Alan Roughley, James Joyce and Critical Theory: An Introduction. NY: Harvester, 1991.

•4• Is It a 'Gramma's Grammar'? (II)

Joyce and French Feminism

FRENCH FEMINIST EXAMINATIONS of Joyce's work tend to be much more theoretically sophisticated than their Anglo-American counterparts. There are of course many exceptions to this, and as we have already seen, the work of Anglo-American critics like Scott, Benstock and Norris, to name but three, make considerable use of similar theoretical perspectives to those of the French feminists who we shall examine in this chapter. Scott incorporates into her own work some of the complex ideas developed by French writers like Kristeva and Irigaray. Benstock has made considerable use of Derridean theory, and Norris has investigated *Finnegans Wake* in the context of structuralism, Freudian psychology and from the perspective of Derrida's ideas on the radical changes which philosophy underwent in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, French feminists, and indeed French theorists in general, offer views of Joyce that are very different from those provided in the work of Anglo-American critics.

The reasons for the differences are difficult to pin down, but it seems quite likely that the traditional English resistance to Continental philosophy in general and the more specific resistance to French critical theory encountered in some English departments are in part responsible. As we saw in the chapter on structuralist investigations of Joyce, Stephen Heath has offered some suggestions to account for the differences. In a 'Translator's note' to Philippe Sollers' 'Joyce & Co.' (*In The Wake of the Wake*), Heath comments on the problems of translating Sollers' French view of

Joyce into English. These problems involve more than the difficulties encountered in the translation from one language into another:

> the difficulty of translation here lies in the fact that this text goes against both the English and the American Joyces, the outcast from a moralizing criticism bent on protecting its tradition from what it calls 'the revolution of the word' and the puzzle to be solved at all costs by a massive 'recovery' of 'facts' (the reconstitution of a hated object, a hatred often present in the Symposium). Is it useless to add that the 'structuralism' currently being bandied about by the literary intellectuals in England and America is a new version of the old refusal of Joyce... and Freud?
>
> (121)

It is highly unlikely that the situation is still as bad as that which Heath describes because American and English critics did gradually move to a serious consideration of French theories. Resistance does remain, however, as the current widespread desire to move from the complexities of poststructuralism to a more simple neohistoricism would seem to suggest.

As the title of *New French Feminisms* indicates, there is no one French feminist theory but a multitude of different feminisms. If there is a notion shared by these feminisms it is probably the impossibility and undesirability of defining a central ideological structure to which one could appeal in the name of feminism. How can one define the feminine? In her contribution to *New French Feminisms*, Cixous writes: 'It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist' (253). As we saw in examining Scott's work, there is a very wide range of theories with which some feminists align themselves. What these feminists would seem to have in common is the idea that phallogocentrism, the traditional form of male-dominated thought and male-defined logic, is inappropriate and indeed incapable of allowing many women to write as they desire to. Much feminist writing strives for a practice that 'will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination' (253). Of course, not all feminists feel the need to break away from traditional forms of discourse, 'to break' what Cixous calls the 'arid millenial ground' (245). Gilbert and Gubar, for example, seem quite content to launch their attacks upon male writers in the traditional genre of historical and biographical criticism and in a traditional form of scholarly writing. As we will see, the French feminists whose work on Joyce we will examine do not find it desirable to work on this ground.

While it is not possible to summarise all of the reasons why French feminists are attracted to Joyce's writing, there are several areas in which his writing would seem to operate in modes which are important to French feminist theorists like Cixous and Kristeva. Cixous sees Joyce's

writing not as a writing about something, but as a writing which articulates a process of becoming and which attempts to provide an experience of the unconscious rather than a discussion about it in a representational mode. Scott thinks that 'Cixous' description of the feminine text as endless, wandering, circulating from body to body, immediately suggests the functions of Joyce's Anna Livia Plurabelle' (Scott, 1987: 10). In Cixous' sense of the terms Joyce's is not *novelistic* but *poetic*. Cixous seems to see Joyce as one of the 'failures... in that enormous machine that has been operating and turning out its "truth" for centuries', as one of the 'poets who would go to any lengths to slip something by at odds with tradition'. It might even be possible that *Finnegans Wake*'s ALP could be seen as a creation resulting from Joyce 'imagining the woman who would hold out against oppression and constitute herself as a superb, equal, hence "impossible" subject, untenable in a real social framework' (Cixous, 1981: 249). And it certainly seems that the *Wake* allows us to consider Joyce as one of those 'poets – not the novelists, allies of representationalism... [whose] poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Hoffmann would say, fairies' (250). It is worth noting at this point that Gilbert and Gubar's view of Joyce's women as the result of a misogynistic male's fears and hatreds is a view which in all cases rests on theories of realism and representationalism.

We have already considered some of Kristeva's interests in Joyce's writing in the chapter on semiotics. She is particularly interested in Joyce's writing as an example of modernist, avant-garde writing which owes much to the genre of subversive menippean satire and which also participates in the carnivalesque. She is primarily concerned with Joyce's last two texts, and she sees his writing as operating according to the 0–2 logic which we looked at earlier. Kristeva also considers Joyce from a psychoanalytic perspective developed from her adaptation of the theories of Jacques Lacan, and she looks at his writing as an example of the 'polylogue', a type of writing also practised by Philippe Sollers. Considering Kristeva as a feminist theorist creates some problems. As Scott notes in *James Joyce*, Kristeva has 'allied herself... with male theory' much more than many other feminists. 'Her position', Scott says, 'is to accept the existence of a male-centered "symbolic" order, and to work to deconstruct it from the inside'. Scott believes that Kristeva 'sees the deconstructive work as a far more advanced stage of feminism than the liberal pursuit of equality seen in the 1920s and still detectable in much Anglo-American feminism; she also resists the radical rejection of the male symbolic order which she equates with *écriture féminine*' (Scott, 1987: 12).

In addition to Kristeva's and Cixous' visions of Joyce we will also consider Christine van Boheemen's work on Joyce in *The Novel as Family*

Romance: Language, Gender and Authority From Fielding to Joyce (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987). Boheemen is a Dutch Joycean, but her thinking owes much more to French than to Anglo-American thought even though she writes in English, so it is here rather than in the previous chapter that we will consider her work. Boheemen draws on the theories of Descartes, Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida and, more importantly, Lacan. Her study of Joyce is primarily a semiotic, psychological study, but Boheemen also addresses the 'question of the feminist method of [her] study' (9) and points out that her 'readings demonstrate how profoundly the idea of gender is interwoven with that of signification' (9). In her 'Introduction', Boheemen also expresses the hope that 'the study as a whole is... inspired by the vision of a new political project: the analysis and articulation of the many and profound ways in which the connotations of gender are used for the purposes of signification'. 'A Modern feminism', Boheemen argues:

> aware of the dichotomous and ultimately self-defeating effect of an oppositional logic (which leads to separatism rather than inclusion), points to the implication of gender and signification in the hope that the conflation will eventually lose its seemingly natural self-evidence. Since we live and write in a patriarchal culture, the notion of a gender-free or even truly dialogic – rather than oppositional and hierarchical – signifying system is no more than an imaginary ideal at present. Realizing that all writing that makes sense is implicated, even if antagonistically, in the dominant structre of sense making, one can, nevertheless, keep pointing to the implication of gender in signification in the hope and trust that the knot will ultimately disintegrate.
>
> (10)

Hélène Cixous

Cixous wrote her thesis on Joyce. *The Exile of James Joyce* (London: John Calder, 1972) is a translation of her monumental study of Joyce's work which was originally published in French in 1972. *The Exile of James Joyce* rivals Ellmann's *James Joyce* in its scope, but its treatment of Joyce's life provides a different perspective on Joyce's life and work than does Ellmann's much more traditional biographical study. Because of the academic requirements imposed on her, Cixous' first study of Joyce relies on a much more traditional scholarly framework than her subsequent writings, but in the 'Interview with Hélène Cixous' (*Sub Stance*, **13** [1976]) by Christiane Makward, Cixous says that she 'invested very little in the academic type of production'. She found it 'constraining' and had no 'good memories of it' (Cited, Scott: 10). *The Exile of James Joyce* traces Joyce's life and writing in a standard chronological order, but the perspective which it offers on his life and writing manages in part to evade the constraints which Cixous later admitted to disliking. This perspective is reflected in the titles of the five major divisions of the work: 'The Family Cell', 'Private and Public Heroism', 'The Choice of Heresy', 'Exile as Recovery', and 'Joyce's Poetics'. Cixous examines Joyce's life in terms of the psychological states which Joyce experienced and considers his 'exile' not only in terms of his removal from Ireland but also as a psychological and ontological state essential to his writing.

Joyce's Exile

For Cixous, exile is a term which applies to both Joyce's life and his artistic poetics. Exile describes Joyce's life in Europe and the intellectual and psychological condition which was essential to his writing. She examines Joyce's essay 'Portrait of the Artist', written on 7th January 1904, as a document which offers Joyce's 'first signature as an artist' (212), and she finds the language of this essay 'particularly interesting' because it combines 'Joyce's own personal speech' with a hesitance which she believes 'cloaks [Joyce's] fear'. 'Stylistically', she suggests, 'it could pass for an obscure parody of the decadent late nineteenth-century art, but it is the form taken by the twenty-two-year-old Joyce's metaphysical anguish, the product of his frustrations, his inexpressible aspirations, his apprehension at the choice that lay before him, the choice of following the beaten track or of making his own way'. While Cixous sees Joyce's artistic signature in the essay, she believes that Joyce also ended the essay in the way that he did and gave it its title in a 'last attempt to remain where he was, at the crossroads of possibilities, in the sphere of cowardice and ambiguity' (212). While it bears the title 'Portrait of the Artist' it depicts not an artist – 'there is scarcely a trace of the actual artist in it' – but an '"imperson", struggling impersonally to bring into the world that being within it that desires to come into fuller existence' (213). It also represents what Cixous terms 'the curve of an hesitation'. It asks the question '"what shall I be?" but the questioner does not wish for a reply'. The essay does point the way, however, to the exile into which Joyce must go:

> He has now to expel all official history in favour of his own, to retreat without loss. His claims that he can show others the way are simply a last lie he tells himself, to disguise the fact that the choice has already been made. It is not possible to transform the world by beginning with an island, nor to recommend that all work together if one's own practice is an arrogant individualism; one cannot be both inside and outside.
>
> (221)

Cixous believes that '*Dubliners* should be reconsidered in the light of this 1904 *Portrait*.' This reveals it as a 'collection of manifestoes' and a

'denunciation of social paralysis coupled with an exhortation to shake it off'. In part this exhortation is self directed; although '*Dubliners* was to produce *Ulysses*... [it] was still written in a style of critical realism which could have produced quite the opposite' (221). In the June after Joyce wrote the essay, he met Nora Barnacle, and Cixous sees the essay 'speak[ing] of the need for [the] encounter and revelation' which was provided when they did meet. It would be difficult to overemphasise the importance for Joyce's artistic career which Cixous places on this meeting and Nora's subsequent role in his life. In terms of his ability to become an artist, she states that 'Joyce had to meet her, he was at last ready':

> She was sufficiently transparent and simple to appear strange and distant; she could strengthen him and deliver him from fear and hesitation. He was at last able to celebrate that marriage of the self, with no unmanning fear of being in the wrong.
>
> (221)

Joyce's meeting of Nora ended his period of transition; the early essay was 'the last stammerings of an uncertain and contradictory rhetoric'. Cixous contends that it was only after meeting Nora that Joyce 'felt... he really had the right to be an artist and creator', and that this right was also the 'right to welcome and to integrate with the mind his own estranged body'. It was only '[t]hrough Nora the true spouse', Cixous insists, that Joyce 'could at last proclaim himself as autonomous artist, his own husband and father at last' (221).

In the section of her book entitled 'The Fear of Marriage and the Dream of Freedom' Cixous considers how Joyce's changing attitudes towards women, particularly Nora, manifest themselves in his writing. Noting that 1931 was both the year of Joyce's marriage to Nora and of his father's death, she speculates on the reasons behind the Joyces' marriage. She asserts that what she calls the 'regularization' of Joyce's life with Nora 'was carried out for material rather than social reasons: there was no longer any risk of being suspected of conformism, but it was necessary to envisage the eventuality of his death and to think about protecting his children' (49). Certain fears which may have inhibited Joyce earlier are by 1931 no longer significant: 'Joyce no longer risks being transformed by marriage into a successor of his father; he is no longer afraid of Nora, society, the Church, or public opinion'. Joyce is also able to limit the significance of the marriage, and the 'gesture has only the strictly limited value he gives it: that of a "legal fiction"' (49).

Cixous examines Joyce's earlier fears about marriage in the context of Irish views on marriage, arguing that for 'the young Joyce marriage had signified the threat of responsibilities to be borne, or of modifications to be made in the self, in a sense that was anything but pleasing to a young autocrat':

> It is normal that the problem should have taken its place in his mind at an early stage, for the home and the tribe are holy places of marriage. But the whole of Ireland is caught in a tormenting, exhausting involvement: the alliance with the Church is unforgiving; marriage and the flesh can only be opposed, but the problems created by puritanism... would only constitute, so to speak, the 'classical' obstacles, stemming in the last analysis from the psychology of the Catholic married couple, if they did not also form part of a complicated local situation that alienates the man.
>
> (52)

Joyce's fears were also reinforced by his awareness of his father's position in respect to marriage and the Irish political system. 'What possessions', Cixous asks, 'could a Joyce own in 1904?' 'Caught between the family with its moral and vital imperatives, and a social and economic dependence in a colonial political system, he becomes the slave of his home, family, and nation.' James Joyce refused the solution offered by a 'career at the Catholic university' because that would have compromised 'his "moral nature"'. Ultimately, Cixous believes, '[h]onour and fear are linked together at the origin of Joyce's refusal to marry' (52).

