

# *Distance by Degrees: Translating* A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

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**Abstract:** *This article aims to present a personal view of the challenges involved in a new translation of Joyce's first novel to Brazilian Portuguese, which will be the fifth to be published in Brazil since the pioneer work of José Geraldo Vieira in 1945. The category of "distance" will be employed to nuance the ideas of "domesticating" and "foreignizing" throughout the text, trying to demonstrate not only that the core of Joyce's aesthetic project, as it can be seen in this novel, already questions stable positions and purely polar oppositions, but also that it posits possible solutions.*

**Keywords:** *Translation; James Joyce; Lawrence Venuti*

## ***A Portrait and Translation***

Ever since the pioneering propositions of Friedrich Schleiermacher, translators have become obsessed (and rightly so) with the opposing paths of either taking the reader to the text or bringing the text to the reader, with reams and reams of work being written to comment, expand or even question this polarization. If the polarization was indeed a necessary corollary of Schleiermacher's view is something we can even discuss further (in other moments), but the fact remains that up to the recent work of Lawrence Venuti, with his distinction between *foreignizing* and *domesticating* translations, the contrast has seemed to work and the opposition has seemed to thrive.

But has it ever been truly clear?

When you talk about bringing A to B or taking B to A, you seem to count on the existence of a clear spot in space where you can separate not only A from B, but specifically A from everything around it which is definable as non-A. And so forth. Not to stretch the spatial metaphor too thin, the point (point taken) is that you've got to recognize a clear position identifiable as your starting point, and another, as your ending point.

More than that, you seem to think (and this reasoning is pervasive whenever people mention the distinction of such *methods*) that the work of bringing or taking this or that to that or this is (A) complete and (B) dependent on a converse immobility. That is, that you will not bring A *somewhat nearer* to B; and that you will not count with the

possibility that, as you bring A to B, B will also move a little further in your direction to facilitate, question or accelerate the process.

Nobody can know for sure how stable these metaphors can be to any single employer of the distinction first evoked by Schleiermacher. And neither does it really interest us here. But the fact seems to be that in its own pristine state, so to speak, the categories of “foreignization” and “domestication” (we might as well give them these names) can encapsulate a notion of translation that includes those small epistemic “traps”.

For can we really think of “text” and “reader” as stable units, definable and univocally recognizable through whatever minimal extension of time and whatever recognizable dimension of culture we are considering in a given moment (and the emphasis here, to make matters denser, is on *in a given moment*)?

Which text, after all, are we bringing to which reader? Or the other way around?

Suppose we’re dealing with a book written one hundred years ago, in a particular subculture (and a particular dialect, for that matter) of a major world language, of course represented (both subculture and dialect) in that book in a version which would be now one century old. Suppose we are thinking of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Is our “A” the book we are thinking about presenting to our “reader”, the book as it was read *then*, by *them*, the original “public”? Or is it supposed to be the book as it is read now, through a century’s patina of reception and even “defamiliarization”. Are we to highlight a degree of “strangeness” that exists now (in its language and its world) but was entirely inexistent for its original public? (And, more intriguingly, are we to underline a degree of *foreignness* that would not necessarily exist for the same project of translation, should it happen to be attempted in Brazil, say in 1918?)

And who *was* that public? The anglophone world? But a Londoner, for instance, even in that selfsame year of 1916 would not recognize this book as integrally pertaining to her/his world. She/he would create with the book a relationship in certain aspects also connected with the opposition described by Schleiermacher. There was already some *distance* at play. Should she (or anyone “presenting” the book at that moment) think about *going* to the book or *bringing* it closer to her? And, more to the point, should we consider Schleiermacher’s categories weaker or stronger when we realize they can be applied to much more than interlingual translation?

Could it be that the book was only approachable in a direct way by Dubliners, and specifically those Dubliners who read it in or around 1916? Even if it was originally published in the United States? Are the Americans of that period its “public”? Which lens will give us the full notion of that clear point “A”? What perception of the book should the translator, should he choose to be “foreignizing”, bring to his reader?

And who is that reader? Is he alive now? Will he approach the book in 25 years? Is he the Brazilian (in my scenario) counterpart of that Dubliner reader (or American? Anglophone?) who was alive in 1916? Should I translate the book in a language (and with an orthography) germane to the Brazilian world of 1916 (a tantalizing idea...). How can I foreignize? What is this *foreign* position I’m working from? How foreign is it? To whom?

