).
- Gordon, John, *Joyce and Reality: The Empirical Strikes Back* (New York: Syracuse

- University Press, 2004).
- Grusin, Richard A., ed., *The Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
- Hanaway-Oakley, Cleo, *James Joyce and the Phenomenology of Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- Hart, Clive, *Structure and Motif in 'Finnegans Wake'* (London: Faber & Faber, 1962).
- Haugeland, John, *Having Thought: Essays in the Metaphysics of Mind* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- Hawkins, Gay, "Sad Chairs", in *Trash*, ed. John Knechtel (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2007).
- Hayles, Katherine, *The Cosmic Web: Scientific Field Models & Literary Strategies in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984).
- Heidegger, Martin, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).
- Hendry, Irene, "Joyce's Epiphanies", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.54, No.3 (July-September 1946), 449-67.
- Herman, David, ed., *The Emergence of Mind* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).
- Herr, Cheryl, *Joyce's Anatomy of Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 1986).
- Herring, Philip F., *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
- Horowitz, Evan Cory, "Ulysses: Mired in the Universal", *Modernism/modernity*, Vol.13, No 1 (January 2006), 869-87.
- Howes, Marjorie, "Joyce, Colonialism and Nationalism", in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 254-71.
- Inglesby, Elizabeth, "Ferrules of Engagement: The Speech of Unheard Things in *Ulysses*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol.56, No.3 (Fall, 2014), 292-325.
- Jacquet, Claude, "James Joyce: Quelques épiphanies du monde extérieur", in *Cahiers Victoriens et Edouardiens Vol.14: Studies in Early Joyce*, ed. François Laroque and Pierre Vitoux (October 1981).

- Jakobson, Roman, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
- Jaloux, Edmond, "James Joyce", *Le Temps* (Paris), January 30, 1941.
- James, Williams, *The Principles of Psychology* (London: MacMillan, 1891).
- Jauretche, Colleen, *The Sensual Philosophy and the Aesthetics of Mysticism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).
- Jolas, Eugene, "The Revolution of Language and James Joyce", in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), 39-45.
- . "Literature and the New Man", *transition*, No.19-20 (June 1930), 13-19.
- Jonas, Hans, "The Nobility of Sight: A Study in the Phenomenology of the Senses", in *The Phenomenon of Life: Towards a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1996), 135-156.
- Joyce, Stanislaus, *My Brother's Keeper* (London: Faber & Faber, 1958).
- Kahler, Eric, *The Inward Turn in Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).
- Karr Richards, Thomas, "Provisional Fixity in James Joyce's 'Proteus'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.20, No.4 (Summer, 1983), 385-98.
- Kearny, Richard, "Epiphanies in Joyce", in *Voices on Joyce*, ed. Fran O'Rourke and Anne Fogarty (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2015).
- Kemey, Tomaso, "The 'Unreal' Effect in *Dubliners*", in *Myriadminded Man: Jottings on Joyce*, ed. Rosa Bosinelli, Paola Pugliatti, Romana Zacchi (Bologna: CLUEB, 1986).
- Kenner, Hugh, *Ulysses* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987).
- . *Joyce's Voices* (Dalkey Press: American Literature Series, 2007)
- Kershner, R.B., "The Artist as Text: Dialogism and Incremental Repetition in *Portrait*", in *Critical Essays on James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Philip Brandy and J.F. Carens (New York: G.K. Hall, 1998).
- . "Time and Language in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist*", *EHL*, Vol.43 No.4 (Winter, 1976), 604-19.
- Kil, Hye Ryoung, "Soap Advertisements in *Ulysses*: The Brooke's Monkey Brand Ad and the Capital Couple", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.47, No.3 (Spring, 2010),

417-26.

