

Joyce with Derrida: An Elaboration on Their Critiques of Purism

Gilyoung Oh

I

James Joyce with Jacques Derrida? A strange bond between an extremely experimental modern writer and a theoretical champion of the post-modern and deconstructive philosopher? What is the thinkable connection between them? What does it mean when Derrida confesses his indebtedness to Joyce in terms of thought-experiment and style?: “Never have I imitated anyone so irresistibly” (“Two Words” 152). For Derrida, Joyce makes a head-start for his deconstructive thinking:

For Derrida, Joyce successfully subsumes innumerable metaphysical concepts such as platonic ideal forms, the Christian paternal creator, the unity of the subject (of the self, of divine beings, and so on) and the clear distinctions between a superior good and inferior evil (as well as the chains of other signifiers attached to these two). Paradoxically his writing is laden with obvious and canonical 'metaphysical' theses, but the operation of this writing has more

powerful deconstructive effects than a text proclaiming itself radically revolutionary without in any way affecting the norms or modes of traditional writing. (Longhley 81)

In sum, Derrida finds a prominent pioneer of deconstruction in Joyce, in that the latter has no scruples of inverting and deconstructing “the norms or modes of traditional writing” even though his writing is “laden with obvious and canonical ‘metaphysical’ theses.” What calls my attention is a “powerful deconstructive effects” of Joyce’s writings on the Western metaphysical concepts, especially on “the unity of the subject” that is a main topic of my essay. This essay aims at delving into the current theoretical relevance of Joyce’s (non-)fictional pronouncements as to the question of “the unity of subject” of the self, be it sexual, racial, or national, in conjunction with Derrida’s project of deconstruction of Western metaphysics.

The focus of this essay is chiefly given on their resounding and profound critiques of purism rooted in the logic of modern notion of sexual identity and relationship among others. A careful examination will be afforded to their trenchant reflections on the notion of the unity of the subject. Even though there exist some deconstructive approaches to Joyce, any detailed study of their engagement with purism has been rarely attempted. Most of the previous deconstructive readings of Joyce are afforded to their common engagement with rhetoric, style and the limit of signification (McArthur 228). The unquestioned notion of Western metaphysics in pure identity is a target on which both Joyce and Derrida do not draw back their critiques. Inasmuch as Joyce’s explication of the question of sexual identity resonates with the unfolding of contemporary discussions in gender theory and feminism, it cannot be unrelated to the seriousness and cogency of Derrida’s project of deconstruction. Joyce proffers a fundamental criticism of what Derrida may call the Western myth of origin, truth and purism, to name a few. A system of binary operation and distinction is at work in the phallogocentric mode of thinking. To make some headway in this difficult question, it may be useful to take a detour by posing the question of sexual and racial identity in Joyce’s

pronouncements that lay bare what are unrepresentable in metaphysical concepts: the feminine, the unconscious, and the racial other. Western metaphysics “assigns the origin and power of speech, precisely of logos, to the paternal position” (*Dissemination* 76). Put differently, “it is precisely logos that enables us to perceive and investigate something like paternity” (*Dissemination* 80). Joyce and Derrida stand on a common ground to problematize the obvious and canonical logic of logos which makes the function of patriarchy possible. They are commonly disgruntled with the validity of the binarism and essentialism of truth-untruth and man-woman in the discourse of sexual and racial identity.

Derrida’s provocative elaboration on the question of identity reminds me of the significance of Joyce’s unrelaxed strictures on the logic of purism. Joyce’s critique of purism is well rendered in both his fictional and non-fictional writings on the woman question. Joyce foreshadows Derrida in his trenchant reflection of the problematic conception of egalitarianism in feminist thoughts. The issue with which Joyce finds himself at odds is an inveterate idealism of the unity of the subject and the logic of binarism, which disregards the question of sexual difference. For example, *Ulysses* disrupts the conventional cultural connotations. It subverts the old-fashioned “dichotomous ordering” upon which meaning rests: “Open-ended and indeterminate in many respects, *Ulysses* tries to escape the dichotomous ordering of Western metaphysics” (Boheemen 6). Joyce’s dismantling of the dichotomous ordering is well illustrated in his grappling with the boundary of sexual identity. Joyce’s writings, be it fictional or non-fictional, document his revulsions at any kind of purism. The ferocious debate between the citizen and Bloom in the episode “Cyclops” of *Ulysses* and Joyce’s unquestionable alignment with Bloom’s mixed subject position, are exemplary in highlighting Joyce’s dissatisfaction with purism: “Bloom appeals to the contingencies of merely contiguous relationships as opposed to the nationalist concern with a lineage of spirit and blood which must be kept pure. Bloom’s insistence on contiguity underwrites his own figuration as a locus of contamination or hybridization as against the assimilative principles of nationalist ideology” (Lloyd 121-2). Joyce discloses, in his portrayal of Bloom, his discomfort

