"…like an egg without salt": On Joyce's Scandal Works

Dipanjan Maitra

A Curious History:

The curious, troubled history of the publication of Joyce's works in progress is summarized in that woeful letter Joyce wrote to his friend Carlo Linati on 19 December 1919:

> The story of my books is very strange. For the publication of Dubliners I had to struggle for ten years. The whole first edition of 1000 copies was burned at Dublin by fraud; some say it was the doing of priests, some of the enemies, others of the then Viceroy or his consort, Countess Aberdeen. Altogether it is a mystery. … As for the *Portrait*, it was refused by nearly all the publishers in London…. My new book *Ulysses* was to appear in the *Egoist* of London. The same old story. From the very beginning the printers refused again. It appeared in fragments in the New York *Little Review*. Several times it was taken out of circulation through the post, by the action of the American Government. Now legal action is being taken against it. (132-133)

Joyce was not of course exaggerating. Margot Gayle Backus has called Joyce's early journalism, his early college publications, such as "Ibsen's New Drama" (1900) or "The Day of the Rabblement" (1901) his early "scandal work" which were calculated to create furor and erupt scandals. Joyce's early book reviews, which saw him not merely critiquing but severely lambasting the proponents of Celtic Twilight lost him a source of income. The early *Dubliners* (1914) stories "Eveline," "After the Race" and "The Sisters" similarly ensured Joyce would never write for the *Irish Homestead* again (87-88). As the noted critic Gerald Gould reviewing *Dubliners* for the *New Statesman* on 29 June 1914 wrote:

> To do him justice, we do not think it is a pose with him: he simply includes the "unmentionable" in his persistent regard. (62-63)

For Joyce, the "unmentionables" were details which as he pointed out to his publisher Grant Richards in a letter:

> …may now seem to you [Grant Richards] unimportant but if I took them away *Dubliners* would seem to me like an egg without salt. (135)

Interestingly, Joyce would point out some of these salty details himself. In a letter to Richards dated 13 May 1906 Joyce meticulously notes the occurrence of the word "bloody" (a word Grant Richards had objected to) in *Dubliners*:

> You complain of *Two Gallants*, of a passage in *Counterparts* and of the word 'bloody' in *Grace*. Are these the only things that prevent you from publishing the book? To begin at the end: the word 'bloody' occurs in that story twice in the following passage. (136)

Joyce, would perhaps also agree with Gould and state that it was not a "pose" but clearly a characteristic style, a strategy, which could not be isolated from the writing itself:

> I have come to the conclusion that I cannot write without offending people. The printer denounces *Two Gallants* and *Counterparts*. A Dubliner would denounce *Ivy Day in the Committee-Room*. The more subtle inquisitor will denounce *An Encounter*, the enormity of which the printer cannot see because he is, as I said, a plain blunt man. (134)

It is therefore always possible to take Gould's point seriously. For clearly, the word "unmentionable," also translates as that which should not, cannot be mentioned, as that which involves a *scandal*. According to the Middle Liddell Greek lexicon, the word 'scandal', derived

from the Greek σκάνδαλον, could denote a "trap or snare laid for an enemy." In the New Testament it was used metaphorically to mean "a stumbling-block, offence, scandal." The word occurs in Romans 9: 33 for instance as:

> Ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Σιὼν λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ καταισχυνθήσεται. (Nestle GNT 1904)

> [Behold I put in Zion a stumbling (from προσκόμμα/ to stumble) stone and a rock of offence/stumbling (from the neuter accusative singular σκανδάλον) and he who believes in him will not be put to shame.]

It is my contention that the Joycean "scandal work" (as Margot Backus has recently labelled Joyce's work till *Finnegans Wake*) perpetuates its "deadly work" precisely by implanting such snares or stumbling blocks within the text, thereby trapping, implicating the reader. In these letters to Richards, by drawing Richards closer to his texts, by asking him to "begin at the end" Joyce was similarly asking him to read backwards, and thus grasp his compositional methods.

