JAMES JOYCE AND THE SLOVENIANS: AUTO- AND HETERO-STEREOTYPES

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James Joyce was born in Dublin but grew up as a writer in Trieste during his more than ten years there, from 1904 until the Great War and then again until 1920. Joyce and Nora Barnacle were on the way to Trieste, via Paris and Zürich, in order for Joyce to take up his first job at the Berlitz School in the major Habsburg military port of Pula/Pola at the tip of the Istrian peninsula, which all foreign citizens had to leave for fears of counterespionage in 1905. He and Barnacle eventually ended up in Trieste, the most important port of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the gateway for Slovenians who wanted to migrate abroad by ship. During Joyce's stay there, Trieste was populated by the two biggest national groups, Italians and Slovenians, as well as Austrians, Jews, Greeks, Czechs, Hungarians, Serbians, and other (mostly Slavic) nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Karst hinterland, however, was predominantly populated by Slovenians. It was there that Joyce came in close contact, professionally and privately, with guite a few important Slovenians in the fields of economy, politics and art, including during his tenure teaching at the Berlitz school of languages. For example, he became acquainted with Amalija Globočnik from Ljubljana, who taught Croatian and with whom Joyce became very friendly (Letters II, 75).

Herbert Gorman's *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (1941), which is based on Joyce's notes, shows that Joyce in fact experienced Ljubljana – or *Laibach* (frequently also spelt *Laybach*) as it was still called during the last decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – first-hand, although it was for only a single night. Joyce and Barnacle were on their way to the Adriatic port by train and in the late evening on 19 October 1904 they got off by mistake in Ljubljana, where they had to spend that night alfresco:

The train rushed southward and after an interminable period halted in the station of what appeared to be a great city, surely the end of the strange new journey. The young couple dismounted from their compartment and made their way out of the station and into the streets. A puzzled inquiry brought them the disturbing information that they were in Laibach (now called Ljubljana) some seven hours from Trieste. The train they had deserted was already hooting its way through the darkness, for it was night, and there would be no more traffic for the south and Trieste until the dawn came. The two travellers crept into a near-by garden and remained there until the morning. There was an Observatory here and they watched and counted the stars, that great wheel of light that glowed above the mysterious city, and agreed that they were bright and glorious. The rich odour of autumnal earth suspired about them and they were not unhappy at all. (Gorman 131)

Today, Ljubljana is the capital of the Republic of Slovenia, which achieved its statehood and independence in 1991. The Slovenian sculptor Jakov Brdar (born in 1949) made a small monument testifying to Joyce's fleeting visit to the city by mistake, which one can see at the entrance to platform 1 at the Ljubljana Central Railway Station (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). Brdar's stylised bronze gutter grate, beside a plaque about Joyce as a writer, is really a metaphor, showing not only that James's and Nora's nocturnal moments in Ljubljana were fleeting, but also how quickly one's life trickles through our fingers to disappear through the gutter grate into the underworld of no return. The one half of the bones of a fish probably signifies the sea, which they hoped to find in Trieste, but of course was not there in Ljubljana.



Fig. 1 and Fig. 2. Jakov Brdar's plaque and grate at Ljubljana Central Railway Station. Photos by Igor Maver

Also, in the 1994 book *Noč v Ljubljani* (*Night in Ljubljana*) a group of Slovenian literati wrote about their personal fictionalised views of Joyce's brief, unexpected overnight stay in Ljubljana in 1904 on his way to Trieste.

In the first part of my chapter, I will address Joyce's interaction with the Slovenians living in Trieste and / or the city of Ljubljana. Amongst other aspects, this section will focus on auto- and hetero-stereotypes of Stage Irishness – clichés which tie in with the late Victorian concept of the 'Oriental Paddy,' which English popular culture misattributed to the proverbially 'unruly' peoples living in the South-Eastern parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the chapter's second part, I will focus on Trieste as a place of Joycean inspiration as far as Slovenian literature is concerned. The main focus will be on Drago Jančar's Slovenian novella-collection *Joyce's Pupil* (2008) – a fictionalised account of the encounter of Joyce and his Berlitz School pupil Boris Furlan known from Richard Ellmann's biography *James Joyce* (1959, revised 1982). With a grain of salt, Jančar's book may be considered 'A Slovenian Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' and thus deserves scholarly attention in the fields of Joyce Studies and cultural circulation between Ireland and the European continent.

