

## Plagiarism, Reflection, and Process: A Preliminary Approach to the Uses of "Silence" in *Finnegans Wake*

ANA LEÓN  
Universidad de Sevilla

"The silence speaks the scene. Fake!" (*FW*, 13. 2-3)

The use of silence as a way of expression seems to be more palpable in an era dominated by the pessimistic attitude of literary authors motivated by a lack of innovation in literature, which gives way to parody and pastiche, the imitation of already dead styles. Human discourse manifests itself as a purely subjective fiction; thus, language becomes a mere reflection of the sunlight, of Truth. It is just a shadow of the world of Ideas, following Plato's myth, whereas the up-to-now "objective" and totalitarian History becomes a complex succession of stories narrated once and again, each time from a different perspective.

In the middle of this cultural crisis, the notion of "unity" is fragmented and the concept of "centre" vanishes in order to create new centres, all of them provisional and perishable. In this moment of desperate searching, silence represents plenitude in the middle of emptiness, the nothingness which, however, proclaims a discontinuous and ever changing infinity. Obviously, the use of silence in literature is neither uniform throughout all the authors nor in all the works where this use appears with a stronger profusion. Joyce's disciple, Samuel Beckett, for instance, prefers the absurd and the void, the "impotence" of language, as Ihab Hassan declares in *Paracriticism*.<sup>1</sup> Others, like James Joyce himself, persevere and confront the omnipotence of language, provoking the saturation and explosion of words. As Harold Pinter proclaims, there exist two kinds of silence: "One when no word is spoken. The other when perhaps a torrent of language is employed."<sup>2</sup> Both literary trends, nonetheless, are not opposed to each other, but work together in an attempt to reach the same goal: silence as the answer to the search for a new kind of communication.

Linguistic exuberance, in the case of Joyce and, more specifically, in *Finnegans Wake*, is a labyrinth through which the author achieves the maximal level of communication and which, by its extreme qualities, touches its contrary, emptiness. In this way, silence or apparent emptiness occurs in Joyce at certain moments when the plenitude of rhetoric seems to be most evident (after all, language continues to be the only mechanism of expression of the human mind). As Hassan states, this is an "articulate silence" (*Paracriticism* 115), oxymoron which, in *Finnegans Wake*, turns into an authentic paradox.

It is interesting to notice that most uses of the word "silence" in the work, though not all of them, take place within the context of an oxymoron by which Joyce confronts the lack of sonority implied by the term, with another word conveying the opposite idea, as in: "The silence speaks the scene" (13.3-4), or in: "science of sonorous silence" (230.22-23). For some critics, this

peculiar usage of the term is one more example of Joyce's fascination for the theory of "coincidencia oppositorum," and in his work *Chaosmos*, Philip Kuberski even relates it to Jacques Derrida's concept, or rather "nonconcept," of "différance."<sup>3</sup> Even in those cases in which James Joyce does not employ an oxymoron, he does contrast "silence" with another activity connected with voice or sound in general, as in "silentiousuement under night's altosonority" (62.3-4). The occurrence of the term itself anticipates the author's contradictory method so that the concept that the word "silence" suggests, which implies emptiness of expression and therefore, should not be represented by any element, is swamped by multiple signifiers that the author alters in order to demonstrate that silences are one more way of communication, and that in his work, they are achieved through a surprisingly plethoric state of language. The usage of the word "silence" that Joyce presents here, then, emerges like a hybrid between two contraries, as the notion of "différance" denotes an intermediate point between the terms "defer" and "differ," assimilating their meanings, but being none of the two words in the end.

Though my study of the word "silence" in *Finnegans Wake* covers the 55 occurrences of the term in the work, including its typographic variations and the "overtones" according to Clive Hart,<sup>4</sup> for obvious reasons, I must limit this essay to the ones I have considered to be more representative of the Language of Silence that builds James Joyce's last work. My study consists on an interpretation of the different versions of "silence" in *Finnegans Wake* taking into account several myths, legends, anecdotes and argument bases. Likewise, I have made use of some of Derrida's interpretations as long as they can be helpful to deal with the subject of silence in literature, as well as to reveal more about the Language of Silence through which James Joyce both amuses and tortures us.

