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James Joyce's Ulysses*

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Love and the Ethics of Subaltern Subjectivity
in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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Department of English Studies
Durham University
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Dedicated to My Parents

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Abstract

This thesis explores Joyce's aesthetic enterprise in *Ulysses* from the perspective of ethics, arguing that my psychoanalytic study necessarily points to the entwinement of ontology, epistemology and ethics. Joyce's literary experimentation not only revolutionised western literature, writing his name into world history, but also inaugurated an emergent subjectivity in modernity. In answering Spivak's question, 'Can the Subaltern speak?', one of my main theses is that *the subaltern can speak through the process of self-naming*, through the self-invention of a new subjectivity and a New Symbolic.

In Chapter One, I critically review Lacan's theorisation of the ethical models in his long career, engaging in the current debates among Lacanians regarding the definition and efficacy of Lacan's theory of the (ethical) act and the interconnected ethico-political theories in the contemporary landscape. I evaluate Lacanians' diverse stances toward Žižek's interpretation of Lacan centered on the emphasis of negativity and Badiou's theory of event and truth-procedures. After offering my own theoretical evaluation and intervention into the above-mentioned debates, I also seek to foreground the place of love in Lacanian psychoanalysis and to elucidate *how love manifests itself ethically*.

In my reading of 'Scylla and Charybdis,' I argue that Joyce, through Stephen's idiosyncratic theory of Shakespeare, articulates his artistic ambition as a work of/for a singular universal, endeavouring to transform the human subject by way of writing a book of himself, and of making a self out of writing.

I take Joyce's literary experiment in 'Cyclops' as an arrangement deployed through the narrative by the Nameless One that juxtaposes with the rhetorical excess of interpolated digressions. Drawing on Lacan's theorization of the look and the gaze, I contend that Joyce conducts a literary traversal of fantasy, a working through of symptomatic nationalism. The interpretation of 'fantasmatic' working offers an alternative reading to the historicist approaches and critiques of Gibson and Nolan. I also argue that neighbour love has already prefigured in 'Cyclops,' in Bloom's proclamation of the ideal of universal love and in the poetic justice of Bloom's escape from his xenophobic, Cyclopean neighbours. The psychoanalytically-inspired theory of 'de-activation of the law' and Badiou's conception of ideological 'subtraction' are enlisted in my interpretation of neighbour love.

I read 'Circe' as Joyce's experiment with a *sinthomatic* construction of subjectivity, contending that there is a constant process of unknotting and reknitting in the construction of textual subjectivity. I examine whether the *sinthomatic* construction of subjectivity, as it is evidenced in the fantasmatic episodes, truly

invents a new structural stratification of subjectivity and alternative libidinal organization. By way of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Žižek's theory, I argue that masochism in 'Circe' is not necessarily ethical but can function as a preparatory step towards the true ethical act. Pseudo-messianism and masochism are opposed to the true messianism manifested through neighbour love as a genuine ethical act. Enlightened by Lacan's complex theory of the psychoanalytic act and Badiou's idea of new neighbourhood, I try to capture the ethical impact of genuine messianism.

I interpret Joyce's modern version of 'Penelope' as a *sinthomatic* writing as well, finding this female countersign to be problematic by way of an ethical evaluation of the *sinthome* as a (singularised) sexual relation and an investigation of Joyce's belief in his *sinthome*. Furthermore, my ethical reading is also explored through the productive tension between what I term '*sinthomatic* eroticism' and love. I invoke both Lacan's idea of love as 'compensaiton' of the non-existence of sexual relationship, and Badiou's work on love as a way of creatively carving out what I term 'the ethical space of love' as a space (not entirely disengaged from but) distinct from the psychoanalytic domain of sexual desires or eros.

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Abbreviations

James Joyce

<i>P</i>	<i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i>
<i>U</i>	<i>Ulysses</i>
<i>FW</i>	<i>Finnegans Wake</i>
<i>SL</i>	<i>Selected Letters of James Joyce</i>
<i>LI, LII, LIII</i>	<i>The Letters of James Joyce, vol 1, 2 &3</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>The Critical Writings of James Joyce</i>

Jacques Lacan

<i>É</i>	<i>Écrits</i>
<i>VII</i>	<i>The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis</i>
<i>X</i>	<i>Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre X, L'angoisse</i>
<i>XI</i>	<i>The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis</i>
<i>SII</i>	<i>Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XI: Les Quatre Concepts fondamentaux de la Psychanalyse</i>
<i>XVII</i>	<i>The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis</i>
<i>XVIII</i>	<i>Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XVIII, D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant</i>
<i>XX</i>	<i>The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge</i>
<i>XXIII</i>	<i>Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XXIII, Le Sinthome</i>

Slavoj Žižek

<i>SO</i>	<i>The Sublime Object of Ideology</i>
<i>EYS</i>	<i>Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out</i>
<i>TA</i>	<i>Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology</i>
<i>IR</i>	<i>The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and</i>

	<i>Related Matters</i>
PF	<i>The Plague of Fantasies</i>
AF	<i>The Abyss of Freedom</i>
WD	<i>Welcome to the Desert of Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates</i>
PD	<i>The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity</i>
OB	<i>Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences</i>
N	<i>The Neighbor</i>
LC	<i>In Defense of Lost Causes</i>
M	<i>The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?</i>
PV	<i>The Parallax View</i>
V	<i>Violence: Six Sideways Reflections</i>
Belief	<i>On Belief</i>
GV	<i>Gaze and Voice as Love Objects</i>
LN	<i>Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism</i>
ET	<i>Living in the End Times</i>
TS	<i>The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Center of Political Ontology</i>
I	<i>Iraq: the Borrowed Kettle</i>
Alain Badiou	
PL	<i>In Praise of Love</i>
SP	<i>Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism</i>
E	<i>Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil</i>
TW	<i>Theoretical Writings</i>
W	‘What is Love?’
ST	‘The Scene of Two’
B & E	<i>Being and Event</i>

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Introduction

In the era of globalisation, multiculturalism has become the dominant discourse of political criticism and cultural studies in both descriptive and prescriptive senses. However, the discourse of multiculturalism, with its emphasis on plural identities and ethnic multiplicity, can hardly provide entirely effective responses to the strife and tensions caused by the rise of modernity, including issues such as imperialism, colonialism, nationalism, racism, and capitalism. In the face of these problems, there is on-going debate in which a universalist ethics is polemical in opposition to both multiculturalism and the Derridean-Levinasian ethics of otherness.

Under the rubric of multiculturalism, critical analysis of power, discourse, interests and identity has extended to cover fields including feminism, post-colonial studies, cultural studies, queer studies and so on. The respect for the Other, tolerance and celebration of difference typical of multiculturalism takes another cue from Derridean-Levinasian ethics. At the risk of oversimplification, and despite the inner discrepancies between their respective modes of thought, the overarching principle of this line of ethics is ‘a generalized reference of the other *qua* other,’¹

¹ Peter Hallward, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, in Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, 2001), p. xxii.

which may be encapsulated in the expression—‘*tout autre est tout autre*.’² Framed in the emphasized priority of ethics over ontology, heteronomy over autonomy,³ Levinasian ethics is articulated in terms of the subject’s ‘traumatic’⁴ ethical experience in confronting the impossible, asymmetrical demand issuing from the face of the Other and the consequent responsibility of the subject towards the Other. The traumatic nature of this confrontation with an inaccessible, irreconcilable demand emanating from an altogether Other has led Simon Critchley to diagnose ‘the Levinasian ethical subject’ as ‘a traumatic neurotic,’ and Slavoj Žižek to identify the superego with the infinite demand of an inscrutable Other.⁵ The universalist

² Jacques Derrida, *Donner La Mort*, quoted in Hallward, *ibid.*, p. xxiv.

³ As Simon Critchley rightly points out, unlike Kant, in Levinas’ work, the ethical demand coming from outside does not correspond to the subject’s autonomy. He says, ‘[e]thical experience is heteronomous, my autonomy is called into question by the fact of the other’s demand, by the appeal that comes from their face and lays me under an obligation that is not my choosing.’ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 56.

⁴ The invocation of trauma in the description of ethical experience can actually find direct textual support in Levinas: ‘[t]his trauma, which cannot be assumed, inflicted by the Infinite on presence, or this afflicting of presence by the Infinite—this affectivity—takes shape as a subjection to the neighbour. It is thought thinking more than it thinks, desire, the reference to the neighbour, the responsibility for another.’ *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Eds. A. Peperzack, S. Critchley and R. Bernasconi (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 142.

⁵ To put it succinctly, Levinasian ethics is carried out in the ethical experience of its subject in confrontation with an impossible demand from the superego embodied in the infinite Other. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, p. 61. Slavoj Žižek’s critiques of Levinas and Derrida are scattered around his works. For instance, see: ‘Appendix: Ideology Today’ in *The Puppet and The Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 145-71; ‘Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence’, in *The Neighbor* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), p. 135-90. Furthermore, in *Less than Nothing*, the section called ‘Badiou against Levinas’ is an expression of Žižek’s continuous scepticism regarding Levinas. *Less Than Nothing* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 829-31. From a broader perspective, although Critchley and Žižek have engaged in an acute dispute in recent years and differ from each other in the positions on ethics and politics, violence and resistance, there is compatibility at this juncture with regard to their observations on Levinas. Critchley, though, is much more sympathetic toward Levinas than Žižek. After Critchley published *Infinitely Demanding*, Žižek’s critical review ‘Resistance is Surrender’ inaugurated the debate. See Slavoj Žižek, ‘Resistance is Surrender’, *London Review of Books*, 29/22 (2007), last accessed 1 January 2014, <<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n22/contents>>. Simon Critchley, ‘Violence Thoughts about Slavoj Žižek’, *Naked Punch* 11 (2008), last accessed 1 January 2014, <<http://www.nakedpunch.com>>.

approach inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis,⁶ meanwhile, advocates an ethics which derives its momentum and dynamics from the ethical subject's singular individuality, in the direction of the ethics of the Real, or from the evental happening at the situated void of the situation in Alain Badiou's ethics of truth.⁷ While this line of ethics originates from a subject's singularity and a particular event, its import is applicable universally.

Given the limited space available to me in this dissertation compared to the scope and depth of each contending position involved in the debate, I do not attempt to cover the diverse arguments exhaustively. Instead, I focus my project by taking as its point of departure Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's classic question in post-colonial studies—'Can the subaltern speak?' With her deconstructivist-Marxist-feminist approach, Spivak examines the power, race and gender dynamics involved in the

⁶ Mari Ruti names this universalist ethics 'post-Lacanian,' and includes the works of Eric Santner, Kenneth Reinhard, Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou within this movement. Although I agree with Ruti's inclusion of these figures as proponents of a universalist ethics, I drop the term 'post-Lacanian' in my own writings for I find the prefix 'post' problematically ambiguous. In Ruti's book, the term 'post-Lacanian' mainly designates positions and attitudes following Lacan, rather than those which seek distance from him. However, the term carries connotations of both going after/beyond/against Lacan and following Lacan. To avoid ambiguity, I have thus decided not to use her term. Another reason for my reservation regarding the term 'post-Lacanian' is that although Badiou calls Lacan 'one of my masters,' he also rightly claims to keep his own position 'at quite a distance from Lacan.' *Ethics* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 121. Many of Santner's and Reinhard's readings are sophisticated combinations of Lacanian psychoanalysis and Judeo-Christianity; Žižek's writings are a mixture of Lacanian psychoanalysis and German Idealism, high theory and pop culture, while Badiou's project draws from Platonism, set-theory and Lacanian psychoanalysis. As such, Lacan's influence can be keenly felt in Badiou. However, the scope and complexity of his philosophical edifice of ontology and ethics apparently exceed psychoanalysis, which, I think, renders the application of the term post-Lacanian to him improper. Mari Ruti, *The Singularity of Being: Lacan and the Immortal Within* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

⁷ It is well-known that Žižek's and Badiou's theorisation of ethico-political issues are polemical in opposition to both multiculturalism and Derridean-Levinasian ethics. I do not attempt to summarise their arguments here, but choose to engage in the related ethico-political issues and arguments at opportune moments later in this thesis.

abolition of sati, the banning of the self-immolation by widows, who, in her article, exemplify the category of the subaltern.

In Spivak's thought, the subaltern is epitomised by the case of sati, which is represented as 'the singular and unverifiable margin,' 'an unascertainable ethical singularity that is not ever a sustainable condition.'⁸ The obscurity and anonymity to which the silenced subaltern has been reduced poses an ethico-political challenge in Spivak's eyes, and her response is a proposal which appears 'contradictory and aporetic.'⁹ On the one hand, Spivak calls for a critical engagement with the ethical singularity of the subaltern. On the other hand, she also holds that 'no amount of raised-consciousness fieldwork can even approach the painstaking labour to establish ethical singularity with the subaltern.'¹⁰ Spivak's position can thus be regarded as a combined critical effort, congenial with the basic tenets of multiculturalism with its emphatic concern for differences and plurality, and also broadly in alignment with Derridean-Levinasian ethics in terms of respect and responsibility for the (inscrutable) Other.

By politicising representation and critically engaging with discursive practices, multiculturalism approaches identity politics, cultural diversity and related

⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.175 and p. 198.

⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Diaspora Old and New: Women in the Transnational World', in *Textual Practices* 10.2 (1996), p. 25.

¹⁰ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Spivak Reader*, Donna Landry and Gerald Maclean (eds.) (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 269.

ethico-political issues from both epistemological and discursive angles. The Derridean-Levinasian approach, meanwhile, revolves around the impossible demand from an inscrutable Other, developing an ethics via an epistemological-phenomenological orientation. However, if the Other, subaltern or otherwise, appears inaccessible, impenetrable and unrepresentable epistemologically, the very being of the Other is undeniable and irreducible, which poses an issue of ontological significance yet to be explored and developed. Such being is already perceived and represented phenomenologically, but still awaits possible ontologisation. The distinction between being and what is existent in discourse and representation and the impact of this difference on subjectivity call for further exploration. My psychoanalytic approach has convinced me that meaningful innovation and sustainable transformation must always be accomplished through substantial changes at the subjective level. Although, as a psychoanalyst, Lacan cannot be said to *do* ontology in the philosophical sense, his theory of subjectivity, framed in terms of the entwinement of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, implicitly deals with necessity, contingency and impossibility with regard to ontology. I therefore seek to articulate and approach an ethics from the ontological level, and propose a critical endeavour at the intersection of ontology, epistemology and ethics.

With this critical background, my dissertation launches a critical reinvestigation

of James Joyce's *Ulysses* via an intervention into the above-mentioned critical debate on ethics. The aim of this project is to interrogate how the subaltern subject, in this case, the Irish subject under 'semicolonial' rule by the British empire, deals with modern problems such as the crisis of meaning, the decline of paternal authority, the crisis of subjectivity and the ethics of the oppressed. Articulating these issues from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the fruitful intersection of the ethics of the Real and the ethics of truth, I will examine how an emergent subject rises from the subaltern status and constitutes an ethical enterprise in the direction of what I call 'the singular universal.' Illuminated by Joyce's revolutionary literary works, Lacan revised his theoretical edifice late in his career, introducing his topological thinking in reinventing the concept of *sinthome* and the unknotting/reknotting of subjectivity. This theoretical connection provides a spark for innovation within the study of subaltern subjects.

I thus propose that the investigation of the liberation of the subaltern subject *should no longer confine itself to the epistemological level of voicing one's own position and rights, or the impossible task of representing the heterogeneous altogether Other, but should instead extend to the ontological level of the reconstructing/reknotting of subjectivity.* Joyce's literary experimentation not only revolutionised western literature, writing his name into world history, but also

inaugurated an emergent subjectivity in modernity. I argue that the ethics of singularity in Lacanian thought finds an expression in Joyce's works. Furthermore, this ethics of singularity, along with the singularity of subjectivity, are my points of intervention into the debate surrounding the prevalent multiculturalism. I offer an account of singular subjectivity and the ethics of singularity in critiquing the underlying opposition between particularity and universality prevalent in current critical debate, suggesting an alternative avenue for the liberation of the subaltern subject. In answering Spivak's question, one of my main theses is that *the subaltern can speak through the process of self-naming, through the self-invention of a new subjectivity*.

Another pillar of my dissertation resides in my theorisation of love and my investigation into the relationship between love and the ethics of subaltern subjectivity. Owing to his anti-philosophical stance, and although there are many discussions of love scattered throughout his works, Lacan never offered a systematic account of love. Instead, in his indirect approach to love, Lacan appeals to insinuation, fragmentary allusion, myth, and poetry. Despite this, I argue that the seeming lack of a theory of love in Lacan's oeuvre does not result from the impossibility of saying anything theoretical about love. Writing from a Lacanian perspective, I systematically *foreground the space for love; love and the ethical act designate the restructuring*

moment of subjectivity at its most fundamental. In this thesis, I critically mark out the place of love in the intersection between love and sexuality, between subjectivity and the ethical act, between the act and love, and between love and the *sinthome*.

In a long and detailed initial chapter, firstly, in opposition to Aristotelian ethics of the master, which is devised as an ethics of the good, an ethics of happiness and virtue, inspired by Spivak and Lacan, I attempt to elaborate the ethics of subaltern subjectivity in the direction of an ethics of the Real. Lacan takes into consideration the libidinal economy in psychic structuration and advocates an ethics of the Real. I trace the different ethical paradigms developed during various phases of Lacan's career and explore the theoretical heritage of Lacanian psychoanalysis in contemporary ethical debate. I critically review Lacan's theorization of the ethical models outlined in four major themes: (1) the ethical paradigm of pure desire as exemplified by Antigone; (2) the psychoanalytic act and the traversal of fantasy; (3) topological thinking, the Names of the Father, and the notion of *sinthome*. Moreover, while the notion of love itself is subject to clarification, I endeavour to investigate the ethical space for love and explore how love works as an indicator or testing ground for the ethical efficacy of *sinthome* and how love impacts on psychic structuration and intersubjectivity.

The theoretical intervention outlined here is strongly supported by detailed textual analysis of *Ulysses*. My psychoanalytic study of the ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ episode addresses the related issues of the fictionality of paternity and the inconsistency/non-existence of the Other, arguing that the correlative functioning of the *sinthome*, self-naming, and the singular universal work for the constitution of an emergent subjectivity. Stephen’s peculiar theory of Shakespeare actually serves as a self-reflexive declaration of Joyce’s ambition for *Ulysses*, displaying his ambition of self-invention, his endeavor of self-begetting of a new subjectivity and a new Symbolic by way of writing the private into the public, elevating the singular to the universal.

In the ensuing chapters, I analyse Joyce’s *sinthomatic* writing, investigating the issues of symptomatic nationalism and ethical ideals, exploring the intricacies of love, perverse practices, *sinthome* and sexuality, and evaluating the ethical efficacy of *sinthome* and love. I read Joyce’s literary experiment in ‘Cyclops’ as an arrangement deployed through the narrative by the Nameless One in juxtaposition with the rhetorical excess of interpolated digressions. Drawing on Lacan’s theorization of the look and the gaze, the fantasy and its traversal, I contend that Joyce conducts a literary traversal of fantasy, a working through of symptomatic nationalism. In parallel with the literary traversal of symptomatic nationalism and anti-Semitism as

ideological fantasy, I suggest that ‘transnationalism’ and ‘non-jewish Jewishness’ can be detected in *Ulysses*. I also argue that neighbour love has already prefigured in ‘Cyclops,’ in Bloom’s proclamation of the ideal of universal love and in the poetic justice of Bloom’s escape from his xenophobic, Cyclopean neighbours at the end of the episode.

Although there has been relatively little criticism which comments on *sinthomatic* writings, or takes literary works to be *sinthomatic*, I propose to take seriously Lacan’s conceptualization of Joyce’s unsubscription from the Unconscious and his ability of dispensing the Name of the Father by inventing new master signifiers and knowing how to organize *jouissance*, and read ‘Circe’ as Joyce’s experiment with *sinthomatic* construction of subjectivity. I contend that there is a constant process of unknotting and reknitting in the construction of textual subjectivity. In my ethical evaluation, I examine whether the *sinthomatic* construction of subjectivity, as it is evidenced in the fantasmatic episodes, truly invents a new structural stratification of subjectivity and alternative libidinal organization. As my analysis demonstrates, pseudo-messianism and masochism should be opposed to the true messianism manifested through neighbour love as a genuine ethical act.

I interpret Joyce’s modern version of ‘Penelope’ as a *sinthomatic* writing as well, arguing that Molly’s countersign is indispensable because Joyce needs the female

participation in the construction of *sinthomatic* eroticism as a repairment to the non-existence of sexual relation. I find the female countersign to be problematic and approached the controversial status of 'Penelope' by way of an ethical evaluation of the *sinthome* as a (singularised) sexual relation and an investigation of Joyce's belief in his *sinthome*. Furthermore, my ethical reading is also explored through the productive tension between, what I term *sinthomatic* eroticism and love.

Chapter One

Love and Self-Naming for/in the Ethics of Subaltern Subjectivity

Today the great majority of people do not have a name; the only name available is 'excluded,' which is the name of those who do not have a name. Today the great majority of humanity counts for nothing. And philosophy has no other legitimate aim than help find the new names that will bring into existence of the unknown world that is only waiting for us because we are waiting for it.

Alain Badiou, 'The Caesura of Nihilism'

I.

The proposal for deriving/devising ethics from/for subaltern subjectivity is not as self-evident as it might appear at the first sight. Ethics, originating with Aristotle's title *Nicomachean Ethics*, has been deeply rooted in the aristocratic worldview and values, thereby introducing the ethical domain in terms of the discourse of the master or the 'function of the master' (VII, 11, 23). In Lacan's reading, Aristotelian ethics is addressed to 'a society of masters,' aiming to elucidate 'the essential virtue of the master' (VII, 23). The training of the group of masters in Antiquity actually points to the notion of proper or ideal citizenship, which constitutes 'a presence, a human condition joined in a much less narrowly critical way to the slave, than Hegel's perspective' (VII, 23).¹¹ Aristotle's project grounds ethical life in virtue raising,

¹¹ Hegel's critique famously announces a reversal of the status of the master and mocks the master as the 'heroic brute,' assigning the slave as the true agent of history. In Lacan's view, this is evidence of

character building and development through education, training, and habit cultivation.

Certain character formations, which are built into humanity's 'second nature,' are considered favourable, as they are able to facilitate a meaningful and happy life.

If one follows *Nicomachean Ethics*, one would find the discursive focus moves from the ideal of the Good to that of happiness, culminating with contemplation for the leisure class of the master as the highest form of happiness.¹² As Jonathan Lear points out, it is immensely striking that for Aristotle, ethics as a reflection of humans' orientation in the world and an inquiry into the self-other relationship would lead to 'the most solitary and ultimate self-sufficient human activity' and 'an image of an escape from the pressures of ordinary practical life.'¹³ In other words, in Aristotle's ethics of the master, which amounts to the ethics of the constitution of citizenship, '*the fundamental good of ethics is to get as far away from your neighbors as possible.*'¹⁴ It is hard to resist the conclusion that the ideal of the master, which culminates in 'total impracticality,'¹⁵ is scarcely tenable. The philosophical eloquence and laxity in Aristotelian ethics curiously amounts to an ethical

the decline of the master discourse, manifested in Hegel's critique at a certain moment in history (VII, 23).

¹² As Lacan puts it succinctly, 'the ideal of the master, like that of god at the center of Aristotelian world [...] seems to avoid work as much as possible [...] to leave the control of his slaves to his steward in order to concentrate on a contemplative ideal without which the ethics doesn't achieve its proper aim' (VII, 23).

¹³ Jonathan Lear, *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life* (London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53. Original emphasis.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

bankruptcy¹⁶ which takes consolation in the fantasy of deathlike and godlike contemplation and a sense of superiority and isolation.¹⁷

However, according to Lacan, it is striking that such a form of ‘localized’ ethics, which is ‘limited to a social type, to a privileged representative of leisure,’ ‘still remains full of resonances and lessons’ (VII, 23). If we take into consideration that the ethical project of the training of masters strongly resonates with the construction of citizenship in the modern versions of liberalist ideology, we should be cautious of the wider range and the prevalent mechanism of the more subtle and complicated forms of the inherent aristocratic logic of representation, dominance, and exclusion which are arguably responsible for severe social injustice and political aggression. Tracing the history and implications of philosophy in politics undoubtedly exceeds the intent and scope of the current project; therefore, the focus of this study is limited to the analysis of the libidinal economy and the underlying structure of relevant types of ethics and politics. I highlight the preference of psychoanalytic ethics of the Real to

¹⁶ These are my own words not Lear’s interpretation and evaluation of Aristotelian ethics. Lear praises the character-based ethics to some extent, when he argues that ‘from the moral law it is impossible to derive any specific conclusions about how to act in a specific set of circumstances [...] For Aristotle, it is precisely because it is impossible to specify a set of rules on how to act well that one must turn to a psychologically informed account of how to build a good character.’ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷ Regarding the logical structure and discursive movement of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Lear offers a powerful critique and argues that Aristotle tries to save his teleological account of ethics ‘by a flight of aristocracy’, and the ideal of contemplation is actually a ‘fantasy’ of release from the pressure of life. Ibid., p. 42 and 56. In the later section of this chapter, I will come back to Lear’s discussion of *Nicomachean Ethics* and show how Lear demonstrates both Aristotelian ethics and Freud’s theories of death instinct betray a teleological point of view that forms the framework of their theories. I will demonstrate also how Lear’s exposition points to the ‘not-all’ logic in Lacanian sense and the logic’s relation with fantasy and enigmatic signifiers though Lear himself is not a Lacanian.

the Aristotelian ethics of idealisation, contrasting the ethics of the subaltern with that of the master, critiquing and supplementing the politics of the citizenship construction with the ethics of love.

Truth be told, to posit the category of the subaltern with the dignity of the subject of ethics is itself an accomplishment of our contemporary critical legacy. At the other end of dominance and even atrocity, the servant and slave have long functioned as instruments of exploitation and a substance upon which socio-political hierarchy is established and enjoyed. This end is chronically and conveniently relegated to oblivion and extinction at both the practical and the discursive levels. Against this background, it takes a creative move to mark out the categories of the oppressed, the persecuted, the colonised, the silenced, the marginalised, and the victimised in the terrain of ethics. By introducing the subaltern as a category of the subject, ethics is transformed both epistemologically and ontologically. Spivak's classic essay in postcolonial studies, 'Can the subaltern speak?', does not only offer due attention to the long neglected and persecuted but also highlights the problem involved in presenting a political agenda for the subaltern to articulate. By so doing, it hints at the epistemological challenge of reforming the ethical domain.

There is another stream of contemporary ethical reflections which takes as its point of departure the ostentation of the acute suffering of the subaltern in the extreme

examples of the creaturely, the Mulselmann, the horrifying figure of the inhuman living dead in the concentration camp.¹⁸ Encountering the suffering of our inhuman neighbour challenges the concept of self-enclosed autonomous subjectivity, thereby shaking off the complacency of the self-other relationship and values, radically revising the entire domain of ethics. The subaltern subject is stripped of discursive visibility and identity representation at the symbolic level and reduced to anonymity at the epistemological level. Moreover, the bare life of the subaltern suffering subject reveals the functioning of biopolitics, laying bare the underside of law, that is, the superegoic enjoyment. The existence of the subaltern at the margin of or even excluded entirely from the Symbolic network discloses the fundamental fact that the human subject has a body to be hurt,¹⁹ manipulated, and enjoyed in a negative way. In psychoanalytic terms, this uncanny encounter with the human dimension of my (suffering) neighbour points to the materiality, alterity of the Other, and the Thingly secret of my fellowman whose strangeness corresponds to the interior foreignness, the 'extimate' at the heart of my own subjectivity. The Other's Thingly dimension in the acute form of pain and suffering warrants a fundamental ethical call. In other words,

¹⁸ For instance, I have in mind the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Giorgio Agamben, Slavoj Žižek, Eric Santner and so on. In the following discussion on the ethical question of neighbour love, all these works will be the reference points.

¹⁹ Joan Copjec, *Imagine There is No Women: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 217-8.

‘[t]hat which exceeds the bounds of my knowledge demands *acknowledgement*.’²⁰

The construction of subjectivity and ethics in general emerges from the very encounter of otherness. Ethics, as an investigation of the self-other relation and of the values of human life, actions, and orientation in the world, finds at its core the ontological question of subjectivity. From this perspective, the ethical demand posited by/from the subaltern is *hardly a branch of ethics, but a paradigm of ethics in general*.

In my study of Joyce, it is not so much an encounter with the suffering of the subaltern that is the issue but rather how the subaltern subject manages to survive and emerge in the cultural and ethical terrain. My primary hypothesis is that Joyce, in his writing, provides his own version of the ethics of subaltern subjectivity through the very act of self-naming and love, instead of endorsing a reflection model between text and life. I am partly in agreement with Colette Soler when she argues that ‘Joyce’s work owes nothing to biography’, and ‘[o]n the contrary, his work inverts biography—that is, his work is an autography, a life of mere writing, a life of words.’²¹ It is insightful that Soler points out the contribution of words to life construction in the case of Joyce. However, taking a step further, I attempt to save Joyce from the pallid image of a writer entrapped in the unreal, self-invented language

²⁰ Simon Critchley. *Infinitely Demanding*, p. 66. Original emphasis.

²¹ Colette Soler, ‘The Paradox of the Symptom in Psychoanalysis’, in Jean-Michel Rabaté (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 99.

game, as a life project and survival guide, as implied by Soler's comments. I would like to contend that in the act of self-naming through 'a life of words,' Joyce provides in his text an ontological rendition of his own version of subaltern subjectivity. This ontological survival through literary endeavour also helps Joyce to gain a position in the literary world and in the struggle for discursive visibility and cultural representation. Since literary creation and subjective survival are both involved in the Symbolic level, it is out of the question that Joyce's writing, however idiosyncratic it may appear, can ever be taken as entirely private. The very singular experiences and experiments of Joyce at both the ontological and epistemological levels are inevitably correlated with those at the universal level. More significantly, the Lacanian notion of the lack of the Other in the famous aphorisms 'The big Other doesn't exist' and 'There is no Other of the Other' is structurally correspondent to the idea of subject destitution and the authentic subjective act as creation *ex nihilo*. Specifically, by means of his singular action through literary creation, Joyce 'posits the universal, performs a certain operation of universalization.'²² Through a theoretical review of the Lacanian concept of knotting and reknitting, I will argue that Joyce literally converts his own singularity into the universal in the chapter on 'Scylla

²² Alenka Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 61. Zupančič's words appear in the discussion of Kant not Joyce. She expresses her penetrating insight in identifying the relationship between the universal and the singular in a truly ethical act. However, as I will be arguing in the latter section of this chapter and in the extended interpretation of 'Scylla and Charybdis' that Joyce describes a similar ethical act with his writing.

and Charybdis' entitled 'Toward the Possibility of the Singular Universal.'

Furthermore, another major hypothesis of my project is that Joyce explores love as an ethical act through his writing. In other words, Joyce devises the ethics of subaltern subjectivity, in which he demonstrates the possibility for the subaltern to voice his/her own name and to love as an ethical subject. In his book, *Joyce the Creator*, Sheldon Brivic proposes that, Joyce, with his atheist outlook, in his writing emulates the role of God, the Creator, to stretch out his pen and give freedom and life to disparate characters of diverse interests and dispositions, which encompass the complexity and totality of life in his paper-made universe. What is stunning and calls for further exploration is that Brivic identifies the cause of love in Joyce's literary creation. Behind the process of attaining fame by way of constructing a multi-mind as the creator, a seemingly schizophrenic manoeuvring, is the view that love motivates. Just as creation negates abyss, '[I]ove seeks the region of the difficult, the void and the impossible.'²³ Moreover, according to Brivic, Joyce read Madame Helena Blavatsky, who 'spoke of the word known to all men as "an unknown word equivalent to the true name of God [...] which identifies the Unknowable Cause" of the universe.'²⁴ And since these terms are 'applied to love,'

²³ Sheldon Brivic. *Joyce the Creator* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 94.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94. In Brivic's words, 'Cheryle T Herr observes that Madame Helena Blavatsky, whom Joyce read, spoke of word known to all men as "an unknown word equivalent to the true name of God [...]"' Moreover, Brivic is not the only nor the first critic of Joyce to make such a significant argument. Richard Ellmann, in his 'Preface' to Gabler's edition, points out that 'Joyce is of course wary of stating

Brivic argues, ‘the process whereby Joyce delivered himself to enter and enrich this work was a process of love.’²⁵

It might take the entire thesis to elucidate the correlation between the cause of love and creation even simply through the narrow yet helpful lens of Lacanian theory. For the time being, snapshots of three famous episodes in *Ulysses* regarding the theme of love are presented herein. The first textual reference is that of ‘the word known to all men’ which Stephen ponders on three times during the day, as a question if not a mystery. The three occasions appear respectively in ‘Proteus,’ ‘Scylla and Charybdis,’ and ‘Circe.’ In ‘Proteus,’ the sentence is embedded in some soft romantic imagination, erotic daydreaming in the form of rhetorical question—‘Touch me. Soft eyes. Soft soft soft hand I am lonely here. O, touch me soon. What is that word known to all men? I am quiet here alone. Sad too. Touch, touch me.’ (*U3*, pp. 434-6). This melodic, erotic daydreaming probably serves as an illustration of Lacanian notion of fantasy. Lacan’s formula of fantasy runs as $\$ \langle \rangle a$, implying that the barred subject assumes a relation to the *objet petit a*, as a materialisation of the structural void that is functioning as the cause of desire. I therefore take fantasy to be *an unconscious discourse* containing the cause of desire as void, thereby making the living a substance of the other side of the Symbolic level. This is a formulation

so distinctly as Virgil does to Dante in *The Divine Comedy* his conception of love as the omnipresent force in the universe.’ p. xiv.

²⁵ Brivic, *Creator*, p. 94.

of fantasy at the structural level. Therefore, regardless of whether this discourse is represented (in)coherently, (ir)rationally, or in fragments or in an extended, finely contrived manner as in elaborate works of arts, customs, and cultures, the descriptive feature is not a fundamental criterion for fantasy. The erotic beseeching melody in ‘Proteus’ assumes precisely the structure of fantasy for it contains not love put in straightforward, positive terms, but circles negativity, a void in the form of a question.

In Chapter nine of *Ulysses*, the theme of love appears in the interior monologue of Stephen inserted in the conversation in the library.²⁶ It is significant that the word ‘love’ is indicated directly only once here and followed by the contrived Latin lines extracted from Thomas Aquinas’ reflection on love—‘Love, yes. Word known to all men’ (*U*, 9.429-30). In ‘Circe’, encountering the macabre figure of the mother’s spirit, Stephen, in this nightmarish scene, utters his question as if he is searching for an anchoring point resisting darkness, death, or nothingness. Stephen says ‘eagerly’, ‘Tell me the word, mother, if you know now. The word known to all men.’ (*U*, 15.4191-3). It is crucial that, in the three instances, although love is repetitively claimed as ‘the word known to all,’ the clichéd idea of the universal word is

²⁶ My interpretation relies heavily on the assertion of Gabler’s so-called ‘corrected edition.’ As Richard Ellmann points out, Gabler settles down the disputes regarding the interpretation of ‘the word known to all men,’ by recovering a passage omitted in the previous editions, but found in the manuscript. According to Ellmann, ‘[w]heather Joyce omitted it deliberately or not is still a matter of conjecture and debate. Gabler postulates an eyeskip from one ellipsis to another, leading to the omission of several lines—the longest omission in the book. These lines read in manuscript ‘Do you know what you are talking about? Love, yes. Word known to all men. *Amor vero aliquid alicui bonum vult unde et ea quae concupiscimus.*’ See ‘Preface’ in Ellmann (1986), p. xii.

represented in the Symbolic underside, in the form of erotic fantasy, interior monologue, meditation, or posited as a question in a nightmarish scene. Love is supposed to signify the ideal, symbolic inter-subjective relation, as the founding principle underlying the Symbolic edifice. However, in the textual instances mentioned above, love is revealed by its absence, manifested as a structural void. Almost as a dubious alibi, love, as the universal word known to all, is literally put into question, rather than put into genuine inter-subjective practice. It appears more like a walking shadow than a positive regulation in the ethical domain of inter-subjective relations, tearing a hole in the fabric of text. Love, in these textual moments, implies more negativity than a potent symbolic efficacy.

In contrast to love in its negative face, in 'Cyclops,' Joyce intends to demonstrate how love might survive and triumph in adversity. The pivotal passage runs as follows:

But, it's no use, says he. Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that isn't the very opposition of that that is really life

What? Says Alf.

--Love, says Bloom. I mean the opposite of hatred. [...]

--A new apostle to the gentiles, says the citizen. Universal love.

--Well, says John Wyse. Isn't that what we are told. Love your neighbor.

--That chap? Says the citizen. Beggar my neighbor is his motto.

(*U*, 12.1481-91)

The biblical reference to the commandment of 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' and Saint Paul is vivid here but, partly, in degenerated form, with the referenced

elements portrayed as targets of derision. It is arguable that the barflies are, to some extent, representatives of the attitudes and voices of Dubliners at the turn of the century. However, splitting of opinions and quarrels among the group are evident. As it is shown in the passage, Bloom announces his mild liberalist humanism and appeals for love. The Citizen brutally negates and mocks Bloom. John Wyse weakly defends Bloom. What we find here is not a duel between two clearly defined opposing parties but cacophonies and ironies. In addition, the narrator's comments are inserted with ironies, further complicating the issue of love. In the ferment of conflicts and disputes, Bloom confronts his xenophobic adversaries and pronounces the task, the commandment of love, assuming the symbolic dignity and efficacy to the extent that he rejuvenates the sacred word of love facing corruption and derision.

Bloom's presence as a single human being and Bloom's voicing of love in opposition to hatred are of utter importance in the sense that this is the episode in which Joyce uses Bloom as a vehicle to pronounce potently the ideal of universal love and hence attempts to secure the possibility of the ethics of neighbour love in the midst of ironies and parodies. The ideal of universal love is expressed without really being accomplished in human action yet in this episode. In the ensuing chapters of textual analysis, I will try to demonstrate how this ethics of love is actualised in the intersubjective relations and actions of major characters of *Ulysses* and in Joyce's

artistic masterpiece. Theoretically, it is crucial to point out the ideal of universal love will not be effectuated unless it is enacted upon one single human being through the work of neighbour love. It is pivotal for a single subject like Bloom to contribute his singular love to fulfill the universal commandment of love. Without the subject taking charge of his ethical responsibility of love, the commandment is nothing more than dead letters, linguistic monuments left in decay and derision, corrupted and mocked in the invectives of the drunken citizens of Dublin.

Furthermore, the anonymous, parodic narrator of ‘Cyclops,’ after the dialogue given above, comments with a mocking voice, offering a passage of contemplation on love ending with God’s universal love. The passage quoted above is one of the famous bewildering interpolations inserted into the realistic setting, dialogue, and action of the chapter of ‘Cyclops.’ As a chapter riddled with irony and parody, the authority, effect, and critical stance of the mocking narrative voice has long been a topic of debate.²⁷ For instance, Phillip Herring held the opinion that ‘[i]t is clear that Joyce abhorred the “Citizen’s” political stance and recognized the nobility of the liberal humanitarian sentiments of Bloom. But all sociopolitical positions are

²⁷ Phillip Herring, *Joyce’s Ulysses: Note sheets in the British Museum* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1972). Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995). Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995). John Nash, ““Hanging over the bloody paper”: newspaper and imperialism in *Ulysses*,” in Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (eds.), *Modernism and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), p. 175-88. Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan, and the Trauma of History: Reading Narrative and Postcolonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). I will provide a thorough discussion of the issue on the narrative voice and effect of parody in the chapter on ‘Cyclops.’

indiscriminately undercut by Joyce's use of exaggeration ("gigantism" is the technique here) and irony [...] it is impossible in this episode to take anything seriously.²⁸ I hesitate to conclude so categorically that Joycean parody leads merely to mockery, playfulness, and an utterly skeptical attitude, excluding any potential for progressive politics. On the contrary, I would like to propose an alternative critical avenue by investigating the effect of parodied interpolation from the perspective of libidinal economy.²⁹ I will demonstrate in the latter part of the discussion how an inquiry into the libidinal economy of Joyce's linguistic and literary practices saves Joyce's text from this skeptical viewpoint and helps us explore the progressive political agenda and ethical action in Joyce's writing.

II.

The task of evaluating the extent to which Joyce's project in *Ulysses* is ethical warrants a critical exploration of how we define and articulate the term ethical. Further, the intervention into the current ethical debates has ventured into the points of convergence and difference between clinical ethics and ethics in the history of philosophy. The case made here, as the theoretical exposition proceeds, is that

²⁸ Herring, p. 14

²⁹ An extended, detailed account of the irony and parody in terms of linguistic libidinal economy will be provided in the chapter on 'Cyclops.'

psychoanalysis has no problem in siding with the Socratic inquiry regarding how one should live a life in the tradition of ethics. Socrates' concerns with 'know thyself' and 'how one should live a life' have preoccupied humans' minds long before hysterical patients sat on Freud's couch. The psychoanalytic approach is compatible with Socratic investigation but subjects the old queries to radical redefinition by introducing the notion of the Unconscious. Clinical investigation involves engaging intensively with the patient's fervent passion and troubled symptoms. A patient's entangled psychological conflicts inevitably lead to a subtler and more complicated picture of de-centred subjectivity rather than a picture of a simple combination of two minds, i.e. the conscious and unconscious. This inherent subject-splitting and internal alienness is built into the human psychic structure, rendering the two-mind model untenable. Consequently, this new perspective endows ethics with the dimension of the Real that is lacking in Aristotelian ethics of the Ideal and of the master.

Lacan's ethics of psychoanalysis arises from the clinical point of view. Psychoanalysis should be faithful to its theorisation of a de-centred subjectivity and therapeutic goal. Clinical ethics outlines how a human subject endeavours to avoid insanity, to tackle troubling symptoms and thus acquires mental equilibrium through therapeutic action and creativity. Fascinated and inspired by Joyce's work and the

underlying subjectivity implied in his literary achievement, Lacan in the later stage of his career, finds with astonishment and admiration that Joyce achieves the best of what psychoanalysis can offer—namely, a subject stripped of the oppressed Other, a subject who invents his own symbolisms and symptoms by way of his *sinthomatic* writings.³⁰ ‘*Sinthome*,’ Lacan’s neologism for symptoms, refers to a way of organising one’s enjoyment, when he/she actively assumes a new subjectivity. Lacan devoted his *Seminar XXIII* to this complex concept, which literally modified his theorisation of the ethical goal of psychoanalysis.

The fundamental question, posed in a rather condensed way, in the current project is ‘*In what sense is sinthome ethical?*’ If with the writing of his oeuvre, Joyce writes his own name, becomes/constitutes his *sinthome*, in what sense can *sinthome* be claimed as an extended, creative ethical act, an ethical act accomplished through the laborious artistic enterprise? To answer this question, it is necessary to review Lacan’s conceptualisation of clinical ethics in the different phases of his career. I shall critically review Lacan’s conceptualisation of the ethical model at different stages of his career, roughly sketched in four major themes: (1) the ethical paradigm

³⁰ Long before he devoted *Seminar XXIII* to Joyce, Lacan had already discerned the peculiarity in Joyce’s writings and expressed high praise. In ‘*Litüraterre*’, Lacan claims that ‘[f]rom the wordplay that we are calling, he [Joyce] would gained nothing from it because he went straightaway, with this *a letter, a litter*, to the best thing that one can expect at the end of psychoanalysis.’ The original French text is as follows, ‘Au jeu nous évoquons, il n’y eût rien gagné, puisqu’il allait tout droit, avec cet *a lettre, a litter*, tout droit au mieux de ce que l’on peut attendre de la psychanalyse à sa fin’ (*XXVIII*, 113). I follow Cormac Gallagher’s translation here.

of pure desire as in the example of Antigone; (2) the psychoanalytic act and the traversal of fantasy; (3) the Not-All logic of the Other and sexuation informed by set theory; and (4) the topological thinking, the Names of the Father, and the notion of *sinthome*.

As the title of this chapter indicates, ‘self-naming’ and ‘love’ lie at the heart of my approach to unravelling the ethics of subaltern subjectivity. Strictly speaking, these two pivotal concepts are not directly or fully developed in Lacan’s works. However, the Lacanian position is that the exploration for ethics of subaltern subjectivity in Joyce’s writing can be enriched and deepened with an extended elaboration on self-naming along with/through the conceptualisation of the singular universal and interrogation of the issue of love and its relation with the ethical act and *sinthome*. Self-naming and the postulation and constitution of the singular universal are intricately correlated to the functioning of *sinthome*. Further, while the notion of love itself is subject to clarification and definition, it functions as an indicator or testing ground for the ethical efficacy of *sinthome* in the self-Other relationship.

By now, owing to the fruits of generations of work at the intersection between philosophy and psychoanalysis, the fact that psychoanalysis, since the time of its founder Freud, never shies away from Eros is commonplace.³¹ The concept of libido

31 For a detailed account of the connection between libido and Eros, please see Jonathan Lear, *Love and Its Place in Nature: A Philosophical Interpretation of Freudian Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale UP,

in the economic context and the emphasis on sexuality keep psychoanalysis in line with classical philosophy. However, love, rather than Eros and sexuality, remains problematic in psychoanalysis. First, the word love is used with tremendous ambiguity to denote and connote the romantic emotion in general or things pertaining to passion, drive, sexuality, and so on. Lacan himself equivocates sometimes, using these terms as synonyms.³² Secondly, when devoted to theoretical conceptualisation, Lacan elaborates on narcissistic love and love in transference. He talks of love and hate while referring to the dialectic of self-other manifested in identification and aggression, in the mechanism of projection at the level of the imaginary.³³ In a similar vein, love in transference aims at the functioning of emotional attachment and melodrama produced within the framework of fantasy and provoked to reappear in the analytic scene. The two instances mentioned above have received relatively clear theorisation and will not be investigated in the present project. Therefore, in contrast to the well-trodden path, I will try to focus on the moment *when love manifests itself ethically*, when it appears to be truly worthy of the name apart from

1999).

32 The references are countless. An example is the famous tale of ‘a parakeet that was in love with Picasso.’ To make explicit my point, I quote Lacan here to show that the word love is used to refer to amorous feeling for someone through the obsession with the dimension of the Imaginary, namely, Picasso’s clothes. According to Lacan, ‘How could one tell a parakeet was in love with Picasso. From the way the parakeet nibbled the collar of his shirts and the flaps of his jacket. Indeed, the parakeet was in love with what is essential of man, namely his attire [...] Clothes promise debauchery [...] when one takes them off.’ (XX, 6).

33 For example, In *Seminar XX*, Lacan invents a neologism ‘hainamoration’ by combining hate and love in French, to replace the ‘bastardized one of “ambivalence”’ to describe the interwoven phenomenon of aggressiveness and narcissism (XX, 90-1).

being entangled with and shackled in other mechanisms, such as projection and transference.

Moreover, insinuation, ellipsis, aphorism, and, sometimes, enigmatic, dense qualification seem to be part of Lacan's strategy of articulating love. Love seems to be ubiquitous in the background since psychoanalysis, after all, addresses the subject's emotional melodrama. However, the elaboration of love looms sparsely, and is arranged in parenthetical manner or by way of indirect approach through literature. Given Lacan's deliberately peculiar approach to love, some might consider that an attempt for a thorough theorisation of love in Lacan risks stepping into a blatant trap that should be avoided at all costs. For instance, following Lacan's attitude to the letter, Jean Allouch argues that 'Lacan was very careful not to produce a theory of love. This abstention is thus a part, almost one of the essential traits, of Lacan Love.'³⁴ The strange, awkward, grammatically irregular notion of 'Lacan love' is Allouch's strategic neologism, designed to avoid a term such as Lacanian love or Lacanian theory of love. He deploys it cautiously, as he states, 'we shall speak of an "approach" to love, rather than "theory" of love: with regard to love, Lacan referred not so much to theory or doctrine as to poetry, myth.'³⁵ I do not intend to contest the validity of the argument *per se*. Instead, I fully acknowledge

34 Jean Allouch, *Lacan Love: Melbourne Seminars and Other Works* (Ourimbah, NSW: Bookbound Publishing, 2007), p. 81.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

and endorse Lacan's motivation to avoid a theorisation of love. Nevertheless, with all due respect to Lacan and Allouch's deliberate, elliptical approach, I would like to question whether imitating the master's method/gesture is the only way to be faithful to his spirit or whether there is an alternative to supplement what the master has left blank or developed through insinuation by using a different approach whilst still remaining true to his inspiration. The pronounced lack of theories on love may be seen as an illustration of Lacan's anti-philosophical stance in his attempt to create an explicit incompleteness in the structure of the subject and the concomitant theoretical system. In sharp contrast, my stance at this juncture is that Lacan's so-called insinuation in approaching love does not result from the impossibility of theorising love. Instead of being a fixed and clearly defined category of the structure, as will be shown later in detail, the reason for this ellipsis is structural because love is situated at the opening of the structure, and is also the fissure in the theoretical system. In precise and dynamic terms, love procures the restructuring momentum of the structure of subjective and intersubjective relations at the most fundamental level.

Therefore, I firmly hold that the possibility of formulating the issue of love by means of an approach other than the anti-philosophical fragmentary method. By taking into consideration the essential role that love plays in ethics, instead of shunning a systematic method, I propose to present a theoretical formulation of love

by working from a Lacanian foundation, marking out the place that has been encircled by the theorisation of subjectivity, ethics, desire, sexuality, and so on. From a Lacanian perspective, I aim to systematically *foreground the space for love*. Love and the ethical act designate the restructuring moment of subjectivity at its most fundamental level, which is a limit experience³⁶ with radical impact. I endeavour to determine the place of love in the intersection between love and sexuality, between subjectivity and the ethical act, between the act and love, and between love and *sinthome*. My position is that love really happens and love constitutes the most life-enhancing, direction-altering, world-reshaping, subjective-transforming, and ethically illuminating moments for the human being.

III.

In Seminar *VII*, Lacan proposes an aestheticization of ethics. However, this aestheticization should not cause us to take ethics merely as a literary metaphor or a fortunate contingent instance. Rather, it should be emphasised that aesthetic ethics is the ethics *par excellence*. In his later theorisation of Joyce's writing in terms of *sinthome*, Lacan revisited, further developing, revising, and radicalising, this conception of aesthetic ethics. It is my claim in this study that Joyce's work

36 I deliberately use the irregular term of 'limit experience' here to denote that it is a cutting-edge experience of venturing on borders and of potential restructuring.

constitutes a prolonged literary act as an ethical act for subjective transformation and cultural revolution. In the *Ethics Seminar*, Lacan uses the tragic heroine Antigone as a model for the ethics of psychoanalysis. This reference to tragedy is essential because Lacan holds that ‘tragedy is in the forefront of our experiences as analysts’ (VII, 243). He claims, ‘the ethics of psychoanalysis has nothing to do with’ the ‘prescription’ or ‘regulation’ of ‘the service of goods,’ but rather, ‘ethics implies the dimension that is expressed in what we call the tragic sense of life’ (VII, 313). Previously, by evaluating Aristotelian ethics and utilitarianism, Lacan has explored the functioning of the first barrier of the good that regulates a subject’s enjoyment,³⁷ which is capable of holding the subject back in the face of ‘the unspeakable field of radical desire that is the field of absolute destruction’ (VII, 216). He then turns to the second barrier of the beautiful in warding off the threatening, engulfing Real, which is a barrier that only ‘gets closer’ to the danger bordering on the limit (VII, 217).

Lacan adamantly confronts Hegel’s classic interpretation of *Antigone* as a drama of conflict between contesting discourses (VII, 249-50).³⁸ Hegel sees the collision

³⁷ ‘Enjoyment’ is absolutely involved with libido in psychoanalytic discourses. According to my reading experience of Lacanian texts, ‘enjoyment’ is equivalent to the French word, ‘*jouissance*’. Both terms are used interchangeably without much significant distinction. The choice of either term is subject to the author’s whim in writing. The legal connotation of ‘*jouissance*’ is well known and emphasized by Lacanians. In *Seminar XX*, Lacan devotes his first lesson to this topic. He says, ‘[L]aw basically talks about [...] *jouissance*’ (XX, 2). That is, law is fundamentally involved with the management of enjoyment. In my dissertation, I will preserve this legal connotation of *jouissance* and further investigate its relation to libidinal economy. I will use these two words, enjoyment and *jouissance* interchangeably.

³⁸ As Lacan points out, Hegel reads *Antigone* as a conflict of discourses which later reaches a certain form of reconciliation. Lacan refutes this notion of reconciliation categorically because as a daughter

between Creon and Antigone as a confrontation between the law of the state, interest of the common good, right of the public, and the principle of the family, right of the private, and sacred right of the dead for a proper funeral. However, Goethe points out that Creon does not present a right, but rather a wrong stance, as implied by the excess in Creon's action and desire. On the surface, Creon acts as if he is defending the law of the state by protecting the rights of the loyal against the traitors, the violators of the well-being of the city-state, supporting the common good. However, actually, Creon 'deviates from the straight path [...] in striking at Polynices beyond limits within which he has the right to strike' (*VII*, 254). According to Lacan, '[h]e (Creon) in fact, wants to inflict on him that second death that he has no right to inflict on him [...] and he thus rushes by himself to his own destruction' (*VII*, 254). The battle has been fought and the threat to the safety and welfare of the state is no longer there. Killing a man twice is of no practical benefit—it does not make any physical difference to human mortality but reveals a blatant cruelty rather than authority. In other words, the mistake or tragic error actually lies on the part of Creon (*VII*, 258, 277).³⁹ With excessive desire and improper edicts as his, a leader becomes a tyrant.

To resist tyranny, Antigone challenges this wrong with a passion, which is itself

of Oedipus, Antigone is part of a race of incestuous tragedy and pessimism. Lacan implies reconciliation is out of the question and artificially imposed.

³⁹ Lacan says, '[t]he mortal fruits that Creon harvest through his obstinacy and in his insane orders is his dead son he carries in his arms [...] he has made a mistake' (*VII*, 277).

unique and falls outside the boundary of the right of the family or that of the dead. Antigone herself is quite aware of her own motivation and justifies her defiance with *the ethics of singularity*. Antigone denies categorically that she acts on behalf of the Gods or with the support of Zeus by pointing out that Creon makes a mistake by understanding her defiance as an outcome of the gods' law imposed on the mortals. She finds her position 'unassailable' owing to a certain 'unwritten' law but 'which is not developed in any signifying chain or in anything else' (VII, 278). To put it straightforwardly, two singularities emerge from Antigone's defiance. Antigone insists on burying her brother out of *her singular love* for Polynices and *his own singular being*. This singularity of Polynices is an indestructible being apart from the particularities of his deeds once done or of the traits he once bore. The singularity of Polynices is worthy to be defended and acknowledged at all cost. The singularity of Polynices is expressed in Antigone's insistence on tautology. Antigone's position is laid bare as follows: my brother may be what you said he is, but to me 'my brother is my brother' (VII, 278). Antigone goes so far as to emphasize Polynices' irreplaceable quality by comparing the replaceable status of husband and children. Regardless of what he is and what he has done in history and to his society, Polynices, as a linguistic creature on earth, bears a unique singular being. Lacan's theorisation of human subjectivity centres on the notion of the

subject as a speaking being and linguistic creature. It should be noted that while animals are capable of communication through signs and codes, humans are distinguished from the animal kingdom by their capacity to signify, i.e. to use signifiers apart from codes and signs. It is well-known that Lacan proposes the theory that the unconscious is structured like a language, which is composed not of set of codes or signs, but of a chain or system of signifiers. The effect of signifiers and signification plays an essential role in the constitution of human subjectivity. In other words, a human subject, as a linguistic being, is the product of language with his/her own unique organisation of *jouissance*, which is irreducible and irreplaceable. For this very reason, his corpse cannot be left unburied as that of an animal in the field without his humanity being properly acknowledged and honoured. The singularity of being originates from somewhere beyond language, beyond symbolisation. However, at the same time, singularity pointing to something beyond language is itself born with the advent of language. In the animal realm lie only instincts and mortality but not the drive dimension, which comes into existence owing to the mark left by signifiers, the punctuation upon human subjectivity left with the subject's acquisition of language. Lacan points out, '[t]hat purity, that separation of being from the characteristics of the historical drama he has lived through, is precisely the limit or the *ex nihilo* to which Antigone is attached;' the singularity of being 'is

nothing more than the break that the very presence of language inaugurates in the life of man' (VII, 279). In the later investigation of the relationship between Joyce's subjectivity and writing through the concept of *sinthome*, Lacan demonstrates how the singularity of Joyce is (re-)constructed by means of a revolutionary writing, deployed through a new relationship with language in Joyce's ambition for the liquidation of the English language and for gaining recognition as a giant figure in world literature. The point of singularity and aesthetic ethics in Joyce's case will be further explored in the final section of this chapter and the textual analysis of *Ulysses*.

For the time being, let us dwell on the ethics of singularity in *Antigone*. Antigone's singular love towards the singularity of her brother endows her with a savage character, rendering her in 'the unshakable, unyielding position' in which she is fixed (VII, 279). Paradoxically, that inflexibility of Antigone's position is the source from which the splendour of her beauty derived. On the one hand, as a punishment for her insistence on a proper funeral for Polynices, Antigone is ordered to be buried alive in a tomb, while on the other hand, she embodies structurally the place between two deaths, a zone of limit, a place on the other side of the border of normal/normative humanity, that of *Atè*. In Lacan's words, 'Antigone perpetuates, eternalizes, immortalizes that *Atè*' (VII, 283). What we encounter at the centre of the tragedy is 'the fascinating image of Antigone herself;' 'Antigone in her unbearable

splendor' which 'attracts us and startles us, in the sense of intimidates us; this terrible, self-willed victim disturbs us' (*VII*, 247). The place between two deaths is a twilight zone carved out when one is either physically dead with his/her name and his/her symbolic value present or when, as in the case of Antigone, the subject has transgressed the social boundary sanctioned and supported by the law of the state, stepping beyond the limit of the Symbolic domain prior to his/her physical death. At the structural level, the space between two deaths is the register of the Real laid bare. Antigone embodies this limit zone and personifies pure desire, which is by definition stripped of any particular interests, secular concerns, and particularity of desires. She assumes desire in its pure state and form. In this regard, the lamentation uttered by Antigone in the walled tomb, as she rebels against Creon to the point of sacrificing her own life without a flinch, is not an eclipse of her stance or courage but rather marks out her position even more conspicuously. It is only when she is between two deaths and already on the other side of life that she begins to lament what she could have enjoyed: the secular joy of the conjugal bed and that of being a mother and so on. It is not a nostalgia for what she used to enjoy but what she could have enjoyed but was denied because of her stepping outside of the social, the Symbolic.

At this point, we have the opportunity to evaluate an ethical paradigm which relies on the blinding effect of Antigone's splendour. Commentators hold

contradictory attitudes toward the efficacy of Antigone as an ethical paradigm for psychoanalysis.

Lorenzo Chieza and Patrick Guyomard exemplify the negative evaluation of the paradigm offered by Antigone, and the concomitant conception of pure desire as an ethical model. They both argue that this aesthetic ethic is simply a moment in Lacan's long career that he would later distance himself from, or even reverse. As Guyomard points out, in 1960, Lacan idealised Antigone, 'in 1964, he held the reverse position. He walked away completely from an idealization of Antigone, and that ideal she had represented for the analyst.'⁴⁰ Guyomard defines the pure desire that Antigone embodies as a desire 'that owes nothing to anything but itself,' and hence 'not far from being the desire for death in its pure state' actually 'a madness.'⁴¹ Guyomard associates pure desire with the desire for death and then links this desire for death to the death drive. However, there is no point in equating physical death with the tendency to cause a break in the psychic structure, namely the death drive. To clarify this critical confusion and theoretical laxity dating back to Freud's explanation of death drive, Lear offers a powerful critique.⁴² Lear's point is that just

⁴⁰ Patrick Guyomard, 'Patrick Guyomard 2' in Elain Hoffman Baruch and Lucienne Juliette Serrano (eds.), *She Speaks, He Listens: Women on the French Analyst's Couch* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 81-5 at p. 82.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴² Jonathan Lear, *Happiness, Death, and the Remainder of Life*.

as Aristotle introduces a teleological term of contemplation as the highest form of happiness to denote his ethics, Freud invents the enigmatic signifier termed as ‘death drive’ and thereby introduces a teleological viewpoint to the psychic tendency towards simple disruption and destruction of no purpose. In spite of this theoretical laxity, Guyomard’s position has its own merits. He argues that pure desire as the death drive in its pure state amounts to ‘pure repetition,’ which I understand as something similar to Freud’s concept of repetition compulsion, and hence, possibly leads to ‘the negative therapeutic reaction and finally the failure of analysis.’⁴³ First, I argue that Antigone does not seek death for death’s sake but simply wants to grant her brother a proper funeral to honour his singularity as a human being who once lived on earth. She does not seek to commit suicide on purpose; her death is simply an unfortunate outcome in the face of tyranny. Secondly, I agree with Guyomard that her gesture constitutes a symbolic suicide *par excellence*, creating a manifestation of the death drive. The splendour of Antigone blazes with the dark flames of the tragic, with a suicidal sense in the manifestation of the death drive.

Chieza launches an even more powerful critique which nearly equates Antigone’s deed with an apotheosis of sadism. As Chieza puts it, with reference to Artaud’s comments, ‘Antigone becomes her own name,’ ‘embody[ing] an antagonistic force

⁴³ Guyomard, p. 83.

par excellence, 'an antagonistic force of pure negativity, which we may well name "death drive"' in contrary to society.⁴⁴ Antigone's defiant victory is described as 'cruelly "terrible"' in the spectacle of suffering, with a strong connotation of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. The total separation from the Symbolic identity leads us to a 'loss of reality,' in other words, 'subjective destitution,'⁴⁵ which finds expression in Artaud's Theater of Cruelty in various forms of existential catastrophe and horrified anguish. In Chieza's opinion, 'Antigone does not cede on her suicidal *demand* to bury Polynices because this is the only way in which she can make *desire* appear in showing the void of pure desire through her splendor, she "saves" desire from Creon's strictly totalitarian attempt to obliterate the 'Real-of-the Symbolic'.⁴⁶ At this stage, Lacan's aesthetic ethics is 'an ontological ethics, an ethics of the preservation of being as the void of the Symbolic.'⁴⁷

Moreover, Chieza is unsatisfied with this model of pure desire. According to Chieza, Lacan himself identifies the negative side of subjective destitution with the 'opposite but inextricable deadlock of separation: tragedy and Buddhism.'⁴⁸ Chieza resorts to Lacan's later insights of the traversal of fantasy and *sinthome* to explicate

⁴⁴ Lorenzo Chieza, 'Lacan with Artaud', in Slavoj Žižek (ed.), *Lacan: The Silent Partner* (Verso: London, 2006), 336-64 at p. 334-5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 344-5.

⁴⁶ Lorenzo Chieza, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 2007), p. 178.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

⁴⁸ Chieza, *Lacan with Artaud*, p. 345.

the negative side of the paradigm of pure desire, ending up in subjective destitution.

The subtlety of this insight is highlighted by the following long quotation:

More specifically, separation *qua* first stage of the traversal of the fundamental fantasy ($\$ \leftrightarrow a$) should literally be considered as the detachment of the symbolic (barred) subject from the imaginary object of desire. The consequence of this is the emergence of the object (cause of desire)—*objet petite a*—in its real void, which can be led to complementarily opposite impasses; either the subject tragically identifies himself with the fundamental lack-of-being, his irreducible scission, precisely by overcoming all contingent alienations, thus losing the object, or the subject identifies himself with *objet petite a*, thus ‘turn[ing himself] into a mummy’; this nirvanization is by no means ascetic since it *péerversely* takes the void of the object for the Real of the Thing.⁴⁹

While subtly pointing out the danger of nirvanization and the subject’s mummy-like state, Chieza launches a strong claim. Chieza’s stance is that Lacan does not have a full-fledged theory of the Real yet in *Seminar VII*, so the conceptualisation of the ethical model at the end of psychoanalysis is overshadowed by this fact. In this seminar, Lacan has not yet forsaken the idea of a mythical primordial Real as totality, which ‘necessarily entails a postulation of a correlative “massive” jouissance.’⁵⁰ Chieza’s states, ‘at this stage, Lacan has not yet completely overcome the (Sadean; Artaudian) idea that nature is One (differential, ‘fermenting’) being that enjoys *per se*: this notion structurally contradicts all theoretical (and clinical) elaborations which presuppose the a priori of the barring of the Other and the logically concomitant reduction of Nature to the Not-One of the

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 345. I, of course, do not think this reference for nirvanization here would correctly interpret or exhaust the heavy concept of Nirvana in the Buddhist tradition. I understand Chieza’s reference to nirvana as embodying the state of void.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 352.

undead.’⁵¹ However, progressively, Lacan would come to acknowledge that “inherent” *jouissance*, in a radical sense is the only *jouissance*.⁵² The concept of the Real in terms of a mystical natural force inevitably leads to the Sadean fantasy of massive enjoyment through absurd and endless erotic play. From Chieza’s perspective, in the case of Antigone, the images of the corpse, foetus, and mummy signify precisely Antigone’s failure to return after crossing the limit, and her act is self-destructive. Articulating from ‘the privileged position of *sinthome*,’⁵³ Chieza re-interprets Lacan’s dictum, ‘do not give up on your desire’ as after disengaging from the established symbolic Other, do not give up the dimension of the Other, the Symbolic function altogether.⁵⁴

Strikingly, Chieza goes on to argue that the terrible beauty embodied by Antigone functions similarly to Sadean fantasy by glossing over the lack of the Other, providing a spectacle associated with massive *jouissance* of the primordial Real.⁵⁵ Chieza perspicuously points out that the blinding spectacle might function as the last barrier to the Real and hence cover up the void of the Other in the Sadean fantasy of

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁵³ Chieza terms Lacan’s later position in *Seminar XXIII* as privileged because he thinks Lacan’s theory evolves gradually and reaches maturation in this later stage by acknowledging the Real of the Symbolic, the inherent *jouissance* of the Symbolic as the only real we have, fully assuming the dictum ‘There is no Other of the Other’.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

⁵⁵ In Chieza’s words, ‘Seminar VII ultimately fails to elucidate the way in which the Lacanian ethics of “pure” desire from the Sado-Kantian anti-ethics of ‘massive *jouissance*.’ Chieza, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, p. 177.

perversion for the reader of the tragedy. I am in agreement with Chieza's insight at this point. In my opinion, it is not merely Sadean fantasy of perversion that has such a function of masking the lack of the Other. The very function of every fantasy, including normal neurotic fantasy, is to cover the hiatus, the lack of the Other, to make the Other appear full, cogent, and competent. I also agree with Chieza on the negative effect of mummification in the embodiment of the void during subjective destitution. However, I would like to emphasize that Antigone is not a perverse figure nor a Sadean heroine.⁵⁶ I therefore depart from Chieza's negative evaluation on Antigone at this point; this distances Antigone's position from the tragedy in *Antigone*. The tragedy of *Antigone* is a sublime drama, inflamed by the dazzling splendour of its protagonist's beauty. It successfully presents the audience with an image larger than themselves of normal, law-abiding citizens, arousing pity and blinding the audience with this aesthetic effect as the last barrier against the nothingness of the Real. The lack of the Other is thus disclosed and hinted by Antigone's defiance as well as covered immediately by the sublime beauty as portrayed in the tragedy. Furthermore, I argue that Antigone's act differs crucially from Sadean fantasy, as the latter is commanded by the Other and, as Lacan contends,

⁵⁶ Of course, Chieza does not say Antigone is perverse straightforwardly. He implies the perverse connotation through nirvanization.

Sade's career is a prolonged courting of the law.⁵⁷ The subjective position of Antigone is fundamentally different from that of the play and its effect on the audience. Antigone does not have the emotion of pity and fear and simply provokes emotional purging in the audience. As Zupančič points out, 'while Antigone is a sublime figure, she is not by any means a subject who experiences the feeling of the sublime.'⁵⁸ She does not observe her own death through the lens of fantasy, but 'she enters, so to speak, into her fantasy.'⁵⁹ I would also argue that Antigone's act is not an enactment of fantasy, but an act stripped of fantasy, an abrupt and inevitable act without a subject. Antigone does not perform an act within a preexistent unconscious fantasy; she simply identifies with his own act, disappearing into the very act, falling into the void, becoming *objet a*. When the previous subjectivity comes undone, Antigone becomes a selfless subject. In later sections of this chapter, I will offer a detailed account of this act of subjective destitution in terms of the traversal of fantasy and the subjectless act that ethically subjectifies the subjects in my discussion on the intersection between Lacan and Badiou. In this regard, I contend that Antigone's position is far from perverse and the spectacular beauty of Antigone does not constitute a fantasy. I have devoted a long section on Antigone not merely

⁵⁷ Lacan explicates the structure of Sadean fantasy with a diagram in 'Kant with Sade.' *Ecrits*. Trans. by Bruce Fink (London: Norton, 2006), 645-68.

⁵⁸ Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real*, p. 253.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

to elucidate an essential moment in Lacan's long-term development of ethics but also to put emphasis on Antigone's act and underscore its distance from the sublime art and the drama of Sadean perversion. This distance prefigures my theoretical stance, thereby underlying my distance towards the practice of perversion later in my investigation of 'Circe' and the perverse drama presented in *Nighttown* in Dublin.

In recent years, the evaluation of Antigone as the ethical paradigm of pure desire has provoked vehement debates, in which some critics interpret Lacan through their skepticism and critique of Žižek. Žižek's pronounced valorisation of radicality, negativity, and destructiveness in Antigone's 'No' as an essential criterion for the ethical act has been severely criticised. I offer several passages from Žižek in order to capture his critical stance. Žižek states recurrently that an act is always 'an act of annihilation, of wiping out—we don't know what will come of it, its final outcome is ultimately even insignificant, strictly secondary in relation to the No! of the pure act' (*EYS*, 44). On another occasion, similar accounts appear—'Antigone [...] risks her entire social existence, defying the socio-symbolic power of the City embodied in [...] Creon', '[f]or Lacan, there is no act proper without the risk of such a "momentary suspension of the big Other;" an authentic act occurs only when the subject risks a gesture that is no longer "covered up" by the big Other' (*TS*, 263-4). In response to

this extremism, Yannis Stavrakakis accuses Žižek of ‘*absolutisation*’⁶⁰ of the suicidal act of pure desire, which might lead to aporia or inertia in politics. Žižek’s appraisal of Antigone’s act of pure desire in correlation with his notion of divine, ethical violence enormously restricts true ethical acts to nearly suicidal radical acts. At the same time, he vehemently criticizes resistances in terms of pragmatic-strategic political actions as futile because they can be easily absorbed into the ideological hegemony and the established socio-symbolic framework. This view led Critchley to portray Žižek as ‘a Slovenian Hamlet, utterly paralyzed but dreaming of an avenging violent act,’ ‘an absolute, cataclysmic revolutionary act of violence.’⁶¹ Critchley therefore contends that Žižek has left us ‘in a fearful and fateful deadlock, both a transcendent-philosophical deadlock and a practical-political deadlock.’⁶² In addition to this critical appraisal of Žižek in terms of political efficacy, Russell Grigg challenges the very notion of an ethical act of pure desire as an absolute negativity itself from a clinical perspective. He takes Antigone as a clinical case, diagnosing her drastic action as that of a hysterical woman, who acts not out of defiance towards the law *per se*, but ‘in conformity with her family destiny.’⁶³ According to Grigg,

⁶⁰ Yannis Stavrakakis, ‘The Lure of Antigone: *Aporia* of an Ethics of the Political’, in Geoff Boucher, Jason Glynos and Matthew Sharpe (eds.), *Traversing the Fantasy: Critical Response to Slavoj Žižek* (Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), p. 180.

⁶¹ Simon Critchley, ‘Violence Thoughts about Slavoj Žižek’, *Naked Punch* 11(2008), last accessed 1 January 2014, <<http://www.nakedpunch.com>> .

