Jacques Lacan

The Sinthome

The Seminar of Jacques Lacan
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polity

Contents

Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* is something I learnt from Atherton and which I found quite staggering. The form of feeble-mindedness that all initiation entails is what hits me at first, and perhaps leads me to underestimate it.

It has to be said that shortly after the time when, thank heavens, I met Joyce, I was to come across a certain René Guénon, who was worth no more than the worst of initiation. *Hi han a pas*, to be written like the hee-haw of the jackass to which Joyce alludes as the central point of the four terms North, South, East and West, as the intersection of the cross – borne by a jackass, goodness knows Joyce makes enough of this in *Finnegans Wake*.[8]

Even so, how can *Finnegans*, this dream, be said to be finished, since already its last word cannot help but join back up with the first, the *the* by which it ends soliciting the *riverrun* by which it starts, which indicates circularity? To spell it right out, how did Joyce manage to miss, right here, what I am at present introducing by way of the knot?

In so doing, I am introducing something new which accounts not only for the limitation of the symptom but also for what means that it is by tying itself to the body, i.e. the imaginary, and by thus tying itself to the real, and to the unconscious as a third term, that the symptom takes on its limits. It is because it meets its limits that one can speak in terms of the knot.

The knot is certainly something that can be scrunched up, that can be rolled up into a ball of twine, but which, once unravelled, maintains its knot shape and, by the same token, its ex-sistence.

This is what I am going to allow myself to introduce into my development for the coming year by leaning, among others, on Joyce.

PRESENTATION AT LACAN'S SEMINAR

Jacques Aubert

Delivered on 20 January 1976

Back in June, Dr Lacan announced that Joyce was going to be on his path. The fact that I am here today on no account means that I find myself on this royal road. Let's say straightaway that I'm more on the hard shoulder, and you know in general why the hard shoulders are signposted. So, you are going to be hearing comments that are not so much *à la cantonade* as *à la cantonnier*, a road-mender's remarks!

I must thank Jacques Lacan for inviting me to produce a piece of work that would be *bâclé*, hurried, and not *bouclé*, complete, that wouldn't be well fashioned, and wouldn't be all that well articulated as far as the knots are concerned. On the other hand, I would like to point out that what I'm about to say starts off from my sense of what is snaking through Joyce's text, through some of Joyce's texts at certain points, something that Joyce wove into them. This awareness of something that snakes in and out has led me not to insist upon what might otherwise produce a definitive piece of work.

To locate the point from which I began, quite by chance, I must specify that it was a short piece from 'Circe' – I'm saying this in an altogether didactic way – a short piece of exchange from this episode of *Ulysses* that was subsequently called 'Circe', and which is known as the episode of hallucination, whose purported *art* is 'magic', and whose purported *technic* is 'hallucination' (according to the table that Joyce drew up for some of his friends).

Elements from earlier chapters crop up again, the status of which it is still too early to assign. They may be characters, true or fictive, objects or signifiers. But what is also interesting is the way they crop up, the way that this clearly has to do with speech, with a word. One realizes this from the very start because I daresay that the first two characters are THE CALLS and THE ANSWERS

that mark out a dimension that is developed in the chapter's form through an ostensibly dramatic style of writing. In short, this is a dimension of speech, and a kind of setting up of sites from which *it speaks*.

The important thing is that *it speaks*, and this runs all over the place. Moreover, anything and everything can be impersonated, to use a term that we shall be meeting in a little while; everything can personate in this text; everything can be the occasion of effects of the voice through a mask.

It is one of these functions, the detail of one of these functions, a functioning of one of these functions, that I think I have distinguished at the start of the chapter in an exchange between Bloom and the one who is supposed to be his father, Rudolph, who has been dead for eighteen years. I'll read you the brief exchange in question. It can be found on p. 416.[1]

Rudolph has appeared, initially, as an elder of Zion. According to the stage direction he has the face of an elder in Zion. After making a few reproaches to his son, he says this:

> What you making down this place? Have you no soul? [Of Hungarian extraction, he is not supposed to be fully fluent in English.] (*With feeble vulture talons he feels the silent face of Bloom.*) Are you not my son Leopold, the grandson of Leopold? Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers Abraham and Jacob?

