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***THE DEATH OF THE NARRATOR AND
THE AUTHOR'S REBIRTH AS A TWOFOLD
PLAYWRIGHT'S SELF-REFLEXIVE ACTANT
IN JAMES JOYCE'S ULYSSES***

Keywords: *dramatic narration; self-reflexive; the postcreation; parallax or the parallax drift of so-called fixed stars; path; passants; apophrades; tessera.*

Abstract: *To apply the cycle of birth, death and rebirth metaphorically to James Joyce's Ulysses, we interpret as the 'exitus' of the narrator the term introduced in 1932 by Joseph Warren Beach in The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique, 'Exit author' (which designates the obliteration of the author's traces through the elimination of any direct narrating agencies in the text of experimental modernist narratives). Two keywords, one used in mid-book by Stephen Dedalus (in Oxen of the Sun), the other, by Leopold Bloom in the novel's last but one episode (Ithaca), explain, from within the Bloomsday story, the progression of the Ulysses text in the absence of a narrator. "The postcreation" (U 14. 294) and "the parallax or parallax drift of so called fixed stars", from U 17.1052-3) do this because they are both pronouncements made on the characters' 'paths' and cause Stephen and Mr Bloom to become 'passants'. The 'path' and 'passants' doublet, proposed by Peter Rabinowitz, in the 2005 Blackwell Companion to Narrative Theory, circumscribe the implied author's field of forces kept going between the postcreative and parallax poles; they are also the self-reflexive poles of Joyce's chronologically very careful narrative. These self-reflexive terms 'rescue' in (textual) action the 'dead' narrator and mediate the author's unmistakable 'rebirth'. Thanks to the Bloomsday crossing of the specific passants' paths in Ulysses, Joyce readers can acknowledge the fulfillment of the dramatic desideratum pronounced by Stephen Dedalus in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Chapter V): that genuinely advanced art should present its images in complete autonomy from the artist.*

The present argument is one of this reader's attempts to simplify the complexity of *Ulysses* by making manifest the coherence and cohesion of the author's image, which implements an earlier programmatic (and revolutionary) statement made by Stephen Dedalus speaking to his friend Lynch (in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* chapter V)

. . . art necessarily divides itself into three forms progressing from one to the next. These forms are: the lyrical form, the form wherein the artist presents his image in immediate relation to himself; the epical form, the form wherein he presents his image in mediate relation to himself and to others; the dramatic form, the form wherein he presents his image in immediate relation to others (Joyce 231-2)

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And, one page later, the superiority effects of the dramatic form in respect to the lyrical and the epic ones is expressed in nearly transcendental terms:

The esthetic image in the dramatic form is life purified in and reprojected from the human imagination. The mystery of esthetic, like that of material creation, is accomplished. The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails. (Joyce 233)

In light of the above, we assume that the greater accomplishment of *Ulysses* by comparison to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is essentially dramatic and performative in nature, since the 1922 text goes well beyond the earlier merely declarative power of the modernist agenda (introduced in 1916) – just as the production of a show exceeds, while implementing it, the blueprint of a script.

On the one hand, in *Ulysses*, the artist Stephen Dedalus is reborn because he acquires a maturer status: he can be shown to create in action “more than a capful of light odes” (*U* 14. 1119¹) – to quote the deprecating words uttered in *Oxen of the Sun* by another young man in Stephen’s entourage, Vincent Lenehan. The latter is mistrustful of the status as a creator of young Dedalus and implying that his local renown by far exceeds his actual artistic output. Readers of *Ulysses* know that this is no longer the case of the artist who, of course, is no longer a young man by the time he becomes the implied author of the book. We propose to show how gratuitous such disparaging words which could be addressed to the creator before the publication of the finished *Ulysses* can be – and to examine the implications of this fact. These derogatory words are uttered in an episode whose protagonists, in their majority young men, exchange buckshee words with loose tongues. In fact, the belittling words have already been contradicted in action once before the time when the ridiculously serious artist thrown among a herd of banterers makes his pronouncement about the postcreation; and they will be contradicted again in *Oxen of the Sun*, not long after the moment of their pronouncement: “Mark me now. In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation. *Omnis caro ad te veniet* ” (*U* 14. 292-4). Being uttered to drunken ears and by a drunken voice, while some medical students are waiting in the lobby of a Dublin maternity hospital to help with the difficult delivery of a baby in the ward upstairs and are drinking with their friends – these words of wisdom with clear Biblical, sacramental echoes, may go unnoticed. To save them, one must return to the carefully designed details of a text that places its clues as attentively as the ones in a mystery story which must allow the detective mind to figure out what is hidden about a crime, so as to create the final account about it and convince outsiders.