Joyce imposed upon Nora the sort of relationship he had with her. He stood firmly against her desires to marry, refusing to 'turn[ ] back to what he calls "the system"' (54). Cixous sees Joyce placing the problem on Nora, and 'it is up to Nora, if she can, to change her wishes'. Joyce sees himself as preoccupied in a battle that he would risk losing were he to marry: 'He... is struggling against "incredible difficulties" but heroically "despises them": "I make open war upon the Catholic church by what I write and say and do. I cannot enter the social order except as a vagabond"'. He invents a 'form of love that suits his soul and mind', but after 1905, 'he has to give up the idea of sharing his mind with her because "with one entire side of my nature she has no sympathy"'. Cixous suggests that in all of Joyce's 'idealistic formulations' one 'cannot fail to recognise... a desire for a holy union': 'Joyce to some extent plays the part of God, and wishes to raise Nora to this level.' This creates a problem, for while Joyce longs for a 'holy union', he also 'rejects Christianity' for 'becoming a part of the social order'. A further problem is created by his sense of the sacred. Cixous cites a letter to Nora, written on 29 August, 1904, wherein Joyce 'refers to a holy night which in his language is a kind of marriage':

> I consider it as a kind of sacrament and the recollection of it fills me with amazed joy. You will perhaps not understand at once why it is that I honour you so much on account of it as you do not know much of my mind. But it... left in me a final sense of sorrow and degradation – sorrow because I saw in you an extraordinary, melancholy tenderness which had chosen that sacrament as a compromise, and degradation because I understood that in your eyes I was inferior to a convention of our present society.
>
> (*L*: II, 49; Cited, 55)

The problem is that while Joyce 'has transformed' the night 'into an exalting imitation of ritual,... Nora sees in it nothing but a degradation close to parody' (54).

Cixous sees many of the problems which Joyce and Nora experienced resulting from his determination to maintain his heroic exile. Joyce can take a firm stand against the Church and turn his nights with Nora into holy rituals, but Nora sees herself as 'only yielding to Joyce's selfish fancies' (55). The matter is made more complicated by their lack of a shared vocabulary: 'when Jim says "I want more than your caresses", he wants her soul and is prepared to give his own in return. But in the context of Dublin, Jim's periphrases and private language are not easy to grasp.' 'All their misunderstandings', Cixous explains, 'stem from his refusal to use symbolic words and his wish for Nora to understand him by implication, that she should leave unspoken the words (marriage, love, only, fidelity) which he cannot say without derogating from his own moral code.' Fortunately these problems were not severe enough to 'hinder Jim from considering Nora as his wife and living with her through all the problems of a lower-middle-class couple such that it could have served as a model for the similar couple in *Ulysses*' (55).

If the relationship between Jim and Nora serves as a relatively happy model for what Cixous terms the 'comic captivation of Bloom', in other texts it offers a model for relationships that were far from happy. 'The Boarding House', offers a view of marriage in which the man, Bob Doran, is tricked by the complicity between Polly Mooney and her mother. Noting that Joyce dedicated the story to his brother, Stanislaus, Cixous sees the story as a 'parable in which [Joyce] defends his decision to reject marriage' (61). While Joyce 'imagined that he had not been caught by the Polly trick', he 'never hides very far away from his work'. Cixous cites the opening lines which describe Polly:

> Polly was a slim girl of nineteen; she had light soft hair and a small full mouth. Her eyes, which were grey with a shade of green through them, had a habit of glancing upwards when she spoke with anyone, which made her look like a little perverse madonna.
>
> (*D*: 62, cited 61)

'And Nora was a slim girl of nineteen', Cixous states, adding that 'Polly and Nora have too many elements in common, and those precisely the most secret, which no-one would know while Jim and Nora were alive' (61). Nora was also the model for Gretta Conroy, but she provided not only the 'physical model' for Polly Mooney, but her 'life and past' as well as her 'family background': 'the mother had got rid of the alcoholic father with the same Christian fortitude. Polly has the same eyes that troubled Joyce so much.' The question of Polly's rather contrived innocence is a little more problematic. 'Joyce constantly compared Nora to Our Lady, not because [she] was a pure, venerable Marian figure, but because Joyce was still passionately attached to the church whose interdicts he rejected and yet desired.' Cixous believes Joyce's attachment to the church was so powerful that 'he could not have loved a woman without taking for his starting-point the first image of woman impressed upon him from childhood upwards, that of Our Lady'. Women were a 'replacement' for the Virgin, and this 'dictates all relationships with women in Joyce's life and work' (62).

Joyce himself explained the comparison, 'often tell[ing] Nora that she has "marked his life as strongly as the Virgin previously had oriented it"'. Cixous uncovers the stereotypical image of the virgin/whore in Joyce's attitude towards Nora:

> She exalts, strengthens, tempts and attracts him; he longs to be open and honest before her, shameless and as much, as entirely, himself as possible. But he longs also to be the spouse and ravisher of the Virgin, to feel the terrifying joy of sacrilege and the glorious joy of replacing the Holy Spirit.
>
> (62)

While Joyce's comparison of Nora and the Virgin is involved in his depiction of Polly as a 'madonna', Cixous does not believe that Nora's own perversity was the model for Polly's:

> Joyce uses Nora to provoke God; she is instrumental if not an accomplice; she loses the possibility of innocence as she becomes gradually initiated into his defiance. In 1904, she had to be a madonna with a gift for perversity; in 1905 she may well have acquired from Jim a certain practical ability. But Polly's perversity has an immediate quality that Nora's never had.
>
> (62–3)

Cixous notes that Polly is called 'a little hypocritical madonna' in the 'manuscript of the first version', and points out that while neither Nora nor Polly were hypocrites, that is what Polly 'is preparing to be' (62–3).

The attitude towards marriage in the *Dubliners* stories is an important part of the strategies which Joyce developed as he exiled himself from the Church and distanced himself from the moral paralysis of his countrymen. But while the marriages of those stories can be read as a 'comic parody of a typical middle-class marriage' and a shared 'target of Jim's and Stannie's allied sarcasm', for Stephen Dedalus, hero and artist, it becomes what Cixous describes as 'such an obsessive problem that any approach, real or imaginary, to the sacrament or any idea of a future married life will set off aggressive behaviour patterns in the "hero", and later, in the "artist", genuine hallucinations' (66). Marriage is a central issue for Stephen as an 'eventual vocation' and the 'centre of that psychological crisis during which Stephen's choices are made' (67). The struggles and revolts which Stephen experiences are, as Cixous shows, remarkably similar to those

which Joyce underwent. In trying to develop and follow the aesthetic principles to sustain him in his chosen role as a creative artist in exile, Joyce developed a moral code that could be as equally demanding and rigid as that which he rejected in the Church. Joyce refused to marry Nora when she discovered that she was pregnant. Cixous notes his explanation of this refusal to Stanislaus: 'the struggle against conventions in which I am at present involved was not entered into by me so much as a protest against the conventions as with the intention of living in conformity with my moral nature' (*L*, II: 99; Cited, 73). 'Such', Cixous explains 'was the declaration in real life which was to become Stephen's fine Satanic formula, "I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church"' (*P*: 247, cited 73). Cixous believes that Stephen's failure to love God may be linked with a weakness in Joyce's love for Nora: 'It may be that Joyce could not succeed in loving Nora as much as himself, either. The refusal of love is both subjective and objective: there is refusal to love and refusal to be loved' (73).

Cixous sees all of Joyce's domestic relationships as being ultimately subordinated by the priority of his role as an artist, and she notes the conflicts which this created when Joyce's son was born during the time when Joyce was trying to get *Dubliners* published: 'the child and *Dubliners* at once became opposed, not because Joyce was not pleased to become a father, but because Nora was taking much more interest in the child than in the written new work'. Joyce 'signified the existence of the conflict by symbolic gestures of refusal: two months after the child's birth, it still had no name' (64). Joyce seems to have been much more protective of his work than of his family: 'Children of flesh and blood were never to be a major concern of his, except when the work would permit of it' (65). In Joyce's mind even Nora became a sort of rival for his attention, and Cixous sees 'Jim both provok[ing] and fear[ing] the inevitable rivalry between Nora and his writing'. This fear and provocation is traceable in *Exiles*, and Cixous thinks that Joyce 'puts himself on trial' in the 'shaming admissions' of the play, 'intending to acquit himself in the end, but meaning first to admit and accept all the wrongs he has done':

> Bertha, alias Nora, the companion of the writer Richard Rowan, has two rivals whom she assimilates together: the one is Beatrice who has inspired Richard from afar and is the pale, cold embodiment of the artist's relationship to his inspiration; and the other is Richard's work itself, which deprives Bertha of the real presence of the man she calls *my* lover, when he sits up all night in the study, giving himself to the work rather than to the woman who longs for him.
>
> (65)

As Joyce continued to write, the situation grew worse, and he seems to have exiled himself from his family and into his work: 'Jim was to succeed so well in destroying the characteristics of marriage that little or nothing remained of the couple's subjection to the function of procreation.' Nora's maternal nature disturbed Joyce so much that 'he was only tempted to leave Nora when she took on the appearance of the mother'. Cixous considers the damaging effect that this must have had on the two children who 'had to be sacrificed to Jim's happiness with Nora':

> Lucia and Georgio had to pay for their parents' decision to be first and foremost Nora and Jim, in order that Jim might freely be James Joyce. This is why Nora's maternal feelings gradually atrophied as she became more and more Jim's companion. Later Joyce would see the double consequences of this wilful deformation of marriage: on the one hand, the children of a couple who live like Adam and Eve in a world unlike Eden are indirectly affected by an overwhelming freedom (when they needed Nora's protection she could only answer that she had but one 'child' – her husband); and on the other, Lucia as she grew up found Nora to be 'father's companion' rather than mother.
>
> (66)

Cixous contends that this produced the 'tragically violent jealousy whose movements can be perceived in *Finnegans Wake*'. Joyce's self-imposed exile in his written work entailed an abdication from the role of father of flesh and blood children. Joyce did later pay more attention to Lucia, but Cixous sees this as the result of Joyce's 'genuine obsession' with Lucia's mental illness rather than as a case of 'normal fatherly care' (65). In the *Wake*, the 'couple Jim and Nora is succeeded by that of Jim and Lucia'; the text is a 'work of fatherhood and incest, whose language echoes that of the daughter' (66).

Joyce's Poetics

Cixous is particularly interested in how Joyce's poetics affected his treatment of reality, and her study is framed by an assessment of the relationships between Joyce's writing and reality. It opens with a brief consideration of the relation between Joyce's realism and symbolism and poses the question: 'How far and to what degree can one speak of "realism" in Joyce's art?' (x); it concludes with an investigation of 'The Language of Reality' and how in Joyce's writing 'Language Replaces Reality' (673–736). Considering Joyce's Irish background and his family, Cixous states: 'The family, the economic and social problems, are... both concrete elements of surrounding reality – an end in itself, but limited – and the means by which the artist's mind is sharpened'. Ultimately, however, 'any realism is at once overtaken and assimilated, to become the surface of a symbolism which is made less and less publicly significant as it is more and more charged with personal meaning, until, with *Finnegans Wake*, it becomes a Joycean form of occultism, initiation to which is achieved by a progress *through* Joyce enabling one to reach reality' (ix–x).

Cixous agrees with J.-J. Mayoux who, in *Joyce* (Gallimard, Paris, 1965), asserts that Joyce had the 'double consciousness of one watching himself live' (44, cited x), and she suggests that Joyce 'already possesses' this 'double consciousness' '[w]hen he writes *A Portrait*'. This enabled Joyce 'to reconstitute by memory a time which is experienced and now past':

> This retrospective glance at his own history reveals both the *image* he has of himself (not himself), and the exterior forces which have caused him to develop in opposition to them; what he sees is the social alienation of his family and of Ireland to which he has responded by withdrawing, by declaring his *difference*, while still, in the tones of the romantic and idealistic *fin-de-siècle* artist, claiming the role of moral reformer within the very society that he rejects.
>
> (x)

Of course, the view of the family and of the economic and social reality that emerges from within Joyce's artistic 'double consciousness' will not be identical with historical 'reality', and Cixous realises that to 'obtain a true picture of the reality of this Ireland... one must take into account the part played by aesthetic transformation and refer to the available biographical documents'. Cixous makes extensive use of Ellmann's biography, Stanislaus Joyce's *My Brother's Keeper* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1958) 'and especially the *Dublin Diary* of 1903–04, which is about the period when James Joyce passed from being aware of his genius to giving it free play' (xi). While she relies on such biographical material, however, Cixous's primary interest is in how the biographical events were transformed as Joyce subjected them to the 'double' vision of his artistic processes.

Cixous believes that much of Joyce's work, including *Ulysses*, is realistic: 'After the moral history of *Dubliners*, after the spiritual gestation of the archetypal artist and the discovery of the subject's own style, after the skilfully demonstrated statement that the Artist creates, starting from his inner exile, a work outside which... he stands, Joyce wrote *Ulysses*, the work which reconciles unity and multiplicity to an end which is both realistic, moral, and universal' (673). Her definition of realism needs to be scrutinised, however, because she thinks that the 'object of realism is not "reality"'. In *Ulysses*, 'the reality of Ireland is only a part of an infinitely larger whole'. Cixous does not see Joyce's text as 'the modern *Odyssey*', because 'the Odyssean symbolism with its network of correspondences leads scarcely further than an ethical statement'. Furthermore, even Homer's epic is 'also part of an infinitely larger whole, taking on meaning from that whole (all Western culture, its historical duration, and its myths) and from its relationship with the concrete reality of the here and now'. Describing Joyce's 'programme' as 'nothing less than a project to write the book of books, to find a... "structural scheme" in which... each component part (art, organ, hour, etc.) should create its own

language', Cixous sees *Ulysses* as a 'monstrous epiphany' revealing the 'total manifestation of reality through language' (674).

Like Eco, Cixous finds the medieval concept of the 'summa' essential to understanding Joyce's aims. From this concept 'Joyce takes the concept of totality, while abandoning its content, that order and hierarchy which made the correspondence-system possible'. Joyce's rejection of the idea of 'one unique style, one author's commentary' enabled him to replace it with 'a multiplicity of styles' (674). This multiplicity shifts the emphasis from the writer to reality as the 'form of what is written' (687). While the 'form mimics reality', without any authorial comment or judgement, it is not a 'technique... of identical reproduction'. Joyce uses 'language and all of its... possibilities of expression as *equivalent matter*' and 'juxtapos[es] the work and the world with no intermediary' in order to 'bring out all the hidden meanings in the concrete subjective'. Like Derrida, Cixous finds meaning determined in part by differences: 'all the meanings [of Joyce's writing] are already contained in the discrepancy or differences between absolute reality, reality as read, and reality as written' (688).