At first sight, what transpires here for the reader of *Ulysses* is a phenomenon described on several occasions by Bloom himself with the expression 'retrospective arrangement', an expression that crops up fairly often throughout the text. The reader cannot fail to be sensitive to this retrospective arrangement, nor to the fact that this is an arrangement formed from a favourite quotation of his father's, a literary text that, to all appearances, had certain effects on him. This text is on p. 73:

> Nathan's voice! His son's voice! I hear the voice of Nathan who left his father to die of grief and misery in my arms, who left the house of his father and left the God of his father.

[1] In this presentation the reference texts are the 1922 Shakespeare & Co. edition of *Ulysses* [reprinted with the same pagination by Oxford World's Classics]; and the 1968 Viking edition of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with criticism and notes by C. G. Anderson.

One can see that what repeats is slightly different. But before I isolate the differences, I would like to point out the effects that this different return has on Bloom.

What does he reply in the 'Circe' episode? The following:

> Bloom (*With precaution.*) I suppose so, father. Mosenthal. All that's left of him.

Here, there appears one of the functions of Bloom, who is described at some length in *Ulysses* as the cautious one. Caution is one of the aspects of Ulysses himself (though Ulysses is not only that). Bloom is often described in a language that is somewhat Masonic in inspiration: 'the prudent member'. This prudent member says, 'I suppose so' (and not *je crois que oui* as the first French translation rendered it), rather it is *I sub-pose so*, or *I suppose something in reply to the question, 'Are you not my son?'*. It's *I sub-pose something of the sort*, which in principle refers back to what his father has said, but which all of a sudden takes another turn when we follow the text because we have this stop, marked by what in the US they call a 'period', something that forms a period, a dot that is not a suspension point but a point of suspense. From this point there emerges 'Mosenthal', which is also punctuated with a full stop.

Around this proper name something is articulated and disarticulated at the same time based on the announced sub-position. What, then, is this *suppôt*, this 'henchman', this *sous-pot* function, a 'pot saucer' function (or a *sous-peau* function, an 'under the skin' function) that Mosenthal holds?

Here, in this context, this signifier has the function of referring his father's speech to the author of a text, the text that has just been mentioned by his father. But in its brutality this signifier obscures more than it clarifies, and the reader is led to uncover, to find again, the thoughts to which it refers and the displacements in which it is implicated.

One of these displacements is evident: in the first text, the text of the 'Lotus Eaters' episode (p. 73), the name in question, the name of the author, features before the quote; it is in the signature position here, and also the reply position. This is very seductive, and since it has to do with Moses, it's especially pleasing. But if we bear in mind – as always, because we spend our time re-reading – the place that Mosenthal occupied in the first text, we realize that this was a displaced reply to the question as to the existence of the true name; a question that itself didn't manage to be formulated except in a suggestively vacillating way.

At this point I should write up another sentence, which is precisely the question to which 'Mosenthal' was supposed to reply:

> What is this the right name is? By Mosenthal it is. Rachel, is it? No.

For good measure, I've included the next part, which might hold some interest.

Even though a German speaker who knows the slang might hear something else, especially if it carried a diaeresis, Mosenthal is the name of the author of a theatre play whose original German title Bloom is trying to retrieve and retranslate. In fact the title is a woman's name, a female Jewish name, which wasn't kept in English. It's a curious idea. It's a melodrama that had the title *Deborah* in German, which was translated into English under the name *Leah*, and this is what Bloom is trying to find. So, he's trying to translate the original title (which is a woman's name) and this takes the form of this search. Clearly, we can see the game of hide-and-seek between the author's name and the creature's name at the level of art, which brings into play both Being, with insistence – the 'is' insists – and the sexual problematic of a patronymic that comes in the stead of a daughter's name.

At this point the reader, whose notice nothing in *Ulysses* escapes, of course, says that this rings a bell, which bears some relation with Bloom himself.

I'll give you the first passage again (and I apologize for doing this in bits and pieces but I'm simply following the path I took), along with its context:

> Mr Bloom stood at the corner, his eyes wandering over the multicoloured hoardings. Cantrell and Cochrane's Ginger Ale (Aromatic). Clery's summer sale. No, he's going on straight [This refers to someone he's just been speaking to; Bloom wonders whether he might be watching him]. Hello. *Leah* tonight [The play in question]: Mrs Bandman Palmer. Like to see her in that again. *Hamlet* she played last night. Male impersonator.

Here begins a short passage on the problematic of the sexes. The English expression 'male impersonator' refers to an actress who has taken on the male persona, his mask, but on the other hand this can apply as much to the one play, *Hamlet*, as to the other, *Leah*. Everything will revolve around this.

