Between

Archaeologies of the Mind: James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Pre-Freudian Psychology of the Unconscious

Annalisa Federici

Abstract

This essay analyses the representation of mental processes in James Joyce's *Ulysses* in light of "scientific" or "experimental" psychology, whose impact on the composition of the novel has been quite underestimated. Since concepts such as "unconscious cerebration" and "mental latency", or the theorisation of a close connection between dreams and repression, regularly appeared in nineteenth-century psychological treatises along with discussions of insanity and deranged states of consciousness, these ideas are likely to have made inroads into the cultural milieu in which *Ulysses* was composed. By analysing the stratified representation of the characters' minds, this essay attempts to read the novel through a focus on pre-Freudian conceptions of unconscious mental processes and latent memory, and to show that some of the ideas propounded by early psychologists may have provided the substance for Joyce's understanding of the functioning of consciousness, the unconscious and memory portrayed in *Ulysses*.

Keywords

James Joyce; *Ulysses*; psychology; unconscious; memory

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Archaeologies of the Mind: James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Pre-Freudian Psychology of the Unconscious

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This essay analyses the representation of mental processes in James Joyce's *Ulysses* in light of "scientific" or "experimental" psychology, which gradually emerged as an autonomous discipline and an experimental science of the mind in the second half of the nineteenth century. This innovative field was characterised by the rigorous observation of physiological phenomena – hence the alternative labels of "physiological" or "empirical" psychology – and the use of the experimental method. Reading the stream-of-consciousness technique or the focus on inner life which characterises modernist fiction in terms of the interplay between psychology and literature has become a critical commonplace, as several studies on the literary appropriation of psychological discourse demonstrate. Martin Jay, for instance, remarks that the multiple intersections between aesthetic modernism and the richly articulated field of modern psychology, both characterised by radical developments taking place at virtually the same time, are based on «an unprecedented preoccupation with the interior landscape of the subject», which «led to voyages of scientific and artistic discovery» (1996: 93). A similar case has been made, more recently, by Mark Micale: while observing that the far-reaching changes in Western culture brought by the advent of modernism «occurred precisely when the distinctively modern disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis began to establish their "scientific" foundations» (2004:

1), he also notes – as Judith Ryan does in *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (1991) – that within the well-established scholarly debate concerning the influence of new models of the mind on the depiction of characters' subjectivity in early twentieth-century literature, pride of place has been given to the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Jung, to the detriment of some of their predecessors and contemporaries, whose impact on modernist writing was much greater than is generally realised. According to Micale, it is fundamental to bear in mind that «psychoanalysis was only one of many emerging models of mind that comprised the coming of early dynamic psychiatry and that contributed to the constitution of the modern psychological self» (2004: 7).

In his illuminating study *Dynamic Psychology in Modernist British Fiction*, George Johnson similarly remarks that, at the turn of the twentieth century, «a particularly close, symbiotic relationship developed between the novel and a cluster of discourses pertaining to selfhood that were labelled "the new psychology", or, more accurately, dynamic psychology» (2006: 1). However, «the admittedly important findings of Sigmund Freud have been so magnified and divorced from their sources that they have overshadowed and in some cases obliterated earlier significant advances in psychological knowledge» (*ibid*.: 208). Furthermore, he adds that the debate about psychoanalysis only began to emerge in Britain around 1908, and that, by the outbreak of the First World War, Freud's theories on hysteria, sexuality, dreams and repression had been introduced and widely discussed. Therefore, psychoanalysis can be said to represent a later manifestation of that new approach to understanding the inner workings of the human mind which was already strongly present in the cultural climate at the turn of the century, and which was increasingly including the exceptional and the deviant, as the realms of dynamic psychology or psychical research clearly demonstrate. Though it is not the aim of this essay to penetrate the domain of spiritualistic or occult psychology, it seems important to keep in mind, as Henri Ellenberger reminds us in his monumental *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (1994), that tendencies in the field of dynamic psychology other than the later psychoanalytical wave were

already much in vogue at the beginning of the twentieth century, and thus likely to have made inroads into the cultural milieu in which modernist masterpieces such as Joyce's *Ulysses* were composed.