While she sees the differences between these realities containing the meanings of the text, Cixous also believes that the 'fluidity of form' to which Joyce's multiplicity of styles contributes, is a result of the 'displacement of reality, or rather [of] the modifications which the notion of reality here begins to undergo'. In *Ulysses*, reality ceases to be a 'common universal objective experience' and becomes a 'particular, subjective, often incommunicable experience':

> If *Ulysses* apparently takes place in Dublin... it is really only a framework and a setting. Dublin exists, but much more as an animate object, a giant body, a corporate character, than as a stage. 'The' consciousness is made up of all individual conscious minds, and the absence of anyone else as an audience means the disappearance of the traditional signposts used in prose writing to facilitate the transition from one person or place to another, such as 'he said', 'he replied', and so on.
>
> (696)

Cixous ultimately considers *Ulysses* as a 'book of consciousness' and contends that '[o]nce one has registered' this 'fact', 'history ceases to exist': 'The reduction of chronological and objective time is expressed as an image by the compression of all time into one single day... all the hours of which are lived through as experience but at different depths and to different rhythms'. Providing the text's 'space of reality', its 'one consciousness' is 'globally and cosmically inclusive', and eliminates the distinctions between the 'events in outer or inner worlds' (700). Along with the lack of the 'traditional signposts' for distinguishing between characters, the lack of any identification of the characters 'by an omniscient author' renders the reader 'unable to distinguish where he is, in whose

mind or at what time in that mind'. This produces a duality in language analogous to the double consciousness Mayoux attributes to Joyce:

> In effect, everyone has two languages; the one carries along with it the specific signs of the individual's existence and thought as they are in the present, but marked by the past, in a form that is absolutely personal and recognisable, while the other is the common language of the senses, of permeability to daily life – the colourless language of indifference common to all of the inhabitants of the same city, who are all informed to much the same extent of those facts and circumstances which do not effect their personal lives.
>
> (700)

The two languages which Cixous discovers in Joyce are in part the result of a technique which she sees as essential in Joyce's poetics; the technique of 'interpenetratability'. The Dubliners who play minor roles in the book are 'divided into individuals – but only their names differentiate them, because they are all alike and all like Dublin': 'Their language is superficial, their speeches interchangeable, and the reader has to pay very close attention in order to see how the roles are distributed among these minor characters' (700). The major characters of Stephen, Bloom and Molly also operate to a certain extent in accordance with the technique of interpenetratability: 'in the inner world in which [they] move... images, facts or events may be encountered in exactly the same way by Bloom's mind and by Stephen's mind, as though the universal consciousness were really a continuous space permitting any idea to be thought, without telepathy, by anyone'. Cixous sees this as indicative of the fact that Joyce's 'vision of reality has nothing left in common with the traditional arrangement usual in novels'. She also hypothesises that if the thoughts are no longer owned by 'one particular ego, then the sum of all thoughts is reality, and Bloom, Molly and Stephen are nothing more than objects of cognition floating in a *continuum*' (700).

There is a limit to Joyce's use of interpenetratability, and 'only in the "Circe" episode', Cixous states, 'are the boundaries of the self shattered, as the experience of dissolution is dramatised in a kind of play'. The extensive use of interpenetratability in the 'Circe' episode produces a 'polycentricity' with which Joyce launches an 'attack upon the unity of the theological world with its single centre' (700–1). Cixous sees Joyce 'attempting to set up a vision of his own', which is 'ex-centric as far as the creation is involved' and 'a world which can escape from the Absolute which rules the world God has created'. In this context Joyce's writing operates as a radical attempt at subverting a God who is perceived as a source of restriction:

> Everything which usually constitutes or contributes to the traps and nets in which God holds the world and the mind captive, subjected to his Presence and Omnipotence, is endangered by Joyce's art – spacial orientation, currents in time, duration and evolution, dialogue which supposes a relationship between two people and hence a space established firmly between two fixed points, and grammar that imprisons words between the rails of reason, obedient to the laws of the divine Logos. All these suffer in Joyce's world.
>
> (701)

In so far as Joyce's writing subverts this theological foundation of phallocentrism it would seem to be in harmony with the aims of female writing which attempts to overcome the restrictions of the phallocentric tradition. Cixous defines phallocentrism in 'The Laugh of the Medusa':

> Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the priviliged alibis. It has been one with the phallocentric tradition. It is indeed that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallocentrism.
>
> (249)

Cixous finds Joyce's attack upon phallocentrism also aimed at the theological and philosophical notions of teleology: his writing 'tries to replace the imagery common to Western thought, with its implications of a beginning and an end, a here and a there, a past and a present, self and an other, by a world without history, a continuous world of osmosis' (701). This has a profound effect on us as readers because 'people and things... appear to us without being subject to our minds' usual process of examination and recognition; races, knowledge, cultures, personal histories, childhood memories, desires all mingle, with no concerns for the normal boundaries of mine and thine, *hic* and *ille*, *tunc* and *nunc*'. This might appear threatening or even chaotic, but Cixous contends that it 'is not chaos, but the polycentricity that has replaced egocentricity or theocentricity'. She believes that Joyce even allows his polycentric writing to expose the limits of the characters that he has created: 'Even Stephen and Bloom only succeed in directing this disorder to a limited extent; their minds interpenetrate, and fantasies move from one to another, without at once being noticed.' The traditional, novelistic convention of separating realism from fantasy no longer applies: 'Life and death communicate in the vertiginous movements of the *danse macabre*' (701). Joyce's polycentrism makes it possible for him to 'dismember history and time, conjugating past and future in the present tense, and even going so far as to attribute to the dead past an imaginary future which contradicts the real past, permitting, for example, the final apparition of Rudy, Bloom's son who died at the age of eleven' (702).

Stephen's desire to awake from the 'nightmare of history' was Joyce's desire to be free from imprisonment by the history of the culture from which he chose to exile himself. Cixous ultimately sees Joyce as a 'learned man of language... prey to despair and a rival of God, whose ambition is

to create the ever-elusive – not Mallarmé's "The book", but the Book which, once read, would not contradict its creator..., the Book that would remain alive, everchanging, moving, ageing, never fixed on the page as a given, signed, complete universe' (735). Cixous thinks that Joyce 'well knew' the death which results from the writer who 'murder[s] his own art' by ceasing to write, and she sees *Finnegans Wake* as an example of Joyce's drive to 'seek out and invent a kind of writing that would not stop its evolution and development once the writer had left it, which would continue developing because it contained an infinite supply of meanings'. For Cixous, the *Wake* is 'Joyce's last will and testament'. The final 'the' of the text is an 'admirable but unique contrivance', but it is not the infinity of which Joyce dreamt. Rather, it is 'the suppression of the ending which is instead replaced by the beginning... And after all, the work is still limited, by the very fact of its having a beginning' (735).

Cixous anticipates what later, poststructuralist critics have said about the *Wake* when she states that it is not a finite *book*, but an example of writing that withholds the last word, that is intended to last for ever...' (735). It demands a curious logical contortion to account for the relationship between its first and last pages: '"At the end", it suceeds itself, and since its beginning is its end, it is both mother and murderer of itself, giving both birth and death to itself' (735). It is 'therefore not surprising', Cixous argues, 'that the word chosen to be the last and designated to be the first, should be "the" – the definite article, the word which points out but which by itself means nothing, a dead word, a sign which depends upon what follows it' (736). Cixous compares Joyce with a hero who in 'uselessness, madness, and terror... writes... until he is himself nothing but the effort of his writing'. She also compares what she perceives Joyce as saying with 'what overwhelms Stephen':

> freedom only exists outside the culture in which one is irremediably imprisoned;... one only sleeps out one's life to the accompaniment of history as told by a God who speaks the same language as oneself;... only within this history does one have a place to occupy and a part to play. If God speaks the language of men, He does so because men have invented God speaking their language, and because they claim to justify themselves and to render themselves innocent by attributing to God the Word that gives the signal for the slaughter to begin.
>
> (736)

'Joyce: the (r)use of writing'

Cixous' essay 'Joyce: the (r)use of writing' (*Post-structuralist Joyce* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984]) affords the opportunity to experience Cixous' work on Joyce after she moves away from the traditional, academic framework of writing, which, as we have seen, she found 'very constraining'. The subtitle of the essay is 'Discrediting the subject', and Cixous begins with a clear indication of how the essay should be read: 'Here begins a reading of Joyce which will point out by means of certain fragments of *Dubliners*, of *A Portrait*, or of *Ulysses* how Joyce's work has contributed to the discrediting of the subject'. Borrowing an idea from Julia Kristeva's 'Introduction' to *La Poétique de Dostoievski* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), Cixous outlines the context for her reading of the fragments from Joyce's texts: 'how today one can talk about Joyce's modernity by situating him on "that breach of the self" opened up by other writings whose subversive force is now undermining the world of western discourse' (Kristeva: 15, cited 15). The essay does not explicitly offer itself as a feminist reading, but it clearly views Joyce's writing as participating in the sort of subversive strategies which Cixous identifies, in 'The Laugh of the Medusa', as the strategies necessary for breaking up the 'arid millenial ground':

> his writing, which is justly famed for its system of mastering signs, for its control over grammar (including its transgressions and dislocations which cut across a language which is too much a 'mother' tongue, too alienating, a captive language which must be made to stumble), how this writing takes the risk of upsetting the literary institution and the anglo-saxon lexicon: by hesitating over the interpretation of signs, by the vitiation of metaphor, by putting a question mark over the subject and the style of the subject.
>
> (15)

The style of Cixous' essay is richer and much more dense than that of *The Exile of James Joyce*, and the essay reads as if Cixous were incorporating some of the Joycean strategies that she discusses into her own style, as if she were striving to allow her writing to articulate its subject instead of writing about it in the traditional academic style. Consider, for example, how easily she moves from text to text and subject to subject in outlining the progression of Joyce's writing in three progressively-expanding sentences whose subjects include an expanding meditation on the trinity:

> Between Daedalus and Icarus: *Ulysses*. And: 'My will: his will that fronts me. Seas between' (*U*: 217). From father unto son, via the mother, always, begun again. This delayed birth constitutes the movement of a work which playfully undermines gestation, the delay inscribing itself in the various falls, losses, repeated and unexpected exiles, which are all the more astounding in that the goal seems accessible, is named, puts itself forward, fascinates, is not hidden but rather pointed out (I, the Artist, the Word), is not forbidden but rather promised, and in that the subject, held in suspense, pursues it with ... the weapons of the self (silence, exile, cunning), marking out its passage with theories, incorporated hypotheses of formalization: one or two ideas from Aristotle, a pinch of St. Thomas; a chapter on poetics and literary history; several chapters on the problems of autobiography; and, in a pre-Freudian context, an implicit theory of the authorial unconscious, and of the textual unconscious, in a blasphemous anology with the Arian

> heresy, showing in the Trinity the three-sided, divinely ordered production that allows the Father to see through the Son's eyes, where the Holy Spirit would be like the chain linking the Name of the Father to the Name of the Son, the scriptor to writing: the breath of the unconscious on the text. (16)

One could follow various chains of signification which Cixous weaves through these three sentences: from the classical, Hellenic narrative of Daedalus to the Judeo-Christian trinity; what happens in *Ulysses* concerning the father, mother and son; Joyce's use of Aristotle and St Thomas and his anticipation of Freud. These topics are not dealt with in the traditional form of subject–predicate sentence patterns but woven together in a way that puts a strain on the traditional paradigms of logic for sentence and paragraph development. The reader can follow the topics along associative chains like those which we saw Eco identify in *Finnegans Wake*. Cixous considers the kind of double pattern which her earlier study associates with Joyce's double consciousness. Here, however, she refers to *Ulysses* as a 'Quest, odyssey, with a double hero' (16).

Cixous analyses the opening paragraph of 'The Sisters' in some detail and states that in this passage, 'we shall grasp the first manifestation of the slide from the one to the plural...' (17). It is in this 'slide' that the discrediting of a singular subject can be experienced as the movement 'from the disquieting plural of One, slipped between the narrator and the I subject, between the one and the other, between master of diction and master of interdiction, between pseudo-father (priest, imitator) and pseudo-son, between true words and bad words (*mots vrais et mauvais mots*)'. The reading of the passage from 'The Sisters' is offered as a marginal reading in at least two senses of the term: Joyce's passage is chosen because of its marginal position 'on the border of the Joycean corpus', and the reading itself attempts to expand the margins of the interpretive process, pushing it towards new margins or limits for engaging with the passage to be examined. This is typical of a poststructuralist commentary, as is Cixous' interest in Joyce's passage as a '[s]cene of decentering of the subject'. Cixous treats the opening paragraph of 'The Sisters' as:

> the locus of a consciousness which censorship hardly separates from the unconscious which speaks in a dream a little later in the story. Scene of the decentering of the subject, as it immediately strikes the readers *of* the text (*in* the text): since a reading subject is present, and on the level of the text. Thus my reading is always preceded by the reading of the other-scriptor, which is preceded by the reading of the other-subject: and this reading is as (far from) innocent as the text which produces it... (17)

Not only is Cixous' reading concerned with the double in Joyce's text; it also offers itself as a double text. This is exemplified in the passage 'this reading is as (far from) innocent as the text which produces it'. Cixous' use of parentheses around 'far from' allows us to read the passage either with or without the negative modification of 'far from': we can read her text as one which is 'as innocent' as Joyce's text or as one which is as 'far from innocent' as Joyce's. The two poles of – innocence and + innocence provide the textual space for what Cixous has already identified as the 'slide from the One to the plural', and neither Joyce's text or Cixous' commentary will offer the subject of an unequivocal innocence. As Cixous' commentary entails a very close reading of Joyce, it is helpful to consider the passage from 'The Sisters' in its entirety:

> There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stoke. Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time) and studied the lighted square of window: and night after night I had found it lighted in the same way, faintly and evenly. If he was dead, I thought, I would see the reflections of candles on the darkened blind for I knew that two candles must be set at the head of a corpse. He had often said to me: 'I am not long for this world', and I had thought his words idle. Now I knew they were true. Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word gnomon in the Euclid and the word simony in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work. (*D*: 9; Cited, 17)

Cixous begins her analysis with a consideration of what Joyce 'said about his book': 'Letter to C. P. Curran, a friend, 1904: "I call the series *Dubliners* to *betray the soul* of that hemiplegia or *paralysis* which many consider a city" (*Letters*, I. 55)' (17–18). She creates a double text by repeating key words and phrases from Joyce's description: 'I emphasize: "*betray*", "*the soul*", "*paralysis*": to betray, by naming, to write in order to betray, to betray "the soul" of / that paralysis / which many consider a city'; her aim is to emphasise the 'metonymic substitution of "the sickness" for the sick body' and the 'traditional dichotomy of soul (manifest in)/ body'. These operate as a 'substitutive reinforcement, a parodic mechanism, playing between sickness and city'. They also establish two poles that structure the double writing in which Cixous is interested. In the play 'between sickness and city', 'the one [term]' substitutes for 'the other in inverse proportion to the expected order: Dublin is sick – Dublin is its sickness – *The* sickness *is*, Dublin is put in its stead'. At this point, Cixous suggests, the reader 'becomes aware of limits beginning to dissolve in the perversion of signifiers' (18).

