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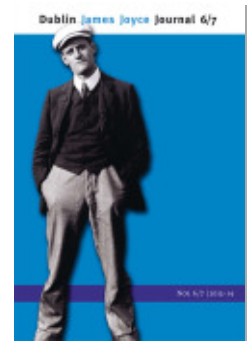
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DAVID SPURR

JOYCE'S SHADOW VISION

In the 'Anna Livia Plurabelle' chapter of *Finnegans Wake* (I.8), one of the washers at the ford asks in the fading light, 'Is that the Poolbeg flasher beyant, pharphar, or a fireboat coasting nyar the Kishtna or a glow I behold within a hedge or my Garry come back from the Indes?' (FW 215.1–3).¹ The answer must be all of the above, for the *Wake* does not provide the conditions for which a given perception of an object necessarily excludes other perceptions of it. There is no standard of clear vision against which to measure possible errors of vision. The absence of optical error by reason of the absence of error's contrary is a fundamental epistemological condition of the Wakean universe. In *Joyce's Book of the Dark*, John Bishop writes that the *Wake* actively encourages readers *not* to attempt to see things in the clear light of day, but to 'keep black, keep black!' (FW 34.34) because the functional blindness of this 'mole's paradise' (FW 76.33–34) has become a kind of liberation from the tyranny of the visible.² In other words, the blurred vision of the *Wake*, described in the first chapter as the 'Blurry works at Hurdlesford' (FW 14.05), is the optical equivalent of its 'Blotty words for Dublin' (FW 14.14–15), the figuratively blotted, smeared, and scarcely readable language of the same book. Just as that language exceeds the limits of referential meaning as such, so the willed blindness of *Finnegans Wake* declares its independence from the '[l]imits of the diaphane' (U 3.04), the purely rational perception of a stable object-world from a fixed point of view.

Joyce is not alone in wishing to render visual perception as something that is never simply neutral, but rather as always transformed by subjective or institutional value, by imagination. In *La poétique de l'espace*, Bachelard writes, 'L'espace saisi par l'imagination ne peut rester l'espace indifférent livré à la réflexion du géomètre. Il est vécu. Et il est vécu, non pas dans sa positivité, mais avec toutes les partialités de l'imagination':³ 'Space as beheld in the imagination cannot remain the inert space of the surveyor. It is lived space, and is lived not empirically, but in all the subjectivity of the imagination.'⁴ Joyce understood that the workings of the imagination are favoured by the

obscurity of shadows and dimness of light. When he first began to write, shadows in the English novel were essentially the heritage of the Gothic genre, where they veiled the malevolent doings of sinister persons; in Victorian novels they signalled the misery of the poor. As E.H. Gombrich among others has shown, the shadow also has a long history in Western painting.⁵ The early cinema, however, imbued the art of shadows with new meaning, as the cinematic image itself was composed entirely of the play between light and shadows of varying texture and intensity.⁶ In 1915–16, the film director Cecil B. DeMille introduced a technique of low-key lighting designed to produce a ‘Rembrandt’ chiaroscuro effect, obtained by means of ‘confined and shallow areas of illumination, sharp-edged shadows and a palpable sense of the directionality of light’.⁷ In 1923, when Joyce began writing *Work in Progress*, one of the cinematic sensations of the day was Arthur Robison’s *Schatten – Eine nächtliche Halluzination*, known in English as *Warning Shadows*, an Expressionist film in which the play between light and darkness opens the way to the unconscious.⁸ Joyce appears to acknowledge such effects in *The Mime of Nick, Mick, and the Maggies*, when this theatrical piece is enhanced with ‘[s]hadows for the film folk’ (FW 221.21). Coincidentally, a year before the publication of this piece in 1934, the Japanese novelist Junichiro Tanizaki had written an influential essay entitled ‘In Praise of Shadows’,⁹ which lamented the loss, under western influence, of the dreamlike and erotic presence of shadows in Japanese art and architecture. He looked to literature as the salvation of darkness: ‘In the mansion called literature I would have the eaves deep and the walls dark, I would push back into the shadows the things that come forward too clearly’.¹⁰ Joyce’s work shows that the sentiment was shared by certain writers in the West, as well as by architects like Frank Lloyd Wright. In his metaphor of the house as the structure of imagined space, Bachelard opposes the rationality of the view from the top floor to the darkness of the cellar: ‘A la cave les ténèbres demeurent jour et nuit. Même avec le bougeoir à la main, l’homme à la cave voit danser les ombres sur la noire muraille’.¹¹ ‘In the cellar the shadows remain day and night. Even with a candlestick in hand, the man in the cellar sees the shadows dance on the black wall.’ As Joyce writes in *Stephen Hero*, ‘Stephen was still a lover of the deformations brought by dusk’ (SH 183). At a time when both the early cinema and modern architecture were consciously exploring the use of shadows,¹² Joyce developed his own aesthetic based on similar principles.

