

## “The Dead” of the Reader

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### บทคัดย่อ

บทความชิ้นนี้นำทฤษฎีที่ว่าด้วยช่องว่างในตัวงานเขียน (gap) ของนักวิจารณ์ กระแสรีดเดอร์-เรสพอนส์ วูล์ฟแกง ไอเซอร์ (Wolfgang Iser) มาเปรียบเทียบกับแนวคิด เรื่องความขาด (lack) ของนักจิตวิทยาฌาคส์ ลาก็อง (Jacques Lacan) เพื่อทำให้เห็นว่าช่องว่างในงานเขียนนั้นไม่ได้ทำให้ตัวงานเขียนมีความสำคัญน้อยกว่าตัวผู้อ่าน แต่อย่างไร ในส่วนแรกของบทความ เป็นการวิเคราะห์เรื่องสั้นเดอะเตท (The Death) ของเจมส์ จอยซ์ (James Joyce) ตามแนวทฤษฎีช่องว่างในงานเขียนเพื่อให้เห็น โครงสร้างความสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจระหว่างตัวผู้อ่านกับงานเขียนในแบบทฤษฎีดังกล่าว สิ่งที่พบคือผู้อ่านเป็นองค์ประธานหรือผู้สร้างความหมายในความสัมพันธ์ ในขณะที่ ตัวงานเขียนเป็นวัตถุที่ถูกกระทำ เพราะตัวงานเขียนนั้นถูกมองเป็นวัตถุที่ปราศจาก ความหมายภายในตัวที่พึงการสร้างความหมายที่ไม่เป็นปัจเจกจากภายนอกตลอด ใน ส่วนที่สองของบทความเมื่อการเขียนหรือการสร้างงานเขียนถูกนำมาเปรียบเทียบกับ ทฤษฎีการพัฒนาอัตบุคคลในแบบลาก็องแล้วนั้นทำให้เห็นว่า ช่องว่างในตัวงานเขียนนั้น มีลักษณะคล้ายกับความขาดแบบลาก็อง ความขาดคือส่วนสำคัญในการสร้างอัตตะแบบ ลาก็อง เพราะทำให้อัตบุคคลปรารถนาอย่างไม่มีที่สิ้นสุด โดยวัตถุและเหตุแห่ง ความปรารถนานั้นไม่มีค่าตายตัว (*objet a*) ด้วยเหตุนี้ตัวงานเขียนจึงปรารถนาการอ่าน และการตีความที่หลากหลายจากตัวผู้อ่านอยู่ตลอดเวลาเพื่อคงความเป็นอัตตะที่(ไม่) สมบูรณ์ไว้ ความสัมพันธ์เชิงอำนาจในส่วนแรกจึงถูกแทนที่ด้วยความสัมพันธ์ ใหม่ที่ความหมายไม่ได้อยู่ที่ตัวผู้อ่านหรือตัวชิ้นงานแต่อยู่ในกระบวนการปฏิสัมพันธ์ ระหว่างวรรณกรรมและผู้อ่าน

### Abstract

This article compares Wolfgang Iser's schematized view concept, or gap, with Jacques Lacan's concept of lack to show that a gap-lack in any text does not constitute a text as a mere object in the power relationship between the reader and

the text. In the first part, James Joyce's "The Dead" is used as an object of study to observe the power structure between the reader and the text through Iser's theory of gap. The analysis reveals that the reader is the subject in the power relationship as she is the subject with meaning. The text is shown as a meaningless object; its heterogeneous meanings can only be externally derived. In the other part, when writing activity or text's development is compared to lacanian subject's psyche development, it is revealed that Iser's gap functions similarly to Lacan's lack. A lack is considered to be one of the significant aspects of a lacanian (in)complete subject because it constitutes an insatiable desire in the subject: a subject whose cause-object of desire is ever-substituted (*objet a*). This means that the reader is the cause-object of desire for the text-subject. The polyvocality of interpretation and reading causes the desire of the text to ever flow, preserving the text's status as a literature-machine. Thus, a new power relationship between the text and the reader is constituted: a kind of relationship where power lies between the process of the interaction between the reader and the text, not on one side or the other.

## The Gap

After Barthes' infamous essay "The Death of the Author" (1967), "text", which was previously known by the name of "work", has taken the center stage in the reading community: the author faded away from the scene, leaving the readers and text in play. A text means what-it-means by the moment it is read, not in the moment it is written. The author is dead at the moment of reading, double-crossed by his own child. Hence, it would be interesting to see what happens after the author is dead since the reading community has been left with the two main characters: the text and the reader. What goes on between the two has not been much discussed in terms of relationship, that is, how the text and the reader interact with each other; and how one perceives the other. In this paper, Joyce's "The Dead" will be used as an object of study to investigate who is the next victim of this literary crime? The reader or the text. (There is nothing particular about Joyce's short story in this context. It is used only for the convenience of the theoretical argument about reading a theory, and for a theory of reading. The focus is not on the short story itself, but on the encrustment of a phenomena surrounding text, that expands into *A Case Studies in Contemporary*

*Criticism: James Joyce, "The Dead"* (1994). The point here is to study the structure of power [*pouvoir*] during *the moment of reading*, to see the direction of force [*puissance*] in the politic of reading in general, not to interpret "The Dead")