In most of his works, Jacques Derrida deals with the eternal dichotomy traditionally ascribed to the relationship between speech and writing. According to the French author, the former usually conveys positive implications, such as the ideas of light, life and presence, whereas the latter brings forth a sense of darkness, death and absence. Moreover, in his essay "Plato's Pharmacy" Derrida goes back to this problematic rivalry and illustrates it by means of an old Egyptian story, the myth of Thoth, god of artistic crafts and general knowledge, writing in particular.<sup>5</sup> Thoth becomes a jealous son who intends to take the place of Ammon-Ra, king and father of all the other Egyptian gods who is endowed with the ability to create through his voice.<sup>6</sup> Thoth's discourse, writing, does not possess the freshness of his father's voice. Once the paternal figure disappears, the *Logos* becomes writing, absence and death. For this reason, Derrida defines writing as a "pharmakon," meaning both "a remedy and poison" (70). Writing is an artificial remedy, not a natural one; a cure containing dangerous side effects, recovering the lost presence through a defective and silent imitation that is far from the original object it recreates: "under pretext of supplementing memory, writing makes one even more forgetful; far from increasing knowledge, it diminishes it" (100).

James Joyce also knew the myth and, as a matter of fact, he applied the figure of Thoth to Stephen Dedalus, the young artist, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

A sense of fear of the unknown moved in the heart of his weariness, a fear of symbols and portents, of the hawk-like man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity on osierwoven wings, of Thoth, the god of writers, writing with a reed upon a tablet and bearing on his narrow ibis head the cusped moon.<sup>7</sup>

Not only the artistic vocation of Joyce's character links him to Thoth, but also his name. Indeed, the Egyptian god is usually portrayed as an ibis headed figure, carrying a reed or stick on one of his hands. Dedalus, at the same time, makes reference to the "hawk-like man" alluding to the Greek mythological character who built two pairs of wings to flee from Creta, whose name in Greek, "Daedalus," means "cunning artificer."

It is in *Finnegans Wake*, nonetheless, where the Irish author makes a wider use of the Egyptian myth as a device to present a strange symbiosis, rather than dichotomy, between the father, speech, and its son, writing. There exist numerous instances throughout the work in which the word "silence" helps portray Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker (H.C.E.), the father of the Porter family, as a god, a generator of life through his voice. His son Shem, on the other hand, is more easily associated with the devil and with Thoth. Obviously, this is just one among many other interpretations, which, however, will show the language that builds *Finnegans Wake* as a Language of Silence, as well as a continuous parody and plagiarism of itself.

From the very beginning, occurring on page 3 and without entering into discussion about the actual starting point of the work, the author presents a prehistoric time when nothing had taken place yet: "not yet, though venissoon after" (3.10). At this prehistoric and therefore oral times, since written texts belong to history, Joyce introduces his protagonist, H.C.E., also characterised as a prehistoric figure on several occasions: "Prehistoric, obiter to his dictaphone an entychologist: his propenomen is a properismenon" (59.15-16). The paternal figure of the work appears as the creator of life through his voice. Due to the coincidence of opposites, however, he may be identified with God as well as with Adam, the universal sinner and yet, also the father of all mankind. Therefore, Earwicker appears as the paternal god, "Mr. Makeall Gone" (220.24), architect and builder of the whole creation from nothingness, from the lowest and most basic elements: "Bygmester Finnegan, of the Stuttering Hand, freemen's mauerer, lived . . . before joshuan judges had given us numbers or Helviticus committed deuteronomy . . . and during mighty odd years this man of hod, cement and edifices . . . piled bildung supra bildung" (4.18-28). The passage describes the character as the great architect, who recycles, rather than generates, life, as the term "building," created from "building" and "dung" suggests, making reference also to the term "Bildungsroman," the novel of self-formation. The text emphasises as well H.C.E.'s prehistoric existence, before the Scriptures were written.

In contrast, if God carries existence and life, his antagonist must necessarily express the opposite idea, non-existence. God reveals his innate existence to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3.14). God's rival, therefore, should "not be." This is what the "first riddle of the universe," formulated on page 170 of *Finnegans Wake*, reveals about Shem, the jealous artist who, like Thoth or Lucifer, commits a sin of hubris planning to attack and substitute his father: "when is a man not a man?" (170.5). The answer to this question comes later: "when he is a . . . Sham" (170.23-24). Shem's name itself combines the meanings of "shame" and "sham," and, according to Richard Ellmann, Joyce probably took the name of this character from the play *Jim the Penman*, by Sir Charles Young, whose protagonist was a forger (*JJI* 550). Shem is accused by his own brother of being a cursed character: "you're doomed . . . windblasted tree of the knowledge of beautiful andevil" (194.13-16). Shaun also relates him to darkness and to one of the devil's numerous names, Belzebu, in: "the child of Nilfit's father, blzb . . . dweller in the downandoutermost where voice only of the dead may come" (194.17-

20). In addition, Shem is an "outlex" (169.31) or outlaw, an exiled like Lucifer, Adam, and even James Joyce himself.