In fact, ‘the postcreation’ is a keyword for understanding, in connection with Stephen Dedalus, what is happening in the novel *Ulysses*. After showing, in what

¹ All the in-text references to the *Ulysses* text shall be, in accordance with the standard, to the Gabler 1986 edition, marked with the capital letter U in italics, followed by the number of the episode and the line notations. This quotation is from the fourteenth episode of *Ulysses*, *Oxen of the Sun*, not long before its ending.

follows, how the postcreative pronouncement arranges the details, which come both before and after it, in the discourse, and how roughly the same thing happens when focusing on the other protagonist of the book, it will be possible to put a twenty-first century narratological name on the Joycean writing strategy. With its ingrained irony, ‘the method’ which advances the image of the artist “refined out of existence” (as the second quotation from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* put it) consists in making weighty pronouncements whose letter is contradicted by their immediate context, yet saved in action (dramatically). The reader is, of course, taunted by this strategy of the artist before realizing what it is conducive to – something which is in keeping with the series of stage happenings that carry drama audiences to and fro while following the progression in the present of theatrical art. The deleterious effect of the novel’s artist, Stephen Dedalus, uttering a drunken sermon about the sacramental postcreation reserved for men’s distinctive agency, which causes them to equal the parturient women’s leading role in procreation, is effaced by two instances that implement the postcreation magisterially. Whoever reads Stephen’s words about the postcreation and remembers them is forced to steer his or her way between their meanings – as between a Joycean *Scylla and Charibdis*. In fact, they are words that connect the artist’s performance in the ninth episode of this title with the fourteenth – because Stephen implements the postcreation even before putting a name to it; and wherever the postcreation intervenes it spreads baffling questions all around.

In *Scylla and Charibdis* Stephen deduces an impressive but baffling Shakespearean life story, working retrogressively from the bard’s work and using mimetically the (recent) exegetes’ texts. When the reactions to his story of his select audience in the National Library of Dublin are mainly negative, and he is asked if he is going to publish the ideas just expounded, which are mainly regarded as bad taste, Stephen bafflingly declares that he does not believe in his own theory: “- Do you believe your own theory?-No, Stephen said promptly” (U 9.1065-7). What he thinks to himself is, however, “I believe, O Lord, help my unbelief. That is, help me to believe or help me to unbelief? Who helps to believe? *Egomen*. Who to unbelief? Other chap.” (U 9.1078-80).

Here, examining the details of Stephen’s postcreative ambivalence reveals some interesting facts. On the one hand, Stephen’s stance is very similar to the earlier vein in which he had uttered the postcreation sermon. On the other hand, the baffling comment to the postcreation in action is accompanied by an important self-reflexive imprint of the author on his text (*Egomen*, with its Greek echoing sound in the above quotation – and *Stephanoumenos*, which occurs first in the nineteenth, and next in the fourteenth, episode (U 9.939 and 14.1115, respectively). The constant association between the postcreative practices and the auctorial signatures demonstrates their emblematic significance in the composition of *Ulysses*.

To illustrate the first of the two facts just observed, in *Oxen of the Sun* (U.14. 292-4), Stephen delivered his very Biblical sermon as a drunken preacher, making himself responsible for the contrast between the letter of what he said and his irreverent posture, which marred it. The similarity in ambivalence is, however, accompanied by a difference: by comparison to *Scylla and Charibdis*, in *Oxen of the Sun* the postcreation pronouncement preceded its impeccable implementation in a

