

Re/Joycean Mistakes, Misprisions, and Modernist Contexts

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2004 WAS A CELEBRATORY YEAR FOR JOYCE ENTHUSIASTS, many of whom (including myself) made a pilgrimage analogous to a modernist *haj* to congregate in Dublin en masse for the Bloomsday centenary celebration on 16 June 2004, the hundredth anniversary of the day immortalized in Joyce's *Ulysses*.¹ Literary legend claims that 16 June 1904 marked the first time that James Joyce and Nora Barnacle stepped out together and took a stroll along the Dublin canal bank, where this bold Galway lass proceeded to "make a man" of young Jamesy. The sacred date is annually celebrated by Joyce aficionados, who delight in organizing serious symposia and scholarly conferences, as well as bibulous banquets, in commemoration of Bloomsweek.²

1 In this review-article, I shall discuss only the following two books: Tim Conley, *Joyces Mistakes: Problems of Intention, Irony, and Interpretation*, U of Toronto P, 2003. Pp. 192 [Can \$50.00], and Gerald Gillespie, *Proust, Mann, Joyce in the Modernist Context*, The Catholic University of America P, 2003 [u.s. \$65.00]. In reviewing Gillespie's book, I shall be concerned only with the section on Joyce.

2 In addition to the celebrations associated with the Joyce Foundation's Bloomsday 100 Symposium (with more than 900 registered delegates), the James Joyce Centre and the city of Dublin sponsored 82 additional events during Bloomsweek. On 13 June, the Guinness Brewery offered a Rabelaisian breakfast for 10,000 on O'Connell Street. This was a grand civic carnival

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Recently, a number of Irish writers complained about the legendary status attributed to the sacred text of *Ulysses* in the modernist literary canon. In the year 2000, critics and publishers touted Joyce's monumental text as the greatest novel in English in the 20th century, and readers welcomed a new millennium amidst cheers of jubilation over the book's canonical status. At the end of the 20th century, no serious contenders had appeared to challenge the work's centenary status, and Joyce, as deceased author and post-structuralist author-effect, proved to be the winner of this particular Gold Cup race, despite the insistence of many common readers that such an inscrutable text should merit the *Throwaway* prize. Some contemporary Irish authors echo that sentiment in a series of recent news stories, complaining that Joyce's glittering prizes have diminished the illumination of their own literary lights, and that far too much fuss has been made over a bulky, laborious

and fun fair for the Hibernian populace, even as devoted Joyceans began attending scholarly panels from nine a.m. to six p.m. each day for the duration of Bloomsweek, with the exception of 6/16/04. Bloomsday 100 was a day set aside for general re/joycing. The James Joyce Centre invited a cadre of eminent guests to a sit-down breakfast at 8:00 a.m., even as the hoi-polloi congregated outdoors to feed on pork sausages and diverse inner organs (a delight to Atkins dieters), and still other devotees gathered for festivities at the Martello Tower in Sandymount. At 10:00 a.m., a bagpipe procession inaugurated a Bloomsday wedding in the Summer House of St Stephen's Green, with bride and groom, dressed in Edwardian costume, claiming to be re-enacting the wedding of John Wyse de Neaulan and Miss Fir Conifer in "Cyclops," and adapting their nuptial vows from Molly Bloom's soliloquy. At 11:00 a.m., Fritz Senn, Michael Groden, and Roddy Doyle, among others, received honorary doctoral degrees from University College Dublin. Various "Joyce walks" traversed the Hibernian metropolis in early afternoon, and the Balloonatic (pronounced Ba-lunatic) players dramatized scenes from *Ulysses* in a packed meeting room in the Ormond Hotel from 3:00–6:00 p.m., when a small group of Joyceans congregated in the Ormond restaurant (where Bloom has an afternoon repast in "Sirens") for a commemorative *Déjeuner Ulysse*. At 8:00 p.m., a huge parade on O'Connell Street inaugurated the final Bloomsday symposium event, an outdoor dramatic presentation enacting *The Parable of the Plums*. Admiral Lord Nelson, the one-handed adulterer, was presented to the thronging populace on the platform of a 3-storey-high cherrypicker, and a bedeviled Joyce surrogate dangled in mid-air from a mammoth crane, in contortions mimicking Joyce's infamous spider-dance. At 10:00 p.m., a large group of revellers gathered for a post-parable reception at the Millennium Towers penthouse, with a roof-garden overlooking the Liffey, the construction sites, and the glimmering lights of Dublin. Joyce would surely have been awestruck by his native city's unprecedented commemoration of Bloomsday. (Perhaps, in future, 16 June might become a national holiday—to boost the tourist trade and put Ireland squarely at the center of one's imaginary cognitive map of 20th-century literature).

