

# Edifying spectacle at UCD

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“They were there gathered together without distinction of social class (and a most edifying spectacle it was to see) in that simple fane beside the waves, after the storms of this weary world...” (*U*, 13.284-286)

This quotation summarises the most important feature of this colloquium. The accessibility of the speakers was one of the most outstanding aspects of this gathering last April in Dublin. Young scholars really appreciated the presence and contact with some of the most productive Joyceans nowadays. We all have read articles and books written by these scholars. Meeting them is an excellent opportunity to see “how they are when they are at home.” In Dublin we were able to have informal chats with all of them after the panels, while having a coffee, a glass of wine, or/and a pint of Guinness (or more than one, depending on the rounds system). They are not only eminent scholars who are able to explain how to decipher some of the most challenging passages in modern literature, but they are also great people who listen carefully to PhD candidates and provide helpful advice for their future professional careers.

“Intellectual stimulation as such was, he felt, from time to time a first-rate tonic for the mind. Added to which was the coincidence of meeting, discussion, dance, row, old salt, of the here today and gone tomorrow type” (*U*, 16.1222-1224)

Attending a colloquium seems a priori something more attractive than any other kind of conference. Considering the etymology of the word “colloquium,” one expects not only panels, but also an exchange of opinions, reflections, and time for discussions. This is indeed the most appropriate forum for PhD candidates and young scholars who are looking for inspiration for their research. At the same time, the speakers are more accessible in such a gathering. Dr Luca Crispi and Professor Anne Fogarty formed the organising committee of the Fourth Annual James Joyce Research Colloquium at UCD that took place in April 2011. They were clearly concerned with all these aspects. However, the result was undoubtedly much more impressive than anyone could anticipate. Inviting a

group of scholars such as Jean-Michel Rabaté, Sam Slote, John Nash, Katherine Mullin, Scarlett Baron, and Frank Callanan for the panels is also a remarkable way to attract a considerable group of motivated students. A varied selection of subjects was obviously an extraordinary surplus to have a broad view of Joyce studies today. The setting could not have been more inspiring for such a gathering, mainly during the sessions that took place at the National Library of Ireland in Kildare Street.

On Thursday evening we gathered at the John Hume Global Irish Institute at UCD. Professor Jean-Michel Rabaté from the University of Pennsylvania was in charge of the opening plenary lecture and presented his paper entitled “Crimes Against Fecundity.” He was mainly interested in how the stylistic game of constant variation in ‘Oxen of the Sun’ becomes the textual equivalent of “crimes against fecundity.” Professor Rabaté was in fact challenging the audience with a fascinating question: is Joyce’s novel pro-life or pro-choice? In other words, was the author trying to kill literary clichés in order to give birth to a new language in ‘Oxen of the Sun,’ or was he demonstrating his mastery over language? Throughout his talk, Professor Rabaté discussed Wolfgang Iser’s *The Implied Reader* and remarked how the style of ‘Oxen of the Sun’ is the object of attention instead of the medium, as well as how the physical birth and the birth of language allegorize the process of writing. He concluded that style is closer to a distortion of reality since it reproduces the author’s own reality, which frequently focuses on one aspect of it. After his disquisition, Professor Rabaté answered a series of questions and pointed out the limitations of non-fiction fiction. He also reflected on the impossibility of translating this chapter in *Ulysses* due to the lack of historicity, an opinion that opened a debate later on among some of us at the wine reception. Professor Rabaté’s remark on the fact that Joyce never imitates the styles of female authors throughout ‘Oxen of the Sun’ was also an issue for reflection and discussion.

The sessions on Friday took place at the Seminar Room of the National Library of Ireland on Kildare Street. Dr Luca Crispi from University College Dublin presented “Becoming the Blooms: Love, Sex, and Marriage.” We all were delighted with the speaker’s performance, and with his extraordinary proficiency in the analysis of manuscripts, which sometimes, due to Joyce’s calligraphy, seemed to be the work of an experienced graphologist. One of the most fascinating moments during the whole colloquium arrived during his excellent talk. That occurred when Luca Crispi unveiled the final page of the manuscript of ‘Penelope’ with the enigmatic closing sentence: “I said I would will Yes.” He pointed out that the tenor of the book depends on one single word: the presence or

absence of the conditional tense. The audience could only agree with him and answer with Molly's capital "Yes." His disquisition was over, but, curiously enough, everyone was reluctant to stand up and leave the Seminar Room, even considering it was already time for lunch. In fact, a debate started on the different interpretations of the two tenses that appear in this sentence, the consequences of selecting one or the other, and why Joyce decided to discard the conditional tense he had earlier inserted. It was great to see how not only Joyceans, but also some of the graduate students wanted to argue on this issue providing brilliant analyses.

