

*Joyce in Trieste: An Album of Risky Reading.* Edited by Sebastian D. G. Knowles, Geert Lornout, and John McCourt. University Press of Florida 2007.

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*Joyce in Trieste* offers a thematic cross-section of some 450 papers from the 2002 Eighteenth International James Joyce Symposium in Trieste, a prominent spot on the map of Joyce studies, a home of the annual International James Joyce Summer School, and a subject of numerous book-length publications. Sixteen Joyce scholars are featured in the four sections of this wide-ranging volume; they add yet another celebratory cord to the polyphony of Joycean scholarship. Aptly subtitled "An Album of Risky Readings," the book's introduction contains thoroughly risky readings of "e-mails of regret" that Sebastian Knowles had received as a program director from participants who had to withdraw from the program. The messages are classified into seven kinds of regret: Regret Formal, Physical, Paralytic, Inexplicable, Metaphysical, Apocalyptic, and Regret Bogus. But Joycean context is the saving grace for Knowles' "somewhat malicious" (5) parodistic vein: all seven rhetorical e-structures are hilariously echoed by textual examples from Joyce himself. And there is more humor in the book, especially from Zack Bowen and Austin Briggs, though Hugh Kenner, too, offers some serenely humorous musings.

Section One offers three essays on "Reading Joyce: Text, Meaning, and Language" by Michael Groden, Margot Norris and Zack Bowen. Groden presents a captivating account of his involvement in authenticating and evaluating for the National Library of Ireland of newly surfaced manuscripts, notebooks and other documents in Joyce's handwriting; they were officially unveiled on May 30, 2002, just two weeks prior to the Symposium. Margot Norris' essay, "Risky Readings of Risky Writings," is a poignant account of the kinds of over-determined readings that readers of Joyce are likely to perform based on Joyce's writing style. "The gaps, oclusions, and mysteries in the Joycean texts," states Norris, "function as *performatives*," not because they "*say nothing*: they actually *do things*" (39). Joyce's gnomic and elliptical stylistic that at once implies and withholds, invites determined readings without affirming their validity. Zack Bowen's essay promises "Plato, Homer, and Joyce: Involving Orientalism, a Smidgeon of Smut, and a Pinch of Perverse Egotism" and, of course, delivers. Bowen discusses the comic dimensions of selected Joycean characters and situations. For instance, Duffy's "righteous mentality is played off against the railway's propagandistic news story that reads like George 'Dubya' Bush's protestations of 'compassionate conservatism'" (56). Bloom's complacency is presented vis-à-vis Odysseus as a "scurrilous character" who, "were he alive today, would be sitting in the White House or acting as a CEO of Enron" (60). And there is enough "smut" and "egotism" to make the essay delightfully readable.

Section Two centers on "Text: Genetic Readings" and features contributions by André Topia, Nick De Marco, Dirk Van Hulle, and Hugo Azérad. In "Narrative as Potential: The Virus and the Program," Topia discusses Joyce's

writing technique in terms of “modelization or simulation, almost in the cybernetic sense of the term” (67). Sentences are actualized as outcomes of silent processes of cognition. Joyce readers are drawn to both actively participate and wholly depend on processes that are “already completed,” making the reading process “both extraordinarily stimulating and deeply frustrating” (69). Nick De Marco’s illustrates these points very well by tackling a singularly stimulating and frustrating chapter of *Ulysses* in his essay “Oxen of the Sun and the Gestation of the Word.” De Marco delineates stages of development of fetus and language by tracing dual gestation of Logos mocked by the Gnostic demiurge. The subject of writing process is also at the center of Dirk Van Hulle’s contribution. His essay, “Dame Plurabelle; Joyce’s Art of Decomposition and Recombination,” attempts to “reconstruct the course of ALP’s genesis both up- and downstream, in order to discover the nominalist principle underlying Joyce’s poetics of process” (88), as it also demonstrates the significance of genetic studies for interpretive ends. Such fundamental aspects of *Finnegans Wake* as “its archetypal character amalgams may have been inspired by Proust” (93) and Joyce’s notebooks support that claim. Finally, in “‘Negative Utopia’ in James Joyce, Walter Benjamin, and Ernst Bloch,” Hugo Azerad offers a different angle on Joyce’s intertextuality by placing utopianism in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* in a broader context of European literature. He re-focuses on Bloch and Benjamin who, like Joyce, undermine “a bourgeois ideology that projects history as a smooth linear continuum, what Benjamin called ‘empty homogenous time’” (11).

