

‘A Great Poet on a Great Brother Poet’: A Parallax Reading of Goethe and James Joyce

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The essay provides a contrapuntal ‘parallax’ reading of Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s ‘Bildungsroman’ *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* — with its extensions *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung* and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* — and James Joyce’s high modernist *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and *Ulysses* (1922). Derived from astronomy, the term parallax designates, transferred to literary history, a narrative stratagem, a metapoetical rationale, and an interpretive method. Joyce employs it as a key concept and narrative tool in *Ulysses* to denote a stereoscopic perspective applied to the protagonists’ actions and the world they live in. Leopold Bloom thus reflects on it and the technique of *Ulysses* is determined by it. On a higher plane, literary critics, too, engage in literary historical parallax whenever they read texts intertextually — as exemplified in this essay. A parallax reading of the novels’ protagonists Wilhelm Meister and Stephen Dedalus, as regards not just their identification with Shakespeare’s Hamlet but also the symbolic connotations embedded in their names and mythological pretexts, allows us to shed new light on the roles and significance of narrative irony, chance, and paternity in these novels.

KEYWORDS Goethe, Johann Wolfgang (1749–1832), *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, James Joyce (1882–1941), James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, parallax, irony, Icarus motif in literature, paternity

Note: Sections 1, 2, 4, and 5 of this essay were presented as an invited lecture at the English Goethe Society in London on 3 December 2009 (section 3 was omitted due to time limitations). Lectures of this kind are, of course, both an invitation and opportunity for dialogue. In the Q & A session following the lecture a number of issues were raised that — following the editor Susanne Kord’s request — I have incorporated in these footnotes rather than, as is normally customary, in the body of the text. I agreed to this solution not least because I felt that readers might be interested in seeing the real-time dialogue evolve, rather than finding all trace of it covered up. Thus the text of this essay is the talk as originally given (apart from the omitted section 3 and my changing ‘talk’ to ‘essay’ throughout); whereas footnotes 40, 41, 46, and 49 are the result of the dialogue that ensued.

*In memoriam Jörg Drews,
the most Goethean of all Joyceans
the most Joycean of all Goetheans*

Verschiedene Sprüche der Alten [. . .] hatten eine ganz andere
Bedeutung, als man ihnen in späteren Zeiten geben möchte.

Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*¹

At the risk of offending some by using such rather pretentious terms as 'greatest' and 'canonical', ruthlessly pilloried in literary studies over the past decades, this essay is about two authors I unapologetically consider the 'greatest' of their respective literary traditions and among the most canonical of Western literature, Johann Wolfgang Goethe and James Joyce. In quantitative terms, both Goethe and Joyce are literary Olympians, as the MLA Bibliography will confirm. Entering Goethe as a keyword into its online search function on 20 May 2009 yielded a bounteous 10,564 publications. Most other suspects to canonical fame came up with barely half that number, even if Milton, the sole exception, came close at 9,022. The next contenders, lagging far behind, were Franz Kafka with 4192, Bertolt Brecht with 4138, Thomas Mann with 4080, and Proust with 4061. At 3237 Schiller, Goethe's Weimarian double partner, managed only a third of the No. 1 seed, as did Flaubert with 3076. Joyce aficionados will be glad to hear that, at 9449 entries, the Irish writer came in only slightly behind his German counterpart. Neither Goethe nor Joyce, however, can hold their own against the obvious frontrunner, William Shakespeare, who came in Zeus-like with a sheer life-exhausting 37,808 entries.² But even 10,000 publications, give or take a little, are quantities that are no longer manageable by individual scholars. And if we can no longer expect to master all the secondary sources available to us, with 'Weltliteratur' expanding at an ever increasing rate, neither can we expect to read all the 'great works' of World Literature in one lifetime.

Thus, just as many Joyceans will not have read *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and fewer still Goethe's *Wanderjahre*, not all Goetheans will be familiar with Joyce's *Ulysses*, and fewer still with *Finnegans Wake*. For this reason I should relate from where my title quotation originates. The sixth wandering of our Irish Odysseus, Leopold Bloom, will locate him in the National Library of Ireland in the early afternoon of 16 June 1904 — also known as 'Bloomsday'; it is the ninth episode of *Ulysses*, the so-called 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode, at the opening of which Stephen Dedalus, the aspiring young poet and symbolic Telemachus, is engaged in conversation in the office of the library's director:

¹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, ed. by Gerhard Neumann and Hans-Georg Dewitz, Frankfurt, 1989 (= Frankfurter Ausgabe, I. Abt., vol. x; forthwith abbreviated as FA followed by *Abteilung*, volume and page number), p. 752 ('Aus Makariens Archiv', No. 37).

² Granted, one should be cautious with and sceptical about this kind of number game; but, if nothing more, these kinds of MLA statistics and resulting rankings do at least tell us something about the relative positioning of this group of authors, if only the English language ones among them since the MLA may be listing fewer bibliographical sources in German and French than in English. Regardless of its statistical imponderables, this league table confirms that, in discussing Goethe and Joyce, we are dealing with two literary heavyweights.

Urbane, to comfort them, the quaker librarian purred:

— And we have, have we not, those priceless pages of *Wilhelm Meister*. A great poet on a great brother poet. A hesitating soul taking arms against a sea of troubles, torn by conflicting doubts, as one sees in real life.

He came a step a sinkapace forward on neatsleather creaking and a step backward a sinkapace on the solemn floor.

A noiseless attendant setting open the door but slightly made him a noiseless beck.

— Directly, said he, creaking to go, albeit lingering. The beautiful ineffectual dreamer who comes to grief against hard facts. One always feels that Goethe's judgments are so true. True in the larger analysis.³

The words 'a great poet on a great brother poet' are spoken not by Stephen Dedalus, but rather by the quaker librarian Thomas William Lyster, who was librarian of the National Library from 1895 to 1920. The passage in *Wilhelm Meister* that he is alluding to can be traced back to Book IV, Chapter 13. I will give here a section of the relevant passage in Thomas Carlyle's translation, which is in all likelihood the version Joyce would have known: 'To me it is clear that Shakespeare meant in *Hamlet* to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. [...] A lovely, pure, noble, and most moral nature, without the strength of nerve which forms a hero, sinks beneath a burden which it cannot bear and must not cast away'.⁴ We know, of course, that, ironically, the passage cited here from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, especially the words — in German this time — 'eine große Tat auf eine Seele gelegt, die der Tat nicht gewachsen ist' and '[e]in schönes, reines, edles, höchst moralisches Wesen, ohne die sinnliche Stärke, die den Helden macht, geht unter einer Last zu Grunde, die es weder tragen noch abwerfen kann; jede Pflicht ist ihm heilig, diese zu schwer' (FA, I, IX, 609), is as much a description of Hamlet's quandary as Wilhelm's own. Wilhelm too is finding it difficult to find his true vocation, to decide between stage-acting and the theatre on the one hand and a 'useful occupation', 'eine zweckmäßige Tätigkeit' (FA, I, IX, 884), or 'tätiges Leben' on the other. As we know, he will, at long last, decide in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* to become a 'Wundarzt', the signals for which are set already in the later books of the *Lehrjahre* with the repeated appearance of two doctors, father and son, and their 'merkwürdige Instrumententasche' (FA, I, IX, 926). Coincidentally, Stephen, too, is at various points in *Ulysses* shown hanging out with students of medicine. His trajectory will be the opposite of Wilhelm's, however: faced with a similar alternative — priesthood or the pursuit of art — at the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* we see Stephen turning to art, as did his historical creator James Joyce.

Like *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, *Ulysses* is a book of many ironic twists and turns. A first irony here is that Lyster's words, chosen from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, with Wilhelm describing Hamlet while his words apply equally to himself, pertain

³ James Joyce, *Ulysses. The Corrected Text*, ed. by Hans Walter Gabler, New York, 1986, Chapter 9, ll. 1–11 (forthwith cited as U followed by chapter and line number).

⁴ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister*, transl. Thomas Carlyle, Boston, 1876, vol. 1, p. 232, quoted here from Don Gifford, with Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated. Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses*, Berkeley, 1989, p. 193.

equally to Stephen, who too is, in the 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode, holding forth on Hamlet, with his words too applying equally to himself. A second irony is that the passage 'a hesitating soul taking arms against a sea of troubles, torn by conflicting doubts, as one sees in real life', applies not just to Hamlet, Wilhelm and Stephen, but also to Leopold Bloom, our symbolic Odysseus adrift in his 'sea of troubles', the real hero of the book, if ever *Ulysses* has one. 'A hesitating soul taking arms against a sea of troubles', or maybe not taking arms, Bloom is torn by conflicting emotions as to how to respond to his wife's planned afternoon tryst with the impresario Blazes Boylan: whether he should return home to keep the lovers from coming together, if not to eliminate the suitor in direct battle, or whether to continue to roam the streets of Dublin for the remainder of the day — which is, of course, this contemporary Odysseus's preferred course of action, or rather, non-action. Coincidence wills it that, in chapter eleven, the 'Sirens' episode of *Ulysses*, just moments before the clock strikes four when Boylan is to meet Molly, Bloom must encounter his rival on his way to the rendezvous, stopping off in his outsider at the Ormond Hotel bar for a drink. Observing him, Bloom reflects, thinking of the penny novel *Sweets of Sin* that he had paged through and bought for his wife in the previous episode, a novel brimful with 'opulent curves' (U10.612), 'heaving embonpoint' (U10.616) and the 'wondrous gowns and costliest frillies' (U10.609) that the female protagonist wears for her lover Raoul:

For some man. For Raoul. He eyed and saw afar on Essex bridge a gay hat riding on a jaunting car. It is. Again. Third time. Coincidence.