After lunch we had the opportunity to listen to Dr Scarlett Baron from Magdalen College, University of Oxford, who presented a paper entitled "Joyce, Genealogy, and Intertextuality." In her paper she explained Joyce's radical intertextuality considering how Joyce arguably effects a kind of genealogical rupture between text and author by incorporating fragments from other authors' texts in his own works, and by effacing the traces of his sources for these borrowings. Then she considered Joyce's texts' thematic and tropic treatment of genealogy. We could observe a series of pieces of evidence regarding Joyce's fascination with genealogy in his works. Scarlett Baron accordingly suggested that it too would seem to argue against over-investment in textual and other paternities. Finally, she pointed out two ways in which Joyce anticipates key strands of post-structuralist thinking in these two former matters: firstly, by questioning the traditional three-part equation between authors, gods, and fathers; and secondly, by means of his use of "anastomosis" as an image for textual meshing, and as a means of simultaneously invoking and denying genealogy.

The next paper was delivered by Professor Anne Fogarty, University College Dublin, and was entitled "Why have women such eyes of witchery?: 'Nausicaa' and Nineteenth-Century Women's Fiction." In her talk, Professor Fogarty explained how 'Nausicaa' is commonly read considering the opposition between Modernism and sentimentalism. She provided evidence of how Joyce made use of the character of Gerty MacDowell to incorporate the motifs and plots of American and Irish female novels from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to prove her statement, she drew parallels between Gerty MacDowell and several characters taken from a series sources from that period, such as Gertrude from Maria Cummins' *The Lamplighter* (1854), Sydney Owenson's (Lady Morgan) *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale* (1806), Rosa Mulholland's *Marcella Grace* (1886), and Emily Lawless' *Grania* (1892). By means of a number of clear examples taken from some excerpts Professor Fogarty's convincing disquisition proved that these passages influenced

Joyce when designing the character of Gerty MacDowell and the style of 'Nausicaa.' Professor Fogarty also explained that it was not Gerty but Bloom who has undergone a moral education by the end of the episode.

After that final session, we could have a walk to Trinity College where we could attend an extra lecture on Beckett by Professor Rabaté. We also had time to have something to drink in a pub while talking about our interests. In the evening we had dinner at a nice restaurant near St Stephen's Green. These moments were ideal for getting to know each other, as well as to meet some other renowned Joyceans who also attended the colloquium, such as Terence Killeen and Fran O'Rourke.

On Saturday we returned to the John Hume Global Irish Institute. Dr John Nash from Durham University delivered the first paper of the day entitled "At Home with James Joyce." We discovered how furniture has a narrative voice, and how it speaks about the people who inhabit 7 Eccles Street. John Nash's starting point was a TIME article on Joyce's house and the contrast with Victorian houses. He explained how a house can become a museum due to an overaccumulation of things, and how it can find the balance of routine and order displaying management and conglomeration, such as in 'Ithaca,' where we find an organised and yet random setting with a dubious order. The audience was particularly amused by John Nash's observation on the description of the Blooms' kitchen shelves in 'Ithaca,' with empty pots and the "battery of jamjars of various sizes and proveniences." His question was even more intriguing than what it may seem a priori: who placed those empty pots there and why? John Nash's paper is an ideal way to get more familiar with this couple, as well as to understand some aspects regarding the Blooms and their relationship, which are undoubtedly related to the course of action of *Ulysses*. Such an approach that focuses on the narrative voice of inert objects is exceptionally attractive in hermeneutics, and John Nash's application of this technique to the study of other authors' works will definitely be received with much interest.