stunning fable of Irish history presented in a nutshell – with the artist Stephen being the one who set the tone and drew the conclusion. In the two episodes there is also a similar contrast between the postcreative richness and the risk of its going unnoticed or being compromised. In the fourteenth episode, the richness of the postcreation is overshadowed by the blatant facetiousness of the more famous pastiches of canonical English prose styles. In *Scylla and Charibdis*, where it is performed even before having been given its name in *Oxen of the Sun*, the postcreation appears as the ingenious but hardly creditable sequel to the Shakespearean work and exegesis. It bears the traits of the circumstances which prompt Stephen to stun the Dublin scholars of an older generation and of established fame gathered in the National Library of Dublin, where he is trying to make his mark. Publicly, the author does not back his own postcreative words, though he attaches more importance to them inwardly (as pointed by the intertextuality with the New Testament words in Mark 9:24). The same holds true about the pip of seriousness, impossible to negate, that the explicitly postcreative words just quoted share with Stephen's lesson from Chapter V of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* transcribed earlier. The postcreation acts precisely as the stumbling block in the Biblical parable.

The effect of the *Scylla and Charibdis* theory on readers cannot fail to be impressive, since Stephen masterfully replays Shakespeare's stage texts and poems and the knowledge about them produced by commentators (some of them latter day names from the turn of the century). Judging what happens in *Scylla and Charibdis* as a masterclass taught in Dublin on this essential English and Elizabethan topic, a later twentieth century reader may well see it as the amazing inventive capacity of a perfectly informed younger mind engaging with his Swan of Avon predecessor as an ephebe, in accordance with what Harold Bloom later termed the anxiety of influence; Stephen probably embodies the 'apophrades' revisionary ratio in respect to Shakespeare, and the 'tessera' one in his dialogue with the commentators. Either way, it is obviously the mind of a maturing artist training itself with the inciting, exquisite images of another that are symbolically represented in *Scylla and Charibdis*. Since it is not an image of his own, it is not necessary to decide whether or not Stephen's declaration that he did not believe in the Shakespearean bio-bibliographical show just staged during in the the library because it was a mere farce; neither is it necessary for his display of knowledge and creativity to count as a typically Irish instance of irreverence, as another twenty-first century reader, a postcolonially correct one may think – though one may well be invited to interpret it so in the light of what happens in *Oxen of the Sun*.

In *Oxen of the Sun*, after being identified by name, the postcreation adds a definitely irreverent sequel or gloss (in both senses of the latter English word!) to the Irish tradition, which nevertheless, shows a very intimate, deep felt knowledge of the Irish self-image. The received version of national, ecclesiastical and colonial Irish history is recycled in disparaging self-images that qualify or contradict the stereotypes put in circulation by Irish self-love in all ages (and by turn of the century Irish narcissistic nationalism). In *Oxen of the Sun*, the postcreation adds itself up to the national, as carefully as it did to the international, heritage of Shakespeare in *Scylla and Charibdis*. It will do the same when adding itself to the Homeric procreation and fertility prescriptions as the themes of the entire fourteenth episode.

Here, the reader does not hear Stephen's singular voice in the second passage which implements the postcreation in *Ulysses*, although, as will be seen, this episode transforms the artist's self designation with the word "Egomenon" into the more extensive appellation "Bous Stephanoumenos". But before tackling this important transformative designation of the artist, it should be noted that every one of the young men present in the lobby of the maternity hospital in Holles Street contributes to the (post)creative Irish history fables – though Stephen is the one to set the tone of the show, with the subtly irreverent words "an Irish bull in an English chinashop" (*U* 14.581). These words give readers a clue about the full range of idiomatic and standard meanings of the word "bull" that connect the Irish to the English by conversational implicatures played against each other, though these conversational implicatures also cooperate, of course, in this episode's discourse. What is in question is a full confrontation of cues: on the one hand, the collective discourse of the civilized English which cast(s) the Irish as barbarians (or as stage Irishmen) liable to drop a brick every time they speak;² to it, the proud Irishmen respond by deliberate Irish 'bulls' introduced in 'the (civilized) English chinashop'; they are the aggressive bulls of collective/corrective irreverence that respond(s) to the colonizer's own idiom by wit and by grit.