I wish to show that this aesthetic of shadows, which invests visual perception with the phantasms of the mind, extends and intensifies

throughout Joyce's work, ultimately achieving a kind of transcendence in *Finnegans Wake*. The shadows that darken Joyce's universe in all of his major works are the conditions of an entire range of things ill seen, through errors of visual interpretation, limited perception, irreducible ambiguity, gross distortion, and outright misrecognition. However, the many instances of visual failure in Joyce should be understood not merely as a series of errors, but rather as a continual interrogation of the logic of error and of its possible redemption in the form of discovery.

The shadows have already gathered in the first stories of *Dubliners*, so much so that they become places of refuge for the children of 'Araby', playing in the 'blind' end of North Richmond Street during the short days of winter (*D* 20.01). The children hide in the shadows to avoid the gaze of the narrator's uncle, and from the same place they spy on Mangan's sister, who throughout the story remains a shadowy figure. Seen from a distance, she is 'defined by the light from the half-opened door' (*D* 'Araby', 21.39–40). When she is finally approached by the narrator, the light from an outdoor lamp 'caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing' (*D* 'Araby', 23.94–6), finally catching at 'the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease' (*D* 'Araby', 23.97–8). In this series of chiaroscuro effects, the body of the girl is visually fragmented in such a way as to illuminate those parts that, in the narrator's eyes, heighten the erotic charge: her hair, her neck, the edge of her petticoat. This charge becomes unbearable, to the point where one dark and rainy evening the boy abandons his post at the window of the front parlour, where he habitually watches for her, to seek refuge in the back drawing-room of the house. There, '[s]ome distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little' (*D* 'Araby', 22.77–9). Seeing little has the effect of quieting the riot of his senses, just as, on the night he is to go to the bazaar, he escapes momentarily from his anxiety by mounting the steps to the upper part of the house, where '[t]he high cold gloomy empty rooms liberated me' (*D* 'Araby', 24.128). These high, dark, rooms are an architectural foreshadowing of the great hall which the narrator finally enters late at night, the greater part of which is in darkness, and where the remaining lights are already being extinguished. As he gazes up into the darkness, it is only now that the narrator sees himself clearly if rather severely, 'as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger' (*D* 'Araby', 26.218–19). Everything takes place as if the darkness of a world imperfectly seen were the condition for self-revelation.

The effects of obscure vision in 'Araby' are thus of two kinds: on one hand, the objectification of the female figure in an aesthetic composition with erotic overtones; on the other hand, an inward recognition in which erotic desire is extinguished in a moment of self-negation. Both of these effects occur in 'The Dead'. In the 'dark gaunt house' on Usher's Island where the Christmas dinner is to take place, Gabriel finds himself already in shadow at the foot of the stairs, and thus remains unseen by his aunts until he calls out to them 'from the dark' (*D 'The Dead'*, 153.64). The same stairs are the scene of a further visual ambiguity after dinner, as the guests prepare to leave. From 'a dark part of the hall' Gabriel gazes up the staircase at a woman standing near the top of the first flight, 'in the shadow also' (*D 'The Dead'*, 182.1138–40). In a chiaroscuro vision like that of 'Araby', Gabriel cannot see the woman's face but he 'could see the terracotta and salmonpink panels of her skirt which made the shadow appear black and white' (*D 'The Dead'*, 182.1141–3). It is only from these fragmentary details that he realizes, 'It was his wife' (*D 'The Dead'*, 182.1143). But even then his manner of seeing her remains indistinct, as her attitude is transformed in his mind into a sentimental symbol, like those in the paintings of J.W. Waterhouse and Holman Hunt: '*Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter' (*D 'The Dead'*, 182.1157–8).

The conclusion of the story takes place in a darkened hotel room from which the candle has been removed, and is marked by a series of visual frustrations. Passing by the cheval-glass, Gabriel catches sight of 'the face whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror and his glimmering giltrimmed eyeglasses' (*D 'The Dead'*, 190.1433–5). The moment of self-misrecognition corresponds to Gabriel's gross misjudgement of his wife. Her strange mood escapes his mastery as she stands looking out the window. In telling the story of Michael Furey, she is taken back to another window, of a house in Galway, and another moment of blindness. In that story, she recalls being alerted by the sound of the gravel Michael has thrown against the window of that house, but as she went to it, '[t]he window was so wet I couldn't see' (*D 'The Dead'*, 192.1530). Her youthful passion carries her at once out into the garden to meet her lover, whose eyes return to her now: 'I can see his eyes as well as well!' (*D 'The Dead'*, 192.1536–7). The ghost of Michael Furey is more visible to her than the jealous husband who stands before her. Later, in the partial darkness, Gabriel also imagines that he sees the young man, and realizes that his aunts, his wife, himself, and all the living: 'One by one they were all becoming shades' (*D 'The Dead'*, 194.1584). Joyce's book ends with this shift in register from the literal to the figurative: no longer

merely the occasion for visual effects and errors, the shadows are now that which we all become as we enter that 'grey impalpable world' (*D 'The Dead'*, 194.1598). In Gabriel's mind the dissolution of the 'solid world itself' removes the grounds of error; he can set out on his journey westward without fear of losing his way (*D 'The Dead'*, 194.1598–9). Shadows are no longer mere spaces of concealment; where all is shadow, they are what we are.

