

THE PERIPATETIC PERIPHERY OR JOYCE'S IMPOSSIBLE «BORDERATION»

ABSTRACT

L'articolo discute la relazione di James Joyce con la nozione di «periphery». Nella poetica di Joyce, questa nozione si riferisce a una posizione geografica specifica (Dublino), a una tipologia di marginalizzazione intellettuale e culturale e a una peculiare forma narrativa. Dallo Stephen Dedalus del *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* e dell'*Ulysses*, ai tre bambini della famiglia Porter in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce combina le coordinate, geograficamente e culturalmente periferiche, di Dublino – che per lui è al tempo stesso «the centre of the paralysis» e «the Hybernian metropolis» – con il modo in cui questi personaggi intessono le loro relazioni reciproche e cercano di posizionarsi nel contesto familiare, sociale e professionale. La sezione *night studies* (II.2) in *Finnegans Wake*, in particolare, restituisce una meta-riflessione sulla periferia in connessione con l'atto stesso di scrivere e con lo spazio che occupa sulla pagina. Segmenti testuali, differenti e apparentemente indipendenti, sono quindi collocati al centro e ai margini della pagina, dando luogo a una narrazione a una contro-narrazione che modificano in modo significativo l'esperienza di lettura.

This article discusses James Joyce's engagement with the multifarious notion of «periphery». In Joyce's poetics it refers to a specific geographical position (Dublin), a kind of intellectual and cultural marginalisation and a peculiar narrative form. From the Stephen Dedalus of the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and of *Ulysses* to the three children of the Porters family in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce conflates the peripheral geographical and cultural coordinates of Dublin - which to him is at the same time «the centre of the paralysis» and «the Hybernian metropolis»- with the way those characters establish their relationships with each other and try to position themselves in the familiar, social and professional context. The *night studies* section of II.2 in *Finnegans Wake*, in particular, offers a meta-reflection on periphery related to the very act of writing and the space it occupies on the page. Hence different and apparently independent textual segments are placed in the centre and the margins of the page, producing a narrative and counternarrative that significantly modifies the reading experience.

their long narrow eyes slid round and fixed upon them
with the motionless inexpensive gaze of those removed
from each other far far beyond the plunge of speech.
Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*

GEOGRAPHICAL PERIPHERIES

The quotation «peripatetic periphery» belongs to *Finnegans Wake* II.2. (298.28-29)¹. It refers to the so called *night studies* and in particular to Shem's glosses to the school book that he, Shaun, and Issy are studying and annotating, as their father, the pub keeper HCE, is serving beer downstairs. Although the quotation is specific to the context of the episode, I find that it perfectly encapsulates Joyce's major preoccupations about a kind of (self) marginalization – similar to Stephen Dedalus' self-inflicted exile – which seems to be the *condicio sine qua non* for any artistic production. Such a peculiar negotiation of space results in a continuous geographical repositioning on both a biographical and fictional level, as well as in a kind of writing that challenges traditional narrative forms, such as the novel or the short story, with its multiple language codes and peculiar use of layout.

The adjective «peripatetic» evokes Aristotle, a prominent reference point in Joyce's aesthetics. Here, however, I am not interested in considering the possible connections between Aristotle's philosophy and the children's annotations, rather I wish to draw attention to Aristotle's peculiar didactic method, whereby – legend goes – he used to teach and exchange philosophical perspectives with his students while they walked around the school garden. «Peripatetic» is in fact a transliteration of the ancient Greek *peripatêtikos*, meaning «of walking». Remarkably, such a form of knowledge production is consistent with Joyce's notion of the «same anew», as he proposes it in the *Wake*, whereby it is precisely in the «circling around», in the incessant repetition of the same that we make our discoveries². Periphery, on the one hand, tautologically refers to the already mentioned gloss that Shem positions on the left-hand margin of the text-book, on the other it becomes the paradigm of Joyce's writing as a whole: a writing that is marginalized because of censorship (the editorial and publication history of *Ulysses* is certainly the most apparent example) or because its complexity is such that it inevitably distances the reader. This is the case of *Ulysses*, and even more so of *Finnegans Wake*, whose peculiar idiolect seems to discourage even the bravest reader. By inserting marginalia to the main/central text, Joyce proposes a counter-discourse and produces an infinite hermeneutical *myse-en-abime*, whereby the kind of margins (metaphorical or real that they may be) Joyce employs, never close, never lead to a stable, final layout or structure. It is, indeed, an impossible «borderation», that Joyce creates in his works. This is another quotation from the *Wake* III.3, when during his trial HCE is questioned by four judges collectively called «Mamalujo» after the initials of the four evangelists. To substantiate their argument against HCE, they invoke