Jingling on supple rubbers it jaunted from the bridge to Ormond quay. Follow. Risk it. Go quick. At four. Near now. Out. . . .

— Twopence, sir, the shopgirl dared to say.

— Aha . . . I was forgetting . . . Excuse . . .

— And four.

At four she. [. . .] Think you're the only pebble on the beach? Does that to all. For men.
(U11.301–11)

Ironically, in his role as Odysseus Bloom has no choice but to stay away from home — we are in the 'Sirens' chapter after all, and nowhere near his *nostos*, his homecoming; hence, for the remainder of this episode he must listen spellbound to the Sirens' 'oceansong' (U11.378), sung — another ironic twist so typical of Joyce — not by the two sexy mermaids Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy, but by Dublin men, the tenors Ben Dollard and Simon Dedalus, Stephen's father. As Goethe's narrator comments pithily, befitting of both Wilhelm as well as Hamlet and Stephen, but in the 'Sirens' episode also of Leopold Bloom: 'Es sind nur wenige, die den Sinn haben und zugleich zur Tat fähig sind' (FA, I, IX, 930). Indeed, 'Goethe's judgments are so true', as Lyster observed.

* * *

What do we know about Joyce's relationship with Goethe, the 'Gouty' of *Finnegans Wake*, where alongside Dante and Shakespeare he forms the prime poetical Trinity: 'I should tell you that honestly, on my honour of a Nearwicked, I always think in a wordworth's of that primed favourite continental poet, Daunty, Gouty and Shopkeeper, A. G., whom the generality admoyers in this that is and that this is to

come'?'⁵ The 'admiring generality' here may actually have some foundation in Joyce's biography in that it could refer, mockingly as so often with Joyce, to Joyce's own younger brother Stanislaus, who in his *Dublin Diary* — frequently read by James and used as a quarry for his works — discusses *Faust*, *Wilhelm Meister*, and *Werther* and elevates Goethe virtually to a new Messiah:

I admire Goethe and I flatter myself that I have a good understanding of his character though I have read very little of what he has written. There are many things in him which lead me to expect that his attitude towards life will supplant in the future that one which Jesus took and the western world has imitated for so many centuries. If he fails to master our world as Jesus and his school did, it will be, I think, because he failed to master himself as they did. His life was chaotic and without order like his work (his lyrics excepted), like his *Faust* and his *Wilhelm Meister* [...].⁶

James Joyce's many references to Goethe's *Faust* in letters and conversations and the numerous allusions to Goethe in his works, from *Stephen Hero* to *Finnegans Wake*, make it abundantly clear that, like his brother, he too had studied some of Goethe's major works, most likely during his college years, although I have found it impossible to verify precisely which texts and editions he consulted. His later Trieste library, representing what was in Joyce's possession in 1920 when he left that city to return to Paris, contains merely one edition of works by Goethe, a 1911 edition of his *Novels and Tales*, translated by J.A. Froude and R.D. Boylan, which comprises only Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, *The Sorrows of Werther*, and *German Emigrants*, but neither of the *Meister* novels. While the young Joyce owned few books — the family was simply too poor for major book purchases — he was always an avid user of public libraries, in particular Dublin's National Library, where we find Stephen in the 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode, and, during his sojourn in Paris 1902–1903, the Bibliothèque Nationale and Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, where we know he read Aristotle's poetics, and from where, in a letter to Lady Gregory, Joyce quotes the opening lines of Goethe's poem 'Der König von Thule'.⁷ But still there is no indication when and where he first perused Goethe, or which of his works he had read. Lyster's remarks in *Ulysses* would seem to signal that Joyce had read *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, but for all we know he may have only looked at those portions of the novel relating to 'Hamlet', in particular Book IV, Chapter 13 — maybe as part of the preparatory reading he did when conceptualizing and writing the library episode of *Ulysses* in late 1918 and early 1919. *Ulysses* contains numerous allusions to and quotes from Goethe's *Faust*, in particular the *Walpurgisnacht* section in the phantasmagorical 'Circe' episode of *Ulysses*. In conversation with Stanislaus, Joyce even referred to *Ulysses* as an Irish *Faust*, as Joyce's biographer Richard Ellmann relates.⁸ Ellmann also repeatedly casts Stephen's counterpart Buck Mulligan not just in the role of the usurper of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but also in the role of the 'denying spirit' Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*.⁹ Ellmann goes on to recount how Joyce wrote to his

⁵ James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, London, 1939, p. 539, ll. 04–08 (quoted forthwith as FW followed by page and line number).

⁶ *The Dublin Diary of Stanislaus Joyce*, ed. by George Harris Healey, London, 1962, p. 89.

⁷ *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. by Richard Ellmann, London, 1975, p. 11.

⁸ Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, second revised edition, Oxford, 1982, p. 265.

⁹ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 265; and Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, London, 1974, in particular pp. 11 and 164.

friend Frank Budgen ‘that Molly’s soliloquy might be epitomized, »*Ich bin das Fleisch das stets bejaht*«. ‘Since Molly occupies the end of the book’, Ellmann continues, ‘it would follow that someone at the start must say, with Goethe’s Mephistopheles, »*Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint*.« This role was clearly apposite for Mulligan, even if he does not declare himself openly’.¹⁰ But we also know from Joyce’s conversations with Budgen in 1918, at a time when the chapters of *Ulysses* had just begun to appear in the *Little Review*, that Joyce had possibly considered but discarded the figure of Faust as the symbolic ‘complete all-round character’ that he needed as both exceptional and ordinary everyman for his novel. Budgen reports:

Joyce spoke again more briskly: » You seem to have read a lot, Mr Budgen. Do you know of any complete all-round character presented by any writer?« With quick interest I summoned up a whole population of invented persons. Of the fiction writers Balzac, perhaps, might supply him? No. Flaubert? No. Dostoevsky or Tolstoy then? Their people are exciting, wonderful, but not complete. Shakespeare surely. But no again. [. . .] I came to rest on Goethe. »What about Faust?« I said. And then, as a second shot »Or Hamlet?« »Faust!« said Joyce. »Far from being a complete man, he isn’t a man at all. Is he an old man or a young man? Where are his home and family? We don’t know. And he can’t be complete because he’s never alone. Mephistopheles is always hanging round him at his side or heels. We see a lot of him, that’s all.« It was easy to see the answer in Joyce’s mind to his own question. »Your complete man in literature is, I suppose, Ulysses?« »Yes,« said Joyce. »No-age Faust isn’t a man. But you mentioned Hamlet. Hamlet is a human being, but he is a son only. Ulysses is son to Laertes, but he is father to Telemachus, husband to Penelope, lover of Calypso, companion in arms of the Greek warriors around Troy and King of Ithaca. He was subjected to many trials, but with wisdom and courage came through them all.«¹¹

If we can trust Budgen’s memory, we can be certain that *Faust* was a text Joyce knew fairly well, even if Ellmann misquotes Joyce’s letter of 16 August 1921 where he actually writes of Molly Bloom that she represents a ‘perfectly sane full amoral fertilizable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent *Weib*’, to which Budgen adds the misspelt adaptation of the Goethe quote: ‘*Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht*’.¹² Indeed, and despite occasional mistakes in his German, if Joyce read Goethe after 1900 we cannot exclude the possibility that he read his works, or parts of them, in the original since Joyce had learnt some German in 1900 in order to read, and even translate, Gerhart Hauptmann, one of whose dramas still exists in Joyce’s draft translation. From 1904 onwards Joyce lived on and off in Zurich, a German-speaking city, and later in Trieste and Pola, which then, still under Austro-Hungarian rule, had significant German-speaking minorities and *Verwaltungsapparate*. In Zurich around 1915, a friend, Ottocaro Weiss, tried to introduce Joyce to the works of Gottfried

¹⁰ Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, p. 8.

¹¹ Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and The Making of ‘Ulysses’*, London, 1972, pp. 15–16. Interestingly, the same can be said of Wilhelm Meister, not mentioned here by Budgen; I ‘transfer’ thus: ‘Wilhelm is son to his father, but he is father to Felix, husband to Natalie, lover of Mariane and Philine, companion in arms of Serlo’s theatre group and member of the Turm society. He was subjected to many trials, but with wisdom and courage came through them all’. Of note here is also Goethe’s observation, in Eckermann’s *Gespräche mit Goethe*, on Byron’s depiction of women: ‘Seine Frauen [. . .] sind gut. Es ist aber auch das einzige Gefäß, was uns Neueren noch geblieben ist, um unsere Idealität hineinzugießen. Mit den Männern ist nichts zu tun. Im Achill und Odysseus, dem Tapfersten und Klügsten, hat der Homer alles vorweggenommen’ (FA, II, xii, 250).

¹² Echoing of course Mephistopheles’s words ‘*Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint!*’ (*Faust* I.1338).