More often than not, the "scandal work" alludes to actual scandals of the day. Margot Backus has situated the Joycean text amidst the scandals publicized in newspapers of the time. She thus argues that many of the *Dubliners* stories deal directly or at least *exploit* forbidden pleasures that scandals generate.[1] She seems to imply that by "including" scandalous fragments, historical events in his narrative, Joyce invited censorship quite literally from the start (108-111). Backus goes on to suggest that Joyce learnt to incorporate "scandal work" more effectively. This

marks a shift from the early elitist Joyce who would sneer at the rabblement and the popular to the Joyce of "Nausicaa" who would scrounge popular ladies' magazines to come up with the "namby-pamby jammy marmalalady drawersy" style of Gerty and Cissy. At this stage Joyce would not shy away from New Journalism but produce counterhegemonic discourse (*Selected Letters* 246). However, this constant change in style from *Ulysses* (with its so-called eighteen different styles) to *Finnegans Wake* does not, I contend, necessarily show any radical shift in Joyce's scandal-mongering tendencies as the factors determining the censorship of *Ulysses* and the comparatively unhindered circulation of the *Wake* still manifest.

"But you overdo the matter": Sewage and the Modern "Poetic Method"

The censorship of *Ulysses* began with Ezra Pound. As the "Foreign Editor" of *The Little Review*, Pound raised objections to certain passages in "Calypso." Pound had not only been championing Joyce's case in Europe, helping him publish *A Portrait* in *The Egoist* and also ironically, Joyce's letter, titled "A Curious History" (30 November 1913) narrating Joyce's publication woes with Grant Richards and Messrs. Maunsel for *Dubliners*. Pound's letter to Joyce, dated 29 March, 1918 feared suppression. He felt the first episode, "Telemachus" was worth all the trouble. But not "Calypso":

> Dear Joyce: As I wrote this a.m. or yesterday, we have got your first installment into print. 30 copies have reached me here. I suppose we'll be suppressed. The Egoist printers wont set up the stuff at all. I dont mind suppression for the first chapter. Its worth it.
>
> Section 4. has excellent things in it; but you overdo the matter. Leave the stool to Geo. Robey.
>
> He has been doing "down where the asparagus grows, for some time.

> I think certain things simply bad writing, in this section. Bad because you waste the violence. You use a stronger word than you need, and this is bad art, just as any needless superlative is bad art.
>
> The contrast between Blooms [insert: interior] poetry and his outward surroundings is excellent, but it will come up without such detailed treatment of the dropping feces.
>
> Quinn is already in a rage over my reference to the late Doctor C. in the March number. Quinn, by the way, has been in hospital for a major operation, and we can't, have him worried unnecessarily.'
>
> Perhaps an unexpurgated [crossout: work] text [longhand: of you] can be printed in a greek or bulgarian translation later.
>
> I'm not even sure "urine" is necessary in the opening page. The idea could be conveyed just as definitely.
>
> In the thing as it stands you will lose effectiveness. The excrements will prevent people from noticing the quality of things contrasted.
>
> At any rate the thing is risk enough without the full details of the morning deposition. (131)

Pound allowed the word "urine" to stand, replaced "the grey sunken [cunt] of the world" with "belly," and deleted substantial lines from the jakes passage. Vanderham thus notes that Pound objected to the jakes passage not only because he found the words obscene on their own, but also because Pound realized that Joyce was blurring the difference between defecation and eroticism ("Ezra Pound's Censorship of 'Ulysses'" 588-590). Bloom seemed to *enjoy* the act of defecation:

> The crucial feature of the jakes passage in this regard is that Bloom enjoys his defecation in a mildly erotic manner. Thus, upon feeling "a gentle loosening [of his bowels]," Bloom thinks immediately of "[(a) paper]" because "(h)e liked to read at stool.]" Having chosen a suitable paper, "an old number of Titbits," Bloom proceeds into the garden. After stopping to contemplate the virtues of dung as a fertilizer capable of redeeming barren soil, he enters the jakes, sits on the "[cuckstool]," lays the paper on his "[bared knees]" selects for his reading pleasure a story suggestively entitled *"Matcham's Masterstroke"* – and proceeds to enjoy himself. (588)

