

## Joyce and Jarry “Joyeux”

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*Abstract*

Drawing joy and pain together in a single comic sensibility, this essay begins by tracing an uncanny translation of proper names, whereby Joyce becomes Freud in German translation. This shift leads to reflection on the surname *Joyce*, said by Gorman, perhaps at Joyce’s bidding, to proceed from the French *joyeux*. The essay goes on to address in its discursively darting way the thought of Freud and Lacan, the dynamics of dreams, puns, and translation, their bearing on *Finnegans Wake*, and the writing of Jarry, Joyce, Bataille, Vico, and Bruno.

*Il est bon d’écrire une théorie après l’oeuvre,  
de la lire avant l’oeuvre—<sup>1</sup>*

**T**his paper would aim at bringing a confirmation of William Anastasi’s view stressing the links between Joyce, Jarry and Duchamp, but I would like to qualify this assertion by suggesting that the link can be best observed in the domain of humor, of the modernist tradition of the “Comic grotesque” that has been illustrated so well by the recent exhibition at the Neue Galerie. Jarry, Duchamp and Joyce all participate in that post-Romantic version of a twisted classicism so well illustrated by the paintings of Arnold Böcklin or the plays of Oscar Panizza.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it was a formative and momentous experience for Duchamp when he caught sight of this essentially South German and Swiss scene in his two-month stay in Munich in the Summer of 1912, especially when he stopped in Basel and visited the Kunsthaus to admire all the weird-looking Böcklins there. I will really address Duchamp here but will restrict myself to connections between Jarry and Joyce, using readings by Lacan and Bataille as bridges and mediations. I will contend that Jarry really called up a French “*Je ris!*” (I laugh, I am laughing) for Joyce, a laughter that could be fraught with despair and sadness at times. There is no doubt that Joyce had been made aware of the curious wit and

proto-surrealist humor of the French writer, probably via stories and anecdotes told to him by Léon-Paul Fargue, who had been a close friend of Jarry in his youth (as William Anastasi has suggested more than once). My point of entrance in this problematic will be a series of onomastic transformations of proper names, and then these equations will help us define more closely the concept of a Joycean "joy".

First, I wish to outline the process by which Freud's name was translated as Joyce's name by Lacan. The idea was elaborated as early as 1930, when Daniel Brody, Hermann Broch's friend and publisher, explained to Joyce that the strong animus *Ulysses* evinced in Jung was easy to understand: "There can be only one explanation. Translate your name into German" (*JJII* 628). That "Joyce" means "Freud" in German is indeed a reminder that the break between Freud and Jung in 1913 had left its impact, even if the disciples of Joyce seemed to prefer Jung to Freud, at least if we judge by the issues of *transition* in which Jung was translated and often invoked. Moreover, the coincidence was not new for Joyce, who had noticed it as early as the twenties. Richard Ellmann describes how, when Joyce arrived in Paris in the summer of 1920, he told John Rodker "that the name Joyce meant the same thing in English as Freud in German" (*JJII* 400). Like Samuel Beckett, who was aware of the fact that his name had been translated from the French ("becquet"), Joyce experienced this translation as an objective joke that sealed something like a fate.

Joyce succeeded in getting his "official" biography published in 1939, the year *Finnegans Wake* was made available to readers in one volume. Gorman's *James Joyce* is fascinating because most of it was written directly (or censored) by Joyce, who masterminded the coincidence of a seventeen-year creative process reaching completion at the same time as a biography that had been nine years in the making. As a result, this first biography is totally unreliable, but there is a lot to learn from it. For instance, the portrait of the young Joyce that emerges is largely antipodal to the "Joyce as Stephen" concept at which many naive readers have stopped. Gorman describes at length James Joyce's youthful energy, social popularity, contagious sense of fun and even his athletic prowess. One sees him "swimming strongly in the salt water of Clontarf" (64)—not exactly what one would expect from an introverted hydrophobic like Stephen Dedalus. Besides, according to Gorman, this lively humor and pervasive sense of fun was justified: Joyce's was true to his name, as we learn that "[t]he name is obviously of French extraction—Joyeux" (8). Indeed, the earliest Joyce we know to have come to Ireland was an Anglo-Norman settler who came from Wales in

the 12th century. This Joyce would have spoken Norman French and not Gaelic.<sup>3</sup> There is also the coincidence that Joyce can be derived from a Gaelic root that means “joyful” too. This evocation of a “Joyeux Joyce” in his life and works is something that we tend to forget, and that Ellmann’s undoubtedly more solid second biography bypasses as it insists on the gloom that pervaded Joyce’s later years.