¹ JOYCE 1975. All the quotations from this book will be given in parentheses after the text and are indicated by the initials *FW*, followed by page and line number. As a matter of fact, all editions of *Finnegans Wake* have had the same pagination since it was first published in 1939.

² With its Vichian representation of history in *corsi* and *ricorsi* (from which the very concept of the «seim anew» derives), *Finnegans Wake* is certainly the most apparent example of this form of «repetition with variation», however it could be said that all of Joyce's works on different levels present circular and recursive features. See BEJA 2004-2005.

the 1542 Act, also known as “The crown of Ireland Act”, which states that «the king of England, his heirs and successors be kings of Ireland». On the basis of that act they make a distinction between the vile “subject” HCE and themselves, as representatives of the nation in power: «but there’s all the difference in Ireland between your borderation, my chatty cove, and me» (528.28-29).

The «difference» between HCE’s «borderation» and the «me» represented by Mamalujo opens the text to another prominent feature about periphery, which is the complex relation between England (presented as the centre) and Ireland (presented as the periphery), a recurring theme in all of Joyce’s works. The very mention of Ireland posits questions about nationality, (post) colonial identities, and obviously language. I find that ultimately the very act of «borderation» associated with HCE in his role of Everyman (HCE can also be the acronym of «Here Comes Everybody») proves to be impossible, as I suggest in the title, because the process of creating borders and therefore nations («borderation» could be read as a crisis between border and nation) is never fully achieved or accomplished. There is a constant risk of contamination and multiplicity that undermines any attempt to differentiate and separate. Remarkably, further on in the chapter, Mamalujo-the-accuser (representing the English nation in its position of cultural dominance) and HCE-the-defendant (representing the increasing subaltern condition of Ireland, especially after the 1542 Act) seem to blend, to become opposing aspects of a composite personality, making it difficult for the reader to distinguish between the two³. Christy L. Burns considers such a multiplication and juxtaposition of identities the natural result of a (post) colonial scenario, which *Finnegans Wake* so perfectly exemplifies:

In contrast to the colonizing nature of England’s attempts to map Ireland, Joyce’s cartography in *Finnegans Wake* evades the will to control and multiplies identities and verbal references in a way that embraces a postmodern refusal of essences. Indeed, if mimetic representation can further colonial control of a country, then the postmodern defines a kind of postcolonial consciousness that moves beyond the internalized polarities that are the legacy of colonization. The conflict that these two cartographies (postmodern and imperialist) reveal might be between postcolonialism and a narrow form of nationalism⁴.

Joyce’s biography represents in itself a paradigm of such a “cartographical conflict”. He began his career at the peripheries of Europe, or at least at the periphery of the Europe that really counted from both a cultural and political point of view. Although in his European wanderings he first moved to Paris and then to Zurich, he set his works in Dublin, which was to him the “centre” of a cultural and social paralysis of epic proportions. Literally. At the same time Joyce’s Dublin represents the archetype of the modern metropolis and the remains of a lost world unable to cope with contemporary social and historical changes. Joyce’s works address the urge to redefine (geographical) boundaries and re-map a city that, despite its stagnating atmosphere, continues to

³ As I have mentioned earlier Mamalujo himself is already a composite character, the result of a combination of other undifferentiated characters.

