11-2024

Metaautobiography and Identity's Paradox: de Manian and Derridean Readings of Joyce and Svevo

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An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

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Lewiston, Maine

04/01/2024

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Eden Osucha for patiently following all of my digressions throughout the second semester of my writing process, helping me focus on issues and markers I had initially overlooked and reconsider ideas I had magnified out of proportion. I would also like to thank the Bates English Department for allowing me the opportunity to exhaust the mayhem of this most personally significant creative endeavor. For the same reasons I often told people that this piece is my "life's work", I would hope that whoever reads this work recognize its autobiographical dimension, inasmuch as this intellectual exploration was nothing less than a freakishly paranoid attempt to make sense of *anything* and *everything* about myself as a learner. In many ways, I dedicate this thesis to the liberal arts education I received at Bates, one which is nevertheless not limited to this 4-year daydream. In this regard, I owe thanks to all those who have driven me to question what I know, at least what I thought I knew. Without stalling much further, I would like to thank my parents for being patient with me throughout my coming-of-age, I understand it's been no picnic. In addition to all my extended family, which given the opportunity I would have taken pleasure of listing in full, I would like to give special thanks to all my siblings out there, some related by blood, most, however, by chance. Insofar as this thesis is an ode to friendship, I would like to personally dedicate this work to Sanford Freedman, who in the last three years held out true kindness and respect to me in exchange for my curiosity and dedication. Thank you, Sanford, for gifting me the opportunity to better understand and accept myself. Thank you for teaching me some of those ineffable things about time and purpose.

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Introduction

As a narrative device which applies both to its characters and its respective reader, description of phenomenological experience as a source of insight is an integral aspect of James Joyce's fiction. To the same extent that Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*[1] arrives at epiphanic conclusions about his faith and about art, the reader is in a similar position to examine these as part of the analytic process. This phenomenological framework is of utmost concern in the type of deconstructive analysis we find in the works of Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man, who challenge the non-transcendental subjectivity of intuition as a solution to the question "what is literature?"[2] Joyce virtually relays the above deconstructive predicament as the process by which Stephen arrives at self-discovery and artistic *becoming*. A main, yet hitherto unexamined aspect of this *becoming*, however, is *Portrait*'s extension into *Ulysses,*[3] whereby Stephen's identification with Leopold Bloom's Otherness remedies the romanticized flaws in Stephen's aesthetic theory in *Portrait*, and has legitimate implications in our conception of Joyce's works as metaautobiographical. To follow this claim, I will examine autobiographical information about Joyce and his relationship to the author who inspired Bloom's character: Italo Svevo. More specifically, throughout this thesis I will point out how the mutual influence both

[1] Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Vintage Books, 1993.

[2] Derrida in an interview: "Without supspending the transcendent reading, but by changing one's attitude with regard to the text, one can always reinscribe in a literary space any statement — a newspaper article, a scientific theorem, a snatch of conversation. There is therefore a literary *functioning* and a literary *intentionality*, an experience rather than an essence of literature"(45). See Derrida, Jacques. *Acts of Literature*. Edited by Derek Attridge, Routledge, 1992.

[3] Joyce, James. *Ulysses*. Vintage Books, 1990.

Joyce and Svevo had on each other translates into their texts, insofar as Joyce's fiction *becomes* the site for a meta-*kunstelrroman*[4] about himself.

One needs a vague knowledge of Joyce's familial setup, schooling, ambivalence to Catholicism and Ireland, *exile* abroad, interest in philosophy and poetry to locate the author in the Stephen Dedalus of *Ulysses* and *Portrait of the Artist*.[5] Where Leopold Bloom is concerned, the Jewish-Triestine author Italo Svevo, Joyce's intellectual and personal confidante, is the most accepted autobiographical source.[6] Joyce impatiently outsourced material and information about Judaism and a European type of Jewish experience from Svevo to develop Bloom, and there is reasonable evidence to suggest that he might have also drawn inspiration from other friendships and acquaintances.[7] Even if Bloom's ambiguous "Jewish" identity is in dialogue with Svevo's ambivalence towards his own,[8] we run into important questions about how Bloom's character reflects Joyce's construction of a Jewish identity, with particular attention to the degree that he

[4] *Kunstelrroman* is the literary term used in reference to a sub-variation of the *bildungsroman* where the narrative focuses on the personal development of the soon-to-become-artist protagonist.

[5] Joyce used the pseudonym "Stephen Deadelus" when he published the first versions three stories out of *Dubliners* (108). See Riquelme, John Paul. “Stephen Hero and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Transforming the Nightmare of History.” *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2004, pp. 103–121.

[6] We find this conviction as early as in the writings of Richard Ellman and Stanislaus Joyce. See Staley, Thomas F. “The Search for Leopold Bloom: James Joyce and Italo Svevo.” *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1964, pp. 59–63. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486462.

[7] The Popper family was an important source for Joyce's exposure. Through private lessons to Leopoldo's daughter, Amalia, Joyce became friendly with the Popper family, often attending their house and familiarizing himself with upper class Triestine lifestyle. There is reasonable evidence from Richard Ellman's research on the matter to suggest that Amalia was a significant source of inspiration for the character of the unnamed romantic interest in *Giacomo Joyce*, Joyce's unpublished fiction piece staged in Italy. For more on Ellman's research, other potential sources of inspirations for Joyce's characters, and overall discussion on his life in Trieste, see Hartshorn, Peter. *James Joyce and Trieste*. Greenwood Press, 1997. for an expansive analysis of Joyce's life in Trieste.

[8] Svevo converted to Catholicism in order to marry his wife Livia, and was a self-professed atheist for most of his life.

espouses antisemitic stereotypes and what "literary" purpose it might serve in *Ulysses*. To that effect, it is important to trace Joyce's exposure to antisemitic discourse throughout his life and his experience with Jewish people in Continental Europe, particularly through Svevo. Considering both author's familiarity with the antisemitic works of Otto Weininger, and that Bloom and Svevo's highly autobiographical characters are likened to Weininger's prototypical Jewish "womanly man," it is important to acknowledge where these parallels originate in a broader historical and intellectual context relating to Modern Europe, and how they are in conversation with each other, and not just how they exist in the text. Otherwise, we run the risk of totalizing both authors' writing into a schema motivated by antisemitic attitudes.

I contend, furthermore, that Bloom's Weiningerian portrayal exists within additional/other ideological and philosophical concerns that are not intrinsically of a "Jewish" kind. The Weiningerian prototype should be understood in view of other intellectual traditions — especially alongside the development of psychoanalytic theory out of Austria during the first decade of the 20th century. Most points of discussion in Weininger's formulation of a misogynistic and antisemitic characterization of the Jewish man — paranoia, sexuality, desire, etc. — derive directly from psychoanalytic theory. To claim that Bloom is Weiningirian would be comparable to claiming he is Freudian. Psychoanalysis and Weiningerian theory exist and function as distinct ideological systems, yet they are in mutual dialogue with questions about identity in the context of Modern subjectivity.[9] Although Freud would eventually discuss the

[9] A major aspect of my discussion on Weininger stems from a comment the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein made about the latter, who he claimed was an enormous influence on him: "I can't quite imagine that you don't admire Weininger very much, what with that beastly translation and the fact that W. must feel very foreign to you. It is true that he is fantastic but he is great and fantastic. It isn't necessary or rather not possible to agree with him but the greatness lies in that with which we disagree. It is his enormous mistake which is great. I.e. roughly speaking if you just add a "~" to the whole book it says an important truth"(141) By the same token, I would like to point out just what this "~" might have to say concerning Svevo. See McGuinness, Brian (2008). *Wittgenstein in Cambridge: Letters and Documents 1911–1951*. Wiley-Blackwell.

influence that (his) Jewish experience had in his writings,[10] we should turn to their intellectual vulnerability for a "psychological" model as a broader reflection of a tradition in paranoid thinking which is inextricably mutual to our concept of Modernity — and its respective works of literature and criticism. With this in mind, throughout the first chapter of this thesis, I will contextualize biographical information about Joyce, Svevo, and their friendship, with particular focus on the criticism of Neil Davison,[11] to expand notions about Joyce's construction of Jewish identity as reflective of these Modern concerns, arriving at a deconstructive paradigm of Otherness which speaks to both authors' writings and their personal relationship. The deconstructive piece is crucial to my analysis because it elaborates on concepts like alterity — *différance* if I dare say —[12] through the same type of paranoid framework which predicts its relevance in literary criticism.

The crux of Derrida's deconstructive theory is to *further* remain along the fringes of the systematic operation in question; it bases its claim to reason on the recognition of that which is both engendered by the system and excluded from it. In four famous lectures he conducted for the James Joyce American Foundation,[13] for example, Derrida takes deliberate issue with his

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[10] For in-depth analysis of the paranoid nature of psychoanalysis and its development, in addition to potential incentives on Freud's part informed by existential concerns see Farrell, John. *Freud's Paranoid Quest : Psychoanalysis and Modern Suspicion*. New York University Press, 1996.

[11] Davison, N. R. (1996). *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the construction of Jewish identity : culture, biography, and "the Jew" in modernist Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

[12] In Derrida's work, here with particular reference to his seminal text *Of Grammatology*, the notion of alterity plays a specifically relevant role in a discussion of identity and Otherness. Where in Derrida's conception, the term *différance* encompasses the simultaneous and perpetual quality of deferral and difference of meaning, the identified self in language experiences a similar dynamic. In a piece from 1978, Derrida debates Emmanuel Levinas's concept of alterity on the basis that acknowledgment of otherness implies a linguistically verifiable concept of (one's) *self*.

[13] Mitchell, A. J., Slote, Sam., & Derrida, Jacques. (2013). *Derrida and Joyce : texts and contexts*. State University of New York Press.

non-normative (French Algerian) status as a Joycean "critic", especially in the context of that particular occasion, and proceeds to execute a reading of *Ulysses* through the same set of concerns. He problematizes institutional literature with a discussion of national, religious and cultural identity, its respective relation and impact on language, and how it fundamentally, and uniquely, informs every (chance) *readerly* experience. He paradoxically problematizes and affirms the instantiation of his every utterance at the symposium, presenting *his* alterity to the audience as an ironic necessity in the institution's fabric.

This "post-modern"[14] approach becomes a major point of discussion in recent discourse on autobiographical writing, where questions about autobiography and writing are mutually implicated in how we go about dividing or associating these. The barrier between fact and fiction; autobiography as a genre; to what degree is fiction autobiographical, and vice-versa: these are pertinent concerns in more contemporary discourse about how social and political contexts inform the degree to which we might read into notions of authorship, voice and representation. Derrida's reading of Joyce can only occur, Derrida *seems* to suggest to his reader/listener, because of his non-belonging, undecidable identity — which applies to everyone, but in the lecture he frames it in his distance to his "American" audience.

With that in mind, my deconstructive reading of Bloom's "Jewish" identity stems from a similar set of concerns, especially as they predict a key aspect of Stephen Dedalus's personal development: the recognition of Bloom's paradoxically "everyman" Otherness, which disrupts his entanglement with the romantic aesthetics which drive his *bildung* in *Portrait*, the privileging

[14] I use the term throughout this thesis in reference to intellectual considerations developed out of the relativistic ideas found in the works of Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, to name a few. I use it in reference to shifting ideas about the consumption of art, and of its occasional overlap with concerns out of critical theory.

of phenomenological experience as a source of insight.[15] Stephen's departure from a privileging of his epiphanies,[16] which in the above deconstructive sense serve to define his identity in relation to the systems of power around him — the Catholic Church, Irish culture, his family — allows him to discover in the "non-Other" Bloom a skeptical attitude towards an aesthetic-ideological identity. I deliberately draw from Paul de Man's term "aesthetic ideology" to display how the major concern of Joyce's *oeuvre*, which here I present as a ruthless search for personal significance and a stable sense of identity, is indelible to the deconstructive tradition which both Derrida and de Man propel, even if their commitments to subjectivity are in stark contrast to each other.

Where Derrida delves into the paradox of his identity, de Man seeks to abolish it altogether, and while this opposition seems perfectly reasonable in this theoretical context, recourse to extra-theoretical considerations renders it *fantastically*[17] alarming. In 1987, four years after de Man's death, letters from 1940-1942 connected to the Nazi-occupied newspaper *Le Soir* and signed by de Man were discovered and released to the public, causing major upheaval in the discipline. Did de Man legitimately espouse anti-Jewish ideals? If so, or if not, does that change

[15] According to Preston, Stephen's aesthetic theory in *Portrait* reflects the body's allowance of such psycho-physical aesthetic experience. See Preston, Carrie J. “Joyce’s Reading Bodies and the Kinesthetics of the Modernist Novel.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2009, pp. 232–54. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25733408.

[16] "Joyce’s linguistic choices indeed appear to mark epiphany as both aesthetic and religious experience, ascribing to it a metaphysical dimension that distinguishes this kind of apprehension from everyday experiences of things. An epiphanic manifestation comes through the “vulgarity” of verbal or bodily gesture, while itself being 'spiritual'—that is, something other than the vulgar gesture or the common object that brings it forth"(191). See LEVINA, JŪRATĖ. “The Aesthetics of Phenomena: Joyce’s Epiphanies.” *Joyce Studies Annual*, 2017, pp. 185–219. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26798616.

[17] I introduce Todorov's theoretical term to highlight the natural relationship between criticism and literature, whereby the same methodological approach Todorov develops to examine literature becomes a major source of analysis for the realm of criticism which seems impenetrable to analysis — the *fantastic*: where that which does not seem to belong to the world contained within a narrative is neither described to be either supernatural or explained within reason. see Todorov, Tzvetan, and Tzvetan Todorov. *The Fantastic; a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973.

how we ought to engage with and "learn" the material? More importantly, are we able to identify the motivation for these questions, primarily the active process of self-effacing in his writings, as a marker that either predicts or validates his rejection of subjectivity as a source of insight? In a 60-page "response" to the scandal,[18] Derrida offers an important perspective to these questions concerning a close friend — and presumably like-minded theoretician — raising additional concerns about the self and writing with direct implications about how we understand deconstruction as a part of the literary tradition. Is there a point at which deconstruction functionally renders criticism indistinguishable from literature?