with the ideology of purism in “a lineage of spirit and blood which must be kept pure.” Rather Joyce prefers “the contingencies of merely contiguous relationships” and Bloom’s “figuration as a locus of contamination or hybridization.” The question of sexual or racial identity is not associated with any pure sexual or racial “lineage.” At issue are the effects of “contingencies” formed and modified in a given sexual and racial relationships:

i) Our civilization is a vast fabric, in which the most diverse elements are mingled, . . . In such a fabric, it is useless to look for a thread that may have remained pure and virgin without having undergone the influence of a neighbouring thread. *What race, or what language . . . can boast of being pure today?* And no race has less right to utter such a boast than the race now living in Ireland. Nationality . . . must find its reasons for being rooted in something that surpasses and transcends and informs changing things like blood and the human word. (*CW* 165-6; Italics mine)

ii) I am nauseated by their drive about pure men and pure women and spiritual love and love for ever: blatant lying in the face of the truth (*Letters II* 191-2)

Joyce does not recoil from his conviction that racism is crucially instrumental in the ideological influence of chauvinistic nationalism which looks for “a thread that may have remained pure and virgin.” Nationalism is nothing other than a purist ideology of “pure men and pure women.”

The question of how to locate Joyce in the issue of Irish nationalism is surely a hot issue of recent post-colonial debate on Joyce. The main trend tends to define him as a cosmopolitan who opposes what they call shallow Irish nationalism steeped in male chauvinism: “He[Joyce] rejected the limitations of a narrow and provincial nationalism in order to speak to a wider, international (and not purely ‘English’) forum, advocating internationalism over provincialism, advising the Irish to look towards Europe and the international community as its ‘bar of public opinion,’ rather than trying to define itself within English constructions of empire, race, and nationhood” (Cheng 47). This analysis is both right and wrong. It is

patent that Joyce “rejected the limitations of a narrow and provincial nationalism.” But it is wrong or at least rash to hastily conclude that Joyce is only a cosmopolite. Joyce’s critical stance toward Irish nationalism and his advocacy of internationalism defy any simplification. Rather his position remains unclassifiable. He is concerned with these two, not discarding one and taking the other. What matters is to elaborate on the question of how Joyce keeps himself away from Irish nationalism. In this sense, the following argument is also questionable: “For the pacifist, exiled, and multilingual Joyce, the ‘spiritual liberation’ of Ireland and the creation of the ‘conscience of my race’ involved getting out of the binary structure and into an internationalist, multilingual, and multiculturalist perspective” (Cheng 51). Recuperating the existing post-colonial readings of Joyce, Cheng falls into a pitfall of binary opposition that he arduously criticizes. His post-colonial reading is not fully attentive to the complex relatedness of the opposing party of provincialism and internationalism. The core of Joyce’s critique of British colonialism and Irish nationalism is that they share the common ground of racial and religious purism. Thus, Joyce is in opposition not only to British colonialism but to Irish nationalism. On the one hand, Joyce is not averse to examining the destructive effects of the long-standing British occupation of Ireland:

I find it rather naive to heap insults on England for her misdeeds in Ireland. A conqueror cannot be casual and for so many centuries the Englishman has done in Ireland only what the Belgian is doing today in the Congo Free State, and what the Nipponese dwarf will do tomorrow in other hands. . . . The English now disparage the Irish because they are Catholic, poor, and ignorant; however, it will not be so easy to justify such disparagement to some people. Ireland is poor because English laws ruined the country’s industries, especially the wool industry, because the neglect of English government in the years of the potato famine allowed the best of the population to die from hunger, and because under the present administration, while Ireland is losing its population and crimes are almost non-existent, the judges receive the salary of a king, and governing officials and those in public service receive huge sums for doing little or nothing. (*CW* 166-7)

