

Introduction: Dandy Paradoxes

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In the late spring of 1927, Joyce took his family on vacation to the Netherlands. Between 21 May and 20 June, he, Nora, and Lucia based themselves in The Hague (or, as Joyce preferred to call it, La Haye) staying at the Grand Hotel Victoria there, but also spending a few days in Amsterdam, at the Hotel Krasnapolsky in Dam Square. He had brought with him some work: the page proofs of *Pomes Penyeach* for correction and also those of “Continuation of A Work in Progress” for *transition* 4 (a section which would eventually become *Finnegans Wake* 75–103), to which he added some choice Dutch words collected on his holidays.

Notwithstanding the high quality of the accommodation, his fondness for the “restful” (*Letters I* 256) nature of Holland, and the expansion of his Dutch vocabulary, the trip seems only to have been a qualified success. Though the Dutch were “civil and obliging and not rapacious” (*Letters III* 159), the currency exchange rate was disadvantageous to tourists from France, so that the cost of living, and eating out, proved to be prohibitive.

In addition to such money matters, the weather was unseasonably cold and unsettled for the whole month of the Joyces’ stay, and he later reported to Michael Healy that the family had been “driven out of Holland by cyclones in the north and those impressive exhibitions of celestial intemperance known as thunderstorms” (*Letters I* 256), the apotheosis of which was when lightning struck the Nieuwe Kerk, which a terrified Joyce claimed to have seen from the window of his hotel room in Amsterdam. There were other, more serious, misfortunes. One afternoon, alone on the “wild and endless” (*Letters III* 159) beach at Scheveningen, reading his Baedeker and trying to locate the Hook of Holland, Joyce was subjected to a prolonged attack by a red mastiff, with the result that his glasses were broken and he had to grope about in the sand to locate the missing lens.

Thankfully the dogs were under stricter control, and the weather was rather less inclement, when, in June 2014, the James Joyce Symposium took place in Utrecht. This ancient Dutch city stands on a tributary of the Rhine, the Kromme Rijn, whose very name gave rise to the title of the Symposium, “A LONG THE KROMMERUN”, and under whose aegis the content of this, volume of *European Joyce Studies* first emerged. Joyce seems not to have visited Utrecht, but he may well have passed through it on his travels around the country, since it is the hub of the Netherlands, the crossing point for road and railway. Indeed, its name is derived from *Traiectum*, the Roman fortress on which the city is built

(the remains of which lie under the cathedral's precincts), the Latin term simply denoting its location at a possible Rhine crossing, contracting to become Trecht, the *U* from the Old Dutch "uut" (meaning "downriver") being added at some point later.

Since Utrecht is a crossroads, it's entirely appropriate that the following articles – a selection of the papers given at the Symposium – all respond in different ways to the conjunctions and intersections which lie beneath the edifices of Joyce's work. However, the opening essays, by David Spurr and Catherine Flynn, take the matter further and examine the very local associations between Joyce and *De Stijl*, the movement which gave the title to the Dutch review founded and published by Theo van Doesburg, in collaboration with the painter Piet Mondrian, the architects J.J. Oud, Gerrit Rietveld, and other artists during the years 1917–1931. At the periphery of the De Stijl movement were the composer George Antheil and Constantin Brancusi, both of whom Joyce knew well in Paris. Indeed, in 1929, after several attempts at sketching Joyce, Brancusi finally produced a "symbol" for the frontispiece of the Black Sun edition of *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun*, a design, Spurr suggests, conformed to the geometrical abstraction of De Stijl. Using this as a personal point of connection, Spurr proposes that Joyce understood that the movement's collaborators perceived an inherently aesthetic value in the forms of industrial production, a view which paralleled his own careful depiction of the dialogic relation between human bodies and machines in *Ulysses*, one which focused on the point of tensions between psychologies of desire and technological complexities.

By contrast, Catherine Flynn's sense of the presence of De Stijl in Joyce starts by way of a single word, "tesseract" (*FW* 100.35), which completes the description of the Fall and Rise of HCE in 1.4 of the *Wake*, a sequence Joyce began in 1923, the same year an exhibition on De Stijl took place in Paris, and which was then revised for *transition* on his vacation in Holland, the text being augmented with Dutch words and names. Denoting a hypercube formed by the conjunction of four dimensions, the tesseract had been crucial to Van Doesburg's efforts to envision a radically new mode of architecture, one which extended into the Fourth Dimension, beyond standard perceptual and aesthetic capabilities. However, Flynn's essay takes the matter further, and focuses on the work of the renowned Utrecht designer and architect, Gerrit Rietveld, whose most famous creations, the Red Blue Chair and the Rietveld Schröder House (located in a quiet residential street in the east of the city) both use a so-called crossing joint, a method for connecting wood together. Flynn suggests that by means of such joinery, various elements are placed "in a relationship of collective interdependence, of mutuality rather than hierarchy, in which the arrangement of multiple parts forgoes a singular dominating

element or shape". Indeed, in the plasticity of the house's interior arrangements, the paradoxical spatiality that it contains, Flynn sees the "built equivalent" to the *Wake*, as both Joyce's book and Rietveld's building share "a ludic quality, inviting playful interaction", and "the refusal of conventional form".