Of course the other questions raised before could generate even longer discussions (can I *foreignize* only “up to a point”? Can I foreignize up to a point and then take the book towards the reader the rest of the way? Can I foreignize in some “areas” of the book while domesticating in others?); and of course these are problems with which real literary translators deal all the time, and to which they propose and create solutions in virtually every book they translate.

*Nem tanto ao céu; nem tanto à terra.* The truth lies not necessarily (and perhaps not at all) in the proverbial *middle*, but it does slide along something which we could more productively consider as some sort of continuum and, more than that, as a continuum between mobile and vaguely defined poles.

And that particular book, that *Portrait*, may show this in an even starker way. For if the whole question (or the whole paradox, or maybe the whole oxymoron) involved in that first opposition is at root a question of point-of-view, of discerning who gets to see whom, in what conditions and in whose terms (a question of “custody”?), then it may well have been a formal problem in literature even before it got considered by translators and people dealing with any form of reception or divulgation of books written in different times, different places, for different cultures, in different languages. Prose fiction, at least, has had to deal with something not at all dissimilar to this whenever the problem has popped up.

Whether we think of Cervantes, Apuleius or Murasaki Shikibu, they all have had to deal with the problem of bringing closer “A” (characters, their speech and their conscience) and B (any potential readers) through the agency of a middle man: the narrator. And the same scope of choices has become available to this agent in the course of the development of the modern novel as we know it (with the same difficulties in establishing any sort of “polarity” the deeper you go and the further the form is sophisticated).

Domestication and foreignization, thence, can be definitely seen as fundamental problems of the novel, even before it dreamt of being translated. No wonder Viktor Shklovsky has found in Tolstoy his prime example of *ostranenie*, and precisely when the narrator was trying to create some sort of closeness between reader and Kholstomer, the *horse*. Poles apart indeed.

Specially writing when he wrote (after Flaubert, after Dickens and James), Joyce could not have ignored the problems posed (and the ways opened) by the creative manipulation of distance between narrator and characters and, subsequently, between narrator and reader. Though the stories in *Dubliners* already display a vast array of technical solutions and explore the rich interactions between the voices of characters and narrator, mediating the access of the reader in myriad subtle different ways, it is of course in *Ulysses* that this development reaches its furthest point. Though the very essence of *Finnegans Wake* may be said to lie precisely in annihilating this middle ground through a singular (and nothing short of revolutionary) procedure apparently based on the exponential growth of the powers and of the centrality of that process, creating a unique, dominating and domineering voice that is at the same time strongly characterized

(individualized) and the voice of everyone, everywhere. . . . It is in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that this radical cline of exploration and discovery has its inception.

The core of the formal distinction between *A Portrait* as we know it now and its former, aborted, *incarnation* as *Stephen Hero* lies in the technical device that allows the book to follow the growth of its main character through a shifting narrative style that becomes more and more “mature” as the novel progresses. This could have been done in a simple *oratio recta* or *direct style*, probably employing a succession of pastiches or “clones” of different literary styles, and one could even easily imagine the author of *Ulysses* dedicating himself to such a project. It is not, though, what has been attempted in *A Portrait*, where the author has chosen to work throughout the book in *oratio obliqua* or *free indirect style*, sometimes more, sometimes less conspicuously.

The first advantage of such a choice is obvious. Instead of generating some sort of parallel commentary on the history and the evolution of nature to mirror the development of his *artist* (something Joyce would indeed do, *mutatis mutandis*, in the episode traditionally known as *The Oxen of the Sun* in *Ulysses*), a parallel that could have something of satire and caricature, what this method allowed Joyce to achieve was a textually evolving surface that effectively *manifested* the development of Stephen’s artistic and intellectual capacities. All these, it goes without saying, without giving up entirely the position of the narrator, i.e., without adopting a consistent first person style that could, no doubt, portray that growth, but with the loss of the precious process of mediation.

After all, in this particular formulation of the problem of distance (as opposed to the formulation we perhaps may find in translation studies) there happens to be a solution to that ever gliding scale of grey tones. I can, indeed, take the reader all the way to the character and leave them there. I can also bring the characters to the reader, through a very simple omniscient narrator. But to Joyce, as to theoreticians like M. M. Bakhtin and pretty much every good novelist you can find, this gives up too much. Solving the problem, denying the distance, reaching one of the poles of the continuum is *not* a desirable situation. It might even be some sort of *solution*, but it remains the sort of solution that only shows how preferable was the original state of *doubt*, of *undecidability*. The power found in permanently shifting positions, and in the permanent affirmation of relative *distance*. The preference, over the direct *access*, given to a means of *translation*.