> Male impersonator. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide?

So, at a certain level there is the fact that the role of Hamlet was very often played by women. It turns out that one Anglophone critic had the fanciful idea of analysing Hamlet precisely in terms of transvestism, taking the impersonator seriously in some sense and saying: Ophelia committed suicide because she realized that Hamlet was in fact a woman. I'm not mentioning this critic for the sake of it, in the name of my Shakespearian and Joycean knowledge, but simply because this implication appears elsewhere in *Ulysses*.

The statement 'Why Ophelia committed suicide?' is equivocal. It's both *Why did Ophelia commit suicide?* and *Was this the reason she committed suicide?* Clearly this doesn't make it through in the French translation, and it's worthwhile pointing that out.

What do we read next?

> Poor papa! How he used to talk about Kate Bateman in that! Outside the Adelphi in London waited all the afternoon to get in. Year before I was born that was: sixtyfive. And Ristori in Vienna. [And this is where the question about the title comes in.] What is this the right name is? By Mosenthal it is. Rachel, is it? No. The scene he was always talking about where the old blind Abraham recognizes the voice and puts his fingers on his face.
>
> – Nathan's voice! His son's voice! I hear the voice of Nathan who left his father to die of grief and misery in my arms, who left the house of his father and left the God of his father.
>
> Every word is so deep Leopold.
>
> Poor Papa! Poor man! I'm glad. I didn't go into the room to look at his face. That day! O dear! Ffoo! Well, perhaps it was the best for him.

So, in this passage a whole series of questions are at stake: questions about existence; about Being and the name; about existence and suicide; the question of the name – and I shall be coming back to this point – that is in fact both the name of the father, his father, and the name of the main character in the play; and lastly the question about the sex that personates, which is that which *père*-sonates.

Behind the question of the name stands the suicide of the father, who possesses this further characteristic of having changed name: this is what is indicated in another passage that is likewise presented in a curious way.

In a pub, a few of the barflies are talking about Bloom. 'He's a perverted jew', says one of them. (Here, 'perverted' means 'renegade', in the same way that Joyce uses it towards the end of

A Portrait: '[. . .] are you trying to make a convert of me or a pervert of yourself?')

> He's a perverted jew [. . .] from a place in Hungary and it was he drew up all the plans according to the Hungarian system [the political plans of Sinn Fein]. [. . .] He changed it [his name] by deedpoll, the father did. (p. 323)

So, it seems that the father changed his name. Moreover, he changed it in a way that is rather interesting, using a legal form called a deed poll. A 'deed' is an act (in every sense of the term), but 'poll' evokes or describes in some way the act from the point of view of the document: it's a document that has been 'cropped'. This 'poll', which describes the cropping, actually refers to what has been lopped off or affected by pollarding (a tree that has had its upper part removed is referred to as a 'pollard'). In fact, 'poll' refers to the top of the head. The deed poll has the characteristic of only comprising one part, the lower part. This is why in the French translation it says *par décret*. This is distinct from indenture where the act is torn in two, precisely by indentation, in order to be entrusted to the two parties. Therefore, so Joyce tells us, the father changed name by deed poll, by a procedure that is different from a symbolic one. But what name did he change?

> – Isn't he a cousin of Bloom the dentist? says Jack Power.
> – Not at all, says Martin. Only namesakes. His name was Virag. The father's name that poisoned himself.

In this we can hear a play on the genitive and on the position of the name of the father, which allows one to understand that it was the name that poisoned itself.

'Virag' appears again. It is mentioned in several places in *Ulysses*. It reappears in 'Circe', where first it is a virago, designated as such: VIRAGO. Here we may remind ourselves just what 'virago' is, namely the name that in the Vulgate, in Saint Jerome's translation of the Bible, serves to designate woman from Adam's point of view. In Genesis, man is led to name woman: *thou shalt be called woman [Virago]*. She is a little bit male (*vir*), while still being a woman.