- Latham, Sean, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to 'Ulysses'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- . *Joyce's Modernism*, *Joyce Studies 2004*, Issue 17 (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2005).
- Latour, Bruno, "Life Among Conceptual Characters", *New Literary History*, Vol.47 No.2-3 (Spring/Summer, 2016), 463-76.
- . "Agency at the Time of the Anthropocene", *New Literary History*, Vol.45 (2014), 1-18.
- . *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- . *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- . "A Few Steps Towards the Anthropology of the Iconoclastic Gesture", *Science in Context*, Vol.10, No.1 (1998), 63-83.
- . "Fractures/Fractures: From the Concept of Network to the Concept of Attachment", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetic*, No.36 (Autumn, 1999), 20-31.
- . *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2013).
- . "The Promises of Constructivism", in *Chasing Technoscience: Matrix for Materiality*, ed. Don Idhe and Evan Selinger (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 27-46.
- Law, John, "Notes on the Theory of Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity", *Systems Practice*, Vol.5, No.4 (1992), 379-93.
- Lawrence, Karen R., "'Aeolus': Interruption and Inventory", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.4 (Summer, 1980), 389-405.
- . *Odyssey of Style in 'Ulysses'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
- Leonard, Garry Martin, *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).
- . "A Little Trouble with These White Corpuscles: Transubstantiation and the Heresy of Masculinity in *Ulysses*", in *'Ulysses' En-Gendered Perspectives: Eighteen New Essays on the Episodes*, ed. Kimberly J. Devlin and Marilyn

- Reizbaum (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999).
- Lerm-Hayes, C.M., *Joyce in Art: Visual Art Inspired by James Joyce* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004).
- Levenson, Michael, "Stephen's Diary in Joyce's Portrait: The Shape of Life", *ELH*, Vol.52, No.4 (Winter, 1985), 1017-35.
- Lévi-Strauss, Clause, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966).
- Lewis, Wyndham, *Time and Western Man* (Michigan: Black Sparrow Press, 1927).
- Livorni, Ernesto, "'Ineluctable Modality of the Visible': Diaphane in the 'Proteus' Episode", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.36, No.2 (Winter, 1999), 127-69.
- Litz, A. Walton, "Ithaca", in *James Joyce's 'Ulysses' Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 385-407.
- Lodge, David, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
- Loss, Archie K., *Joyce's Visible Art: The Work of Joyce and the Visual Arts 1904-1922*, (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984).
- MacDuff, Sangam, *Panepiphanal World: James Joyce's Epiphanies* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020).
- Mahaj, Sarat, "Typotranslating the Green Box", in *The Duchamp Effect*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999), 61-91.
- Malafouris, Lambros, Colin Renfrews, eds., *The Cognitive Life of Things: Recasting the Boundaries of the Mind* (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archeological Research, 2010).
- Mamigonian, Marc A., Turner, John Noel, "Annotations for *Stephen Hero*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.40, No. 3 (Spring, 2003), 347-505, 507-18.
- Majumdar, Saikat, *Prose of the World: Modernism and the Banality of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).
- Mao, Douglas, *Solid Objects: Modernism and the Test of Production* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- Martella, Giuseppe, "Material and Work", in *Myriadminded Man: Jottings on Joyce*, ed. Rosa Bosinelli, Paola Pugliatti, Romana Zacchi (Bologna: CLUEB, 1986).
- Martin, William, *Joyce and the Science of Rhythm* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