And there is virtually no other way to affirm this power more directly, more stridently and more triumphantly than what we find in the first page of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

### ***A Portrait***

My goal here is not to present any comparative analysis of different translations of *A Portrait*. Above all (but not only) because I am here as “a” translator of the book to Brazilian Portuguese. Of course, then, I would have to defend my decisions, my choices

(otherwise, if I did not think I had a reason to stand by them, why should I have done what I did?); of course I recognize the brilliance and the different stances of all of the other translators of the book. As a matter of fact, I have even recommended one of those translators to his editor.

Nevertheless, as a reader, I cannot forget the impact (mostly negative, I have to admit) of my first reading of those lines that open the book in the only Brazilian translation available when I was a teenager. My sole dependable memory of that moment is of thinking something along the lines of “blast it: no serious novel can start this bad”.

Because those first lines are “lines” in a much stricter sense. They are razor sharp implements, designed to cut deep, but also capable of incapacitating the user, be this user a translator or a reader. With no prior “warning” the reader is installed in this ambiguous prose, steeped in free indirect speech, which makes no apologies for writing sentences no “decent” narrator should ever accept, while offering no reasons to write sentences no “normal” toddler could ever compose. It’s not the mask of up close first person caricature; it’s not the distant objective description that could be offered by a third person “voice”. If indeed this book will rejoice in going through all degrees of distance between these poles, right now we seem to be smack in the middle of the cline.

And like all intermediary positions in any cline, this one can get slippery. It’s a true balancing act, what the narrative voice proposes here, between ludicrousness and poetry, between pastiche and assimilation. And if this results in the ultimate triumph we see in that first page in its entirety, it can only be due to the astounding capacities Joyce had already developed, to erase his own voice, to create a narrator capable of letting himself be permeated by another voice without risking to lose his control of the narrative and of the overall “tone” of the final text.

This is huge.

And as the reader progresses through this first page and gradually (very gradually) realizes what’s at stake here, as she/he slowly perceives the swift “evolution” of this hybrid narrative voice, something that will encapsulate in this moment the whole “ethos” of the book, the reader will start to appreciate what in that first moment may have sounded (looked, on the page) strange, awkward, alien. Bit by bit the trajectory of this reader through this first pages will establish an idea, an “image” of someone, of something we will come to recognize as Stephen Dedalus’s consciousness.

This process is of course iconic, for we could not expect ourselves to be effectively *guided* to this conscience. We could not *hope* for a complete version of what Bakhtin has called an exterior conscience with a “surplus” of vision, an exterior stance able to provide a “finished” version of Stephen Dedalus. And we don’t have only to exclude the possibility of accepting this finished version of his formed conscience, based on the rather neutral premise that whatever we may say about a *Bildungsroman*, we have to admit that we must be pretty much always looking precisely at the series of events that contributed to end up in a (somewhat) formed conscience. *Ergo*, no definite conscience could ever be presented in no first pages at all.

But this simple premise, this simple first premise can obfuscate the fact that it *is* indeed possible for the narrator of a *Bildungsroman* to present, in any given moment, a version of the process of formation that can be at least given as something discretely cut out of the passage of time, as a singular moment, isolated, insulated and, exactly because of all this, as something that is in fact finished *from the outside*. Perhaps it's not merely fortuitous that we have in *A Portrait* that famous discussion of aesthetics, in which Stephen, quite near to the end of his "coming-of-age", presents Aquinas' vision that any work of art has first of all to have *singularitas*, that particular kind of unity which says what is the work and what is the background against which it defines itself.

A work of art, a work of literary art, has got to be the product of an exterior conscience (its author, under whatever handle we may chose to employ) who has got to be capable of giving it some sort of "closure", of "finishing", through some sort of "surplus" of vision. Even though, of course, this closure may result in an open, unsolvable form, or problem. It's the fact that it is a final version that counts, not the possibility of it having some finality, much less some finalizability, except in what concerns its relations to the author.

