

# The Artist in and of the Work: Joyce's Artistic Self-Fashioning

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**Peer review:** This article has been subject to a double-blind peer review process



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## Abstract

*This paper will explore the problematic link between biography and literature as it is self-consciously demonstrated by Stephen's theory about Shakespeare in the 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode of James Joyce's Ulysses. I argue how Stephen's construction of the link between Shakespeare's life and his work both illuminates and repeats a larger critical gesture between biography and literature. This is based on a mode of hermeneutical temporality which sees the present moment as containing within itself temporal fullness to be realised in a teleological fashion. However, Joyce's own ironic construction of Stephen, who disavows his own theorizing, should alert us as to how much we can take this theory at face value with respect to a character who invokes the name of Shakespeare as much to construct a theory of him as to deconstruct it. In response to this, I argue that Rene Girard's reading of Shakespeare in terms of mimetic desire provides a more compelling picture of the ways in which not only his characters, but the characters in Ulysses understand and articulate sexual desire as mediated by a prior belatedness patterned on the desire of the Other. However, I problematize Girard's reading of Shakespeare and Joyce, and my final contention is that the desire of reading and self-fashioning is set in motion not so much by mimetic recognition as it is by the Lacanian notion of misrecognition. This forms the discursive conditions of the articulation of that desire while irrevocably fracturing not only the Girardian idea of the triangulation of desire, but also the 'loop' of literature and biography by thwarting all attempts to speak and desire from the place of the Other, as the Other.*

Keywords: James Joyce; Ulysses; Stephen Daedalus; William Shakespeare; Rene Girard

*With the term thinker we name those exceptional human beings who are destined to think one single thought, a thought that is always "about" beings as a whole. Each thinker thinks only one single thought.*

Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, Volume III<sup>1</sup>

Responding to early criticism about prurient content of *Ulysses*, Joyce memorably remarked that if his novel was not worth reading, then by the same token, life was not worth living. The remarkable impression one gets from reading this novel, which is as much tethered to abstruse metaphysical speculation as it is to the flows of bodily functions, might help solidify an interpretive response of it being about life as it emerges from Joyce's own life. The irreducibly problematic link between biography and literature is self-consciously probed in the chapter of *Ulysses* titled 'Scylla and Charybdis'. Here Stephen Daedalus (the precocious artist figure modelled after Joyce himself) defensively advances a reading of Hamlet aimed at demonstrating how 'we walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves' (Joyce, 2001: 273). Here Daedalus fuses a sometimes wilfully perverse biological speculation into Shakespeare's sexual life with his own musings about Aristotelean entelechy. He posits that a purposeful end shapes all parts of a single whole and conjures up a spectral image of Shakespeare which implicitly seeks to validate his own insecurities. He speaks about being begotten as a signifier of artistic belatedness, indexed in the conflation of the Bard's first name with the intentionality of artistic creation: 'They clasped and sundered, did the coupler's will. From before the ages He willed me and now may not will me away or ever' (Joyce, 2001: 46-7, emphasis mine).

My focus in this paper will be on exploring how Stephen's construction of the link between Shakespeare's life and his work both illuminates and repeats a larger critical gesture between biography and literature. This is based on an understanding of temporality which sees the present moment as containing within itself temporal fullness to be realised in a teleological fashion. The crucial link between Stephen and Hamlet, and by extension Joyce and Shakespeare, has of course been underlined by critics eager to centre upon 'Scylla and Charybdis' as providing an unambiguous presentation of Joyce's own theory of literary creation. The great Joycean critic Hugh Kenner unambiguously underlines that 'Joyce saw that the plot of the *Odyssey* and that of *Hamlet* were homomorphs, one concentrating on the father, one on the son', elevating the structural importance of Hamlet to be conterminous with Homer's epic (Kenner, 1973: 33).