- McBride, Margaret, *'Ulysses' and the Metamorphosis of Stephen Dedalus* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001).
- McCormack, W.J., Stead, Alistar, eds., *James Joyce and Modern Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).
- McMillan, Dougland, *Transition 1927-38: The History of a Literary Era* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1975).
- McNulty, Tess, "Joyce Adapting Shelley: The Social Function of Lyric Form", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol.41, No.2 (Winter, 2018), 23-41.
- Melchiori, Giorgio, *Joyce Studies in Italy 4, Joyce's Feast of Languages: Seven Essays and Ten Notes*, ed. Franca Ruggeri (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995).
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968).
- Merritt, Robert, "Faith and Betrayal: The Potato in *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.28, No.1 (Fall, 1990), 269-76.
- Milesi, Laurent, "Joyce's Anamorphic Mirror in 'The Sisters'", in *European Joyce Studies 7: New Perspectives on Dubliners*, ed. Mary Power and Uli Schneider (Amsterdam: Brill, 1997).
- Mitchell, Andrew, "Eugene Jolas and the Joycean Word in Transition", in *Joyce's Disciples Disciplined: A Re-Examination of the 'Examination of Work in Progress*, ed. Tim Conley (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2010).
- Moliterno, Frank, *The Dialectics of Sense and Spirit in Pater and Joyce* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1998).
- Moran, Patrick W., "An Obsession with Plenitude: The Aesthetics of Hoarding in 'Finnegans Wake'", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.50, No.1/2 (Fall, 2012/Winter, 2013), 433-52.
- Moshenberg, Daniel, "The Capital Couple: Speculating on *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.25, No.3 (Spring, 1988), 333-347.
- Natali, Ilaria, "A Portrait of James Joyce's *Epiphanies* as a Source Text", *Humanicus* 6 (2011).
- Nichols, Ashton, *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth-century Origin of the Modern Literary Moment* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama Press, 1987).
- Noon, William T., *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957).

- Norford, Don Parry, "'Very Like a Whale': The Problem of Knowledge in *Hamlet*", *ELH*, Vol.46, No.4 (Winter, 1979), 559-76.
- Norris, Andrew, "Joyce & and Post-Epiphany", in *Hypermedia Joyce*, ed. David Vichnar and Louis Armand (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2010).
- Norris, David, "Epiphany as Scene of Performance", in *A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce's Dubliners*, ed. Oona Frawley (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 2004).
- Norris, Margot, *The Decentered Universe of Finnegans Wake: A Structuralist Analysis* (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1974).
- O'Brien, Eugene, "Can Excrement be Art...if not, why not?", in *Eco-Joyce: The Environmental Imagination of James Joyce*, ed. Robert Brazeau and Derek Galdwin (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2014).
- O'Leary, Timothy, "The Perils of Experience: Sensation in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*", in *Literature and Sensation*, ed. Anthony Uhlmann, Helen Groth, Paul Sheehan, Stephen McLaren (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 90-100.
- Olson, Liesl, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- Osteen, Mark, *The Economy of 'Ulysses'* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995).
- Plock, Vike Martina, "'Object Lessons': Bloom and His Things", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.4, No.3-4 (Spring/Summer, 2012), 557-72.
- Pound, Ezra, *Pound/Joyce: The Letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read (London: Faber & Faber, 1968).
- Power, Arthur, *Conversations with James Joyce* (London: Millington, 1974).
- Rancière, Jacques, *Le fil perdu: Essais sur la fiction moderne* (Paris: La Fabrique Éditions, 2014).
- Rasula, Jed, "*Finnegans Wake* and the Character of the Letter", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.34, No.4 (Summer, 1997), 517-30
- Rice, Thomas Jackson, *Joyce, Chaos and Complexity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997).
- . "The Complexity of *Finnegans Wake*", *Joyce Studies Annual*, Vol.6 (Summer 1995), 79-98.
- Rimbaud, Arthur, *Collected Poems*, trans. Martin Sorrell (Oxford: Oxford World's

Classics, 2001).

Riquelme, John Paul, "Stephen Hero, Dubliners, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Styles of Realism and Fantasy", in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, 1<sup>st</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 103-30.

———. *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fiction: Oscillating Perspectives* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983).

Robbe-Grillet, Alain, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Édition de Minuit, 1963).

Rossmann, Charles, "Stephen Dedalus' Villanelle", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.12, No.3 (Spring, 1975), 281-93.

Ruggeri, Franca, Terrinoni, Enrico, eds., *Joyce Studies in Italy 15, James Joyce: The Recirculation of Realism* (Roma: Edizioni Q, 2014).

Saint-Amour, Paul K., "Symbols and Things", in *The Cambridge Companion to 'Ulysses'*, ed. Sean Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 200-16.

———. *Tense Future: Modernism, Total War, Encyclopedic Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Saldívar, Ramón, *Figural Language in the Novel: The Flowers of Speech from Cervantes to Joyce* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

Sayeau Michael, *Against the Event: The Everyday and Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (Oxford: University Press Scholarship Online, 2013).