⁴ BURNS 2008. For further studies on hybridized identities in Joyce see also RICHARD 2001.

escape any kind of cartographical definition. The borders Joyce is interesting in set the limits and possibilities in the characters' agency. This is the case with Leopold Bloom, whose perigrinations through Dublin map the movements of his conscience. The part of the city he allows himself to walk in or the places he can go to are all marked by his emotional response to very personal matters. See for instance his attempts to avoid meeting Boylan just before his encounter with Molly. Thus, as Bloom follows his route, Dublin's borders expand and contract accordingly.

In the first chapter of the *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen studies geography but he seems to be unable to visualize the places described in the book or trace the borders between countries. As he tries to connect them to an ever-expanding universe, his topographical understanding of the world continues to shift between space and place, movement and location⁵. Ireland makes no exception, it does contribute to Stephen's epistemological impasse:

He opened the geography to study the lesson; but he could not learn the names of places in America. Still they were all different places that had different names. They were all in different countries and the countries were in continents and the continents were in the world and the world was in the universe. He turned to the leaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was.

Stephen Dedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Sallins
County Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
The Universe⁶

What Stephen is reading about geography does not seem to leave any memory trace behind. He is lost without a clue, names and borders do not stick in his memory, which makes it harder and harder to actually locate himself provided with a geographical context. As he progresses from «Clongowes Wood College» to «The Universe», he describes a movement from finite to infinite, from periphery to centre and beyond:

What was after the universe?
Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began?
It could not be a wall; but there could be a thin thin line there all round everything. It was very big to think about everything and everywhere⁷.

⁵ I am here referring to the well-known distinction between space and place as it has been discussed by a number of philosophers and geographers, such as Heidegger, Bachelard, Lefebvre, Foucault, de Certau and Harvey. For an account of their views and perspectives within modernism see THACKER 2003.

⁶ JOYCE 2004, p. 14.

⁷ Ivi, p. 15.

Stephen's urge to understand the possible extension of the universe makes him also consider its supposed limits, imagining that a thin line defines its very borders. Further, expressions such as «round the universe» and «all round everything» seem to suggest that Stephen is assigning the universe a circular shape, which he is ideally trying to circumscribe. The very act of circumscribing echoes the notion of periphery, at least in its original meaning, from the Greek *periphēria*: «circumference, outer surface, line round a circular body».⁸ Stephen is trying to mentally reach the limits of the universe and to move from a periphery (Dublin, the very place in which he is living) to another, the periphery of the universe, without passing through the centre. Such an operation is consistent with Stephen's biography, and in particular with his determination that he boldly announces to Cranly at the end of the *Portrait*, the results of which are reported in *Ulysses*. The self-imposed exile in Paris, which in theory should lead Stephen to the life he has always longed for, does not prove to be effective. To him Paris, the very centre of Europe, is no different from the periphery he comes from, because the periphery Stephen cannot escape is ontological rather than geographical. Stephen is "peripheral" in the way he relates to his friends and acquaintances, in his self-marginalization from any kind of social and cultural context. This is consistent with what Andrew Thacker notices of *Ulysses* (but it could be extended to all of Joyce's works): «the space and its geography is always informed by social and political relationships».⁹ I would add that the very mapping of geographical spaces in Joyce is shaped by personal and emotional interactions (psychic space): there is not just one Dublin, there are many and they change according to the characters' perceptions and narrative context. To use Lefebvre's spatial categories, this is what happens when the representational space overlays (and therefore modifies) the representations of space¹⁰.

Hence when Stephen comes back to Dublin to see his dying mother, he is a defeated man, who proved unable to fulfill his task and realize his projects. Remarkably, in the *Telemachus* episode of *Ulysses*, it is the much-loathed Buck Mulligan, who acknowledges Stephen's tendency to withdraw from any social and cultural context. On the one hand, Stephen exhibits a highbrow attitude towards the representatives of Dublin's cultural world, on the other he refuses any confrontation because he is afraid of being judged or, what's worst, mocked by them. However Mulligan only perceives Stephen's aura of intellectual superiority, which he associates with a somewhat «hyperborean quality» that he also possesses:

—You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you, Buck Mulligan said. I'm hyperborean as much as you. But to think of your mother begging you with her last breath to kneel down and pray for her. And you refused. There is something sinister in you....¹¹

⁸ Online Etymology Dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/periphery>, accessed 18.05.18.