In *A Portrait*, Stephen wonders:

Or was it that, being as weak of sight as he was shy of mind, he drew less pleasure from the reflection of the glowing sensible world through the prism of a language manycoloured and richly storied than from the contemplation of an inner world of individual emotions mirrored perfectly in a lucid supple periodic prose? (*P* IV.698–703).

The suggestion is that only the inner world can be seized with perfect clarity, whereas the world of the senses remains merely the indistinct reflection of something glowing out there. This question is symptomatic of a work fraught with anxiety over the weakness and vulnerability of the eye. In the very first lines, baby Stephen is threatened with the image of eagles that will come and 'Pull out his eyes' (*P* I.34), and the central drama of his days as a schoolboy at Clongowes concerns his partial blindness from having broken his glasses.

As an older boy back in Dublin in the 'old darkwindowed house' is it Stephen's bad eyesight or an effect of the 'spectral dusk' of the waning day that makes him only dimly discern something in the doorway, where '[a] skull appeared suspended in the gloom'? The passage continues, '[a] feeble creature like a monkey was there, drawn thither by the sound of voices at the fire'. A voice from the doorway asks, 'Is that Josephine?' and receives the reply from the old woman making tea, 'No, Ellen. It's Stephen' (*P* II.275–93). The scene has a ghostly character. In the shadows cast by the flickering firelight, Stephen has mistaken Ellen for a suspended skull, then for a monkey-like creature, and she has mistaken him for Josephine. However, the fact that something more than optical error is at stake here is suggested by the origins of this story in one of Joyce's *Epiphanies*.¹³ In *Stephen Hero*, epiphany is described as 'a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself' (*SH* 216).

In this case the sudden spiritual manifestation could be the image of death formed by the skull suspended in the gloom. It belongs to a repertoire of such

images scattered throughout Joyce's fiction, where the eye curiously seizes on the shape of the skull of another person, mentally stripping away the flesh. Thus in 'Counterparts', Farrington stares fixedly at the 'polished skull' of his employer Mr Alleyne, 'gauging its fragility' (*D* 71.42–3). When, in *A Portrait*, Stephen meets with the director of his college, '[t]he priest's face was in total shadow but the waning daylight from behind him touched the deeply grooved temples and the curves of the skull' (*P* IV.242–4). The figure of his friend Cranly appears to Stephen as 'the phantom of a dream, the face of a severed head or deathmask' (*P* V.149–50). In *Ulysses*, Bloom contemplates the '[s]hrunken skull' of the chemist at Sweny's (*U* 5.473), and at the National Library, Stephen ponders the face of John Eglinton, whose glittering eyes peer forth from a 'rufous skull', seeking the bearded face of AE 'amid darkgreener shadow' (*U* 9.30). Such images recall the *memento mori* theme in late medieval and baroque painting, where the flesh of the body is torn away or stretched so thin as to reveal the organs and skeletal structure behind it.¹⁴ In the science of optics, orthoscopy refers to the condition of 'normal', distortion-free vision. But in these examples the subject seems to penetrate beyond the surface of the 'correct' visual field in a moment of heightened perception, one that seems to be favoured by the presence of gloom and shadow.

In the scene from *A Portrait* where Stephen stands in the colonnade of the library, he misremembers a line from Thomas Nashe's song known as 'A Litany in Time of Plague' (from *Summer's Last Will and Testament*, 1600). The song itself is a *memento mori*, reminding us that

Beauty is but a flower,
Which wrinkles will devour;
Brightness falls from the air,
Queens have died young and fair,
Dust hath closed Helen's eye:
I am sick, I must die.¹⁵

But in *A Portrait*, moved by the sudden silence of his companions, the falling darkness, and the passage of his beloved through 'the darkening air', Stephen remembers the third line as 'Darkness falls from the air'. The verse itself with its 'black vowels and its opening sound, rich and lutelike' seems musically imbued with darkness. To hide his reverie from his companions, Stephen moves toward 'the deeper shadows at the end of the colonnade' (*P* V.2080–4). The point is that his 'error' in quoting Nashe is in fact true to the spirit of his

poetic inspiration, which thrives on the reverie born in the falling darkness. Although this error is one of memory rather than vision, it corresponds in its imaginative function to the visual distortions of all those things seen in the dark in strange ways.

During the writing of *Ulysses* Joyce suffered several attacks of glaucoma and iritis, diseases which if left untreated can lead to blindness, and he submitted to a series of no less than nine eye operations during the next eleven years. In 1922, during one of his crises in vision, Joyce confided to Philippe Soupault, 'I always have the impression that it is evening' (quoted in *JIII* 537). It seems natural that under these conditions Joyce should imagine what it would be like to be blind, and even to wonder whether with the loss of vision something else might be gained. Encountering the young man known as the 'blind stripling' in Dawson Street, Leopold Bloom asks himself: 'What dreams would he have, not seeing?' (*U* 8.1144–5). Similar thoughts occur to Stephen while walking on Sandymount strand, where he closes his eyes and taps the sand in front of him with his ashplant. Stephen deliberately tests the '[l]imits of the diaphane', as if wishing to escape the 'ineluctable modality of the visible' (*U* 3.01–4), the optically-organized world of rational perception, with its clear distinctions between subject and object. By closing his eyes he can at least imagine that he is 'walking into eternity along Sandymount strand' (*U* 3.18–19).