The degree to which we notice meta parallels between Svevo and Joyce, and Derrida and de Man raises questions not about antisemitism per se, but about how in such a context the paradox of identity serves an indelible function in the writing process. Throughout this thesis I will examine how these concerns play out in Joyce's (de)construction of Bloom's "Jewish" identity, whereby Svevo's role in Joyce's artistic development closes the metaautobiographical loop between *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, and how the theoretical and critical writings of Derrida and de Man mirror this process and bridge fiction to theory. In the following chapter, I will perform a deconstructive analysis of Bloom's ambiguous Jewish identity, which will require a brief digressive overview of developments in autobiographical criticism over the last few decades.

[18] See Derrida, Jacques, and Peggy Kamuf. "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep within a Shell: Paul de Man's War." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 590–652. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343706. Throughout the piece, Derrida offers a deconstructive and highly self-critical examination of how the deconstructive process exists in the midst of these discoveries regarding de Man. He analyzes de Man's infamous contributions to *Le Soir* in an honest attempt to negotiate his friendship to someone so deeply invested in the deconstructive ethos.

Chapter I — Otherness Demystified: Where Weiningerian and Freudian Typologies Intersect Leopold Bloom

Since Philippe Lejeune's seminal 1975 essay "The Autobiographical Pact"[19] set a standard for a formalist understanding of autobiography as genre, not necessarily a concept of truth or veracity, critics have then attempted to negotiate the discrepancy between the two. In the "Pact," Lejeune expounds the idea that what "defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity that is sealed by the proper name,"[20] whereby both reader and author share a mutual agreement of the text's intended aim as autobiography.[21] To Lejeune, although there is no legitimate means to distinguish autobiography from fiction, given the ability of fiction to *mimic*[22] autobiography, there are formal conditions afforded by cultural and literary convention that should aid the distinction.[23] These conventions, however, are unsustainable; consumer cultures are not universal. Form here, at least partially, is contextual, predicting a turn

[19] Lejeune, Philippe. “The Autobiographical Pact.” *On Autobiography*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1990, pp. 3–30.

[20] ibid., 19

[21] "Turning back from the first person to the proper name, I am therefore prompted to rectify what I wrote in *Autobiography in France*: 'How to distinguish autobiography from the autobiographical novel? We must admit that, if we remain on the level of analysis within the text, there is no *difference*. All the methods that autobiography uses to convince us of the authenticity of its narrative can be imitated by the novel, and often have been imitated.' This is accurate as long as we limit ourselves to the text minus the title page"(13). Additionally, the text must follow a variety of formal guidelines like keeping first person narration, which he then addresses in a later essay to encompass third person narration, see Lejeune, Philippe, et al. “Autobiography in the Third Person.” *New Literary History*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1977, pp. 27–50. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/468435)

[22] From Mimesis*:* a literary term which refers to representations of real life in art.

[23] Here Lejeune refers to conventional book culture. Modality, nevertheless, plays a significant role in critical understandings of what constitutes "autobiographical" representation. Lejeune, for instance, dedicates an entire book to theoretical elocubrations on the diary form. See Lejeune, Philippe. *On Diary*. Published for the Biographical Research Center by the University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009.

in the discourse to considerations about authorship and how it negotiates the undecidability of the fact/fiction dichotomy as part of the autobiographical process.

Paul John Eakin, endeavors continuance to the limiting scope of this formalist approach, delving into considerations about the fictional aspects of autobiographical writing — and vice-versa — as descriptive of the process of self-invention.[24] The literary relationship functions as a result of negotiating the space between fact and fiction; Eakin argues that "the presence of fiction in autobiography is properly regarded not as an interference with the search for the truth about the self but rather as an inevitable and invaluable resource for its recovery."[25] Fiction, as an artefact of narrative, of storytelling, grants the autobiographical process with a measure for self-representation. Eakin's approach adheres to the autobiographical contract only as far as to bridge a spectrum of readership: [historians] which "naturally assume that all autobiographies are based on verifiable facts" and those "[literary critics] willing to treat such texts as though they were indistinguishable from novels."[26] This division obscures a fuller and more pragmatic compass of the critical spectrum; a more descriptive distinction would frame the spectrum in recognition of the impossibility of any totalistic point of view, since they all venture a solution the incompatibility between the subject outside the text and the subject *in* it.[27]

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[24] Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1985. See also Eakin, Paul John. *Living Autobiographically : How We Create Identity in Narrative*. Cornell University Press, 2008.

[25] Ibid., 54

[26] Ibid., 3

[27] For more in-depth formalist considerations like Lejeune's see Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Genette develops throughout the work shrewd considerations about the function of the specific modal qualities associated with literature in the conventional context of Western discourse.

The interest of the critic is to examine within the fact/fiction dichotomy where we might identify the evasive "autobiographical subject" at the center of the analytic process. Eakin negotiates different methodological positions to account for the necessarily difficult implications around a stable notion of self-representation.[28] The autobiographical subject is always at odds with the one they purportedly *re-present in* the writing. To understand the autobiographical work, one must invariably observe and identify the contextual processes, or "fictions", which lead to the creation of each text, and consequently each subject. Eakin argues that, insofar as there is a "drive toward narration of the self"[29],

> autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation, that the self that is at the center of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure. In these pages, I seek to identify the fictions involved in autobiography and the sources — psychological and cultural — from which they are derived.[30]

The autobiographical endeavor is an ever-informative process of self-discovery and self-invention; it is a self-reliant literary activity which can function in the absence of the critic. The autobiographical process occurs through "fictions" — narrative conventions: metaphor, irony, etc. — which establish and predict how the reader identifies the *resulting subject in the text*. These fictions, nonetheless, remain contextual — historical, cultural, etc. — even if to a lesser degree than predicted by form or modality. Eakin's general description sets the stage for a focus on context which prevents totalizing descriptions of autobiographical writing.

The cultural studies lens fits perfectly within these critical developments in autobiographical writing because the question of representation and voice can be assessed

[28] "the principal subject of debate among theorists of autobiography in recent years: is the self autonomous and transcendent, or is it contingent and provisional, dependent on language and others for its very existence"(181).

[29] Ibid., 6

[30] Ibid., 3

directly in relation to its respective author as it engages in self-aware narrative about selfhood, about representation. Post-colonial, queer, feminist literature and methodologies, to name a few, problematize an antiquated perception of "voice" that ignores socio-political factors which affect an individual's relationship to language, to their sense of self. To offer a solution to the unsolvable distinction between autobiography and fiction, the question of self-representation renders the author the locus of the literary exchange. Leigh Gilmore, in *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*[31] reflects this dynamic in three essays which "offer a method for discerning when and how self-representation operates at a distance from the conventions of autobiography,"[32] on the basis that the "limits of autobiography, multiple and sprawling as they are, might conspire to prevent *some* self-representational stories from being told at all if they were subjected to a literal truth test or evaluated by certain objective measures [my italics]."[33] Gilmore's concern is not to redefine autobiography or to establish its rapport to fiction, but rather to assess *a priori* means of self-representation which are conditioned by socio-political factors, particularly about how these modify the notion of veracity in narratives about trauma.[34]

Gilmore approaches her analysis insisting on the problematic discourse around evidence, which she argues excludes the role of the body's materiality as the creator/enabler of identity and its performativity — sexual.[35] The body, Gilmore suggests, is a vehicle to embodied experience

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[31] Gilmore, Leigh. *The Limits of Autobiography : Trauma and Testimony*. Cornell University Press, 2001.

[32] Ibid., 7

[33] Ibid., 14

[34] "autobiography draws its authority less from its resemblance to real life than from its proximity to discourses of truth and identity, less from reference or mimesis than from the cultural power of truth telling"(3)

[35] Ibid., 125

with the potential to harness memory and trauma, and ideological predictions subjugate it and prevent discourse on "the relationship between truth telling and agency."[36] Gilmore's analysis accounts for the distinct narrative approaches of their different authors, whose problematic rhetorical identities with regard to "truth-telling" are unique to the contextual ideological constraints imposed on them by virtue of gender identity, race, age, etc. This level of subordination predicts how they embody trauma and might then be able to self-represent.

Fundamentally, the ultimate complaint eventually concerns the instability of autobiography as genre, which Gilmore argues in terms of the authority placed on critics, particularly due to the virtual obligation to historical narrative about the genre and its canon.[37] The rhetoric might be heavily ideological, but it reframes the inadequacies of genre distinction into a pluralistic narrative system which, in Bergland's terms, "acknowledges the importance of marginalized voices, but avoids, essentializing individuals and groups; [it] takes into account complex relationships between cultures and discourses that produce the speaking subject, but avoids viewing language as a transparent representation of the imagined real."[38] If language inherently precludes adequate self-representation(s) in writing, then how resistant is fiction to the fragility of any conceptual determination of "truth"? Is there a legitimate degree to which one may establish a firm distinction between fact and fiction in writing, even if in purely formalist terms? Might we not be able to look at fiction as a type of meta-autobiography which creates the illusion of fiction?

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[36] Gilmore, Leigh. “Policing Truth: Confession, Gender, and Autobiographical Authority.” *Autobiography & Postmodernism*, University of Massachusetts Press, Boston, MA, 1994, p. 55

[37] Ibid., 74.

[38] Bergland, Betty. “Postmodernism and the Autobiographical Subject: Reconstructing the 'Other.'" *Autobiography & Postmodernism*, University of Massachusetts Press, Boston, MA, 1994, p. 130.

As this applies to Joyce and Svevo, it makes sense that critical focus most often turns to discourse on Jewish identity and psychoanalysis, yet I argue that we should be able to look at the pair as a culturally motivated deconstructive paradigm to the previous question. We should be able to identify in their works a constant play, paradoxical for that matter, with the impossibility of totality in discussions about identity. In the following segment, I will expand on some conceptions of antisemitic portrayals in the works of Joyce and Svevo to present the mutual relationship between the authors and their respective biographical representations in the extent to which it premeditates the role of a deconstructive Otherness in the autobiographical function of some of their works.

…

We need to first consider how Joyce's construction of Bloom's Jewish identity is informed by a diverse exposure to ambiguous, mythical, and outright antisemitic representations of Jewish identity throughout his life.[39] During his years in training as a Jesuit, we find a young Joyce interested in the Old Testament and in Romantic literature depicting Jewish individuals. Around this time, Joyce "excommunicated" himself from the Church. Later in 1898, attending University College in Dublin, the Dreyfus Affair had reached full-blown proportions in France, and Joyce showed reservations about what he perceived as Irish nationalist anti-Jewish discourse spread across newspapers and intellectual circles.[40] Joyce was exposed to different strands of antisemitic propaganda and discourse from Ireland and France, and his *exilic* arrival in continental Europe gave him firsthand experience with Jewish people who "had forged"[41] — to quote Neil Davison's

[39] See Davison "Silence: Jesuit years — Clongowes and Belvedere".

[40] See Davison "Silence: university years — the Church, Dreyfus, and aesthetics".

[41] See 127 in Davison "Cunning: Jews and the Continent — texts and subtexts".

clever allusion to *Portrait* — unique assimilated identities. More poignantly, it was in the Northern Italian city Trieste, Joyce's main residence for over a decade, that he befriended Svevo and met a large population of others who might have "similarly" identified as Jewish.

Trieste, was of particular appeal to Joyce for its idiosyncratically "Italian" disposition; in contrast to most other Italian cities at the time with more homogeneous demographics, Trieste's population was composed of a large Jewish population. *Fin-de-siècle* Trieste was a significant and profitable seaport. This contributed to both a populational boom and its cultural diversity, which was largely informed by its geographical location. Whereas most Italian cities are water-locked, Trieste neighbors what was then the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Because of this proximity, a sizable portion of its population was not ethnically Italian but instead came from Austria, Germany, and Slovenia; the considerable number of residents of Jewish descent reflected the burgeoning antisemitism throughout Europe.[42] Trieste's Jewish community featured a unique dialect and intellectual culture, and this tradition produced two of the most significant literary figures of Italian Modernism — Italo Svevo and Umberto Saba.

Of particular relevance for considering the considerable influence of the city's intellectual culture on James Joyce's artistic project, Trieste's was the only one to welcome and entertain Freudian psychoanalysis,[43] which was brought to Italy by Svevo's nephew, Edoardo Weiss, after his apprenticeship with Sigmund Freud.[44] Psychoanalysis became commonplace discourse in Trieste's intellectual circles, and there is reason to believe that this is correlated to its

[42] See Hartshorn 62.

[43] At least until 1904, Trieste possessed no local university, incentivizing its population to find education abroad, many of which, including Svevo, went to Austria, the birthplace of psychoanalysis.

[44] Ellman, Richard. *James Joyce*. Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 340.

larger-than-average Jewish population, considering that the writings of Otto Weininger were accepted throughout the remainder of Italy as an alternative to Freudian theory. A key artifact of that moment is Svevo's novel *Zeno's Conscience*,[45] the first novel explicitly *about* psychoanalysis, which he wrote following a lengthy correspondence with Weiss.[46] As Svevo was an intimate friend of Joyce, he had significant impact on the latter's knowledge and interest in the "psychoanalytic,"[47] in addition to exposing him to Weininger's work. Although both writers explicitly denied either influence throughout their later lives,[48] the prevailing scholarly consensus holds otherwise.[49] The force of psychoanalytic conventions and themes can be observed throughout Joyce's fiction, in their recurring focus on strikingly modern questions of identity, paranoia, gender, and sexuality which are intrinsic to our understanding of Bloom's character. This psychoanalytic "bent" is a major point of discussion in this concern of Joycean criticism,

[45] Svevo, Italo. *Zeno's Conscience*. Vintage, 2015.