According to the reader-response's premise, a text exists because it is read. It is said in an introduction to *Reader-Response Criticism: from Formalism to Post-structuralism* (1980) that according to Stanley Fish, "the place where sense is made or not made is the reader's mind rather than the printed page or the space between the covers of a book" (as cited in Tompkins, xvii). This means that life or the essence of a text, a meaning and a signification, is without the text, but within the reader. It is of the reader when he reads. The reading reader breathes life onto the letters on the pages, putting a narrative in motion, making an object into a textual artifact. This is to say, the most basic and significant nature of a text, any species of text, is its perpetual motion, the movement from one point to the other. There is no such thing as a static text. Even labyrinth-like texts of postmodern, both fiction and non-fiction, such as Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler* (1981, original work published 1979) and Deleuze's *A Thousand Plateaus* (2014, original work published 1980), have to move from one point to the other to portray a *rhizomic narrative*: the differential and productive molecular-machine or flow. "Reading causes the literary work to unfold its inherently dynamic character" (Iser, 1980, p. 51). In this aspect, any text would simply be randomly arranged black blots on a dead paper without the reader. "Literature exists when it is read" (Schwartz, 1994, p. 126).

One of the reasons that literature is a reader dependent item is that it is an artifact with a "gap" that cannot be closed from within. This "gap" or a "schematized view" as coined by Wolfgang Iser can only be filled by the reader's *konkretisiert* (realized). "The text as such offers different "schematized views" through which the subject matter of the work comes to light, but the actual bringing to light is an action of *Konkretisation* [realization]" (Iser, 1980, p. 50). This means that reading is seen as a realization that brings about the movement of a narrative. The gap is created by the "intentional sentence correlatives". They are a group of sentences that "aims at something beyond what it actually says" (Iser, p. 53). What it aims at is the reader's imagination and disposition. This can be said to be the essence of a good literature, according to Iser. Literature should not be a closed system with a didactic purpose. It

should not tell the reader everything it wants to say. Good literature should demand the reader to impose her imagination and disposition onto reading activity. The reader should see more than the text says and know more than the text shows, that is, the text's gap can only be filled by the imagination and the disposition of the reader. To put it simply, as generic as it sounds, a text shows, not tells. It shows the reader where the 'gap' is, but it does not tell the reader what to do with it. However, as some may notice already, the reader's imagination and disposition are varied among the reader. Not every reader will get the same experience from the same text. This is also true in the case of one reader who reads in a different time and space.

Such practices would not be tolerated in the eyes of the New Criticism, as it is an affective fallacy. Wimsatt and Beardsley (1994) note that "the Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results...It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from psychological effects of a poem and ends in impressionism and relativism" (as cited in Tompkins, 1980, p. ix). Nevertheless, reader-response critics encourage such practice. Affective reading is essential to the politic of reading because it denies the totalitarian reading of a text. Why should a text be only what it should mean? The reader-response critics strongly believe in this so faithfully that there is an essay by Stanley E. Fish called "Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics" (1994). Its name should be enough for the reader to "fill" in the gap with what the text would be about.

An example of this phenomenon could be seen explicitly in *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism: James Joyce, "The Dead"* edited by Daniel R. Schwartz. The form<sup>1</sup> of the book, though it is a collection of criticism, literally is a concretization of Iser's philosophy of the schematized view. "The Dead" is read differently by one critic to the other, as a feminist text, a historical text, a text to deconstruct and so on. The book as a whole explicates the nature of Iser's gap, showing us the functionality and the impact it can create. There are, at least from what could see from our object of study, two functionalities of the gap, which are the multiple readings of a gap and the multiplicity of gaps.

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<sup>1</sup>The word form is strictly used in the context of Russian formalist's sense. Form and content is inseparable as it is form that structures content.

The first functionality of Iser's gap is that a gap, that very one gap, can be read in various ways. This can be seen from an essay in the book mentioned: Rabinowitz's "'A Symbol of Something': Interpretive Vertigo in 'The Dead'". The gap here is at the staircase scene where Gabriel is mesmerized by the image of Gretta. On one hand, the formalist reader would read this gap as "a structure of the written text...way in which it contradicts or at least destabilizes itself by occupying contradictory position" (Rabinowitz, 1994, p. 137). This is to say, the staircase scene, this gap, defamiliarizes the structure of the narrative. The movement of the narrative from the first part to the second part can be seen as the narrative focusing on Gabriel Conroy.

The first part mainly focuses on Gabriel's anxiety created by his speech, "[Gabriel] would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them [the people at the party] which they could not understand" (Joyce, 1994, p. 24), and his subjectivity as a male, "[Gabriel] was still discomposed by [Lily]'s bitter and sudden retort" (Joyce, p. 25). The stated subject matters can be analyzed further<sup>2</sup>; however, the point here is to show that this part of the whole narrative is Gabriel-focused. In the second part of story, the form of the narrative continues to focus on Gabriel as the focal point of the narrative. Gabriels' political stance is explored in his "accidental" confrontational dialogue between himself and Miss Ivor on the subject of Gabriel writing a literary review for *The Daily Express*, which is a newspaper that opposes Irish independence. His state of mind is also symbolically portrayed through the arrangement of food at

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<sup>2</sup> His anxiety about his over-educated speech echoes his comment on Miss Ivor as a part of "the hyper-educated" who lacks "a certain qualities of hospitality, of humor, of humanity" (Joyce, p. 35). This means that Gabriel's anxiety is not that the other would not understand him, but of the fact that he himself is the other. His subjectivity is split between his ideal-ego (a man with such and such great characteristic) and the other-ego (the hyper-educated person). His anxiety is created because his subjectivity is undermined. This is also happens in the case of his interaction with Lily. When Gabriel hands Lily his money, Lily immediately refused: "O no, sir! cried the girl, following him. Really, sir, I wouldn't take it" (Joyce, p. 24). His subjectivity is denied by the other, that is, he cannot be the desire of the other. In other words, because he cannot be the object-cause of desire of the other, he fails to function as a potent subject. This can also be seen in how he always tries to get the attention of other character also. Furthermore, this whole scene can be seen in terms of class struggle and gender representation if one wishes to look it that way.

the dinner table: "between these rival ends ran parallel lines of side-dishes...In the center of the table there stood, as sentries to a fruit-stand which upheld a pyramid of oranges...three squads of bottles of stout...drawn up according to the color of their uniform" (Joyce, p. 38).