The recurring images of blindness in *Ulysses* figure as a kind of absolute to Joyce's aesthetic of shadows, which is on the whole more nuanced. In the first episode, Buck Mulligan quotes Yeats's poem 'Who goes with Fergus?' which begins with an invitation to 'pierce the deep wood's woven shade.'¹⁶ Just then a cloud covers the sun, 'slowly, wholly', as we are told both at *U* 1.248 and at 4.218, the phenomenon being observed both by Stephen at Sandycove and Bloom in Dorset Street.¹⁷ In each case, the language that follows these words tells us something about the effects of the mind on visual perception. To Bloom's mind, filled with thoughts of Palestine, the clouded sun is 'Grey. Far' (*U* 4.218), like the barren desert. Stephen, remembering Yeats's song, sees the same cloud as producing a very different colour, 'shadowing the bay in deeper green' (*U* 1.248–9).¹⁸ The moment recalls to Stephen memories of having sung the song to his dying mother. Its 'long dark chords' (*U* 1.250) are like the 'black vowels' of Nashe's song, reminding us that shadows invade the sound of poetic language as well as its images. Stephen then remembers a dream of his mother returning to haunt him, '[g]hostly light on the tortured face' (*U* 1.274–5). The passage as a whole weaves a complex pattern of shadow, poetic

association, music, memory, and dream, in a richer, darker texture than anything belonging to the clear light of day.

As Stephen returns from the parapet of the Martello tower, we read: 'In the gloomy domed livingroom of the tower Buck Mulligan's gowned form moved briskly to and fro about the hearth, hiding and revealing its yellow glow' (*U* 1.313–15). The assonance of gloom, dome, and room; of tower, gown, and glow, combine to produce the dark *tones* of the scene in both the phonetic and visual senses. But what is actually seen here? Is the yellow glow that of the yellow dressing gown, which already in the first paragraph showed a propensity to float in the air independently of Mulligan's body? Or is it the yellow glow of the fire in the hearth, alternately hidden and revealed by the briskly moving gown? Joyce leaves us in the dark here, perhaps in order to reproduce for the reader the visual perplexity that Stephen himself presumably experiences at this moment, having just entered the gloomy chamber from the outer light of sun and sea. However, the play of light and shadow is made even more extraordinary in the next sentence: 'Two shafts of soft daylight fell across the flagged floor from the high barbicans: and at the meeting of their rays a cloud of coal smoke and fumes of fried grease floated, turning' (*U* 1.316–18). The crossed shafts of light reproduce in disembodied form the positions of the mirror and razor which, in the novel's first sentence, lay crossed; they also figure as a luminous version of the 'rapid crosses in the air' made by Mulligan at Stephen's approach (*U* 1.12). At the centre of this cross, however, the cloud of coalsmoke floating in the light appears as a noxious form of the woodshadows that 'floated seaward' a moment earlier, just before the cloud covered the sun (*U* 1.242–48).¹⁹ We have therefore a perfect trinity of sacrilege: the sign of the cross is desecrated successively by commonplace objects of toiletry, by mocking gestures, and by shafts of light in polluted air.

The gloomy living room in the Martello tower has a kind of counterpart in the old chapter house of St Mary's Abbey, visited in the 'Wandering Rocks' episode of *Ulysses*. In passing from the tower to the abbey we descend from one storey up to seven feet below ground, but both places are dark enough to make clear vision impossible. Ned Lambert, an employee of the grain merchants' firm that uses the twelfth-century chapter house as a storage room, is giving a tour of the space to an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Hugh C. Love. However, as they grope in the darkness by the light of an expiring torch, there is little to see beyond the vaulted ceiling and the windows obscured by piled seed bags. J.J. O'Molloy appears at the entrance, and what follows is a

comedy of errors in which the three men grope in the dark, struggling to recognize one another by the sound of their voices. The section opens with the view of '[t]wo pink faces' that turn towards the entrance to the chapel house 'in the flare of the tiny torch' (*U* 10.398). When one of them asks, 'Who's that? [...]' Is that Crotty?' (*U* 10.399), the point of view has shifted abruptly from O'Molloy to Lambert, who recognizes the new arrival not by seeing him, but only by hearing his voice 'groping for foothold' (*U* 10.400). Even then he is not sure, asking, 'Hello, Jack, is that yourself?' (*U* 10.401). Nor can Rev. Love be seen, but is identified only by his 'refined accent' speaking in the gloom: 'How interesting!' (*U* 10.406). Like these persons wandering in the gloom, the reader might also be excused for a certain confusion as to who, precisely, is who. Like them, we see things not face to face, but through a glass, darkly.

