

WHAT'S IN A WORD? OR A MINUTE MINUTE ENCOUNTER

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The paper attempts an approach to the genesis of the stories in Joyce's *Dubliners* in response to the genetic notions that Fritz Senn and Claude Jaquet have developed about *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. Out of a small detail in the manner of Joyce's style in the short story of "An Encounter", I argue that perhaps one single word might have been the kernel of a full story, in the belief that one of the author's principles was the assumption that "all is in all". The hypothesis, considering the play that Joyce so frequently performed upon his words and his use of "chimeras" and "hydras", discards the biological simile of germination that both Senn and Jaquet seem to favour in their writings, and suggests the more static image of a mathematical fractal as more appropriate for Joyce's earlier works.

Before I venture a more downright beginning, let me clarify the reason for such a slightly puzzling title. This article originated from what, to me, was quite a striking moment in the short story "An Encounter", the consequence of a small "irregularity" in Joyce's manner through the story and through the whole collection of *Dubliners*. It may be obvious that what is meant by the above is not that the events (call them plot or fable) in the "encounter" section of "An Encounter" last for as short a time as a minute. Rather, what I mean is that much of "An Encounter" may be contained in such a small word as a nominal "minute". Perhaps this is too insignificant a word to give it a chance to expose story-wide implications, and I acknowledge that what follows may be accused of niggling in its detail. Yet such scrupulosity is not alien to Joyce's work.¹ My approach denotes a type of genetic analysis provoked by the writings of Fritz Senn and Claude Jaquet and therefore it hints at the possibility of the disclosure of a primal core in Joyce's stories (Jaquet 1990: 23-35; Senn 1995: 59-74).²

¹ As critics have acknowledged, the word "minutia" in *FW* 11.15 may be intentionally included to challenge that type of critic who pays unnecessary attention to useless speculation. More careless readers, especially children, seem to enjoy *Finnegans Wake* more happily. Yet I find the associative game quite amusing.

² The genetic research carried out by the French school of Daniel Ferrer is of a different class.

When attempting any approach to the genesis of any particular text one is always tempted to locate any previous writings that might have influenced the author or functioned as a source of inspiration. For those suffering from the anxiety of influence, I could venture to suggest a couple of short stories that, to my knowledge, have never been connected, either to "An Encounter" or to any of Joyce's writings: they are Henry Lawson's "No Place for a Woman" and "Joe Wilson's Courtship", from his 1867 collections *On the Track* and *Joe Wilson and His Mates*, respectively (Lawson 1964). Lawson was a turn of the century Australian writer whose works are not even today catalogued in Dublin's National Library and whose genius Joyce might have never enjoyed but, still, the stories share striking coincidences. The resemblance with the first story starts with the exclusively male world both pieces depict (in spite of Lawson's title), and is followed by the similarity between its protagonist, Ratty Howlett, and the pederast in Joyce's story. Both share an unusual repetitive speech, and Ratty has a habit of asking passers-by, even young ones, whether they are married or not (305), he holds his hand on his lower back, never looks at other bushmen in the face but gazes into the horizon (304), insistently inquires about the past, or, indirectly, about the character-narrator's being a doctor (305). He is also concerned with justifying his behaviour, which is described by the narrator as "queer" (304). The second story, "Joe Wilson's Courtship", adds one connection to the character of the boy-narrator in "An Encounter": Joe Wilson is not as "manly" as the rest, but rather the "poet" type. Two further events remind the reader of the following story in Joyce's collection: the first time Joe Wilson sees the girl he will fall in love with, she is "framed" by the scenery just like Mangan's sister is framed by the lamp-light and the stair-railings, and at one point in Lawson's story, somebody will take "Possum" (as the girl is nicknamed) to the "church bazaar". Joyce's "Araby" could be close at hand. My thesis, however, is far from this, as it is far from any approach that might suggest abstract generalisations of the thematic content of the story. My model explores the possibilities of a single word to signify the major theme or themes of a short story.

No doubt these coincidences may be only that: coincidences, and if ever Joyce felt that some motifs were worth borrowing it is undeniable that Joyce did something very different by bringing them together in his own way and perhaps for a different purpose, but both authors share such a fascination for the local and such a taste for the sordid and for its detail that one is never fully certain that these could only be "sheer coincidences". In this respect, only one further reminder: I do not believe, as the typological tradition seems to suggest, that sooner or later all words justify their links because they are held together by divine revelation. If there is any presence of the divinity in "An Encounter", it is not as a container of words, but must rather be asleep in the Pigeon House where the boys never arrive. Yet coincidence is perhaps a stronger criterion if made to rely upon the conventional character of language and, when coincidences match the intended, we should perhaps soundly retrieve them as designed clues. Call them prophecies if cataphoric in reference or repetitions if anaphoric, but their emphatic character does not essentially change. Furthermore, if

the coincidences concentrate upon one word, this particular term may raise suspicions.³