This "cloacal obsession" which interlinks defecation and enjoyment is of course not a Joycean discovery. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argues (citing Freud) that the anal drive also involves an erogenous zone. Lacan traces the outlines of a rim-like structure, likening it to the lips (Homeric "enclosure of the teeth") the "source and departure of a certain drive" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 169). The fundamental structure of the rim, which for Lacan is a structure that emerges from the Freudian metaphors for the outlets of the drive, is thus marked by "a course that returns" and which requires an object to maintain its consistency; with the anal drive one is always able to provide *something*, one object for another—– the feces when one lacks the phallus (104). The anal drive thus falls within the domain of the metaphor, providing substitutes when one is caught short. Lacan goes on to relate it to soiling, purification and also, catharsis (196). If we went back to Joyce's passage, as Vanderham shows us, Joyce seems to conjugate the enjoyment associated with the act of

defecating with "reading pleasure" as both are described concurrently, like malleable substitutes in a relation of enjoyment[2]:

> Quietly he read, restraining himself, the first column and, yielding but resisting, began the second. Midway, his last resistance yielding, he allowed his bowels to ease themselves quietly as he read, reading still patiently that slight constipation of yesterday quite gone. Hope it's not too big bring on piles again. No, just right. So. Ah! Costive. One tabloid of cascara sagrada. Life might be so. It did not move or touch him but it was something quick and neat. Print anything now. Silly season. He read on, seated calm above his own rising smell. Neat certainly. *Matcham often thinks of the masterstroke by which he won the laughing witch who now*. Begins and ends morally. *Hand in hand*. Smart. He glanced back through what he had read and, while feeling his water flow quietly, he envied kindly Mr Beaufoy who had written it and received payment of three pounds, thirteen and six. (56)

The scandal of the passage resides in its radical directness, in its ability to forge sudden circuits of desire. It addresses and ropes in the reader reading this passage as well, who is thus forced to associate his act of reading with the act of defecation. The scandal work of the passage operates via these unexpected traps, these webs of association ensnaring the unsuspecting reader within. The reader in a way confronts himself, caught in the act of witnessing the commonest of everyday acts but one that he is careful to conceal, and one that functions as an "unmentionable" in society. While the book is often careful to describe waste disposal systems, Dublin's water works (in "Ithaca" for instance) serve as a receptacle of what culture is careful to hide: its own refuse.

The letters sent to the editors of *The Little Review* as Kevin Birmingham shows us, portray this sentiment vividly. Birmingham quotes one woman from Chicago who wrote to *The Little Review* angrily:

> Damnable, hellish filth from the gutter of the human mind born and bred in contamination. There are no words I know to describe, even vaguely, how disgusted I am; not with the mire of his effusion but with all those whose minds are so putrid that they dare allow such muck and sewage of the human mind to besmirch the world by repeating it— and in print, through which medium it may reach young minds. (189)

The threat that *Ulysses* seemed to posit, and the jakes passage bears testimony to it, is perhaps its threat to culture or civilization itself. As Lacan would assert, it is this very segregation of detritus that helps establish civilization and the city. In fact, it is a problem peculiar to man. In "Leçon sur Lituraterre" Lacan notes for example that the very premise of civilization is the 'sewer'/'égout' ("Leçon sur Lituraterre" 114).[3] In another talk, given in Bordeaux entitled "My teaching, Its Nature and Its ends", Lacan would place the sewer at the very inception of civilization and the city. For Lacan, a perennial question for man is what to do with his excreta:

> But when it comes to the equation *great civilization =pipes and sewers,* there are no exceptions. There were sewers in Babylon, and Rome was all sewers. That's how the City began, with the *Cloaca maxima*. It was destined to rule the world. So we should be proud of it. The reason why we are not is that, if we gave this phenomenon what we

