> What does Joyce clearly *state*? What does *Joyce* clearly state? What does Joyce *clearly* state?
>
> Fritz Senn, 'Dynamic Adjustment in *Dubliners*'

When James Joyce said that 'in realism you get down to facts on which the world is based; that sudden reality that smashes romanticism into a pulp", he affirmed something that doubled into a question: what constitute the "real" for Joyce? Recent criticism offers an extensive analysis on what constitute "reality" in both *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* and proposes a reading of Joyce's realism in terms of representation of a harsh reality in *Dubliners*, and of interplay between harsh reality and subjectivity in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The aim of this essay is to investigate Joyce's realism in *Dubliners* and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* on two levels. Firstly, in the analysis of realism in *Dubliners* critics have too often underestimated the role played by subjectivity, and I will argue that *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is not the first depositary of James Joyce's relativistic attitude towards reality, as critics such as Riquelme seem to suggest.[1] Secondly, I will suggest looking at Joyce's early fiction in terms of an evolutionary realism, a mode of representation of life and experience that aimed to arouse, or to make others see, a development.

It is often said by critics that of 'the two epiphanic modes of stark realism – "the vulgarity of speech or of gesture"- and the visionary fantasy – "a memorable phase of the mind in itself"', the vulgarity of speech is characteristic of *Dubliners* where 'the visionary [is] displaced by the grim limitations of living and dying'.[2] *Dubliners* is certainly a realistic text, so realistic in terms of places, people, and subject matter represented that Joyce met not few difficulties to publish it as he had wrote it. The themes narrated in *Dubliners* - such as the violence of a drank man beating his son ('Counterparts'), or the story of a married woman who has a relationship with another man and commits suicide when the man resists her ('A Painful Case') - were unusual material for fiction, and even more unusual was the frankness with which Joyce

[1] John Paul Riquelme, '*Stephen Hero*, *Dubliners*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Styles of Realism and Fantasy', in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. by Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 103-130 (p.123).
[2] Riquelme, p. 104.

treated them. A true representation of these facts – or even 'unfacts' as Jeri Johnson suggests-[3] was for Joyce the mode by which Dubliners could see that to 'make[…] most people lives unhappy [was] some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable or misconceived ideal'.[4]

In order to depict reality faithfully Joyce expanded the limits of nineteen-century realism of writers such as Honorè de Balzac and George Eliot. The distinctiveness of Joyce's realism lies in the close relationship between subject matter and style, between objectivity and language, a relationship that reaches is climax in *Finnegans Wake*. The narration for Joyce cannot be realistic unless facts and people speak for themselves, and this is made possible by means of what Hugh Kenner defines the 'Uncle Charles Principle', which 'entails writing about someone much as that someone would choose to be written about,' a device that 'does not entail recording spoken words'.[5] Hence, words 'detect the gravitational field of the nearest person'[6] even when the story is narrated in the third person, as in 'Clay':

> The matron had given her leave to go out as soon as the women's tea was over and Maria looked forward to her evening out. The kitchen was spick and span: the cook said you could see yourself in the big copper boilers. The fire was nice and bright and on one of the side-table were four very big barmbracks.[7]

This is clearly Maria's point of view, 'spick' and 'span' belong to her idiolect. In the course of the story we have Maria's reasons for not living with Joe (*D* 76) and it is Maria who thinks about herself has 'accustomed to the life of the laundry' (*D* 76). 'Clay' is saturated with Maria's voice and her consciousness, and 'Eveline' we have Eveline's point of view to shape the honesty and *frank*ness of Frank and his 'stories of the terrible Patagonians' (*D* 27). The opening of 'A little Cloud' also contains Little Chandeler's thoughts and idiolect in expressions such as 'Galler had got on' (*D* 53) and 'it was something to have a friend like that'(*D* 53), which raise out of Little Chandeler's reflection and comparison of himself with his friend. In 'A Painful Case' Mr James Duffy's refuse to live in the city, which is unsustainable because 'too modern and pretentious' (*D* 82), should be read in the same light (what does Mr Duffy mean by 'too modern'?).