This last feature becomes quite interesting, considering that in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus declares that his three artistic weapons are "silence, exile and cunning" (269), which are also the devil's attributes.<sup>8</sup> In the same way, Shem "swure . . . He would split. He do big squeal like holy Trichepatte. Seek hells where from yank islanders the petriote's absolation," which refers to exile, followed by: "From prudals to the secular but from the cumman to the nowter," mentioning cunning, and finally: "And Unkel Silanse coach in diligence" (228.4-15). It is obvious that the spelling of "Silanse" differs from the ordinary spelling of the word "silence," though it does not modify its pronunciation. But the difference between "Silanse" and "silence" does not simply consist on the few letters the author has changed. In fact, he has also altered the hierarchy of the word, so that now, in capital letters, it turns from a common noun into a proper one. All this seeming too evident, however, produces a radical change in the reading of the context where the term occurs. At first sight, the reader is appealed by a visual reading of the word, the most direct one, identifying the pair "Unkle Silanse" with a proper noun, one more appellation among the numerous pseudonyms Shem receives throughout the whole work. The also peculiar typography of "Unkle" leads us to the word "uncle," so that the final interpretation would be something similar to "uncle Silanse." It is important, however, not to avoid the also possible allusion to "ankle," though it is true that its use in the context seems rather incoherent, and probably, the ambiguity of the term "Unkle" appears more like a tricky device to confuse the reader, rather than as anything significant. Curiously enough, there exist other references to Shem's inferior extremities, as in: "Acts of feet, hoof and jarrety: athletes longfoot" (222.30-31). The sentence, which according to some authors is a parody of the three virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity,<sup>9</sup> draws attention to the similarity of Shem's extremities with the animal ones, like the devil's hooves. Joyce increases the character's low nature by adding a popular disease to his feet, though he even makes it worse through a hyperbolic use of the adjective "long". In this sense, Shem does not only suffer "athlete's foot," but "athletes longfoot," which makes a stronger emphasis on his physical defect. Also, Shaun calls his brother "Mr. Anklegazer" (193.12-13), a very appropriate pseudonym for the devilish Shem. In fact, the devil was condemned, after Adam's fall, to creep over the earth: "upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Gen. 3.14). In the Catholic tradition, too, the image of the Immaculate Virgin is often portrayed with her feet stepped on a serpent or a dragon, representing the devil.

Going back to the interpretation of "Silanse," the reader at this point may keep stored in his mind all the information and read the word again, this time taking into consideration the whole context and not only the word in isolation. From this more general perspective, then, the word takes part in the catalogue of attributes applied to Shem, silence, exile and cunning, though it still keeps being its own name, "Silanse." For this reason, Shem emerges as the bearer of silence, but also as its own incarnation. He practises silence but he himself is silence, in the same way that God provides life and is life. Shem, thus, lacks his father's creative speech, and is linked to every symptom of death. Writing, which tries to imitate the lost presence of speech, becomes "the presence (of a corpse)" (FW 224.4-5). Through his literary composition, represented by the ballad, the letter, the whole work

and even the continuous rumours he spreads about his own father, Shem tries to reconstruct Earwicker's presence. For that reason, Shaun argues about Shem's writing that "Every dimmed letter in it is a copy and not a few of the silbils and wholly words I can show you in my Kingdom of Heaven" (424.32-33), as also his writing instrument is described as "his pelagiarist pen" (182.3).

Shem's composition is, in this sense, the cause and the effect of Earwicker's fall, which in many cases is equated with the sunset, while Earwicker appears as the sun. This is clear in another use of the word silence, in II.1: "A pause. Their orison arises misquewhite as Osman glory, ebbing westward, leaves to the soul of light its fading silence (allahlah lahlah lah!) (235.6-8). The fragment recovers the moment in which the rainbow-girls, divisions of Earwicker's daughter, Issy, call on the divinity through his messenger, Shaun: "They've come to chant en chor . . . the madiens' prayer to the messiaeger of His Nabis" (234-35.36-1). The sun slowly descends through the west in a lyrical and colourful image, whereas the girl's songs, who are described as sunflowers, "holiodrops" (5), vanish in the horizon, expressed by the term "orison," suggesting both "horizon" and "oration." The young girls' canticles contrast with the last voice calling to prayer, as in the Arab minarets: "allahlah lahlah lah," creating a beautiful synesthesia by which the arrival of night induces the chromatic wane mixed with the extinction of voice. Earwicker's decline, thus, represents the disappearance of the sunlight, introducing the coming of darkness and the dominion of silence.