> might call its fundamental import, we would find the prodigious analogy that exists between sewage and culture. ("My Teaching" 66)

But what is also threatening about waste or the sewer is its propensity, as Joyce's first reviewers would agree, to bring into view, expose what ought not to be mentioned or viewed at all—— what it was supposed to *contain* all the time. As Lacan points out, in another lecture given at the M.I.T. that it is only waste, one's refuse, that proves that one has an interior, and there is nothing less "sure," certain, than this fact for we always try to repress it. And waste comes from interior:

> There is nothing less sure than our having an interior. Waste (*les déchets*) perhaps comes from the interior, but the characteristic of man is that he doesn't know what to do with his waste.
>
> Civilization is waste, *cloaca maxima*.
>
> Waste is the only thing that testifies to our having an interior. ("Conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on 2 December 1975")

Joyce was not the only author recycling garbage, the detritus of culture at this time. What Ellmann calls Joyce's "transubstantiation" of the "bread of everyday life" into "something that has a permanent artistic life of its own" could be aligned with a "modern" poetic method (163). Indeed, as Walter Benjamin noted in his reading of Baudelaire, this is one of the fundamental tenets of the "theory of the modern" and a "poetic method." For Benjamin, the ragpicker of nineteenth century Paris and Baudelaire the poet of modernity become one:

> One year before Baudelaire wrote "Le Vin des chiffonniers," he published a prose description of the figure: "Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day's refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously; he collects, like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or: gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry." This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practiced it. Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse, and both go about their solitary business while other citizens are sleeping; they even move in the same way (103).

The poet of modernity is thus inextricably, ineluctably, caught up within the snares of the industrial network, collecting, supplying and redistributing. It is a perfect replica of the US postal system. As Birmingham points out, in the United States the suppression of a publication meant largely the disruption of its circulation. In 1844, the Post Office which already had "legal monopoly" over postage and its distribution, began to exercise its power with its said purpose as "elevating our people in the scale of civilization and bringing them together in patriotic affection" (109). Postage was cheap and newspapers and periodicals fell under "second class mail" so that they could be delivered anywhere within the country at two cents per pound in 1879 and at one cents per pound till 1918 when *The Little Review* began serializing *Ulysses*. It was this efficient, intricate network, a circuit of distribution which ensured that little magazines, avant-garde periodicals could be read and appreciated almost anywhere in the country which also ensured their survival. But this smooth flow of print across the states also meant that the Post

Office had absolute control over its dynamics. For instance, the cost for "first class" mail was eight to fifteen times higher which small periodicals like *The Little Review* could never afford (110). But the Post Office, if it so desired, could "promote" a magazine's "second class" status to a first class one, thereby effectively bankrupting it. No less importantly perhaps, the monopoly of the Post Office, after World War I came to signify absolute power to caste surveillance over one's mailbox. It did not even matter if the content of a mail actually *led* to agitations or unrest, any potentially dangerous (pornographic or anarchistic) document could be stopped, banned from circulating (111).

The U.S. Government thus banned the January 1919 issue of *The Little Review*. The Post Office notified Margaret Anderson that the May 1919 issue containing Episode IX was being reviewed to see if it was obscene, and subsequently banned it too. Going by Birmingham's accounts, by December 1922 the U.S. authorities were seizing copies of *Ulysses*, now in its second edition in Paris, everywhere in the United States. New York customs officials sent a copy to the solicitor of the Post Office to decide on the fate of the seized copies:

> When the solicitor's judgement was handed down, officials in Boston and at the General Post Office Building gathered up nearly five hundred copies of *Ulysses* they had been collecting through the fall, wheeled them down the basement's dim corridors and unloaded them in the furnace room. The piles of books sat before the furnace's back doors and a row of lower chambers, narrow like catacombs. The men opened the round cast-iron hatches and began tossing James Joyce's *Ulysses* into the chambers. Paper burns brighter than coal. Seven years of writing, months of revisions and typesetting,

> weeks of printing and hours of packaging and shipping were incinerated in seconds. (249)

The furnace room thus answers Lacan's question that is integral to man: what to do with one's waste? Like the furnace room which was a part of the Post Office, the circulation, popularity of *Ulysses* owed a great deal to the circulation of print afforded by the Post Office system. The officials in Boston were merely trying to annihilate what they had themselves helped circulate and generate: extremes meet, the Penman and the Postman complement each other.