[46] For more information on Svevo's correspondence with Weiss, and how Svevo actively ironizes psychoanalysis in *Zeno*, see Moloney, Brian. "Psychoanalysis and Irony in 'La Coscienza di Zeno.'" *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 67, no. 2, Apr. 1972, p. 309-318, https://doi.org/10.2307/3722314.

[47] While in Trieste, Joyce had direct exposure to the psychoanalytic works of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, but remained unimpressed by the tradition. Joyce vehemently refused the opportunity to receive analytic treatment by the latter, and would, a decade later return to Jung's help as a last resort for the treatment of his daughter's schizophrenia. See Ellman.

[48] Joyce would deny influence and interest in psychoanalysis, claiming, in response to Jung's disparaging preface to the German translation of *Ulysses*, that he had "nothing to do with psychoanalysis"(Ellman 628), and on a separate occasion that he did "[not] believe in any science"(Ellman 693). Before Joyce had any exposure to psychoanalysis, he displayed an active interest in "unscientific" dream analysis and stream of consciousness which we find rendered in the early drafts of *Stephen Hero* in the epiphanies and sermons.

[49] Rosa Maria Bollettieri, for instance, contends that "Svevo has supplied precise evidence for this: 'He had too poor a grasp of German then, being able to approach a few poets, but not the scientists… But by then all his works, including *Ulysses*, were already begun"(179). See Bollettieri, Rosa Maria Bosinelli. "The Importance of Trieste in Joyce's Work, with Reference to His Knowledge of Psycho-Analysis." *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1970, pp. 177–85. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486834.

particularly as Weininger's prototypical depiction of the Jewish man as "womanly" is often identified in Bloom.[50]

There are several moments from which to draw connections between Bloom and the Weiningerian "womanly man," which term Ellman points out Joyce uses directly in reference to Bloom,[51] and which Joly identifies in Bloom's fastidiousness about his appearance, his practical and material-mindedness, his choice of career as "author-journalist," etc.[52] It is difficult to isolate the "antisemitic"[53] from these Weiningerian associations at the same rate that we also identify overlaps with Joyce, who for many years was an "author-journalist" for the biggest Triestine newspaper, *Il Piccolo della Sera*.[54] Such an overlap points to a type of Weiningerian construction that is neither intrinsic nor exclusive to Jewish *men*. Otherwise, we would quickly locate these in Stephen Dedalus, whose coming-of-age journey in *Portrait of the Artist* is just as much a "Weiningerian" struggle with masculinity as Bloom's. The more direct relationship between Bloom, Svevo and Judaism, however, explains this tendency to probe these for traces of the Weiningerian subject.

We find similar points of observation in reference to Svevo's highly autobiographical protagonists, even though *Sex and Character* was published years after Svevo's first two novels.

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[50] We see Joyce on the explicit occasion verbalize a conception of Jewish identity which problematizes how "neutral" we might treat his construction of Bloom to be. We find such occasions in 1905 in his allusion to a term like "Jewish kindness,"(Davison 133) and as late as in 1928 in a letter to his brother after Svevo's tragic death in a car accident, where he assumes: "Somehow in the case of Jews I always suspect suicide"(169)

[51] Ellman, Richard. *James Joyce*. Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 463.

[52] Joly, Ralph Robert. “Chauvinist Brew and Leopold Bloom: The Weininger Legacy.” *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1982, pp. 194–98. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/25476430.

[53] See introduction of Reizbaum, Marilyn. *James Joyce's Judaic Other*. Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 7.

[54] See Harsthorn "Joyce as Journalist".

Stanislaus Joyce, Joyce's brother, on one end of the spectrum, took enormous issue with how people callously described Svevo's protagonists "inept"[55] — considering, of course, that Svevo almost entitled his first novel, *A Life* (*Una Vita*, 1892),[56] "*il Inetto.*" The Italian critic Giacomo Debenedetti, on the other end, found that Svevo's characters not only played into Weiningerian tropes, but that their not being Jewish evinced Svevo's personal Weiningerian "self-hatred:"[57] "When he felt the torturing leaven of his own life fermenting beneath the surface of his characters so that the obscure depths of autobiography rise through the mask of fiction, he thus obeyed, as a Jew, the suggestions and imperatives of his race."[58] Debenedetti suggests that Svevo's self-effacing reflects an indelible aspect of the Jewish experience: to naturally self-efface. Debenedetti's position, nevertheless, encourages the Weiningerian distinction, especially seen in contrast to what in Svevo's attitude, in view of their shared ethical concerns about antisemitism, we see as the acceptance of his ambivalence towards the naturally ambivalent notion of a Jewish identity.[59]

Svevo, *née* Ettore Schmitz, was born in Trieste to Austrian-Jewish parents,[60] raised amidst other Jewish-Triestine families, attended schools run by Jewish directory in Trieste and

[55] See Stanislaus' introduction in Svevo, Italo. *As a Man Grows Older*. Sun & Moon Press, 1993.

[56] Svevo, Italo. *A Life*. First American edition, Knopf, 1963.

[57] In 1903, Weininger, Austrian and Jewish like Svevo, published *Sex and Character*. Svevo's cousin, Stenio Tedeschi, commited suicide at the age of 30 while composing an Italian translation to the piece. Weininger, too, took his own life, at the age of 23, soon after *Sex and Character* was published.

[58] Davison 170.

[59] Svevo: "It isn't race that makes a Jew, it's life"(Davison 158).

[60] Italo Svevo and Umberto Saba, both of whom were Jewish, the two most important Triestine literary figures. whose relationship to their Jewish background is indicative in their literary personas. It is curious that both authors employed pseudonyms; in Ettore Schmitz's case it masks his Jewish identity: "Italo Svevo" literarlly translates to the "Italian Swabian"; and Umberto (Poli) Saba efaces his father's Catholic name in exchange of an arguably Hebrew term.

Germany,[61] yet almost never wrote about or in reference to his Jewish upbringing or his conception of what might constitute Jewish identity. With minor exceptions to the implied degree of Jewishness in "Svevo,"[62] or in Zeno's final memory of childhood, the only major moment in Svevo's writings where he actively delves into the topic is in his first published work: a piece on Shylock he composed a few weeks after his brother, Elio, was denied a job in Vienna for being Jewish.[63] In the piece, according to Davison, Svevo "absolves Shakespeare of any anti-Jewishness, and proclaims that Shylock embodies the victimization of ghetto Jews and their 'inmost suffering essence.'"[64] Considering what we gather about the brothers' mutual affection,[65] we should not understand this as Svevo's dismissal of Elio's recent experience with antisemitism. Rather, Svevo challenges conventional standards for authorial responsibility, designating processes of signification that are unique to literature, with the implied aim of describing a type of reading that focuses on the individual bearing the brunt of antisemitism. Shakespeare's portrait of Shylock, by this logic, is antisemitic if within the totality of the text it fundamentally distorts or negates the existence and material impact of antisemitism on Jewish people. Shakespeare, or the text, spins Shylock's stereotypical portrayal with a display of observable human suffering which should transcend superficial aspects of the antisemitic portrait. Afforded the appropriate

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[61] See Brombert, Victor. “Literary Biography: Svevo’s Witness.” *The American Scholar*, vol. 60, no. 3, 1991, pp. 425–32. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41211924.

[62] "The Italian-sounding Svevo (the Swabian) refers to a region in Germany precisely in the manner in which many names of Italian Jews (Morpurgo or Moravia, the name of his mother, are good examples) refer to specific regions or towns. Such a sly, imbeded 'Jewish' signal becomes even more likely in view of the information his brother Elio gives concerning the paternal grandfather, Abramo Adolfo Schmitz, who was a native of Köpchen, a town in Transylvania where the Germans spoke a Swabian dialect"(Brombert 427).

[63] "[he] saw no one but anti-Semites"(Davison 158).

[64] Davison (158)

[65] Interestingly enough, we find a similar parallel in the Joyce family with James and Stanislaus.

conditions, Svevo should then be able to distance himself from his work, allowing his (conditionally Weiningerian) characters to "suffer" for themselves.

Svevo's deeply insecure and paranoid protagonists, however, none of whom would survive "without the protection of irony"(77),[66] defer the reader's potential to break down the "suffering" in their portraits. His characters are predictable and paranoid to a paradoxical extent that simultaneously invites the reader to make assumptions about their portraits and challenge how confident they accept these. They seemingly evade typologies which might be associated with them; in this sense, they are just as Weiningerian as they are Freudian, and the inability to confidently place them into an objective category is crucial to Svevo's paradoxical writing. He would not, could not, claim that his portraits either are or are not antisemitic because they circumvent the ironic process he sets up in his discussion of Shakespeare. Moreover, this is why we can and should read Svevo, especially in the "anti-psychoanalytic" *Zeno*, with a focus on its avant-garde use of dramatic irony in psychological (mis)representation,[67] rather than in the psychoanalytic terms its reading misleadingly invites. The reader would be wise to question suggestive symbolism in the text: take Zeno's suggestively Oedipal diary; the sparrows in Mario's fables in *A Perfect Hoax.*[68] Zeno and Mario are self-conscious and self-centered yet are oblivious to how legitimate self-awareness escapes them; in their attempt to evade *identification,* at least so is the impression this creates for the reader, they inadvertently further expose their

[66] See Robison, Paula. "'UNA BURLA RIUSCITA': IRONY AS HOAX IN SVEVO." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1972, pp. 65–80. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26278926.

[67] See Rushing, Robert A. "Italo Svevo and Charlie Chaplin: Dramatic Irony and the Psychoanalytic Stance." *American Imago*, vol. 63, no. 2, 2006, pp. 183–200. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26305325.

[68] In *A Perfect Hoax*, Mario writes fables which conveniently describe moral and social dynamics which can be directly symbolized in relation to his feelings of inadequacy as an author.

fragilities. From this type of paranoid thinking which informs their unstable narcissistic tendencies we uncover the "passive" Weiningerian, the Freudian "hysteric". Svevo might explicitly reference both theories in *Zeno*, yet he dedicates the entire novel to ironizing these.[69]

Insecure masculinity is a ubiquitous theme across his works, often involving some sexual pretext, yet it is constitutive of larger existential concerns associated with Modern life that are not intrinsically "Jewish." Anxiety, irony, skepticism, etc. are all facets in a tradition of paranoia which challenges how reliably individuals understand their place in the world.[70] What does it mean to act morally? What does it mean to exist in society? to be an individual? In a post-Cartesian and post-Baconian world,[71] we see philosophical and scientific thinking not necessarily at odds with each other, but attempting to negotiate incompatibilities between these, whereby the mind-body dualism obfuscates the entire world of internal states, drives, desire, which might make sense of human suffering and injustice. In *Zeno*, Svevo draws heavily from Freudian psychoanalysis, Schopenhauerian pessimism,[72] and Darwinian evolutionary theory[73] to present a type of engagement with modern life problematized by the injustices it engenders and

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[69] See Moloney.

[70] See Farrell, John. *Paranoia and Modernity : Cervantes to Rousseau*. Cornell University Press, 2006.

[71] See Farrell's chapters examining the paranoid functioning of both thinkers' proposed modes of investigation. Where Bacon offered Modernity with one of the more significant opening points to the scientific method, Descartes later added the problem of the split between the mind and the body to the scientific paradigm, enforcing a conception of philosophy that remains pertinent in contemporary discourse and concerns.

[72] See Treitel, Renata Minerbi. “SCHOPENHAUER’S PHILOSOPHY IN ITALO SVEVO’S ‘LA COSCIENZA DI ZENO.’” *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1972, pp. 53–64. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26278925. Treitel argues that Zeno's paranoid pessimism is highly Schoppenhaurian, that boredom engenders actions which Zeno cannot quite explain. Many would describe psychoanalysis in similar terms, both in reference to the unconscious and to the *transference* between analyst and analysand, whereby the "slip" might unconsciously surface out of something like boredom. It would be unfair to privilege one theoretical source over another because Zeno ultimately engages with a level of paranoid thinking that is at the heart of these different "existential" traditions.

[73] See Minghelli, Giuliana. *In the Shadow of the Mammoth : Italo Svevo and the Emergence of Modernism*. University of Toronto Press, 2002, https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442676107.

perpetuates — in this case financial and sexual. Is "survival of the fittest" a naturalistic or social constructivist point of view? Referring to the question I raised in discussion of Gilmore's, are we destined to specific misfortunes by virtue of how our ideological bodies belong in the world they inhabit? Svevo disentangles these dichotomies without resolving them, keeping them in a paradoxical limbo where both extremes are true and untrue. We shall never know if Zeno outsmarts the psychoanalytic process. Alternatively, we shall never know what that might mean in the first place.