However, in the third part, the focal point of the narrative shifts by the staircase scene: "there was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of" (Joyce, p. 48). Thomas Loe calls this "[the text]'s deliberate thematic ambiguity" (as cited in Rabinowitz, p. 137). The form of the narrative is defamiliarized by this scene. Before, Gretta is seen as a functionary character. However, in this scene, she is turned into the subject of Gabriel's gaze, the main character. She becomes the attention of the narrative. She does not only become the subject of the narrative but also its "deliberate[d] thematic ambiguity", that is, she is the gap that waits to be filled by the imagination and the disposition of the reader. This means that by defamiliarizing this scene, the reader would unconsciously reread Gretta retroactively, revealing the signification of Gretta not only in the staircase scene but of the whole narrative: who Gretta is and how she articulates with other characters, the setting, and theme. Such is the formalist reading of the staircase scene.

On the other hand, as claimed by Rabinowitz, if this scene is read by with psychoanalytic reading, the staircase scene would be read as something different entirely. Rabinowitz assumes that "a psychoanalytic critic [reader]...might search out the ways in which the text works on our [the reader] underlying anxieties" such as "by tying the effects of the story to the male anxieties about women summarized by Freud's notorious question, "What does woman want?" (Rabinowitz, 1994, p. 137). However, this does not mean that the psychoanalytic reader would have to read this gap all the same. Schwarz says that in the staircase scene Gabriel does not look at Gretta. It is he who looks at himself: "the one who is always watching Gabriel *is* Gabriel" (Schwarz, 1994, p. 112). The scene symbolizes the Symbolic-mirror image for Gabriel. Gretta functions as the Other that captivates Gabriel's ego. This is because Gretta is portrayed as a whole subject, and ego-ideal with "grace and mystery in her attitude". Gabriel sees her as an image that he wants to be: a subject

that is opposite to him, who is not paralyzed by his own impotence. He sees *his* Other('s) image. The scene has nothing to do with a female image; there is only the *gestalt*: a genderless whole image. Thus, unlike Rabinowitz's psychoanalytic which treats this gap as "what does woman want", Schwarz's psychoanalytic reading shows that this gap is about Gabriel and his (inter)subjectivity only, not about Gretta or the feminine subject.

The list could go on, but it should be enough to show that the same gap can be read differently by various readers. Even the same reader reads it differently from a change in circumstance. The feminist reader might read this scene as the manifestation of female re-representation: Gretta cannot be comprehended by the male gaze of Gabriel because feminine signification is not the same with male-signification. Structuralists might claim that this scene is structured to portray something like this: the *langue* of the story structures Gabriel as the embodiment of paralysis, so this scene, as a *parole*, shows that it is also Gretta who is one of the causes of Gabriel's symptom. But the deconstructionist would fiercely argue otherwise by subverting the binary opposition between Gabriel and Gretta, saying that Gretta is the one who is paralyzed by the Gabriel's gaze. Thus, the plurality of the signification of a text is encouraged because it shows that a gap of a text cannot be closed by one reading. In a way, reader-response criticism valorizes the polygamy of reading: one text is to be read by different reader(s).

As it could be seen, "The Dead" as in *A Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism: James Joyce, "The Dead"* is given a status of a mere object, waiting to be "rade"<sup>3</sup> by the reader. The narrative-machine will not work unless its gap is filled – inserted– by the reader, as a machine that needs a key to start its engine; and the machine is transformed accordingly to the type of key inserted, turning it from this machine to that machine. However, the result of transformation is not always pleasant. Sometime the outcome is something obscene, and the text cannot do something about it. It is always the reader who is in charge of the (w)hole text. The fact that the short story itself takes only about fifteen percent of the space in *A Case*

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<sup>3</sup>It is a play on the word read, rape, and ride. No, the text is not feminine in this context. Nevertheless, it can be feminine and (masculine) if the reader treats it so.

*Studies in Contemporary Criticism* while the other seventy five percent is of the *how-to-rade*, shows that the text is *literally* overrun by the reading activity. This shows that the active force or *puissance active*, thus, is always with the reader during the reading activity. Reading is not about the text, but about how the text is *rade*. How the text is *killed* and brought back again as something obscene by its own killer. It is a vicious circle, of course, as it can be seen from the example above that though there is only one gap, the text is being *rade* simultaneously. “The Dead” is turned into a passive object, manipulated by the reader who *rades*. A textual artifact is truly an object without a body<sup>4</sup>: a pure victim.