Postcreative wit spans very courageously over otherwise unbridgeable gaps. In the only passage where it is explicitly mentioned in the novel (*U* 14.292-4), the postcreation throws a bridge from the profane artistic world towards the sacred because of the concluding *bona fide* Latin words "*Omnis caro ad te veniet*". They represent a sermonic promise or Mariolatric prophecy about the preordained attraction by the spirit of all woman-born flesh; their promise can be shown to be ultimately fulfilled in the articulations of the finished (and published) text of *Ulysses*. We can only approach this important point of our demonstration in stages, by following first the avatars of the postcreation in direct connection to Stephen's performances in the novel. We shall pursue the creation-postcreation theme further so as to touch the trajectory of the other main character of the novel, Leopold Bloom. This will show that Mr Bloom is the novel's other artist, though he does not act postcreatively but parallaxically to configure his own autonomous image of the novel as a whole dramatically, without the presence of a narrator. "The parallax or parallaxic drift of so-called fixed stars" aligns more metaphorical keywords (by comparison to the single keyword reserved for Stephen the explicit artist of the novel) and will approximate the way the mature character Leopold Bloom perceives his coming together with the young Stephen Dedalus. At the literal level, they account for the two characters' attraction to each other consummated in a meeting which, though short-lived, is essential. But there is a self-reflexive level of their meaning which points beyond the immediate data of the Bloomsday story and which can be explained by adding a third term, 'path', introduced by twenty-first century

² In a Field Day pamphlet titled "Civilians and Barbarians", Seamus Deane presents the history of the first stereotype of Irish subalternity, while the clownish presence in English theatres of stage Irishmen as "garrulous, boastful, unreliable, hard-drinking, belligerent (though cowardly) and chronically impecunious" (Welch 534-5) is surveyed in *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature*.

narratology, to the traditional story-plot, story-discourse dyads – as will be seen in the final stage of the present argument.

To begin with, it is worth noting that though in *Oxen of the Sun* the whole context of Stephen's pronouncement (*U* 14.277-301) is deeply ironic, the postcreation is serious enough, precisely in the spirit of the nearly transcendental commendation of the dramatic form noticeable in the initial quotations from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Stephen's declarative words are uttered by a kind of Joking Jesus, seated at the head of the table and addressing his disciples in a Last Supper posture of sorts, while actually speaking like a drunken son, rather than as the Son of God, and delivering his would-be-parting speech to other partying 'sons' (spelt with small case). Thanks to the ambivalent movement of the postcreation to and fro between literal and figurative meanings, readers are invited to advance along parallel lines in the semantic field of the 'bulls' governed by the Homeric title of the fourteenth episode. Beside the famous parodies of English canonical styles as the internationally recognizable and most conspicuous 'Irish bull' introduced in the guise of a Trojan horse in the English colonizer's chinashop of the noble literary tradition of the colonizer, there is a corresponding Irish national fable with historical bulls. This fable is a collective creation, in line with the beginning of the fourteenth episode which is a sandwich of public/collective discourses. Each young man stationed in the maternity lobby contributes his own 'bull' to the overall picture. From the quite faithful chronological reiteration of local knowledge shared in Ireland's public space, the reader catches echoes of the first bull "sent to our island by farmer Nicholas, the bravest cattle breeder of them all" (*U* 14.582-3). The reference is to the coming here of the Anglo-Norman Henry II Plantagenet at the behest of Nicholas Breakspear, or Adrian IV, the only English Pope, who gave a papal bull, *Laudabiliter*, for retrieving into the fold of diocesan/continental Catholicism insular Celtic Christianity. There follows a merger with the later Tudor Lord Harry, alias Henry VIII, recognizable owing to "a point shift and petticoat with a tippet and girdle and ruffles on his wrists" (*U* 14. 600), and because of the Reformation fable in which he plays the role of "the lefthanded descendant of the famous champion bull of the Romans, *Bos Bovum*, which is good bog Latin for boss of the show" (*U* 14.628-9). The savageness of the fable's personification of John Bull, England's name in political cartoons since the beginning of the eighteenth century, reaches a climax when, the "supreme head on earth of the Anglican Church", as Henry Tudor styled himself in the 1534 Act of Supremacy, is described in a counter-ritual pose:

the lord Harry put his head into a cow's drinkingtrough in the presence of all his courtiers and pulling it out again told them all his new name. Then, with the water running off him, he got into an old smock and skirt that had belonged to his grandmother and bought a grammar of the bulls' language to study but he could never learn a word of it except the first personal pronoun which he copied out big and got off by heart (*U* 14.630-5)