What can possibly be the purpose of such a scene? Elsewhere I have written on the implicit irony of this episode, in which 'the most historic spot in all Dublin', where 'Silken' Thomas's ill-fated rebellion was launched in 1534, has become an underground storage room for Messrs Alexander and Co., seed merchants.²⁰ The chapel house is a black hole in the middle of 'Wandering Rocks', itself an *omnium gatherum* of the major characters in *Ulysses*. Its literal darkness, its obscurity as a place of historical importance, the fact that it is primarily of interest to an Anglican clergyman,²¹ the offhandedness of the remark that 'O'Madden Burke is going to write about it one of these days' (*U* 10.410) — all of this points to the site of Ireland's first rebellion as a blind spot in Irish historical remembrance. The incidental manner in which it figures in Joyce's narrative seems designed as an oblique commentary on this act of historical forgetting; it is the evocation of an absence through a parody of the blindness and misrecognition which have created that absence in Irish memory.

These dark interior spaces are symmetrically arranged in *Ulysses*: they figure respectively at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the book, each being the occasion of its own curious visual effects. The long day's journey ends in the darkness of the bedroom at No. 7 Eccles Street, where, moving visibly above Bloom's invisible thoughts, there appears '[t]he upcast reflection of a lamp and shade, an inconstant series of concentric circles of varying gradations of light and shadow' (*U* 17.2300–1). We have seen how in Joyce's works the play of light and shadow produces a range of perverse effects of religious or historical bearing. In this case, the circular shadows cast on the rectangular ceiling become a figure of enchantment with analogies to Joyce's own work. The 'square round Sinbad the Sailor's roc's auk's egg' (*U* 17.2328–

9) is the ceiling round the shadow, but also the square of the page round the circular dot with which the episode ends, and, by extension, the book itself, which contains within its rectangular form the wondrous travels of a modern-day Sinbad, now come full circle to the point where he began. The moment is not one of optical error so much as optical *errance*, a wandering astray from the object that explores the object's oneiric potential without losing sight of its essential geometric form.

I began by claiming that the obscure visions of *Finnegans Wake* were the logical conclusion to a practice throughout Joyce's work of investing visual perception with the phantasms of the mind, and that this practice was favoured by an atmosphere of darkness and shadow. My example was the flashing light seen in the gathering darkness by the washerwomen at the ford in *Finnegans Wake* I.8. Indeed, this flashing light appears as a visual echo to a host of such images in the previous works. In 'The Dead', as Gabriel begins his dinner speech, the Wellington Monument wears 'a gleaming cap of snow that flashed westward over the white field of Fifteen Acres' (*D* 176.893–5), prefiguring the journey westward he will contemplate at the story's end. In *A Portrait*, Stephen gazes upward from the steps of the library, watching the birds in flight: 'bird after bird: a dark flash, a swerve, a flash again, a dart aside, a curve, a flutter of wings' (*P* V.1775–6). This is a visual counterpart to the instant of inspiration a few pages earlier, which has 'flashed forth like a point of light and now from cloud on cloud of vague circumstance' (*P* V.1540–1), enabling Stephen to write the villanelle. In the murky atmosphere of the 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses*, Bloom sees a 'flasher' shining from the south side of the city, which he identifies successively as a searchlight, the *aurora borealis*, and a steel foundry, before concluding it to be a 'big blaze', possibly of Blazes Boylan's house (*U* 15.170–1). What these moments have in common is not just a light shining in darkness, but also an inward event in the subject's consciousness, an event independent of the rational perception of space and thus free to compound itself in phantasmatic forms. As the washerwoman says in *Finnegans Wake*: 'My sights are swimming thicker on me by the shadows to this place' (*FW* 215.09–10). At the same time, we recall that the misdemeanour alleged against HCE is that of having 'flashed' the dainty maidservants in Phoenix Park, an incident nonetheless subject to a host of different visual interpretations. Where the third episode of *Ulysses* begins with the '[i]neluctable modality of the visible' (*U* 3.01), the third chapter of the *Wake* begins with an ambiguous invocation: 'you spoof of visibility in a freakfog' (*FW* 48.01–2). The difference between the two marks the ghostly

insubstantiality of the Wakean universe, while suggesting the specious nature of visibility itself as a privileged mode of apprehending the real.

At this point, however, I wish to consider *Finnegans Wake* as something more than the logical extreme of Joyce's propensity for chimerical visions engendered in the dark. Since night and shadow are the prevailing conditions of Joyce's 'book of the dark' (FW 251.25) we need to ask whether there is an exceptional kind of vision which, rather than being the mere consequence of darkness, has something of darkness in its very nature. *Finnegans Wake* is, finally, a qualitatively different work from the earlier fiction, even from those parts of the earlier work that resemble it formally, such as 'Circe'. Despite its original and experimental nature, 'Circe' remains a simulation of delirium, a representation of hallucination from a fundamentally parodic perspective. *Finnegans Wake* is closer to the real thing in its purer perversion. One can talk about it only by abandoning the rational model of perception, the model that separates subject and object and, as Georges Bataille claims, 'allows the subject to consolidate while sheltered from contagion by the other'.²² I want to suggest that the prevailing eye of *Finnegans Wake* can be understood with reference to the quasi-mythical organ known as the pineal eye. I offer this not as a solution to any mystery, but rather as an alternative mode of understanding the visionary mode of the *Wake*.