Having come to this point in my lucubration and my groping between the lines of *Ulysses*, I should like to single out what gives the impression of being a hole in this interlacing. Indeed, it's tempting to use, with a view to interpretation, a schema that brings into play the suicide, the change of name, and Bloom's refusal to see the face of his dead father. It would be very apt if all that were to

reappear in 'Circe', in what is deemed to be a hallucination. But this is nowhere near enough, even if there is some truth to it, to make the text function, to account, for example, for the passage, 'Poor Papa! Poor man!' in the first extract (after 'Every word is so deep Leopold'). These words report the father's commentary on the play, and then: 'Poor Papa! Poor man!', which perhaps was not so kind about the father's comments. 'I'm glad. I didn't go into the room to look at his face. That day! O dear! [. . .] Well, perhaps it was the best for him.' In short, there is a whole set of items that need to be accounted for, and above all the effects produced in the dramatic redistribution that 'Circe' comprises. For this holds together, it functions, and things happen precisely alongside something that gives the impression of being a hole. Precisely, Joyce has a knack, among other things, of displacing, if I may say so, the area of the hole in a manner that allows for certain effects.

For example, in the given quotation the son's voice is not mentioned, no more than the father's death. On the other hand, an effect is produced by the son's voice, which is displaced in a reply, but a son's voice that bears a certain *savoir-faire* about the signifier. This precaution, this ability that is to be supposed, to be sub-posed, can be seen growing in accordance with an altogether suggestive logic. I spoke of the rhetorical suggestiveness of Mosenthal, within periods, articulated in the style of *j'en ai marre, marabout . . .*[1]: *Mosenthal . . . All that . . . all that's left of him.* 'All that's left of him' is *all that remains of him*. But it's also *all that's to the left of him, on his left*. If one thinks of what the Creed stipulates on the respective places of the Father and the Son on high, this says a great deal about their relations. All that's left of him, a name, an author's name; all that's to the left of him, something therefore that either way is not a true son. Let's stop there.

What's quite sure is that this gives pleasure to Bloom and that this had been understood. And how do we see this? It's because the father is not at all happy. The following retort begins:

> Rudolph (*Severely.*) – One night they bring you home drunk [. . .].

If you please, no out-of-place humour, let's speak instead about *your* transgressions. Bloom's jubilation, Bloom who has prudently said what he had to say, and which pleases everyone.

However, within this series of effects, some of which I've just isolated, there is another sort of cascade: another effect develops, which is in some respect structural in relation to the previous effects, a sort of result of the previous effects. This game in relation to the father

seems to slide to the side of the mother. The father, who is contested in various ways, leads to a mother on the side of the imaginary.

So, Rudolph has mentioned his son's transgression, when he came home drunk, having spent all his money, and also when he came home covered in mud. 'Nice spectacles for your poor mother!' He wasn't the one who was displeased, it was her!

But the way this comes about, the way it is passed on to the mother by means of the mud, is rather funny: those of you who've read *A Portrait of the Artist* in English may have noticed that 'mud' is also a familiar term for 'mother'. This gets associated with a pantomime (p. 67 in the Viking edition). It's a little sketch, of the epiphany type (I'm using the term with a little provocation): in one of the first chapters of *A Portrait* Joyce placed a series of sketches where the child Stephen, young Stephen, is finding his way around in Dublin, based on a certain number of points, scenes, sites, and houses. He is seated in a house (generally the scenes start like that), on a chair, in the kitchen of his aunt who is reading the evening paper and admiring 'the beautiful Mabel Hunter', a beautiful actress. A young girl with ringletted hair approaches

> on tiptoe to peer at the picture and said softly:
> – What is she in, mud?
> – In a pantomime, love.

Now, it so happens that the passage from 'Circe' that I was speaking about just now slides into the mud because this signifier, 'mud', comes back three or four times in the passage, sliding from mud to the emergence of the mother: 'Nice spectacles for your poor mother!', says Rudolph, and Bloom says, 'Mamma!', because she is appearing at that very instant. (In 'Circe', as soon as certain words, certain signifiers, are introduced, the object, as it were, comes to the surface.) And in what way? '*In pantomime dame's stringed mobcap, widow Twankey's crinoline and bustle, blouse with muttonleg sleeves*', following the logic of English pantomime, that is to say, a man disguised as a woman (these pantomime shows are played in particular around Christmas, and involve generalized cross-dressing: panto-mime).

So, women's dress. But something else resonates here, because at the very start of *Ulysses* the mother has been mentioned in relation to pantomime (pp. 9–10). Indeed, after having mentioned his dying mother, Stephen says:

> Where now?
> Her secrets: old featherfans, tasselled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer. A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl. She heard old Royce sing in the pantomime of Turko the Terrible and laughed with others when he sang:
>
> *I am the boy*
> *That can enjoy*
> *Invisibility.*
>
> Phantasmal mirth, folded away: muskperfumed.