Jennifer Levine goes one step further in her chapter on *Ulysses* in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, where she asserts that *Hamlet* displaces *The Odyssey* as the Ur-text for Joyce: 'Stephen may be cast as

Telemachus, but he thinks he is playing Hamlet' (Levine, 1990: 123). Richard Brown points to Shakespeare as forming a crucial source for Joyce's near obsession with adultery, a theme which not only conditions much of his creative work across genres (the short story collection *Dubliners* and the play *Exile* being meditations on betrayal in its various incarnations) but also framing his 'approach to the whole of the literary tradition' (cited in Burham, 1990: 43). Burham herself goes on to deliberately conflate Shakespeare and Bloom in her argument that 'Molly Bloom exhibits a ... complexity of character by functioning both as Bloom's dark lady and his Ann Hathaway' (Burnham, 1990: 44). Indeed, Vincent Cheng notes that Joyce felt himself to be 'in a father-son relationship with Shakespeare' re-enacting the Freudian-Oedipal drama of literary usurpation which finds unambiguous expression in Stephen's meditation on familial consubstantiality in the chapter in *Ulysses* set in the National Library (Cheng, 1984: 88). These readings foreground the intertextual linkages between Shakespeare and Joyce which surface both within the text of *Ulysses* and Joyce's own investments in his literary characters being ironic models of past literary figures.

However, Joyce's own ironic construction of Stephen, who disavows his own theorizing, should alert us as to how much we can take this theory at face value. With respect to a character who invokes the name of Shakespeare as much to 'usurp his interlocutors' understanding of Shakespeare by pouring his poison 'in the porches of their ears' (Joyce, 2001: 252) as to situate himself enviously with regards to the literary father: 'My will: his will that *fronts* me' (Joyce, 2001: 279, **emphasis mine**). In as much as Joyce has Stephen weave his theory of Shakespeare from a wilful misreading of his life, he also deconstructs the critical urge to read literature from life and life from literature. As Kershner argues, 'Stephen the artist-critic here admits to the destructive aspect of the Janus-headed artist, god of his own creation' (Joyce, 2001: 226). In response to this, I argue that Rene Girard's reading of Shakespeare in terms of mimetic desire provides a more compelling picture of the ways in which not only his characters, but the characters in *Ulysses* understand and articulate sexual desire as mediated by a prior belatedness patterned on the desire which comes to us mediated by the demands of the unconscious Other. Extending the Girardian framework to encompass the desire of reading, as mediated by textuality, will also emphasise how the critical desire to interpret the life of Shakespeare/Joyce's text and the text of Shakespeare/Joyce's life. This is profoundly mimetic, as Joyce's fashioning of Stephen responds with repressed violence to Stephen's fashioning of Shakespeare's life, in a doomed attempt to fight over the body of Shakespeare's text, which in Girard's theory is offered up in a sacrificial way. However, Girard's own theoretical framework is itself caught up in

what Jacques Derrida terms the equivocation between structure (of theory) and genesis (of artistic genius) which is endemic to any body of work, literary or philosophical. It is my final contention that the desire of reading and self-fashioning is set in motion not so much by mimetic recognition as it is by the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's notion of misrecognition, which fractures the symmetry of mimetic desire by implying how the recognition which stimulates desire is premised upon an unbridgeable gap in self-understanding. I thus take seriously the claim, seemingly neglected by critics who stress the homologies between Stephen, Joyce and Shakespeare, that rather than artistic reconciliation, 'Joyce restores sundering to the narrative of reconciliation' (Wallace, 2005: 801). It is thus the differences between author, literary characters and critic which *Ulysses* self-consciously asserts is the condition for interpretation. Ultimately, if the poststructuralist emphasis on the incommensurability of sign, structure and the self to their own hermeneutical sufficiency opens up questions of absence and the consequent possibilities of enunciation, 'Ulysses puts to the reader the question of the possibility of autobiography' (Weinstock, 1997: 349). In this way, I argue that *Ulysses* both raises and undermines the possibility of complete critical identification with the text. The critical desire to read literary production as a straightforward manifestation of an author's life (or indeed unconscious urges as demonstrated by psychoanalytical studies of literature) neglects to consider how this desire is motivated by a fantastic assumption of unity between biography and literature. Ironically, the gestures towards wholeness in *Ulysses* expose even more abysses.