At certain moments in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* one intuits that the narrative course coincides too closely with the many possible standard meanings of a word only slightly marked (if marked at all) in the text. This is the case of "vacation" right at the beginning of "The Sisters" (*D* 9.2-3) or "gnomon" (*D* 9.11), in its clear reference to the "dark" side of the Euclidean system. This is also the case in "Araby", where the revelation turns out to be the awareness that the boy-narrator arrives at about the mistake of imposing an inappropriate code upon a reality that he turns into fiction. The discovery is also of discernment between a narrative technique and the object narrated. In order to show a love fiasco that is the consequence of his own allurements (for which he alone is responsible as a traitor to himself), a courtly love narrative that betrays itself is simply perfect. However, the voice of the young character, once relieved from fallacy and deception and turned into narrator, maintains the lofty style of courtly speech: "I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (*D* 35.33-34). The sentence shows the young man's mistake even in form, since the parallelism and the alliteration provide an agreeable ending for both the eye and the ear that is at all respects inappropriate for the otherwise "stoical" revelation. The mistake is specially condensed in *derided*. While a synonym for *tease*, *derided* is necessary for the visual alliteration and to mark the difference between Mangan, who actually laughed at his sister ("her brother always *teased* her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her"; *D* 30.22-23, emphasis added) and himself. The word *tease* is associated with the first instance of quasi-mystic contemplation of the beloved and, as it helps Mangan to distance himself from his sister, it should have been used by the young boy (the older narrator admits) as a para-text to be correctly interpreted. Now aware of his mistake he tries to make up for his fault by hiding her name as a means of detachment, but he should have laughed at himself then the way he can do now in the darkness of the great halls of "Araby". Thus the word works perfectly at the superficial level of the narrative (the more "realistic") as a detractor to the idealisation of the beloved since, according to the *OED*, "to tease" means "(1) to annoy, vex; (2) to make fun of, deride, scoff at, mock; (3) to coax (to persuade or try to persuade by pleading or flattery; to obtain by persistent persuasion); (4) to disentangle the fibres of (wool); (5) to raise the nap of (cloth); and (6) to brush or comb the hair towards the scalp for a bouffant effect". The *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* adds: "(7) to tear in pieces, especially into minute shreds for microscopic examination; (8) to tantalize or baffle by arousing desire in without the intention of satisfying it" (sic). Meanings one through three describe Mangan's action when annoying and laughing at his sister. The second group (four through six) in connection with "the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side" (*D* 30.24), discover an odd attraction, almost hypnotic, that her "rope" of hair exerts over the boy. "To rope" is slang for "to

³ For a more than pleasing discussion of the conflict between coincidence and intentionality, see Navarrete (1999).

swindle" or "to attract by the use of sexual charms", and, whether consciously or not, the girl was arousing a desire she never meant to satisfy (meaning number eight). Meaning number seven seems to be out of place until it is recognised as meaning to aim at the narrative technique. It then signals not only a scrupulous method of analysis but the constructive procedure the narrator has become aware of, a procedure only attainable by means of the corresponding detailed shaping of the text.

In "Eveline", the only story in *Dubliners* with a proper name for a title, the protagonist's name functions quite in a similar manner. It includes the character's dependence on her mother if read as "Eve line", that is, the descendant line from Eve, thus widening the implications of everything passed from mother to daughter to cover at least the whole of the female sex in Catholic Ireland and the whole of the Judeo-Christian world. Looked at as "Helen", its etymological correlate, the name turns Eveline into the Greek belle, while Frank would be seen as Paris promising a new life in "Buenos Ayres"/Troy after marriage. Read as "little Eve", its actual etymological meaning, Eveline is simply "a little life", the only one she knows and to which she holds, and the only one she seems to have as suggested by Miss Gavan's words: "Look lively, Miss Hill, please" (*D* 37.29). The name can even be read, although ironically, as "life line", the one that sailors (like Frank) fling into the sea to save the life of a sinking fellow. The narrative and the narrator become suspicious as "eve" is "any woman with the qualities typically associated to her sex" and "line" turns out to be slang for "a glib or superficially attractive mode of address or behaviour" (not only Frank's then, but also Eveline's, hiding behind a third person pronoun).