⁹ THACKER 2003, p. 116.

¹⁰ LEFEBVRE 1991.

¹¹ JOYCE 1986. All the quotations from this book will be given in parentheses after the text and indicated by the initial *U*, followed by episode and line number (1.91-94).

In Mulligan's personal jargon «hyperborean» means something like «detached» and «upstream», by connecting it to Stephen's choice not to kneel down and hence grant his mother's last wish, he implies that Stephen has gone too far in acting like a maverick. Indeed to Mulligan this is the ultimate form of self-marginalization, as well as self-sabotage. The disturbing «sinister» aspect of Stephen's behaviour will eventually lead him to a life of solitude and contempt, quintessentially peripheral on both a personal and professional level.

Mulligan's peculiar use of the adjective «hyperborean» deserves closer analysis. In Greek mythology «hyperborean» referred to a particular race of Giants, who lived beyond the «North Wind». The Greeks thought that Boreas, the god of the North Wind lived in Thrace, and therefore Hyperborea indicated a region that lay far to the north of Thrace. This land was supposed to be magical with the sun shining twenty-four hours a day, which made it more similar to a kind of Utopia than to a real place¹². Notably in *The Book of Invasions*¹³, it was the Celts to be identified as «Hyperboreans». This book also stated that the civilization of the far north was established by migrants from Ireland, which connected Hyperboreans to Irish. Hence through this probably forged account of Irish history, Hyperborean becomes a synonym of Irish identity and paradoxically the «hyperborean Stephen» can be regarded as the champion of a collective identitarian affirmation. Indeed, such a reading of «hyperborean» connects to Joyce's ambivalent position about the Irish revival and those cultural movements that proposed to redefine the very notion of Irishness no longer, or at least not merely, in terms of an irretrievable pastoral innocence, but as the only possible cultural and literary reality that could represent the changes and urban reconfigurations of a city like Dublin, which aspired to become a metropolis¹⁴.

Furthermore, «hyperborean» associates Stephen with the Swedish scientist and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg, who founded The New Jerusalem Church to which William Blake belonged for some years. As early as 1911, the year of his lecture on William Blake, Joyce displays a certain interest on Swedenborg's mysticism and on the scientific journal *Daedalus Hyperboreus*, which he personally issued between 1716 and 1717. This is probably the original source for Mulligan's definition of Stephen. Swedenborg's contentious beliefs led him to an irreversible process of marginalization from the scientific community that could be compared to Stephen's personal experience with his fellow intellectuals. Indeed, Stephen's cultural isolation reaches its acme in the *Scylla and Charybdis* episode of *Ulysses* when his philosophical and lit-

¹² Scholars hypothesize that the real location might be the Arctic circle.

¹³ *The Book of Invasions* (in Gaelic *Lebor Gabála Érenn*) was a pseudo-historical text circulating in the Middle Ages, in which Ireland was described as a land invaded and settled by successive Celtic tribes over different periods. The people of Ireland in medieval times had never believed that the Gaelic speaking people were native of their land. Their assumptions were largely based upon this pseudo-historical book and *Cath Maige Tuired* or *The Second Battle of Maige Tuired*.

¹⁴ On Irish identity, cultural marginalization against the context of literary modernism, see VILLAR-ARGAIZ 2018; SEIDEL 1976a; HAMPSON 2005. On Joyce's considerations about the Irish revival and Dublin as both a metropolis and the centre of a cultural paralyis see LANIGAN 2014.

erary theories, discussed at the National Library, showcase his eccentricity in the most literal sense of the word.