### **Art which Contains Life: Stephen's Shakespeare as a model**

Stephen's theory about Shakespeare announces itself not only as an aesthetic theory about the relationship between creator and text, adumbrated by Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as the artist refining himself by turning the dross of reality into imperishable art, but as a theory about the life of the artist as text and the texts of the artist as figurations of the frustrations and imperfections of his life. Stephen's Shakespeare is fixated on the experience of being an exile, which resounds in the 'note of banishment, banishment from the heart, banishment from home' from his earliest plays to his last (Joyce, 2001: 272). Corrupted by Ann Hathaway who was much older than him 'in a cornfield' and betrayed by her with his brothers, Shakespeare becomes both bawd and cuckold (Joyce, 2001: 244). His art responds to his own personal failings by turning the events of his life into 'grist to his mill' the metaphor used suggesting both hard-won extraction and displaced aggression turned into aesthetic resentment (Joyce, 2001: 262). In Stephen's view, the details of

Shakespeare's life, seen in its totality through the lens of theory, becomes a text in which the 'boy of act one is the mature man of act five' (Joyce, 2001: 272). More than a begetting which compromises the creative artist through his contingent dependence upon the prior frailty of the flesh indexed through the legal fiction of paternity, the artist's life is something made, the intentionality of the act implying the actualisation of the possible, an ineluctability in which the 'signatures' of the artist can be found in 'all things I am here to read' (Joyce, 2001: 45). Just as Stephen ponders the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son as crucial to the aesthetic conception of Christianity, the texts of the artist and the artist's life form a closed structural economy without expenditure of loss. This structural model implies an investment in conceptualising the link between biography and literature which is repeated in biographies of Joyce and Shakespeare. The critic Gordon Bowker's illuminative biographical study of Joyce narrates Joyce's refraction of his own experience in the episode of young Stephen's breaking of his spectacles at Clongowes and his subsequent quest for redress in a way which could just have as easily emerged out of Portrait as from the biography, and Richard Ellmann's daunting biography James Joyce consistently interweaves events and locales of Joyce's life with the use he would make of them in the fiction. Indeed, King notes that Ellmann 'was a fastidious close reader of the autobiographical content in Joyce's writing' (King, 1999: 300). To prove his point, King cites a passage from Ellmann which positions Joyce as how Stephen positions Shakespeare:

*The life of an artist, but particularly that of Joyce, differs from the lives of other persons in that its events are becoming artistic sources even as they command attention. Instead of allowing each day, pushed back by the next, to lapse into imprecise memory, he shapes again the experiences which shaped him (cited in King, 1999: 300).*

More interestingly, Park Honan's learned biography of Shakespeare claims Shakespeare was 'almost too much in the light' towards the end of his life due to his daughter Susanna's legal entanglements (Honan, 1999). In a gesture repeating Stephen's unresolved guilt towards his mother in *Ulysses*, 'Mary Shakespeare was involved with his deep understanding and his artistic faults, his exalting of Juliet or Rosalind, his odd failure with two different Portias, perhaps his blunder with Jessica, and with the curious misogyny evident in the Sonnets' (Honan, 1999: 285). Indeed, Honan's assertion that in composing *Othello*, 'the author might have found hints in his own temperament for his calculating, rational, improvising, and half-comic Iago, as well as for the self-dramatizing Moor' (Honan, 1999: 316). He finds another uncanny echo in Joyce's Stephen: 'His unremitting intellect is the hornmad Iago ceaselessly willing that the Moor in him shall suffer' (Honan, 1999: 273).