Scholar, John, "Joyce, Heidegger, and the Material World of *Ulysses*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol 54, No.1-2 (Fall, 2016/Winter, 2017), 119-47.

Scholes, Robert, "Joyce and the Epiphany: The Key to the Labyrinth?", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol.72, No.1 (Winter, 1964), 65-77.

———. "Stephen Dedalus, Poet or Esthete?", *PMLA*, Vol.79, No.4 (September 1964), 484-89.

Scholes, Robert, Kain, Richard M., eds., *The Workshop of Daedalus: James Joyce and the Raw Materials for 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1965).

Scholes, Robert, Walzl, Florence L., "The Epiphanies of Joyce", *PMLA*, Vol.82, No.1 (March 1967), 152-54.

Schwenger, Peter, "Words and the Murder of Things", *Critical Enquiry*, Vol.28, No.1,

- Things (Autumn, 2001), 99-113.
- . *The Tears of Things: Melancholy and Physical Objects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).
- Segal, Naomi, *Banal Object: Theme and Thematics in Proust, Rilke, Hofmannsthal and Sartre* (London: University of London Press, 1981).
- Senn, Fritz, *Inductive Scrutinies*, ed. Christine O'Neill (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995).
- . *Joyce's Dislocutions: Essays on Reading as Translation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984).
- . "'Circe' as Harking Back in Propective Arrangement", in *Reading Joyce's "Circe"*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994).
- . "'Ithaca': Portrait of the Chapter as a Long List", in *European Joyce Studies 6: Joyce's 'Ithaca'*, ed. Andrew Gibson (Amsterdam: Brill, 1996).
- Serres, Michel, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R. Schehr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).
- Sharon, Kim, *Literary Epiphany in the Novel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).
- Shaviro, Steven, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
- Shelley, Percy, "A Defence of Poetry", in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, ed. Donald H Reiman and Neil Fraistat, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977).
- Sheringham, Michael, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- Shklovsky, Victor, "Art as Technique", in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essay*, trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 3-25.
- Slote, Sam, "Epiphanic Proteus", *Genetic Joyce Studies*, [geneticjoycestudies.org/GJS5/GJS5lote.htm](http://geneticjoycestudies.org/GJS5/GJS5lote.htm) (Spring, 2005).
- . "Protean Phenomenology and Genealogy", *Dublin James Joyce Journal*, No.2 (2009), 128-42.
- Sniader Lasner, Susan, "Stephen's Diary: The Hero Unveiled", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.4 (Summer, 1979), 417-23.
- Spiteri, Reymond, Review of Rachele Dini's *Consumerism, Waste, and Re-Use in*

*Twentieth-Century Fiction, Modernism/modernity*, Vol.25, No.3 (September 2018).

Spurr, David, "Stuttering Joyce", in *European Joyce Studies 20: Errears and Erroriboose*, ed. Matthew Creasy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 121-33.

Staten, Henry, "The Decomposing Form of James Joyce's *Ulysses*", *PMLA*, Vol.12, No.3 (May 1997), 380-92.

Stewart, Susan, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1952).

Stewart, Garrett, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990).

Sultzbach, Kelly Elizabeth, *Ecocriticism in the Modernist Imagination: Foster, Woolf, and Auden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Tadié, Benoit, "'A Diabolic Rictus to Black Luminosity': Exploring the Lipoti Virag-Dracula Connection", in *European Joyce Studies 22, Joycean Unions: Post-Millennial Essays from East to West*, ed. Brandon Kershner and Tekla Meksnober (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 127-36.

*The Bible: Authorized King James Version*, ed. Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)

Thelen, Esther, "Grounded in the World: Developmental Origins of the Embodied Mind", *Infancy*, Vol.1, No.1 (January 2000), 3-28.

Thill, Brian, *Waste* (London: Bloomsbury Object Lesson Series, 2015).

Thornton, Weldon, *The Antimodernism of Joyce's 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1994).