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶³ Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language and Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 128.

through his ‘idealized view of desire,’ Žižek ‘overestimate[s]’ Antigone’s act.⁶⁴ Instead, he argues that ‘far from creating the absolute freedom to which Žižek refers,’ Antigone’s act of ‘both defiance and sacrifice’ is ‘initially ambiguous in its status’ and binds her to ‘her family destiny and paternal law.’⁶⁵ She defies ‘the law of her city in the name of her (Oedipal) law’, and ‘her no-saying reveals an allegiance to the autochthonous law of the father that is the source of her motivation.’⁶⁶

In response to Grigg’s counterargument, Žižek points out that Lacan avoids psychoanalysing Antigone with ‘no mention of repression, of the formation of the unconscious, of incestuous desire’ in his reading of Antigone.⁶⁷ Moreover, given that ‘the Oedipus family’ is ‘*the* incestuous family’ Lacan *contended* that ‘the Oedipus family, precisely was *not* Oedipal, and Oedipus did not suffer from the Oedipus complex.’⁶⁸ In my opinion, Žižek is right in pointing out that Antigone acts not out of her being born into a peculiar family of incestuous bond, but rather out of her unique singular love in fidelity towards the singularity of the being of her brother.⁶⁹ The singularity is disregarded in Creon’s law, and Antigone’s act is ‘ex-timate’ in the sense it intervenes into the void, ‘the “symptomal torsion” of this [established]

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p 130, 131.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129, 131.

⁶⁷ Slavoj Žižek, ‘*Concesso Non Dato*’, in Geoff Boucher, Jason Glynos and Matthew Sharpe (eds.), *Traversing the Fantasy: Critical Response to Slavoj Žižek* (Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), p. 251.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 251.

network.’⁷⁰

Regarding the suicidal tendency and negativity that is strongly critiqued in his so-called extremism or absolutisation, Žižek highlights the structural role of negativity rather than the shades of destructiveness in Antigone’s act. Žižek’s position can be summarised in two points: First, the ethical act exemplified by Antigone is structurally excessive in the sense that ‘it is only through an act that I effectively assume the big Other’s non-existence, that is, I enact the impossible: namely, what appears as the impossible within the co-ordinates of the existing socio-symbolic order’ (I, 80). The act may appear negative, yet the symbolic consequence is profound—‘*only such an “impossible” gesture of pure expenditure can change the very co-ordinates of what is strategically possible within a historical constellation.*’ (I, 81). Secondly, Antigone’s gesture is ‘not simply a pure desire for death—had it been so, she could have directly killed herself and spared the people around her all the fuss. Hers was not a pure symbolic striving for death, but an unconditional insistence on a particular symbolic ritual’ (I, 81). In a more recent account on Antigone, it is no longer the pure negativity of the Real that is recurrently highlighted by Žižek, but that of ‘the pure signifier’ is (LN, 84). In her insistence on the proper burial of her brother, ‘Antigone does not stand for some extra-symbolic

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 252.

realm but for the pure signifier—her “purity” is that of a signifier. Hence, although her act is suicidal, the stakes are symbolic’ (*LN*, 84).

I generally endorse Žižek’s defence but would like to point out the stakes are high when he re-imports the pure signifier into his much-avowed emphasis of pure desire in terms of negativity. That is, at the limit-experience of between two deaths, a master signifier is introduced which encapsulates Antigone’s very singular being and functions as the source of her ethical act. In this regard, an ethical paradigm based on the Real of pure desire no longer stands because the act is ‘contaminated’ with the ‘impure’ signifier. It seems that another dimension, the Symbolic dimension of ethical act, is re-introduced. I would like to cite a passage near the end of *Seminar XI* to present my stance on the debate here. After proposing the idea of the traversal of fantasy earlier, Lacan concludes this Seminar with remarks in reference to the analyst’s desire:

This crossing of the plane of identification is possible. Anyone who has lived through the analytic experience with me to the end of the training analysis knows that what I am saying is true [...] after the mapping of the subject in relation to the *a*, the experience of the fundamental phantasy becomes the drive (*XI*, 273).

The analyst’s desire is not a pure desire. It is a desire to obtain absolute difference, a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the primary signifier, the subject is, for the first time, in a position to subject himself to it. There only may limitless love emerge, because it is outside the limits of law, where alone it may live (*XI*, 276)

The fact that Lacan states the analyst’s desire is not pure desire implies his abandonment of his previous position where he posited pure desire as an ethical

paradigm, thereby shifting his emphasis from desire to drive. Indeed, given the inherent complicity between desire and law, Lacan seems to move away from his praise of Antigone's transgressive act in terms of pure desire to a more confined understanding of desire in differentiation from the drive in the later periods. This stance has made some critics judge Antigone's act and the notion of pure desire to be surpassed by Lacan himself.⁷¹ Ed Pluth interprets the passage cited above even more radically—the concept of subject as void is rather untenable, and at the most fundamental level, the subject is always an effect of the signifier. Pluth's position is implied in the following rhetorical question: '[w]hat crossing the plane of identification, traversing of fantasy or an act amounts to is a return to an original position, one in which a subject is first subjected to a signifier. Does this not also mean to the moment at which a subject is first produced by a signifier?'⁷² In sum, Pluth wants to give credit to Žižek's distinction between 'the subject as such' and the "subjectivized" subject, the 'subject subjected to a signifier;' he also adds a nuance to it by emphasising that 'the two are actually part of the same whole,' something Žižek himself endorses but does not admit all the time.⁷³ In light of this concept of the subject inherently being an effect of the signifier, Pluth argues that just as the subject

⁷¹ Stavrakakis, p. 174. He claims that 'Clearly, *Antigone* is not Lacan's last-or most insightful-word on the question of ethics.'

⁷² Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts: Freedom in Lacan's Theory of the Subject* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 131.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 133, 134.

need not be conceived in terms of void, an ethical act does not need to be conceptualised in purely negative terms. Instead, Pluth proposes that an ethical act can use signifiers in an alternative way without the presence of the Other as authority and law.⁷⁴ An act transforms the subject as well as the Other by way of unleashing new signifiers into the world. As Pluth puts it, ‘a subject in an act disjoins from the Other as a site of knowledge, as a subject-supposed-to-know, and joins itself to that which resists this Other, which means that it joins itself to a fundamentally “barred” or “split” Other, an Other incapable of providing recognition for meaning or identity.’⁷⁵ In similar vein, Mari Ruti shares this critical attitude toward Žižek’s overemphasis on negativity of the ethical act as pure desire and subjective destitution, pointing out that Žižek ‘does not sufficiently distinguish between the symbolic order as a hegemonic structure and the signifier as a tool of resistance.’⁷⁶ It is not by accident that both Ruti and Pluth turn to Badiou’s theory of truth-process in search for a more ‘positive’ account of an ethical act to counter the emphasis of negativity in Žižek’s reading. I use the term ‘positive’ here not as a moral judgment but to mean the act’s involvement with positivization, with the usage of signifiers. As Adrian Johnston observes, Žižek’s project, in alignment with the psychoanalytic act of working through, of traversing, designates the process from [psychoanalytic] act to

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 97-114.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁷⁶ Ruti, p. 112.

[revolutionary] event, while Badiou's project sets out from [a breakthrough] event to [an ethical] act [of fidelity to the truth, in order to carry out the truth-procedures].⁷⁷

In this line of reasoning, *sinthome*, when read with Badiou, is regarded as an extended ethical act in its alternative usage of signifiers and innovative organisation of *jouissance* with new signifiers.⁷⁸

However, does Lacan's passage in the last page of *Seminar XI* really cancel out his previous position on ethics entirely? I think not. While in normal functioning of subjectivization, the subject necessarily takes on identities and meanings guaranteed by the Other, at the moment of traversing fantasy, the subject strips off the previous identification, confronting the fundamental signifier that he/she has assumed. That is to say, the subject undergoes a limit/borderline experience and he/she becomes situated at the interstice between negativity and primary postivization, implying subjectivization between the Symbolic and the Real. A minimal yet 'absolute difference' is introduced and acknowledged precisely by way of the analyst's impure desire. The subject dwells neither completely in the abyss nor does he/she cling to the master signifier or glue his/her being to the concomitant identities that he/she previously lived with. Negativity may designate this crucial distance from previous postivization, subectivization, and identification. The subject, indeed, undergoes

⁷⁷ This is the main thesis of Adrian Johnston's book, *Badiou, Žižek and Political Transformations: The Cadence of Change* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2009).

⁷⁸ Ruti devotes three chapters of her book *The Singularity of Being* to this thesis, p. 59-126.

destitution when all the identities are crossed. It is by going through such kind of traversal, the breakthrough moment of negativity, that a profound transformation and further invention of new master signifiers become possible. In Lacan's concept of the psychoanalytic act, 'after passing through a "true act," the subject emerges transformed, that this authentic gesture modifies the very configuration of subjectivity.'⁷⁹ In this regard, the concepts of the subject as void and subjective destitution are not entirely unsustainable. Meanwhile, the subject's inherent involvement with the signifier, as a product of the signifier, can be subjected to renewal and new re-invention with this knowledge of the Real having experienced the traversal of fantasy.

In conclusion, my position is that Antigone's act does embody subjective destitution. Her act manifests the disappearance of subjectivity once framed by a given Symbolic expression. This indeed is a symbolic death, a death of the Symbolic together with the subject. However, the disappearance of the subject, which is deadly, tragic, and suicidal in *Seminar VII*, harbours a truth that Lacan does not want to forsake entirely. The subject's identification of/through/with the Real act as a negativity carves out the space and momentum of negativity that Lacan would continue to explore in later work, for instance, through the notion of surplus

⁷⁹ Johnston, p. 147-8.

enjoyment or in his invention of the concept of *objet a* in the effort to capture the functioning of the Real. Negativity, in this light, does not denote something bad but only presents the nothingness, the Real dimension, as radically different from representation, the Symbolic level. Lacan might have abandoned the model of Antigone as the paradigm of ethics, but he does not altogether forsake negativity, to which the image of Antigone gives form. I hold that in *Seminar XI*, articulating the paradigm of ethics, the psychoanalytic act within the parameter of the traversal of fantasy, Lacan neutralizes this negativity by stripping it of the tragic, suicidal, and deadly connotation, endowing the moment of pure negativity with a shade of emancipation, of breakthrough. Later, in *Seminar XXIII*, when elaborating on *sinthome*, Lacan elaborates on this negativity, defining it only as a moment not as a destiny, as a necessary point with the topological thinking of unknotting and reknitting. Unknotting is not an end in itself, but rather a presumed fundamental, structural, or logical moment. In there is no unknotting without the consequent reknitting, every reknitting necessarily presupposes an unknotting. It is true that Antigone does not return from the place between two deaths, but her act does make the void of the Other apparent, thereby carving out a space for the possibility of further political/ethical action. If we articulate from Badiou's concept of political

event and truth procedures,⁸⁰ it is arguable that Antigone's act, suicidal as it may appear, might well function as an event, which requires the later declaration of truth and work of fidelity to re-inscribe this act/event into the Symbolic dimension. Antigone's work is half done and the truth remains untold. As a consequence of the truth-procedure after the event, this re-inscription might lead to possible revolution of the Symbolic dimension itself.⁸¹

IV.

In addition to Antigone's act and splendour as the tragic paradigm for an ethical act, Lacan in *Seminar VII* provides an alternative avenue for ethics, namely the imperative of neighbour love.⁸² These two paradigms may seem contradictory at the first sight, but are in fact the continuation of Lacan's reflection on the ethics of the

⁸⁰ Ethics and ontology have been the two major pillars of Alain Badiou's theoretical project. Badiou's ethical theorization centres largely on an extended exploration of the event, fidelity, truth procedures, and the concomitant subject of truth, which have figured pervasively in most of his works. For instance, please refer to *Conditions*, Trans by Steven Corcoran (New York: Continuum, 2008), *Ethics: An Essays on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2002), and *Saint Paul: the Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2003). Owing to the scope, focus, and orientation of the current project, the richness and complexity of Badiou's ontological and ethical projects and their relation and intersection with Lacan's theory of subjectivity and ethics can hardly be given its due space and attention. The topic itself demands voluminous study in the future. In the present dissertation, I can only focus on some relevant moments of intersection of Badiou and Lacan in the study of Joyce.

⁸¹ At this point, I differ from Chieza's position to take Antigone's act as a 'mirage of another consistent Other; precisely by deciding to collapse into the void of the lack [...]' Chieza, *Lacan with Artaud*, p. 347.

⁸² I deliberately use the term 'neighbour love' rather than neighbourly love to highlight it is not a love of friendly attitude but a commandment of love to our neighbours and a commandment to enact love as a true neighbour.

Real. While Antigone posits an act regardless of the social interaction (her suicidal gesture of Symbolic death itself equals to a death of the Symbolic), neighbour love appears to be a commandment aiming at regulating the social interaction. However, Lacan's juxtaposition of these two paradigms in the same seminar is far from accidental. On the one hand, Antigone exemplifies how a subject confronts her singularity, the strangeness within, and assumes her unwavering fidelity to it. On the other hand, neighbour love deals with a subject's responsibility in the face of the uncanny, strangeness in her neighbour. Lacanian psychoanalysis holds firmly that the intersubjective framework is fundamentally inscribed into subjectivity because a human child is born into an intersubjective framework and his/her subjectivity is an effect of the signifier and intersubjective relations. Neighbour love will both modify the intersubjective relations and transform the subjective structuring. Lacanians, in recent years, have attempted to bring to the fore what Lacan hints at in *Seminar VII*, making great efforts to present neighbour love as an ethical paradigm in light of Lacan's concept of the traversal of fantasy and his exploration of love in terms of the not-all logic.

In the lecture on 'the Paradox of Jouissance,' Lacan first comments on the Freudian myth of the primal father in the lesson of 'The Death of God' and in the following lesson 'Love of one's neighbour,' endorsing this biblical imperative. It is

hardly by chance that the two lessons are adjacent for, paradoxically, Lacan seems to think that the commandment of neighbour love supplements the predicament of the death of the Father/God. Divine love, the love of God is coupled with the love of one's neighbour as a widely known principle in both Jewish and Christian doctrines. In *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud presents a story of the instalment of the law originating from the murder of the primal father. Without hesitation, Lacan regards it a Freudian myth, dubbing it as 'the only myth that the modern age was capable of,' and 'a myth of a time for which God is dead' (VII, 176-7). The Freudian myth can be briefly recapitulated as follows: The Father of the primal horde has it all. The father embodies complete jouissance without castration by way of enjoying all the women and denying the rest of men access to women. The band of brothers revolt against and murder the father. However, instead of acquiring the desired, once-denied enjoyment, the brothers, out of love for the father and guilt for the crime, elevate the father to a prohibitive agency in his name. The physical death of the father fails to displace the father's function symbolically. The father rules after his death more effectively and severely through his name. The half-told truth⁸³ in the Freudian myth is that the Father as a 'structural operator' (XVII, 123), 'the agent of castration' (XVII, 124), represents the Symbolic founding gesture

⁸³ Truth is 'made visible by the myth, but at the same time it is also camouflaged by it' (VII, 176).

of naming. The entire myth of the primal father is but a *fantasmatic* sleight of hand to turn the impossibility of full *jouissance* into a prohibition (XVII, 123-5). In Lacan's words, 'if for us God is dead, it is because he always has been dead and that's what Freud says. He has never been the father *except in the mythology of the son*, in that of the commandment which commands that he, the father, be loved [...]' (VII, 177, emphasis added). With the assistance of the diction developed by Lacan in later stages, the figure of the primal Father and his murder 'in the mythology of the son' is nothing more than the fundamental fantasy shared by those who had undergone castration successfully.⁸⁴ Therefore, Lacan straightforwardly refutes the Nietzschean celebration of the demise of God and Dostoevsky's notion in *Brothers Karamazov* that 'if God is dead, everything is permitted,' asserting that since God as the authority figure functions as the agency of prohibition, once God is dead, we are far from liberation, but '[n]othing is permitted anymore' (XVII, 119-20).

Lacan detects 'a certain atheistic message in Christianity' in the doctrine of the commandment to love God by way of loving one's neighbour, advocating that 'the pinnacle of psychoanalysis is well and truly atheism' (VII, 178; XVII, 119). Freud identifies the crisis of authority prevalent in modernity, while in the meantime salvages the patriarchal function. His 'patriarchal civility' is a nostalgic gesture for a

⁸⁴ I will further discuss this male position in the next section on sexuation.

good father (VII, p. 177). For Lacan, this nostalgia is certainly to be discarded, leading inevitably to an atheist view. Authority, law, the Father, and God are nothing but names, representing the Symbolic function of naming and its tarrying with negative owing to the logic of not-all, whose operation is the proper domain of the Unconscious. In *Seminar XI*, against the views of both Freud and Nietzsche, Lacan proclaims the definition of atheism tersely, '[f]or the true formula of atheism is not *God is dead* [...] the true formula of atheism is *God is unconscious*' (XI, 59, original emphasis). Paradoxically, Lacan's atheist formula, 'God is unconscious,' reveals the category of God is indispensable and structurally essential like the Unconscious itself in human subjectivity. 'The God hypothesis will persist' (XX, 45), and the God issue remains one of Lacan's major preoccupations throughout his career.⁸⁵ Lacan's tackling of God's intricate relation with the functioning of authority/law/signifier in subjectivity and the Unconscious from an atheist view is a persistent endeavour. In the final stages of his career, he lays bare his position on this issue, arguing that God's existence is not merely a product of cultural discourse, nor does it merely depend on the subject contingent choice to believe in God or not.⁸⁶ Lacan states,

It is evident that God exists, but not any more than you do! That doesn't get us very far [...]. What is it that really interests us in this 'there exists,' with respect to the

⁸⁵ Just follow the indexes of each seminar, the category of God is amply recurrent and sometimes figures centrally in Lacan's studies at different periods of his career. A famous example is seen in *Seminar XX*, where Lacan discusses God and its relevance to feminine *jouissance* (XX, 64-77).

⁸⁶ Kenneth Reinhard, 'Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor', *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 53, 73.

signifier? That is that there exists at least one for whom that business of castration doesn't work, and it is because of this that what is called the Father has been invented. That's why the Father exists at least as much as God, which is to say, not very much [...]. Inasmuch as there exists one, it follows that all the others can function, that is with reference to this exception, to this 'there exists.'⁸⁷

This passage presents an analytic interpretation of Freud's myth, signalling that at the level of the signifier and hence the human unconscious, there exists at least one signifier situated at the exception, where the primal Father and God are structurally located. What is situated at the exception is not submitted to the law of castration, and somehow becomes the agency for the instalment of law and regulation of *jouissance*. God and the Father represent the general logic of legal functioning within the dialectic of exception and totality, which later Lacan would equate with the male logical formulation in sexuation in *Seminar XX*. In recent years, scholars take seriously the joint issue of Christianity's atheist message and the psychoanalytic atheist stance in elucidating neighbour love, the relation between law and love, and even the constitution of the singular universal. Žižek is one of the most avowed contributors whose opinions are in consonance with this atheist view, especially in his works *The Monstrosity of Christ* and *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, claiming that this atheist stance captures the true spirit of Christianity. Badiou takes Saint Paul as an ethical paradigm for truth from an atheist stance by calling Saint Paul's example a fiction and 'a fable' (*SP*, 5). Eric Santner and Kenneth Reinhard discuss several

⁸⁷ Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre 19: Ou Pire, 1871-72*. Unpublished transcript, December 8, 1971. Reinhard's translation. Qtd in Reinhard, *Ibid.*, p. 53.

figures in Judaism on the convergence of biopolitics and psychoanalysis without emphasising on atheism. Instead, they are in line with a contemporary position advocating that a religious vision can function as a ground for our investigation into the political and ethical issues in our ‘postsecular’ era (N, p. 133).⁸⁸ Here, I would like to emphasize that the reference to the engagement of atheist motifs in both Christianity and psychoanalysis in recent scholarly literature is less of an involvement with the aged-long debate of God’s (non)existence than an endeavour to think through the psychoanalytic stance that ‘God is unconscious.’ My critical stance is to investigate and unfold what it means for the subject *to assume ethically*, to confront actively the irreducible lack, and to take responsibility accordingly when the inconsistency of the Other is fully acknowledged.

Freud, with his sympathetic Aristotelian concern with the good, *stops short* at his comments on the commandment of neighbour love. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud states that the commandment imposes a challenging puzzle and lists various reasons against this biblical imperative. In summary, Freud argues that ‘owing to the scarcity of my love and fairness for my family and friends, I should not squander it to strangers simply because they inhabit earth;’ ‘Worse than this, the strangers might deserve my love;’ ‘Worse still, the strangers who happen to come by

⁸⁸ Eric Santner, ‘Miracles Happen: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Freud and the Matter of the Neighbor,’ *The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology*. (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005), 76-133. The page numbers of quotations from this work will be inserted in the main text.

might be evil and carry pernicious intentions towards me and my community.’⁸⁹

Where Freud stops short, Lacan proposes his own way out. He attempts to demonstrate how neighbour love supplements the death of God by unshackling and intervening in the entangled libidinal economy governed by law, the Father’s rule. Lacan’s argument centres on his interpretation of St Martin’s encounter with the beggar. The fact that the beggar is naked probably reveals that he not merely intends to demand clothes to be covered and food to be fed but also requests that ‘Saint Martin either kill him or fuck him’ (VII, 186). In other words, something ‘fundamentally evil’ (VII, 186) is manifested in the confrontation with the neighbour. Further, the core of the problem is presented as follows, ‘what is more of a neighbor to me than this heart within which is that of my *jouissance* and which I don’t dare to go near?’ (VII, 186) The overlapping of the perplexing, disturbing *jouissance* of oneself and the neighbour as a stranger blatantly marks out the fact that ‘[i]n any encounter there’s a big difference in meaning between the response of philanthropy and that of love’ (VII, 186). While philanthropy and humanitarian help may function as a complacent, secure means to keep my neighbour at arm’s length, love is far more risky and radical in the subject’s encounter with his/her neighbours. Neighbour love is truly ethical for it manages to open and to re-structure the space of the overlapping

⁸⁹ Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), p. 66-9.

zone of my *jouissance* and the foreign *jouissance* of my neighbour, and consequently reshape the intersubjective field in constituting a new neighbourhood. This capacity of genuine openness to ‘the alterity, the uncanny strangeness of the Other’ and of myself functions precisely as ‘the very locus of a universality-in-becoming.’⁹⁰

In this section, my investigation will follow Lacan’s advancing of his theorisation of the Real in the years ensuing *Seminar VII*. Indeed, it is the shifting conceptualization of the Real which ultimately leads to a new ethical paradigm. The inscrutable, monstrous, yet persistent nature of the drive leads Lacan to encircle it in terms of the Thing (*Das Ding*) with emphasis on its apparent non-verbal, anti-signifying, recalcitrant character in *Seminar VII*. As Chieza succinctly indicates, Lacan oscillates and equivocates at certain moments regarding the questions of the Primordial Real and the Real-of-the-Symbolic.⁹¹ Theoretical equivocations of this sort and Lacan’s later abandonment of pure desire as his ethical paradigm⁹² demonstrate that a full-fledged theory of the Real had not yet been forged at the moment of the *Ethics Seminar*. Retrospectively, Lacan’s conceptualization of the

⁹⁰ Eric Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig*. (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2001), p.5.

⁹¹ I have discussed Chieza’s position and my interpretation of Chieza in the previous section.

⁹² Ed Pluth observes the history of desire in Lacan’s career and points out to the disappearance not only of pure desire as an ethical model but also of the complete absence of desire as a key operative notion in Lacan’s later seminars. He says, ‘it [desire] enjoyed a steady increase in importance from seminar one to six, and reached its apotheosis in the seventh seminar, only to be humbled considerably in the very next seminar. What we see over the course of the 1960s is a continuation of this humbling, and in the after 1970s a near absence of the concept altogether.’ *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 63.

Real is an on-going process, a work-in-progress that takes years of seminars to evolve and mature. The Thing-like quality of the Real is later re-interpreted as disruptive and traumatic. Borrowing from Aristotle, in *Seminar XI*, Lacan proposes the dichotomy between *touché* and automaton to represent the dichotomy between the Real and reality, which assumes a ‘dissymmetrical,’ ‘circular’ causality without ‘reciprocity’ between the system and its ‘unassimilable’ factor (XI, 207, 253). According to Paul Verhaeghe, ‘the systematically determined chain of signifiers [...] determines what *cannot* appear in the chain [...]. From another point of view, this associative chain can only contain systematically determined series of signifiers, *on the condition that there is a gap present in the chain itself.*’⁹³ The system of automaton and the emergence of the negativity of *touché* are mutually decided. Lacan argues that the encounter with the Real is always a ‘missed encounter’ (XI, 55) for the Real indicates precisely the trauma, the disruptive element emerging at the impasse, and the stumbling block where the system fails.

With this causality in mind, what then is the Real? This is probably an issue whose potentiality will never be exhausted because Lacan’s defines the Real in terms of negativity, of what is neither the Symbolic nor the Imaginary. The effort to grasp and encircle the Real inevitably becomes an endless project. Despite this, a brief

⁹³ Paul Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender: From Subject to Drive* (New York: Other Press, 2001), p. 77.

presentation of the Lacanian Real is still in order for further discussion. How do we conceive the engendering process and functioning of the Real? How do we articulate the theoretical moment prior to symbolization without looking back at the concept of the primordial Real, which as Chieza successfully argues is a Sado-Kantian fantasy? In *Seminar XI*, when interpreting the origin of the drive, Lacan posits the intriguing myth of the lamella to emphasize on the unreal and shapeless character of the Real. In Lacan's own words, 'this lamella, this organ, whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ [...] is the libido' 'as pure life instinct,' 'immortal life,' 'irrepressible life,' 'indestructible life' (*XI*, 197-8). Libido is conceived by Lacan 'as an organ, the inhuman-human 'undead' organ without a body, the mythical presubjective "undead" life-substance' as well as 'the reminder of the life-substance which has escaped the symbolic colonization' (*N*, 167).⁹⁴ The object *a* is 'merely its representatives, its figures. The breasts [...] as an element characteristic of the mammiferous organization, the placenta for example [...] certainly represents that part of himself that the individual loses at birth and which may serve to symbolize the most profound lost object' (*XI*, 198). Lacan, with his myth of the presubjective lamella, seems to be arguing for a

⁹⁴ Slavoj Žižek, 'Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence', *The Neighbor: Three Inquires in Political Theology* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005), 134-90. Žižek likes to interpret *objet a* as organ without a body and even dedicates a whole book to this Lacanian concept of the Real in his critical engagement with Deleuze. Please see *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

material base for the Real. This myth refers to a biological fact: while non-sexual reproduction implies the principle of eternal life, sexual reproduction implies death and ‘a primordial loss which precedes the loss involved in the chain of signifiers.’⁹⁵

In other words, there is a fundamental *a priori* incompatibility between the Real and the Symbolic. With this myth, humans are situated at the same level of zoological classification of other sexually reproducing biological entities. However, the Lacanian view holds firmly that human subjectivity and sexuality would never be the outcome of a smooth development through the process of maturation, but an after-effect of symbolization, a result of the interaction with the Other and the Unconscious. That is to say, the autoerotic stimulation, genital sensation, of the human child takes on a traumatic connotation precisely because ‘from the perspective of given symbolic configurations,’ ‘jouissance is alien and unable to be named.’⁹⁶

While the instinct is animalistic in nature, the drive falls into the properly human domain. Taking fetishism as a telling example, sexuality is intimately entangled with fantasy and drive. Although sexuality is commonly associated with the beast-like qualities of mankind, it is actually the most humane one because the *driven* characteristics, through the detours of fantasy and artifice, in sexuality clearly distinguish humans from the rest of the animal kingdom from a psychoanalytic point

⁹⁵ Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender*, p. 81.

⁹⁶ Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 77.

of view.

The subject's encounter with the alterity of the Other is a moment of pivotal importance. The premature birth of a human child renders the child absolutely dependant on the adult caregivers, who feed the child's needs with the accompanying introduction of enigmatic messages invested with their sexual desires.⁹⁷ On the road to the construction of subjectivity and sexuality, Otherness is installed through the superimposition of two lacks, the subject's lack and the lack of the Other. Jean Laplanche interprets this superimposition of two lacks in the following words—'internal alienness' is 'held in place by external alien-ness; external alien-ness [is], in turn, held in place by the enigmatic relation of the other to his own internal alien.'⁹⁸ In Lacan's words, '[a] lack is encountered by the subject in the Other;' '[i]n the intervals of the discourse of the Other, there emerges [...] something that is radically mappable, namely, *He is saying this to me, but what does he want?*' (XI, 214)

In the attempt to decipher the mysteries of the Other's desire, the child resorts to incessant 'whys', i.e. 'all the child's whys reveal not so much an avidity for the reason of things, as a testing of the adult, a *Why are you telling me this?*' (XI, 214) Facing

⁹⁷ As Jean Laplanche points out, 'women unconsciously and sexually cathect the breast, which appear to be natural organ for lactation.' The situation is 'an encounter between an individual whose psycho-somatic structures are situated predominantly at the level of need, and signifiers emanating from an adult. Those signifiers pertain to the satisfaction of the child's need [...] and those other messages are sexual [...] I refer to them as the sources objects of drives.' *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, trans. David Macey (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 126, 130.

⁹⁸ Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness*, ed. John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 80.

the profoundly ambiguous status of the Other's desire, the subject gets agitated, 'ex-cited' by these enigmatic signifiers, and embarks on the 'never-ceasing work of symbolization and failure at symbolization, translation and failure of translations, that constitutes [...] signifying stress' (N, 91-2).

The underlying mechanism for handling the signifying stress is the formation of fantasy in answering in the questions relating to *Che Vuoi*.⁹⁹ In this light, fantasy can be viewed as the means for the organisation of *jouissance* or the process of metabolising the signifying stress, a construction based on the void, encircling the remainder at the fissures and failures of discourse. In a single move, fantasy is a defensive manoeuvre to both avoid and contain the traumatic and disruptive Real. Lacan's formula for fantasy is $\$ \langle \rangle a$, read as the barred subject's correlation to *objet a*, the gap and surplus of the discourse, the remainder and reminder of the Real. The word 'correlation' is deliberately chosen to represent the fact that fantasy is not the product of imagination nor is it constructed by a transcendental subject or ego entity but rather is 'the kernel of the subject's being' (EYS, 162, original emphasis). Subjectivity itself is constructed through fantasy; one's fundamental fantasy is that of being *par excellence*. Consequently, the subject's encounter with his own fantasy

⁹⁹ Lacan devises the graph of desire in order to explain the correlation between desire, signifier, voice, and fantasy formation with the question of *Che Vuoi*. See 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious', *Écrits: A Selection*, trans by Alan Sheridan (London: W.W. Norton, 1977), 292-325.

causes a disappearance of the (conscious) subject/ego. Žižek describes this existential drama of subjective fading as follows: '[t]he subject can confront this extimate kernel [fantasy] only at the price of his temporary *aphanisis*' (EYS, 162).¹⁰⁰

This process accurately describes the fact that the traversal of fantasy leads to the subject's existential dissolution, subjective destitution. By the end of *Seminar XI*, Lacan proposes the traversal of fundamental fantasy as his new ethical paragon for psychoanalysis. Without the support of *the subject supposed to know* to guarantee the consistency of the Other and to maintain the fantasy framework in which the subject dwells, 'the permanent liquidation of that deception,' sustained by transference, is effected and the 'crossing plane of identification is possible' (XI, 267, 273). Lacan mentions a new formulation for the end of analysis, 'after the mapping of the subject in relation to the *a*, the experience of the fundamental phantasy becomes the drive' (XI, 273). Instead of clinging to certain identities, the subject now comes to assume the nothingness of the drive, which opens the possibility of further identifying with his self-invented *sinthome* as his peculiar way of drive organisation. After *Seminar XI*, Lacan continued his search for the model for subjectivity by/after the end of analysis. Lacan, in the final stages of his career,

¹⁰⁰ There is confusion in Žižek's equivocation between the ego and the subject, as Pluth points out. Žižek uses the term subject 'in traditional sense to refer to a conscious reflecting individual, and he also uses the term *subject* to refer to the fantasy itself: the fantasy is the truth if the subject, it is what the subject really is.' *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 85.

inspired by Joyce, ventured into the extended account of the conceptualisation of *sinthome*.

It is of vital importance to bear in mind that is the ‘radical ambiguity of *objet petit a* in Lacan, which stands simultaneously for the imaginary fantasmatic lure/screen and for that which this lure is obfuscating, for the void behind the lure’ (N, 177). *Objet a* thus represents (1) the object framed in fantasy as the matheme $\$ \langle \rangle a$, and (2) the void, the nothingness of the Real stripped of the fantasy. In other words, *objet a* signifies both the nothingness of the Real and the semblant disguising this nothingness.¹⁰¹ With this usage, in fantasy, the subject maintains a relation with *objet a*. On traversing the fundamental fantasy, the subject equates *objet a*, the void, and the nothingness. Fortunately, this ambiguity is not extremely difficult to clarify with a careful reading of the context. When necessary, my own view will be supplied accordingly.

At the collective, cultural level, fantasy functions to consolidate the rule of law and dominant ideology, including the inherent antagonism of society by holding its subjects in the fantasmatic thrall of superegoic enjoyment. Later in this project, in the reading of ‘Cyclops,’ I will demonstrate how Joyce describes Dubliners of his time—they turned to various kinds of ludicrous fantasies, indulging in symptomatic

¹⁰¹ Lacan dedicates the entire *Seminar XVIII: On the Discourse which is Not a Semblant* to advance and theoretically clarify the issue on semblant.

nationalism for consolation when finding themselves beset by imperial invasion and humiliation and enduring continuous frustration within the Symbolic project of Irish Nationalism. I will also argue how Joyce accomplishes his literary work by using the symptoms in the early twentieth century, laying bare the moments when *objet a* is encapsulated in or stripped off fantasy.

By now, it should be clear that human subjectivity and sexuality are constructed through the correlated acquisition of language, installation of the Symbolic, and the organisation of *jouissance*. The same structural mechanism applies to the institution of law in general. In his extended study on *Homo Sacer*, Giorgio Agamben highlights the fact that the operation of power always works ‘at the intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical’ levels. According to Agamben, ‘the inclusion of bare life in the political realm constitutes the original—if concealed—nucleus of sovereign power. *It can even be said that the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.*¹⁰² Carl Schmitt’s works *Political Theology* (1922) and *The Concept of the Political* (1932) have become key references when examining the law at its origin and at the moment of the state of emergency. Schmitt argues that the essence of the politics is centred on the distinction between the friend and enemy, and ‘the political enemy need not be

¹⁰² Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans, Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), p. 6. Original emphasis.

morally evil or aesthetically ugly' nor does it need to be 'an economic competitor.'¹⁰³

The demarcation between friend and enemy and the declaration of war against certain nations or groups of people therefore do not necessarily rely on necessity or logical reasoning but on the contingent decision by the God-like sovereign. For Schmitt, the sovereign power implies that the modern politics of the state is a secularisation of theology. The sovereign is a borderline concept functioning at the limit of law. Just as God performs miracles as a deviation from the law of nature, so the sovereign executes the power to suspend the law in the state of emergency (*N*, 14).

The sovereign is positioned at the point of 'inclusive exclusion,' located in 'the zone of indistinction' between the inside and outside of law because the sovereign's rule 'applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it.'¹⁰⁴ The normal functioning of positive law does not apply to chaos. The locus of normal order and the condition for regulation are situated between law and chaos, where the sovereign is empowered to establish, sustain, or suspend a law.¹⁰⁵ It is crucial to highlight that the sovereign's decision to declare a state of emergency is not so much an expression of the capriciousness of the will of 'a subject hierarchically superior to all,' but rather a structural necessity of inscribing exteriority into the body

¹⁰³ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1996), p 26-7.

¹⁰⁴ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 7, 6, 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

of law ‘that animates and gives it meaning’ and consistency.¹⁰⁶ At the structural level, there is something lawless at the limit and foundation of the law, which is epitomised by the inclusive exclusion of sovereignty. In modern(ist) classic examples of this sort such as *The Trial* and *The Castle*, Kafka’s protagonist is thrown into the labyrinth of modern bureaucracy at the empirical level. The character’s situation may be interpreted at the structural level as a confrontation with the law’s validity over its efficacy, an encounter with legality’s impotence in its obscene underside of superegoic enjoyment. This is how a law appears to be ‘*in force without significance*.’¹⁰⁷ In religious terms, in a well-known letter to his friend Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem interprets Kafka’s world as ‘a state in which revelation appears to be without meaning, in which it still asserts itself, in which it has validity but no significance [...] even though it is reduced to the zero point of its own content.’¹⁰⁸ In the state of emergency, the sovereign’s rule conspicuously reveals the excess of authority over efficacy and of validity over meaning.

Furthermore, Agamben’s contribution resides largely in drawing out the topological localisation of the sovereign as well as in marking out its counterpart *homo sacer* in the parallel positioning of the structure. In ancient Roman texts,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 51. Original emphasis.

¹⁰⁸ Gershom Scholem, *The Correspondence of Walther Benjamin, 1932-1940*, trans. Gary Smith and Andre Lefevre (New York: Schocken, 1989), p. 142.

homo sacer is the figure who can be murdered without punishment and cannot be included as an object of sacrifice either. Doubly excluded from the divine and secular law, *homo sacer* is thus doubly captured, presenting ‘the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban.’¹⁰⁹ Both situated at the limit zone of indistinction between the inside and outside of law, the sovereign and *homo sacer* are two symmetrical figures. The former is the actor of law in its pure form, pure ban; the latter embodies the bearer of this originary violence and the power of law. However, this symmetry should be understood in structural terms. That is, ‘the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially *homininess sacri*, and *homo sacer* is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns.’¹¹⁰ Modernity marks an era in which biopolitics expands at the very origin of law, ranging from the extreme example of the concentration camp to the hedonistic ways of life in our contemporary permissive society.¹¹¹ Biopolitics becomes the rule and everybody potentially becomes *homo sacer*. Precisely, ‘on the level of [symbolic] law, we are treated as citizens, legal subjects, while on the level of its obscene superego supplement, of this empty unconditional law, we are treated as *Homo Sacer*’ (WD, 32).

On reading Agamben through a psychoanalytic lens, the biopolitical aspect

¹⁰⁹ Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 82-3.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119-89. Cases of modern biopolitics include disciplinary medical measures on sexuality and sanity studied by Foucault, the politicization of death in the case of overcoma, and so on. See also Žižek’s account on the permissive society in *The Neighbor*.

belongs to the domain of the drive and the law's superegoic rule. The sovereign occupies the same position of the primal father in the Freudian myth, the father who sets the limit of the law for the sons while exempting himself from stricture and restriction. From the perspective of the sons, whilst subjected to the law and castration, the male subjects (sons) remain in awe of the Father and dream of becoming the exceptional sovereign figure, the Father, who enjoys complete *jouissance*. To put it succinctly, the law reigns with its inherent transgression.

In this regard, the superego in psychoanalysis does not represent the symbolic agency that interpellates our social identities and mandates. Rather, the superego represents the surplus of 'the signifying stress left over' from symbolic interpellation (N, 103). Fantasy is the 'congealed excitation' or idiosyncratic (dis)tortion of the drive formation which constitutes the thing-like strangeness of a being, i.e. '*the matter or materiality at the heart of the neighbor*' (N, 104, original emphasis). While negativity represents the nothingness of the Real, materiality points to the psychosomatic frontier, implying a *creaturely* density induced by the signifying stress, which is derived from exposure to the enigma of the Other's desire, a meta-juridical dimension of the law. Materiality marks the embodiment of peculiar drive organisation through the construction of fantasy in response to the 'undeading'¹¹²

¹¹² Santner, *Psychotheology*, p. 43.

agitation of the signifying stress. Materiality takes on the *creaturely, inhuman, undead, thing-like uncanny quality*, as it is built around the void of symbolic discourse. Materiality points to the surplus in excess of meanings and positive traits or social identities, which are basically the signified effect of symbolization.¹¹³

Inhumanity and undeadness actually describe the strangeness at the core of our being and that in the neighbor figure. The negative prefixes, ‘in’ and ‘un’ indicate the monstrous dimension of the internal excess of subjectivity.¹¹⁴

What we find indigestible or unbearable in our daily encounter with the neighbour is this monstrous Thing, the Other in his mode of irreducible singularity, which defies symbolization. In this light, as a figure doubly excluded from secular and divine regulations and as an archetypal bearer of sovereign violence and power, *homo sacer* is reduced to the ‘zero-degree of social existence’ (N, 100) in the zone between two deaths. *Homo sacer* literally becomes ‘the direct embodiment of signifying stress’ (N, 100). I would like to highlight that, precisely because of this embodiment, *homo sacer assumes the status of the neighbour at the core of jouissance*. The faceless presence of the *Muselmann* in the concentration camp is

¹¹³ In his study on the Jewish thinker Franz Rosenzweig, Santner explains the difference between personality and character. In Rosenzweig’s language, the former represents the positive traits or identities subjected to symbolic exchange and substitution following the logic of B=A; the latter denotes the metaethical dimension of the self, the excess of one’s peculiar drive density, which refuses substitution, following the logic of B=B. Ibid., p. 71-81.

¹¹⁴ As Žižek puts it, ‘the “undead” are neither alive nor dead; they are the monstrous “living dead”’. The same goes for inhuman, ‘‘He is not human’’ is not the same as ‘‘he is inhuman.’’ He is not human means he is external to humanity [...] while ‘‘he is inhuman’’ means [...] he is marked by a terrifying excess’ (N, 159).

the emblematic figure of the neighbour reduced to *homo sacer*, exemplifying the subaltern in the most drastic condition. Deprived of social identities, symbolic positions and human dignity, *Muselmann* gives expression to the terrifying inhumanity, uncanny materiality, and creaturely existence at the receiving end of sovereign power, at the originary limit of law. Considering the faceless nature of the *Muselmann* and fully endorsing the psychoanalytic weight of the shapeless character of *jouissance*, Žižek strongly critiques the Levinasian ethical edifice based on the subject's responsibility to the demand made from the Other's face, which functions as an ultimate non-linguistic reference for human authenticity (*N*, 142-51). From the vantage point of psychoanalysis,¹¹⁵ Levinas is far from radical because he fails to recognize that the face is always already 'a fetish', a fantasmatic lure, and a gentrification of 'the raw reality of flesh', a layer over of the terrifying excess of the Real (*N*, 146). As Žižek points out, the survivor of the *Shoah* directly inhabits the abyss of catastrophe without a minimal safe distance to maintain the Symbolic

¹¹⁵ I would like to point out that not everyone holds that there is radical incompatibility between Levinas and Lacan. For instance, Critchley poses an alternative view. He takes into consideration that both Lacan and Levinas take seriously, in their ethical projects, the impact of the subject which the impossible demand the Other imposes. Critchley, therefore, provides a 'psychoanalytically reconceived account of the Levinasian ethical subject' and argues for a 'homology between Lacan and Levinas.' See 'On the Ethics of Alain Badiou', in *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 219. Regarding the critical discrepancy on the role played by the face, Ruti puts it as follows: 'if the post-Levinasian ethics tends to emphasize the ethical call of the face, the post-Lacanian ethics tends to stress the terror-inducing strangeness of the face.' Ruti, p. 189. However, Ruti thinks that the post-Lacanian skepticism to Levinas is 'partially mistaken' and the Levinasian face is more than 'an imaginary lure' as Žižek points out. She cites Levinas to make her point. Levinas defines a face as 'a being beyond all attributes' and as 'the very identity of being', which 'manifests itself in it in terms of itself, without a concept' (Qtd in Ruti, p. 191). In this light, the Levinasian face points towards singularity and the Real dimension beyond the Imaginary.

framework, which renders the *Muselmann* a tragic witness, one whose testimony is impossible to present in front of the Other in an effective Symbolic field (*N*, 161). To remedy this predicament, articulating from the Lacanian perspective, Žižek proposes acknowledging the fact that ‘there is no Other.’ Consequently, the ethical avenue out of this modern horror encapsulated in the concentration camp and embodied in the *Muselmann* moves from *homo sacer* to the neighbour (*WD*, 112-34). It is vital to release *homo sacer* from the limit zone of indistinction by reaching out to them in neighbour love.

In Judeo-Christian tradition, what is ethical is the ‘obligation to endure the proximity of the Other in their “moments of jouissance,” the demonic and undying singularity.’¹¹⁶ Neighbour love is an ethical command that can be used to confront and disentangle the uncanny inhumanity in the Other, to unleash the congealed energy in fantasmatic schema at the subjective and intersubjective levels, and to convert this excess to life in a new way of being together. According to Santner, the Judeo-Christian ethical project goes beyond the superego, aiming at ‘a deanimation of undeadness’¹¹⁷ and an ‘unplugging’ which need ‘not signify a radical break with social relations, with the rule of a community’s law’ but ‘a suspension of the undying, “undead” supplement of the law: a “sabbatical” interruption not of work *per se* but

¹¹⁶ Santner, *Psychotheology*, p. 82.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

of a surplus, *fantasmatic labor* at the core of the sovereign relation.¹¹⁸

In his famous essay, ‘On the Concept of History’, Walter Benjamin presents an allegory in which the puppet called historical materialism is to win the chess games only ‘if it enlists the service of theology.’¹¹⁹ The idea recurrently presented in Benjamin’s work is that theological service is the messianic motif in Judaism. Benjamin elaborates his understanding of messianism in his reading of Kafka, arguing that the hunchback, a cringe figure, will disappear ‘with the coming of Messiah, who (a great rabbi once said) will not wish to change the world by force but will merely make a slight adjustment in it.’¹²⁰ What might this slight adjustment, this messianic gesture, mean? Through a Lacanian lens, Santner creatively interprets the materiality of historical materialism in terms of the symptomatic cringe induced by the signifying stress. He further argues that messianism works to intervene in the uncanny materiality, pointing out that, for Benjamin, ‘a miracle signals not the state of exception, but rather its suspension, an intervention into this peculiar topological knot—the outlaw dimension internal to law—that serves to sustain the symbolic function of sovereignty’ (*N*, 103). How could a miracle work in Benjamin’s messianic thinking? Both Santner and Agamben evoke the intelligibility or

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, ‘On the Concept of History’, trans, Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writing, vol 4, 1938-40* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 389.

¹²⁰ Walter Benjamin, ‘Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death’, Trans by Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writing, vol 2, 1927-34* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 811.

recognisability of revolutionary timing through Benjamin's concept of the now time and the dialectical image.¹²¹ Benjamin's famous passage deserves to be cited at full length, and later I will refer back to this fragment in commenting on the manifestation of neighbour love in *Ulysses*:

Each now is the now of a particular knowability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time [...] It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectic at a standstill, For while the relation of the present to the past is temporal, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but imagistic.¹²²

Santner argues that the missed opportunity for revolutionary intervention or action for neighbour love might lead to collective symptoms such as the furious outburst of violence in the *Kristallnacht* programmes.¹²³ In other words, the collective symptoms are 'not so much forgotten deeds, but rather forgotten failures to act', 'failures to suspend the force of the social bond' of the dominant ideology (*N*, 89). A dialectical image takes on the messianic tincture when the missed opportunity for revolution and neighbour love is recognised and rendered legible and the ethical action fully assumed.

In this light, neighbour love aiming at a suspension of law at the point of exception manifests a radical structural difference and a huge distance from the

¹²¹ For the reference of Santner, please see his article in *Neighbor*, 83-90. Also see Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 138-45.

¹²² Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Intro. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 463.

¹²³ Santner refers to Žižek's comments on *Kristallnacht* (*WD*, 23).

dominant trend of cultural politics in our contemporary critical terrain, namely multiculturalism and the celebration of plurality and differences in identity politics. While the latter functions in the Symbolic domain of the community's law, participating in the proliferation of signifiers, with limited negotiation at the level of meaning making and representation, the former attempts to disrupt the law from its underside, attempting to work through transgressive, fantasmatic supplementation. Instead of negotiating with the discursive hegemony of *signification* as exemplified in multiculturalism, Santner interprets the messianic project in the Judaism of the first third of the last century as a project aimed towards a miraculous unbinding of the *signifying stress*. If we take symptom or symptomatic cringing as 'a locus of some sort of disorganization' of the drive, then the ethical project of neighbour love can be viewed in a 'reflexive sense as a disorganization of a disorganization' (N, 114). To pose a radical challenge to the status quo, the symptomatic disorganization of law cannot be left intact.

V.

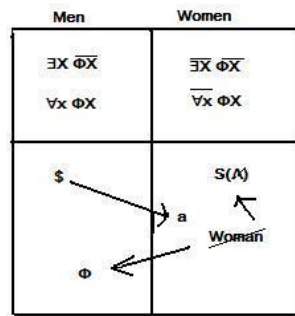


Figure 1

As early as in *Seminar XI*, Lacan adumbrated a crucial distinction between the phallus and *objet a*: '[t]he *objet a* is something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ. This serves as a symbol of lack, that is to say, of the phallus, not as such, but in so far as it is lacking' (XI, 103). Upon closer scrutiny, Lacan seems to suggest *objet a* is an algebraic expression that represents 'the ever-impossible representation of a radical lack',¹²⁴ a primordial one *prior to* the phallus, which comes to represent the radical lack. Paul Verhaeghe fully acknowledges the implication of this remark, underscoring that it contains something outside/beyond sexuality. Sexualisation and gender formation in terms of 'phallicization' within the Imaginary and the Symbolic dimensions function as a 'defensive elaboration' retroactively interpreting the first radical lack, the primordial loss.¹²⁵ In the classic Oedipal scenario, the overwhelming and incomprehensible desire of the (M)other is interpreted in the phallic terms as the name(s) of the Father

¹²⁴ Paul Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender*, p. 80.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80, 129.

and ‘the impossibility of *jouissance*’ is replaced by ‘the prohibition of enjoyment.’¹²⁶

In this light, the Lacanian concept of symbolic castration is far from a paternal threat to the child’s access to *jouissance* but creates the possibility of pleasure. The sense of never having enough *jouissance* ‘has to do with the *jouissance* that is supposed to lie beyond the phallic pleasure,’ which is ‘asexual,’ ‘situated outside the Other of the signifier, more exactly in the place where the Other is not whole.’¹²⁷ Lacan terms this non-phallic *jouissance* as the Other *jouissance*, the psychotic *jouissance*, the *jouissance* of the being or that of the Other. The Other *jouissance* represents the after effect of the insufficiency left by the Other of the signifier, which tries to establish a totalising effect by means of the One of the phallic signifier. In Lacanian terms, the Other *jouissance* ‘ex-sists within phallic *jouissance*.’¹²⁸ In Lacan’s later elaboration of sexuation, the Other *jouissance* is synonymous with the feminine *jouissance*, whose ‘ex-sistence’ we shall explore in this section.

The lack or loss plays an indispensable, constitutive role in Lacan’s conceptualisation of subjectivity. Lacan’s theory evolves through the years without displacing the previous one but reworking it in a retroactive manner.¹²⁹ Around the time of *Seminar XI*, there is the dialectic between the Real as *touché* and the

¹²⁶ Paul Verhaeghe, ‘Enjoyment and Impossibility: Lacan’s Revision of the Oedipus Complex, in Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg (eds.), *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 37-8.

¹²⁷ Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender*, p. 102.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

Imaginary and the Symbolic together as automaton. By the time of *Seminar XX*, this dichotomy develops and transforms as the opposition between ‘a phallic jouissance and a jouissance of the body.’¹³⁰ In other words, in Lacan’s theorisation of sexuation, ‘[t]he impossible relation between the subject and its drive reappears in the impossible relation between a man and a woman on the one hand, and the not-whole part of woman on the other.’¹³¹

Lacanian tend to distance themselves from the emphasis on gender identities or gender politics prevalent in academia. First, the most fundamental sexual difference is built into subjectivity itself and cannot be reduced merely to the symbolic construction of gender identities. As Žižek puts it, ‘[s]exual difference is thus ultimately not the difference between the sexes, but the difference which cuts across the very heart of identity of each sex, stigmatizing it with the mark of impossibility’ (*LN*, 760). Contrary to Judith Butler’s view, Žižek remarks,

[T]here is indeed ‘gender trouble,’ but not in Judith Butler’s sense: the point is not only that the identities of each sex is not clearly established, neither socially nor symbolically or biologically—it is not only that sexual identity is a symbolic form imposed onto a fluid and polymorphous body which never fits the ideal—the ‘trouble’ is rather that this ideal itself is inconsistent, making a constitutive impossibility. Sexual difference is not simply particular difference subordinated to the universality of human genus/gender, but has a stronger status inscribed in the

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 66. In Lacan’s text and Lacanians’ works, the *jouissance* of the body is related or even synonymous with the Other *jouissance*, i.e. feminine *jouissance*. In the following exposition and discussion, these terms may be applied interchangeably.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 132. Verhaeghe here follows Bruce Fink’s translation of *Seminar XX*, translating ‘*pas toute*’ as ‘not-whole’. As will be shown later, some Lacanians use ‘not-whole’ while others prefer ‘not-all’ to designate the anti-totalization feminine logic that Lacan elaborates in *Encore* without substantial difference in meaning.

very universality itself: a difference which is the constitutive feature of the universal species itself, and which, paradoxically for this reason, precedes (logically/conceptually) the two terms it differentiates between: ‘perhaps, the difference which keeps apart one [sex] from the other belongs neither to the one nor to the other’ (*LN*, 759).

Moreover, Lacanians hold skepticism toward the plurality of sexes as a symbolic construct. For instance, Miguel Bassols argues against the prevailing contemporary grain, ruthlessly repudiating the radical potential of the promotion of ‘the sexual continuum’ or the ‘infinite multiplication’ of sexes and gender-related identities and considers such formulation to be nothing more than ‘a “morphing” of the phallus’, i.e. ‘the function of phallus in its multiple transformations, conversion of the organ into a signifier by its concealment in so many other “simulacra.”’¹³² Bassols contends that the ‘drag queens’ and ‘drag kings’ are nothing more than caricatures in phallic morphing.¹³³ Alexander Stevens even detects the ‘adaptive’ tendency of ego psychology that Lacan once severely attacked in identity politics.¹³⁴ The whole process of the democratic discursive debates and ‘choice of a collectivizing identity’ amounts to a communitarian demand for the subject to be adaptive to reality.¹³⁵ The succinct explanation of the logic underlying identity politics is that ‘the community-making identification’ includes just another category, be it gender or sex

¹³² Miquel Bassols, ‘The (a) Sexed Object’, *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 11* (Place: publisher, 2003), 131-9, at p. 131 and 133.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹³⁴ Alexandre Stevens, ‘Love and Sex Beyond Identifications’, in Véronique Voruz and Bogdan Wolf (eds.), *The Later Lacan: An Introduction* (Albany, NY: Suny Press, 2007), p. 210-21.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

in plural, for further proliferation along with other signifiers of contention, such as ‘Puerto Ricans, blacks, Jews, steelworkers unions, and so on’, as showcased in the United States.¹³⁶ These categories or signifiers for discursive contention constitute ‘communitarian demand[s],’ requesting visibility, rights, and so on, serving ‘as lobbies, as pressure groups in the same way.’¹³⁷ Under the banner of identity politics, Stevens exposes gender politics’ ‘fundamentally adaptive’ logic because all the discursive efforts procure nothing more than the fact that ‘now one can choose one’s Other before adapting oneself to.’¹³⁸ It would be unwise to deny entirely the cultural change effected through the discursive practice and contention at the representational levels. However, the trend of gender politics harbours a position inherently in enmity with Lacanian psychoanalysis because it stands/stops at the threshold of the Real in its focus on participating and competing cravingly at the Symbolic and the Imaginary levels in manufacturing more signifiers, thereby contributing to the endless morphing process of the phallus. In clear contrast, Lacan’s sexuation does not concern biological organs or gender identities but rather represents the masculine and feminine structures as ‘psychosexual position[s],’ ‘two jouissances,’ ‘women and men are “in” the symbolic differently,’ with ‘a different relation to the Other.’¹³⁹ That is

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 213.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 213.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 213.

¹³⁹ Verhaeghe, *Beyond Gender*, p. 101; Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Écrits Closely* (Minneapolis MN: Minnesota University Press, 2004), p.158; Suzan Bernard, ‘Tongues of Angels:

to say, sexuation attempts to arrive at the heart of the problem of the subject's structural positioning in the entwinement between the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary.

While Lacan's early theorisation of sexuality reflects on the Symbolic inscription, by which the masculine subject and the feminine subject are respectively considered 'to have' or 'to be' the phallus, Lacan's later theorisation is deployed at the Real level, through the different positions that the masculine and feminine subjects take with regard to the phallic function ΦX . The upper part of the table of sexuation consists of four formulae, which consist of the contradictions between universal statement ($\forall X \Phi X$) and existential exception ($\exists X \neg \Phi X$) by way of negation. The male psychosexual position is structured around the dialectic between totality and exception. Specifically, all of the subjects that are taken to be male fall into the same category by submitting entirely to the phallic function on condition that there is at least one who is not subjected to the phallic function (XX, 79). The inclusive exception represents precisely the father function in the Freudian myth, the primal father whose unlimited *jouissance* and name circumscribe the boundary for male subjects. The male structure follows the 'democratic principle *par excellence*' since every man is 'equally' '*represented and limited by a single universal law*' of exception

Feminine Structure and Other Jouissance', in Suzan Bernard and Bruce Fink (eds.), *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 172.

(N, 52). An obvious, structural parallel between Schmitt's political theology and the male subject can easily be detected. The sovereign, like the primal father, is situated exactly at the margins of his regime where he regulates with exemption. As Kenneth Reinhard brilliantly discerns, the subjective decision on the male part is '*the choice not to choose*' (N, 56), for he, on the one hand accepts the phallic law of castration, while, on the other, continues fantasizing about an exceptional position free of castration. With 'a conditional universal,' 'a particular (particularized) universal particular'¹⁴⁰ based on exception as its 'end-point' (XX, 80), the primal father is arguably the fundamental fantasy of the male subject in support of the functioning of law.

In the lower part of the table of sexuation, Lacan further represents the masculine subject by \$, propped by Φ as a signifier, also incarnated in S1. How does this barred subject \$ desire? Lacan argues that the male subject is 'unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of this desire' (XX, 80), through fantasy \$ \leftrightarrow a. Rather than a meeting between two subjects, the relationship between the self and the Other is deployed in the loop of the fantasy on the part of one party. In Lacan's words, '[t]he act of love is the male's polymorphous perversion' (XX, 72). This closed circuit of fantasy in the phallic

¹⁴⁰ Alenka Župančič, 'The Case of the Perforated Sheet' *Sexuation* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 285.

jouissance on the side of man leads Lacan to describe the mechanism of male desire as ‘the impotence of masturbation’ and ‘the *jouissance* of the idiot’ (XX, 81). It is dubbed idiotic because ‘[t]he man enjoys through the organ and at the same time the organ enjoys all by itself,’ which makes ‘the *jouissance* of the One’ and poses ‘an obstacle for access to the Other.’¹⁴¹ The One always turns back to itself, ‘as idiotic as speaking to oneself.’¹⁴² This reflects one of the reasons why Lacan proposes the famous dictum that ‘there is no sexual relation(ship).’

Is there a possibility to transcend desire’s confining circuit of fantasy and attain the dimension of existence and hence the possibility for a subject-to-subject relationship? Commenting on Kierkegaard’s *Diary of a Seducer*, Lacan identifies that ‘by castrating himself, by giving up love,’ Kierkegaard is aiming at ‘this desire for a good at one remove, a good that is not caused by a little *a*’ (XX, 77). Does Kierkegaard succeed in his endeavour or is his manoeuvre simply a fantasy of transcendence? Lacan responds with an ambiguous ‘perhaps’, more in the direction of a positive attitude because he remarks, ‘why not? Regina too existed [...] perhaps it was through Regina that he attained that dimension [of existence]’ (XX, 73). What stimulates me to take this point further lies less in judging Kierkegaard’s success or failure than in highlighting that the dimension of existence beyond desire and sex

¹⁴¹ Pierre Naveau, ‘Man’s Approach to Woman: A Logical Pathway’, *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 11* (Place: publisher, 2003), pp. 167-75, at p. 174.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 174.

seems to hover over Lacan during the course of his theorisation of sexuation and conceptualisation of love. As we shall see later, this dimension of existence captured and maintained in the subject-to-subject relationship is what Lacan seems to think love is aiming at.

Regarding the female side of sexuation, Lacan presents his famous ‘not-whole’ or ‘not-all’ logic.¹⁴³ The subject under the banner of woman is qualified by the negation of the universal statement, rendering woman as ‘not-whole.’ What does not wholly being situated in the phallic function mean? It represents the fact that without a conditional exception as a limit to delineate a whole, to render woman as a closed set, a totalised category does not exist. In other words, there is no name (of the Mother or of Woman) or a boundary concept to (re)present woman as unified category of whole. This underlies Lacan’s famous or notorious proverb, ‘~~Woman~~ doesn’t exist.’ In his own words, ‘Woman can only be written with a bar through it. There is no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital W indicating the universal. There’s no such thing as Woman because in her essence [...] she is not-whole’ (XX, 72-3). This notion of the barred woman, I think, should be thought together with the notion of the barred subject. As Copjec points out, ‘the proposal that there is no

¹⁴³ ‘Pas tout(e)’ is translated by Bruce Fink in his rendition of *Seminar XX* as ‘not-whole.’ As far as I can tell, Lacanians utilize ‘not-whole’ or ‘not-all’ as a choice of personal tastes in translation without much conceptual difference. ‘Not-whole’ or ‘not-all’ designates the female logic of a system or a set without totalisation.

whole, no “all” of a woman, or that she is not One, is fundamentally an answer not just to the question of feminine being, but to *being as such*. It is not only feminine being, but being in general that resists being assembled into a whole.¹⁴⁴ In this light, the *Encore* seminar is not merely Lacan’s revisiting of Freud’s theorisation of feminine sexuality but rather his rethinking of the question of being, subjectivity, and ethics in general. The critical task in the present project is therefore partly to distil the intimate relation between the ethical and the feminine position in Lacan’s thinking, which I shall explore shortly.

Given that woman cannot be counted as a whole, how would woman under the signifier ‘woman’ constitute herself and participate in the set named woman? In *Seminar XXI: Les Non-dupes Errent*, Lacan further elucidates this subject: ‘there is no such thing as the Woman, which is, namely that there are only [...] different ones, and in some way, [they enter] *one by one*, and that all that is [...] dominated by the privileged function of this, nonetheless, that there isn’t one to represent the statement that interdicts, namely the absolutely no.’¹⁴⁵ There is no democratic principle of equality between women; each woman exists in her own *singularity*; each stands next to another in an endless series without contributing to a totality but to an infinite, open set under the banner of woman. This results in another form of non-relation. Pierre

¹⁴⁴ Copjec, *Imagine There is No Woman*, p. 6, emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵ *Seminar XXI*, unpublished transcript May 14, 1974. I follow Reinhard’s translation (*N*, 58).

Naveau accurately discerns, each woman is ‘all alone;’ ‘[t]here is an unbridgeable gulf between the one and the other;’ ‘[t]he non-relation is not only the mark of sex, it is also the mark of the Other sex, the feminine sex.’¹⁴⁶

The not-whole concept of woman has structural consequences in the theorisation of feminine *jouissance*. Succinctly, ‘[w]hile man is coupled to the Other via object a, woman is “twice” related to the Other—coupled via the phallus and ‘tripled’ via S(the barred A), the signifier of the lack of the Other.’¹⁴⁷ This triple coupling to the Other on the female part betrays another reason underpinning the sexual non-relation since a man becomes ‘the means for a woman to reach this Other *jouissance*, the *jouissance* beyond [the phallus], the one which separates her from him, which makes her not-all his, which means that she ends up being alone.’¹⁴⁸ In capturing the female mechanism, Lacan proposes an Other *jouissance*, a feminine *jouissance* that is ‘a supplementary *jouissance* compared to what phallic function designates by way of *jouissance*’ (XX, 73). This Other *jouissance* apparently signals a *jouissance beyond* the phallus, ‘a *jouissance* that belongs to that part of the Other that is not covered by the fantasy of the “One”’—that is, the fantasy is sustained ‘in the repetitive circuit of drive’ by the positing of the phallic exception.¹⁴⁹ In *Seminar XX*, Lacan ventures to

¹⁴⁶ Naveau, p. 172, 173.

¹⁴⁷ Bernard, p. 172.

¹⁴⁸ Naveau, p. 173.

¹⁴⁹ Bernard, p. 172.

develop the Other/feminine *jouissance* further by terming it the *en-corps*, an ‘enjoying substance’ which insists the body is beyond its sexual being (XX, 23).

The Other *jouissance* beyond the phallic one poses a theoretical challenge, spawning critical puzzlement and vigorous debates. Bruce Fink¹⁵⁰ once tried to unpack the reasoning not without perplexity:

All the *jouissance* that do *exist* are phallic (in order to exist, according to Lacan, something must be articulable within our signifying system determined by the phallic signifier); but that does not mean there cannot be some *jouissance* that are non phallic. It is just that they do not exist; instead, they *ex-sist*. The Other *jouissance* can only *exi-sist*, it cannot exist, for to exist it would have to be spoken, articulated symbolized. [...] the other *jouissance* must be ineffable [...] mystic [...] inarticulable.¹⁵¹

At certain points in *Seminar XX*, Lacan seems to gesture towards a line of reasoning supportive of this *ex-sistence* of the Other/feminine *jouissance*, suggesting that it can only be captured in experience when he refers to the ecstasy of Mother Teresa and the intimate link between woman and one of God’s faces (XX, 76-7). However, he also makes it enormously clear and states that ‘[i]t is not because she is not-wholly in the phallic function that she is not there at all, she is *not* not at all there. She is there in full. But there is something more’ (XX, 74). In order to solve this paradox or even contradiction, let us turn to Lacan’s formulation of the double negation in the

¹⁵⁰ Bruce Fink is only one of the illustrated figures who argue for the traditional, standard view of the feminine *jouissance* as that beyond or outside the phallic one. On the other side, Žižek, Chieza, and Bernard hold the position that there is no outside and not-all needs not to be conceived as a mystic, inarticulable beyond.

¹⁵¹ Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Écrits Closely* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 2004), p.161-2.

existential statement of the feminine subject.

If the masculine structure is built upon the dialectic of totality and exception as limit, the female logic is centred on not-all or not-whole and infinity. The notion of infinity carries immense importance in Lacan's understanding of feminine *jouissance* and demands further elucidation. It would amount to a theoretical disaster if Lacan were to commit a serious logical error in the seemingly glaring contradiction between the double negation of the existential formula, 'there does *not* exist a single woman that is *not* subjected to the phallic function,' and the negation of the universal statement, 'woman is not-wholly subjected to the phallic function.' The ostensible logical contradiction is considered resolved by Lacan when it applies to the situation of the infinity set. In a key passage often cited, Lacan states,

One can write 'not-every (*pas tout*) x is inscribed in Φx ,' one deduces by way of implication that there is an x that contradicts it. But that is true on one sole condition, which is that, in the whole or the not-whole in question, we are dealing with the finite. Regarding that which is finite, there is not simply an implication but a strict equivalence [...] But we could [...] be dealing with the infinite [...] When I say that woman is not-whole and that that is why I cannot say Woman, it is precisely because I raise the question of a *jouissance* that, with respect to everything that can be used [encompassed] in the function Φx , is the realm of the infinite. (XX, 102-3)

The double negation and the absence of exception can inhabit an infinite set without logical contradiction. Zupančič offers a cogent explanation:

Lacan does not deny every existential consequence (or implication) of the not-all; what he denies is the existential consequence of an exception at the level of this set that he calls not all. Instead of negating the first *jouissance* and positing the second, noncastrated *jouissance*, one takes away from the first *jouissance* its exception (the

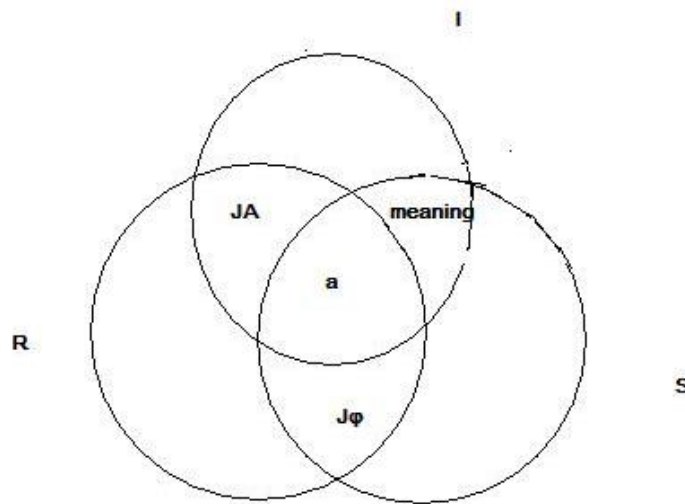
non-castrated jouissance), which maintained it within the finite set. This is what opens up the space of the other jouissance. [...] Infinite jouissance is not a jouissance so great or intense that the words fail to express it [...] ‘infinite’ refers to the structure or topology of enjoyment and not to its quantity (or quality).¹⁵²

Infinity results from the sheer absence of exception, the dissolution of totality; it does not result in a mysterious outside or beyond. This feminine logic of not-all inspires contemporary thinkers to further investigate Pauline love and neighbour love, which we shall revisit shortly. For the time being, it should be clear that ‘in the feminine libidinal economy, [t]here is no Outside, no Exception to the phallic function, for that very reason a woman is immersed in the symbolic order more wholly than a man—without restraint, without exception’ (*PD*, 68). For clarification, the feminine not-all neither indicates that ‘not all women are under the law of the phallus’ and that some may escape castration nor that ‘not *all of* a woman’ is not castrated and some part of her body ‘remains unscathed’ (*N*, 59-60).

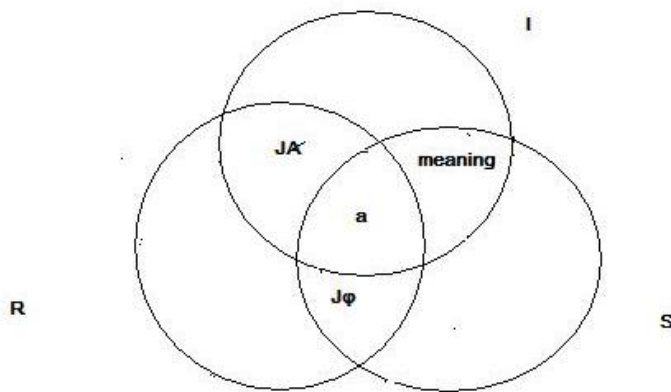
If there is still ambiguity in the concept of the feminine/Other *jouissance* in *Seminar XX*, by the time of *Seminar XXII* and *Seminar XXIII*, Lacan gradually solves and clarifies this problem by way of the Borromean knots. In the figures below, Lacan uses JA and J(A barred) to designate Other/feminine *jouissance*.

¹⁵² Alenka Župančič, *Sexuation*, p. 294-6.

Graph 1



Graph 2



Clearly, JA is situated 'outside the ring of the Symbolic, but it is not outside all the rings,' hence 'feminine jouissance remains indirectly related to the Symbolic: the feminine not-all is ultimately both different and dependent on the phallic Symbolic,

precisely insofar as it stands as the not-all of the Symbolic, its constitutive point of exception.’¹⁵³ Chieza is probably one of the most relentlessly rigorous critics in his support of Lacan’s notion ‘there is no Other of the Other.’ Tracing the meandering paths of Lacan’s theoretical development through decades, he keenly identifies moments of oscillation or theoretical lapses in Lacan’s long-term striving for truth and theoretical consistency. In his exposition and comments on *Seminar VII*, Chieza points to Lacan’s wavering between the hypothetical Primordial Real and the Real in the Symbolic, contending that he sometimes comes close to a perverse Sado-Kantian position. Now, Chieza points out again the problematic nature of a notion of JA (a *jouissance* that is in plenitude without being barred at all) as the feminine *jouissance*. Since there is no outside guarantor of the Other even in the form of primordial *jouissance*, it is against theoretical integrity to posit an Other *jouissance* in full, without being barred. This *lapsus* is revamped by Lacan himself when JA is rectified and replaced with J(Abarred) in *Seminar XXIII*. Chieza presents his exegesis brilliantly: ‘JA cannot stand for the *jouissance* of the “real Real”: in other words, there is no Other *jouissance* given that there is no Other of the Other’; ‘J(Abarred) is therefore a (form of) *jouissance* of the impossibility of JA.’¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), p. 186. Graph I appears in *Seminar XXII: R.S.I.* (unpublished) lessons, 14 and 21 January 1975. I rely on Chieza’s rendition. Graph II appear in *Le Seminaire XXIII Le Sinthome*, p. 55.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186, 187.