Something quite similar happens with the word "cleaver", which in its verbal form contains the conflict in "The Boarding House": "to cleave" is at once "to split, to separate" and "to adhere, cling, loyally, firmly or unwaveringly", conveying that the idea that the union in marriage Mrs Mooney plans for her daughter is bound to fail is more than a suspicion. The "discomfiture" assigned to Doran (*D* 68.4) includes in its Latin origin both a union "*con-ficere*" and a separation in the prefix "dis-" (Senn 1986: 412). The movements of the seeming protagonist, Mrs Mooney, and with them the development of the story, are prescribed from the beginning of the narrative in the description of her character. An "imposing woman" (*D* 62.3-4), Mrs Mooney's actions can all be described as "imposing": she not only forces Doran's will, but she "represents her daughter falsely" (another meaning for *impose*) thus warning the reader about her opinions of other characters and about herself because she is likely to be *imposing*, that is, "to give a false identity or character" of herself. Furthermore, if "to impose" is "to offer for sale with intent to deceive", the responsibility for the purchase and sale of rancid meat is not only her husband's, and the same intention could well be extended to the present commercial exchange of her own daughter. Still further, "to impose" includes the meaning of "to make public with intent to deceive or present fraudulently", which is exactly Mrs. Mooney's threat to Doran since "She did not think he would face publicity" for "publicity would mean for him, perhaps, the loss of his sit" (*D* 65.11-15).

In the case of the examples shown above, the words do not really appear at any specific, given or predictable point in the narrative. They are not really highlighted in the text, and they appear scattered and diffuse throughout the stories although they may occasionally produce a slight feeling of estrangement or a defamiliarizing effect that makes the reader stop at them. For instance, the first example mentioned, that of the word "vacation" from "The Sisters", is a polysyllabic obstacle in a monosyllabic sequence that slows down the pace of the opening of the book (Burman 1979: 56). In addition, its use is mainly American. The word was probably preferred to the more British "holiday", another polysyllable, because it includes the ideas of "vacancy" both in Flynn's end of physical or spiritual activity and in the church (a vacancy Flynn will offer the young boy but that the boy will reject). "Vacation time" becomes the time for Flynn to quit his position as a priest as well as the time to be free from obligations and responsibilities, thus including the theme of the boy's "liberation" as he walks in the sun. The vacuum Flynn's death brings to his sisters (assuming he filled their lives at least with housework) is also that of Eliza's empty chatter. The narrative itself is full of silences, thus turning "vacation" into a "germinal" word that gives way to subsequent development at both the thematic and technical levels. There is no need to quote Claude Jaquet to remind us that Joyce was always fascinated by words because of their creative power, because they evoked visions (Jaquet 1990: 24-25), or because they shared such a perlocutionary force that the word "paralysis" in "The Sisters" has the power to kill. And there is no need to quote Jaquet to remind us that, like Baltasar Gracián, Joyce was conscious that words could create monsters: "A word is like an oral hydra since beyond its proper and direct meaning, if split or reversed, out of every syllable an ingenuous subtlety is born, and from every accent a concept" (Gracián 1942: 211).⁴

While further examples scattered through the fifteen stories may be as suggestive as the above, by far the more suspicious and disquieting of all of them is the word "minute" in "An Encounter". In this story the third episode is, dramatically, by far the most effective and, thematically, the most relevant of the three that make up the story. In this section the word appears three times within the same paragraph (D 26.19-23) and although it is not powerfully highlighted in any way, it is not a case of anadiplosis or reduplication that Joyce frequently exploits elsewhere in *Dubliners* (see the beginning of "Two Gallants", for instance). Since it is the immediate meaning the word has in the text, it usually goes unnoticed by the reader. Already in Babylon, the word "minute" was used to measure time, but Ptolemy, by 150 BC, adjusted it to name the grades in a circle, the way St. Augustine would use it so that, applied to the dial of a clock much later in the thirteenth century, the word returned to its original use. If one stops, however, hydras and monsters may start sprouting from it, for the word "minute" also denotes "agreement, intimate and exact understanding among participants", and this is precisely what the pederast demands

⁴The translation is mine. Gracián's original wording in his XXXI discourse ("De la agudeza nominal") is as follows: "Es como hidra vocal una dicción, pues a más de su propia y directa significación, si la cortan o la trastruecan, de cada sílaba renace una sutileza ingeniosa y de cada acento un concepto". Before Gracián, San Isidoro de Sevilla, in *Las Etimologías*, and after both of them E. R. Curtius (1953) also noticed this inherent power of words.

from the young narrator: "His voice ... seemed to plead with me that I should understand him" (*D* 27. 29-31).