The mythical pineal eye has historically been associated with the real pineal gland. Descartes believed that, in human beings, the pineal gland was the seat of the soul,²³ and that it ensured the union of body and soul.²⁴ In some animal species the pineal gland is photoreceptive, and there is evidence that in human beings it contains vestiges of the retinal function from a primitive stage of evolution. For this reason the pineal gland is also sometimes called the pineal eye or third eye, and has throughout the ages been the subject of occult and mystical speculation. Madame Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine* (1888) locates the third eye as the organ of spiritual sight;²⁵ this is also one of the tenets of Rosicrucianism.

Around 1930, when Joyce was in the early stages of writing *Finnegans Wake*, Georges Bataille wrote four separate pieces on the pineal eye which took the subject to a completely new level. These essays (published only posthumously) were of a prophetic nature; they speak of the pineal eye not as a vestigial organ but rather as the embryonic form of a radically new vision, designed to liberate human consciousness from the repressive doctrines of modern science, and to restore its original condition of delirium and play. Bataille wants to construct a mythology 'répondant non plus à l'observation

ou la deduction mais à un développement libre des rapports entre la conscience immédiate et variée de la vie humaine et les données prétendues inconscientes qui sont constitutionnelles de cette vie':²⁶ 'no longer corresponding to observation or deduction but to the free relations between the immediate and varied consciousness of human life, and the supposedly unconscious conditions that constitute this life.' Whereas normal vision is horizontal, in Bataille's mythic representation the pineal eye is oriented along a vertical axis that joins the sky with the earth. Symbolically, then, our highest aspirations are joined in the same vision with our basest instincts of filth and perversion. There is no longer a high and low: the sun lies in 'the depth of the sky like a corpse at the bottom of a well.'²⁷ The pineal eye is not so much an organ of perception as 'an immediate existence': when it opens, it blinds itself in a feverish auto-combustion of the mind, where its role can be compared to that of a fire burning down a house. 'The head, instead of enclosing life like money in a safe, spends without counting,' because the erotic transformation effected by the pineal eye has endowed the mind with an incandescent power, like that of a current circulating among the points of an electrical circuit. The notions of *dépense*, of *incandescence maladive*, and of *orgasme durable*, all introduced in these early essays on the pineal eye will remain central to Bataille's poetics of excess and of heterology,²⁸ his word for nonlogical difference, the science of the radically Other.²⁹

It is not difficult to see the analogies between this aesthetic and that of *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce's last work has the same driving forces of delirium and play. This is not a mere representation of delirium nor a translation of the unconscious, but rather what might be called an active participation in the erotics of language in all its perverse mutations and combinations. The feverish incandescence of the pineal eye also belongs to the language of the *Wake*, evidently written in the spirit of ecstatic expenditure, with nothing held back and everything risked. The vertical axis of vision that combines the sacred and the profane, which joins the seen to the obscene, is also characteristic of Joyce's work, where the celestial finds company with the scatological. We are in the neighbourhood of the *Wake* when we read in Bataille a line such as the following: 'Pendant la nuit, un immense amour, trouble, doux comme un spasme de jeune fille, se jette dans un univers géant, lié au sentiment intime d'avoir uriné les étoiles':³⁰ 'During the night an immense love, vague and gentle like the spasm of a girl, is released into a giant universe, akin to the feeling of having urinated the stars.'³¹

In *Finnegans Wake*, the pineal eye is referred to more than once. In II.2, the 'night lessons' chapter, it figures as one of the '[f]orce centres' of esoteric doctrine, here named the 'intertemporal eye', the third eye placed between the temples of the head (FW 303.10–11R).³² Chapter I.5, on ALP's letter, makes a more explicit connection between the pineal eye or gland and ecstatic language. In pseudo-psychoanalytic style, comment is made on the suggestive nature of apparently innocent language, that is, what a 'neurasthene nympholept, endocrine-pineal typus, [...] is feeling for under her lubricitous meiosis when she refers with liking to some feeler she fancies face' (FW 115.30–5). Joyce here alludes to a theory that associates disease in the pineal gland with hypersexual development, but the passage as a whole evokes the act of writing as a feverishly erotic and feminine process: etymologically, the 'nympholept' is originally one caught in a frenzy after being bewitched by a nymph, though in Joyce the bewitcher and bewitched seem to merge in the same feminine figure. Her mode of expression is driven by 'a priapic urge for congress with agnates before cognates' (FW 115.32–3). Cognates are words with common etymological origins or children of the same parentage. One definition of agnates refers to supernumerary children, those born when there are already legitimate heirs. In terms of written composition, then, the nympholept writer favours the language of agnates, that is, of excessive expenditure, exceeding in erotic delirium the language of cognates, or what is necessary for the orderly transmission of meaning. In other words, she is a figure for the writer of *Finnegans Wake*, and her vision, in Bataille's terms, is that of the pineal eye.