Although this concept of the feminine Other *jouissance*, derived from the double negation and indirectly connected with the Symbolic, does not embody a mysterious plenitude of some form of primordial uncastrated Real and a lure of transcendental beyond, it *does* point to a certain kind of corporeality beyond meaning, which is not entirely outside the language effect. This effect of textual corporeality opens up another dimension of materiality with revolutionary potential which figures later in our analysis of Joyce's literary experiment. As Suzan Bernard argues, the double negation in the feminine logic 'works to effect a kind of affirmation, *a strange form of positivity*. The feminine subject inhabits the symbolic in this form not as a simple absence but as a kind of presence that emerges from "beyond the veil" of phallic presence.'¹⁵⁵ This presence embodies traces of *jouissance* in what Lacan terms as *en-corps, enjoying substance* (XX, 23), which is connected with Lacan's peculiar concept of the *poiesis*. As Bernard indicates, textual materiality is a convergence of love and poetry—'the something com[es] from nothing—that Lacan links to the contingency of being and ultimately, to the path of love.'¹⁵⁶ In his explanation of the mechanism of male desire as polymorphous perversion, Lacan makes a distinction between desire and love, between the act of love and literary making love. In Lacan's words, 'To make love (*faire l'amour*) as the very expression indicates, is

¹⁵⁵ Bernard, p. 178. Emphasis added.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

poetry. But there is a world between poetry and the act' (XX, 72).¹⁵⁷ Poetry, with its emphasis on aesthetic enjoyment and the surplus in excess of meaning making, reveals a strange kind of materiality at the intersection of the Symbolic and the Real. Why would the feminine logic of not-all provide reader access to this materiality? Bernard argues that, '[w]ithout the constitutive illusion of the phallic exception as limit, *the symbolic becomes, in a sense, real*. One way of conceptualizing feminine jouissance, consistent with this claim might be to say that in feminine jouissance, *the real finds a signifier*.'¹⁵⁸

I would like to highlight that in this movement of the Real finding a signifier, the Symbolic getting very Real harbours a conception prefigured in the direction of *sinthome*, by which Lacan is primed to further elaborate on the subject's *savoir-faire* of one's *jouissance*, of approaching the Real with the experimentation of the self-invented Symbolic. Marvelling at and intrigued by what Joyce accomplishes through his works of art, Lacan moves his aesthetic ethics of the Real inspired by Antigone to a new level, to the extent that his entire theorisation of the end of analysis, the ethics of psychoanalysis, is radically rewritten. The current project attempts to evaluate how, at the strange convergence of love and poetry and intersection of negativity and materiality, along with peculiar materiality and textual corporality,

¹⁵⁷ As Fink's Note 25 reads, l'acte d'amour implies 'the act of love-making,' equivalent to l'acte sexuel, i.e. intercourse.

¹⁵⁸ Bernard, p. 179. Emphasis added.

Joycean poetics contributes to ethics.

VI.

Before advancing to the subject of *sinthome* and ethics, I would like to briefly discuss an ethical evaluation of love and desire. It has been demonstrated that sublimation deployed in the formula of the elevation of an object to the dignity of the Thing, assumes the structure of fantasy. Idealisation or over-evaluation by way of sublimation is a common procedure in triggering desire. However, this mechanism also reveals the fact that phallic *jouissance* thus pursued is nothing more than the functioning of fantasy, and hence, through ‘masturbatory,’ ‘autistic’¹⁵⁹ enjoyment. Through fantasy, the subject uses his/her partner as a prop, who assumes the status of a semblance of *objet a* as cause of desire to fulfil his/her enjoyment. As Lacan makes explicit in the first lesson of *Encore*, ‘[p]hallic *jouissance* is the obstacle owing to which man does not come (*n’arrive pas*). I would say, to enjoy a woman’s body, precisely because what he enjoys is the *jouissance* of the organ’ (XX, 7). This is one of the underlying reasons for the sexual non-relation. How would love be conceived theoretically to transcend this dilemma of non-relation and pose to a *Real love* and a truly intersubjective relation? Fink, on one occasion, ponders over the possibility of

¹⁵⁹ Stevens, p. 217.

‘a love beyond desire, gesturing toward a movement from the *homosexual* formula of $\$ \langle a \rangle \$$ to that for love as $\$ \langle \rangle \$$.’¹⁶⁰ Although Fink chooses to put his question and schematization of Lacan’s proposal of love as a subject-to-subject relation in a modest footnote, this proposal actually functions as a point of departure in my search for the model for love. My stance in the present study is to endorse such a line of reasoning for an intersubjective relation of love. As I previously proposed in section II of this chapter, it is love at the moment when it is ethically figured that will be the focus of my critical interest. Lacan’s ethical paradigm of pure desire, the model of Antigone’s singular love, and the paradigm of neighbour love have shed great light on how love manifests ethically at the intersection of subjectivity and the ethical act. At this juncture, considering Fink’s proposal, we reach the intersection between love and sexuality.

By approaching sexual difference from the dimension of the Real, Lacan’s theory of sexuation provides a very bleak view of human sexuality, ending up in a sexual non-relationship. However, Lacan himself seems also to gesture towards a notion of love as transcendence over desire. He postulates the aphorism of love as a

¹⁶⁰ Fink, *Lacan to the Letter*, p. 186, note 38. I cite his words here, ‘If we think of phallic jouissance as the satisfaction that corresponds to desire—and the terms $\$$ and a that form fantasy [...] it would seem to point to a love beyond desire—equivalent to what Lacan jokingly refers to here as a jouissance beyond the phallus. This form of love might correspond to love of the Other or to what Lacan qualifies in the last chapter of the seminar as a “subject to subject” relationship’ (XX, 144) in which the object seems to drop out; we might schematize this latter relationship as follows ($\$ \langle a \rangle \$$) [homosexual desire] \rightarrow ($\$ \langle \rangle \$$) [love]. ‘Homosexual’ is Lacan’s neologism to refer to the two-man relation, as man in French is ‘homme.’

compensation for the lack of a sexual relation without exhausting the implication of this formula.¹⁶¹ What does Lacan mean in this thought-provoking, enigmatic aphorism? In recent years, Lacanians have sought to clarify and elaborate on it. The importance of Lacan's aphorism resides in whether love is postulated as a 'consoling illusion' or 'the union of disjunctive elements in a new whole' to compensate for the failure of sex with some value vaguely called love or whether 'there is something *real* in love, correlative to the impossibility of the sexual relationship, but neither identical to it nor to its dissimulation' (*N*, 51). It would be catastrophic for Lacan's edifice if love were to amount to nothing but one of the former two positions, i.e. either an 'illusory consolation' or 'a union', and this proposal of love would appear to be nothing more than the illusory mirage of love at the Imaginary level sneaking in from the backdoor. Only the third position of conceptualising love as *Real* is tenable from a rigorous Lacanian point of view and qualifies love as an ethical act. I take Reinhard's proposal for the third position of *Real* love to mean that while it is situated at the same level of the impossibility of the sexual relationship, love emerges from this negativity of the Real impasse as something positive and palpable, yet at the same time remaining in excess of the representation at both the Imaginary and the Symbolic levels. My stance in this

¹⁶¹ Lacan mentions this formula on several occasions in *Seminar XX*. For instance, he says, in the lesson 'Love and Signifier'; 'What makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love' *Seminar XX*, p. 45.

current project is that for love to be ethically manifest, it must consist of a Real act and an intersubjective relationship. This is undoubtedly a key subject which invites experiments of tentative propositions and whose potential, I believe, is still far from exhaustion. Bearing this in mind, the current attempt to theoretically foreground the space for love as an ethical manifestation can be considered part of the on-going work on love. I propose to pursue several avenues to approach the ethical issue of love in the study of *Ulysses*.

Firstly, since the functioning of fantasy obfuscates the intersubjective relation, for love to figure ethically, it is reasonable to posit a transcendence of masturbatory enjoyment, the traversal of fantasy. Previously, in the section on neighbour love, I explained how love as an ethical act functions in miraculously breaking through the thrall of fantasy. Love manages to work through the law by suspending the underlying superegoic enjoyment, disorganising the framework of fantasy, and unleashing the inherent libidinal energy. Moreover, the radical impact of the traversal of fantasy on subjectivity can hardly be overemphasised. It is not simply a common daily experience of disillusionment and the learning of practical wisdom in handling worldly affairs. The transcendence of fantasy is a life-shattering and subject-transforming event of existence at the ontological, epistemological, and ethical levels. Fantasy manages to produce objects of desire through the cause factor

of *objet a* for the subject and is itself the core being of the subject. Undergoing the traversal of fantasy not only endows us with more freedom and flexibility in choosing objects but also opens ‘the possibility for new possibilities.’¹⁶² The entire coordination of the subject’s perception and approach toward his/her life and the world is drastically changed and his being both at the conscious and unconscious levels points to the direction of re-construction. A new possibility is opened at the most fundamental level for the subsequent new possibilities to appear and take shape in this life and world. The traversal of fantasy therefore is *a Real event* for the subject, with the explicit connotation of an event of the Lacanian Real. In this Real event, the subject confronts the core of his being and its dissolution. After this existential drama of subjective destitution, the subject is literally at the threshold of a brand new world. It is no exaggeration that love alters life and reshapes the world both from the phenomenological vantage of experience and the theoretical point of view.

¹⁶² For a detailed account of the working through and the consequent new opening, please see Jonathan Lear, *Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony* (New York: Other Press, 2003).

VII.

Lacan's neologism *sinthome*, distinct from *symptôme*, has a major theoretical importance. First presented at the 1975 James Joyce Symposium, Lacan's paper was termed as '*Joyce le symptôme*' and changed to *Le Sinthome* in his twenty-third seminar on Joyce.¹⁶³ *Joyce le symptôme* is supposed to be read 'as a single unit, like a name.'¹⁶⁴ The singularity inherent in a name, in a symbolic nomination, is maintained and highlighted. Lacan's critical sensitivity to names and naming in Joyce's work and subjectivity remained vivid even later in his seminar on Joyce. With the new title *Le Sinthome*, Lacan does not aim to demonstrate his erudition in etymology but wishes to introduce a new concept on symptoms, singularity, and subjectivity. This theoretical innovation in psychoanalysis should be appreciated in the long-term evolution of Lacan's thinking. From *Seminars XIX* and *XX* held in the seventies, a conspicuous shift of logic can be detected. A '*dialectical logic*' on the relation between the three registers in terms of oppositions in the earlier period gradually gives way to 'a triangular or three-dimensional logic'.¹⁶⁵ The topological thinking of knots is introduced when conceptualising the 'non-hierarchical,' 'intermingling' relationship among the three registers of the Imaginary, the Real, and

¹⁶³ According to Roberto Harari, *sinthome* was how *symptom* spelled in the incunabula produced around the end of the 15th century to the beginning of the 16th century. *How James Joyce Made His Name*, Trans by Luke Thurston (New York: Other Press, 2002), p. 23.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁵ Stijin Vanheule, *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 151.

the Symbolic in formulating human subjectivity.¹⁶⁶ *Jouissance* is organised by the interlocking of the three rings of R. S. I. A different nomination is employed to account for ‘a distinct psychic formation,’ ‘a new structure in psychoanalysis where number four will be decisive’ through its transforming of the Borromean knot in the topological thinking of unknotting and reknitting.¹⁶⁷ Lacan critically investigates the relationship between Joyce’s work and his subjectivity and life, which entails ‘a consideration of how the subject had been undone, and how it was refounded in language.’¹⁶⁸ The radical consequence of the subjective-transformation through Joyce’s ambitious literary experimentation is a thorough cultural revolution in the attempt to ‘liquidate the English language.’¹⁶⁹ It is no exaggeration that after Joyce, fiction writing was no longer the same, and his critics’ incessant works are part of Joyce’s project of cultural revolution, both in linguistic and literary terms.

The analytic goal is reformulated in this later development of theory. The subject enters into the clinic with his symptoms, with a belief in the meaning of his symptoms and a supposition that the analyst will be able to know the true reason behind his symptoms. Since ‘*it is only through the liberation of the Symbolic constellation that the Real of the drive appears,*’¹⁷⁰ the subject is obliged to work

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 154.

¹⁶⁷ Harari, p. 24.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷⁰ Paul Verhaeghe and Frédéric Declercq, ‘Lacan’s Analytic Goal: Le sinthome or the Feminine Way,’ in

through the Symbolic to achieve the aim of changing one's relation with the Real. This is the foundation of legitimizing the psychoanalytic practice because the subject can change his relation with the drive by means of talking cure. Psychoanalysis is therefore capable of creating a new subject.¹⁷¹ After transferences are dissolved and interpretations exhausted, the subject may come to a stage of giving up his previous supposition of the Other, becoming aware of the inconsistency between the Other and the traversal of fantasy. The subject thereby reaches the point of the end of analysis understood in terms of dehydraulicization, desexualisation, desubjectivization, expressed in the notion of subjective destitution. At this juncture, I think, the subject is faced with an ethical decision *par excellence*. That is to say, in the confrontation with 'the primary signifier' which he/she has been subjected to (XI, 276), the subject is provided with sufficient information about his/her own symptomatic patterns or peculiar organisation of the drive. He/She is therefore in a better position 'to assess his [/her] stance toward this drive-fixation and eventually either change or keep that stance.'¹⁷²

No longer entrapped by the veil of fantasmatic formation nor bothered by the Other's desire as its de-centred cause, the subject may come to assume the position of

Luke Thurston (ed.), *Re-inventing the Symptom: Essays on the Final Lacan* (New York: Other Press, 2002), p. 64.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

‘the saint,’ ‘who causes itself, becomes its own cause’ (AF, 79). The reference to the saint is far from accidental. Lacan, in his later teachings, accentuates the shift from the Other-filtered symptoms to the self-made ones and coins the neologism ‘*sinthome*.’ He plays with homophony, as he uses the term *sinthome* to represent a combination of *symptôme*, ‘*saint homme*’ (holy man), and ‘*sinthomadquin*’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas), who does not believe in the Other and seeks the Real Thing (XXIII, 14). Lacan elevates Socrates to the level of a saint because in his choice for death, Socrates steps beyond the normal human repertoire of choices and manifests his distinguished singularity through this act of choice. As Lacan puts it, ‘I must say that Socrates is not human for he is willing to die for the city life. He accepts it; that’s a fact’ (XXIII, 14).¹⁷³ Lacan further compares the singularity exhibited in Socrates’ act of choice with the woman’s refusal in response to certain sexual request: ‘all, but not that (*tout, mais pas ça*)’ (XXIII, 14). Socrates’ act and the insistence of ‘all, but not that’ are examples of the *sinthome*. In other words, the *sinthome* is a ‘purified symptom,’ ‘stripped of its symbolic component,’ whose existence is based on the decision of this neosubject.¹⁷⁴ The subject becomes the cause of himself by indentifying with the *sinthome* and providing an answer to the Real, rather than to the Other; the subject accomplishes *a creation ex nihilo*, as a suppletion for the lack of the

¹⁷³ Lacan remarks that ‘il faut dire que Socrate n'est pas homme, puisqu'il accepte de mourir pour la cité vive. Il l'accepte; c'est un fait.’ My translation.

¹⁷⁴ Verhaeghe and Declercq, p. 66.

Other.¹⁷⁵ An alternative concept of the end of analysis is provided: the aim is ‘to succeed in enabling the subject to suture stitch, unstitch—that is, to tie or untie something, to retie things otherwise.’¹⁷⁶ The underlying premises are that ‘*there is no subject without a symptom*,’¹⁷⁷ and ‘there is no unknotting without reknitting and vice versa;’ ‘[a]nalysis proposes not enjoyment through the symptom, but enjoyment through *sinthome*.’¹⁷⁸ The new paradigm of the end of analysis is encapsulated in the promotion of identification with the *sinthome*.

How do we appreciate and capture the knowledge in the identification of the Real? Stijin Vanheule observes, ‘at the basis of this change [from dialectical logic to triangular logic], Lacan’s view of the functioning of language shifts somewhat.’¹⁷⁹ In other words, language does not merely evacuate *jouissance* and introduce holes into the Real but also functions as a means of *jouissance*: ‘language not merely structures the Real, the Real also affects the Symbolic.’¹⁸⁰ Concepts such as ‘*lalangue*’ and ‘*parlêtre*’ are devised to capture the libidinous aspect of language, or better, the intermingling of the Symbolic and the Real in language and subjectivity. Lacan also points out the distinction between the signifier and the letter to explicate

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 69-75.

¹⁷⁶ Harari, p. 107.

¹⁷⁷ Verhaeghe and Declercq, p. 66.

¹⁷⁸ Harari, p. 108.

¹⁷⁹ Vanheule, p. 152

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 158.

this form of *real* knowledge.¹⁸¹ The letter designates ‘the drive-kernel of the signifier, the substance fixating the real *jouissance*,’ while the signifier, in contrast, is now ‘a letter that acquired a linguistic value.’¹⁸² The inscription of the letters without meaning inscribes the *jouissance* as well the knowledge of this *jouissance*.

This line of thinking entails radical implications in terms of subjectivity and poetry. The concept of *sinthome* is in line with such a theoretical development. The notion of writing as *sinthome* and lettering as littering of enjoyment leads Lacan to a forceful conceptualisation of poetry as prophesy. Prophesy partakes of the dimension of pure saying (*le dire*). As Soler points out, ‘[i]t is the least stupid saying, since only poetry (or prophesy) manages to say something new, even unique, using old and worn-out signifiers. Poetry produces new meanings, and with this new meaning, new perspectives on reality.’¹⁸³ Lacan observes a novel interdependence of the inventiveness of poetry and the subjectivity in Joyce’s writing.¹⁸⁴ Joyce devotes his life to writing because he has disinvested from the Unconscious. The cancellation of his subscription to the Unconscious means he is no longer divided and hence has become an individual, probably a holy one, who knows how to make do with his own *jouissance*. Moreover, the suspension of the Unconscious indicates

¹⁸¹ Veronique Voruz, ‘Acephallic Letter as a Phallic Letter’, in Luke Thurston (ed.), *Re-Inventing the Symptoms: Essays on the Final Lacan*. (New York: Other Press, 2002), p. 113-5.

¹⁸² Verhaeghe and Declercq, p. 67.

¹⁸³ Soler, p. 96.

¹⁸⁴ Harari, p. 359.

that the subject has no Other to resort to but to invent his own name as an act of self-nomination to work with, to name the terrifying Real with alternative suppletions.¹⁸⁵ For Joyce, the artifice of writing as *sinthome* bears the ambiguity or even convergence of meaning and being and, in a sense, ‘determines the credibility of being.’¹⁸⁶

The explanation given above is undoubtedly dense, condensing several notions of ultimate importance and requiring further theoretical unpacking. Joyce’s self-naming through his art makes up for the deficiency of the working of the Name of the Father. As Lacan puts it, ‘his art is the real warrant of his phallus’ (XXIII, 15).¹⁸⁷ The expanded notions of foreclosure and pluralisation of the Name(s) of the Father, which essentially revise Lacan’s theory of madness and the end of psychoanalysis, are fundamental to Lacan’s exposition of Joyce’s nomination in contrast to the functioning of the traditional paternal metaphor.¹⁸⁸ In *Seminar III* on Psychoses, Lacan proposes that the foreclosure of the Name of the Father, distinct from the neurotic repression and the perverse disavowal, is a specific and necessary mechanism for psychoses. In the long course of his theoretical development, he

¹⁸⁵ Harari offers detailed and extended account of Joyce’s disinvestment from the Unconscious and the mode of Joycean suppletions and nomination. See especially the comparative tables in *ibid.*, p. 241, 263, 282, 352 to get a thorough idea of the distinction between neurotic symptom and the Joycean *sinthome*, the functioning of the paternal metaphor and Joyce’s nomination.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

¹⁸⁷ ‘*c’est son art qui a supplé à sa tenue phallique.*’ I follow Gallagher’s translation here.

¹⁸⁸ Massimo Recalcati, ‘Madness and Structure in Jacques Lacan’, trans. Jorge Jauregui, *Lacanian Ink* 32 (Place: publisher, 2008), 97-121.

gradually extends the notion of foreclosure to represent the general phenomenon in which ‘something is radically lacking’ or where ‘the gap in question is irreducible.’¹⁸⁹ In interpreting this tendency of conceptual generalisation, Roberto Harari follows the view of Claude Conté, contending that the various Lacanian aphorisms of *il n’y pas* actually represent the various forms of foreclosure.¹⁹⁰ The cases of the two aphorisms, ‘there is no meta-language’ and ‘there is no sexual relation,’ indicate respectively a foreclosure of the existence of a meta-language and a foreclosure of signifiers which are capable to write (to prescribe/describe) the relationship between the sexes.

This conceptual expansion of foreclosure not merely successfully dislodges the mechanism of foreclosure from the exclusive connotation of psychosis but also reveals Lacan’s thorough theoretical rigor in support of the notion, ‘there is no Other of the Other.’ The lack/incompleteness/inconsistency of the Other is a general structural fact, which cannot be remedied through any transcendental guarantor. Lacan’s various aphorisms of *il n’y pas* are precisely articulations of this structural void from different angles. When Lacan highlighted the capacity of the Name of the Father to name, substitute, and negate the Desire of the Mother, the paternal law was regarded implicitly as a transcendent Other to remedy the lack of the Other and

¹⁸⁹ Harari, p. 285, 286.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 284-9.

totalise the Symbolic field. In other words, to put it aphoristically, ‘there is an Other of the Other.’¹⁹¹ With the paternal metaphor as a transcendental guarantor, the Symbolic field becomes self-enclosed and all encompassing, while the primordial Real, the Real in its pure state, lies outside/before Symbolization. It is of little wonder that with the rejection of the paternal metaphor, the foreclosure of the Father’s Name, the subject necessarily falls prey to psychoses and risks being invaded by the overflowing of *jouissance*. However, Lacan gradually shifts his position. He neither situates the paternal metaphor ‘in a *beyond*’ and nor does he take it as ‘a *transcendence*’ or ‘a signifier of signifiers.’¹⁹² He regards it as ‘an “organizer”’ although ‘still a “privileged” signifier.’¹⁹³ The Name of the Father no longer totalises the Symbolic in an all-encompassing way; instead, Lacan ‘relativizes the function of the Names of the Father, and from the early 1960s, speaks of the Names-of-the-Father.’¹⁹⁴ As Chieza puts it, ‘when there is no Other of the Other, the Symbolic of the individual subjects itself sustains the universal structure in a particular (phallic) way.’¹⁹⁵ Chieza’s rendition does not only make explicit the relativization and pluralisation of the ‘particular’ paternal phallic function but also reveals that the universal Symbolic functioning requires the support and participation

¹⁹¹ Chieza, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, p.107-15.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

of the individual, and this prefigures and paves way for the concept of the Singular Universal in the processes of an ethical act and self-naming. Harari elucidates Lacan's later position by pointing out the capability of the Name of the Father to name the Desire of the Mother that is always conditioned by the Mother in her discourse.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, the paternal metaphor used in substitution for the Mother's desire is not derived from the structural necessity, but rather from a cultural or social contingency. Following this logic, there is the nominative function that can be 'unconditioned' and hence, 'the father as name' and 'the father who names' can be distinguished.¹⁹⁷ Lacan further argues that the paternal metaphor is nothing other than a symptom in that it functions to manage or organise *jouissance*. Lacan makes a strong claim, which may shock the readers of early Lacan, contending that '[t]he Oedipus complex is itself a symptom' (XXIII, 22).¹⁹⁸

The fourth element of self-naming, 'the unconditioned Name-of-the-Father' is an instance of 'suppletion' (*suppléance*).¹⁹⁹ Suppletion or *suppléance* is another neologism which, according to Copjec, is actually 'plucked from the eighteenth-century French rhetoric' used to designate 'a term that substitutes itself not [...] for another prior term, but for an absence.'²⁰⁰ Joyce's nomination, his *sinthome*,

¹⁹⁶ Harari, p. 237-8, 240.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 239, 238.

¹⁹⁸ In Lacan's words, '*Le complexe d'Oedipe est comme tel un symptôme.*' My translation.

¹⁹⁹ Harari, p. 239, 29.

²⁰⁰ Joan Copjec, '*Gia Savoir Sera: The Science of Love and the Insolence of Chance*', in Gabriel Riera

is different from the conventional Name of the Father substituting the Desire of the Mother; in contrast, the self-nomination as suppletion is simply an artifice working with/on the structural void without metaphorising or negating anything. Harari interprets this idea as follows: ‘it is not a replacement of anything else, but sets itself up for and by itself at the site of reparation where the “slip” or lapsus has occurred. The metaphor remains within the order of the signifier, whereas nomination works by means of the letter.’²⁰¹

The paternal deficiency leads Joyce to bypass the metaphorisation of the Name of the Father and therefore unsubscribes from the Unconscious (XXIII, 164-66). Because of the disinvestment from the Unconscious, Lacan detects the structural difference between the symptom caused by repression and the self-invented *sinthome* caused by the working of self-naming. In the case of Joyce, the suppletion of his proper name makes up for the lack of the proper functioning of the Name of the Father. As Lacan puts it, ‘[i]t is not just *Joyce le symptôme*, Joyce has, if you like, unsubscribed to the unconscious’ (XXIII, 164).²⁰² With the symptoms, the subject still holds his/her trust in authority, in the Name of the Father, in the subject supposed

(ed.), *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), at p. 123. Although the context of Copjec’s article discusses the possibility to make up for the lack of sexual relation, with the generalisation of foreclosure in Lacan’s later thinking, I think, it is arguable that suppletion is also generalised in the theorisation of the *sinthome* and in the nominative suppletion of the lack of the traditional, conditioned Name-of-the-Father.

²⁰¹ Harari., p. 241.

²⁰² ‘Ce n’est pas seulement Joyce le Symptôme, c’est Joyce en tant que, si je puis dire, désabonné à l’inconscient.’ My translation with a slight modification.

to know, in the meaning of his/her symptoms. The *Sinthome* caused by the unsubscription from the Unconscious does not seek meaning and authority in the Other; instead, the undivided neosubject, which Lacan terms as the 'individual' (XXIII, 168), takes responsibility of the expertise to organize his/her *jouissance*. In a passage encapsulating his understanding and admiration for Joyce's work of art, Lacan proclaims in the fourth lesson of *Seminar XXIII*: 'one can be responsible only in the extent of his know-how. What is know-how? It is art, artifice, which is capable of outstanding value because there is no Other of the Other to enact the Last Judgment' (XXIII, 61).²⁰³ In light of his topological thinking, the *sinthome* is the fourth ring in the reknitting of the unknotted rings of the Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary as illustrated in the following diagram:

²⁰³ Lacan says, 'On n'est responsable que dans la mesure de son savoir-faire. Qu'est-ce que c'est que le savoir-faire? C'est l'art, l'artifice, ce qui donne à l'art dont on est capable une valeur remarquable, parce qu'il n'y a pas d'Autre de L'Autre pour opérer le Jugement dernier.' I follow Cormac Gallagher's translation with a slight modification.

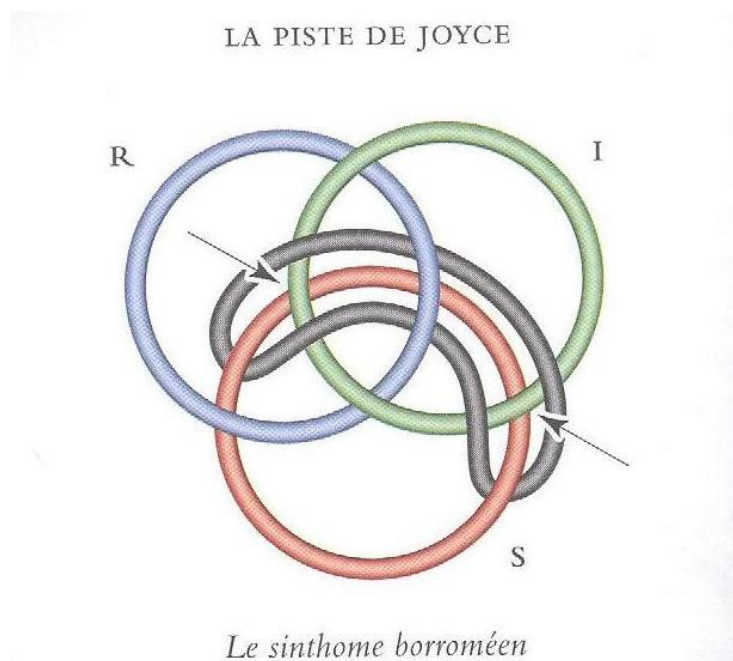


Figure 2

Joyce's art, as his *sinthome*, plays the role of the fourth ring precisely (XXIII, 37). The path that Joyce takes should be distinguished from that usually taken by a neurotic subject. In the case of the neurotic subject, it is 'a question of going through the Symbolic and the symbolically determined symptoms to the Real;' the neurotic has to 'find answer to the Real of the drives and sexuality' after the working through of fundamental fantasy.²⁰⁴ For the psychotic subject as well as for Joyce, it is 'a question of going from the Real to the Symbolic,' of limiting *jouissance* by 'a fabrication of a symptom, which Lacan in Joyce case named sinthome.'²⁰⁵ Now, the crucial question is whether Joyce is mad.²⁰⁶ Lacanians have different opinions on

²⁰⁴ René Rassmussen, 'On Joyce and Psychosis', *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 13* (place: publisher, 2005), 45-53 at p. 50-1.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²⁰⁶ Lacan himself raises this question without directly answering it, but circles and ponders this question. He remarks, 'Joyce était-il fou?' (XXIII, 77) 'Ce que je soulève comme question dans ce

this rather fundamental issue. Rene Rasmussen dubs Joyce as ‘psychotic, but in a stabilized way.’²⁰⁷ Darian Leader takes him to be a ‘non-triggered psychotic’ who is ‘initially “in between” neurosis and psychosis and subsequently manages to produce a partially (individualized) symbolic.’²⁰⁸ Chiesa takes Joyce to be neither neurotic nor psychotic, saying that being already separated from the Symbolic, and without having to traverse the fundamental fantasy, Joyce creates his founding master signifier, that is, his own proper name as a writer.²⁰⁹ According to Rik Loose, in *Seminar XXIII*, Lacan deliberately raises this question while avoiding giving a positive answer by saying that ‘about whether or not Joyce was mad? Why should he not have been mad? It’s not a privilege.’²¹⁰ Loose therefore argues that he does not know whether Joyce was psychotic, neurotic, or perverse, but he only knows that his writing effectively ‘administrates’ his *jouissance*.²¹¹

The divergence of perspectives is far from trivial because it implies Joyce’s case surpasses the traditional categories of clinical structures and Oedipal drama, which Lacan inherits from Freud and remains faithful to in his early works, especially the extended discussion of psychoses in *Seminar III*. Lacan uses the Borromean knot

jaspinage, à savoir si oui ou non Joyce était fou, peut trouver ici à se repérer. Fou, pourquoi après tout Joyce ne l’aurait-il pas été? Ceci d’autant plus que ce n’est pas un privilège...’ (*XXIII*, p. 87).

²⁰⁷ Rasmussen, p. 46.

²⁰⁸ Chiesa, ‘Lacan with Artaud’, p. 357.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

²¹⁰ Rik Loose, ‘Joyce’s Administration’, *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 13* (2005), 83-91 at p. 85.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

and topological thinking to explore the structuring of human psyche, arguing that there is no reknitting without unknotting and that Joyce's ego is the fourth ring that ties together the three circles, the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary, to keep them from falling apart and from the consequent madness.²¹² Lacan talks of the dissolution of the Imaginary in explaining the topological regression that Judge Daniel Paul Schreber experienced.²¹³ Schreber's breaking away from the Symbolic has inevitably 'affected his actual flesh as much as his image,' and therefore he turns to the subsequent delusion with the attempt at restoring 'the Imaginary dimension through the re-libidinalization of his body image.'²¹⁴ While Yasmin Grasser argues that 'the Imaginary is disjointed from the Symbolic does not signify its disappearance', Rasmussen directly radicalizes the insight by claiming that 'the lack of the third knot, of the imaginary' would lead Joyce to resort to his writing to create 'an ego in language' as 'a replacement for the missing Name of the father.'²¹⁵ With reference to the famous episode in which Stephen temporarily loses his ego like a fruit divested of its soft ripe peel in *A Portrait*, Loose provides an account of Joyce's exile by

²¹² Bogdan Wolf, 'Joy, Joys, Joyce. How to Work with the Sinthome?' *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 13* (place: publisher, 2005), 55-62. Pierre Skriabine, 'Does the Father say Knot?' *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 13* (place: publisher, 2005), 147-62.

²¹³ Judge Daniel Schreber's *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* records his own psychotic outbreak, delusions and other paranoid experience. It has become an influential work in psychoanalysis thanks to Freud's study. In *Seminar III*, Lacan has commented extensively on the case of Schreber and Freud's interpretation.

²¹⁴ Yasmin Grasser, 'M-A-N, basic M-A-N, M-A-N oowaza Body', *Psychoanalytic Notebooks 13* (place: publisher, 2005), 75-81, at p. 78.

²¹⁵ Rasmussen, p.52.

indicating that Joyce exiled himself not because of his hostility toward Irish Nationalism, Catholic morality, and Irish language or culture, but

because he lacks a fundamental fantasy, which provide him with an ego and sufficient identity to be able to withstand the command of the cultural super-ego of his nation. Joyce's solution for this lack of ego was his *sinthome*, namely, his identity of being 'more writer than the writers.' This phrase captures the essence of Joyce ego, his identity, a fourth ring in the Borromean knot.²¹⁶

With the cancellation of the Unconscious, Joyce makes a reknitting with the self-made ego as the fourth ring, marking his proper name as a writer. As Rasmussen points out, Lacan, in the discussion of Joyce, deliberately avoids using 'le moi' to indicate the imaginary formation and entity, but chooses the word 'the ego'; Joyce's ego is used 'as a replacement for the missing Name of the Father.'²¹⁷ Thurston cautions us stating, 'the writing of the knot cannot be situated in symbolic structure, psychological meaning or the mute insistence of the drive; in other words, the knot is itself irreducible to the registers it inscribes.'²¹⁸ In Lacan's reading of Joyce, while epiphany marks itself as 'the falling away of the imaginary from the knot to reveal something forbidden and unrepresentable in language' and signals the 'meaningless punctum where body and speech, symbolic and real collide;' the *sinthome* 'intervenes to prevent the psychotic unraveling of the knot.'²¹⁹

So, is Joyce mad? My stance in this study is that Joyce is hardly mad. Joyce

²¹⁶ Loose, p. 85

²¹⁷ Rasmussen, p. 52.

²¹⁸ Luke Thurston, *James Joyce and the Problem of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 195.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

has successfully supplemented the defective functioning of his paternal metaphor with his name as a writer. In this regard, ‘the name “Joyce” literally embodies a subjective placeholder for the lack of the Other;’ ‘[t]he name ‘Joyce’ is a “singular universal.”’²²⁰ Furthermore, it is my claim that the *sinthome*, as self-naming and know-how of organising *jouissance*, constitutes an extended ethical act because the neosubject fully acknowledges the non-existence of the Other and takes responsibility for the artifice of self-invention, for the subjective making and transformation.

Now, the crucial question should be shifted: If the *sinthome* distinguishes itself from the neurotic symptoms with the emphasis on self-naming, self-inventiveness, and singularity, how would this singularity influence culture, politics, and society? To communicate and produce social and cultural impact demands shared master signifiers, and common fantasmatic ground; then, how can ‘the individual naming of the Real’²²¹ achieve universality and accomplish revolution? The postulation of the Singular Universal manages to answer this question. The subject’s role is constitutive in the postulation of the universal. As Chieza points out,

Insofar as the symbolic structure is universal only through a particular contingent Master-Signifier that hegemonizes fundamental fantasies, the subject’s encounter with the real lack beneath his ideological fundamental fantasy forces him to assume the lack in the universal. Conversely, the resymbolization of lack is therefore, by definition, always carried out at the level of the particular. More precisely, insofar as this is nothing but the specific moment at which the subject realizes that particularity is

²²⁰ Chieza, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, p. 190.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190-1.

necessary if there is to be universality, it is here that the particular is turned into the individual.²²²

The unknotting and reknitting process of the individual implodes the convention, raising the individual to the Universal when the conventional version of the Universal is challenged and traversed step-by-step. Chieza further proposes two avenues for assuming the Singular Universal and accomplishing subjective transformation and cultural revolution in a single move through self-naming and artifice—that is, the subject may either ‘become his own name’ or ‘name a movement.’²²³ This is indeed what Joyce has done through his writing. He becomes his own name by naming himself and renaming the literary legacy by writing his own proper name into the history of literatures. In the later chapters on *Ulysses*, I will endeavour to analyze how Joyce achieves literary working through of cultural symptoms, produces new ways of writing, and paves the way for new master signifiers through his literary experiments. A cultural unknotting and reknitting is at work in parallel with a subjective untying and retying. I would also like to point out that with the invention of the word ‘Joycean’ and the flourishing of the industry of Joyce’s study, Joyce scholars actually participate in constructing the cultural innovation under the name of Joyce as a Singular Universal. While Joyce’s singularity is written into the Universal, the singular critical contribution of every critic of Joyce constantly renews

²²² Ibid., p. 191.

²²³ Ibid., p. 191.

and refuels the momentum and meaning shaping of this Singular Universal. In light of Badiou's diction of the truth procedure, Joyce's art may very well fall on deaf ears and blind eyes or may very well undergo distortion and betrayal if Joyce's critics are unable to recognize his innovation as a genuine artistic event and unable to extend their fidelity to this event through the truth-process of acknowledging Joyce's art. The present study is a modest effort to be faithful to this artistic event in the name of Joyce and to keep alive its revolutionary spirit while intervening into the critical legacy and relevant cultural debates.

Chapter Two

My Own Private Shakespeare: Toward the Possibility of a Singular Universal in ‘Scylla and Charybdis’

‘We can’t change the country. Let us change the subject.’

Ulysses, 16.1171

‘Il croit aussi qu’il y a un book of himself. Quelle idée de se faire être un livre.’

Jacques Lacan, *Le Sinthome*, p. 71

I.

By the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus pronounces his own self-appointed mission and identity as an artist. By evoking the mythological figure of father-artificer, Stephen heroically exclaims, ‘Welcome, O Life! I go to encounter for the millionth time of the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race’ (*P*, 390). This youthful aspiration is less a form of romantic(ist) ambition and narcissistic projection than an independence earned through constant disillusionment with authority, an outcome of an excruciating process of working through the shackles of ideological fantasies. As Shelley Brivic points out, having triumphed over the church’s authority, the sinful kiss and the Eucharist in the first three chapters successively, ‘the new identity Stephen seizes at the end of each chapter turns out in the next one to be hardly more than a

fantasy.’²²⁴ Just pages earlier, the nature of the artist’s manifesto as an unborn conscience of his race, a distancing from the dominant forms of ideology, is laid bare in Stephen’s dialogue with Cranly;

You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church. And I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile, and cunning. (*P*, 385)

If we regard silence and exile in terms of Stephen’s refusal to lend his voice and strength in direct support of political engagement with various forms of Irish nationalism in confrontation with British imperialism, and his exile in terms of his physical exile abroad and symbolic exile from home, state and church, our qualification of the meaning and means of cunning remains unsettled and begs for subtler and more creative critical interpretation.

In his dialogue with Bloom regarding paternal lineage and national tradition, Stephen finds himself cast in the role of son, but betrays his treacherous intention in challenging both paternal and national authorities:

--You suspect, Stephen retorted with a sort of half laugh, that I may be important because I belong to the *faubourg Saint Patrice* called Ireland for short.
--I would go a step further, Mr Bloom insinuated.
--But I suspect, Stephen interrupted, that Ireland must be important because it belongs to me.

²²⁴ Shelly Brivic, *Joyce Through Lacan and Žižek: Explorations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 82.

--What belongs, queried Mr. Bloom bending, fancying he was perhaps under some mis-apprehension. Excuse me. Unfortunately, I didn't catch the latter portion. What was it you . . . ?

Stephen patently crosstempered, repeated and shoved aside his mug of coffee or whatever you like to call it none too politely, adding:

--We can't change the country. Let us change the subject. (*U*, 16.1160-71)

This little skit is usually identified by critics as a failed communication between Bloom (the father) and Stephen (the son), or as an aborted ritual of transmitting paternal legacy, legitimacy, a nullified attempt at securing, restoring or re-inaugurating genealogy figuratively. Such a failure is of vital importance since after a prolonged wander into the night the two male protagonists finally have the opportunity to sit down and engage in conversation. Under such circumstances, what meaning or defiance of meaning can be derived from this encounter? The reversal of conventional subsumption/relationship between an individual and his/her father/fatherland in implied hierarchical terms reveals that Stephen's ambition targets something beyond the classic notion of the anxiety of influence explicated by Harold Bloom in 1970s. Bloom's major concern resides in how a poet may find his own voice and position in literary history by engaging a complex struggle with the tangled relationships he has with poets who preceded him. Every poet is necessarily indebted to the achievement of previous generations when he is inspired to write due to his discovery of what it means to be a poet when reading another poet's poetry. A poet will thus be inclined to produce work derivative of existing poetry, and to render

his creation consequently weak under the shadow of masters and giants. However, in order to guarantee his survival into posterity, to make sure that future readers will remember his name and his unique contribution, a poet must strive to concoct an original poetic edifice to distance himself from his literary fathers. In other words, every poet in the making lives with the anxiety of influence from his former masters. Framed in terms of the Oedipal struggle, a son poet endeavours to shed off the influence of his literary fathers, overcoming his ancestors' shadows by claiming his succession to the crown, the literary authority. What is left intact in this picture of a power struggle is the peaceful functioning of paternal authority in the literary domain, the founding efficacy of the Name of the Father in Lacanian terms.

However, the task that Joyce assigns to himself and to his surrogate figure Stephen is much more radical than any kind of Bloomian/Oedipal warfare. The reversal addressed by Stephen aims at a Symbolic subversion. Instead of the subject's submission to and reliance upon the efficacy and authority of the Father/fatherland, the Father/fatherland as a symbolic entity depends on the subject. With this motif of subversion in mind, when Stephen impatiently ends the dialogue by suggesting they change the subject because they cannot change the country, this response opens to a variety of interpretations. At the most common-sensical level, the sentence can undoubtedly mean that 'we can't choose or change our native land,

which is tormented by coercion, humiliation and injustice, and burdened with paralysis; so let us not talk about it and choose another topic.’ However, I intend to look critically awry at this sentence, performing an act of interpretive anamorphosis by taking the word ‘subject’ as a pun. Rather than shifting the topic, it is *the human subject that is to be shifted, to be transformed*. With this pun, it is not merely that the meaning of the sentence is drastically modified, but that an utterly new dimension is summoned and demands to be unfurled. If Joyce’s aloof attitude toward politics leads him to adopt a controversial distance from direct engagement and support of Irish nationalism, it stands to reason that his self-proclaimed (through Stephen) cunning by means of art targets the subjective transformation on the cultural landscape. It is the transformation of the subject that, I argue, harbours the possibility of a new singular universal, a new Symbolic.

In Stephen’s theory of Shakespeare, paternity is fundamentally undermined and declared to be a ‘legal fiction’ (*U*, 9.844). From this perspective, Joyce’s cunning transcends the drama of projection, emulation and renovation within the rite between father and son, gesturing toward a ‘broader engagement with questions of subjectivity,’ a ‘complex interpretation and subversion of traditional literary and philosophical ways of articulating the self,’ and the concomitant radical restructuring

of a new Symbolic.²²⁵ The very conception of a new Symbolic requires further qualification. Lacan's early work has devised a sophisticated account of how subjectivity comes into being through the child's encounter with the Other, who is simultaneously a desiring being, a network of language/discourse and a specular image. The subject thus encounters the Other in the dimensions of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary. The essentially intricate and entangled relationship between the subject and the Symbolic makes it a daunting challenge to conceive the subject's freedom from the effect of a nearly all-encompassing Symbolic. In consequence, it appears extremely difficult to achieve a genuine cultural revolution, for a true revolution necessarily requires the breaching and restructuring of the existing Symbolic order.

To push this line of reasoning to the extreme, it follows that a genuine cultural and social change must necessarily be correlative with the subject's own ontological transformation in terms of self-creation. Herein, I propose an account of the convergent moment of subjective transformation and symbolic revolution through Lacan's reading of Joyce's literary experimentation. The designation of a new Symbolic can be truly worthy of such a designation only when artists not merely make new aesthetic objects to refresh and enrich the existing culture, but when they

²²⁵ Thurston, p. 10.

work to shift the ground of the cultural edifice by changing these aesthetic parameters and the subjectivity that the very works of art assume. This is precisely the effect that Joyce's art achieves. As Colin MacCabe puts it,

[f]or readers of English literature, both adjective and noun are immediately thrown into doubt, it is Joyce's texts which serve to focus and emphasize the changing attitudes to language and representation [...] After Joyce it should be difficult not to write differently to our future and to read differently into our past; to admit, in all its embarrassing reality, the "heciten[t]" (*FW*, 119, 18) nature of any subjectivity.²²⁶

In grasping Joyce's revolutionary endeavour, Lacan's encounter with Joyce does not amount to an application of psychoanalytic knowledge to Joyce's work, but rather an investigation of the mutual engagement of Joyce's writing in its author's constitution of the self and the Symbolic. Joyce's writing entails 'the sweeping away of the subject's constitution in language [...] [and] a consideration of how the subject had been undone, and how it was refounded in language.'²²⁷ In the face of flawed paternity, 'instead of honoring or rendering homage to his father,' Joyce 'makes into his life goal the effort to honor *his proper name*.'²²⁸ In this chapter, by means of a theoretical detour into later Lacan and a detailed textual analysis of the 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode, I attempt to demonstrate how Joyce's honouring of *his proper name*, through elaborate self-naming devices, gestures toward the constitution of a new Symbolic disengaged from the dominance of the Name of the Father.

²²⁶ Colin MacCabe, 'The Voice of Esau: in the Library', in Colin MacCabe (ed.), *James Joyce: New Perspective* (Bloomington IN: Indiana U P, 1992), p. 111.

²²⁷ Harari, *How Joyce Made His Name*, p. 25.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 145, emphasis added.

In the library episode, this peculiar relationship between father and son points to a re-interpretation of the relationship between two giants, between Shakespeare and Joyce. That is to say, Shakespeare cannot merely be a rival in the competition for immortality. One of the major insights of early Lacan was that the projection and identification of the Imaginary needs to be rewritten with the Symbolic for the subject to function normally. Since the efficacy of the Symbolic hinges on the proper assumption of the paternal metaphor, the Name of the Father therefore becomes the essential guarantor underlying the framework of the subject's identification, projection and transference in the Imaginary domain.²²⁹ In the absence of transference and projection supported by the underlying functioning of the Name of the Father, what Joyce seeks in Shakespeare *cannot* be formulated in terms of the anxiety of influence, of a crisis, in which an aspiring artist confronts an overwhelming presence of paternal legacy, striving 'to outdo his rival in some infantile phallic competition.'²³⁰ In other words, we should not only concentrate on the Imaginary level, 'where the egos of Joyce and Shakespeare meet in a spectacular and eminently visible clash of literary mastery,' but must try to 'account for naming itself as an act that ruptures the barrier between the symbolic and the real, an instance of

²²⁹ See Lacan's *Seminar I, II, III* and so on, especially those passages on the schema L for an extended explanation of this fundamental argument.

²³⁰ Thurston, p. 77.

transgressive *poesis* that is always in excess of meaning-laden ego.²³¹ Instead, as Luke Thurston argues, the convergence of the two figures lies in the revelation and reworking of the monstrous literary thing disclosed in the very gaps of representation, the void marked by the flawed paternity. The dialectic of the literary thing and the (re)constitution of subjectivity as the speaking being, *parlêtre* in Lacan's words, finds expression in Shakespeare's tragedies, especially in *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and in Joyce's frequent, enigmatic references to Hamlet, King Hamlet's spirit, and the grotesque representation of the monstrous character of Iago.

Seen in this light, we are in a better position to unravel Stephen's idiosyncratic theory of Shakespeare as an interrogation of paternal authority. We are also able to explain why its starting point would be Hamlet's encounter with the King's ghost, for it embodies a sinister opening of representation, of meaning-making, a hole in the fabric of the Symbolic, an uncanny encounter with the Real which derails reality at the epistemological level and constitutes a narcissistic wound at the ontological level. What Stephen finds so urgent in the parallel experience of Shakespeare is precisely how the epistemological crisis and the ontological wounds may be successfully dealt with in the artist's writing of his wounds into his works. Marking one's name thus appears to be a highly drastic measure for survival, both on the personal, existential

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

level and on the public, symbolic level. Once disillusioned by the decline of paternity, and deprived of ideological fantasies, to sign one's name corresponds to the inauguration of new master signifiers on the way to constructing of a new Symbolic. The central thesis of the present chapter is that in the act of self-naming, Joyce's cunning resides in the writing of the singular into the universal, epitomised by Stephen's private theory of Shakespeare, by investigating how life transforms into art and how a national bard gives birth to himself through appropriating his life in the construction of representative masterpieces. That is to say, the self-naming process of the singular subjectivity of an artist corresponds to the naming of a new Symbolic. Joyce's ambition gestures toward the possibility of a singular universal.

Firstly, I would like to clarify the notion of 'singular universal' by distinguishing it from the underlying relationship between particularity and universality in multiculturalism's tolerance and celebration of difference. The ideology of multiculturalism is betrayed in its emptied gesture of enriching the cultural field with difference through the incorporation of particularity. This incorporation is null because at the same time the privileged version of certain particularities still maintain a universal status.²³² In short, in multiculturalism the functioning of the Symbolic

²³² Žižek's critique of multiculturalism is scattered around many of his works. Here I provide a quote to illustrate his main point: 'Today's *multiculturalist* ideology provides an exemplary case of the falsity of a direct universalist position: multiculturalism is clearly a disavowed, inverted, form of racism, a "racism with a distance"—it respects the Other's identity, conceiving the Other as a self-enclosed authentic community toward which the multiculturalist maintains a distance rendered possible by his

Other remains intact, even solidified, while the challenge of the particular is neutralised in service of the existing universal.

Secondly, I take the assumption of a singular universal as a necessary ethical act if we try to follow the logical consequence of the thesis that the Other doesn't exist. On the one hand, the notion of a singular universal designates that the singular is elevated to the universal. On the other hand, the universal comes into being or renews itself only through a singular being's contribution. Underlying this conception of a singular universal is that the subject's acknowledgement of the non-existence or inconsistency of the Other would force him to traverse fantasy and to encounter his own being as nothingness, namely, to assume the destitution of his own being. The subsequent theoretical moment next to this enlightenment can be conceived as bifurcated; the subject either falls back to the previous Symbolic and subjective arrangement, or enacts a leap of faith into the ethical act of assuming full responsibility by providing new master signifiers to respond to the lack of the Other. Instead of waiting to be given a name by symbolic authorities, the subject takes responsibility for making his own names, his own version of the master signifiers.

This act of self-naming is truly an ethical breakthrough, for the subject no longer

or her privileged position. In other words, multiculturalism is a racism that empties its own position of all positive content (the multiculturalist is not a direct racist, he or she does not oppose to the Other the particular values of its own culture), but nonetheless retains this position as the privileged empty point of universality from which one is able to appreciate properly other particular cultures—the multiculturalist's respect for the Other's specificity is the very form of asserting one's own superiority' (AF, 96).

submits to the existing authorities as guarantors of the meaning of his existence and his action, no longer lives and acts on the behalf of the Other. Instead, the subject breaches the seemingly all-encompassing Symbolic, taking the lack of the Other as his cause, embarking on the task to restructure the Symbolic. It is ethical because the subject manages to take responsibility at the most fundamental level; it is a breakthrough because the Symbolic foundation is subjected to a radical reworking. The subject writes his/her singularity into the universal, renewing both the public and the personal domains, essentially restructuring the ontological paradigms and the epistemological parameters, achieving subjective transformation and cultural revolution in a single act. I suggest that Joyce, through Stephen's Shakespeare theory, attempts to produce an account of the singular universal as a possible solution to navigating the problematic cultural politics of his time, rather than offering another particular version in confrontation with the dominant version of Shakespeare as one of the many alternatives among various forms of ideology, including imperialism, nationalism, Irish Revivalism and so on.

II.

First, I trace how the process of constituting a new Symbolic embodied in a

singular universal requires Joyce to work from and work through the historical materiality of cultural politics and the psychological materiality of paternity.

It is far from accidental that Stephen chooses Shakespeare in his intervention in the cultural scene in turn-of-the-century Dublin, where the struggle for recognition, cultural capital and authority is pervasive among people from different camps. The Shakespeare controversy is a vehicle for representing the historical disputes between Edward Dowden and W. B. Yeats regarding Shakespeare criticism and their different stances toward the Irish renaissance. In this regard, Stephen's private theory of Shakespeare may be taken as the third alternative, a way of steering between Scylla and Charybdis, represented by Dowden and Yeats respectively, and, broadly speaking, through imperialism and nationalism in competition for cultural capital. As Andrew Gibson points out, the meaning of the chapter title has long been disputed, almost to the extent that it appears 'indeterminable.'²³³ However, the very denotation of 'opposition or fissure' is present and 'perceptible everywhere,' which indicates that the central problem for Stephen and for Joyce is 'how to steer between contending opponents recur[ring] in the Irish writing of the 1890s and 1900s.'²³⁴

Joyce's attempt 'to read within the then dominant criticism' is part of 'the subject matter of *Ulysses* when Stephen voices his interpretation of Shakespeare in the

²³³ Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 60.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

National Library.²³⁵ Despite his denial of belief in his own Shakespeare theory in response to Eglinton's query, Stephen's seriousness and investment are betrayed by his formal gesture of sending a telegram to Mulligan to call attendance to his own speech. In the course of the dialogue, Stephen remarks silently: 'See this. Remember [...] Listen' (*U*, 9.294), and later says that 'in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be' (*U*, 9.383-5), as well as observing Eglinton's body language, notably when he is 'leaning back to judge' (*U*, 9.152). Stephen frames the library dialogue in self-reflective terms and is concerned about how his own speech is perceived and judged by his audience. For Stephen, it is hardly a casual daily conversation among literates, but a slice of history that he deliberately extracts to be remembered. Stephen's private theory of Shakespeare should not be a whimsical pastime of a young intellectual, but a significant publicly-staged intervention into the Irish cultural scene of Joyce's time. Moreover, this speech is staged for the gaze of his audience of the present as well as for the future. The impact of an intervention into the present cultural scene is supposed to be appreciated in the light of later day development. In this regard, I argue that Stephen's Shakespeare speech is like a manifesto gesturing to a future possibility, the possibility of a singular universal that is yet to be realized and

²³⁵ MacCabe, p. 111.

developed. In the context of *Ulysses*, the experimentation of a concrete singular universal is to be explored in my textual analysis in the ensuing chapters.

Stephen's dismal situation is staged in the episode. He is literally excluded and his Shakespeare theory falls on deaf ears. For instance, while George Russell collects works from young poets, Stephen is left out of consideration. Russell even departs in the middle of the speech. Eglinton refuses to publish his speech in *Dana* and teases Stephen about his quest for monetary reward for writing. Mulligan and Haines are invited to the gathering, centred on George Moore, while Stephen is excluded from the circle. The self-aggrandising feeling and complacent tone of the Revivalists is echoed in sentences such as 'we are becoming important, it seems' (*U*, 9.311-2) and 'Are we going to be read? I feel we are' (*U*, 9.322-3). Moreover, when Stephen, as an artist, tries 'to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race,' his invisibility and insignificance are reaffirmed by statements such as, 'Our national epic has yet to be written, Dr Sigerson says. Moore is the man for it' (*U*, 9.309-10). Faced with such public humiliation, Stephen murmurs pensively, identifying his exile among his countrymen, 'Cordelia. *Cordoglio*. Lir's loneliest daughter' (*U*, 9.314).

The telegram episode signifies another kind of rejection and exclusion that Stephen faces. Stephen's telegram to Mulligan cites Meredith's definition of the

sentimentalist as ‘he who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done’ (*U*, 9, 550-1). According to John Nash, this piece, on the one hand, betrays ‘a complex denial of sentimentality for the loss of readership,’ for the telegram is ‘the only circulated piece of Stephen’s writing to be received and read by another.’²³⁶ On the other, the line of the telegram refers to both Haines and Mulligan, for they ‘would irresponsibly “enjoy” while ignoring their political debts: for Haines “history is to blame” while for Mulligan there is no blame.’²³⁷ This irresponsibility is physically displayed in Haines’ absence, his having gone to purchase Hyde’s *Lovesongs of Connacht*, and Mulligan’s belated arrival with the manners of a jester. Therefore, the telegram hints at ‘the refusal of responsibility by an English audience.’²³⁸

It is in such an unwelcome context that Stephen attempts to formulate his Shakespeare theory and steers through the troubled waters of cultural politics. At the end of the library episode, Stephen remarks, ‘My will: his will that fronts me. Seas between’ (*U*, 9.1202). According to Robert H. Bell, there is a pun, ‘a twinning of two distinct discourses’ in the sentence, ‘referring literally to the struggle between himself and Buck Mulligan, and metaphorically to his invention of “my will,” his

²³⁶ John Nash, *James Joyce and the Act of Reception: Reading, Ireland, Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), p. 95.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

version of Shakespeare.²³⁹ Stephen is to demonstrate his distinct will through his own version of Will Shakespeare. As Stephen's Shakespeare theory will show, his intervention in cultural politics, though deployed in an attempt for recognition, does not merely amount to an Oedipal struggle and cannot be solely contained in reductive hegemonic competition with British Imperialism and Irish Revivalism, represented by Dowden and Yeats. To put it more precisely, Joyce did not simply write the library episode to take revenge on the group who had once ignored him on in Dublin. His version of 'will' is not merely a will to symbolic capital and cultural power, but aims at a radical subjective and symbolic transformation.

III.

Stephen proposes his private theory of Shakespeare, gesturing how a new poet and a new Symbolic might be created in a single move in response to Eglinton's lament that 'Our young Irish bards [...] have yet to create a figure which the world will set beside Saxon Shakespeare's Hamlet though I admire him, as old Ben did, on this side idolatry' (*U*, 9.43-5). It is noteworthy that the father makes his presence known as a ghost; 'Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit' (*U*, 9.170). Why this

²³⁹ Robert H. Bell, *Jocoserious Joyce: the Fate of Folly in Ulysses* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991), p. 177, note 21.

arrangement? And what is a ghost? Stephen replies with a precise definition: ‘What is a ghost? Stephen said with tingling energy. One who has faded into impalpability through death, through absence, through change of manners’ (*U*, 9. 47-8). Thurston suggests that this appearance of the ghost is related to the central question of how Joyce approaches subjectivity. He makes explicit that the central problem in Joyce is ‘that of the “I” understood not simply as a character in the Freudian psyche but as an enigmatic problem of epiphany or *apparition*,’ and that the use of an apparition is ‘associated not with the unconscious [...] but with the *uncanny*.’²⁴⁰ A ghost is someone who is excluded, exiled, out of joint. A ghost or an apparition is something *unreal* because it tears a hole in the fabric of reality. Its uncanny presence is an intrusion into the normal functioning of the social-symbolic plane and disturbs the representational framework. A father reveals his presence to the son as a ghost only when he betrays his (mal)function as the Name of the Father. The father’s symbolic efficacy in designating/metaphorising the desire of the mother is thus put into question. In Hamlet’s encounter, and what Stephen detects in Shakespeare’s world, is a dramatisation of ‘the destitution of paternal authority.’²⁴¹ The appearance of a ghost father itself constitutes paternity’s own ‘flawed

²⁴⁰ Thurston, p. 10

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44

embodiment,' and works as 'a linguistic remainder.'²⁴² In Stephen's eyes,

Shakespeare's world is one marked with the decline of the father:

the theme of the false or the usurping or the adulterous brother or all three in one is to Shakespeare, what the poor are not, always with him. The note of banishment, banishment from the heart, banishment from home, sounds uninterruptedly from *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* onward till Prospero breaks his staff, buries it certain fathoms in the earth and drowns his book. (*U*, 9.997-1002)

Shakespeare and his characters are burdened with a troubled legacy which renders the father/son rite problematic. Stephen would argue that such a dramatisation of distorted national history/family romances results literally from the author's writing his life into his work:

Is it possible that that player Shakespeare, a ghost by absence, and in the vesture of buried Denmark, a ghost by death, speaking his own words to his own son's name (had Hamnet Shakespeare lived he would have been prince Hamlet's twin) is it possible, I want to know, or probable that he did not draw or foresee the logical conclusion of those premises: you are the dispossessed son: I am the murdered father: your mother is the guilty queen, Ann Shakespeare, born Hathaway? (*U*, 9. 174-80).

Before commenting on the relationship between life and work, I would like to emphasise the radical impact that the malfunctioning of the Name of the Father may leave on representation, subjectivity, fantasy and jouissance. The Name of the Father is what intervenes in the symbiotic relation between the child and the mother, providing a metaphorisation of the desire of the mother, mediating the *jouissance* both of his/her own bodily enjoyment and that of the (m)Other. The Father's Naming is

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 46

to name the lack of the (m)Other, and ‘in referring to nothing with concrete embodiment, to no empirical organ, the Phallus belongs to the domain of the signifier.’²⁴³ The Name of the Father hence is the necessary third term to render the subject’s life liveable, providing master signifiers and their concomitant instalment of fantasy. The Symbolic rewrites the Imaginary duality with the third term of the paternal metaphor. As Harari puts it, ‘[s]ignification is necessarily phallic.’²⁴⁴ The decline of paternal metaphor necessarily entails the shattering of the fantasy plane too, and ‘[w]hen the fantasmatic frame disintegrates, the subject undergoes a “loss of reality” and starts to perceive reality as an “irreal” nightmareish universe with no firm ontological foundation’ (*PF*, 66). Reality, representation and fantasy are on the same side. The dichotomy does not lie between reality and fantasy, but between the Real and reality with representation and fantasy as support underneath.²⁴⁵ The decline of paternity would thus necessarily lead to the breakdown of symbolic efficacy in representation and disturb the subject’s sense of reality and enjoyment.

In the case of Stephen Dedalus, the transmission of legacy from father to son is problematic in the very ritual of transferring his name. Richard Brandon Kershner

²⁴³ Harari, *How James Joyce Made His Name*, p. 72.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁴⁵ Lacan and Lacanians have devoted much space to the important issues of the function of fantasy and its relationship with reality and representation, the dichotomy between reality and the Real in psychoanalysis. See, for instance, Lacan’s *seminar XI*, Zizek’s *The Plague of Fantasy, The Sublime Object and Ideology* and his many other works. Lear, Santner and Copjec deal with this topic while touching upon other related issues such as surplus enjoyment, sexuation, the traversal of fantasy and so on. I will discuss fantasy and its related issues later in my study on ‘Cyclops,’ ‘Circe,’ and ‘Penelope.’

comments on Stephen's process of becoming disillusioned, saying that '[a]t each significant stage of the development of Stephen's consciousness, he undergoes a period of painful sensitivity to "raw" language, language that seems in some respects to lack denotation.'²⁴⁶ The appearance of raw language, I argue, designates the moment in which the Symbolic loses its efficacy in its function of meaning-making, gesturing toward the point of unknotting. As Joyce's detailed account shows, Stephen's sense of reality is broken. He passively encounters the intrusion of the Real in the instance of so-called raw language.

In *A Portrait*, Stephen was led by his father to Queen's college to be shown the trace of a name with the identical initials 'S. D.', shared between father and son, carved on the desk, but only to encounter the strange word 'fetus,' which intrudes and disturbs the field of vision, shattering his sense of reality. After this encounter, Stephen's own repressed desires and fantasies leak and seize him overwhelmingly.

The following extract demonstrates the uncanny, macabre nature of this experience:

They passed into the anatomy theatre where Mr. Dedalus, the porter aiding him, searched the desk for his initials. Stephen remained in the background, depressed more than ever by the darkness and silence of the theatre and by the air it wore of jaded and formal study. On the desk he read the word *fetus* cut several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood. He seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company [...] But the word and the vision capered before his eyes as he walked back across the

²⁴⁶ Richard Brandon Kershner, 'The Artist as Text: Dialogism and Incremental Repetition in *Portrait*', in Philip Brady and James F. Carens (eds.), *Critical Essays on James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1998), p. 231-42.

quadrangle and towards the college gate. It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They too had sprung before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words. He had soon given in to them, and allowed them to sweep across and abase his intellect. (*P*, 252)

The gruesome appearance of the raw language of ‘fetus’ marks the intrusion of the Real and leaves Stephen puzzled and flooded with *jouissance* without the protection of a sound framework of reality supported by the potent Symbolic. The gaping stain of the word ‘fetus’ constitutes precisely a blot, the Lacanian gaze in the field of vision, breaching reality and the representational plane. Such an uncanny experience necessarily puts the authority of the father into question and undermines Stephen’s sense of reality and identity. His father’s instructions sound hollow and meaningless, resonating feebly with repetitious words: ‘I mixed with fine decent fellows [...] But we were all gentlemen, Stephen—at least I hope we were—and bloody good honest Irishmen too. That’s the kind of fellows I want you to associate with, fellows of the right kidney’ (*P*, 253-4). These lines are less wise advice than embarrassing prattle. The voice of the father is finally reduced to a pathetic ‘sob,’ which itself embodies the presence of the Lacanian voice.²⁴⁷ This confrontation with the father’s irrationality, impotence and enjoyment in the failure to pass on authority and assume his symbolic mandate has drastic consequences for Stephen’s subjectivity.

²⁴⁷ Lacan adds the voice and the gaze as objects of the acoustic drive and the scopic drive to the faeces and breasts as the objects of the anal drive and the oral drive. The voice hence designates the voice’s function as an *objet petit a*, as the embodiment of the void in structure, the excess or surplus of enjoyment, the lacuna in meaning-making at the acoustic level in Lacan’s edifice.

Stephen experiences the existential vertigo of unreality without the shield of the fantasmatic frame, lost in the hole of the fabric of the Symbolic. Joyce describes

Stephen's loss of reality as follows:

He heard the sob passing loudly down his father's throat and opened his eyes with a nervous impulse. The sunlight breaking suddenly on his sight turned the sky and clouds into a fantastic world of sombre masses with lacelike spaces of dark rosy light. His very brain was sick and powerless. He could scarcely interpret the letters of the signboards of the shop. By his monstrous way of life he seemed to have put himself beyond the limit of reality (*P*, 254).

That is to say, the malfunctioning of the paternal metaphor renders Stephen lost between two deaths, leading him to experience his black Sabbath of existence in terms of horror and unreality *contra* Antigone's splendid version of being between two deaths portrayed by Lacan in *Seminar VII*. In a similar vein, Maud Ellmann, commenting on this episode and the text of *A Portrait* as a whole, identifies how naming itself becomes 'maiming,'²⁴⁸ arguing that the portraiture that Joyce devises is not so much a representation and remembrance of a well-rounded character as a 'disremembering' process, by which the subject undergoes 'fading,' 'dissolving into a nameless scar.'²⁴⁹ Ellmann claims that *A Portrait* 'conceives identity as a scar without an author, without an origin, and at last without even a name.'²⁵⁰ As a double scar of the subject and of the text, *A Portrait* is 'radically opposed to the tradition of

²⁴⁸ Maud Ellmann, 'Disremembering Dedalus: "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,"' *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, Robert C Young (ed.) (London: Routledge, 1981), p.191.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

the human subject and the orthodox conception of the subject matter of the text.²⁵¹

The subject that emerges is more like a form of punctuation, like ‘the silence woven into music, the absence woven into vision,’ or ‘the pulsation of the unconscious.’²⁵²

How does Stephen cope with this drastic existential crisis, the ontological vertigo in the face of the eclipse, or better, the annulment of the Symbolic? Significantly, Stephen strives to drag himself out of the horrifying derailment by relocating himself in a social and geographical context, *namely, by re-anchoring himself in the Symbolic through renaming*. Stephen pronounces, ‘I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Stephen and Simon. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names’ (*P*, 254). This gesture of re-anchoring oneself back into the established Symbolic through existing names shows the intricate relationship between symbolization and subjectivity, displaying the pivotal roles name and naming play with regard to the construction and maintenance of subjectivity. It is *not* yet a creative self-naming yet in the direction of constructing a new Symbolic, but a desperate attempt of inscribing oneself back into established Symbolic framework to avoid existential crisis.

In ‘Scylla and Charybdis,’ Stephen again encounters the crippled father figure

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 197.

and feels extremely isolated from his father: '[H]urrying to her squalid deathlair from gay Paris on the quayside I touched his hand. The voice, new warmth, speaking. Dr Bob Kenny is attending her. The eyes that wish me well. But do not know me' (*U*, 9.825-7). There is little hope for the successful transmission of paternal legacy. Right after this brief piece of memory concerning the father, Stephen spells out his famous speech on paternity as legal fiction:

A father, Stephen said, battling against hopelessness, is *a necessary evil* [...] Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is *unknown* to man. It is *a mystical estate*, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro- and microcosm, *upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a *legal fiction*. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son? (*U*, 9.828-45, emphasis added)

Paternal metaphor, the phallic signification built on void, is nothing but a necessary evil, a necessary fiction of legality. The entire Symbolic edifice and subjectivity are centred on the void, the nothingness, the pure negativity. The Name of the Father is to acknowledge properly and necessarily the lack of the Other, to temporarily stabilise enjoyment through this naming. As Rabaté points out, '[p]aternity points to the void, the unconscious of origins, the unconscious hoarding of signs or letters, and yet it remains the model of any creative gesture.'²⁵³ The notion of connecting Joyce with God, with creator, is heavily concerned with the naming function of the Father upon

²⁵³ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *James Joyce, Authorized Reader* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 171.

the void and the possibility of creating something out of nothing through naming. Artistic inspiration finds its roots in divine creation: ‘to speak is to act, to name is to create: the logos of God, the *fiat lux* of the Creator Father, effects what it proclaims.’²⁵⁴ It is thus paternity as an ‘act of authoring,’ a notion of ‘literary creation *ex nihilo* rather than human creation with the help of a woman’ that is at stake in Joyce’s self-naming.²⁵⁵ Joyce becomes his own father, fathering his world in making his own proper name part of the world of literature and in creating a fictional world within the Symbolic cultural terrain.

The radical quality of Joyce’s naming and creation cannot be encapsulated by the typical oedipal struggle for recognition of established authority in the Other, nor can it be interpreted as merely another example of the anxious, adolescent scenario of rebellion against the accepted categories of identity as Kent Baxer contends. By interpreting naming as an adolescent tension between the father and the son, Baxer suggests the latter fails to transcend the confinement imposed by the authority and genealogy of the father. He remarks that:

Desire is inscribed in the very (im)possibility of the proper name itself. The adolescent attempts to renounce the name of the father and claim his own name and identity, but names are always already part of a genealogy, are always already the name of the father. The adolescent’s attempt to make a name for himself is both facilitated and frustrated by the ‘double law of the name’ that creates the illusion that the proper name signifies an individuality, but always expresses this

²⁵⁴ Ellen Carlos Jones, “‘Writing the Mystery of Himself:’ Paternity in *Ulysses*,” *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, Bernard Benstock (ed.) (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), p. 227.