Furthermore, while Freud is generally credited with having advanced a revolutionary theory of the human mind according to which psychical symptoms are often the surface manifestations of deeply repressed conflicts, we should not forget that concepts such as William Carpenter's "unconscious cerebration" and William Hamilton's "mental latency" regularly appeared in nineteenth-century treatises on the newborn science of psychology. The notion of latent thought, active and dynamic but beyond human control or the threshold of consciousness, was of central importance to the conception of self from the mid-Victorian period throughout the twentieth century. Analogously, the deep interest raised at that time by "deranged" states of consciousness can be said to have paved the way for – though not immediately prefigured – Freud's studies on hysteria and neurosis, which led him to formulate the theory that the unconscious mind governs behaviour to a greater extent than people are normally aware. As Alison Winter explains in her comprehensive study of the rise and fall of mesmerism in Britain, the unconscious today is a notion laden with Freudian baggage, which has «charged this term in a way that makes it misleading when applied to the early and mid-Victorians» (1998: 10). To revert to its pre-Freudian significance implies restoring to it the original multiplicity of a conceptual umbrella gathering approaches which were widely different, though sharing a basic concern of Victorian mental theories, that is how, and to what extent, are visible actions and behaviours governed by non-rational processes beyond conscious control.

In the cultural context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, in which the new science of the mind widely permeated intellectual debate, the literary imaginary was inevitably influenced by innovative theories of selfhood, memory, consciousness or the unconscious, as well as their pathological alterations, formulated within the field of coeval psychological investigation. As Roger Smith has effectively pointed out, «psychology in Britain was shaped *in a public arena*, not through the specialization or differentiation of academic life»

(2004: 83); moreover, the periodical press played a major role in moulding «a discourse about psychology as part of a public, non-specialist culture» (*ibid*.: 98). Therefore, a key assumption in the present study is that fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century participated in contemporary debates about the nature of sensory perceptions, conscious and unconscious processes as well as memory, and shaped the way psychologists – who often developed their arguments through literary allusions and tropes, or referred to cases from novels as well as real life to illustrate their points – wrote about the powers and mysteries of the mind. Scholars like Rick Rylance (2000) and Erik Lindberg (2000), among others, have variously emphasised this phenomenon, which extends from the Victorian age, when psychology emerged as an autonomous discipline, to the modernist period, characterised by further theoretical advancements. In a thought-provoking study of the substrate in which early twentieth-century culture is rooted, Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth maintain that

> The relationship between the conscious and the unconscious mind and the significance and workings of memory were central to the debate about the nature of individual and social identity during the nineteenth century. [...] And although they [Victorian psychologists] did not directly prefigure Freud's work their writing was an important part of the intellectual context within which psychoanalytic theory arose. In mid-nineteenth-century Britain, the interest in what William Carpenter termed "unconscious cerebration" was closely connected to the growing enquiry into modes of insanity and the uncertain division between "deranged" and "sane" states of mind. As with the specific accounts of phrenology, mesmerism, and the various forms of insanity, mid-century debates on "latent thought" or the "automatic action" of the mind wavered between a desire to explore and to control the self. (1998: 67)

In line with the general scholarly interest in psychoanalytical psychology and consequent neglect of empirical or experimental

psychology in relation to modernist literature, the importance of the latter in the cultural milieu in which *Ulysses* was written has been quite underestimated. Although scholars – primarily Richard Ellmann in his 1965 biography – have often pointed out Joyce's disavowal of interest and even aversion to psychoanalysis, there is an extensive bibliography on the subject[1], while (to the best of my knowledge) there has not yet been an attempt, other than John Rickard's, to analyse previous models of consciousness and theories of memory which may have influenced Joyce's representation of psychic phenomena. In his seminal study entitled *Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of* Ulysses, Rickard contends that

> *Ulysses* functions as a site of struggle or tension between competing philosophical and psychological conceptions of the nature of human subjectivity and the role of memory within that subjectivity or selfhood. *Ulysses* – shaped both by the dominant philosophical and psychological discourses of its own time and by older models of mind or self – enacts or works through the struggle between these often incompatible models rather than presenting one version or model of subjectivity. (1999: 3)

In his illustration of what he terms, following Cheryl Herr (1987), *Ulysses*'s "cultural unconscious" – that is, the intellectual substrate which informed the novel – the critic frequently mentions Freud and Jung, but he does so alongside William James, Henri Bergson, Michael Maher and others. Furthermore, Ellmann's listing of the volumes contained in Joyce's Trieste library, appended to his 1977 study *The Consciousness of Joyce*, provides a treasury of clues about the author's

[1] Joyce's bold claim to Djuna Barnes in a 1922 interview has now become proverbial: «in *Ulysses* I have recorded, simultaneously, what a man says, sees, thinks, and what such seeing, thinking, saying does, to what you Freudians call the subconscious – but as for psychoanalysis, [...] it's neither more nor less than blackmail» (Barnes 1922: 65, also qtd. in Ellmann 1982: 524). Psychoanalytic studies of Joyce include, among several others, Brivic 1980; Friedman 1993; Kimball 1983 and 1991; Shechner 1974; Thurston 2004.