The relevance of such a vision to the aesthetics of shadows becomes apparent in *Finnegans Wake* I.7, the 'Shem the Penman' chapter, which joyfully combines images of writing with an excess of darkness, filth, and obscenity. The question of optical error is raised when Shem, having long shut himself up in the darkness of his own house, at last ventures a view 'out of his westernmost keyhole' (FW 178.29) with the aid of a powerful telescope. The view is dim on account of the impenetrable weather, and the moment is fraught with portent as Shem, with 'hope in his shivering soul, as he prayed to the cloud of Incertitude, of finding out for himself [...] whether true conciliation was forging ahead or falling back after the celestious intemperance' (FW 178.31–5). Shem's vision is thus potentially far-seeing, and of prophetic import, but it is also intensely inward-looking and solipsistic: it is 'his my see', a 'see me see' he 'loves in meeingseeing' (FW 178.36–179.01). While praying for a higher vision, he also seems to take pleasure in seeing himself see. So it is that

he got the charm of his optical life when he found himself (*hic sunt lennones!*) at pointblank range blinking down the barrel of an irregular revolver of the bulldog with a purpose pattern,³³ handled by an unknown quarreler who, supposedly, had been told off to shade and shoot shy Shem should the shit show his shiny shnout out awhile to look facts in their face before being hosed and creased (uprip and jack him!) by six or a dozen of the gayboys (FW 179.01–8).

The telescope and the gunsight are instruments of two fundamentally opposed ways of seeing. Shem's searching vision through the dimness of the heavens, like that of Joyce, is thus threatened with annihilation by a figure of violence from a world where facts are to be looked in the face like objects at the end of a gun-barrel.

If Shem's vision is worth shit from this point of view, its other aspect consists in his fanciful reading of his shadowy 'Blue Book of Eccles, *édition de ténèbres*', which he pores over delightedly, so that everything he sees there is 'an aisling vision more gorgeous than the one before t.i.t.s., a roseschelle cottage by the sea for nothing for ever, a ladies tryon hosiery raffle at liberty, [...] an entire operahouse [...] of enthusiastic noblewomen flinging every coronetcrimsoned stitch they had off at his probscenium' (FW 179.31–180.3), and so forth. The traditional Irish aisling, with its dreamlike figures of women, is combined here with both the bourgeois idyll of a seaside cottage and the obscene fantasy of upper-class women flinging their underclothes at Shem himself. This intoxication with vulgarity ends with a long cry, in which the song 'The Dear Little Shamrock of Erin', recorded by John McCormack in 1906, is transformed into *Deal Lil Shemlock Yellin*, Shem's prolonged squeal of the high note, lasting 'fully five minutes' (FW 180.7). This cry will be echoed in the opening line of Chapter III.3, by Yawn, who lies in a semi-swoon, and from whom '[l]owly, longly, a wail went forth' (FW 474.01). Again we find ourselves in the neighbourhood of Bataille, where we are repeatedly told of a headlong fall through space accompanied by a horrible inhuman cry ('chute vertigineuse dans l'espace céleste accompagnée d'un cri horrible').³⁴ This cry responds to the vision, made manifest to the pineal eye, that there is neither high nor low, neither immobile object nor established ground, but rather 'une fête fulgurante d'astres qui tournent à tout jamais le vertige de la bacchanale':³⁵ 'a flashing feast of stars spinning forever and ever the vertigo of bacchanalia'. This vision corresponds closely to the well-known passage in the quiz of

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Finnegans Wake I.6, concerning a human being 'as hapless behind the dreams of accuracy as any camelot prince of dinmurk', who is suddenly granted 'an earsighted view of old hopeinhaven' (FW 143.6–10). 'Ah how starring', the questioner says, before asking, 'what would that fargazer seem to seemself to seem seeming of, dim it all? Answer: A collideorscape!' (FW 143.22–8): a kaleidoscope, a collision or escape, etc. In this vision, where 'every person, place and thing' is 'moving and changing every part of the time' (FW 118.22–4), there is no ground for optical error, because there is none for dreams of accuracy. In the world of *Finnegans Wake*, the only error is to believe in error. By this point, Joyce's aesthetic of shadows has evolved from the painterly chiaroscuros of *Dubliners* through the dark reveries of *A Portrait* and the tenebrous spaces of *Ulysses*. *Finnegans Wake* is the black hole into which all of the other works are engulfed: a whirling vortex where the limits of the diaphane are shattered, where darkness is turned inside out in order to become its own form of illumination.