Austin Briggs's essay is also concerned with modernistic interior spaces, but rather less theorised than those of De Stijl. Instead, he is drawn to similarities that exist between the suburban property fantasised by Leopold Bloom in the "Ithaca" episode of *Ulysses* and the island estate constructed by Robinson Crusoe in Defoe's novel. The eighteenth-century man of letters was an important example for Joyce, of course, and according to Frank Budgen, he was one of only four authors whom Joyce had read in their entirety, the others being Ben Jonson, Flaubert, and, of course, Ibsen. As Briggs suggests, the "grocer's assistant's mind" Joyce once claimed for himself is certainly present in "Ithaca", as the miscellaneous contents and the precise dimensions of Bloom Cottage and its grounds are set down with the welter of detail that is common to the fiction of both Joyce and Defoe. Ultimately, this prototypical "Man Cave", this plenteous space cut off from the outside world, is rejected, and material desire is passed over for more companionable forms of longing: Bloom simply cannot live without his Molly.

Another such companionable form, for Joyce, at least, was Parnell. The contribution of So Onose considers why Joyce chose Professor MacHugh's voicing of John F. Taylor's speech advocating the revival of the Irish tongue when in 1924, a year after the conclusion of the Irish Civil War, he was asked by Sylvia Beach to read a passage from *Ulysses* for a recording. The speech compares the Irish fight for independence from Britain to the Jewish struggles in Egyptian captivity. According to Beach, the reason Joyce gave for selecting the passage from "Aeolus" was that it was "'declamatory' and therefore suitable for recital", but she suspected that this was not the whole truth, sensing that "it expressed something he wanted said and preserved in his own voice". With reference to Home Rule debates and the perception of Parnell during Joyce's student days, Onose shows that his recording of Taylor's speech had a self-admonitory element. That is, having witnessed the ways in which nationalist resistance had slipped into bed with the enemy, Joyce was reaffirming his commitment to the tradition of resistance that Parnell had bequeathed to him.

Anglo-Irish relations are also the indirect topic of Stephanie Boland's essay on the role that London's East End plays in Joyce's imagination. In 1900, he visited the area around the Mile End Road on family business with his father, and his experience of the heavily Jewish area and of the music hall may well have had a major influence on his later depictions of the Hibernian metropolis in *Ulysses*. Furthermore, elements of the Cockney female – sexually desirable,

disorderly, and humorous – emerge in the *Wake* where Cockneyism is used “to neutralise imperial power”, especially in the shape of ALP, shown “riding her Parisienne’s cockneze” (*FW* 102.13).

A less indecent way of framing ALP’s “cockneze” might be to describe it as embodiment, and that is the substance of Boriana A. Alexandrova’s article, a subtle account of the “multilingual ethics” which ensure that “as we venture to perform the text, *we* come to embody ALP’s speech”, and, in a centrifugal process of *transmaterialisation*, “[w]e acquire her accent, rhythm, and vocabulary”. Her suggestion is that the point at which readers find themselves shocked, disturbed, or even disappointed to find that *Finnegans Wake* is, in fact, not the kind of English-language text they had expected, is the very “moment that illuminates our boundaries in relation to the other”. That is, in such multilingual encounters, there emerge “the outlines of our cultural norms, our patterns of reading or communicating, and our consciously or unconsciously conceived habits of relating in the space where we meet with difference”.

For Maria Kager, as well as implying ethical and aesthetic choices, Joyce’s multilingualism also needs to be seen in the light of his extraordinary aptitude for bilingualism, that innate ability to be *at home* in two (or more) languages simultaneously. Joyce’s mastery of what linguists call code-switching, the seemingly arbitrary alternation of two (or more) languages within the same conversation, evolved into what Joyce termed the “pollylogue” (*FW* 470.9) of *Finnegans Wake*.

Such bilingualism was never innocent of politics, however, and Sam Slote’s essay considers the ways in which Joyce diagnoses the political inflections of a community, and asks what, in the *Wake*, makes a group of disparate individuals communal. In his *Politics*, Aristotle, of course, had argued that language maximises *energeia*, which is why humans are the most political of animals. However, as Slote observes, Aristotle implies only a single language untainted by barbarian impurities, while that of the *Wake* is promiscuous, exemplified in a single term “latification” (*FW* 551.21) – a calque from the Latin *latifundium*, meaning a large cultivated property, but also derived from *latificatio*, or broadening, implying the reach of a *lingua franca* – whose authority is, in time, challenged, and finally mortified.