reading habits in the crucial period in his artistic development comprised between 1904 and 1920[2]. The variety of the books that Joyce collected while he was writing *Ulysses*, and that he left behind him in Trieste when he moved to Paris in 1920, reflects the range of specific intellectual needs that he felt during the composition of his masterpiece and shows that the author may have been far more interested than he ever admitted in the psychoanalytical discourse of the time. As Wim Van Mierlo has more recently pointed out, however, it was not until a set of notes, taken from the third volume of Freud's *Collected Papers*, was discovered in one of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* notebooks that some evidence of a direct contact with the psychoanalytical intertext could be found. In his view, «the genetic connections [...] allow a further contextualization of Joyce's contact with the New Psychology» (Van Mierlo 1997: 116) and demonstrate that the author «was able to draw on psychoanalytical writings without necessarily subscribing to a psychoanalytic agenda» (*ibid*.). Although such evidence is perhaps not necessary, since psychoanalysis was very much in the air in the late 1910s and 20s, it is in any case particularly instructive that among the volumes owned by Joyce one can find Freud's *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* (*Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 1910) and *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens* (*The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, 1917), Jung's *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen* (*The Significance of the Father in the Destiny of the Individual*, 1909), along with Michael Maher's *Psychology: Empirical and Rational* (second American edition, date unknown). Joyce's knowledge of this book is particularly relevant to the purpose of the present study, not only for its intrinsic value as illustration of the scholar's personal views

[2] For a list of the items in the collection, see Ellmann 1977: 97-134, as well as Gillespie 1986. Elsewhere, Gillespie cites Ellmann's catalogue as «the only detailed source for information on Joyce's reading over the period during which he was writing the majority of the works which make up his canon» (1983: 19). Such findings caused Ellmann to reconsider the question of Joyce's dismissal of psychoanalytical theories that he had often addressed in the first edition of his biography (1965).

on the most commonly debated psychological issues of the time, but also because it represents a compendium of preceding and coeval psychological doctrines and offers historical outlines of contemporary scientific concerns such as mental faculties, sensory perception and memory. While it is far from certain that Joyce may have read or directly known about nineteenth-century psychological theories, Maher's explicit mention of Carpenter and Hamilton along with Gustav Fechner, William James, G.H. Lewes, Théodule Ribot, Dugald Stewart and James Sully – among others – is likely to have provided a sort of mediation. Joyce's habit of quoting extensively from other works of the Western canon, of layering or "seeding" the text of *Ulysses* with traces of older texts and traditions, makes it evident that these borrowings extended far beyond the books that make up the Trieste library. However, the presence of Maher's treatise can be seen as evidence of the fact that Joyce had an interest in the "new psychology" and included a variety of psychological ideas in his novel.

Tracing the impact of the most significant European psychological discourse on the composition of Joyce's *Ulysses* – a text notoriously appropriating, reworking and even subverting countless texts and discourses – could seem risky. Though exploring potential sources, this study moves beyond the implications of influence and concerns itself with some of the works and theories that may have provided the substance for Joyce's understanding of the functioning of mind, consciousness, the unconscious and memory represented in his masterpiece. The intellectual climate in which *Ulysses* was composed was dominated – in both specialist discourse, circulating widely through the popular press, and common knowledge – by a materialist science of the self which rejected dualistic separations of body and mind, and which was at the same time fascinated and unsettled by those inner regions that remained beyond conscious control. Moving from the assumption that there are complex and diverse ways in which literature and science were interwoven and mutually influential in the Victorian as well as in the modernist period, this essay aims to explore the extensive connections between literary and psychological discussions of the way the mind functions, as well as the participation of fictive

narrative in the province of emergent psychology of the unconscious and memory science. Therefore, it proposes to offer new insights into Joyce's *Ulysses* – a novel that is entirely permeated by psychological language and theory, and constantly reflects on issues under debate in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century psychological texts – through a focus on pre-Freudian conceptions of unconscious mental processes and latent memory. As the editors of the thought-provoking collection *Cognitive Joyce* point out in their introduction, «in *Ulysses*, the exceptionally-detailed, true-to-life portrayal of the human mind is a constant concern of the narrative, whichever character we may be following» (Belluc - Bénéjam 2018: 2). Furthermore, it seems evident that Joyce incorporated a variety of psychological notions in *Ulysses*, often displaying his familiarity with the scientific language of psychology. This chiefly occurs in the verbose and pedantic style of episodes such as "Eumaeus" – whose corresponding organ is "nerves" – and "Ithaca", where one can find a number of revealing passages: «his mental organs for the moment refusing to dictate further» (*U* 16.788-89)[3]; «as if both their minds were travelling, so to speak, in the one train of thought» (*U* 16.1580-81); «What suddenly arrested his ingress?/The right temporal lobe of the hollow sphere of his cranium came into contact with a solid timber angle where, an infinitesimal but sensible fraction of a second later, a painful sensation was located in consequence of antecedent sensations transmitted and registered» (*U* 17.1274-78); «Why, firstly and secondly, did he not consult the work in question?/Firstly, in order to exercise mnemotechnic: secondly, because after an interval of amnesia, when, seated at the central table, about to consult the work in question, he remembered by mnemotechnic the name of the military engagement, Plevna» (*U* 17.1421-25). Such excerpts demonstrate the author's acquaintance with, and even highly ironic use of, nineteenth-century psychophysiological theories of mental blocks, or obstructions in the