Keller — unsuccessfully; Ellmann comments: ‘For the moment [...] literature in German did not attract him, and he scoffed even at Goethe as “*un noioso funzionario*” (a boring civil servant).¹³ Yet later in life, in 1928, with *Ulysses* behind him and *Finnegans Wake* in the making, Goethe was important enough for Joyce to take the time to visit Goethe’s Frankfurt birthplace.¹⁴ Later still, in the years leading up to his death, around 1940, he read *Goethe’s Conversations with Eckermann*.¹⁵

The earliest references to Goethe that I have been able to trace stem from Joyce’s early essays and notebooks and his draft of *Stephen Hero*, which — as Goethe was to rewrite his draft of *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung* into the mature *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* — was later rewritten and transformed into the novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In his 1902 essay on the Irish writer James Clarence Mangan, Joyce observes: ‘The philosophic mind inclines always to an elaborate life — the life of Goethe or of Leonardo da Vinci; but the life of the poet is intense — the life of Blake or of Dante — taking into its centre the life that surrounds it and flinging it abroad again amid planetary music’.¹⁶ If this sounds as if Joyce did not consider Goethe a poet, or more of a philosopher than a poet, one of the epiphanies collected in his epiphany notebook between 1900 and 1903 seems to suggest quite the opposite. This epiphany is a short while later transformed and integrated into section XVI of *Stephen Hero*, written around early 1904, in which we find Stephen Daedalus visiting the Daniel family in Donnybrook and observing the daughters and their friends engaged in games:

[Stephen] could see seriousness developing on the shrewd features of a young man who had to put a certain question to one of the daughters:

— I suppose it’s my turn now . . . Well . . . let me see . . . (and here he became as serious as a young man, who has been laughing very much for a full five minutes, can become) . . . Who is your favourite poet, Annie?

Annie thought for a few moments: there was a pause. Annie and the young man were ‘doing’ the same course.

— . . . German?

— . . . Yes.

Annie thought for another few moments while the table waited to be edified.

— I think . . . Goethe.¹⁷

¹³ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 394.

¹⁴ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 581.

¹⁵ Ellmann, *James Joyce*, p. 731.

¹⁶ James Joyce, *Critical Writings*, ed. by Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, Ithaca, 1989, pp. 73–83 (p. 82).

¹⁷ James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. by Theodore Spencer, Frogmore, 1977, p. 44. In Joyce’s earlier epiphanies this reads:

O’Reilly — (*with developing seriousness*) Now it’s my turn, I suppose (*quite seriously*)

Who is your favourite poet?

(*a pause*)

Hanna Sheehy — German?

O’Reilly — Yes.

(*a hush*)

Hanna Sheehy — . . I think Goethe

(*Workshop of Daedalus. James Joyce and the Raw Materials for »A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man«*, ed. by Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain, Evanston, 1965, p. 22)

Obviously, this hardly signals that Joyce agrees with Annie, who is simply rehearsing the stock response that she thinks is expected of her: a great poet cannot but be German, and the greatest of them all cannot but be Goethe, hence her answer. What Robert Scholes and Richard Kain have called 'the ridiculous safeness of the choice'¹⁸ is yet another instance of Joycean irony at work. A further mention of Goethe in *Stephen Hero* relates to the scene, a short while earlier, where we read that Stephen had started occupying himself with Ibsen, who is described thus in Joyce's rather exalted early style, although one again steeped in irony:

It must be said simply and at once that at this time Stephen suffered the most enduring influence of his life. [...] the minds of the old Norse poet and of the perturbed young Celt met in a moment of radiant simultaneity. Stephen was captivated first by the evident excellence of the art: he was not long before he began to affirm, out of a sufficiently scanty knowledge of the tract, of course, that Ibsen was the first among the dramatists of the world. [...] one could scarcely advance the dignity of the human attitude a step beyond this answer. Here and not in Shakespeare or Goethe was the successor to the first poet of the Europeans.¹⁹

This of course refers to Dante, who is mentioned in the following line.

One of the perennial questions surrounding Stephen as a figure in *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and even in *Ulysses* is the degree to which he mirrors Joyce, serving as an autobiographical mirror image, and the degree to which Joyce has applied irony in the representation of this oftentimes rather immature and perhaps merely aspiring young artist. It is all about the degree of *Dichtung* and *Wahrheit* in Joyce's work. What Hellmut Ammerlahn has said about Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* applies equally to Joyce: 'Im Blickfeld der Literaturwissenschaft und -kritik [...] muß *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* deshalb als *Künstlerroman*, als "Bildungsroman des denkenden imaginativen Dichters", ja letztendlich als "innere Biographie" seines Autors verstanden werden. Goethe schrieb diesem Werk — allerdings in ironischer Maskierung — den geheimnisvoll-offenbaren poetologischen Metatext über die eigene Entwicklung und die seiner Imagination ein [...].'²⁰ Much the same has been said about the relationship between Joyce and Stephen. Not merely because of the Library episode of *Ulysses*, in which Stephen so famously holds forth about Shakespeare's Hamlet, as Wilhelm Meister does in Goethe's novel, are these two works and their young and artistically inclined male protagonists so intimately related, but also because of their progressional homology. Joyce discarded and rewrote a first draft of the novel, *Stephen Hero*, shaping it into a much more elaborately textured and richly symbolic final product, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which in turn extends into the author's literary *tour de force* of modernist experimentalism, *Ulysses*, mirroring in manifold ways the trajectory of the Wilhelm Meister project from the youthful *Theatralische Sendung* via the mature *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* to the experimental and enigmatic *Wilhelm Meisters*

¹⁸ *Workshop of Daedalus*, p. 22 note.

¹⁹ *Stephen Hero*, pp. 41–42.

²⁰ Hellmut Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit. Goethes Künstler-Bildungsroman Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Struktur, Symbolik, Poetologie*, Würzburg, 2003, p. 38.

Wanderjahre.²¹ Of course, one could also devise an alternative homology, one in which *A Portrait of the Artist* parallels the *Theatralische Sendung*, *Ulysses Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and *Finnegans Wake Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, the latter standing for two of the most enigmatic *Alterswerke* of European literature.²²

What further underscores the significance of these homologies is the symbolic significance that both authors attached to the names they gave their heroes. At first glance Wilhelm Meister's name does not stand out in any particular way, with both Wilhelm and Meister being not uncommon in German; however, their particular significance soon emerges from the storyline: Wilhelm is the German form of William, Shakespeare's Christian name, and it is Shakespeare who becomes Wilhelm's symbolic father figure — and indeed Goethe's, as we know from his writings on Shakespeare. In his early Storm-and-Stress essay 'Zum Shakespeares Tag' of 1771 Goethe, at age twenty-two, calls him 'Shakespear, mein Freund' (FA, I, XVIII, 11); many years later, in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the mature Goethe elevates him to 'unser Vater und Lehrer Shakespeare' (FA, I, XIV, 633). Meister calls up the suggestion of mastery, both in generic terms as well as in the more specific senses of craftsmanship ('Handwerksmeister') and artistry ('klassische Meister', 'alte Meister'), this of course being both ironical and in earnest, for is it not in Wilhelm's progress towards mastery that we witness all the pitfalls and mistakes he has to suffer through to achieve it, if ever he does achieve it in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*? In possibly the last use of the term 'Meister' in Goethe's *Lehrjahre*, it is the Italian Markese who remarks:

jeder, der nur irgend etwas treibt, will Künstler, Meister und Professor heißen, und bekennt wenigstens durch diese Titelsucht, daß es nicht genug sei nur etwas durch Überlieferung zu erhaschen, oder durch Übung irgend eine Gewandtheit zu erlangen; er gesteht, daß jeder vielmehr über das, was er tut, auch fähig sein solle zu denken, Grundsätze aufzustellen, und die Ursachen, warum dieses oder jenes zu tun sei, sich selbst und andern deutlich zu machen (FA, I, IX, 952–53)

— a skill that Wilhelm, by the end of the novel, has barely yet mastered.

Likewise Stephen Daedalus, still with the classical »æ«-spelling in *Stephen Hero* — another speaking name like 'Meister' — and later transformed into Dedalus, with a simple »e«, in *A Portrait*: Who on earth, or rather who in Ireland, has ever heard of such a name for a thoroughbred poverty-stricken Catholic Irish family? Dedalus! The obvious allusion contained in this outlandish and eccentric surname is to the legendary Daedalus of classical Greek mythology who constructed the labyrinth in which King Minos housed the minotaur, 'ein Gebäude mit vielen Irrgängen', as an 1860 encyclopaedia of classical mythology informs us.²³ Daedalus is the 'archetypical

²¹ This is also noted by John Hennig in his article 'Stephen Hero and Wilhelm Meister — A Study of Parallels', *German Life and Letters*, 5.1, New Series (October 1951), 22–29: 'There is a strict parallelism between *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* on the one hand, and *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, the *Lehrjahre* and *Wanderjahre* on the other hand' (p. 23). Hennig goes on to note many of the superficial parallels between Goethe's and Joyce's texts, some of which I will also discuss, but fails, unlike Gillespie cited below, to probe more deeply into the interpretative ramifications of these parallels.

²² Compare also Ehrhard Bahr, 'Goethe's *Wanderjahre* as an Experimental Novel', *Mosaic*, 5.3 (1971/72), 61–71, and his book *Die Ironie im Spätwerk Goethes: 'diese sehr ernststen Scherze': Studien zum West-östlichen Divan, zu den Wanderjahren und zu Faust II*, Berlin, 1972, pp. 88–130.