²⁵⁵ Karen Lawrence, ‘Paternity as Legal Fiction in *Ulysses*,’ *James Joyce: The Augmented Ninth*, p. 235.

individuality in reference to the name of the father.²⁵⁶

Baxer seems to claim that using the father's surname amounts to falling into the constraint of genealogy and that nothing fundamentally challenges the established authority of the father. Moreover, Baxer holds that what Stephen and other adolescents do in their rebellion and search for an identity and name is no more than a choice among the established categories accumulated in the cultural terrain. It therefore follows that when Stephen plays with his surname and renders it 'a Greek bastardization,' it merely demonstrates 'how Stephen has taken a name from *an existing system of meaning* and made it meaningful to himself.'²⁵⁷ In Baxer's reading, naming for oneself or inventing one's own name is neutralised as it remains a choice among the existing categories; the question is only directed to 'which father?'²⁵⁸ Joyce's agenda is not *apropos* of opting for this possibility and excluding others in the current situation, but rather introducing and inventing one that has never existed. Baxer's account implicitly rules out the possibility that a fundamentally new avenue might be introduced under a new name. He therefore misunderstands Joyce's endeavour and underestimates the radical nature of his achievement.

Joyce's strategy for building his own subjectivity defies and transgresses this classic categorisation and Lacan's encounter with Joyce leads him to revise his

²⁵⁶ Kent Baxer, 'Naming a Name for Himself: Paternity, Joyce and Stephen's Adolescent Identity Crisis', *Naming the Father: Legacies, and Explorations of Fatherhood in Modern and Contemporary Literature*, Eva P Bueno, Terry Caesar and William Hummel (eds.) (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000), p. 205.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212, emphasis added.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

theories about the end of psychoanalysis in clinical practice. Instead of the destitution of the subject and the traversal of fantasy as the end/aim of analysis, Lacan proposes the concept of identifying with the *sinthome* as an alternative outcome. Here, we can detect a relativisation of the Name of the Father in Lacan's thinking. Rather than the singular Name of the Father, we now have plural Names of the Father by way of symptoms. As Chiesa cogently argues, later Lacan would radically revise his thinking regarding the ethics of psychoanalysis to avoid the entrapment of the tragic path taken by Antigone and the Buddhist dwelling on nothingness, advocating a third mode of identification with the newly-invented, self-manufacturing *sinthome*.²⁵⁹ Commenting on the analytic goal, Paul Verhaeghe and Fredric Declercq remark that '[t]he symptom is what defines mankind, and as such it cannot be rectified or cured. This is Lacan's final conclusion: *there is no subject without a symptom*.'²⁶⁰ This is precisely Joyce's way of making his own name; by inventing his own *sinthome*, inscribing it into the Symbolic and hence contributing to his own version of a cultural revolution.

In Joyce's world, paternity is defective, and the subject inevitably faces the existential task of surviving. Whereas the normal neurotic subject assumes the paternal authority with doubt, Joyce keenly perceives the Symbolic to be mere fiction

²⁵⁹ See Chiesa's *Subjectivity and Otherness*. Also see his essay 'Lacan with Artaud.'

²⁶⁰ Paul Verhaeghe and Fredric Declercq, p. 66.

covering over a void, over nothingness. This insight emerges at the convergence/intersection of epistemology and ontology, whereupon an epistemological revelation coincides with an ontological battle for survival. Thus, a key question here would be how Joyce avoids madness and becomes an individual, as Lacan likes to say. Joyce's literary ambition is not a game of Oedipal rivalry; his aesthetic practice is not for decorative pleasure, but an ontological struggle toward survival and self-assertion, not within the existing cultural framework, but in a fight against existential abyss.

Rather than the 'cunning Italian intellect' based upon the fiction of the Madonna, Joyce betrays the fictional status of the Symbolic, this very foundational lack of the Other. For his subjectivity to survive and for a new Symbolic to be established, Joyce invents new names to replace the declining Name of the Father. Honouring one's father would amount to 'a way of linking up with symbolic debt,' something which Joyce would like to avoid. As such, 'instead of honoring or rendering homage to his father,' Joyce 'makes into his life's goal the effort to honor his proper name.'²⁶¹

In place of paternal metaphor, Joyce cunningly inserts his own name. As Chiesa puts it,

the name "Joyce" literally embodies a subjective place-holder for the lack of the Other; and it does so by means of a particular way of writing. The name of "Joyce" is a "singular universal": Joyce reaches a substitutive version of the Name of the

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 145.

Father—thus individualized and individuated and anti-ideological by definition—precisely by writing his *jouis-sens*.²⁶²

Lacan designates Joyce as an individual precisely because of his ability to achieve a new Symbolic through the instalment of a singular universal and his know-how in dealing with his own *jouissance*. Chiesa summarises this point succinctly:

Joyce is “the individual” for Lacan in so far as he succeeds in subjectivising himself by (partially) individuating *objet petit a*, the lack of the Symbolic; the individual is not the ideological One but stands for another modality of the One, another (non-psychotic) way of inhabiting the Symbolic, “starting” from its real lack.²⁶³

The assumption of a singular universal betrays the structural correspondence of the subject’s act in place of his subjective destitution. In the state of the subjective destitution, the subject’s status as void and the inconsistency of the Other are duely acknowledged. The Other relies on the subject’s authentic act, the subject’s participation to make it function properly. Žižek argues for the formula of ‘A(the Other) = a (*objet a* as a symbol for the subject’s act)’ (*IR*, 144-7). On the one hand, he claims that ‘it is the very supplement of my “subjective” act of decision [...] which changes the dispersed, “not-all” collection of signifiers into the “objective” order of the big Other;’ on the other hand, Žižek also states ‘in so far as the big Other functions as the guarantee of the meaning-to-come, the very fact of the big Other involves the subjective gesture of precipitation.’²⁶⁴ For the universal functioning of the law, the operation of the Symbolic, to be effective, there must be the assumption

²⁶² Chiesa, ‘Lacan with Artaud’, p. 358.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

of the subject, the singular contribution from the subject. As Zupančič cogently argues, '[t]he reason why the subject cannot be effaced from the "structure" of the ethical' lies in the fact that 'the gesture by which every subject, by means of his action posits the universal, performs a certain operation of universalization.'²⁶⁵

As I have explicated at length in the previous chapter regarding my theoretical intention underlying this dissertation, while the normal neurotic subject strives to undergo the traversal of fundamental fantasy and procure the freedom to assume an individualised new Symbolic, Joyce does not need to undertake this traversal in the very beginning. On the contrary, he is 'already separated from the Symbolic; instead, he needs to create his founding Master Signifiers.'²⁶⁶ The individualised master signifier that Joyce is to assume and endorse is nothing more than his own proper name as an internationally acclaimed author. As Jacques-Alain Miller remarks, '[Joyce's] authentic Name-of-the-Father is his name as a writer [...] his literary production allows him to relocate himself within the meaning he lacked.'²⁶⁷ In lieu of the defective Father, the name of 'Joyce' 'literally embodies a subjective place-holder for the lack in the Other, and it does so by means of a particular way of writing.'²⁶⁸ The name 'Joyce' thus becomes a master signifier, transcending neighbourhood and

²⁶⁵ Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real*, p. 61.

²⁶⁶ Chiesa, 'Lacan with Artaud', p. 357.

²⁶⁷ Miller, quoted in Chiesa, *ibid.*, p. 358-7.

²⁶⁸ Chiesa, 'Lacan with Artaud', p. 358.

participating in the cultural capital to circulate worldwide. The name ‘Joyce’ assumes the status of ‘the singular universal’ : ‘Joyce reaches a substitutive version of the Name-of-the-Father—thus individualized and individuated and anti-ideological by definition—precisely by writing his *jouis-sens*.’²⁶⁹ Joyce’s literary act of inventive writing is an ethical act for he actively takes up the responsibility of constructing the Other, rather than passively submitting to existing authority, by gesturing toward a singular universal. Consequently, we can easily detect that behind Joyce’s half-joking ambition to keep academics busy for centuries in deciphering his works looms large his endeavour for subjective survival, his anxiety to be recognised *symbolically* through his name as a writer inscribed in the Other, through creating and becoming a master signifier. This is Joyce’s peculiar way of writing his own version of a singular universal.

IV.

The structural dissolution caused by the deficiency of the Name-of-the-Father, requires a re-constructing of the unchained knots at the three levels of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. Joyce as a writer is his newly invented image, his newly devised ego upon which his subjectivity essentially relies. When Joyce writes, his

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 358, original emphasis.

identity and his entire existential weight are at stake and his writing is his means to carry out his ethical act in constructing an existence for his subjectivity. Seen in this light, we can now better appreciate and interpret the peculiar relationship between work and life in Joyce's writing and in Stephen's private theory of Shakespeare. Russell protests and refutes Stephen's idiosyncratic, biographical reading of Shakespeare:

Interesting only to the parish clerk, I mean, we have the plays. I mean when we read the poetry of King Lear what is it to us how the poet lived? As for living, our servants can do that for us, Villiers de l'Isle has said. Peeping and prying into greenroom gossip of the day, the poet's drinking, the poet's debts. We have King Lear: and it is immortal.' (*U*, 9.184-8)

Russell's impatient refutation actually bears its own merit and can be regarded as an advocacy of the New Critics' 'intentional fallacy' *avant la lettre*. However, the relationship between life and work that Stephen presents is *not* that of reflection. Nor does he aim at an anecdotal, biographical, historicist approach to art. There is, rather, a peculiar avenue for recognition other than reflection that Stephen strives to make explicit. Stephen has his own agenda for subjective and symbolic constitution when he makes efforts to incorporate as many biographical elements as he can in interpreting Shakespeare. Right at the beginning of his lecture, Stephen says to himself: 'Local colour. Work in all you know. Make them accomplices' (*U*, 9.158). In addition to the current Shakespeare motifs, namely, 'the theme of the false or the usurping or the adulterous brother' (*U*, 9.997-8), Stephen argues that Shakespeare

hides and scatters his brothers' names in real life when composing his masterpieces: 'He had three brothers, Gilbert, Edmund, Richard.' (*U*, 9.894), continuing to point out that '[i]n his trinity of black Wills, the villain shakebags, Iago, Richard Crookback, Edmund in King Lear, two bear the wicked uncles' names. Nay, that last play was written or being written while his brother Edmund lay dying in Southwark' (*U*, 9.911-4).

Readers can detect how seriously Joyce takes Stephen's private theory of Shakespeare, as the manoeuvres Stephen identifies in Shakespeare become common practice in Joyce's own writings. Critics would hardly miss the fact that Joyce: (1) playfully scatters autobiographical and literary allusions throughout his works; and (2) constantly smuggles in proper names and plays with sounds, letters and senses. The former is part of Joyce's project of turning himself and his real life acquaintances into fictional characters which he can return to time and again to reshape, revamp and re-evaluate. Readers of *Ulysses* easily find themselves cast in the similar and sympathetic position of Stephen with his idiosyncratic reading of Shakespeare, encountering autobiographical references, in-jokes and self-reflexive commentary everywhere. For some critics, this mixing of life and work by the author himself is frustrating and confusing. According to Robert Adams, Joyce intrudes frequently by

inserting autobiographical facts which are ‘beyond fictional explanation.’²⁷⁰ Joyce is ‘present’ everywhere ‘as an unexplained animus; he omits, arranges, and juxtaposes elements and occasionally, to remind us of his power, he appears as an agent of confusion, bafflement, and deliberate frustration.’²⁷¹

Other critics have celebrated this practice in the name of ‘Joyicity’ as a demonstration of Joyce’s comic presence. Joyce’s allusions in *Ulysses* reveal an ‘antic’ Joyce ‘clowning around.’²⁷² As Bell argues, Joyce metamorphoses into many narrative guises: ‘Joyicity thus illustrates a version of personal identity, affording us glimpses of its author, nowhere to be seen, everywhere present, like Shakespeare “a ghost, a shadow now.”’²⁷³ Bell detects in Joyce’s comic play with autobiographical allusions a serious agenda of identity-making. He quotes Roland Barthes, saying ‘it is the work which affects life, not the life which affects the work.’ Bell claims ‘[w]hatever happened to the actual James Augustine Joyce, this purveyor of joyicity is subject to the laws of folly, drawing all things down and up: in this sense the author becomes a series of parodic “selves,” perpetually sacrificed and redeemed.’²⁷⁴ Instead of reflecting life in art, the attempt to write life into his work aims to achieve a symbolic and subjective function, to produce an identity effect. This effect can only

²⁷⁰ Robert M. Adams, *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 180.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

²⁷² Bell, p. 184, p. 185.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

be conferred by the work's effect upon life, not the other way around.

In contrast to Adams' position and in agreement with Bell's argument, I contend that in the library chapter, through the idiosyncratic theory of Shakespeare, Joyce launches his own theory of the intimate connection between life and work which is more than a case of mere representation or reflection. It is thus less a work which reflects autobiographical facts than a life constructed through the writing of the work on a life. The function of Joyce's writing as his *sinthome* is of fundamental ontological importance. To put it succinctly, Joyce 'devotes his life to it [his writing], because it is his life.'²⁷⁵ With the aid of the conception of know-how (the subject's *savoir-faire* of his *jouissance*) and the singular universal, the relation between life and work is cast in a new light. Therein lies one of the basic claims of my position: as a subject unbounded by the Name of the Father, the traditional privileged signifier in organising our culture and normal neurotic subjectivity, Joyce's writing is his way of constructing his life, his enjoyment and his meaning of life. The ontological stakes are thus extremely high. It is not that he bases his writing on his life or that his work reflects his biography or historical facts. Rather, he is his writing; his life, his subjectivity depends on his work, his assumption and practice of being a writer. That is, in gesturing toward the possibility of the singular universal, the subject's

²⁷⁵ Harari, p. 359.

work on life, the subject's *savoir-faire* of his *jouissance* harbours his freedom, his ethical choice, and decision. In his work on and invention of his life, his ontological being at the most fundamental is at stake.

Joyce establishes his subjectivity and the world upon the void. In his oeuvre, we encounter the recurrent artist-god motif and Joyce's ubiquitous presence in his work, the consubstantiality between the author and the characters, the consubstantiality between the father and the son, between Bloom and Stephen and so on.²⁷⁶ Stephen contemplates: 'So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which then I shall be' (*U*, 9. 383-5). Joyce is here aware that the artist to be is in the making. Joyce only becomes Joyce by creating his masterpieces. Brivic praises this endeavour, remarking that 'Joyce respected God sufficiently to suspect that the Deity might value his honest emulation more than his slavishness.'²⁷⁷

Joyce is in accord with Lacan in that both of them acknowledge language's function in shaping subjectivity and the world. As Brivic puts it, '[f]or Lacan, consciousness is made up of language that aims at an object it can never reach, while Joyce developed as a model of life the idea of writer projecting words into a world he

²⁷⁶ See Sheldon Brivic's *Joyce the Creator*, especially the chapter devoted to consubstantiality.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

can never occupy.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, Joycean literary experiment expands beyond what is known of/as the world, venturing into new perspectives of world formation through his '*sinthome* as a symptom cultivated as an artistic activity.'²⁷⁹ As a subject disinvested from ideological fantasies and unsubscribed from the Unconscious, writing for Joyce is not merely an aesthetic practice for detached pleasure but an existential endeavour to constitute subjectivity by manufacturing his own name. That is to say, by writing his life into his own works and becoming an indispensable master in literature for the future generations, Shakespeare functions for Stephen as a master figure/signifier working his way into eternity through the constitution of a singular universal in the symbolic. Stephen blatantly pronounces Shakespeare's practice of writing as an act of self-naming in the following passage:

When Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare or another poet of the same name in the comedy of errors wrote Hamlet he was not the father of his own son merely but, being no more a son, he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson. (*U*, 9.866-9)

While the awkward name of 'Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare' condenses and mocks the controversial debate over the identity of the poet, the legacy that Stephen identifies and reads into the name of Shakespeare is his assumption of a singular universal by honouring his own proper name, by making his own proper name a master signifier in literature.

²⁷⁸ Brivic, *Joyce through Lacan and Žižek*, p. xi

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1

As Stephen points out, '[h]e has hidden his own name, a fair name, William, in the plays, a super here, a clown there, as a painter of old Italy set his face in a dark corner of his canvas. He has revealed it in the sonnets where there is Will in overplus' (*U*, 9.921-4). According to Thurston, this 'cryptonymy' offers a figure of Shakespeare 'radically influenced by the personal, by the singular instance of identity and desire. If the plays are one long signature, the name itself becomes an enormous pun, a polysemic node binding together insisture and testament, self-institution and self-perpetuation.'²⁸⁰ Since 'insisture' is resonant with insistence, signature, and institution, I understand Thurston's neologism 'insisture' as the artist's insistence, his will to sign his own name in the literary institution. In consequence, this artistic insistence through signature constitutes a form of symbolic recognition.

This is one of Joyce's unique practices in writing his version of the singular universal. Thurston explains, 'Joyce defines insisture as the performative instance of the name in the literary institution, its alchemical conversion of the particular instant to the timeless universal.'²⁸¹ Moreover, 'Joyce's readings and raidings of Shakespeare turn on the name and its poesis, on name-making and inscribing the name into the world created: insisture [...] is always a name-play that both shapes the

²⁸⁰ Thurston, p. 82.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.82.

universe and distorts it with particular will, with an illegitimate signature.’²⁸²

Insistence is also where the creative act as an ethical act in language lies, for the subject takes the responsibility to name him/herself, to insist on oneself, rather than being institutionalised by the existing authorities.²⁸³

The practice of stuffing/distorting/imploding words is concerned with the famous or notorious play with words and with names, which leads us to Joyce’s self-nomination at the level of the Real. Name-play is a significant device for Joyce’s attempt to write the singular into the universal. Joyce playfully and deliberately distorts the proper names, thereby defying the law of proper names and drawing upon a clutter of biographical information to rename Shakespeare as ‘Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare.’ This distorted/perverted proper name is too long and hence unabashedly defies linguistic and cultural convention. The obesity of the newly-invented name gives rise to a certain density, pointing to the singularity of Shakespeare.

Similarly, Joyce scatters his biographical details and plays with his own name and the names of his characters throughout his entire oeuvre. Joyce’s deliberate conservation of the historicity of setting and names of Stephen’s interlocutors serves a

²⁸² Ibid., p. 82-3.

²⁸³ Thurston argues that ‘the authorial signature is necessarily illegitimate’ given that a truly creative act as a Lacanian act marks out ‘a point of rupture with the discursive bound of social existence.’ Ibid., p. 83

peculiar literary purpose rather than pure autobiographical interest. As Clare Hutton identifies,

[i]n this chapter of *Ulysses*, more than in others, Joyce insists on the historicity of his setting [...] characteriz[ing] real historical figures—George Russell (1867-1935), T. W. Lyster (1855-1922), John Eglinton a.k.a. William K. Magee (1868-1961) and R. I. Best (1872-1959)—giving them real names and their real-life intellectual interests and thus marginalizing their fictionality'.²⁸⁴

This differs from 'his more usual aesthetic practice of characterising real historical figures and giving them fictional names' as in the cases of Haines and Mulligan.²⁸⁵ In short, Joyce intends to emphasise that those people were once there and populated Dublin and its cultural territory, which not only constitutes the historical materiality of *Ulysses*, but also contributes to his process of unknotting and re-knotting through re-naming others to accompany his own self-naming. It is arguable that if Joyce *allegorises* Haines and Mulligan, he *singularises* those interlocutors in the library episode. Joyce achieves a quasi Benjaminian messianic gesture to save the historical moment and figures from oblivion by keeping their names and writing their actions into *Ulysses*, elevating the singular into the universal. Furthermore, Joyce plays with the singular when constituting the universal. Instead of changing their names, Joyce plays with the interlocutors' real names through distortion and perversion. For instance, we encounter 'John sturdy Eglinton,' (*U*,

²⁸⁴ Clare Hutton, 'Joyce, the Library Episode, and the Institution of Irish Revivalism', in Andrew Gibson and Len Platt (eds.), *Joyce, Ireland, Britain* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006), p. 132.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

9.600), 'Mr. Secondbest Best' (*U*, 9.714-5), 'Besteglinton' (*U*, 9.728), 'Steadfast John' (*U*, 9.737) and so on. I would like to point out that, on the one hand, the adjectives 'sturdy,' 'Steadfast,' 'Secondbest' and 'Best' are words utilised to betray the qualities and traits of his characters. On the other hand, when Joyce inserts these adjectives into names as a middle name, or capitalises them to form a new proper name, Joyce turns adjectives into nouns, into names. In this way, Joyce elevates distinctive traits into proper names to capture the singularity of these historical figures. In the meantime, by perverting the names of the historical figures, Joyce also plays with these singularities, making them resilient and flexible to suit his construction of the fictional world of *Ulysses*, which ultimately serves his own self-designation as a new master in world literature.

Chapter Three

Laughter in the Dungeon: Symptomatic Nationalism and the Ethical Ideals in ‘Cyclops’

History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

Ulysses, 2.377

I.

Critics have long puzzled over the bewildering, kaleidoscopic display of stylistic changes and digressive interpolations in the ‘Cyclops’ episode. In a cave-like setting, the realistic portrait of the gathering of the barflies at Barney Kiernan's pub is interlaced with digressive insertions of different styles. These interruptions constitute ‘rhetorical excess,’²⁸⁶ appearing in the text ‘at random, spawned by an association, generated by an aspect of the story, a word used by a speaker, a historical analogy to an event, or merely a rhetorical figure.’²⁸⁷ They consist of exhaustive lists of titles, saints, names, trees and fishes, fragments of romanticised episodes of Irish national heroics, descriptions of the ‘legendary beauty’ (*U*, 12.1442) of an Irish facecloth, places and scenes of Irish nationalist self-identification, journalistic reports of a natural disaster (*U*, 12.1858-96), boxing (*U*, 12.960-87), a high-fashion wedding (*U*, 12,1266-95) and so on. The narrative voice, which supposedly frames and

²⁸⁶ With this term, I am indebted to Christian Van Boheeman-Saaf. My ensuing discussion in this chapter shall follow her identification of Joyce's textual experiment in ‘Cyclops’ as a form of rhetorical excess within the realistic representation. Christian Van Boheeman-Saaf, *Joyce, Derrida, Lacan and the Trauma of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

reports the activities among characters, is itself *besieged* by the rhetorical force of these thematic digressions. Moreover, the narrative voice, which traditionally is attributed to a single character with a unified set of memories or to a totalising author, lapses into drastically diverse styles, which include, among others, biblical reference, Homeric epithet, mock-romantic narratives and journalistic reportage. Joyce here deploys ‘a polyphony of voices,’²⁸⁸ presenting ‘an assemblage in place of a total/totalising narrative, an open system of narrative resonances in which experimentation and proliferation replace the authority of the singular eye.’²⁸⁹ As Karen Lawrence observes, ‘[t]he story appears to be told twice, once in the single voice of the narrator, once in the parodic forms of various literary and subliterate styles.’²⁹⁰ The ‘realistic’ narrative and interpolations of rhetorical excess undercut each other.

Approaches to the anonymous, first-person narrator are mainly divided into two camps. First, unreliability and intention to distort reality and facts can be detected in the narrative. The ‘realistic’ narrative is told by an unreliable anonymous, first-person narrator conventionally called the Nameless One, who is a ‘[c]ollector of bad and doubtful debts’ (*U*, 12.24-5), having a job ‘regarded in Ireland as the lowest

²⁸⁸ Emer Nolan, ‘State of the Art: Joyce and Postcolonialism’, in Derek Attridge and Marjorie Elizabeth Howes (eds.), *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 78-95, at p. 85.

²⁸⁹ Mark Nunes, ‘Beyond the “Holy See”: Parody and Narrative Assemblage in “Cyclops”’, *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, 45.2 (1999), 174-85, at p. 183.

²⁹⁰ Karen Lawrence, *The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 102.

of occupations, almost as bad as a career in petty crime.²⁹¹ The narrator is not hesitant to let others ‘have the weight of my tongue’ (*U*, 12.3-4). In stark contrast to the lyricism of introspective monologues by Stephen and Bloom, the vulgarity and unreliability is more than evident in the reportage of the Nameless One, who is inclined to abusive denunciation and is metaphorically a Cyclops figure due to nearly losing his eyesight.²⁹² The unreliability of the Nameless One’s representations is hinted at in the very beginning, for they come from a Cyclopean persona. Enda Duffy proposes to read the Nameless One as a suspicious informer, and the story he reports as a product to feed the colonial surveillance.²⁹³ Duffy argues that the Nameless One knows dirty secrets about everyone, heaping gossip, pouring censure and reporting troubles such as the fracas between Bloom and the Citizen.²⁹⁴ In short, the desire of the Nameless One distorts facts and reality, producing a *realistic yet partial* representation tarnished with anti-Semitism and staged for the colonial gaze of surveillance.

While the first approach as exemplified by Duffy’s criticism contends that the

²⁹¹ Gifford, p. 316

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 315.

²⁹³ Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses* (Minneapolis; London: U of Minnesota P, 1994), p. 122.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122-3. Duffy builds his argument on the close reading of ‘Cyclops’ as an episode pervasive with ‘a plethora of references to the police’ and ‘the culture of the courthouse.’ For example, Barney Keirnan’s is located near Green Street Courthouse, where rebels are prosecuted, and Little Britain Street stands in the quarter of the centres of judicial power in Ireland. Cases like Canada Swindle or Danis Breen’s suspicion of being libelled with a nonsense postcard suggest that Dublin and the narrative offered by the Nameless One are under the influence of colonial surveillance. Duffy, p. 113 and p. 119.

narrator is apparently untrustworthy in representing reality, some other critics emphasize the narrator's very ability to recount and report events, to tell stories although these stories might bear on ambiguities, blurring the distinction between fiction and facts. The second approach identifies the narrative as a 'realistic'²⁹⁵ or 'naturalistic'²⁹⁶ mode of representation. What has been termed as the 'initial style' of the first nine episodes by Joyce, which consists of interior monologue and a third person narration, is replaced and 'turned inside out' by 'figurative language in parodic trappings' and 'a colloquial first-person narrator.'²⁹⁷ The second approach does not negate the discussion about reliability, but puts emphasis on the idea that the narrative is still deployed in a 'realistic' representational model, which assumes an epistemological structure in terms of the linear perspective of a picture. The elementary structure between the subject and the object, between the viewer and the picture, between the reader and a story remains intact. A voice, reliable or dubious, is still reporting an event, telling a story, presenting a picture to the audience. Framed by the realistic model of representation, it is only a secondary consideration that this represented object might be contaminated by the intention or desire of the narrating subject. The question of reliability represents a moral judgment centring

²⁹⁵ Duffy, p. 121. Duffy shifts from 'realist' to 'realistic' in writing, arguing that 'Cyclops' is 'realistic' rather than a 'realist' as the narrative is formed within the context of colonial rule. But I think the term 'realist' still applies in describing the narrative by the Nameless One because it differs from the surrealist, expressionist and impressionist techniques in style.

²⁹⁶ David Michael Greer, 'Theatrical Joyce', Ph.D. Thesis (Universidade de Lisboa, 2011), p. 233.

²⁹⁷ Dermot Kelly, *Narrative Strategies in Joyce's Ulysses* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), p. 30.

on authentication, not an epistemological investigation involving subjectivity, object, representation, and so on. The question of unreliability does not necessarily challenge the realistic mode of representation.

In 'Cyclops,' I argue, the radical subversion of the realistic mode of representation and the underlying subject/object relation is deployed through the clash between the realistic narrative and the interpolations, as well as the implosion from within the digressive interpolations themselves. The self-centred narration by the Nameless One is 'defused' and 'euphemised' through the insertion of discourses with 'the appearance of objective narrative though this objectivity is shown to be an illusion by their uncontrolled parodistic development (what Joyce called the technique of gigantism).'²⁹⁸ In short, Joyce's textual experiment is a twofold disruption. It is an outspoken challenge to the realistic mode of representation, undermining the underlying epistemological assumption. Realistic representation is built upon a traditional concept of authority, a personalised image of either an author or a narrative voice attributed to a character, of a totalising subject in the face of his object. In 'Cyclops,' the supposedly transparent visibility of realistic representation is first invoked and then deliberately *obfuscated*, the subjectivity of a centred discourse *subverted*. In this chapter, I will explore how this subversion of realistic mode of

²⁹⁸ Patrick McGee, *Paperspace: Style as Ideology in Joyce's Ulysses* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), p. 79.

representation and its concomitant subjectivity is achieved aesthetically.

Joyce's textual experiment in 'Cyclops' is a state of narrative disarray of digressive interpolation in dialogue with a realistic mode of representation of the Nameless One. The experience of reading this chapter can be roughly outlined as follows. The reader sets out with conventionalised representation of diegetic reality, and suddenly his/her expectation is deliberately shaken when he/she repeatedly encounters stylistic changes and thematic digressions. The reader is thus taken away from diegetic reality to wild imaginary or fantastic worlds, epitomised in instances of fetishistic lists, romanticised pseudo-epics or heroic legends. To borrow from Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf, the reader encounters narrative 'rhetorically excessive of (realistic) representation.'²⁹⁹ While the reader is wandering around the digressive, imaginative reality and wondering about the function and the meaning of these insertions, he/she cannot but burst into laughter at the very excess of this rhetorical digression. That is, the 'rhetorical excess' tends to run out of control not simply with regard to the realistic mode of representation, but also in relation to the fantasised rhetorical excess itself. Rhetorical excess *implodes* from within and shatters the closure of enjoyment in the fantasised world initially established by the rhetorical excess itself. In summary, Joyce's narrative experiment is triple-layered: (1) realistic

²⁹⁹ Van Boheemen-Saaf, p. 78.

representation; (2) narrative interpolations rhetorically excessive to representation; and (3) the implosion of rhetorical excess when the excess runs out of control.

After grasping the narrative (dis)array in 'Cyclops' as roughly sketched above, I propose an alternative critical avenue by investigating the effect of parodied interpolations from the perspective of libidinal economy. I will attempt to demonstrate how an inquiry into the libidinal economy of Joyce's linguistic and literary practices will help us to explore the potential for a progressive political agenda and ethical action in Joyce's writing. Namely, the critical focus should not merely be put on what is being mocked in parodies, but on how Joyce does this as an *exorcism* of the fantasmatic enjoyment of the political agendas. I will argue that prior to the emergence of a post-colonial subjectivity, Joyce enacts a literary working through of a drunken version of cultural nationalism to pave the way for an emergent subjectivity.

As indicated above, narrative (dis)array in the form of rhetorical excess harbours a twofold critique: an epistemological challenge to representation, and an ontological subversion to centred subjectivity. I hence propose to read this narrative (de)formation by way of the Lacanian theorisation of subjectivity and the epistemological model of the look and the gaze. I will utilize Žižek's dialectical revision of psychoanalytic insights, which clarifies the relationship between the

domains of private, personal pathology and public, ideological politics. The psychoanalytic-minded theories on ideology also shed light on the relationship between symptomatic nationalism and anti-Semitism. In the final section of this chapter, meanwhile, I offer a critical assessment of the ethico-political ideals purveyed in 'Cyclops' in opposition to the symptomatic nationalism which Joyce has represented and distanced himself from by means of literary working through.

II.

Let us begin our investigation of rhetorical excess with its capacity to violate realistic representation of the world by adding the opacity of fantasised reality, which is a flagrant antithesis to the sordid, vulgar reality presented by the Nameless One. This fantastic reality intrudes abruptly, emerging as an alternative mode of discursive visibility, of diverse style, and arguably another mode of imagination with which to organise enjoyment. For instance, while making their entrance into Barney Kiernan's, the characters are introduced with parodies of Irish legends. Bloom is portrayed in heroic terms: 'O'Bloom, the son of Rory: it is he. Impervious to fear is Rory's son: he of the prudent soul' (*U*, 12.216-7). Alf Bergan, Denis Breen and Breen's wife are depicted as follows: 'a godlike messenger came swiftly in, radiant as the eye of heaven, a comely youth and behind him there passed an elder of noble gait

and countenance, bearing the sacred scrolls of law and with him his lady wife a dame of peerless lineage, fairest of her race' (*U*, 12.244-8). Similarly, the Citizen, who is generally acknowledged as a figure modelled on Michael Cusack, founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association and representative of aggressive nationalism who attacks Bloom with a diatribe and physical violence, is described in mock-Homeric gigantism and Revivalist Irish heroism. He is thus comically rendered as 'a broadshouldered deepchested stronglimbed frankeyed shaggybeared widemouthed largenosed longheaded deepvoiced barekneed brawnyhanded hairylegged ruddyfaced sinewyarmed hero' (*U*, 12.152-4). The modern Dubliners are displaced imaginatively into another discursive-laden reality, painted in archaic, romanticised language as if they were creatures from an ancient time and space.

The landscape is also subjected to a similar process of romanticised rewriting. Esoteric and nostalgic in its style, the mundane setting, the quarter of Dublin through which the characters pass, is re-cast as a lampoon of the nineteenth-century translation or revision of Irish poetry, myth, and bardic history or legend, which mocks the styles of Lady Gregory and James Clarence Mangan.³⁰⁰ The Dublin Corporation Fruit, Vegetable and Fish Market is referred to as 'the shining palace' (*U*, 12.87); the traffic and Dublin inhabitants are replaced by 'warriors and princes' (*U*, 12.70), '[I]ovely

³⁰⁰ Gifford, p. 316.

maidens' (*U*, 12.78-9), 'heroes [...] from afar' (*U*, 12.83), 'the peerless princes of unfetterd Munster and of Connacht' (*U*, 12.83-4) who populate the fertile landscape with 'fishful streams' (*U*, 12.71), 'lofty trees' (*U*, 12.75), and 'innumerable' herds (*U*, 12.102). In this interpolation, readers are also given a taste of Joyce's use of lists or runs for the first time. The richness and fertility of this imaginary land is depicted in terms of extravagant lists of trees, fish and herds. This use of 'runs' is one of Joyce's techniques for parodying the Revivalist imitation of the bards' techniques.³⁰¹

Instances of exhaustive lists are abundant in 'Cyclops:' a saint-run (*U*, 12.1689-1712), a tree-run describing guests at John Wyse Nolan's wedding (*U*, 12.1269-79), a clergyman run (*U*, 12.927-38), a fish-run (*U*, 12.71-4, 81-2), a run for 'Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity' (*U*, 12.176-99), and so on. These lists command fascination, perplexity and frustration in the reader. These lists are themselves *a combination of triviality and gigantism*. For example, the long list of Irish tribal heroes and heroines are trivialised, for they are no more than decoration represented on the stones dangling from the Citizen's girdle. However, this triviality acquires inflated grandiosity by simply becoming *too long* (*U*, 12.176-199). It functions less like an objective description than a grotesque, indigestible object inserted into the narrative. Legendary heroism is thus ruthlessly mocked and

³⁰¹ As Gibson points out, 'runs' is Douglas Hyde's term. Gibson, p. 115.

undermined. Despite the seeming precision, catalogues such as these stick out in the text and vitiate the flow of the narrative.

Furthermore, the name list starting with the Irish tribal heroes, kings, priests and patriots such as ‘Cuchulin, Conn of hundred battles, Niall of nine hostages,’ ‘Father John Murphy,’ ‘Henry Joy M’Cracken’ (a leader of the United Irishmen) and so on gradually runs astray, giving way to non-Irish figures such as ‘Christopher Columbus,’ ‘The Woman Who Didn’t,’ ‘Benjamin Franklin,’ ‘Napolean Bonaparte,’ ‘Julius Caesar,’ ‘Muhammad,’ ‘the Queen of Sheba,’ ‘Patrick W. Shakespeare,’ ‘Brian Confucius,’ ‘Tristan and Isolde,’ and ‘Ludwig Beethoven’ among others. Inconsistency is thus introduced in the representation of Irish heroism. The seriousness of this catalogue evaporates when the reader meets with an irremediable breach consisting of absurd obfuscation and mirthful fascination in this object-like list. *Ideological anamorphosis* is achieved when the name-run roams ludicrously awry, thereby placing obtrusive, indigestible non-sense in the middle of discourse.

The psychological operation of this reading experience can be concisely outlined as follows. First, there is a lapse from the visuality of realistic representation into a fascination with the objects, which tends to entail fantasised indulgence in the form of romanticised, legendary rendition and gigantism. Then, this indulgence is shaken by a catastrophic reversal of an object of plenitude into a pure void, a stain or blot in the

view, and the reader is woken up from the ‘drunkenness’ of the text. This visual experience is precisely what Lacan describes in his conception of the gaze as a partial object which functions as the structural void, or the surplus in the scopic field. In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan argues for the splitting of the look and the gaze, and the primacy of the later over the former (XI, 67-119). The so-called function of the look designates the viewer's, the subject's, ordering of visuality according to the subject's accustomed codes of representation. Hence, the look belongs to the domain of the Symbolic. In parallel to the Lacanian dichotomy between *jouissance* and symbolisation, between *tuché* and automaton, we have the dichotomy of the gaze and the look. The gaze as a partial object is the form or the embodiment of the leftover of a prephallic *jouissance*, that is, a surplus-*jouissance* exceeding symbolisation. Breasts, faeces, the gaze and the voice constitute Lacan's four specimens of the object-cause of desire, the corporeal embodiments of the logical consistency of the inherent nothingness in the structure of the split subject and of the Other.³⁰² The dichotomy between the gaze and the look should be taken as inscribed originally in the splitting of the subject, and that is why there is the precedence of the gaze over the eye.

³⁰² Jacques-Alain Miller observes a shift in Lacan's understanding of *objet a* from the corporeal expression toward a pure logical function, condensed in notation or algebra. For a more detailed account, please see the theory chapter of this thesis. 'A reading of the Seminar *From an Other to the other*', *Lacanian Ink*, 29 (2007), 7-61, at p. 13.

The returned gaze emitting from the side of the object points to anxiety and lack rather than power. The subject/object antithesis is temporarily suspended and the subject's scopic reign is subverted from within and momentarily put into question. In the encounter with the returned gaze, the meaningless stain, the non-discursive rupture of representation, the subject experiences inconsistency in its ability to structure and represent the world in rational terms. As Lacan puts it, '[t]he gaze is presented to us only in the form of a strange contingency [...] as the thrust of our experience, namely the lack that constitutes castration anxiety' (XI, 72-3). Psychoanalysis holds that the 'objectivity of reality' relies on 'a libidinal disinvestment,' or, in Lacan's words, 'extraction of *objet petit a.*'³⁰³ The normal-neurotic experience is established in the elision of the gaze. The experience of the Lacanian gaze therefore bears on a psychotic flavour, as shown in Lacan's famous illustration of the gaze: a sardine can floats at the sea, looking back at him, mocking him [Lacan] as 'nothing on earth' (XI, 96). Lacan puts the experience as follows: 'it was looking at me at the level of the point of light, the point at which that looks at me is situated—and I am not speaking metaphorically' (XI, 95). Lacan draws up a schema composed of two superimposed triangles to indicate the splitting of the eye and the gaze (XI, 91, 106):

³⁰³ Jacques-Alain Miller, 'The Prisons of *Jouissance*', *Lacanian Ink*, 23 (2009), 36-55, at p. 49.

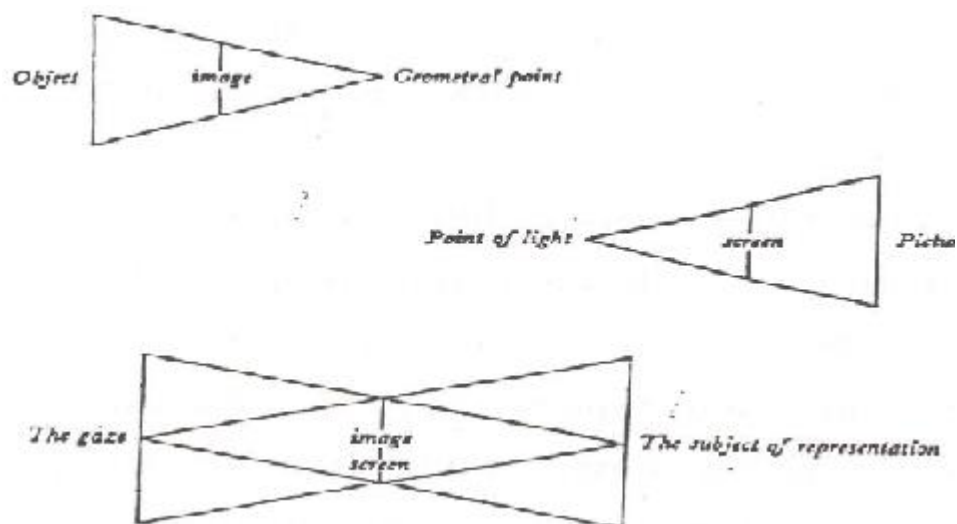


Figure 3

As the schema above indicates, the mode of the image, of the picture, pertains to the eye, the look, and the space of light belongs to the gaze. The schema is designed to make clear that ‘the geometrical dimension’ is only ‘a partial dimension in the field of the gaze,’ and that as a seeing subject, one is ‘literally called into the picture, and represented here as caught’ (XI, 88, 92). Lacan highlights that ‘the world is all-seeing,’ and ‘the pre-existence of the gaze—I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked from all sides’ (XI, 75, 72). Reality, objectivity and subjectivity are thus challenged with the uncanny experience of the returned gaze, as the subject finds her/himself called into the picture precisely at the non-sensical point of representation, the non-discursive blind spot, acknowledging his/her self-inclusion. As Lacan famously puts it, ‘No doubt, in the depths of my eye, the picture is painted. The picture, certainly, is in my eye. But I am in the picture’ (XI, 96).³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ The original French reads as follows: ‘Sans doute, au fond de mon oeil, se peint le tableau. La

This self-inclusion of subjectivity in the picture is of utmost importance for it not merely undermines the epistemological framework of realistic representation, which presupposes the exteriority of the subject in front of the object, but discloses both the primacy of the gaze over the look and that the subject is *originally and structurally inscribed into the picture*. Given that the subject itself falls into the picture, the subject literally dwells in the constructed reality. The point is less to leave the realistic representation model altogether than to recognise the unconscious dimension of the gaze, of fantasy construction, and the self-inscription of the subject in the fantasy. Fantasy is not merely projection or daydreaming on the part of the subject, fantasy is what the subject *is*; fantasy is that through which the subject constitutes her/his world to inhabit. As Žižek puts it,

as a transcendental subject I am the always already given horizon of all reality, but at the same time, I am in the picture: I exist only through my counterpoint or counterpart in the very picture constituted by me; I as it were have to fall into my own picture, into the universe whose frame I constitute. (*LN*, 706)

This ‘world-structuring’ function and ‘worldliness’ of fantasy demonstrates that human subjects are ‘essentially engaging the world,’ and ‘we reveal what and who we are in the nature of our engagements.’³⁰⁵ Consequently, it is not merely that the prejudice of the subject might distort reality, but that there is no hard reality to which

tableau, certes, est dans mon oeil. Mai moi, je suis dans le tableau’ (*S11*, 111). Alan Sheridan mistranslated the final line as ‘But I am not in the picture’ (*XI*, 96).

³⁰⁵ Jonathan Lear, *Therapeutic Action: An Earnest Plea for Irony* (New York: Other Press, 2003), p. 196-7.

to return. The moment the gaze returns and breaches representation marks out the subject-shattering experience, and the subject dissolves once the constructed/fantasised reality disintegrates.

To fully appreciate the structuring function of fantasy, we also have to explore the intersubjective dimension of fantasy. As Copjec points out, a thorough understanding of the Lacanian gaze in its relation to fantasy should be read in light of Lacan's 'graph of desire.'³⁰⁶ Lacan's graph of desire is divided into two levels: the level of meaning, identification and symbolisation, and the level of enjoyment and fantasy. Lacan's idea is that symbolisation itself inevitably entails a surplus of enjoyment. Psychoanalytic insight is basically centred upon how human subjectivity is entangled with the troubled surplus enjoyment. In Žižek's words, 'the trouble with *jouissance* is not that it is unattainable, that it always eludes our grasp, but rather, that *one can never get rid of it*, that its stain drags along forever' (GV, 93). Lacan argues that the subject encounters this surplus-enjoyment in the gaps of language which designate the Other's lack or inconsistency, the pure desirousness in the Other's discourse, which exceeds and eludes symbolisation. Consequently, the subject endeavours to cover up the Other's lack with an invented answer, an unconscious discourse which is by definition fantasy. Fantasy here is conceived as an indication

³⁰⁶ Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), p. 32. A detailed exposition of the 'Graph of Desire' can be found in Lacan's 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious' (*É*, 671-702).

of the impossibility or the failure of total interpellation or symbolisation and its concomitant remedy. In confrontation with every identity interpellation, the subject simultaneously encounters doubt about the Other's call. In short, the subject would ask, 'why am I what you tell me to be?' and 'what do you (the Other) want from me?'-- the so-called '*Che Vuoi?*' question. Fantasy is the subject's answer to this doubt. The *intersubjective* structure of fantasy should be highlighted here; my desire is not directly phrased in terms of 'what do I want?' but rather framed by the more original question of 'what do the others want from me?', 'what do they see in me?' and 'what am I for the others?' (*LN*, 686). This can be one of the meanings of the famous aphorism of Lacan—'Human desire is the desire of the Other.' The splitting of the subject is transposed into the intersubjective structure of fantasy. The *Real gaze* as a void in structure is translated into the imagined gaze of the Other, around which the subject's fantasy is organised.

The importance of the world-structuring function cannot be overemphasised, for this insight helps us appreciate Joyce's narrative manoeuvre as a literary working through of fantasy. Seen from this perspective, Joyce does not attempt to present a 'truer' Irish reality in contrast to the fantasised version provided by Irish cultural nationalism, and the Irish Revivalism. Gibson's reading of 'Cyclops' as an investigation of the construction of historiography helps to shed further light on the

scope of symptomatic nationalism represented by the various parodies present in the episode. Gibson observes that gigantism and the mythologised, romanticised Anglo-Irish³⁰⁷ Revivalist historiography stands as one of the main targets of Joyce's parody in 'Cyclops,' and argues that 'the new nationalism' presented by Arthur Griffith and the Citizen shares the historiography adumbrated by the former.³⁰⁸ The agenda of the Anglo-Irish Revivalists, according to Gibson, is to 'unearth an authentically Irish past with which they might identify, to consolidate their position in the unsettling wake of Catholic emancipation' and to produce 'cultural fusion and regeneration' between Irish and Anglo-Irish cultures.³⁰⁹ Joyce suspects this goal for union or syncretism perpetuates 'dispossession and subordination' because it is a forced and forged union, and cites 'English approval' in support of this position.³¹⁰

To this extent, I entirely agree with Gibson's evaluation.

Gibson therefore comes to the conclusion that the realistic mode of

³⁰⁷ As Gibson and other critics have noted, the Celtic Revivalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century are genteel, mainly Anglo-Irish, opting for Oisín rather than Patrick, for the 'authentic' heroic past rather than Irish Catholic tradition. L.H. Platt summarizes Joyce's attitude toward this Irish Revivalism as follows: 'First, there is the charge that the Revival's indifference to the achievements of the early Irish Church produces a false historiography of Irish culture. Second, Joyce makes a clear distinction between national culture and Anglo-Irish culture, thus refuting the Revival's enunciation of its own ancestry. Finally, and perhaps most radically, Joyce refuses to accept the view that an authentic national culture, protected and cultivated by an Anglo-Irish intelligentsia, had managed to survive and even flourish in adversity beyond the eighteenth century. For Joyce the Gael was dead and beyond resurrection, except on Joyce's own terms.' L. H. Platt, 'Joyce and the Anglo-Irish Revival: the Trieste Lectures', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 29.2 (1992), 259-66, at p. 159.

³⁰⁸ Gibson, p. 102-26. Gibson identifies the similarities between the Revivalist historiography, Griffith's *The Resurrection of Hungary* and the Citizen's discourse, such as habits of imprecision, exaggeration, inclination to myth, repeated demands for purity and so on, p. 123-5.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103-4.

representation used by the Nameless One serves as a clear critique of the interpolations of rhetorical excess, posing ‘liberating comic relief’ amidst ‘the whole [Revivalist] mode of the historical imagination.’³¹¹ As ‘an Irishman, living in history,’ the Nameless One ‘has and represents an irreducible, unregenerate, vulgar and vital presentness’ that demands acknowledgment.³¹² The reality presented by the Nameless One certainly can function as a critical opposition to the version represented by the Revivalist mode, as encapsulated by the interpolations of rhetorical excess. However, I would like to argue that it takes more than the juxtaposition of two realities and modes of representation to dispel the ideological fantasy constituted by the Revivalist mode of representation, since there is no hard or true reality to return to and fantasy is itself world-structuring. The point is to *disengage* the subject’s libidinal investment in world/reality constituting fantasy by eroding the fantasmatic structure the subject inhabits from within. That is why, I argue, Joyce deploys a more complex aesthetic scenario to undermine symptomatic nationalism from within, inserting implosion within the interpolations of rhetorical excess themselves in order to achieve true subversion and emancipation.

In *The Subaltern Ulysses*, Duffy targets the imperialist representation of the

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 126.

³¹² Ibid., p. 126.

‘spectacle of the native,’³¹³ commenting on the sharp juxtaposition between the realistic representation and the interpolations, emphasising the interpellative power of discourse and stereotypes. Duffy argues that the conflict between Bloom and the Citizen should be appreciated in terms of the split stereotypes of the colonised (Ariel versus Caliban, civilian versus barbarian, gentleman versus terrorist), and the concomitant stylistic collision between the realistic reporting of the Nameless One and the glorified style of interpolation which belongs to Bloom’s class.³¹⁴ Duffy first draws attention to a medical skit cast in Victorian portraiture, in which a grotesque image of an Irishman with a lump in his neck is represented, a figure of deformity and unkempt dress. This image or spectacle of the native is ‘horrificing’ because ‘the pose is that of a gentleman, but the connotations are those of a beggar.’³¹⁵ Duffy contends that it is the imposition of these opposed stereotypes of the native between Ariel and Caliban, civilian and barbarian that renders the image grotesque, and hence calls for a splitting of the two and a further ‘interpenetration’ or intermingling of the opposed poles to subvert the stock images that the colonists impose upon the colonised. Duffy argues that the ‘transgress[ion],’ ‘interruption’ or ‘interpenetration’ of the duality between the split stereotypes and styles may unlock the shackles of the

³¹³ Duffy dedicates a chapter to ‘Cyclops’ in the book, which bears the title “‘And I Belong to a Race”: The Spectacle of the Native and the Politics of Partition in “Cyclops””, p. 93-129.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93-121.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93-5.

interpellative power of colonial discourse and assist the birth of a new, post-colonial subject.³¹⁶

Although I am sympathetic with Duffy's supposition that writing 'Cyclops' during the period of the War of Independence, Joyce may have been working towards an emergent post-colonial subject, it is far from clear how and what kind of new subjects may come about by such an interpenetration of discourses. What is implied by this methodology is that if one stereotype takes on the traits, or uses the discursive elements or methods of the other, it can subvert the rigid, stock images and their interpellative power. The so-called interpenetration or 'transgression' in Duffy's words means that one may employ the techniques of the other. For instance, the Nameless One's narrative is replete with references to documents, and the barfly refers to newspaper accounts when criticising the brutality of British imperialism. However, upon a closer look, Duffy's dichotomy appears too neat. For instance, while Duffy assigns the style of parodies roughly to Bloom's class in contrast to that of the Nameless One, it is questionable whether the dichotomy can be sustained since Bloom doesn't seem to share the Irish Revivalist aspiration for Irish purity, which is one of the main targets parodied in the interpolations. Moreover, the interpenetration or transgression does not necessarily produce subversion or contribute to the

³¹⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

construction of a new subject. Quite the contrary, transgression or interpenetration of discourse between the two stereotypes under the colonial gaze may well suggest that both types inhabit a common ideological fantasy, shared symptomatic nationalism, which struggles to fight against colonialism while its efficacy is put into question through various parodies in 'Cyclops.'

As mentioned above, Gibson has pointed out that the nationalism represented by the Citizen, whom Duffy places in the category of stereotyped terrorists, actually shares the Revivalists' historiography, such as the example of the 'gentleman' stereotype in Duffy's dichotomy. The insurgencies of Irish nationalism are thus framed or supported by the genteel discourse of Irish Revivalist historiography and myth-making of Irishness. Transgression and interpenetration between the two stereotypes and stock discourses merely indicate how the symptomatic nationalism saturates both poles of the dichotomy, rather than undermining the stereotypes. Transgression or interpenetration of stereotypes does not, therefore, necessarily provide an emancipated image with which an emergent post-colonial subject can identify. A scathing satire is cast in the interpolation about 'the really marvellous exhibition of cynanthropy' by the Citizen and his dog Garryowen (*U*, 12.712-38), which relentlessly mocks both the 'terrorist' Citizen and the genteel Irish Revivalism with their cult of bards and legendary heroism. It is a transgression of a stereotype

portrayed via the comic, ridiculous notion of a ‘genteel terrorist,’ which does not stray very far from the imposed image of the native as the ‘gentleman beggar’ identified by Duffy. This certainly gives rise to questions as to how liberating such an image, provided by the interpenetration of stereotypes can be in service of fighting against Imperialism and fabricating a new subjectivity for an emergent post-colonial country. In Duffy’s reading of the interpellative power of imperialism and the stereotypes of the colonised, the entangled influence of symptomatic nationalism is completely left out. For a new post-colonial subject to emerge, more is required than directly opposing imperialism via the transgression of stereotypes. Subjective transformation demands the subversion of symptomatic nationalism by uncoupling the subject’s libidinal investment from certain fantasmatic frameworks of ideology.

Let us now turn to the textual analysis to see how Joyce achieves a critique of symptomatic nationalism. Once the subject is capable of recognising the gaze that he/she imagines unconsciously in the Other and confronts the Other’s failures, the ideological subject is transformed into ‘a politicized and free subject.’³¹⁷ The gazes exchanged between Ireland and Europe frame the long digressive passage about Irish forestation deployed as ‘the fashionable international world’ attends ‘the wedding of the chevalier Jean Wyse de Neaulan’ (*U*, 12.1266-95). The long list of the guests’

³¹⁷ Todd McGowen, *The Real Gaze* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 17.

names (trees) at the wedding is inserted between the phrases ‘Europe has its eyes on you’ (*U*, 12.1264) and ‘our eyes are on Europe’ (*U*, 12.1296). The Irishness (forests, in this case, decimated by colonialism, symbols of ‘natural purity’ of indigenous Irish), under construction is fundamentally posed for the sake of the imagined gaze of the Other. In the context of a fashionable wedding, the list of trees serves as a blatant satire, in which Joyce mocks relentlessly that the characteristic of Ireland imagined to be most lovable to the European gaze is a grotesque mixture of genteel style and forestation. Laughable as this comic image may appear, it poses a serious political critique by questioning how such fantasmatic construction, such symptomatic nationalism, which absorbs the patriotic energy of Joyce’s time, can be of any practical use to those seeking national independence or emancipation from British colonialism. By exposing the absurdity of this mixed image at the core of the ideological fantasy, the subject may unhook his/her libidinal investment from it. As such, in working through fantasy, the subject comes to acknowledge what specific gaze he/she has supposed in place of the Real gaze, the void of the structure and how he/she has derived enjoyment from the concomitant ideological fantasy.

In addition, in a hilarious account of the execution of Robert Emmet, which parodies a newspaper’s report, Joyce constructs a fabulous farewell party, a pompous carnival. It is a scathing critique of violent nationalism because if the attendance of

‘the picturesque foreign delegation known as the Friends of the Emerald Isle’ (*U*, 12.554) hints that the armed rebellions might appear as entertainment in the eyes of the foreign powers, it also betrays that Irish people participate in this patriotic carnival, deriving considerable pleasure from the romanticisation of martyrdom. The execution becomes a street carnival when ‘the York street brass and reed band’ performs on the scene (*U*, 12.536), and ‘the children of the Male and Female Foundling Hospital’ are described as being ‘delighted with this unexpected addition to the day’s entertainment’ (*U*, 12.447-9). The introduction of the executioner is depicted in the manner of a famous performer entering the stage: ‘[q]uietly, unassumingly, Rumbold stepped on to the scaffold in faultless morning dress and wearing his favourite flower,’ and to welcome him or the performance of execution, ‘the viceregal ladies wav[e] their handkerchiefs in their excitement while the even more excitable foreign delegates cheered vociferously in a medley of cries’ (*U*, 12.592-3; 598-60). By exposing the fantastic framework of violent nationalism and making explicit the hidden enjoyment that silently pervades society, Joyce attempts to break the ideological spell of symptomatic nationalism. The symptomatic inconsistency is most conspicuously exhibited at the moment when Emmet’s fiancée immediately accepts a proposal from ‘a handsome young Oxford graduate, noted for his chivalry towards the fair sex, stepped forward and, presenting his visiting card,

banknote and genealogical tree, solicited the hand of the hapless young lady' (*U*, 12. 658-60). This farcical arrangement unveils the idea that violent nationalism remains shackled by the colonialist ideology, aspiring after English values.

Any ideological formation includes two levels: the level of interpellation and symbolisation, and the level of enjoyment in the form of fantasy. Ideology thus contains symbolic discourse and shared enjoyment. In the case of nationalism, national identification operates both on the level of symbolic identity and that of 'a shared relationship toward a Thing [...] toward the Nation qua Thing' (*TN*, 201). Usually this shared national Thing is embodied in national memories, national treasures, or specific ways of life. However, we should be aware that the shared practices and memories do not necessarily constitute a national Thing. Quite the contrary, it is nationalism as symbolisation and identification which turns the practices into a shared Thing, essentialising and homogenising these practices in terms of national purity. In *On Belief*, Žižek points out that the place of Muslims in Bosnia's national identity actually emerges from imposed political programming, which declares Muslims as an ethnic community rather than merely a religious group. In response to this political artifice, Muslims actually answered this call of nationalism and started to perceive themselves as a nation, 'systematically manufacturing their tradition' (*Belief*, 28). Consequently, the essentialising tendency in nationalism

should be seen in a new light. The discourse-oriented analysis of essentialism in nationalism only captures half of the truth. Certain traditional features or characteristics may be incorporated as national symbols and points of national identification *not merely* in the domain of symbolic discourse, but also at the level of nationalism as fantasy, as shared enjoyment. Nationalism does not need the positivity of traditional features to function as national essence, but requires them as *empty gadgets* around which the shared enjoyment, the national Thing, is organised.

In the case of Irish nationalism, the obsession with national roots, a legendary past, heroism, language, forestation, landscape and so on in the name of Celtic Revivalism, as well as the campaign for Gaelic sports (*U*, 12.889-912), are less symbolic discourse than the gadgets of collective enjoyment in the form of a national Thing. The un-Irish may well be conflated with the Irish as the reader finds that the list of Irish national heroes extends absurdly from ‘Cuchulin’ to ‘Brian Confucius,’ ‘Tristan and Isolde,’ ‘Ludwig Beethoven,’ and ‘the Last of the Mohicans’ (*U*, 12.176-199). The lists and categories of names, titles, saints, and trees are the *gadgets of enjoyment*, insubstantial elements giving body to surplus-enjoyment around which symptomatic nationalism as ideological fantasy can be organised. The function of the items in the list is thus purely formal and inclined to proliferation because these items are less positive entities than mere semblants of the Lacanian

partial objects, which elude and exceed symbolisation.

When the lists of names run on too long and lapse into absurdity, they constitute a stain, an indigestible blot, or meaningless lacuna within the framework of the interpolated representation; that is, the rhetorical excess of these interpolations runs out of control and implodes from within. The *Real* gaze is rendered palpable in the undisciplined extension of these lists, and in the stealthy distortion of the names. Overstuffing itself constitutes a sense of void and ridiculousness; for instance, the gigantism of the list of tribal heroes is mocked and deflated when non-Irish names are included. In another example, in the list of the names of the foreign delegation attending Robert Emmet's execution, Joyce supplements the sarcastic meaning of the names by reducing them to sounds, to nonsense such as 'Herr Hurhausdirektorpresident Hans Cuechli-Steierli' and 'Nationalgymnasiummuseum-sanatoriumandsuspensoriumordinaryprivatedocentheneralhistoryspecialprofessor doctor Kriegfried Ueberallgemein' (*U*, 12.566-9). Joyce also makes fun of saints by including 'S. Thomas Aquinas' alongside 'S. Anonymous and S. Eponymous and S. Pseudonymous and S. Homonymous and S. Paronymous S. Synonymous and S. Laurence O'Toole' (*U*, 12.1703; 1696-8). These apparently invented names, titles and saints deflate the significance of the lists and categories within which they are included. It is significant that such lists are the convergent points of signifiers of

symbolic mandate and empty gadgets as Lacanian partial objects of enjoyment. Joyce therefore aims at two targets with a single strike, assaulting the Symbolic order at the pivotal points of master signifiers by turning the names of saints into voice, or better, noise. He also subverts the Symbolic order by exposing the formal character of symbolic mandate, as in the case of the saint list. It is as if sainthood is nothing more than a letter 'S.' added to names. To put it more precisely, Joyce exposes the underside superegoic enjoyment of symbolic mandate by way of revealing the status of saints as empty gadgets of enjoyment in the form of fantasy. With a stroke of genius, Joyce attacks ideology from its underside by subverting meaning and expelling fantasy at the same time. In a single move, the subject's complacency regarding epistemological faculty and subjective stability is subverted.

It is crucial that this implosion induces bursts of laughter. Rhetorical excess first leads the reader to step into the domain of fantasy and then wakes him from fantasy by imploding the excess from within. Joyce's triple-layered narrative manoeuvre is paralleled by the process of psychotherapy. When representation *breaks down*³¹⁸ into rhetorical excess, the reader is led to Irish nationalism in the form of ideological fantasy, bearing witness to or even acting out the Dubliners' own lapse into fantasy, enjoying Irish nationalism despite all the frustration in

³¹⁸ Jonathan Lear, in *Freud*, offers a telling distinction between 'virtue and neurtue' to explicate how the neurotic inhabits fantasy and transference and breaks away from reality. *Freud* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 151-53.

confrontation with the British colonial power. The laughter caused by the implosion of the text designates precisely the *breakthrough* moment when fantasy is breached and symptom worked through.³¹⁹ Why do we need this double break to achieve a therapeutic effect? Rather than holding the fantasy projection at arm's length, the subject literally inhabits the world-structuring fantasy in transference. The therapeutic action lies in the ironical epiphany, 'the lucky break,' happiness in terms of 'happenstance,' opening 'the possibilities for new possibilities.'³²⁰ The moment of breakthrough is the point at which the world itself shifts. Breaking through designates an ethical act, a crucial moment when the subject goes through the fantasy, which is a covering-up the Other's inconsistency.

In bursting into laughter, the subject becomes aware of the Other's lack and his own implicated enjoyment of ideological fantasy, which supports ideology. In a single move, the subject realises/perceives his/her own subjective destitution and the truth that there is no Other of the Other. As Todd McGowen puts it, 'our ability to contest an ideological structure depends on our ability to recognise the real point at which it breaks down, the point at which the void that ideology conceals reveals itself. Every authentic political act has its origin in an encounter with the real.'³²¹

³¹⁹ For a detailed account of the theory surrounding the clinical conception of breakdown and break through, please see the chapter 'The Remainder of Life' in Jonathan Lear's *Happiness, Death, and The Remainder of Life*.

³²⁰ Lear, *Happiness*, p. 29; *Therapeutic Action*, p. 137-78.

³²¹ McGowen, *The Real Gaze*, p. 17.

Moreover, this burst of laughter should be distinguished from the pernicious, suffocating superegoic laughter and enjoyment epitomised by the barflies' cynical laughter at Bloom and the fantasmatic enjoyment of the comic stylistic/linguistic digression and boundary crossings. Therefore, those readings which assume the inherent subversion in dialogism or heteroglossia, or which celebrate too readily the liberating potential in 'the postmodern pastiche,'³²² should be questioned as they are no more than the superegoic underside of the same dominant ideology and discourses.

This critical stance also underlies my distance from Emer Nolan's comments on 'Cyclops' in *James Joyce and Nationalism*. In her book, Nolan identifies the tension between modernism and nationalism and criticizes the related tendencies of rendering Joyce apolitical and praising the modernist project while castigating Irish nationalism. She argues that there is a critical potential in the community of language which works for Irish nationalism and that Joyce's attitude toward it is not dismissive, but arguably sympathetic. That is, Joyce makes an effort to represent and release the critical energy embedded in Dublin's community of language by way of parody, satire and even invective, in fighting against what Nolan calls 'the leveling modern discourse.'³²³

Nolan points out the inadequacy of criticism based on 'the opposition between

³²² Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 118.

³²³ Nolan, *Nationalism*, p. 85-119.

Bloom and the citizen as one between multivocal dialogism and a monolingual monocular bigot,³²⁴ suggesting that ‘Bloom himself is no less a ‘monologist’ than the citizen.’³²⁵ She holds that ‘[t]o deny the citizen any success [...] can result in a restatement of the familiar stereotype that centuries of English investigation of Irish culture had been concerned to promote,’ further arguing ‘[i]t seems strange and inconsistent [...] to conclude that Joyce’s massive creative effort in “Cyclops” should ultimately be read as proposing the idea of the barbarism of the Irish, the hoariest stereotype in all of Irish colonial history, and one which he very frequently publicly attacked.’³²⁶ In addition, after deploying a shift from ‘the citizen’ and ‘his discourse’³²⁷ to ‘the citizens’ and ‘they,’³²⁸ Nolan begins to articulate the group as a community of language. Nolan moves on to pose a contrast between the leveling modern discourse, which is represented ‘primarily through the figure of Bloom,’ and which demystify[ies] and seculariz[es] other kinds of “high” styles or language’ and the community of language presented by the citizens.³²⁹ She contends that ‘the text cannot parody the citizen [...] for his language of violence is its language as well. His discourse, in its relentless parody and destructive energy, resembles the modernism of

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.96.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.97.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.104.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107

sheer textual production exemplified by the interpolations.³³⁰ As Nash points out, Nolan's comments do not really stand at least in three aspects. First, 'Joyce's coincidence of language with the citizen is brief;' second, the dichotomy between the levelling modern discourse and the community of language is 'a false dichotomy' for this is merely 'a convenient myth from which to distinguish a supposedly authoritative language.'³³¹ Most important of all in our concern here, '[t]he citizen draws on an anti-imperial newspaper parody [...] while also being himself a mocking parody of xenophobia.'³³²

Furthermore, taking Joyce's artistic enterprise in 'Cyclops' as a literary working through of symptomatic nationalism, I argue that Nolan seems to confuse Joyce's creative manoeuvre by way of irony and parody in critiquing this community with the linguistic community's own capacity to manipulate its language actively and consciously for self-critique. Against Nolan, it stands to reason that Joyce might have drawn literary energy from the vernacular and invective circulating in the community of language, but his creative endeavour far exceeds his cultural sources. Through irony, hyperbole and parody, Joyce's attitude is hardly sympathetic with the language community. He might be sympathetic with the rights of the oppressed, and

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 107.

³³¹ John Nash, "'Hanging over the bloody paper": Newspaper and imperialism in *Ulysses*', in Howard J Booth and Nigel Rigby (ed.), *Modernism and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), p. 178-9.

³³² Ibid., p. 179.

is amused with the linguistic energy, but it is absurd to claim that he takes in it without critical evaluation. Moreover, even though it is arguable that Joyce creatively employs stylized archaic language, hyperbole or irony in interpolations, it is untenable to claim that the community of language can manipulate the linguistic enjoyment as an autonomous ego. That is to say, what Nolan cancels out is precisely the Unconscious dimension of the language community. In this section, I have contended that these interpolations are fantasmatic expressions of symptomatic nationalism, rather than active manipulation of conscious, rational discourse by autonomous egos. The fantasy *lives* its subjects. The subjects dwell in the fantasy without entirely knowing what they are doing and talking.

III.

Thought and discourse are structurally entangled with surplus-enjoyment. Racism, anti-Semitism in our case, is to be explored by way of the mutual imbrication between discourse and enjoyment. This section aims to investigate racism as an ideological fantasy, and the correlation between symptomatic nationalism and anti-Semitism. Long before Bloom makes his physical entrance in the book, anti-Semitism has overshadowed the textual space. Bloom is therefore stepping into and further entrapped in a pre-given discursive network of anti-Semitism. For

instance, Haines, ‘a Britisher,’ enunciates glaring anti-Semitism: ‘I don’t want to see my country fall into the hands of German Jews. That’s our national problem, I’m afraid, just now’ (*U*, 1.666-68). In ‘Nestor,’ Deasy, a Unionist, echoes the anti-Semitic invective of contamination and conspiracy by proclaiming,

[m]ark my words, Mr. Dedalus [...] England is in the hands of the jews. In all the highest places: her finance, her press. And they are the signs of a nation’s decay. Wherever they gather they eat up the nation’s vital strength. I have seen it coming these years. As sure as we are standing here the jew merchants are already at their of destruction. Old England is dying’ (*U*, 2.345-51).

Deasy’s malevolence goes further in rendering the Jews as devilish and innately corrupt: ‘[t]hey sinned against the light [...] And you can see the darkness in their eyes. And that is why they are wanderers on the earth to this day’ (*U*, 2.361-3). His anti-Semitism reaches its apex with an implication of total exclusion³³³ when he remarks: ‘Ireland, they say, has the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the Jews’ (*U*, 2.437) ‘[b]ecause she never let them in’ (*U*, 2.443-4). With this poisonous joke, Joyce depicts the enjoyment that Deasy derives from his anti-Semitism: ‘A coughball of laughter leaped from his throat dragging after it a rattling chain of phlegm. He turned back quickly, coughing, laughing, his lifted arms waving to the air’ (*U*, 2.433-50). With his culturally deemed otherness in his native land, Bloom is to confront anti-Semitism as a discourse muddled with symptomatic

³³³ Although there are relatively few Jews in Ireland compared to other European countries. However, Ireland did let the Jews in. As Davidson points out, ‘Dublin had a three-century-old Jewish community, and that very April, 1904, the Limerick anti-Jewish riot had occurred.’ Neil R. Davidson, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 197. From now on, this text will be identified as *Construction*.

enjoyment and to negotiate his status of being an (un)Irish Jew.

With regard to the stereotypes cast upon the Jews, Marilyn Reizbaum observes two tendencies.³³⁴ Contradictory properties are attributed to Jews. Among these clichéd characterisations, in mythologised panegyric, the Jewish people are praised for their perseverance in suffering and their strenuous effort to survive and arise prominently from adversity in the postexilic experience. However, detestable images of moral degeneration and religious and political traitors are assigned to Jews once they are encountered locally as individual citizens existing in civil society. Jews undergo denigration and persecution ‘because Jews are dirty, greedy, mendacious, because they wear ear locks, speak jargon, do not want to assimilate, and *also* because they *do* assimilate, cease using their jargons, are nattily dressed.’³³⁵ That this image of Jewishness produces contradiction betrays the performative character of ideology, leading us to an anti-descriptive view of naming, the dimension of the arbitrary intervention of the Symbolic Other. In accounting for the problem of determining what sustains the identity of the designated object through naming, Žižek invokes the Lacanian retroactive effect of naming: ‘it is the name itself, the signifier itself, which supports the identity of the object. That “surplus” in the object which

³³⁴ Marilyn Reizbaum, *James Joyce's Judaic Other* (Stanford: Stanford University Prredd, 1999), p. 9 and p. 19.

³³⁵ Sander Gilman L., *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 2.

stays the same [...] is “something in it more than it”, that is to say the Lacanian *objet petit a*’ (SO, 95). Positive traits in reality offer no guarantee to sustain the unity of an object under a certain name. Symbolisation is itself ‘a radical contingency in naming,’ and meaning is therefore ‘supported by some “pure,” meaningless “signifier without signified”’ (SO, 97). The named object/figure/entity is simply ‘an objectification of a void, of a discontinuity opened in reality by the emergence of signifier’ (SO, 95). In anti-Semitism, the word ‘Jew’ as a name does not refer to a cluster of particular features in reality, but is grounded on a tautology which says ‘they are like that, *because they are Jews*’ (SO, 96). The objective features attributed to the discriminated Other are apparently false; it is something else, ‘something in it more than it,’ that constitutes the identity of the racial Other.