On the one hand, Joyce pays careful attention to the barren situation of colonized Ireland. On the other hand, however, Joyce casts a suspicious view on the shallowness of Irish nationalism as well rendered in his unfavorably portrayed Irish nationalism and the Irish Revival in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce tends to consider culture as a complex and contingent process of hybridization. His ongoing critique of the unity of the subject attached to the logic of pure identity and homogeneity, is typically illustrated in his rendition of the Bloom-Molly couple in *Ulysses*. They are not pure Irish. They are racially and culturally hybridized. They are all unfixed and over-aculturated characters of identities. Molly's complex racial background commands our attention: "Molly is also polyracial—Irish, Jewish, and possibly Spanish. Molly is 'impure,' then, both sexually and racially. Yet Joyce gives this 'other' woman a voice. In fact, he gives her the last word" (Doyle 182). Joyce is an unflinching advocate for the "impure" and heterogeneous identities. Joyce's voice is met with Derrida's resounding attack on the logic of homogeneity: "The motif of homogeneity, the theological motif par excellence, is decidedly the one to be destroyed" (*Positions* 64). Joyce's destabilization of the male language of logos underlies his (in)famous experimentation with language and style in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

II

The episode "Oxen of the Sun" of *Ulysses* is exemplary for Joyce's conviction that "a language [is] so encyclopaedic" (*U* 14.1203). A point of interest is that the borrowed styles from Joyce's preceding authors in this episode are all male writers. Joyce induces, and inverts them simultaneously: "Stylistic pastiche, indirect quotation and allusion, and the characters' quotations of literary sources call into question of the authority and singularity of the father and the order of apostolic succession" (Lawrence 239). In "Oxen of the Sun," Bloom is firmly opposed to the male characters who have a complete disregard for a woman's suffering from

pregnancy and delayed delivery. Bloom refuses to align himself with the line of “the authority and singularity of the father and the order of apostolic succession.” He is in compassion from his heart with Mina Purefoy’s present suffering. The borrowed styles from Joyce’s preceding male writers are symptomatic of male characters’ common ignorance of female singularity. The young male characters in the episode attempt in vain to accommodate Purefoy’s suffering into their seemingly scientific language. Purefoy’s female voice is subjugated into the male interpretation of her suffering. This episode is “remarkable for the extent to which the paternity of authorship displaces the maternal, on the level of plot (the baby’s birth) and on the level of language (the development of the foetus)” (Lawrence 238). The male characters’ mental consciousness of superiority over a woman’s physical suffering appropriates the female pregnant body to the male science of medicine. It is a typical logic of the male appropriation or representation of the opposite sex.

In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce pushes his deconstructive thought-experiment to the extreme. His dismemberment of the English language is not merely an expression of Joyce’s disenchantment with the notion of pure language deemed free from the traces of other language. It is a strategical undermining of colonialism of British empire: “Joyce’s dislocutory and translating process of writing the English language – his transforming English to ‘unenglish’ – subverts linguistically the hegemony of British culture and its language” (Jones 181). Joyce’s attack on purism reaches a crescendo in *Finnegans Wake*. He questions and deconstructs the outmoded notion of pure and untainted language. Pure language is a myth. All languages are originally tainted with the traces of other languages. *Finnegans Wake* demonstrates Joyce’s genius in the deconstruction and mixture of all thinkable languages in the world:

His whole literary work can be seen as a very subtle Irish reappropriation of the English language. Joyce dislocated English, the language of colonization, not only by incorporating in it elements of every European language but also by subverting the norms of English propriety and, in keeping with Irish practice, using obscene and scatological vernaculars to make a laughingstock of

English literary tradition—to the point, in *Finnegans Wake*, of making this subverted language of domination a quasi-foreign tongue. (Casanova 315-16)