However, what makes the text even more submissive is the other functionality of the gaps: the multiple gaps. While we could see from above that the staircase can be read multiple ways, this is not the only gap in “The Dead”. There exists multiple gaps throughout this short story, and so do other texts. The most significant thing here is not only that there are multiple gaps of the text, but that these gaps tend to multiply throughout the text’s life. This would mean that the more the text grows older, the less we could see the text. This is to say that, the older the text is, the more criticisms there are about the text. The text is not overrun by just one gap, but multiple ones, and it seems that they keep multiplying themselves. The text thus becomes the vessel for the other’s discourse. We will look at a feminist reading from *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism: James Joyce, “The Dead”*, to see the pluralism of gaps within the text, and the other gaps beside the staircase scene. And we will simulate the process of the multiplying of gaps in action by *rating* “The Dead” with one reading that is not mentioned in *Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism*: a post-colonial reading.

The multiplicity of gaps can be seen in Norris’s feminist essay “Not the Girl She Was at All: Women in “The Dead””, because Norris did not only *rade* the text as an object of reading, but also the battleground between the two conflicting feminist schools of criticism: the historical American school and the ahistorical French school. On the side of the historical, American feminist Carolyn Heilbrun, for example,

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<sup>4</sup>This is not to be confused with Deleuze’s “body without organs” even though they do have similar concepts.



criticized in 1982 that Joyce is “a man who hates women for becoming what he has determined they should be?” (as cited in Norris, 1994, p. 191). The very reason for this is that Joyce does not follow the dogma of the tradition of Anglo-American feminism, by not producing “a rhetorical investment in moral improvement and social hopes that culminates...in powerful feminist polemics...and utopian female representations and self-representations” (Norris, 191). Thus, the American feminist (second wave feminism) would call the scenes where Gabriel offers money to Lilly and speaks for Gretta as a *misrepresentation of feminine images*, promoting male dominance over female (female being the lower class and voiceless). Therefore, the gaps for American feminism are of repression and misrepresentations of women, the gaps that genders the text. On the contrary, the French feminist or the poststructuralist feminist is “far more comfortable with an antirepresentational, antirealist strategy of writing woman...in favor of exploring how the activity of saying may itself act as a gendering of a text” (Norris, p. 192). Joyce’s later works, *Ulysses* and *Finnegan’s Wake*, thus, are considered to be ones of the milestones in woman writing (*Écriture féminine*). Kristeva calls it a “distinction to a patriarchal writing that arrogates truth, knowledge, and authority to itself” (as cited in Norris, p. 192). “The Dead”, as said by Norris, is structured around a binary opposition between “loud male” and “silent feminine”. While the American feminist would consider the “loud male” to be the gap of the text, the French feminist’s gap the “silent female”. The third wave feminist would call this gap “a performative and rhetorical approach (that pays attention to *how* saying works)” (Norris, p. 192). This is a feminine writing *par excellence*. Post-feminists do not see a female’s silence as a male-constructed voice repressed voice, but as a female-constructed voice, a voice that is different and more subtle than a male’s loudness. This means that the silent female characters in “The Dead” are not to be seen as a *representation* but as a discursive performative of femininity which Norris calls “the stifled back answer” (Norris, p. 192).

As feminist readers deals with the sexuality of the minority, the post-colonial reader also works with the minority, but in terms of cultural colonization and the marginalized other. At first glance, “The Dead” could be considered a post-colonial text, a story about the retribution and racial equality, because of Freddy’s remark about “the negro chieftain” opera singer: “why couldn’t he have a voice, too? Asked

Freddy Malins sharply. Is it because he's only black?" (Joyce, 1994, p. 40). However, if this passage above is looked awry it could be seen that Freddy's gesture idolizes the western intuition of art or music and others, as a verb, the opera singer. The word chieftain, used by Freddy in describing the opera singer, implies the singer's vulgar barbarianism, that is, he comes from a tribe as a chieftain. This implies that even the center of the marginal space, the head of the tribe, the chieftain, has to give in to the institution of western civilization. He has to "be" something he is not in order to be "seen" or "heard of". Also, when Freddy mentions "why couldn't [the opera singer] have a voice, too?" (Joyce, p. 40), the voice of the singer is silenced at the end of the sentence. The adverb "too" at the end of the sentence strongly emphasizes that Freddy wants the opera singer to have the voice of majority like other (European) opera singer. The right to have one's own voice for Freddy is the right to have the "white" voice, "the finest tenor voice", to speak like the majority. Freddy wants the singer to speak the language that is not his own, symbolically castrating the opera singer from his language. Like father, like son (the mother is always there).

While the scene above is *rade* as a scene of cultural colonization, it gives a new meaning, new gaps to the scene where Gabriel thinks about writing for *The Daily Express*. The multiplicity of gaps is put in motion (this means that not only are there gaps in a text, but also that it is the reader who infects a text with their own gaps). The new gap here is to be *rade* by the post-colonist reader. Even though Gabriel is portrayed as neutral on the subject of politics because "he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books" (Joyce, 1994, p. 31), if the discourse of Gabriel on the subject of writing for *The Daily Express* is looked closely, it could be seen that he is structured almost similarly to the opera singer. The effect of Gabriel being colonized can be seen when he cannot say anything to Miss Ivor: "[Gabriel] continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and *murmured lamely*" (emphasis added, Joyce, p. 31). He justifies this *paralysis* by saying that "they [Gabrielle and Miss Ivor] were friends of many years' standing...he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her" (Joyce, p. 31). However, this is not the case. He "murmured lamely" because he lost his ability to communicate with "the other", the other Irish, because he becomes something else, something like a hybrid (as he *desires* to be neutral). His paralysis is created by the fact that he is manipulated by the West Briton, working for them in exchange for the