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[3] Jeri Johnson, 'Introduction', in *Dubliners*, by James Joyce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. vii-xl (p. xxii).
[4] James Joyce, quoted in 'Introduction', *Dubliners*, p. xiii.
[5] Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.21.
[6] Kenner, p.16.
[7] James Joyce, *Dubliners* [1914], ed., intro. and notes by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 76. Hereafter referred to in the main text as *D*.

> He never gave alms to beggars and walked firmly, carrying a stout hazel.
> He had been for many years cashier of a private bank in Baggot Street. Every morning he came in from Chapelizod by tram.
>
> (*D* 83)

Mr Duffy's firmness –as well as the personality of other characters of *Dubliners*- is conveyed also by means of the pace of the sentence. The style in 'Clay' is sparkling as Clay wants to represent herself, while in 'A Painful Case' the short and detached sentences convey Duffy's 'distance from his body'(*D* 83). In 'A Painful Case' Joyce suggests also the existence of multiple realties when he writes that Mr Duffy 'began to doubt the reality of what memory told him' (*D* 90). James Joyce, therefore, by means of the 'Uncle Charles Principle' is able to depict Dubliners's subjectivities, how they perceive, interpret and respond to the external reality.

After a careful rendering of Dubliners's subjectivity Joyce is able to dismantle those same Dubliners' narratives he had created, and to show them as made of allusions, omissions and clichés that perpetuate the state of paralysis of Dublin.[8] In order to dismantle Dublin's discourses Joyce employs the same device he uses to create them. If on the one hand the 'Uncle Charles Principle' allows Joyce to leave the characters speak for themselves and the reader to see what the characters see, on the other hand the same principle allows the reader to see what the characters do not see. The absence of authorial judgement made possible by the 'Uncle Charles Principle' allows us to perceive the omissions in 'The Sister' and to be directly involved in the non-understanding of Reverend Flynn's story. In 'Clay' we are able to see Maria's contradictory thoughts about the reasons for her living in a laundry, in 'Eveline' we see the logical laps of Eveline's thoughts, and in the 'The Dead' we wonder about the ambiguous use of the word "generous". The creation of a visionary reality in *Dubliners* is fundamental, because it is by means of the contrast between this visionary reality (internal) and material reality (external) that Joyce tries to stimulate the 'moment of anagnorisis or self-recognition',[9] which is 'the first step towards the spiritual liberation of [his] country'[10], a liberation from paralysis. In this light, it is understandable James Joyce's defence of *Dubliners* in terms of exactness: 'the word, the exact expression I have used, is in my opinion the one expression in the English language which can create on the reader the effect which I whish to create'.[11] The 'nicely polished looking-glass' comprises both external and internal reality, and by means of 'one good looking at themselves'

[8] Marilyn French, 'Joyce and Language', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 19 (1981-1982), 239-255 (p.141). French refers to the language of these narratives as 'masking language'.
[9] Johnson, 'Introduction', *Dubliners*, p.xi.
[10] Joyce, quoted in 'Introduction', *Dubliners*, p.viii.
[11] Joyce, quoted in 'Introduction', *Dubliners*, p. ix.

Dubliners would see the two clashing. [12] The presence of multiple realities and of fluctuating viewpoints seem to be supported also by the double meaning of the tiles of most of the stories – such as 'Two Gallants' and 'The Boarding House' –or in names ('how frank is Frank?'). [13] Significant is also Joyce's use of external elements such as the card announcing Reverend Flynn's death in 'The Sister' (*D* 5), the song 'The Death of Parnell' in 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' (*D* 103-105), the song in 'The Dead' (*D* 161-162) and Gabriel's full speech in 'The Dead' (*D* 159-161). These external elements –like in the art of modernist painters such as Pablo Picasso and Geroge Brasque –place these genres in a different context. In so doing, Joyce attracts the reader's attention to the text rather than on the story as a whole. The reading experience is doubled, we read the external text by ourselves and at the same time we read it over the shoulder of the characters which will filter our experience of it. Therefore, the creation of an 'oscillating perspective […] a viewpoint for reading that vacillates between mutually defining poles' cannot either be ascribed only to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or considered in *Dubliners* as merely preparatory to it as Riquelme proposes. [14] In *Dubliners* the fluctuation is fully at work. Joyce's realism creates a contrast between the two realities and does not negate the existence of the internal reality as Marilyn French suggests. [15] It is not a matter of 'a single, knowable, […] Truth' [16] that 'has been concealed by a masking language' [17] that is at stake here, rather an exterior truth that smashes an existent and fully recognized interior one. The 'potential doubleness of things' between the realistic and the symbolic that is clearly recognized in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, [18] should be read as fully working in *Dubliners.* In addition to these considerations of a 'doublness of things' it would be worth including Michael Faherty's reading of the beginning and ending of each story in terms of presence of an 'illusion of narrative directness' and at the same time containing a 'rhetorical climax'. [19] Something very similar happens in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