Of course we can add to this other closely related words, such as "minuteman" for instance, that happily seem to describe the young narrator's "vigilant, observant, or enterprising" character: not only is he the one who plans to play truant but, unable to find green eyes on the sailor's faces he starts imaginary voyages to far away lands (23:12-15). And of course, we can play with the "hydras" in the word: its syllables show astonishing coincidences with the themes in the story. If taken to be a verbal compound, "min-ute" would be "let's remember or call to mind". The young boy as a character made the effort to bring what his studies in world geography had taught him while as a narrator he proves to be an imaginative individual who is able to portray an image of the perverse action of the pederast that is not a "re-presentation" of a direct experience of the fact since he refuses to observe it with his physical eyes. He is "vigilant", however, in the sense that he is able to produce a mental recreation of it through the adult's words and Mahony's.

Taken separately, "mi-nutes" includes a "minor", and one of the slang words for "the human testicles" or for someone who is "insane". These three are conspicuous elements in the story. Considered phonetically, "-nute" becomes [nit]. "Nit" is a signal to mark that somebody is coming near (the narrator warns Mahony about giving away their real names in *D* 26:28-29), but especially a derogatory term applied to someone considered stupid or incompetent. This small word relates quite amusingly to the character of Mahony, whom the narrator has always despised (*D* 10.11-12). As a verb, "nit" covers two more themes in the story, that of the boy's nervous desire to depart from the old man "to escape, decamp and hurry away" towards the end of the story, and that of the narrator as a bookworm who "pores carefully over books", or who, at least, brags about his readings. By focusing on the attention to intellectual knowledge, it ironically aims at the boy's desire for "real adventure" and his conscious decision not to look at the pederast. The story can then be read as a search for "real" physical experience that the narrator denies to himself by relying on words and intellectual referents.

Using a different partition, "-Utes" takes us as far in time and place as to the Shoshonean tribe that inhabited areas of present day Colorado, Utah and New Mexico, and let us remember that the narrator and the other children in the story played the Wild West. Standing by itself, "Min-" recalls the Chinese dynasty originating in that region of China, and the Egyptian god Min. The boy's imaginative effort to cover the geography (23:12-15) takes him —and us— to at least three continents. This last reference is astonishingly rich in the number of links it seems to share with the story at hand. The apparently innocent syllable happens to name an Egyptian god whose monolithic statues represented him as a human being (one of the few anthropomorphic gods that have never suffered changes in their representation) with a raised hand holding a whip ready to beat and, hidden under very tight clothes giving him the aspect of a mummy, the other hand gripping his phallus. The pederast's threat of punishment with a whip and his action among the bushes, and even his worn out discoloured clothes, find here quite a close analogy.

The word *whip* (either as a noun or a verb) appears ten times in the story: no doubt one of the themes in the story is the threat of punishment by Father Butler and the pederast, another one is the boys' decision to play truant for the day, not only a coincidence when *to whip* is, literally, among other things, "to shrink work on Monday". Again, the boy's memory and linguistic knowledge seem to substitute perfectly for the sensorial and physical experience he denied himself when he refused to look in the direction of the adult.

Further coincidences with the rest of the narrative abound. At the beginning of the warm season in Egypt, in April, Min was taken out of his temple in procession, accompanied by hymns and dances. He is a god of the fertility of the fields and of agricultural prosperity, to the point that his whip is sometimes shown as a flail. But even if represented with a flail, Min is always connected with the maintenance of royal perpetuity, at the same time a god of justice and punishment and, when associated to Osiris, a god of resurrection. He also functioned as a protector for the roads leading to the Red Sea (Meeks 1994: 329) and of foreigners and strangers.⁵ The pederast the narrator meets is "strange" at least in the double sense of Mahony's "queer".⁶ One of the rituals associated to Min was, according to Meeks, that of the renewal of royal power, the transmission of authority from the dead King to his successor and a confirmation of his legitimacy (perhaps not only a theme in "An Encounter" but also in "The Sisters"). The Pharaoh and his Queen entered the temple to perform a sacred marriage before the King was raised to the throne. The annual ritual took place towards the end of the third season, at the beginning of the new year (June 19 in our calendar). In "An Encounter" we are just at the beginning of summer ("The summer holidays were near at hand"; *D* 21:8).⁷ For the occasion, Tait, the goddess of fabric, waves a new gown of white linen for the Pharaoh, who is also fitted with new white sandals that protect him from danger. In the story, the night before the escape the narrator "pipeclayed" his "frail canvas shoes" (*D* 21.31-32), in all respects an inappropriate kind of shoe for an excursion but the right shoes when

⁵ For information about Min see *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (1918), Meeks (1994) and McFarlane (1995).

