

Panel 21

James Joyce & Interart Encounters

Gender, Love, Sex: A Gendered Interpretation of Stephen Dedalus as Loveless Sex and Artistic Parthenogenesis

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James Joyce's *Ulysses* is often crowned the quintessential novel of the 20th century, blending myriad art forms into one singular novel. In my paper, I discuss Joyce's blend of sexual reflexivity alongside heroic adaptations. I detail how *Ulysses*' second protagonist, Stephen Dedalus's aesthetic philosophy of familial and sexual love from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* extends into the world of *Ulysses*. Stephen's struggle for love and to love reflects the common association with Shakespeare's Hamlet and Homer's Odysseus. Sex, which Stephen desires, cannot be realized because of the disharmony with his intellect and his body. Veering from traditional Shakespearean and Homeric influence, Joyce also layers Stephen's association with Norse mythology. The *Völsunga* saga, where twins Siegmund and Sieglinde birth the legendary Germanic hero Siegfried, parallels Stephen's Apollonian and Dionysian character traits, as well as the twin motif embodied by Apollo and Artemis. Joyce hints at a Norse connection by referencing Richard Wagner's opera *Die Walküre*, an adaptation and reinterpretation of the *Völsunga*. This creates an intermedial web of cultural myths, autoerotic sex, adaptive opera and Shakespearean theatre, culminating in the character of Stephen Dedalus. Joyce takes theatre and myth and reintroduces it in the hallucinatory writings of "Circe". He interweaves reality with fiction, providing us with the complexity of an early 20th century young man whose name draws upon the mythic intelligence of Daedalus' flight and the inevitable hubristic crash of Icarus.

Biography

Lau Wee How is a fourth-year student in English and Philosophy at Nanyang Technological University. He actively participates in conferences and is building his profile as a researcher in preparation for pursuing a PhD.