²³ *Reallexikon des classischen Alterthums für Gymnasien*, ed. by Friedrich Lübker, Leipzig, 1860, p. 226.

personification of the inventor-sculptor-architect' figure²⁴ and the fabled artificer of his own wings, devised in order to flee from the labyrinth from which King Minos would not let him escape after Daedalus had given Ariadne the thread with which Theseus was able to escape from the labyrinth. The name Stephen, too, resonates with added meaning. It relates back to the first Christian martyr who was stoned to death outside the walls of Jerusalem around AD 34; a Jew educated in Greek — not unlike Bloom in this respect, who is a Jew who knows a smattering of Greek and plays the role of a Greek hero; Stephen's namesake was the dominant figure in Christianity before the conversion of Paul.²⁵ Joyce's character Stephen resembles the Christian martyr in that he, too, feels persecuted by his peers and, like Daedalus, is attempting to use artifice to escape the institutions of his imprisonment, the Catholic church, his family, and Irish nationalism — whether he will succeed, or whether he, like Icarus, is destined to founder, remains unresolved by the end of either of Joyce's Stephen-novels, *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*.

* * *

Why remind you of all this detail in an essay devoted to Goethe and Joyce? In part because the direction I wish to take is the mutual illumination one can achieve by counter-reading, intertextually, if you will, the figures of Stephen and Wilhelm and the novels in which they appear. However, on one level this has already been done — this reflecting the sad predicament of the scholarly latecomer like myself to a field already so saturated with precursors. In an article published in 1992, Gerald Gillespie exposed the 'process of literary parasitism' underlying Joyce's treatment of the 'Hamletic condition of the Western mind' in the 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode, seeing Stephen replicating Wilhelm's mission 'to raise the dismal level of German cultural life by founding a national theater' by his own attempt 'to forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race'.²⁶ Via a discussion of 'the theme of reconciliation' (293) and the role and relevance of 'the Ghost' for both novels (298), amongst other things, Gillespie observes how 'Goethe's Wilhelm decides to abandon art permanently for a more suitable profession. He becomes a useful bourgeois. It is as if he foreshadows the crossing over from being a Stephen to being a Bloom' (293), and concludes that 'the important modernist departure is that Joyce, by such means as Stephen's theorizing, more insistently potentiates the Oedipal theme of "incest" into that of "palimpsest"' (292).

Instead of trying palimpsestically to extend Gillespie's already exhaustive coverage of the Hamlet correspondence, I want to turn my attention here to two aspects of this palimpsestuality that have remained underexposed in the various essays by John Hennig, Brian Shaffer, David Barry and Gerald Gillespie, some more substantive than

²⁴ *Joyce Annotated. Notes for Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, second revised and enlarged edition, ed. by Don Gifford, Berkeley, 1982, p. 131.

²⁵ *Joyce Annotated*, p. 135.

²⁶ Gerald Gillespie, 'Afterthoughts of Hamlet: Goethe's Wilhelm, Joyce's Stephen', in *Comparative Literary History as Discourse. Essays in Honor of Anna Balakian*, ed. by Mario J. Valdés, Daniel Javitch and A. Owen Aldridge, Bern, 1992, pp. 285–304. The quote by Joyce, adapted from Gillespie, is taken from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Text, Criticism, and Notes*, ed. by Chester G. Anderson, New York, 1968, p. 253.

others, published to date on the Goethe/Joyce relationship.²⁷ These are the roles attributed to coincidence and paternity within the symbolic frameworks and mythological substrata of the two groupings of novels, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* with its roots in the *Theatralische Sendung* and extension into the *Wanderjahre* on the one hand, and Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses* on the other. I will start by returning to the theme of coincidence which I first intoned when I discussed Bloom's response to seeing Blazes Boylan on this fateful day, 16 June 1904. Indeed, it is through the very opposition of fate and chance, *Schicksal* and *Zufall*, that Goethe incorporates this concept into the plot of the *Lehrjahre*.

Upon entering, or rather being pushed by Jarno into, the *Turmsaal* in Book VII, Chapter 9, and hearing and seeing the first of the *Turm* members, Wilhelm ponders: 'Sonderbar! sagte er bei sich selbst, sollten zufällige Ereignisse einen Zusammenhang haben? Und das, was wir Schicksal nennen, sollte es bloß Zufall sein?' (FA, I, IX, 872). It was, not coincidentally, this first member of the *Turmgesellschaft* whom Wilhelm had encountered in Book I, where he is cautioned: 'Leider höre ich schon wieder das Wort Schicksal von einem jungen Manne aussprechen, der sich eben in einem Alter befindet, wo man gewöhnlich seinen lebhaften Neigungen den Willen höherer Wesen unterzuschieben pflegt' (FA, I, IX, 423). Wilhelm responds surprised: 'So glauben Sie kein Schicksal? Keine Macht, die über uns waltet, und alles zu unserm Besten lenkt?' The stranger replies:

Das Gewebe dieser Welt ist aus Notwendigkeit und Zufall gebildet, die Vernunft des Menschen stellt sich zwischen beide, und weiß sie zu beherrschen, sie behandelt das Notwendige als den Grund ihres Daseins, das Zufällige weiß sie zu lenken, zu leiten und zu nutzen, und nur, indem sie fest und unerschütterlich steht, verdient der Mensch ein Gott der Erde genannt zu werden. Wehe dem, der sich von Jugend auf gewöhnt, in dem Notwendigen etwas Willkürliches finden zu wollen, der dem Zufälligen eine Art von Vernunft zuschreiben möchte [...] (FA, I, IX, 423–24)

This is a crucial lesson for Wilhelm, but one he, in his youthful immaturity and naivety, does not yet fully comprehend. Indeed, it is one that, even by the time he enters the *Turmgesellschaft*, he still does not fully understand.

Let us look at some of the major occurrences of chance and coincidence in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: for example, was it not mere chance that it was Wilhelm's travelling party rather than Natalie and her escort who were attacked on the road in Book IV, providing the first opportunity for Wilhelm to meet the 'schöne Amazone' Natalie? This was certainly not prearranged or coordinated by any of the *Turmmitglieder*, and yet comes, as Hellmut Ammerlahn has shown, precisely at the mid-point of the novel, in the forty-ninth chapter, with a further forty-nine chapters to follow.²⁸

²⁷ Brian Shaffer, 'Kindred by Choice. Joyce's *Exiles* and Goethe's *Elective Affinities*', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 26.2 (1989), 199–212; David Barry, 'Peninsular Art: A Context for a Comparative Study of Goethe and Joyce', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 29.4 (1992), 380–96; for Hennig and Gillespie, see notes 26 and 21 above; other more generally comparative studies include Henry Hatfield, 'The Walpurgis Night: Themes and Variations', *Journal of European Studies*, 13.1–2 (March–June 1983), 56–74, which compares Goethe's *Faust* and Joyce's 'Circe'-Episode in *Ulysses*; and Maurice Beebe, *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce*, New York, 1964.

²⁸ Ammerlahn, *Imagination und Wahrheit*, p. 42.

And is it not a coincidence that Aurelie's lover should be Lothario, the very paragon of a 'tätiges Leben' as it emerges in Books VII and VIII, even if his vexed relationship with Aurelie might not have set the perfect example? Is it not a coincidence that Philine's youthful lover must be Friedrich, who will turn out to be none other than the brother of Natalie, Lothario, and the Countess? Also, is it not chance that it is Wilhelm who disguises himself as the Count, only to find out later that the Countess is Natalie's sister? And, maybe most importantly, is it not coincidence that Wilhelm happens upon Mignon, around whom so much narrative energy circulates in this novel, and who turns out to be none other than the niece of the Italian Markese who just happens to visit Lothario's castle in Book VIII shortly after Mignon's death?

Before we speculate on the relevance of coincidence here, let us take a quick look at some occurrences of the term in Joyce's *Ulysses* where Bloom, in the 'Sirens' episode, considers it a coincidence that he seems continually to encounter Blazes Boylan on the very day that Boylan is to rendezvous with Molly. It is an ironic coincidence, too, that at the very moment in the 'Sirens' episode when he hears the song 'Come Thou Lost One' being sung from Flotow's opera *Martha*, he realizes that he was just about to write a letter to his secret pen pal Martha Clifford: '*Martha* it is. Coincidence. Just going to write. Lionel's song. Lovely name you have. Can't write. Accept my little pres. Play on her heartstrings pursestrings too. She's a. I called you naughty boy. Still the name: Martha. How strange! Today' (U11.713). Another such chance incident occurs earlier that day; in the 'Lestrygonians' episode, just moments after Bloom had been reflecting upon Charles Stewart Parnell and Home Rule, we read: 'The sun freed itself slowly and lit glints of light among the silverware opposite in Walter Sexton's window by which John Howard Parnell passed, unseeing. There he is: the brother. Image of him. Haunting face. Now that's a coincidence. Course hundreds of times you think of a person and don't meet him' (U8.499–504). But, of course, the irony is that Bloom, as he himself half-realizes, is not seeing Charles Stewart Parnell, the famous but disgraced politician, now long deceased, but merely his brother. And just a couple of lines later, seeing the poet A.E. Russell cycle by, Bloom reflects: 'And there he is too. Now that's really a coincidence: second time', only to add the portentous observation: 'Coming events cast their shadows before' (U8.525–26). My final example — skipping various further occurrences of the word — is taken from the 'Eumaeus' episode; well beyond midnight, a tired Bloom converses with a drunken Stephen, stating: 'Coincidence I just happened to be in the Kildare street museum today, shortly prior to our meeting if I can so call it, and I was just looking at those antique statues there. The splendid proportions of hips, bosom. You simply don't knock against those kind of women here. An exception here and there' (U16.890–94). The more obvious irony here of course is that one of these few exceptions is his own wife, about whom he had just spoken to Stephen, extolling her character and good looks. But the less obvious irony is that it was no mere coincidence that Bloom was ogling at Molly-Bloom-like antique goddesses in the Kildare Street National Museum; it was to avoid meeting with Blazes Boylan in their first encounter that day. The passage reads:

Mr Bloom came to Kildare street. First I must. Library.