Historical postcreation is here scathingly satirical and savagely explicit in associating ecclesiastical with political history, Catholicism and colonization; it deliberately vexes Catholic pieties and received public discourses. Even more

offensively, Irish church going women are accused by the young male's the fable which presents them as literally running to the encounter of the Catholic invader, worshipping the stranger and spurning "the strapping young ravisher[s] in the four fields of Ireland" (U 14. 598-9).³ The full version of the postcreated Irish Catholic *cum* colonial history runs as follows, while the voices of the fabulists change in practically every sentence, in volleys now from Stephen to the medical student Dixon, now from the latter to Vincent Lenehan and back to Stephen, now from them to further anonymous participants in this collective recollection scene:

. . . but before he came over farmer Nicholas that was a eunuch had him properly gelded by a college of doctors who were no better off than himself. So be off now, says he, and do all my cousin german the lord Harry tells you and take a farmer's blessing, and with that he slapped his posteriors very soundly. But the slap and the blessing stood him friend, says Mr Vincent, for to make up he taught him a trick worth two of the other so that maid, wife, abbess and widow to this day affirm that they would rather any time of the month whisper in his ear in the dark of a cowhouse or get a lick on the nape from his long holy tongue than lie with the finest strapping young ravisher in the four fields of all Ireland. (U 14. 589-99)

It is significant that this casts the women in the fable as cows, which links them to the Kerry cows and their foot-and-mouth disease, two of the whole novel's leitmotifs. In action, the postcreation throws an ingeniously spontaneous bridge over the gender war motif which forms the substance of the whole fourteenth episode. Besides being precisely what had prompted Stephen's postcreation statement, the competition between males and females is reiterated in the sequel to the first fable of the island's history. In the first fable, the women were to blame for the colonization, because they had chosen to worship the foreign apocalyptic creature, the "*Bos Bovum*" or "boss of the show", who "had horns galore, a coat of cloth of gold and a sweet smoky breath coming out of his nostrils" and seduced the women of the island, who, "leaving dough balls and rollingpins, followed after him hanging his bulliness in daisychains" (U 14.586-9). In the second fable, an equally ailing self-hate self-image about Irish emigration after the Flight of the Earls, it is men who are to blame:

the men of the island seeing no help was toward, as the ungrate women were all of one mind, made a wherry raft, loaded themselves and their bundles of chattels on shipboard, set all masts erect, manned the yards, sprang their luff, heaved to, spread three sheets in the wind, put her head between wind and water, weighed anchor, ported her helm, ran up the jolly Roger, gave three times three, let the bull gine run, pushed off in their bum boat and put to sea to recover the main of America. (U 14. 640-6)

On the other hand, the daring postcreation causes the further association of the ambivalent worshipping/whoring women of Catholic Ireland with the parturient women slandered throughout the fourteenth episode while they are actually "in that

³ 'The four fields of Ireland' is the traditional nationalist denomination of Ireland's four provinces: Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Connaught.

allhardest of woman hour” (U 14.46). Being envious of parturient women’s role in procreation, the young men of the episode vie with each other for slaying them; they end up sinning against fertility while mistreating women with their male postcreative fabulation about women as whores and abortionists. This makes the young male banterers reincarnations of Odysseus companions who sinned against fertility on the island of Trinacria.