Recirculation:

If the decision to ban or censor *Ulysses* marks culture's unease with its own refuse, then the decision to put it in circulation again is no less problematic. Historically, Judge Woolsey's "landmark" verdict, on 6 December 1933, declared:

> In many places it seems to me to be disgusting, but although it contains, as I have mentioned above, many words usually considered dirty, I have not found anything that I consider to be dirt for dirt's sake. Each word of the book contributes like a bit of mosaic to the detail of the picture which Joyce is seeking to construct for his readers…when such a great artist in words, as Joyce undoubtedly is, seeks to draw a true picture of the lower middle class in a European city, ought it to be impossible for the American public legally to see that picture?... *Ulysses*, may, therefore, be admitted into the United States. (*The United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses"* www.leagle.com)

But one must never forget that Woolsey's decision which effectively lifted the ban and ensured the publication and distribution of *Ulysses* in the United States was also a *reading* of *Ulysses* as it sought to *interpret* its virtues for the general reader. As Vanderham points out, Woolsey made use of about eleven secondary texts ("satellite" books) and virtually exculpated the book from all charges of obscenity (*James Joyce and Censorship* 116):

> But in "Ulysses," in spite of its unusual frankness, I do not detect anywhere the leer of the sensualist. I hold, therefore, that it is not pornographic. (*The United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses"* www.leagle.com)

Nor was it "aphrodisiac":

> But my considered opinion, after long reflection, is that, whilst in many places the effect of "Ulysses" on the reader undoubtedly is somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac (*The United States v. One Book Called "Ulysses"*)

However, as scholars began unearthing Joyce's sources for *Ulysses* and beyond, the veracity of Woolsey's statements came under scrutiny. For as Vanderham reasons, citing Richard Brown's work on the subject, Joyce's fascination with the pornographic is almost impossible to ignore—just as references to erotic literature in *Ulysses* are also not hard to find. Molly's pun on French author Paul de Kock's name and that there is nothing "smutty" in *Ruby– The Pride of the Ring* (*Ulysses* 53), or Joyce's references to Sacher-Masoch, Maria Monk's *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, Mirabeau's *Le Rideau Levé*, go only to show that Joyce cultivated a lively interest in the erotic, the popular and what was commonly considered "vulgar" (*James Joyce and Censorship* 117). There is thus little doubt that Joyce was exploiting the erotic literature he could find around him. Hence the very "admission" (Woolsey's word) of *Ulysses* into the United States could only

be possible by ignoring or repressing the pleasure and thrill of the text that Joyce had labored to create by once again including the unmentionably scandalous. As Robert Spoo has shown, Joyce also simultaneously benefitted from Samuel Roth's "piracy" (or the loopholes of a protectionist copyright policy) by having his work advertised alongside semi-erotic novels.[4] Like Grant Richards, Woolsey's reading ignored Joyce's compositional methods by not reading Joyce's *avant-textes*.

Confessing in a Foreign Tongue:

Joyce's inclusions of unmentionables were confessions as well. He was not only including references to popular "scandalous" material such as William T. Stead's stunning New Journalism to give first-hand reports of child prostitution in *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* but as Hugh Kenner noted years ago, he was also injecting embarrassing "personal" scandals in his narratives. Kenner showed that the story "Matcham's Masterstroke" is also suspiciously similar to a short story Joyce submitted as a fifteen-year old to *Tit-Bits* and which was rejected in favor of a short story by none other than a certain Philip Beaufoy (11). Margot Backus thus finds Joyce's addition of such shameful personal details in disguise a further strategy to confess in a *foreign tongue* (165-180). If Joyce is paying an offhand tribute to Beaufoy by immortalizing him "admitting" Beaufoy's name into his text, then he is also in a sense admitting his own albeit juvenile failures. The act of making Ireland see what she refuses to see is incomplete without avowing one's own "refusals". The fact that the Joycean text forces its readers to its older, unpublished avatars, is not without consequences.