Straw hat in sunlight. Tan shoes. Turnedup trousers. It is. It is.

His heart quopped softly. To the right. Museum. Goddesses. He swerved to the right.

Is it? Almost certain. Won't look. [...] Not see. Get on. [...]
 Quick. Cold statues: quiet there. Safe in a minute.
 No. Didn't see me. After two. Just at the gate.
 My heart!
 His eyes beating looked steadfastly at cream curves of stone. (U8.1167–80)

Ironies here abound, not least of which is the fact that rather undivine intervention leads Bloom directly to the divinities of old — albeit in mere statuesque shape. Klaus Reichert writes poignantly: 'Joyce liebte Koinzidenzen. Sie waren für ihn ein jeweils anders gewichtetes Ordnungsgefüge »der Welt«, der Alltagswelt, jenseits von Logik, Kausalität und Sinnzusammenhängen. Den ganzen *Ulysses* kann man lesen als ein dicht geknüpftes Netz von Koinzidenzen'. But he also goes on to make another, maybe even more crucial, observation:

Und doch: hinter den Koinzidenzen steht möglicherweise die »unsichtbare Hand«, die die Zufälle lenkt. Im *Ulysses* sind es die Figuren und Episoden der homerischen *Odyssee*: Es gibt keinen Gang Blooms durch das Häusermeer Dublins, keine Begegnung, keine Handlungssequenz, die nicht durch die Texte Homers und einiger seiner Ausleger vorstrukturiert [...] wären, freilich ohne daß Bloom und die anderen Figuren im Roman das wüßten. Sie alle glauben, frei zu handeln, und hängen doch an ungekannten Strippen, wiederholen etwas, das schon einmal geschah. Joyce brauchte das homerische Schema, um seinem vielfältigen Koinzidenzmaterial eine erzählerische Form zu geben. Man könnte seinen Roman deshalb auch eine »Geschichte als Sinnggebung des Sinnlosen« nennen.²⁹

Let us read that passage from the 'Lestrygonians' episode once more, this time in a slightly extended version: 'And there he is too. Now that's really a coincidence: second time. Coming events cast their shadows before. With the approval of the eminent poet, Mr Geo. Russell. [...] A. E.: what does that mean?' (U8.525–28). There are two things worth pointing out here. First, the less obvious point for those unfamiliar with Joyce's works and their literary historical context: A.E. is the pen name of the Irish writer George Russell; in Don Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated* we are told:

Russell himself tells the story of its choice and meaning: he had attempted a picture of 'the apparition in the Divine Mind of the Heavenly Man', and the title for it was mysteriously supplied by a disembodied whisper — 'Call it the birth of Aeon'. Some time later, in the National Library, his eye caught the word *aeon* in a book left open on a counter. He took this as a sign that his pen name had been chosen for him; but when he used it for the first time, the compositor misread it as *AE*, and with this final sign from the Divine Mind the revelation of the pen name was complete.³⁰

That is to say, George Russell's pen name results from what he considers fate, but what others would at best consider coincidence. And second, and maybe more obvious, are we not meant to read the phrase *with the approval of the eminent poet* and think *with the approval of Joyce*? It is this that I have been steering towards in my Odyssean meandering towards interpretation.

²⁹ 'Koinzidenzen oder die allmähliche Verfertigung eines Joyce-Lesers', in Klaus Reichert, *Welt-Alltag der Epoche. Essays zum Werk von James Joyce*, Frankfurt, 2004, pp. 7–16 (pp. 7–8).

³⁰ Don Gifford with Michael Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated*, revised and expanded edition, Berkeley, 1989, p. 173.

By design the characters are not at the mercy of 'Fate', with a capital 'F', or 'höherer Wesen' like the *Parzen*, the Three Fates, or even the hands of Gods or Goddesses, but at the mercy of the 'artist', who, in Joyce's much-quoted lines from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, remains 'like the God of the creation, [...] within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails'.³¹ We easily forget that it is neither fate nor any other supernatural entity or phenomenon that controls our *Heros*' and *Meisters*' destiny, but the hands of the artists Goethe and Joyce, who, through the means of narrative plot, leitmotifs and structural parallax, create fictitious life stories ever so rich in symbolism, irony and ambiguity. In this regard though, one must disagree with Reichert when he argues: 'Es gibt keinen Gang Blooms durch das Häusermeer Dublins, keine Begegnung, keine Handlungssequenz, die nicht durch die Texte Homers und einiger seiner Ausleger vorstrukturiert [...] wären, freilich ohne daß Bloom und die anderen Figuren im Roman das wüßten. Sie alle glauben, frei zu handeln, und hängen doch an ungekannten Strippen, wiederholen etwas, das schon einmal geschah'. The characters in *Ulysses* are not limited to repeating, or duplicating, or parroting in modern guise merely what has gone before, but revisit and retell, and, in revisiting and retelling, revive and reinvigorate what has gone before. Their life stories diverge from those of their precursors in a revisionary movement reminiscent of what Harold Bloom described as the two ratios of 'Clinamen' and 'Kenosis', a swerving away in irony from the pre-text and their proto-characters.³²

Thus, unlike Penelope, Molly has sex with her suitor Blazes Boylan, and, unlike Odysseus, Molly's husband knows about this, all the while refraining from returning home to slaughter his competitor in flagranti. Is it the Homeric determinism and dictate that keeps Bloom from going home or is it his own choice and volition? We do not know for sure, and Joyce certainly has a hand in that. And while Joyce's Odysseus and Telemachus Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus — the symbolic father and son — at last come together in the 'Oxen of the Sun', 'Circe', 'Eumaeus', and 'Ithaca' episodes, we find that they hardly know what to do with one another. As one early critic, William Schutte, noted perceptively: 'The fact that they have certain interests in common — music, religion, medicine, and so on — only underlines their inability to communicate. [...] In the end the only genuine sympathy between the two is a sympathy of the bladder — and that is universal'.³³ If Joyce turns Homer's blood relations into mere bladder relations, this is as much a commentary on the fluidity of the subject concept of modernity as it is an ironic reflection on the whole notion of epic gravitas, not to mention paternity and (literary) succession.

So whatever role we attribute to fate and chance or coincidence in *Ulysses* and *Wilhelm Meister*, the fact remains that both novels have been fashioned by their authors, that their plots and characters — fates and coincidences inclusive — have been creatively designed *with the approval of the eminent poets*. While there is something distinctly Odyssean and epic about Wilhelm's wanderings, his 'unbestimmtes

³¹ *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (see footnote 26), p. 215.

³² Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, New York, 1973, p. 119 and *passim*.

³³ William M. Schutte, *Joyce and Shakespeare. A Study in the Meaning of Ulysses*, New Haven, 1957, p. 15.

Schlendern' (FA, I, IX, 496), his being guided Athena-like by the *Turmgesellschaft*,³⁴ and his succession of failed relationships with women, only at long last to find his true love in Natalie and his son in Felix, much as Odysseus returns to his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus, it is not this Odyssean subtext to Goethe's novel that I want to focus on next. Rather, Wilhelm, as a son to a father and as an aspiring artist who seems doomed to fail, is the avatar of two other mythological figures, one of which, namely Icarus, allows us more closely to equate him with Joyce's embodiment of the young artist character. As befits his father's surname Dedalus, Stephen is, as I noted earlier, clearly to be read as Icarus, the son of the mythological architect Daedalus, the young man who flew too close to the sun and tumbled from the skies when the wax of his artificial wings melted away. Indeed, as if wanting to be goaded by his father into self-destruction, Stephen in the 'Proteus' episode of *Ulysses* imagines his 'consubstantial father's voice' saying to his siblings: 'Did you see anything of your artist brother Stephen lately? No? Sure he's not down in Strasburg terrace with his aunt Sally? Couldn't he fly a bit higher than that, eh?' (U3.61–64).

Easily overlooked, Wilhelm too is frequently equated with Icarus as a bird-like figure on the brink of ruin. In the very first chapter of the novel, in Book I, Chapter 1, 'die alte Barbara' describes Wilhelm as 'den jungen, zärtlichen, unbefiederten Kaufmannsohn'. But while Wilhelm indeed does not yet possess the financial means to support Mariane, which is what Barbara is referring to here, the two young lovers are so in love that they are literally 'beflügelt'. Thus we read of Mariane: 'Mit welcher Lebhaftigkeit flog sie ihm entgegen' (FA, I, IX, 361). It is this very 'Lebhaftigkeit' that is ascribed to Wilhelm when he falls, Icarus-like, from the heights of passion into the lover's torment of doubt and despondency at the beginning of Book II, where we read:

Um diese wieder in sich zu erwecken, brachte er vor sein Andenken alle Szenen des vergangnen Glücks. Mit der größten Lebhaftigkeit malte er sie sich aus, strebte wieder in sie hinein, und wenn er sich zur möglichsten Höhe hinauf gearbeitet hatte, wenn ihm der Sonnenschein voriger Tage wieder die Glieder zu beleben, den Busen zu heben schien, sah er rückwärts auf den schrecklichen Abgrund, labte sein Auge an der zerschmetternden Tiefe, warf sich hinunter, und erzwang von der Natur die bittersten Schmerzen. Mit so wiederholter Grausamkeit zerriß er sich selbst [...] (FA, I, IX, 430)

Later, in Book II, Chapter 2, in conversation with Werner, Wilhelm exclaims: 'Und so ist der Dichter zugleich Lehrer, Wahrsager, Freund der Götter und der Menschen. Wie? Willst du, daß er zu einem kümmerlichen Gewerbe herunter steige, er, der wie ein Vogel gebaut ist, um die Welt zu überschweben, auf hohen Gipfeln zu nisten [...]?' (FA, I, IX, 435). Of course, like Stephen, who has to overcome his damnation to hell following Father Arnall's sermon (of Chapter III.2 of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) in order to arise anew to the height of artistry, Wilhelm must learn to pick up the pieces of his life and move on to reach new heights in Books VII and VIII. Thus Wilhelm overcomes two such falls from heaven, the first of love, the second of stage-acting and authorship.