No doubt the critical consensus is sound which sees not only a close link between the substance of an author's life with the textuality of his words, and the way in which Stephen crafts an image of Shakespeare which serves to validate his own desire to be the literary 'father of all his race' through supplanting the latter (**Joyce, 2001: 267**). The literary transaction between Joyce and Shakespeare is read by Kershner as such:

*Joyce can deny that the historical Shakespeare has any importance except insofar as his image furthers [his] own art. Objectively, this is falsehood; but subjectively, it is necessity. Thus each artist "creates" his own Shakespeare (Kershner, 1978: 227).*

What is missing here is a recognition of the ways in which Joyce ironises Stephen through a comic undermining of his (and the critic's) model of reading. Indeed, I argue *Ulysses* underlines Joyce's scepticism towards any economy of closure and any hermeneutic gesture which sees textual signifiers as saturated with pre-determined meanings outside of the context(s) of reading. On the level of the word, Joyce demonstrates distortion and misreading: Molly mishears Bloom's references to Aristotle as 'Aristocrats Masterpiece' and comically misinterprets metempsychosis (**Joyce, 2001: 918**). Ironically this is the novel's master signifier for conservation and return. Bloom and others also mishear the word 'throwaway', which in the course of the novel gets distorted and misunderstood beyond recognition. If Sharpe is right to observe that in *Ulysses*, 'coition ... implies an intercourse between the mind and things, between spirit and flesh, between the Son and the Father' (**Sharpe, 1963: 122**). Bloom's delight and guilt towards the act of masturbation can be interpreted as a sign of Joyce's ironic focus on sexual expenditure and implied death without possibility of actualisation. Indeed, if the notion of gestation undergirds both biological and artistic development, brought together significantly in the image of 'the transformation, violent and instantaneous, upon the utterance of the Word', then the ending of the chapter 'Oxen of the Sun' shatters any notion of teleology and 'final cause' through sheer textual excess. (**Joyce, 2001: 553**). As the chapter follows the historical the gestation of the English language, Joyce parodies any triumphalist or nationalistic assertion of a hegemonic form of the language by deforming it into uninterpretable and interminable street slang. As Kristeva notes in her essay *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Joyce's ultimate focus on the ironic apotheosis of maternal body is positioned as such:

*[The feminine body] in its most un-signifiable, un-symbolisable aspect, shores up, in the individual, the fantasy of the loss in which he engulfed or becomes inebriated, for want of the ability to name an object of desire (Kristeva, 1987: 58-9).*



Joyce thus evokes a sense of structure only to destroy and fragment it—no easy Hegelian synthesis is possible between Shakespeare, Joyce/Stephen and Ulysses, and life, writing and text. It will be more interesting to turn to a model of reading and interpretation which positions biography and textuality as contested spaces in which desire, and the desire to read, manifests through mimetic conflict. Girard's philosophy will provide us with a fascinating account of how interpretive intentionality is grounded on a certain repressed understanding of violence, and above all, envy.

### **Reading of the Text as the Drama of Desire: Girard's Shakespeare and Joyce**

In his book *A Theatre of Envy*, the philosopher Rene Girard offers his theory about the relationships between the characters in Shakespeare's plays as defined by 'mimetic interaction' (Girard, 2000: 256). Crucial to Girard's larger anthropological insight is the fact that the desire of the subject is fundamentally imitative of the desire of the other person. Desire does not so much express the inner being of the subject as much as it is entrenched in social relationships defined by envy, competition and aggressiveness. Patterned as it is on an external model, desire discovers both lack at the heart of being, and mediation with respect to how the Other channels our desire towards the same object. Taken as a theoretical model towards a biographical criticism of Shakespeare's artistic talent, Girard asserts that Stephen uncovers something fundamental in Shakespeare, which is not so much the source of artistic inspiration as it is the structural necessity of mimetic desire. Shaken by his first sexual encounter with Ann and his passivity in the affair, Shakespeare 'must beat Ann at her own game; he must win by her rules, thus making victory impossible' (Joyce, 2001: 259). As long as Shakespeare patterns his desire after Ann's desire, his plays demonstrate how characters use substitution, doubling and disguise to expose the repetition of desire and the violence which lies behind social relations. Extending his biographical criticism on Shakespeare onto Ulysses, Girard argues how Bloom and Stephen become unconscious rivals in mimetic competition for Molly:

*Just like Stephen himself, Leopold Bloom, the hero of Ulysses, has a bad case of French triangulitis; he hates to be deceived but acts as if he loved it, baiting Stephen with suggestive pictures of Molly and inviting him his prospective rival to his home. Ashamed of being acted on, he wants to act, but all he achieves is co-authorship in the magnum opus of his own cuckoldry (Joyce, 2001: 263).*

Girard's analysis is enlightening as it offers both a psychological and structural account of inter-subjectivity and (as I later argue) intertextuality. Indeed, this model of reading can be productively mapped onto Ulysses in

terms of exploring how the articulation of the desires of Bloom, Molly and Stephen is necessarily grounded upon the construction of the desire of the other person. Stephen wonders about this dehiscence of the self in terms of the Other in him: 'I am other I now', which is manifested by his affecting to be Hamlet (reproducing the character's neuroses as a result) and his passive-aggressive reactions towards Eglinton and Russell who offer their own theories of Shakespeare in the National Library (Joyce, 2001: 242). Bloom's voyeurism and his anxiety are crucially linked to his inability to resume sexual relations with Molly, as he tries to find an imitative model of desire through the example of Blazes Boylan. Indeed, Girard's observations on Hamlet could as easily apply to Bloom: 'Hamlet must receive from someone else, a mimetic model, the impulse that he does not find in himself' (Joyce, 2001: 276). Indeed, if Bloom's androgyny signifies yet another form of imitative desire, Molly's musings about the male sexual organ make the aspect of mimicry and simulation comically explicit: 'I wished I was one myself for a change just to try with that thing they have swelling upon you so hard and at the same time so soft when you touch it' (Joyce, 2001: 924).

Extending Girard's framework towards the dynamics involved in the desire of reading will shed light on the uncanny repetitions which structure Stephen and other critics' readings of Joyce and Shakespeare. If Girard is right to assert that desire is engendered in imitation of previous models, then each critical gesture arises from mimetic impulses. More than this implication of structural homology, Girard's reading implies that the reader and/or critic of the text desires as Shakespeare and Joyce desires. The critical desire to read a literary text finds its pattern in other readings of the same text. The texts of both authors thus become contested spaces in which the will to assert originality through reading as the author read is ceaselessly undermined by the belated nature of repetition and mimicry, as indexed through Stephen's rejection of fatherhood as a 'conscious begetting' (Joyce, 2001: 266). For Girard, the logic of mimicry and the increased level of violence associated with it culminate in sacrifice, where violence is directed away from the competitors towards a sacrificial victim who appeases and annuls the violence before it becomes too destructive. Girard thus reads 'Scylla and Charybdis' as enacting a sublimated drama of mimetic violence and sacrifice by positioning Stephen and his interlocutors as fighting over their interpretations of Shakespeare. Stephen's disingenuous disavowal of his theory does not signal an overt diffidence, but an acute understanding of how to deflect escalating violence by concentrating it in the form of a sacrifice, the sacrifice in this instance being his own theory:



*The author silences his own voice, yields the floor to his antagonists, and becomes a literary equivalent of his bawd-and-cuckold figure ... Just as Joyce speaks of his own expulsion behind the mask of Stephen, [his] irony is seen, I believe, in the recurrent theme of the poet who becomes a preferential scapegoat in a world hostile to his art ... in Joyce's text the collective victim is the one real poet in the entire group (Girard, 2000: 269).*

If we understand the text as sacrificial object, then it sublimates collective aggression by soliciting interpretations simulated by the original desire to read. It is no wonder that *Ulysses*, seen as a Bloomian text, itself dramatizes the logic of ritual sacrifice through the figure of the Wandering Jew who is put on trial, persecuted and who ultimately returns in the incarnation of the Word.