For one thing, it also helps us ask why *Finnegans Wake* (1939) was never banned despite the elaborate sexual "geometry" of the book (II.2). For critics such as Vanderham, the reason is

too obvious— an inscrutable, obscure language (*James Joyce and Censorship* 82). In his letter to Joyce already cited in this paper, Pound was also suggesting that an unexpurgated version of *Ulysses* could only be published in a Greek or Bulgarian translation. And Pound was not entirely unjustified. For, while the *Ulysses* episodes were being banned by the English-speaking world, Sylvia Beach was offering to publish the entire book in France, its typeset by a Frenchman—Darantiere.

Interestingly, this is also the time when *Ulysses* had entered, as Michael Groden showed, the last of its three stages marking a shift from characters to formal experimentations (51). Beach's offer and American censorship gave Joyce enough time to change, radically transform, his style and perform long and complicated verbal jugglery often incomprehensible to the general reader. Thus *Finnegans Wake*, written entirely under the deeply sympathetic patronage of Harriet Shaw Weaver, permitted Joyce to radicalize this "method." While Joyce had been resolute enough in populating his texts with details his countrymen refused to see, an inspection of his manuscripts shows that at times his confessions never made to the published text. Joyce seems to have advocated some form of self-censorship too in some cases. While the detail about his rejected short story is cunningly disguised, in the following instance his (and Nora's) private life remains buried in what genetic scholars call an *avant-texte*, and only an inquiry into the compositional stages of the *Wake* could have revealed it.

Qui jouit de la joie de Finnegans Wake? The Private *Jouissance* of *Finnegans Wake*

In what is known as NLI MS 41.818, pre-publication drafts of the *Wake* retrieved by the National Library of Ireland in 2006, we encounter a vignette which would later be transformed into the Tristan and Iseult episodes in the book (Pre- "Work in Progress": *Finnegans Wake* drafts NLI

MS 41.818). They were most probably dictated by Joyce, because of his bad eyesight, in April 1923, to Nora. Daniel Ferrer transcribes this passage as:

> My precious since we last parted it seems to me that I have been continually in your company, even when I close my eyes at night, I am, I am continually seeing you hearing you, meeting you in different places so that I am beginning to wonder whether my soul does not take leave of my body I sleep and go to seek you and what is more find you, or perchance this is only a phantasy. Tell me Daniel, my precious darling. (100)

Ferrer reminds us that this is an almost verbatim reproduction of a letter that Nora addressed to Joyce on 16 August 1904. But the perversity of the act rests in the fact that Joyce made Nora write the same letter which he was convinced she had copied from a correspondence manual, nineteen years ago (48). But none of this intimate history made into the *Wake*, as this passage remained "unutilized" in the published text. Nora and Jim's confessions remained private till 2006.

Thus, perhaps it is not without reason that Fritz Senn noted in an interview that he did not find *Finnegans Wake* erotic:

> There is a lot of sexual content, for some readers there seems to be nothing else. One unfortunate result of finding something sexual in every passage is that thereby SEX is removed from the book. What I do miss, however, is anything erotic […] In my response none of the abundant parts with sexual content, or overtones (or vibrations, etc.), are erotic as something pleasant or stimulating, or cheerful. Other readers I am sure feel different (Tatsuo Hamada *Fritz Senn and "Finnegans Wake"*)

But is eroticism or its enjoyment entirely lost in the *Wake*? Or did Joyce find other ways to inject both into his last book? If the erotic is constantly obscured in the *Wake*, how does one enjoy it? Who *enjoys* the *Wake? Qui jouit de la joie de Finnegans Wake,* to echo Rabaté? (157-180) One answer, as Rabaté himself provides, is one who can read backwards, across the text's pre-texts. Joyce's manuscript genetics certainly calls for a "genetic" reader (like Ferrer) who would have at his disposal the universe of Joyce's *avant-textes* to appreciate the full perversity of their content.[5]