³⁴ See FA, I, IX, 1374 with its reference to Wilfried Barner's *Geheime Lenkung. Zur Turmgesellschaft in Goethes »Wilhelm Meister«*.

All this of course parallels the 'schöne Seele' of Book VI, who describes her feelings as follows when she discovers Jesus as her lover: 'Das ist Glauben, sagte ich, und sprang wie halb erschreckt in die Höhe. Ich suchte nun meiner Empfindung, meines Anschauens gewiß zu werden, und im Kurzen war ich überzeugt, daß mein Geist eine Fähigkeit sich aufzuschwingen erhalten habe, die ihm ganz neu war' (FA, I, IX, 766), only to continue shortly thereafter: 'Nun hatte ich aber seit jenem großen Augenblicke Flügel bekommen. Ich konnte mich über das was mich vorher bedrohte aufschwingen, wie ein Vogel singend über den schnellen Strom ohne Mühe fliegen [...] ' and further: 'Sodann ergreift unsere Seele oft ein und das andere von den geistigen Bildern, und schwingt sich ein wenig in die Höhe, wie ein junger Vogel' (FA, I, IX, 767–68).

Stephen Dedalus, too, has inherited something of the 'Zinsendorfische Art' des 'kühnen Flug[s] der Einbildungskraft' (FA, I, IX, 769), as Goethe puts it. Like the 'schöne Seele' in *Wilhelm Meister*, Stephen too experiences an inner anguish about religion and the soul, and the beauty of the sacred versus the beauty of the profane. For Stephen this battle is decided when he encounters, as his symbolic mate, the girl on the beach at the end of Chapter IV of *A Portrait*, who is described as 'a strange and beautiful seabird' and a 'wonder of mortal beauty'³⁵: 'Heavenly God! cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy. [...] Her image had passed into his soul for ever and no word had broken the holy silence of his ecstasy' (171). This quasi-religious encounter follows the scene where Stephen reflects on 'his strange name', which 'seemed to him a prophecy', whereupon he sees 'a winged form flying' (168). 'What did it mean?', we read in a form of *Erlebte Rede*;

[w]as it a quaint device opening a page of some medieval book of prophecies and symbols, a hawklike man flying sunwards above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve and had been following through the mists of childhood and boyhood, a symbol of the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being? (169)

There is considerable irony in the fact that the first actual piece of art we see Stephen creating, immediately after his propounding to his friends an elevated theory of artistic radiance premised on the Aquinian notions of *integritas*, *consonantia* and *claritas*, is a rather clichéd and obscure poem that was inspired by nothing more mundane than the 'dewy wetness' of a 'wet dream', as Hugh Kenner contends,³⁶ or double masturbation, as Robert Adams Day speculates.³⁷ In short, Stephen vacillates between the roles of Daedalus father and Daedalus son, and occasionally seems to be unaware of the fact that, as Daedalus son, he has no option but to be doomed to failure.

Wilhelm by contrast may come to nought as an artist, but through his failure eventually manages to change the course of his life and, in the sequel *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, will go on to train as a 'Wundarzt', putting himself in a position to save his son's life. His early indecisiveness and 'unbestimmtes Schlendern' cast him not just in the role of Hamlet and Odysseus but also, within — in the words of

³⁵ *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (see footnote 26), p. 171.

³⁶ Hugh Kenner, 'The Portrait in Perspective', reprinted in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, pp. 416–39 (p. 428).

³⁷ Robert Adams Day, 'The Villanelle perplex: Reading Joyce', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 25.1 (Fall 1987), 69–85.

Philine — ‘diesem *vierfach* verschlungenen Romane’ (FA, I, IX, 612, my emphasis), as Theseus seeking to escape from the labyrinth of Minos, his third mythological role and fourth symbolic one. In Book IV, Chapter 3, Wilhelm admits to his fellow players that, in trying to grasp Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*,

glaubte ich recht in den Geist der Rolle einzudringen, wenn ich die Last der tiefen Schwermut gleichsam selbst auf mich nähme, und unter diesem Druck meinem Vorbilde durch *das seltsame Labyrinth* so mancher Launen und Sonderbarkeiten zu folgen suchte. So memorierte ich, und so übte ich mich, und glaubte nach und nach mit meinem Helden zu einer Person zu werden.

But: ‘*In diesen Irrgängen* bemühte ich mich lange vergebens, bis ich mich endlich auf einem ganz besonderen Wege meinem Ziele zu nähern hoffte’ (FA, I, IX, 578–79, my emphases). The crucial moment occurs when Wilhelm realizes that he is not Hamlet after all:

Wir wollen es ja nicht so genau nehmen, sagte Wilhelm, denn eigentlich hat mein Wunsch den Hamlet zu spielen, mich bei allem Studium des Stücks, *aufs Äußerste irre geführt*. Je mehr ich mich in die Rolle studiere, desto mehr sehe ich, daß in meiner ganzen Gestalt kein Zug der Physiognomie ist, wie Shakespeare seinen Hamlet aufstellt. (FA, I, IX, 674, my emphasis)

Indeed, Stephen, too, already in the opening pages of *Ulysses*, which are played out south of Dublin on the Martello tower at Sandycove, sets up the parallel with Hamlet by seeing his mother’s ghost appear before his inner eye; yet he cannot know that the part he is playing is that of Telemachus, the hidden ‘title’ of this first episode of Joyce’s novel. After all, the paratextual title, used by Joyce only in his letters and the two schemata he shared with Carlo Linati and Stuart Gilbert, not in the published work itself, is as much beyond Stephen’s ken as it is beyond the ken of the intended reader of the first edition of Joyce’s novel.

Wilhelm, too, has obviously confused the model; as he gradually learns to realize, the ‘Urbild’ for Wilhelm’s actions is not Hamlet, but rather Icarus and Theseus, incarnations of his symbolic life that he grasps as little as Stephen does his. Yet he does come to the realization that something peculiar is going on in his life; as Wilhelm concedes, talking about himself in talking about Hamlet:

Nur hat man, wie ich glaube, darin gefehlt, daß man das zweite, was bei diesem Stück zu bemerken ist, ich meine die äußeren Verhältnisse der Personen, wodurch sie von einem Orte zum anderen gebracht, oder auf diese und jene Weise durch gewisse zufällige Begebenheiten verbunden werden, für allzuunbedeutend angesehen, nur im vorbeigehen davon gesprochen, oder sie gar weggelassen hat. Freilich sind diese Fäden nur dünn und lose, aber sie gehen doch durchs ganze Stück, und halten zusammen, was sonst auseinander fiel. (FA, I, IX, 663)

The ‘dünne und lose Fäden’ that he himself will later recognize are those of the *Turmgesellschaft*, but we as readers can see more dimensions to his ‘vierfach verschlungenes Leben’ than he himself is capable of seeing. The maxim of the ‘vierfache Verschlungenheit’ is of course as applicable to Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* as it is to Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*, as is amply illustrated in the

case of *Ulysses* by Joyce’s Linati and Gilbert schemata. For the ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ episode, the ‘Library’ section in which Stephen expounds his theory of Shakespeare and Hamlet while Bloom, nearly unnoticed, wordlessly passes by as the ‘wandering jew’ (U9.1197, 9.1203, and 9.1209), the Linati schema lists as symbolic levels and layers: Hamlet, Shakespeare, Christ, Socrates, London and Stratford, Scholasticism and Mysticism, Plato and Aristotle, Youth and Maturity.³⁸

* * *

It is surely no coincidence that the ‘Library’ episode of *Ulysses*, concluding the first half of the novel in terms of chapter count, is also the episode in which the issue of paternity is most prominently addressed. It is this aspect of the two texts with which I wish to conclude my intertextual counter-reading of *Ulysses* and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. The fatherhood issue is one of the central dimensions of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and one that has been as much discussed in Joyce scholarship as it is referred to by the characters within the novel itself. Woven into the fabric of *Ulysses* in numerous episodes, talk of the ‘consubstantial father’ (U3.50 and 62; U9.481) who is also an ‘unsubstantial father’ (U9.553) crescendos into passages such as the two following ones. First, in the opening pages of the novel in Chapter 1, the ‘Telemachus’ episode, Buck Mulligan says about Stephen:

He proves by algebra that Hamlet’s grandson is Shakespeare’s grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father.

— What? Haines said. [.]