There appears here a fantasmatic whole that is linked to the mother, through Stephen's stumbling, with a radical ambiguity: what was she laughing at? At old Royce singing? At what he was saying? At the sound of his voice? Goodness knows what else.

It turns out that this mother, this problematic mother, is dressed precisely as the mother in the *Aladdin* pantomime, Widow Twankey, is dressed. The Widow Twankey blouse is the blouse worn by Aladdin's mother in the pantomimes, a mother who clearly understood nothing of what he was up to, apart from the fact that in rubbing the lamp the genie within was being made to talk.

I shall leave this point here in order to move onto another aspect of the functioning of the text.

Ellen Bloom, who has just emerged, is not at all like the father on the side of the elders of Zion. Rather she sounds like she is on the side of Catholic religion, apostolic and Roman, for what does she say when she sees him all covered in mud?

> O blessed Redeemer, what have they done to him!
> [. . .] Sacred Heart of Mary, where were you at all at all?

This is rather curious because one would have expected the Sacred Heart of Jesus instead. In a certain way, this betrays her narcissistic relation to religion: she is very clearly Catholic, in a way that it was possible to be in the nineteenth century, and this is a dimension that deserves to be noted when one speaks about Joyce, even if one has to go looking in the more benign texts, *Stephen Hero* and *Dubliners*: an imaginary relation to religion is ascertained in the mother.

I would like to indicate this first of all in relation to epiphany. What is known as 'epiphany' signifies many things that are fairly diverse. Joyce defined epiphany once only, in *Stephen Hero*, and of course what he said has been slightly twisted. Here is the definition:

> By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself.

This is a definition that is polished, didactic, and redolent of Aquinas. But it is slotted into a text that over two pages takes us from a dialogue with his mother in which she reproaches Stephen for his unbelief – she is constantly mentioning the 'priests' – to Stephen breaking away from her on this issue and, at another level, circumventing the problem. In his discourse he slips from the woman/priest relationship to the beloved. Then, suddenly, he says that he started wandering round the streets, and a Dublin incident that was 'keen enough to afflict his sensitiveness' effectively 'set him composing some ardent verses'. There is no further mention of the poem, but he reports the dialogue he heard, a colloquy between a young lady and a young gentleman. One of the few words that appears is the word 'chapel', a word that in Ireland designates a Catholic church (the churches strictly speaking were occupied by the Anglican church): apart from this word there is precious little but suspension points in the dialogue.

So, this dialogue which, from one angle, doesn't present anything, leads him to write a poem and, from the other angle, he baptizes it and defines it over the following lines, in learnèd fashion, as an 'epiphany'. He adds that what he wanted to do was to record these scenes, these realist and exceedingly suggestive sketches. Therefore, we have a sort of duplication of experience (let's say, in order to simplify things, a realist side and an in some sense poetic side), and a kind of elimination or suppression of the poetic in the text of *Stephen Hero*. Now, the elided poem was called 'Vilanelle of the Temptress', and it emerged precisely within a certain discourse that involved his mother, his mother in relation to the priests.

This relationship, which I have roughly defined as an imaginary relation to religion, is to be found again in different ways in *A Portrait of the Artist*, for example with the sermons on hell, which are interminable (both Kantian and very Sadean) and which aim to present in detail the horrible tortures of hell, to give *in praesentia* an idea of what hell is. Or in another way with the figure of the confessor, who listens but also replies. What does he reply? What does he say? It is precisely around all of this that Stephen's Easter duty revolves, the confession of his turpitude, and also the function of the artist.

Here I shall indicate two passages, from two texts, one that is to be found at the start of *Stephen Hero*, where Stephen says that in writing verse he was able to 'combine the offices of penitent and confessor'; the other towards the end of *A Portrait of the Artist* when, mortified at seeing his beloved lending an ear and smiling to a young well-scrubbed priest, he says that he has renounced the priesthood, that the matter is settled, and that he doesn't stand on that side. He adds in so many words that it's fellows like the young priest, whom women confide in, who in turn tell them everything in the half-light, and he says that he would like to be there before she engenders someone of their race, and that the effect of this word should even improve this blasted race a little.

This is perhaps related to the famous 'uncreated conscience' that he speaks about on the last page. It goes by way of the ear, the famous conception through the ear, which moreover we meet in 'Circe'.

Jacques Lacan – And which Jones insisted on a great deal. Jones, Freud's pupil.