Would Freud himself have objected or applauded a reversed translation of his name as Joyce? He might have liked to see that Jung would appear “young” (and thus more easily “freudened”) if one translated Jung’s name into French as “Le Jeune.” It was Lacan who made a lot of the fact that Freud’s name had been translated; this is what he says in a lecture entitled “Freud in the century”, given to medical students in May 1956:

I will begin by saying what, while appearing under Freud’s name, extends beyond the time of his appearance and conceals its truth even in its very unveiling—that Freud’s name signifies *joy*. Freud himself was conscious of this, as is demonstrated by a good number of things—an analysis of a dream that I could adduce, dominated by a sum of composite words, more especially by a word of ambiguous resonance, both English and German at the same time, and in which he enumerates the charming little spots in the environs of Vienna.

If I pause at this name, it’s not that my procedure is panegyric. I’m anticipating what I shall articulate in my discourse by recalling that his family, like all families of Moravia, of Galicia, of the outlying provinces of Hungary, owing to an edict of 1785 by Joseph II, had to choose this name from a list of names—it’s a feminine first name, in fairly frequent use at the time. But this name is a much older Jewish name which throughout history one already finds translated differently.<sup>4</sup>

The world of dreams penetrated so courageously by Freud is, as we know, a world of puns and onomastics in translation. To understand this, we can take a closer look at the dream quoted by Lacan. It is the dream of “Hearsing”, in which Freud explains that he has dreamed of stopping at a train station called Hearsing, before reaching Fliess. He alludes to a number of place names like Hietzing, Liesing, Mödling, which are suburbs of Vienna, and to the English word “hearsay” (*Standard Edition* 298). In glossing the name of Mödling, just added here to show that there are similarly sounding suburbs, Freud gives its etymology as Medeliz: “. . . Hitzing, Liesing, Mödling, (Medlitz, *meae deliciae* der alte Name, also

'*meine Freud*'), und den Englischen *Hearsay*=Hörensagen. . . ."<sup>5</sup> In order to give a witty signature, Freud does not write "Freude" as would be normal but "Freud" without the final e! He confirms that he understands his last name as suggesting "delight". This section of a dream demonstrates the work of condensation and the function of puns in dreams (especially in Freud's own dreams). This proves again, if this were necessary, that the *Interpretation of Dreams* paves the way to *Finnegans Wake*. . . .

However, Freud signed psychoanalysis as his "invention" more with his first name, a name that he deliberately changed by shortening it from Sigismund to Sigmund, as if he wished to let the echoes of "Sieg" (victory) and "Siegfried" the Wagnerian hero more perceptible, than with his family name. In fact, "Freude" does not appear to be a crucial concept in canonical psychoanalytic literature—and psychoanalysis is only now tackling the issue of affects. . . . One will not find "joy" in the Index to the *Standard Edition*. It took Lacan to transform a key Freudian term—*Lust* or *Libido*—into French as "*jouissance*". To do so, he needed the assistance of Joyce—or rather just to borrow Joyce's name. What Lacan did was to retranslate Freud into French as the inventor of *jouissance* at the same time as he was translating Joyce into a new, revised and revisited (Franco-Irish) Freud. In the end, Joyce literally replaced Freud as a "founder of discursivity" for Lacan: Joyce became the only "author" who could lead to an understanding of psychosis, and in the process he became the psychoanalytic Symptom as such. It would be too long to elaborate at length on Lacan's reading of Joyce as the *Sinthome*.

In April 1975, at a time when he was already immersing himself in a spate of critical approaches to Joyce because of the forthcoming invitation to open the June 1975 International James Joyce Symposium in Paris, Lacan quoted Gide's ironical novel, *Paludes* (1895)—a short ironical novel written just after he had acknowledged his homosexuality and married his cousin and that comes from the same period and cultural moment as Jarry's masterpieces. Here is what Lacan writes:

It is worth giving all its due to the proverb translated and glossed by André Gide in *Paludes*—*Numero deus impare gaudet*, which he translates as "Number two is happy being odd" ("*Le numéro deux se réjouit d'être impair*"). As I have said for some time, this is quite right, since nothing would realize the two if there was not the odd, the odd that begins with three—which is not obvious immediately and makes the Borromean knot necessary.<sup>6</sup>