⁶ The duality of Male/Female principles may appear in the combination of the attributes of Min (thus resembling the pederast even closer). Harold Bayley writes: "In Egypt Pan was known as Min, and three gigantic limestone figures of Min have been found at the town of Koptos, the chief seat of his worship. 'Min' says Professor Petrie, 'was the male principle,' and it is probable that Min is the same name as *man*, in contradistinction to woman. Man, in Scotland pronounced *mon*, is the root of the Latin *mens*, meaning single, solitary, alone. It was originally, perhaps, *om on*, the 'One Sun' or it may have been a coalition of *ma on*, the One Mother, as in moon, the symbol of the *Maña Mater*. Ra, the Sun, was Amon or Amun; The Greeks entitled Zeus Ammon or Hammon; and the word *Amen!* means firm, true, verily. The Anglo-Saxons termed the Moon *mona*, and at the present day *Moon-* or *Mona-day* is called 'Monday.' Anglesey, a famous sanctuary of the British druids, was anciently known as *Mon*, *Mona*, or *Menai*; and *Mona* and *Minnie* are familiar Christian names. *Mona* is the alternative name of the Isle of Man, which was also known as *Moabia*. The town of Bodmin was originally 'the abode of Min' and in nomenclature may be equated with the Indian Allahabad, the 'abad or abode of Allah'" (Bayley 1912: 112). In *FW* 433.19-20 we find the sentence: "*Minxy was a Manxmaid when Murry wor a Man*".

⁷ The solar Egyptian calendar marked quite an improvement on the Babylonian lunar year. It divided the year into three seasons with four 30-day months each plus 5 epagomenous days. The beginning of the year coincided with the appearance of Sirius, on July 19.

the boy tries to use them as a shield to cover his panic and desire to run away from the pederast.

In the same old ritual, the Egyptian Pharaoh, in his role of intermediary with the gods, offered these some food in the form of a magic biscuit covered with mud. Drink was also present in the symbolical suckling of the King with milk. In the story the narrator unsuccessfully looks for a diary and at some window stops to observe how "biscuits lay bleaching. We bought some biscuits and chocolate which we ate sedulously" (*D* 23.34-24.1). Around the magic biscuit nine birds of different species were arranged and at its sides two more birds were placed, of which one was released while the other stayed to certify with its song that the Pharaoh deserved his new position.⁸ At this point of the ritual, four arrows were shot and more birds released in the direction of the four cardinal points. With Dublin as a centre, Norway, China, North America and Egypt can be accepted as referential countries covering North, East, West and South. The coincidences turn the story into a ritual of transmission of power and knowledge inherited, not only at a sexual, but also at cultural and literary levels, which demand such a sympathy that would turn the young boy into an "image" of the adult at Rings End. Stories evaluating the inheritance imposed upon—rather than willingly received by— younger Dubliners are, at least, the first five ones of the collection.

One way to check whether a "hydra" works as a generating impulse would be to consider other instances of the word and their relationship with the theme or themes of a passage, especially if these are scattered among other works. Out of the thirty-three appearances of the word in *Ulysses* probably more than half of them are seemingly irrelevant to my point here, but many of these are related to contexts in which time is a determinant to discuss the characters' approach to life and death, as in *U* 12.323, *U* 9.16 or *U* 8.481.⁹ In this last instance, the repeated connection of the word *minute/s* with people either being born or dying, becomes reduced to a timing of "every second", but then Bloom adds "since I fed the birds five minutes". Obviously, the word "minute/s" is one that one cannot but expect to be used for any other purpose but as a sheer time referent, and yet, there are instances that inevitably suggest connections with "An Encounter". The first appearance of the word in *Ulysses* (in 4.53) takes place while Bloom is going to Dlugacz's to get something for breakfast. He asks Molly whether she'd like anything and her answer is only a short but maybe too meaningful "Mn", which, literally, is neither a negative nor an affirmative answer but may carry more sexual strength than ordinarily alleged. In *U* 8.117, the occurrence of the word takes place right after Bloom's reflections on figuring out how the blind man would feel the colours. The implication is that the word is associated with an intellectual, rather than physical, apprehension of reality. In *U* 16.1288 the context is one of gambling on horse races, and "minute" is related to the moment of Bantan Lyons' arrival, but the paragraph brings up an awareness of "Lovemaking damages" (*U* 16.1289) in an isolated (displaced?) sentence.

⁸ This makes a total of 11, quite a "special" number in Joyce that perhaps he even connected with himself because of the graphic similarity with "JJ".