[3] Joyce, James, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text*, Ed. Hans Walter Gabler, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986; hereafter cited by episode and line number as *U*.

flow of thoughts and mnemonic associations; the well-known metaphor of the "train of thought", applied to conscious as well as unconscious mental activity (and which was also believed to be able to transmigrate from one subject to another, as popular reports on experiments in telepathy and mesmerism attested); the idea of the localisation of mental functions and sensations in specific areas of the brain, first introduced by phrenologists and also referred to in Maher's *Psychology*; and, last but not least, the systematic attempts to improve the efficiency of memory which were very much in the news in the late nineteenth century. This and other evidence clearly shows, as Van Mierlo also suggests, that «despite his frequent attacks on psychoanalysis, Joyce was not at all averse to the subject of psychology» (1997: 123), and that his treatment of the discipline was also aimed at rendering the chaos in cognitions about human mental functioning often generated by manifold, always evolving and sometimes contrasting models and doctrines.

One of the most common conceptions in coeval psychological theories, which directly or indirectly found their way into *Ulysses*, was the idea of a correlation between psychical (inner, hidden) and physical (outer, manifest) phenomena. The British psychophysiologists (in particular Henry Holland, G.H. Lewes, William Carpenter) were distinguished authors of treatises on psychology in connection with cerebral physiology. They sought to elucidate the correlation between mind and brain, between the intellectual and physical functions, as well as the mental manifestations of the nervous system. They essentially followed current lines of research demonstrating that reflex actions extend to the brain and produce acts of which we may be cognisant because of their effects, but over which we exercise no volitional control. Another interesting dichotomy characterising Joyce's representation of mental phenomena is that of consciousness (what is observable and superficial) *versus* the unconscious (what is concealed and submerged). Furthermore, as Rickard remarks, «images of burial and exhumation abound in *Ulysses*, surfacing frequently in the thoughts of both Stephen and Bloom» (1999: 56), and acting as «metaphors for the repression of unpleasant or disturbing memories and for the inevitable way that these memories return over and over again to consciousness» (*ibid.*). He also

notes that Freud, who took great interest in the unearthing of Pompeii and found in archaeological excavation a metaphor for the psychoanalytic recovery of the past, may provide an interesting parallel to Joyce in his development of similar metaphors for the workings of repression. If Freud's assimilation of archaeology into his topographical model of the mind has been well excavated, I would also add, however, that nineteenth-century theories of the unconscious, widely disseminated in popular culture, anticipated both Freud's attempt to unearth the human psyche and the use of archaeological metaphors, often conceiving the reading of dreams as a means of exploring the intricate archaeology of the mind.

Following Ellenberger's claim that, in nineteenth-century dynamic psychology, dream, hypnotism (formerly known as magnetic or mesmeric sleep), spontaneous somnambulism and related trance-like states were adopted as the main approach to the unconscious, several scholars have recently focused attention on Victorian watershed developments in the physiology of sleep and dreamy mental states. Natalya Lusty and Helen Groth, for instance, have questioned a «neat epistemic break between nineteenth- and twentieth-century approaches to dreaming» (2013: 7), thus demonstrating that Freud's psychoanalysis did not necessarily herald the emergence of modern dream theory as many scholars suppose. In the period under consideration, dreams and other dreamlike states could be nebulous concepts. Therefore, the categorisation of dreamy kinds of mental events was irregular and contested, and the uncertain status of dream-states had remarkable implications for the notions of consciousness and selfhood. The keen interest in dreams as revelation of a deeper self or otherwise submerged layers of the mind underwent significant shifts during the second half of the nineteenth century, culminating in James Sully's groundbreaking essay "The Dream as a Revelation" (published in 1893 in the influential *Fortnightly Review*), which Freud would approvingly cite in his own *The Interpretation of Dreams* a few years later, chiefly with reference to the palimpsest metaphor. As Groth elsewhere points out, «Sully's dream interpretation is equally concerned with the generative interplay between chaos and order, surface and depth» (2014: 114); moreover, he

employs numerous images of layering and stratifications which frequently appeared in the psychological discourse of the time. For instance, in his study not only does Sully argue that, «like some palimpsest, the dream discloses beneath its worthless surface-characters traces of an old and precious communication» (qtd. in Bourne Taylor - Shuttleworth 1998: 121); he also refers to an «unveiling during sleep of the more instinctive layers of our mental life» (*ibid*.: 118), or an «emergence into the full light of consciousness of deeper and customarily veiled strata of our nature» (*ibid*.: 118–19). By conceiving dreams as revelations allowing «the overlaid strata of old experience to come to light again» (*ibid*.: 120), he contends, «we may learn much concerning that organic substrate of our conscious personality which links us on to the animal series» (*ibid*.: 119). As Sully puts it, his conception mainly derives from contemporary envisaging of the brain as «a hierarchy of organs, the higher and later evolved seeming to control, and in a measure to repress, the functional activities of the lower and earlier» (*ibid*.: 118).