Cixous returns to the realism which she considered in her earlier study of Joyce. Citing a letter to the publisher of *Dubliners*, Grant Richards, in which Joyce claimed to have 'taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation' of Ireland, she argues that the representation of Joyce's realism is at least 'modulated' even in his early stories: 'Even if their author

intended *Dubliners* to belong to the world of meaning and expression – Joyce insisting on what he *meant* to the very word ("in accordance with [...] the classical tradition of my art") – at least one sees how representation is immediately modulated in so far as the discourse has less bearing on a concrete outside, on a reproducible real, than on the gaze directed at the referent (the Dubliners).' Joyce may have thought that he was writing about the concrete reality of Dublin, but his writing also manifests the self- or auto-referential aspect which we considered in the chapter on semiotics. Joyce's writing not only directs its gaze toward Dubliners, but back to itself, to the 'nature of that gaze, and even on the name, the letter of that gaze: so initially there is only deferred representation, a perceptible hesitation on the surface to be inscribed' (18). Cixous believes that '[o]ne could modify the orders which Joyce gave himself by articulating them with certain declarations which seem to point towards the idea... of text as either pathbreaking or as a substitutive formation'. Stephen's declaration 'This race and this country and this life produced me [...] I shall express myself as I am' (*P*: 211; Cited, 18), 'could equally well be read,' Cixous argues, as the 'recognition that writing is a mode of production determined, beyond the biographical, by the socio-cultural system' (18).

Poststructuralist feminism and Freud's notion of the *heimlich* provide Cixous with a further expansion of the context in which she examines and situates Joyce's writing. She believes that in Joyce's notion of 'spiritual liberation' 'there remains, lurking, that theological left-over instituted in the notion of the "spiritual" which holds the text in front of the mirror'. This positioning of the text in front of the mirror is Cixous' metaphor for a confirmation of the text by the text which cuts the role of the reader out of the reading–writing process. Using the classical 'spiritual' paradigms of traditional theology will confirm the text as spiritual: 'Spiritual mirror, spiritual chapter'. A more valid 'spiritual liberation' – and here Cixous' argument echoes her ideas on feminist writings in 'The Laugh of the Medusa' – is to be achieved by transgressing the borders of the classical–theological and realist traditions: 'Is not the "spiritual liberation",' she asks, 'brought about via a liberation of signifiers, fraudulently crossing the "classical" realist border, and that of its solemn double, symbolism'. Joyce's texts need to be considered in terms of the 'scene of writing' which, 'when only just set' is 'slipping, turning, and always decentered' (18). Joyce's confident assertion on 'spiritual liberation' is only one aspect of his text. In addition to the subject's confident assertion of what he, or she, knows, there always lurks what the subject ('ego, the it, the id, the subject') does not know. The '*unheimlich* effect... sets up a play between the familiar, and the sudden breakdown of the familiar, between the home (*Heim*) and the hidden (*heimlich*), between my self and that which escapes me' (18–19). In Joyce's text the Freudian 'fear of being blinded', which is a result of the *heimlich* revealing itself, is 'an indispensable axis crossing the Joycean space' (19). This fear is also a 'substitute for the fear of castration: fear which in its turn produces the other self, that kind of other which is kept handy in case the self should perish'. '[I]n literature', Cixous argues, this other self,

> becomes 'the double', a stranger to the self, or its indirect manifestations: doubling of the self, split self, and all those subversions of the subject, *visibly at work* in the excerpt [from 'The Sisters'] quoted: where 'I' (the narrator) weigh up my strength, my existence, my grasp on reality, and my abdicating by examining the power of words.
>
> (19)

The '(r)use of writing' to which Cixous' title refers is '*(R)used writing, writing governed by ruse*: which is therefore luxury writing, because in order to play tricks and to sow seeds, you have to produce wild goose chases, you have to modify the traditional mode of the narrative which claims to offer a coherent whole' (19). The reader learns to modify through commitment to a 'double apprenticeship':

> the necessary one which is reading–writing a text whose plurality explodes the painstakingly polished surface: and the one which is, in the very practice of a reading not condemned to linearity, an incessant questioning of the codes which appear to function normally but which are sometimes suddenly rendered invalid, and then the next moment are revalidated, and, in the inexhaustible play of codes, there slips in, indecipherable and hallucinatory by definition, the delirious code, a lost code, a kind of reserve where untamed signifiers prowl, but without the space of that reserve being delimited.
>
> (19)

Ulysses provides Cixous with an illustration of this intrusion of a 'delirious' or 'lost' code. In the 'middle of a majestic episode ("Nestor") which bears the meaning of History, which resounds with the echoes of battles, with questions concerning a country's past... there slips onto the scene of representation and into a network of correspondence tightly worked by the idea of historical causality, a riddle posed by Stephen':

> – This is the riddle, Stephen said:
> *The cock crew,*
> *The sky was blue:*
> *The bells in heaven*
> *Were striking eleven.*
> *'Tis time for this poor soul*
> *To go to heaven.*
> – What is that?
> – What, sir?
> – Again, sir. We didn't hear.

Their eyes grew bigger as the lines were repeated. After a silence Cochrane said:

– What is it, sir? We give it up.

Stephen, his throat itching, answered:

– The fox burying his mother under a hollybush.

He stood up and gave a shout of nervous laughter to which their cries echoed dismay.

(*U*: 22; Cited, 20)

Cixous believes that this riddle 'forces the reader into a dumbfounded identification with the pupils'. The 'genre of the riddle, a literary and detective-story genre, which assumes... that there should be a solution somewhere, the one who asks being... the one who possesses the knowledge' – all of these traditional conventions 'combine[ ] to make you "take seriously" the existence of an answer' (20). Joyce's writing subverts these conventions, however, and denies the reader the meaning that she, or he, confidently expects. Stephen's answer to the riddle, Cixous contends, 'reveals not a positive knowledge, but the gap in knowledge, the knowledge of nonknowledge, the author abandoning his rights over language'. This entails what Cixous calls the 'desacralization of reading in the sense that reading is implicitly the rite of passage into culture' (20). The sonorous echoes in the passage provide a 'miming [of] tension', and Cixous lists some of the ways in which the 'preciseness of... terms' and the answer 'ape[ ] scientificity or the absolute', reinforcing the expectation that the logic of the riddle must lead to an answer (19). In the end, however, there 'remains the untamed subject: the fox'. 'That is all,' Cixous declares, adding that Stephen's nervous laughter 'is... the laughter of the perverse text', a laughter that is 'hard to bear, just as it is difficult to accept that frustration is normal in the intellectual sphere'. This frustration is 'experienced as the subterfuge of castration' and the point at which 'you must stop demanding meaning', and at which 'academic discourse is brought to its limit' (21).

Because of the operations of the double in Joyce's writing, the reader is offered two choices in the face of the crisis of meaning which texts such as the riddle precipitate. The first 'course[ ] of action' entails 'trusting to the known facts about Joyce's work, particularly his intensive use of symbols, and his obsessive and often explicit concern to control word order'. This results in a 'prejudging' of the book as 'a full text' that is 'governed by "the hypostasis of the signifier", a text which conceals itself but which has something to conceal which is findable'. Cixous sees this course of action producing a 'reassuring position' that is almost necessary because academic discourse operates (in either a 'conscious or unconscious fashion') by 'pushing Joyce back into the theological world from which he wanted to escape', by 'squeezing him "through the back door"'. (In support of her argument that academic criticism can operate in this way,

Cixous cites 'versions of Joyce as a Catholic, Medieval Joyce, Irish Joyce, Joyce the Jesuit in reverse and hence the right way around as well, etc.'.) The alternate course for reading Joyce, and the one which Cixous advocates and follows herself, requires the reader to 'imagine a reading which would accept' the sort of 'discouragement' offered by the riddle of the fox, 'not in order to "recuperate" it by taking it as a metaphor for the Joycean occult (which would... be right but would only be taking account of the formal aspect of that effect of privation), but rather by seeing in that trap... the sign of the willed imposture which crosses and double-crosses the *whole* of Joyce's work, making that betrayal the very breath (the breathlessness) of the subject'.

Cixous' intention is to open up within her own work the (at least) double play of signification which she perceives at work within Joyce's text, to allow her reader to experience not an 'academic' discussion *about* the ways in which Joyce's writing operates, but a writing which articulates the same double strategies as Joyce's writing. It is this experience of the double in Joyce's writing (and in writing in general) that is offered when Cixous writes that 'betrayal' is the 'very breath (the breathlessness)' of Joyce's 'subject'. The reader can read the writing in a more or less, conventional, linear fashion, but the operation of 'breathlessness' within the parentheses breaks the linearity of the reading, forcing the reader to go back and consider how 'breathlessness' contradicts and negates, from within the parentheses, the signification of 'breath'. The either/or logic of traditional binary logic (nothing can simultaneously 'breathe' and be 'breathless') is undermined as the bracketed signifier, 'breathlessness', which should offer subordinate support and clarification for 'breath', the signifier outside of the bracket, actually contradicts it and produces a meaning that is at least a double meaning: 'betrayal' is the 'very breath' of Joyce's 'subject' *and* 'betrayal' is the 'breathlessness' of Joyce's 'subject'. It is just such a contradictory double that Cixous finds in the riddle. Stephen does offer an answer to the riddle: 'The fox burying his mother under a hollybush', but this answer does not satisfy us because it disappoints our expectations which are based on the traditional concepts (the genre of the riddle, there should be an answer, the riddler should be able to solve the riddle) which Cixous outlines.

When Cixous finally turns to a close analysis of the passage from 'The Sisters' (her detour through the fox riddle serves at least two purposes: it allows the reader to gain a better understanding of the 'double' modes of signification in Joyce's writing and it enables Cixous to follow a logic other than the academic, linear logic which demands that the subject should be examined in a straightforward, economic, linear fashion), she suggests that the 'farce of breaking-up which interferes directly with the order of *Ulysses*' is 'easy to spot' in that text 'because it is isolated almost as a symptom...' (21). The unattached element (the fox, the answer to

the riddle) is 'indirectly granted a transgressive violence... in which a *gratuitousness*... comes to the surface and makes significance quiver as if it were the *nervous laughter of writing*' (21–2). In *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, however, the 'unattached element' and the 'breaking-up' that interfere with narrative order also operate, although their operations are not as easily detected as they are in *Ulysses*. The symptom which reveals their operations, however, is still the 'laughter' of writing. Cixous looks at 'The Sister's' image of the smiling priest letting his 'tongue lie upon his lower lip' (*D*: 13), and identifies its psychological signification of a 'phallus playing dead' (30, n. 10). She states that the 'vocal outburst' of the laughter of writing in this case 'stands in contrast to the horrible and silent smile of the corpse', and that this 'silent smile' is the 'inscription under the insidious sound "s" ["silent", "smile"] of unspeakable vice, of sin which is suggested, "murmured" but unfinished, of the perversion of relations between subject and object, between body and soul, life and death, sound and meaning... work and magic...' (22).