On the other hand, for Lacan, who like Joyce, heard "joy" in both Joyce and "freude" the answer could be Joyce himself. In fact, Lacan argues that as readers it is only Joyce's *jouissance* that one is able to grasp ("attraper") in *Finnegans Wake* where Lacan would locate the symptom:

> […] cette jouasse, cette jouissance est la seule chose que de son texte nous puissions attraper. Là est le symptôme.("Joyce le Symptôme" 167)
>
> […this joyous, this jouissance is the only thing that we may catch (in) his text. That is the symptom.]

Lacan says that if one read *Finnegans Wake*, one would notice that something *plays* ("joue") not on every line, but on every word— on the pun:

> Lisez *Finnegans Wake*, vous vous apercevrez que c'est quelque chose qui joue, non pas à chaque ligne, mais à chaque mot, sur le pun, un pun très, très particulier. (165)
>
> [Read *Finnegans Wake,* you may perceive something which plays, not in every line, but in every word, on the pun, a pun, very, very particular.]

Lacan thus recommends that we read the *Wake* again. For, even if we do not understand anything we would still see that the book *reads itself*. It is as if the *Wake* is caught up in its own

enjoyment, and the reader can always sense someone else's *jouissance* and not his own while reading it:

> Lisez des pages de Finnegans Wake, sans chercher à comprendre. Ça se lit. Si ça se lit, comme me le faisait remarquer quelqu'un de mon voisinage, c'est parce qu'on sent présente la jouissance de celui qui a écrit ça. (165)
>
> [Read some pages of *Finnegans Wake*, without looking to understand. It reads itself. If it reads itself, as someone from my circle remarked to me, it is because one senses the jouissance of someone who wrote it, present.]

And this "someone" ("quelqu'un"), according to Lacan, is the one who wrote it, i.e. Joyce himself. We, as readers, are cut off from this *jouissance*. This "cutting off" is perhaps related to Lacan's contention in the same lecture that Joyce is unsubscribed from/to his unconscious — "désabonnéà/de l'inconscient" (164, 166). For Lacan, the question simply becomes, why did Joyce publish *Finnegans Wake* and brought it into the public domain in the first place? Jacques-Alain Miller, commenting on this passage remarks:

> It had to do with a pure *jouissance*, without there being any idea of posterity for him. With Joyce, *jouissance* is so patent in the writing itself that nobody would dream that he was doing it for honour, for money, for women, or simply for others. (26)

Joyce's re-circulatory project now seems complete, as it offers an insight into what the *scandalous* itself could consist of. If the modern poet can only subsist by recycling polluted cultural detritus, then Joycean art consists in accommodating the rejected (including one's own

literary pieces) within it. These confessions could be embarrassing details about personal failures or could even be one's mildly erotic, sentimental first love letter. On either occasion, the detail remains altered, in often unidentifiable "transmogrifications" awaiting the genetic reader to retrace it or as Lacan would have it, only *perceive* Joyce's *jouissance*. It is not as if *Finnegans Wake* is without eroticism, but its *jouissance* is private as it is in an important sense unreadable. If the litter of the world finds their way in the *Wake* (indeed Book I.5 could be read as a river of prose with Anna Liffey carrying the litter of the world) then the letters of the *Wake*, including the letter dug out from the rubbish heap by the hen are made of litter too. But the *Wake*'s notorious unreadability points towards a final passage in its trajectory. The letters of the *Wake* become litter again, as unreadable, obscure waste that is no longer "useful". Shaun parodies Joyce's critics in calling Shem's works, including *Ulysses* unreadable and useless:

> It would have diverted, if ever seen, the shuddersome spectacle of this semidemented zany amid the inspissated grime of his glaucous den making believe to read his usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles […] (179)

Lacan calls this movement from the letter to litter a "slip," a lapsus, a fall. For Lacan Joyce slides, slips from letter to litter, where the letter becomes trash once again: glisse de *a letter* à *a litter*, d'une lettre, je traduis, à une ordure (113). We could only say in conclusion that in either case, this slip, this fall into the rubbish heap ('ordure') of *avant-textes* is never without a scandal. For, if to fall into the litter is to be "usylessly unreadable" then to fall into unreadability is to trip one's feet by the stumbling blocks (σκανδάλον) the text presents as Joyce's scandal work.