Against the notion of pure language Joyce poses his seminal idea that language is nothing other than “stolentelling” (*FW* 424.35). Writing is, for Joyce, always-already rewriting and “stolentelling.” The impure languages of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are “lost in . . . a puling sample jungle of woods [pure and simple jumble of words]” (*FW* 112.2-3). In “a puling sample jungles of woods,” the unity of the self and the purity of language could find no purchases. Viewed differently, Joyce’s dismemberment of the English language is an expression of his detoured struggle with British colonialism as Stephen confesses his self-consciousness in using of the ruler’s language:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his[the dean] lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (*P* 189)

Likewise, Joyce’s “soul frets likewise in the shadow” of the English language, as *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* demonstrate. Along with the deconstruction of purism in terms of language, the unquestioned axioms of racial and sexual identity are put on the scale of examination: “Joyce’s language evinces a progressive movement towards linguistic anarchy, defying wholeness and presence and the authority invested in a unified subject” (Cheng 85). Bloom’s dream of transsexuality in the episode “Circe” of *Ulysses* and each character’s multiple transformation in *Finnegans Wake* suggest that the notion of pure racial and sexual identity becomes an impossibility confronted with the realities of heterogeneous desire and deconstructed language: “All the dream-selves of the *Wake* interpenetrate: all the men are women, one might say, all the women men, a situation that undresses gender down to a matter of mere letters, carved

neither in stone nor in flesh” (Froula 301). The impressive scene of Bloom’s transvestite and transsexuality in the “Circe” episode put an emphasis on the fact that sexual identity is nothing other than a kind of masquerade “that undresses gender down to a matter of mere letters.” Sexual identity is not immutable.

III

Joyce replaces the outmoded notion of pure identity with that of “miscegenations on miscegenations” (*FW* 18.20). The name of the God, who is “I am that I am” in the doctrine of Christianity presupposes the God’s self-identity who is Logos itself. Joyce rephrases this as “I yam as I yam” (*FW* 604.23). Joyce fractures the Biblical logic of self-containment by introducing the overtone of the Latin word iam, already, suggesting difference at the heart of identity (Boheemen 155). Joyce’s newly envisioned community of “miscegenations on miscegenations” aims at “confusioning of human races” (*FW* 35.5) as impressively illustrated in Bloom’s utopic vision of Bloomusalem in *Ulysses*. Joyce’s sympathetic renditions of the Bloom-Molly couple in *Ulysses*, and the HCP- ALP couple in *Finnegans Wake*, express his vision of “miscegenations on miscegenations” where the notion of pure identity is dissolved:

Ulysses and (even more outrageously) the *Wake* lift a protean dissolution of all stable identity from base to superstructure, passing that great circuit of desire which is capitalist productivity through the domains of language, meaning and value, and consequently eroding the classical distinction between bourgeois ‘civil society’ . . . and bourgeois ‘culture’ the high-minded, harmonious stability of which is supposed precisely to mask and mystify the former set of practices. (Eagleton 316)

In the Joycean world, “all stable identity from base to superstructure” is

problematized and dissolved. Joyce's deconstruction of unified self and sexual differentiation in *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses* is contingent on the Derridean critique of the unified subject of the self. The universal and neutral subject is usually deemed the male subject. Joyce's engagement with the question of sexual difference is of significance, for it undermines the unquestioned universality of male subject. The notion of 'Man' as the universal and neutral pronoun of humanity excludes the half of its members. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* "dispel the very possibility of a simple identity for a race or a simple meaning with which that identity can be expressed" (MacCabe 117). The motif of "simple identity" is decidedly the one to be destroyed in Joyce's thought-experiment.

For this reason, Derrida's following provocative argument commands a careful examination: "This should not, however, be hastily mistaken for a woman's femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other of those essentializing fetishes" (*Spurs* 55: Derrida's italics). What Derrida emphasizes is the weight of relation that meddles in the question of sexual identity. Any theoretical discussion of sexuality may not be much fruitful unless it is discussed in term of sexual relationship. Elaborating on Nietzsche's problematic and scandalous argument on femininity, Derrida scrutinizes how the binarism of truth and untruth is translated into sexual relationship. At issue is the question of relationship that comes before identity. Male subjects take the role of interpreter onto themselves. The unquestioned notion of truth is already problematic, insofar as it excludes the feminine from the process of interpretation. In this gendered binarism of truth and untruth, the feminine is the name of untruth for truth. Derrida's point is not merely to designate woman as the other or untruth. Nor does he attempt to invert women's inferior position from the other and untruth to the superior level of the self and truth: "Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. . . . Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth" (*Spurs* 51). Derrida is distrustful of Lacan's theory of sexuality which is yet, in Derrida's view, confined within the binary logic of the self and the other:

Woman—her name made epoch—no more believes in castration’s exact opposite, anti-castration, than she does in castration itself. Much too clever for that (and we ourselves—who we?—might learn from her, or in any case from her operation) she knows that such a reversal would only deprive her of her powers of simulation, that in truth a reversal of that kind would, in the end, only amount to the same thing and force her just as surely as ever into the same apparatus. (*Spurs* 61)

Derrida does not recoil from his opposition to “the metaphorical fullblown sail of truth’s declamation, of the castration and phallogocentrism, for example, in Lacan’s discourse” (*Spurs* 61). Derrida refers to the two way by which sexual difference is incorporated and neutralized into phallogocentrism: conflict (Hegel/Nietzsche) and neutralization (Heidegger/Levinas).

Derrida is not unreservedly favor of feminism’s attack on patriarchy, inasmuch as feminism falls short of going beyond the given metaphysical binarism of the self and the other. What should be questioned is the logic of othering in sexual difference: “Feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man. And in order to resemble the masculine dogmatic philosopher this woman lays claim—just as much claim as he—to truth, science and objectivity in all their castrated delusions of virility” (*Spurs* 65). On a superficial reading, his critique sounds harsh. But the point of Derrida’s argument is that the project of feminism is problematic only if it fails to problematize the fundamental logic of “truth, science and objectivity.” Feminism may be at fault in reiterating woman’s non-being or woman’s unrepresentability. The core of what Derrida calls into question is how to rethink of sexual difference in sexual relationship. Foreshadowing Derrida’s thinking, Joyce concerns himself with the social mechanism by which sexual identity is conditioned and formed. At issue is to make a relevance of the question of colonialism to the woman question in Ireland, for the political, the religious, and the sexual are interrelated in Joyce’s writings. What we call feminist issues are inevitably intervened into the debate on colonial discourse, since the feminist issues cannot be ghettoized into a separate chapter in

the terrain of Irish colonial situation. Some biographical evidences are relevant in explaining the relatedness of politics to sexuality in Joyce's thoughts: "Joyce's politics were largely determined by attitudes to sexuality. Central to his commitment to socialism was his ferocious opposition to the institution of marriage, bourgeois society's sanctified disavowal of the reality of desire" (Fairhall 55). Joyce's position of radical off-centeredness to any existing social authority, voiced in Stephen's characterization, is relevant: "My mind rejects the whole present social order and Christianity" (*Letters II* 48). Joyce desires, following Blake, of "spiritual rebellion against the power of this world" (*CW* 215).

Joyce's disagreements with the existing Irish nationalism, feminism and cosmopolitanism make a large topic into which I am neither obliged nor equipped to enter here. I qualify myself to the elaboration on Joyce's counterweight to the norm of the unity of the subject. Joyce in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* holds racial and sexual purism in abeyance: "[W]hat I [Joyce] object to most of all in his [Griffith] paper is that it is educating the people of Ireland on the old pap of racial hatred" (Ellmann 237). The cornerstones of shallow nationalism like unwavering male-chauvinism and racism, fail to accommodate Joyce's growing fascination with the new ethics of equality in sexual and racial difference. Joyce is cautious about the possibility of Irish nationalism being reduced to a male parochialism: "Middle-class nationalist leaders needed to mobilize the peasantry, but not to the point where their own privileges were thereby jeopardized, and the balancing act was becoming steadily harder to pull off" (Fairhall 94). Irish nationalism is in nature a middle class and male-oriented movement bereft of some meaningful involvements with the other classes and women. Women are generally excluded from Irish nationalism as brilliantly portrayed in the short story "A Mother" of *Dubliners*. A crucial problem with Irish nationalism is that it plays by the same rule of the colonizer's binarism of the self and the other. Refuting the supremacy of Anglo culture, Irish nationalism takes the position of the self in its ferocious advocacy of Celtic culture: "Celticism or Irish Nationalism tried to do for the 'Irish race' what Anglo-Saxonist racism had done for the 'English race,' by exalting the