⁹ For chapter and line numbers I follow Gabler's 1984 edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

It may be claimed that, if one strains the method, many passages in *Ulysses* can be read as sexual innuendoes connecting with the sex theme in "An Encounter", but there are some instances where our small word clearly seems to bring to mind other motifs in the short story. In *Ulysses* the word is connected to Stephen's reflections about what Theosophos postulated: "Theosophos . . . whom in a previous existence Egyptian priests initiated into the mysteries of Karmic law" (*U* 14.1168-69); and the period of time Stephen describes includes "observations about boyhood days and the turf, recollecting two or three private transactions of his own which the other two were as mutually innocent as the babe unborn" (*U* 14.1168-90). Another occurrence may bind the pederast's masochistic behaviour to Bello's through his demand that Bloom ask him for cruel behaviour every ten minutes. Bello's squeezing of his cockhorse's testicles emphasises the link (*U* 15.2941-46). Yet another exploits the geographical theme: in *U* 16.483 the word "minutes" appears after the sailor's enumeration of his journeys around the world (Frank in "Eveline?") and the postcards he displays become the centre of attention for several minutes.¹⁰

Although Molly's soliloquy (*U* 18.1104 ff) couples the two themes of death and sex by willing to "get up a minute" from her bed "before she is put into the grave" (and perhaps thus stop thinking about her adultery and her menstruation), there are passages that one feels could have belonged to the unrepresented "stream of consciousness" of the pederast in "An Encounter":

Id like to meet a man like that God not those other ruck besides hes young those fine young men I could see down in Margate strand bathing place from the side of the rock standing up in the sun naked like a God or something and then plunging into the sea with them why arent all men like that thered be some consolation for a woman like that lovely little statue he bought I could look at him all day long curly head and his shoulders his fingers up for you to listen theres real beauty and poetry for you I often felt I wanted to kiss him all over also his lovely young cock there so simple I wouldnt mind taking him in my mouth if nobody was looking as if it was asking you to such it so clean and white his looks with his boyish face I would too in 1/2 a minute even if some of it went down what its only like gruel. (see, for instance, *U* 18. 1344-54)

It may also be meaningful that occurrences of the word are concentrated in this last chapter (no other chapter has seven, while chapters 16 and 17, the two next in frequency, show only four each). Perhaps the themes of sexual intercourse and infertile sex present at the end of *Ulysses* and in an "An Encounter" brought the word to Joyce's mind and pen with a higher recurrence.

At least fifteen of the twenty-odd times the word appears among the "chimeras" in *Finnegans Wake* seem to provide sufficient support for the creative force of the word "minute(s)" in "An Encounter". A few examples may be enough. In *FW* 598.31 the minutes are associated with the punishment and violence of male

¹⁰ A very similar case is found in *U* 17.1516.

strokes: "Upon the thuds trokes truck, chim, it will be exactlyso fewer hours by so many minutes of the ope of the diurn of the sennight of the maaned of the yere of the age of the madamanvantora". In *FW* 143.36, there is a large geographical leap: "I'll nudge you in a minute! I bet you use her best Perisian smear" (from Paris to Persia); or consider *FW* 353.30: "*Similar scenatas are projectilised from Hullulullu, Bawlawayo, empyreal Raum and mordern Atems. They were precisely the twelves of clocks, noon minutes, none seconds*".

There are examples related to sex and homosexuality, such as *FW* 210.28, "a reiz everymorning for Standfast Dick and a drop every minute for Stumblestone Davy", or *FW* 83.4, where "a minute silence" is linked to a "very first wind of gay gay and whiskwigs wick's ears pricked up, the starving gunman, strike him pink".¹¹ In *FW* 153.14, just after "minute" comes "the flyleaf of his frons; and he was quietly for giving the bailiff's distract on to the bulkside of his *cul de Pompe*"; and again in *FW* 421.3: "Search Unclaimed Male. House Condamned by Ediles. Back in Few Minutes. Closet for Repeers. 60 Shellburn. Key at Kate's Kiss. Isaac's Butt. Poor Man. Dalicious arson. Caught. Missing. Justiciated. Kainly forewarred". Other passages relate Min and the feeding ritual to homosexuality, as in *FW* 79.11: "as many minnow a minute . . . was, like the salmon of his ladderleap all this time of totality secretly and by suckage feeding on his own misplaced fat". The flight from the hill in Rings End appears in *FW* 448.4: "the hoyth of number eleven, Kane or Keogh's, and in the course of about thirtytwo minutes' time proceed to turn aroundabout on your heehills" (the text continues with further connections).¹²