experimental work so dependent on extraneous Bakhtinian heteroglossia that a good portion of the text should have been edited out and left on the cuttingroom floor. The book is too long and unwieldy, they insist.³ These brash anti-Joycean sentiments struck me as somewhat uncharitable and curmudgeonly—at least, until I had begun reading Tim Conley’s treatment of *Joyces Mistakes*. (Toward the middle of the book, Conley points to the deliberate suppression of the apostrophe in his title, perhaps in emulation of *Finnegans Wake*, and chides those readers who failed to notice this prominent omission or who casually dismissed it as typographical error).

Joyce is purported to have once quipped that he had self-consciously littered his fiction with so many puzzles, riddles, paradoxes and inconsistencies that his modernist literary production would keep the Professors busy for centuries. Recent studies by Tim Conley and Gerald Gillespie seem to reinforce Joyce’s prophecy, as each seeks to add yet another critical dish to the tantalizing fea(s)t of Joycean interpretation. Conley engages in a self-indulgent recasting of post/post-structuralist analysis, and Gillespie attempts to expand the modernist contexts of Joycean production in the time-honored tradition of humanist scholarship. Entrenched in historically antagonistic camps, these oppositional texts add an ingenious menu of sometimes overcooked information and analysis to the seemingly replete banquet of Joyce scholarship.

Let us, for a moment, concoct a Borgesian fantasy. Imagine the protagonist Stephen Dedalus, in collusion with the stage Irishman Buck Mulligan, collaborating on a critical text spoofing academic interpretations of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Both Buck and Stephen would have to have made a brief detour from Oxford and Paris, respectively, via Canada and the University of Toronto. The result of their authorial collusion might exude the “true scholastic stink” of Aristotle and Aquinas, seasoned with spicy bits from Foucault and Derrida. Such a Mulligan stew cooked up for scholars might well resemble *Joyces Mistakes*.

Conley’s first mistake, it would seem to the ingenuous reader, is refusing to offer an “Introduction” to his book on *Joyces Mistakes*. As a reader who has spent a quarter of a century laboring in the bog of Joyce studies, I tried to approach “Re: Cognizing Error” with an open mind, only to meet disappointment in this first chapter’s self-conscious refusal to delineate what the rest of the book might be about. By the

3 See, for instance, the *New York Times*, 29 February 2004, as well as *The Dublin Magazine*, June 2004.

time I had finished Chapter 2, on the “true scholastic stink,” I still had few odiferous clues to the actual smell of this scholarly study. It gave me heart to learn that the text would not devote itself to a “compendium of irregularities,” though “of course a significant number and variety of examples [would] be concentrated upon (see the appendix)” (20). Was this text a self-reflexive pastiche of Joyce criticism, a scholarly spoof laughing at itself even at the moment of its conception (though without benefit of a Catholic *lex eterna*)?

After reading Chapter 3’s “Fault Lines,” I had learned a good bit about the harbingers of Modernism, about Herman Melville and Marianne Moore, about Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* and Christine Froula’s interpretation thereof. But James Joyce and his artful errors? Well, those were promised on the ever-elusive horizon. Having indentured myself to the editorial servitude commanded by book review editors, I felt determined to move forward, wishing at every point that the author in question had read the *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White and had taken to heart their stylistic admonitions against the use of the “not-un” construction. This particular reader was feeling not unvexed by the Conley’s irritating rhetorical flourishes.