Once set in motion, the chain of equivalences shows that the Irish fables with bulls mediate and implement, postcreatively, the equivalence between the ancient and the modern oxen mythically and metaphorically understood. The oxen in the title of the episode typify the beastliness of limited men whose delegitimizing ironies are the absurd accompaniment of the sublimely and mythically legitimated action of the suffering parturient women. The male postcreation adds itself up to procreation in a tireless circularity of ironical reversals staging the competition between men and women. Procreation is firstly commended when suggesting, in the episode’s formulaic words at the beginning, that the maternity is a templum and that the women are, by implication, the sacred kine of the God Helios; next procreation is delegitimated when enacting the men’s stampede into the templum with their sharp discursive weapons. In the present of the Bloomsday time-line, the callous male banterers are the personification of the oxen in the *Odyssey*’s thirteen canto and correspond to the ancient hungry warriors pressed by hunger to consume the sacred cows reserved for ritual slaying as part of the fertility god’s worship. In the fables of the Irish past embedded in the Bloomsday story, the oxen should be read as both the ancient bulls who stood for what was most to blame in the foreign interventions/invasions on the Emerald Island, and as the modern bullocks who function as the natural followers of “the strapping young ravishers in the four fields of Ireland” (U 14.599). Just as there was nothing heroic in the Flight of the Earls which triggered the *inventio* of the second fable, of Irish emigration, where the men flee in reaction to what the women of Ireland had done to the nation when they allowed themselves to be seduced by foreigners, there is nothing worthy in the attitude of the modern sons or bullocks boasting in the lobby of the maternity hospital while women are as good as dying in childbirth. And there is nothing meritorious *per se* in anything that the herd of young men or bullocks do. For this reason, it is significant that in this episode, whose title may well be redrawn as ‘*Oxen of the Son*’, Stephen Dedalus begins to be recognized as a worthier son than the rest by Mr Bloom. This is something that we, readers, only understand when Mr Bloom gives us a piece of his mind in the episode *Circe*. Here he explicitly connects his fate (the Jewish *kismet*) with Stephen’s when he wonders why he is still following Stephen after having met at the bedside of parturient Mrs. Purefoy, and after having recognized the superiority of the young artist over the others of his lot (the other ‘sons’ gathered at the Maternity hospital - in all the senses of the word ‘sons’ when equated with ‘bullocks’, ‘bulls’ and ‘oxen’): “What am I following him for? Still, he’s the best of that lot. If I hadn’t heard about Mrs Beaufoy Purefoy I wouldn’t have gone and wouldn’t have met. Kismet.” (U 15.639-41); and the answer, according to the continuation of this passage, is that Bloom has followed Stephen protectively; as a father will accompany his son. Bloom’s words call attention to Stephen’s greater potential than the mere bantering capacity of the bullocks that he

befriends when he refers to himself as “Bous Stephanoumenos, bullock befriending bard” (*U* 14. 1115).

The Stephen that Mr Bloom befriends because he recognizes him as superior to other young men starting from the fourteenth episode is still the one who has not yet produced anything more imposing than “a capful of light odes”, though he will be gradually transformed into the mature artist who could have authored the images radiating meaning on their own as the postcreated ones did in *Ulysses*. But it takes the kind of recognition that only a man of Mr Bloom’s maturity can arrive at for making of Stephen the complete, rather than just inexperienced, young man that he still is within the confines of the story which is the mere raw material for the composition of the whole Bloomsday plot. For, just as in Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, where the adult narrator confronts the readers with his younger self, there are in Joyce’s novel two Stephens. The incompletely experienced Stephen becomes the fully competent artist only after absorbing the radiant maturity of Leopold Bloom – an experience that the readers of the book have already shared in with delight during the Bloomsday hours – or years of reading.

To explain this mechanism which makes the plot of *Ulysses* obtain as an extension of the story (by a further installment of the novel’s own postcreation), two twenty-first century narratological tools, which will effect the essential passage from Stephen’s to Mr Bloom’s trajectory, must be brought into the picture – in the last stage of our argument. Peter Rabinowitz has designated by the term ‘path’ the trajectory of a character’s own experiences, in the order and sequence in which they occur, and he has called ‘passants’ the new class of actants “on whom impressions are registered” (Rabinowitz 184). Together, path and passants supplement “the well-established” story/discourse distinction, because “characters may experience events neither in the story order nor in the discourse order, and that difference can matter for readers” (Phelan, Rabinowitz 6). Readers have noticed that, on Stephen’s path, the postcreation only became a recognized fact after Stephen himself gave it a name, and that it was successfully replicated when Stephen led the show for the collective composition of the postcreated Irish history fables.