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[12] Joyce, quoted in 'Introduction', *Dubliners,* p. vii.
[13] Jeri Johnson offers a detailed analysis on the double meaning of the titles in the notes to *Dubliners,* pp. 194-279 ('Two Gallants', p.217; 'The Boarding House', p. 223); on 'how frank is Frank' see Johnson's introduction to the volume, p.xxiv.
[14] John Paul Riquelme, 'The Preposterous Shape of Portraiture: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*', in *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. by Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), pp. 87-107 (p. 87).
[15] French, p. 240.
[16] French, p.240.
[17] French, p.241.
[18] Jeri Johnson, 'Introduction', in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1916], ed., intro. and notes by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. vii-xxxix (p. xviii).
[19] Michael Faherty, 'Heads and Tails: Rhetoric and Realism in *Dubliners*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 28 (1991), 377-385 (p. 377).

In the opening of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen's reality is made of reception of sounds and smells, but this first part of the novel ends in a quite different way.

> The fellows were practising shies and bowling lobs and slow twister. In the soft grey silence he could hear the bum of the balls: and from here and from there through the quiet air the sound of the cricketbats: pick, pack, pock, puck: like drops of water in a fountain falling softly in the brimming bowl.[20]

Stephen responds imaginatively to what he hears, developing from his condition of receptiveness to a condition of internal reworking of what surrounds him. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Joyce makes the reader see the development of a young man, and shows his development instead of describing it, as it was happening with *Stephen Hero*. When Joyce wrote to Stanislaus about *Stephen Hero* -'I am discontented with a great deal of it and yet how is Stephen's nature to be expressed otherwise? Eh?'[21] he manifested his intention to show Stephen's nature as it was. In order to show a nature shaped by oscillating forces, a person conducting a dialogue with himself and the world around him, Joyce had to employ a style that would render with fidelity the subject matter. The employment of the 'Uncle Charles Principle' – which is disparaged in Dubliners amongst various characters in the attempt of provoking a national development – is in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* firm on Stephen in the attempt to represent faithfully the development of a single individual.

Starting from *Stephen Hero*, Joyce selected and organized those elements of Stephen's life that he saw significant to Stephen's development, and organized them in what Jeri Johnson describes as a 'pattern of rising action', with each chapter beginning with Stephen in a position of humility and ending in a state of triumph and ecstasy. [22] The two 'ephipanic modes of stark realism'[23] coexist in Stephen's development, as we can see from the beginning of the second part, which is interwoven with the end of the first part:

> Uncle Charles smoked such a black *twist* that at last his nephew suggested to him to enjoy his morning smoke in a little outhouse at the end of the garden.
> […]
> While he smoked the brim of his tall hat and the *bowl* of his pipe were just visible beyond the jambs of the outside door.
>
> (*AP* 50; my emphasis)

[20] James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [1916], ed., intro. and notes by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.49. Hereafter referred to in the main text as *AP*.
[21] James Joyce, quoted in 'Introduction', *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. xiii.
[22]Johnson, 'Introduction', *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. xv.
[23] Riquelme, 'Styles of Realism and Fantasy', p.123.