In Chapter 4, on “Multiple Joyce Questions,” Conley asks whether or not Joyce is, indeed, the author of *Ulysses* and, by way of various digressions round David Hayman’s notion of the Arranger, Patrick McGee’s concept of the Deranger, and Bakhtin’s insistence (quoted via Michael Groden) that there are no authors *per se*, but only author effects and subject positions, Conley concludes that the text of *Ulysses* was assuredly palimpsestic, multivocal, plagiarized, collaborative, pirated, and cobbled together through various authorial strategies of pastiche, fragmentation, networking, and multiplicity. “For Joyce’s Bruno- and Vico-informed poetics, contraries are momentary division within a pattern or cycle of disjuncture and reunion. As his aesthetic of error progresses, Joyce ... is as much ‘not-Joyce’ as he is ‘Joyce’” (58). A third of the way through the book, I still harbored a utopian faith that Conley might eventually talk about either Joyce or not-Joyce, or perhaps a critical amalgamation of the two.

In Chapter 5, we become more closely acquainted with Joyce’s (and Conley’s) “Fickling Intentions,” even as the author explodes the New Critical notion of authorial intention and offers us a brief *aperçu* of various Joyce editions that have erupted onto the scene of reading since the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922. Does Conley, however, really need to prepare his reader for the divagations of his exposition by 1) citing an

oft-heard, now clichéd joke about the paranoia of psychologists and 2) invoking Pascal's metaphorical wager in a florid metonymical pastiche that attributes to contemporary editorial endeavors "a secular version of this soul-shaking gambit" (60)? The exhausted joke seems reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's vaudeville borrowings, and the "soul-shaking" rhetoric sardonically satirical of the adolescent Stephen Dedalus's invocation of his *anima* in swooning miasmas of aesthetic exaltation. But never mind. Conley is an intelligent author whose wit, like that of Oscar Wilde and Stephen Dedalus, often goes astray. Relying heavily on critical essays by Michael Groden, Vicki Mahaffey, and Fritz Senn, Conley takes his reader on a "cook's tour" of the multifarious and contradictory editorial ingredients cobbled together for the contemporary reader of *Ulysses*. Since the first pirated American edition of Joyce's work, an ingenuous audience has been baffled by a succession of quivering, unstable texts, often embellished with obfuscatory editorial annotations that occlude the book itself. "For now," Conley speculates, "the general relation of editing and error, as an aesthetic-hermeneutic problem, remains the untouchable subject in much of textual theory" (63). Conley clearly delineates editorial concerns and crises by outlining the need to establish a legible copy-text, to examine textual presentation, and to offer elucidating annotations. Much of his discussion focuses on Hans Walter Gabler's 1984 edition of the "Corrected Text" of *Ulysses* and on John Kidd's infamous attack on Gabler in what Michael Groden has whimsically described as a "World Wrestling Federation sideshow for the intellectual crowd" ("Perplex" 235). Finally, Conley articulates his "own criticism of the Gabler edition": "since error's prevalence as trope, sign, and method in the novel and its composition is so central and affirmative, the 'errors' readily attributable to the editor ought to be not a mere 'byproduct of the theory' but clearly indivisible from the entire narrative of the theory and its practice" (71).

Conley's shrewd deprecation of Danis Rose's "Reader's Edition" of Joyce's *Ulysses* serves up the culinary metaphor of a "most idiosyncratic dish," a "text liberally garnished with hyphens (to soften those Joycean compounds) and the dessert of Molly Bloom ... sprinkled with apostrophes and italics she never had" (72). Still, he wonders whether such an Irish stew, garnished with "slight changes of space or spice," will actually prove sufficient lure "[to] bring many new diners to the table" (72). (Here Conley's own copy-editor failed to notice the omission of the critical preposition "to.") Like most Joyceans, Conley is dubious, if not contemptuous, of Danis Rose's project, scornfully compared

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to Anthony Burgess's similarly misdirected effort to offer students a *Shorter Finnegans Wake*—yet another work that thoroughly defies editorial attempts to anthologize and annotate its substance for the delectation of a resistant university audience. Conley's chapter is so liberally spiced with quotations from Groden, Mahaffey, and Senn that readers might be well advised to consult these original commentaries on the Gabler-Kidd controversy—a battle that has become infamous in the annals of Joyce studies, and that has provoked passionate disputes among devotees of either ilk (in the *New York Review of Books*, for instance) and has inspired Joyceans to challenge each other to duels with fountain pens and word processing apparatus at twenty paces during international symposia (see Groden, "Perplex," 233–39; Kidd; Mahaffey; and Rossman).

