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**JAMES JOYCE'S EUROPEANISM**

(EUROPENISMUL LUI JAMES JOYCE)

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**Key-words:** *Irishness, Europeanism, literary canon, local, national, trans-national, reception, modernism*

### ABSTRACT

The doctoral thesis explores James Joyce's modernism(s) as a progressive negotiation of different critical and aesthetic labels that supplement, complement and complete each other in the act of reading, whereby Europeanism is the outcome of a series of attempts at localizing or including the Irish writer within a larger context. The novelty of the thesis resides in the fact that it advances a postbinaristic reading of Joyce as a European author (the Irish component being presupposed, recycled and accommodated in the continental label).

### SUMMARY

The present thesis is not so much a reading of James Joyce from a certain (post-local, post-national, post-colonial) perspective, but rather a reading of the author's early readers and their efforts to locate the writer within an aesthetic label (shifting from naturalism, realism, the avant-garde or, later, modernism) or in a culturally geographical space (whereby they would identify Joyce as an Irish, a British, a continental or, eventually, an international writer of fiction). The thesis could be read as an overview of both these labelling strategies which become illustrative not only for the author under discussion, but also for his early audience and their difficulties in framing Joycean fiction under a unifying vision, label or name. The cause of this critical *undecidability* could be said to reside in a twofold dilemma circumscribing both Joyce's complexity of writing and the protean nature of his fiction (which radically changes – in style and

technique – from *D* to *U* and *FW*) and the audience’s critical blind spots in deciding whether this fiction is *good* or *bad*, acceptable or indecent, and hence, their hesitation in reading Joyce as a classic (often assimilated to the Russian writing tradition, to Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turghenev) or as a modern (going beyond the Flaubertian tradition, into innovation).

The focus on Joyce’s *Europeanism* starts with a broad examination of the concept that we conventionally associate to anything that can be attributed to the European culture and tradition, stemming from the Judeo-Greek and Roman heritage, while potentially transcending local, regional or national values and coordinates. Our understanding of the concept borrows a postbinaristic significance in that it issues Europeanism as inclusive of the local, the regional and the national. Joyce’s Europeanism cannot be discussed outside any of the following two frameworks: one cannot ignore the abundance of Irishness that his fiction features at the level of language, imaginary, topos or that of the continental overtones that permeate his writing, from the European writers’ influence (Ibsen being the most frequently quoted) to his attuning in the modernist fashion of writing an urban novel. The concept itself is a blending of tradition (“Europe”) and innovation (“-ism” – like most isms at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it points to a revolutionary moment, trend, a shift towards what seemed, at the time of his writing, an avant-gardist type of aesthetics).

The structure of the thesis covers three main sections devoted to: a) the theoretical apparatus exploring Joyce’s canonicity and the mechanisms of reception theories at play in the reading of the Irish writer; b) the progressive unfolding of the aesthetic and geographic labels generated by Joyce’s early critics in their responses to a fiction of both cumulative realistic detail and proliferating innovative forms, of both the familiar classicism in the use of myth and the radical unfamiliarity of language and style; c) the (a)political implications deriving from Joyce’s treatment of the local, the national and trans-national.

**Part 1** opens with an insight into the mechanisms of the literary canon formation and Joyce’s canonization. Subchapter **1.1.** revolves around key-concepts, among which: *norm*, *standard*, *tradition*, *institutional and normative value*, *order*, *rewriting*, *revisionism*, *world literature*, *internationalization* and also around the biographical material focusing on: a) Joyce’s classicization, canonization by way of publishing strategies (the case of the 1969 Penguin Classics’ edition of Joyce – a carefully directed promotional plan and prefiguration of the subsequent institutionalization with higher education); b) Joyce’s canonization by the founders of

the Joyce industry, where the names of Stuart Gilbert (and his 1931 study of *U*, reissued as a companion to the Penguin edition), Herbert Gorman (and his 1939 biographical study of Joyce), Richard Ellmann's *Ulysses – A Short History* (featuring in the Penguin edition as a tightly controlled publishing plan) accompany and closely assist Joyce's gradual inclusion in the series of the "academically respectable" writers. The subsection also recovers the history of Joyce's internationalization (by inclusion in the "new order of values" as early as 1922) with a view to exemplifying a symptomatology of canon formation at large.