Examining the psychological implications of the relationship between the old priest and the young boy, Cixous finds that it revolves around 'relations of reversal and overstepping' (22). The attributes of the priest become those of the boy when the priest gives the boy knowledge that he had hitherto not possessed. The priest teaches the boy about written knowledge: 'he told me that the fathers of the Church had written books as thick as the *Post Office Directory* and as closely printed as the law notices in the newspaper, elucidating all these intricate questions' (*D*: 13). For Cixous, this knowledge, both hidden and revealed, in the story, is inextricably linked with the materiality of writing. When the boy receives knowledge from the priest, 'the attributes of one term slip onto another in the terrifying materialization of the power of the letter' (22). Cixous offers a lengthy and complex introduction to her analysis which is essential to her view of how 'The Sisters' operates:

> if you know that the narrator whose thoughts suggest these opening sentences [of the first paragraph] is the disciple of a queer disappointed priest in whom 'there was something gone wrong', if you know that the priest, initiator, had taught the boy Latin, a tongue which is doubly foreign, dead, theological, magical, and also 'how complex and mysterious were certain institutions of the Church which I had always regarded as the simplest acts' [*D*: 13], that the priest amused himself 'by putting difficult questions to him', then you sense the harrowing intensification of an examination which centres on the highest knowledge, below the decaying garments of the master and behind the mask of 'simplicity': there the master represents an unfathomable authority, and the scene is from the outset the sacred one, profaned by a highly 'incarnate' death: if there is complicity between the subjects such that the curiosity of the one regarding the other seems to announce some morbid identification, if the dead priest's smile parts the disciple's lips, it is because there is at stake between them the access to an object of desire, which in the end is perhaps nothing other than the very play of inscription in so far as certain signifiers can hollow out an 'other' place in the text, the sexual metaphor for which is given later: the narrator's dream reveals the secret, desirable and fearsome nature of it: shows itself moving, appealing, withdrawing, miming the exile of jouissance, displacing the prohibited place, which is never seen, where the priest's head, the grey *disembodied* face, has *something* secret to tell which is never told. (22)

Like the answer to the riddle of the fox, the priest's secret is refused for the reader. Like the passage in which the riddle occurs, 'The Sisters' sets up a context which gives the reader the expectation that he, or she, will be given a meaning and then withholds the meaning while allowing the reader to experience the dissolving of the context which created the expectation of meaning for the reader in the first place. The meaning seems to reside in a '[h]idden recess' on the other side of the 'long velvet curtains' (*D*: 13) of which the boy dreams, but the reader gradually experiences the

> [h]idden recess receding in a sinister movement to vanish on the other side of soft curtains... through the veils of perverted confession, summoned by the head, object-subject ('*it* smiled'), 'very far away' to 'some land where the customs were strange – in Persia I thought... But I could not remember the end of the dream'. (22)

Cixous follows the gradual receding of the meaning which the reader seems to be promised in psychological terms. She sees the boy's inability to remember the end of his dream, 'parodying the excentricity of the subject' in the context of the 'pursuit of *Where id was, there ego shall be*' (22). In the boy's dreams, the priest-as-id 'signals with dead tongue and disembodied head'. Cixous traces the gradual disappearance of meaning along a 'metonymic chain where the other place always has its other' (23):

> Far, antique, strange, Persian, perverse, perdition piercing, slipping, transgressing the occidental/oriental line, sending the sacred back to a desecration, continually emptying out speech, shifting the name for strangeness without representing the signified, the fleeing letter offering itself only in order to efface itself, drawing the subject further on... beyond the Church, beyond Persia how far? on the dribbling trace of the other's halting words. (23)

This cutting off of meaning is something that Cixous believes happens from the very beginning of the story. The title, 'The Sisters', signifies an '"other" place which cuts off meaning, as the head is cut off – the title of the story... excludes the reader from meaning...'.

This cutting off of meaning can be considered in the context of the doubling of the subject, the process which Cixous believes to be so important in Joyce and which, as we have seen, she uses in her own

writing. Through the process of doubling, the subject splits and becomes involved in the movement from the '[o]ne to the plural', making it impossible for the reader to grasp a single, unified subject (17). At the beginning of the essay, the bracketing of the 'r' in 'Joyce: the (r)use of writing' allows the title to be read both as the 'ruse' and the 'use' 'of writing'. Cixous writes on the ways in which Joyce's writing is a 'ruse' that produces 'wild-goose chases' like the search for the answer to the fox riddle, a search that fails because the text cuts off meaning; at the same time, she claims that 'in order to play tricks' like this, one has to *use* the 'traditional mode of the narrative which claims to offer a coherent whole' and then 'modify' this 'traditional mode' in order to produce the *ruse*: the *ruse* of subversive writing requires the *use* of a traditional mode of writing in which the traditional mode is modified for subversive ends (19). This is but one example of the 'double' ('use' as 'ruse' and vice versa) writing that Cixous finds produced in Joyce's text.

A further example of double writing is offered in Cixous' use of the subtitle 'Discrediting the subject'. We have already looked at how Cixous sees the subject of Joyce's writing displaced in the 'slide from One' (the 'One' of the stable, unified, capitalised subject) 'to the plural' (17). Her subtitle 'Discrediting the subject' offers an account of the effect of Joyce's writing upon the traditional concept of the subject *at the same time* that it refers back to how '(r)use' 'discredits the subject' of Cixous' own writing in an explosion of the single, unified subject. What is the subject of Cixous' essay (if essay is still an appropriate term to apply to this writing)? The answers (for there is always more than one) include: Joyce's use of traditional narrative; his subversion of this mode in the 'ruse' of riddles and a decentring of the subject; specific citations of different texts ('The Sisters', *Ulysses*, *A Portrait of the Artist*, *Finnegans Wake*, letters, etc.) which produce a double, 'use'/'ruse' writing; Cixous' own use of Joyce's subversive techniques; the 'subject' which is 'discredited'; and the subject of the discrediting process itself – the process of the ruse that appears to proffer a subject while actually discrediting it.

To appreciate fully Cixous' analysis of 'The Sisters', it is necessary to examine her close inspection of the opening paragraph from the story. The first several pages of her essay (with their detour through Joyce's relation to various traditions and the fox riddle operating as a kind of delay) seem to be a part of the discrediting signified by the subtitle, but Cixous does eventually return to the opening paragraph of Joyce's story. Her analysis consists of nine short sections, the first of which compares the title's signifier of females and the first sentence's reference to the (male) priest:

'(1) *The Sisters: "There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke."*' Cixous describes the title as 'split off from the body of the text' and as

a 'floating head(ing)' which reveals that she sees this splitting-off producing a signification of the priest's head as the boy sees it in his dream. The subject of the two sisters who care for the priest is 'usurp[ed] ... right up to the end of the story' (23).

'(2) "*There was*"'. Cixous thinks that the 'impersonal (neuter)' of 'there' announces 'impersonal being' as the subject of the story. This is also involved in the double play of a signifying 'chain' which 'personalis[es] subject/animation/death'. 'The effect of the impersonal as subject is double: the consolidation of the personalization of a non-human, and the depreciation of the human'. The priest (signified of 'him') is a 'personal subject... buried as complement to the object ('*for him*'). This results in 'the *waiting* for the subject ('*him*') in as much as he is a person' (23).

At this point Cixous announces her interest in the possibility of a 'relationship between... waiting and repetition and time'.

'(3) "*There was – it was*":' Cixous terms this an 'anaphora', the rhetorical device which entails the repetition of a word or words, and points out that there is a 'sign of repetition from the very first sentence'. The phrases '*this time*' and '*third stroke*' are an '*involution*' which is a 'closing up of repetition in identity... instead of [an] evolution'. As a subject of the story the priest is closed up by the announcement that 'There was no hope for him this time' and by the reference to the third stroke which signifies his death. There will be no direct access to the priest-as-subject, only a mediated access through the other characters which is also a mediation through the past tense. Furthermore, as the priest is paralysed he is referred to in the third person, so that the 'subject ('*him*') does not speak'. The narrator who does speak through the 'I' and pronouncement of the 'it', 'first person singular, third person neuter singular', is involved in a '[b]reach of the subject [that is] hidden in the heart of the text'.

'(4) "*Paralysis*":' While Cixous obviously agrees with the emphasis which Joyce placed on this word (and which has been traditionally accepted without question by all of his critics), she sees the term signifying in a much more radical way than do those critics who read *Dubliners* as representational stories depicting Joyce's view of the spiritual malaise which he felt afflicted his city. She describes the word as 'the signifier which, with its foreign, savage grip, sucks up the text, invests it, immobilizes it in space and time: the whole [of the first paragraph] converges in it and stops the text' (23). The 'enigmatic' 'power' of the term is 'supported by an equally wild set of replacements: "*gnomon*", "*simony*", "*catechism*". Paralysis inscribes impotence in the kind of "slip" in the text... [it] inscribes the whole of the text as analysis–paralysis (relaxing of the muscles, play of opposites, stiffness/fixity/lack of control' (23). A text which should volunteer meaning becomes 'like a text mined by the riddle

which produces its involution'. The boy's speech is 'exhausted in its pursuit of meaning', and as he compares the sound of 'paralysis', with that of words like '*gnomon* in the Euclid' and '*simony* in the Catechism' his speech 'comes up against the occlusion of an Elsewhere fixed there by an antique language (g–k–Euklid, KateKhism, Gnomon)' (23).

The rest of Cixous' analysis is devoted to how 'the word *paralysis* functions in the text' (24).

'(6) "No *hope*": waiting, hope, space ahead: exit?' asks Cixous. The answer is this 'No' which in the phrase 'no hope' operates as a 'cancellation before the letter which from then on does violence to the very time of writing'. The boy's phrase 'filled me with fear' expresses a part of the 'hope and fear [which] build up tension in the anticipation of the sacred', but this anticipation leads only as 'far as "filled with fear", where fear fills up the hollow left empty by hope'. Cixous asks if 'there was ever hope?' Her answer describes hope as that 'weighty impersonal which does not make me aware of being pitiable'. As a sign, 'hope' marks the 'uncrossable frontier between the signifier and the signified'. In the phrase 'no hope for him this time' 'hope' is detached from a subject [and] constitutes itself as an insane, empty absolute.'

'(7) "*It was the third stroke*"' signifies an 'absence' which Cixous sees linked with 'repetition'. The repeated ('third') stroke signifies the absence of the first stroke and is also a part of the signifying network that operates around the 'reverberation of time which scores the text uninterruptedly (*"often", "every night", "night after night"*)'. Cixous sees a further textual space, which is related to both absence and hope, produced by the drive of the boy's desire. The 'reverberation of time' is 'reinscribed' through an 'oblique projection of the space' which the boy's drive produces. The drive produces this textual space as 'in its movement towards:... "*I longed*"', a phrase wherein Cixous sees 'time and place... articulated by desire'. This desire creates a tension which makes the text quiver from '*hope*' to '*fear*' (24). The boy was 'filled... with fear' but 'longed to be nearer' to the source of his fear (*D*: 9). Cixous considers the boy's desire as part of 'a homosexuality which is only admitted in the dark folds of a confessional'. The 'stroke' ending the first sentence signifies a 'death blow' that is involved with the 'desire to kill', a desire Cixous finds eclipsing the homosexual desire (24).

At this point Cixous makes a 'tactical regrouping around... privileged signifiers' like 'paralysis', 'sinful', and 'word'. Such signifiers produce 'axes which are literally visible; and audible'. The axis of words creating visible images produces:

> The obvious play of light and shade [which] is put in question by the text's uncertainty, vacillating, like all the logical pairs which function insubordinately in the grey margin of doubt (life/death, hope/fear, true/empty) ('idle': empty – then vain, without foundation; lacking; lacking an occupation; unoccupied → not working). Doubtful light or shade, which presents the always deferred place of revelation: the trajectory of the question is guided by a system of '*faint*' signs, of reflectors, of filters (the reflection of candles, for there would be two candles at the head: the light seen from outside, returning to the inside...).
>
> (24–5)

The lack of any clear-cut subject (although readers who cling to a representational reading of the story as a 'realist' text which uses 'symbolism' will maintain that there is such a subject) is something that Cixous links to the extensive opaque-quality of the text. The images of 'light and sight work together, first of all to point out that the focusing of the light source has the effect of sending the subject back, at the very moment of its appearance, into the opaque, the colourless, the night time place of its mutations'. This leads Cixous to the eighth section of her analysis:

'(8) "*Night after night I had passed the house (it was vacation time)*"': Cixous considers this passage a part of a 'decomposition of the repetition night after night;' the 'night [is] not perceived as dark but pierced by "and studied the lighted square of the window"' (25). Cixous asks us to note how the subject, the 'I', of the sentence is doubly split, first by the parenthetical 'it was vacation time' and then by the 'and': 'Note the violent splitting of the subject: I had passed (–) and I had studied. Cut by '*and*'; cut by (–)' (25).

The parentheses in the sentence function in very similar fashion to those Cixous uses in her own writing, and her use of them to produce a doubling of the subject could be modelled on the parenthetical operations that she uncovers in Joyce. 'The parenthesis [is] by definition withdrawal', and Cixous observes in the boy's sentence, 'something introduc[ing] itself which you do not want introduced'. This 'something' is the double subject '("*vacation time*" [as] vacant time)', [which is also] *time without work*. There are several possibilities for the appearance of the boy's parenthetical explanation of why he was not at school. It is the:

> Sign of a movement of denial, of excuse, speech suddenly flagging, an indication of the bad conscience which is the source of the text and of... and of silences, and of the ambiguities which constitute the 'bad' side of the priest's discourse. Set apart, this time and this parenthesis which are isolated by the time set apart: '*it*': impersonal; '*was*': state; '*vacation*': empty; '*time*'. Impersonal, empty, state, time (+Name=the true name of the story). Empty time between two times; time without studying after a time of study; dead time; guilty time.
>
> (25)

All of these Cixous extrapolates from the parenthetical statement '(it was vacation time)' as various reasons for the boy's need to make the statement, to explain his position outside of the house where the priest lies dying. The statement also triggers off the 'double time articulated by *after*, *after* – *now*, *now*, and by the dyads – *passed and studied*, *faintly and evenly*...' Yet this movement also produces a paradoxical 'effect of immobility ("and night after night I had found it lit I had found it lighted in the same way"). The phrase 'in the same way' offers another doubling which Cixous describes as "the same and the other in the same"' (25).

Cixous finds Joyce's text intriguing and is interested in the source of the intrigue and the 'fixation with the same which holds and intrigues' her: '(and I, the reader, am thus fastened in the text)' (25). In part, the attraction lies in the text's articulation of a movement that is never questioned: 'the question '*why*' all these toings and froings?' is 'left out'. Cixous raises the possibility that the absence of this question might be symptomatic: 'I might read into this, if I were to stray a little, the symptom of the text's neurosis: he passed and passed again as if he could not get away from it.' Ultimately, the 'design "*fear (-hope) longing*" signifying the 'predominance of the [boy's] desire to draw near which collides with the window' 'master[s]' and 'constrain[s]' both the opening paragraph and, indeed, the 'entire story'. In the darkness of the tale 'something is repressed whose return governs all of the subject's thought processes':

> I cannot see him because he is not dead, because he is going to die. If he were dead I could see him; when he is dead I will see him; I want him to die so that I can see him; I want him to die. That is not said.
>
> (25)

'(9) "*He had often said to me: "I am not long for this world*"".'
This he of course signifies the priest, but the pronoun avoids naming him. 'He' remains:

> the unspecified subject, whose corpse lies across the fictive space, emerges at, or just after, the moment of his death through this citing of a prophecy which is in the process of coming true, only finding the words once they are already lost:
> '*Idle*', '*true*'.
>
> (25–26)

Cixous views the operations of the boy's desire as an articulation of the process that Freud termed the return of the repressed. She sees his '[s]carcely repressed... desire' returning like 'an innocent killer' searching for 'satisfaction in... words which make a cunning detour': 'He has said: I am not long for this world. And I had thought his words *idle*. Now I knew they were *true*. Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word paralysis' (*D*: 9; Cited with Cixous' emphasis, 26).