Psychoanalysis appeals to Svevo, therefore, because it purports to offer solutions to what otherwise seems like an inevitable resort to pessimism in modern life, which is just what happens in his first novel *A Life* (1892). Psychoanalysis attempts to systematically negotiate these concerns by explaining them in conversation with intangible states like desire, drive, self-control. Freudian theory, to make sense of human behavior, of mystifying aspects of human experience, theorizes these explanations through observable paradigms — Oedipal, hysteric, etc. Freud had yet to publish his first major works by the time Svevo had already written his first two novels — *A Life* and *As a Man Grows Older* (1898). Considering how similarly all his works delve into paranoid thinking concerning feelings of inadequacy and immaturity, it should be predictable to describe his earlier novels as proto-psychoanalytic,[74] and to do so would be in denial of Svevo's interest in existential paradoxisms interconnected with his concerns about literature, as described above regarding his views on Shylock. Psychoanalysis, moreover, initiates out of an exercise in

[74] Svevo's proto-Weiningerian characters are more explicitly a product of "secular" traditions, which in his works become, "[Svevo's] own blend of Zolaesque Naturalism and Schopenhaurian pessimism. At first the two thinkers might seem irreconcilable. But Schmitz's comment that Schopenhauer was "the first to become aware of us — [those] sick people, the sort who think [as] healthy fighters, [similar] to men who act, [related, but] like two different animals," implies a connection to Zola. In creating Nitti and Brentani as this type of "fighter," Svevo demonstrates that "the will" is best depicted through the natural forces that play on a character's destiny — à la Zola. Zola's naturalism impressed upon Svevo the "truth" of the Darwinian evolution of human character. (Davison 167)

reading. To Svevo, the paranoid processes of his protagonists are a vehicle to a perpetual state of inertia, which would fulfill a desire to avoid any such resolution.[75]

We also see these Modern concerns in the works of Svevo's Italian contemporaries Luigi Pirandello, and Gabrielle D'Annunzio, whose protagonists exhibit comparable struggles with the burdens and boredom of modern bourgeois life. It is just as possible to explain their protagonists' afflictions through psychoanalysis as it is through material affordances like an excess of time provided by financially comfortable lifestyle and upbringing. D'Annunzio was a crucial source of inspiration for Joyce,[76] and we see Joyce allude to the appeal to his "*Byronic*"[77] characters in the following exchange with his brother:

> "Psychologist! What can a man know but what passes inside his own head?" Stanislaus replied, "Then the psychological novel is an absurdity, you think? and the only novel is the egomaniac's? D'Annunzio's?" Joyce replied, "I said as much in my pamphlet."[78]

Svevo's protagonists are more characteristically Weiningerian and Freudian than Pirandello's or D'Annunzio's because of their added feelings of sexual inadequacy, yet all of them could be typed egomaniacal. It should be noted, moreover, that their respective status of wealth fundamentally contributes to the "psychological" differences between their different

[75] In this sense, I second Bond's suggestions about how Svevo anticipates Lacanian psychoanalysis in its preoccupation with the configuration of the unconscious through language, one which is culturally bound. See Bond, Emma. "Irony as a Way of Life: Svevo, Kierkegaard, and Psychoanalysis." *Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2016, pp. 431–45, https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.2016.0029.

[76] See Reynolds, Mary T. "Joyce's Villanelle and D'Annunzio's Sonnet Sequence." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1976, pp. 19–45. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3830953.

[77] The "Byronic" hero refers to the type of protagonist who goes about their comfortable lives in a state of existential dread or boredom.

[78] See Ellman 265.

protagonists.[79] D'Annunzio's protagonists are made decadent by wealth, Svevo's are bored by petty bourgeois life.

In his first novel *A Life*, Svevo blurs the reader's judgment about why Alfonso feels sexual subordination to his boss's daughter, Annetta. He works an unrewarding white-collar office job, falls in love with his boss's daughter, and becomes engrossed in the wealthy lifestyle of upper class Triestine society — we might say of the decadent kind. He is disadvantaged to his rival Macario in the courtship for Annetta, and the reader is not quite able to detect the source of the discrepancy. If Alfonso takes his own life because, according to Davison, he "fails to perceive how threatening his delusions actually are[, r]efusing to realize both his timidity and

[79] In *One, No One and One Hundred Thousand*, published three years after *Zeno*, Pirandello's protagonist Vitangelo narrates *in retrospect* the entire development of an existential crisis after his wife, Dida, points out his nose is bent to one side. On the same level of dramatic irony as in *Zeno*, Vitangelo is in a position to provide a narrative which conforms to his "current insight," overlooking the legitimate cause of his crisis which he "unconsciously" leaves traces throughout. For instance, after he describes to his reader his tendency to "fall, at any word said to [him], at the sight of a housefly buzzing about, into deeps of reflection"(10), he breaks the fourth wall and addresses what he presumes is the audience's assumed inference: "'It is plain to be seen,' you will tell me, 'that you had plenty of time to squander.' Not exactly that, I would have you know. Some allowance is to be made for the state of mind I was in. But beyond that, I don't deny that my life was leisurely to the point of idleness. I was well-to-do…"(10). He brings up the comfortable and wealthy upbringing which allows him the time to contemplate minutious details so deeply, yet shows incredulity towards the average person when he engages in his exercise:

> I wondered no little how others could go on past me, without taking any account whatever of that stone… As a matter of fact, it did not seem to me that those who had passed me, and who had gone all the way, were substantially wiser than I. They had passed me, there was no doubt about that, prancing like colts; but at the end of the road, what they had found was a cart, their own cart; they had harnessed themselves to it with a vast deal of patience, and were now engaged in drawing it after them. But I drew no cart, and bore, accordingly, neither bridle nor blinders; I could certainly see farther than they; but go — where was there to go? (10-11)

The average person to whom he refers is the average worker. He fails to misicorrelate his access to an excess of free time with that of the average worker. Ironically, that is precisely why he goes into crisis in the first place, because he has never had to self-examine before his wife challenges his conception of self. His only claim to success is in "concludere mai nulla; tranne di prender moglie"(6). Curiously enough, we do not know how he and Dida came to marry, although the assumption at this point is that the source is financial, especially if we remain skeptical of her claims about how he "rimanev[a] un bell'uomo"(4). This level of skepticism should make sense if we accept how the remainder of the novel tackles the issue of the impossibility of self-knowledge and self-representation — or authenticity, to put it in simpler terms. Vitangelo's "inadequate" self-consciousness allows the reader to piece together the framework of his crisis, and its respectively "illusive" resolution, as a struggle with identifying oneself as another, where identifying the other as such is *a priori* to the dynamic. (See Pirandello, Luigi. *One, No One, and One Hundred Thousand*. Quick Time Press, 2020.)

superiority complex as products of his immaturity,"[80] it is because he can identify no rational explanation to his sexual subordination to Annetta. His immaturity is result, not the cause, of an arguable necessity to stake his self-concept as a man on his intellectual and aesthetic sensibilities. Svevo blurs this necessity, troubling the extent to which we understand it as a self-fulfilling prophecy, or sheer unwillingness to compromise with cultural norms around courtship. We do not know whether his paranoia stems from legitimate socio-economic and/or sexual disadvantages, or from a cultural system which cannot, will not, accommodate his non-normative masculinity. Throughout the next chapter it will prove crucial to delineate this dynamic across all three of Svevo's novels, evincing the impossibility of a stable sense of identity for his protagonists, which I will eventually connect to Joyce's *Portrait* considering Stephen's illuminating experience with Bloom's paradoxical Otherness.

[80] Davison 168.

Chapter II — Character Evasion and Paradoxical Outcomes

The most significant difference between Alfonso, Emilio and Zeno, age and financial status aside, is that Alfonso pines for successful authorship, Emilio has met little success in it, and Zeno shares no such interest altogether. It is crucial to acknowledge this difference, which may initially come across as trivial, because Alfonso's sense of despair and failure derives from his feelings of intellectual ineptitude, which exist in conjunction with his feelings of sexual inadequacy. In Emilio's case, he claims to be on good terms with the mild success he meets in his writing, yet he still experiences feelings of sexual inadequacy, most of all towards his best friend, the cool womanizer and artist Stefano. These narrative setups are psychoanalytic goldmines, although they precede Freudian theory by a decade. Therefore, we should identify Alfonso's and Emilio's existential struggle as the prototypical stage of pessimistic-driven insecurity which Svevo capitalizes on in *Zeno*.[81]

In *A Life*, Alfonso dives into paranoid thinking due to his feelings of sexual and intellectual impotence, inasmuch as he feels emasculated by Annetta. Svevo ambiguously presents Alfonso's rivalry to Macario in terms which frame the latter's self-confidence as the major source which legitimates Alfonso's disadvantage to Macario. We see this translate in his feeling sexually subordinated to Annetta:

> As soon as he was alone with her he tried to pull her to him, but she resisted firmly and said contemptuously: "All this constant kissing's a bore." It was a very offensive phrase. By it Annetta laid bare the ridiculous side of their relationship which he had already felt and was withdrawing from it, leaving all its weight on his shoulders. Thus he was faced

[81] Befitting the autobiographical sentiment, the chronology of Svevo's personal life mirrors some of the narrative premises of his three novels. In his first novel *A Life*, Alfonso is bored with his bourgeois lifestyle and pines to write a successful piece of writing. In his second novel *As a Man Grows Older*, Emilio has already published a novel which meets very little success. And in *Zeno*, before which point Svevo had considered dropping the literary act altogether, Zeno is satisfied with his bourgeois lifestyle, all things considered.

> with someone who could deride him, Annetta herself. It was then that he decided to follow Francesca's advice, for revenge firstly. He wanted to thrust those words down Annetta's throat and show her that if there was anything ridiculous in their relationship it was not his fault alone. Oh, he was convinced she needed him, needed their relationship and in the very form she had wanted to deride. Obviously Francesca was of his opinion too. This gave him great confidence; without her approval, though convinced himself, he would never have had the confidence or resolution necessary to act.[82]

Alfonso delusionally subverts the reality of *his* need of Annetta for access to physical intimacy in order to accommodate what in his mind is the impossibility to come to terms with the contrary notion. Otherwise, he would have to accept that his first act of forcefulness towards Anetta was an impulse he is unwilling to habituate. When he "feel[s] sore at not having shown ease with Federico and strength of will with Annetta"[83] he is in a state of inertia which could either be explained by virtue of his lesser-than-average masculinity, or by the very paranoid thinking which prevents him from taking action — although we might recognize in his narcissistic tendencies an "unconscious" drive to find himself in such a state of inertia.

He takes explicit issue, moreover, with Annetta's "offensive" phrase because he stakes his sense of masculinity on his intellectual capabilities. His narcissistic tendencies, his superiority complex in relation to Macario and Annetta, are "either/or" cause and effect to his feelings of inferiority. To avoid an essentialist view of this type of behavior, we should try to identify the extrinsic origin of this general state of insecurity. He, for instance displays a concern to "find some subject of conversation which would take him through an evening in Annetta's company without her feeling bored or his showing (as he was resigned to being) he was bored himself,"[84]

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[82] Svevo, *A Life*, 160-1

[83] Ibid., 158

[84] Ibid., 161

to eventually fearing "her giving him, in some form or other, the dismissal which he had once feared as a result of his daring."[85] To compensate for his inability to have physical, sexual autonomy with Annetta, Alfonso relies on his intellectual appeal to seduce her, to maintain some rational sense of control in their dynamic. To the same extent, however, that he paranoidly negotiates his means of intellectual "dominance" in the time he spends with her, we should identify this most clearly depicted in his subordination to her in the co-authoring of their novel. His inability to self-verify through either of these events depletes the stable picture he would have otherwise been able to maintain of his masculine self-concept. Nevertheless, we should detect in Alfonso's struggle the paranoid pessimism of Schopenhauer,[86] whereby Alfonso *might* be aware of personal deficiency, but that he is unable to accommodate what could be the Darwinian "curse" of his physical inadequacies. Svevo blurs the line between an essentialist and a social constructivist explanation to Alfonso's Otherness to drive his almost necessary turn to paranoia.

Emilio exhibits insecurities over his masculinity like Alfonso's, although we see it more clearly due to his blatant narcissism. Emilio has no practical obligation to Angiolina, and maintains his relationship with her out of self-interest, à la Pygmalion — whereas Alfonso faced constraints affecting the status of his employment. Emilio presents less justifiable explanations for his jealousy — particularly with attention to his non-commitant attitude towards the beginning of the novel — yet displays it more shamelessly, like a helpless child, as the novel progresses. Following an accusation of jealousy, Emilio responds: "'I am not jealous,' said

[85] Ibid., 163

[86] Svevo on developing Alfonso as "precisely the Schoppenhaurian affirmation of life which is so close to its negation [so that] the ending of the novel [would be] as abrupt and crude as the member of a syllogism"(Davison 167).

Emilio, in a low, deep voice, 'but sad, very sad, indeed.'"[87] Emilio changes to a "low, deep voice" to soothe the impending acceptance of Angiolina's infidelities through a brief display of masculine confidence. His sadness derives from feelings of emasculation which he cultivates in competition with Angiolina: "The sort of women I have to do with don't deserve that my wife should be jealous of them."[88] Emilio is insecure about his status as a desirable subject, which at least in his conception is dictated by the quality of one's looks. He is as sad about Angiolina's infidelity as he is about its effect on how he perceives himself as a sexual prospect, implying his desire is to be more desired than Angiolina: his "competition."

Although to a more discreet extent than in *A Life*, Emilio exhibits a major source of his jealousy towards Stefano because of the latter's ability to appeal to Angiolina through his intellectual sensibilities. Emilio extraneously fails to inspire and seduce Angiolina through poetic recitation, among other things; meanwhile, results arrive more naturally to Stefano, who makes "Angiolina grow quite pink with pleasure."[89] with the prospect of making her the model for his next sculpture. Stefano at no point shows an interest in betraying Emilio's trust — he is the one, after all, who informs Emilio about the entire umbrella-maker episode, and who persuades him at the beginning of the novel against getting involved with Angiolina — yet Emilio pathetically confesses:

> 'I am sick with jealousy, nothing else but jealousy. I am jealous of the others too, but most of all of you. I have got accustomed to the umbrella-maker, but I shall never get accustomed to you'… He did not want his friend to be able to profit by a state of affairs for which he himself had been largely responsible…Balli was not slow to guess what was passing in Emilio's mind, and he felt profound pity for him. He promised him solemnly to

[87] Svevo, *As a Man Grows Older*, 61.