To understand this silly schoolboy's joke, one needs only to imagine the usual mistranslation of the Latin tag (meaning roughly: "Uneven numbers please God" or "God enjoys the thought of uneven numbers"), which by a French literalization turns into a pleasant paradox: two is an odd number! This oddness offers a mode of access to what interested Lacan more and more in later years, the concept of "God's jouissance"—a *jouissance* associated with excess and gender and sexual subversion. The idea of an "odd" first even number would clearly have pleased both Gide and Jarry, who would have easily inscribed it within the circle of pataphysical calculations. The passage quoted from Gide's novel already suggests that freedom derives from odd numbers, which no doubt has some link with sexual "oddity."<sup>7</sup> *Paludes*, an almost "post-modern" novel that could be signed by Donald Barthelme, opens with a Preface that leaves readers free to make sense as they wish, facing a decidedly "open" text:

Before explaining my book to others, I wait for others to explain it to me. To want to explain first of all means immediately restricting the meaning; for if we know what we have meant, we do not know that we meant only that. —One always says more than THAT. —And above all, what interests me is what I have put there without knowing it, —that part of Unconscious that I would like to call God's part. —A book is always a collaboration, and whatever it is worth, the more the scribe's part is small, the more God's welcome will be great. —Let us wait for the revelation of things from everywhere; from the audience, the revelation of our works.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, with such a parodic "*sotie*" (this is the genre Gide ascribes to *Paludes*, a word suggesting "a satirical farce", since indeed the novel provides an infectious caricature of French intellectuals and esthetes of the turn of the century), one cannot be sure that even this statement is to be taken seriously—especially in view of its suspicious pseudo-religious overtones. However, the motto could well be taken up by Joyce, who declared more than once that he had not written *Finnegans Wake* alone but had used countless "collaborators" (or as the *Wake* puts, "anticollaborators"): the great Letter of the Wake is described as a "chaosmos of Alle" in which everything changes all the time, partly because of the "continually more or less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators. . ." (*FW* 118.21, 25-26).

The mention of Joyce in a context heavily determined by curious—odd—speculations of what looks like numerology is not fortuitous. Indeed, when Lacan began his seminar on Joyce, he said that he was about to take a new departure because he had managed to go beyond the Trinitarian scheme that underpinned the logic of Borromean knots he had elaborated so far. He had, up to his *R, S, I* Seminar of 1974-75, toyed with the possibility of organizing the three “registers” of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary in such a way that they would be knotted together and call up the signifier of “heresy” (the capitals R, S, I, pronounced in French, roughly sound like *hérésie*). At the very end of this Seminar, Lacan discloses the key to his central intuition:

I have been taking a look at Joyce because I have been solicited to open a conference. Well, if Joyce is completely caught up in the sphere and the cross, it is not only because he read a lot of Aquinas thanks to his education with the Jesuits. You are all as caught in the sphere and the cross. Here is a circle, the section of a sphere, and within the cross. Moreover, this also provides the sign plus. . . . But no-one has perceived that this is already a Borromean knot.<sup>9</sup>

This is an insight that had been curiously anticipated by Jarry. In a book review published in *La Revue Blanche* in 1901, he discusses *The Tragedy of the New Christ*, written by Saint-Georges de Bouhéliér. Typically, the author presented Christ as a proto-anarchist and a naturist. Jarry agreed with these views but added that this naturism should be understood theologically, as a sign of Christ’s immanent divinity. He adds: “Just when the crowd swarms around him with lynching threats, he enjoys (*il jouit*), which is admirable, the enormous and harmonious movements of the crowd as if it was a mathematics of the spheres.”<sup>10</sup> This sends us to *Gestes et opinions du docteur Faustroll, pataphysicien*, in which the last section entitled “Of God’s surface” endeavors to calculate it. After three pages of the most bizarre equations, Jarry concludes:

Therefore, definitively:  
 GOD IS THE TANGENTIAL POINT OF ZERO AND  
 INFINITY  
*Pataphysics is the science. . . . (Oeuvres 734)*

We then need to reopen the lengthy book at the beginning, in which a definition of pataphysics is given:

Definition: *Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions that grants symbolically to lineaments objects described by their properties.* (*Oeuvres* 669)

Jarry's works and idiosyncratic calculations bring to the fore the cultural world from which Joyce was also issued. Whereas Joyce may have privileged Mallarmé and Verlaine, Jarry knew Lautréamont, whom he admired, and both had the greatest respect for Ibsen, at least the Ibsen of *Peer Gynt*. I do believe that Joyce felt that Jarry was a sort of alter-ego in "joyicity" and therefore wanted to analyze the French author's meteoric trajectory. This is why we find in *Finnegans Wake*: "You rejoice me! Faith, I'm proud of you, French davit!" (*FW* 464.36). This follows one of the few absolutely indubitable allusions to Jarry in the *Wake*. One page earlier, we find: "He's the sneaking likeness of us, faith, me altar's ego in miniature . . . for ever cracking quips on himself, that merry, the jeenjakes. . . . He has novel ideas I know and he's a jarry queer fish betimes, I grant you, and cantankerous, the poisoner of his word, but lice and all and semicoloured stainedglasses, I'm enormously full of that foreigner, I'll say I am!" (*FW* 463.6-15) There, we hear Joyce speaking in the voice of Shaun just then praising in a mocking manner his estranged brother, the writer, who appears closer to Jarry than to Joyce's brother Stanislaus. Like Jarry, this foreigner did in fact poison himself with absinthe and other drinks, was rather cantankerous and queer, but had "novel ideas" all the time!