### **Girard's Misrecognition: Towards a psychoanalytic understanding of the detours of reading**

However, if Girard's theory is yet another attempt to actualise what was potentially in the text through making theory adequate to the enterprise, thereby effecting a 'reconciliation', a more radical reading of the Joycean project will emphasise the 'sundering' which as Stephen says, precedes the critical re-appropriation (**Joyce, 2001: 247**). In an essay on the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Jacques Derrida notes how Husserl 'had to navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis on logicising structuralism and psychologistic geneticism' in negotiating the ultimately undecidable difference between the pre-existence of structure and the original event of birth (**Derrida, 1980: 158**). Read as a meta-commentary on theory, Girard's own philosophy necessarily equivocates between on the one hand reading the text as evincing the priority of theoretical structures (and thus being passive) and on the other hand, arising out of a spontaneous decision (and thus being active). This uncannily repeats Stephen's own equivocations between both his earthly and spiritual Fathers, for the aporia between critical exemplification and creative originality fragments the desire for closure and the imagined consubstantiality between Father and Son, text and theory. Indeed, Girard's discourse on Shakespeare is caught between elevating Shakespeare as a dramatic genius who uncovers the structure of mimetic desire in his plays, and Shakespeare's plays as needing Girard's own theories to fully become what they are as dramatic works. In this mise en abyme of recognising in the Other what belongs to the self, Girard senses his own victimization as sacrificial object:

*In the meantime I had turned to mimetic desire and lectured about it to English-speaking audiences. The experience was always pleasant and yet, on some occasions, reminiscent enough of Stephen's to facilitate my understanding of the Joycean text. During the question period I was warned that my mimetic triangles, precisely because they are so exquisitely French, cannot really apply to English or American writers – least of all, of course, to the greatest of them all, William Shakespeare (Girard, 2000: 266).*

In this gesture of equating himself with Joyce, Stephen and Shakespeare, what Girard ultimately neglects to consider is Jacques Lacan's argument that the misrecognition of desire undergirds the subject's access to the symbolizing function of language. Lacan situates the origin of this misunderstanding at the moment when an illusory image of wholeness is presented to a child looking at himself or herself in a mirror. This fantastic prop is literally imaginary, for it is an image which structures the subject's understanding that he or she has a coherent personality. Desire is then always mediated by the Other, who ironically confirms the subject as unique individual by further displacing him or her away from the absent core of the self. In *Ulysses*, Joyce dramatizes moments of dislocation and misrecognition which mediate self-understanding. In a quest to supplant Shakespeare as artistic father, Stephen is confronted not with a mirror, but with a 'cracked looking-glass' and the figure of Hamlet is hopelessly refracted and distorted through various characters in *Ulysses* (Joyce, 2001: 6). Stephen assimilates Shakespeare only to distort him; as Richard M. Kain notes, 'Stephen, in his discussion, omitted all references here given to Shakespeare as a man in public life, or as a man with friends. Like Daedalus, Stephen's Shakespeare is lonely, embittered, an aesthete dedicated to "silence, exile and cunning"' (Kain, 1964: 347). Indeed, in texts which make explicit the presence of spectres, Bloom, Stephen and Hamlet must confront figures from their own families which, in their incommensurability with narrative and historical closure, destabilize the boundaries between life and death, past and present, and identity and non-identity. These breaks and detours further disrupt the desire for presence and completion. Reading this back into Joyce's life (thus accomplishing a critical mirror-image of Stephen's theorizing), Joyce's own ambiguous embracing and abjection of his mother, who in his mind stood for the unrelieved and unthinking grip of patriarchy and religion on the soul, functions as an unacknowledged creative source for the Irish émigré:

*Joyce's mother, May Murray Joyce, suffered the decline of the family into poverty and her husband's drunkenness shored by her Catholic faith and her expectations that her eldest son James would find his vocation on the priesthood ... The May Goulding Daedalus of *Ulysses* is even more memorable as the ghost haunting her profligate son whom*

*he attempts to exorcise from his guilt-ridden consciousness ... It was May Joyce's terminal cancer that brought her son back from his first attempt at self-exile in Paris when he was twenty-one (Bernstock, 1985: 9).*