Dreams and repression, for instance, are closely related in *Ulysses* when Stephen Dedalus is involuntarily confronted with the ghostly apparition of his mother – for whose death he feels deep remorse – first during sleep in "Telemachus" and then in one of the hallucinatory visions in "Circe". Such revenant is clearly the materialisation of the character's repressed memories, showing that some images and recollections have the power to come back as forcefully as one tries to elude them:

> In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes. Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. *Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet:*

> *iubilantium te virginum chorus excipiat*. Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! No, mother. Let me be and let me live. (*U* 1.270-79)
>
> STEPHEN: Ho!
>
> *(Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word. A choir of virgins and confessors sing voicelessly.)*
>
> THE CHOIR: Liliata rutilantium te confessorum ....
>
> Iubilantium te virginum ..... (*U* 15.4155-65)

In these excerpts such an evil, repressed memory, which is distorted by Stephen's sense of guilt for not praying on his mother's deathbed, is so vivid as to become – as seems appropriate to a dream or a visionary, expressionistic, hallucinatory episode like "Circe" – the apparition of a ghost, and is clearly a twisted projection of the past onto the present, since the revenant comes back from the dead bearing traces of the original scene impressed on Stephen's mind mixed with elements of fantasy. The latter passage can be easily interpreted as typical Circean dream play or reverie, where spectral presences haunt the minds of the living and repeated phrases or leitmotifs haunt the text of the novel. However, it is also a complex literary representation of Freudian and pre-Freudian theories of the return of the repressed, especially considering Stephen's previous attempt to free himself from the burden of the past by uttering in despair «No, mother. Let me be and let me live». Therefore, by analysing the stratified representation of the characters' minds in *Ulysses*, as well as a series of dichotomies arising from the depiction of their inner life – changing surface versus sedimented depth, submerged/repressed past versus conscious present – it is possible to show that some of the ideas propounded by early

psychologists may have provided the substance for Joyce's understanding of the workings of mind, consciousness, the unconscious and memory portrayed in his masterpiece.

The field of physiological psychology in the mid-nineteenth century sought a theory of the mind which could explain varying and often troubling states of consciousness. As Anne Harrington argues in *Medicine, Mind, and the Double Brain* (1987), Victorian mental science put a great emphasis on the notion of the duality of the mind or "double consciousness", generally considered as a type of disorder concerning associative mechanisms or a form of disrupted memory. The label was variously applied to a spectrum of mental states ranging from insanity and dual personalities to dreams, reverie, somnambulism and mesmerism, and was generally based on what was known in neurology as "double brain", or the notion that each hemisphere of the brain might function as a distinct organ. All of this definitely reinforced popular fascination with the hidden movements of the mind outside conscious control. The assumption that personal identity mainly consisted of different layers – or, better, of an unconscious, deep self, created through different strands of latent memory and underlying a conscious, superficial self – often intersected with the physiological argument that the reason for such division was to be found in the structure of the brain. For instance, the authoritative British physicians Henry Holland and Arthur Wigan took a close interest in recollection and its pathological alterations, advancing the thesis that not only was the brain a double organ, but also that the cerebrum actually consisted of two distinct and separate brains, working either with or against each other, and thus possibly generating conditions of insanity or mental disorder. In his *Chapters on Mental Physiology* (1852), undoubtedly one of the most influential psychological studies to be published in the mid-nineteenth century, Holland formulated the concept of "double consciousness" seen as related to disorders in associative and mnemonic mechanisms. He claimed that

> It has been a familiar remark that in certain states of mental derangement, as well as in some cases of hysteria which border

> closely upon it, there appear, as it were, two minds [...]. If the latter explanation be admitted, then the cases just mentioned come under the description of what has been termed *double consciousness*; where the mind passes by alternation from one state to another, each having the perception of external impressions and appropriate trains of thought, but not linked together by the ordinary gradations, or by mutual memory. (1852: 185-87)

Holland's description – applying to all those phenomena in which there is a disruption in the unity of consciousness and mutual memory is absent – was taken to extremes by Wigan in his treatise entitled *A New View of Insanity: The Duality of the Mind* (1844), where he argued that the human mind is split between competing physical and moral brains, setting up a physically divided moral dichotomy. Wigan purported to prove