I would like to conclude this section with a quotation from *Aeolus*, the episode of *Ulysses* set at the headquarters of the *Freeman's Journal*, where Stephen submits Mr. Deasy's article on foot and mouth disease. The episode is divided into sixty-three newspaper headlines, of which the first one reads: «IN THE HEART OF THE HIBERNIAN METROPOLIS» (*U* 7.1-2). This title signals a specific geographical location, it situates the newsroom of the *Freeman's Journal* into the heart of Dublin, the Hibernian metropolis – Hibernia being the Latin name for the region that became Ireland¹⁵. Remarkably, towards that heart both Stephen and Bloom, the outcast heroes of the novel, converge. Thacker comments on the irony of the headline which defines Dublin as a metropolis suggesting that Joyce: «seems equivocal over the status of this city: Hibernian heart, but not the central organ of a nation since London is still the imperial capital of Ireland»¹⁶. Stephen is quite aware that Dublin metropolitanism cannot compete with London, he knows that any attempt at changing this situation is destined to fail. Indeed, the hectic atmosphere of the newsroom, the clatter of the typewriters that fills the air, the banging on the doors, the never-ending meetings and discussions, all of that clashes with the stagnant intellectual condition of the people who work in that place: supposed brilliant journalists who cannot detect a writer or a possible talent (as Stephen could be) when they see one. Hence Stephen's presence at the *Freeman's* and his marginalization is evidence of Dublin provincialism rather than metropolitanism. Such a condition is not simply recounted, it is also represented through the morphology of the text. Much has been said about the challenging textual construction of *Aeolus*¹⁷, here it will suffice to notice that this peculiar layout can be regarded as a typographical translation of the political, social and cultural interplay between margin and centre. Thus the capitalized tags interact with the other textual segments precisely like an urban centre metaphorically and materially interacts with the extreme margin of the city.

Although *Aeolus* is probably the most overt example of this interplay between textual and geographical spaces, it could be argued that every episode of *Ulysses* queries our reading practices, as the configuration of the textual material even when it seems traditionally arranged challenges the spatial layout as well as the flow of narrative. I find that the typographical implications of *Aeolus* are somehow anticipated by the last part of *Proteus*, which significantly presents Stephen's only attempt at composing a piece of creative writing, scribbled at the margins of Mr. Deasy's covering letter for his article.

In the next section I shall discuss Stephen's "marginalia" in *Proteus* and the chil-

¹⁵ It is remarkable that Ireland is referred to with its Latin name and not in Gaelic. For the Roman Empire, Ireland was certainly a peripheral location, a land to conquer and annex. Joyce here is mocking the absolute lack of a sense of history among the intellectuals who compose the editorial staff of the newspaper.

¹⁶ THACKER 2003, p. 118.

¹⁷ See for instance DONOVAN 2003; RADAK, 2018.

dren's schoolbook annotations in the *Wake* in terms of textual space and marginal writing. They represent the most effective examples of Joyce's engagement with space, whereby the spread of text on the page and the geographical position of the characters in a specific urban context interrelate and concur in the construction of narration.

GEO-TEXTUAL PERIPHERIES

Proteus opens with Stephen's meditations on Aristotle as he walks around the "peripatos" of Sandymount strand. His stream of consciousness reveals his feelings and anxieties about a number of issues: his mother's death, his troubled relationship with his father and, more prosaically, his need to find a place to stay for the night, after his decision not to return to the Martello Tower, the old military post at the periphery of the city. Moreover, Stephen's stream of consciousness discloses the artist's mind in the course of artistic creation when his emotions and experience are about to be transfigured into a work of art. It occurs precisely when he has no place to go and needs to move from periphery to the city centre to pursue his career as a writer. I would argue that Stephen's peculiar geographical and psychological position is consistent with his one and only attempt to compose something creative (or at least the only attempt that the reader is allowed to see), which surprisingly is not a piece of fiction as one would expect but a few scattered lines of a poem. Lines that do not seem particularly original or creative, rather they seem to be the remnants of the conversation with Mr. Deasy and of his remarks about his article on foot and mouth disease that Stephen was asked to submit at the *Freeman's Journal*. Like a tune stuck in one's head, Mr. Deasy's words echo in Stephen's mind, and combine with other thoughts, thoughts about his mother, her kiss, a woman's kiss, death, blood and other fluids. Stephen crystalizes all of these images into the figure of the vampire, that has been repeatedly evoked in the episode¹⁸:

He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth's kiss. [...] His lips lipped and mouthed fleshless lips of air: mouth to her moomb. Oomb, allwombing tomb. His mouth moulded issuing breath, unspeached: ooeeah: roar of catacratic planets, globed, blazing, roaring wayawayawayawayaway. Paper. The banknotes, blast them. Old Deasy's letter. Here. Thanking you for the hospitality tear the blank end off. Turning his back to the sun he bent over far to a table of rock and scribbled words. (U 3.404-407)

As Stephen is trying to choose the most suitable words and the right rhythm for his poem, he feels the need to write what he has in mind, to transfer it on a piece of paper. He only has banknotes (that are quite useless for this purpose) and Deasy's article, so he decides to write at the margins of Deasy's covering letter for the *Freeman's*. Stephen mentally reads Deasy's last words «Thanking you for the hospitality» and immediately after, so immediately that Joyce does not insert any punctuation in the sentence, he «tear[s] the blank end off» and writes his lines. In this regard, the word «hospitality»

¹⁸ For further studies on Stephen's vampire poem see SEIDEL 1976b, DAY 1980 and OREM 2011.

is particularly meaningful. Not only does it refer to Mr. Deasy's acknowledgements to the editors of the journal, but also to his involuntary sharing of the writing space with Stephen: his poem finds its place in the space that is left blank at the margins of someone else's writing. Someone who has no ambition of becoming an artist and yet, to Stephen's scorn, has managed to be published, to find a place in the *Freeman's*, better than Stephen who can only act as a messenger.

In this perspective the vampire motif presents many analogies with Stephen's personal situation: his poem can only exist by exploiting others' words and spaces, analogously the vampire's existence depends on finding human blood, and therefore consuming others' lives. Reversing the Mr. Deasy/*Freeman's Journal* situation, it is now Stephen, his writing, that can only *materialize* at someone's else expense. Such a double bind reinforces the argument of Stephen's ontological periphery: the only writing he can produce is a text the needs to call for a continuous reconfiguration of space and textual hierarchies, because this is a writing of movement and change. It is not by chance that Stephen's only artistic sample is produced in an episode named after Proteus, the sea god of change and fluidity.

What we have just discussed in *Proteus* paves the way for the complex layout of II.2 of *Finnegans Wake* in which, as I have mentioned earlier, the "fluidity" of the text is disrupted by the children's marginalia. Moreover the text that runs at the centre of the page functions both as the main narrative and as the schoolbook the children are studying, on which they are taking notes and adding footnotes.

From a genetic point of view, Joyce initially conceived of the chapter as a unique text without any particularly original layout. Only after various revisions did he decide to add some textual material in the form of annotation and footnotes to be ascribed to the children. Hence he first added the italics on the left hand margin of the page, ascribed to Shem (the penman, the writer), then added other textual material to put on the right hand margin of the page to be ascribed to Shaun (the postman, the orator), and eventually he decided to insert some footnotes on the text that would be assigned to Issy¹⁹. Joyce wanted to convey the idea that the children read from their schoolbook and gloss it at the same time, each of them in his/her own personal way. It should be also noticed that at some point Shem and Shaun exchange their position and so Shem's annotations are placed on the right hand margin and vice versa (unfortunately this change is not detectable by the use of the italics, because the writing on the left maintain this particular font).

Commenting on Stephen's poem I noticed the strong interrelationship that it establishes with Deasy's text, both in terms of imagery and word choice. There is no trace of such parasitical exchange in II.2 because most of the textual material that runs on the margins of the page originally belonged to other sections of the novel. In *Finnegans Wake* this peripheral insertions of blocks of text functions as a counter-discourse or a counter-narrative that, while it opposes the main narrative, tries to surpass it. The incoherence of the boys' glosses at the margin of the text suggests also that they are try-

¹⁹ For a genetic reconstruction of II.2 see CRISPI 2007.

ing to achieve intellectual independence formulating their own theories and proposing their own vision of the world. In this regard, the “night studies” section represents another repetition with variation of one of the *Wake*’s major motifs, i.e. the brothers’ struggle (which includes Freudian sexual rivalry for the attention of their mother and sister) and their wish to overcome the parents (in particular the father)²⁰.