Notes:

[1]While "The Sisters" is haunted by Father Flynn's "sin" or the threats of homoeroticism, "An Encounter" dramatizes the traumatic encounter with the *queer old josser*. Eveline, similarly at the threshold of an elopement, is courting a scandal. While Ignatius Gallaher seduces Little Chandler with his scandalous reports from the city, Mrs. Moony smells a scandal early, and she prepares to meet Bob Doran to settle it. And certainly, Parnell's fall, which effectively destroyed John Joyce's already dwindling fortunes and which recurs across Joyce's oeuvre from *Dubliners* ("Ivy Day"), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), *Ulysses* (1922) and to HCE's "felix culpa" in Phoenix Park in the *Wake*, was one of the most written about sex scandals of the late nineteenth century.

[2]It might be possible to derive a concurrent "relation of jouissance" from Lacan's formulation of a "jouis-sens"/ "enjoy-meant" in *Television* (1974), a pun which for Lacan constitutes the "law of the signifier" (10). Roberto Harari locates jouis-sens at the edge of psychotherapeutic practices, as the very opposite of symbolization which brings about a "calming effect" by naming things, or "tempering" anxiety, stagnating signification (112). By contrast, jouis-sens reinvigorates signification, stimulating even provoking an "analytic task":

> In this manner, analysis comes to be recycled due to the condition of jouissance, and does not remain stuck fast to meanings [senses]. (113)

[3]For an exhaustive analysis of Lacan's "Lituraterre" see Dr. Santanu Biswas's "A Literary Introduction to 'Lituraterre.'" *The Literary Lacan: From Literature to Lituraterre and Beyond*. Ed. Santanu Biswas. London and Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2012. 173-195.

[4]As Spoo maintains, Roth's magazine was never firebrand experimental, rather:

> Roth offered fragments of modernism fixed in an amber of transatlantic decadence, mild eroticism, and international realism. Poems by John M. Synge, Carl Sandburg, Emanuel Carnevali, Lawrence, and Pound were offered together with *Yellow Book* verse by Richard Le Gallienne and racy translations of Arabic poems by E. Powys Mathers. Fiction and prose experiments by Joyce, Lawrence, Eliot, and Djuna Barnes appeared alongside work by Frank Harris, Catulle Mendes, Richard Middleton, and Caradoc Evans. A translation of Octave Mirbeau's *A Chambermaid's Diary*— a picaresque account of fetishism, sexual manipulation, and ruined innocence— appeared in the same issues as *Ulysses*; Roth advertised them together as "great suppressed novels." (179)

[5]Rabaté's answer seems significant here. As he argued in *James Joyce and the Politics of Egoism* (2001), the ideal reader of the *Wake* could well be a "generic one," a "genreader" who would not only be situating his/her reading of *Finnegans Wake* in the context of Joyce's pre-publication drafts but would also be willing to take the *Wake*'s undecidabilities in his/her stride:

> Facing an expanding archive, the "genreader" progresses through an excess of intentions and meanings that never adequately match each other. Therefore the "genreader" will be *genetic* in that (s)he (like the she-hen viewing literature as a mound of rubbish from which meaning will be finally extracted) is always becoming, and transforming the text whose intentions are to be ascribed to a whole unstable archive, and *generic* because always poised in some sort of textual and sexual undecidability. (207)

Unless otherwise indicated, translations of Greek/French excerpts are mine.

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Dipanjan Maitra

State University of New York, Buffalo

dmaitra@buffalo.edu