NOTES:

1. An initial version of this article was presented as a paper at the conference 'Optical Errors in Joyce', held in June 2013 at the Université de Paris, Sorbonne Nouvelle.
2. John Bishop, *Joyce's Book of the Dark* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 218.
3. Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l'espace* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957), p. 17.
4. Translations are my own.
5. Studies of the subject include E.H. Gombrich's *Shadows: The Depiction of Cast Shadows in Western Art* (London: National Gallery, 1995), Victor Stoichita's *A Short History of Shadow* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), and Michael Baxandall's *Shadows and Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). My thanks to Anne Fogarty for suggesting these titles.
6. Thomas L. Burkdale argues boldly, but with good evidence, that 'the invention of the cinematograph changed Joyce's perception of the modern world and his idea of what modernist art ought to do.' See *Joycean Frames: Film and the Fiction of James Joyce* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 29.
7. See Lea Jacobs, 'Belasco, DeMille, and the Development of Lasky Lighting', *Film History* 5.4 (1993), 405–18, p. 405 and p. 408.
8. *Warning Shadows* was sufficiently well known in England for Evelyn Waugh to refer to it in *Brideshead Revisited* as an object of general knowledge (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 191.

9. Junichiro Tanizaki (1933) translated as *In Praise of Shadows* by Thomas Harper and Edward Seidensticker (New Haven, Connecticut: Leete's Island Books, 1977).
10. Tanizaki, p. 19.
11. Bachelard, p. 36.
12. Inspired by Japanese architecture, Frank Lloyd Wright remarked that 'There can be no such thing as absolute death or utter evil—all being from light in some form. In any last analysis there is no evil, because shadow itself is of the light. See *A Testament* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957), pp. 254–5. Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* was influential in formulating this aesthetic. Also see, Robert McCarter, *Frank Lloyd Wright* (London: Reaktion, 2006). More recently, Daisuke Miyao, writing on the aesthetics of shadows in Japanese cinema, points out the 'ambivalent relationship between new forms of social relations—primacy of vision, to be specific—and cinema as a new visual medium' in *The Aesthetics of Shadow: Lighting and Japanese Cinema* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2013), p. 8.
13. See the fifth of Joyce's 'Epiphanies', PSW 165.
14. See, for example, Hans Memling's *Vanitas* triptych (1485), or Caravaggio's *San Gerolamo* (1606).
15. Thomas Nashe, 'From *Summer's Last Will and Testament*', *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth-Century Verse*, edited by Emrys Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 615–7 (p. 616).
16. Yeats, *Collected Poems* (New York: Scribner's, 1996), p. 43.
17. One can imagine that both Stephen and Bloom are looking at the same cloud at relatively the same time. Episodes 1 and 4 both take place around 8:00 am, and in the latter Joyce repeats the words from the former: 'A cloud began to cover the sun, wholly, slowly.' The repetition suggests the simultaneity of the two gazes on the same object, in keeping with the Joycean logic of parallax.
18. At the end of 'Circe', Stephen, drunk and prostrate after his altercation with the soldiers, murmurs the lines of Yeats's poem. In Bloom's hearing, the legendary Fergus becomes a girl named Ferguson: 'In the shady wood. The deep white breast. Ferguson, I think I caught. A girl. Some girl. Best thing could happen him' (*U* 15.4949–51).
19. The 'woodshadows' occur in slightly different form in the second line of Yeats's 'Who goes with Fergus?': 'And pierce the deep wood's woven shade.'
20. David Spurr, *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 195–8.
21. In 'Circe', the Rev. Hugh Love is merged with the Englishman Haines to produce 'The Reverend Mr Haines Love' (*U* 15.4700).
22. Denis Hollier, *Against Architecture: The Writings of Georges Bataille*, translated by Betsy Wing (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), p. 95. Hollier's book brought to my attention Bataille's writings on the pineal eye.

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23. René Descartes, *Œuvres*. 13 Vols. Edited by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Vrin, 1964–74), III, pp. 19–20.
24. Descartes, *Oeuvres* XI, p. 351.
25. Helen Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*. 3 Vols. (London: Theosophical Publishing Co., 1888), II, p. 299.
26. Georges Bataille, *Œuvres complètes*. 12 Vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1970–88), II, p. 27.
27. Bataille, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 27.
28. Bataille, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 25.
29. Bataille, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 61.
30. Bataille, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 28.
31. Because it is close to the inner ear, the pineal gland or eye has also been called the pineal ear. The interchangeability of eye and ear is a motif of the *Wake* which corresponds to the multivalent function of the pineal eye. Joyce's recurring motif of the earwig, present in the various names of H.C. Earwicker, is suggestive of the pineal eye in its alternate form as the pineal ear. The earwig is popularly thought to be capable of burrowing into the human head.
32. A page later, the name of René Descartes is evoked, literally translated as 'reborn of the cards' (FW 304.27–8), in a possible allusion to Descartes's theory of the pineal gland. *Finnegans Wake* can indeed be understood as transcribing a re-born vision of the world after a vast reshuffling of the familiar perceptual cards.
33. The 'British Bulldog Revolver' manufactured by Philip Webley and Son, Birmingham, England, was a widely sold handgun in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Charles Guiteau used one to assassinate US President James Garfield in 1881.
34. Bataille, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 27.
35. Georges Bataille, 'Les mangeurs d'étoiles', in *André Masson* (Rouen: Wolf, 1940), I, p. 567.