This allows Joyce to identify Jarry with Jerry, one of the twins or fighting brothers of the archetypical family of the *Wake*. Kevin and Jerry are the twins, and they underpin the entire architecture of the book. In that context, the name of Jarry surfaces a few more times, but it may be heard in many "jerries". Thus in another obvious reference, Jarry looks as if he had shed his joyicity and appeared as "grim". This comes in a footnote to a reference to Jarry's *Faustroll* ("Allwhichhole scrubs on scroll circuminiuminluminatedhave encuoniams here and improprieties there. (1)" [*FW* 278. 3-5]). The footnote written by Issy, the psychotic daughter of the family, has: "(1) Gosem pher, gezumpher, greeze a jarry grim felon! Good bloke him!" (*FW* 278 F 1) One hears echoes of church Latin (*semper*), of "For he's a jolly good fellow!" and of "God bless him!" But the greeting, "Greet a jolly good fellow", turns sour; it is with grease that it is tendered, Jarry has become a "grim felon". God will no doubt strike him with a blow!

Not only is Jarry enlisted in Joyce's system of warring or jealous brothers, but he himself is caught up by the pervasive ambivalence that

runs through each word in the *Wake*. We see him transmogrified into “Jerry Godolphing” at the beginning of III, 4, p. 555: he is a “badbrat” who “furrinfrowned down his wrinkly waste of methylated spirits, ick, and lemoncholy lees, ick, and pulverised rhubarbarorum; icky. . .” (*FW* 555.22-24). The point is that Jarry embodies not just “joy” but the *jouissance* that is an affect that leads you, as Lacan famously said, from tickling your little cousin to autos de fe and book-burnings.

An important relay for the gradual preeminence of the untranslatable concept of *jouissance* in Lacanian theory was Georges Bataille, who had reminded Lacan of the importance of a paroxystic concept of “joy” when discussing psychoanalytic issues. One can see this in a passage from a June 1939 essay published in *Acéphale*, “The Practice of Joy before Death”, an essay contemporary with the published version of *Finnegans Wake*. In the context of a looming world war, Bataille begins by associating the simple joy of being alive to the cruel joy that is born by violence and human participation in struggle for survival. It concludes with a “Heraclitean Meditation” that announces:

I MYSELF AM WAR. . . .

Before the terrestrial world whose summer and winter order the agony of all living things, before the universe composed of innumerable turning stars, limitlessly losing and consuming themselves, I can only perceive a succession of cruel splendors whose very movement requires that I die: this death is only the *exploding* consumption of all that was, the joy of existence of all that comes into the world; even my own life demands that everything that exists, everywhere, ceaselessly give itself to be annihilated.<sup>11</sup>

This ultimate and annihilating “joy” would provide a good gloss on the orgasmic and nihilistic dissolution of Anna Livia Plurabelle, who “dies” as a river as she merges with her “mad father”, the ocean. I’ll just quote a few well-known lines:

My lips went livid from the joy of fear. Like almost now.  
How? How you said how you’d give me the keys of me heart.  
And we’d be married till delth to uspart. And though dev do  
espart. O mine! Only, no, now it’s me who’s got to give.” (*FW*  
626.29-32)

This may not yet reach the intensity of Bataille’s frantic evocations: “I imagine the gift of an infinite suffering, of blood and of open bodies, in



the image of an ejaculation cutting down the one it jolts and abandoning him to an exhaustion charged with nausea",<sup>12</sup> but it is not so far.