But a work of art is not its *theme*. And when the object of the work of art (as in the case of *Bildungsromane*) is this most unfinished of forms, the human life, when its *theme* is the human conscience we have an interesting clash of views and possibilities (something recently quite strongly underlined by the success of the so-called auto-fiction). And what Joyce sets out to do, right from the first page of *A Portrait*, is to present this succession of (yes) discrete moments (after all, he structures the book as a succession of snippets from a life) in a way that allows (nay, forces) one to read each "life state" as something mobile, unstable, as some being in the continuous act of *becoming*.

Presented this way (*ex post facto*, we have to admit), the formal (and philosophical) dilemma behind *A Portrait* seems to lead only to one solution: the extensive, intensive use of *oratio obliqua*, as the sole way to simultaneously enter the conscience of Dedalus in any given moment and not give it away as something finished by and through the process of presentation "from a distance". Not only by the end of the book, but in each small section of the text, Dedalus is not necessarily "ready" to take front stage and present his world as in a soliloquy, but at the same time "his word" is not something "ready", something that can be considered from the outside and presented as such. He has to be seen *refractedly*.

But this presents another problem, and once more a problem that Joyce chose to treat through an analysis of various degrees of *distance*. For if the whole book dramatizes the process of formation of a conscience, we could well admit that at some point by the end of the narrative this process could be coming to an end, or could already have ended. And this poses a different problem, for if we've previously had to approach Dedalus' conscience "through a glass, darkly", in the moment it comes of age, in the moment this conscience is something we can considered "fully formed", it could well be approached from the outside, as the whole it now is. It could be "narrated" by an exterior voice, who would enter, with it, the infinite dialogue of partial visions and illusions of reciprocal

wholeness that characterizes human interaction. Dedalus, ready to be a man among men, could then be seen by men, as a man.

The third person narrator would seem to be adequate now.

But Joyce knew quite well the inverted polarities of this equation, now that what's at stake is not "the formation of a conscience", but the formation of an artist's conscience. Dedalus will not be ready to be treated as legitimate narrative "object", for he is himself, or intends now to be, a creator of worlds, a viewer and narrator of objects, things and persons. Joyce understood fully well that for all of us (truth be told), but especially to the artist, the creation of a conscience entails the creation of a consciousness, and this particular consciousness is precisely the consciousness of a watcher, of an ogler, of a manipulator, and not merely a percept, not a set of sense-data. Thence the brilliant solution of giving Dedalus expression in a rather polemical sort of first person by the end of the book. Polemical because in form of a diary, that most "private" of expressions, that most inchoate, immature and personal (isolated) form of narrative: Dedalus may be (or consider himself to be) ready to "be", but he is not necessarily ready to "speak" properly to others. He may not be the passive percept a third person narrator could encompass, but he still is not yet the first person narrator he would have wanted to be.

Another thing to be considered, in the whole scheme of "distances" proposed by the narrative dynamics in *A Portrait* is the fact that, precisely because we give up (or are deprived of) that limited though powerful means of access to his conscience that was represented by the *oblique* narrator, now this first person (at first blush some sort of "independence" for Dedalus and, consequently, something that could even be seen as the positive result of the entire process of formation of which we've been speaking) can also be seen as somewhat distant, alienating and, as a matter of fact, solipsistic, at least *in potentia*.

That this manoeuvre can turn what in a rather simplistic reading amounts to the apex of this process of formation into its obverse, into something that betrays its denial in the very act of asserting its affirmation, can be seen as no smaller triumph than the one presented to us in those first pages. And everything still hinges on the idea of "distance" and, more than that, on the power and the almost unavoidable need for an intermediate stance that may facilitate some sort of *oblique* access that, considered this way, is the straightest way to the wild heart of our matter.

## **Translation**

Now we can finally put things in a direct relation to the act of translation.

Because translators, literary translators above all, are indeed trained to become protean, to meld into an "environment" ultimately defined by the "voice" or voices created by the author. But this "ability" is more strikingly necessary when it comes precisely to the representation of that "singular" voice. One can arguably say that the task of creating autonomous voices, capable of characterizing and defining "persons", is quite

possibly the same, for both the original author and the translator. Of course the trouble of creating and bounding personalities and so forth lies exclusively with the author, but it's not impossible to think that the subsequent act of "dressing" these characters in different, autonomous voices is fundamentally the same in both the original and the translated work. Nevertheless, the relation between these two "entities" (author and translator) and that intermediate stance is by definition altered, if nothing else, by the mere fact of the existence of the original author as a "new" intermediate position when the matter is considered from the point of view of the translator. Since the translator cannot ignore the original discursive stance responsible for the work (the author), he now has to deal with the whole equation at a further remove. Which can be even more interesting when we are speaking about this "flexible" narrator, basically responsible for what Hugh Kenner (67) has called the *thousand little bits of novelistic housekeeping*, and for managing the attribution of "slots" for free indirect speech and, later in Joyce's body of work, interior monologues.