Related to this view of H.C.E. as the sun, there is another example of the use of "silence" in which Shem appears as "the Cad," H.C.E.'s attacker in the Phoenix Park. As in the portrayal of Thoth, the pen or stick is fundamental in order to describe Shem, and conveys inevitably phallic implications that link the pen to the act of writing. Certainly, "the Cad" employs a stick in order to attack Earwicker, together with his "making use of sacrilegious languages" (24), which confirms the artistic function of the aggressor's instrument. In I.5 the punctuation marks of the letter, certainly caused by the pen, become the numerous injuries the criminal vents on his victim with his rustic weapon: "Yet on holding the verso against a lit rush this new book of Morses responded most remarkably to the silent query of our world's oldest light" (123.34-36). Though at first sight, the text does not show any punctuation marks, those appear on its surface when exposing it to the sunlight. The text itself is called "the new book of Morses," due to the "paper wounds," caused by "a prongued instrument" (124.3), and similar to the signs of Morse code. The sentence "the silent query of our world's oldest light" obviously makes reference to Earwicker's complaints, whose voice is damaged after the accident. The textual pauses, "stops," coalesce with the victim's laments: "stop, please stop, do please stop, and O do please stop respectively" (124.4-5). According to some authors, the section represents the moment when the son takes the place of his father.<sup>10</sup>

The allusion to Shem's instrument is also evident in another use of the word "silence" in which his brother Shaun expresses his opinion about him: "And I see by his diarrhio he's dropping the stammer out of his silenced bladder" (467.18-20). One of Earwicker's most popular features is his stammer. Shaun seems to refer here to the differences between an oral communication, which admits possible lapses like stammer itself, and a written expression which, in omitting the use of voice, loses any possibility of committing those oral mistakes: "dropping the stammer out of his silenced bladder." In his intention to imitate his father's creative power,

Shem also follows Earwicker's scatologic model. Therefore, his "diarrhio" and not diary, is made of filth and excrement: "*Lingua mea calamus scribae velociter scribentis: magna voce cantitans* (did a piss, says he was dejected, asks to be exonerated), *demum ex stercore turpi cum divi Orionis iucunditate mixto, cocto, frigoriq[ue] exposito, encaustum sibi fecit indelible* (faked O'Ryan's, the indelible ink)" (185.22-26). At the same time, if the character confesses to make his own ink from his urine, it is logical to interpret his "silenced bladder" as the writer's pen. Nonetheless, the difference between his father's creation and Shem's, as his brother argues, is based on the fact that the latter lacks the paternal voice, and thus, it is a silent kind of expression. As John Gordon affirms, the imitation of Earwicker by his son is just "Shem's literary perversion of the spoken word" (163).<sup>11</sup>

Finally, in his creative function H.C.E. does not only play the role of God or the sun, but also stands for the cosmic egg which is the origin of the universe. On many occasions Earwicker is presented as an egg, mainly as the popular figure of Humpty Dumpty: "Leg-before-Wicked lags-behind-Wall where here Mr Whicker whacked a great fall . . . Hayes, Conyngham and Erobinson sware it's an egg" (434.10-13). The symbolic image of the egg whose rupture starts the origins of life, already appears in many ancient myths about the creation of the universe. As Philip Kuberski declares, "Every couple or opposition in *The Wake* is 'complementary' in the way that the liquid and solid aspects of an egg are both one and two, just as the world-egg and the Fabergé egg represent the macro and microcosmic forms of this wholeness whose fracture begins historical time" (77). Actually, Earwicker's heirs are accused of belonging to a low kind of nature: "of a truly criminal stratum, Ham's cribcracking yeggs" (76.5-6). The expression "cribcracking yeggs," on the one hand, makes reference to the egg's fragmentation. On the other, the term "crib" also includes the sense of "plagiarise," and, in a parallel way, "yeggs" does not simply keep a close resemblance with "eggs," but implies the meaning of "burglar," too. Earwicker's heirs, therefore, make an attempt against him in two different ways: causing his fall, as well as trying to supplant him through imitation. All that remains after the father's fall is the silence of his memory, as the use of "silence" in this particular case indicates: "Big went the bang: the wildewide was quite: a report: silence: last Fama put it under ether" (98.1-3). The example becomes a clear display of the idea of creation from destruction. "Big went the bang," in effect, reminds us of the theory of the origin of the universe known as the "Big Bang," which, even if it is impossible to determine whether Joyce knew much of it or not, was proposed for the first time by 1920, by George Lamaître.<sup>12</sup>