Heteroglossia: The Irish and the 'Oriental' Paddy

The cosmopolitan Adriatic city of Trieste had a major – exoticist and orientalist – influence on Joyce's writing in *Ulysses* and helped to shape his views on national identity, stereotypes, and nationalism. Upon their arrival in Trieste, in late October 1904, Joyce left Barnacle in the gardens outside the train station to find an accommodation for the night.¹ When they were in Piazza Grande just outside the station,² he got caught up in a brawl with drunken English sailors and was arrested. Living up to the Irish Paddy image under the influence of alcohol, he was released within a few hours thanks to the English Consul, so he could finally re-join Barnacle waiting for him in the square outside the railway station. Typologically speaking, this 'first night' in Trieste may be considered a kind of re-enactment of the first – and only – night they spent in Ljubljana.

Although, anecdotally, he lived up to certain clichés of Stage Irishness in his own proclivities towards drink, the sober Joyce was probably not willingly staging his Paddy-like Irishness while living in Trieste during his formative years as an Irish writer in the diaspora. Indeed, as he observed that the South-Eastern European people living in the Habsburg Empire in general, and in Trieste as a multi-cultural hotspot in particular, were subject to clichés based on the Paddy-concept of Stage Irishness, Joyce started to see the need to deconstruct the traditional late-Victorian 'Oriental Paddy' images of the 'unruly' Hungarians (mostly of Jewish descent as far as Trieste is concerned), Greeks, Slovenians, Serbians, Croatians, Turks, and others. The resonances and affinities that Joyce observed in Trieste between Stage Irish stock types and orientalised Hungarian stereotypes became a significant theme of *Ulysses* and an inspiration for the depiction of its protagonist Leopold Bloom.

Although her husband, the author and explorer Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) – who served several years as British Consul in Trieste, where he also died (see Maver 17-23) – held a different opinion, the Trieste-based Lady Isabel Burton (1831-1896) wrote condescendingly about the Hungarians. Referring to the Victorian Irish novelist Charles Lever,³ Lady Burton re-fashioned Stage Irishness into what she called the "Hungarian" phenomenon of the "Oriental Paddy" from the Austro-Hungarian Empire with its imperial interest in the Balkan Peninsula:

As regards politics and finance, Buda-Pest is simply a modern and eastern copy of Dublin. The Hungarian magnate still lives like the Squirren and Buckeen of the late Mr. Charles Lever's "earliest style;" he keeps open house, he is plundered by all hands, and no Galway landowner of the last generation was less fitted by nature and nurture to manage his own affairs. [...] And where, we may ask, is the power that can muzzle these eastern ban-dogs? Who shall take away the shillelaghs of these Oriental Pad-dies? (Burton 506-7)

¹ For Triestine itineraries of Joyce, see Crivelli.

² Today, the Piazza Grande is called Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia, and is situated just next to the emblematic Habsburg statue of the Austrian Empress Sisi, Elizabeth of Austria – erected after her death in 1898 in Geneva – who apparently liked Trieste very much.

³ Elisabetta d'Erme's chapter in the present volume adds further context by demonstrating what Lady Burton here ignores, namely the circumstance that Lever applied the Stage Irish cliché of the Paddy to the Hibernian Pro-English landowning elite to satirise the 'English' lifestyle of the landed gentry rather than the Irish peasants.