Another essential point concerning this imaginary dimension of religion is thrown into relief in the famous passage in *Ulysses* where there is an opposition between the Trinitarian and problematic conception of theology and an 'Italian' Madonnaizing conception that plugs all the holes with an image of Mary. He says that, indeed, the Catholic Church did rather well in founding everything 'upon the void', 'upon incertitude'. It seems to me that in these texts the names of the father are playing out at various different levels.

In 'Circe', however, and in *Ulysses* as a whole, what sets things in motion, what produces the artifice, is the game of hide-and-seek with the names of the father, that is to say, alongside everything that gives the impression of being a hole there are displacements of the hole and there are displacements of the name of the father.

In passing, we have seen, rather haphazardly, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Virag, and Dedalus too, and another who is rather funny. In one of the central episodes, where there's one eye, 'Cyclops', we meet a certain J. J. whom, you will recall, if you have some memory of it, we met in a previous episode under the name J. J. O'Molloy. The 'O' means 'descended from'. J. J., son of Molloy. His position is rather curious. He's a man of law, but a man of law – I won't say altogether diminished, but on the wane. We are told (and here the English words are interesting) that his clientele is declining, 'practice dwindling', and this is because of his 'gambling'. His gambling has in some way superseded his practice.

Clearly something would have to be developed from this. What I would simply like to indicate is the function of this perfectly false father who bears the initials of both James Joyce and John Joyce, Joyce's father. What's more, it's remarkable that the words of this

J. J. O'Molloy bear on other fathers. In a passage that links up with the riddle that Dr Lacan quoted last week (the 'Aeolus' episode, which is set in a newspaper office), it is he who turns to Stephen to give him a fine piece of rhetoric, which also holds some interest. We have learnt that O'Molloy, after having taken up gambling, started doing 'some literary work' for the press. We should note in passing that this also refers back to 'The Dead', the last of the short stories in *Dubliners*, where Gabriel Conroy, the main character, writes 'a literary column', but we don't know much about it (this appears in yet another manner in *Exiles*). What kind of literature? Is it the kind of literature that deserves to live? Gabriel asks himself the question, and we shall see that he isn't the only one.

So, we're told that J. J. O'Molloy turns to Stephen and presents him with a fine specimen of legal eloquence (pp. 134–5):

> J. J. O'Molloy turned to Stephen and said quietly and slowly:
> – One of the most polished periods I think I ever listened to in my life fell from the lips of Seymour Bushe [a surname that's one letter away from 'bush', which also refers to pubic hair]. It was in that case of fratricide, the Childs murder case. Bushe defended him.
> [Then comes a little Shakespearian aside:] *And in the porches of mine ear did pour*. [*Hamlet*.]
> By the way how did he find that out? He died in his sleep. Or the other story, beast with two backs? [This is Stephen's cogitation.]
> – What was that? the professor asked.

ITALIA, MAGISTRA, ARTIUM

> [One of the titles that punctuate the episode in the newspaper office.]
> – He spoke on the law of evidence, J. J. O'Molloy said, of Roman justice as contrasted with the earlier Mosaic code, the *lex talionis*. And he cited the Moses of Michelangelo in the vatican.
> – Ha.
> – A few wellchosen words, Lenehan prefaced. Silence!
> [. . .]
> J. J. O'Molloy resumed, moulding his words:
> – He said of it: *that stony effigy in frozen music, horned and terrible, of the human form divine, that eternal symbol of wisdom and of prophecy which, if aught that the imagination or the hand of sculptor has wrought in marble of soultransfigured and of soultransfiguring deserves to live, deserves to live.*

Thus, having begun to turn himself into a sounding board of legal knowledge, having specified the law of evidence in relation to other sorts of law, O'Molloy makes Bushe speak, makes the Bush speak, giving voice to a rhetorical testimony on art as founding the right to existence ('deserves to live') and the right to existence of the work of art. One can grasp the resonance that this carries in relation to newspaper literature: art founds, in law, the bearer of the Law, Moses, since he shall remain as the Vatican Moses (this is how he is designated, 'the Moses [. . .] in the vatican'): which is not uninteresting when one bears in mind what the Vatican represents in *Ulysses*, and furthermore, when one bears in mind that the statue in question is actually in San Pietro in Vincoli, the church of Saint Peter in Chains.