It's not only a question of finding that "sweet spot" that enables the curious "vision in a mirror" of the *oratio obliqua*, but it is also a need to find the *same* sweet spot the author has found. If we may try a comparison here, it seems to be somewhat like the situation of author and translator of a rhymed sonnet: one had to find words to rhyme; the other has not only to make it rhyme, but his rhymes have now to say the same thing the original did.

Since Literary translators are indeed trained to develop a shifting perspective, and even a shifting "voice", they are used to produce along a sliding continuum of possibilities, styles and sociolinguistic levels. This is no news. But what *A Portrait* sets as a task for this translator is the challenge of working to match *another* sliding continuum which not only "grows" from chapter to chapter, offering new perspectives, possibilities and, in a more concrete level, new vocabularies, but also manages to stay the whole time centered between the opposite poles of the Scylla of caricatural first person and the Charibdis of distant-objective third person. While finding those selfsame "rhymes", tating back for every titting of the original while creating some sort of (deep down) cohesive and coherent cline of development, the translator has to tread the same path, the same narrow, narrow path, that Joyce created as he went: it was a difficult track for the pioneer, but he had the advantages of choosing rather freely his footholds, and he had the advantage of being probably the best hiker we've ever known; me, I'm shorter-legged, shallower-chested, and I still have to place my clumsy boots precisely in the tight spot where he lodged his brogues.

And, much more than that, all those different layers of complication latent in the original literary "problem" of the representation of that conscience are also added to this new equation. For Joyce, the empirical subject James Augustine Aloysius Joyce as well as the implied presence behind the mobile narrator of *A Portrait*, was dealing with a much narrower system of differences. Not to mention the fact, perhaps not valid here, that Stephen Dedalus (or initially Daedalus) *was* James Joyce, what remains is



that Joyce was dealing with the life and the world (and the language of this world) of someone quite close to himself. Someone of his own socio-cultural and linguistic world. There was no veil of *belatedness*, no relevant *remoteness*. He had Dedalus's life and voice pretty much under his thumb, and was free to deal with it in the most indirect ways precisely because in a very different sense he indeed *had* an external, almost perfect point of view: he could revel on seeing that life in a mirror because he knew quite well what was to be seen; he was choosing his distance and his angle of refraction. But in a translation for a new world, a new culture, a new time (and not only a new language) these paths will all have to be redefined.

How much do I want to brand this original world (or this original "view" of a world) as "quaint"?

How much do I want to make it resonate directly with, say, a Brazilian kid in his or her teens in 2016?

Should I domesticate or foreignize not only in space, but also in time? For instance, all the vocabulary connected to school life in Clongowes and at Belvedere can be adapted to correspond to what a student knows today in Brazil. But do we want to do it? On the other hand, I can *keep* those words in English, and explain in footnotes. Or even keep them in Portuguese, but trying to maintain their historical distance, their possible *weirdness*, and also annotate their meaning and their context.

And this last *middle ground*, which was indeed the path chosen for my translation of *A Portrait* is perhaps a good example of this midway path already illustrated by Joyce's choice of narrator, now transposed to editorial-translating matters. In both cases it was a choice between some sort of direct representation (first person/keeping words in English) that would almost unavoidably incur the risk of caricature and some kind of "description" through equivalence (third person/domesticating translation); and in both cases there springs this possibility of a third, intermediate, diagonal way of looking at the object...

Footnotes may have a bad rap, but in this particular case they may represent that possible third way, without estranging the reader and without opting for a particular kind of "foreignization", in the temporal continuum, that was bound to make the book not "exotic", but necessarily "alien", "dated", and unquestionably not so immediately relevant for whoever may be the Brazilian equivalent of Stephen Dedalus in 2016. On the other hand, this potential Brazilian Dedalus would like to *know*, and would like to approach this world as a different, marked reality: if the past is indeed *a foreign country*, as L.P. Hartley would have it, a sophisticated reader would expect to realize *they do things differently there*.