In this context, we can see more clearly the critique of this rhetoric of the Oriental Paddy that Joyce embeds in his depictions of Bloom as a truly cultivated and peaceloving person who is the descendant of a Jewish-Hungarian diasporic family that migrated to Dublin via the Austro-Hungarian cities Szombathely, Vienna, and Budapest (Joyce, *Ulysses* 17.535). In *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste* 1904-1920, John McCourt identifies several Trieste-based Hungarian Jews who were Joyce's friends and who inspired the making of Joyce's protagonist. Bloom, in fact, represents a deconstruction of the negative hetero-stereotype of the 'Oriental Paddy' – an aspect triggered off by Joyce's multicultural and transcultural Trieste experiences, where Jewishness and oriental(ist) features, including the Slavonic European 'Other,' were considered as positive and enriching:

In Trieste, Joyce came to know several Hungarians, including Nidia Frigyessy Castelbolognese, president of II Circolo dei Magiari, whose father was born near Budapest, and Teodoro Mayer, founder and owner of *II Piccolo* and *II Piccolo della Sera*, the city newspapers that led the irredentist struggle (McCourt 94).

During his time at the multi-national Adriatic port of Trieste, Joyce absorbed a vast array of cultural, linguistic, and political influences. Among these, the Slovenian influence was an important one, and it is visible in *Ulysses*, where many Slovenian words are to be found. As Mina M. Đurić observes, in the "multilingual context" of the "Cyclops" episode of Ulysses, "the South Slavic material is incorporated in the exclamations of toasts: 'hoch, banzai, eljen, zivio, chinchin, polla kronia, hiphip, vive, Allah [...] evviva"" (Đurić 176; Joyce, Ulysses 12;600), where we observe "živio"/"long live." As a polyglossic text containing abundant multi-lingualism and incessant code-switching, Finnegans Wake is deeply imbued with the polyglot community which Joyce encountered during his Trieste years including Trieste-based Slovenians such as Boris Furlan or Amalija Globočnik. Like the Triestino spoken in Trieste - the lingua franca-like dialect fusing Italian, Slovenian, Croatian, Austro-German, and other languages - the 'Wakese' language of Finnegans Wake may be considered a polyglot construct encompassing multiple languages. Distortions and corruptions of Slovenian (and Croatian) words abound in Finnegans Wake (see Leeming 289-309), such as "Cheevio" (Wake 321) and "zivios" (548) for the toast "živio." A prominent example in the Wake is Bog/God, as it appears in the English-Slovenian phrase "by the wrath of Bog" (76). Joyce often resorted to the Italianised Slavonic languages and the Triestinised German and was frequently inspired by the Italian satirical weekly La Coda del Diavolo. In the sentence "Many a diva devoucha saw her Dauber Dan at the priesty pagoda Rota ran" (Finnegans Wake 466), for instance, "devoucha" suggests the small Slovenian Karst town of Divača not far from Trieste on the Karst plateau, and "Dauber Dan" recalls the Slovenian greeting "Dober dan" (Good day), while "Rota" refers to a well-known Triestine musician of the period. Due to his keen interest in the cinema, Joyce would have very likely known about the Slovenian actress Ita Rina (1907-1979) – the "diva" born in "Divača," who reached international fame between the two wars and later rejected Hollywood offers for her married life. Indeed, Joyce established the first Dublin cinema, the Volta Cinematograph, in 1909 after seeing a cinema performance in Trieste. The Volta had to be closed in 1910, with a great loss for the investors, who were primarily rich Slovenian entrepreneurs from Trieste, such as Giovanni Reb(e)c, Francesco Novak, and Antonio Machnich/Mahnič. The main *spiritus agens* behind the project was Nicolò Vidacovich, Joyce's student, lawyer, and translator, originally from Capodistria (today the port of Koper in Slovenia), with whom Joyce was very close and who was a convinced Italian irredentist.

Cultural Circulation: Joyce's encounter with Slovenian literary production and vice versa

Let us now consider Trieste as a place which acquainted Joyce with Slovenian literary production and *vice versa*. The best-known Slovenian writer of the *fin-de-siècle* – the dawning of the modernist period – was undoubtedly Ivan Cankar (1876-1918), who holds an iconic status as probably the most important writer of fiction in Slovenian-language literature. He gave several widely advertised public lectures on Slovenian politics and culture in Trieste / Slov. Trst (the Slovenian lungs, as he called it, as opposed to the Ljubljana heart) from 1907 until 1918, when Joyce was living there (until 1915). There is every reason to believe that Boris Furlan, a Slovenian pupil of Joyce, would have attended at least some of these lectures. However, it appears that Cankar neither met Joyce nor the Viennese painter Egon Schiele (1890-1918), who had spent some time there, although they both shared rebellious critical views of their own homeland and society as well as the orthodox imperial order and morality. They would certainly have had a lot to talk about.