Through this constant game between the origins and the end of life, the cause and the effect respectively, Joyce proposes an interesting "chaosmos" of the particular language that builds *Finnegans Wake*. The apparent contradictions between both extremes, beginning and end, vanish in the cosmos of the work, necessarily linked to its chaos. Another use of "silence" on page 143 confirms this contradiction, offering a panoramic view of the work as a "collideorscape," a kaleidoscope also suggesting "collide" and "escape," clearly combining collision and mixture: "could such a none, whiles even led comesilencers to comeliwithhers and till intempestuous Nox should catch the gallicry and spot lucan's dawn, byhold at ones what is main and why tis twain . . . O disaster! shakealose" (143.15-22). Obviously, everything occurs by night, when the father lies next to his wife and his voice has been silenced: "comesilencers to comeliwithhers." It is the turn of the Language of Silence, and only daylight will bring voice back again: "till

intempestuous Nox should catch the gallicry." Through fragmentation, then, Joyce intends to obtain a more complex reality, the relationship between order and anarchy.

The Language of Silence is also characterised by observing itself both as subject and object of its metalinguistic function. Since *Finnegans Wake* is built by such language, then, the work also follows a reflective organisation, by which the text recreates multiple parodies of itself. These parodies, as any mirrored image, are not perfect copies but inverted reflections. Roland McHugh defends that even the structure organising the chapters of the book obeys a mirror effect, so that books I and III are symmetrical inversions of each other, and the same can be applied to II and IV.<sup>13</sup> An attempt to impose this structure upon the work too rigidly, however, would offer a partial view of the work, highlighting certain formal aspects and forgetting others. It is true, however, that in most cases, *Finnegans Wake* functions as a mirror where every single element meets its own reflection, at least once. The mute language of the work, placed on the silenced side of the mirror that reflects reality, expresses this idea.

This symmetrical inversion is made evident at the beginning of book I, from the very moment of composition of the chronicles or annals:

II32 A.D. Men like to ants or emmets wondern upon a groot hwide Whallfisk which lay in a Runnel. Blubby wares upat Ublanium.

566 A.D. On Baalfire's night of this year after deluge a crone that hadde a wickered Kish for to hale dead turves from the bog lookit under the blay of her Kish as she ran for to sothisfeige her cowrieosity and be me sawl but she found hersell sackvulle of swart goody quickenshoon and small illigant brogues, so rich in sweat. Blurry works at Hurdlesford.  
(Silent.)

566 A.D. At this time it fell out that a brazenlockt damsel grieved (*sobralasolas!*) because that Puppette her minion was ravisht of her by the ogre Puropeus Pious. Bloody wars in Ballyaughacleaghally.

II32. A.D. Two sons at an hour were born until a goodman and his hag. These sons called themselves Caddy and Primas. Primas was a santryman and drilled all decent people. Caddy went to Winehouse and wrote o peace a farce. Blotty words for Dublin. (13-14.33-15)

The most striking element at first sight is the intermediate silence that seems to act as a dividing line, cutting the events in two halves. Paying a closer attention, the second half reveals itself just as a symmetrical variation of the previous one. In this sense, the annals headed by the date "II32" are followed by "556," which is immediately repeated, going back to "II32" at last. In rhetoric terms, this effect produces a clear chiasmic structure, represented either by the pattern "abba," or by the X symbol, but in any case, indicating the reflective characteristic of the chronicles. The term chosen on this occasion, however, is not the noun "silence" but the adjective, "silent," whose inclusion in between the two sets of historic events has the intention of splitting two identical, though at the same time, irreconcilable halves. The use of the adjective instead of the noun immerses all the events that take place from that moment onwards in a world of shadows; they become merely silent reflections.

From an argumentative position, on the other hand, each date introduces a catalogue of the most remarkable incidents occurring in that year, as is common in all annals. The first event they report, then, introduces the figure of Earwicker, the father, identified with a whale, whereas the second one introduces his wife, Anna Livia. After the silent break, there appears their daughter, Issy, and finally the twins, Shem and Shaun. In this sense, even

the occurrence of the main characters supports the chiasmic organisation of the book: father-mother-daughter-sons, (abba), where the female characters are flanked by the male ones, placed at both extremes of the structure.

Dates may also add some significance to the characters' sexual distinction. According to Campbell and Robinson's cabbalistic interpretation, 1132 reproduces Adam's date, consisting of number 11, which represents renewal after the last figure of the numerical series, 10, plus number 32, which is the number of the falling of bodies. In the same way, 566 is the exact half of 1132 and thus, Eve's number: "The rib of All-Father Adam ('his better half') became Eve, and so half of 1132 becomes 566" (46). The end of the paternal era, therefore, opens a period of change and renewal. It initiates the substitution of the parents by the sons, in a reflective cycle that imitates the previous presence, reconstructing the same image through a reversed and mute copy, "Echoland" (13.5).