> that each cerebrum is a distinct and perfect whole, as an organ of thought. That a separate and distinct process of thinking or ratiocination may be carried on in each cerebrum simultaneously. [...] That from the apparent division of each cerebrum into three lobes, it is a natural and reasonable presumption that the three portions have distinct offices. (1844: 26-29)

Though sometimes considered as speculative at that time, such theories directly or indirectly paved the way for modern neuroscience and the study of the localisation of mental functions in specific parts of the brain, which had already been anticipated by Lavater's physiognomy and Gall's phrenology. Regardless of their scientific validity, the immense popularity of these notions cannot be denied, as shown by Joyce's allusion in "Circe" to "your knowledge bump" (*U* 15.2095), that is the phrenologists' assumption that particular mental faculties were localised in precise regions of the brain, and that the strength of a given faculty was evidenced by the prominence of its region in the skull.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the concept of "double consciousness" continued to be discussed as an extreme state of disordered association or disrupted memory and formed part of a much wider debate concerning the presence of hidden traces within the mind. William Hamilton's theory of "latent mental modification" remained a major influence on later psychological writing and in all subsequent debates on the presence of latent traces in human thought. In his *Lectures on Metaphysics* (1877), Hamilton moves from the assumption that «the infinitely greater part of our spiritual treasures, lies always beyond the sphere of consciousness, hid in the obscure recesses of the mind» (1877: 339). After distinguishing three degrees of what he calls "mental latency", he concludes that «the sphere of our conscious modifications is only a small circle in the centre of a wider sphere of action and passion, of which we are only conscious through its effects» (*ibid*.: 349). Hamilton's theory was also mentioned in William Carpenter's pivotal treatise entitled *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874), whose aim was to develop and reinterpret typical associationist assumptions by establishing a materialist analysis of the mind. Carpenter advances his theory of "unconscious cerebration" also in connection with the widespread notion of a difference between voluntary and involuntary memory. Quite interestingly, he describes this faculty in terms of superposed layers, namely as the "storing-up" of mental representations leaving an indelible trace on our present states of mind:

> Now there is very strong Physiological reason to believe that this "storing-up of ideas" in the Memory is the psychological expression of physical changes in the Cerebrum, by which ideational states are permanently registered or recorded; so that any "trace" left by them, although remaining so long outside the "sphere of consciousness" as to have *seemed* non-existent, may be revived again in full vividness under certain special conditions. (1874: 436)

Eventually, it was chiefly to the connection between conscious and unconscious memory that most discussions on the self or the role of

recollection in shaping personal identity reverted. While nineteenth-century psychologists recognised that the sense of a continuous self depends on the awareness of the connections between past and present experiences, they also acknowledged that memory actually contains much more than what we consciously recall, and may act as a repository of latent impressions. For instance, in his *Psychology: Empirical and Rational*, Maher considered memory both a conservative and a reproductive faculty essentially based on the mechanism of association, or better as

> the faculty of retaining, reproducing, and recognizing representations of past experiences. [...] During the whole of our life the greater portion of our mental possessions lies below the surface of consciousness, and exist only in a condition of potential resuscitation. It is the power of *recalling* and *recognizing* these dormant cognitions which completes and perfects this instrument of knowledge. (1890: 179)

The author also referred to the notions – recurring in contemporary intellectual debate – of «*spontaneous* or *automatic* memory, and *voluntary* memory, or the power of *recollection*» (*ibid*.: 180). It is noteworthy that, among the most common metaphors for such stratified conceptions of the self, one can find the archaeological analogy, in which the past is continually brought to the surface and thus made present, or the notion of palimpsest, representative of a vision of personal identity according to which memories and experiences are superposed but never erased. To quote a revealing example, in his *Problems of Life and Mind* (1874) G.H. Lewes – a novelist and journalist who also wrote extensively on psycho-physiological issues – contended that the mind

> is not a passive recipient of external impressions, but an active co-operant. [...] What the Senses inscribe on it, are not merely the changes of the external world; but these characters are commingled with the characters of preceding inscriptions. The sensitive subject

> is no *tabula rasa*: it is not a blank sheet of paper, but a palimpsest. (1874: 162)