This 'deserves to live', which insists (through the rhetorical 'deserves to live, deserves to live'), bears the stamp, is countersigned, by its effects on the one for whom the 'period' was destined, namely Stephen. J. J. O'Molloy turns towards him and it transpires that, 'his blood wooed by grace of language and gesture, [he] blushed.' Curiously enough, Stephen's blushing forms a series with other texts by Joyce. I'm thinking in particular of the passage from *A Portrait* that you might have noticed: during a trip to Cork, Stephen goes with his father to the anatomy theatre in the medical school where his father had spent some time; very little time, it would seem. The father is in search of his carved initials. No mention is made of the fact that clearly these initials are also his (Simon Dedalus carries the initials S. D., like Stephen Dedalus). But Stephen comes across the word 'FOETUS' (also carved into the bench), which causes a great effect on him. He blushes, then pales. Thus we meet again, in relation to the initials, but in another relation, the 'deserves to live'. I'll add that this series can be extended with another passage from *Dubliners*, again in 'The Dead', to which I alluded earlier. The aforenamed Gabriel Conroy is about to give a speech, the customary speech for a family gathering. He's always there when you need him to write in the newspaper or make a little speech of this kind. And they've just been speaking, precisely, about artists whose names have been forgotten, those who've left nothing behind save a name that is altogether problematic.

> – His name, said Aunt Kate, was Parkinson. [. . .] the purest tenor voice that was ever put into a man's throat.

This gives him pause for thought, and he takes off from there, concluding one of the first 'periods' of his speech with two things: an

echo of a song called 'Love's Old Sweet Song', which evokes the lost paradise in its opening line; and a quotation from Milton (though not *Paradise Lost*) which says the following, 'I hope that I may leave something so written to aftertimes, that they shall not willingly let it die.'

So it is that the question of the right to existence, the question of the right to creation, the question of validity, and the question of certitude, too, find themselves knotted into Joyce's discourse.

Another thing concerning the bush: the eloquent Bushe, in speaking of Moses, is also speaking about a Holy Bush, the Holy Bush in the Bible. The Lord says to Moses that 'the place whereon thou standest is holy ground', the ground before the burning bush. The holy bush turns out to have a certain relationship with the 'fox'. For when J. J. O'Molloy reappears in Circe, he has a 'foxy moustache' and something of barrister Bushe about him. This is a fox that we have seen more than once in *A Portrait*, where of course it appears because Fox is one of the nicknames for Parnell, associated with his fault. But it is also very precisely a kind of signifier of dissimulation: 'He was not foxing', says the young Stephen when he is in the infirmary and afraid that he will be accused of skiving. And then, a little later, when he has just renounced joining the orders, right after picturing to himself his imaginary calling card, 'The Reverend Stephen Dedalus, S. J.', he wonders what kind of face he would have, and one of the things that comes to his mind is 'one of the Jesuits whom some [. . .] called Lantern Jaws and others Foxy Cambell'.

So, we have this bush / fox series. But there is also some wordplay, which functions for 'Molloy' / 'Molly' too, articulated on 'holy'. We had 'holly' / 'holy', 'Molly / 'Molloy', and another word that doesn't appear in *Ulysses* but of which Joyce says – I'm tugging this by the sleeve, or rather by the letters, but after all, he wrote those letters – he reveals to us the name of something that is supposed to enter the functioning of 'Circe', namely the plant, the golden garlic, which Hermes gave to Ulysses so that he would be able to resist Circe, and which is called 'moly'. The curious thing is that between the two, between 'moly' and 'Molly', there is a difference which belongs to the realm of phonation. What is 'phonized' in *Ulysses* is 'Molly', with a single vowel, and the 'moly' he speaks about is a diphthong, a *ditongue* as it used to be written. The ditongue (*di-tongue*?) transforms into a consonant at the same time as the diphthong transforms into a single vowel. There is consonantal duplication, a duplication of consonance, and this consonance is what appears in *Ulysses* in the shape of 'Molly'.

He says two or three curious things about 'moly'. Dr Lacan is going to analyse one of them, I believe; I'll make do with pointing out one other. It is a gift from Hermes, god of public thoroughfares, and 'the invisible influence (prayer, chance, agility, presence of mind, power of recuperation) which saves in case of accident.' Thus, this is something that confirms Bloom in his role as the prudent one. In the end, he is one who corresponds fairly well to the definition that can be found in the entry in the Lalande philosophical dictionary on this question of prudence (which is rather disappointing, probably because it is above all Saint Thomas who speaks about it). There is a short authorless note that says the following: '*Prudence*. The ability, in choosing one's means, to obtain for oneself the greatest well-being.' Bloom seems to be saying that this is precisely how one gets by.