Moreover the children’s peripheral annotations challenge a traditional notion of knowledge that relates to something that cannot be questioned, only accepted. By refuting that interpretation of knowledge the children are also refuting the notion of the *ipse dixit*, the authority of the father figure (in all its possible extensions). The more these textual interventions seem incoherent with the main text, the more they mark the children’s intellectual autonomy, bringing them closer and closer to the moment in which they will supersede their parents, and take their place, power and authority²¹. In particular Shem’s and Shaun’s annotations on the left and right margin are evidence of the stages of the development of their consciousness, which is destined to eventually become one²². As Crispi has argued, II.2 describes the crucial passage in which the children differentiate from the father and struggle to express their own identities, accordingly their glosses mark the moment of the loss of their innocence, so that «the novo taken place of what stale words whilom were woven» (*FW* 292.20-21)²³.

The kind of layout Joyce created for II.2 is also reminiscent of Derrida’s experimental writings in *Glas* or in “Tympan” (*Margin of Philosophy*), whereby the text at the margin has the ambivalent function of filling the narrative of the central text (by supplementing more text) and producing a counter-utterance that disrupts it. Such a simultaneous interplay between disruption and creation is always already given in the language of the *Wake*. Its *portmanteau* words are bottomless boxes that can contain a virtually infinite number of meanings and (personal, historical) memories. Through their peculiar annotations at the same time the children add to the central text and remove or subtract something. In their role of readers and students, the children offer their own interpretation of the schoolbook’s contents, they choose from among the possible meanings and memories kept in those words. Theirs is the ‘writing of disremembering’, which entails a willed act of forgetting, dismembering, recreating, only after those stages they can remember again, when their voices and writing become one. This complex combination of inherited points of view and polyphonic discourses can be compared to what Bakhtin defines as hybridization, which mixes not only two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, but also two *socio-linguistic* consciousnesses, two epochs, that come together «within the arena of the utter-

²⁰ For in-depth analysis of the brothers’ battle see, among others, HAYMAN 1990; FORDHAM 2007.

²¹ From a temporal point of view, II.2 describes the lapse of time between evening and midnight, whereas III and IV describe that between midnight and dawn, when the parents will be definitively overcome.

²² I have discussed elsewhere Shem’s and Shaun’s consciousness in terms of left and right hemispheres within the context of the theories about lateralization of the brain function, which were contemporary to Joyce. See VOLPONE 2018.

²³ CRISPI 2007, p. 216.

ance»²⁴. Hybridization overcomes authoritative discourse and its unconditional allegiance which permits no play with the context framing it, and no play with borders.

In the *night studies* section, HCE's narrative and the contents of the schoolbook concur in the construction of the authoritative discourse the central text is imbued with. By contrast, the composite nature of the children's glosses undermines the monolithic quality of such a discourse, producing crevices and breaches: in this "space in-between", a different language, with different words can be created. The children refuse to ventriloquize desires, hierarchies and cultures that they do not recognize as their own, they make the limits and the borders of that text porous and permeable²⁵. In III.4, when HCE's role as a father and holder of traditional cultural values is eventually superseded by Shem and Shaun, Mamalujo comments on the scene in Esperanto signaling the need to "celebrate" the children's passage into adulthood through the use of a new language and therefore the adoption of different cultural values²⁶. Remarkably those values are to be created *ex-nihilo* since Esperanto is an artificial language with no cultural, historical or political context.