Chapter 6 [(sic)s] offers a fairly amusing meditation on the "(Sic) of irony," complete with a suitably sophisticated post-structuralist disclaimer of the word *zeitgeist* as "a tired and dislikable word reluctantly re-yoked for short, symbolic duty here" to delineate the "virtually automated cynicism" characteristic of literary criticism in this postmodern, post-contemporary era in the Nova Hibernia of the present. Conley justifiably complains that, for John Kidd, "there is only error, never irony" (88), in wrongheaded and obstreperous editorial demands for a Celtic realism documented by the names Joyce might have seen in *Thom's [Dublin] Directory* for 1904. With the cold steel-pen of his wit, Conley chides Linda Hutcheon for a bipolar (schizophrenic) non-definition of "irony" and a "very limited understanding of language's polymorphous and ever-evolving form" (93). Irony, he insists, is pervasive and ineluctable, a product of linguistic and textual instability, since "Joyce forces us to err and, consequently, compels us to be ironic about it" (94). In some brief Beckettian "Intermittences of sullemn fulminance," Conley wallows in his own polymorphously perverse post-structuralist and Derridean auto-experimental gaming instinct and claims that his unedited (but authorized) text "is both the subject and the analyst" (95). Exposing the inevitably fallible "textual condition" through a self-indulgent exercise in uncorrected typography, Conley claims that every authorial signature must be interpreted as "a stutter" (96). University professors who encounter similar typographic mutterings and stutterings in uncorrected undergraduate essays might find themselves more "irnoy"ed [sic] than amused by this sophomoric exercise in (il)literate exhibitionism.

As Conley incessantly reminds us, all readers of literature bring to their textual interpretations “experiential prejudices, conditioned responses, and habituated if not dulled sensory receptors” (119) that make none of the critics exposed to this particular theoretical gambit ideal, or even acceptable readers. And so, fully cognizant of the erroneous (mis)interpretations that I bring to Conley’s text, I confess to my own conscientious application of an insectual, linear, and logocentric tenacity to reading his labyrinthine prose. Only in the last section of the book, devoted theoretically to “Reading Errors” (and to reading errors theoretically), did I find Conley’s style vivacious, even riveting. The author seems to take particular pleasure in devising cute allusions in the form of terse epigrammatic statements, such as “There are more active adherents of intentional fallacy than are dreamt of in poststructuralism” (103; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*); and “Joyce keeps incubating within his work prototypes of possible readers, slouching towards actualization, waiting to be born” (104; Yeats, “The Second Coming”). Of course, behind such authorial playfulness lurks the shadow or authoritarian mastery, the specter of literary dominance that delights in duping an unsuspecting audience. It is this muffled autocratic streak that I find most objectionable in Conley’s theoretical approach, even when he dons the persona of a post-structuralist critic humbled before the polysemic and infinitely deferred, riddling mysteries of Joyce’s *Wake*.

In his postmodern, theoretical approach, Conley emerges as a critical Quixote who spends a good bit of time and energy tilting at windmills. In order to propose an open-ended reading of the *Wake*, he must first demolish a host of erroneous and misguided predecessors: Linda Hutcheon for her double-edged definition of “irony”; Roland McHugh for his ingenuous pretense of forging an innocent reading of a culturally embedded text; E. D. Hirsch for his naive arguments in favor of “Objective Interpretation” (120); Campbell and Robinson for their “three-step program” of discovery, definition, and brooding (113); Wolfgang Iser for some of the implications of his Implied Reader construct; and so on, and so on, unto no last term. Most of these targets strike a 21st-century critic as straw *personae*. One of the advantages of writing a theoretical text about Joyce’s own textuality is that Conley does not have to bother with a great deal of Joyce criticism. He seems to admire the work of John Bishop and, in a qualified way, that of Margot Norris. But his “slash and burn” technique chooses the easy mark by setting out to demolish some wizened troglodytes of an interpretive