Rather than a seamless integration and transubstantiation of the material of life into the mediated form of art, this potential for disruption and dislocation is recognised by Hansen. He states that 'Stephen's commentary attempts to disrupt Hamlet by allowing the ghosts of the material world that surrounded the text to disfigure the text itself' (Hansen, 2001: 93). Hansen later invokes the German cultural theorist Walter Benjamin's meditations on the differences between empty, homogenous time and Messianic time to emphasise that in Joyce's text, 'the ghosts of the past haunt the peripheries of history and must be made to disfigure the central text and its ontology of linear time' (Hansen, 2001: 104). I argue that Ulysses locates the many textual sites of disfigurement as examples of how the desire for closure and self-recognition can never be fully present and thus, fully represented.

In his book *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida argues that 'one never inherits without coming to terms with some spectre' emphasising how the spectre, exceeding presence and absence by coming back from the past, opens up the decision to read and to ground the desire for the text (Derrida, 1994: 24). The desire to read is thus fundamentally predicated upon the traces of memory and meaning which constantly remind us that time will always already be out of joint. Given that Shakespeare played the part of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, perhaps Shakespeare comes towards Stephen, Joyce and us as a ghost who needs to be reckoned with in our collective quests for self-fashioning and fulfilment. As Patricia Novillo-Corvalan reminds us, 'the memory of the spectre is neither capable of reproducing Shakespeare's genius nor offering a coherent narrative of his life; instead, it elicits further gaps, uncertainties, and the eerie, disturbing force of the supernatural' (Novillo-Corvalan, 2008: 213-4). Seen in this light, the desire of Stephen to speak from the place of the Other who is Shakespeare is fundamentally impossible, for the drama of misrecognition and identification is played out in purely imaginary terms: 'each imagining himself to be first, last, only and alone, whereas he is neither first nor last nor only nor alone in a series originating in and repeated to infinity' (Joyce, 2001: 863). Indeed, as James Maddox writes, Stephen's construction of Shakespeare in relation to himself betokens a desperate urge to ground an enduring self by finding a complete and coherence image of the mature artist within:

*Stephen's concern with a perduring self as opposed to a succession of transient selves states in different terms the relation at the heart of the Shakespeare theory: the relation between the past that persists and the past that is left behind (Maddox, 1978: 106).*

King astutely exposes Stephen's posturing as signalling 'a schizophrenic anxiety over his identity, as defined by the measure of his sovereignty over the text', a mastery which is ceaselessly undermined by the spectral identity of Shakespeare and Shakespeare's text (King, 1999: 302). Cixous reminds us, 'Shakespeare is the name of a corpus, of an infinite, unlimited body without ego, without an absolutely identifiable owner' (Cixous, 2012: 27). Perhaps the most fitting image of the indissoluble link between misrecognition and the need to create the Other in the subject's own image is evoked in a moment in the hallucinatory sequence of the chapter 'Circe'. Here Shakespeare returns not as image, but as familiar nightmare, fracturing the boundaries between life and art:

*(Stephen and Bloom gaze in the mirror. The face of William Shakespeare, beardless, appears there, rigid in facial paralysis, crowned by the reflection of the reindeer antlered hat rack in the hall) (Joyce, 2001: 671).*

To reiterate, this moment powerfully highlights how, the text will always return in the act of interpretation only on the condition that we misrecognise or misread it. The distorted image of Shakespeare reflects Stephen's critical desire to read him as cuckold at the price of a more profound betrayal. This is nothing less than the absolute otherness of what appears in the mirror, and thus by extension, allows itself to be read. The desire to find the author in the text, and to rescue the text from the author, opens up a vertiginous abyss which both warns and seduces the reader to read on.

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**To cite this article:**

Tan Xing Long, Tan, I. 2019. The Artist in and of the Work: Joyce's Artistic Self-Fashioning. *Exchanges: The Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 7(1), 1-14. Retrieved from: <http://doi.org/10.31273/eirj.v7i1.400>

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<sup>i</sup> Editor's note: As can be found in for example: Heidegger, M. (1991). *Nietzsche*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.