[88] Ibid., 61

[89] Ibid., 92

> do as he wanted. Then, in the hope of distracting Brentani's thoughts a little, he said that he regretted all the same not being allowed to see Angiolina… For a moment his eyes took on a dreamy look, as if he were mentally drawing the outlines of her figure.[90]

In addition to the fact that Stefano is significantly more charming and handsome than Emilio, his only interest in Angiolina — in keeping with the arrogant attitude he keeps towards his art — is aesthetic. Emilio's paranoid jealousy piques when Stefano appeals to Angiolina's aesthetic sensibilities, "profiting" from Emilio's failed efforts, because this is a scenario which could interfere with Stefano's commitment to him. Svevo is less deliberate about his presentation of social convention as the root source of Emilio's feelings of inadequacy than with regard to Alfonso, yet both exhibit undecidable jealousies which have invariable recourse to hermeneutic and psychoanalytic considerations.

About Zeno, what the reader knows regarding his nervous conditions is that he unconvincingly fits into every psychoanalytic paradigm, and that is because it is impossible to affirm just what is wrong with him, paradoxically motivating and resolving his affliction. Zeno is paranoid about what the title of the novel very ironically suggests is *his self-consciousness*. Zeno "fails" Dr. S.'s journaling assignment because in his attempt to outperform the psychoanalytic process he seemingly sabotages it. He does not fail, however, in the sense that psychoanalysis will outperform *him*, inevitably *making* him "see [himself] whole."[91] He self-consciously imbues his smoking history with overtly suggestive psychoanalytic evidence. Because he self-consciously presumes that *he* is in the process of "analyzing [him]self,"[92] he allows to the

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[90] Ibid., 90.

[91] Svevo, *Zeno's Conscience*, 7.

[92] Ibid., 11.

surface of the text precisely what normative psychoanalysis attempts to unearth — i.e. suggestions about unconscious sexual desire.

Zeno, for example, does not — cannot — describe his relationship to smoking in conventional terms, confessing, in fact, that he "didn't know whether [he] loved or hated cigarettes, their taste, the condition nicotine created in [him]. But when [he] came to realize that [he] hated all of those, it was worse."[93] Instead, he describes his desire to smoke, if desire is the appropriate term here, in a distractingly suggestive setup. He establishes a circular ritual where he has the impulse to smoke as an act of subversion — "these words alone made me yearn for him to leave, to go out at once, allowing [him] to rush to [his] cigarettes"[94] — and that he cannot quit because of "[his] distractions."[95] His addiction is a mutually self-fulfilling process of wanting to smoke because it subverts an inhibition, and of not being able to quit because smoking inhibits his compulsive thoughts of women. Zeno capitalizes on this mutuality when he "inadvertently" correlates the two in his bout of jealousy at the rehabilitation clinic:

> I fell ill immediately, but I did not realize what was making me suffer until I was left alone. A mad, bitter jealousy of the young doctor. Handsome he was, and free! He was called the Venus of doctors. Why wouldn't my wife love him? Following her, as they left, he had looked at her elegantly shod feet! This was the first time since my marriage that I had felt jealous. What misery! It was no doubt a part of my condition as a wretched prisoner. I fought back! My wife's smile was her usual smile, not mockery after having eliminated me from the house. It was she indeed, who had caused me to be locked up, though she attached no importance to my habit; but she had surely arranged this to please me.[96]

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[93] Ibid., 10.

[94] In the original Italian, "le proibizioni valsero ad eccitarlo"("the prohibitions served to excite it";[my translation] 29).

[95] *Zeno*, 15.

[96] Ibid., 22.

Zeno presents a scenario with a convenient set of conditions to exemplify his inability to quit smoking on the mutual basis of his being excited by its prohibition as well as his desire to mitigate his jealousy — his thoughts of *sexual* infidelity. His account is particularly convenient, however, because he directs the unreasonable notion of blame at his wife for rendering him a prisoner — which we ought to observe in parallel to the above description of Alfonso.

Nevertheless, although it may seem preposterous of him to deflect responsibility in such a way, going as far as to claim that "[he] had never even considered the possibility of smoking less,"[97] he consistently presents himself throughout the novel as virtually unable to suppress or control his desires or impulses. He will, for instance, smoke to his body's detriment: "I won, and heroically concealed the sickness produced by this strange exploit."[98] Zeno *must* deflect responsibility to his wife because his inability to quit hinges on the delusion of inhibition. If she is not at fault, he can reject the treatment and smoke less, as per his doctor's earlier suggestion. Nevertheless, "this is [his] decision"[99] to settle for an extreme cure which once initiated "must succeed.[100] He then can only explain his inability to quit by his paradoxical desire for this state of irresolution. Zeno's account ultimately depicts how the entire psychoanalytic framework he develops to explain his addiction is merely an extensive means to explain his profound inability to regulate. It is not that he cannot quit because of repressed sexual thoughts and feelings; rather, these "repressed" sexual thoughts and feelings are an intricate system that obscure the

[97] Ibid., 20.

[98] Ibid., 9.

[99] Ibid., 22

[100] Ibid., 20.

overarching issue of his conflict with negotiating the incompatibility between his thoughts and his actions, whereby the body serves as a type of mad conduit to his impulses.

From Zeno's "unconscious" conflict with regulation, the reader unearths from his highly suggestive sexual narration what is actually an inability to make sense of female attraction as a dichotomous division between love and lust, along with the physical body and the mind. In spite of its high suggestivity to the contrary, Zeno never describes a desire to enact what he lets on to be the sexual fantasies he, for instance, has about women he passes down the street: "In my mind I undressed them, leaving only their boots on, I took them into my arms, and I let them go only when I was quite certain that I had known every part of them."[101] Svevo's fantasy to let go of a naked woman, except for their shoes, implies a fetish for control. I argue, however, that Zeno only lets on that his fantasies are sexual because they are imbued with sexual suggestion, for that is just what they are: suggestions. Which is why when the doctor fails to capture what he means and makes allusive comments about the value of sexual desire, that Zeno attempts to "[speak] sincerely, as in Confession,"[102] and further elaborate on his affliction in equally suggestive terms:

> A woman never appeals to me as a whole, but rather… in pieces! In all women I loved feet, if well shod; in many others, a slender neck but also a thick one, and the bosom, if not too heavy. I went on listing female anatomical parts, but the doctor interrupted me. "These parts add up to a whole woman." I then uttered an important statement: "Healthy love is the love that embraces a single, whole woman, including her character and her intelligence." At that time I surely hadn't known such a love; and when I did encounter it, it was unable to give me health. [103]

[101] Ibid., 15.

[102] Ibid., 16.

[103] Ibid., 17.

The description of his love by "pieces" is fetishistic, yet the introduction of his "word" on love problematizes the entire schema of his obsession. The problem with his "fetish" is that he divides the female anatomy into mutable parts which can often be incompatible. If Zeno's fantasy is to know a woman wholly, which is an entire body composed of mutable parts, then it is an impossible task. Zeno's fetish is nothing more than an inability to rationalize how attraction exists in a realm within the duality of mind and body. Without necessarily coming to terms with the inadequacy of his system, Zeno opens an opposing system of dissection towards a finality of the intellect and of character. To know, love a woman wholly, one must be able to love — to fully envelop — their body *and* mind. Zeno's paradoxical self-avoidance, which in his paranoid tendencies conveys ignorance of self, stems from an inability to identify that which is not himself as a non-dualistic totality. He cannot reckon with the fact that a woman might be subject to "change." In fact, he cannot accept that the same is true for himself.

This dynamic is more institutionally pointed in *Portrait*, wherein a significant source of Stephen's paranoia is in attempted negotiation with the incompatibility between his conception of the world and the injustices he experiences at different stages of his sexual maturation. In Chapter I, Stephen's childish effort to verbalize the unjust pandying against him displays his limited ability to contextualize the event, repeating how "unfair and cruel" it had been. He recognizes, nevertheless, that his status as student, "small and young,"[104] is subordinate to that of his superiors, and that "the prefect of studies was a priest but that [he had been] cruel and unfair."[105] Stephen is compelled to speak out for himself, validated by the affirmation of his

[104] Joyce, *Portrait*, 50.

[105] Ibid., 47.

peers, yet he is unsure about his position, which we see in his inner dialogue the concern with the possibility that injustice might prevail:

> The rector would side with the prefect of studies and think it was a schoolboy trick and then the prefect of studies would come in every day the same only it would be worse because he would be dreadfully waxy at any fellow going up to the rector about him.[106]

Stephen's cynical attitude towards the power hierarchy at his school, although limited, reflects a complex level of reflexive thinking whereby his supposition is that the rector would overlook true justice because of what he would assume to be Stephen's cynicism in the first place. With this in mind, it makes sense that Stephen contemplates "whether it might not really be that there was something in his face which made him look like a schemer and he wished he had a little mirror to see,"[107] because assumptions are the most likely cause when injustice has no cause. As Stephen grows older, his reasoning skills improve dramatically, yet his feelings of guilt override and dictate how he might understand his identity outside of its existence in relation to the institutions around him.

By Chapter III, Stephen’s self-consciousness is sophisticated, informed by an erudite knowledge of the humanities, yet his romantic sensitivities prevent him from making rational judgments about how the Catholic Church subordinates him. In Chapter III, Stephen's existential conflict is significantly more poignant than in Chapter I because at this stage of life he must accept his failure to exercise the "choice" to repress his sexual urges, although he also shows no necessary concern until the sermons. In Chapter I he must simply accept that he is "small and

[106] Ibid., 49.

[107] Ibid., 48.

young," but in Chapter III he is in the position to mediate the impulses of his physical body, which under Catholic dogma renders him fully accountable for his sins:

> Every word of it was for him. Against his sin, foul and secret, the whole wrath of God was aimed. The preacher's knife had probed deeply into his diseased conscience and he felt now that his soul was festering in sin. Yes, the preacher was right. God's turn had come. Like a beast in its lair his soul had lain down in its own filth but the blasts of the angel's trumpet had driven him forth from the darkness of sin into light.[108]

Stephen goes through a euphoric phenomenological process of reckoning with the weakness of his soul. The way to justify his inability to self-control is to accept the circular logic of God's grace, whereby it must be true because he is a sinner, and vice-versa. The description of Stephen's experience is highly developed in romantic sentiment, and in its pathos we discover his insight:

> His sin, which had covered him from the sight of God, had led him nearer to the refuge of sinners. Her eyes seemed to regard him with mild pity; her holiness, a strange light glowing faintly upon her frail flesh, did not humiliate the sinner who approached her. If ever he was impelled to cast sin from him and to repent the impulse that moved him was the wish to be her knight. If ever his soul, reentering her dwelling shyly after the frenzy of his body's lust had spent itself, was turned towards her whose emblem is the morning star, *bright and musical, telling of heaven and infusing peace*, it was when her names were murmured softly by lips whereon there still lingered foul and shameful words, the savour itself of a lewd kiss. That was strange. He tried to think how it could be but the dusk, deepening in the schoolroom, covered over his thought.[109] (99)

The latter sentence ambiguously dichotomizes dusk into two distinct yet ultimately singular entities, whose paradoxical functions encapsulate and summarize Stephen's epiphanic experience. The dusk engenders Stephen's experience *and*, as another entity, interferes with the latter process. This circularity captures Stephen's epiphanic process, which can only be

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[108] Ibid., 109.

[109] Ibid., 99.

understood as the mutual dusk-like effect that his sensory experience has on his romantic disposition. Whether or not the dusk is the root cause of his experience, it must also be by virtue of the dusk that he cannot discover a more rational explanation for his insight. This epiphanic programme evolves into Stephen's romanticized aesthetic theory, returning us to the question of whether he becomes "the artist" by the end of the novel, and through which we discover the impossibility of adhering to a dichotomous framework without recourse to either ideological extreme. His defense of either position will be impacted by the (im)perfect incompatibility between the two ends of the spectrum.

We find a possible resolution to this dynamic, whereby Stephen escapes the existential throes of a sexual development inhibited by Catholic dogma, by going into exile from his dominant culture. We catch no glimpse of the exile *in* the narrative, offering us no means of confirming whether he does fulfill the promise of the novel's title: becoming "the artist." The romantic flaws in his theory, however, instruct us as to how we might make sense of this irresolution. Stephen's drive to do away with his sexual subordination to the Church mars his sincere attempt at an aesthetic theory, whereby he prioritizes the "object" over the "subject" as a way to remove sexual and erotic experience from the aesthetic realm. The major implication of this totality is that it denies the Other as a source of embodied experience — after all, what is the "whatness" of an individual?[110] If we turn here to Joyce's editing process of the novel, we find illuminating developments which have direct recourse to our understanding of this irresolution.

[110] For an in-depth analysis of this problem of "whatness" see Druff, James H. “THE ROMANTIC COMPLAINT: THE LOGICAL MOVEMENT OF STEPHEN’S AESTHETICS IN ‘A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN.’” *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1982, pp. 180–88. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/29532159.

At the time of writing the novel, struggling to find a publishing house for *Dubliners*, and having only published the collection of poems *Chamber Music*, Joyce stagnated in the writing of *Stephen Hero*. Joyce was private about his work, discussing it in depth with his brother over letters; he had no one with whom to discuss literature and philosophy in Trieste until he met Svevo. The two met in 1908 after Joyce was assigned to be Svevo's English language private instructor. Svevo already showed proficiency in the language and took pleasure in discussing literature and philosophy with Joyce. On two separate occasions, Joyce exposed Svevo to some of his writing: on one occasion reading out *The Dead* in its entirety to Svevo and his wife Livia, after which Svevo disclosed to Joyce that he too was a published author and gifted him with his two novels — *A Life* and *As a Man Grows Older*.[111] Joyce was deeply impressed by the two works. Later, Joyce presented Svevo with drafts to the first three chapters of Stephen Hero as a language exercise. Joyce, who was not confident about the sermons in the third chapter, received Svevo's immense approval. Concerning the first chapter, however Svevo showed the following apprehensions:

> I think it deals with events devoid of importance and your rigid method of observation and description does not allow you to enrich a fact which is not rich by itself. You should write only about strong things… I do not believe you can give the appearance of strength to things which are in themselves trivial, not important. I must say that everyday life without a problem which could affect strongly your own mind (you would not choose such a novel) you would be obliged to leave your method and find artificial colours to lend to the things the life they wanted in themselves.[112]

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[111] Joyce provided the English translation title to the novel, which from the original Italian would have literally translated to "Senility".