Subchapter 1.2. regards Joyce's canonic grounding on Homer, the Bible and Shakespeare – with a mind to reverse the intertextual trajectory, whereby Joyce's canonicity resides in the *revisitation by anticipation* or *plagiarism by anticipation* – a syntagm used by Pierre Bayard. Joyce's texts are, accordingly, anticipated by Homer, the Bible and Shakespeare in an exercise of *retroactive semantification* (Fritz Senn's analysis of the process of backward influence in relation to Joyce-Homer), by means of which Homer or Shakespeare are better understood through their reading of Joyce. Passages in *U* frequently allude to the reversal of the conventionally chronological flow, as in:

So in the future, the sister of the past, I may see myself as I sit here now but by reflection from that which I then shall be. (*U* 9.383-05)

Theoretical considerations include a reshuffling of *intertextuality* which, according to Robert Alter turns Joyce's writings into a web of "citational reality", where certain elements are puzzle-like displaced and replaced in other parts. This allows us to revert to recent reception theories investigating the strategic dynamism of intertextuality and its links to lectocentric positions assumed by Jauss, Ingarden, Iser (with a focus on his *gaps* and *blanks* in the text). The archeology of this citational reality transforms Joyce's fiction into a real playground for reception studies speculating on the role of the reader and the textual mobility in exchanging and interchanging fictional texts with other texts. This is termed – according to Joseph Pucci – *allusion* (instead of *intertextuality*), whereby the reader identifies two intertextualized pieces of writing in a larger *allusive space*, and their corresponding or shared components are identified as *attexts* (provisional, transitory passages that are transferred from one text to another in a logic of the *at-text* orientation). The undeniable complexity and difficulty of fiction as denounced by Joyce's readers pinpoint to the blanking of the reader himself, to his being downplayed by the text and to the vulnerable position that Joyce's audience assumes in the act of reading. Hence,

early readers' inability to assign Joyce a certain label and the constant hesitation in balancing criteria of aesthetic evaluation.

**Part 2** represents the core demonstration of the thesis, with its progressive analysis of the labels attached to Joycean fiction by the early readers of *D*, *P*, and *U*. The synthetic approach of this demonstration is aimed at both regrouping reactions and offering a timeline in the history of Joyce's early reception (as recorded in the *Critical Heritage*). It rests on Joyce's Europeanism as challenge and transgression of aesthetic labels, from naturalism, to realism, the avant-garde and modernism, with an intensive reading of both Joycean fiction and non-fiction (his *Critical Writings* spanning over forty years of the author's life ). In gradually figuring and transfiguring labels, part 2 illustrates the incompatibility between Joyce's aesthetics and recognizable, traditional labels available at the time of his writing and early reception. While Joyce's books of fiction prove uncomfortable (when not plainly indecent in the eyes of his readers), his critical and journalistic writings accommodate a wide range of interests in the literature of the day, of the continent and in Ireland's political profile. What both fictional and non-fictional works share is the constant return to Irish matters (Irish theatrical performances, Irish writers, Irish political leaders, the latest Irish political debates, Irish history and Irish nationalism) – but always in the vicinity of articles devoted aesthetics, to European drama, to English literature and in a changing rhetoric shifting from the earlier ironic treatment of local and national issues to the more recuperative view of an Ireland “of saints and sages” that bears more at the core of its culture than is offered by received opinion. This main chapter, therefore, offers an insight into Joyce's differentiation from many accepted forms, whether of a literary, religious or political nature and a further “complication” of their premises into both fictional and non-fictional works.

Subchapter **2.1.** links readers' response to Joycean fiction as naturalist writing with mainly positive reactions (especially in relation to *D* and *P*) and with an inclusion of the author in the line of canonic naturalist writings. These are the first attempts to include the Irish writer in a European tradition and in the literary canon. Naturalism is often identified as the justification of the documentary-like Joycean fiction, of the interest and exploitation of details, of the over-explicit passages in the books – of all of the Irish “reality” depicted. The subchapter gradually deconstructs the hypothesis of a uniform reception grill, focusing on the demonstration of the (thematic, stylistic and genre) “impurities” of Joyce's novels as a starting point for the later configuration of a different label. The pre-requisite label of naturalism is responsible for the international branding

of Joycean fiction as authentic and essential, but insufficient in understanding Joyce's work as a whole; Joyce's Zolanesque naturalism does not only rest upon a certain authenticity, but also hints at the socio-political component of his ironic or satirical display of the Irish *epicleti*.