Dr Sam Slote from Trinity College Dublin presented then "The Gay Science of *Finnegans Wake*," a brilliant talk on the parallaxic perspectivism of Joyce's most inaccessible work. Sam Slote applied Nietzsche's *Gay Science* to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* with reflections on authorship as deity, as well as on the concept of identity – as hypostasis, and the effects of transaccidentation and transubstantiation – within *Finnegans Wake* under Joyce's omnipotent rule. He started by discussing the multiplicity of concurrent perspectives found in a work, which, according to him, is not written *in* English, but *from* English. He also reflected on the presence or absence of plot, characters, setting, and even of an author,

although his main goal was not to disambiguate the *Wake*, but to solve why it has been ambiguated. The reason can be found in the Nietzschean pluralisation of perspective that is also distinctive of Joyce's final work. Consequently, Sam Slote pointed out that instead of paronomasia, a more accurate term to describe the language of the *Wake* would be parapolylogic.

The next speaker was Frank Callanan from Dublin who spoke about "The Provenance of Harp and Harper in "Two Gallants." In his paper Frank Callanan reflected on the symbolism of the harp and the harper in "Two Gallants" throughout a study of sources of Irish history. Joyce was familiar with some of them, and they definitely influenced him to depict allegorical images of Ireland. Surprisingly, Joyce's view of the harp and the harper in "Two Gallants" seems to be inspired by a novel he was unlikely to be familiar with, *With Essex in Ireland* by Emily Lawless, an Irish author who was a unionist in politics. It is also significant how Joyce's portrait of the harp and harper followed the same pattern of other traditional motifs in the author's work, which were displayed combining an older and mythic Ireland with the tawdry reality of modern Dublin. Frank Callanan's talk was ornamented with an extremely interesting chronicle of Irish history and politics. This study of the harp and the harper was certainly useful for those of us who are interested in Joyce's use of musical symbolism in his works and the connection of such motifs with politics, mainly because of the thorough historical contextualisation provided in Frank Callanan's research. A discussion followed on politics in the works of Joyce, his vision of Ireland as an exile, as well as other controversial issues that developed in fascinating debates during the coffee break we had afterwards.

Dr Katherine Mullin from Leeds University delivered the final paper, "Anti-Treating is about the Size of It: Joyce, Drink, and the Rounds System," a sociologic study on the rounds system and the anti-treating league that paid special attention to politics and the historical background of Joyce's works. She mentioned some remarkable interpretations on how the treating question was established by the English settlers in Ireland, and how therefore the anti-treating league and the Gaelic League requested affiliation to cut profuse costs on drink and reduce tribute to the English exchequer. Also interesting to know was how Bloom's abstention at Barney Kiernan's is seen as a lack of manliness and as proof of his status as outsider.

Dr Katherine O'Callaghan, an expert in music in Joyce's works, chaired the roundtable discussion in which we all, PhD candidates, had the chance of pointing out what we had learned, and how we intended to put it into practice in our current and future

research. Such an initiative is extremely useful for students in many ways. It provides the young and future scholars with the perfect setting for a debate. Such a forum is also suitable for those who want to improve their communicative skills when speaking in public. But it is also important for students to hear how others receive their viewpoints and ideas. This can certainly be an extraordinary first contact with the kind of criticism that awaits students in their future professional careers. I must also say that I witnessed many intelligent remarks uttered by the PhD candidates during the whole conference.

During this final evening, we paid a visit to the James Joyce Centre, where we enjoyed a musical performance by the Irish tenor Noel O'Grady. Then, formal discussions turned into informal chats at the reception. A flow of anecdotes and wine followed surrounded by portraits of Joyce's family members at the James Joyce Centre first, and later on at a pub near the Liffey.

The Fourth Annual James Joyce Research Colloquium was a success. The high level of scholars who inspired the PhD candidates with their varied talks and approaches was outstanding. Also the numerous activities that were arranged for those who attended the conference were enjoyable and created the ideal setting for relaxed discussions on the matters introduced in the panels. Those moments were really rewarding, mainly because we had the opportunity to ask questions, to ask for advice, and even, to exchange opinions and have informal conversations with some of the most influential Joyceans nowadays, as well as with really talented students. Some of them, with a promising future, will undoubtedly become successful scholars. Obviously, nothing would have been possible without the careful organisation of Luca Crispi and Anne Fogarty.