The second thing that I would like to stress is that there is an ongoing question about certainty and how to ground it.

This certainty reappears precisely with respect to the famous Virag. I didn't tell you everything. I came to a halt in the famous quotation where O'Molloy is telling the others about Virag:

> His name was Virag. The father's name that poisoned himself. He changed it by deedpoll, the father did.
>
> – That's the new Messiah for Ireland! says the citizen. Island of saints and sages!
>
> – Well, they're still waiting for their redeemer, says Martin. For that matter so are we.
>
> – Yes, says J. J., and every male that's born they think it may be their Messiah. And every jew is in a tall state of excitement, I believe, till he knows if he's a father or a mother.

I'll simply stress what is perhaps appearing over and above the humour that constitutes part of the functioning of the text of 'Cyclops'. It's barroom humour, but it's very much present. Moreover, it's a brand of humour that would have to be linked to other problems that bear on anti-Semitism, but I won't have time to tackle that now. There is an imaginary identification that situates another question: the problematic of the Messiah and, through this, the problematic of succession. The problem of the king's word that grounds legitimation, a word that enables one, even if the mother's belly has been mendacious, to land back on one's feet through legitimation. Legitimation, that is to say, the possibility of bearing the stamp of the king, the crown, *στέφανος*, or else to bear this other stamp that appears in 'Circe' with Virag, the grandfather, who 'chutes rapidly down through the chimneyflue', bearing the label *basilicogrammate*, 'the king's *grammate*'. This problematic of legitimacy that turns out to be problematic legitimation is

perhaps assuming here the figure of the imaginary dimension and its recuperation.

It seems to me that Joyce uses certainty and brings it onto the stage in its relationships with the effects of the voice. Even if a word, a paternal word, is challenged at the level of what it says, it seems to suggest that something of it passes into the *personation*, into what lies behind the *personation*, into what lies on the side of phonation, perhaps, on the side of something that is also something that 'deserves to live' in melody; perhaps precisely because of this something that in spite of everything has effects on the mother through melody. The mother's 'phantasmal mirth', which is mentioned at the beginning of *Ulysses* bears very precisely on pantomime and old Royce (*Roi*-Joyce), who used to sing. Something passes through the melody, and perhaps not merely sentimentality. Of course, Irish culture at the turn of the century was altogether pervaded by melody, especially the melodies of Thomas Moore, which in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce calls 'Moore's maladies'. Moreover, it was in this that Joyce's father, John Joyce, exulted. But in this art of the voice, of phonation, perhaps just enough of it was passed on to the son.

In short, while this certainty with respect to what he makes always has something to do with the mirror, with these mirror effects that would have to be enumerated, this also has to do with the voice-effects of the signifier. I would like to remind you that 'The Dead', with which Joyce concluded *Dubliners*, at a crucial moment in his poetic production, at a time when things became unblocked in some respect, the guiding idea of 'The Dead' occurred to him when his brother told him about a particular interpretation of one of Moore's melodies that staged a dialogue between revenants and the living. Stanislaus said to him that the fellow who sang it did so in an interesting way, in a way that said something. Then, as if by chance, Joyce set to writing 'The Dead'. And one of the centrepieces of this short story is the moment when the protagonist's wife is mesmerized, frozen into stone like the Moses statue, listening to a hoarse-voiced singer singing this famous melody. What effect does this have on the protagonist? It turns his wife into a symbol.

> A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow [. . .]. He asked himself what a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow [. . .] is a symbol of.

He describes her in vaguely realist terms, but at the same time he asks what she symbolizes. This symbolizes a certain way of listening, among other things.

Joyce wanted to set out the rules for this certainty, for the

problems of certainty and its grounding in relation to the voice's effects on the signifier, in an aesthetic science, but fairly quickly he saw that this was not so firmly linked to science, and that it was precisely a *savoir-faire* tethered by a practice of the signifier. What is foremost in my mind, which imposes itself upon me through and beyond what Aristotle said about *praxis* in his *Poetics* (which gave Joyce pause for thought), is Lacan's definition: 'a concerted action on the part of man [. . .] that puts him *en mésure*, in a position, to deal with the real through the symbolic.' It is precisely in 'Circe' that we perceive this question of *mésure*, when Bloom, entering the brothel, is seen by Stephen as he turns. And this evocation of *mésure* is, as if by chance, also a quotation from Revelation. I should doubtless stop here before my talk becomes overly apocalyptic.