If the universe that generates *Finnegans Wake* is an echo, it is also portrayed as "Errorland" (62.25), due to the vision of the work as a continuous reflection of itself, and to the perception of its language as the vehicle to obtain a distorted perspective of the reality it reflects. As I have already suggested, the sons recover their parents' inheritance and translate it according to their own version, as is expressed in III.4. In the episode, the whole house is divided into two levels of performance, one where the parents act, and the other, where the sons move, creating a mirror-effect: "in sequence to which every mickle must make its mickle . . . being the only wise in a muck's world to look on itself from beforehand; mirrominded curiositease" (576.21-24). Thus, the whole description of "Shem the Penman" appears as his father's own reflection throughout I.7, where according to Gordon: "HCE continues to stare into the mantelpiece mirror communing with himself" (159). In the same manner, book III, about Earwicker's other son, Shaun, is meant to be "a description of a postman travelling backwards in the night through the events already narrated," as Joyce himself declared.<sup>14</sup>

All these instances of reverted analogies arise the connections between *Finnegans Wake* and *Through the Looking Glass*, by Lewis Carroll.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the technique known as "portmanteau word" which Alice learns from the poem "Jabberwocky," there exist many other similarities between the two works that I will omit here, since they are sufficiently well-known to all the readers of James Joyce. I will simply point out the attempt to manipulate the human mental mechanisms, present in both works by means of a journey to the kingdom of dreams, using a distorted reflection of the world ordinarily known as the "awaken" reality, now reversed by the language that builds it up. The references to this process of reversal are numerous in *Finnegans Wake*: "a venter hearing his own bauchspeech in backwards" (100.27-28), as in: "way back in his mistridden past" (110.31) and also: "quoit the reverse" (53.23). Though the case of Earwicker's reflected image on his sons deserves a deeper analysis, I will pay a closer attention to their sister, for obvious reasons of brevity. Indeed, the strongest link between the two works of dream is introduced by H.C.E and A.L.P.'s daughter, Issy. She adopts the role of Alice in many cases, and is attached to the mirror and its reflection. In fact, her most common sigla often appears doubled, depicting the character and her reflected image.<sup>16</sup> In II.1, then, Issy is described as: "IZOD . . . a bewitching blonde who dimples delightfully and is approached in loveliness only by her grateful sister reflection in a mirror" (220.7-10).

In addition, Issy incarnates her mother's counterpart in the shape of a cloud, reflected upon the surface of the river: "O Yes! And Nuvoletta, a lass"

(159.5), which confirms her function as a cloud, "Nuvoletta," and as Alice, "a lass," as well. Furthermore, making an inventory of Shem's possessions on page 183, we find, among many other personal items, some garters that belong to a multitude of female characters, including: "provirgins', super whore's, silent sisters', Charley's aunts', grandmother's, mothers'-in-law . . . godmothers' garters" (183.26-28). The pair "silent sisters" makes allusion to Shem's own sister, whose personality is split by her reflected image. A similar expression occurred on page 3: "not yet, though all's fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with two twone nathandjoe" (3.11-12). The quotation introduces the world of images and vanity, "vanessy," also alluding to Jonathan Swift's Vanessa. As in the previous usage of "silence" taking place in the expression "silent sisters," the term "sosie" also implies more than one sister, making clear, as the adjective "silent" did, that such plurality is caused by the cleft of Issy's personality into her own repeated image, her "sosias," adopting the term from Plautus' comedy.<sup>17</sup>

Issy's image, thus, is a silent repetition of herself, and the young girl develops the same idea on 147, where she addresses her image reflected on a mirror: "Do you like that, *silenzioso*? Are you enjoying, this same little me, my life, my love? . . . I will not break the seal. I am enjoying it still, I swear I am!" (147-48.35-4). Issy calls the glass "*silenzioso*" and admits to enjoy that silence, "I am enjoying it still," where the adverb "still" can also be interpreted as an adjective, meaning "silent, quiet." Issy promises not to break the seal, probably referring to the glass that separates two worlds that are identical and opposed at the same time. Although Issy makes this promise in this particular case, she does not keep it in many others. Thus, we find the following in II.2: "Alis, alas, she broke the glass!" (270.20). The breaking of the glass is just a device to express the transfer from one world into the other, from the old era into the new one, which is but an imitation of the former. Trespassing the mirror, breaking the seal, then, entails entering the reflective silence of the sons.