books he desires, not the “paltry cheque”. The description of Gabrielle’s passion for books, “he loves to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books” (Joyce, p. 31), shows that he *does* work for the West Briton. His payment, of course, is the books themselves. This technology of cultural colonization forbids him to communicate with “the other”. If he is allowed to communicate to Miss Ivors, not only would there be a chance of Gabriel being convinced by Miss Ivors to stop writing for *The Dailey Express*, but Gabriel’s speech would also reveal the “masked” technology of the colonizer’s discourse. The referent “murmured lamely” is actually the sound for help, to free him for the grasp of the West Briton. Therefore, “The Dead” of the post-colonial reader is to be *rade* as a story about “the other” who loses his voice to the colonizer, turning him into one of the cogs in the colonization-machine. Simply put, “The Dead” in the point of view of the post-colonial reader is structured like Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (2004, original work published 1915): a story about a man who transforms into a thing perverted and obscene. While Gregor from *Metamorphosis* is colonized by capitalism, Gabriel by the colonization-machine itself.

In the analysis of the reading process –or the *rade*– of “The Dead” from *A Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* so far, we have observed some significant aspects of the relationship between the reader and the text. A text exists only when it is read by the reader, filling in the “gaps” or schematized views by the reader’s disposition and milieu. This means that each reader perceived the same gap differently and there is more than one gap in a text: gap(s) usually overlap each other. A staircase scene in “The Dead” is a gap that the formalist reader would read as a “turning point” of the narrative form, while the psychoanalytic reader would read this gap as a symbol of Freudian “what does woman want?” or Lacanian “the Symbolic-mirror stage”. Nevertheless, the feminist reader would find the gaps in the subject of women while the post-colonialist reader would find the schematized views in “racialized” subject matter. Each reading of different readers would not be the same: “these gaps have a different effect on the process of anticipation and retrospection, and thus on the “gestalt” of the virtual dimension, for they may be filled in different ways” (Iser, 1980, p. 55). “The Dead” shows that when a text is *rade* the structure of a text changes simultaneously to each reader and each rereading. Thus, the reader is “the subject” and the text is “object” in this power relationship. The

significance of the text is within the reader: the reading activity. Being an object with gaps, the text is conceived as an object without an essence, relying on the other to exist as something that is not even what it is. However, if the gaps are treated as a lacanian lack, it could be seen that it is always the text that is the subject in the reading process, and the reader the object of the text.

### The Lack

The gaps of the text are not to be seen as gaps that make a text an incomplete object. On the contrary, it is these gaps that make a text a “complete” subject: the split subject. The word “complete” does not refer to the state of wholeness. There is no such thing as whole subject, only subject with a hole, as the subject always lacks. If the subject loses his lack, he is a psychosis-subject (Zizek, 2007). Thus, “complete” in this context means that a text “completely” becomes a subject because of its lack-gap. It is this very incompleteness that makes the text a subject. The lacanian subject has to go through the three stages of development (The Real, the imaginary, and the symbolic) in order to be a subject. It is not born as a subject with lack, but made to be one. Therefore, before we see how the reader is the object of the text, it is only appropriate to see how the text is structured similarly to the lacanian split subject, to see that a text is not *written* to be a subject with lack but it is *made* to be one.

The first order is the Real. Lacan refers to it as “the lack of the lack...the impossible” (as cited in Grosz, 1991, p. 34). A child is born into this stage in which he integrates himself with everything around him, mentally and physically. It is a phrase of “the inexpressible, of what cannot be spoken about” (Sarup, 1992, p. 85). Kristeva takes this notion of the Real and combines it with her notion of *chora* which is derived from Plato's *Timaeus*:

[i]t is a place where simultaneously the structure of the mother's body ends and that of the fetus begins. In this sense, it constitutes the space within which the otherness of the fetus is distinguishable... [and] where one of the earliest processes – perhaps the first – of signification appears. (Payne, 1993, pp. 168-169)

The Real for Kristeva occurs in the womb of the mother. It is the space where the sense of otherness is established within the mother's body in the form of the unborn child. It is here also, in the *chora*, that the child's first signification process can be found. Unlike the symbolic signification process, "in Kristeva *chora* the linguistic sign has not yet emerged as an absence of the object; thus, the distinction between the real [reality, not the Real] and the symbolic has not yet been arisen" (Payne, p. 169). It is a space of a language that cannot be expressed in the real world: a kind of semiotic process that is not grounded on the characteristic of representation. The text is also *conceived* in this way (the word "conceive" is used deliberately to conjoin "to think of something" with and "to become pregnant with a child").

A text is first conceived as an idea, a vague idea in the head-womb of the author. It cannot be expressed but we know it is there as an uncanny feeling. The author is metaphorically the mother of the text. This is so because the *chora* of the text is inside his womb-mind. The text is the *other* within the author, like the child within the mother's body. The idea, in general, cannot be tinkered with, that is, the owner of the idea cannot make it better. The only thing that one can do is let it grow inside one's head, satisfying its need. This is also the same with the child. The only thing that the mother could do is to feed it; she cannot make him a better baby or a worse one. The other reason the conceived idea of a text cannot be *made better* is that the author-mother or the mauthor does not speak the same language as the idea-text does. The mauthor speaks the language of the symbolic while the text is conceived with the language of the Real, an inexpressible semiotic.