Subchapter 2.2. points at the transitional history of Joyce's reception, from the reading of the author's Zolanesque nature to his Flaubertian affiliation, at a thematic and stylistic level. Several realist subcategories feature among Joycean readers' early responses: *authenticity* (of the individual and the larger, Irish experience critically formulated as compositional elements accounting for "the picture of life", "the period", "the types and characters"), *verisimilitude* (addressing the content, and not the "form"-less fictional material which points as the radically unfamiliar, post-realist label), *complete realism* (attained by the author's "ever so frank, plain-spoken" effects of language – John Quinn) and, last but not least, Joyce's *politics*. This component of Joyce's apparent realism can partially explain Joyce's rendering of Ireland in the "cracked looking-glass" stylized form of punishment and comment. Joyce's politics (in fictional and non-fictional writings) shift from being a faithful *reflection* of Irishness to being a mere *refraction* of it, when style and form cannot account for a pure, realistic rendering of the *realities* of Irish life. Other times, Joyce is read as an apolitical writer, whose disinterest in the field reputedly competes with the difficulty of his writings. Avoiding extremes, Joyce's politics changes with time, from his journalistic days at the *Daily Express* to the public lectures in Trieste a few years later. If politics exerts a relative effect on fiction, fictional treatment of politics offers the researchers plenty of food for thought. Joyce's Irishness (as origin and the "local colour" of his fiction) is conventionally the object of aesthetic and political observation; while it is appealing to a mass of readers and critics who take delight in the local exoticism of fiction, others dismiss it as a masterpiece on the same grounds:

"If this book had been written by Dostoieffsky, it would have been a masterpiece" (*CH* 1970: 110)

It is only with the break of convention (political, cultural, religious) that Joyce will be read as "part of the great revolution of the European novel" (*CH* 1970: 114), a "leader of the European prose" (Pound), an "academically respectable" author (Harry Levin).

More recent criticism reads Joyce beyond both (Irish and European) labels, with an insistence that, taken alone, both are equally limitative or exclusive. Thus, the 'European' label not



only accommodates Joyce spatially, but the whole Irish baggage that Joyce transfers with him. Authenticity itself is part of Joyce's politics of inclusion and assimilation in a larger context; Mario Vargas Llosa's definition of a *real writer* best illustrates the necessity of stepping outside the local into the trans-local/-national. Joyce's innovative narrative, his unconventional style and unfamiliar language are, therefore, part of a discourse on the nature of the author's *invention* of authenticity. Realism is, therefore, a label to be included in the history of Joyce's protean fiction and in that of his early reception, and further translated, transcended.

Subchapter **2.3.** follows Joyce's *revolution* towards the modern(ity)/(ism) element(s) in a close analysis of the main ingredients subsuming Joyce's modernism, namely cosmopolitanism and the "new".

Section **2.3.1.** explores Joyce's cosmopolitanism viewed as participation in the exilic literature of the world, as an aesthetic compliment to Joyce's modernism, as a cultural/political strategy for Joyce's self-inclusion in the range of internationalist writers, or as a strategy of technical innovation. Early definitions of Joyce's cosmopolitanism focus on his treatment of the urban novel, whereas present-day readings of it envision a literature of mobility, flexibility, changeability and self-reflexiveness. It is within this perspective on the mechanisms of cosmopolitanism that one can conceive of the local featuring alongside the national and the international. Mads Rosendahl Thomsen's observation that a "cosmopolitan attitude is not a prerequisite to being either internationally or nationally canonized" and that "there are more examples of the opposite being the case, where the quality of the writing and universality of the themes are enough" (Thomsen 2008: 47) summarizes our thesis that Joyce's Europeanism does not oppose, but rather includes his Irishness in postbinaristic fashion. We trace cosmopolitanism to two of its manifestations in the works of James Joyce: the functions of the urban novel and the nature of the *travelling* discourse.