The seal mentioned above later reveals itself as Salomon's Seal, used in some instances throughout *Finnegans Wake* to represent the whole work. The book as container is thus portrayed by means of this graphic scheme, consisting of a six-pointed star, formed by two interlaced triangles and popularly known as "The Star of David" or "Magen David," in Hebrew. The shape of this figure becomes essential in order to observe the whole work as a reflection, and is tightly linked to the use of "silence" as well. In II.2, for example, the sentence: "Salmonson set his seel on an hexengown" (297.3-4), indicates its hexagonal pattern and also mentions the salmon of wisdom, identified in many cases with Earwicker. Making use of the strange spelling of the word "hexagon," here occurring as "hexengown," Joyce combines the hexagonal shape of the figure with an allusion to the "perizomata" or gown made from fig leaves and used by Adam and Eve as a garment to cover their naked bodies.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Roland McHugh cites Eliphaz Lévi in *The History of Magic* explaining that the structure of this design represents God's triangle, formed by his own forehead and his two eyes, reflected on the water surface and revealing the number 6, which is the number of creation.<sup>19</sup> Truth, as in Plato's myth, can only be achieved through reflected shadows of the real image.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Shem offers his own version of Salomon's Seal, on page 293, which has been object of multiple interpretations. Most of them, however, coincide to affirm that the triangle represents the "vagina" or the symbol of fertility that is the source of life, that is, Anna Livia's delta. One interesting aspect, nonetheless, is the effect that the act of dissociating the

two triangles brings about. The resultant figure appears then as a structure originally occasioned by two interlaced triangles, arranged back to back, giving the impression that one of them is a mere reflection of the other.<sup>20</sup>

All this preamble about Salomon's Seal is indeed quite helpful to interpret the peculiar use of the word "silence" in I.7: "*Are We Fairlys Represented?, Solomon Silent reading*" (176.7-8). The line is taken from a list of Shem's games and pastimes, and naturally, also suggests the reading of H.C.E. in his role of mythic salmon, which is another reconstruction or writing of his person. Furthermore, the sentence connotes the seal that stands for the whole work, written and read in silence and displayed as a mute image, whereas the Language of Silence that builds it is just a continuous parody of itself, a mirrored image.

As I have frequently indicated, though in this sense the whole work is constantly imitating itself, the images produced, as in a mirror, are not exact copies but altered reproductions of the original image. In the same way, the Language of Silence is also a language of continuous movement and changes. There is no need to gather all the innumerable repetitions taking place throughout the book in order to demonstrate its regeneration and the incessant alterations the text undergoes. The ballad itself, as official representative of the work and the hero's story, serves as a good example of it. Indeed, the transcription of the ballad incorporates several errors that are to be attributed to its oral transmission, from one source to the other. More specifically, Joyce inserts slight alterations at the end of each stanza which seem to be the product of a misinterpretation of the last lines, following a method that some critics, like Gordon, have identified with the popular game known as "Consequences" or "Rumour" (122): "And religious reform./Hideous in form" (45.17-18), as well as in: "His butter is in his horns./Butter his horns!" (23-24).

At the same time, as in the case of the ballad, the letter also appears as a text in constant evolution, changing all the time: "every person, place and thing . . . was moving and changing every part of the time: the travelling inkhorn (possibly pot), the hare and turtle pen and paper, the continually more and less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators . . . differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns" (118.21-28). The text is written in silence and follows a process of continuous revision, as the use of "silence" verifies on this occasion: "when they were yung and easily freudened, in the penumbra of the procuring room . . . could (did we care to sell our feebought silence *in camera*) tell our very moistnostrilled one that *father* in such virgated contexts is not always that undemonstrative relative" (115.22-27). The passage is to be found in I.5, the episode about Anna Livia's "mamafesta." It seems that Shaun starts here elaborating a discourse about psychoanalytic interpretations, which according to him, are always related to sex and to the father figure's guilt: "inverted parentage with a prepossessing drauma present in her past" (31-32). Since the whole episode deals with the moment of conception of the letter, Shaun is describing here its features by means of a mockingly psychoanalytic tone. As it is well-known, Joyce was not very fond of Psychoanalysis, and in several cases rejected the offer made by Jung, whose name is cited in the example next to Freud: "yung and easily freudened," to treat Joyce's schizophrenic daughter, Lucia. In the same manner, the language used in *Finnegans Wake* has often been described as schizophrenic; even Joyce himself, in an attempt to excuse his daughter's insanity, argued that the strange logic showed in one of Lucia's letters was due to Lucia's great intuition, who was trying to imitate the style used by Joyce in his last work (*JJI* 679).