After the *chora* or the Real, the child enters the imaginary stage. It is known to be the stage where a child identifies with his *other* image (the mirror image): "the mirror phase is a period at which, despite its imperfect control over its own bodily activities, the child is first able to imagine itself as a coherent and self-governing entity" (Sarup, 1992, p. 64). It is around this time that he constitutes his sense of self, an ego. This is so because the child starts to recognize himself as a "self-governing entity", separating from his surroundings. He sees his *gestalt* (the ideal-ego) in his own reflection. However, this image, this image that entraps the child, is not of the child but of the other. It is the imaginary other that the child now becomes, losing his former self as the Real entity. This is where the primordial lack of the child occurs:

“the child’s fascination with its mirror-image coincides with its recognition of lack” (Grosz, 1991, p. 37). Because now the mother is not a part of him, he lacks the first partial object-cause of desire: the milk and the breast of the mother; the *objet a*. It is here that the child’s need (a physical and instinctual need) is articulated with his first demand (a cry of “oo” and “aa”). When the child *needs* to eat something, he *demand*s his mother to do so.

In the context of the text, what is significance here is the desire that erupts at the moment at the child’s first cry of demand. “*Desire* is that which goes beyond demand and conveys the subject’s wish for totality. It can never be fulfilled” (Sarup, p. 36). A desire is that which goes beyond need through the articulation of the child’s demand. Contrary to need and demand, desire cannot be satisfied. *Desire desires a desire and to be desired*. This is so because “from this time on [the time when the child constitutes a lack], lack, gap, splitting will be its [the child’s] mode of being. It will attempt to fill its (impossible, unfillable) lack” (Grosz, p. 35). The point here is to show that this gap is important to “the mode of being”. The ego of a child brings about the desire and lack of being a subject.

The writing process of the mauthor, thus, can be compared to the mirror stage. It is where the ego of the text is constituted. When the idea-text is *translated* into a text by the mauthor, it loses its “lack of a lack”. The “inexpressible of the text” is *interpreted* by the mauthor. The word “interpret” and “translate” in this context implies a sense of losing something or adding something during the process of communication. That is, the mauthor cannot *fully* comprehend the language of *chora*, so it is only natural for him to misinterpret, and translate the message into something that he could comprehend: reducing and adding details to the idea-text. Like the ego of a child, the ego of a text, being written down by its mauthor, makes it a “self-governing entity”. It is independent in a sense that it does not need to exist in the *chora* of the mauthor anymore. Now it can exist as a “subject” outside its mother, separate from the Real of the mauthor. Nevertheless, the text still relies on the imaginary mauthor. The *gestalt* or the ideal-ego of the text is reflected by the mauthor’s writing. He writes the ideal-ego for the text, that is, the text loses its former status as “impossible” into possible: an idea-text becomes the mauthor’s ideal-text. As one could see by now, during this identification, a lack is simultaneously created

within a text. It should be noted that the idea-text cannot be comprehended in normal language, so when the idea is turned into an ideal, a text loses its former status. A gap or schematized view is thus created intentionally and accidentally. The intentional gaps are those that follow the account “the text should show, not tell”. The author creates these gaps as a way of writing his ideal-text—a text that does not reveal an answer to the reader whether it has one or not. The accidental gaps are those that are created by way of signification. Because a language, a Symbolic apparatus, is a finite system with infinite traces of sign (the meaning of words is unstable), the author’s ideal-text is written accidentally with traces or gaps of meaning. That is, the ideal-text is a locus of signifiers with indefinite meaning: a semiotic gap.

The other explanation to show that the idea-text is written with different language from the ideal-text is to think about our own writing itself. We are usually forced to write systematically. Everything we write has to, in one way or the other, follow the existing form of writing: an essay, a poem, a novel, a short story, and so on. Woman writing and a style called a “free writing” (think of Jack Kerouac), which are considered to be something that stand out of the writing norm, are in fact writing techniques with specific form, that is, we usually know what they are when we see one or experience one. The form of writing is thus a language that is alien to the idea-text. When we come up with an idea, an idea in its singular form, we have an idea-text as it is. However, when we are made to explain or write (an ideal-text), we tend to struggle with the fact that we have to interpret and translate the idea-text into an ideal-text. In short, the ideal-text is a text with a desire – a desire to be translated and interpreted back to its (unachievable) former stage, an idea-text.

Even though the Symbolic order (semiotic system) plays a rather significant role in lacanian theory as a whole, not just in terms of child development, in this context we are concerned with the fact that language separates the child from the dyad relationship with the mother<sup>5</sup>. An imaginary relationship between the child and the imaginary mother (someone or something that performs “mother”) is seen as a phrase where the child and the mother form a narcissistic couple, existing outside

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<sup>5</sup> Language for Lacan is not just something that gives meaning, but something that constitutes our unconscious, not just through its signifying functionality, but by its logic of metonym and metaphor.

“the conditions for social, linguistic, and economic exchange relations, although it provides some of their preconditions” (Grosz, 1991, p. 67). Thus, the Symbolic father (anyone who embodies the culture-authority figures) steps in between the child and the mother, that is, the language *castrates* the child from the mother. The word castrate is used because for the child, the mother is the phallus during the Imaginary order: “the receptacle and guarantor of demands” embodied. She is his *jouissance* before the symbolic *jouissance*. In other words, the child moves from family to culture, from *jouissance* to Signifier(s) or *nom-du-père*<sup>6</sup>: “the child’s sacrifice of its primary love-object in conformity with the law must be compensated...by means of the acquisition of a position, a place as a subject in culture” (Grosz, 71). The child trades his mother’s love for the place within the realm of the Father, taking the position of “I” as a signifier that anyone can use.