community, who nonetheless deserve qualified recognition for their pioneering attempts to make sense of what must have seemed, before the enlightened precepts of post-structuralism, an incomprehensible and impregnable text. It would take the wisdom of a new generation of scholars, from Colin MacCabe onwards, to remind millennial readers that the *Wake* was meant to be a provocative and riddling text. For the last thirty years, Joyce critics have dismantled and deconstructed the old “New Critical” models to suggest that a text as convoluted as *Finnegans Wake* “reads us” and calls into question not only the stability of the querulous text at hand, but the consciousness of a reader confronting its puzzles, mysteries, and aporias. The post-structuralist position that Conley so passionately defends has already been imbricated into the “experiential prejudices” and “conditioned responses” of his audience. Joyceans have heard all this before, and many times—from Colin MacCabe, Margot Norris, Derek Attridge, Patrick McGee, Jacques Derrida, and Fritz Senn—to name only a few.

If, as Conley observes, “reading is a haunted act” (118), his own text is haunted with some propitious specters—Nietzsche, Kant, and Saussure, as well as Heidegger, Blanchot, Proust, Iser, Eco, Rorty, Cixous, and (most of all) Wittgenstein. With this dazzling cast of philosophical exagminers [*sic*], Conley comes to some refreshing and liberating (but thoroughly qualified) conclusions. He reminds us, for instance, that “the performance of reading the *Wake* is not separated from its accompanying anxieties” (117). Taking a cue from Blanchot, he celebrates the “negative, wronging function of art” critical to Joycean interpretation (132). “For Joyce, typography becomes typology” (135). He posits the “incorporation of revision as method in the *Wake*” and perceives “Joyce’s punctuation as truly musical notation ... with the question mark as the ‘ricocoursing’ ... point of eternal return” (136). Conley adopts the interesting strategy of placing Joyce’s works within a long and revered “literary tradition of interrogatory texts” (137), including such obvious predecessors as the Catholic Catechism, the writings of Aristotle, and the littering curiosities of epistolary queries. From this middenheap of examples, the author cannily disinters a *Fragenkatalog* of epigrammatic observations: “the *Wake* reviews and questions its own methods and madness,” and much of the reader’s “repeated probing and questioning” is intentionally “related to the effort of reading” (141). The “associational meanings of the *Wake*” emerge as elusive but ominous “Hydra heads that only multiply when attacked” (142).

One of the most interesting contributions of Conley's study is his tantalizing comparison of the text of *Finnegans Wake* to the cognitive functions of AI (Artificial Intelligence). "More than a database, the *Wake* is an indigestible digest, because it is data in digestion. Information is accessible only in process" (143). Conley brilliantly delineates the *Wake* as a deliberate interrogation of consciousness, "a vortex of phenomenology and aesthetics" that gives the reader "a chance to test one's own humanity, errors and all" (147). He is quick to remind us (frequently) that the "*Wake* enjoys reminding readers that they are too complacent and self-congratulatory" (144). In the involution of such a critical challenge, however, who is left to remind the author of precisely this point? "The imperfections of my argument *are* my argument" (151), he coyly protests. But ay, there's the rub. Even as Conley dons the persona of humble poststructuralist interpreter of an uninterpretable text, he offers his audience a theoretical tome riddled with authorial complacency and self-congratulatory strikes against a long list of pre-post-structuralist antagonists. The book hinges almost entirely on a series of vicious attacks on conventional critics whom Conley dismisses as unenlightened and implicitly damned. The problem with this kind of sustained critical jest is that it ultimately reveals the authoritarian provocateur behind the mask of punning clown—the arrogant critic determined to discredit and humiliate a host of purported enemies. Not only does such a mocking tone of sustained contempt prove tedious, but it is likely to alienate even the most judicious of Joyceans.