Section Three features five essays devoted to “Meaning: Political Readings.” Vike Martina Plock opens the section with her essay “Why does Gerty Limp?” Her essay offers highlights from the history of Irish Nationalist iconography and illustrates, after Hugh Kenner, that Gerty’s and Mr. Holohan’s limps “express the same idea, the malfunction of nationalist icons and narratives” (120). Brian Caraher follows with a complex essay, “A ‘ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry’; Reading Nightmares of Orientalist History in Joyce’s *Ulysses*,” reworked from a previously publication. It centers on the Orientalist allure that historical Palestine had for Western cultural desires. In Joyce, that allure is represented by the figure of Haroun al Raschid “as a fictive measure to articulate the Orientalist fantasies of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom” (131). The theme of Palestine is continued in Arye Kendi’s essay, “‘Nothing doing. Still an idea behind it.’ The Restoration of Zion.” Kendi follows Joyce’s numerous allusions to the Zionist idea circulated at the beginning of the 1900s. In the next essay, Bronislav Knezevic re-focuses the political lens by asking: “It there a Class to Renounce in This Text” *Gentlemanly Ideology in A Portrait of the Artist*.” At the center of his discussion is the issue of class and the ideological dimensions of the designation “gentleman” as a measure of social status and power. Knezevic follows the development of Stephen’s identity from a son of a gentleman in Clongowes to a young man who is “deeply informed both by the gentlemanly education imposed by his father and by his peripherality to the native elite” (168). Though devoid of English characters (other than the dean of studies), “the class culture with which Stephen has to contend with was very much a deeply embedded result of English imperial rule” (168). The section ends

with Richard Robinson's study, "Buckley in a General Russia; Finnegans Wake and Political Space." The author's interest is hermeneutic as he examines how FW "generates meanings from – and makes text out of – European political space" (170). At the center of Robinson's inquiry is an aspect of section II.3 where the Buckley passage, heavily inscribed with Crimean/Russian elements can be read as "a synecdoche of a greater Europe" (171) that encodes a history of national and linguistic confrontations between East and West.

Section Four presents essays on "Language: Joycean Readings" and it opens with "Jim the Comedian" by Hugh Kenner. The title, from Pound's Pisan Cantos, reverberates through this brief gem of an essay as Kenner begins with a close reading of the opening of Ulysses with an eye on *the funny*, even though the first time readers invariably find the opening difficult and strange (191). Kenner invites us to relish again phrases ("a fine tang of faintly scented urine") and ponder uncommon words ("peckish," i.e. "hungry"), including "Joycean catspeak" (192-93). Equally attentive close readings are prominent in Austin Briggs' erudite essay, "Breakfast at 7 Eccles Street." Eggs are on Briggs' mind as he joins previous scholars in speculating whether Molly will serve her husband breakfast in bed on June seventeen. The question is particularly funny since Bloom muttering appears to be misheard by Molly. Briggs cites Fritz Senn's amusement at the thought "that Bloom might confront a sullen Molly serving him a breakfast he never asked for and containing eggs he did not want" (200), given that Bloom discards the idea of eggs for breakfast in Calypso ("No good eggs with this drouth" U 4.43-44). Speaking of food, Ira Nadel continues the topic in "Molly's Mediterranean Meals and Other Joycean Cuisines: An Essay with Recipes." From cultural to textual, to thematic, the functions of food "are complex in Ulysses, but Joyce's cuisines, especially of the Mediterranean, provide a gastronomic guide to character, place, and action" (210). Nadel's great study is followed by another "Mediterranean" Joyce – the Joyce of cinema. In her essay, "Cinematic Joyce," Carla Marengo explores the effects of late Victorian developments in photography and cinema on Joyce's writing techniques. Joyce's text "offers paradoxes in visual presentation (...) and in narrativity and discourse" (225), exemplified by Gerty's performance on the beach, where "representation meets self-representation, the erotic meets the onanistic, or, in Bloom's words, placing the spectacle within the range of commodities, 'When you feel like that you often meet what you feel' " (U 13.828-29; 225). Contextualized by history of cinema, including early Italian developments likely to bear on young Joyce-the-Triestine, Marengo's essay is a fitting coda for this diverse album of Joycean readings occasioned by the great city of Trieste that saw Joyce morph into a mature artist.