— O, shade of kinch the elder! Japhet in search of a father! (U1. 555–61)

Whereupon the Englishman Haines rejoins:

— I read a theological interpretation of it somewhere, he said bemused. The Father and the Son idea. The son striving to be atoned with the Father. (U1.577–78)

Second, in the ‘Library’ episode, eight chapters later, we hear Stephen declaiming:

— A father [...] is a necessary evil. [...] Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery [...] the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. (U9.828 and 9.837–44)

As arcane as these words sound, no wonder someone retorts: ‘What the hell are you driving at?’ (U9.846). But Stephen is only echoing what Telemachus says to the goddess Athena at the opening of the *Odyssey*: ‘I will tell you truly stranger: in fact, my mother says I am his [that is, Odysseus’] son, but I for my part do not know, for no one yet has known his father on his own’.³⁹ In Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, too, there is one character who expresses the selfsame sentiment and knows exactly what

³⁸ Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, pp. 188–97 (unpaginated pages).

³⁹ Homer, *The Odyssey*, transl. Robert Fagles, New York, 1997, ll. 1, 214–16.

Stephen and Telemachus are driving at, but it is not Wilhelm, as one might expect, although he is the person most directly affected, but rather Friedrich, Natalie's brother. At the conclusion of the novel and having just revealed Philine's pregnancy to Wilhelm, he proclaims: 'Die Vaterschaft beruht überhaupt nur auf der Überzeugung, ich bin überzeugt und also bin ich Vater' (FA, I, IX, 940). Does this not sum up in a nutshell Wilhelm's predicament throughout his 'Lehrjahre'? First he does not know, then he does not believe that he is the father of Felix.⁴⁰ In Stephen's words: 'Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to Wilhelm'. Wilhelm's 'Lehrjahre' are as much about his personal development as about a father unconsciously in search of a son, but also a son unconsciously in search of a father. And it is at the very moment, in Book VII, Chapter 9, when Wilhelm is handed his 'Lehrbrief' that he also receives confirmation from the Abbé that Felix is his son.⁴¹ If we hold true the sentence, passing through the mind of Leopold Bloom in the 'Oxen of the Sun' episode, 'The wise father knows his own child' (U14.1063), then Wilhelm has clearly up to this point been lacking in wisdom. But Wilhelm has nearly as little relationship with his son as with his father. Does Wilhelm ever genuinely grieve his father's death? No wonder then that he is stunned when, just moments before he receives his *Lehrbrief*, he thinks he hears in the voice of one of the senior *Turm* society members the voice of his own father: 'Der Vorhang riß sich von einander, und, in voller Rüstung, stand der alte König von Dännemark [*sic*] in dem Raume. Ich bin der Geist Deines Vaters, sagte das Bildnis, und scheide getrost, da meine Wünsche für Dich [...] erfüllt sind. [...] Lebe wohl, und gedenke mein' (FA, I, IX, 874). This scene with father, son, and unholy ghost, brings us full circle not just back to *Hamlet*, with its father-son latticework, but also to *Ulysses* and the symbolic pairing of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. During this one day, 16 June 1904, Bloom sees visions, if not to say ghosts, of both his father and his deceased son Rudy, while Stephen sees a ghost-like vision of his mother. Bloom has lost a son and, for this one day, seems to have adopted a son in Stephen, if only symbolically. But the feelings are not mutual. As Schutte astutely observes:

⁴⁰ In the discussion following my talk Susanne Kord alerted me to a fascinating and enlightening article by Elisabeth Krimmer which focuses precisely on this issue in *Wilhelm Meister* within the larger gender historical and legal context of Goethe's time. She notes, for instance: 'Curiously, although the nature and success of Wilhelm's personal development is very much in question, there is little scholarly uncertainty regarding Wilhelm's fatherhood. This is surprising since Goethe's novel seizes every opportunity to obfuscate and ironize the problem of paternity, but it is far from certain that he is Felix's biological father' (261). She goes on to observe, with special importance for our reading of Leopold Bloom: 'In Goethe's novel, maturity does not manifest itself through progressive personal growth but through the momentous decision to accept one's place in the line of fathers. [...] Goethe is not only acutely aware that fatherhood is not naturally given but socially created, he is also convinced that it is this social reality that counts. A man may not be his son's "genitor", but he must accept his responsibility as "pater" if societal order is to be maintained. But even as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* affirms the necessity of unambiguous patrilinearity, it also paints an atmosphere of absurdity and disenchantment resulting from the knowledge of its constructedness' (268–69). She also remarks, with particular relevance for our interpretation of Stephen's trajectory of 'Bildung': 'Given this close association [in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*] of paternity and civic virtue, it is hardly surprising that fatherlessness also carries in its wake the inability to gain *Bildung*' (263). Elisabeth Krimmer, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: Paternity and *Bildung* in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*', *German Quarterly*, 77.3 (Summer 2004), 257–77.

⁴¹ Again keeping in mind Krimmer's proviso that this is merely a socially constructed paternity.

Although Stephen is much concerned with the problem of paternity, as his gratuitous discussion of the subject in the National Library indicates, there is never the slightest suggestion that he thinks of Bloom as his spiritual father or that he feels drawn to him in any way. Indeed, Joyce makes a point of emphasizing that Stephen is disconcerted and repelled by the 'strange kind of flesh' with which he has come into contact. [...] There can be no denying that Bloom has fatherly feelings for Stephen, that in his semipractical, sentimental way he would like to become a foster father to the younger man.⁴²

Similarly, Wilhelm becomes the foster-father to Mignon, but this bond too will be only short-lived. Mignon, the child-*Ersatz* — at times we do not know whether she is more daughter or son, her androgynous ambiguity being, of course, more pronounced in the *Theatralische Sendung* — is no longer needed once Wilhelm has found his genuine male offspring.

* * *

If living up to — or failing to live up to — the promise contained in their names — Hero, Stephen, and D(a)edalus on the one hand, Wilhelm and Meister on the other — is crucial for the two young male protagonists of Goethe's and Joyce's novels, so for the reader it is crucial to recognize the interpretive ramifications not only of these names, and the roles inscribed into them, but also of their mythological and literary prototypes. Whereas the characters — and here I once again include Leopold Bloom — may feel that they are at the mercy of fate and coincidence, and above all the fateful coincidence of their given names, we as readers know that it is not a god's or goddess's hand, or a mythological plot outline, that controls their destinies: it is the author who directs our attention, supplies the textual signals, inscribes the various mythological allusions, and superimposes the symbolic planes of meaning, all of which is beyond the characters' knowledge and control. Bloom is happily unaware that he is Odysseus — who knows how he might have responded to the day's challenges if he *had* known. While Stephen has greater cause to regard himself as Icarus — after all, he is the son of D(a)edalus — he prefers to cast himself as Hamlet; all the while the role *we* as readers see him playing is that of Telemachus. Wilhelm for his part would like to be Hamlet, but is oblivious of the fact that he is simultaneously Odysseus, Icarus and Theseus, all of whom are trying to escape from some form of *Schicksalslabyrinth*, something that the *Wanderjahre* tellingly also calls 'die Labyrinth der menschlichen Gesinnungen und Schicksale' (FA, I, x, 674). And yet, even within these frames of reference, not all is fixed: we find the characters perpetually shifting ground, moving in and out of their assumed roles and guises, perpetually in 'con-fusion' about who they are, both fusing and confusing their many symbolic roles and attributes, making any final interpretive assignation impossible. Joyce's *Ulysses* will strike any reader as particularly vexing in this regard, but many of Goethe's contemporaries found the *Lehrjahre* equally confusing and enigmatic; thus even Schiller noted, in a letter sent to Goethe on 9 July 1796:

⁴² Schutte, *Joyce and Shakespeare*, pp. 12–13.

Dem Inhalte nach muß in dem Werk *alles* liegen, was zu seiner Erklärung nöthig ist, und, der Form nach, muß es *nothwendig* darinn liegen, der innere Zusammenhang muß es mit sich bringen — aber wie fest oder locker es zusammenhängen soll, darüber muß Ihre eigenste Natur entscheiden. Dem Leser würde es freilich bequemer seyn, wenn Sie selbst ihm die Momente worauf es ankommt blank und baar zuzählten, daß er sie nur in Empfang zu nehmen brauchte; sicherlich aber hält es ihn bey dem Buche fester, und führt ihn öfter zu demselben zurück, wenn er sich selber helfen muß. Haben Sie also nur dafür gesorgt, daß er gewiß findet, wenn er mit gutem Willen und hellen Augen sucht, so ersparen Sie ihm ja das Suchen nicht. Das Resultat eines solchen ganzen muß immer die eigene, freye, nur nicht willkührliche Produktion des Lesers seyn, es muß eine Art von Belohnung bleiben, die nur dem Würdigen zu Theil wird, indem sie dem unwürdigen sich entziehet.⁴³

Indeed, Goethe himself admits in hindsight, some thirty years after the first publication of the novel, to Eckermann:

In [Schillers] Briefen an mich sind über den ‘Wilhelm Meister’ die bedeutendsten Ansichten und Äußerungen. Es gehört dieses Werk zu den inkalkulabelsten Produktionen, wozu mir fast selbst der Schlüssel fehlt. Man sucht einen Mittelpunkt, und das ist schwer und nicht einmal gut. [. . .] Will man aber dergleichen durchaus, so halte man sich an die Worte Friedrichs, die er am Ende an unsern Helden richtet [. . .]. Denn im Grunde scheint doch das Ganze nichts anderes sagen zu wollen, als daß der Mensch trotz aller Dummheiten und Verwirrungen, von einer höhern Hand geleitet, doch zum glücklichen Ziele gelanget. (FA, II, XII, 141)

This ‘höhere Hand’ is, of course, as we noted earlier, not Fate’s, the artist’s, who stands ‘within [and] above his handiwork’, ‘paring his fingernails’, ‘like the God of the creation, [. . .] invisible, refined out of existence, [and] indifferent’.