Together, 'word' and 'paralysis' constitute what Cixous calls a 'dangerous pair once you realize that the signified really invests the signifier' (26). Like Eco, Cixous emphasises the importance of metonymy in Joyce. The 'name of the sickness effectively [is] the sickness, the sickness by metonymy, being the name of Dublin, and the name of the city itself'. These metonymic connections support the 'monstrous metaphor' with which 'the entire text would constitute itself' as the pronouncement: 'saying-Dublin = saying-death'. Along the metonymic track, however, 'parody slips in'. Like Eco, Cixous sees the metonymy working in 'both directions': 'if the sickness *is* Dublin, Dublin is the sickness'. The contiguity of the metonymic signifiers produces 'to infinity the exchange which blurs the direction of causality'. It is no more possible to say that the sickness is caused by Dublin than it is to say that the city is a result of the sickness. The operations of the various signifiers that Cixous has been investigating constitute a play in which 'The Sisters' produces 'its own reflection' and which also results in the 'reiteration of the signifier'. Cixous sees 'the hesitation of the letter' in the text's production of its own reflection, and this hesitation (Dublin = city = sickness = paralysis = word = paralysis = sickness = city = Dublin, etc.) makes it 'impossible to set up a subject and intentionality, in that it is so difficult to extricate language as such from what language says to itself across the words of the subject'.

Cixous believes that the subversive nature of Joyce's writing emerged very early in Joyce's career. Unlike the commentators who see *Finnegans Wake* and parts of *Ulysses* as the scene of Joyce's radical writing, Cixous finds 'The Sisters' as one of the sources of Joyce's subversiveness. In terms of the story's characters, Cixous sees Joyce's writing already producing a kind of '*langwedge*' (*FW*: 73. 01), or language-as-a-wedge, that is foregrounded in the *Wake*. Instead of representing the objective world of culture and linking world and word, the language drives a wedge between character and culture and word and world: 'It is impossible', Cixous argues, 'for the narrator to constitute himself as an imaginery unity by gaining assurance from a language which escapes mastery, especially since the signifiers from a foreign tongue only make his voice echo; they cannot be used, sound objects without signification, even if they do appear in the same semantic field of the culture' (26). Producing her own pun to suggest the extent to which 'The Sisters' initiates Joyce's version of the revolution of the word, she suggests that:

> With the inscription of 'Paralysis', and of what it carries in its *wake* ('gnomon', 'Euclid', etc.), the nascent revolution put into practice by Joyce takes effect, a revolution which shakes the foundations of 'the metaphysical enclosure' dominated both really and metaphorically by the discourse of the master (the master of God's discourse, struck down, dying, aphasic). This exile, in the ephemeral but primordial signifier which aims to 'betray' the

> sickness-Dublin, has as a secondary effect the betrayal of the place from which it strikes; *Ulysses*, and its task of demolishing cultural conservatism, starts here, in this text where no-one knows anything except for the text which does not know that it hides.
>
> (26, emphasis added)

The purpose of the signifier in subversive writing is not the same as that of its counterpart in phallocentric writing. In the latter,-the signifier works toward the conservation of the proper name (of the city, of the person, of God, above all, of the father). In writing which works to subvert the phallocentric tradition, the proper name is put at risk and eventually ruined. This is an idea explored by Barthes and Derrida and one to which we will return in the chapter on Joyce and poststructuralism. It is also the idea which Cixous uses to conclude her study of 'The Sisters'. Examining the narrator's line 'It sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being' (*D*: 9; Cited, 27), Cixous contends that '[w]hat is said of "*Paralysis*" goes a long way.... The common noun for the sickness is also the proper name of a maleficent and sinful being: the imagined spectacle of the soon to be dead [priest], letter of the gaze, is repeated in the echo of the word 'paralysis', letter of the letter' (27–8). The operations of the signifier 'paralysis' move it from 'word [the boy's] to being [the priest's, the boy's, the city's], from voice [the boy's] to sin [the unnamed transgression], the disguises of the forbidden (*l'interdit*) are multiplied, stirring up the desire to *see*'. The object of this 'desire to see' is the '***deadly work***' of paralysis as: sickness, transgression, signifier, and source/cause of death. 'Thus it is the name which kills: the empire of the signifier which will be subsequently extended to the point of producing *Finnegans Wake*, infinitely mocking the conscientious control of the scriptor' (28).

Cixous expands her view of 'paralysis' as signifier to include an assessment of its role as a precursor of the 'Word' in *Ulysses* and the *Wake*: 'Word, master of its grammes, inseminating itself by the introduction of the letter L into its body [paraLysis], which gives it the dimensions of the concrete infinite, "word", "world", "work", lapsus at the source of *Ulysses*, comical straying of the signified which [Joyce as] the scriptor from the beginning, in *Dubliners* called from the place of jouissance into the realm of the sacred' (28). Cixous finds much room for a serious and perhaps even uneasy contemplation of the subversive nature of Joyce's writing; in 'The Sisters', his 'game is still impregnated with unease because the enterprise of turning away from the beaten track is a new one, and one does not yet know what mutation of the language will be brought about in the long run by the liberation of the signifier'. Ultimately, however, Cixous recognises the essentially heroic and comic elements of Joyce's writing as it allows the reader to experience a delight even while paying attention to its subversive operations:

> how can you not delight in this inaugural audacity which burns its boats, scuttles the theological foundation of the word, reduces the master to silence, inflicts on the name-of-the-father an eclipse behind a miserable curtain, underlining in a blasphemous fashion the lettered character of the spoken word, bursting apart the ceremonial of reading and more generally of culture by rejecting from the outset any hope of a response, by taking back in the very gesture of giving ('*No*'/'*hope*'), affirming nothing except on the level of the voice by means of a repetition which magnifies the spoken, an affirmation which is supported and put at risk by a questioning of the very function of the spoken...
>
> (28).

For Cixous, 'there will be no end to the dream' in Joyce's writing. That which is behind '"The Sisters's" velvet curtains gives on to that which, if there is something, is something which retreats before the name'. This 'something' involves the operations of the all-too-human desire which we all share. The 'distressing' 'saying' of this 'something', this 'it' 'can only be heard through the annihilation of the master who guarded the Referent' (28–9). For Cixous, a large part of Joyce's genius lies in his willingness and ability to subject himself to the splitting of the subject, to discredit himself as subject and become the 'divided scriptor [who] takes it upon himself-as-subject... to return the story from his pen to the reader–postman, to return the signified to the signifier's address, and to do this without "dismay"' (29).

Julia Kristeva

We have already looked at Kristeva's view of Joyce's writing in relation to Menippean satire and the carnivalesque, and we have also considered how she sees his writing functioning according to the 0–2 logic which subverts the 0–1 logic of theological discourse and the discourse of the Western, phallogocentric, epic tradition. Kristeva clearly values the subversive nature of Joyce's writing, and considering *Finnegans Wake* within the political context of the collapse of capitalist society, she argues that the 'equivalent... of the language of *Finnegans Wake*' is the 'one language that grows more and more contemporary' (Kristeva, 1980: 92). We will resume our consideration of Kristeva's use of Joyce's texts as models for her theories of language here by considering her views on femininity and theory and looking at how she uses Joyce's writing in this context. There are two objections which might be raised against a consideration of Kristeva's views of Joyce as feminist views, and the reasons behind such objections are touched on in Scott's *James Joyce*. Because Kristeva offers '[t]he most widely known feminist appropriation of Lacan', her ideas on Joyce could equally be considered in the chapter on Joyce and psychoana-

lytic theory. Kristeva also 'has allied herself... with male theory', and her 'position is to accept the existence of a male-centred "symbolic" order, and to work strategically to deconstruct it from the inside' (Scott, 1987: 12). As a result of this there are no doubt many feminists, particularly among separatist feminists, who would object to Kristeva's feminism; nevertheless, Kristeva does work on the role of the feminine in discourse, and her appropriation of Lacan's theory is, as Scott points out, a 'feminist appropriation'.

In Chapter Five of *Desire in Language*, 'From one identity to another', Kristeva posits that 'every language theory is predicated upon a conception of the subject that it explicitly posits, implies, or tries to deny' (124). Kristeva outlines some of the ways in which the subject has been theoretically treated during the history of Western philosophy and writing, including the influential theories of the subject found in the writings of Descartes, Husserl and Freud. Her goal is to arrive at a semiotic theory of the subject which she can relate to her theories of the mother and the maternal in language. Drawing on the Freudian and Lacanian concepts of the subject she arrives at the idea of a 'subject-in-process' which bears some similarity with the continually changing subject identified in Joyce by Cixous (135). Kristeva, however, elaborates a concept of the subject which can support the signifying economy of the 'undecidable character of any so-called natural language'. The support of this economy of the signifier cannot be 'the transcendental ego alone'. While 'there would be a speaking *subject* since the signifying set exists... this subject, in order to tally with its heterogeneity, must be... a questionable *subject-in-process*'. This subject can be apprehended thanks to 'Freud's theory of the unconscious' because 'through the surgery [of this theory] practiced in the operating consciousness of the transcendental ego, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis did allow... for heterogeneity, which, known as the unconscious, shapes the signifying function' (135). 'In the light of these comments', Kristeva offers a 'few remarks on the questionable subject-in-process of poetic language'. These comments reveal her views on the role of the maternal in poetic language and that language's relation to the incest taboo.

Kristeva sees 'semiotic activity' introducing a 'wandering or fuzziness into... poetic language', and, from the sort of 'synchronic view' of language that we have already considered, this activity is a 'mark of the workings of the drives' (136). Like Cixous, who considered the fundamental operations of the drive in 'The Sisters', Kristeva sees the function of the drive revealed in sets of opposites: 'appropriation/rejection, orality/anality, love/hate, life/death'. The diachronic perspective sees the semiotic activity as one which 'stems from the archaisms of the semiotic body'. Before the mirror stage enables the individual to perceive itself as an image that is identical, and 'consequently', Kristeva adds, 'as

signifying', the semiotic body 'is dependent vis-à-vis the mother'. The individual is prepared for the future role as speaker and 'for entrance into meaning and signification' by 'semiotic processes' which are simultaneously 'instinctual and maternal'. Once the individual enters the symbolic realm and gains access to 'meaning and signification', however, the instinctual and maternal aspects of the semiotic processes must be repressed: 'Language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother'.

In contrast to the subject of language as symbolic communication, the 'questionable subject' of poetic language ceases to repress the instinctual and maternal, 'reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element'. Kristeva sees the constitution of (non-poetic) 'language-as-symbolic function' dependent on the incest prohibition, a dependency which it shares with the constitution of 'women as exchange objects': the 'prohibition of incest constitutes, at the same time, language as communicative code and women as exchange objects in order for society to exist'. Poetic language, however, is subversive and disruptive of social order, and '*would be* for its questionable subject-in-process the *equivalent of incest*'. In this context, Kristeva sees the poetic language of *Finnegans Wake* playing around the incest prohibition, but she considers in biographical terms the HCE–Issy relationship which we saw examined by Benstock in fictional terms. Arguing that the 'passage into and through the forbidden, which constitutes the sign and is correlative to the prohibition of incest, is often explicit as such', she cites as an example, 'Joyce and his daughter at the end of *Finnegans Wake*...' (136).

Kristeva stresses the equivalence between poetic language and incest 'for three reasons'; they are: a) formalist poetics is mistaken in its notion that poetic language can be 'solely interpreted' 'as a preoccupation' with signification 'at the expense of the message'; 'rather it is more deeply indicative of the instinctual drives' activity relative to the first structurations (constitution of the body as self) and identification (with the mother)'; b) 'because it utters incest, poetic lanague is linked with 'evil'; 'literature and evil... should be understood beyond the resonances of Christian ethics, as the social body's self-defense against the discourse of incest as destroyer and generator of any language and sociality'; c) 'one must, in discussing poetic language, consider what [the] presymbolic and transsymbolic relationship to the mother introduces as aimless wandering within the identity of the speaker and the economy of its very discourse... this relationship of the speaker to the mother is probably one of the most important factors producing interplay within the structure of meaning as well as a questioning process of subject and history' (137).

Kristeva places a great deal of emphasis upon the function of rhythm, and particularly 'sentential rhythms' in poetic language. While she relies on Céline to illustrate her argument, what she says about sentential

rhythm's ability to displace the denotated object of the sentence and to produce a meaning that is 'other' to that provided by the constitutive grammar of the sentence has an obvious relevance to Joyce. The sort of movement from the singular subject to the plural which we saw Cixous analyse in Joyce's writing provides an analogue for the ways in which Kristeva sees the 'elided object in the sentence relat[ing] to a hesitation (if not an erasure) of the *real object* for the speaking subject' (141). Cixous pinpointed such a hesitation in 'The Sisters' continual deferral of the feelings between the boy and the priest and of the subject named by the title of the story. Many critics have commented on Joyce's well-known use of 'hesitation' (both as the word by which Parnell was betrayed and as a narrative technique) in the *Wake*. Kristeva insists that we

> must also listen to [and read the texts of] Céline, Artaud, or Joyce... in order to understand that the aim of this practice [of sentential rhythms which elide the object and render the subject questionable], which reaches us as a language, is, through the signification of the nevertheless transmitted message, not only to impose a music, a rhythm – that is, a polyphony – but also to wipe out sense through nonsense and laughter
>
> (142).

Joyce's celebrated declaration that his Wakean language is 'nat language in any sinse of the world' (83. 12) exemplifies Kristeva's point. A message comes across, but the polysemy of the language defies the determination of any univocal, monological meaning. Is the language 'not' language or a 'nigh' language? In any 'sense', any 'sins' or 'since' of the 'word' or 'world'?

