

invaluable glimpse, expertly contextualized and annotated by Esdale and Malcolm, into these two important women writers in key moments of their creative lives.

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FERRER, Daniel. 2023. *Genetic Joyce: Manuscripts and the Dynamics of Creation*. The Florida James Joyce Series. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. Pp. xx + 214. ISBN 9780813069715, Hardcover \$85.

According to a famous anecdote Samuel Beckett related to James Joyce's biographer Richard Ellmann in 1954, Beckett attempted on one or two occasions to take dictation for a nearly blind Joyce as he was writing *Finnegans Wake* (1939). In Ellmann's retelling, "in the middle of one such session there was a knock at the door which Beckett didn't hear. Joyce said, 'Come in', and Beckett wrote it down. Afterwards he read back what he had written and Joyce said, 'What's that "Come in"?' 'Yes, you said that', said Beckett. Joyce thought for a moment, then said, 'Let it stand'" (ELLMANN 1982, 649). One reason this anecdote feels so true is that it affirms the depth of Joyce's commitment to establishing the rich texture of everyday life in his works that affords so much of the pleasure in reading him by suggesting that this texture owes, in part, to the works' incorporation of literal intrusions of everyday life on their author's writing process. Paramount among Ferrer's achievements in this important new study of pivotal compositional moments in Joyce's manuscripts and notebooks — the culmination of nearly forty years spent practicing genetic criticism on Joyce — is his revelation of a vast documentary record testifying to how the published versions of Joyce's works reflect a creative vision that did not come into being fully formed but was continually evolving in response to external influences and circumstances. As Ferrer summarizes in his conclusion, Joyce's archive reveals his process to have been "a long and patient struggle with the potentialities of language and its perceived limitations, the laws of narration, the tradition of the novel, chance readings and patient research, amanuenses, printers, postal delays, writing instruments, economic conditions, and many other factors that inflected [the final form of his books] on a daily basis, in small ways or crucial matters" (174–75). For readers who know the published versions of Joyce's works intimately (and it must be said that Ferrer assumes a reader with such knowledge, including of *Finnegans Wake*), the survey Ferrer offers of how

“factors” beyond Joyce’s control “inflected” his writings proves consistently illuminating and sometimes transforms our understanding of key aspects of the works.

But Joyce’s works were not merely shaped by and in response to the (often mundane) occurrences of everyday life. Some of Ferrer’s most memorable case studies show how Joyce’s creative genius took advantage of such “accidents”, whether they were his own, his collaborators’, or the byproducts of his environmental and material circumstances. In an example reminiscent of the Beckett anecdote, Joyce had another amanuensis while working on *Finnegans Wake*, a woman named France Raphael, who rewrote some hard-to-decipher entries from his notebooks in more readable handwriting. While she did a respectable job overall, mistakes were inevitably made. In one instance, a note by Joyce that began with one of his special sigla for the *Wake* followed by the letter “c” (taken together, a shorthand reference to Chapter 3 of Book III), followed by the phrase “on vibrating bed”, was transcribed by Raphael as the siglum plus the phrase “convibrating bed”. Joyce apparently liked the mistake and incorporated it into the *Wake* as “convibrational bed” (148–49). More significantly, Ferrer traces the origins of a passage of backwards writing that appears in the Black Mass scene from the “Circe” episode of *Ulysses* (1922). In the published version of the scene, the cry “Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth” by “THE VOICE OF ALL THE BLESSED” and the response “Gooooooooooooo!” by “ADONAI” are preceded by “THE VOICE OF ALL THE DAMNED” crying, “Htengier Tenetopinmo Dog Drol eht rof, Aiulella!” and “ADONAI” responding, “Dooooooooooooog!” While the backwards writing fits naturally with the inverted logic of a Black Mass, Joyce did not add it until very late in the writing process when he revised the second set of proofs for the episode, inspired by how his revisions to the same scene on the previous set of proofs had literally bled through the page and become visible in reverse on the other side due to the cheapness of the paper (16–21). (One of the virtues of Ferrer’s book is its generous inclusion, here and elsewhere, of clear reproductions of the evidentiary documents.) This example perfectly illustrates what Ferrer calls, in an apt encapsulation of one of the most notorious challenges that scholarly editors face, “the vicissitudes of authorial intention” (22).

Given the importance of music for Joyce, his willingness not only to accept accidents as part of his process but to use them as opportunities for improving a work (often by increasing its complexity) might also suggest a useful analogue for better understanding the nature of his creativity: an improvising jazz musician. Several times while reading Ferrer, I was

reminded of a story that pianist Herbie Hancock tells of an experience he had as part of Miles Davis's second classic quintet in the early 1960s: "I remember one night, it was a great night for the band. The music was building, the audience was right there with us, and at the peak of Miles' solo on 'So What' I played a really wrong chord. Miles took a breath and played a phrase that made my chord right. Miles didn't hear it as wrong, but instead as something that happened. His job was to make it sound right" (Eskow 2002, 171). Like Davis, Joyce was a master at riffing on the unexpected happenings in life that might thwart a lesser artist, which goes a long way towards explaining his ability to create the mind-bending chains of association throughout *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* that make those works so difficult yet rewarding. As Stephen Dedalus puts it in a famous passage that Ferrer also quotes, "A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery" (JOYCE 1986, 156; see FERRER 149).