Devoted Joyce scholars will find much to admire and a great deal to criticize in Conley's provocative study. Conley is a good theorist, and his enthusiasm for *Finnegans Wake* is contagious. But after so much play in the fields of the *Wake*, he has begun to resemble Shem the Penman, locked in the haunted inkbattlehouse of his own critical imagination. One hopes that, in future books, he will prove to be somewhat less condescending toward his audience and less contemptuous of other critics, and that he will make an effort to rein in his tendency toward editorial explanation, divagation, and apparent pastiche. Students and common readers might more profitably return to the sources that Conley so prolifically quotes, i.e., to studies by Michael Groden, Fritz Senn, Vicki Mahaffey, Hans Gabler, Margot Norris, and John Bishop. As an amusing dessert, they might try to digest the notorious fulminations of John Kidd, whose editorial master-work, long promised, seems forever receding on the publishing horizon.

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If Conley's book smacks of dissertationese, Gerald Gillespie's ponderous study brings to the task of authorship a long career of serious scholarship in the field of Comparative Literature. Driven by a passion for literature and humanism, Gillespie identifies his critical antagonists from the outset: post-structuralists, postmodernists, postcolonialists, Derridean deconstructionists, neo-Marxists like Marcuse and the Frankfurt School, Jamesonians, the early William Spanos and *boundary 2*, Richard Rorty, Hayden White, and an occasional (post)feminist. The list might be expanded, but as one strolls through the intellectual labyrinth constructed by Gillespie, it becomes clear that his text should be issued with a warning label exhorting: "Reader, beware!" What most annoys Gillespie is any school, movement, or individual critic who attempts to deracinate 20th-century modernism from its literary, historical, and cultural roots. *Context*, *pretext*, and *post-text* are what Gillespie's scholarship is all about. And woe to the reader who refuses to consider the enormous panorama of aesthetic influences and cultural connections that Gillespie offers to the inquisitive eye. He brings to this enormously learned study more than forty years of reading, thinking, meditating, and teaching. Gillespie infuses this truly comparative tome with the dazzling results of a long career as a passionate, informed, and creative literary scholar.

The title of Gillespie's book does not adequately reflect the enormous range and breadth of its author's analytical gambol. For him, the "contexts" of modernism go back not only to the Renaissance and Romanticism, but to ancient classical myth, global exploration, and even the (possibly apocryphal) voyage of the Irish Saint Brendan. The author does not stroll, he gallops—through centuries of literary history and cultural production. The naive reader might be in for a vertiginous roller-coaster ride on a magical mystery tour through the modernist labyrinth, with the erudite author as his putative guide. Part Don Quixote, part shaman and scribe, Gillespie begins each chapter with an ingenuous query about a commonly received idea like modernist "epiphany." With a nod to James Joyce and a few winks in the direction of Zack Bowen and Morris Beja, Gillespie ranges from Schopenhauer through Huysmans, Proust, Woolf, and Mann in an effort to tease out the subtle resonances of a particular concept's significance in the modernist canon.

With each successive chapter, the canon we thought we knew and had clearly configured expands, contracts, whirrs and tilts, then proves far more slippery and indeterminate than we might have anticipated.

Take, for instance the fairly simple, seemingly depleted theme of the “man-nature relationship” (68). Has anything new been said on this exhausted topic since the era of Romanticism? Yes, plenty, Gillespie assures us, as he insists that we revise and reconsider “our actual heritage from the European experience” (68) by returning to Pater, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Baron Haussmann and his taming of the Paris *Bois*, the history of parks and urban public spaces, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad, Gabriele d’Annunzio, Knut Hamsun, August Strindberg, Einstein, the Greek philosopher Euhemerus, Kierkegaard, Richard Wagner, and of course, James Joyce and Thomas Mann—to name only a few of the elements in Gillespie’s dazzling interrogation of the contextual dimensions of our contemporary understanding of the man-nature, urban-pastoral binary. Among the “Prime Coordinates in Modernist Cultural Mappings” in Chapter 4 can be found Dante, Marco Polo, Aphra Behn, Nietzsche, Gide, and Joyce, the last of whom “reinfuses the handed-down map” with a celebration of “its inherent polypolarity. Rebirth is the only cultural and human choice that can fully command his dreaming” (98). Part romantic, part dreamer, and entirely humanist in his erudite orientation, Gillespie offers startling and ingenious permutations of received literary ideas and trumps even the most skeptical of readers with the sheer range of his encyclopedic knowledge and scintillating critical mind.