As regards the influence of Joyce as a source of artistic inspiration on contemporary Slovenian literature, the internationally best-known contemporary Slovenian writer Drago Jančar (born in 1948) heads the list.⁴ Among many other prestigious awards, Jančar most recently received the Austrian state Prize for European literature (2020). In 2008, Jančar wrote a collection of novellas: *Joyce's Pupil, Ten Novellas*. The first, eponymous novella "Joyce's Pupil" describes Boris Furlan (1894-1957), a Slovenia-born inhabitant of Trieste who was a young student of English, taught by Joyce privately and at the Berlitz School. Jančar, of course, fictionalises his involvement with Joyce in Trieste, although he astutely follows the actual events from his life. The brief mention of Furlan in Ellmann's biography served Jančar as a prompt and pre-text for his short story, where he uses Ellmann's wording as the motto: "Another of Joyce's pupils was a young man of twenty named Boris Furlan (Ellmann 341; Jančar 1). With regard to Furlan, one needs to mention another important Slovenian pupil of Joyce's at the Berlitz school in Trieste: Josip Vilfan or Wilfan (1878-1955), a leading politician

⁴ While beyond the scope of the present chapter, it is worth mentioning that there are many translations of Joyce into the Slovenian language, where Tina Mahkota stands out as the foremost contemporary translator *par excellence* of Joyce in particular and Irish literature in general.

among the Slovenians in Trieste, who studied in Vienna, where he became influenced by socialist and radical democratic ideals and where he lived from 1928 onwards, with his last period of life being spent in Belgrade. After World War One, he became one of the MPs in the Italian parliament in 1921. He was among the founders of the State of Slovenians, Croats, and Serbs after the war in October 1918, soon after that to become the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians. Furlan, a young lawyer, worked in his office, and as a legal theorist he became Vilfan's bestknown collaborator.

Jančar's novella / short story "Joyce's Pupil" is set in 1914. It presents Furlan as a twenty-year old Slovenian student in Triest / Trieste / Trst, who repeatedly describes an oil lamp upon the command of his English teacher Professor Zois (Italian phonetic spelling for 'Joyce') and becomes fed up with the repetitive task. For Slovenian readers, the name 'Zois' phonetically carries an additional level of connotation and works as a pun, since in 18th century Ljubljana there lived an important Enlightenment patron of the arts, the richest Carniolan / Slovenian of his time, Baron Žiga / Sigismundus Zois (1747-1819). He was an avid supporter of the Slovenian language and a natural scientist who holds a special and important place in Slovenian science, art, and culture. This is the oil lamp-episode in Jančar's opening story:

The first lines are spoken many years earlier, in English, in the quiet of a Trieste apartment. It is evening. On the table one can see a warm circle of light which radiates from a beautifully fashioned oil lamp. The thirty-year-old English teacher and his twentyyear-old pupil are bent over books and papers. A strong north wind is blowing outside, searching for a route through the streets to the sea. Shutters bang and the sea foams against the shore; the swirling winds only accentuate the tranquillity and safety of the room. The pupil reads English sentences aloud, and the teacher patiently corrects his pronunciation. When the lesson is over, the teacher walks to the window and looks out on to the street where a piece of paper blows and eddies in the wind. Perhaps he speaks in his Irish accent about the language, perhaps about Thomas Aquinas. After each lesson, pupil and teacher generally discuss philosophy. The pupil, like so many youths of the day, is much taken with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. The teacher attempts to quell this enthusiasm; for him the only philosopher is Aquinas, whose thought, in the teacher's opinion, is as sharp as a sword blade. The teacher reads a page of his work in Latin every day. The teacher sits back down and asks the pupil to describe the oil lamp in English. The pupil gets hopelessly tangled in technical expressions, and the teacher takes over from him, describing the oil lamp in exhaustive detail. He goes on for a full half hour, indulging a habit that many years later the student will call descriptive passion. Professor Zois, the student cries out, I will never learn English. Professor Zois chuckles, in part out of satisfaction at his description, in part at the way the pupil mangles his name. That is how the Italians say it because they can't pronounce Joyce properly. ...