I would like to conclude my reflection on Joyce's peripheries by offering some final considerations on Issy's footnotes and her own peripheral writing. Unlike her brothers, she never changes her space in the page, at times she appears distracted, not interested in the book they are studying, as if she were lost in her stream of consciousness. From a genetic point of view, Issy's footnotes represent the last addition to the chapter, they date back to Joyce's most difficult moment in life, when his daughter Lucia's mental derangement became a fact (between 1933 and 1935), indeed the character of Issy has many features in common with Lucia²⁷. Perhaps out of love and affection for his daughter, Joyce assigns to Issy's marginal writing a crucial function in the text, one could even say that Issy's is the most creative peripheral writing presented in the *Wake*.

Her footnote 1 on page 279 is an attempt to rewrite ALP's letter, the *Mamafesta*, which, as it becomes clear in I.5, represents the "heart" of the text, its ur-source. Among the subjects she and her brothers are studying, Issy is only interested in the parts that teach how to write a letter, in the style of eighteenth century conduct books. As if she were another Pamela or Clarissa, Issy's fictional letters recount her own story, which is nothing but a repetition with variation of the *Mamafesta* and therefore of the *Wake* itself: accordingly the contents of Issy's letter refer to her future husband and her attempts to justify his supposedly guilty behavior. One could also consider Issy's footnote as an invite to take a detour, another point of departure from the central text that leads to another writing and narrative. Incidentally, this is consistent with ALP's communicative intentions for her *Mamafesta*, «the document of the family drama»,

²⁴ BAKHTIN 1981, p. 358.

²⁵ The reference to central and marginal discourses, the polyphonies and multivocalities of the characters, and the peculiar use Joyce makes of the English language in the *Wake* can certainly be open to a postcolonial reading. See ATTRIDGE – MARJORIE 2000; ORR 2008.

²⁶ Notably the whole chapter is a rewriting of Freud's wolfman case, which stages a young boy's conflictual relation with his parents in the form of Oedipal complex. See FERRER 2007.

²⁷ See among others HAYMAN 2007; SCOTT 1984; EIDE 2002.

as Mikio Fuse defines it²⁸. Notably, some of its passages could also be traced back to an incestuous message by Issy to HCE, which already turns Issy into an author and therefore a rival for Anna Livia (in order to become an adult, Issy has to replace her mother in all of her roles).

The letter writing appears to be a feminine quality, a task that only women can properly perform:

All the world's in want and is writing a letters.^ A letters from a person to a place about a thing. And all the world's on wish to be carrying a letters. A letters to a king about a treasure from a cat.* When men want to write a letters. Ten men, ton men, pen men, pun men, wont to rise a ladder. And den men, dun men, fen men, fun men, hen men, hun men wend to raze a leader. Is then any lettersday from many peoples, Daganasanavitch? Empire, your outermost.^ A posy cord. Piece.

^ To be slipped on, to be slept by, to be conned to, to be kept up. And when you're done push the chain (*FW* 278.14-25)

Here again, Joyce combines high literature with everyday life, the artistic value of the poetic utterance with the filthiness and triviality of some of its contents, whereby «when you're done push the chain». A suggestion that is reminiscent of Leopold Bloom's "reading session" at the lavatory, where he peruses the trashy magazine *Titbits*, in the "Calypso" episode of *Ulysses*. It is worth reminding here that ALP's letter is found by a hen on a heap of dung and that throughout the *Wake* Joyce toys with the puns dung/ding, letter/litter that lead to the notion of "litterature".

Finally I find it particularly revealing that the last school assignment the children have to fulfill is the writing of a letter. They all concur to its composition, although it is only Issy who can actually accomplish this task. The *Nightletter* and the doodles that go with it²⁹ are not placed on a marginal position in relation to the central text, simply because there is no longer a central text. Shem, Shaun and Issy's writing occupies the entire page. Indeed, what was once the central text has now made way for another kind of narrative, recounted with another kind of language: the revolution of the next generation has begun.

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²⁸ FUSE 2007.

²⁹ Incidentally ALP's Mamafesta is also presented as the document that relates the members of the «Doodle Family» (*FW* 294.54), see FUSE 2007.

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