The bifurcation in Jewish stereotyping finds expression in how Arthur Griffith, an editor of the *United Irishman* and founder and leader of Sinn Féin, responds to the Dreyfus affair, the Limerick affair and Zionism.³³⁶ In an article dated April 23, 1904 in the *United Irishman*, Griffith publicised his anti-Semitism:

The Jews of Great Britain and Ireland have united as is their wont, to crush the
Christian who dares to block their path or point them out for what they

³³⁶ The Dreyfus affair was an anti-Semitic political scandal which divided France in the 1890s and 1900s in which Alfred Dreyfus, a French artillery officer of Alsatian Jewish descent, was convicted of treason for the false accusation of communicating French military secrets to Germany. Despite the evidence of forged documents, Dreyfus was convicted as guilty twice and sentenced to life imprisonment once for the alleged treason. For a detailed account of Griffith’s attitude and Joyce’s response, please see Davidson, *Construction*, p. 61-82. Violent attacks and boycotts in Limerick flared up in 1904, aroused by Father Creagh’s belligerent sermon in which he accused Jews of being Christ murderers and moneylenders and usurers, designating them religious and economic traitors.

are—nine-tenths of them—usurers and parasites. In this category we do not include the Zionist minority of the Jews, who include those honest patriotic Jews who desire the re-establishment of the Hebrew nation in Palestine—the last thing on earth the majority desires. Attack a Jew—other than a Zionist Jew—and all Jewry comes to his assistance. Thus, when France condemned a Jew, Captain Dreyfus, to perpetual imprisonment for high treason, all Jewry combined to ruin France [...] Precisely the same tactics are being followed in regard to Father Creagh in Limerick [...] The Jew in Ireland is in every respect an economic evil.³³⁷

Griffith supports Zionist Jews as he takes Zionism to be a version of nationalism for an oppressed and dispossessed people. The Irish, the Jewish and the Hungarian are thus united in their search for independence and autonomy from oppression. In this respect at least, the Jewish people participate in the Symbolic fiction of nationalist statism in correspondence with the nationalist project of Sinn Fein. However, Griffith also casts racist slurs by stigmatising Jews as ‘usurers and parasites’ and ‘an economic evil.’ In response to Griffith’s anti-Semitism, Joyce comments in one of his letters that ‘[w]hat I object to most of all in his paper is that it is educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred whereas anyone can see that if the Irish question exists, it exists for the Irish proletariat chiefly’ (*LII*, 167). In ‘Penelope,’ Joyce incorporates Griffith’s endorsement of the Limerick boycott and his anti-Semitism through Molly’s words when she says that Bloom ‘was going about with some of them Sinner Fein lately,’ and ‘that little man he [Bloom] showed me without the neck is very intelligent the coming man Griffiths is he well he doesnt look

³³⁷ Quoted in Reizbaum, p. 40.

it that's all I can say still it must have been him he knew there was a boycott' (*U*, 18. 383-7).

What is divulged in Griffith's representation is the divided positioning of Jews in the structure of nationalist ideology. The Symbolic fiction of nationalism includes Jews as glorified signifiers, while the underside of this, the unwritten code of anti-Semitism, treats Jews as the sublime object of racism-as-ideological-fantasy. If ideology is to sustain itself, it has to come to terms with the nonsensical kernel of enjoyment, which turns out to be the 'last support of the ideological effect,' beyond the discursive mechanism of the Symbolic fiction (*SO*, 124). On the ideological plane, the traumatic experience of what Ernesto Laclau calls 'social antagonism,' which Žižek regards as the counterpart of the inconsistency of the Other in Lacanian theory, tempts the subject into racism to mask the inherent inconsistency of the ideological fantasy. Ideology at the level of the Symbolic fiction tends to conceive the society, nation, or culture as an organic whole, a healthy image and a potent signifier for identification. Consequently, some way to suture the gap between the fantasy of the unified entity and its inherent absence has to be found.

It is precisely at this point that racism as ideological fantasy becomes apparent. The trick of racism resides in the way in which it intertwines the logic of exclusion with the transference of guilt, which turns out to be a pseudo-account, a covering-up

for the failure and inherent inconsistency of society. As Žižek puts it, '[s]ociety [the Other] doesn't exist and the Jew is its symptom' (*SO*, 125). Social antagonism is displaced and directed toward the Jews as a corrupting or corroding force, an embodiment of negativity. A logic of inversion underlies anti-Semitism; the truth is of course that '[f]ar from being the positive cause of social negativity, *the "Jew" is a point at which social negativity as such assumes positive existence*' (*SO*, 127). The signifier 'Jew' condenses a cluster of contradictory features. That the Jew is assigned to the structural position of *a socially constructed embodiment of negativity*, a figure around which the ideological fantasy is centred, further elucidates this phenomenon. Paradoxically, at the empirical level, a specific Jew as an individual is *under erasure* precisely because he/she unwittingly comes to occupy the position of 'the conceptual Jew' operative in anti-Semitism as 'a mere 'positivization of a void' (*PF*, 76). The conceptual Jew is thus 'a filler holding the place of some structural impossibility, while simultaneously disavow[ing] that impossibility' (*PF*, 76). Ideological anamorphosis occurs at the moment when the sublime object of ideology is recognised as an embodiment of 'negative magnitude.'

The displacement of guilt to the demonised Other, the enemy who opposes us, may help us understand the operation of scapegoating; 'when in doubt persecute Bloom' (*U*, 15.976-77). Scapegoating works with the Jewish conspiracy theory as

an ideological fantasy, one which evidently figures in Haines's, Deasy's, and Griffith's words, rendering Jews as vampire-like, parasitic figures responsible for the decay and corruption of the nation, the empire or the world; 'And they are the signs of a nation's decay. Wherever they gather they eat up the nation's vital strength' (*U*, 2.347-9). It has been commonplace in anti-Semitic discourse to claim that Jews aspire to world dominance by manipulating economic, political and even media power behind the scenes. This theory of Jewish conspiracy is intimately connected with the stereotypes and false accusations to which Jewish people have been subjected, and these two dimensions fuel each other. The stereotypes of being moneylenders, usurers, Shylock figures and swindlers are repetitively applied to Jews. In *Ulysses*, the gentile Reuben J. Dodd is associated with Bloom in 'Hades' on the basis that he is a moneylender, considered a Jewish occupation (*U*, 6.250-95); in 'Cyclops,' the Canada swindle case (*U*, 12.1084-93), an immigration swindle, is depicted as a proof of the Jews' typical financial infidelity since it was a case in which both the convicted and victims were Jews. As Reizbaum points out, this is 'less a matter of false accusation than a confirmation of the Jew as thief and swindler.'³³⁸

At this juncture, I attempt an alternative interpretation of the association with Bloom as the source of Griffith's *The Resurrection of Hungary* (1904), taking it as an

³³⁸ Reizbaum, p. 15.

expression of the theory of Jewish conspiracy. John Wyse Nolan indicates that ‘it was Bloom gave the ideas for Sinn Fein to Griffith to put in his paper all kinds of jerrymandering, packed juries and swindling the taxes off of the government and appointing consuls all over the world to walk about selling Irish industries’ (*U*, 12. 1574-77).³³⁹ Griffith’s project draws inspiration from the Hungarian nationalists’ success in establishing a dual monarchy within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, anticipating that Ireland would become a dual state with Britain through passive resistance.³⁴⁰ The Hungarian-Irish parallel had been ‘part of Irish republican thinking since at least 1848.’³⁴¹ Therefore, the association between Bloom and Griffith is untenable, a bit whimsical, if not utterly enigmatic.

Joyce may utilise Bloom’s association with Sinn Fein to connote Bloom’s enthusiasm or support for Irish autonomy.³⁴² The gossip about Bloom’s involvement is derived from Bloom’s Hungarian background and the rumour about Griffith’s

³³⁹ Joyce uses ‘anachronism’ in this incidence for ‘Sinn Fein was a name first used at the end of 1904’ (Reizbaum, p. 43) and the event narrated in ‘Cyclops’ took place on June 16 of that year. It should be noted that Joyce’s attitude toward Griffith and Sinn Fein is quite complicated. As Gibson indicates, it is ‘by no means primarily critical,’ Gibson, p.122. Dominic Manganiello holds that Joyce may find some appeal in Griffith’s moderate policy to gain home rule through passive resistance. But Joyce apparently objects the principle of physical violence in Fenianism, and criticizes the moderate procedures mixed with violent rhetoric in the philosophy of Sinn Fein, which might still breed extreme Sinn Feiners who advocate for violent nationalism. *Joyce’s Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Books, 1980), p. 137-8.

³⁴⁰ Richard Davis, *Arthur Griffith* (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1976), p. 11.

³⁴¹ Gibson, p. 119.

³⁴² This is not the sole reference to Bloom’s nationalist enthusiasm. For instance, in ‘Lestrygonians,’ Bloom nearly gets beaten up in a protest against Joe Chamberlain, who is an aggressive imperialist siding with the English policies in the Boer War and an enemy of Home Rule (*U*, 8. 423-6).

having a Jewish adviser-ghost writer.³⁴³ But, if this is founded, why would Joyce employ *authorship under erasure* in Bloom's association with Sinn Fein, why was there a rumour of a ghost-figure behind the scenes? According to Duffy, the notion of 'giving the idea for' betrays a 'discounted' authorship, 'a displaced, double affair.'³⁴⁴ I suggest that this arrangement of authorship under erasure betrays that the stereotype of Jewish conspiracy not only operates within the mechanism of postivising the negative, but also points to the idea that the conceptual Jews are not the authority figures or master signifiers of the symbolic fiction, but occupy a structural position of spectral presence, a kind of uncanny double of the public authority 'act[ing] in the shadow, invisible from the public eye, irradiating a phantom-like, spectral omnipotence' (*LN*, 683). While the Italian Irish Joseph Patrick Nannetti was accepted as a public figure, representing Dublin's College Green in the Irish Parliament in 1904, anti-Semitism marks Bloom, a Jewish Irish/an Irish Jew, as a spectral presence with an elusive, 'fantasmatic ex-sistence' (*LN*, 683). After Martin Cunningham confirms Wyse's claim about Bloom's contribution to Sinn Fein, Bloom is still perceived as suspicious and referred to as 'perverted,' as a 'wolf in sheep's clothing,' a 'Virag from Hungary!' and 'Ahasuerus [...] [c]ursed by God' (*U*, 12.1635-7).

³⁴³ Gifford, p. 366.

³⁴⁴ Duffy, p. 118.

In addition to this, the Jewish Diaspora is incorporated into the stereotype of implied political infidelity. For example, the Jews are slandered as ‘Jerusalem (ah!) cuckoos’ (*U*, 12.1571-2). Moreover, when John Wyse asks ‘why can’t a Jew love his country like the next fellow?’, J. J. Molloy replies, ‘Why not? [...] when he’s quite sure which country it is’ (*U*, 12.1628-30). The Dreyfus affair may well serve as an example of how Jews were viewed as permanent outsiders and potential traitors.

Furthermore, racism is unfailingly surrounded by the fantasmatic speculation about the genitalia, sexuality and the bodily traits or enjoyment of the Other. This obsession with the Other’s secret enjoyment reveals what the racists truly target in their diatribes and violence is nothing but the ‘unbearable surplus enjoyment contained in the Other,’ the ‘unfathomable traumatic element that “bothers us” in the Other,’ which fantasy attempts to circle and contain (*GV*, 105). In ‘Cyclops,’ the prevalent anti-Semitism finds expression in denigrating references to the Jews such as, ‘circumcised,’ ‘a bit off the top,’ ‘a prudent member and no mistake,’ or ‘a sort of a queer odour’ (*U*, 12.19; 20; 437; 453). It is noteworthy that Bloom’s dubious masculinity (or indeed the femininity notoriously attributed to male Jews in stereotypes) can become a source not only of derision but also of the Citizen’s vehement vilification for a justified murder: ‘Lying up in the hotel Pisser was telling me once a month with headache like a totty with her courses. Do you know what I’m

telling you? It'd be an act of God to take a hold of a fellow the like of that and throw him in the bloody sea. Justifiable homicide, so it would' (*U*, 12.1658-1662). However, since hatred and violence aim at the 'real kernel of *objet a*, "what is in the object more than itself,"' the object of racist violence, be it verbal or physical, is in fact 'indestructible' (*GV*, 107). In the same manner that the Irish national Thing is organised around fetishism of national heroes, trees and fishes, these features of repulsion and fascination designate for the Lacanian 'something in the object more than itself' around which the racist fantasy of the Other's enjoyment being stolen or kept away from us is derived and organised.

Given the fact that the subject is structurally split, and that anti-Semitism as an ideological fantasy is an inherently intersubjective construction, the projection thesis in which the racist 'projects' or 'externalises' his/her inner conflicts onto the target of discrimination is not sufficient (*LN*, 686). Rather, Lacan's formula for fantasy ($\$ \langle \rangle a$) reveals a '*self-referential inclusion*': 'the transcendental I, \$, is "inscribed into the picture" as its point of impossibility' (*LN*, 707). As Lacan remarks, '[t]he picture, certainly, is in my eye. But I am in the picture' (*XI*, 96). Applying this Lacanian formula of self-inclusion in fantasy, Žižek reverses Hitler's anti-Semitic verse, '[w]e have to kill the Jew within us,' by demanding acknowledgment that '*he, the anti-Semite, in his identity, is also in the Jew*' (*ET*, 135-6; *LN*, 707). The subject is in

the picture of ideological fantasy of anti-Semitism. To strip away (anti-Semitic) fantasy dissolves the racist's subjectivity. In other words, what the anti-Semite attributes to the figure of the Jew betrays his/her own symptomatic being that he/she refuses to recognise. An investigation into the mixed features contained within the anti-Semitic conceptual Jew as an embodied negativity would thus help to reveal the symptom of the society itself.

IV.

Let us reflect on the ethical ideals announced both through Bloom's mouth and through the poetic justice of Bloom's hilarious flight in a passage of parodic biblical prose (*U*, 12.1910-8). Besieged by the superegoic enjoyment of the entangled symptomatic nationalism and anti-Semitism, Bloom utters his definition of nation, asserting both his Irish and his Jewish identity: 'What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen. -- Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here. Ireland' (*U*, 12.1431-2); 'And I belong to a race too, says Bloom, that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant' (*U*, 12.1467-8). It appears that Joyce here places the issue of being Irish together with being Jewish, thereby condensing and problematizing the ethico-political question of what it means to be an Irish Jew or a Jewish Irishman. In bantering with other denizens of the pub, Bloom continues to

summon the Judeo-Christian commandment to neighbour love as an ethical paradigm.

Finally, Bloom acknowledges his ‘non-Jewish Jewishness’³⁴⁵ with a jocoserious assertion of his Jewish identity through a whimsical list of Jews, which ends with ‘Your God was a jew. Christ was a jew like me’ (*U*, 12.1808-9).

Joyce deliberately problematises the definition of being a Jew by complicating Bloom’s Jewish identity. Bloom was born in Ireland and is three-fourths Jewish in lineage, and never circumcised (*U*, 13.979-81). He is an assimilated Jew, and not a Zionist. In ‘Ithaca,’ Joyce records Bloom’s assimilation history:

To Master Percy Apjohn at High School in 1880 he had divulged his disbelief in the tenets of the Irish (protestant) church (to which his father Rudolf Virag (later Rudolph Bloom) had been converted from the Israelitic faith and communion in 1865 by the Society for promoting Christianity among the jews) subsequently abjured by him in favour of Roman Catholicism at the epoch of and with a view to his matrimony in 1888. (*U*, 17.1634-40)

Bloom’s identity as a Hungarian-Irish baptised Jew may illustrate that racial and cultural hybridity was a common social and historical fact among assimilated European Jewry, which puts into question the dichotomy of purity and otherness. This hybridity, which has not yet been properly represented on the cultural scene, constitutes ‘the very image of Ireland’s unacknowledged ethno-cultural hybridity.’³⁴⁶

Moreover, Jewishness itself is a cultural, textual assemblage of prevalent thematics

³⁴⁵ Davidson, *Construction*, p. 218.

³⁴⁶ Joseph Valente, ‘Joyce’s Politics: race, nation, and transnationalism’, *James Joyce Studies*. Ed. Jean Michel Rabaté (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 73-96, at p. 76.

and poetics associated with the figure of the Jew.³⁴⁷ ‘Non-Jewish Jewishness’ therefore designates an alternative conception of being a Jew. In this section, I will explore the notions of ‘transnational’ national identity and ‘non-Jewish Jewishness’ in light of the relationship between the Lacanian conception of the subject as void and the construction of national identity.

The ethico-political ideals of nation and universal love proposed by Bloom deserve to be quoted in full in the service of an analysis of their ethical significance:

--A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place.

--By God, then says Ned, laughing, if that's so I'm a nation for I'm living in the same place for the past five years.

So of course everyone had the laugh at Bloom and says he, trying to muck out of it:

--Or also living in different places.

--That covers my case, says Joe.

--What is your nation if I may ask? says the citizen.

--Ireland, says Bloom. I was born here Ireland [...] And I belong to a race too, says Bloom, that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant [...] Plundered. Insulted. Persecuted. Taking what belongs to us by right. At this very moment. This very instant. (*U*, 12.1422-1469)

--Are you talking about the new Jerusalem? says the citizen.

--I'm talking about injustice, says Bloom [...] Force, hatred, history, all that. That's not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it's the very opposite of that that is really life.

--What? says Alf.

--Love, says Bloom. (*U*, 12.1473-1485)

--A new apostle to the gentiles, says the citizen. Universal love.

--Well, says, John Wyse. Isn't that what we're told. Love your neighbour.

--That chap? Says the citizen. Beggar my neighbour is his motto. Love, moya! He's a nice pattern of a Romeo and Juliet.

³⁴⁷ Reizbaum, p. 35-88.

Love loves to love love. Nurse loves the new chemist. Constable 14A loves Mary Kelly. Herty Mac Dowell loves the boy that has the bicycle. M. B. loves a fair gentleman. Li Chi Han lovey up kissy Cha Pu Chow. Jumbo, the elephant, loves Alice the elephant [...] His Majesty the King loves Her Majesty the Queen. Mrs Norman W. Tupper loves officer Taylor. You love a certain person. And this person loves that another person because everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody. (*U*, 12.1489-1501)

Bloom's highly democratic definition of a nation as 'the same people living in the same place,' or 'also living in different places' is mocked and his nationality immediately questioned. Upon closer scrutiny, it is noteworthy that what is challenged is not the democratic ideal of the nation as such, but its efficacy. Previously, by means of an analysis of symptomatic nationalism, I have shown how the Symbolic ideal for national autonomy and independence is contaminated by and entangled with the superegoic enjoyment exemplified in various fantasmatic construction around the national Thing. The Symbolic law operates with the ideological fantasy. Insofar as the Symbolic law of the liberalist ideal is underpinned by the exception/transgression of law in the form of ideological fantasy, the superegoic underside enjoyment of symptomatic nationalism and anti-Semitism, for the Symbolic law to really take effect, the suspension of the superegoic underside is required.³⁴⁸ This procedure can be approached in two ways. In the first place, the law, the Symbolic ideal (represented in the liberal ideal at this juncture) must be taken

³⁴⁸ For a more detailed account of the relationship between the Symbolic law and its underside superegoic support, see Chapter One on the Lacanian theorization of the function of fantasy.

seriously and literally; the letters of the law as the embodiment of justice, equality and democracy must be realised and practiced without treacherous, obscene fantasy or the insidious enjoyment instanced in the unwritten code of racism, xenophobia or sexism.

Approaching this matter from another angle, a working through or deactivation of the fantasmatic support, or a sustained operation of law/regulation devoid of the superegoic enjoyment, is therefore inevitably in order. Since, in parallel to the literary traversal of ideological fantasy, Joyce inserts the aspiration to universal love and the liberal ideal of nationhood, it is our task to explore the relationship between these ethical ideals, ideology and law, to see how ethical ideals might render ideology and law inoperative and transformed.

Despite his garbled expression, Bloom's definition of a nation is as simple as it is true. Countless brutal wars and atrocities arise precisely because of the failure of really honouring this rootless, colour-blind, pristine, liberal Symbolic law. As Žižek puts it, 'the truly subversive thing is not to disregard the explicit letter of Law on behalf of the underlying fantasies, but to *stick to the letter against the fantasy which sustains it*' (PF, 29, original emphasis). Bloom is capable of upholding and pronouncing this Symbolic ideal because he does not share the symptomatic nationalism and its concomitant fantastic mode of enjoyment. On the contrary, the cynical laughter of the barflies is derived from their shared symptomatic nationalism

and coded enjoyment, which simultaneously support and undermine this Symbolic ideal. In Lacanian terms, the law works side by side with its transgression, with its superegoic underside enjoyment; in the words of Agamben, the law works with its exception, with its inclusive exclusion, with its state of emergency built into the structure. As discussed above, the shared fantasmatic enjoyment centred around the national Thing and the fear of the Other's theft of our enjoyment all contribute to the transference of guilt and social antagonism to the discriminated Other. Bloom's remarks sound offensive to the nationalist ear precisely because they refute the unwritten superegoic law and challenge the shared coded enjoyment in national fantasy and racism.

Joyce deliberately fragments Bloom's discourse on his nationality and proposal of universal love with the inserted digression of extravagant praise for 'the much treasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish facecloth' (*U*, 12.1438-9). The long paragraph on the facecloth continues for twenty six lines (*U*, 12.1438-64), which not only praises the legendary beauty of the cornerpieces' of the cloth as 'the acme of art,' (*U*, 12.1442) but also includes all the 'moving scenes' (*U*, 12.1461-2) associated with the Irish landscape. It is this culturally contrived enjoyment of symptomatic nationalism around the National Thing, in this case the landscape and traditional handcrafted art, that abruptly obfuscates the flow of the narrative as well as frustrating

Bloom's ethical ideals. By identifying how Bloom's ideal of nationhood is ridiculed and who participates in this derision, I argue that it is the efficacy not the validity of this proposal that is in jeopardy. For those who do not share the superegoic enjoyment of symptomatic nationalism that might cripple and debilitate the Symbolic ideals, the validity is taken seriously and without irony.

Furthermore, Joyce's own 'transnationalism,' to borrow Joseph Valente's term, should be read with Bloom's democratic definition of nation in mind. In the face of the tension between a 'vigorously post-colonial' Joyce and 'an acerbic anti-nationalist cosmopolitan' Joyce, Valente traces Joyce's attitudes toward nationalism over the years, arguing that the transnationalism developed in exile grows out the 'sublation' of the principles of his 'anti-nationalism' in his Irish years.³⁴⁹ Valente identifies several causes for Joyce's 'anti-patriotic posture'³⁵⁰ toward both Griffith's Sinn Fein political agenda and the cultural nationalism of Irish Revivalism. Joyce's hostility toward the dominant political and cultural discourse of Irish nationalism of his time is undoubtedly derived from his uneasiness with 'Gaelic exclusionism,' which valorises Irish purity in race, culture and language, disregarding the 'ethnocultural hybridity' of Ireland and breeding hatred.³⁵¹ In contrast to 'Gaelic exclusionism,' Joyce, Valente

³⁴⁹ Valente, p. 73.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 74.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 75-76. Other reasons identified by Valente for Joyce's disapproval of Irish Revivalism include Joyce's cult of Parnell, the Irish propensity for self-betrayal, and the intellectual banality of the Irish cultural nationalism in subordinating all cultural standards to promoting ethno-national identity.

contends, espouses ‘Irish exceptionalism,’ ‘grounded not, as in revivalist doctrine, on a unique collective identity, but rather on a singular degree of collective self-alterity.’³⁵² In explicating this ‘self-alterity’ and ‘exceptionalism,’ Valente cites Joyce’s famous lines in response to Griffith’s race baiting agenda and support of the Gaelic revival: ‘If the Irish programme did not insist on the Irish language I suppose I could myself be a nationalist’ (*SL*, 125). This astringent remark discloses not so much Joyce’s scorn for the motivation of the entire project of Irish nationalism as his acerbity about constructing the nationalist agenda around the conception of a certain notion of ‘Irishness,’ the Irish language included.³⁵³

Through a Lacanian lens, I would like to argue that Joyce’s ‘self-alterity’ or ‘exceptionalism’ aims less at an outright rejection of nationalism than at a radical gesture of stripping off the national Thing, the ideological fantasy of symptomatic nationalism. Ireland should seek identity or solidarity not in purity based on exclusionism, but in self-exceptionalism, which suspends exclusionism as superegoic

³⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁵³ Critics tend to unearth different tendencies in Joyce’s controversial attitude toward cultural nationalism. In this chapter, I have touched upon some of these. For instance, Gibson argues that Joyce employs the gigantism in parodied interpolations to mock the Irish Revivalists romanticized historiography, while Nolan in *James Joyce and Nationalism* tries to argue for Joyce’s positive attitude toward Irish nationalism. Regarding cultural nationalism, Seamus Deane points out that Joyce is ‘himself a dominant figure in that movement [of Irish Revival],’ sharing with the Revivalists ‘the same linguistic anxieties’ and the aspiration for an Irish national literature to be born through experimenting with the English language, yet dismissing the ‘folkish’ or ‘folksy’ elements of Revivalist agenda, warning against the representation of ‘pseudo-Irishness,’ the preserve of ‘the stage-Irishman of the nineteenth century England.’ Joyce seeks to gain distance from this shortcoming, attempting to achieve his own version of ‘literary independence.’ Seamus Deane, ‘Joyce the Irishman’, *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 28-48.

enjoyment of ideological fantasies. I would therefore draw an affinity between Joyce's 'self-alterity' and 'exceptionalism' and Agamben's 'exception' from the law's exception, the 'suspension of suspension,' an 'unplugging' from the reified mode of enjoyment on which Santner and Žižek have commented extensively. This exceptionalism is further complicated by Joyce's revised notion of Sinn Fein, the name in Irish meaning 'we ourselves,'³⁵⁴ hinting at a distance from 'essentialist orthodoxies,' subverting the inherent binarism of the Revivalist logic with a 'transnationalist objective of opening the borders of national(ist) identity' to acknowledge the hybridity in race, language and culture, in 'a nonetheless Irish-affirmative mode.'³⁵⁵

As Valente remarks, 'since romantic or revivalist nationalism centred on determining what was proper or improper to the "imagined community,"' Joyce uses Sinn Fein for subversion. In other words, '[t]he slogan, "ourselves alone," with an emphasis on the multiplicities of selves, comes to name an Irish exceptionalism based on Ireland/Irishness as exceptions to themselves.'³⁵⁶ Thus the phrase 'We ourselves' takes on a new tenor, signifying a new mode of being-togetherness: We are ourselves alone, being together here and now without being burdened or tarnished with the

³⁵⁴ It has been pointed out that Sinn Fein means, 'we, ourselves;' yet it is often translated as 'ourselves alone.'

³⁵⁵ Valente, p. 91.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

ideological fantasy of purity. Being-togetherness itself constitutes ‘we ourselves.’ Transnationalism is built on this revised notion of ‘we ourselves,’ advocating a project to ‘transvalue the present state of ambivalence and self-division into a constructive cultural perspectivism by refuting all romantic fictions, unionist or separatist,’ thus preparing Ireland ‘to become a modern trans-nation, characterised by cultural inmixing within its borders.’³⁵⁷ Valente refers to Joyce’s much quoted lines on the acknowledgement of multiplicity in support of his conception of Joyce’s transnationalism.³⁵⁸ For instance, Joyce states, ‘[o]ur civilization is a vast fabric, in which the Nordic aggressiveness and Roman law, the new bourgeois conventions and the remnant of a Syriac religion are reconciled. In such a fabric, it is useless to look for a thread that may have remained pure and virgin’ (*CW*, 161); before going on to say ‘What race, what language [...] can boast of being pure today? And *no* race has less right to utter such a boast than the race now living in Ireland’ (*CW*, 165).

Although, on the surface, Valente’s rhetoric regarding Joyce’s transnationalism seems to resonate with the celebration of hybridity, multiplicity, and difference which is so prevalent in post-colonial criticism and multiculturalism, a crucial concept distinguishes his approach from others. Valente attempts to read Joyce’s transnationalism through the lens of Nietzsche’s perspectivism, namely, through the

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

operation of the 'transvaluation' and 'transubstantiation' of nation/nationness/nationalism. This critical gesture is of vital importance. Regardless of whether Valente is fully conscious of it or not, transnationalism born out of a thorough transvaluation is less a version of multiculturalism than a founding gesture to create the possibility for the coexistence of difference. Prior to the negotiation of tolerance, hybridisation or pluralisation in the site of discursive hegemony, transnationalism helps to make negativity and nothingness appear. At this juncture, I would like to call attention to the parallel work of transvaluation and transubstantiation. That is to say, transvaluation can be accomplished in company with transubstantiation and vice versa. Without traversing fantasies and de-animating the fixed drive formation at both the personal and collective levels, the tolerance of difference and the celebration of multiplicity simply extends the field of domination through incorporation, while leaving intact the functioning of law or the Symbolic structure based on the sovereign exception and the internal exclusion of *homo sacer*.

Tolerance and the celebration for plurality, hybridity certainly remind us of the parlance of post-colonial criticism. To just give one example from Joyce criticism, Vicent J. Cheng, throughout his book *Joyce, Race and Empire* repetitively identifies the aggressive nationalist logic of domination and exclusion based on a hierarchical binary opposition between the oppressor and the oppressed. To counter binarism,

Cheng advocates tolerance and differences, hybridity and plurality. This contention finds typical expression in his interpretation of the tension between the Citizen and Bloom. The former represents the tendency of essentializing nation(ness) and the exclusion of what is deemed the other/outsider based on a binary opposition, ‘the need to demarcate the Self and the Other as polar enemies marked by absolute difference; of limited, one-eyed vision.’³⁵⁹ By contrast, ‘by defining a nation simply as a people generally within a geographical location, Bloom’s answer refuses either to hierarchize or to “imagine” an essentialized community, but rather allows for personal or ethnic difference and heterogeneity.’³⁶⁰ While the violence of hierarchical binary opposition is invoked and repudiated in the above argument, it is conspicuous that the argument itself is deployed through a dichotomy, an opposition between two polarities. Strictly speaking, upon more cautious reflection, dichotomy, dialectic and binary opposition is elementary in language and human thinking and it hardly constitutes a crime itself. However, without the working of ‘transubstantiation’ in terms of the traversal of fantasies, and the de-activation of the structure of law and its exception, the structural imbalance is not necessarily shaken or defused with the celebration of heterogeneity, difference and plurality. This partly betrays the inadequacy of multi-culturalism in approaching hybridity and plurality.

³⁵⁹ Vincent J. Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 201.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

There are at least two ways to conceive hybridity and plurality. One is to enclose difference as independent and individual one in each, separate political entity; the other is to manufacture hybridity by way of appropriating otherness and heterogeneity into a new syncretism.³⁶¹ In the latter case, hybridity may well work to serve the incorporation of otherness and differences while omitting autonomy and subjectivity of diverse elements. In this light, transnationalism plays a crucial role, preparing the ground for a nation *devoid* of particularities, a nation rigorously honoring the Symbolic law without being sustained by the attachment to the national Thing and the various ideological fantasies. If the notion of transnationalism is to be put into words, Bloom's ideal of a nation offers a pristine draft for it. I therefore would like to claim that transnationalism can afford a conceptual extension to a nation without nationalism, commonly built upon imagined homeland, history and community.

In a similar vein, transnationalism may also shed light on Joyce's attitude towards Zionism.³⁶² Zionism as a secularised messianism aimed at establishing an

³⁶¹ Chaoyang Liao, 'Untigering the Tiger: Together as Many, or Hybridized as One' *Chung-wai Literary Monthly*, 21.3 (1992), 48-58. The original Chinese title is '是四不像·還是虎豹獅象? : 再與邱貴芬談台灣文化.' I follow the author's own translation of the title here.

³⁶² Joyce's attitude toward Zionism and Judaism is complex and encompasses various aspects, including the political, the linguistic, the religious and the cultural. Please see Ira Bruce Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews: Culture and Text* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), p. 69-84. Joyce's Trieste and Zurich libraries harboured Theodor Herzl's *Der judenstaat*, Harry's Scher's collection, *Zionism and the Jewish Future*, Edouard Dujardin's *Le Source du fleuve chrétien*, subtitled *Histoire critique due Judaïsme acien et du christianisme primitive: Le Judaiseme*. Nadel thinks that Joyce is skeptical about the aggressive nationalism lurking behind Zionism, yet finds inspiration in Herzl's liberalism and Dujardin's ideas of intermixing language and culture. Joyce's circle, especially during the years abroad,

Israeli state posed an alternative for European Jewry faced with the exacerbated anti-Semitism of Joyce's time. After broaching his idea of the nation, Bloom champions love, not Zionism, as a possible avenue of ameliorating injustice in reply to the Citizen's query, 'are you talking about the new Jerusalem?' It is the Judeo-Christian ideal of universal love, not the state of Israel, for which Bloom opts. In *Ulysses*, Bloom's attitude toward Zionism is epitomised by his response to the advertisement for Agendath Netaim. Joyce transforms a real-life friend, Dlugacz,³⁶³ into a 'ferretheaded pork-butcher' (*U*, 4.152) who wraps the goods Bloom has purchased in a paper containing an advertisement for Agendath Netaim, which, as a result, triggers Bloom's pondering over the planting project in Palestine: 'You pay eighty marks and they plant a dunam of land for you with olives, oranges, almonds or citrons' (*U*, 4.194-5). Bloom passes judgment on this project: 'Nothing doing. Still an idea behind it' (*U*, 4.200).

The turn of the twentieth century witnessed the parallel rise of Irish nationalism and Zionism.³⁶⁴ Arguably, while rejecting the practicality of Zionism, Bloom does

included figures such as Moses Dulgacz, an ardent Zionist, a Rabbi and wholesaler, and Ottocaro Wiess, an informal promoter of Zionism and brother of Italy's first psychoanalyst, Edouardo Weiss. Among them, most important of all, Ettore Schmitz (Italo Svevo), a Hungarian-Jewish, avant-garde novelist and Joyce's student, becomes a reader and critic of Joyce's work, helping Joyce finish *A Portrait*. As Davidson argues, his person, and the characters of his own novels join Joyce's construction of Bloom's 'Jewishness.' Davidson, *Construction*, p. 155-84.

³⁶³ Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews*, p. 71

³⁶⁴ George Bornstein, 'The Colors of Zion: Black, Jewish and Irish Nationalisms at the Turn of the Century', *Modernism/Modernity*, 12.3 (2005), p. 369-84. Bornstein regards the prevalent inscription of Zionism in *Ulysses* as a literary representation of the parallel development of Black, Jewish and Irish nationalisms in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, reading Zionism as the common

not refute the underlying aspiration for deliverance from bondage and the enterprise for autonomy and independence. For Bloom (and arguably Joyce), Zionism should be situated within the larger framework of revolution and the demand for democracy.³⁶⁵ However, Bloom descends further into a distressing imaginary digression:

A barren land, bare waste. Sodom, Gomorrah, Edom. All dead names. A dead sea in a dead land, grey and old [...] The oldest people. Wandered far away over all the earth, captivity to captivity, multiplying, dying being born everywhere. It lay there now. Now it could bear no more. Dead: an old woman's: the grey sunken cunt of the world.' (*U*, 4.219-23)

Davidson argues that Bloom's refusal of 'the hope [of Zionism]' is a symptom of his intensified sense of isolation and an outcome of his introjected self-image, even a self-hatred of anti-Semitic stereotypes such as 'the shadow of Weininger' and 'the feminized Jew.'³⁶⁶ According to Davidson, 'he is not accepted as an Irishman by others, and he will not accept himself as a Jew [...] His negative vision [of Palestine and Zionism] thus ends in an image of female decrepitude.'³⁶⁷ I disagree with Davidson at this point because he explains Bloom's attitude in terms of a political inaction resulting from psychological paralysis. My stance is that there is a deeper cause for Joyce to make Bloom maintain his distance from Zionism.³⁶⁸

motive of different nationalist demands for emancipation.

³⁶⁵ Alain Badiou, 'The Question of Democracy.' *Lacanian Ink* 28(2006), p. 59.

³⁶⁶ Davidson, *Construction*, p. 203.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

³⁶⁸ Although it is common-sensical for critics today not to conflate the attitude of characters with that of their authors, it is also well-known that Joyce's detachment from politics find ample expression in his biographical and critical writings, and his novels. My argument in this chapter is that through Bloom, Joyce articulates his skepticism toward the state and politics and calls for an ethics in

The refusal of Zionism as a feasible solution to anti-Semitism is further evidenced in ‘Ithaca.’ Bloom literally burns the advertisement: Bloom ‘produced from his waistcoat a folded page of prospectus (illustrated) entitled Agendath Netaim, unfolded the same, examined it superficially, rolled it into a thin cylinder, [and] ignited it in the candleflame’ (*U*, 17.1324-6). It is noteworthy that Bloom’s rejection of Zionism takes a different path from that of Theodor Herzl, a Hungarian Jew, author of *Der Judenstaat* (*The State of the Jews* or *The Jewish State*) and a Zionist leader. It stands to reason that those who endorse the establishment of a Jewish state merely dream of displacing the internal conflict with geographical distance without actually resolving the problem caused by the intricate collusion between symptomatic nationalism and anti-Semitism. To untangle this issue, Joyce enlists the ethical ideal of universal love.

Bloom’s proposal of universal love is immediately ridiculed by the Citizen. Whenever the sense of irony surfaces, breaking in the flow of the narrative, the reader should be cautious not to dismiss the validity of the proposed idea too rapidly. With more careful inspection, it is arguable that it is not the ideal of universal love *per se* that is challenged in the parodied digression, but its degenerate vulgarisation in terms of mundane erotic or romantic love. It is this vulgar version of fantasy expressed in

the materiality of language that obfuscates both the flow of narrative and the efficacy of the ideal of universal love. The idiosyncratic, non-sensical line, ‘Love loves to love love,’ is actually a parody of St. Augustine’s description of his indulgence in sexual desire before he discovered Divine love as the true and ultimate love.³⁶⁹ My stance does not endorse an outright rejection of erotic love or worldly love in general, but allows room for a conception of love, divine, true or otherwise, to be able to account for an ethical act which might transform the libidinal economy of *jouissance*. The commandment of neighbour love may function as an ethical act able to deactivate the commonplace fantasmatic investment or mundane organisation of erotic enjoyment. In this regard, the notion of love as invoked by Joyce is not a humanist or humanitarian sentiment, but a weak messianic gesture in the Benjaminian sense, the purpose of which is to render law and its underside superegoic enjoyment inoperative and hence to rectify the situation and complete the law.

In the context of ‘Cyclops,’ what is under scrutiny is not erotic, romantic love but the nationalist passion engendered by empires or states to further their political agendas. Joyce never lived to witness the independence of the state of Israel, but his aloofness and distance from state politics and aggressive nationalism, be it Irish or pro-Israeli, demands critical reflection. The danger inherent in Zionism resides in

³⁶⁹ Gifford, p. 364-5. St Augustine, Confessions 3:1: ‘Not yet did I love, though I loved to love, seeking what I might love, loving to love.’

the way that the nation-state instrumentalises the Holocaust, legitimising political measures through victimhood and so on (V, 96). As Arthur Koestler warns, ‘if power corrupts, the reverse is also true; persecution corrupts the victims, though perhaps in more subtle and tragic ways’ (quoted in V, 102-3). Commenting on the Israel/Palestine conflict, Badiou offers a profound insight:

The founding of a Zionist State was a mixed, thoroughly complex, reality. On the one side, it was an event which was part of a larger event: the rise of great revolutionary, communist and socialist projects, the idea of founding an entirely new society. On the other hand, it was a counter-event, part of a larger counter-event, colonialism, the brutal conquest by people who came from Europe of the new land where other people lived. Israel is an extraordinary mixture of revolution and reaction, of emancipation and oppression [...] It has to become the least racial, the least religious, and the least nationalist of States. The most universal of them.³⁷⁰

Žižek arrives at a similar proposal when he argues for the ‘transnational universality’ inherent in the Western Enlightenment.³⁷¹ Since both the Jews and the Palestinians share the same ‘diasporic experience,’ they should attempt to come together ‘not on the ground of occupying, possessing or dividing the same territory, but of both keeping their shared territory open as a refuge for those condemned to wander,’ ‘a place for those with no place’ (V, 122; 109). Utopian as these proposals may appear, they actually harbour a serious attempt to unravel and dismantle the chronic political malady of the nation-state, imperialism, colonialism, and even law in general.

On this point, Freud’s contemplation of the two kinds of universalism may help

³⁷⁰ Badiou, ‘The Question of Democracy’, 54-9 at p. 59.

³⁷¹ I have engaged with the question of universality and the related issues of singular universality and universal singularity in previous chapters, and will elaborate further in the chapter on ‘Circe.’

us understand the logic underlying the dichotomy between state politics in alignment with nationalism and imperialism and the Judeo-Christian ideal of universal love. In *Moses and Monotheism*, distinguishing two versions of monotheism, the ‘Pharaonic’ and the ‘Jewish’, Freud remarks;

In Egypt [...] monotheism grew up as a by product of imperialism: God was a reflection of the Pharaoh who was the absolute ruler of a great world-empire. With the Jews, political conditions were highly unfavorable for the development from the idea of an exclusive national god to that of a universal ruler of the world. And where did this tiny and powerless nation find the arrogance to declare itself the favorite child of the great Lord?³⁷²

The God for all in the Pharaonic version is a reflection of the power of Pharaoh. Therefore, it constitutes a ‘particularized universal[ism],’ a ‘progressive extension/universalization of the reign of this God,’ which obeys ‘the logic of imperialistic conquest.’³⁷³ This conquest follows the masculine/sovereign logic of ‘inclusive exclusion.’³⁷⁴ The universalism, meanwhile, always depends on and defines itself with a privileged exception, ‘an exception that “proves the rule;”’ the conqueror sets the standardised particular to be universalised, hence a ‘particularised universalism.’³⁷⁵ In ‘Cyclops,’ the violent nature of the ‘Pharaonic,’ imperial

³⁷² Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (SE 23). Trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), p.65.

³⁷³ Copjec, *Imagine*, p. 155.

³⁷⁴ I invoke here the male logic of all and exception that Lacan expounds in his formula of sexualisation. Agamben’s extended account of the political theology, the operation of law in terms of the ‘inclusive exclusion’ of the sovereign and *homo sacer*, follows Lacan’s male logic. Please see sections V and VI in the chapter on theory in this thesis.

³⁷⁵ See Copjec, *Imagine*, p. 155 and Kenneth Reinhard, ‘Universalism and the Jewish Exception: Lacan, Badiou, Rosenzweig’, *Umbr(a)*, (2005) 43-71, at p. 44. From now on, this source will be identified as ‘Universalism.’

‘particularised universalism’ finds expression in ‘sanctimonious Cromwell and his ironsides that put the women and children of Drogheda to the sword with the bible text *God is love* pasted round the mouth of his cannon’ (*U*, 12.1507-9). Another example is presented in the form of ‘an illuminated bible, the volume of the word of God and the secret of England’s greatness, graciously presented to him [the Zulu chief] by the white chief woman, the great squaw Victoria’ (*U*, 12.1523-5). Here, the promotion of God and the expansion of empire converge. The imperialised and particularised universalism of the Christian God in the service of statism, colonialism and Eurocentricism is clearly a betrayal of St. Paul’s notion of universal love.

In recent years, scholars have undertaken a sophisticated investigations of Jewish and Christian universalism in terms of subtraction rather than particularisation.³⁷⁶ While the imperial, Pharaonic universalism is constituted on a privileged particularity of exception, the subtractive universalism in Judaism centres on the conception of the Jews as ‘remnants’³⁷⁷ of themselves. The Jewish notion of universality does not appeal to ‘the possibility of becoming a totality’ through the postulation of all and exception, but to the logic of not-all, to the act of subtraction and ‘decompletion’ of the structure and subjectivity.³⁷⁸ Franz Rosenzweig, the interwar German-Jewish

³⁷⁶ The jargon ‘subtraction’ undoubtedly reverberates with Badiou’s prolonged discussion of the concept. See Badiou’s article ‘On subtraction’ in *Theoretical Writings*.

³⁷⁷ Reinhard, ‘Universalism’, p. 67.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67-8.

thinker, offers an influential interpretation of the tenets of Judaism in *The Star of Redemption*. According to Rosenzweig, creation, revelation and redemption are made up of ‘three modalities of decompletion’: (1) the divine contraction to create a void, a nothingness prior to creating the world; (2) the subtraction of revelation in the gesture of electing contingently and arbitrarily a people as the chosen people; and (3) the neighbour love of redemption, which ‘grows according to the logic of not-all,’ as neighbour love means to love each person *who happens to be my neighbour*. The chosen people are selected not by traits or characteristics but by a lack of particularities and by the Jewish people’s leap of faith in being faithful to the act of revelation. As Copjec puts it, ‘the election of the Jews does nothing but *deselect* their particular characteristics.’³⁷⁹ In this light, the fact that Freud finds no particular reasons for Jewish election is actually a solution in itself, for the election actually originates out of nothing in particular. This Jewish universalism devoid of particularities, as Freud remarks, helps Jews defy their miserable history and survive in diaspora, forcing them to ‘hold their own in commercial life’ and ‘make valuable contributions to every form of cultural activity.’³⁸⁰ The Jewish identity is sustained by the lack of particularities, and Judaism by the principle of immanent subtraction. When a nation inaugurates and manufactures its collective identity around

³⁷⁹ Copjec, *Imagine*, p. 156.

³⁸⁰ Freud, *SE* 23, p. 91.

nothingness rather than around some national Thing, being 'remnant' to oneself actually resonates with 'self-alterity' in Valente's discussion of Joyce's 'transnationalism.'

The idea of 'self-alterity,' being a 'remnant to oneself' and a Jewish identity without particularities, also paves the way for an alternative critical appreciation of Bloom's self-assertion of his 'non-Jewish Jewishness.' In confrontation with the accelerating anti-Semitism among the increasingly drunken barflies, Bloom finally gives up his self-restraint³⁸¹ and sallies out his exhilarating yet perplexing list of Jews: 'Mendelssohn was a jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza. And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God [...] Well, his uncle was a jew [...] Your God was a jew. Christ was a jew like me' (*U*, 12.1804-9). As Davidson notes, Bloom's list challenges the assumption of an either/or conception of identity, and 'Joyce's joke is thus on the reader, not on Bloom.'³⁸² In 'Cyclops,' the problematic list of names includes a non-Jew, an Italian Catholic (Mercadante), an assimilated, anti-Semitic Jew (Marx), an unorthodox, excommunicated Jew (Spinoza), a Jew who works to mitigate anti-Semitism (Moses Mendelssohn), and a Jew who renounces Judaism, converting to Christianity (Felix Mendelssohn

³⁸¹ For instance, when the Citizen says 'Those are nice things coming over Ireland filling the country with bugs,' 'Bloom lets on he heard nothing' (*U*, 12.1141-3). Similarly, when the Citizen continues to complain about letting in the Jews, Bloom acts on 'letting on to be awfully deeply interested in nothing' (*U*, 12.1161).

³⁸² Davidson, *Construction*, p. 219.

Bartholdy).³⁸³ In 'Ithaca,' Bloom evokes again the list of 'examples of postexilic eminence,' repeating some of the names appearing in 'Cyclops':

Three seekers of the pure truth, Moses of Egypt, Moses Maimonides, author of *More Nebukim* (Guide of the Perplexed) and Moses Mendelssohn of such eminence that from Moses (of Egypt) to Moses (Mendelssohn) there arose none like Moses (Maimonides) [...] Felix Bartholdy Mendelssohn (composer), Baruch Spinoza (philosopher), Mendoza (pugilist), Ferdinand Lassalle (reformer, duellist). (*U*, 17.709-23)

Bloom's list of Jews poses a challenge to critics who try to identify some affinity between Bloom and the men on the list.³⁸⁴

Marx and Jesus are the two figures who elicit most reflection. Marx's alleged anti-Semitism stirs diverse criticism and dispute. Davidson interprets it as an instance of Jewish self-hatred, taking it as 'a result of the type of Jewish self-abnegation Bloom embodies.'³⁸⁵ The primary source for Marx's anti-Semitism is his controversial article, 'On the Jewish Question.'³⁸⁶ I briefly comment on this polemical piece here as a means to explore what Reizbaum dubs 'the poetics of Jewishness' in Marx's theory and to evaluate the so-called anti-Semitism in Marx. I take this short yet monumental text by Marx as a specimen which condenses the entanglement of modernity, capitalism and anti-Semitism. In her book *James Joyce's Judaic Other*, Reizbaum analyzes the discourse of anti-Semitism in terms of

³⁸³ Gifford, p. 378.

³⁸⁴ As will be shown in a moment, Davidson and Reizbaum participate in the discussion of Bloom's lists of Jews.

³⁸⁵ Davidson, *Construction*, p. 219.

³⁸⁶ Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question,' p. 1-21. All quotations from this text are from the on-line Marx archive. Last accessed 20 April, 2012: <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works>>

the thematics and poetics of Jewishness. The former roughly describes the stereotypes and clichéd conceptions of Jews circulating in society and culture, the latter the prevalent cultural discourse built on these thematics.³⁸⁷ ‘The Jewish Question’ is actually not merely the supposed problem caused by the Jews in society, but also the issue of the emancipation of the Jews.

In the second part of the article, Marx offers provocative lines of argument, which appear to be a strange combination of sharp social, economic-political analysis and outrageous anti-Semitic remarks. For example, Marx’s diagnosis of the problem of modernity is intertwined with anti-Semitic discourse:

What is the secular basis of Judaism? *Practical need, self-interest*. What is the worldly religion of the Jew? *Huckstering*. What is his worldly God? *Money*. Very well then! Emancipation from *huckstering* and *money*, consequently from practical, real Judaism, would be the self-emancipation of our time. In the final analysis *the emancipation of the Jews* is the emancipation of mankind from Judaism [...] The Jew has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner, not only because he has acquired financial power, but also because, through him and also apart from him, money has become a world power and the practical Jewish spirit has become the practical spirit of Christian nations. The Jews have emancipated themselves insofar as the Christians have become Jews.³⁸⁸

The god of *practical need* and *self-interest* is money. Money is the jealous god of Israel, in face of which no other god may exist. Money degrades all the gods of men--and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal self-established value of all things. It has, therefore, robbed the whole world--both the world of men and nature--of its specific *value*. Money is the estranged essence of man's work and man's existence, and his alien essence dominates him, and he worships it. The god

³⁸⁷ Reizbaum’s examples of the poetics of Jewishness are Freud, Nietzsche and Otto Weininger, p. 51-88. However, without detailed analysis of Marx, Reizbaum regards Marx as anti-Semitic after quoting a line by Marx, ‘What is the object of Jewish worship in this world? Usury. What is his worldly god? Money’, p. 16.

³⁸⁸ Marx, p. 18, original emphasis.

of the Jews has become secularized and has become the god of the world. The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jews. His god is only an illusory bill of exchange.³⁸⁹

On the surface, in sentences like ‘Money is the jealous God of Israel,’ Marx ostensibly absorbs the anti-Semitic discourse prevalent in society, adopting uncritically the deep-seated denigration of the Jews, the Jewish conspiracy of world dominance, the stereotype of the Jews as usurers, and so on. The problem of modernity is equivalent to the problem of Judaism, and indeed modernity faces a Jewish Question. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, this is arguably a trenchant social critique based on the poetics of Jewishness, which is itself an incorporation of the thematics of Jewishness into an economic-political analysis.

The passage cited above reveals that there is a shift of emphasis from the characterisation of Jews as economic manipulators and conspirators of world dominance through economic monopoly to the way in which money itself dictates politics and culture. Beneath the apparent stigmatising, racist jargon of anti-Semitism, Marx offers his own socio-economic observation and critique. To put it succinctly, Marx identifies the social symptom of modernity and embarks on a critique of capitalism and the problem of human alienation as a product of commodity fetishism. These social and economic ailments are what have been conveniently assigned to the figure of the Jew and the concomitant Jewish conspiracy theory in the

³⁸⁹ Marx, p. 19, original emphasis.

form of 'Money' being identified as a Jewish God, and huckstering as a typical Jewish enterprise. As Žižek points out, '[t]he (anti-Semitic figure of the) "Jew" is not the positive cause of social imbalance and antagonism: social antagonism comes first, and the "Jew" merely gives body to this obstacle' (*PF*, 76). It certainly breeds the suspicion of Marx's anti-Semitism for on the one hand he discloses the disease of modernity through his critique of capitalism in the name of Judaism, and on the other, he equates Judaism with capitalism without critical clarification. This embroilment of modernity, capitalism and anti-Semitism was a global predicament in Joyce's time. Joyce's insertion of the name of Marx at this juncture in *Ulysses* is thus a perspicuous gesture encapsulating this embroilment. The true locus of the emancipation of the Jews and of mankind is to work through the ideological fantasy of anti-Semitism and identify social antagonism as a symptom of modernity, rather than claim it as a result of the presence of the Jewish people.

Let us return to the evaluation of Bloom's self-assertion and self-identification through the list of prominent Jews. Except for the non-Jew, Mercadante, these men are 'converts, revaluers of the faith and apostates.'³⁹⁰ Reizbaum contends that Joyce employs this list because the men on 'the list of assimilated, apostate, dissociated, convert Jews who are (mis)taken for Jews in and outside the novel,' are thus

³⁹⁰ Reizbaum, p. 72.

‘ironically or not, like Bloom.’³⁹¹ Bloom seems to fit into the category of treacherous, assimilated Jews in this ‘non-Jewish Jewishness,’ sharing the border-crossing quality of being simultaneously Jew and non-Jew. The historical Jesus is a Jew, yet his revolution in faith inaugurates Christianity, rendering him a non-Jew. As Reizbaum puts it, ‘Jesus is like Bloom in that he is a Jew and a non-Jew at the same time and therefore inevitably noble and ignoble, oppressed and martyred.’³⁹² In other words, this line of interpretation holds that the list represents the historical fact of the blurring of being Jew and non-Jew at the same time. To evoke Jesus, ‘your God’ as ‘a jew like me’ sounds particularly repugnant and irritating to the ears of the Citizen precisely because of the conflation in Bloom’s mouth between *his* God and his Other/the Jew. The irony is evident when the Citizen threatens to ‘crucify’ ‘the Jew/other who dares to identify himself with *his* God’³⁹³—‘By Jesus, says he [the Citizen], I will brain that bloody jewman for using the holy man’ (*U*, 12.1811). The irony of crucifixion is further highlighted when the Citizen attempts to attack Bloom with a biscuit tin after identifying Bloom as a mocked Messiah just moments before: ‘That’s the new Messiah for Ireland! says the citizen. Island of saints and sages!’ (*U*, 12.1642-3). The crucifixion once suffered by the heretic and revolutionary Christ, described as ‘the first socialist’ (*U*, 18.178) in

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Bloom's words to Molly in 'Penelope,' is now re-enacted humorously and ironically with the modern mocked Jew/Messiah in the hands of Christians for no other reason than his being, like Jesus, a Jew.

Drawing inspiration from Freud's point regarding the two modes of universality, I argue that Bloom's assertion of his 'non-Jewish Jewishness' is not merely an acknowledgement of border-transgression, but a *voiding* act of the subtractive universality in Judaism discussed earlier. 'Non-Jewish Jewishness' may be interpreted as an outcome of rendering vacant the particular contents which once occupied the category of the Jewish subject through subtraction. Subjective destitution is precisely the act of subtraction required for the (re-)emergence of the voidness of subjectivity and for the renewal or reinvigoration of self-identity. By means of the list of prominent Jews in 'Cyclops' and 'Ithaca,' it is as if Joyce is recapitulating the subtractive doctrine of Jewishness and Judaism and Freud's observation that the Jews survive their dire situation of diaspora by dislodging themselves from the romanticisation of a national Thing to devote themselves to worldly achievements. My method at this point is not to search in Joyce's archive to unearth the textual sources of the Jewish elements in Joyce's writings, or to distil the Jewish or Judaic elements among the texts Joyce once had at hand to see how he has incorporated, satirised or smelted these materials in his oeuvre. That is to say, I do

not seek literary, philosophical or cultural intertextuality, or to further the strong claim that *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* may be deemed Jewish texts.³⁹⁴

Instead, taking note of the overlapping composition dates of the two authors' works,³⁹⁵ I work on the basis that modernity at this stage faced the portentous crisis of the collusion between aggressive nationalism and rampant anti-Semitism in Europe, which, as history went, would later coagulate into the Nazi concentration camps and the catastrophe of the Holocaust. Intellectuals like Joyce and Rosenzweig responded with perspicuous diagnoses of this malady, seeking a possible remedy in another kind of universalism, rather than the global expansion of imperial universalism. They seek an avenue embodied in universal love and the famous commandment of neighbour love in the Judeo-Christian tradition which might serve to facilitate a genuine openness for being-together among neighbours. Neighbour love of this kind works hand in hand with the subtractive principle of Jewish identity; as Rosenzweig states, the category 'neighbour' is an empty set stripped of essence or particularities: 'The effect of the love of "neighbor" is that "Anyone" and "all the world" [...] belong together [...] whoever be momentarily my neighbor represents all the world for me in

³⁹⁴ Just to give some examples, Ira B. Nadel's *Joyce and the Jews*, Marilyn Reizbaum's *James Joyce's Judaic Other*, Neil R. Davidson's *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the Construction of Jewish Identity*, and Maren Linett's 'The Jew's Text: "Shem The Penman" and "Shaun The Post."' *James Joyce Quarterly*, 45.2, (2008), p. 263-80.

³⁹⁵ At the end of August, 1918, Rosenzweig began writing *The Star of Redemption*. He entirely devoted himself to this book and finished the *Star* in the middle of February, 1919. Joyce, of course, spent a much longer time conceiving and composing *Ulysses*. By the time Joyce finished *Dubliners*, he started to conceive a story about a Jewish canvasser named Leopold Bloom. The title and basic premise in 1914 would be incorporated into the writing of *Ulysses*. The work was completed in October, 1921.

full validity.³⁹⁶ Neighbour love is thus an ‘ensouling proximity,’³⁹⁷ the opening of a new neighbourhood.

By now, it should be clear that it is far from accidental that the parallel between symptomatic nationalism and neighbour love should appear in ‘Cyclops.’ The aspiration of universal love is invoked when poetic justice allows the survival of a mocked Messiah, embodied in Bloom, who advocates love in confrontation with his xenophobic fellowmen. Love is manifested as the semblance of messianic hope of escape from the smothering enjoyment of ideological fantasies and stifling xenophobia in ‘Cyclops.’ Love is not a liberalist sentiment working as an accomplice to the rhetoric of tolerance in maintaining the status quo, but a de-activation of law at the structural level. To put it another way, the structural breakthrough requires *works of love*. Inspired by Lacanian ethics, I argue that the ethical call for neighbour love can function as a remedy to the symptomatic Irish Nationalism of Joyce’s time. At this moment, it is only a semblance of messianic hope that is (re)presented. However, it prefigures the action of neighbour love carried out by Bloom in the ‘Circe’ episode. With a stroke of genius, ironically, the escaped Messiah, mocked yet saved by poetic justice is to truly become the Messiah himself by coming to offer his love to Stephen, who happens to fit into the category of

³⁹⁶ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*. Trans. William Hallo (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), p. 236.

³⁹⁷ Santner, *Neighbor*, p. 109.

neighbour.

Chapter Four

Subjectivity Under Construction: Messianism and Masochism in ‘Circe’

I.

Taking seriously Lacan’s groundbreaking proclamation of Joyce’s unsubscription from the Unconscious and his concomitant artifice of a singular *sinthome* on 16 June 1975 at the occasion of the fifth International James Joyce Symposium,³⁹⁸ my critical endeavour embarks on an experimental reading of the episode of ‘Circe’ in order to explore the possible consequences of how subjectivity embodied in an individualized *sinthome* may be invented through the process of constant unknotting/reknotting. By putting to the test the Lacanian insight that Joyce’s *sinthomatic* subjectivity exceeds the classic clinical categories of neurosis, perversion, and psychosis, I propose to conduct a critical reading to see how a new subjectivity is manifested in Joyce’s text. There has been relatively little literary criticism that comments on *sinthomatic* work or claiming an artistic work to be *sinthomatic*, although some scholars’ disentangling of the complexity of Lacan’s theorization of the *sinthome* has made it relatively accessible to readers. In this chapter, I will analyse the construction of subaltern subjectivity in ‘Circe’ by examining the juxtaposition of masochism and messianism

³⁹⁸ Jacques Lacan, ‘Joyce le Symptôme’, *Le Séminaire XXIII : Le Sinthome* (Paris : Seuil, 2005), p. 161-9.

in this episode. My purpose is to explore the ethical significance that might be derived from the bemusing (non)connection of these two absurd fantasies. Going beyond the employment of Lacan's theorization of *sinthome* in textual analysis, I venture into a critical assessment of *the ethical potential and efficacy of the sinthomatic subjective construction*. I argue that a structural breakthrough inherent in true messianism is manifested through neighbour love as it is epitomized by Bloom's rescue of Stephen at the end of 'Circe.' As a subaltern subject, whose structural status in hegemonic dictates of politics, culture, and sociality is reduced to that of *abject or homo sacer*, Bloom draws sources from culture and pastiche in the construction of an emergent subjectivity. I will carefully examine whether the experimentation of the *sinthomatic* construction of subjectivity, as it is evidenced in the fantasmatic episodes of 'Circe,' truly invents a new structural stratification of subjectivity and an alternative libidinal organization. As the analysis will show, pseudo-messianism and masochism should be opposed to true messianism manifested through neighbour love.

It is well-known that, rather than applying the established psychoanalytic literature to psychoanalyse Joyce, Lacan's encounter with Joyce is a much more complicated, exciting endeavour. Psychoanalyzing Joyce in the classic Freudian sense was derided by Lacan himself for the encounter with Joyce had inspired him to

theoretical innovation. Lacan had apparently encountered Mark Schechner's *Joyce in Nighttown* in his research for the Seminar on Joyce and offered a scathing comment:

Ulysses, let us approach it. That it can be analyzed is no doubt what is realized by a certain Schechner [...] He imagines that he is an analyst because he has read a lot of analytic books. It is a rather widespread illusion, precisely among analysts. Then he analyses *Ulysses*. This makes an absolutely terrifying impression. Contrary to *Surface and Symbol*, this analysis of *Ulysses* is an exhaustive one because one cannot stop when one analyses a book. (XXIII, 71)³⁹⁹

Commenting on Lacan's ire for 'wholesale psychoanalytic teachings', Rabaté draws readers' attention to Lacan's 'merit of "restraining himself"' from analysing the whole novel by only tackling a few fragments.⁴⁰⁰ However, I wonder if Lacan's 'restraint' is the true reason underlying his trivialisation of Schechner's reading. Given that Joyce's project cannot be contained within the conventional thematics of castration and the Oedipal scenario, the interpretation of repression and the return of the repressed, it is arguable that Lacan's suspicion against exhaustive psychoanalysing stems not from its wholesale scope but from the likelihood of its getting the overall picture of psychic structuration in *Ulysses* wrong.

'Circe' is no doubt one of the most controversial, enigmatic, obscure, and

³⁹⁹ The original French text is as follows: '*Ulysses*, venons-en là, qu'on puisse l'analyser, car c'est sans aucun doute ce que réalise un certain Schechner [...] Il s' imagine qu'il est analyste parce qu'il a lu beaucoup de livres analytiques. C'est une illusion assez répandue, parmi les analystes justement. Et alors, il analyse *Ulysses*. Contrairement à *Surface and Symbol*, cette analyse d' *Ulysses*, exhaustive naturellement—parce qu'on ne peut pas s'arrêter quand on analyse un bouguin, n'est-ce-pas ?-fait une impression absolument terrifiante.' I follow Cormac Gallagher's translation with slight modification.

⁴⁰⁰ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Jacques Lacan: Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature* (New York: Plagave, 2001), p. 167.

obscene chapters in *Ulysses*. The reader is not merely perplexed by muddled incoherence, abrupt shifts of plot, and incomprehensible content but also confronted with the fact that critical interpretations are either blatantly contradictory or extremely unsatisfying. One finds it hard to provide a thorough account to eliminate the difficulties and reconcile diversities. Furthermore, the apparent obscenity in the form of psychodrama does not directly lead to the revelation of inner truth of an individual or collective Unconscious, but obfuscates and frustrates critics' hysterical quest for meaning and interpretation. As Thurston points out, what we encounter in Joyce's writing, especially in 'Circe' and *Finnegans Wake*, is the moment 'when a symptom is not a symptom,' when Joyce manifests his 'ex-hysteria'.⁴⁰¹ The critical analysis of Joyce from a Lacanian perspective has to take as its point of departure a reading of Joyce as a work of 'ex-hysteria,' of non-neurosis and even as 'ordinary psychosis.'⁴⁰² In *Le Sinthome*, Lacan's main thesis of the *sinthome* as the *savoir-faire* of one's singular way of organising subjectivity and *jouissance* through self-naming can be encapsulated in the following two pivotal passages, which deserve to be cited at length:

The hypothesis of the Unconscious, as Freud underlines, is something which cannot hold up except by supposing the Name-of-the-Father. Supposing the Name-of-the-Father, for sure, this is God. It is in this that psychoanalysis, by

⁴⁰¹ Thurston, p. 190.

⁴⁰² This is a term devised by J-A Miller by following and developing the insight of Lacan's topological thinking and pluralisation of the Name(s) of the Father. See *Psychoanalytic Notebook 19: Ordinary Psychosis*.

succeeding, proves that one can moreover do without the Name-of-the-Father. One can moreover do without it provided one makes use of it. (XXIII, 136)

It is not God who has perpetrated the thing called the Universe. We impute to God what is the business of the artist, of which the first model is, as everyone knows, the potter [...] He has moulded—with what, by the way?— this thing that is called, not by chance, the Universe. Which only means a single thing, which is that there is something of the One. *Yadlun*, but we do not know where. It is more than improbable that this One constitutes the universe. (XXIII, 64)⁴⁰³

Lacan makes a significant clinical judgement that Joyce's subjectivity is unsubscribed from the Unconscious, from which he launches an innovation in psychoanalytic theory by claiming that one may well go on to dispense with the Name of the Father on condition that one knows how to deal with it by inventing one's own names in the place of the established Name of the Father. Through the invention of alternative master signifiers, the subject may embark on the self-naming process, assuming and constructing a new singular universal. The pot that Lacan evokes here reminds me of his comment in 'On creation *ex nihilo*' in the *Ethics Seminar*, in which Lacan argues for the centrality of the notion of the creature and of the creator, 'not only for our theme of the motive of sublimation, but also for that of ethics in its broadest sense' (VII, 119). Lacan's postulation runs as follows: 'an object, insofar as it is a created object, may fill the function that enables it not to avoid the Thing as signifier, but to

⁴⁰³ The original French text is as follows: 'L'hypothèse de l'inconscient, Freud le souligne, ne peut tenir qu'à supposer le Nom-du-Père. Supposer le Nom-du-Père, certes, c'est Dieu. C'est en cela que la psychanalyse, de réussir, prouve que le Nom-du-Père, on peut aussi bien s'en passer. On peut aussi bien s'en passer à condition de s'en servir' (XXIII, 136) ; 'C'est pas Dieu qui a commis ce truc qu'on appelle l'Univers. On impute à Dieu ce qui est l'affaire de l'artiste, dont le premier modèle est, comme chacun sait, le potier. On dit qu'il a moulé—avec quoi, d'ailleurs ? ce truc qu'on appelle, pas par hasard, l'Univers. Cela ne veut dire qu'une seule chose, c'est qu'il y a de l'Un, *Yad'lun*, mais on ne sait pas où. Il est plus qu'improbable que cet Un constitue l'Univers' (XIII, 64). I follow Cormac Gallagher's translation with slight modification.

represent it [...] we are going to refer to what is *the most primitive of artistic activities, that of the potter*, ‘the most primordial feature of human industry’, which ‘allows us to affirm unambiguously a human presence whenever we find it’ (VII, 119-20, my emphasis). Pottery-making is paradigmatic of sublimation as artistic creation in the most fundamental and general sense of the term.⁴⁰⁴ At the most elementary level, sublimation as creation is not merely creation out of nothing, but also the creation of/around nothing itself simultaneously. Lacan argues that the vase, as such, ‘creates the void and thereby introduces the possibility of filling it,’ that it is ‘an object made to represent the existence of the emptiness at the center of the real that is called the Thing, this emptiness as represented in the representation presents itself as a *nihil*, as nothing’ (VII, 120-1, original emphasis). Lacan summarizes his point in a proverb: ‘the vase is made for matter. Nothing is made from nothing’ (VII, 121). Seen in this light, comparing Joyce’s artistic enterprise and subjective construction to God’s creation, Lacan holds that the *savoir faire* of one’s *jouissance*, the *sinthomatic*

⁴⁰⁴ Of course, there is a difference in Lacan’s comments on courtly love as a paradigm of sublimation in *Seminar VII* and the *sinthome* as a form of sublimation. The Imaginary and narcissistic characteristics of courtly love are expressed in Lacan’s definition of sublimation at that stage. To sublimate is ‘to elevate the object to the dignity of the Thing.’ Lacan deems courtly love conservative in his evaluation of it, regarding it to be ‘fundamentally narcissistic in nature’ in this elevation of certain objects to colonize *das Ding* (VII, 151). In this vein, ‘[a]t the level of sublimation, the object is inseparable from the imaginary and especially cultural elaborations. It is not just that the collectivity recognizes in them useful objects; it finds rather a space of relaxation where it may in a way delude itself on the subject of *das Ding*, colonize the field of *das Ding* with imaginary schemes’ (VII, 98). When I interpret Lacan’s association of *sinthome* with pottery-making, apparently it only points to the tarrying with the Real with indispensable symbolisation as a fundamental human psychic functioning. It is sublimation in its most fundamental, elementary level that Lacan discusses, not the elevation as a colonization of *das Ding* as in the case of courtly love.

working is by definition a form of creation *ex nihilo*. Although this conceptualization may be a later development inspired by Joyce at the final stage of his career, it can also be viewed as a continuation of the notion of sublimation from his earlier period.

Viewing the *sinthomatic* working as a new form of sublimation, I explore how one's unsubscription from the Unconscious might take place and take form in actual psychic functioning, the organization of *jouissance* or subjectivity-in-the making. The focus of my interpretative effort would be better described as the unconscious of 'the textual subjectivity' expressed through the writings of Joyce, which necessarily contains and exceeds the unconscious of the characters Stephen and Bloom.⁴⁰⁵ I propose that 'Circe' is a dramatisation of a textual subjectivity under construction. Put otherwise, I read 'Circe' as Joyce's experimentation with the unconscious, with the re-structuration of subjectivity in terms of the (self-)naming and *savoir-faire* of his own *jouissance*. Joyce invents his *sinthome* by way of drawing sources from culture and simultaneously making havoc with it by displacing, distorting, and dissolving those elements. I thereby take the 'nighttown' episode to be the locus for the (re)presentation of the *sinthomic* repertoire of the textual subject established by Joyce

⁴⁰⁵ Shelly Brivic seems to resonate with the idea of textual subjectivity that I propound here when he argues for 'the subject of *Ulysses*' by pointing out that the relationship between the characters of Bloom, Stephen, and Molly may contribute to the subject of *Ulysses*; however, they do not constitute a fixed formula of son, father, mother, and so on, and this lack of link in conventional senses is itself part of the whole for the subject of *Ulysses*. *Joyce through Lacan and Žižek*, p. 139.

through writing *Ulysses*. Many phrases, incidents, and characters appearing in the previous episodes are recalled and rearranged in fantasies, or hallucinations in nighttown. I argue that a textual re-structuring of subjectivity, which traverses boundaries of those minds, actions, characters, time, space, memories, and realities, is under construction in the episode. If composing *Ulysses* is intrinsically correlative with Joyce's self-naming, his postulation and construction of life through work, the textual manufacturing of subjectivity is necessarily intertwined with the *sinthomatic* weaving. I argue that as a consequence of the subject's unsubscription from the established Name of the Father, the plural construction of the *sinthome* work through various signifiers.⁴⁰⁶ 'Circe' is precisely such a chapter in which readers encounter a showcasing of symptomatic/*sinthomatic* constructions, both at individual and collective levels. In my reading of Joyce through Lacan, the inevitable question that necessarily ensues is how Joyce's unsubscription from the Unconscious might be manifested in the subjective construction and the experimentation with sexuality, which are the two main foci in 'Circe.'