Thwaites, Tony, *Joycean Temporalities: Debts, Promises, and Countersignatures* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

Tindall, William York, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1959).

———. *The Literary Symbol* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955).

Tonetto, Maria Grazia, "Joyce's Vision of Realism: A New Source", *Genetic Joyce Studies*, Issue 12, [geneticjoycestudies.org/GJS12/GJS12\\_Tonetto.htm](http://geneticjoycestudies.org/GJS12/GJS12_Tonetto.htm), (Spring 2012).

Topia, André, "La trace et l'embrayage: de Dickens à Joyce", in *L'Empreinte des choses*, ed. André Topia and Marie-Christine Lemardeley (Paris: Presses

- Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2007).
- . “‘Sirens’: The Emblematic Vibration”, in *James Joyce: The Centennial Symposium*, ed. Morris Beja, Phillip Herring, Maurice Harmon, David Norris (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 76-82.
- . “Narrative as Potential: The Virus and the Term”, in *Joyce in Trieste*, ed. Sebastian D.G. Knowles, Geert Lernout, John McCourt (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007).
- Trackett Reynolds, Mary, *Joyce and Dante: The Shaping Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
- Tucker, Herbert F., “Epiphany and Browning: Character Made Manifest” *PMLA* (Oct. 1992), 1208-21.
- Uhlmann, Anthony, *Thinking in Literature: Joyce, Woolf, Nabokov* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).
- Valente, Joseph, “Thrilled by His Touch: Homosexual Panic and the Will to Artistry in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, No.50, Vol.1-2 (Fall 2012/Winter 2013), 223-244.
- Van Hulle, Dirk, “Authors’ Libraries and the Extended Mind”, in *Cognitive Joyce*, ed. Sylvain Belluc and Bénéjam Valérie (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018), 65-82.
- . *James Joyce’s ‘Work in Progress’: Pre-Book Publications of ‘Finnegans Wake’ Fragments* (London: Routledge, 2016).
- Viney, William, *Waste: A Philosophy of Things* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).
- . “Reading Flotsam and Jetsam: The Significance of Waste in ‘Proteus’”, in *Joyce Studies in Italy 12, Polymorphic Joyce*, ed. Franca Ruggeri and Anne Fogarty (Roma: Edizioni Q, 2012), 165-79.
- Vitoux, Pierre, “Aristotle, Berkeley, and Newman in ‘Proteus’ and *Finnegans Wake*”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.18, No.2 (Winter, 1981), 161-75.
- Walzl, Florence L., “The Liturgy of the Epiphany Season and the Epiphanies of Joyce”, *PMLA*, LXXX (September 1965), 436-50.
- Watson, Janell, *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- Weathers, Wiston, “A Portrait of Broken Words”, *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.4 (Summer, 1964), 27-40.

- Weir, David, *James Joyce and the Art of Mediation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).
- Whitehead, Alfred North, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Humanities Press, 1929).
- Whittaker, Stephen, "Joyce and Skeat", *James Joyce Quarterly*, Vol.24, No.2 (Winter, 1987), 177-92.
- . "Joyce's Umbrella: The Pattern of Created Things", *Studies in the Novel*, Vol.18, No.1 (Spring, 1986), 36-50.
- Wicke, Jennifer, "Joyce and Consumer Culture", in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 234-54.
- Williams, Keith, "Ulysses in Toontown: 'vision animated to bursting point' in Joyce's 'Circe'", in *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing after Cinema*, ed. Julian Murphet and Lydia Rainford (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 96-124.
- Williams, William Carlos, *Paterson* (New York: New Directions Books, 1995).
- Wilson, Edmund, *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931).
- Woolf, Virginia, "Modern Fiction", in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf Vol.4: 1925 to 1928*, ed. Andrew McNeille (London: The Hogarth Press, 1984), 157-64.
- Yee, Cordell D.K., *The Word According to James Joyce. Reconstructing Representation* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1997).
- Young, Robert, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).
- Žižek, Slavoj, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge MA: MIT University Press, 2009).