One of Ferrer's most consequential examples of how Joyce's manuscripts reveal his proficiency at making complex art out of what might appear to the untrained eye as accidents concerns a notorious passage of interior monologue from the "Sirens" episode of *Ulysses* where Leopold Bloom imagines a prematurely gray-haired Shakespeare walking through Elizabethan London: "In Gerard's rosery of Fetter lane he walks, greyedauburn. One life is all. One body. Do. But do" (JOYCE 1986, 230). This unspoken thought of Bloom's stands out from the hundreds of others he has because it echoes nearly verbatim an unspoken thought of Stephen's from the earlier "Scylla and Charybdis" episode: "In a rosery of Fetter lane of Gerard, herbalist, he walks, greyedauburn. An azured harebell like her veins. Lids of Juno's eyes, violets. He walks. One life is all. One body. Do. But do" (JOYCE 1986, 166). How is it possible for Bloom's and Stephen's private thoughts to mirror each other so closely, with Bloom adopting the idiom of Stephen's interior monologue? Some readers have thought this must be a rare blunder on Joyce's part. However, by identifying evidence in an early draft of "Sirens" of Joyce's intention to include this Shakespeare reference in the episode and tracing the evolution of his "effort to weave it into the narrative in one place and, when this failed, his efforts to rescue it and integrate it into another context", Ferrer convincingly argues "that the stunning inclusion of a portion of Stephen's monologue in the midst of Bloom's thoughts is not a blunder or an oversight and that it is not tied to a local context" (95). That Joyce meant to include the seemingly aberrant Shakespeare reference in "Sirens" is now clear. However, whether he had full awareness of the implications of what he was doing is less so, and not

all readers may be prepared to go as far as Ferrer in concluding that Joyce was making “a deliberate attempt to undermine the well-oiled narrative machinery that he had mounted in the first episodes and to call into question the interior monologue as the last refuge of psychological realism” (95). Knowing that Joyce’s apparent slipup was deliberate has implications for how we might interpret the “intention to mean” behind his “intention to do”, to borrow a distinction from Peter Shillingsburg (SHILLINGSBURG 1996, 34–35). But Ferrer’s study is at its most compelling when it lets readers draw their own conclusions about the possible madness behind Joyce’s method. Fortunately, there are times when Ferrer does exactly that, as in his fascinating description of how studying Joyce’s reading notes on Ernest Hemingway and Sigmund Freud reveals that Joyce lifted words and phrases from those writers for *Finnegans Wake* that seem so unremarkable and end up so divorced from their original context by the time they make it into the *Wake* that “the most perceptive of readers and probably even the keenest artificial intelligence could not recognize Hemingway [and Freud] under the surface of Joyce’s text” (136). Here, as feels appropriate, Ferrer remains content to tantalize us with a few examples, observe that “this type of indistinguishable source is extremely common in *Finnegans Wake*”, and leave the mystery of Joyce’s thinking unsolved (137).

The book exhibits many of the strengths and weaknesses inherent to a survey. Its self-proclaimed aim “to make readers of Joyce aware of the relevance of the domain that genetic criticism calls the *avant-texte*, give them an idea of the wealth of material that they can find there, and suggest ways of interpreting the complex mechanisms that rule this material” is rather broad (9). The eight chapters, plus introduction and conclusion, contain Ferrer’s selection and discussion of some of the “greatest hits” from Joyce’s manuscript archive, which means there will likely be something of interest here for all readers of Joyce and modernism. But there is less focus in both the argument and the range of manuscripts considered than in some other recent genetic studies of Joyce, such as Luca Crispi’s *Joyce’s Creative Process and the Construction of Characters in Ulysses: Becoming the Blooms* (2015) or Wim Van Mierlo’s *James Joyce and Cultural Genetics: The Joycean Genome* (2023). The book’s organizational structure is correspondingly loose: it jumps around chronologically, sometimes even within individual chapters, and lacks the sense of an overriding argument being consistently developed from one chapter to the next. A mistaken reference in Chapter 5 to an example from Chapter 2 as having been discussed “in the first chapter” begs the question of whether this error is just a typo or perhaps evidence of an earlier chapter ordering that was abandoned (87). Also, the

concluding chapter on Virginia Woolf's reading notes on the early episodes of *Ulysses*, while interesting, does not really tie in convincingly with the book's primary focus on Joyce's creative process. However, these criticisms are small compared to the many insights Ferrer offers in taking us on this tour of the Joycean manuscript archive — a daunting realm for sure, but one for which he proves a most helpful and engaging guide.

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EGGERT, Paul, and Chris VENING, eds. 2023. *The Letters of Charles Harpur and His Circle*. Sydney: Sydney University Press. Pp. 404. ISBN 9781743329498, Hardback AUD \$120. ISBN 9781743329283, Paperback AUD \$60.

The work of scholars and critics is greatly assisted by biographies, but, perhaps, even more so by well edited collections of letters. As a Conrad scholar, the multi-volume *Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad* provides me with a rich mine of evidence for the job of scholarly editing that frequently cuts closer than available biographies to Conrad's everyday creativity and the living that sometimes got in the way of that creativity. Conrad's correspondence and his network of correspondents provide scholars with an entryway into the dynamic world of Anglo-American publishing at a time when the work of innovators such as Conrad were being published in a wide variety of newspapers and magazines. As a scholar of Australian literature, with a specialization in book history and print culture, I see *The*