In *FW* 51.33, the association is with headquarters, persecutions and battles, not far from the first episode of the fighting Indians in "An Encounter": "the southeast bluffs of the stranger stepshore, a *regifugium persecutorum*, hence hindquarters) as he paused at evenchime for some or so minutes (hit the pipe dannyboy! Time to won, barmon. I'll take ten to win.)". In *FW* 91.26 "minutes" is close to "Tot[h]" and "hawks with his heroes in Warhorror" (an Egyptian god, birds and war combined). Egypt is again present in its flower: "Ask him this one minute upthrow inner lotus of his burly ear vomit he dropped his Bass's to P flat" (*FW* 492.2). Examples of the word associated to war abound: "Our thirty minutes war's alull" (*FW* 246.3). Other passages include further references to the lotus and the Nile ("lotusts" and "nill" in *FW* 620.3) in close sequence with words such as "Yawhawaw. Helpunto min, helpas vin" (619.34) which bring together what could very well be another version of Joe Dillon's cry of victory, "yaka yaka yaka" (*D* 19.16) with Min and a demand to help him (a proxy of the pederast's demands?). Again, minutes, war and Dillon's cry are joined in "But learn from that ancient tongue to be middle old modern to the minute" which is introduced by "Atac first, queckqueck quicks after" (*FW* 270.18).

¹¹ With an additional call to the Battle of Pinkie (September 1547) when Edward Seymour, at the time Lord Protector of England while Edward VI was still a minor, smashed the Scottish forces? If so, there is also a fight here.

¹² In *FW* 180.1 "minutes" is connected to a "cocked had" and I wonder whether we can assume any connection with the pederast's "jerry hat" (*D* 24.24) as the narrator calls it.

In *FW* 46.21 —"Thok's min gammelhole Norveegickers moniker"— "min" is perhaps a possessive applied to the "game hole" of a Norwegian monk, but associated, as in the short story, with Norway (and Toth?). In *FW* 547.27 Min is again linked to the geographical dimension, and even to Ringsend itself, although the episode here seems to include sex between a man and a woman. Finally, although this is no attempt to exhaust the chimeras in *Finnegans Wake*, "Min" can be found in *FW* 12.3: "Let young wimman run away with the story and let young min talk smooth behind the butteler's back", a striking analogy with the action in "An Encounter" where the young narrator is left alone to talk "smooth" with the pederast (something Father Butler would openly condemn) while Mahoney runs away.

Fritz Senn (1995), in his genetic considerations of Joyce's works, in "In Quest of a Nisus Formativus Joyceanus", establishes the premise that in every Joycean text there is a "*nisus formativus*", a genetic impulse that is responsible for the development and the shape of the final text, its characters, the narrative, the voices, and even for that apprehended by the reader—which often cannot go beyond intuition but which is useful to understand the text. The Joycean "entelechia", according to Senn, would be the vital impulse to move an organism to achieve its own completion, a perfection based on the power force of the quintessence of that text. In many other instances, Senn also suggests, our belief that we somehow possess the whole or a part of that formative impulse of a chapter, passage, or episode, may bring about what he calls "*nisus hyperformativus lunaticus peripheralis*", of which these notes might not be completely free.

If in *Ulysses* Joyce worked upon "schemas" that occasionally showed forth elements he had collected in pocket notes and that seemed to be creative nuclei, a mental image that Senn calls "archmorph", a meaningful core that helped to define the adjoining that was created around it (and of which there is nothing left, only the peripheral, while inviting us to guess with difficulty about the kernel), it may be possible, if not wholly reasonable, to assume that a rather primitive form of the model already appeared in *Dubliners*. This model would exploit the possibilities of signifying within a single word. Put differently, it can be said that the lexical context of a word "expands" to the point of generating a story by itself, or that the story "contracts" to be contained in just one word. These "gnomonic" extensions could well have been the "origin" of some stories.

The word *minute* comes from the science of mathematics and Joyce's knowledge of mathematics was sufficient to enable him to explore the multiple thematic and narrative possibilities of both the Euclidean conception of gnomon and of Giordano Bruno's definition of the term in his *De Trilpici Minimo*. In Hall and Stevens's definition (the manual Joyce had at use while at school) the emphasis was on the subtractive character of a part of a parallelogram notwithstanding that the final figure is always identical in shape to the original. It is this capability of expansion and contraction of the gnomon that really catches Bruno's attention and moves him to define it as "that which, added or subtracted, enlarges or diminishes a figure without changing its form" (Weir 1991: 348). For Bruno, the gnomon is an

example of the doctrine of opposites in which two completely contrary items become identified as they coincide: "the maximum and minimum come together in one existence ... and both in the maximum and in the minimum, contraries are one and indifferent" (Weir 1991: 384).