Is there anything similar that an attentive reader may notice on Mr Bloom’s path, if the path stands for “the order in which a character experiences the events of a narrative” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 6), and if it makes the characters be ‘passants’ (a new class of actants representing an experiencing agency located “beyond the narrator and his or her chosen focalizers on whom impressions are registered” (Rabinowitz 184)? After regarding Stephen as a passant on whose path the order for the discovery of the postcreation, at the moment when it is literally mentioned, does not coincide with the focalization of the story (since the name of the postcreation is only mentioned once, while it is enacted at least twice – and each of its instances occurs in different places in the novel), one feels entitled to expect the same on Mr Bloom’s path. And indeed, what happens here is that he vacillates for ten episodes (between episode 8, *Lestrygonians*, where his first guess about what it might mean occurs, and episode seventeen) before he can put a name to it. Without the electronic edition of the text to remind it, the reader may lose sight completely of the term. Yet, after comparing Bloom’s remarkably complete statement about the word’s meaning to its first occurrence, one can realize its importance as a keyword.

When “Parallax. I never exactly understood. There's a priest. Could ask him. Par it's Greek: parallel, parallax.”(U 8. 110-2) becomes “the parallax or parallactic drift of so-called fixed stars, in reality evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons to infinitely remote futures in comparison with which the years, threescore and ten, of allotted human life formed a parenthesis of infinitesimal brevity” (U 17. 1052-6) – it sums up the career of the straying characters of the *Bloomsday* on the eve of their homecoming. First of all, it makes the paths of the characters Stephen and Mr Bloom converge meaningfully, albeit for “an infinitesimal” moment in a landscape of “infinitely remote futures” – since they will only remain together, united in essence briefly, though in the catechismal and propedeutic discourse designed by the implied author for the episode *Ithaca*. What else does the parallactic reflection on the characters’ momentary encounter record, on Mr Bloom’s path, if not the fact that they have gravitated towards each other each from his own path “as evermoving wanderers from immeasurably remote eons” (since Stephen is an ambitious intellectual and Mr Bloom a mere advertising canvasser, and a sexually frustrated young man is anyway eons apart from a matrimonially mature and experienced man, one whose erotic life and meditations shamelessly imparted to the reader seem lifted from a book written any time after the sexual revolution of the late 1960s). If it were not for the traumas tormenting the novel’s two protagonists and keeping the reader immersed in them for the whole *Bloomsday*, there would be no encounter, no filiation dreams and no friendship to keep the two and the stories together.

As things stand, however, at the end of the novel, the focus on “the parallax or” – we would like to add ‘or rather’ – “the parallactic drift of so-called fixed stars” can be regarded as the astronomical metaphor which describes the movement and articulation of the characters on their respective paths; they both correspond to and deviate from each other as members of the same (human) constellation. Here, the dynamics of reading is reflected back, owing to this metaphor, because in *Ulysses* whatever discovery seems to fix for a moment the textual and intertextual meanings will soon afterwards be deflected, even, sometimes, contradicted. But the parameters remain the same, although in movement, and they serve to assert the constantly changing nature of existence fictionally reflected by an author who has given full liberty to his (postcreative and parallactic) images. The fact that Mr Bloom is the essential second self-reflexive pole which keeps the artistic semiosis going in Joyce’s mature book on behalf of the implied author is proved by the precision of the words entrusted to him. He is one of the novel’s new actantial class of characters who can and should be “viewed from the perspective of the impressions registered on them” (Phelan, Rabinowitz 590). His *Bloomsday* precision makes him function felicitously, at the end of the day, as one of the essential points for assessing the movement and fixed points the meanings of the novel. More precisely, with what Gifford and Seidman explain as being his “parallax [as] the apparent displacement or the difference in apparent direction of an object as seen from two different points of view ... [or] the difference in direction of a celestial body as seen from some point on the earth’s surface and from some other conventional point, such as the center of the earth or the sun” (Gifford, Seidman 160) and with his ‘parallactic drift’ which measured “the apparent motion imparted to a star by what was actually the earth’s

motion in orbit” (Gifford and Seidman 582) he functions as the second passant of *Ulysses* after Stephen with the postcreation.

The two passants and their keywords make perceivable in action, dramatically and performatively, outlines of the artist’s handiwork unmediated by narrators; the author is reborn when sighted paring his nails on the postcreative and parallaxic scaffolding of his creation.

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