SCRIPTURAL POETICS IN JOYCE'S
FINNEGAN'S WAKE

Gian Balsamo

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Gian Balsamo
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Palo Alto, October 2001
rather, according to the models offered by reading and discourses, a
fascination with other than a discourse and their analyses. In parts this
larger, according to the model of other perspection of consciousness, as
encer, some of the most challenging thinking could be contained no
material discipline of the humanistic, as well as social and natural-sc
 lenses. Even in philosophy, perspectively in various ways the methodological
insights, such as the notion of understanding, methodological
by re-introducing their terms, modes, and methods in history and context.
als and their discourses into general scientific research, the whole spectrum of humanities, disciplines
vues of reading and a new ethos and self-understanding, criticism began
within the ambit of "theory" enhanced and empowered by new tools.
To re-introduce reading and textual interpretation as they encountered
complex intellectual problems of the day, begun to be considered in certain
sense, the most effective means of penetrating the inarticulate
necessity. The most effective means of penetrating the inarticulate
vance and national claims to define the growing up of philosophy in the
helps to develop. Since roughly the 1900s, literary criticism has ad-
caption of literary-critical interpretation that the work endorses and con-
need to begin by witnessing on the revolution in the method and form.
until years, of James Joyce. To fully appreciate this book's significance,
als, reading's book on the methodological politics, or more precisely the shift.
A new age for literary criticism is at work affirming itself in China.

Vanderbilt University
Professor of Comparative Literature and Religion Studies

by William Trian

Literature, Literacy, and the Intellectual Revolution of Literary Criticism

Preface
the two around their common investment in typology. This is what Balsamo’s book brings out in exquisitely detailed and carefully argued ways.

Balsamo begins his argument from a critique of presence as never simple and only itself but rather always borrowed from and contaminated by non-presence, by a remembered past and/or an anticipated future. This is conspicuously the case in Scriptural typology, where each character or event intrinsically refers to others and has its “own” being only outside itself in these relations. Furthermore, this predicament actually illuminates a general condition of whatever beings we encounter in reading and perception and indeed in any type of experience whatever. The intrinsic iterability of literary existence is paradigmatic for any experience of being. Balsamo’s critique of presence thus catalyzes a reassessment of the relation between types and their antitypes, making it no longer a one-way street from origin to fulfillment but rather a process of ongoing retrospective revision by which filiation is reversed and the chronological progenitor (the Biblical type) is produced in the sense of being radically redefined by the chronological successor (the Joycean reprise and re-elaboration of the Biblical type). This is actually the dynamic of Scriptural typology as the church fathers and medieval theologians, quoted extensively by Balsamo discovered it.

Scriptural typology, as practiced and as re-elaborated constantly throughout subsequent ages of interpretation, is indeed remarkable for the way it resurrects typical characters and features of tradition in order to reanimate them in new historical contexts. This relation of reinterpretation and revitalization characterizes already, paradigmatically, the New Testament as a recasting of the Old. The New Testament had radically displaced the authority of the Old. It was an interpretive revolution that revealed the true meaning of Moses and of every Old Testament motif in Jesus and therefore as outside the Hebrew canon altogether. Thus Scriptural typology itself provides the basis of a revolutionary relation between type and antitype, reversing chronological relations of filiation. This revolutionary potential is obscured and betrayed only by certain tendencies to doctrinal narrowing which, for Balsamo and presumably already for Joyce himself, are represented emblematically by Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas’s codification of typological hermeneutics into the famous system of the four-fold senses built on the literal, historical sense misrecognizes the interpretive, totally revisionary essence of the process itself, with no static sense that can remain fixed and intact outside it. Something analogous happens in Aquinas’s theology of the Eucharist, which, as Balsamo shows in Rituals of Literature, loses the sense of full actualization of the event of ritualistic sacrifice in its liturgical interpretation.

What is so specially revealing in Joyce, especially the Joyce of Finnegans Wake, is the way language openly displays the amalgamations and accretions and permutations by which it is temporally constituted in constant negotiations between its reservoirs of crystallized meaning and its projections and promises of possibilities of sense. Language viewed and exposed thus is an archaeology that is also a teleology, showing the potentialities that were inherent in linguistic elements all along but only in terms of their distant progeny and prospects born openly to the light of day in language centuries and ages later. This progeny itself then actually filiates its own ancestry by the new twists and turns—which can include radical shifts and reversals—that it gives to its heritage as a whole. Through hints at the micro-linguistic level, Joyce’s Ham becomes the pivot-point for re-reading the Biblical Ham as well as Shakespeare’s Hamlet in a startling new light, specifically the lurid light cast by the scene of primal incest that remains so largely latent and implicit in the precedents, particularly in the Genesis story of Noah and his sons, but is worked out in excruciating detail—that is, with reference also to the primal sacrifice of the Crucifixion—in its later Joycean incarnation. Joyce’s rendering in fact becomes an unreserved revelation or apocalypse of this Scriptural type, to use and abuse, that is, to mutate and recreate another category typical of Scripture itself and key to Balsamo’s reconstruction of “Scriptural poetics.”
Joyce’s appropriations, disappropriations and re-elaborations or re-inventions of Biblical types are not only anachronistic, making thereby the child the father of the man. They are also anarchic. Typological engendering is a mutual process for both the type or prefiguration and its anti-type or fulfillment without any element that is any more origin than destination, more beginning or “arché” than mediation. There can thus be no fixed doctrinal or even semantic paradigm that delimits a priori the range of significances that these types bear or can take on. Joyce’s linguistic procedures of amalgamation, accretion and abbreviation, substitution and emendation work in unrestrained ways to bring novel significance and latent, unsuspected relations out of each and every type every whichway related to one another. Joyce exploits especially etymological sedimentations, as well as proleptic suggestions of homophonies, very often crossing between and among various different languages, in the words that name and describe his types in order to release them into this ambit of unrestricted connectedness.