The expression 'such a back twist' is Stephen's interpretation of the reality around him, and it is significant that, together with the 'bowling lobs' and 'brimming bowl' at the end of the first part they are recalled again in the realistic image of his Uncle Charles. Riquelme illustrates extensively how in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* this pattern is repeated at the beginning and end of each part and within chapters, and how this alternation creates a narrative structure based on a 'differential style' able to capture Stephen's oscillating nature, a structure 'that emphasizes repetition rather than continuous, chronological development'.[24] Therefore, not only the words are repeated, acquiring a different meaning in a different context – mimicking thus Stephen's discovery of double meanings in single words in the course of his development as an artist- but also the oscillating pattern of the narrative is repeated, and everything without any authorial suggestion to the reader. The alternation of opposed states (the external and the visionary) has a specific effect. 'The overlap between the two scenes creates a double helix in which the experience of visionary intensity […] and the experience of a grim reality […] frame one another' [25] and therefore give us a realistic representation of Stephen's development as essentially oscillating. The opposition is indispensable, and on this point we can see a similarity with *Dubliners* where the contrast is necessary in order to stimulate the epiphanic moment of revelation. In the light of extremes states of mind, styles and repetition of words, Joyce's realism is both 'duplicitous […]vividly realistic […] and symbolically resonant […]'.[26] The external and the visionary realities acquire meaning only when they converge, because it is by means of this merging that Stephen's development can take place. As Riquelme highlights, this fusion of 'fantasy and realism […] in a form of play that is the attempt to produce something new'[27] is also the one necessary to Stephen's development as an artist, as the composition of the villanelle shows. Joyce therefore went well beyond a novel describing 'essentially [his] own break with the Catholic Church and discovery of his true vocation',[28] and to see it in this light means to frame Joyce's work within borders he rejected all his life.

The title *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* seems to imply that the young man has become an artist at some point, but it does not assure us that the development is ended. As Michael Levenson highlights,

[24] Riquelme, 'Styles of Realism and Fantasy', pp. 116-117.
[25] Riquelme, 'Styles of Realism and Fantasy', p 119.
[26] Johnson, 'Introduction', *A Portrait A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, p. xxiv.
[27] Riquelme, 'Styles of Realism and Fantasy', p.121.
[28] J.I.M Stuart, '*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*', in *Twentieth Century Interpretation of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 15-20 (p.15).

on April 16 Stephen is ready to go, but on April 27 he is still there. [29] In this light, Michael Levenson's reading of the last entries of Stephen's diary as showing an impossibility of closure deserves more attention than apparently has been given to it so far by critics. If on the one hand the shift to the first person gives the illusion of a true representation, of Stephen's own authorial force as distinct from James Joyce's the arranger, on the other hand this same document raise new questions, and it is also the own nature of the journal that rejects closure. The reader, as in *Dubliners*, assumes a closure that is not written in the text. The only way to attest if Stephen has left the country is to read *Ulysses* where, in accordance with the pattern of contrasting forces and raising action, we find him having returned to Dublin, 'displeased and sleeply'.[30]

In both *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, reality is not one, is neither coherent nor continuous, and is made of a play between internal and external forces interrupting each other. Joyce's realism makes us see a perpetually conflicting dialogue, and that it is by means of interruptions and clashes that a new nation and a new artist can raise. A discourse made of interruptions and clashes, as the one at work in Joyce's fictions, forces the reader to drop strict interpretations born by an ancestral necessity of unity and to put under question those assumptions that were meant to fill the gaps. In Joyce's fiction there is always a space, a 'gap between the utterance […] and the proposition [where] the reader's own discourses are left to circulates'.[31] Joyce's realism is constantly delayed: by the power of his written word we see a representation of life that demands us to turn the pages back and forth, continuously.

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[29] Michael Levenson, 'Stephen's Diary in Joyce's *Portrait*: The Shape of Life', in *James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: *A Casebook*, ed. by Mark, A., Wollager, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 183-20 (186).
[30] James Joyce, *Ulysses: The 1922 Text* [1922], ed., intro. and notes by Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p.3.
[31] Colin MacCabe, *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.34.

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