[112] Joyce, James, et al. *Letters of James Joyce*. Viking Press, 1957. p. 227. Furthermore, Davison's analysis is heavily psychoanalytic, insofar as to ascribe Stephen's modified aesthetic theory as a function of his Oedipal conflicts enacted in part through his rapport with the Church and Joyce's trust in Svevo in his search for a paternal figure. Nevertheless, we see in Stanislaus's letter, "the first genuine and spontaneous sign of pleasure in the literary work of an outcast artist"(162).

Joyce eventually makes good use of Svevo's feedback, which we see in the more developed sermons, and later in *Ulysses*'s rich depiction of everyday life, whose great "everyman" is Bloom.[113] Bloom's "everyman" likeness approximates and evades any strict typological claims we might intuit about him. Bloom cannot be understood as a totalistic embodiment of the Weiningerian type, even if he does *at times,* because he does not fit into any stable or normative paradigm of sexuality, religiosity, etc. This should not justify isolating the notion of stereotype from Bloom's portrait.

Rather, I argue that the paradoxical characterization of Bloom's Otherness allows Stephen to recognize the impossibility of Otherness in the first place, which corrects the romantic flaw in his aesthetic theory. Here *Portrait* extends into *Ulysses*, resolving Stephen's *kunstelrroman*. Bloom embodies a "passi(ve/fist)" acceptance of the complex web of contradictions which encompass Modern life: he is non-confrontational towards his wife's adultery, nor is he towards "the citizen": people who "can see the mote in others' eyes but they can't see the beam in their own."[114] What initially seems a passive dismissal of the citizen's antisemitic remarks eventually presents itself as Bloom's sense of confidence towards his Otherness. Stephen, alternatively, struggles with this acceptance, which is why he romantically indulges in his epiphanies. Bloom's acceptance of Modernity boils down to a reckoning with "injustice": "Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it's at the very opposite of that that is really life... Love."[115] Bloom seems to suggest that injustice is what

[113] See Davison, Neil R. "Joyce's Homosocial Reckoning: Italo Svevo, Aesthetics, and 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.'" *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 24, no. 3, 1994, pp. 69–92. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3194849.

[114] Joyce, *Ulysses*, 326.

[115] Ibid., 333.

occurs when force, hatred and history supplant love, yet love is not compatible with *men* and *women* because these are not compatible with each other in the first place, which we see reflected in Molly's affair with another man. The "very opposite of that" refers to a world of injustice where a gendered dichotomy exists between people. Injustice is born not out of difference, but out of stability, which is why he emerges victorious from the episode: not because he acts like a man, but because he cannot. Bloom's "everyman" Otherness allows Stephen to recognize the impossibility of Otherness in the first place, which corrects the romantic flaw in his aesthetic theory. Here *Portrait* extends into *Ulysses*, resolving Stephen's *kunstelrroman*.

Chapter III — The Cultural Underbelly of the Linguistic Self: Deconstruction Analyzed

The paradoxical inter/intra-personal conflict hitherto examined is in direct conversation with what Paul de Man terms "aesthetic ideology," which, as it concerns the problem of identity, of *subjectivity*, becomes a problem for both author and critic. The emergence of deconstructive theory throughout the 60's and 70's attempted to remedy the dichotomous rapport between the author and the critic. On the critical level, critics defend the notion that literature proffers a legitimate linguistic system. On the authorial level, which encompasses a majority portion of the "post-theoretical" view, contends that any analysis of literature is contingent on extra-textual considerations including culture, gender identity and sexuality, history, etc. De Man's position, as the most "rigorous" of all anti-philosophers, anti-critics, is to point out how the fallacious institutional justifications for literature are engendered through self-satisfying logic. De Man contends that critics devise elaborate "theoretical" convictions about narrative tropes in literature — metaphor, allegory, irony, etc. — as legitimate markers of a "literariness" intrinsic to literature:

> Literature is fiction not because it somehow refuses to acknowledge "reality," but because it is not *a priori* certain that language functions according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world. It is therefore not *a priori* certain that literature is a reliable source of information about anything but its own language.[116]

De Man's concern is that language has no legitimate claim to reliable representation of anything but itself, and, therefore, cannot be theorized with respect to literature. It might be theorized with respect to a given novel, to the extent that it encompasses a "linguistic" world of its own that has

[116] See de Man, Paul. *The Resistance to Theory*. University of Minnesota Press, 1986. p. 11

no recourse to the external world.[117] De Man's turn to philosophy is to correlate the critical justification of such theoretical markers as an inevitable turn to the type of Kantian transcendentalism which defines the attachment to intuition as it functions as a legitimate marker of insight in Romanticism.

With this in mind, the central problem in the critical error is a matter of *subjectivity*. Given that de Man ambiguously demystifies the literary institution, what he provides is an entry point into the self-sufficient relational crux of the institution between reader and text. To dissolve this symbiotic relationship, the critic must first acknowledge how the problem of ascribing decidability of language is just as much a function of one's (undecidable) subjectivity:

> Prior to making any valid statement about a distant society, the observing subject must be as clear as possible about his attitude towards his own. He will soon discover, however, that the only way in which he can accomplish this self-demystification is by a (comparative) study of his own social self as it engages in the observations of others, and by becoming aware of the pattern of distortions that this situation necessarily implies.[118]

To understand another, one must first understand oneself as an individual in the mutual process of "observation" between individuals. The critic cannot understand their position if they have recourse to a view of themselves that is not independent of the social world which subjectivizes them. There is no theoretical view of literature that has no recourse to external consideration, and the critic is eager to objectify the other without accepting the inverse proposition. The deconstructive process pontificates the issue of subjectivity by framing it as a necessary aspect of the tradition that the critic's self-preservational "subjectivity" maintains their relationship to

[117] "non-linguistic, that is to say historical and aesthetic, considerations"(de Man 7).

[118] Ibid., 9.

literature.[119] The "subjectless" text, bearing in mind Derrida's claim that "[t]he absence of a center is here the absence of a subject and the absence of an author"(8),[120] encompasses both reader and author. Therefore, if the integrity of any system revolves around the necessarily, mutually-affirming, inadequate relationships between its constituent parts, this in literature must then be the incompatibility between the reader-author-text relationship and all their "subjectivities."

Curiously enough, De Man's earlier works appeal to more existential assessments of "subject(ivity)" and its respective implications on the signifying process/enterprise, in contrast to his later writings/style, both of which we find hybridized in the essay "Autobiography as De-Facement."[121] In it, he challenges the notion of autobiography as genre through an analysis of Wordsworth's autobiographical *Epitaphs*, making the famous claim that "[a]utobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs to some degree, in all texts."[122] Thus,

> The interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge — it does not — but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions.[123]

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[119] "The only problem is the critical moment at which the 'subject' becomes actually evident, or emerges as the invention of a conceptual necessity: this is the moment of Derrida's criticism. For good anti-logocentric reason, Derrida *decides* that deconstruction ought to be subjectless"(47). See Smith, Paul. *Discerning the Subject*. University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

[120] See Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" for a critique of how disciplines (philosophy in this case) On the basis of the conflicting positions the institution *must* engender,enable opposing ideas precisely because they rely on these, insofar as they are unable to provide "foolproof" evaluations of any given institution.

[121] de Man, Paul. “Autobiography as De-Facement.” *MLN*, vol. 94, no. 5, 1979, pp. 919–30. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2906560.

[122] Ibid., 921.

[123] Ibid., 922.

Autobiography is mode and not genre because it defies self-representative and/or textual totalization provided its textual makeup is like that of fiction. De Man's critique draws heavily in opposition to Lejeune's "Pact," inasmuch as the pact dismisses rhetorical distortions to the notion of a "*same*" author writing and *in*-writing. In addition, de Man intentionally works with a piece by Wordsworth to evince his complaint over autobiography as a "specifically pre-romantic and romantic phenomenon."[124] If Wordsworth's "autobiography" fails because it functions through tropological substitutions that prevent "accurate" or consistent self-representation, then autobiography, at least insofar as it essentially exists in the romantic tradition as a fixture of fiction, is strictly a rhetorical enterprise. In no verifiable capacity is it figurative.

Therefore, the Pact cannot assign transcendental authority to the reader regarding the "*authenticity* of the signature and the consistency of the signer's behavior,"[125] for the author *in*/*out* of writing is never the same "subject". The ironic impasse of this dynamic is that autobiography's only deconstructive possibility is to accept the impossibility of its own intended aim, which de Man alludes to:

> The problematic relationship between subject and object that prevails in the sphere of aesthetics is better understood when one considers it from the point of view of the author rather than from the point of view of the reader (or beholder). For the author is directly engaged in the ambiguities of aesthetic invention. As a free agent, his natural tendency would be to expand and to satisfy himself in the world-at-large, but he is constantly frustrated and curtailed by the restrictions that the form imposes upon him.[126] (43)

[124] Ibid., 919.

[125] Ibid., 923.

[126] See page 43 in the essay "The Sublimation of the Self".

According to early de Man, the author is in a position to fabricate as much about themselves as the restrictions of form allow, whereas the reader is presumably less inhibited. De Man assigns importance to the author, and points out the frustration unearthed out of the paradoxical need for narrative forms which preclude authorial subjectivity. The role of the "subject" is crucial to the writings of both Derrida and de Man, even if the latter does not seek to remedy the problem.[127]

This type of analysis might seem unpleasantly deconstructive, reductive on occasion, but it is important to wring out the remains of the long-worn-out question "what is literature?" because contemporary concerns increasingly challenge — in addition to its social implications — how our relationship to specific traditions informs some of our attitudes about the reading experience, both as the physical act of visually identifying words as they occur in the physical world, and as an interpretative act involving a level of embodied experience which exceeds the parameters of these conventional premises. We do not *read* autobiographies of the Romantic period under the same set of pretexts that we would *read* those in the postmodern vein, particularly because our attitudes towards the "author" (as well as the critic) and the text have changed dramatically with the advent of post-structuralism.[128]

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[127] Insofar as the aim of this piece is to push forward a deconstructive examination of certain developments in deconstructive theory in literary criticism, I employ many "literary" terms which in this context are highly ambiguous and unstable in a manner that reflects the complexity of these developments as they broach larger questions about literature. More specifically, although Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man exercise relatively conflicting deconstructive ideologies, the notion of literature I aim to problematize is that which relies on pragmatic engagement — supposing there is any singular viable alternative to this necessity. In an interview… Derrida alludes to some of these basic problems around "literariness" — of historical context and subjectivity:

> The literary event is perhaps more of an event (because less natural) than any other, but by the same token it becomes very "improbable," hard to verify. No *internal* criterion can guarantee the essential "literariness" of a text. There is no assured essence or existence of literature. If you proceed to analyze all the elements of a literary work, you will never come across literature itself, only some traits which it shares or borrows, which you can find elsewhere too, in other texts, be it a matter of language, the meanings or the referents ("subjective" or "objective"). And even the convention which allows a community to come to an agreement about the literary status of this or that phenomenon remains precarious, unstable and always subject to revision. (73 — See Derrida, Jacques., and Derek. Attridge. *Acts of Literature*. Routledge, 1992.)

[128] Throughout the 70's and 80's we have the most compelling attempts in the structuralist and formalist traditions to validate claims about the "natural" system which unravels the "literariness" of a text, in opposition to

The back-and-forth motion of Barthes's critical trajectory, as an important digression, evinces the complexity of this debate. In 1967, Barthes wrote one of the still most recognized and influential essays in criticism, a landmark of the post-structuralist ethos — "The Death of the Author" — and virtually dedicated the remainder of his intellectual career to remedy the impossibilities of the essay's premise. His most significant (material) contribution to criticism, *S/Z* offers what is still arguably the most compelling methodological approach to literary analysis, whereby it dismisses the author's role in the text's meaning and renders limitless the analytic possibilities in the text, inasmuch as the reader can always (re-)engage with the text given their ever-changing perspective on it.

Shrewd as his attempt was, Barthes eventually recants his stance on authorship just a few years later through *The Pleasure of the Text*, and also *writes* what I would argue to be the most groundbreaking ("anti") autobiography since Augustine's *Confessions*. For a thinker whose intellectual ethos sprouted out of the revolutionary magnitude in one of the seminal essays of post-structuralism, Barthes subverted the entire foundation of his reputation by somehow producing an equally compelling and insightful conception of literature on the other side of the "authorial" spectrum, whereby his "autobiography" breaks apart any authoritative or singular representation of the self.[129] Barthes "converts" his critical journey through the clash and

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the growing concern over the effect of bias and social construction on the readerly experience — mostly derived from the critical theory of Michel Foucault — whereby concerns over concepts like institutional agency bleed into literary criticism and become incisive challenges to the notion of *authority* (both that of the reader and the author), of the split between fact and fiction.