The passage, therefore, seems to be a description of the language of *Finnegans Wake*, which Shaun psychoanalyses as if it were an insane person. The word "silence" in this case is accompanied by a Latin ablative, "*in camera*," forming an expression common in Latin Law meaning "secretly, privately." Moreover, the term "feebought" is quite similar to "feedback," used in psychiatry and psychology to define a sort of retroactive activity of an effect upon its cause, conditioned by the systems of "input" and "output," or codifying and de-codifying information: "What can't be corded can be decorded if an ear aye sieze what no eye ere grieved for" (482.33-34). The language of the work, thus, is described as a silent kind of language, and also as a system of communication that is ever changing and going backwards.

For this reason the language of *Finnegans Wake* is apocalyptic, adopting Derrida's terminology.<sup>21</sup> It is transmitted by different voices that emerge as veils covering the truth, rather than revealing it. The apocalyptic discourse is also the one that carries a message that never arrives, it announces the revelation of something that is never revealed, as in: "Leave the letter that never begins to go find the latter that ever comes to end, written in smoke and blurred by mist and signed of solitude, sealed at night" (FW 337.11-14). The language that generates the universe of *Finnegans Wake*, in fact, follows a process of incessant alteration: "but remind to think, you where yestoday Ys Morganas war and that it is always tomorrow in toth's tother's place" (570.11-13). This passage evokes an episode of *Through the Looking Glass* in which the White Queen's apparent lack of logic turns the land into a timeless universe: "the rule is, jam to-morrow, and jam yesterday, but never jam to-day . . . it's jam every *other* day" (87), an atemporal progression very similar to the one of Joyce's last work.

Though this essay is just a brief example of the many diverse implications the word "silence" conveys throughout the whole work, it may serve as a good representation of the different ways in which Joyce employs the term in *Finnegans Wake*. A closer interpretation and analysis of the multitude of "silences" in the text, certainly provides a more complete vision of the work generated by the Language of Silence. Indeed, this mute communication emerges as a continuous parody of itself, turning the universe it creates into another mirrored image. At the same time, however, the Language of Silence in *Finnegans Wake* gives birth to a world created in an instant of change that entails the transference from an older era to a new one, inserting alterations and submitting the product of such change to an incessant evolution, in an infinite extension of time and space. The work, therefore, is seen as a process, rather than as a final product, intermittent and fragmentary, neither definitive, nor conclusive.

#### Notes

1. Ihab Hassan, *Paracriticism: Seven Speculations of the Time* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1975) 53.

2. Harold Pinter, "Writing for the Theatre," *Complete Works: One* (New York, Grove, 1978) 14-15.

3. Philip Kuberski, *Chaosmos* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1994). Kuberski states in his work that the notion of "différance" is close to "expressing the night-logic of *Finnegans Wake*: the perpetual differing and deferring of the processes of life and language, the perpetual presumption of an origin or foundation always thwarted by the apparent effects of such an origin" (86-87).

4. Clive Hart, *A Concordance to Finnegans Wake* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1963).

5. Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy" *Dissemination* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1981) 61-156.

6. In his essay, Derrida argues that "God the king does not know how to write . . . He has no need to write. He speaks, he dictates, and his word suffices" (76).
7. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (London: Penguin, 1992) 244. All subsequent references will be to this edition.
8. C. George Sandulescu, *The Language of the Devil* (Gerrards Cross: Collin Smythe, 1987). Sandulescu asserts that silence must necessarily be the devil's expression, "if only because he is the only one popularly believed to speak silently and utter words of silent power" (267).
9. Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (New York: Horcourt Brave and Jovanovich, 1944) 144.
10. Campbell and Robinson 104.
11. All the references correspond to John Gordon, *Finnegans Wake: A Plot Summary* (Dublin: Gill and McMillan, 1982), and the page numbers appear in brackets in the text.
12. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1985).
13. Roland McHugh, *The Sigla of Finnegans Wake* (London: Arnold, 1976) 6.
14. Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon's report in *Understanding Finnegans Wake: A Guide to the Narrative of James Joyce's Masterpiece* (New York and London: Garland, 1982) 210.
15. All the references in this paper are to Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland and through the Looking Glass* (Wordsworth, 1993).
16. See the characters' corresponding siglas in McHugh 51-52.
17. Titus Macius Plautus, *El anfitrión*, in *Comedias* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1992).
18. Frances M. Boldereff, *Hermes to his Son Thoth Being Joyce's Use of Giordano Bruno in Finnegans Wake* (White Eagle, 1968).
19. The quotation from Eliphaz Lévi's *The History of Magic* (London: Rider, 1969) occurs in McHugh 71.
20. Though the design showed by McHugh on page 70 differs from the graphic representation of Solomon's Seal by Shem on page 293 of *Finnegans Wake*, the reflective character of the structures seem to be evident in both versions.
21. Jacques Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," *Semeia: An Experimental Journey for Biblical Criticism* (N.p.: Scholar, 1982) 65-97.