But what makes a comparative reading of Goethe’s and Joyce’s novels particularly compelling and apposite — beyond what Roland Barthes, taking Schiller’s cue, would have called these novels’ ‘writerly’ nature — is the fact that both authors have decided to exploit the very same mythological and literary historical subplots and pre-texts (specifically the fable of Daedalus and Icarus, Homer’s *Odyssey*, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*), making them, in this one regard at least, brothers in spirit wrestling with the same elective father figures. This ‘stereoscopic vision’⁴⁴ of Goethe and Joyce providing two perspectives on the same ghosts of the past creates what I would like to call the effect of literary historical parallax. The astronomical definition of parallax runs: ‘The apparent displacement, especially of a star or other heavenly body, when it is viewed successively from two points not in the same line of sight’.⁴⁵ Parallax is thus premised on a triadic structure, one thing being observed from two distinct vantage points. And it is, of course, precisely this concept of parallax that, translated

⁴³ Friedrich Schiller, *Werke und Briefe*, vol. XII, *Briefe II 1795–1805*, ed. by Norbert Oellers, Frankfurt, 2002, p. 197.

⁴⁴ Fritz Senn, ‘Remodelling Homer’, in F. S., *Inductive Scrutinies*, ed. by Christine O’Neill, Baltimore, 1995, pp. 111–32 (p. 116).

⁴⁵ This definition taken from *The Reader’s Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, New York, 1968, p. 977.

into an aesthetic principle, governs the structure of *Ulysses*. The prime example of this kind of heavenly body seen from a double perspective is less Molly, as one might expect, the 'Gea-Tellus' of the 'Ithaca' episode (U17.2313), than that little 'matutinal cloud (perceived by both [Stephen and Bloom] from two different points of observation)' (U17.40), which is described with precisely the same words in the first and fourth episodes; it is seen by Stephen in the early morning from the parapet of the Martello tower at Sandycove, and then by Bloom in central Dublin at precisely the same time in the morning, walking along Upper Dorset Street on his way home (U1.248 and U4.218): 'A cloud', we read in both instances, 'began to cover the sun slowly, wholly'.⁴⁶

As used by Joyce, parallax is both a poetical stratagem and a metapoetical rationale, encapsulating the novel's method at the same time as it is expressly reflected upon by the main character who appears in it. Leopold Bloom, in the 'Lestrygonians' episode, mulls over the possibly Greek provenance of the term, registering in his stream of consciousness:

Fascinating little book that is of sir Robert Ball's. Parallax. I never exactly understood. There's a priest. Could ask him. Par it's Greek: parallel, parallax. Met him pike hoses she called it till I told her about the transmigration. O rocks! Mr Bloom smiled O rocks at the windows of the ballastoffice. She's right after all. Only big words for ordinary things on account of the sound. (U8.110-15)

Of course, this wonderful passage contains another of Bloom's misreadings, 'par' being not Greek, but Latin, meaning, as adjective, similar, of equal size, or appropriate, among other things, whereas 'para', the word he should have identified, is Greek, as the Greek wanderer and exile Odysseus should have known, the word meaning 'beyond', with 'parallax' stemming from 'parallas sein', meaning to vary, decline, or wander. Inasmuch as Joyce's *Ulysses* is built around the use of 'big words for ordinary things', which are presented to us over and again 'from different points of observation', the novel is clearly intended as an extended exercise in literary parallax. But there are two distinct kinds or layers of such parallax: first, we have *internal* parallax — our perpetually being presented with people, things, and events within the novel from two or more perspectives; but this is complemented, secondly, by various kinds of *external* parallax — for example, our ability as readers to compare and contrast characters, things, and events in the novel with their mythological avatars and literary historical counterparts, in effect creating the ever shifting quicksands of interpretability that I alluded to earlier.

Perhaps not just per happenstance, this kind of contrast and double perspective is what underpins most definitions of irony, and certainly the definition of dramatic irony, which goes some way to explain why both Goethe's and Joyce's novels are considered paradigms of the ironic genre. As defined in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*,

⁴⁶ In the discussion following my talk, T.J. Reed pointed out that parallax was understood and employed in the eighteenth century and earlier primarily as a means to measure distances and to map the world. In this sense, parallax in Joyce's *Ulysses* is of course also a mapping device, allowing the reader to identify fixed points in its cosmos.

Dramatic irony is a plot device according to which (a) the spectators know more than the protagonist; (b) the character reacts in a way contrary to that which is appropriate or wise; (c) characters or situations are compared or contrasted for ironic effects, such as parody; (d) there is a marked contrast between what the character understands about his acts and what the play demonstrates about them.⁴⁷

All of this applies programmatically to the novels under discussion.

Literary historical parallax, the novelistic stratagem that both Goethe and Joyce have harnessed by alluding, at times overtly, but more often covertly, to their characters' various pre-texts and proto-types, contributes not just to an increase in dramatic irony but also to the proliferation of interpretive meaning. In *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses* — and the same might be said for *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* and *Finnegans Wake* — both Goethe and Joyce deploy literary historical parallax in order to amplify situational and interpretive irony, in the process opening up a veritable exegetical *mise en abyme*. Thus Goethe casts Wilhelm as an Icarus-like figure revisioning Shakespeare's Hamlet as a cautionary tale of his own predicament, 'eine[s] Prinzen [...] dessen Vater unvermutet stirbt' (FA, I, IX, 607). Joyce in turn deploys Goethe's novel and its central protagonist in order to cast his Icarus-like figure Stephen as yet another young and aspiring artist revisioning the story of Shakespeare's Hamlet in his own likeness, with the possible implication that he too is all but fated to fail. Both Wilhelm and Stephen failed to heed what the narrator of *Wilhelm Meister Wanderjahre*, a Goethe in novelistic disguise, imparts to us: 'Shakespeare ist für aufkeimende Talente gefährlich zu lesen; er nötigt sie, ihn zu reproduzieren, und sie bilden sich ein, sich selbst zu produzieren' (FA, I, X, 569). But there is no certainty about any of this: we know not whether Stephen will succeed to become another James Joyce, or indeed whether Joyce saw his career as a success in the first place. Nor do we know exactly what becomes of Wilhelm, even after his newly adopted career as *Wundarzt* in the later novel.

To return parallaxically in closing to the sentence presented to us at the beginning of the 'Scylla and Charybdis' episode, 'a great poet on a great brother poet', we can now appreciate another layer of that telltale pronouncement. Literary historical parallax allows us to see beyond Joyce, who through his character Lyster equates Shakespeare and Goethe as great brother poets. But if Shakespeare and Goethe are indeed to be taken for brother poets, who then is the father? Homer is surely the most obvious contender, being in 1784 Goethe's 'Lieblingsdichter',⁴⁸ his favourite poet. Literary history unfortunately has no DNA test for us to make sure. At any rate, as Stephen Dedalus maintains and Friedrich in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* confirms, 'fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession [...]. On that mystery', and that is 'upon incertitude', we might now modify his statement, not only the Church 'is founded',

⁴⁷ *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, enlarged edition, ed. by Alex Preminger, Princeton, 1974, p. 407.

⁴⁸ Goethe according to Graf F.L. zu Stolberg in a letter to Johann Heinrich Voß, 2 June 1784; reprinted in *Goethes Gespräche (ohne die Gespräche mit Eckermann)*, ed. by Flodoard Freiherr von Biedermann, Wiesbaden, 1949, pp. 84–85.

but also *literary history*. And inasmuch as Goethe in his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* elects Shakespeare to serve as his father figure, Goethe declares himself, counter to Lyster's contention, to be not Shakespeare's brother but his son. Thus if we were to reread the equation in *Ulysses* — 'a great poet on a great brother poet' — as referring to Joyce commenting on Goethe, which is clearly what is (also) implied by this clause, Joyce and Goethe 'naturally' emerge as sons to the same father, but maybe, in another manifestation of parallax, a double father figure, namely Shakespeare and Homer. The moral, if you will, is that whereas in everyday reality fathers create their sons, and whereas in the novels by Goethe and Joyce fathers and sons seem to create one another, in literary history sons create their fathers: here 'conscious begetting' is not only possible, but is indeed the rule.⁴⁹ But, of course, with all this 'incertitude' about 'fatherhood' and 'succession', 'paternity' in this parallax perspective may be little more than 'a literary historical fiction', or is that again perhaps just misappropriating, in Leopold Bloom's formulation, 'big words for ordinary things on account of the sound'?

Notes on contributor

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⁴⁹ As Elinor Shaffer correctly reminded me following the Goethe Society lecture, issues of paternity, both imaginary and real, also figure prominently in Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), a connection I have not pursued here, but one that sheds additional light on my argument. Also in response to my talk, Elizabeth Boa queried the role of gender in this section. Clearly, Stephen (as a mouthpiece perhaps for Joyce?) sees the role of fathers and mothers differently. However, in literary historical practice, which is the focal point of my argument, we will encounter for any given author, male or female, a whole host of father and mother figures. At this level of argument 'fathers' are merely a metaphor for parental lineage, which will typically be composed of both mothers and fathers, although not necessarily so (some male authors may decide to choose only male precursors, just as some women writers may opt only for female precursors). Nonetheless, and put differently, in terms of authors choosing and defining their literary parentage, there is, 'essentially speaking', no difference: writer sons probably choose their literary ancestry no differently from writer daughters, although the individual balance of mother and father figures chosen will certainly vary widely.