As mentioned before, the notion of the palimpsest is particularly useful to account for the textual representation of consciousness, the unconscious and memory in *Ulysses*, characterised by countless refractions, stratifications and overlaps. As Susan Stanford Friedman puts it, «like a palimpsest, both psyche and literary text are layered, with repressed elements erupting in disguised forms onto the manifest surface of consciousness, of a text» (1992: 58). Therefore, Joyce's novel, actually a text where ghostly traces of former and coeval writings still remain, can be said to develop enduring metaphors for the architecture and workings of the human mind as well as eclectic, multi-layered constructions of selfhood which reverberated throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For instance, the fundamental role played by memory in the construction of personal identity acquires central importance in *Ulysses* and manifests itself as a delicate balance between the threat of a possible dissolution of the self and the function of recollection, which accumulates both personal experiences and narrative fragments in a coherent and teleological sequence. Moreover, it also calls into question notions of continuity and discontinuity, unity and fragmentation, surface and depth. The tension between the need to remember and the desire to leave behind one's past, along with the creation of a continuous conception of selfhood through the powers of personal memory, deeply concern the protagonists of the novel. Memory in *Ulysses* sometimes deals with the desire to recover a past that cannot be brought back, but more often with the attempt to conceal and restrain it. Since earlier experiences are frequently so unpleasant as to be resisted and repressed, another significant instance of stratification in the representation of the characters' subjectivity is the dichotomy between conscious present and submerged past, or between memory and repression, consciousness and the unconscious. The text of the novel thus resonates with psychological theories concerning the presence of latent traces of past events, thoughts and memories suddenly emerging and becoming manifest in the ordinary functioning of mental processes.

Several nineteenth-century psychologists paved the way for Freudian psychoanalysis in emphasising the capacity of powerful emotional experiences to leave enduring traces upon the mind, which represented an opportunity to explore altered mental states and recover submerged memories inaccessible to ordinary consciousness. Notions of shock and trauma, closely related to ideas about unconscious knowledge and conscious recall, formed a crucial aspect of the way in which physiological psychology envisaged the interdependence of consciousness, memory and the emotions, or attempted to think through the relations between mind and body. As Jill Matus interestingly remarks, «the term "trauma" emerged in the late nineteenth century when the label for a physical wound came to be associated with a mental state» (2009: 7). This notion clearly presupposed that «the mind had to be conceived of as physical, material and physiological – and therefore vulnerable – like the body» (*ibid.*). In reading *Ulysses*, therefore, it is compelling to focus attention on models of the unconscious at work in literary representations of a self whose wounds are invisible, but detectable in aberrations of mind, memory, affect and dream which, though linked in materialist science to the physical, are also associated with the psychological sphere.

Both Bloom and Stephen must face psychological impasses in their lives, that is, blocks and obstructions essentially deriving from dysfunctions of memory, or rather from a problematic relationship with traumatic occurrences such as Rudolph Virag's suicide or the deaths of May Dedalus and Rudy Bloom. In parallel with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century interest in the disruption of associative and mnemonic mechanisms, characters in *Ulysses* are paralysed by crucial experiences and by the consequent difficulty in remembering or coping with them. Furthermore, reproducing phenomena known as "unconscious cerebration" or "mental latency", the text of the novel manifests the characters' attempts to repress unpleasant thoughts or recollections which come back as vehemently as one tries to evade them. For instance, the traumatic event of Rudolph Virag's suicide is a persistent psychological impasse for the protagonist of *Ulysses*, who tries, to no avail, to overcome it. The loss of his father represents a

disturbing memory that frequently flashes through Bloom's mind provoking a deep sense of guilt. In the following extract from "Lotus-Eaters", the thoughts and visual perceptions combining in Bloom's stream of consciousness give rise, almost by chance, to the sudden recollection of Virag's death – activated by the idea of Ophelia's suicide in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – while seeing a playbill in the street, and repressed immediately after:

> Mr Bloom stood at the corner, his eyes wandering over the multicoloured hoardings. Cantrell and Cochrane's Ginger Ale (Aromatic). Clery's Summer Sale. No, he's going on straight. Hello. *Leah* tonight. Mrs Bandman Palmer. Like to see her again in that. Hamlet she played last night. Male impersonator. Perhaps he was a woman. Why Ophelia committed suicide. Poor papa! How he used to talk of Kate Bateman in that. Outside the Adelphi in London waited all the afternoon to get in. Year before I was born that was: sixtyfive. And Ristori in Vienna. What is this the right name is? By Mosenthal it is. *Rachel*, is it? No. The scene he was always talking about where the old blind Abraham recognises the voice and puts his fingers on his face. Nathan's voice! His son's voice! I hear the voice of Nathan who left his father to die of grief and misery in my arms, who left the house of his father and left the God of his father. Every word is so deep, Leopold. Poor papa! Poor man! I'm glad I didn't go into the room to look at his face. That day! O, dear! O, dear! Ffoo! Well, perhaps it was best for him. Mr Bloom went round the corner and passed the drooping nags of the hazard. No use thinking of it any more. Nosebag time. Wish I hadn't met that M'Coy fellow. (*U* 5.192-212)