Thence the conundrum.

I can domesticate in as much as I don't leave the English words; I can foreignize (temporally) in as much as I don't employ contemporary equivalents to those words; I can keep this middle ground through the use of a footnote, whenever needed, which seems now to be justified by the juxtaposition of so many double binds... The translation is not only dealing with the opposition Dedalus x Narrator, so brilliantly solved by the

creative use of free indirect speech; it is not only dealing with that Schleiermacher-Venuti opposition Domesticating x Foreignizing; it is not only dealing with the opposition Old x New as could be encountered by any competent Irish reader today, when he faces as book like *A Portrait* and finds himself once more in that *foreign country* of the *days beyond recall*. The translation has to deal with all three oppositions: in the first case, trying to reproduce the ambiguous, flexible and *unimputable* (or proteanly passive of being seen as many things at once) voice of the book, and we can say a bit more about that; for the other two situations though, what matters most, and what is infinitely more intricate for the project of literary translation (and makes this project fundamentally different from the creation of an original piece), is the fact that they are inextricably woven together. And all three oppositions, presented at the same time, show the same proclivities to radicalization that can be adequately summarized in a cursory view and review of, say, Venuti's scheme. Some sort of either/or thinking, some apparently powerful dichotomy that seems to present new ways to consider the corpus of study and, in the end, even new ways of dealing pragmatically with it.

Nevertheless, what our close contact with a book as densely layered and, more than that, more contrapontistically simultaneous in its presentation not necessarily of voices but of possibilities of reading such and such a voice, what our effective and "sincere" immersion in a work which is not merely a presentation of new technical ideals, of writerly fireworks capable of dazzling readers, critics and translators, but deep down (and consequently even skin deep, after you've really understood the project) an entirely new way of facing the paradoxes of superposed, conflicting and shifting identities, of facing the dilemmas and the possibilities of the conundrums of "distance", "juxtaposition" and, yes, why not, of a very real kind of *coincidentia oppositorum*, what emerges from all this cannot but be a new point of view that favors the *tertius*, the middle ground: not necessarily the synthesis, not necessarily the overcoming of the opposition, but perhaps the denial of the opposition through some means that recognize the irreconcilability of such opposites the whole time.

But what is this posture? What does it entail as practical "advice" or as some sort of "guideline" to the translator?

There are no easy, direct answers here. And there shouldn't be. For if this our premise is correct, if indeed we can derive something fertile from the extrapolation of an intrinsically literary problem, as it was managed in one particular (and very singular) book, and if this extrapolated idea can then be applied to dilemmas essentially pertaining to literary *translation*; if we've found one possible way of seeing the predicaments of the literary translator not as problems that come to life only when this praxis is fully established, but as problems that arise from the same well that gives us the whole density and difficulty of all literary works; if we can see literary translation (and "translation", full stop) as part of a set of linguistic-literary-philosophical problems that characterize the whole endeavour of literature as an element of the linguistic-epistemic kit that allows us to delve into ourselves and into what makes the other "other"; and if all of this can

now be seen, for this book, as something that may be illuminated by this book, what it will tell us, in its long and complex representation of an ever open-ended process (although the “person” undergoing all this would not maybe see it this way: and this is the “ironical” distance that gives as *A Portrait*), is precisely that we have to keep *trying*.

What can the translator of *A Portrait* learn from the book as he or she tries to decide how better to approach it during translation?

That seeing *in a mirror* has its advantages; that sometimes the best way to look directly into something (and coming back “alive” and capable of relating what you saw to others) may be this peculiar kind of refraction that evades the simple and direct answers of manuals, formulas and ready-made sentences. That the diagonal, the flexible and plastic, the protean diagonal of a vision guided not only by its object, but also by the medium that stands, not “in its way”, but as something through which is possible the only “straight” vision, that this “looking askance” may be even more honest.

Because we all may end the book needing the succor of a prodigious *father*, though perhaps not to *forge* some *uncreated conscience*. We are always belated, and this belatedness can make it harder for us to see that even this *father*, in his more concrete, real incarnation, saw the world *through a glass*.

Will I have learned it?

It will all live or die in that same first sentence, where a man has to dance, once again, between the certain death of ridicule and the cold undead remoteness of objective description. As always. Once more.

*Once upon a time.*

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