[129] Paul Jay describes how his autobiography, "eschews both memory and biography, and insists that writing autobiographically is a thoroughly creative activity. [It] treats of the distance between the biographical and the written self by affirming it, deconstructing "Barthes" into a group of fragments which are arranged under a series of names, topics, and concepts… Barthes's text constitutes a denial of the "fiction" of the subject as anything other than a creaton of human consciousness and human language… Barthes's *Barthes* strives to create dis-order, to "halt", "deflect," and to "divide the subject from its "destiny." This "destiny" is for Barthes not a Natural one, but the historiically constructed idea that the "self," as "whole" and "recovered" (a "single enormous network") can restore itself in, or by writing a text… Barthes's text seeks to deconstruct — or to reconstruct — the ontological foundations

(in)compatibility of "opposing" theoretical methodologies — structuralism, post-structuralism, formalism — into a deconstructive paradigm of creative writing which effectively resolves into the uncertain crux of the subject.

The deconstructive project was particularly significant to these conceptual developments because it magnified and propelled this concern over the legitimate status of literature, of the author/text/reader, as a relational institution. The deconstructive pr(e/o)mise, is that it can ("self-consciously") delineate an institution's mechanistic self-sufficiency, and simultaneously its own, unearthing the *center* which holds it together — and this *center* virtually always boils down to language. Derrida and de Man attempted to demystify critical justifications in the formalist and structuralist traditions which privilege the notion that institutions which rely on language are self-sufficient, that they exist extrinsically to its linguistic center.[130] Derrida argues that in the same way that disciplines like literature and philosophy have a center outside of themselves, namely language, that they *must* therefore reject a deconstructive notion of language because they must exist within an ever-cyclical state of a self-satisfactory rapport with their *center*.[131] Competing methodologies in a discipline, therefore, may seem to be in competition, but this

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of the autobiographical text. See Jay, Paul L. “Being in the Text: Autobiography and the Problem of the Subject.” *MLN*, vol. 97, no. 5, 1982, pp. 1055–57. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2905976.

[130] Derrida: "The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the torality *has its center elsewhere*. The center is not the center. The concept of centered structure — although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the *epistémé* as philosophy or science — is contradictorily coherent. And, as always, coherence in contradiction expresses the force of a desire. ("Structure, Sign, and Play" 1)

[131] "*There is no sense* in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to attack metaphysics. We have no language — no syntax and no lexicon — which is alien to this history; we cannot utter a single destructive proposition which has not already slipped into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest"(2).

same "opposition" can only exist within a particular discursive framework which *allows*, *engenders* their existence in the first place.

Although both have left indelible marks in literature and philosophy, neither Derrida nor de Man fit the category either of critic or philosopher — insofar as their anti-institutional stances predictably meet so significant resistance in these disciplines, although Derrida combats that irony. Deconstruction can only exist because of its circular opposition to *itself*, which is without question part of its process and claims. However, if Derrida challenges institutional self-justifications, it is with the express aim of addressing not just the problem of language, but the center of language, since literature and philosophy, in their claims of mutual exclusivity to dig deeper at a "purity" of language that is unaffected by institutional demands, have their own set of *pre*-institutional demands, something which speaks to the ineffable in the human experience. Deconstruction resembles literature in the sense that it is equal parts framework, process and "result"; it does not seek to dismantle systems and institutions, although it recognizes that these are invariably "incomplete" regardless of how many of its self-justifications one might be able to deconstruct and repurpose. Rather, deconstruction aims to simultaneously — and perpetually — deconstruct and reconstruct how language maintains its own pragmatic status as such, as well as that of different institutions. At this point, De Man and Derrida begin to diverge in their deconstructive activities: whereas de Man seeks to debunk the entire critical tradition with no particular sensitivity for material considerations, Derrida affirms and debunks his own presence *in* the writing, the problem of his *subjectivity*.

In de Man's case, he is less overtly self-aware about the impact of his subjectivity, although he is careful to efface the traces of subjective inconsistency in his writing, even he falls

prey to a type of "aesthetic ideology." If we turn for a moment to de Man's 1964 review of Jean Paul Sartre's autobiographical work *The Words* — here through Paul John Eakin's account — we discover the partial source of his concern with subjectivity:

> Paul de Man found the tightness and rigor of the composition, especially in the first part of the book, to be at odds with "the autobiogaphical genre," in which "narrative always remains open and seemingly erratic." "The people, events, and details that occur in an autobiography," he continues, "may well be the passions involved whenever a man speaks about himself, but they occur *without plan or interpretation, the way things happen in actual experience*." Given the assumption that human existence is essentially non-narrative or even anti-narrative in character, the concept of an autobiographical narrative would be a contradiction in terms.[132]

It is worth first noting that the change in attitude on de Man's part largely reflects his departure from existential concerns to a more rigid rhetorical examination of text and language. With that in mind, it is curious to consider how his conception of "the way things happen in actual experience" has larger implications not just in literature but in one's understanding of self. Any type of narrative, which must then apply to any individual's conception of the phenomenal world and their presence *in* it, is a type of fiction, although not necessarily of the literary kind. If Sartre's *The Words* are too manicured for de Man's taste, what would de Man have to say about a work which is "anti-narrative," to use Eakin's term? If the text can be explained in terms of historical and aesthetic considerations, then the reader has authority over the legitimacy of the claims provided in the autobiographical text and has authority over the "subject." What happens then, however, when the "subject" extrapolates this dynamic and auto-problematizes, when the *writer* actively distorts the closure of the literary act to the degree that the "meaning" of the text becomes not of its contents but of its substantiality?

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[132] Eakin, *Fictions*, 130.

What would de Man, for instance, have said about *Roland Barthes* or *Camera Lucida*?[133] I find it convenient that de Man never acknowledges either of these last works by Barthes which challenge the entire notion of fiction (and literature): they do not ask what is the *meaning* of the signifier or what is literature, but what is "*is*"? De Man's resistance to this type of postmodern outlook reveals an ironic impasse in his deconstructive ethos. At the same time that he is one of the most rigorous of all "literary" critics — and, to what I can only guess would be his disappointment, the descriptor "literary" suits him extremely well here — and his engagement with text verges on the deconstructive ideal of "subjectlessness," his discourse stagnates when the two centers, language and *being*, intersect. He refuses to deconstruct this relationship on the basis of what becomes *his* aesthetic ideology, which is especially ironic given his praise of Barthes's "theoretical challenge" in the 1972 essay "Roland Barthes and the Limits of Structuralism":[134] "It has to be taken all the more seriously since the particular quality of Barthes's writing is due to his desire to believe in its theoretical foundations and to repress doubts that would break its stability"(186). De Man inadvertently predicts the irony of how this assertion might have just as well been addressed to him and eventually would . If narrative is limited to a type of "reading," and there can never be a categorizable, identifiable subject, then de Man signs the critical equivalent to Lejeune's autobiographical contract, whereby he validates his own enterprise with the conclusion that there is no deconstruction past the baseline of narrative and the self.

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[133] In *Barthes*, Barthes self-references the problematic nature of an autobiographical process. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes problematizes the nature of autobiographical narrative with the inclusion of photography.

[134] De Man, Paul. "Roland Barthes and the Limits of Structuralism." *Yale French Studies*, vol. 77, no. 77, 1990, pp. 177–90, https://doi.org/10.2307/2930153.

Derrida, on the other hand, while he shares similar concerns and insistences with de Man, does not resist the pragmatic implications of "indulging" in the deconstruction of this impasse. His more "literary" writings, rather, treat the "impossibility" of writing in their fundamental rapport with the individual, with human experience. De Man incisively critiques phenomenological epistemology precisely because it is the closest thing to the (*un)solvable* "reason" for/of literature. Derrida is deeply interested in engaging with these notions of phenomenal experience, self-invention/creation/representation, hybridity and alterity, insofar as he makes the following declaration in an interview:[135]

> No doubt I hesitated between philosophy and literature, giving up neither, perhaps seeking obscurely a place from which the history of this frontier could be thought or even displaced — in writing itself and not only by historical or theoretical reflection. And since what interests me today is not strictly called either literature or philosophy, I'm amused by the idea that my adolescent desire — let's call it that — should have directed me toward something in writing which was neither the one nor the other. What was it?
>
> "Autobiography" is perhaps the least inadequate name, because it remains for me the most enigmatic, the most open, even today. At this moment, here, I'm trying, in a way that would commonly be called "autobiographical," to remember what happened when the desire to write came to me, in a way that was as obscure as it was compulsive, both powerless and authoritarian. Well, what happened then was just like an autobiographical desire. At the "narcissistic" moment of "adolescent" identification… this was above all the desire to inscribe merely a memory or two. I say "only," though I already felt it as an impossible and endless task. Deep down, there was something like a lyrical movement toward confidences or confessions. (34)

Insofar as we understand Derrida to be preoccupied with the historicist nature of institutional impossibility, his attitude towards the readerly act is not so different from de Man's. Literature and philosophy meet at the opaque region of knowledge that verges on arbitrariness, to the extent that to develop any sort of interpretation about anything requires an explanation of selfhood, of

[135] Derrida, Jacques., and Derek. Attridge. *Acts of Literature*. Routledge, 1992.

being.[136] Derrida correlates *his* readerly experience with the process of self-discovery/invention, whereby the "adolescent" desire Derrida speaks of is at the heart of the deconstructive conflict. What Derrida loosely calls an "autobiographical" act implies the impalpable overlap between knowledge of self and of everything without — philosophy, literature, language, etc.

Insofar as Derrida's conceptual ethos revolves around an insistence on historicity, an acknowledgment of the impossibility of representation without recourse to the influence of historical or cultural equivocity, deconstruction cannot be removed from literary criticism precisely because it seeks to remedy the state of the author-reader-text relationship. Derrida may be less concerned with the legitimacy of his "literary" readings since the larger concern in his investigations, first evinced in his (Joycean counter-) reading of Edmund Husserl, is to evaluate the dimensions of representation which might exist outside of a partial self, "[w]ithout the apparent fall back into language and thereby into history, a fall which would alienate the ideal purity of sense, sense would remain an empirical formation imprisoned as fact in a psychological subjectivity — *in the inventor's head.*"[137] Husserl's theory of univocity towards a return to the Platonic ideal, Derrida argues, cannot occur without the *psychological* subjectivity of the "observer" because for there to be a referential exchange between observer and the ("pure ideal") observed, language must unfold. Joyce, on the other hand, Derrida argues also aims towards the Platonic ideal but by "overload[ing] [each atom of writing] with the whole memory of man:

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[136] "The term *being* is for Derrida continually and continuously involved with the founding philosophical question of "What is?" Whether in an investigation of the individual existence of particular phenomena (the letters of a word, the construction of a book, the function of the pen inscribing writing) or as part of an investigation og Being as philosophical concept, Derrida follows Heidegger in re-marking the term with crossed lines in order to remind us that the investigation of Being as a philosophy and one that is ongoing. Indeed, the notion of Being as an ongoing process of becoming would seem to be one of the reasons why Derrida finds Joyce's writings such a powerful attraction." (xiii — see Roughley, Alan. *Reading Derrida Reading Joyce*. University Press of Florida, 1999.)

[137] Roughley, 3..

mythologies, religions, philosophies, sciences, psychoanalysis, literatures."[138] Joyce, Derrida argues, imbues language with all the *equivocal* facets of historicist consideration in order to ultimately break free from them, Derrida terms this "equivocity." In the famous 1984 lectures to the American Joycean Foundation, Derrida simultaneously describes Joyce's works in the magnitude of their greatness, at the same time that he ultimately suggests that there is no legitimacy to any of his claims because there is no universal language to institutionalize them. More blatantly, Derrida takes issue with his own presence in the symposium: the French Algerian at an *American* Joycean gathering.

Throughout the lectures, moreover, to describe this paradox, inasmuch as the institution presumes some type of exclusion or distinction between that which is acceptable/conceivable discourse about Joyce's writing, Derrida problematizes the sheer possibility of interpretation due to "chance" associative "encounters." In this sense, Derrida elaborates an ambiguously "possible" reading of Joyce which might perhaps only emerge through the unpredictable overlap between his "self" — composed of a multi-faceted identity — and his experiences in the world, which Roughley analyzes:

> This notion of a "chance" encounter" and the play of randomness in his reading of *Ulysses* is a rhetorical strategy that simultaneously re-marks the risks operating in the play of writing. The position of the "I" in language can offer no more than a simulacrum of stability and control. The alterity of language and the "other" of the "I" are always at work in a way that can undermine the seemingly confident control of language by, and from, the position of the "I." Derrida allows the elements of randomness and chance to contaminate the readings of *Ulysses* within which he prepared his address to the symposium; but as that address was prepared in advance, the "chance encounter" could only *appear* as chance to the audience. This enables Derrida to use chance and randomness as a way of bringing his audience to an experience of his, and their own, indecision.[139]

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[138] Ibid., 27.

[139] Ibid., 70

If we consider that, according to Roughley, and implied in Derrida's lecture,

> [w]hat makes the numerous languages, puns, typographical unorthodoxies, geometrical figures, and sigla of *Finnegans Wake* intelligible to some extent is the incorporation of various univocal strands (the base language of English, the recognizable geometric patterns, the encoding of the sigla in English, the recognizable song rhythms, and so on) within the text.[140]

That can only be the case because Derrida finds himself in the unique position to go through the "*reading*" of the text within the parameters of his available experience; the lecture is called, after all, "*Ulysses* Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce" because the entire experience of language, according to Derrida, is conditional: conditional on every chance aspect of one's (phenomenological) experiences which might inform a stable understanding of that which the language may stand for.

At which point can we raise important points of inquiry as to what may be some of these conditions for Derrida, and is there any degree to which they may exercise some legitimate function, some comprehensive, understandable reading? To what degree can we distance Derrida's ideological positions from the integrity of their sources of representation, like when he claims that "[t]he only thing that begins by reflecting itself is history. And this fold, this furrow is the Jew… the situation of the Jew becomes exemplary of the situation of the poet, the man of speech and writing."[141] We know from his reading, and his general interest in *Ulysses*, that he was "attentive to Bloom's status as a Jew," insofar as he "also pursues his own Judaism in his discussion of those writings, where he identifies himself with Bloom's identification as 'ben Bloom Elijah' and points out that he 'too [is] called Elijah: this name… was given me on my

[140] Ibid., 7.