Owing to what Freud – preceded by nineteenth-century theorists of "unconscious cerebration" and "mental latency" – would designate the return of the repressed, which dominates and impinges upon the present, Bloom, like Stephen, has never been able to fully come to terms with the deaths in his past or with the displeasing thoughts that he always dismisses or avoids. For both characters, traumatic experiences in connection with people they have lost may be able to activate other

repressed material and justify their deep sense of guilt and unease. Thus it seems appropriate that the figure of the deceased Rudolph Virag comes back, materialising as a spectre, in the "Circe" episode, which is much more adequate for ghostly apparitions, and where the characters must inescapably confront their latent fears and anxieties, but also their dreams and fantasies. Here Bloom encounters his hidden past, coping with his deep anguish over the memory of his father. Virag comes back from the underworld to admonish his son and unleash a profound sense of guilt linked to his Jewish origins and recanted Judaism:

> ([...] *A stooped bearded figure appears garbed in the long caftan of an elder in Zion and a smokingcap with magenta tassels. Horned spectacles hang down at the wings of the nose. Yellow poison streaks are on the drawn face*.) [...]
>
> RUDOLPH: What you making down this place? Have you no soul? (*with feeble vulture talons he feels the silent face of Bloom*) Are you not my son Leopold, the grandson of Leopold? Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers Abraham and Jacob?
>
> BLOOM: (*with precaution*) I suppose so, father. Mosenthal. All that's left of him. (*U* 15.248-64)

The paternity theme which, also through biblical allusions, was already at the heart of the previously quoted excerpt from "Lotus-Eaters" – and which permeates the whole novel, linking Bloom to both his deceased father Rudolph Virag and his dead son Rudy, but also connecting Stephen, who has disowned his natural father Simon Dedalus, to Bloom as spiritual father – comes back in this passage from "Circe" with equally complex intertextual overtones. As with Stephen confronting the ghost of his mother assailed by a deep sense of guilt, here Bloom's hallucinatory encounter with his dead father, merging real («yellow poison streaks», «drawn face») and visionary elements, could be easily interpreted as a representation of Freudian and pre-Freudian

theories of the return of the repressed. However, it may as well be a mocking re-enactment of the archetypal scene of Hamlet's encounter with his father's ghost, as is also evidenced by its script style. In other words, Joyce seems to appropriate coeval psychological discourse and adapt it to his own concerns as a writer confronting the ghosts of the past and the looming figure of Shakespeare as a model and spiritual father, with whom he engages in an intermittent dialogue throughout the whole novel. Not only does the distorted repetition of certain phrases and leitmotifs related to deceased parental figures link the characters' memory to textual memory, but this faculty also involves the allusion to, and reworking of, other texts of the literary tradition as intertextual memory. It seems clear that, while stressing the importance of recollection as a way of sustaining a coherent personal and authorial identity, *Ulysses* also shows a persistent preoccupation with movements of the mind which lay outside the control of conscious memory or the will, as well as an enduring fascination with multi-layered constructions of both self and text.

In conclusion, the representation of mental phenomena in Joyce's *Ulysses* seems to resonate with images and concepts that widely permeated the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cultural sphere through the new science of the mind, chiefly the dualism between surface and depth, conscious and unconscious states, voluntary and involuntary memory, or the notions of repression and mental latency. All of this bears witness to a general interest, long before the advent of Freudian psychoanalysis, in the attempt to excavate the human psyche and explore the intricate archaeology of the mind. In particular, within the novel's layered representation of consciousness, or inside the vast repository of the characters' personal memories of their own past life and experiences, special attention is paid to such traumatic events as the loss of parental and filial figures, that Stephen and Bloom desperately try to overcome and repress. This shows that, in the ever-shifting temporal dimension of *Ulysses*, the past is not simply "received" by the present in a voluntary act of recollection; rather, the present is actually "haunted" by the past and its latent traces, which are in turn modelled, reinvented and reconstructed by the present itself.

Memory in *Ulysses* has the potential to become a process of creative exchange in which past, present and future moments are allowed to interconnect. Such fluid representation of time at work in the novel is of course closely related to the question of identity and the continuity or discontinuity between former and actual selves; or, as Bloom puts it, «tomorrow is a new day will be. Past was is today. What now is will then morrow as now was be past yester» (*U* 15.2409-10). Not only does this passage reveal, once again, how concepts of memory, time, personal identity and text production entwine in the very fabric of *Ulysses*; it also self-reflexively points to the way in which a masterpiece of literary modernism was able to merge coeval cultural concerns, such as the focus on subjectivity and inner life, with scientific theories firmly rooted in the previous century. Just as Joyce's understanding of the psyche is depicted as stratified in *Ulysses*, so the novel relies upon a bedrock of pre-Freudian thought.

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