- As shown in section **2.3.1.2** and in section **2.3.2.** the urban novel becomes highly symptomatic of the modernists' preoccupation with the "production of urban space", whereby Dublin becomes a "Weltstadt". Two concurrent perspectives on authorial treatment of the urban novel occur: on the one hand, there is the view on the city devoid of a centre (stemming from Simmel's theory on the urban consciousness as overwhelmed by a de-centred city), and,

on the other hand, there is the “recuperative” view on the city as the centre of “modern consciousness”, which is ultimately an urban one.

Space and spatial configurations also reside in Joyce’s fiction in instances of *mapping* Dublin and Ireland by a twofold strategy of zooming in or out, by performing either a centripetal or a centrifugal movement. The stage-Irish city is occasionally “staged-out”, translated to its readers in many ways; it is a background or a foreground, a protagonist or a silenced- down element fully flooded in the Penelopean monologue at the of *U*. So are the binary political components of the city (re)production with its Catholic/Protestant, Nationalist/Unionist divides – which are eventually reduced to either ambivalence or parody.

- The travelling discourse (section **2.3.1.3.**), the textual *dromomania*: reinforces Joyce’s position as a cosmopolitan writer and implies the mobility of: vision and perspective, of the exiled writer in a continental context, of the language with its shifts, turns, plays – producing a text in motion/progress with a wide range of polyglotticism, contortions of phrase, flowing style. The effects of such a rhetoric envision: an internal unsettling of the narrative which forces the reader to follow closely and get lost in the many textual translations; a process of identity re/formation and re-configuration (since Joyce is the European writer of “pluralistic and open forms of identity” – John Rickard); a self-reflexive authority of modernity, following de Certeau’s assertion that “the city is simultaneously the machinery and the hero of modernity”; a type of self-reflexive fiction in general, where we recycle Fritz Senn’s understanding of the self-reflexive writing as self-denunciation of the narrative as “scheming”, as “convention”.

Section **2.3.3.** takes the element of novelty (the “new”) to stand for innovation, for the break with convention, for early attempts at experimentalism, and for anticipating Joyce’s later modernity/modernism/postmodernism as label. Joyce’s “new writing” can be critically approached by a closer scrutiny of the functions of the “new” in this subchapter.

- a) The “new” stands for the (re)newed tradition, for the manifestation of the “individual talent” at the dawn of “new age writing” (as labelled by the early readers) – according to which Joyce is either pronounced “a little ahead” of his time (*CH* 1970: 293) or in tune with the “latest” trend in modern painting: impressionism. Joyce is awarded the role of opening up the threshold “era” of the great divide between Joyce’s supporters and detractors, according to whom, Joycean fiction is either “new literature” or “a distant grand monstrosity” (E.R. Curtius in *CH* 1970: 447)
- b) The “new” as a form of experimentalism pointing at a change of form and technique (not so much of content). As the word itself suggests, experimentalism only marked a transitory passage towards Joyce’s reception as a modernist writer. The label proved convenient for launching Joyce on the international publishing market: the *Little Review* was looking for precisely experimentalists of the Continent that would be accommodated in the American pages. The extreme experimentalism of a book like *FW*, on the other hand, brought about a whole amount of negative responses on the part of Joyce’s closest friends and family (Stanislaus, Pound, or Wells – who read, and later confessed in a letter to Joyce, that the book was nothing more than a “game”, a “riddle” that takes away the basic pleasures of the reading practice).
- c) The “new” as code for the avant-garde with its many forms and manifestations. After brief attempts at recycling Joyce as expressionist or surrealist, certain early readers of Joyce would claim him as Dadaist, cubist or futurist. While there is proof of Joyce’s familiarity with the artistic manifestos / manifestations in Europe, little can be said of his programmatic inclusion of avant-gardist strategies. Once again, the readers are divided between enthusiasts supporting the revolutionary nature of Joycean fiction akin to those of the Dadaists, and the well-tempered classics defending – still – Joyce’s classicism (see E.R. Curtius). The second group would claim that Joyce’s unconventionalism helps generate, and not constrict meaning in the manner of avant-gardists. This understanding of the “new” as suitable for a plurality of labels leads one to the conclusion that these symptomatic approximations are all facets of the **modernism(s)** at play in Joycean fiction.
- d) The importance of the “new” in the process of canon formation has to do with the progressive conceptual unfolding of the “modern”, “modernity” and “modernism”. While