To cite another example, Gillespie’s intriguing chapter on “Ironic Realism” ranges from a sincere appreciation of the brilliance of Aphra Behn, through a canny consideration of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* as modernist forebear, to a celebration of John Barth and Alejo Carpentier (though not necessarily in that order). Magical realism and comic irony expand the “evolutionary repertoire” of a continually changing contemporary literature that nonetheless harks back to the past for serious aesthetic models and ludic satirical fodder.

Although Proust, Mann, and Joyce are the titular titans of Gillespie’s text, his approach remains consistently comparatist, with each of these three modern masters suspended in a kind of Brownian motion throughout the book. In a chapter devoted to “Cinematic Narration in the Modernist Novel,” for instance, Gillespie offers tantalizing tidbits about cinematic moments in Proust’s *Recherche*, allusions to the Bioscope Theatre in Mann’s *Magic Mountain*, and brief analogies to film in the “Aeolus” and “Circe” episodes of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, all in the context of illustrating the impact of “the simultaneity of disparate time strata” on European and American culture during World War I (124). In Chapter

7, “City of Wo/man,” Gillespie surveys the “large-scale transference of the poetic interest in nature onto the city” in Baudelaire’s poetry, as well as in fiction produced by Rilke, Kafka, and Butor, before glancing at labyrinthine images of urban “otherness” in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Proust’s *Swann’s Way*, Mann’s *Felix Krull*, and Dorothy Sayers’s *Gaudy Night*. In “Afterthoughts of Hamlet,” Shakespeare’s drama triangulates a comparative consideration of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* and the “Scylla and Charybdis” chapter of *Ulysses*. Gillespie’s most sustained discussions of Mann focus on the theme of “Educational Experiment” and on the intersection of “syncretic Hermetism and literary humorism” in Mann’s psychologically pregnant texts (199). When Gillespie sets out to plumb the musico-linguistic mysteries of “primal orality” in Joyce’s fiction, his chapter on “The Music of Things and the Hieroglyphics of Family Talk” skims the palimpsestic surface of Joyce’s resonant *chaosmos* and ignores the sophisticated interpretive supplements to Saussurian theory provided by post-structuralist critics like Derek Attridge, Daniel Ferrer, and Christine Froula, as well as more recent work by Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf. In the final chapters of his book, Gillespie takes readers on a tour of Orphic and Odyssean netherworlds represented as harrowing psychological journeys in fiction by Proust, Joyce, and Mann, with particular fascination focused on the psychomachia of the “Circe” episode in *Ulysses*. After harrowing hell, Gillespie turns his gaze toward the “Haunted Narrator before the Gate” in Joyce, Kafka, Hesse and Butor. And in a concluding interpretive chapter, he sets out to traverse the highly contested territory of “Structures of the Self and Narrative” from Renaissance Humanism, through Enlightenment Rationalism, 19th-Century Romanticism, Symbolism, High Modernism, and, by way of allusions to Borges and Barth, “the nihilistic deconstruction of the self in so-called postmodern writing” (291). This is an ambitious agenda that the author admits might simply tantalize readers in its “excessively monothematic” exposition via “scattered references to works that merit a far more detailed scrutiny” (261).

Conley’s and Gillespie’s books, each adopting critical stances at opposite ends of the theoretical spectrum, are both characterized by authoritarian and highly opinionated voices. Gillespie, however, acknowledges his biases from the outset, then proceeds to offer an encyclopedic and awe-inspiring *aperçu* of modernist contexts. Conley’s pedantic wit, in contrast, cloaks the author’s critical dominance in the costume of jester and linguistic prankster. His highly inflated rhetoric swells like a helium balloon, then implodes from the pressure of

expanding gases, to release noxious Aeolian winds that exude a “true scholastic stink.” Curious (or queasy) diners at the feast of modernist studies might well prefer Gillespie’s tantalizing cornucopia of scholarly *hors d’oeuvres* to Conley’s more dubious warmed-over Irish stew of post-structuralist *doxa*. But then, in criticism as in life, *Chacun son goût!*

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