In the chapter 'The Father, Love, And Banishment', Kristeva contrasts Joyce with Beckett. She examines Beckett's writing and considers the texts *First Love* and *Not I* as a 'parenthesis... adequately circumscribing' Beckett's 'known novels and plays' (148). This parenthesis works as a sort of bracket in which Kristeva pauses in her investigation of poetic language to consider Beckett's writing as somehow antithetical to the sort of subversive and carnivalesque poetic language that she advocates. She offers as 'the complete opposite of Beckett's universe', a 'Venetian ambience', and one only need pause to consider Venice's association with the carnival in order to grasp Kristeva's implied idea of Beckett. Her Beckettian parenthesis, however, makes the idea explicit as Kristeva links it to a 'microcosmic' account of 'the now carnivalized destiny of a once flourishing Christianity'. Kristeva's two-novel parenthesis of Beckett's *First Love* and *Not I* 'includes everything' that poetic language should subvert:

> a father's death and the arrival of a child (*First Love*), and at the other end, a theme of orality stripped of its ostentation – the mouth of a lonely woman, face to face with God, face to face with nothing (*Not I*). Beckett's *pietà* maintains a sublime appearance, even on her way to the toilet. Even though the mother is a prostitute, it doesn't matter who the actual father is since the child belongs solely to its mother (*First Love*).
>
> (148)

Kristeva compares 'the babblings of a seventy-year-old-woman' in *Not I* with Molly's speech in *Ulysses*' 'Penelope' episode, describing the former as the 'antonym of a hymn or of Molly's monologue', which are 'no less haloed, in all their nonsense, with a paternal aura' (148–9). The babblings of Beckett's old woman, 'ironically but obstinately rais[e] her toward that third person – God – and fill[ ] her with a strange joy in the face of nothingness'. Kristeva ironically comments that '[r]aised, demystified, and for that very reason more tenacious than ever, the pillars of our imagination are still there. Some of them, at least...' (149).

Kristeva clearly believes that the pursuit of the father, even the dead father – and even if written in an ironic mode, as it is by Beckett – affirms rather than dislodges the importance of the paternal and sustains the monologic discourse of the phallocentric. 'The primary, obsessed man', however, 'never sees his father as dead' (150). The paternal strength remains in the son, and the writer who remains in the position of being in relation to the father (even the dead father) narrates not in a poetic language, but in a monological communicative language that demands an addressee: 'As long as a son pursues meaning in a story or through narratives, even if it eludes him, as long as he persists in his search he narrates in the name of Death for the father's corpses, that is for you, his readers'. Beckett writes 'the myth of the bachelor', of the 'banished lover, with all his calculations... and his nighttime "stewpan" keeping him bedtime company better than a bride... ' (151). He also 'writes against Joyce, too, ascetically rejecting the latter's joyous and insane, incestuous plunge summed up in Molly's jouissance or the paternal baby talk in *Finnegans Wake*'. Kristeva sees 'Beckett's tragic irony' offering an 'impossible subjectivity' that is an 'equally impossible femininity' (154). *Not I* offers a 'sweet relief' from its 'heartrending statement of the loss of identity', but this relief is 'produced by the most minute corruption of meaning in a world unfailingly saturated with it', in a world, in other words, dominated by the non-poetic monologisms of phallogocentric discourse. Kristeva contrasts Beckett's achievement with 'the overflowing Molly and Finnegan's negative awakening': between the two 'stands a jouissance provoked by meaning's deception, which nevertheless inevitably perseveres through and beyond this unavoidable third person' (154).

Kristeva is particularly interested in the history of the 'Religion of the Father', and she sees Joyce's writing producing a revolutionary upheaval in this history. There was an 'attempt... at the beginning of the Renaissance, to save the Religion of the Father by breathing into it, more than before, what is [sic] represses: the joyous serenity of incest with the mother' (156). Such attempts, Kristeva argues, were '[f]ar from feminist,

[and] can be seen as a shrewd admission of what in the feminine and maternal is repressed'. These attempts failed and the 'Renaissance was to revive Man and his perversion beyond the mother thus dealt with and once again rejected'. One of the consequences was that 'Humanism and its sexual explosion, especially its homosexuality, and its bourgeois eagerness to acquire objects (products and money) removed from immediate analysis (but not from the preconscious) the cult of natality and its real symbolic consequences' (157). This, however, was not such a bad thing according to Kristeva who says that the removal was 'So much the better' and argues that 'through such scorn for femininity, a truly analytic solution might... take place at last'. It took shape, at 'the end of the nineteenth century' when 'Joyce, even more than Freud', affirmed 'this repression of motherhood and incest... as risky and unsettling in one's very flesh and sex'. In Joyce's writings:

> by means of a language that 'musicates through letters', [the repressed (motherhood and incest)] resume within discourse the rhythms, intonations, and echolias of the mother–infant symbiosis – intense, pre-Oedipal, predating the father – and in this the third person. Having had a child, could a woman, then, speak of another love? Love as object banished from paternal Death, facsimile of the third person, probably; but also a shattering of the object across and through what is seen and heard within rhythm; a polymorphic, polyphonic, serene, eternal, unchangeable jouissance that has nothing to do with death and its object, banished from love.
>
> (157)

Philippe Sollers

The inclusion of the male French writer, Sollers, under feminist critiques of Joyce would no doubt meet with objections from feminists who hold that males are biologically and culturally incapable of fully comprehending feminism, yet Sollers offers some unique insights into Joyce and women. Sollers is primarily a writer of fiction, but he also expresses an impressive awareness of Joyce's work (an awareness noted by critics of Sollers' own writing). In 'Joyce & Co.' (*In the Wake of the Wake* [Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1978]), he considers Joyce's relations with women and his creation of female characters from the perspective of a French poststructuralist, psychoanalytic writer. He begins by asserting that 'Joyce traces the limits of any maternal, national language' and offers an analysis of this language which counterbalances the ideas we saw offered by Gilbert and Gubar:

> What is a meaning in the language of a mother country? The private property of child speech, which makes groups of adults reprieved children; but also a referential functioning of the subject toward his or her bodily matrix and a barrier erected by the preconscious against the unconscious.
>
> (107)

Sollers is highly psychoanalytic in his comments on Joyce, and he offers an interesting view of Joyce's relations with the women who assisted him. Arguing that '[n]ot enough attention has been given to the fact that throughout his life Joyce wrote with money provided by women', Sollers considers this union of female money and male writing as 'the point at which a romance "novel" knits together, notably between literature and psychoanalysis'. He considers the relations between Joyce and his 'first patroness', in an unusual light:

> Mrs. McCormick... was absolutely bent on having Joyce psychoanalyzed by Jung at her expense. Joyce refused the proposal and Mrs. McCormick stopped her allowance. We begin to see here the exact antithesis of the classical analytic situation, a question of *no longer* paying someone who does *not* want to be psychoanalyzed.
>
> (109)

For Sollers as reader/analyst of Joyce-as-life-and-text this is only the beginning of a narrative: 'Nor is this the end of the story, since Joyce's daughter, Lucia, who early shows signs of serious mental disturbance, will be treated by this same Jung, the Jung who had written a highly critical article on *Ulysses*, accusing Joyce of schizophrenia' (109). Sollers speculates on the psycho-sexual implications of these events:

> A woman gives Joyce financial help so that he can write. But she wants him to have analysis. Joyce refuses. Punishment: no more money. Joyce's daughter is ill. She is treated in place of him. Suppose that Joyce's daughter is one of his *letters*: the letter falls into the hands of Jung, which is to say that it misses Freud.
>
> (109)

What Sollers sketches out here is a poststructuralist version of a textual economy in which value, gender, agreement/refusal, psychoanalysis and father–daughter relationships all play a part.

Like Kristeva, Sollers in part views gender relations in writing in terms of incest. He describes Joyce as writing 'from a hyper-complex system of kinship' and emphasises 'by "generalized incest"' that Joyce 'explores *all* the possible discourse positions between mother–son, father–daughter, father–son, etc' (117). Joyce does not really achieve this until *Finnegans Wake*; in *Ulysses*, 'this is not yet the case':

> The father–son couple (Bloom–Stephen), the question of filiation by spiritual paternity, is brought up against the great final matrix of enunciation, Molly. Paternity is 'depreciated' in relation to the engulfing monologue. Molly's password is 'I am the flesh which always says yes', constructed on the inversion of the Faustian 'I am the spirit which ever denies'.
>
> (117)

Unlike most of the critics whom we have examined so far, Sollers thinks that Joyce transcends the limitations of gender and 'go[es] on to write in non-centered enunciation positions'. What Joyce 'gets beyond', Sollers contends, 'is very precisely the position of female paranoia' (117). Unlike schizophrenia, which 'allows the possibility of leaving sexual difference out of count, paranoia poses sexual difference in all its force'. Sollers thinks that Joyce's movement beyond female paranoia helps to account for the difficulty of his writing: 'if Joyce is a difficulty, it is because his writing comes to edge on this psychotic axis where, in principle, language is marked in the fact of its lacking' (117).

Sollers sees *Finnegans Wake* as a text which 'makes names *germinate*', and the primary 'principle name[ ], veritable compass card of meanings... found in *Finnegans Wake*' is the female ALP:

> First, the feminine position: ALP, Anna Livia Plurabelle. Position one and multiple, but principle of unification. Anna Luna Pulchrabelle. A flux of multiplicities (rivers) but unitary, the one as *she* the same in its variations. Bizarre, isn't it, the *one* which is *there* the *a* which is *the* masculine *one* which is *the* as *she*.
>
> (117)

Sollers describes Joyce as the 'anti-Schreber', and contrasts the male paranoia that Freud and Lacan analysed in Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* with the female paranoia he believes Joyce manages to transcend. Male paranoia is the 'insane attempt for a man to become the woman of all men' (118–19). In Schreber it entails a 'castration he awaits, wants, and fears all at the same time'. This castration 'constitutes a limit in relation to which it can be said that [Schreber] cannot act in the real'. In contrast to this, 'Female paranoia... [is] more radical' and 'gives rise to a different erotomania of writing'. It produces 'texts given in terms of novel, of fiction, but they are very often dictated in a manner close to a more or less automatic writing' (119).

Sollers offers the hypothesis 'that in female paranoia there is a foreclosure of the word, the verb, which signs a kind of absolute impossibility of acceding to the symbolic'. It is from just such a 'radical negation of writing' that Sollers believes Joyce 'writes... and speaks':

> He writes and speaks in that impossible place where there ought not to be anything speaking or writing, and he brings it to a highly worked sublimation. In other words, Joyce gets something to come which in principle ought not to come. Which is undoubtedly the reason for the ferocious *Verneinung* Joyce suffered from his contemporaries and continues to suffer from those who have followed them.
>
> (119)

While he recognises the importance of the notion of 'matricidal writing' in Joyce, Sollers argues that it 'must not... be allowed to conceal the position of incestuous discourse with the mother which emerges with Molly in *Ulysses*'. It is in Molly's monologue that Sollers sees Joyce leaving criticism in general 'nonplused' and 'a whole criticism, above all written in English, standing petrified to attention before this monument-attempt upon the mother as language' (119–20).

The traditional view that Joyce's writing was influenced by Dujardin is, for Sollers, a misunderstanding of the '[h]eight of irony' produced by Joyce's 'pretend[ing] to have been influenced... by... Dujardin, and... his totally unimportant book' when he was actually writing from beyond the position of female paranoia. Molly's language is a 'Molly-recrimination-monolanguage' which is 'transformed by the *Wake* into the joyance of languages' (120). Sollers sees the end of the *Wake*, like that of *Ulysses*, 'entrusted to a woman':

> this time it is the daughter flowing and flying and returning into the paternal bosom: Anna Livia... arriving madly now as mother and as daughter on the horizon of the mouth of her son–husband–father, the ocean. And everything will begin again beyond the reunification, the fullness, the completeness, in that other beating rhythm of the one and the multiple which can only be written *anew*.
>
> (120)

Joyce's exploration of a power that can be related to Kristeva's 'female semiotic' produces a major disruption of traditional notions of gender and sexuality which has had a daunting effect on Joyce's readers:

> It is this saturation of the polymorphic, polyphonic, polygraphic, polyglotic varieties of sexuality, this *unsetting* of sexuality, this devastating ironicalization of your most visceral repeated desires which leaves you... troubled when faced with Joyce. Freud, Joyce: another era for manwomankind.
>
> (120)

Christine van Boheemen

The Novel as Family Romance: Language, Gender and Authority from Fielding to Joyce was 'engendered by Continental European theory'. Although it is offered as a 'contribution to Anglo-American scholarship on the English novel', its theoretical perspective derives largely from semiotics, psychoanalysis, feminism and deconstruction, and demonstrates, as we have already noted, a considerable indebtedness to French theorists in these areas (1). Van Boheemen develops a central argument for her study that includes the 'interrelationship of authority and gender', and she offers five questions which outline the focal points of her concerns:

> How can the conceptualization of origin, traditionally personified as masculine, become feminine? What does the change signify with regard to the

> history of authority and legitimation, the notion of subjectivity? Has the idea of woman's otherness become the emblem of modernity? Why the necessity for the metaphor of gender? Moreover, what are the implications for women writing and speaking in a Modern epoch?
>
> (2–3)

The 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses* provides an example of the transformation from the masculine to the feminine that is central to the concerns of the study. Addressing a girl, Bloom declares 'Speak, you! Are you struck dumb? You are the link between nations and generations. Speak, woman, sacred lifegiver!' (xv. 4647–49; Cited, 1). Van Boheemen contends that Bloom's words 'project as the be-all and end-all material nature and biological reproduction in the figure of woman; and the desire of both Bloom and *Ulysses* is to make this woman speak, to hear the voice of origin' (2). She believes that in Bloom's words, the 'idea of woman as image of nature and as means of passage of the flesh of masculine identity... [is] changed to take on a transcendental, mythic power, that of giving life'. This idea, she argues, is 'in marked contrast to the orthodox Christian view, which reserved absolute origination and authority to the masculine principle, God the Father' (2).