Rather than “latification”, it is lactification, and the products that ensue from such process, that is the focus of Philip Keel Geheber’s essay. He reads the “Burrus and Caseous” tale, recounted in the *Wake* 1.6, within the history of Irish dairy production, and he shows how, within this internecine struggle between butter and cheese, “economic and political power resists assimilating difference into its systems”. The nub, for Geheber, is Joyce’s understanding of *assimilation*. The term should be seen not as homogenisation, which implies loss of

identity, but as incorporation, where the distinctions can still be tasted within the larger mass.

The next pair of essays moves beyond the deafening political noises of the *Wake* to consider the wordlessness that lies beyond it. For Katherine O'Callaghan, the text is neither incomprehensible nor unreadable, but one that "marks or memorialises, perhaps to the greatest degree to which prose is capable, the 'loss of loss itself'". Her essay dwells upon those moments when the *Wake*'s personages are lost for words, or when Joyce attempts to evoke moments of silence, not least in what O'Callaghan memorably terms that "gaping silence between the end and the beginning of the book". And above all, there hangs the paradoxical question of whether such moments can ever be more than mere *representations* of silence; or, to adapt Samuel Beckett's famous insight, whether the *Wake* is not about silence, but instead is that silence itself.

In contradistinction to Beckett, mathematics was never Joyce's forte, but, as Tim Conley's article points out, he never seems to have lost interest in the subject. Perhaps Joyce's fascination with numbers was sustained not simply by his incalculable indebtedness to his patrons, but also by his sense of their linguistic possibilities: the status of mathematics as a universal language, both in its claims as the grammar of nature and, more practically, as a transnational vocabulary. The *Wake* teems with references to mathematicians, formulae, and mathematical textbooks. The children's lessons passage of 11.2 produces a key phrase, "an equality of relations" (*FW* 283.11), which Tim Conley uses to frame larger questions of approximating equalities within the text's intricate processes. He asks: "Is to make meaning (or to 'make sense') to equate, to make equal, or is it to differentiate, to assign varying and sometimes contrary values?" Can the *Wake* ever mean, or only equate to a meaning, in the sense of an = sign?

Such questions are given a more practical emphasis in the last two essays of the collection, both of which describe some of the pressing issues raised by Genetic Criticism, both in theory and in practice. Robert-Jan Henkes's entertaining account of the challenges of Notebook Research – challenges posed in the first place by the vagaries of Joyce's handwriting, and thereafter by the eclecticism of the word lists he obsessively compiled from his voracious reading, even while on vacation – shows the terms of the life sentence that is the exegesis of the *Wake*.

Dirk Van Hulle's essay confirms that Joyce clearly was a writer who thought on paper, but reminds us that he was also open to whatever happened to offer itself as potential material for his work, an assimilative process the writer described as "decomposition" prior to subsequent "recombination" (*FW* 614.34–5). Thus, Van Hulle suggests, Joyce needs to be regarded not simply as the sole creator, but one who only existed in combination with his cognitive *Umwelt*, including,

on the one hand, the massive number of negative reviews in newspapers, and fiercely critical “anticollaborators” (*FW* 118.25–6), such as Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, and, on the other, the unwavering support he received from *avant-garde* journals, fine arts presses, and long-suffering patrons.

In July 1927, shortly after his return from the Netherlands, Sylvia Beach received a post card from Joyce, the front of which showed a photograph of him, and the back of which contained a stressed four-line poem, entitled “Scheveningen”:

Sáy, ain't this succéss fool aúthor
Jést a dándy páradox,
With that sílvier béach behínd him,
Hówling: Hélp! I'm ón the rócks!¹

While this squib may allude, in “jest”, to the traumatic incident with the “howling” dog on the beach, it is revelatory of larger issues that were preoccupying Joyce during his visit to the Netherlands, not least the scathing reactions to the publication of the second installment of his “Work in Progress” in the April issue of *transition*, and the unease that Harriet Shaw Weaver was showing with the book; an unease which had even led Joyce, in the last letter he wrote to her before his departure for Holland, to propose seriously that the entire project should be taken over and completed by James Stephens. Despite all generous financial support – the “silvier” lavished on him by American benefactors such as Weaver and Beach (who had, incidentally, also footed the bill for a couple of expensive colour reproductions of paintings by Vermeer, purchased at the Mauritshuis in The Hague, and which would subsequently adorn his Paris flat) – the “dandy paradox” of his trip to Holland was that Joyce, lying on that wild Dutch strand, also felt himself to be “on the rocks”.

Joyce was aware of his debts in the Netherlands, and so it is that I should like to acknowledge the labours of Onno Kusters, Peter de Voogd and Tim Conley, my fellow organisers of the Utrecht James Joyce Symposium, in selecting and editing the essays for this volume. We are grateful to the contributors themselves for producing such sparkingly original work and, finally, we should like to express our thanks to Alana Gillespie, who helped prepare the typescript of this volume with such unfailing vigilance and patience.

The last words are simply Joyce's Dutch: “Tisgoed. Het best” (*FW* 256.16).

1 Peter Spielberg, *James Joyce's Manuscripts and Letters at the University of Buffalo: A Catalogue* (Buffalo: University of Buffalo, 1962), 22.