In the context of the text, the moment of “public-ation” is itself an ideal-text’s castration from the mauthor. Before this moment, the text takes meaning and significance accordingly to how the mauthor writes it to be. It is “ideal” because it is structured from the imaginary dyad relationship between the text and the mauthor. In other words, it is a narcissistic phase between the two. In order to be a text, it needs to be cut from the mauthor. Thus, the word public-ation does not specifically mean to be published; a recognition in public space ought to be enough. In public space, the text loses its former self, as the subject-object of the mauthor, and transforms into the “subject” of the public. The ideal-text becomes a text. During this stage, the text constitutes the second significance lack. Aside from the lack of being an idea-text, now the text lacks the status of its imaginary-ideal self.

The only thing that can (temporarily) satisfy the lack of the child is *objet a*. It is cause-object of desire. It is the cause of desire because “this object reveals only another want, another satisfaction for which it yearns” (Grosz, 1991, p. 75). It is an object of desire because it is a substitution for the “real” object that can satisfy the desire of the subject: “it is always a divergence, a metonym, a lack of the real, displaced onto a substitute” (Grosz, p. 75). The real, not the Real, function of *objet a*

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<sup>6</sup>Nom in French is a pun between the no and name. No is of prohibition or castration while name is of signifier as the Master Signifier or the unary signifier of the child is the word “NO”.



is not to satisfy the lack of the subject but to engender the desire of the subject, making it forever moving around objet a: “the object-cause is always a missed; all we can do is encircle it...the object of desire that eludes our grasp no matter what we do to attain it” (Zizek, 1991, p. 4). This may seem like an unproductive system. On the contrary, “the real source of enjoyment is the repetitive movement of this closed circuit” (Zizek, p. 5). An obvious example could be found in the shopping activity of some people. They always say “*this is my last item in my shopping list, let’s go home*”. However, when they walk past that little cosmetic booth or anything that is not on the list, they always give us the “eye” and say “*please, don’t be mad. I really want this. I promise this is the last one*”. Five minutes later, they would find that new object and repeat the same phase. What we can do is let them tire out physically. This is the only way that “these” physical people would stop, as desire never stops. The very reason that the lack can never be satisfied is that the lack of the lack would cause an anxiety within the subject:

it is not the lack of the object that gives rise to anxiety but,  
on the contrary, the danger of our getting too close to the  
object and thus losing lack itself. Anxiety is brought on by  
the disappearance of desire (Zizek, p. 8)

This means that the illusive mechanic of *objet a* is itself to protect the subject from psychosis and *jouissance*, putting the desire in an infinite motion. Thus, the fulfillment of the lack or gap is impossible.

Before we look at the *objet a* of the text, we will look at the “The Dead” again first. According to the analysis of reading “The Dead” from before, it is obvious that reading is driven by the attempt to fill the gaps or the schematized views of the text. The gaps change according to each reading, that is, each reader reads the text differently. For the reader-response criticism, these gaps are not made by the text but by the reader. They find the gaps according to their disposition and cultural context. Fish said that “interpreters do not decode the poems: they make them” (as cited in Murfin, 1994, p. 128). The reader imposes the gaps and the subject-matter-to-be into the text, changing the story in the text to their own story. The gaps are actually the reader’s meaning in disguise. Even though the reader says that he can find the

meaning in this particular gap of the text, the meaning, in fact, engenders the gaps (hence, the second functionality of the gaps mentioned above). If the gap is to be a question and the meaning an answer, while normally the question “should” functionally comes before the answer, in this case, the answer comes before the question. This shows that, for example, the feminist and the post-colonialist reader impose their own meaning on a text, turning it into the gendered and racialized text. In other words, the reader literally “create[s] in his or her mind a poem or novel or play that isn’t in the text” (Murfin, p. 127). However, as we can see, the gap or the lack of the text has been with the text from the beginning. It is there when its mauthor interprets and translates the ideal-text from the idea-text, constituting the first lack of the text. When the ideal-text is publicized into a text, it again loses the imaginary meaning that it shares with the mauthor – a meaning that only the mauthor knows (and the ideal-text). Thus, the text constitutes the two lacks: the primordial lack and the imaginary lack.

The primordial lack is a text’s desire to “mean” or “signify” itself previously as the idea-text in the *chora* or the Real of the mauthor. Nevertheless, this is impossible because what it tries to be is inexpressible: “wholeness is lost and s/he will desire it always. Of course, the baby does not know what is missing; the baby cannot articulate its lack” (Sarup, 1992, p. 67). The imaginary lack is the lack that corresponds to the desire of the mauthor: an attempt to return to the imaginary state with the mauthor. Nevertheless, this lack is also impossible to satisfy as the text cannot return to its mauthor, that is, a text cannot be “written” again by the mauthor (it should be noted that the meaning of the ideal-text takes place only during mauthor’s writing process of an ideal text). This shows that the reader’s gaps are a pseudo-gaps (they are actually an imposed meaning on the text) while the text’s desire to return to its former states are the genuine gap of the text. Thus, with this premise it could be seen that the reader is the *objet a* of the text. (There is, of course, the third lack, the Symbolic lack where text cannot signify the fixed meaning because of the flow in the semiotic system. However we would not talk about it because by stating that it would not be mentioned, the idea of the ambivalence of language is manifested, that is, we mentioned it by not mentioning it)