⁴⁰⁶ Finn Fordham seems to resonate with my reading here when he hints at 'the genesis of multiple personality,' although his approach is not psychoanalytic but more akin to genetic criticism, focusing on the techniques of revision and composition. As Fordham puts it, 'Drawn toward multiplicity in his methods of formation and in the content of his epic, Joyce would come close, however, to the fragmentation, both textual and personal, that he feared [...] The life of writing can make and unmake the writer's life [...] In such complex interplay, any writing of fragmentation can suffuse the life itself, bringing it to the edge, and over the edge, into a state of fragmentation. It is sometimes argued that Joyce does teeter over the limit into fragmentation, personally and textually [...] the genesis of fragmentation and of fusing. Placing such accounts together could contribute to a plural sense of the multiple personalities of the life of writing and the genesis of its multiplicities.' Finn Fordham, "'Circe" and the Genesis of multiple personality', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 45.2-3 (2008), pp. 507-20 at p. 518.

As Chieza puts it succinctly, ‘despite not being a psychotic, Joyce does not need to traverse any fundamental fantasy,’ and ‘[u]nlike neurotics, he is already separated from the Symbolic; instead, he needs to “create” his founding master signifiers.’⁴⁰⁷ Chieza evokes Lacan’s theorization of Joyce’s *sinthomatic* invention as a means to interpret Artaud’s ‘cruel theatre.’ It is well known that, after Artaud’s hospitalization, Lacan made a wrong diagnosis by declaring that ‘Artaud is obsessed, he will live for eighty years without writing a single sentence, he is obsessed.’⁴⁰⁸ Instead, after nine years, Artaud emerges as a new subject, returning with a new name, as ‘Artuad-le-Mômo’ by way of ‘continuously reshaping his “real name.”’⁴⁰⁹ Artaud claims himself to be ‘a.r.t.o,’ ‘embody[ing] his real letters, as Joyce is for Lacan the individual, ‘*l.o.m.* [...] a structure which is that of the *homo*.’⁴¹⁰ Artaud correctly identifies Lacan and classic psychoanalysis as ‘erotomania’ for he detects that psychoanalysis has mapped out the structural correlation between the Symbolic and the sexual, between thought/meaning and enjoyment, between master signifiers in patriarchy and phallic *jouissance*.⁴¹¹ Chieza interprets Artaud’s ‘cruel theatre’ as an artistic enterprise with the high stake of existential survival. The theatre is ‘cruel’ because it is intrinsically connected with suffering in the sense that ‘[s]uffering *qua*

⁴⁰⁷ Chieza, ‘Lacan with Artaud’, p. 357.

⁴⁰⁸ Jacques Lacan, ‘Lapsychanalyse. Raison d’un éche’, *Aures Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), p. 349. I follow Chieza’s translation here.

⁴⁰⁹ Chieza, ‘Lacan with Artaud’, p. 360.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-43.

anti-representation cannot be thought, it can only be lived.⁴¹² Artaudian theatre is an effort to disengage from the ‘erotomaniac’ present culture, to confront directly the *Real* suffering outside the regime of the historical Other, and to invent a new love other than that of historical sexuality. Similarly, in ‘Circe,’ the subject in the making deals with primary masochism as the *Real* suffering in the sense of Artaudian theatre when s/he devises new organisation of *jouissance* and alternative psychic structuration through various master signifiers.

In cases of normal neurosis, the law-giving authority, the master who names, gender identity and sexual relations are interwoven and correlated. It is the lack in the Other that has undergone phallic signification, the nothingness that is signified in phallic terms. Triangulation is introduced into the subject’s social/sexual relation with the Other simultaneously. Hence, authority, sexuality, and identity are correlative in the problematic of symbolization, in the subject’s organisation of *jouissance*.

As Verhaeghe puts it, ‘these contents are identical in neurosis: the father (“The Other of the Other does not exist”), gender identity (“The Woman does not exist”), and the relation between the genders (“The Sexual Relationship does not exist”).’⁴¹³ While the neurotic finds a solution ‘by way of the Imaginary,’ ‘through the

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 349.

⁴¹³ Ibid., pp. 436-7.

fundamental fantasy according to which she or he assumes a gender identity and a sexual relationship in accordance with conventional authority,' a neo-subject unsubscribed from the Unconscious, from the traditional phallic signifiers, has to invent his/her own master signifiers as anchoring points and devise his/her own ways of organizing *jouissance* to deal with the ontological issues at the social, bodily, subjective, and sexual levels in his/her relationship with the Other.⁴¹⁴

II.

Critics have called Bloom 'Dublin's Insignificant Other,' 'a Chaplinesque figure [...] comically henpecked and cuckolded, a combination bound to inspire mockery,' recognising his anguished no-man status as 'an Irishman who is not a "true" Irishman, a father who is not a "true" father, a man who is not a "true" man.'⁴¹⁵

Throughout his one-day pilgrimage, Bloom is frequently confronted by his fellow Dubliners' xenophobia, plagued by the apprehension of Molly's adultery, haunted by Rudy's death, and so on. In a word, Bloom is an epitome of the collapse of the father. 'Circe' depicts the red-light district of Dublin, where the troubled interiority of Bloom is acted out and worked through in the most naked and cruel sense. He

⁴¹⁴ Regarding the general conception of the subject in the making, one may find enlightening inspiration from the continuous theorisation dedicated to Jacques-Alain Miller's notion of ordinary psychosis. Please see *Psychoanalytic Notebook 19*, especially Miller's article, 'Ordinary Psychosis Revisited', in the same issue, pp. 139-67.

⁴¹⁵ Robert H. Bell, *Jocoserious Joyce: The Fate of Folly in Ulysses*. (Ithaca: Cornell, 1991), p. 41. Patrick McGee, *Paperspace: Style as Ideology in Joyce's Ulysses* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988), p. 79.

comes to nighttown, ‘the brothel as the theatre,’⁴¹⁶ where his innermost guilt and obscene fantasies are called upon and purged and he hilariously produces new identities as a secular messiah, as a ‘womanly man,’ or a martyr in the bedroom in his masochistic fantasy. ‘Circe’ as a staged psychodrama offers a much more drastic confrontation with the Real, the direct working through of anguished fantasies, the experience of subjective destitution and creation *ex nihilo*. Bloom’s embodied performance in an Artaudian cruel theatre can be cast in light of Lacan’s later theorisation of *sinthome*. Miraculously, Bloom re-invents his own subjectivity ‘chiefly as a survivor.’⁴¹⁷ He even manages to offer neighbour love by coming to Stephen’s rescue in ‘Circe,’ and proposes step-fatherhood⁴¹⁸ to Stephen in ‘Eumaeus’ (*U*, 16.1160-5).

In this dream-like setting, Bloom and Stephen are not called upon to realise some wish-fulfilment. Instead, they literally confront the traumatic repetition of their deepest nightmares, immersing in the pain in pleasure and the pleasure in pain. In this episode, we encounter an overflowing of enjoyment, nonsensical and singular. Erotic enjoyment and deformed suffering are scattered around, all too fragmented, and

⁴¹⁶ To borrow the phrase from Austin Briggs’s title, ‘Whorehouse/Playhouse: The Brothel as Theatre in the “Circe” chapter of *Ulysses*’, this essay basically traces modernism’s intricate relationship with the brothel in historical documentation and then hits upon Artaud’s notion of dream illusion and cruel theatre. *Journal of Modern Literature*, 26.1(2002), 42-57.

⁴¹⁷ Harry Girling, ‘The Jew in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*’, *Jewish Presences in English Literature*. Eds. Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller (Montreal: McGill Queen’s UP, 1990), p. 109.

⁴¹⁸ Bloom’s desire to be a step-father, or more precisely to be a Stephen-father, has long been acknowledged by Joyce criticism. See Stuart Gilbert’s *James Joyce’s Ulysses: A Study*.

nearly devoid of coherence and meaning. The subaltern subjects' suffering and enjoyment are exposed and the question is raised as to how they would manage to survive. In Stephen's case, it is his mother's death that motivates repetition compulsion. The paternal tragicomedy in Stephen's and Bloom's versions and the sexual masquerades are certainly the major concerns of our discussion. Paternity and sexuality are intimately connected. The paternal metaphor functions as an operator to name the mother's *jouissance*, which is a symbolic sleight of hand to protect the child from the *jouissance* of the first (m)Other, and a way of turning something impossible into something prohibited. In other words, the anxieties and threat in the Oedipal stage actually come from the Mother, and the Father is called upon to ward off the mother's *jouissance*. Hence, 'the father is a symptom for the son.'⁴¹⁹ Stephen's version of the tragicomedy of the paternal authority is derived from his intuition about fictionality of the Name of the Father. In 'Scylla and Charybdis,' Stephen famously pronounces 'A father is a necessary evil [...] Paternity may be a *legal fiction*. Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son' (*U*, 9.823-46, my emphasis). Stephen's obsession mainly resides in his suspicion of the authority of the Name of the Father and the naming function and how, as a son, he might manufacture his own name and inscribe it in the Symbolic. He

⁴¹⁹ Paul Verhaerghe, 'The Collapse of the Father and Its Effect on the Gender Roles', in Renata Salecl (ed.) *Sexuation* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000), 131-54 at p. 135.

plays with the idea of whether the father names the son, or the son names the father, or the son fathers and names himself. In the famous instance when Bloom proposes step-fatherhood to Stephen in 'Eumaeus', Stephen responds, 'I suspect [...] that Ireland must be important because it belongs to me' (*U*, 16.1160-5).

The inquiry into the relationship between the father and the son would be far from complete without reference to the symbolic underside and to the mother's desire. In 'Circe,' Stephen's trauma is condensed precisely into his encounter with the ghost of his mother and his guilt-ridden refusal to kneel down at his mother's deathbed. The stage direction of this hallucination runs as follows: 'Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word. A choir of virgins and confessions sing voicelessly' (*U*, 15.4157-62). This uncanny presence of the mother is extremely anxiety-provoking. Stephen's response is worthy of analysis. The Gothic element of the mother's presence and her voice in silence signals the enigma of the Other, the inconsistency, the lack of the Other, a Real rem(a)inder of symbolisation. Therefore, he finds this maternal voice as silence unbearable, beseeching for a definite answer, a symbolisation to break and soothe the overwhelming anxiety. He says, 'Tell me the

word, mother, if you know now. The word known to all men' (*U*, 15.4191-2). When the mother keeps on pleading for Stephen's confession, Stephen perceives this as a phantom's menace and defends himself by a physical as well as a psychological attack. 'He lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier. Time's vivid final flame leaps and in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry' (*U*, 15.4143-5).

What Stephen is unable to confront is the nothingness of *jouissance* as the lack of the Other. The over-proximity of the Other's *jouissance* induces anxieties and fierce attacks. That is to say, when the fantasy framework fails to sustain a proper organisation of the *jouissance*, the subject acts out his anxiety by destroying the fantasy plane in the making. It is arguable that Stephen's action constitutes the so-called passage to the act for it implies 'a withdrawal from staging, a cut where the story changes course.'⁴²⁰ In *Seminar X on Anxiety*, Lacan proposes the differentiation between acting out and the passage to the act (135-53). If acting out always happens in transference, it is necessarily 'addressed (unwittingly) to the analyst' as 'a protest against a faulty interpretation, or a failure on the analyst's part to make an interpretation altogether.'⁴²¹ Acting out is 'a staging, a showing' to the gaze

⁴²⁰ Robert Harari, *Lacan's Seminar On 'Anxiety: An Introduction* (New York: Other Press, 2001), p. 81.

⁴²¹ Ed Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 100.

of the Other of ‘a repetition of an unconscious and a fantasmatic scenario.’⁴²² What has become deaf to the ears of the analyst, the subject stages for the analyst as a protest. As Pluth puts it, ‘whereas acting out is an enactment of a fantasy, a *passage à l’acte* seems to be a reaction to (and against) this fantasy, to this “scene” in which the subject maintains a desirable position for the Other.’⁴²³ When Stephen strikes the chandelier physically, he also attacks the fantasmatic scene psychically, destroying the staging and making himself fall out of the psychodramatic scene as well. It therefore follows that the passage to the act is not yet an ethical act *par excellence*.

I deliberately frame this episode as a curtailed fantasy in the making because it designates a similar situation to the dream of the burning child in Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*. In the dream, the father leaves the sick-bed of his son, after the son has died, to rest in the next room, and then suddenly wakes up with fright at the son’s reproach, ‘Father, can’t you see I am burning?’⁴²⁴ In interpreting this classic dream, Lacan argues that the father in the story wakes up from the kernel of the Real, the navel of the dream, for his dead son’s reproach carries the unbearable pain, debt, guilt, and *jouissance* (XI, 53-64). Similarly, Huang Tsung-huei argues that Stephen’s relation with his dead mother in ‘Circe’ is ‘not unlike that between the

⁴²² Harari, p. 81 and Pluth, p. 100.

⁴²³ Pluth, p. 100.

⁴²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud: V*, p. 509.

grief-stricken father and the dead son.’⁴²⁵ Stephen breaks off and curtails the traumatic dream when he encounters his mother’s reproach: ‘Stephen, can’t you see I am suffering?’⁴²⁶ By applying Kristeva’s theorisation of abjection, Huang proposes that Joyce and his literary representative, Stephen, went into exile because they loathe something in Ireland more than Ireland, namely, the Mother figure, Mother Ireland, and the Mother Church, which together constitute an abject maternal presence. Joyce/Stephen plays the *fort/da* game with her, which is embodied in his distorted, detached yet clingy relationship with his mother and motherland.⁴²⁷ Stephen attacks the horror when encountering the abject figure of his mother, and his flight ‘from his mother [...] is a flight from a confrontation he needs to make, from an ambivalence he needs to come to terms with’.⁴²⁸

Bloom also suffers from his own version of the decline of the father. He is a man of troubled legacy following the death of his son, Rudy. He ponders, ‘I too. Last of my race. Milly young student. Well, my fault perhaps. No son. Rudy. Too late now. Or if not? If not? If still? He bore no hate. Hate. Love. Those are names. Rudy. Soon I am old’ (*U*, 11.1066-9). Bloom is also plagued by his father’s suicide. As Thurston points out, ‘the father’s suicidal act has to be excluded from the son’s

⁴²⁵ Tsung-huei, Huang, *Genesis of the Subject as a Void: A Psychoanalytic Reading of James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Taipei: NTU Press, 1999), p. 98.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-130.

⁴²⁸ McGee, p. 141.

experience and memory; its meaningless “nonsense” cannot be allowed to invade and despoil the space of subjective signification.’⁴²⁹ This trauma is highlighted in ‘Circe’ in a ‘clownish or macabre-carnavalesque’ hallucinatory meeting of the father and son:

RUDOLPH What you making down this place? Have you no soul? (with *feeble vulture talons he feels the silent face of Bloom*) Are you not my son Leopold, the grandson of Leopold? Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers Abraham and Jacob? (*U*, 15.258-62)

In this incident, the paternal institution, the father’s function of naming, the father’s capacity for the ‘prescription of identity is no longer stable and authoritative.’⁴³⁰ As Thurston says, ‘the voice of the real father bears no more than a feeble trace of ancient symbolic mandate of the law; its insistent demand therefore amounts to a clownish or sinister parody of that sacred authority.’⁴³¹ Moreover, throughout the episode, and the entire work of *Ulysses*, Bloom, together with other characters, is besieged by a brutish English imperialism in terms of linguistic and cultural invasion. Gibson carefully documents and analyses how the instances of British convention, references, manners, gestures, literature, and culture, are scattered around, invading and adulterating the consciousness and the Unconscious of the Dubliners in ‘Circe.’⁴³² Gibson proposes that Joyce employs techniques of parody and ‘Irishization’ of an

⁴²⁹ Thurston, p. 179.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴³¹ Thurston, p. 180-1.

⁴³² Andrew Gibson, ‘Strangers in my house, Bad Manners to Them: England in “Circe”’, in Andrew Gibson (ed.) *Reading Joyce ‘Circe’* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1993), 179-221.

English encroachment. In other words, Joyce's response to the English invasion can be thought of 'carnivalistically rather than polemically' and Joyce 'deliberately trivializes the issues' in 'Circe.'⁴³³ Insightful as is his criticism, I would argue that Joyce's dealing with identity crisis in terms of paternity, masculinity, sexuality, and national identity under the imperial rule far exceeds the notion and capacity of parody, Irishisation, and carnival.

For instance, a severe identity crisis is epitomised in Stephen's and Bloom's hallucinatory encounter with Shakespeare: '(in dignified ventriloquy) 'Tis the loud laugh bespeaks the vacant mind. (to Bloom) Thou thoughtest as how thou wastest invisible. Gaze. (he crows with a black capon's laugh) Iagogo! How my Oldfellow chokit his Thursdaymornun. Iagogogo!' (*U*, 15.3825-9). This passage also hilariously points to the implication that the distorted name itself is perhaps 'an encrypted signature (I +ago, Latin for I act).'⁴³⁴ This literary act of naming is intimately correlative with the Lacanian notion of the ethical act, the subjective creation *ex nihilo*.

Pressed with great tension, in 'Cyclops,' Bloom endeavours to scream out his Jewish identity, which, on the one hand, betrays the fogginess of his mentality and the handmade quality of his theory, and, on the other hand, reveals the merriment and

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 218 and p. 215.

⁴³⁴ Thurston, p. 106.

inventiveness of his own version of the Jewish question. Bloom bursts out, ‘Mendelson was a jew and Karl Marx was a jew and Spinoza. And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God [...] Well his uncle was a jew. [...] Your God was a jew. Christ was a jew like me’ (*U*, 12.1804-9). His remarks anticipate an individualised subaltern subjectivity later in ‘Circe.’ It marks Bloom’s new names, his *sinthome*—what he claims to be himself without the subscription to the Other, to the Name of the Father. Arguably, it is Bloom’s ego functioning as the fourth ring for the reknitting of the other three registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real.

III.

In this section, I will explore ‘Circe’ by making a critical effort, firstly, to distinguish pseudo-messianism and messianism, and secondly, to argue not for the inherent link between masochism and messianism but to point out the possible ethical danger and potential in masochism’s (non-)relation to messianism proper.

In his *Joyce in Nighttown*, Mark Schechner made a hasty claim that provides a psychologisation of the possible social-political reason underlying the link between masochism and messianism rather than giving a properly psychoanalytic reading of ‘Circe’. Schechner identifies the abrupt shift between the masochistic fantasy of

abuse and the messianic fantasy, remarking that this shift ‘may violate the conventional logic of dramatic development, but not the psycho-logic of primary process thought. Masochism and messianism are intrapsychic patterns, and there is good enough reason to regard the former as a condition of the latter.’⁴³⁵ Schechner goes on to explain what he means by masochism as the condition for messianism, saying that ‘[i]f we consider the prevalence of messianic themes in nineteenth and twentieth-century Irish literature as a whole, and consider too the situation of cultural bondage and political impotence out of which they arose, we ought to see clearly enough the dependence of messianism upon castration and futility.’⁴³⁶ In other words, what Schechner proffers is a psychological motivation for messianism out of suffering, despair, and impotence, which is vaguely connected to the pain and humiliation contained in masochism.

Schechner first gives a condensed summary of Bloom’s messianic fantasy, which begins with the grand speech of Bloom’s social reform agenda and his being hailed as ‘emperor president and king-chairman’ (*U*, 15.1471). The fantasy then abruptly breaks down with the incoherent accusations in the persecution of Bloom, the modern messiah. In Schechner’s opinion, the persecution inflicted upon Bloom, his rise and downfall, is a paradigmatic storyline for the figure of the messiah, and ‘Circe’ repeats

⁴³⁵ Mark Schechner, *Joyce in Nighttown: a Psychoanalytic inquiry into Ulysses* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1974), p. 109.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.110.

‘the myth of the tragic savior, the drama of election and betrayal,’ which is a common fate that ‘Christ, Parnell and [Joyce]’ share.⁴³⁷ The connection between masochism and messianism that Schechner attempts to make lies merely in the correspondence between the suffering and downfall inflicted upon the Messiah and those portrayed in masochism. As Schechner puts it, ‘His [Bloom’s] masochism mediates between the desire and the confirmation by calling down evidence of election in the form of imaginary punishment. The betrayal of the savior, and his final crucifixion are all part and parcel of the messianic dream [...] The savior’s betrayal and apparent failure are, for him, the stamp and assurance of his divine election, his castration the proof of his election.’⁴³⁸

Although Schechner dutifully cautions that ‘Christian humility is not quite the same as Bloomian masochism’ for ‘[t]he one aims at the enforcement of continence and discipline in the face of threat, the other at the achievement of orgasm,’⁴³⁹ he does not really explain the difference between Bloomian sexual masochism and martyrdom, affliction and humility in messianism and their possible connection. Instead, Schechner ends his comments with an equivalence between martyrdom in the bedroom and that of messianism, which appears more like a subterfuge to evade real argument than a cogent point. According to Schechner, Bloom’s refusal to be a

⁴³⁷ Ibid, p. 143

⁴³⁸ Ibid., p. 145.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 147.

victim of violence in 'Cyclops' and 'Circe' is a 'sign of his aversion to real martyrdom, however much it may appeal to him in fantasy. A modern man, he is willing to settle for lesser martyrdoms of the bedroom. A sensible man, he will settle for the lesser salvations a man may find on the beach, in the bath, or some other private place.'⁴⁴⁰

It is quite obvious the so-called martyrdom in the bedroom and that of messianism are merely superficially linked by reference to the self-afflicted pain. Moreover, it is unclear how a social-reform potential in messianism can be distilled from the blatant psychosexual nature in the masochistic fantasy deployed through the interaction between Bloom and Bella/Bello. Even more striking and unconvincing is that Schechner argues for a 'moral heroism by way of his psychosexual perversity.'⁴⁴¹

Given that Bloom's socio-political messianic fantasy, in which he compares himself to Christ, eventually lapses into a psychosexual fantasy of masochism in terms of 'petticoat government,' one wonders how Schechner's proposal of 'moral heroism' can really be sustained. That is to say, we are in need of a viable alternative critical reading that can properly theorise the bewildering juxtaposition of messianism and masochism in 'Circe,' and account for how ethical significance may be found in Bloom's so-called 'moral heroism.'

Although, as Lacan points out, Joyce's ambition as manifested in his work is not

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 148.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., p. 102.

to be a redeemer (to the existent authority in decline) but to be God himself as an artist;⁴⁴² the concept of redeemer, or the signifier of messiah, has been evoked in the (re-)construction of subjectivity of Bloom in ‘Circe.’ Stock references to messianism and masochism of the time of Joyce are vivid in ‘Circe,’ and are inextricably entangled at the very core of subjective (re)structuration at the most intimate socio-sexual-political fantasies. Although the knotting of one’s *sinthome* through the invention of novel signifiers is built from the inconsistency of the Other and the unsubscription from the Unconscious, the reworking of subjective experimentation is largely established upon not merely the rewriting of characters and fragments from the previous chapters but also from materials in the cultural storehouse. This should be taken into consideration in any critical appraisal of the ethical efficacy of *sinthomatic* (re)construction and experimentation, which I will pursue shortly. Bloom’s allusion to the Messiah in ‘Cyclops’ prefigures the extended messianic fantasy in ‘Circe’. In ‘Cyclops,’ the Citizen mocks Bloom, saying, ‘That’s the new Messiah for Ireland’ (*U*, 12.752); Bloom is again designated as ‘ben Bloom Elijah’ (*U*, 12.1916) in the final lines of the chapter. In ‘Circe,’ Bloom seems to identify with Christ when he repeats Christ’s sentence from Luke 23:3, saying ‘you have said it’ (*U*, 15.1835) in reply to the query uttered by an anonymous voice,

⁴⁴² Lacan remarks, ‘The artist [of A Portrait of the Artist] is not the redeemer. It is God himself as fashioner’. The French text runs as follows: ‘L’artiste n’est pas le rédempteur, c’est Dieu lui-même’ (*XXIII*, 80), my translation.

‘Bloom, are you the Messiah ben Joseph or ben David?’ (*U*, 15.1834). In the meantime, the motif of the false Christ, of the pseudo-Messiah, and of Antichrist is invoked recurrently in ‘Circe.’ Bloom’s extended lecture and reform project is curtailed by various protesters, including the figure of Alexander J. Dowie, who attacks Bloom by uttering ‘[f]ellowchristians and antiBloomites, the man called Bloom is from the roots of hell, a disgrace to christian men’ (*U*, 15.1753-4). According to Gifford and Seidman, Alexander J. Dowie was a contemporary of Joyce, a Scottish-Austrian-American with a dubious reputation, who founded the church of Zion City and claimed himself to be ‘Elijah the Restorer,’ ‘the third manifestation of Elijah,’ and was accused of ‘misuse of funds,’ ‘injustice,’ ‘tyranny,’ and ‘polygamous teachings.’⁴⁴³ After Florry mentions, ‘Well, it was in the papers about Antichrist’ (*U*, 15.2135), the newspaper boy announces the ‘Safe arrival of Antichrist’ (*U*, 15.2147) when Bloom finally meets Stephen in the brothel. Recurrent references to the motif of Messiah and the pseudo-Messiah or the false Christ not merely reflect a prevalent cultural feature, but also serve to ignite the critical rumination on the possible distinction between pseudo-messianism and true messianism. I offer my own reading as an explanation of this distinction in the following analysis.

As critics have correctly identified, Bloom’s messianism/masochism is

⁴⁴³ Don Gifford and Robert J Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 2008), p. 157.

‘secular.’⁴⁴⁴ Stimulated by Zoe’s encouragement, ‘[g]o on. Make a stump speech out of it’ (*U*, 15.1353), Bloom’s extended fantasy is an absurd mixture of critique of imperialism and capitalism (*U*, 15.1390-7), and utopian versions of social reform, which cover diverse concerns such as the construction of a tramline (*U*, 15.67-8): ‘the reform of municipal morals and the plain ten commandments. New worlds for old. Union of all, jew, moslem, and gentile [...] the universal language with universal brotherhood. No more patriotism of barspongers and dropsical imposters. Free money, free rent, free love and a free lay church in a free lay state’ (*U*, 15.1685-1693); ‘Mixed races and mixed marriage [...] Liberty of Speech, Plural Voting [...] Painless Obstetrics and Astronomy for the People’ (*U*, 15.1699-1710). There are also prolonged passages of mocked coronation (*U*, 15.1398-1449), fragments of *sinthomatic* enjoyment, as ostensibly expressive in the ludicrous image of ‘a colossal edifice with crystal roof, built in the shape of a huge pork kidney, containing forty thousand rooms’ (*U*, 15.1548-9) as a symbol of ‘the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future’ (*U*, 15.1544-5). Moreover, Bloom’s downfall is staged as secular martyrdom with reference to Parnell—‘Lynch him! Roast him! He’s as bad as Parnell was. Mr. Fox’ (*U*, 15.1762)—and is framed in Biblical prose—‘And he shall carry the sins of the people to Azadel, the spirit which is in the wilderness, and to

⁴⁴⁴ Davidson, *Construction*, p. 221.

Lilith, the nighthag. And they shall stone him and defile him, yea, all from Agendath Netaim and from Mizraim, the land of Him' (*U*, 15.1898-901).

Commenting on the irony and mockery of Joyce's arrangement of pseudo-messianism, Gibson reads the mock coronation as both a humour for Bloom's laughable imagination and as a political critique of Griffith's project in *The Resurrection of Hungary*. As Gibson puts it, '[g]iven Griffith's anti-Semitism, the irony here is precise: the Jewishness of Griffith's Moses was purely Symbolic. Bloom is the obverse both of Griffith's Moses and of his dignified, idealistic, statesmanlike, exemplary Hungarian hero.'⁴⁴⁵ Although the ostensible reference to the mocked Christ and false messiah can be regarded as another example of Joyce's typical jocoserious enterprise, Cheng proffers a more straightforward reading and positive evaluation of Bloom's messianic fantasy, in which the irony is superficially acknowledged and put aside. Cheng's attitude can be summarised as follows:

the fantasies of 'Circe' now allow Bloom the psychological (and therapeutical) space by which to counter and refute all the Citizen's innuendos and accusations, for in 'Circe' Bloom does imagine himself as just such a Messiah, come to institute the New Bloomusalem according to his ideals and in direct opposition to the Citizen's agenda [...] Interspersed with these suggestive if somewhat comic details are clearer, larger statements of Bloom's utopian vision of the Nova Hibernia as an inter-heterogenous contact zone eschewing absolute hierarchies and homogenization of difference, in accordance with his earlier definition of 'nation' ('the same people living in the same place').⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), pp. 120-1.

⁴⁴⁶ Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire*, p. 219, 222.

Both analyses find support in Joyce's text, but how Bloom might *enjoy* through this fantasy remains unclear. Concerning the lengthy passages of (pseudo-)messianism, I would like to focus on the libidinal economy operative in Bloom's self-appointed identity of a new master figure and in the bifurcated structuration of the sovereign and his subjects. That the coronation passage is staged like a socio-political carnival and endowed with great excitement signals that Bloom derives enjoyment from being the center of fantasy. The coronation is an occasion in which some action of symbolic significance and efficacy is accomplished through words, by which the symbolic mandate is assigned to a certain human bearer and authority and power imputed to him/her. In J. L. Austin's influential work, *How to do Things with Words*,⁴⁴⁷ what are famously called speech acts or performative utterances are neither true nor false for these sentences are not constative or descriptive statements but declarations and linguistic actions. When performed in appropriate contexts or circumstances, performative utterances take symbolic effects and change the status of things in the world. These performative utterances would not be capable of fulfilling their tasks were they not situated in authorised settings and symbolic contexts, which are themselves established according to specific socio-symbolic codes and endorsed by the authority of the law, the Symbolic Other.

⁴⁴⁷ J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

In this regard, Austin's speech acts may change things in the world without transforming the framework of symbolic rules and authority that underlie this world. In other words, a speech act may be a symbolic act but it is far from an ethical act in the Lacanian sense. While Austinian speech acts may do things with words, they do not 'change the subject.'⁴⁴⁸ Nor do they change the symbolic structure. Austinian speech acts are 'highly ritualized and codified,' but Lacanian ethical acts defy pre-established codes, laws and authorities, exposing the inconsistencies of the Other. The Lacanian act must be signifying (doing something with words) the 'transformative' and 'transgressive.'⁴⁴⁹ Lacan emphasises that locomotion itself does not constitute an act; however, 'if one day it amounts to crossing a certain threshold where I place myself outside of the law, my locomotion will have the value of an act.'⁴⁵⁰ While the Austinian performative utterances are enacted within the law, the Lacanian acts lies outside the law, and are boundary-crossing in essence. Furthermore, the transformative power of the Lacanian act on the subject is different from the Austinian speech act's capacity of modifying things within the law. The structuration of the subject can be punctuated by the enactment of the Lacanian act: 'the subject is, as subject, entirely transformed by the act' and an act is 'the inauguration of the subject as such, that is to say, from a veritable act the subject

⁴⁴⁸ Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 101.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴⁵⁰ Lacan, unpublished Seminar XV, 11/15/1976, qtd in Pluth *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 101.

arises differently [...] its structure is modified.⁴⁵¹ A certain symbolic co-ordination, law, or unconscious fantasy underlies a subject prior to the act. Undergoing the Lacanian act, the subject transgresses the previous symbolic framework and is entirely transformed to the extent that it is arguable that a new subject is emerging. It is this dimension that is lacking in Austinian speech acts and the subject who enacts performative utterances.

The coronation scene itself is a manifestation of an Austinian speech act *par excellence*. Seen in this light, despite the liberalist agenda in the content of the lecture, it is arguable that Bloom is tightly contained in the established Symbolic order with his particular fascination with the prolonged, ritualistic performances, such as imitating the politicians' shaking hands, kissing and embracing children and so on. The messianic fantasy also betrays Bloom's obsession with titles, when the position of the sovereign is conferred upon him, 'Lord mayor of Dublin' (*U*, 15.1364), 'sir Leo Bloom' (*U*, 15.1382), 'emperor-president and king-chairman' (*U*, 15.1471), 'Leopold the First' (*U*, 15.1475). The hybridity of these titles from different political systems and ideologies reveals that Bloom is eager to accumulate as many imaginary titles as he can, rather than subverting or challenging any political ideology or power of his day. In the ritual of the mock coronation, traditional authority figures such as

⁴⁵¹ Lacan, unpublished Seminar XIV, 2/15/1967 and 2/22/1967, qtd in Pluth *Signifiers and Acts*, p. 102.

bishops and archbishops, ‘the chief rabbi’ (*U*, 15.1423), ‘twentyeight Irish representative peers’ (*U*, 15.1416-7), and so on, are called upon to participate, lending their approval to Bloom. In addition to titles bestowed upon him and streets named after him such as ‘Boulevard Bloom’ (*U*, 15.1386), Bloom is also preoccupied with decorating himself with insignias of imperial power—‘Bloom appears, bareheaded [...] bearing Saint Edward’s staff, the orb and sceptre with the dove, the curtana’ (*U*, 15.1442-4). The three items are all symbolic of English authority and carried before the English sovereign at his/her coronation.⁴⁵² It is an egregious irony that a self-appointed Irish-Jewish Messiah still seeks English approval in support of his newly invented identity, which betrays the fact that, in this pseudo-messianic fantasy, the established ideology, authority and laws of the Symbolic Other are sustained and reinforced rather than breached or challenged.

Moreover, Bloom’s (self-)assignation to the symbolic investiture of the sovereign also signals that the entire Symbolic structuration in the pseudo-messianic fantasy follows the Schmittian logic of the political theology of the sovereign, operating by the masculine logic of totality and exception. As elucidated in Chapter One, Agamben launches a study of power situated ‘at the intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models, arguing that *‘the production of the*

⁴⁵² Gifford and Seidman, p. 473.

*biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.*⁴⁵³ The sovereign's power to declare war, to demarcate the fine line of friends/enemies, his power to pronounce the state of emergency and the suspension of the law marks a 'zone of indistinction' of both the inside and the outside of the law, in which, *'[t]he rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it.'*⁴⁵⁴ It is the locus where law governs through power, violence, force, sovereign will and decision, rather than reason, normal regulation and positive law. Agamben also argues for a structural parallel between the sovereign and *homo sacer*, who also occupies the position of 'inclusive exclusion,' of being included by exception and exclusion.⁴⁵⁵ Simply put, *homo sacer* is characterised by a 'ban': '[h]e who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it, but rather abandoned to it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable.'⁴⁵⁶ Situated beyond both penal law and sacred sacrifice, *homo sacer* presents

the originary figure of life taken into the sovereign ban and preserves the memory of the originary exclusion through which the political dimension was first constituted [...] the sacredness of life, which is invoked today as an absolutely fundamental right in opposition to sovereign power, in fact originally expresses precisely both life's subjection to a power over death and life's irreparable exposure in the relation to abandonment.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), p. 6, original emphasis.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

The sovereign Bloom addresses the crowd as '[m]y subjects!' (*U*, 15.1504). In the extension of constructing Bloom's kidney-shaped edifice, brutality, destruction and death are vividly described:

In the course of extension several buildings and monuments are demolished. Government offices are temporarily transferred to railway sheds. Numerous houses are razed to the ground. The inhabitants are lodged in barrels and boxes, all marked in red with the letters: L.B. Several paupers fall from a ladder. A part of the walls of Dublin, crowded with loyal sightseers, collapses. (*U*, 15.1550-5)

In other words, the glory and power of the sovereign is erected at the expense of his subjects who are rendered to the status of *homo sacer*, exposed to the originary force of the sovereign power. Joyce gives vivid expression to the creaturely imagery of *homo sacer* when he describes 'the inhabitants are lodged in barrels and boxes, all marked in red' (*U*, 15.1553). This figure of distorted, suffering neighbours are what Santner and Žižek have named as the creaturely, undead, inhuman dimension of law and human subjectivity, which is directly expressive of law's 'enigmatic and unnerving surplus of validity over meaningness,' of 'a chronic signifying stress' secreted by the functioning of symbolisation. Santner has drawn inspiration from Benjamin's interpretation of Kafkaesque figures, such as 'Odradek' and 'Gregor Samsa,' as 'a series of figures with the prototype of distortion: a hunched back,'⁴⁵⁸ arguing for the creaturely figures as beings 'distorted by a sort of cringe, as if the [signifying] stress [...] had taken on direct, bodily form and intensity' (*N*, 99). The

⁴⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death', *Selected Writings, vol 2, 1927-34*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001), p. 807.

creaturely figures designate ‘the direct embodiment’ of the superegoic enjoyment, the originary testimony to the sovereign power, ‘the coming flesh of the “state of emergency” sociosymbolic meaning’ (*N*, 100). In this light, Bloom’s pseudo-messianism is hardly ethically progressive but repeats the political theology of the sovereign, governing and distributing with a law built upon totality and exception. The sovereign is privileged on the basis of the fact that the oppressed is rendered into the substance of cringe, of the creaturely, of *homo sacer*. Bloom, who is not regarded as a true father/son for the troubled legacy of his father’s suicide and the premature death of his son, nor taken as a true Irishman for his Jewish origin, or a true husband for the premonition of Molly’s adultery, has been reduced to the interstice in the socio-symbolic existence, situated at the polarity of *homo sacer*. In the pseudo-messianic fantasy, by imagining himself to shift to the other topological polarity of the sovereign hardly changes the status quo, nor does it alter the underlying socio-symbolic framework, the operation of dominant ideologies or the distribution of enjoyment. Embedded in Austinian speech acts, the secular Messiah enacts the role of ‘emperor-president and king-chairman’ (*U*, 15.1471) and perpetuates the socio-symbolic framework without achieving the truly ‘transgressive’ and ‘transformative’ ethical act in the Lacanian sense.

In ‘Circe’, the pseudo-messianic fantasy ends abruptly with protests initiated by

‘the man in the Macintosh’, and followed by ‘Father Farley’ and ‘Alexander J Dowie’ and so on. Bloom is soon proclaimed by ‘Dr Mulligan’ as ‘bisexually abnormal’, (*U*, 15.1775) as ‘a finished example of the womanly man [...] about to have a baby’ (*U*, 15.1798-1810). This incident is one of the most perplexing and enigmatic in ‘Circe’, and to tackle its complexity may go beyond the scope of the limited space here. However, in the current context of my discussion of subjectivity in the making, I will at least suggest that this is also a moment of idiosyncratic self-naming. This incomprehensible master signifier indicates typical *sinthomatic* quality, which, to borrow Thurston’s words, is a ‘constitutive mark,’ unmasking ‘the untreatable singularity,’ ‘the untranslatable signature of a subject’s enjoyment.’⁴⁵⁹ It marks Bloom’s new name, his newly devised *sinthome* as an idiosyncratic way of organising his *jouissance* and a self-assignation of meaning and identity in the world. Arguably, it structurally occupies the fourth ring, the individuated *sinthome* that knots the three other rings and keeps them from dissolution.

IV.

It is time to unravel the problematic perverse drama and masochism of ‘Circe’.

⁴⁵⁹ Although Thurston is referring to the general qualification of *sinthome*, not to the specific incidence of Bloom’s becoming ‘womanly man’, I think, his characterisation still applies. Thurston, p. 196.

In 'Circe,' Joyce ushers in deformed figures such as 'a pigmy woman,' 'a deafmute idiot with goggle eyes,' 'shapeless mouth' and the spasms of 'Saint Vitus' dance,' and follows this with a series of obscene masquerades, tortures, and the nightmarish repetition of deepest trauma (*U*, 15.25;14-5). We should be cautious not to be too ready to celebrate the references to beastliness and the creaturely as a Bakhtinian transgression of the existing ideology or law.⁴⁶⁰ The creaturely figures undoubtedly designate the most pathetic abject. Prostitution and the setting of the brothel present the most usual form of superegoic enjoyment as the underside of the law. Abject and other forms of superegoic enjoyment as the underside of the law actually underlyn and support the functioning of the law. For instance, soldiers frequenting brothels may just be another code of behaviour to support a severe militant discipline. The refusal of the secret code may just be even more threatening. In the context of a discussion of the Jewish-Pauline state of emergency, as opposed to the Bakhtinian carnivalesque state of exception, Žižek argues that the latter indicates the period 'when everyday moral norms and hierarchies are suspended, and one is encouraged to indulge in transgressions,' while the former designates precisely the effort to '*suspend the obscene libidinal investment in the Law, the investment on account of which the Law generates/solicits its own transgression*' (*PD*, 113). In other words, what is really

⁴⁶⁰ Eric D. Smith offers a Bakhtinian reading of this chapter in "'I Have Been a Perfect Pig": A Semiosis of Swine in *Circe*,' *Joyce Studies Annual*, 13 (2002), 131- 46.

suffocating and controlling, what really prevents people from freely enjoy themselves sexually or otherwise lies not in ‘the direct repression’ or ‘the so-called internalization of prohibitions, but the very excess of enjoyment coagulated into a specific formula which curves/distorts/transfixes our space of enjoyment, closes off new possibilities of enjoyment, condemns the subject to err in the closure of a vicious cycle ...’ (N, 175). Similarly, the creaturely figures correlative with transgression in nighttown are not necessarily subversive to the law. Rather, the creaturely figures need to be traversed if any critical or therapeutic potential embodied in these figures is to be released or effected.

On the one hand, various sexual fantasies and masquerades are enacted. On the other, the masochist tortures and traumatic scenes sometimes are carried out in such a fashion that they seem no longer to be contained in the fantasy plane, bordering on extreme cruelty. Some critics come to identify ‘Circe’ as a kind of Artaudian theatre of cruelty, manifesting ‘the theatricality of the real and the reality of the theatrical.’⁴⁶¹ ‘Circe’ stages the processing of enjoyment in the Artaudian theatre by way of various *sinthomatic* constructions and their vicissitudes. Therefore, what readers encountered in ‘Circe’ should first be identified as ‘real masochism,’ ‘primary masochism,’⁴⁶² dealing with the confrontation of the Real, the traumatic sufferings

⁴⁶¹ Austin Briggs, p. 46.

⁴⁶² Regarding the interpretation of masochism in ‘Circe,’ critics have offered a variety of opinions.

and the attempt to make sense of these sufferings, and to the fundamental naming of one's subjectivity. In *Seminar XXIII*, Lacan himself addresses the issue of masochism in Joyce and in Bloom. Unlike his usual equivalence of the author with Joyce's main male protagonists, especially Stephen and Bloom, Lacan cautions his audience to be subtler on this matter, remarking,

Masochism is not at all to be ruled out from the possibility of Joyce's sexual stimulation. He insisted enough on it in the case of Bloom. But I will say that what is rather striking are the metaphors he employs. Namely, peeling off something like a fruit skin. He did not enjoy it on that occasion. It is something that is psychologically valid. He had a reaction of disgust [...] Perhaps, after all, the beating disgusted him. He was, perhaps, not a true pervert. (*XXIII*, 149-151)⁴⁶³

The act of beating that Lacan comments on here is a violent incident; Stephen was beaten up by his fellow students after his disagreement over their evaluation of certain poets. What Lacan finds curious in this incident is that Stephen has experienced neither enjoyment nor the supposed affect of anger or hatred but disgust toward this event. This betrays that Stephen has a peculiar relationship with his own body and

However, I shall argue in the following section that either the feminist critique or queer criticism are insufficient and confusing without taking into consideration the distinction between the perverse structure and the so-called primary masochism or real masochism. Primary masochism is Freud's term. 'Real masochism' and its critical potential are described by Christoph F. E. Holzhey in his dissertation. With lengthy evaluation of important theories on masochism including figures such as Freud, Laplanche, Bersani, and Deleuze, he insists that 'different forms of masochism are based in a pre-discursive, universal phenomenon [...]. I will call this 'real masochism,' not in the sense of 'authentic,' but on the contrary, in the sense of the Lacanian register of the real ie. as that which escapes symbolization.' *Paradoxical Pleasure in Aesthetics: Masophobia, Sexual Difference, and E.T.A. Hoffmann's Kayter Murr* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), p. 19.

⁴⁶³ The French text goes as follows: 'le masochisme n'étant pas du tout exclu des possibilités de stimulation sexuelle de Joyce, il y a assez insisté concernant Bloom. Mais je dirai plutôt que ce qui est frappant, ce sont les métaphores qu'il emploie, à savoir de détachement de quelque chose comme une pelure, Il n'a pas joui cette fois-là, il a eu une réaction de dégoût. C'est là quelque chose qui vaut psychologiquement [...] Peut-être qu'après tout, la raclée, ça le dégoûtait.' I follow Cormac Gallagher's translation with slight modification.

implies that Stephen (hence Joyce) is not a true pervert. In the meantime, Lacan does not deny that in personal life and in his characterisation of Bloom, sexual practice takes on obvious masochism. I find that Lacan's comments suit my stance in this chapter as well. Joyce seems fascinated by and apparently indulges himself in constructing a perverse, masochistic relationship with Nora.⁴⁶⁴ In the relationship between Bloom and Molly, masochism is as vivid as the biographical counterpart of the author. However, on a broader view, the subjective structuration of Joyce cannot be interpreted within the confinement of perversion, or masochism in particular. He is clearly beyond the scope of it. I would like to point out that if readers take into consideration the various modes of *sinthomatic* construction via different master signifiers, such as in the case of 'womanly man' and secular Messiah, it is quite apparent that the subjective structuration of Bloom also exceeds masochism. That is to say, masochism itself only constitutes an important aspect of the subjectivity of Bloom.⁴⁶⁵

Masochism in 'Circe' has long been a site of fierce debate. As David Cotter

⁴⁶⁴The letters between Nora and Joyce recorded their perverse, masochistic practices. For instance, in a letter dated 2 September, 1901, Joyce wrote to Nora, 'Will you, dearest, take me as I am with my sins and follies and shelter me from misery. If you do not I feel my life will go to pieces. Tonight I have an idea madder than usual. I feel I would like to be flogged by you, I would like to see you eyes blazing with anger' (*SL*, 166). See also note 546 in my following chapter on 'Penelope.'

⁴⁶⁵ On this point, my position is different from that of Frances L. Restuccia. Restuccia identifies both real-life and literary masochism in Joyce through her reading of the corresponding masochistic elements, and arrangements in Joyce's letters with Nora and in Joyce's work, observing 'a masochistic strategy within Joyce's writing that enabled Joyce to work toward liberation from patriarchy, in particular Church patriarchy.' See *Joyce and the Law of the Father* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), p. xii.

indicates in *James Joyce and the Perverse Ideal*, Joyce draws from the Victorian repertoire of a wide range of masochistic elements, such as Pageism, Lancelotism, forced feminisation, transvestism, rump presentation, cuckoldry, shame and disgust, the rites of becoming woman, animals, tools, objects, and so on. The florid masochistic episodes find abundant expression in 'Circe' when Bloom is reduced to a servant or even a slave. For instance, while recalling '[t]o be a shoefitter in Manfield's was my love's young dream,' 'Bloom, stifflegged, aging, bends over her hoof and with gentle fingers draws out and in her laces' (*U*, 15.2811-4). Pageism soon turns violent and egregious: 'The nosering, the pliers, the bastinado, the hanging hook, the knout I'll make you kiss while the flutes play like the Nubian slave of old' (*U*, 15.2891-2). Later, this passage even terminates with the imagination of lynching and cannibalism: 'Very possibly I shall have you slaughtered and skewed in my stables and enjoy a slice of you with crisp and crackling from the baking tin basted and baked like sucking pig with rice and lemon or currant sauce' (*U*, 15.2898-2901). It is noteworthy that, as the masochistic fantasy becomes intensified, the exchange of gender also occurs. After Bloom mumbles, 'Awaiting your further orders we remain, gentlemen,' 'Bella' is transformed into 'Bello,' calling Bloom, 'Hound of dishonor!' (*U*, 15.2832-5).

Some critics point to the cross-dressing and cross-gender performance in 'Circe,'

arguing that these gender identities constructed by costumes actually amount to a destructive move, revealing that sexuality is ‘always clothes-deep into the subjects,’⁴⁶⁶ exploring an infinite play of signifiers in gender/sexual politics. Others argue that under Bella/o’s domination, Bloom’s submission only temporarily deprives him of his patriarchal power, and his later beastification actually functions toward the recovery of his manhood and mastery.⁴⁶⁷ I find these interpretations problematic. Firstly, although it appears transgressive on the surface, this gender-crossing, or sex-reversal, actually betrays quite a conservative nature because it perpetuates the binary distribution of existing signifiers of gender representation and gender stereotyping.

Suzette Henke points out,

the whoremistress acquires all the accoutrements of imperialistic power as soon as she dons male trousers and sprouts of a moustache. A ringmaster and tyrannous phallic mother, Bella/Bello demeans, humiliates, and tortures her obsequious victim. A battered Bloom succumbs to ritual degradation [...] Both Amazonian woman and effeminate male, enacting transvestite and trans-sexual roles of Edwardian pantomime, are inscribed in a melodrama of sado-masochistic catharsis.⁴⁶⁸ In her male incarnation, Bella/Bello becomes authoritarian and violently sadistic, torturing Bloom to the point of absolute alterity [...] The new womanly man is reduced to the archaic subject-position of powerless womanly woman [...] It is clear from role-reversals in ‘Circe’ that, in terms of cultural representation, female gender confers parodic marginality. Woman seems destined to play the part of *l’autre*, alienated other in the specular projections of the male libidinal imagination.⁴⁶⁹

By putting emphasis on the fact that ‘the semiology of gender remains

⁴⁶⁶ Cheryl Herr, ‘One Good Turn Deserves Another: Theatrical Cross-dressing in Joyce’s “Circe” Episode’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, 11.2 (1984), pp. 163-76 at p. 175.

⁴⁶⁷ Sandra M. Gilber and Susan Gubar, *No Man’s Land: The Place of Woman in the Twentieth Century*, vol.2: *Sex Changes* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989), p. 336.

⁴⁶⁸ Suzette Henke, *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 112.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

unchanged [...] in transvestite or trans-sexual guise' and that '[e]ven the comedy of language cannot alter the binary codes of gender or the deeply embedded sex-roles inscribed in societal consciousness,' Henke distils a different reading, detecting that this trans-sexual arrangement actually conveys 'the pervasive cultural fear that woman, granted phallic authority, would persecute her mate with unbridled ferocity; and that man, bereft of the kind of patriarchal power [...] would sink helplessly into sexual degradation'.⁴⁷⁰ In this regard, transgressive display/play of gender-crossing reveals a latent cultural fear shared by the dominant patriarchy rather than a release from the conventional gender distribution.

Furthermore, there is a deeper libidinal structuration operative in masochism that needs to be addressed. Nick Mansfield correctly analyzes masochism as an art of power. The contract formed between Wanda and Saverin in Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* and their performance clearly annihilates the desire of the Other, stifling others,' his partners', and women's subjectivity. Mansfield points out that '[m]anipulating gender categories is one of its most important types of play, but the appropriation of or identification with the feminine on the masochist part is never at the expense of his masculinity, and is never simply undertaken because he understands femininity as more implicitly passive.'⁴⁷¹ It is actually a 'conservative

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 116.

⁴⁷¹ Nick Mansfield, *Masochism: The Art of Power* (Westport: Praeger, 1997), p. xii.

formation,⁴⁷² merely a fantasy carried out by a total subject in the masochistic contract and rituals.⁴⁷³ Despite contending also that Joyce draws from cultural stereotypes and that the masochistic type of art is ‘masturbatory,’⁴⁷⁴ Cotter still celebrates ‘minoritarian becoming,’⁴⁷⁵ arguing for the ethics of escape and renunciation in terms of the Deleuzean Body without Organs.⁴⁷⁶ Since to degrade is to feminise in the current culture, the only way to avoid the constructed roles is to resist ‘the tyranny of the penis,’ and the masochist may ‘become woman, become minoritarian, and finally become nothing, and so everything.’⁴⁷⁷ As Serge André acutely points out when talking of male perversion, ‘[t]he man who gets himself humiliated, insulted, whipped, by his confederate is really seeking to take her place as the woman. He offers himself as object in a typical masculine fantasy scenario only in order to experience the remaining jouissance not mastered by that fantasy.’⁴⁷⁸ Perversion offers ‘a kind of mimetic caricature of feminine jouissance;’ the pervert ‘slip[s] into the skin of this Other body, like a hand into a glove.’⁴⁷⁹

To evaluate these criticisms by Cotter and Mansfield, I propose first to go back to the classic interpretation of the perverse structure, not merely the perverse traits,

⁴⁷² Ibid., p. 51.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., p.32-50.

⁴⁷⁴ David Cotter, *James Joyce and the Perverse Ideal* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.143-9.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 147

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 143-4.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 193.

⁴⁷⁸ Serge André, *What Does A Woman Want?* (New York: Other Press, 1999), p. 270.

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 270 and p. 272.

arguably inherent in all clinical categories, neurotic, psychotic, or perverse. A structure signifies the relation between the subject and the Other. The child's dependence on the caregivers necessarily submits him/herself to the responses and demands of the Other. The first Other's *jouissance*, demands, and unconscious desires necessarily become complicated in the relationship between the subject and the Other. It is arguable that the child might take interest in being 'the phallicized object through which the mother fills her own lack.'⁴⁸⁰ The father's intervention is never successfully assumed and is sometimes derided and delegated to an insignificant or impotent onlooker (of the mother/child relation). Given that the father's law is introduced to the child only through the mother's discourses, it is the mother's ambiguous reference, or equivocations of sexual differences, and the law of the father that makes the law of the father challenged and derided. In the meantime, this equivocation takes effect only when it is confirmed by 'the tacit collusion of a father who is willing to be deprived of his symbolic rights, and let the mother take over his words with all the ambiguity that this delegation implies.'⁴⁸¹ However, it is crucial here to maintain the distinction between disavowal and foreclosure of the father's law. 'The pervert's mother does not "lay down the law" to the father; unlike

⁴⁸⁰ Verhaeghe, *Normal and Disorder*, p. 409.

⁴⁸¹ Joel Dor, *Structure and Perversions* (New York: Other Press, 2001), p. 111.

the psychotic's "outlaw" mother'.⁴⁸²

In consequence, the mechanism of disavowal is unable to produce sufficient separation. The Symbolic law is not sufficiently registered in perversion. In the normal neurotic structure, '[t]he symbolic father provides a rationale for any limit he places on the child's behavior, and he too abides by the moral law, thus practicing what he preaches.'⁴⁸³ This rationale of the Symbolic is lacking or dwindling in the case of perversion, in which 'the Other's desire that is substituted for the law is a desire or will that eroticizes blame, punishment, humiliation and unequal distribution of power (originally between the child and the parent).'⁴⁸⁴ The child remains trapped as the Imaginary phallus for the mother, working hard to deny the Other's desire and to secure this privileged position. Verhaeghe argues that, without the proper mediation of the paternal metaphor, perversion is 'ungendered;' '[p]erversion is not about a male-female relationship, but about a mother-child relation.'⁴⁸⁵ Lacan repeatedly remarks that the pervert is reduced to the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*. In the face of this predicament, resulting from the insufficiency of paternal mediation, the pervert would try to reverse the passive position of the Other's plaything to actively assume the instrumental position of the Other's enjoyment by

⁴⁸² Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁸³ Stephanie S. Swales, *Perversion: A Lacanian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Subject* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 160.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 160.

⁴⁸⁵ Verhaeghe, *Normal and Disorder*, p. 414.

means of defying the law, carrying out the individualised scenario through contract. The contract between the involved partners in perverse practice replaces the normal Symbolic law and discloses rigid characteristics to cancel out ambiguity and efface the Other's desire. Lucie Cantin comments on the contract between Wanda and Sacher-Masoch, pointing out that '[t]he contract regulates, defines, and formalizes the relation to the other. Things are said before they are done. The signifier compels and one must abide.'⁴⁸⁶ Cantin continues to argue that 'once the contract is signed, the other as a subject is abolished, along with this desire and freedom [...] the contract responds to the processing of the drive beyond the phallic effects, in a mechanical, action-reaction organ logic set in motion by the trait, the piece or the partial object that the other then supports.'⁴⁸⁷ Seen in this light, far from fulfilling the neurotic's wet dreams of revolutionary transgression and limitless enjoyment, the perverse drama is often quite rigid and repetitive.⁴⁸⁸ To put it another way, in analogy to Agamben's dialectic between the sovereign and *homo sacer*, the perverse subject dwells in a permanent sovereign ban by the phallic mother, and the entire perverse scenario is devised to discipline the creaturely being governed by this perverse sovereign ban.

⁴⁸⁶ Lucie Cantin, 'Perversion and Hysteria', in Willy Apollon, Danielle Bergeron, and Lucie Cantin (eds.), *After Lacan: Clinical Practice and the Subject of the Unconscious* (Albany: SUNY P, 2002), 155-79, at p. 174.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 155-79.

With this in mind, let us return to our evaluation of the diverse critical responses to masochism in 'Circe' and examine some key passages regarding forced feminisation. Bello commands Bloom:

What you longed for has come to pass. Henceforth you are unmanned and mine in earnest, a thing under the yoke. Now for your punishment frock. You will shed your male garments, you understand, Ruby Cohen and don the shot silk luxuriously rustling over head and shoulders. And quickly too! [...] (*points to his whores*) As they are now so will you be, wigged, signed, perfumesprayed, recepowdered, with smoothshaven armpits. Tape measurements will be taken next your skin. You will be laced with cruel force into vicelike corsets of soft dove coutille with whale bone busk to the diamondtrimmed pelvis [...] Martha and Mary will be a little chilly at first in such delicate thighcasing but the frilly flimsiness of lace round your bare knees will remind you [...] Little jobs that make mother pleased, eh? And show off coquettishly your domino at the mirror behind closedrawn blinds your unskirted thighs and hegoat's udders in various poses of surrender, eh? [...] When you took your seat with womanish care, lifting your billowy flounces, on the smoothworn throne. (*U*, 15.2965-3017)

It is quite obvious that the celebration of cross-dressing and transgender as subversive transgression is too hasty and does not really hold, because, strictly speaking, at the most fundamental level, perversion constitutes a mother-child relation as indicated above; that is, it is hardly a drama between man and woman but that of a child with unstable genderisation with a phallic mother.⁴⁸⁹ Although these lines show

⁴⁸⁹ Dor, in Part II and Part III of his *Structure and Perversion*, discusses the relationship or distribution of phallic attributes in women and men in different clinical structures, and in cases of homosexuality, lesbianism, transsexuals, and transvetism; those related categories which traditionally are assigned to, and border upon perversions. His insightful discussion, though far from exhaustive, indicates that the repertoire of cross-dressing and cross-gendering still centers around the distribution of phallic attributes and its deviation, and is far from a whole-sale structural innovation or revolution as some critics may want to celebrate.

clearly that '[w]omen are processed by men in ways that disguise and trammel them so as to reconstruct their sensory features,' there flickers fragile 'female awareness' or 'feminist insights'⁴⁹⁰ embodied in sentences like '[a]s they are now so will you be.'

On the other hand, this stereotyping of women, the stock, codified portrayal of women's clothes, gestures, and actions is clearly a 'typical masculine fantasy scenario' enacted 'only in order to experience the remaining jouissance not mastered by that fantasy.'⁴⁹¹ This epitomises the pervert's attempt to 'slip into the skin of this Other body, like a hand into a glove.'⁴⁹² Mansfield's critique of the power relation and the total subject probably reveals more truth of the masturbatory nature of the perverse fantasy, staging, and drama as a means to quench the Other's desire and to assume the status of the instrument of the Other's enjoyment. In this light, the masochistic elements that Joyce draws from the Victorian repertoire are far from some revolutionary liberation or experimentation of diverse sexuality. The Bakhtinian carnivalesque state of exception is simply the superegoic underside of the law. The rigid, perverse transgression is nothing but masturbatory. While Cotter acknowledges the masturbatory nature of the perverse ideals in Joyce's work and life in general and in 'Circe' in particular, he still advocates the ethics of escape and the

⁴⁹⁰ Brivic, *Joyce through Lacan and Žižek*, p. 147.

⁴⁹¹ Serge André, p. 270.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 270, 272.

experiential value of minoritarian becoming by borrowing the Deleuzian conception of bodies without organs.

My contention is that the masturbatory nature of perverse ideals functions in a similar way to that by which neurotics conduct masturbatory enjoyment and is far from subversive of the law.⁴⁹³ When an ethic ends up in passive escape to avoid the aggressive conventional roles of male domination, its efficacy is quite dubious and confined. Because this fantasy scenario in perversion produces nothing new or subversive, it perpetuates the conventional categories and stifles the Other's subjectivity when the whole perverse design strives to deny the Other's desire and to instruct the Other on how to enjoy through contract. The reference to Deleuze is far from accidental and reveals the problematic nature of the conception of bodies without organs with the possible kinship with superegoic enjoyment of ideology.⁴⁹⁴

Hence, the enactment of perverse ideals is far from a satisfying ethical act. The true ethical act lies in the recognition of the non-existence of the Other, the precipitation into new subjectivity, and the intervention of love as the suspension of fantasy and its concomitant superegoic transgression and enjoyment. Dwelling and indulging in fantasy, be it neurotic or perverse, is nothing but the reification of

⁴⁹³ In *Seminar XX*, Lacan has devoted ample space to explain the masturbatory nature of desire and fantasy in his theorisation of sexualisation.

⁴⁹⁴ See Žižek's evaluation of the two faces of Deleuze. One is truly revolutionary, the other ventures near to serving the superegoic enjoyment of ideology in *Organs without Bodies*.

enjoyment and continuous subscription to the Other. That is to say, *the messianic force to intervene and to change the status quo lies not in the ethics of escape as Cotter would believe, but in the ethics of the breakthrough.* Following this line of argument, even if we do not assign Bloom or Joyce with a stable, rigid perverse structure and remain faithful to our contention that he is beyond the clinical categories from the very beginning, the masochism enacted here, I argue, can be conceptualised as a step *prior to* the miraculous ethical breakthrough that Santner outlines in his conception of neighbour love.⁴⁹⁵ The pervasive phenomenon of perverse elements and florid masochism in ‘Circe’ constitute another interpretation similar to Artaudian theatre. It aims to contain primary masochism by way of actively assuming the position of passive victim or abject, which can function as a means of acquiring the minimal distance required for further liberation, and for a subjective formation and transformation. As Žižek keenly points out,

Paradoxically, such a staging is the first act of liberation: by means of it, the servant’s Masochistic libidinal attachment to his master is brought to daylight, and the servant thus acquires a minimal distance toward it [...] When we are subjected to a power mechanism, this subjection is always and by definition sustained by some libidinal investment: the subjection itself generates a surplus-enjoyment of its own. This subjection is embodied in a network of ‘material’ bodily practices, and for this reason, we cannot get rid of our subjection through a merely intellectual reflection. Our liberation has to be staged in some kind of bodily performance [...] this performance has to be of an apparently ‘masochistic’ nature; it has to stage the

⁴⁹⁵ See Santner’s extended argument in ‘Miracles Happen: Benjamin, Rosenzweig, Freud, and the Matter of Neighbor’, *Neighbor*, p. 76-133.

painful process of hitting back at oneself.⁴⁹⁶

In this light, the ethics of escape is insufficient and the true ethical act of Bloom does not reside in his perverse becoming of the Other, the woman, the object, or the tools, but in his miraculous breakthrough of these suffocating fantasies and enjoyment, coming to Stephen's rescue to manifest his neighbour love in the here and now. I argue that the ethical potential advocated by Žižek can be seen in Bloom's masochism. Cotter's ethics of escape does not really explain the fact that Bloom himself is frequently rendered marginal in his social existence, exploited and humiliated at various points of his life. It is arguable that the florid masochism itself has already functioned as a secondary mechanism in processing his status as abject, his perception of himself as *homo sacer*: 'Justice! All Ireland versus one! Has nobody ...?' (*U*, 15.3202). I would like to call attention to the moments of masochism in which ritualised cuckoldry⁴⁹⁷ is intrinsically intertwined with Bloom's 'real life' anxiety of Molly's adultery in 'Circe':⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁶ Slavoj Žižek, 'An Ethical Plea for Lies and Masochism', in Todd McGowan (ed.) *Lacan and Contemporary Film* (New York: Other Press, 2004), 173-86 at p. 183.

⁴⁹⁷ I will return to the issue of cuckoldry in the next chapter on 'Penelope'. See also Janina Levin, 'Modern reinterpretation of the cuckold', PhD thesis (Philadelphia, 2010).

⁴⁹⁸ Owing to the space and focus of this chapter, I have no intention to explore fully or to exhaust the rich and complicated nature of masochism in 'Circe,' but merely attempt to confine my effort by pointing out what I think are the limits and critical potential of masochism which, I have found, is still missing from Joyce criticism. See Brivic's *Joyce through Lacan and Žižek*, in which Brivic devotes a chapter on 'Circe' to discussing shame as a key feature of masochism; Frances L. Restuccia, *Joyce and the Law of the Father*; James Davis, 'Beyond Masochistic Ritual in Joyce and Deleuze: Reading Molly as Non-Corporal Body', *Joyce, 'Penelope' and the Body* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 171-88. Masochism has drawn recent critical attention as well from viewpoints other than the Lacanian perspective. For instance, Thomas P. Baláz offers an understanding of masochism from the lens of object-relations psychoanalysis in his 'Recognizing Masochism: Psychoanalysis and the Politics of Sexual Submission in *Ulysses*', *Joyce Studies Annual* (2002), 160-91. See also Jennifer Burns Levin's dissertation, 'Literary Masochism and Representations of Sexualized Pain in the Modern Imagination',

Boylan (*tosses him sixpence*): Here to buy yourself a gin and splash. (*he hangs his hat smartly on a peg of Bloom's antlered head!*) Show me in. I have a little private business with your wife, you understand.

Bloom: Thank you, sir. Madam Tweedy is in her bath, sir. (*U*, 15.3762-7)

Molly's adultery is staged and contained in Bloom's participation as an impotent onlooker as well as a servant. To codify a hurtful scene is already an attempt to contain and tame the Real. Henke reads this incident as 'an enactment of caricatured cuckoldry,' in which 'the timorous Bloom relives the pain of conjugal loss in the mode of voyeuristic farce.'⁴⁹⁹ As 'playwright and participant,' or as 'the author/actor/director' of the comedy of infidelity, Bloom 'symbolically sutures the wound of cuckoldry by dramatizing marital transgression in the stylized frame of a turn-of-the-century peepshow,' and hence gains 'the gratifications of both aesthetic mastery and psychological catharsis.'⁵⁰⁰ Moreover, I would like to highlight that it is also by way of this masochistic staging that Bloom comes to recognise his contribution to cuckoldry: his libidinal complicity with the adultery between Boylan and Molly is also staged in his fantasy of serving the whole scene. This acknowledgement of one's own involvement and investment in the subjection to power and injustice, one's enjoyment of shame and pain, constitutes the necessary step prior to the truly ethical breakthrough for future transformation. Arguably, prior to Bloom's act of neighbour love to intervene in the objectal dimension of the Other, the signifying stress contained in the formation of fantasy (*N*, 76-133), Bloom works through his subjection at the libidinal level in his masochism to break free from his own creaturely being, which exceeds social representations or ideological interpellations and is usually absorbed in supereogic enjoyment. The subject's

Ph. D. thesis (Irvine, CL, 2009), in which Bloom as 'Mademoiselle Ruby, pride of the ring' (*U*, 15.716) receives extensive study.

⁴⁹⁹ Henke, *Politics of Desire*, p. 118.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-9.

assumption of responsibility of one's own being requires this suspension of the underside of supereogic enjoyment. In the meantime, our neighbour love is realised only when we break free from both the Symbolic law and its fantasmatic thrall, constituting a suspension of suspension, responding to the testimony of the creaturely part of ourselves as well as to the creaturely figures of our neighbours, taking revolutionary action in the now time as the miracles of here and now.

V.

As demonstrated in my extended analysis of the libidinal economy of (pseudo-)messianism and masochism in 'Circe,' the subjective position in both fantasies still falls prey to the dialectical structuration of the law. The law is operated with the polarity between the sovereign exception and the inclusive exclusion imputed to *homo sacer*. In Bloom's enactment of (pseudo-)messianism represented in his lecture of social reform, he occupies the structural locus of the sovereign; in the masochistic fantasy, Bloom is assigned to the opposite end of the *homo sacer*. While, on the surface, in his hallucination of masochism and (pseudo-)messianism, Bloom seems to explore diverse roles and the concomitant experiences, these experiences and subjective positions themselves are but components operative in the same structuration of the existing law. With regard to the ethical efficacy, (pseudo-)messianism and masochism are equally powerless in subverting the law. Is there any possibility of conceiving the space for the

extra-legal, which would suspend or deactivate the structural fixity at both psychic and collective-symbolic levels? In recent years, scholars have devoted critical energy to delineating precisely such a space, where true messianism is claimed to be located. As will be shown, the ethical act, the evental happening, and the truth-process converge in the manifestation of neighbour love.

At the textual level, Joyce does not terminate his long chapter of 'Circe' at the moment of heightened enjoyment within the confines of his characters' intensive indulgence in fantasies in nighttown. On the contrary, in the last several hundred lines (*U*, 15.4241-4967), he introduces another dimension. 'Circe' does not end abruptly at Stephen's passage to the act, his violent yet impotent attack on the chandelier at the height of a ghastly, horrid fantasy, but shifts to an ethical act effected by the manifestation of neighbour love when Bloom finally and meaningfully engages in the young man's life. It is arguable that this is an example of 'ethical violence' or 'divine violence' that Žižek advocated in the sense that it manages to end, to break up from the impotent violence and systemised violence embodied in the superegoic enjoyment as well, while Stephen immediately becomes the potential object/victim for the exploitation by Bella Cohen and violence by Private Carr and Private Compton, representatives of capitalism and British colonialism in this context. Jettisoning entirely his role of bedroom martyr as a cringed, pathetic abject in the masochistic

fantasy, Bloom reverses the stereotypical submissive attitude and intervenes actively into Bella Cohen's vicious attempt to overcharge Stephen (*U*, 15.4275-6) and her threat to summon the police (*U*, 15.4295) by hinting at his knowledge of 'behind the scenes' secrets: '[a]nd if it were your own son in Oxford? (warningly) I know' (*U*15.4306). More importantly, he comes to rescue Stephen when the latter is brutally humiliated and beaten.

Žižek enlists the term 'violence' in his conception of the act for he intends it as a wake-up call from the insipid monotony that he thinks he has detected in the predominant agenda of multiculturalism and the concomitant emphasis on tolerance and difference.⁵⁰¹ In *Violence*, Žižek concludes with a conception of violence that is capable of intervention into other forms of violence by drawing attention to Walter Benjamin's definition of 'divine violence'. Although this ethical violence is baptised as 'divine,' it actually has nothing to do with the apocalyptic vision of the intrusion of external violence from above as exemplified by 'today's religious fundamentalists who pretend they are acting on behalf of God and as instrument of the Divine Will,' or with the 'idea of Judgment Day, when all debts will be fully paid and an out-of-joint world will finally be set straight' (*V*, 158). Benjamin wrestles painstakingly to devise a 'divine' violence beyond the violence of law as he articulates:

⁵⁰¹ This is the underlying project in his article, 'Neighbors and Other Monsters: A Plea for Ethical Violence', *Neighbor*, p. 134-90.

Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes the antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is law-making, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them [...] If the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood [...] So neither the divine judgment nor the grounds for this judgment can be known in advance. Those who base a condemnation of all violent killing of one person by another on the commandment are therefore mistaken. It exists not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude and, in exceptional cases, to take upon themselves the responsibility of ignoring it.⁵⁰²

At stake in this passage is the difference between mythic and divine violence and the subjective freedom for intervention without the guarantee or support of the Other. Žižek accurately identifies the superficial parallel between the sovereign violence in law as mythical violence and the divine violence that is antithetical to law because both are involved with killing or violence regarded as neither a crime nor a sacrifice (V, 168). But he soon distances the two for ‘mythical violence’ as law-making and law-preserving are a means in the service of power and law and sacrificial in nature, while ‘divine violence’ is ‘non-sacrificial and expiatory’ (V, 168). Divine violence serves no higher force, intention or design but designates ‘just the sign of the injustice of the world, of the world being “out of joint”’ (V, 169). Hence, it follows that divine violence is not an expression of divine omnipotence, nor that of the sovereign exception, but ‘*a sign of God’s (the big Other’s) own impotence*’ (V, 170, original emphasis). Divine violence falls at the order of Event in the Badiouian sense; it is

⁵⁰² Walter Benjamin, ‘Critique of Violence’, *Selected Writings, Vol. 1, 1913-26* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996), p. 249-51.

the subject's solitary decision, ethical act, and eventual intervention in response to the eventual site of the Other's inconsistency and, hence, 'the subject's *work of love*' (V, 172, original emphasis). I would further argue that, although it appears provocative when Žižek invokes literal killing or murder in discussion, the true import does not reside in the spectacular quality of the act itself, but *in the capacity of an ethical act to breach the operation of law and its underside, to transform the co-ordinates of libidinal structuration of the system.*⁵⁰³ If an ethical act can be considered as 'divine violence,' it is divine only by virtue of its being extra-legal and violent by virtue of its breakthrough quality. As Benjamin puts it in the above-quoted lines, 'if the former [the mythical violence] is bloody, the latter [the divine violence] is lethal without spilling blood.' It is only when the libidinal economy is substantially and structurally modified and reworked that the *ethical* efficacy of an act can be worthy of the name in a properly psychoanalytic sense.

What is true messianism then? Contemporary thinkers have turned to Pauline love in their attempts to theorise the breakthrough of the law and power modelled on the political theology of the sovereign, which works by the masculine logic of all and exception. In his insightful reading of Paul's letters as a messianic text, Agamben interprets the messianic calling as a vocation by virtue of the revocation of law, as a

⁵⁰³ Is not Žižek himself at various occasions in his works appealing to the notion that doing nothing sometimes is more radical than pseudo-action?

separation in terms of immanent division.⁵⁰⁴ The conception of the messianic vocation by virtue of revocation is of the utmost importance for our discussion here for it proposes the conception of rendering the law ‘inoperative’.⁵⁰⁵ Agamben focuses his interpretation on I Corinthians 7:17-22 and 7:29-32 in which Paul famously pronounces, ‘Circumcision is nothing and the foreskin is nothing [...] let every man abide in the same calling’ and ‘time contracted itself, the rest is, that even those having wives may be as not having, and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing’ and so on. Agamben regards this ‘as not’ by virtue of ‘revocation.’ As he puts it, succinctly, ‘*[t]he messianic vocation is the revocation of every vocation*’ and ‘the messianic nullification’ amounts to ‘deactivation, rendering ineffective’ of the status quo.⁵⁰⁶ This revocation can be viewed as a suspension, or de-animation of the current operation of libidinal economy of the law, a revocation of the difference between the circumcised and the foreskin. Regarding the cut running through the division of identity, Agamben interprets it with the internal division effected by the so-called Apelles’ section or cut. The fourth-century BC painter is said to be able to produce a fine line that cuts his rival’s line in two and Agamben utilises this example to articulate an immanent division that suspends the

⁵⁰⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005), p. 19-58.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23, 25, and 28.

division of identities themselves. Commenting on Paul's pronouncement, '[n]ot all of those of Israel are Israel', Agamben argues that

Under the effect of the cut of Apelles, the partition of the law (Jew/non-Jew), is no longer clear or exhaustive, for there will be some Jews who are not Jews, and some non-Jews who are not non-Jews. [...] He who keeps himself in the messianic law is not-not in law. The division of the law into Jew/non-Jew, in the law/without law, now leaves a remnant on either side. [...] He who dwells in the law of the Messiah is the non-non-Jew.⁵⁰⁷

The remnant status of the subject as a product of internal division that Agamben tries to conceptualise in the above passage should be opposed to the external division operative among a communitarian grouping or an identitarian differentiation. The communitarian grouping operates by the masculine logic of all and the exception, or to put it in Schmittian terms, by an erection of totality built upon the limit-setting exception, while the conception of the remnant follows the feminine logic of 'not-all'. Without the boundary-setting exception, there is no closure or totality, there is not-all. As a result, the subject is capable of dislodging from communitarian or identitarian closure of all and the exception, and of assuming his/her not-all remnant existence, which de-activates the inside/outside division of law in general and unplugs the particular identities based on the same masculine logic. *In other words, true messianism is extra-legal, aiming to render law inoperative and to extricate the communitarian closure inherent in law by introducing a remnant into every*

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 50-1.

identity-making.

It is this position of interpreting Paul's messianic separation or self-division that has led Agamben to a scathing critique of Badiou's book on Paul, which, according to Agamben, 'tries to demonstrate precisely, how "a universal thought, proceeding on the basis of the worldly proliferation of alterities [...] produces a Sameness and Equality" But is this really accurate? [...] The messianic cut of Apelles clearly never adds up to a universal.'⁵⁰⁸ In an interview, Badiou directly answers Agamben's explicit repudiation of his own reading of Saint Paul as the foundation of universalism. After acknowledging the difference between his own reading and that of Agamben, Badiou remarks that this difference actually does *not* constitute a contradiction for 'in Paul, there is an interplay between separation and universalism.'⁵⁰⁹ Separation is actually inherently 'necessary' to Paul's universalism 'because we have separated ourselves from the old man,' out of which emerges 'a newness of life.'⁵¹⁰ It is a division 'internal to the subject' between the old and the new, 'between the power of death and the power of life.'⁵¹¹ What Badiou is referring to here is actually his powerful interpretation of the Pauline way of suspension of the vicious dialectic of law and sin through the fidelity to the Christ-event, i.e. through love.

⁵⁰⁸ Agamben, *Remains*, p. 51-2.

⁵⁰⁹ Adam S. Miller, 'An Interview with Alain Badiou: "Universal Truth and the Question of Religion"', *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture*, 3.1 (2005), 1-5 at p. 2.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

I fully endorse Badiou's response to Agamben here, for Badiou's conception of 'indifference' carries the same emphasis on separation in terms of the internal division or immanent division that Agamben has endeavoured to distil from the figure of non-non-jew as an effect of the so-called Apelles' cut. Badiou's *universalism based on separation yet in excess of separation* is best encapsulated in his conception of the eventual grace in the ethical formula of 'not ... but.' Badiou condenses a great deal in the pivotal passages in explaining Paul's sentence in Romans 6. 14, 'for you are not under law, but under grace':

A structuring of the subject according to a 'not ... but' through which it must be understood as a becoming rather than a state [...] Law and grace are for the subject the name of the constituting weave through which he is related to the situation as it is, and to the effects of the event as they have to become. We shall remain, in effect, that an eventual rupture always constitutes its subject in the divided form of a 'not ... but,' and that it is precisely this form that bears the universal. For the 'not' is the potential dissolution of closed particularities (whose name is 'law'), while the 'but' indicates the task, the faithful labor, in which the subjects of the process opened by the event (whose name is 'grace') are coworkers. (*SP*, 63-4)

To put it succinctly, in 'Circe,' if, by staging the innermost masochistic psychodrama, Bloom achieves a therapeutic action of working through, which is similar to the mechanism and effect of the traversal of fantasy, it is arguable that Bloom has undergone a similar process of revocation from the previous libidinal investment and internal-division of his own subjectivity, and moved to what Agamben interprets as the messianic calling. That is to say, Bloom is capable of breaking free from fixed psychic structuring, which is precisely a 'no' to the past and prepares a ground for the

‘but’ gesturing in the direction of a new, alternative ethical action and structural re-working both at the individual and intersubjective levels.

Let us now dwell on Joyce’s depiction of the chaotic circumstances into which Bloom’s ethical act of neighbour love is enacted. Several hundred lines at the end of ‘Circe’ are devoted to portraying a prosaic nighttown farce. It is a mundane episode in which a visit to the brothel by a group of males terminates with a drunken young man’s accidental attack on the lamp. This incident triggers Bella Cohen’s greedy attempt to overcharge and Bloom’s argument with Cohen; the British soldiers seize the opportunity to harass people, provoking violence, and beat up Stephen; Bloom is opportunely present and offers Stephen timely protection and neighbour love. The ending of ‘Circe’ starts from Stephen’s attack on the Chandelier with his ashplant. In the beginning of ‘Circe,’ the ashplant once functioned as the young artist’s personal equipment, and proud symbol of rationality, learning and individuality when he enters into nighttown: *‘flourishing the ashplant in his left hand, chants with joy the introit for paschal time’* (U, 15.73-4). A few lines later, Stephen utters, *‘(triumphanliter) Salvi facti sunt’* (U, 15.98).⁵¹² With this remark, Stephen *‘flourishes his ashplant, shivering the lamp image, shattering light over the world’* (U15. 99-100). Whether Joyce intends Stephen’s gesture and chants to be serious or half-serious, half-mocking

⁵¹² Gifford and Seidman translates it as ‘and they are made whole [saved]’, p. 453.

is unclear. But, reason seems aligned with Stephen's 'flourishing ashplant.' This connection is echoed and parodied near the end of 'Circe' when Stephen again '*lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier*' (U, 15.4243-4). In contrast with the image of shattering light, at this moment, it is darkness that has been brought to the world by the ashplant: '*Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry*' (U, 15.4244-5). While Stephen loses his sobriety and poise, he also 'abandon[s] his ashplant' (U, 15.4255); it is Bloom who picks up the stick: Bloom says to Stephen, 'Come along with me now before worse happens. Here is your stick', while Stephen replies 'Stick, no. Reason. This feast of pure reason' (U, 15.4732-5). This can be interpreted as Bloom taking over the ashplant and the symbolic power with which is metaphorically endowed. However, Joyce bestows on Bloom's action with a symbolic meaning other than Stephen's celebration of the power of pure reason.

This mundane incident in a red-light district is mainly depicted in realistic mode in the form of dialogue and action. In this realistic portrayal, clichéd lines are repeated by the characters, which immediately give rise to hallucinatory voices and imaginary, and more extended fantasies. These fantasmatic digressions are generated metonymically, echoing an incident in reality, reflecting less the singularised or individualised desires than fantasies originating from the collective

Unconscious that, I argue, underlies the words and actions of the characters. For instance, when Private Carr intends to provoke conflicts and find excuses to insult, arrest, or attack Stephen by saying '(to Cissy) Was he insulting you while me and him was having a piss?' (*U*, 15.4394), *the image and voice of Lord Tennyson appear abruptly: '(gentleman poet in Union Jack blazer and cricket flannels, bareheaded, flowingbeared) Theirs not to reason why' (U, 15.4396-7).* The line is from Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade.' The image of Tennyson is an absurd mixture or pastiche of Britishness, and his lines show the underlying code of British soldiers, who are the building block of violent Imperialism. At other occasions, the image and voice of Edward VII (*U*, 15.4449-65) appear immediately after Private Carr remarks, 'What's that you are saying about my king?' (*U*, 15.4448). Edward VII is conjured up to witness the impending conflict between Stephen and the soldiers, remarking or chanting lines parodying a popular hymn:

(slowly, solemnly but indistinctly) peace, perfect peace. For identification, bucket in my hand, Cheerio, boys. *(he turns to his subjects.)* We have come here to witness a clean straight fight and we heartily wish both men the best of good luck. Mahak makar a bak. *(he shakes hands with Private Carr, Private Campton, Stephen, Bloom and Lynch).* (*U*, 15. 4459-63)

This appearance of Edward VII, of course, serves to indicate the imperial power that frames the entire episode of colonial violence; the line 'peace, perfect peace' derives from the title of a popular hymn composed by an English Bishop and poet⁵¹³ and

⁵¹³ Gifford and Seidman, p. 522.

certainly functions as a scathing critique of the British hypocrisy for the fight, which is anything but ‘a clean straight fight.’

It has been one of the hallmark features in Joyce’s writings that clichéd lines are frequently evoked from the storage of language and culture as if our everyday usage of language is necessarily contaminated or corrupted by clichés and stereotypes. These clichés are not evoked voluntarily but intrude into dialogues and narratives, betraying the fact that the human subject is spoken by language. There is something in language that exceeds the speakers’ conscious control and can be said to dictate the speakers. Like parasites, language and culture live on human subjects, seep the vitality, imagination, and autonomy of human subjects. Stereotyped images and clichés are not merely summoned in this context to give expression to what frames the violent colonialism and what underlies the code of imperial violence. They are also conjectured by protagonists such as Bloom and Stephen in confrontation with the violence. For instance, Stephen says to Private Carr,

I understand your point of view though I have no king myself for the moment. This is the age of patent medicines. A discussion is difficult here. But this is the point. You die for your country. Suppose. (*he places his arm on Private Carr’s sleeve*) Not that I wish it for you. But I say: Let my country die for me. Up to the present it has done so. I didn’t want it to die. Damn death. Long live life. (*U*, 15.4469-75)

There is apparently a thesis lying behind Stephen’s remarks. The line, ‘[l]et my country die for me’ can be interpreted as another instance of Stephen’s declaration of independence from symbolic authority, a manifesto of his famous ‘*Non Serviam*’ (*U*,

15.4228). Stephen's weapon in the face of injustice is his cunning, his rhetorical power, and his witticism, which actually builds on the inversion of clichés.

Another example can be found in Bloom's appeal to the prostitute Cissy Caffrey to intercede and end the conflict between Stephen and the soldiers: Bloom says to her, 'Speak you! Are you struck dumb? You are the link between nations and generations. Speak, woman, sacred lifegiver!' (*U*, 15.4647-9). It is as if, in the midst of farce, chaos, male follies, and colonial violence, the only symbolic means that Bloom can employ is the evocation of a proverb-like clichéd utterance such as woman as 'sacred lifegiver.' Neither Stephen's witticism nor Bloom's references to idiomatic phrases help at all in the confrontation of colonial violence and everyday conflicts. These clichés mark not so much the symbolic efficacy stored in culture and language but the impotence of words and 'ancient wisdom' in culture in the face of real-life drama and political violence in the mundane world. In 'Circe,' what eventually and eventually takes effect to change the situation is the ethical intervention of neighbour love.

In conclusion, 'Circe' does not end with masochism but with a working through by way of masochism and other perverse fantasies and practices. I have read 'Circe' as a literary rendition, not of a traversal of the fundamental fantasy as in the case of neuroses but as a remarkable dramatisation of one's own masochistic scenarios and a processing of masochism *in order to open for sinthomatic re-formulations*. This is

an episode in which countless references to past episodes are recalled and reworked; it is an examination of memories, a reworking of the past, to face up unclarified debts of guilt, suffering and oppression. It is a moment of working through fixed, reified *sinthome* in the direction of opening the possibility of reworking, reknitting, and restructuring. Without the subscription to the traditional master signifiers, the *sinthome* is supposed to be individuated and singularised. However, the *sinthome* itself risks reifying or solidifying into a stagnant entity or a strict form of drive formations, which might imprison the subject in draining configurations of psychic life. Under such circumstances, is there still room for a subject to transcend and to renew his/her own *sinthome*, to assert freedom by applying a truly ethical act, to rupture the co-ordinates of life for innovation of a new neighbourhood, a new intersubjective relationship? Does Joyce simply indulge himself in incessant (re)knitting of his own *sinthomatic* undertaking through his writing or does he insert inside it a semblance of hope for self-revolutionising, for subverting one's own *sinthome*, a possibility for a real structural breakthrough of one's *sinthome*? My answer is positive. The individualised/individuated master signifiers and the concomitant *sinthome* are still in need of the possibility for re-invention. Epitomised in the example of Bloom, Joyce works out a textual subjectivity that is able to enact a breakthrough of one's *sinthome* and engage in neighbour love and the restructuration

of intersubjective relationship ensuing the eventual breakthrough. Bloom not only comes to take responsibility for his peculiar drive formation at the most fundamental level but also triumphs to take responsibility for his neighbour in his rescue of Stephen. Miracles really happen in the very manifestation of love.

By examining the logic underlying the structure of perversion from a Lacanian perspective, the line of argument that puts emphasis on the celebration of transgression and the so-called perverse ideals is too ready to sacrifice subjectivity rather than an endorsement of the subject, although these perverse practices are claimed to defy and transgress the tyranny of norms in the experiments and proliferations of perverse ideals. This line of criticism bypasses the entire scenario of working through, the subject's recognition of the non-existence of the Other, and the subject's ethical decision to take responsibility for his/her own enjoyment. Phrased otherwise, it actually bypasses subjectivity and the ethical dimension. In this light, there is nothing 'ethical' in the perverse ideals, for, strictly speaking, that which is ethical, ultimately, is an eventual act that opens a new possibility of possibilities, genuinely opening to the *Real* of the Other. In the case of neighbour love, the ethical conduct of loving one's neighbour restructures the relationship with the Other, opening a new neighbourhood. While the perverse subject is busy with all the perverse ideals in manufacturing different forms of his/her own or his/her victims'

creaturely being, the genuine ethical question to be raised is ‘why would you have to enjoy in this way again and again?’ My stance in this chapter has made it clear that one should not be too ready to accept a practice that simply encourages losing oneself in the fun house by reducing to a creaturely existence, be it a symptomatic or *sinthomatic* construction.

In the process of performing the *sinthome*, as in the case of cuckoldry in the masochist fantasmatic scenario, Bloom comes to realise his own involvement in manufacturing and sustaining such a melodrama in his mind and in his real life, to acknowledge his own libidinal investment as a victim and betrayed husband, as oppressed and dispossessed. In other words, the ethical potential in masochism resides in Bloom’s recognition of his contribution to his own sufferings as a way of organising enjoyment, his responsibility in the whole lot, the whole game, his *sinthome* and his wife’s adultery. Would there be any difference if he were to take another action or attitude in the face of the impending adultery, or if he were to handle the relationship with Molly differently after the death of Rudy rather than indulging in the wounded doubt? The compulsive characteristic in the *sinthomatic* practices is squarely observable, as in the cases of the neurotic symptoms and the perverse practices, which themselves equally cry out for re-invention.

Before ending this chapter, I would like to dwell for a moment on the two ethical

moments in ‘Circe,’ and attempt to articulate the possible connection between (1) the ethical working through of masochism and (2) the true messianism manifested in neighbour love as an ethical act/breakthrough and a Badiouian Truth-Event. As indicated above, this working through of masochism designates the necessary step *prior to* a miraculous ethical breakthrough. In the context of commenting on Žižek’s tendency ‘to equivocate between the Lacanian act and the Badiouian event,’ Johnston points out one crucial incompatibility between the former and the latter. Johnston argues that, at certain moments, Lacan acknowledges that ‘an act can be thought only after the (f)act,’ while on other occasions he appears to ‘problematize the very possibility of even an *après-coup* subjection of the act,’ suggesting that ‘such deeds cannot retroactively be recognized and comprehended by the subject created or changed by these same gestures.’⁵¹⁴ That is to say, the entire fantasy enactment and working through may be unconscious and leaves *no traces of memory* on the part of the subject who has undergone such an act. The drastic effect of transformation and the ensuing systematic reworking and symbolic restructuring may be so radical that the traversing/founding act itself, albeit indispensable and necessary in itself, becomes *unrecognisable* for the emergent subject and the new world. In contrast to this conception of the Lacanian act, Badiou emphasises that ‘an event subsequently gives

⁵¹⁴ Johnston, *Transformation*, p. 148. The resources of Johnston’s argument come from Lacan’s unpublished Seminar XIV (6/7/1967), (2/15/1967).

rise to a subject retroactively recognizing it and being able faithfully to elaborate the event's truth consequences.⁵¹⁵ In Badiou's theorisation, the subject is convoked by the evental happening and embarks on the truth process through his/her own fidelity to the event. In other words, Badiou's subject and truth are always post-evental and his account fails to take into consideration what Žižek calls 'an event which succeeds through the self-erasure of its evental dimension.'⁵¹⁶ The status of the fantasies portrayed in 'Circe' is unclear, whether they are conscious or unconscious, partially unconscious or not, individuated or intermingled with collective cultural unconscious of its time, or whether they belong to a specific character or the larger textual subject. Anyhow, it is arguable that, to a large extent, the acting out and working through of fantasies as unconscious discourses themselves is beyond the self-awareness of the subject and its happening comes *under erasure* after the event (of working through) as well. However, it remains a crucial and indispensable act/event for the future happening/act/event. The ethical effect of this indispensable act/event is to be detected in the subsequent transformation of intersubjective relationship and restructuration of neighbourhood.

Scholars have tried to translate the Lacanian feminine logic of not-all into ethical responsibility to explicate the capacity of an ethical act to transform subjectivity and

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵¹⁶ Qtd in Ibid., p. 150.

intersubjective relationships in terms of set theory (*N*, 129). As Santner puts it, ‘there is no direct path from legal subjection to “not all”; “not all” only opens up through a traversal of the fantasy of exception, which in its turn sustains the force of the figure of legal subjection. To put it differently, “not-all” is what you get with the traversal of fantasy.’⁵¹⁷ The conception of a new being-togetherness, a new neighbourhood by virtue of Badiou’s conception of the generic open set built entirely upon the event of neighbour love and the persistent work of love, follows precisely the logic of not-all as a consequence of the traversal of fantasy, of the working through of various masochistic and pseudo-messianic fantasies in the specific case of ‘Circe.’

Reinhard enlists Badiou’s conception of a new neighbourhood to devise the imagination for the consequence of what he terms as the political theology of the neighbour (*N*, 62-7). He hopes to derive the political consequences from Badiou’s conception of the generic set, ‘which is included in a situation without belonging to it, without being proper to it, or presented in it; that is, without being discernible in terms of the situation’ (*N*, 62-3). However, for Badiou, a truth process elaborates precisely on a generic set, which ‘although invisible and insignificant from the perspective of the situation, remain faithful to the event and testify to its truth’ (*N*, 63). The

⁵¹⁷ Santner’s private communication with Žižek, qtd in *P&D*, p. 116.

ethico-political consequence entailed is that neighbourhood as generic set may be established by way of fidelity to the event of neighbour love as ‘an *infinite* set of possibilities of social inclusion and association distinct from the principles of representation, equality, and totality, that determine the conceptual closure of the political theology of the sovereign’ (N, 63). In a lecture, Badiou also calls for an idea of neighbourhood as an open set, which, by definition, means ‘there is no difference between it and what is interior to it’ (N,66). Hence, a neighbourhood as an open set designates ‘a place, subset, or elements where there is no boundary, no difference between the inside of the thing and thing itself’ (N, 66). Hence, in neighbourhood, there are no limits set up by exception nor by defining features; it is nothing but an open set of infinity sustained by a ‘*decision*,’ by an ethical act of love, ‘that requires fidelity and work to remain open’ (N, 67). This conception of neighbourhood as an open, generic set follows the feminine logic of not-all for the universality of love takes work to love one by one, not by the masculine logic of exception in which to love all (totality) operates by means of exclusion (some). Santner and Žižek echo this insight when they pronounce that the true ethical formula for love should be expressed in the double negation in the feminine formula of sexuation: ‘there is nothing for which I am not responsible’ as the counterpart of ‘I am not responsible for All’; ‘there is nobody I do not love’, in contrast to the masculine

conception of 'I love you all' on the basis that 'I really hate some' (*N*, 130, 183). It is precisely for this reason that a single manifestation of love bears the capacity to transform both subjectivity and intersubjectivity and it must take incessant works of love to sustain, reinvent, and rework the new neighbourhood constructed through the event/act of love. In a novel like *Ulysses*, which does not contain such spectacular actions and heroic adventures on a grand scale as its Homeric counterpart, the act of neighbour love does carry significant ethical weight because it changes the libidinal economy of the subject of the ethical act as well as the intersubjective relationship. In other words, the (non-)relationship between Bloom and Stephen is broken through and there is opportunity for a new neighbourhood in which alternative intersubjective relation can unfold. How successful would the ensuing intersubjective relationship within the new neighbourhood be? That is another question which requires further critical evaluation.

Bloom's act of neighbour love in coming to Stephen's rescue marks a breach of his pain-afflicting and enjoyment-loaded fantasmatic fabric, where he has dwelled long, undeniably signalling a breakthrough of his own *sinthome*, which he has invented, inhabited and for which he has therefore been completely responsible. Such a breakthrough arguably facilitates subjective transformation and intersubjective re-organisation as exemplified in Bloom's returning home with the slight yet

significant adjustment of asking Molly to prepare breakfast and the possibility for Bloom and Stephen's dialogues in 'Eumaeus' and 'Ithaca.' In this regard, love in the form of Bloom's neighbour love toward Stephen does assume the ethical status of an act, a constructive negativity for breaking through the status quo. Bloom's deeds assume a 'no and but' structure, which is paradigmatic of a Truth/Event in Badiou's interpretation of Pauline love. It is arguably a 'no' to the past *sinthome* and a 'yes' to a new intersubjective structuration. Love assumes an ethical status, functioning as a turning point, a moment of breakthrough. Love as an ethical act supplies momentum for a life-altering, structure-transforming movement, changing the relationship between the subject and the Other, inaugurating a new subject, and revolutionising the Other as well by gesturing to a new singular universal, a new formation of neighbourhood.

As David Trotter accurately puts it, '[after Circe] the question we ask of Leopold, Molly and Stephen is not "Who are they finally?" but "What they might yet do for each other, in each other's lives?"'⁵¹⁸ Although, in 'Eumaeus' and 'Ithaca,' the void is keenly felt at the attempt of a new symbolic construction, and the impossibilities or failures of a sustainable relationship between Stephen and Bloom as father/son or of another nature yet to be invented. The impossibilities or failures themselves also

⁵¹⁸ David Trotter, 'The Modernist Novel', in Michael Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), p. 93-4.

signal an on-going experimentation of a new possibility of being together, of a new neighbourhood in the Badiouian sense of an open, generic set as a manifestation and product demanding fidelity and works of love as a truth process.

To conclude, this work of love can be interpreted as a realisation of messianism by virtue of Benjaminian conception of dialectic at standstill. As Benjamin writes in the famous passage,

it is not what is past casts light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectic at standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what has been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but imagistic. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical—that is, not archaic—images. The image that is read—which is to say, the image in the now of its recognisability—bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.⁵¹⁹

At the end of ‘Cyclops,’ Bloom is besieged by xenophobic violence while at the same time hilariously imputed as ‘ben Bloom Elijah’ (*U*, 15.1916). In response to this missed opportunity for his fellow Dubliners to enact their neighbour love on himself, Bloom *recognises* the opportune occasion for his ethical act toward Stephen. The continuity of historical linearity is interceded and the messianic time of now becomes possible precisely by this kind of recognisability for ethical responsibility and revolutionary intervention, which will consequently suspend the law/sin dialectic, transforming the subject undergoing the act, fissuring and restructuring the

⁵¹⁹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), p. 463.

co-ordinates of the status quo as well.

Chapter Five

The Problematic Countersign: On Love and *Sinthomatic* Eroticism in ‘Penelope’

‘To know what your partner will do is not a proof of love.’

~Jacques Lacan, *Encore*, p. 146

‘What makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love.’

~Jacques Lacan, *Encore*, p. 45

I.

It is a commonplace in Joyce criticism that Joyce intends the final chapter of *Ulysses* to be ‘the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity’ (*LI*, 160). This chapter purports an ethical evaluation of Joyce’s famous, or notorious, rendition of the problematic countersign by his modern Penelope, Molly Bloom. It conducts a critical reading of Molly’s soliloquy by situating the episode in the ethical problematic cast through the prism of Lacan’s theorisation of *sinthome*, sexuality, and love in the later period of his career. I take the case of Joyce’s rendition of this female countersign to be an opportunity not merely to show the ethical efficacy and limits of Joyce but also to investigate the theoretical issues inherent in Lacan’s conception of love, ethics, and *sinthome*. Seen through a Lacanian lens, if we accept the aphorism of ‘there is no such thing as a sexual relationship’ (*Il n’y pas de rapport sexuel*), a theoretical issue that immediately follows would be this: what ethical consequences can be drawn from the non-existence of a sexual relationship? In the meantime,

given that Lacan's ontology of sexual difference is a world of distance from the premodern cosmology of the complementary masculine and feminine principles, a critical question thus emerges. Why does Joyce find it necessary to construct a female 'clou' as a countersign to Bloom's passage to eternity?⁵²⁰ If Molly's extended soliloquy does not contribute to the further development of plot in *Ulysses*, what makes Joyce deem this final construction or appropriation of the female voice to be indispensable? I propose that, with the assertion of the non-existence of a sexual relationship, the ethics of the Real can be pursued in terms of an ethics of the *sinthomatic* eroticism and in the direction of love.

As the title of the chapter indicates, I consider the status of 'Penelope' to be ethically problematic. The problematic status of the countersign is to be explored firstly by way of an ethical evaluation of the *sinthome* as a (singularised) sexual relation and an investigation of Joyce's belief in his *sinthome*. Secondly, my ethical reading will be made from the perspective of the tension between, what I term, the *sinthomatic* eroticism and love as it is manifested in theory and in the specific text of 'Penelope.'

⁵²⁰ It is well known that in a letter to Frank Budgen dated 16 August, 1921, Joyce made clear that 'Ithaca' ended the book, and that 'Penelope', with no beginning, middle or end, was the coda, while Molly was the 'clou' of the book (*LI*, 170).

II.

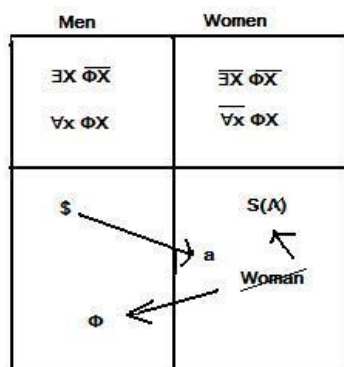


Figure 4

As extensively elaborated in Chapter One, Lacan's maxim of the non-existence of a sexual relation can be explored in various ways. To recall memory and facilitate the ensuing discussion, I offer a brief summary as follows, which might itself risk oversimplification owing to the limited space available to me at this juncture. To put it succinctly, it can mean at least the disjunction between a man and a woman with regard to the Real of sexual difference, with regard to the structural void as the upper part of the chart of sexuation indicates (XX, 78, Figure 4). It also designates the disparate ways of approaching and organising *jouissance* between those who take the feminine and masculine positions as the below part of the formula of sexuation shows (XX, 78, Figure 4). The masculine logic is deployed through the dialectic between totality and exception. That there exists at least one figure that is not subjected to the phallic function sets the limit of completeness, constituting a universe, a totality of a set of men who are subjected to the phallic function. On the side of the feminine

logic, that there is no figure existent without submitting to the phallic function lifts the boundary setting and renders the set of women not-all, pointing to the direction of infinity. The lower part of the formula of sexualisation (Figure 4) deals with the masculine and feminine subjects' relation to the Other, showing how he or she desires differently and organises his/her *jouissance* respectively. While those who suppose the masculine position are related to the Other via *objet a* through the formula of fantasy $\$ \leftrightarrow a$, the feminine subjects are 'twice' coupled through the Other via the phallus and 'tripled' via S(the barred A), the signifier of the lack of the Other.⁵²¹ To put it otherwise, 'the feminine subject's "other" relation to the Other correlates with a *jouissance* "beyond" the phallus, a *jouissance* that belongs to that part of the Other that is not covered by the fantasy of the "One"—that is, the fantasy sustained by the positing of the phallic exception.'⁵²²

I will pursue Joyce's writing of *sinthomatic* eroticism in the direction of Lacan's further reflection on the non-existence of the sexual relation, which is encapsulated in another of Lacan's famous proverb, namely, 'There is such a thing as One (*Y a d'l'UN*)' (Lacan, 5). As Fink and Žižek point out, *Y a d'l'UN* and *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* must be juxtaposed.⁵²³ Harari interprets Lacan's formulation of 'there

⁵²¹ Bernard, p. 172.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁵²³ Fink's note 19 in his translation of *Seminar XX*, p. 5. Žižek's explanation appears in *Less Than Nothing*, p. 57.

is One' as 'an intransitive psychical constellation,' which means that 'the One is all alone,' not in the sense that it would be 'a subjective or empirical solitude', but 'One as a psychical formation broken off from the Other.'⁵²⁴ Moreover, 'One' does not signal some 'mythical encompassing One,' but the One as 'a "sinthome," a kind of "atom of enjoyment," the minimal synthesis of language and enjoyment, a unit of signs permeated with enjoyment (like a tic we compulsively repeat)' (*LN*, 58).

In alignment with the aphorism, 'there is no sexual relation' (*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*), in *Seminar XXIII*, Lacan continues to hold firmly that there is no equivalence between a man and a woman with regard to his/her partner-*sinthome* owing to the structural asymmetry between the positions of woman and man and the imbalance between two sexes with regard to the libidinal mechanism mediated by the phallic signifiers and intercepted by the mechanism of fantasy. However, this imbalance needs to be recast in Lacan's new conception of the sexual relation through the conceptualization of *sinthome*. A key passage in *Seminar XXIII* deserves full quotation and careful unpacking, for I consider it to lay the ground for what I have termed as the *sinthomatic* eroticism:

It is in the measure that there is a *sinthome* that there is no sexual equivalence, namely, that there is a relationship. In fact, if the non-relationship stems from equivalence, it is in the measure that there is no equivalence that the relationship is structured. There is then at once sexual relationship and non-relationship. *Insofar as there is sinthome, there is relationship*. That is to say, *it is from the sinthome that the*

⁵²⁴ Harari, pp. 224-5.

other sex is supported [...] If a woman is *sinthome* for every man, it is quite clear that there is a need to find another name for what is involved in the case of a man for a woman; since iprecisely the *sinthome* is characterized by non-equivalence. One may say that man is for a woman anything you please-- an affliction, worse than a *sinthome*. You may well articulate it as you please, a devastation even. But, if there is no equivalence, you are forced to specify what is involved in the *sinthome*. (XXIII, 101, my emphasis)⁵²⁵

The basic tenets of Lacan's position at this moment can be interpreted as follows.

First, there is sexual relation only if there is *sinthome*, and the *sinthome* creates not merely a new subject but also the Other sex. It has been a fundamental thesis of Lacan's return to Freud that Lacan rewrites the Oedipal scenario with the functioning of the Name of the Father as a paternal metaphor. The Name of the Father designates the Desire of the Mother. Metaphorisation is necessarily involved with substitution, allowing 'the emergence [...] of the signified for the subject,' indicating a 'creation of meaning.'⁵²⁶ In Lacan's opinion, Joyce has disinvested from the Unconscious, which means that he can dispense with the Name of the Father on condition that he knows how to invent his own. Harari interprets this insight as an

⁵²⁵ The original French text goes as follows: 'Dans la mesure où il y a *sinthome*, il n'y pas équivalence sexuelle, c'est-à-dire il y rapport. En effet, si le non-rapport relève de l'équivalence, c'est dans la mesure où il n'y a pas équivalence que se structure le rapport. Il y a donc à la fois rapport sexuel et il n'y a pas rapport. Là où il y rapport, c'est dans la mesure où il y a *sinthome*, c'est-à-dire où l'autre sexe est supporté du *sinthome* [...] Si une femme est un *sinthome* pour tout homme, il est tout à fait clair qu'il y a besoin de trouver un autre nom pour ce qu'il en est de l'homme pour une femme, puisque le *sinthome* se caractérise justement de la non-équivalence. On peut dire que l'homme est pour une femme tout ce qui vous plaira, à savoir une affliction pire qu'un *sinthome*. Vous pouvez bien l'articuler comme il vous convient. C'est un ravage, même. S'il n'y a pas d' équivalence, vous êtes forcés de spécifier ce qu'il en est du *sinthome*.' I follow Cormac Gallagher's translation with slight modification.

⁵²⁶ Harari, p. 239-40. It is well known that Lacan gives a pseudo-mathematical formulation of metaphorisation as follows: $NF/DM \times DM/X \rightarrow NF/Signified$ to Subject. NF stands for the Name of the Father; DM stands for the Desire of the Mother. Once as numerator and once as denominator, the Desire of the Mother is reduced and hence leads to the Name of the Father's capability to provoke a certain X as the signified. This is one of the basic linguistic operations whereby meaning is produced thorough metaphorisation/substitution.

invention of an ‘unconditioned’ Name of the Father through the mechanism of suppletion. It is a Name of the Father ‘unconditioned’ by the Desire of the Mother.⁵²⁷ I take it to mean that the Name of the Father is dislodged from the attempt for a substitution of the Desire of the Mother. Instead, the newly invented names are designed to name the void and nothing more, which is the establishment of the fourth ring as a suppletion to bind together the three registers of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary in Lacan’s later topological thinking. What Lacan finds in Joyce’s suppletion through the *sinthome* is a dislodging of the normative and nominative function of the Name of the Father.⁵²⁸ As Lacan summarises this point succinctly, ‘[t]he father—as a name and he who names—is not the same thing. The father is that fourth element [...] without which nothing is possible in the knot of the symbolic, the imaginery and the real’ (*XXIII*, 167).⁵²⁹ In this light, without the support of the traditional regulation of sexual difference mediated by the authority of the Name of the Father, how would the non-rapport of sexual relation be (re)instituted or negotiated privately by the involved parties? This is precisely Joyce’s question, which he answers by his *sinthome*, exploring his existential and ethical questions by his experiment and construction with the woman in his life. Together with this

⁵²⁷ Ibid., p. 239.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., p. 237.

⁵²⁹ The French text is as follows: Le père comme nom et comme celui qui nomme, ce n’est pas pareil. Le père est cet élément quart [...] cet élément quart sans lequel rien n’est possible dans le nœud du symbolique, de l’imaginaire et du réel.’

experiment is his investigation and representation of manhood, femininity, women's images, women's sexuality, and so on. This is why, although 'Penelope' does not contribute further to the development of plot, it is indispensable for the inter-*sinthomatic* eroticism under construction in *Ulysses*.

To put it more precisely, in Verhaeghe and Declercq's terms, *sinthome* has 'creative effects': 'the jouissance of one's own drives creates the "Other gender."' ⁵³⁰

In my opinion, this conceptualisation of partner-*sinthome*, or *sinthomic*-partner, marks out *both the ethical merit and limit of sinthome*. The self-invented *sinthome* deserves the credit for maintaining the recognition of the non-existence of the Other and for authoring one's own sexual rapport by way of the creative *savoir-faire* of one's *jouissance*. Verhaeghe and Declercq explain this point as follows: 'this [sexual] Other is a fiction, but it is a fiction that does not turn the subject into a dupe because he has created by himself, based on his particular way of jouissance, [in which] a particular signifier [...] knots the three registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary into a particular sexual rapport.' ⁵³¹

However, assessed from the viewpoint of intersubjectivity, this could also signify that 'there is both sexual relation and non-relation.' ⁵³² The question or paradox of the potential non-relation or 'non-reciprocity' in the newly conceptualised *sinthome* as

⁵³⁰ Verhaeghe and Declercq, p. 74.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵³² Harari, p. 207.

sexual rapport calls for further elucidation, to which I will return later. For the time being, the non-reciprocity can be understood to be directly derived from the sexual non-equivalence. The lack of equivalence of sexual positions necessarily entails *the lack of interchangeability* between a man and a woman with respect to the *sinthomatic* sexual relation. Although Lacan is comfortable in asserting that, for every man, his woman can function as his *sinthome*, the asymmetry of sexual positions and libidinal organisation as outlined in the formula of sexuation leads Lacan to coin feminine *jouissance* in different terms such as ‘ravage’ or ‘devastation’ rather than her man as her *sinthome*.⁵³³ Nevertheless, as Harari traces the development of Lacan’s thinking, it is evident that Lacan soon altered his position. While presenting a talk on July 9, 1978, Lacan demonstrates a clear discrepancy: ‘So much so that I consider you all out there, insofar as you are, you have every Jack as *sinthome* his Jill. There is a he-*sinthome* and a she-*sinthome*.’⁵³⁴ On the basis of the structural non-existence of a sexual relation or the sexual non-relation, Lacan has proposed in the final stage of his career that *sinthome* is all that is left for sexual rapport. Moreover, this ‘repaired’ sexual relation should be ‘an *intersinthomic* relation;’ ‘in other words, each individual supports the “remaining,” bound sexual relation in accordance with one’s *sinthomic*

⁵³³ Ibid., p. 207.

⁵³⁴ Qtd in Harari, p. 209.

incarnates.⁵³⁵

Upon closer scrutiny, I would like to emphasise here, there is ambiguity in the above-mentioned '*intersinthomic*' sexual relations. On the most optimistic level, the *intersinthomic* sexual relation can signify that there is a corroboration of *sinthomatic* working between joint parties and hence an *intersinthomatic* relation points to the direction of an intersubjective relation at work, which is an operation deemed as a recognition of the subjectivity of the Other. However, it can also mean that despite the he-*sinthome* and the she-*sinthome* being equally feasible, the involved parties may indulge in constructing his/her own *sinthome*, living in/as his/her own *sinthome* in their *intersinthomic* sexual relations without truly recognising the subjectivity and ontology of the Other. In the following analysis of Joyce's case, an ethical evaluation of Joyce's particular *sinthome* will necessarily lead to an examination of whether or not *sinthome* allows room for the subjectivity of the Other.

III.

That we are able to evaluate Joyce's *sinthomatic* eroticism as a sexual relation through *Ulysses* is precisely because, as an artificer of his *jouissance*, his writing and

⁵³⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

sinthome-making are intrinsically connected. To grasp this insight properly, the writing of sexual relation in/by Joyce must be read in parallel to Joyce's writing as his *sinthome*. As I argued in the chapter on 'Scylla and Charybdis,' Joyce's construction of *sinthome* through writing does not follow the reflection/imitation model between life and work. Hence, the conflation between Joyce, real-life persons and main characters in Lacan's theorisation, which easily arouses qualms among critics, should not be taken as an expression of naïve intentional fallacy. Instead, as Lacan himself claims, he does not approach Joyce's work as a literary critic, but as a psychoanalyst, to see how at certain moments his literary endeavour corroborates his existential writing of *sinthome*.⁵³⁶ Looking awry at the relationship between life and work, it is arguable that Lacan unwittingly provides a new theory for literature, while devising an innovation in psychoanalytic theorisation on *sinthome* and the pluralisation of the Name(s) of the Father. My Lacanian reading is still a literary critical effort and certainly does not try to psychoanalyse Joyce through the text of *Ulysses* but to observe and explore 'Penelope' as part of his *sinthomatic* work and to evaluate the ethical limit and consequences from such a *sinthomatic* elaboration. In a similar vein, Parveen Adams points out that Joyce does not relate to Nora in the *Encore* model. That is, Joyce does not approach Nora in terms of fantasy by putting her in

⁵³⁶ Lacan says, 'Je ne suis pas un universitaire, contrairement à ce qu'on me donne du professeur, du maître, et autres badinages. Je suis un analyste' (XXIII, 163).

the position of object a.⁵³⁷ Instead, Joyce ‘repeats the problem in the real of his writing,’ ‘relat[ing] to Nora through his *écriture*,’ ‘lov[ing] Nora with his *sinthome*.’⁵³⁸ Lacan himself draws attention to the peculiar intimate relationship displayed in the Nora letters. Lacan marvels at the relationship between Joyce and Nora and names it ‘singular’ or ‘curious’:

The love letters of Nora, what do they indicate? [...] what is this relationship to Nora? Curious [singular] thing, I will say that it is a sexual relationship; even though I say that there are none such. But it is a funny sexual relationship [...] the fact is that the gloves that are at stake are not completely innocent; the inside-out glove is Nora. This is his way of considering that she fits him like a glove [...] For Joyce, there is only one woman. She is always based on the same model and he only puts her on like a glove with the most reluctance. It is only, this is tangible, by the greatest disparagement that he makes Nora into a chosen womn. Not alone must she fit him like a glove but she must squeeze him like a glove. She is absolutely useless. It even gets to the point that [...] every time a kid is born [...] it creates a drama, [because] it was not foreseen in the programme. (*XXIII*, 83-4)⁵³⁹

Nora is claimed by Lacan to be useless; nevertheless she sustains an essential function in Joyce’s construction of a curious, singular sexual relation with her. Adams interprets this enigmatic utterance by Lacan, remarking that Nora has the function of

⁵³⁷ Parveen Adams, ‘The Sexual Relation in James Joyce and in Cronenberg’s *Crash*’, *Psychoanalytic Notebooks*, 13(2005), 131-45 at p. 137.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139-40.

⁵³⁹ The original text goes as follows: ‘Les lettres d’amour à Nora, que nons indiquent-elles? [...] Qu’est-ce que c’est donc que ce rapport de Joyce à Nora ? Chose singulière, je dirai que c’est un rapport sexuel, encore que je dise qu’il n’y en ait pas. Mais c’est un drôle de rapport sexuel [...] les gants dont il s’agit ne sont pas complètement innocents. Le gant retourné, c’est Nora. C’est sa façon à lui de considérer qu’elle lui va comme un gant [...] Pour Joyce, il n’y a qu’une femme. Elle est toujours sur le même modèle, et il ne ‘s’en gante qu’avec la plus vive des répugnances. Il est sensible que ce n’est que par la plus grande des dépréciations qu’il fait de Nora une femme élue. Non seulement il faut qu’elle lui aille comme un gant, mais il faut qu’elle le serra comme un gant. Elle ne sert absolument à rien. C’est tout à fait net dans leurs relations, au point que [...] chaque fois que se raboule une gosse [...] ça fait une drame, c’était pas prévu dans le programme.’ I follow Cormac Gallagher’s translation with slight modification.

‘binding the other three rings together, pointing out that Nora “kept him together.”’⁵⁴⁰

However, that Nora is Joyce’s *sinthome* does not mean that ‘because he has Nora that there is the ring of *sinthome*,’ ‘rather it is the other way round;’ ‘[i]t is through his *écriture* that he can have Nora.’⁵⁴¹ In this regard, Joyce does not endow his relation with Nora with the *sinthome* as predicate; instead, the *sinthomatic* eroticism is his writing of the sexual relation. As Adams puts it, ‘Nora is the fourth ring of *sinthome* that ties the other three rings together and thus that Nora “kept him together.”’⁵⁴²

The soliloquy of ‘Penelope’ bears remarkable resemblances to Nora’s style of letter writing.⁵⁴³ Brenda Maddox, in her *Nora: The Real Life of Molly Bloom*, carefully examines the similarities and discrepancies between the fictional character and the real-life figure.⁵⁴⁴ That the parallel or correlation between the textual analysis and biographical facts has long drawn strong interest in Joyce scholarship seems to prove that Lacan’s insight into the intricate relationship between literary writing and ontological construction stands soundly.

In her comments on Joyce’s ‘performativity’ derived from the Nora letters, Van

⁵⁴⁰ Adams, p. 140.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵⁴⁴ As Maddox points out, Joyce never said that Nora is Molly Bloom, and the birthplace and physical figures are not quite the same between Nora and Molly. Joyce also derives the features of Molly from other females in his life. For instance, the dark hair comes from Amalia Popper, his Trieste pupil and the famous ‘Yes’ is derived from Nora’s friend Lilian Wallace. In the meantime, Nora is present in female characters other than Molly, such as Bella Cohen, Anna Livia Plurabelle, and so on. *Nora: The Real Life of Molly Bloom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), p. 198-210.

Boheeman-Saaf gives an illustration of how the writings of *sinthomatic* eroticism work. The topological knotting of subjectivity and literary working are interwoven, and the *jouissance* of writing and the writing of *jouissance* are correlative in Joyce's experimentation of sexual relation. It has been acknowledged that Nora contributes 'not only to the style, but also the substance' of the writing of 'Penelope.'⁵⁴⁵ The correspondence between literary masochism and real-life masochism can be traced in *Ulysses* and the obscene letters.⁵⁴⁶ Reviewing the correspondences between Joyce and Nora in December, 1909, Van Boheeman-Saaf argues that these letters mark an 'event,' a juncture of 'an irreversible change' in Joyce's life and work.⁵⁴⁷ The link between the 'new, intersubjective experience' and 'the act of writing to the drive' inaugurates 'a significant event in Joyce's aesthetic development,' by which Joyce's fiction moves 'away from *mimesis* to an ever more performative and rhythmic style.'⁵⁴⁸ Van Boheeman-Saaf observes in these letters sources not only for the dialectic of the virgin-whore, which is generally accepted as a feature of Stephen's

⁵⁴⁵ Maddox, p. 104.

⁵⁴⁶ See Frances L. Restuccia, *Joyce and the Law of the Father*. Restuccia traces the correspondences between perversion in real life and literature, pointing out the parallel perverse practice of drawer, glove and fur fetishism, flagellation in sexual practices, and so on. For instance, following in Severin's footsteps, Joyce attempted to transform Nora into a Venus in Furs. Joyce hopes to bring Nora 'a splendid set of sable furs, cap, stole, and muff' (*SL*, 172), 'a grey squirrel cap with violets at the side and a long broad flat stole of grey squirrel and a beige granny muff of the same on a steel chain, both lined with violet satin' (*SL*, 176). In 'Circe', fetishism and flagellation are vividly transplanted from literature and real-life masochism. 'The Venus in Furs figure multiplies. Bloom has craved and hence undergone degrading cruelty at the hands of various "phallic women": Mrs Yelverton Barry, Mrs. Bellingham, Mrs. Mervyn Talboys, Circe or Bella/Bello, and Molly among others', Restuccia, p. 133. In the case of Joyce, the writings he reads, writes and practices are intimately connected.

⁵⁴⁷ Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf, 'The Nora Letters as a Source of Joyce's Performativity', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 45.3-4 (2008), 469-479 at p. 469.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 469.

attitude toward women, but also for a style characterised by the dichotomy between ‘the intensely lyrical and the brutally direct, the aestheticizing and the obscene,’ by ‘the alternation, oscillation, or modulation between contrary moods, two polarized registers of imagery, between lyricism and naturalism, idealization and objectification.’⁵⁴⁹ Tracing the development of Joyce’s letter-writings and literary oeuvre, Van Boheeman-Saaf not only detects the metamorphosis of the style of the love-lust letter into the performativity of hallmark features in his literary work but also shows how Joyce begins to launch erotic experimentation with Nora and seeks ‘full control of the writerly scenario’⁵⁵⁰ by instructing Nora to ‘write to me letters even madder and dirtier than mine to you’ (*SL*, 189). The performative characteristic should be highlighted for these letters are not representations of sexual desire but an exploration and construction of *sinthomatic* eroticism. As Van Boheeman-Saaf puts it,

This is not writing as the act of exchanging information, nor is it a simple supplement to the absence of the physical presence of the other. It is writing that grows increasingly performative, circular, and addressed to the self, breaking through the oppositional framework of inside-outside, sender-receiver that supports traditional thought. As an exploration of the nature and limits of the bond that ties Joyce to Nora, the letters proved transformative because they let him discover a style of writing that is always addressed both to an Other as well as to the self, while driven by the oscillating pulsation of the drive.⁵⁵¹

The letters can be viewed as Joyce’s way of littering his *jouissance* through letters.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 472.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 476.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., p. 477.

In this light, these letters are both ‘performative’ and ‘transformative’ in that writing filters and reshapes drive, sexuality, and subjectivity. Arguably, this can be taken to exemplify how life and work intermingle and to show how *sinthomatic* eroticism is constructed through writing and how writing is Joyce’s *sinthome*.

How would the lack of sexual relation be felt and dealt with and what specific form would the *intersinthomatic* relation manifest in Joyce’s text? The *sinthomatic* eroticism may take various forms but, most obviously, it centres on the issue of in/fidelity.⁵⁵² Lacan suggests that *Exiles* exemplifies the in/fidelity complex in Joycean *sinthomatic* eroticism. He puts it as follows:

⁵⁵² Of course, the scope and complexity of Joyce’s *sinthomatic* eroticism far exceed the issue of infidelity and venture into the representation of women’s image, women’s sexuality, the construction of the body, and so on, as the large bulk of Joyce criticism has revealed. In the initial project of this chapter, I intended to include in the ethical evaluation of Joyce’s *sinthomatic* eroticism an investigation of how Joyce’s representations of these issues in ‘Penelope’ are distinct from the representations in the established patriarchal culture, and on how modernism negotiates for a future other than convention. A large amount of criticism on ‘Penelope’ can be taken to show how individualised *sinthome* has provoked collective reflection and evaluation on how reactionary and progressive Joyce’s peculiar construction of eroticism is. For instance, earlier criticism devotes abundant energy to discussing the symbolic and realistic representation of Molly and attempts to evaluate how progressive or reactionary Joyce’s representation of women is as exemplified in Molly Bloom. The list is long. For a summary of this division of reception of Molly, see Bonnie Scott’s *Joyce and Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984) and Mark Schechner’s *Joyce in Nighttown*, p. 197. The archetypal or symbolic construction of ‘eternal feminine’ certainly draws sources from culture. Despite diverse critical evaluation, I take it as a rather conventional representation for it reflects nothing but the collective fantasy and shows the limits of Joyce’s *sinthomatic* eroticism. The critical tendency of analysing a realistic Molly is suggestive less of Joyce’s utter incapability of offering a realistic portrait in his female characterisations than of his dramatisation of women characters being reflected in deep-seated stereotypes or symbolism stored in the treasury of culture. It exposes that realistic representation does not necessarily catch the so-called authentic reality but is entangled with the conventional discursive network. For instance, see Elaine Unkeless, ‘The Conventional Molly Bloom’, *Women in Joyce* (Chicago: U of Illinois Press, 1982), pp. 150-68. More recent criticism draws inspiration from cultural criticism or contemporary theories to investigate how Molly’s self is determined by the reproduction, negotiation, partial success and resistance toward the dominant discourses of gender, class, patriarchy, colonialism, and consumption of her time. See Richard Pearce (ed), *Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on ‘Penelope’ and Cultural Studies* (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin Press, 1994). Critics well versed in Derrida, Deleuze and others explore how the construction of the body in ‘Penelope’ illustrates modernism’s exploration of bodily representations. See Richard Brown (ed.), *Joyce, ‘Penelope’ and the Body* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006).

Exiles is truly an approach to something of the symptom. The central symptom, for sure, is constituted by the deficiency proper to the sexual relationship [...] Non-relation means that there is no reason why he should take a woman, among others, to be his. A woman among others is also one who has a relation with any other man whatsoever. And it is indeed this any other man whatsoever that is at stake in the character that he imagines [...] and the one woman in question, who is none other than Nora. (XXIII, 70)⁵⁵³

Cuckoldry has been a recurrent motif in Joyce's oeuvre. The repetition itself can be viewed as Joyce's attempt to accommodate his fundamental question of sexuality afresh in new styles and new storytelling to render it less traumatic, more bearable. Comparing the two versions of cuckoldry in *Exiles* and 'Circe', Henke states, '[t]he seriously embattled scenario of *Exiles* is here replayed as *Commedia del'Arte*.'⁵⁵⁴

The sexual non-relation points to the matter that 'there is no science of love, no formula of it'⁵⁵⁵ and that although there are 'biological bodies of different genders, and signifiers related to sex: man and woman, father and mother,' and signifiers of 'sexual ideals, such as "virgin," "whore," "wife," and so on,' '[n]one of these inscribes the object which would annul the sexual lack,' or 'compensate for the hole' in structure.⁵⁵⁶ Moreover, '[g]iven that the appropriate partner for jouissance is lacking, a symptom puts in place something else, a substitute, an element proper to

⁵⁵³ The original text is as follows: '*Exiles*, c'est vraiment l'approche de quelque chose qui est pour lui le symptôme. Le symptôme central, bien entendu, c'est le symptôme fait de la carence propre au rapport sexuel [...] Le non-rapport, c'est qu'il n'y a vraiment aucune raison pour que, une-femme-entre-autres, il la tienne pour sa femme. Une-femme-centre-autres, c'est aussi bien celle qui a rapport à n'importe quel autre homme. Et c'est bien de ce n'importe quel autre homme qu'il s'agit dans le personnage qu'il imagine, et pour lequel, à cette date de sa vie, il sait ouvrir le choix de l'une-femme en question, qui n'est autre que Nora.' I follow Cormac Gallagher's translation.

⁵⁵⁴ Henke, p. 118.

⁵⁵⁵ Copjec, 'Gia Savoir Sera', p. 122.

⁵⁵⁶ Colette Soler, 'Literature as Symptom', qtd in Ellie Ragland-Sullivan and Mark Bracher (eds) *Lacan and the Subject of Language* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 216.

incarnate jouissance.⁵⁵⁷ There is no sexual relation; however, there is the writing of *sinthomatic* eroticism as a substitute ‘to incarnate jouissance,’ as a newly-invented, individualised *sinthome*-partner. The central question of the lack of sexual relation is encapsulated in a staging of a possible adultery between Bertha (wife) and Robert (friend) when Richard (husband) deliberately puts Robert in front of his wife to ask his wife to free herself for possible adultery. Ragland-Sullivan is accurate in arguing that ‘Richard sees the sexual relations in the realm of the Real, not the Symbolic,’ for *Exiles* ‘is a paradox concerning a would-be adultery to be committed by a woman who is not married to her husband in the Symbolic (legally, so to speak).’⁵⁵⁸ I take it to mean that Ragland-Sullivan finds that, technically or legally, there is no obligation of fidelity and therefore no question of adultery between an (un)lawful husband and wife. In this regard, Joyce, in *Exiles*, does not tackle a Symbolic fiction of marriage and adultery, but a sexual relation in the Real level, at the level of *jouissance*. It follows that ‘the problematic at issue here not only concerns the mere restrictiveness of social norms but also a genuine confusion on the character’s part’ about sexual difference, ‘about a question that would not trouble a normative person, like Robert, for whom a man is a man, a woman is a woman.’⁵⁵⁹ That is to say, Richard aims to

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 216.

⁵⁵⁸ Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, ‘Psychosis Adumbrated: Lacan and Sublimation of the Sexual Drive in Joyce’s “Exiles”’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 29.1 (1991), 47-62 at p. 56.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 57.

explore a woman's relation to sex and love and how it might differ from a man's, and investigate issues such as the role a woman's adultery would play in affecting a relationship, and so on. Joyce's manoeuvre in *Exiles* is less a social critique advocating free love than a writing of *sinthomatic* eroticism, an attempt at prescribing a script for a possible adultery, a *sinthomatic* dramatisation of infidelity, to render the lack of harmonious sexual relation less disruptive, less traumatic, and less unpredictable. By devising a contrived scenario of adultery, Joyce creates a play of infidelity that turns a possibility into an imagined reality, even necessity and duty to betray. With an artistic sleight of hand, Joyce attempts to confront the anxiety over the partner's freedom to choose love objects by turning this possible condition for infidelity into a command for adultery.

In 'Scylla and Charybdis,' Stephen's private theory of Shakespeare, as John Eglinton mocks, has been deployed as 'a French triangle' (*U*, 9.1065). Stephen's theory is centred on the notion of paternity as 'a legal fiction' (*U*, 9.84), built 'upon the void,' '[u]pon incertitude, upon unlikelihood' (*U*, 9.842). Recognising the fictional status of the Father's name, Stephen's theory gestures toward self-naming in the direction of positing a singular universal: 'he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson' (*U*, 9.868-9). The specific form of the singular universal that Stephen develops in his

Shakespeare theory is a peculiar writing concerning the issue of (the non-existence) of sexual relation. Stephen contrives an idiosyncratic theory of Shakespeare by drawing sources from biographical episodes and detecting the parallel themes in literary texts, arguing that ‘the theme of the false or the usurping or the adulterous brother or all three in one is to Shakespeare [...] always with him’ (*U*, 9.997-9). These motifs resonate throughout Shakespeare’s life in the adultery of his wife Anne Hathaway and his daughter Susanna, and in his works, including *The Tempest*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline*, and so on. Simply put, Stephen sees that Shakespeare creates a world, exemplified in *Othello*, in which ‘he is bawd and cuckold. He acts and is acted on. Lover of an ideal or a perversion, like José he kills the real Carmen. His unremitting intellect is the hornmad Iago ceaselessly willing that the moor in him shall suffer’ (*U*, 9.1021-4).

As Christine Froula rightly points out, Stephen is ‘[h]ardly the disinterested literary biographer.’⁵⁶⁰ Through this peculiar theory of Shakespeare, ‘in a strategy that combines self-legitimation with cultural analysis, Joyce projects upon Shakespeare a daring explosion of *Ulysses*, elucidating in his poems and plays the sexual dialectic that shapes *Ulysses*’ artistic economy.’⁵⁶¹ The sexual dialectic is that between the ‘immateriality’ or ‘insubstantiality’ of paternity posited in masculine

⁵⁶⁰ Christine Froula, *Modernism’s Body: Sex, Culture and Joyce* (New York: Columbia UP, 1996), p. 107.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

culture ‘as an intrinsic wound/void/loss’ and the masculine cultural imagination that ‘casts all women as *potential* “whore” by virtue of their material connection to children’ and the suspicion of potential infidelity.⁵⁶² In this vein, Froula discloses that, in the face of the non-existence of sexual relation and the potential inadequacy of naming by the paternal authority, masculine culture has rendered fathers as potential cuckolds and mothers as possible whores.⁵⁶³ Following this line of reasoning, the term ‘whore’ is less about prostitution than about adultery since whore is paired with cuckold. Froula further points out that Joycean artists, including Shakespeare, Richard, Stephen, and, of course, Joyce himself, desire this ‘wound,’ ‘actively court a wound,’ which is ‘inflicted by an adulterous woman,’ scheming to ‘dramatize’ wound by way of ‘contrivance.’⁵⁶⁴ Hence, the melodrama of infidelity of Richard/Bertha/Robert repeats in *Ulysses* as that of Bloom/Molly/Boylan. As Froula discloses, ‘[t]he triangle that appears to thwart his desire in reality serves it, providing both the “wound” he needs to write and a model of the world of sexual betrayals he incorporates and gives birth to by writing.’⁵⁶⁵ Seen in this light, ‘[r]ather than love, the Joycean artists sacrifice the real lover to an imaginary one,’ ‘empty[ing] out the historical world and incorporate[ing] it within,’ ‘turn[ing] his wound into mock

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 108-110, original emphasis.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

self-tormenting psychodrama to fuel an art that aspires to contain the entire world in it.⁵⁶⁶ The symptom manifested in these texts is a self-willing suffering, a writing of *sinthomatic* eroticism. Although Joyce does not follow the mechanism of fantasy that Lacan elaborated in the *Encore* seminar, in his writings of sexual relation, his version of *sinthomatic* eroticism displays a similar self-serving quality evident in the operation of sexual desire and fantasy. This reading should throw light on the nature and the necessity of a female countersign to ‘Bloom’s passport to eternity.’ If, in ‘Circe,’ Bloom enacts his cuckoldry fantasy, in ‘Penelope,’ Molly is designed to stage her own version of whoredom as adulterous wife to complete the Joycean sexual script of *sinthomatic* eroticism, in which a curious marriage and an odd sexual relation is manufactured and sustained despite the staging of adultery.

Molly is clearly aware of the position she has been put into by her husband’s clandestine desire and practical design when she says, ‘can you feel him trying to make a whore of me what he never will’ (*U*, 18.96-7). She is proud of her knowledge of the perverse desires and idiosyncratic preferences of her husband when she boasts, ‘what a madman nobody understands his cracked ideas but me’ (*U*, 18.1406-7). The cuckold/whore fantasy certainly is prominent in the peculiarity of their marriage. Molly is aware that the affair with Boylan is not merely a product of her

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

own pursuit of desire and sexual gratification, and that Bloom clandestinely plays a role in this adultery script, which in turn serves Bloom's own desire mechanism. Bloom has helped to facilitate Molly's affair with Boylan; Molly suspects that this is the reason why Milly was sent away to study photography: 'all the same on account of me and Boylan thats why he did it Im certain the way he plots and plans everything out' (*U*, 18.1007-9). Molly also surmises that her adultery with Boylan functions to fulfil the scenario of Bloom's fantasy of having an affair with a married woman which he dares not commit: 'no hed never have the courage with a married woman thats why he wants me and Boylan' (*U*, 18.1253-4). This melodrama of adultery serves Bloom's desire as Molly notices: 'I suppose it was meeting Josie Powell and the funeral and thinking about me and Boylan set him off well he can think what he likes now if thatll do him any good' (*U*, 18.168-71).

Joyce's ambition for a peculiar *sinthomatic* eroticism intrudes into the private recess of his modern Penelope's fantasies. Instead of suppressing female desire and lust outside marriage by presenting a virgin/wife image that serves the dominant patriarchy, Joyce's endeavour is to imagine and to accommodate possible scenarios of female fantasy and desires in Molly's sexual relations with other men. This endeavour marks both the ethical merits and limits of Joyce's *sinthomatic* enterprise in 'Penelope.' If the moral codes of ancient Greek patriarchy necessarily require the

impeccable chastity and impervious fidelity of the wife, any potential female deviation can only be repressed into denied fantasies or violently suppressed in reality by the slaughters in Homer's version. In stark contrast, Joyce's modern rendition allows room for female desire even in the form of adultery and makes it culturally imaginable and representable. In this regard, Joyce at least should enjoy the praise that *Ulysses* problematises the issue of infidelity. By way of making a cuckold the mock-hero of his modern epic, Joyce attempts to 'subjectify' what normally is reduced to a derided, degenerated object and endows a cuckold with the status of hero in novelistic endeavour. As Janina Levin points out, Joyce 'sees the most potential in the cuckold's marginality and tries to establish it as a viable subject-position.'⁵⁶⁷ Michael Mason provides a similar observation, claiming that cuckoldry and heroism are not incompatible in the eyes of Joyce and that Joyce creates a new type of hero in European Literature.⁵⁶⁸ The subject-position of Bloom's version of cuckoldry is further problematised by Joyce when ostensible masochism is involved. Bloom is hardly a 'suffering martyr' for 'if he tolerates his wife's infidelity, he also enjoys it; he even facilitates it by staying away from home.'⁵⁶⁹ '[T]he conflict' between the threat of indignity and the revelation of unconscious desire⁵⁷⁰ is evident in *Ulysses*, which

⁵⁶⁷ Janina Levin, *Modern Reinterpretations of the Cuckold*, p. 93.

⁵⁶⁸ Michael Mason, 'Why is Leopold Bloom a Cuckold?' *ELH* 44.1 (1977), p. 171-188.

⁵⁶⁹ Levin, p. 94.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

poses the question of the subject's responsibility at the level of libidinal economy. In a similar gesture, Joyce also attempts to 'subjectify' the wife/whore as the counterpart of the husband/cuckold. Despite the debate over Joyce's appropriation of a female voice, 'Penelope' apparently gives room for Molly, the modern Penelope, to invoke and select her own suitors within a limited scope, and endows her with the right to kill them in her own fantasies. By taking into consideration female subjectivity in terms of desires and fantasies, and by representing the libidinal economy that is operative both in the pair husband/cuckold and wife/whore, Joyce renders what had previously been severely stigmatised and repressed.

However, upon closer scrutiny, the merits of Joyce's representation of *sinthomatic* eroticism may appear limited and the celebration of the autonomy of female desires and female subjectivity may be seriously undermined. As will be demonstrated, this female countersign is rather problematic for Molly's desires, enjoyment, fantasies, and choices are socio-culturally and libidinal-economically conditioned. As Froula observes, Bloom's simultaneous presence and absence is encrypted in Molly's sexual fantasy of adulterous lust. For instance, 'I wish some man or other would take me sometime *when he is there* and kiss me in his arms' (*U*, 18.104-5, emphasis added). This fantasy is staged for the gaze to provoke the jealousy and desire of an estranged husband. In her wild sailor fantasy, Bloom is

paradoxically felt through his absence:

of course a woman wants to be embraced 20 times a day almost to make her look young no matter by who so long as to be in love or loved by somebody *if the fellow you want isnt there* sometimes by the Lord God I was thinking would I go around by the quays there some dark evening where nobodyd know me and pick up a sailor off the sea thatd be hot on for it and not care a spin whose I was only do it off up in a gate somewhere (*U*, 18.1407-1413, emphasis added).

This fantasy can be taken as direct evidence of Molly's lust-desire as a counterpart to her reflection just a few lines earlier on the male freedom for casual sex, which enjoys more tolerance in society and culture: 'they can pick and choose what they please a married woman or a fast widow or a girl for their different tastes like those houses around behind Irish street no but were to be always chained up theyre not going to be chaining me up no damn' (*U*, 18.1388-91). However, readers should not celebrate this wild fantasy as recognition of women's freedom for free love/sex and so on. As is apparent in the passage, Molly's boredom and desperation are vivid and she clearly longs for someone that she really wants but who is not there. Froula identifies this fellow to be Bloom, 'whose perverse passion, as she [Molly] well knows, she best stands to awaken by acting the whore;' Froula keeps on contending that '[i]ndeed this sailor fantasy would seem [...] to be of collaborative authorship: the "great Suggester Don Poldo" [i.e. Bloom] has, after all, exhibited her photograph provocatively to [other] sailor[s].'⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷¹ Froula, p. 174.

What is even more remarkable is that Bloom's interference with the adultery of his wife/whore takes into consideration the arrangement of a selective distraction for the post-adultery wife/whore. It is of course Stephen who is selected to fulfil this task. In the female countersign, the husband's selection successfully arouses Molly's interests, which are made obvious in her fantasy about playing a role in Stephen's life: 'I can tell him the Spanish and he tell me the Italian then hell see Im not so ignorant what a pity he didnt stay' (*U*, 18.1476). Molly also fantasises an affair with the would-be young poet: 'Ill make him feel all over him till he half faints under me then hell write about me lover and mistress publicly too with our 2 photographs in all the papers when he becomes famous O but then what am I going to do about him though' (*U*, 18.1363-7). Furthermore, the *sinthomatic* erotic script of cuckold/whore is carefully completed with an imagined procedure for reunion. In 'Penelope,' the adultery with Boylan is rendered much less threatening to their marriage when it seems to function as a backdrop for Molly to arouse the sexual interest of her husband again. Underneath Molly's 'wayward desire'⁵⁷² and sexual confidence lies her desperate attempt to win Bloom back sexually:

Ill just give him one more chance Ill get up early in the morning [...] Ill throw him up his eggs and tea [...] Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful out of that to make his micky stand for him Ill let him know if that's what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked to up to my neck nearly not by him 5or 6 times handrunning theres the mark of his spunk on the clean sheet

⁵⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

I wouldn't bother to even iron it out that ought to satisfy him [...] I've a mind to tell him every scrap and make him do it in front of me serve him right its all his own fault if I am an adulteress as the thing in the gallery said [...] Ill tell him I want to buy underclothes then if he gives me that well he wont be too bad [...] Ill let him do it off on my behind provided he doesnt smear all my all my good drawers [...] Ill wipe him off me just like a business his omission then Ill go out Ill have him eyeing up at the ceiling where is she gone now make him want me that's the only way (*U*, 18.1497-1540).

It is arguable that Molly remains a faithful wife while she busies herself with playing the whore for Bloom. I agree with Froula that 'her [Molly's] sexual life involves *not play but playacting* of a script shaped by her husband's desire.'⁵⁷³ For a woman who cannot even afford to buy underclothes by herself, and who schemes for her husband's favour through sex, what Molly does is 'neither free nor play but a highly determined (socioemotionally as well as socioeconomically) form of sexual labor.'⁵⁷⁴ Despite being 'a desiring subject,' Molly's 'social, economic, and emotional motives' drive her to conform to 'Bloom's perverse erotic script.'⁵⁷⁵ Henke also points out that Molly's sexual practice follows Edwardian sexual scripts.⁵⁷⁶ Unkeless has argued that Molly typifies the conventional image of women with confining concerns, physical narcissism, anti-intellectuality, passivity, the lack of ambition in career, and so on.⁵⁷⁷ The representation of Molly seems to be quite conventional both at the social and sexual levels, and the interrelation of the

⁵⁷³ Ibid., p. 176.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 177.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 177.