After these conversations by the light of the oil lamp, Joyce's pupil, a young Slovenian law student from Trieste, suddenly felt a certain blankness in his head. A moment before he had been speaking freely with his teacher about Schopenhauer and Aquinas, about problems of morality and courage, but when he was confronted with the puzzle of the oil lamp, the fuel well, the glass chimney, the wick and all the rest of the parts that made up that insignificant object, he felt a gigantic hole opening up inside his head, a hole that swallowed up every thought, a kind of empty space in which, nothing could be heard but the howl of the wind through the Trieste streets on the way to the sea. (Jančar, *Joyce's Pupil* [2003] 8-9)

Just before the Great War, in 1914, the Irish teacher and the Slovenian student of English met one last time before Joyce left for Zurich in 1915. This encounter is referred to in the story as well:

Joyce and his Triestine student met for the last time on a hot July day in the summer of 1914. One could feel tension in the air throughout the city. Mobilised men were mustering near the barracks, while crowds shouting bellicose slogans milled on the streets and piazzas. The teacher, upset and worried, rapped on his young friend's apartment door. Then they looked through the windows of the pupil's room at the building of the Italian consulate, which was surrounded by an angry crowd. Encouraged by loud shouts, several of them tried to tear down the Italian flag. Stones were thrown at the façade; some panes of glass shattered; there was yelling. Joyce was clearly perturbed, and he worriedly asked his young friend what was going to happen. Professor Zois, he said with a laugh, there will be war. This scared his teacher. Joyce said that he would depart. When the shouts of the crowd grew louder, he shut his eyes, then he turned around, and while his pupil was still speaking, he ran out of the apartment and the building without saying a word. The pupil laughed; history was being made outside. He understood that some people can derive ineffable joy from describing an oil lamp, but he was interested in other things. (Jančar, *Joyce's Pupil* [2003] 10)

Furlan, whose life is fictionalised in Jančar's short story, was born into a Slovenian family in Trieste. He went to Slovenian private schools in Trieste. As a teenager, he also attended an intensive English course at the local Berlitz language school, where he was taught by Joyce. He finished his law studies in Vienna and Bologna, and in 1930 he fled to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to escape fascist persecution. In 1931, he opened a law office in Ljubljana, and in 1936 he became a Professor of the sociology of law at the University of Ljubljana. In the second half of March 1941, upon Yugoslavia's accession to the Triple Alliance, Furlan was evacuated from the country and went abroad. He was sentenced to death *in absentia* by the Italian authorities after the invasion of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers and the Italian occupation of a part of Slovenia until 1943. He escaped via several stops to the United States and then to London in 1943, where he prepared and read regular broadcasts on Radio London. In London, where he stayed from June to August 1943, he was briefly appointed Minister of Education in the Royal Yugoslav government in exile. In 1944, however, he started to support the Yugoslav partisan movement.

After the end of the Second World War, Furlan became Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ljubljana. He nonetheless tried to maintain a critical attitude towards the communist regime; for example, he secretly translated *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. In June 1947, he was arrested (with altogether 32 people) and tried at the so-called Nagode trial, along with 14 other Slovenian intellectuals of various political orientations, who were in favour of parliamentary democracy, for alleged conspiracy against the state and espionage. The main charge against him was his translation of Orwell's allegorical novel about Stalin's Russia. In August 1947, he was sentenced to death, but the sentence was later changed to 20 years of compulsory hard labour.

After being pardoned, he retreated to Gorenjska, a small town in the Upper Carniola region, where he was subject to a public lynching, which he barely survived, and which finds a vivid expression in the title story of Jančar's collection. Jančar's book vividly recounts this sad part of Furlan's life after the staged trial right after the Second World War in 1947, as alleged enemies of the then socialist Yugoslavia.