While a transformation such as this might be considered as an example of the sort of overturning of opposites (male and female) that is advocated by deconstruction, van Boheemen does not see it as such. Although she thinks that *Ulysses* 'flaunts its "feminine" indeterminacy and celebrates flux and open-endedness', she also argues that 'Joyce's Modern foregrounding of language, like his staging of Molly Bloom, should not be seen as overturning the plot of patriarchy' (7). Like Cixous, van Boheemen sees Joyce's writing producing a 'strategy of doubling'. She does not see this as part of a subversion of the phallocentrism, however, but as a strategy 'meant to safeguard patriarchy, however paradoxically, in designating not material reproduction but textual productivity as origin' (8). While it is 'not wrong to think of Joyce as the precursor of *écriture féminine*', he is a precursor only. His style 'flaunts its subversive otherness, coded feminine' (41), but instead of subverting patriarchal dominance it reinforces the subordinate position of the female by appropriating it. Indeed, van Boheemen sees such appropriation as characteristic not only of Joyce, but of Modernism in general: 'Modern thought from Joyce to Derrida rests upon a double dispossession or repression of "femininity" and the appropriation of otherness as style' (8). Like some of the other studies we have examined, *The Novel as Family Romance* sees Joyce using the position of the female but not producing any serious subversion of the feminine's subordinate position within the patriarchal structure.

Fundamental to van Boheemen's feminism and her view of Joyce is the belief that it is not possible to work outside the patriarchal system: 'I have no illusion', she states, 'that it is possible to step outside the sway of the patriarchy' (42). Unlike Kristeva, who sees working with patriarchal myths and patterns as a choice, van Boheemen would seem to believe that female critics have no alternative but to participate in existing patriarchal structures:

> the female critic who wishes to object to the use of gender as metaphor and who desires a change in the contemporary inscription of woman as a primarily sexual creature rather than the *animal rationale*... lacks a point from which to move the world of discourse. Moreover, in writing, she inevitably makes herself the accomplice of the patriarchal project. If she cannot escape participation, however, she can choose her own subject matter and style.
>
> (42)

Van Boheemen sees the subversion of existing phallocentric structures as an ongoing project of writing with an outcome that has yet to be realised: 'All inscriptions and legitimations are human products, and the future need not be like the present. If that future is to come about – however impossible it may be, at present, to *think* it – we must continue to investigate the complex figurations of woman, origin and authority in the discourses of our culture' (43). One of van Boheemen's specific aims is to 'create awareness of the implication of connotations of gender in signification'. To this end, she strives to 'deliberately reemphasize difference, pointing again and again to the moments when the textual (hence patriarchal) requirement of single origin and meaning perverts the logic of noncontradiction' (43).

Van Boheemen examines *Ulysses* as an open-ended text in which the strategy of doubling is an essential narrative operation. She considers this doubling within the context of the evolution of the English novel. Doubling gradually evolves into a part of the strategy of maintaining open-endedness through the avoidance of resolution. The 'doubling of characters... provides a resolution... in *Tom Jones*', but this gradually changes: 'even if we limit ourselves to literature in English, the number of plots that do not resolve their doubling but exploit it is convincingly large':

> Oscar Wilde moralized *The Picture of Dorian Grey*; Stevenson suggested the psychic cohabitation of a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Henry James turned the screw of the alter ego in many of his stories. That the reading public accepted this convention suggests that the modern assumption of division in the human psyche... was no longer an overwhelming threat.
>
> (135–6)

While the notion of doubling entails such variations on the traditional theme of the doppelganger, van Boheemen sees the open-endedness of *Ulysses* resting on a doubling that has more profound implications

affecting our notions of representation:

> the open-endedness of *Ulysses* may reveal... underlying assumptions, problems of conceptualization and personification relating to representation itself. The Joycean text... rests upon the strategy of using the successful inscription of the 'other' (in Joyce, women) as legitimation for the new signifying practice... [I]f family romance as an epigenetic centre is discarded, it is replaced by a different conceptualization of origin and identity which in the final analysis proves equally mythic.
>
> (136)

While the Joyce section of *The Novel as Family Romance* is primarily concerned with *Ulysses*, van Boheemen does examine the ways in which the *Wake* produces a double writing. Joyce's final work is the culmination of a development which begins with *Dubliners*. After the collection of short stories, Joyce's 'strategy will be more and more deliberate ambiguity, more use of language to undo differences rather than to affirm or create them' (137). His writing is a 'heretical way of writing which culminates in the free "chaosmos" of *Finnegans Wake*'. In order to demonstrate the doubling of this 'heretical' writing, van Boheemen examines Joyce's combining of *twilight* and *toilette* in order to produce 'the resultant single word, *twalette*'. This term creates a 'blurring of categories' which 'inheres in a revision of the material part of the sign', and '[i]t is this self-inscription of the "other" into the graphic symbol... which produces a double or even plural signification'. The 'advantage of this [double] strategy of writing', van Boheemen contends, 'is precisely its ambiguity':

> it both affirms and denies identity. It keeps the conventional meanings while revising them; it violates the principle of single identity, while not wholly destroying it; it erodes the very logic/logos of signification without a total deterioration into chaos; it questions the self-evidence of the logos of Genesis, while remaining within its domain.
>
> (138)

It is in *Ulysses*, however, that van Boheemen is primarily interested. While pointing out that '*Finnegans Wake*... shakes more cornerstones of Western metapysics', she thinks it 'sufficient to remind ourselves that the language of this capstone to Joyce's oeuvre seems deliberately designed to reflect a decentering ambivalence towards the central logical axiom of Western thought' (138).

Van Boheemen believes that 'Joyce's strategy of questioning the logos show[s] affinity with the insights of Derrida' (171), and in her sixth chapter, 'The Difference of *Ulysses* and the Tautology of Mimesis', she details some of these affinities. '[W]hat Joyce attempts through his writing', she suggests, 'is similar to what Derrida tries to attain in his readings of philosophy – an unsettling of the conventional categories of thought, of the hierarchising strategy by which we order reality and structure representation, always a decentering that tries to unsettle the logos and not to undo it' (139–40). Joyce's writing uses mimesis not as 'a one-directional operation', but as a 'double process, a simultaneous and mutual confirming constitution of presence' (165). It achieves this through a 'deconstruction of plot' in which '[s]elf and world, language and reality mirror and sustain each other in a single act of mutual polarity'. The narrative of *Ulysses* not only represents what we usually understand by the term *story*, but also produces another double operation: it mirrors the 'shape and presence of "life"' and, '[a]t the same time, the order of the objective world confirms the order of the story' (165).

It is in the seventh chapter, 'The Syntax of Return: "Still an Idea Behind It",' that van Boheemen focuses on this issue of gender and the feminine in Joyce's writing. She sees 'Penelope' as one of the most important episodes in *Ulysses* and argues that it 'should be seen as the *mise en abîme* of the otherness, and difference, of *Ulysses* itself':

> As a *ricorso* it is self-contained, separated from the action. It presents itself as an afterthought, an 'ek-static' supplement to the main body of *Ulysses*. Still, even if 'Penelope' stands outside and apart, the flow of its language, transgressing the boundaries set by syntax and decorum, continues the stylistic practice of the text as a whole.
>
> (173)

Although the 'Penelope' episode is in some ways separate from the rest of the text, it is also a microcosm of the text. It not only 'continues the stylistic practice' of the preceding chapters, but 'presents it in a concentrated and heightened form'. It confirms the otherness of the text: 'by repeating, clarifying, and intensifying the style of writing in the body of the text, ['Penelope'] affirms and signs the alterity of *Ulysses*' (173).

Earlier in her study van Boheemen records the common critical view that the 'most striking quality of Molly's monologue is its absence of traditional punctuation' (173). She returns to this idea in order to suggest that the 'flow of the eight sentences', which are indicated by punctuation, 'is often read, as Joyce said he intended it to be read, as the representation of the "other"': 'as feminine language – alogical, flowing, inconsequential, and in every way the opposite of the masculine logos of predicative meaning' (173–4). Van Boheemen suggests an alternative reading of the episode based, not on the usual practice of reading it as a presentation of Molly's character, but on a reading of its syntactical functions: 'if we forgo a mimetic view of the figure of Molly and try instead to define her syntactic function in the texture of words... Molly's language proves more than the speech of a woman or even the idea of a woman'. The episode does offer insights into Molly's character, but van Boheemen is

more interested in the ways that it transgresses traditional forms of logic: 'Undermining the possibility of discrimination, distinction, and denial, "Penelope" suspends the either/or of a logic into a both/and (or neither/nor) as well as or/rather'. Furthermore, while it is 'embodied differently' in 'Penelope' the 'preclusion of distinct meaning and identity... is the characteristic quality of *Ulysses* as a whole':

> 'Penelope' presents the concentrated essence of the style of the text, and in its achievement retrospectively affirms and confirms the otherness of the work as a whole in structure, style, and theme. 'Penelope' presents itself as both the capstone and the cornerstone of *Ulysses*, its arche and its telos.
>
> (174)

Taking a 'closer look at Molly's style' as it is found not in 'Penelope', but 'in the main body of the text', van Boheemen offers an analysis of 'metempsychosis' which contradicts the ideas we saw presented by Gilbert and Gubar. Gilbert and Gubar contend that Molly's 'implicit metamorphosis of it into the babble of "met him pike hoses" exemplif[ies] the parrot-like blankness with which Joyce's women respond to abstract concepts' (1988: 170). Van Boheemen points out that it is 'Molly's husband, Leopold, who... remembers the typical quality of his wife's style', and she believes that he does so 'lovingly' (174). 'Molly... does not desire epiphany', van Boheeman states; 'on the contrary she seeks liberation from the obfuscation of meaning brought about by a logocentric culture'. Molly does 'turn[ ] Greek into the speech of an uneducated Irish housewife', but van Boheemen compares this with 'Joyce turn[ing] the Greek epic into an Anglo-Irish novel'. 'Moreover', she adds,

> these words ['met him pike hoses'] are plain because they redirect the reference to a transcendent signifier, an intangible mystery of the soul, to common, familiar English words already in use in Anglo-Saxon days, referring to the piece of clothing covering the least spiritual part of the body. It is as if Molly's 'voicing' of the written word of the text... echoes it in such a deflatingly revealing way that we seem to overhear the uncanny voice of original otherness, an otherness outside *doxa*, subverting the fixity of conventional meaning in an obliquely sly, knowing way.
>
> (175)

It is perhaps worth noting that the conflicting views of van Boheemen and Gilbert and Gubar can be explained in part by their contrasting theories of language. Gilbert and Gubar view Molly as Joyce's misogynistically condescending 'realist' representation of a woman; van Boheemen thinks that Joyce is producing something 'other' than the language of realist literature and that his writing questions the very concept of mimesis upon which realist writing is premised. Gilbert and Gubar think that Molly's 'met him pike hoses' is a result of Joyce's

attempt at depicting a realistic woman with a 'parrot-like blankness'; van Boheemen sees it as a 'rendering of the unconscious of "metempsychosis" and take[s] Molly's voice as that of the "other"... predicating origin not as a transcendent presence but, if at all, as material, physical, organic' (175).

Molly's language is, for van Boheemen, a language of the 'other' which 'speaks of Joyce's notion of "feminine" language' (177). Van Boheemen's analysis of the style of Molly's language leads to three important conclusions: '"Penelope" and the other passages featuring Molly's style characterize her as an emblem of otherness;... the style of this otherness is a figure for the otherness of the text as a whole;... this otherness is never absolute' (177). The condition of the other, to van Boheemen's mind, is dependent on that in relation to which it is other. The 'other' within a dominant discourse is 'always a variant of, and within, the dominant discourse'. This means that 'Molly... can never speak for herself as wholly other' for two reasons: a) 'she is Joyce's creature and the product of a masculine imagination'; b) 'a language of the essentially other, "alias" *écriture féminine*, is a logical impossibility'. This assertion clearly puts van Boheemen in an antithetical position to some of the feminist arguments that we have considered, and her argument is well worth examining:

> The original 'other' (feminine) identity can *qua* identity not express itself in language, for language, after all, is the very instrument and constitution of the logos/logic of difference. Extending this conclusion to the otherness of *Ulysses*, one notes that just as Molly's voicing of Greek polysyllables is a dislocation within the bounds of signification, so *Ulysses* is a rewriting of the epic which, in deconstructing the tradition of narrative, remains within the boundaries of its genre. Just so the otherness of deconstructive readings, including this one, remains within the philosophical tradition of Western metaphysics.
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> (177)

This explanation of her assertion that *écriture féminine* is a 'logical impossibility' demonstrates van Boheemen's willingness to use traditional logic in support of her view of Joyce and confirms her belief that it is not possible to work outside of the patriarchal structure. This puts her in a different position to critics who, like Cixous, not only believe that patriarchal patterns can be subverted, but who also attempt to write in a subversive mode. At the same time, her argument does attempt a certain self-reflectiveness ('including this one'), and this indicates that van Boheemen is willing to attempt something like the double writing (it refers both to itself and to other texts and arguments) which she values in Joyce.

In the last analysis, van Boheemen believes that Joyce's depiction of women, and particularly of Molly Bloom, is a result of a paradoxical ambivalence. There is 'his struggle to unsettle the logos of difference'

which results, as van Boheemen demonstrates, in Molly's role as the producer of a language and style which is the 'other' of the text; at the same time this struggle 'paradoxically proves... to be inspired by a desire for totality and wholeness which, if not dependent on patriarchal repression, hinges on appropriation and assimilation...' (184). In her conclusion, van Boheemen argues that 'it would be simplistic to take [*Ulysses*'] apparent celebration of the feminine sexuality... as expressing the demise of [patriarchal] logocentrism...' (199–200). Like Henke, who raises the possibility that Joyce could well have used a female writing in order to demonstrate his own mastery, van Boheemen considers the possibility that the 'sheer obsessiveness of the concern with gender and the body may... be taken as a magic gesture of self-defensive warding off': 'Joyce's inscription of the "other" as flesh may be such a self-protective gesture, aimed at laying [to rest] the specter of spiritual annihilation' (200). In other words, the concern with the feminine may have been no more than Joyce's attempt to retain a masculine, phallocentric, and because of the patriarchal privileging of spirit, spiritual dominance: 'In signing women as flesh, Joyce still implicitly signs himself as spirit or *Geist*' (200). Clearly, van Boheemen would seem to agree that Joyce was capable of writing a 'gramma's grammar', but she would probably want to qualify her agreement with the possibility that it may have been a writing to celebrate the victory of *his* creative spirit.