Bataille starts this short and lyrical piece by quoting Nietzsche ("All this I am, and I want to be: at the same time, dove, serpent and pig"). This reference calls up his earlier appraisal of Salvador Dali's surrealist painting, *The Lugubrious Game*. Explaining how this painting conveys a vision of reality and matter caught beyond beauty and ugliness so as to disclose that Nature both hides and shows everything at once as Heraclitus would say, Bataille invokes a Sadean hilarity and then lets it seize him completely: "My only desire here—even if by pushing this bestial hilarity to its furthest point I must nauseate Dali—is to squeal like a pig before his canvases".<sup>13</sup> In fact, Dali was upset if not nauseated, and replied that the "cretinous" Bataille had misread both his painting and Freud! I mention this painting because it turned out to be a crucial element in a theoretical discussion opposing first Breton and Bataille, then relayed by Dali and Lacan about the term of paranoia. How can one "make a paranoiac laugh"? Such was François Roustang's interesting question. Bataille's reply would say that the best way would be to make him or her first squeal like a pig.

Can one find traces of this excessive, paradoxical and ambivalent hilarity in Joyce? It seems that if there is this hilarity, it is first manifested as a laughter that rejects Freud and the Freudians. Joyce's reluctance to believe in Freud—as he repeated, he preferred the philosophy of Vico: "I don't believe in any science, but my imagination grows when I read Vico as it doesn't when I read Freud or Jung" (*JJII* 693). There are countless testimonies of how much Vico and Bruno appeal not just to Joyce's imagination but to the imagination of their readers. Vico's *New Science* repeats an earlier trope invented by Bruno on this topic. In a famous passage Vico explains that his "science" of history will convince the reader if his or her imagination grows and feels pleasure while reading it:

And history cannot be more certain than when he who creates the things also narrates them. . . . And this very fact is an argument, O reader, that these proofs are of a kind divine and should give thee a divine pleasure, since in God knowledge and creation are one and the same thing.<sup>14</sup>

In various works, Bruno had made similar remarks a century and a half earlier.<sup>15</sup> Joyce often quotes the *Candelaio*, a comedy published in Paris in 1582 and whose motto, "In tristitia hilaris, in hilarite tristis" ("Laughing in sadness, sad in hilarity"), becomes a recurrent motif in the

*Wake*. This bawdy comedy, in fact three farcical plots tied together in a wild Borromean knot, is preceded by a complex montage of hilarious paratexts: we find a dedication, an argument, an anti-prologue and finally a pro-prologue. This dizzying chain of texts begins with an invocation of the Lady to whom Bruno declares his flame, blending a passionate declaration of love with a reasserted trust in the strength of his own philosophy: "*Con questa filosofia l'animo mi s'aggrandisse, e me si magnifica l'intelletto.*" (With this philosophy, my mind becomes larger and my intellect magnifies itself.) The Pro-prologue sells the farce by displaying its baroque wares in a speech that could apply to most of Jarry's works, especially to the *Ubu* cycle: "Under your eyes will pass idle theories, moronic plots, empty thoughts, frivolous hopes, explosions of passion, sentimental disclosures, false suppositions, mental alienations, poetic furors, delusions of the senses, disturbances of the imagination, aberrant explorations of the intellect; unreasonable beliefs, senseless preoccupations, hazardous studies, seeds of madness too soon sown but of glorious offspring" (*Oeuvres* 42-43) And Bruno sends us back to the ancient couple of Democritus and Heraclitus, the paradigm of the laughing philosopher followed by the crying philosopher. Like Jarry and Duchamp before him, Joyce will just need to splice Democritus and Heraclitus together, linking early materialism's concern with the body and the void to a concept of eternal recurrence so that the ultimate joy of the spheres should be heard echoing in his last text.

### Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Jarry, *Les Minutes de sable mémorial*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, ed. Michel Arrivé (Paris: Pléiade, 1972) 172.

<sup>2</sup> See the Catalogue of *Comic Grotesque: Wit and Mockery in German Art, 1870-1940*, ed. Pamela Kort, Neue Galerie, New York (Munich: Prestel, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Costello's biography, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar III, The Psychoses*, trans. Russell Grigg New York: Norton, 1993) 232-33.

<sup>5</sup> *Traumdeutung*, n p. 299.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan "R.S.I. Séminaire 1974-75", ed. J. A. Miller, *Ornicar?* n° 5, December-January 75/76, 49.

<sup>7</sup> André Gide, *Paludes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1920) 70.

<sup>8</sup> André Gide, *Paludes*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Lacan, "R.S.I.", in *Ornicar?* n° 5, 37.

<sup>10</sup> “Textes critiques et divers”, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol II, 614.

<sup>11</sup> *Visions of Excess*, 239.

<sup>12</sup> *Visions of Excess*, 299.

<sup>13</sup> *Visions of Excess*, 28.

<sup>14</sup> *Divine Science*, 104-05.

<sup>15</sup> Giordano Bruno, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, *Chandelier*, ed. Yves Hersant (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1993) I, 42-43.