There follows, in part 5, Jančar's description of Furlan's return to Trieste after his studies abroad and the war that had ended. He specifically refers to the burning down of the Slovenski Narodni dom – the Slovenian National Hall –, which was, as an important political act, officially returned to the Slovenian community only in 2020 by the Italian state and under the auspices of both presidents of the two republics, Italy and Slovenia:

On a grey November afternoon, Italian troops disembarked in the port of Trieste. And not too long after this, a new set of spectres appeared on the streets. Young men from Italian suburbs and small towns marched about in black uniforms singing of youth and springtime; they beat their political opponents, and set fire to a large building in the centre of town – the Slovenian National Hall. When firefighters came to fight the blaze, they cut their hoses to the sounds of bellicose slogans. The young lawyer tried to settle down in the midst of the blind tumult of history. [...] He found himself among those educated Slovenians of Trieste who organised anti-fascist resistance. In 1930 he was warned that his arrest was imminent. He escaped over the border into Yugoslavia, and in a single day found himself in a new city among new people. In the thick fog that curled through the streets of Ljubljana that autumn, his inner vision searched for the far-off and now lost shining disk of Trieste's sun, and his inner ear listened to the howling of an Adriatic storm. (Jančar, *Joyce's Pupil* [2003] 11)

Years later, Furlan, having lost all contact with Joyce, reads about his teacher's rise to international literary fame on the occasion of his passing in 1941, when Ljubljana was occupied by the Italian Fascist troops in the early April of the same year. As Joyce was unknown in Slovenia at that time, Furlan is surprised to learn that "his former English teacher, the [...] somewhat eccentric professor Zois, had become a rather well-known writer in the intervening years" (Jančar, *Joyce's Pupil* [2003] 6).

Joyce's Pupil continues with a long, fictionalised description of Furlan's life during the war and especially after it, including his 1947 espionage charge. Jančar himself mentions in an interview that he saw Furlan's name by chance in Ellmann's *James Joyce, New and Revised Edition* (cf. Jančar, "We Need a Memory of Everything" n.p.). The fact that he was Slovenian made him undertake further research which resulted in the novella / short story under consideration. Or to quote from this text:

On the sixth or seventh day, the prosecutor deposed Joyce's pupil. He spoke of the book *Animal Farm* that the accused had received from England. According to the prosecutor, he had made vile use of his knowledge of English, acquired in Trieste, to translate excerpts from this loathsome pamphlet, and he had lent the book to his fellow conspirators. (Jančar, *Joyce's Pupil* [2003] 20)

Furlan later remembered in one of his letters: "In 1913/14 I started to study English. My teacher was James Joyce, who at the time was teaching at the commercial High School in Trieste" (Furlan qtd. in McCourt 200).

Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, it was during his stay in Trieste that James Joyce absorbed a vast array of cultural, linguistic, and political influences, among which the Slovenian was an important one. These influences are not only visible in Joyce's literary works; they may be also traced back to his self-fashioning in Trieste. Staging his Irishness in Trieste for over ten years, Joyce served as a multicultural mediator between English misrepresentations of the Irish as 'Paddies' and the South-Eastern Europeans as 'Oriental Paddies,' deconstructing these hetero-stereotypes in his writing. In turn, Joyce's influence on Slovenian figures, translators, and writers, such as Boris Furlan and Drago Jančar, through his time in Trieste, has shaped Slovenian accounts of their own history and national selfhood. In its own small way, the test case of Joyce among the Slovenians demonstrates the important work that remains to be done both in documenting and analysing cultural circulation between Ireland and the European continent, and in analysing the role that national stereotypes such as the Stage Irishman and the Oriental Paddy play in mediating and shaping these cultural encounters and exchanges.

For Joyce as an Irishman, as well as for each of us, as we know it from the English Shakespeare, life is but a walking shadow, every woman and man is a poor player on the stage of life, and so we all stage our little lives and endeavour in the *anima mundi* on a daily basis. Be it in terms of hetero-stereotypes enforced on our personal stage by others, or auto-stereotypes enacted by ourselves, the phenomenon of staging one's self is not a local but a global phenomenon: *Totus mundus agit histrionem*.

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