The reader is the object-cause of desire of the text because they preserve the vicissitude of the text's desire: the unstableness of the text. This is significance for the text because the text's mode of being is the lack: "from this time on, lack gap splitting will be its [the child] mode of being. It will attempt to fill its (impossible, unfillable) lack" (Grosz, 1991, p. 35). A text cannot be a close(d) "subject". This is to say, a text cannot not have a "static-ultimate meaning" that can be read universally and locally the same. If the text is closed (the lack is satisfied), it will lose its status as a text, turning into a dead-text: a text that loses its drive and desire to be alive. For example, would we read or analyze any text if hypothetically someone somehow could find its "ultimate meaning"? We cannot *rade* it as the meaning is now "absolute". Because of this, the text would be a tautology: a dead stone. *Why read it? If we know that it is what it is.* This shows that the lack is crucial to the text's mode of being. Without it, a text would cease to be. This is where the reader comes in as its object-cause of desire. As long as the reader read the text differently, the text will continue to exist as a lacking subject: a living text. Each meaning that the reader imposes on a text can only temporarily satisfy the lack of the text. This is to say, for a period of time that meaning is considered "true" until the other reader comes and rereads the text again. Broadly speaking there are two kinds of reader which will now be called an object-reader.

The first object-reader aims to satisfy the imaginary lack of the text (the lack of the ideal-text). He would read the text and say that *"this is what the mauthor means"*. However, as stated above, the text can never know what it lacks from the mauthor. The reader as the text's *objet a* of the text can only temporarily satisfy this lack until there is another reader comes up and says *"no, that is not what the mauthor tries to say. This is what he tries to say"*. The text will forever keep circling around "the imaginary object of desire"; and it ought to do so if it wants to be a living-text. This kind of reader can be found in those who are interested in the history, context, and/of the author of the text.

The other object-reader aims to satisfy the lack of Real or *chora*. They focus more on the text itself as it is, trying to reinterpret the language of the Real or *chora* of the text. This is to say, the lack of Real can only be satisfied when the text can be re-written with the text's original language, making it an idea-text. The structure of

*langue* and the context are to be focused as they show how the text is re-structured from its original stage. Also, etymology and historiography are stressed by this reader. If we actually know what the origin of the word is, we might somehow know how to re-write the text with its original language. This kind of reader is more of a text based reader who tries to find the (un)conscious of the text. Similar to the first kind of objet-reader, this kind of objet-reader is impossible to satisfy the lack of the text simply because the language of Real or *chora* is inexpressible. However, the point of the object-reader is not the goal, but the aim: an attempt to re-construct and deconstruct the text. If a text is hypothetically rewritten into an idea-text, the text would cease to be because *what is the point of reading it anyhow? If we "really" know what it means.*

## Conclusion

From the analysis of *A Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism: James Joyce, "The Dead"* at first it could be seen that the text is dead when it is read by the reader. The narrative changes accordingly to how the reader reads it. For example, the post-colonialist reader would read "The Dead" as a story about the conflict between the West Briton and the pro-Irish. This is not to say that this reading is wrong in any way, but to show that the text does not have an essence. Thus, the reading is seen as the *rade* or read-rape of the text. The text is reduced to an object that corresponds submissively to the subject-reader. Nevertheless, when a text is studied through the lacanian account of psyche development, it reveals that the text's lack of essence, which at first is seen as the lack of stable meaning, is not to be seen as "incompleteness". On the contrary, this very lack is the text's mode of being. The text is structured like the lacanian split subject, that is, the subject-text is supposed to be lack. Nothing can change that. The text's lack can be classified into two different kinds of lack. On one hand, the lack of idea-text is the lack that the text aims to satisfy by going back to the stage of the Real or *chora*. On the other hand, because the text is castrated from the mauthor (the author) by publication, it aims to return to the time when it is an ideal-text: an imaginary lack. Thus, this means that the reader is the *objet a* of the text, the object-reader. They can never satisfy the lack because each reading differs from the other; and because the very nature of the lack of the

text is impossible to be satisfied. The readers are interchangeable between one and the other as it is the aim to read the gaps of the text that are more significant than the goal of finding the “right answer”. This is to say, the objet-reader is metonymic. Therefore, when the reader reads a text according to his disposition, making it his/her story, the reader turns himself into the object-reader: an object with a sole *raison d'être* to prolong the life of the text. We cannot read without turning ourselves into the object of what we read. “The Dead” of the reader is itself the death of the reader. Nevertheless, this premise could be wrong. It could be the “gaps” of this paper that need to be satisfied, to be corrected. So, why don't you we put down everything and find what is “lacking”<sup>7</sup> in this paper, and attack it, ridicule it, fix it and so on. This way we could say that we are the “subject” of this very “object”.

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<sup>7</sup> Where is “The Dead” at the second half? Could this be the intention of the text to efface “The Dead” in the second part? Could it be because of the fact that the aim of this paper is to propose a new theory of reading and writing in general, not to read “The Dead” with this theory? Is “The Dead” a lab rat used to test a new reading formula? Or could it be that the text wants the reader to fulfill her function, as its *objet a*, by reading “The Dead” against the second half of the paper by herself? Is this theory of writing and reading even valid? “I” do not know for “I” am that which do not know; for “I” am just the subject of unconscious in this paper; and for “I” am only “your” jouissance. “I” ex-sist on the margin to remind that the author is dead and c(sh)ould not say why “The Dead” is missing in the second part.

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