Self's own proclaimed racial and cultural superiority in comparison to all other races/cultures" (Cheng 49). This is a mirror image of colonialism. In Irish nationalism less than in British colonialism, a certain unchanging racial purity and essence is assigned by the logic of binary opposition of the self and the other. Irish nationalism, assuming the position of the self on itself, endows British colonizer with the position of the other. Britain gets tainted with the stigma of racial otherness. Pure alterity or otherness cannot get the coverage in a given colonial situation which is afforded to the hegemonic colonizer.

A young colonial would-be artist, Stephen's distrust of any racial and national identity expressed in his ferocious dispute with Davin on the issues of Irish nationalism and the Irish Revival in *A Portrait*, recuperates his creator's similar thinking. Both Bloom's and Stephen's shared dislikes of "orthodox religious, national, social and ethical doctrines" (*U* 17.24-5) may be considered an expression of Joyce's deep-down discomfort with purism in terms of religion, race, sex, and nationhood. Stephen does not align himself with the Irish revivalists who unreservedly idolize Irish peasant as the prototype of pure Irish history. Stephen retains his realistic view: "I really don't think that the Irish peasant represents a very admirable type of culture" (*SH* 54). Stephen keeps himself at bay from idealism couched in the slogan of the Irish Revival: "The [English] intelligence of an English city is not perhaps at a very high level but at least it is higher than the mental swamp of the Irish peasant" (*SH* 55). Stephen "shows how the pursuit of an essential racial and national identity, whether retrieved or constructed anew, is always already compromised by the colonizer's stereotypes, ingredients of which have invaded and occupied that identity" (Valente 37). Joyce's revulsion at the chauvinistic blindness of Irish nationalism is captured in a ferocious discussion between Bloom and the citizen in the "Cyclops" episode of *Ulysses*. The citizen, a male representative of Irish nationalism, reveals not only the problems with the conventional notion of male-centered citizenship, but also the underbelly of Irish nationalism as an unifying ideology of homogeneity. Joyce makes a mockery of the seemingly universal male citizenship in a tour-de-force characterization of the

citizen. The citizen is a modern Cyclops who gets trapped in the one-eyed logic of essentialist nationalism in pure blood and raciality. The citizen stubbornly refuses to acknowledge Bloom as his fellow Irish citizen, since the latter is an impure Jew.

This is a familiar logic of colonialism encoded by the binarism of the self and the other. It is thus understandable in the discourse of purism that the female subject is excluded and even condemned as Mr. Deasy, an ideological comrade of the citizen in their shared beliefs in pure Celticism, brags as follows: "I just wanted to say, he[Deasy] said. Ireland, they say, has the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the jews. Do you know why? . . . Because she never let them in, Mr Deasy said solemnly" (*U* 2.437-42). Mr Deasy haughtily argues that he fights for the right: "A woman brought sin into the world. . . . A woman too brought Parnell low. Many errors, many failures but not the one sin. I am a struggler now at the end of my days. But I will fight for the right the till the end" (*U* 2.390-96). But Deasy's harsh rebuke of women as the sinners in the biblical terms ironically undercuts his seemingly heroic argument. His notion of "the right" only proves an unconvincing presentation of an unbalanced social contract that only accommodates the male subjects in the name of equality and liberty while excluding women from it. Joyce's critical stance toward Irish nationalism stems, along with his unwavering love of Ireland, from his dissatisfaction with essentialist universalism. Essentialist universalism finds its illustration in men's prejudices and biases about women. These prejudices and biases are not merely a misconception of reality. The notion of sexual or racial identity is produced by the given ideological representation of it. Identity always-already presupposes a hegemonic social relation and its representation.