⁵⁷⁶ Henke, p. 138-49.

⁵⁷⁷ Unkeless, p. 150-68.

double constriction of the social and the sexual should not fail to strike the reader. While contemporary critics detect Molly's boredom, her despair as a lower-middle class wife with limited choices and her playacting of an imposed erotic script, it is unclear whether Joyce intends this description of Molly to be a socio-cultural criticism or if the portrayal is merely a peculiar eroticism that Joyce draws from culture and real-life experiences. In my opinion, it is certainly a highly idiosyncratic *sinthomatic* eroticism that Joyce attempts to forge through the female countersign. However individualised this representation of *sinthome* may appear, it still draws inspiration from the time and culture of the composer, and, to a large extent, it does *not* go very far from his culture. This seems to disclose one of the limits of Joyce's *sinthomatic* eroticism. There is ambiguity in this portrait of a modern Penelope. On the one hand, Molly's narrowness and pettiness may be taken as a social critique in which Joyce attempts to portray how women under such conditions might enjoy and negotiate their desires. On the other hand, Joyce seems to enjoy his *sinthomatic* eroticism through writing such women who fall prey to and collaborate with the confining social, economic, and emotional conditions. That is to say, Joyce comes near to the social symptoms while he constructs his *sinthomatic* eroticism.

Lacan famously titles *Seminar XXIII* as *Joyce le sinthome* to emphasise the

singularity of the being of Joyce. Joyce does not have his *sinthome* as a predicate or trait, Joyce *is* his *sinthome*; his *sinthome* is his signature, his name and being. Joyce *as* his *sinthome* is the product of his know-how to organise his *jouissance* in the face of the consequence of his unsubscription from the Unconscious, of his foreclosure of the Name of the Father. It is under such circumstances that the peculiar nature of his *sinthomatic* eroticism should be appreciated. That is, the *sinthomatic* eroticism should be differentiated from such neurotic symptoms as the return of the repressed anxiety and desires. Froula implicitly presupposes that Joyce still partakes in the authority of the Name of the Father despite Joyce's diagnosis of its hidden fear, fantasy, and enjoyments. That is why Froula finds Joyce dangerously close to the dominant patriarchy in the sexual dialectic of cuckold/whore and painstakingly attempts to draw the fine line to distance Joyce from conventional patriarchy. Froula calls Joyce's endeavour a 'cultural analysis,'⁵⁷⁸ arguing that 'Joyce devoted himself to a "modern" art of self-portraiture that required him to incorporate and dissect his culture in and as himself, and, in the Library, Stephen obliquely presents himself as cultivating what he diagnoses as the necessary "wound" of gender in order to create.'⁵⁷⁹ Froula's interpretation implies that Joyce still subscribes to the Name of the Father, falling into the categories of neurosis or perversion. She actually

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 188.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 192.

employs 'plot and perversity' as the title for her reading of *Ulysses*. However, she seems to hesitate to declare Joyce's belonging to the clinical structure of perversion as straightforwardly as Restuccia did in her book, *Joyce and the Law of the Father*. Despite my admiration for Froula's analysis, her attempt to save Joyce from his closeness to the cultural malady of the perverse sexual dialectic of cuckoldry/whoredom is a little far-fetched, and appears more like a critic's desperate gesture of saving the canonised work and an acclaimed master by projecting a position wiser than that which the artist really takes. Froula contends that, while Joyce 'dissects the fetishized opposition [of cuckold/whore] that underwrites his culture, he buys into the economy of [...] that same sexual dialectic.'⁵⁸⁰ However, the psychodrama Joyce produces 'puts the reader in the analyst's position'⁵⁸¹ for the cultural malady. Froula's criticism suggests that it is the reader/the critic who is to detect the cultural disease while the author comes too close to cultural malady. Strictly speaking, the sexual dialectic of cuckold/whore that Froula indicates is the underside fantasy of the Symbolic law, in which the potent Name of the Father ideally should be able to adequately name the Desire of the Mother. It is the underside, repressed fear of deficiency of this naming and symbolisation that gives rise to the cultural fantasies of infidelity, adultery, and so on. That this cultural underside

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p. 151.

fantasy is termed by Froula as the dialectic of cuckold/whore is of no small significance for it betrays moral judgement already. Cuckoldry implies humiliation in the sense of failing the task of assuming masculinity endowed by the authority of the Name of the Father, while whoredom denies female autonomy as desiring subjects and describes a deviation from the normative fidelity prescribed for women/wives. It is quite telling that there is no specific term to name the female counterpart who suffers the betrayal of her husband. The coupling of cuckold/whore is a by-product and underside repressed fantasy of patriarchy.

One of the key features of *sinthome* as an outcome of the foreclosure of the Name of the Father is that repression and the return of the repressed do not work. Joyce's unsubscription from the Unconscious leads him to maintain a peculiar relation to his *sinthome*. While symptoms such as the expression of the return of the repressed are unconscious formations produced by the mechanism of condensation and displacement, the *sinthome* as the outcome of the cancellation from the Unconscious remains unconscious to its author-subject.⁵⁸² Paraphrasing Lacan's ideas, Harari says, 'it [*sinthome*] cannot be situated in the unconscious, but the subject remains unconscious of it [...] a man of savoir-faire did not know that he was making the *sinthome*.'⁵⁸³ Moreover, in the practice of wordplay and nameplay as one of the

⁵⁸² Harari, p. 221.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

famous illustrations of Joyce's *sinthomatic* writing, Joyce constructs his *sinthome* by quasi-automatic writings, in which *jouissance* and signifiers penetrate each other, and enjoyment and meaning are intertwined. At this stage of his career, Lacan no longer conceives the Real and the corroboration of the Symbolic and the Imaginary in a dialectical way. Instead, in *sinthomatic* writing, in writing as *sinthome*, the Real and the Symbolic coalesce. To extend this insight on wordplay to a general conception of *sinthome*, this writing as direct working on *jouissance* is the process of constructing law and subjectivity. Law does not function with its excluded, repressed underside enjoyment. There is no repression and the return of the repressed. The intrinsic connection and concoction of law and enjoyment is *sinthomatic* working itself. In this light, there is no hidden secret to be unearthed and worked through. On the contrary, there is law, subjectivity, and sexual relation under construction in an individualised *sinthomatic* fabrication. Joyce *enjoys* through his writing for he is in the process of writing the script of his enjoyment, his sexual relation. He tries to symbolise the Real through the making of his *sinthomatic* eroticism. Moreover, just as the neurotic believes in his/her symptom and stakes his/her being, Lacan argues that, although Joyce does not know what he is doing with his *sinthome*, he believes it and lives with/in it. This leads to the fact that his enterprise of *sinthome* does not go

very far.⁵⁸⁴ This betrays another limit of Joyce's *sinthome*. Not merely does the *sinthomatic* eroticism not go very far from the repressed fantasy of the traditional patriarchy, the structural function of *sinthome* and Joyce's belief in it is not very far from the role played by neurotic symptoms. In commenting on what Joyce does in/with *Exiles*, Harari remarks that Joyce commits 'the act of imagining—and why not: desiring—that his wife Nora is betraying him;' '[i]t is as if he wishes to have a kind of absen[ce], but simultaneously knowing, witness.'⁵⁸⁵ By way of such a manoeuvre, 'Joyce's desire to decipher his own enigmas does not take him very far [...] because he believes in his *sinthome*; and due to this belief, he is not greatly interested in resolving the enigmas.'⁵⁸⁶

One of the consequences of this 'not very far' is the repetitious and constricting characteristic that can be detected in the specific version of Joyce's *sinthome*. In Adams's eyes, Joyce's writing of sexual relation through his *sinthome* does not constitute a truly *intersinthomatic* construction. There is no reciprocity in this *sinthomatic* eroticism. Instead, '[i]t is she alone who is tailored to fit.'⁵⁸⁷ As Adams has pointed out, the sexual relation between Nora and Joyce is '*de facto* not

⁵⁸⁴ As Lacan puts it, 'Il est évident que ça ne va pas loin' (XXIII, 69).

⁵⁸⁵ Harari, p. 135.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 135. This also marks a difference between Joyce and the normal neurotics. Although both believe in *sinthome* and symptoms, the neurotic searches for an answer from the Other as the authority for the meaning of the enigmatic troubling symptoms.

⁵⁸⁷ Adams, p. 140.

reciprocal.⁵⁸⁸ Adams even claims that it is the non-reciprocity of Joyce's *sinthome* in his relationship with Nora that once blinded Lacan to insist on the non-symmetry between man and woman in *sinthome* and to fail to conceive inter-*sinthome* for some time.⁵⁸⁹ In other words, the sexual relation is simply Joyce's *sinthome*, but not vice versa. The *sinthomatic* sexual relation that Joyce builds up with his wife makes him extremely dependent on Nora, but Nora maintains her own 'independent spirit.'⁵⁹⁰ While in the *sinthomatic* erotic script, Molly corroborates the cuckold/whore fantasy by committing adultery, Nora, in reality, complains and refuses it.⁵⁹¹ Joyce himself seems to be aware that his writing is after all his own partner-*sinthome* and that his partner may not share the same *sinthomatic* construction and find the imposition of his *sinthome* a prison house from which the female subjective desires to break free. In the female countersign, Joyce inserted a line to express Molly's protest: 'Oh Jamesy let me up out of this pooh sweets of sin' (*U*, 18.1128-9).

Nora's defiance and Molly's protest betray that, although *sinthomatic* working bears the ethical merits of establishing a sexual relation on the basis of the

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁸⁹ Adams says, 'But if the sexual relation is at the level of the real how indeed can we talk of men and women? How did Lacan fail to see this, given that he elucidated in respect to Joyce, his *sinthome* and Nora. Perhaps Lacan's blindness stems from the fact that the relation between Nora and Joyce is de facto not reciprocal. Empirically, it remains asymmetrical. That's what Lacan picks up on when he asks what the man could be for the woman but can't answer the question'. Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁹⁰ Maddox, p. 374. Maddox observes, 'Nora is not important because she belonged to Joyce, because in reality she never belonged to him. She was the stronger of the two, an independent spirit who had far greater influence on Joyce than he had on her.'

⁵⁹¹ Joyce once attempted to 'manipulate the disobligning historical Nora into becoming the nightmare-woman of his dreams, while she [...] complained to Frank Budgen, "Jim wants me to go with other men so that he will have something to write about."' Froula, p. 111.

inconsistency or non-existence of the Other, Joyce's version of *sinthome* risks being equally masturbatory and self-serving. Just like the functioning of fantasy in the normal neurotic case, Joyce's *sinthomatic* eroticism is also incapable of recognising the subjectivity of the Other, failing to establish a truly subject-to-subject relationship. As Véronique Voruz brilliantly puts it, 'cancelling one's subscription to the unconscious is not a sign of love;' 'if, following the example of Joyce, to reduce the symptom to its core articulation is the way to learn how to live without the Other, it is nonetheless only the starting point of knowing how to live with the other.'⁵⁹² Strictly speaking, Voruz proffers this insight in a different context other than the *sinthomatic* construction of sexual relation, but her perceptive viewpoint still applies to the non-reciprocal *sinthomatic* eroticism in Joyce. In discussing the wordplay, the incessant *sinthomatic* working as a *savoir-faire* of *jouissance* with *lalangue*, Lacan has come to realise the limitations of *sinthome* when he observes 'circularity' in the writing of *Finnegans Wake*, 'since already its last word can but attach itself to the first, the *the* on which it terminates, by agglutinating itself to the *riverrun* on which it returns' (XXIII, 168-9).⁵⁹³

The limitation of 'circularity' that Lacan identifies signals that Joyce's

⁵⁹² Véronique Voruz, 'Acephalic Litter as a Phallic Letter', in Luke Thurston (ed) *Re-Inventing the Symptom*, p. 128 and 132.

⁵⁹³ I follow Voruz's translation here, qtd in *ibid.*, p. 131. I quote the original French passage in full here as follows, 'comment le dire fini, puisque déjà son dernier mot ne peut se rejoindre qu'au premier, le *the* sur lequel il se termine se racolant au *riverrun* dont il se débute, ce qui indique le circulaire?'

sinthomatic writing, or better Joyce's writing as his *sinthome*, has become a self-engendering, self-propelling, self-serving writing machine, which serves the artist's existential purpose in an endless circular fashion. This perennial writing for seventeen years serves the artist's 'artificial narcissism,' which 'has alienated him to his reflection in the shimmering Other,' and Joyce is 'condemned to eternal self-identity.'⁵⁹⁴ The same solipsistic tendency is observable in Joyce's relation with women, as Lacan accurately detects,

[Joyce] knew very well that his relations with women were merely his own song. He tried to situate the human being in a way that has the sole merit of differing from what has been asserted about it previously. But in the end, all that, it's the same old story, it's the symptom. What I'm the most inclined to say, is that this is the human dimension proper. That's why I spoke of holy Joyce-the symptom [Joyce-le-sinthôme], like that in a single trait.⁵⁹⁵

The *sinthomatic* eroticism in terms of a cuckoldry/whore dialectic, which has been respectively named by Brivic and Froula, is clearly Joyce's symptom and not Nora's, who is secondarily enlisted to offer her countersign like Molly in *Ulysses*. Joyce's *sinthomatic* eroticism perpetuates 'eternal-identity.' Lacan had first been startled by Joyce's artifice of *sinthome* by way of his knowing how to do with *jouissance* without the support of the Other. This shares one of the basic tenets of the ethical act of psychoanalysis in terms of the recognition of the inconsistency of the Other. However, Lacan also gradually realises the ethical limitation of *sinthome* for it does

⁵⁹⁴ Voruz, p. 133.

⁵⁹⁵ Jacques Lacan, 'Geneva Lecture on the Symptom', qtd in Voruz, p. 133. I also follow Voruz's modified translation.

not constitute a true recognition of the Other (sex). What would be the ethical paradigm that can work to exceed the confinement of *sinthome* and gesture toward a true subject-to-subject relationship in psychoanalysis? The answer that psychoanalysis can offer is love.⁵⁹⁶ I will turn to the theorisation of love by Lacan and Badiou and explore an inherent tension between *sinthomatic* eroticism and love in Joyce in the ensuing section.

III.

It may seem out of the ordinary to make Lacan a theoretician of love, and not of the subject of desire. It is however from the angle of the innovations in thinking which deal with it, that his undertaking is an event and a condition for the renaissance of philosophy. I moreover know of no theory of love having been as profound as his since Plato's.

~ Alain Badiou, *Manifesto of Philosophy*, p. 82.

At the risk of oversimplification, the core essence of Lacan's *Encore* can be viewed as encapsulated in the two related aphorisms, 'there is no sexual relation' (*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*), and 'What makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love' (XX, 45). As demonstrated in the previous section, Joyce's *sinthomatic* eroticism comes close to a similar danger in the operation of desire and fantasy in that it risks being non-reciprocal and constricting, stifling the wide range of

⁵⁹⁶ Voruz comes to a similar insight when she argues for a move 'from the impasse of the symptom to love,' p. 132-5.

possibilities as well as the subjectivity of the Other. As Lacan perceptively puts it, although *sinthomatic* eroticism excels in forging the knowledge of the partner, ‘[t]o know what your partner will do is not a proof of love’ (XX, 146). If the compensation that Lacan aims at is not the illusory imaginary love of union or fusion as a covering up of the non-existence of sexual relation, then how would a genuine love appear? As I proposed in the opening chapter, my intention in this thesis is to foreground the ethical space of love. Situated at the impossibility of the sexual relationship, a genuine love worthy of its name must emerge from this negativity of the Real impasse as something positive and affirmative, while simultaneously transcending the representation of the Imaginary/Symbolic coordinates. That is to say, a genuine love must be a Real act and an intersubjective relationship. Lacan himself gestures toward this line of reasoning.

Before I further my reading of Joyce’s endeavour in the direction of the tension between love and *sinthomic* eroticism, I would like to evoke again Lacan’s definitions of contingency (‘to stop not being written,’ ‘*cesse de ne pas s’écrire*’), necessity (‘it doesn’t stop being written,’ ‘*ne cesse pas de s’écrire*’), and impossibility (‘it doesn’t stop not being written,’ ‘*ne cesse pas de ne pas s’écrire*’) (XX, 94). The complexity of the idea merits long quotation:

I incarnated contingency in the expression ‘stops not being written.’ For here there is nothing but encounter [...] it is owing only to the affect that results from this gap

that something is encountered [...] which momentarily gives the illusion that the sexual relationship stops not being written [...] The displacement of the negation from the 'stop not being written' to 'doesn't stop being written,' in other words, from contingency to necessity—there lies the point of suspension to which all love is attached. All love, subsisting only on the basis of the 'stops not being written,' tends to make the negation shift to the 'doesn't stop being written,' doesn't stop, won't stop. Such is the substitute that—by the path of existence, not of the sexual relationship, but of the unconscious, which differs therefrom—constitutes the destiny as well as the drama of love. (XX, 145)

In this rich and condensed passage, a lot of points require further explanation and elaboration. Owing to the space and focus of this chapter, what should be emphasised here is that the non-existence of sexual relation, and the lack of ratio or formula for sexual relation, necessarily suggests that love might be understood in the direction of contingency and encounter. The chance encounter of pure contingency inaugurates the process of love, which turns into necessity, into incessant writing. Lacan also ventures concepts such as 'courage,' 'recognition,' and truly intersubjective relation, which betrays not merely the fragile nature of love but also opens up the ethical dimension in love. As Lacan puts it,

There is no such thing as a sexual relationship because one's jouissance of the Other taken as a body is always inadequate—perverse, on the one hand, insofar as the Other is reduced to object *a*, and crazy and enigmatic, on the other. Isn't it on the basis of the confrontation of this impasse, with this impossibility by which the real is defined, that love is put to the test? Regarding one's partner, love can only actualize what, in a sort of poetic flight, in order to make myself understood. I called courage—courage with respect to this fatal destiny. But *is it courage that is at stake or pathways of recognition? That recognition is nothing other than the way in which the relationship said to be sexual—that has now become a subject-to-subject relationship*, the subject being but the effect of unconscious knowledge—stops not being written (XX, 144, emphasis added).

I take Lacan to mean that there is a surplus in the very contingency of an encounter itself, which exceeds the work of fantasy although it is not entirely independent of it. This contingency of the Real encounter enlists courage as a stake in love, which simultaneously discloses that love without the underlying Symbolic formulation, without the guarantee of the Other, is built solely upon this very fragility of the subject's courageous undertaking. Moreover, when Lacan shifts emphasis from courage to recognition, he transforms an ethical question of subjective courage into an ontological recognition of intersubjective relations. In the meantime, the subject-to-subject relation as the outcome of ontological recognition bears undeniable ethical significance because the subject no longer reduces the other to *objet a*, transcending the mechanism of desire that Lacan names as 'masturbatory' or 'perverse' throughout the seminar.

This condensed passage is of vital importance to interpret Lacan's dictum of love as compensation for the lack of sexual relation. Alain Badiou establishes his theorisation of love on Lacan's conception of the non-existence of sexual relation and the concomitant compensation of love. His proposition of love as a generic process of truth and the conception of love as a scene of Two clearly bear witness to the influence of Lacan. The eventual happening of love can be regarded as a philosophical variation of Lacan's notion of the contingency of love as an encounter;

the idea of love as the scene of Two resonates with Lacan's proposal of a 'subject-to-subject relation.'

Mathematical ontology and an ethics that is derived from and congruent with such a rigorous ontology have been two principle pillars of Badiou's philosophical edifices, although his writings encompass a much more complex medley. Badiou famously argues for four truth procedures, which include that of politics, of art, of science, and of love at various points in his works. Art, politics, and science clearly fall into the public and collective domains, whereas love is certainly experienced privately; however, it is 'an individual experience of potential universality' (*PL*, 17). In a terse essay, named 'What is Love?', Badiou claims that 'love is by no means given in the immediate consciousness of loving subject,' proffering 'an axiomatics of love' by which 'it is necessary to keep the pathos, errors, jealousy, sex and death at a distance' (*W*, 266).⁵⁹⁷ Badiou aims at formulating the structure of love rather than describing the ethos and passion of a loving subject. Like the rest of other truth procedures, love is deployed by Badiou through the dichotomy of being and event. Badiouian truth is always *subtractive truth*. With his uncompromising proclamation of atheism, the point of departure is a system not authorised by God. For Badiou,

⁵⁹⁷ For a more detailed account of the reasons underlying Badiou's de-psychologisation of love by way of mathematisation of love, see Carlos Gómez Camarena, 'Je Te Mathème! Badiou's De-psychologization of Love', *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 8 (2010), 153-78. <http://www.discourseunit.com/annual-review/>, last accessed 1 October, 2012.

ontologically speaking, this means, at the most fundamental, ‘the One is not’ (*E*, 25). As Badiou puts it, ‘[t]he multiple “without one”— every multiple being in its turn nothing other than a multiple of multiples—is the law of being’ (*E*, 25). On the ontological level, there are myriad ‘presented multiplicity[ies],’ each of which can be counted as a ‘situation,’ a ‘place of taking place’ (*B & E*, 24). In the book, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, he furnishes one of his chapters with the title, ‘the *Ethic* of Truths,’ with its emphasis on singular truths rather than the truth in general (*E*, 40-57, my emphasis). Badiou pronounces adamantly, ‘if there is no ethics “in general,” that is because there is no abstract subject, who adopts it as its shield’ (*E*, 40). In Badiou’s conception, the void or hole is situated, and the event is a break incalculable and irreducible to the site of the event. The truth and the subject are singular and event-induced. For a truth procedure to be initiated and developed, ‘something extra,’ ‘something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in “what there is”’ must happen (*E*, 41). This ‘something extra,’ ‘this supplement’ is what Badiou designates as ‘event’ (*E*, 41). Roughly speaking, in Badiou’s edifice, along with the dichotomy of being and event is that of knowledge and truth. Concomitantly, a further dichotomy is operative in Badiou’s distinction between what he calls ‘some-one,’ ‘an animal of the human species,’ a kind of ‘particular multiple’ within the designation of the power of established knowledge and the ‘composition’

of the ‘subject’ as ‘a point of truth’ (*E*, 44). Badiou encapsulates his points as follows: ‘since a situation is composed by the knowledges circulating within it, the event names the void inasmuch as it names the not-known of the situation [...] the fundamental ontological characteristic of an event is to inscribe, to name, the situated void of that for which it is an event’ (*E*, 69). Moreover, through the evental happening and the truth construction around the naming of the event, a transforming agenda is inaugurated, and wholly new arrangements, permutations, and restructurations are set in motion.

In the case of love, ‘knowledge is the present condition’ of each person, while love as a chance encounter ‘pierces a hole within the certainty of the present life conditions.’⁵⁹⁸ Buttressed by Lacan’s theory of the lack of sexual relation, the being or the situation whose void that will function as the evental site for love to emerge is the disjunction of two sexuated positions, ‘man’ and ‘woman.’⁵⁹⁹ Badiou further argues that, ‘since the situation alone is insufficient, it requires supplement. Not by a third structural position, but by a singular event. This event initiates the amorous procedure, we will call it an encounter’ (*W*, 267). An encounter supplements the void of the situation, inaugurates a generic truth procedure. The declaration of the

⁵⁹⁸ Gómez Camarena, p. 165.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 167. To save Badiou from the possible charges that his model shows preference for the mainstream heterosexuality, Gómez Camarena adds a bit of sophistication to the disjunct positions between two sexes by saying that ‘[t]his two is the precise split between man and woman—the sexed couple that is *not* necessarily hetero-sexed; that is to say, the disjunction between two subjects.’ Original emphasis.

truth through the announcement of ‘I love you’ names this evental happening, ‘induces the subjective activation,’ the enactment of the fidelity of this truth. The disjunction is ‘radical’ and hence there is no third position to reconcile it. The truth of love initiated by the supplementary event of encounter is thus ‘transpositional,’ ‘subtracted from every positional disjunction’ (W, 269). The truth of love for Badiou is the construction of the Two, the scene of Two, ‘the possibility of the immanent two in the corrosive exteriority of sexual non-rapport’ (ST, 45). The notion of ‘immanent two’ is of utter importance to Badiou when he strives to distinguish love from the couple. The couple is what appears to the third party, and therefore ‘completely exterior to the Two of disjunction,’ which establishes itself solely on the courageous commitment and fidelity to the truth of the evental encounter of love (W, 271). Badiou further explains,

This stage of the two is not a being of the Two, which would suppose three. This stage of the Two is a work, a process [...] The Two is the hypothetical operator, the operator of an aleatory inquiry of such a work or such a track [...] the event-encounter occurs only in the form of its disappearance or eclipse. It is fixed only by a nomination, and this nomination is a declaration, the declaration of love. The name which declares is drawn from the void of the site from which the encounter draws the bit-of-being [*peu d'être*] [...] love is interminable fidelity to the first nomination (W, 272).

That love as the construction of the scene of Two marks out its emergence from the nomination of the encounter-event, which itself supplements the sexual non-rapport and discloses the ‘dis-relation [*dé-rapport*]’ between desire and love (W,

273). However, the dis-relation between desire and love does not mean that love can disregard the dimension of desire, of sexuality totally, for ‘the disjunction is simultaneously its material and its obstacle’ (ST, 45). While sexuality deployed through the mechanism of desire and fantasy is ‘narcissistic,’ ‘love reaches out toward the ontological;’ ‘love focuses on the being of the other, on the other as it has erupted, fully armed with its being, into my life thus disrupted and re-fashioned’ (PL, 21). The construction of Two is an outcome of ontological recognition of the other as well as a new ontological construction, which alters, restructures the life and world of the two subjects. This ontological construction of love *supplements ethically* the non-reciprocity of the fantasy/desire mechanism as well as *sinthomatic* eroticism, which as my analysis in the previous section has shown becomes non-reciprocal. I propose to name this dis-relation as a tension between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism, which I analyse in the ensuing paragraphs as the conclusion to this chapter.

Although it remains unclear what happened on 16 June, 1904,⁶⁰⁰ Joyce transcribes the personal and the private into the public and the Symbolic by making the events of his masterpiece unfold on this day, marking it on the territory of world literature. By doing so, I argue, Joyce raises the singular to the universal while in the meantime *embarking on a work of love, inaugurating the writing of a work of art*

⁶⁰⁰ It is usually supposed that Nora and Joyce met on this day. However, the nature and details of their meeting remain unclear. Maddox records a dialogue between Herbert Gorman and Joyce, ‘Q: Why did you pitch on June 16, 1905 for Bloomsday? Was it the day you met Nora? A: Reply later,’ p. 27.

incited by the pure accident of the love encounter. Ample space has been devoted to exploring the idiosyncratic content and peculiar construction of *sinthomatic* eroticism between Bloom and Molly. The real life relationship between Joyce and Nora is reflected in the literary text; striking similarities and parallels between the literary text and real-life incidents can be readily detected.

In contrast to the overflowing enjoyment and *sinthomatic* eroticism evidenced in the monologue of the loquacious modern Penelope, a glaring absence of love shines through darkly in this episode. Phrased otherwise, in the midst of a garrulous soliloquy about mundane details, egregious boredom and confinement in the household, and ubiquitous references to past and present erotic fantasies and sexuality, love makes itself present by its blatant absence. Love marks a void in this marriage in the current representation of Molly's countersign, except that from this very conspicuous void arises an image of utopian plenitude and full-spirited memory of love from the youthful days. It may appear like a longing for an irrevocable loss that signals an escapism. It is also arguable that such a noticeable contrast can certainly lend solid support for a realistic or naturalist interpretation for a bleak view of reality in marriage besieged with various troubles. I find resonance in Henke's interpretation of this incident in terms of a link between the motif of 'return' and nostalgia. According to Henke, 'Bloom obsessively tries to go back to that far-off

time of his inaugural love-making with Molly on Howth to reclaim a world and place of amorous satisfaction, of erotic origins dissociated from the subsequent trauma of filial loss and paternal failure.⁶⁰¹ Moreover, that both Bloom and Molly dream of returning to the same amorous inaugural point signifies that ‘they are always already locked in a passionate embrace phantasmatically inscribed in the textual unconscious of Joyce’s swirling, circular discursive matrix.’⁶⁰² There is no doubt that Joyce puts weighty emphasis on the representation of the fragment of love from his distant youth. In ‘Lestrygonians,’ triggered by the taste of ‘glowing wine’ and its connection with the ‘[s]un’s heat,’ Bloom recalled a secret memory of love, which, to put it humorously, figures as a primal scene between Bloom and Molly. The monumental status of this memory merits quotation at length:

Hidden wild ferns on Howth below us day sleeping: sky. No sound. The sky [...]
 Pillowed on my coat she had her hair, earwigs in the heather scrub my hand under
 her nape you’ll toss me all [...] Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed
 her mouth [...] Joy: I ate it, joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. Soft warn
 sticky gumjelly lips. Flowers her eyes were, take me, willing eyes. Pebble fell. She
 lay still. A goat. No-one. High on Ben Howth rhododendrons a nannygoat walking
 surefooted, dropping currents. Screen under ferns she laughed warmfolded. Wildly I
 lay on her, kissed her: eyes, her lips, her stretched neck beating, woman’s breasts
 full in her blouse of nun’s veiling, fat nipples upright. Hot I tongued her. She kissed
 me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me.
 Me. And me now.
 Stuck. The flies, buzzed. (*U*, 8.899-918)

‘Penelope’ terminates with Molly’s reminiscence, which echoes the passion,

⁶⁰¹ Henke, p. 123.

⁶⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

sensuality, sexuality, and love in Bloom's memory, yet answers Bloom's pensive retrospection on the sharp contrast between the dreary humdrum of the present and the bright past with a life-asserting, love-confirming, sorrow-comforting 'yes' in her female countersign. The passage is of pivotal significance:

The sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapyear like now 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get around him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldnt answer first only looked over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didn't know of Mulvey and Mr. Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing all birds fly [...] Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I were a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will yes. (*U*, 18.1571-1659)

Vivid, colourful images from that particular date and specific locus of Howth are evoked with equal emphasis on the memorable kiss, proposal, and commitment with a slight yet important difference. Joyce has encrypted details of Molly's calculation, petty manipulation and schemes at the height of courting with her recollection of Molly's series of objects of desires. What has been described as 'all yielding' in Bloom's version is further certified and substantiated by Molly's approving, corroborating, myriad 'yes.' Most important of all, this is *the* moment, *the* hidden

memory and intimate ritual that declares the truth of the *evental* happening of love and that acknowledges the creation of the scene of *the Two*, à la Badiou. This is one of the essential indispensable pillars of Molly's countersign, not merely in terms of participating in the construction of *sinthomatic* erotic practices but also with regard to the assertion of her subjectivity. To repeat Lacan's comment in the *Encore* Seminar, 'to know what your partner will do is not a proof of love' (XX, 146). Lacan correctly assigns love to the domain of intersubjectivity while enjoyment is always potentially masturbatory, advocating a subject-to-subject relationship in love. Although it is arguable that *intersinthomatic* practices may open avenues for intersubjective engagement and investment in *sinthomatic* eroticism, love points to another form of intersubjectivity than sexuality that can hardly be ignored, diluted or neutralised.

The clear contrast between the tedious present and the shining past and between the gross construction and negotiation of *sinthomatic* eroticism and the absence of love may render the youthful distant memory nostalgic and illusory. It may appear as a luminous fragment of a remote, inaccessible past that an estranged couple desperately cling to. However, if we take into consideration Badiou's theory of love as a truth process and the construction of two out of the impasse or impossibility of the sexual non-relation, it is arguable that the mutual faithfulness toward the memory of bountiful affirmation, passion, and commitment may amount to a possibility for

renewing the relationship rather than a covering up of the impasse of a dying marriage. In a similar vein, I argue that nostalgic, ephemeral, and utopian as this fragment of memory may appear, it actually marks out and embodies the eternity of the *Real* idea of love. This episode from the past with unabashedly fantasmatic colouring is a fragment of truth, a Platonic Idea of the Real. It is of ultimate irony, if not blatant oxymoron, to claim an Idea to be of the Real register, granted that, from a Lacanian perspective, the incongruity between the Symbolic and the Real is a basic premise.

In what sense would an Idea, which is apparently a naming process, a Symbolic construction, be designated as Real? As a Lacanian thinker, we can rest assured that Žižek intends the idea to belong to or to derive from the register of the Lacanian Real. Žižek invokes Lacan's double characterisation of the Real. Žižek summarises the two Real(s) of Lacan as follows: the Real as the 'over-abundant obscene-morbid vitality of the primordial Flesh,' 'the Real in its most terrifying imaginary dimension, the primordial abyss which swallows up everything, dissolving all identities' must be opposed to 'the Real of pure virtual surface, the "incorporeal" Real,' 'the Real of pure appearance which is the truth of the Platonic Idea' (*LN*, 61-2).⁶⁰³ It is in the context of attempting an interpretation of some fragments with strong fantasmatic quality in cinematic renderings that clearly encapsulate 'the eternal Real' that Žižek first invokes

⁶⁰³ In this context, Žižek's conception of a Real Idea is a result of the convergence of Lacan, Badiou, and Deleuze. For a detailed account, see *Less Than Nothing*, p. 23-78.

this idea of the Real. The *Real* Idea designates ‘not the hidden reality beneath appearances,’ ‘nothing but the very form of appearance, this form as such,’ ‘the supra-sensible’ of ‘appearance as appearance’ (*LN*, 31). It is the Real as minimal difference, as pure difference, as incorporeal, supra-sensible nothingness on the surface that is the true locus of the production of the Idea as the Real, as the naming of the True-Event, as the forcing of something new into the Symbolic at its most fundamental level.

I argue that the fantasmatic episode that both Bloom and Molly recall and invoke as a proof of their bond, their being a subject of love in the scene of Two, is precisely ‘the eternal Real’ that Žižek has strived to expound. It is nothing from the perspective of outsiders, but from this nothing, this void, emerges truth for the engaged subjects who embark on the truth process of love. The fantasmatic quality with affective intensity in Joyce’s characters’ memories betrays the fact that it is not just a speck from the distant past, but a truth embodied in eternity. If the declaration of truth names the eventual happening of a love encounter and announces the constitution, not of the couple as two physical entities but the singular subject of love comprised of the Two, there must be a certain supra-sensible Real Idea of eternity in the declaration that the subject of love can return to carry out the fidelity as works of love. The Hawth episode is squarely such an eternal idea of Real as the

Truth-declaration of the eventual happening of love.

It is this monumental point of the eternal truth-declaration that constitutes the scene of Two, and this creates the platform for the sexual difference to manifest itself and for the possibility of exploration and fabrication of *sinthomatic* eroticism. It is through this eventual truth of eternity that the subject of love enacts his/her fidelity. The truth-declaration of the Real idea is 'eternal' in the sense of immanent transcendence. The ideas of transcendence and eternity should not appeal to an otherworldly authority, but be realised in the time frame of here and now. As Badiou claims, in *The Praise of Love*, 'I love you' always heralds 'I'll always love you' (*PL*, 47). What is 'assumed within the declaration' is 'an anticipation of eternity;' 'it is in effect locking chance into the framework of eternity' (*PL*, 48). Love is such a 'subjectively powerful experience' that 'you attempt a declaration of eternity' (*PL*, 48). Chance/contingency is transformed into eternity/necessity through the declaration. According to Badiou, this is what love is: 'the problem then resides in transcribing this eternity within time;' 'a declaration of eternity to be fulfilled and or unfurled as the best it can be within time: eternity descending into time' (*PL*, 47).

The Howth memory is the point of eternity of immanent transcendence, a nomination of the eventual happening of the love encounter, which calls for fidelity to the declaration and construction of the scene of Two. Love is essentially 'atheist' in

the sense that ‘the Two never pre-exists its process’ and that love demands to ‘redeploy’ life arrangements from the angle of the two and to re-address itself time and again in the face of challenges in life from the points of Two (*PL*, 50-2). This is why love is a process, a duration, a work of love in Badiou’s edifice.

In ‘Penelope,’ there is a tension between love as an eternal idea of Real, as a point of truth-declaration and the gradually reified *sinthomatic* eroticism. In the female countersign, Joyce’s endeavour is mostly channelled to contrive a female collaboration at the level of sexuality through drawing a representation of concrete actions and fantasies of his modern Penelope to render the *sinthomatic* eroticism complete. As my analysis has shown, this *sinthomatic* eroticism has considerable ethical limits when it becomes non-reciprocal and fails to sustain fully a subject-to-subject relationship, or to maintain a scene of Two properly. However, Joyce also inserted in passing the flickering of the semblance of hope to breach the reification of *sinthomatic* eroticism that still exists at the moment of Molly’s protest: ‘Oh Jamesy let me put of this pooh sweets sin’ (*U*, 18.1128-9). By invoking the declaration of the eventual truth, the eternal Idea of Real, which turns the contingency of the love encounter into a necessity, Joyce signals that what is truly at stake in the female countersign lies elsewhere than the construction of a complementary view of *sinthomatic* eroticism and instead gestures toward love as a construction of the scene

of Two. The invocation of the declaration of eternity, which inaugurates the truth-procedures of love, resuscitates the subject-to-subject relationship and recalls the life-altering moment at the existential level. The recollection does not dwell on nostalgic indulgence but demands a re-invention of love, which, as Badiou interprets, is itself ‘a re-invention of life’ (*PL*, 33). What is fundamentally demanded in the female countersign is not merely the female ‘yes’ toward the *sinthomatic* erotic writings, but the ‘yes’ as the assertion of subjectivity, which is indispensable for the construction of love as a scene of Two in the first place. ‘Bloom’s passport to eternity’ is countersigned by Molly’s participation in these two senses.

I argue that returning to the point of the nomination of love when the scene of Two has first been constructed also enlivens the tension between *sinthomatic* eroticism and love in a productive way. In Badiou’s edifice, the truth-procedures inaugurated by the evental happening do not merely restructure the co-ordinates of life but also enact the process of ‘forcing,’ which is originally a concept derived from Paul Cohen’s set-theory. As Badiou puts it, ‘[f]orcing is the point at which a truth, although incomplete, authorizes anticipation of knowledge concerning not what is but what will have been if truth attains completion’ (*TW*, 130). Love’s capability of re-deploying various aspects of life could be regarded as a kind of ‘forcing’ of the truth. However, Badiou warns readers of the limit of forcing, arguing that ‘[t]here is

a point that is unforceable [...] unnameable,'which, in psychoanalysis, is the domain of enjoyment (*TW*, 132).

Badiou calls for a respect for the Real in the face of the forcing of naming with regard to sexual difference. Badiou articulates this ethical respect for the Real by way of curbing the power of forcing in the following way: '[f]or if what is not named is unique, not being named functions *as its proper name* [...] love of the generic [truth] [is] in essence, the love of the unnameable [...] For where truth is concerned only by undergoing the ordeal of its powerlessness do we discover the ethic required by assuming its power' (*TW*, 134-5). Badiou further portrays an ethical movement deployed through the oscillation between the power of truth and its powerlessness in the face of the Real, the unnameable, signalling an ethical effect achieved not merely by the love of generic truth, but also by the love of the unforceable, of the unnameable.

As Badiou puts it,

No matter how powerful a truth is, no matter how capable of veridicality it proves to be, this power comes to falter upon a single term, which at a stroke effects the swing from all-powerfulness to powerlessness and displace our love of truth from its appearance, the love of the generic, to its essence, the love of the unnameable [...] the love of the unnameable lies beyond even the generic, and it alone allows the love of truth to be maintained without disaster or or dissolution coming to effect the veridical in its entirety. For where truth is concerned, only by undergoing the ordeal of its powerlessness do we discover the ethic required for assuming its power (*TW*, 134-5).

Badiou seems to argue that the forcing of the truth necessarily reaches an impass, an unforcible point of the unnameable. However, this powerlessness should not be

taken as failure of the truth procedures, but a structural point that can save the truth procedure from its ‘disastrous desire for complete constructibility’ (*TW*, 135). In Badiou’s passage, I find a theory of an ethical effect, which is accomplished through a productive tension between the truth and the Real, between the naming of the truth and the unnameable, between the forcing of the power and the powerlessness of the unforcible. However, it remains unclear how this productive tension may operate in reality. Is there a general formulation for the working of the tension between the truth and the unnameable? Or should the way the tension may unfold be situated and case-specific? I leave the answers open for future reflection. At this juncture, my attempt is to analyse the case of ‘Penelope’ and see how the tension operates and achieves an ethical effect. As the following analysis will demonstrate, my critical endeavor in this project is not merely an application of theory to textual analysis, but a fruitful encounter between theory and literature. Badiou’s theory may shed light on my interpretation of Joyce and at the same time the particular case of ‘Penelope’ may also add a subtle novelty to the theoretical conception of the tension between truth and the unnameable.

In the case of love, the unnameable is the Real of sexual difference. Peter Hallward attempts to interpret the danger of extreme forcing in the following way: ‘love is threatened by a terrible danger or “evil”— the conversion of its own

axiomatic subjectivity into a definitive objectivity. The danger threatening every love is that the medium of disjunction might itself be named and objectified, defined and thus turned into a force of fusion [...] the subjects of love must not attempt to *know* their disjunction. A unity of fusion, “the romantic idea of full, fusional love, under the purified sign of the One, is exactly the Evil of love.”⁶⁰⁴

Although Joyce does not fall prey to the romantic illusion of the One, his writing of *sinthomatic* eroticism forces into the Real of sexual difference in the attempt to construct the sexual knowledge of the Other to the extent of risking life-constricting non-reciprocity, which is an imposition that stifles the subjectivity of the Other. The truth procedure inaugurated by the declaration of love embodied in the Howth memory constructs the scene of Two and opens space for the experimentation of the *sinthomatic* eroticism, which, I argue, can be taken as a concretization of truth, or in Hallward’s words, a ‘conversion’ of an ‘axiomatic subjectivity into a definitive objectivity.’ The forcing of truth takes the detour of *sinthomatic* eroticism in its operation. The *sinthomatic* eroticism becomes suffocating when it becomes non-reciprocal and effaces the subjectivity of the Other. The closure of reified *sinthomatic* eroticism demands to be breached and renewed again. It is in this regard that Badiou proposes that ‘sexual pleasure is the unnameable of love. Love as a

⁶⁰⁴ Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject of Truth* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 190-1.

subjective or generic procedure may eventually rename everything in its shared situation—except its unnameable medium itself.⁶⁰⁵ It is love as the construction of the scene of Two that makes possible the forcing and the writing of the (*inter*)*sinthomatic* eroticism. However, this forcing itself reaches an ethical limit, a structural impasse. In ‘Penelope,’ this impasse of the unforcible, the resistance of the unnameable finds expression in Molly’s protest against this closure of *sinthomatic* eroticism—‘Oh, Jamesy let me up out of this pooh sweets of sin’ (*U*,18.1128-9). Molly’s defiance signals that her sexuality and the Real of sexual difference exceeds the confinement of the *sinthomatic* eroticism and her concomitant subjectivity can not be merely reduced to a *sinthomatic*-partner. This incident provides an example to the productive tension between (the truth concretized in the form of) the *sinthomatic* eroticism and the (unforcible/unnameable) Real.

Moreover, in the case of ‘Penelope,’ the productive tension between truth and the unnameable finds another expression in the tension between *sinthomatic* eroticism and love. This adds a nuanced twist to Badiou’s theorization of the relationship between truth, forcing and the unnameable. To breach the closure of the *sinthomatic* eroticism, love plays a crucial role here. The invocation of the memory of the declaration of love and the construction of Two, which is itself the reminder of love as

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

the subject-to-subject relationship, may function to revive such an ethical respect for the Real as well as a re-invention of the *sinthomatic* eroticism in the direction of exploring new possibilities of collective *sinthome*. The tension between the *sinthomatic* eroticism and love thus poses an ethical question regarding the way in which the human subject can tarry ethically with the negative with regard to subjective and intersubjective responsibility. In this light, Badiou's proposal for the respect for the unnameable should be appreciated in correlation with the respect and construction of the subject-to-subject relationship. The Real in excess of the *sinthomatic* manufacturing and the recognition of the Other's ontological being is intimately intertwined. The respect for the Real and the maintenance of a subject-to-subject relationship is ultimately reciprocated. In 'Penelope,' in spite of the flickering invocation of the distant memory of the declaration of love, love's ethical import and impact on the possible re-invention of the writing of *sinthomatic* eroticism can be profound.

The productive tension between the unnameable Real and the forcing of truth is enacted through the truth of love's capacity to re-energize the reified *sinthomatic* eroticism. Between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism, the ethical potential of the Real apparently lies on the side of the truth of love. I think the reason resides in that love as a truth procedure has already contained a respect for the Real of the Other, a

respect for the subjectivity of the Other in its construction of a subject-to-subject relation, in the establishment of a scene of Two. When it manifests ethically, love is a Real act as well as an intersubjective relationship. This is the truth of love. In my analysis of ‘Penelope,’ by identifying a productive tension between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism, I slightly modify Badiou’s theorization of truth, forcing and the unnameable, re-deploying the tension between the truth and the unnameable in terms of the tension between the Real of the inaugural truth of love and the *sinthomatic* eroticism as a reified form of truth.

In conclusion, I interpret ‘Penelope’ as a female countersign to ‘Bloom’s passport to eternity’ (*LI*, 160) in two senses. First, based on Lacan’s theorization of the non-existence of a sexual relation and the concomitant conception of the *sinthome*, I have argued that ‘Penelope’ can be viewed as Joyce’s experimentation of a peculiar (*inter-*)*sinthomatic* eroticism. Molly as Bloom’s *sinthome*-partner is indispensable in offering her participation in the construction of the (*inter-*)*sinthomatic* eroticism. However, this female countersign in terms of sexuality and *sinthomatic* eroticism appears problematic because its ethical merits are limited. Although the *sinthomatic* eroticism is ethical in the sense that it recognizes the inconsistency of the Other, Joyce’s rendition of *sinthomatic* eroticism remains problematic in that the presentation of women and sexuality appear quite conventional and that the *sinthomatic* eroticism

is non-reciprocal and stifles the subjectivity of the Other.

Secondly, by way of Badiou's account of love as a truth-procedure and a construction of a scene of Two, I have contended that the female countersign is necessary in that Molly's 'yes' is an assertion of subjectivity, which is indispensable for the construction of love as an intersubjective relationship. Finally, I have also argued that there is a productive tension between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism in that love is capable of breaking through the closure of reified *sinthomatic* construction, re-inventing *sinthome* and restructuring life and intersubjective relationship.

Conclusion

This thesis explores Joyce's aesthetic enterprise in *Ulysses* from the perspective of ethics. The initial interest in ethics at the intersection of literature, psychoanalysis, and philosophy has necessarily led to the entwinement of ontology, epistemology and ethics. In my study of Joyce, I find that the imaginative process by which the subjective and the collective come to negotiate with memories and experiences, exploring and experimenting with viable alternative futures, has always been intricately aligned with ways of being, knowing, responding and acting. The cadence of radical change and fundamental transformation of the world is inherently correlative with the ontological question of subjective re-structuration, with the ethical responsibility toward the Other and the world, and with representation and discursive practices. Joyce's ambition to make the academics busy for several centuries is not merely an artist's hubris but is of existential concern. In writing *Ulysses*, what is at stake is the subjectivity of the writer as well as the emergent subjectivity of the subaltern, 'the uncreated conscience' (*P*, 390) of the Irish race as exemplified in the textual subject of *Ulysses*. The aesthetic experiment at the level of representation is correlative with the ontological transformation through the process of self-naming, of devising a self-invented *sinthome*. Moreover, love understood as

an ethical, *Real* act and an intersubjective relationship assumes a productive relationship with the *sinthome* and contributes to the ethics of subaltern subjectivity.

If Gayatri Spivak famously asked, ‘Can the subaltern speak?’ in her seminal essay, it should be clear by now that my answer to this question is a critical but emphatic ‘yes.’ While I in no way mean to cancel out or belittle Spivak’s profound insight into the existential and representational dilemma faced by the subaltern, the ethics of subaltern subjectivity that I make a case for in this thesis point, in many respects, to an opposite position and to an alternative approach. The main argument of Spivak in her influential text, also expounded in many of her other works, is that the subaltern, whose status remains problematic, can hardly speak as a result of imperial/colonial ‘epistemic violence,’⁶⁰⁶ with a particular emphasis on the denial of independent subjectivity of the native subaltern women and on the inherent heterogeneity of the subaltern *per se*. As Spivak puts it, ‘[b]etween patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, and not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the “third-world woman” caught between tradition and modernization.’⁶⁰⁷ Such a predicament has led Spivak to proclaim that ‘[t]he subaltern cannot speak,’ and ‘[t]here is no virtue in global laundry lists with woman as

⁶⁰⁶ Spivak, ‘Subaltern’, p.76.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.102.

a pious item.’⁶⁰⁸

Despite this dismaying picture of the subaltern’s situation, I detect a semblance of hope in Spivak’s comments on the suicide of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri at the end of the article. Bhaduri, a young woman of sixteen or seventeen years old, took her own life at her father’s Calcutta apartment in 1926. Aware of the fact that her death might be attributed to a scandalous pregnancy, Bhaduri waited for her period to arrive before hanging herself. Her suicidal act remains perplexing because of the way in which it defies the social code regulating female suicide in India. Nearly ten years after her death, it was disclosed that she was involved with rebellious groups devoted to the armed struggle for Indian independence. After finding herself incapable of carrying out an assassination that had been assigned to her and aware of the ‘the practical need for trust,’⁶⁰⁹ she took her own life. Spivak correctly and compellingly interprets Bhaduri’s fatal act as ‘an unemphatic, ad hoc subaltern rewriting of the social text of *sati*-suicide.’⁶¹⁰ That is to say, in the absence of diction, concepts, and other means of representation for the female subaltern subject in the established societal framework, Bhaduri’s suicide can be understood as a desperate way of navigating the interstices of discourses by means of a ‘physiological inscription of her

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., p.103.

⁶¹⁰ Ibid., p.104.

body.’⁶¹¹

The prevailing patriarchal, mythological, and nationalist discourses of her time left no room for Bhaduri to articulate her desires, her being, her subjective position. Confronted with the impossibility of subaltern representation, Bhaduri did not merely attempt to embody the negativity of the system but also carefully conducted her death by negating the existing socio-cultural codification of the act of female suicide itself. As Spivak explains, her gesture defies ‘the interdict against a menstruating widow’s right to immolate herself.’⁶¹² There is an ambiguous yet desperate effort to articulate, to assert one’s own voice at the interstice of representation, which fissures, ruptures and renders open the apparently seamless dominant discourses. It is in this regard that I argue for a semblance of hope for the excluded, silenced subaltern to (re-)introduce her/his own voices and existence even in Spivak’s epistemological approach to discursive analysis. In short, albeit negatively, the subaltern does speak, voicing her/himself, asserting her/his existence from the gap, the void in the dominant existing socio-cultural discursive field. What is important to emphasize here is that the representational system is breached precisely through the interstice of discourses, from the void of the socio-symbolic network, and the previously inaccessible, un-represented, subaltern Other comes to make a presence, represents him/herself

⁶¹¹ Ibid., p.104.

⁶¹² Ibid., p.104.

obliquely. What has been conceived of as an impossibility—the subaltern’s inability to speak—becomes thinkable, becomes possible. However, although I find that Spivak does insinuate a semblance of hope at the end of her article, she fails to explore further and articulate fully the ethical potential of such an event, as paradoxically encapsulated as it might be in a deliberate act of suicide.

Spivak’s deconstructivist-discursive analysis is broadly in line with Derridean-Levinasian ethics, whose agenda is based on conceptualising and interrogating the answerability of an ethical call, an impossible demand issuing from the radical Other, the subaltern Other included, toward the self, who is implicitly supposed to be the centre, if not the standard. Two consequences follow from such a stance. First, the ethical weight falls inevitably on the self’s unshakable responsibility toward the ethical demand of the irreducible Other, toward the radical Otherness or alterity that resists assimilation and identity. Secondly, this inaccessible, irreducible otherness is simultaneously mysticised and transcendentalised.

The discursive impasse, the impossibility of representation that confronts the subaltern subject as diagnosed by Spivak therefore signifies a structural void. In Lacanian psychoanalytic terms, this structural void of course corresponds to the concept of the Real. There is no doubt that Spivak works in line with

Derridean-Levinasian ethics when it comes to recognising the Real of the structural void from an epistemological and phenomenological perspective. However, what my project has sought to demonstrate is that psychoanalysis can make a vital contribution in conceptualizing the Real of this structural void from an *ontological* angle. More specifically, the Real of the structural void is *built into* the establishment of subjectivity and the fabrication of the socio-symbolic edifice at the same time. The silence, anonymity, invisibility and unrepresentability of the subaltern as identified by Spivak at the discursive epistemological level is not merely an inherently foreign otherness, but also an otherness internal to the subject him/herself. It is a nothingness built into the subject and the Symbolic Other ontologically. The subaltern's unrepresentability should not be mysticised as some transcendentalised, unreachable otherness, which erects an unsolvable ethical impossibility. The subaltern subject, as I have demonstrated, is not located completely outside the socio-symbolic order, outside the law and so on. Rather, the subaltern occupies a position of inclusive exclusion—precisely what Agamben identifies in his conceptualisation of *homo sacer*. The subaltern's anonymity and exclusion is included within the Symbolic order at its blind spots, and helps to constitute the structural void around which the Symbolic establishes and sustains itself. In Lacanian parlance, working from an ontological perspective, this

epistemological unintelligibility is embodied in the non-existence or inconsistency of the Other and the subject's consequent drive-formation of the subject by way of inclusive exclusion.

Fully endorsing the fundamental psychoanalytic insight that there is a correlation between the intra-subjective and intersubjective domains, I have proposed an alternative ethics which more fully explores how the subaltern subject claims and asserts his/her own subjectivity, how his/her own existence is voiced, how his/her own being in the world is renewed and restructured in a single move via subjective transformation and cultural innovation/revolution. Moreover, and as a consequence of this, radical change and lasting re-construction on a large collective scale (the social, the cultural, and the Symbolic) can be sustained and made to flourish only by way of profound, structural transformation at the level of subjectivity. That is what underlies my somewhat audacious claim that subjective transformation and cultural innovation/revolution can and should be accomplished in a single move. In the meantime, this claim is supported and framed by my utilization of Lacan's topological thinking, which motivates my emphasis on the ontological transformation, the restructuration of subjectivity, the re-organisation of one's own *jouissance* and the reknitting of the psychic structure, and a profound re-arrangement of the self/Other relation. In this light, what is perceived as ethically impossible at the

epistemological level becomes both ethically possible and workable at the ontological level. An ontological restructuration thus opens up the possibility of transforming the dominant ethical and epistemological repertoire and reconfiguring the Symbolic co-ordination.

A universalist ethics shifts the ground of the ethical investigation by giving back subjectivity and ethico-political *agency* to the subaltern, by allowing the subaltern to take the position of the self in relation to the world he/she inhabits. Despite occupying a marginalised, exploited, silenced, even victimised position, the subaltern is still fundamentally a human subject, inevitably endowed with drive (the re-organisation of which, as I have argued, can become the source of ethical engagement). To grant the subaltern subject selfhood, to shift the responsibility back to the question of subjective reconstruction, does not lead to a denial of the Other. On the contrary, by fully acknowledging the inconsistency of the (Symbolic) Other, the ethical process of self-naming gestures toward the possibility of the singular universal, inventing new master signifiers and hence rewriting the Symbolic framework that mediates and co-ordinates the self/Other relationship. Moreover, my conceptualisation of love as an ethical act in the Lacanian sense and my application of love as a truth procedure in Badiouian terms represents an attempt to delineate the unfathomable impact that love can have on the transformation of both subjective and

intersubjective planes.

Finally, I must address an issue which might be raised with regard to my advocacy of a universalist ethics for the subaltern subject. The question can be phrased in these terms: How does the particularity and otherness respected and celebrated by multiculturalism and Derridean-Levinasian ethics figure in relation to a universalist ethics claimed by Badiou to be '*indifferent*' to all minoritarian identity and communitarian markings (*SP*, 23)? Is the universalist ethics of subaltern subjectivity that I have proposed a strange mixture? Would this mixture attract criticism from both parties? Badiou and Žižek's reservations about the multiculturalist emphasis on difference and the plurality of identity politics and their polemics against the Derridean-Levinasian respect for otherness can be summarised as follows. Badiou holds that differences are an expression of the status quo, the situation as it is, and are therefore not to be maintained. Rather, differences should be the subject of ethical or political intervention. The rhetoric of respect for otherness and differences risks becoming nihilistic (in the sense that ethics may be inaugurated by treating human subjects as potential victims). Moreover, there is also the danger of producing incessant differences based on communitarian identities that can be readily absorbed by the logic of equivalence that defines global capitalism.

In this light, arguing for an ethics of subaltern subjectivity does not mean

automatically granting the subaltern subject any ethical significance because of his/her underprivileged position, victimhood, or estrangement from dominant discourses. Instead, the ethics of subaltern subjectivity acknowledges that the subaltern occupies an evental site in the structural void and thus grants the subaltern subject agency—the capacity of ethical action in a Lacanian sense and fidelity to the event in Badiou's diction. Strictly speaking, it is only when a subject, subaltern or otherwise, makes an ethical act or embarks on truth procedures that he/she becomes an ethical agent. It is in this regard that an ethics of subaltern subjectivity participates in the universalist ethics, which is an ethics of working through the singular universal and universal(isable) singularity. Granting the subaltern subject ethical agency does not mean shifting all of the ethical responsibility back to the dispossessed and demanding a kind of heroism on the part of the victim, as Ruti suggests.⁶¹³ Anyone who arises from his/her ordinary situation, who recognises the event, who declares the truth and maintains fidelity to the truth qualifies as an ethical agent. It is the shift in perspective to approaching ethics ontologically rather than epistemologically and discursively that supports the idea that subjective transformation and cultural revolution are correlative, and that the subjective and

⁶¹³ Ruti makes scathing comments on Badiou and Žižek's valorization of 'the immortal' and heroism, saying that their attitude constitutes 'a virulent aversion for the victimized that routinely shifts the emphasis from what the victimisers do to how the victimized handle their lot.' She also continues to point out that '[a]lthough the goal of such pronouncements is to empower us so that we do not hand over our agency to others, they can also easily be (mis)used to evade responsibility for intensely insensitive or abusive behaviour.' Ruti, p. 209.

collective changes are structurally intertwined. It is only through this proposition that it becomes possible to endow the subaltern subject with ethical agency, despite the subaltern's socio-cultural unintelligibility.

In this project, I devoted Chapter One to mapping out the development of ethical paradigms in Lacan's long career, critically evaluating the ethical efficacy of Lacan's conceptualisation of the following: (1) the ethical act as pure desire, (2) the end of psychoanalysis as the traversal of fantasy, (3) the Not-All logic of the Other and sexuation informed by set theory (4) the end of psychoanalysis as the identification of one's *sinthome*/symptoms, and the theorisation of the *sinthome* as sublimation in the topological thinking of his later work inspired by Joyce's writings. Furthermore, I also sought to foreground the place of love in Lacanian psychoanalysis and to elucidate *how love manifests itself ethically*. I propose in this current project that for love to be ethically manifested, it must consist of an intersubjective relationship and a Real act which acknowledges the non-existence of the Other and the concomitant subjective responsibility. Love and the ethics of subaltern subjectivity are the two pillars of my thesis, which do not merely motivate my critical readings of *Ulysses*, but also frame and drive my evaluation of Lacanian theory and Joyce criticism, especially with regard to the question of the ethical efficacy of the *sinthome* as exemplified in the case of Joyce's *sinthomatic* writings, and with the focus on the issues of the

structural place and the ethical efficacy of love.

In my reading of ‘Scylla and Charybdis,’ I argue that Joyce, through Stephen’s idiosyncratic theory of Shakespeare, articulates his artistic ambition as a work of/for a singular universal, endeavouring to transform the human subject by way of writing a book of himself, and of making a self out of writing. Stephen’s speech in the Library deals with the problem of paternal deficiency and the necessary fiction of legality, the establishment of the Symbolic, broaching the author’s God-like ability to create *ex nihilo* by writing life into work and creating a life out of writing. I read this peculiar theory of Shakespeare’s work through Lacan’s conception of the subject’s unsubscription from the Unconscious and the consequent construction of the *sinthome*— exploring how the subject may author his/her world, producing his/her proper name in the world of literature, which is a process of writing the singular toward the [Symbolic] universal. I describe this *sinthomatic* artistic work as a process of self-naming, a process which repairs the structural dissolution caused by the deficiency of the-Name-of-the-Father, re-constructing and re-weaving the unchained knots of the three registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. In this regard, treating Joyce’s artistic work-as-*sinthome* harbours existential significance, as it is less a work which represents or reflects life than a life and a self created through writing. Joyce *is* his writing and his subjectivity relies on his work

of art and his being a writer.

In 'Scylla and Charybdis,' Joyce encrypts his artistic ambition in Stephen's peculiar Shakespeare theory. Through a Lacanian lens, the private theory of Shakespeare could be interpreted as a self-reflexive literary manifesto of work-as-*sinthome*. After delineating Joyce's project in this light, my textual analyses of *Ulysses* in the ensuing chapters were centered on the investigation of how the *sinthome* is developed and exemplified in the text. In my reading of 'Cyclops,' I interpret the chapter's rhetorical excess as an incidence of symptomatic nationalism and argue that Joyce achieves an aesthetic working through of symptomatic nationalism via a dialectic of realistic narrative and rhetorical excess. Joyce's narrative experiment is triple-layered: (1) realistic representation, (2) excessive narrative interpolations that threaten/destablise realistic representation, and (3) the implosion of rhetorical excess as it runs out of control. I read this triple-layered narrative manoeuvre in terms of Lacan's theory of the look and the gaze, of fantasy and the traversal of fantasy. When realistic representation lapses into rhetorical excess, the reader is led into Irish nationalism in the form of ideological fantasy. However, the 'rhetorical excess' tends to run out of control, not simply with regard to the realistic mode of representation, but also in relation to the fantasised rhetorical excess itself. Rhetorical excess *implodes* from within and shatters the closure of

enjoyment in the fantasised world established by the excess. The burst of laughter caused by the implosion of the drunkenness of the text effects the *breakthrough* moment when the fantasy is breached, and the symptom is worked through. Secondly, I suggest that it is far from accidental that symptomatic nationalism is juxtaposed with neighbour love in ‘Cyclops.’ Inspired by Lacanian ethics, I argue that the ethical call for neighbour love can function as a remedy to symptomatic nationalism. The aspiration of universal love is not merely palpable but arguably secured and praised when poetic justice allows for the survival of a mocked messianic figure (embodied by Bloom), who advocates love in confrontation with his xenophobic countrymen.

I read the problematic chapter of ‘Circe’ as a *sinthomatic* work in which subaltern subjectivity is constructed through an incessant process of unknotting and reknitting. In addition to the experimental reading of ‘Circe’ as a *sinthomatic* work, I also offer an original theoretical contribution by venturing an ethical evaluation of the *sinthome* through textual analysis of the fantasies of messianism and masochism, along with the act of neighbour love. By means of an analysis of the libidinal economy, I argue that the pseudo-messianism as expressed in Bloom’s lecture on social reform still assumes the male logic of totality and exception, the dialectic of law and transgression, and that it can hardly be viewed as ethical. It is only through

the act of neighbour love that true messianism is made explicit.

With a stroke of genius, Bloom, the mocked messiah in ‘Cyclops,’ comes to rescue Stephen at the end of ‘Circe.’ Bloom manifests neighbour love toward Stephen in a real ethical act, remedying the missed opportunity in the final scene of ‘Cyclops’ in which Bloom’s fellow citizens have failed to act as neighbours. The messianic ‘time of now’ (in a Benjaminian sense) comes into being via this kind of recognition of ethical intervention, which consequently transforms the subject taking part in the act, fissuring and restructuring the co-ordinates of the status quo as well as the subject him/herself. Through works of love, a new neighbourhood, conceived as an open, generic set in the Badiouian sense, comes into being. Love as an ethical act is a life-altering, structure-transforming movement, reconfiguring the relationship between the subject and the Other, gesturing toward a new singular universal, a new formation of neighbourhood. Moreover, ‘Circe’ does not terminate with the indulgence of an idiosyncratic *sinthome*, but the moment when the *sinthome* is breached by the ethical act of neighbour love, which opens for the further renewal and reinvention of the *sinthome* and the intersubjective relationship.

In my examination of ‘Penelope,’ the problematic status of the countersign is explored first by evaluating the ethical efficacy of the *sinthome* as a sexual relation in Lacanian thought, and second through examining the tension between what I termed

sinthomatic eroticism and love. First, I fully acknowledge the merit of *sinthomatic* eroticism as a repairment of the non-existence of sexual relation in its capacity to maintain the recognition of the non-existence of the Other and of authoring and forging one's own sexual rapport by way of the self-invented *savoir-faire* of one's *jouissance*. However, upon closer scrutiny, although the *sinthomatic* eroticism that Joyce endeavours to construct through the female countersign is highly idiosyncratic, the images of Molly with her pettiness and narrowness and the triple constriction of the economic, the social and the sexual remain quite conventional. It is arguable that this version of *sinthomatic* eroticism is derived from the culture and society of its author without much distance or modification, and Joyce seems to enjoy his *sinthome* through writing such conventional women who suffer with and corroborate the existing social, economic and emotional confinement. The *sinthomatic* eroticism that Joyce presents in 'Penelope' does not stray very far from the social symptoms of his time. This marks one of the limits of *sinthomatic* eroticism.

Moreover, this *sinthomatic* eroticism mainly centres on the motif of in/fidelity, which is a recurrent theme in Joyce's texts. By devising a contrived scenario of adultery, Joyce attempts to offer a *sinthomatic* dramatisation of infidelity in order to render the absence of a sexual relationship less traumatic and more bearable. It is an artistic sleight of hand that transforms a possibility into an imagined reality, even a

necessity to betray one's partner. This self-serving, self-engendering *sinthomatic* eroticism provokes Molly's protest and Nora's defiance both inside and outside *Ulysses*, and clearly does not constitute a truly *inter-sinthomatic* construction, or genuine reciprocity. This exposes the serious ethical limitation of the *sinthome* as it is incapable of effectuating a true recognition of the Other.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, it must therefore be highlighted that this ethical limitation of the *sinthome* poses a major theoretical challenge. In the sixties, Lacan conceptualises the end of psychoanalysis in terms of the traversal of fantasy, and as the identification of the *sinthome* later in the seventies, and claims that Joyce would not gain much from psychoanalysis for he has gone 'straight to the best thing one can expect at the end of analysis' (*XVIII*, 113). What, then, can psychoanalysis do with the limitations of the *sinthome*? Answering 'nothing' immediately seems to be problematic but is also, arguably, a feasible response. Indeed, the psychoanalytic notion of working through is primarily concerned with 'traversal,' 'negation,' and 'disinvestment.'⁶¹⁴ As Pluth puts it, 'an act would entail a dissolution of the subject of fantasy, and its replacement by a new subject. But what, if anything, does an act do to something like a *sinthome*? Nothing at all.'⁶¹⁵ Under such circumstances, can the *sinthome* possibly be renewed or re-invented, and a subject re-structured? This is

⁶¹⁴ Pluth, *Signifiers and Acts*, 160.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 160-1.

the underlying issue behind the question that I posed in the previous chapter: '[w]hat kind of ethical paradigm could be used to exceed the confinement of the *sinthome* and work toward a true subject-to-subject relationship?'

In reply to this issue, I identify a productive tension between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism in 'Penelope.' In sharp contrast to the humdrum reality of boredom and confinement facing the estranged couple, a luminous memory of passion and commitment on Howth is evoked by both Bloom and Molly. I read this fragment as an embodiment of the eternity of the *Real* idea of love and as a testimony to the declaration of love inaugurating the truth-procedures required to construct Badiou's scene of Two. Although Joyce's creative energy is largely devoted to constructing a female countersign to collaborate in *sinthomatic* eroticism, he also leaves room for a female 'yes' as an assertion of subjectivity, which is essential in the construction of love as a scene of Two in the first place. Moreover, the invocation of the memory of the declaration of love which inaugurates the construction of the scene of Two may function as a reminder of love as a subject-to-subject relationship. This recognition of the subjectivity of the Other harbours the potential to re-invent the *sinthomatic* eroticism, to explore new possibilities of being together, to carry on a constant work of love. In the productive tension between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism, I thus detect love's capacity to break through the structure and to renew

(inter-)*sinthomatic* construction.

In conclusion, what should be emphasized here is that the significance of the above argument should be explored and appreciated as part of a larger landscape. My critical endeavour does not merely aim to offer an original reading to explain the enigma of the seeming absence of love in the midst of an overfluence of sexuality in the episode of ‘Penelope,’ but also seeks (1) to intervene into Lacanian theory with regard to the ethical evaluation of the *sinthome* and of love, and (2) to explore love’s impact on the ethics of subaltern subjectivity. As I have demonstrated in Chapter One, Lacan devised different ethical paradigms throughout his long career, which end with the conception of *sinthome* in the last stage of his work. This later construction of *sinthome* as an ethical paradigm has led some Lacanians to conclude that psychoanalysis can not go further than the *sinthome* in the theorization of ethical act. For instance, Miller and Pluth seem to support this point and take the *sinthome* as the last word that Lacan has offered on the question of ethical paradigms and claim that psychoanalysis can do nothing to the *sinthome*.⁶¹⁶ Moreover, it should be rightly so from a psychoanalytic perspective. Is the *sinthome* the final word in ethics? My stance is that it is hardly the case because love can function to break through the (inter-)*sinthomatic* construct and the status quo, restructuring subjectivity, renewing

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., p. 157-63.

the *sinthome*, and re-energizing the inter-subjective relations. Seen in this light, love is an ethical act, working constantly and continuously to renew the *sinthome* and goes further than the *sinthome*'s capacity of individualized self-naming and the inventive organization of *jouissance* in the direction of truly recognising the Other and establishing inter-subjectivity. Love enriches and broadens the conceptualization and scope of what can be considered ethical. This insight can be generalized and marks one of my contributions in this project in the broader field of psychoanalysis in addition to a case study of *Ulysses*.

Moreover, the powerful impact that love has effected on renewing the *sinthome* (erotic or otherwise) also signals that the ethics of subaltern subjectivity should be pursued not merely through self-naming and the construction of individualized *sinthome*, or through love independently, but should be explored by way of the mutual workings of love and *sinthomatic* construction. In 'Penelope,' there is a productive tension between love and *sinthomatic* eroticism. In my readings of 'Circe' and 'Cyclops,' the impact of love on the symptom/*sinthome* is also palpable. Neighbour love is characterized by the capacity of breaking through and renewing both structure and the status quo, be it symptomatic nationalism or *sinthomatic* work in terms of Bloom's idiosyncratic mixture of masochism and messianism. Furthermore, the ethical act of neighbour love arguably operates with the necessary recognition of the

Real of the Other, and the acknowledgement of inter-subjectivity because neighbour love can undermine the position of inclusive exclusion that the subaltern subject has been assigned to in bio-political domination. Neighbour love as an ethical act is therefore inherently intersubjective and opens the possibility for new possibilities at the collective level, inaugurating the re-arrangement of a new neighbourhood, which is a new way of being together. The case studies of three episodes of *Ulysses* point to a more general insight that both love and the *sinthome* are indispensable in the ethics of subaltern subjectivity, and the productive tension between love and the *sinthome* also contains ethical significance.

Lacan's encounter with Joyce has proved to be a fruitful one in psychoanalysis. While my reading of *Ulysses* is inspired by Lacan, the research goals of my dissertation do not dwell on an application of Lacanian theory in analyzing a modernist manifesto, but attempt to explore how literary works can contribute to and inspire the theoretical construction and transformation of psychoanalysis, ethics, politics and post-colonial studies. The specific fruit of a theoretically-minded textual analysis can also lead to a more generalized insight in psychoanalysis and the ethics of subaltern subjectivity.

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