Joyce's labelling as "modern" traditionally equated the "contemporary" or "innovative" writing, the very few occurrences of his "modernism" were nothing more than glosses on his dadaism. Eventually, the exhaustion of critical labels has led to the configuration of "modernisms" – a plural form accounting for the anticipation, extension and proliferation of modernism into the later postmodernism.

**Part 3** explores the politics of labelling Joyce by, first and foremost, going beyond the postcolonial perspective and by anatomizing Europeanism as an organic correspondence between localism and continentalism – the separation of the two leading to unnecessary and repetitive binaries that deconstruct rather than construct a more comprehensive view on the matter. They usually result in tensions which are reflected in the rendering of Ireland as rural, folk, mythical Ireland "as *real* Ireland and in the corollary distrust of urban and cosmopolitan hybridity as 'inauthentic' and un-Irish" (Vincent Cheng).

Section **3.1.** introduces the premises of postbinaristic "ideologies", where the concept of "ideology" should be read as non-/counter ideology pleading for a logic of incorporation rather than dissemination, for unity rather than separation of visions. In light of this non-ideology, the *national* is misrepresented by *otherness* (and unfamiliar to the *local* – as in the opening pages of *U*), the local becomes cosmopolitan (Dublin is the modern metropolis still holding to its particularities, but not parochialism), the *flaneur* becomes a citizen of the world and Joycean language sounds like an Esperanto, at times. The proportionate balance between Irishness and Europeanism allows for universalism and particularism to reinforce, to supplement and complement each other in a dialogic practice of mutual determination.

Section **3.2.** represents a case-study of Joyce's local reception, which deserves particular attention due to its fortuitous accommodation in the larger body of the thesis, despite the fact that it limits itself to the reading of Joyce in *Secolul 20*, between 1980-1985. The section does not propose to exhaustively record the reception of James Joyce in Romania; it only selects the critical material devoted to the Irish writer's European dimension, thus featuring the interferences of the local, the national and the international and their correspondence in the larger sphere of reception studies regarding Joyce. It addresses the first half of the 80s, when most criticism of the writer praised him as an artist with a European pedigree, following in the footsteps of Richard Ellmann. Surprisingly enough, most of the other articles (Joyce-unrelated)

in the same issues of *Secolul 20* contain or are accompanied by similar translations of Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, Ortega y Gasset's *De meditationaem...* or Giuseppe Galasso's *L'Altra Europa*.

A conclusive section (3.3.) attempts at clarifying the functions of the *local, regional, national* and *continental*, starting from Eliot's *Christianity and Culture* and arriving at Michael Ignatieff's *The Europe of the Mind*. Though chronologically separated by approximately forty years, the two perspectives share much in devoting their critical energies to the inclusion of the local into the national and supra-/trans-national, both insisting on the necessity of understanding world culture and literature not only as the sum-total of smaller cultures, canons and traditions, but as an *interaction* and *exchange* between them.

In a similar note, Irish studies occasionally go beyond oppositions, helping envision tradition and the literary canon as aesthetically dominant, while rediscussing Irish tradition in a larger context, in tune with some of the more recent critical studies dedicated to localizing culture and exporting it on the international scene. Joycean criticism generates a panoply of such conceptual hybrids, like “regional internationalism” (coined by Laurent Milesi, with his interest in dialects and “obscure idiosyncratic cants”) or Derek Attridge's “semicolonialism” (a better alternative to postcolonialism, speaking of an inherent interdependency of traditionally opposed pairs like native-foreign, colonialist-colonized, turned into “peers”).

These are only a few reasons why a challenge of Joyce's labelling is required. Among other over-used and “abused” “isms” with which the 20<sup>th</sup> century is so accustomed, **Europeanism** is an almost “hygienic” label for rediscussing Joyce in terms of positive accordance with a certain cultural tradition and of positive evaluation in the same cultural space.