Claude Jaquet (1990) and Fritz Senn (1995) suggest biological similes as the most appropriate ones to describe the growth of the Joycean text as a living organism, given that *Ulysses* insists upon such terminology in many chapters (Senn 1995: 62). If Senn mentions the possibility of identifying a "gene" that would condition the progress and development of the text and he calls his proposal a hypothesis, mine is perhaps only an attempt at a hypothesis, but the biological simile does not seem to be suggestive either for *Dubliners* or for *A Portrait*, where biological comparisons do not seem to abound. The image of the gnomon does not appear to fully fit the processes described above since its growth or diminution implies a continuity (like that of the gnomon of a sun-dial) that the addition of semes to the word apparently preclude. The image I think might be appropriate for this type of creative/additive process is that of the mathematical fractal, without implying by this that the genetic multiplication should extend to the infinite.¹³

This working hypothesis depends on Joyce's familiarity with the mathematical-geometrical theory of fractals (a familiarity of which I have found no proof to this moment),¹⁴ and also, perhaps looked at from a different perspective, it adds little to the theory that Joyce's works permanently emphasise the idea that "all is in all". But, if accepted, the game becomes an engine that generates stories created around one or a few words, allowing the possibility of a lack of a primary idea as a starting point. Mathematicians knew about the discordant behaviour of fractals at least as early as 1895, when the German Georg Cantor and Karl Weierstrass published their conclusions. Obviously enough, the mathematical term is only useful as an analogy for a process, that is, if we take the fractal to be "A mathematically conceived curve such that any small part of it, enlarged, has the same statistical character as the origin" (*O.E.D.*). While the gnomon suggests a more "analogical" image, the fractal emphasises the static aspect as it is based on a fixed formula that reproduces the complete object upon one or all of the sides of the original object. The literary correlate would be that in which one single term or its components (syllables) could be considered as an agglutinative of the theme or themes that make up an episode, a word that would provide a "minimalist" version (but an acceptably complete one), a word that would contain in itself the "quintessence" of the episode or its creative impulse.¹⁵ The image is useful at least to help us identify the "entelechy" of a system

¹³ The image of Gracián's hydra, self-generating out of its "cleaved" parts, is close to the image of the fractal, while for *Ulysses* and especially for *Finnegans Wake*, Claudet's image of monstrous chimeras is more appropriate since words become compounds or deformations, mixtures or additions unnatural to them. Of course Joyce was not the only one to enjoy and promote this type of connection and (almost insane) fascination for the word: Samuel Beckett played with the different meanings of words that in French start with "g-o-d" (particularly in slang) to turn them into themes in *Waiting for Godot* (see Graver 1989: 44-45).

¹⁴ There is no book that could contain such kind of information in Joyce's Trieste Library, or, at least, it is not recorded in Gillespie (1983).

¹⁵ Giordano Bruno's definition of "gnomon" (which Joyce must have used besides the one in Hall and

that, like the mathematical fractal, produces images of irregular and fragmentary shape that classical geometry was unable to describe. One is tempted to compare these "literary fractals" as instances of the "*mot juste*", but the case is quite different if the fractal is to generate a whole story or episode and to prove sufficient (at least for Joyce) to evoke thematic relations and evolutions.

Perhaps the immediate conclusion one can draw from this, is that we should read *Dubliners* the way we read *Finnegans Wake*, at least with the same attention and the same attitude towards the unexpected. Perhaps this is too "lunatic" and "peripheral" and a few tiny examples may not be enough to determine whether a generative principle is or is not hidden within the Joycean word, but it is not difficult to infer from the instances considered above that the fractal word contains some kind of a special force that breaks open many associations deeply rooted in the language and also probably in Joyce to the point that it insistently brings together the central themes of an episode or a story or to the point that make it almost a generally accepted truth that Joyce simply re-wrote the same book again and again over his lifetime. In the case of the word "minute" in "An Encounter", one must allow for the possibility of the associative process impelled by the word as being the seed for a collection of themes that are perfectly stitched together in the fabric of the story (that is Joyce's skill to make everything appear natural and real). The simile of the fractal does not enjoy the dynamism that Joyce scholars like to consider for the genetic principles at work everywhere else, but it may be useful to describe a productive or "reproductive" system perhaps more primitive in its dependence on conventional lexical knowledge, but no less fruitful for all that, and certainly more appropriate for *Dubliners* (and I would extend the certainty to *A Portrait*) than the "biological chimeras" in *Ulysses* or *Finnegans Wake*.

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Stephens's *Textbook of Euclid's Elements* reads as follows: "The *gnomon* is that which, added or subtracted, enlarges or diminishes the figure without changing its form" (in David Weir 1991: 348). The definition is appropriate because it resembles the basic trend of the fractal and its repetitive structural principle, but while Bruno highlights the affinity of opposites (a *gnomon* "complements" the figure of which it is a *gnomon*) the fractal calls attention to the similarity between the primary and the final objects, no matter how complex it might be.

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