[141] Davison, 7.

seventh day."[142] We know additionally that a major concern in *Ulyssean* criticism and Derrida's writings, so much so that it is at the basis of cultural studies, refers to alterity, to difference, which in the following quote pertains to critic's observation of his reading, but which effectively corresponds to *his* reading of Bloom:

> For reasons pertaining to the structure of the corpus, of the project and signature, one cannot secure any principle of truth or legitimacy. Therefore you also have the feeling that, since nothing can surprise you from within, something finally might happen to you from an unpredictable outside.[143]

In the same way that Derrida, the non-normative "Joycean [~~inter~~]national,"[144] is a source of expansion in the Joycean tradition by virtue of his *difference* — which in Derrida's vein I keep here in the "English" — to its conventions, Derrida's understanding of Bloom stems from the same type of engagement, which would explain the coincidentally ambiguous and self-reflexive reference to "the extraordinary exchange between Bloom and Stephen on the motif of *belonging*:"

> — But I suspect, Stephen interrupted, that Ireland must be important because it belongs to me.
> — What belongs? Queried Mr. Bloom, bending, fancying he was perhaps under some misapprehension. Excuse me. Unfortunately I didn't catch the latter portion. What was it you? {...}
> {Stephen then hastens matters:} — We can't change the country. Let us change the subject.[145]

What is *belongs*? and to whom/what? Does Stephen or Ireland? Does France or Algerian-born Derrida? Is "what was it you?" that which Stephen *is*? Is the "subject" Ireland? Can Ireland be a

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[142] Roughley, 18.

[143] Mitchell, 62.

[144] Ibid., 59.

[145] Ibid., 45.

subject? Is a "subject" a "subject"? is a *subject* a "subject"? Derrida premeditates in a chain of cyclicality which almost seems inadvertent, but which effectively broaches the question of identity and alterity that, in addition to Derrida's, pervades Joyce's works. Criticism and literary authorship, on this level, derive from a similar phenomenological resource of selfhood.

Derrida, therefore, frames Joyce at the center of his argument to the degree that the only way out of doing injustice to him is by "*being in memory of him*… not necessarily to remember him, no, but to be in his memory, to inhabit a memory henceforth greater than all your finite recall can gather up,"[146] he allows his reader to recognize this statement in application to himself — insofar as Derrida "*conveniently*" privileges Joyce's greatness[147] — and to *oneself*. This premise, at this point, begs the pragmatic consideration of when, if at all, "chance" ceases to explain external interest in a particular "theme," point of interpretation. In other words, to what degree is Joyce's writing "*universal*(ly) experiential" — in this case with reference to questions of identity — to justify either some substantial aspect of the text or some legitimate claim about literature, about readership — presuming such a divide exists?

> A text by Joyce is simultaneously the condensation of a scarcely delimitable history. But this condensation of history, of language, of the encyclopedia, remains here indissociable from an *absolutely* singular event, an *absolutely* singular signature, and therefore also of a date, of a language, of an autobiographical inscription. In a minimal autobiographical trait can be gathered the greatest potentiality of historical, theoretical, linguistic, philosophical culture — that's really what interests me.[148]

Overall, Derrida's stance implies that there is autobiographical activity in both reading and writing. He does not seem to suggest, however, that there is a necessary point of recognition

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[146] Ibid., 24.

[147] Ibid., 59.

[148] Attridge, 43.

on the reader's part of the autobiographical trait in the writing. Following his description throughout the interview, we may judge that such an overlap is not necessary, for any *reader* can only be sufficiently able to relate to any type of literature, at least insofar as it has some semblant aspect of *experience* — and that insofar as the reader can make any type of judgment about what that might be in the first place. In this sense, it may not be necessary for Derrida to identify what is autobiographical in Joyce's writing by virtue of identifying *with* it, but it is all too coincidental to suppose that by the same token that Derrida *is able to* engage with *Ulysses* on the particular basis of his being Jewish, that we could not make any observations about Joyce's autobiographical relationship with Judaism and Jewishness, especially with the necessary inclusion of Svevo to the discourse. Paradoxically, if we accept my readings of Joyce's texts, Derrida's identification can only occur on a "literary" level at the instances where a process of identification allows for it, which in the case of *Ulysses* is in Stephen's final "anti-epiphany.

Conclusion — Reading Derrida's Joyce in the Presence of Svevo's Lecture

In 1927, the Milanese newspaper *Il Convegno* approached Svevo to present a lecture on Joyce and *Ulysses*,[149] which at that point in time it had a slim Italian audience. Throughout the lecture, Svevo presents a series of inaccuracies about Joyce's personal life, including mild distortions about his character. Svevo, the master ironist, however, frames these in as flattering a guise as might allow him to paint the following basic picture of Joyce:

> In Joyce's culture there is a marked Italian bias, accentuated by the desire, which was very lively at some periods of his life, to feel less English. In *Ulysses*, whenever it suits him, he makes free use of some of our racy turns of speech, leaving the English reader, if he is curious on the point, to get his Italian dictionary.[150]

Svevo's aim, in part, is to depict a Joyce whose existential concerns about identity motivate his authorial interests and activities. Svevo describes Joyce's debt to Italian culture as an intentional, personally motivated, departure from his feelings of Otherness to the "whatness" of being English, which in this case ambiguously refers to nationality and language. Stanislaus produced the English translation to this lecture, and he keeps the "English" from Svevo's original "*inglese*" with its ambiguous referential source.[151]

Stanislaus's *choice*, at least initially, to confuse Joyce's nationality, disregarding what he would have known to be major resentment on Joyce's part, merely relays the purposeful ambiguity of Svevo's original claim. As Svevo proceeds with the lecture, the term reappears and subverts the *reader's* initial suspicions because at this point its semantic purpose is to pluralize

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[149] Svevo, Italo. (1950). *James Joyce*. City Lights Books.

[150] The pages to the text I have access to are unnumbered.

[151] In the same way that words in the *English* language are capitalized when referential to language and nationality, the inverse is true in Italian — "*italiano*".

Joyce's feelings of Otherness towards English as language — a compound to national/cultural identification:

> [Joyce] is twice a rebel, against England and against Ireland. He hates England and would like to transform Ireland. Yet he belongs so much to England that like a great many of his Irish predecessors he will fill pages of English literary history and not the least splendid ones; and he is so Irish that the English have no love for him. They are out of sympathy with him.

If Joyce seeks to be less "English" it is because his status as "English" speaker is neither recognized by the "English" as such or by his Irish kin as being of their kind. Svevo presents a layered double consciousness to preface and justify a paternalistically affectionate, and mostly sincere picture of the idiosyncratic Joyce. We see this, for instance, when Svevo reframes Joyce's arrogance as the lingering trace of youthful pride, and sums up "Joyce's outward life at Trieste" as "a spirited struggle to support his family," where in reality Joyce was constantly in debt on account of his habit of binge drinking, often turning to Svevo for financial support.[152] Svevo might distort or omit some aspects of Joyce's *narrative*, but not only is it out of pragmatic interest, it performs a rhetorical function: it ironizes his distance to Joyce *in* the text.

Svevo's speech cannot exclusively fit either the category of criticism or homage, and yet it does both and neither when he completely overlooks his autobiographical parallels in the text. Otherwise, we would have to accept the unusual degree to which he circumvents identifying himself within Joyce's work *and* the material in his speech, especially when he develops intelligent considerations about the nature and function of autobiographical writing, especially as it applies to *Portrait*, "the story of [Joyce's] youth:"

[152] "Svevo agreed to pay for a year's lessons in advance, giving Joyce exactly what he needed. (Svevo once wrote to Livia [his wife], 'Poor Joyce… We have got a fine leech on our hands" (Hartshorn 68).

> Dedalus comes to the point of feeling the Jew Bloom to be a kind of father to him, while Bloom for his part, amid dreams and adventures, is also aware of a sense of fatherhood. The incident is plausible because Bloom has lost his son, and Stephen would like to find some substitute for his own living father, whose tenor of life is enough to explain Stephen's mood of despair. The approach is rendered possible by other reasons. The Jews and the Irish are both nations whose languages are dead. Stephen, moreover, is attracted by one who is very far from his own way of thinking, and feels a relief in communion with one who eschews all the culture that obsesses Stephen. One must allow that Stephen is less convinced of belonging to Bloom and never admits it explicitly, while Bloom proclaims his paternal affection and feels its duties and responsibilities.

Stephen's attraction to Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* describes Joyce's ambivalence towards his sense of national and cultural identity. Stephen identifies with Bloom because Bloom embodies a Jewish-Irish Otherness that is at a more complex normative distance to the "English" *center* of his Irish Otherness. Stephen, one degree removed from Bloom's Otherness, can identify with Bloom's "unpredictable outside." With this in mind, it verges on the absurd that Svevo dismisses his centrality in the exchange: "Joyce, as he would say himself, drew Dedalus forth from his pocket, while he had to go to seek Bloom in the wide world,"[153] Whether this is Svevo's mastery of irony at play or sheer self-effacing modesty — which are not mutually exclusive— the overlaps between he and Bloom are *fantastic*, even if certain physical and/or intellectual characteristics mismatch. Svevo's analysis of Stephen's rapport with Bloom is as acceptable as it is autobiographical, granted it would be naive to treat Svevo's obliviousness as a casual occurrence. Thus, might we be able to look at it as a reversal of the above analysis of *Ulysses*, whereby Svevo might self-efface to convey acknowledgment of the autobiographical implications in the novel, allowing him to publicly retribute Joyce's homage with an affirmation to their father-son relationship?

[153] To which Davison responds: "Humility or diplomacy aside, Svevo may not have recognized that the 'wide world' in which Joyce sought Bloom was ultimately the Schmitz villa"(166).

If we accept this position, then we are witnessing Derrida's description of "greatness," which will prove important to quote to its full extent:

> There is first of all the greatness of whoever writes in order to give, in giving, and therefore in order to give to forget the gift and the given, what is given and the act of giving. Beyond any return any circulation, any circumference. This is the only way of giving, the only possible – and impossible – way. The only possible way – as impossible. Before any restitution, symbolic or real, before any gratitude, the simple memory, in truth the mere awareness of the gift, by giver or receiver, annuls the very essence of the gift. The gift must open or break the circle, remain without return, without a sketch, even a symbolic one, of gratitude. Beyond any consciousness, of course, but also beyond any symbolic structure of the unconscious. Once the gift is received, the work having worked to the extent of changing you through and through, the scene is other and you have forgotten the gift and the giver. Then the work is "loveable," and if the "author" is not forgotten, we have for him or her a paradoxical gratitude, which is however the only gratitude worth its name if it is possible, a simple gratitude without ambivalence. That is what's called love, I'm not saying that it happens, perhaps it never *presents itself*, and the gift I'm describing can doubtless never make a present. At least one can dream of this possibility, and it is the idea of a writing that gives.[154]

Derrida's description of "greatness" is virtually the type of love I extract out of Bloom's resistance, which in *Ulysses* is its own type of existential gift to Stephen. If "greatness" is this type of love, and greatness can never make itself present, then how could I possibly identify this love in the first place? It was already made, nonetheless, before my exposure to Derrida's lecture, and before my exposure to *Ulysses*. Whether I am in memory of Derrida or Joyce, if either, I do not know, and neither could Derrida. It would prove unwise to defend either position, however, because it supposes a stable place of origin.

Joyce exists in memory of other things and people, one of them being Svevo, whom Joyce "translates" into the "English" of *Ulysses.* Joyce's interest in Svevo, inasmuch as we see him characterized in Bloom's character, stems from a partial identification with Svevo's non-belonging status as a Jewish-Austrian-Italian individual who speaks and writes in the

[154] Mitchell, 24.

Triestine dialect about highly autobiographical characters who are in stark odds with Modern life. They feel emasculated, uncertain about their status as members of middle-class Italian society. He, nevertheless, self-effaces from his writing, problematizing a crucial contributor to his non-belonging: his ambivalent Jewish identity. His characters, as well as he, are often linked to Weiningerian descriptions, which is not a fair assessment if we accept it in comparison to the loveable Bloom, or in the context of other paranoid literature. Like psychoanalysis, Weiningerian theory is a paranoid tradition which attempts to remedy the imperfection of subjectivity by typifying intangible aspects of human experience. All of Svevo's protagonists exhibit an attempt to resist that push, perpetuating the paradoxical instability of their subjectivity.

Although it may seem uncompelling, we see this happen on a critical level, where you have individuals like Paul de Man and Derrida who so incisively probe at the problem of subjectivity so as to justify their endeavors by that same insistence, which we see in de Man's early antisemitic speech, and in Derrida's active acknowledgment of the importance of his Jewish identity to his ideas. The "Jewish" element which overlaps across these different figures, considering the many conceptual overlaps I have hereby exposed between them, is curious, but only insofar as we buy into Vico's theory of cyclical history of human consciousness, which is one of the dominant theoretical forces across all of Joyce's works. To the extent that it exercises a similar type of greatness, that "it is the thing itself,"might we say that Joyce is in memory of him? Yes, which then requires us to turn to do the same for Vico all the way to the first syllable of recorded time. Nevertheless, that is precisely what Vico's theory drives forward, the notion that a cyclical condition like this reflects development of human civilization as they came to (verbal) consciousness. If according to Derrida the gift of greatness, what I have presented as the

phenomenal transaction of love, can never be made present, then what remains unseen in these interpersonal relationships is the absence of the Other. What Derrida describes as the being in memory of someone means being in memory of oneself, whose chance and contextual Otherness is the only source of explanation to a “greatness” about writing. The gift of writing then is that it can never make the author into anything; it can never truly Other or make oneself Other.

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