These techniques simply extend and enhance the operations of language already inherent and at work in the Bible itself, together with its adherent tradition of interpretation. This is an anarchy in which time no longer binds things into unilateral relations of domination and derivation. Time rather operates flexibly as a medium for freely ranging backwards and forwards, revising and revisioning past types which are only whatever they can become in being reinvented. This essentially is the legacy of Scriptural typology, when it is unbounded from imposed dogmatic superstructures, and it finds its fulfillment and in a manner its apotheosis in the writings of James Joyce. Such is the revelation of the process of reading and interpretation as it works on the basis of typological transformation that Balsamo enables us to discern with acute clairvoyance in the tradition that links the Bible together with Joyce.

Balsamo’s richly elaborated arguments help us estimate more accurately just how profoundly the reciprocity of text and interpretation has fundamentally changed the statute of literary criticism in recent decades. Literary works are shown to be fully realized—and thus in a significant sense to be actually “made” (“poïeta”)—by their interpretations. The literary critic is no longer confined to a role of producing commentary on a static text and canon but assumes responsibility as an agent in performing the texts and producing the visions of literature and thus in catalyzing the formation (and destruction) of literary canons. The Bible and Joyce, connected via a (dis)continuous tradition, as excavated by Balsamo, form an axis that is peculiarly revealing and in some ways normative for the sort of revisionary, projective and retrospective, dynamic that has in just this sense revolutionized criticism in relation to literature. The Bible, as the archetypal literary text and model for all canons, is placed in a relation of being anachronistically engendered by the ultra-modernist project of James Joyce. This is how the tradition and canon have to live, if they are going to go on living, and it is in fact how they always have lived throughout the historical past. To this extent, the fracturing and demise of an invulnerable, intact canon is shown to be present in the core and origin of this canon itself, as inseparable from the canon’s very own possibility.

Curiously, the assertion of autonomy by literary criticism as a speculative discipline rivaling or even absorbing philosophy, theology, and the whole spectrum of anthropologies turns out to be the most convincing testimony to the authority of literature in the contemporary world and in the midst of its crisis. Precisely literature’s lack of intellectual foundations, duplicated by the criticism that translates it into intellectual discourse, sets it free to be the sort unqualified, untrammelled inquiry into the undelimited field of all that concerns human beings. These concerns are in some way leveraged from the ultimate concerns traditionally treated in the field of religion. For literature, understood as Balsamo understands it in this book—and in the more deliberately theological and anthropological pages of his complementary study, Rituals of Literature—is transfigured as liturgy, as liturgical reenactment of primordial rites of sacrifice,
William Pride: Philosophy in Practice: "Philosophy's Role in Science and Religion."

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In science, philosophy plays a crucial role in providing a framework for understanding the nature of reality and the limits of human knowledge. It helps scientists develop the conceptual tools necessary for formulating theories and interpreting data. Philosophy also provides a critical perspective on scientific claims, helping to ensure that they are grounded in reason and evidence, rather than in unexamined assumptions.

In religion, philosophy offers a means of grappling with the profound questions of life, death, and the meaning of existence. It enables believers to articulate their faith in a way that is coherent and intellectually rigorous. At the same time, philosophy challenges religious beliefs and practices, encouraging participants to reflect on their assumptions and motivations.

In practice, philosophy's role in science and religion is not limited to the ivory tower. Philosophical perspectives can be applied to everyday life, helping individuals make informed decisions and live more fulfilling lives. Whether guiding our actions or informing our understanding of the world, philosophy remains a vital discipline that enriches our lives in countless ways.

This essay explores the relationship between philosophy and science, examining how these fields interact and influence each other. It also considers the role of philosophy in religion, examining how it can be used to deepen our understanding of religious concepts and to foster a more thoughtful and engaged approach to faith.

In conclusion, philosophy's role in science and religion is a complex and multifaceted one. By providing a critical perspective and guiding us in our inquiries, philosophy helps us to be more informed, thoughtful, and reflective in our understanding of the world and our place in it.

William Pride: Philosophy in Practice: "Philosophy's Role in Science and Religion."