Irish feminism is repressed as the other in the macro-political discourse of Irish nationalism: "In the fight against the enemy from the outside, something within gets even more repressed and 'woman' becomes the mute but necessary allegorical ground for the transactions of nationalist history" (Radhakrishnan 84). Irish feminism is put off the agenda of Irish nationalism. Irish nationalism's consistent

policing of female sexuality does not escape the unquestioned logic of gender division in the ideological and legal confinement of women to the domestic sphere: "In the cities, the rising Irish bourgeois middle class followed Victorian English dictates of femininity" (Scott 14). The difficulties in locating Joyce's ambiguous position toward Irish nationalism and feminism is largely due to the fact that he does not take effortlessly the reverse direction of cosmopolitanism: "Yeats and Joyce knew this and in that respect they went beyond nationalism into a universalism for which history, myth and legend supplied the imagery merely. The supreme action was writing" (Deane 173). This is a recurrent misunderstanding of Joyce's position regarding the Irish question. Joyce retains a suspicious view on the shallowness and provinciality of Irish nationalism. But it is similarly misleading to conclude that Joyce is accordingly a cosmopolitan who advocates an old-fashioned internationalism or "a universalism" going beyond nationalism. Both stances toward the Joycean engagement with the Irish question are at fault in falling short of capturing Joyce's fundamental questioning of identity and difference in terms of sex, race, religion, nationhood and so on. Joyce performs a kind of double-front fights not only with the purism of Irish nationalism, but also with that of universalism and internationalism. Joyce's contrived distance from Stephen, an ambitious young artist who desires to leave his "reality of experience" (*P* 252) of Ireland, dramatically expresses the author's suspicion of naive internationalism.

Joyce is concerned with both sides of nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The answer may come from a careful examination of difficulties of Joyce's engagement with the question of "[n]ational consciousness, which is not nationalism, is the only thing that will give us an international dimension" (Fanon 198). Fanon's argument casts a warning to Stephen in *A Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*, who desires to be a true national artist. At issue is not to define the nature of national consciousness. As identity is formed in the process of representation, so is national consciousness. Culture abhors all simplification. Joyce's ambiguous and complex engagement with Irish nationalism and feminism is explainable in terms of his distance from any sweeping logic of simplification. Joyce's thought-experiment on the question of

sexual difference is closely intertwined with his deconstruction of the fixed ideas of immutable identity. He envisions a new notion of sexual and racial identity in process and relation, far from a fixed form. In a sense, Joyce foreshadows Derrida's project of deconstruction as the critique of purism: "everytime I write, . . . Joyce's ghost is always coming on board"("Two Words" 14).

(Chungnam National University)

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Abstract

Joyce with Derrida: An Elaboration on Their Critiques of Purism

Gilyoung Oh

This essay aims at delving into the current theoretical relevance of Joyce's (non-)fictional pronouncements as to the question of "the unity of subject" of the self, be it sexual, racial, or national, in conjunction with Derrida's project of deconstruction of Western metaphysics. The focus of this essay is chiefly given on their resounding and profound critiques of purism rooted in the logic of modern notion of sexual identity and relationship among others. A careful examination will be afforded to their trenchant reflections on the notion of the unity of the subject. The unquestioned notion of Western metaphysics on binary opposition of sexual identity is a target on which both Joyce and Derrida do not draw back their critiques. Inasmuch as Joyce's explication of the question of sexual identity resonates with the unfolding of contemporary discussions in gender theory and feminism, it cannot be unrelated to the seriousness and cogency of Derrida's project of deconstruction.

Joyce proffers a fundamental criticism of what Derrida may call the Western myth of origin, truth and purism, to name a few. A system of binary operation and distinction is at work in the phallogocentric mode of thinking. To make some headway in this difficult question, it may be useful to take a detour by posing the question of sexual and racial identity in Joyce's pronouncements that lay bare what are unrepresentable in metaphysical concepts: the feminine, the unconscious, and the racial other.

Joyce's ambiguous and complex engagement with Irish nationalism and feminism is explainable in terms of his distance from any sweeping logic of

simplification. Joyce's thought-experiment on the question of sexual difference is closely intertwined with his deconstruction of the fixed ideas of immutable identity. He envisions a new notion of sexual and racial identity in process and relation, far from a fixed form.

■ **Key words** : James Joyce, Jacques Derrida, Sexuality, Feminism, Gender Study, Identity, Irish Literature, Colonialism, Deconstruction, Purism, Nationalism

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