

**THE PROBLEM OF DESIRE IN  
JAMES JOYCE'S "THE MIME OF MICK,  
NICK AND THE MAGGIES" \***

**Yu-chen Lin**

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature  
National Sun Yat-sen University

**Abstract**

In its mimicry of adult customs of courtship and marriage, the game in "The Mime of Mick, Nick and the Maggies" reproduces HCE's family imbroglio, which in turn epitomizes Ireland's originary loss—presented through a chain of displacement of time, space and identity—stemming from betrayal and transgression, and her subsequent fall to hybridisation. With this Joyce poses the problem of totalization characteristic of the metaphysics of nationalism by staging the colonial subject's desire for a lost or impossible presence of the absent origin. This desire is expressed through the rainbow girls' circumlocutory articulation of Izod's thwarted longing for the other whose identity resists totalization, and who is blind to her desire. Embedding frustrations in playfulness, the children's game can thus be understood as a metaphor of Joyce's play with language to represent an Edenic Ireland which is perpetually lost.

**Keywords:** Joyce, the "Mime," desire, hybridity, *différance*

---

Received November 1, 1996; accepted January 23, 1997

\* This paper is part of a research project (NSC 86-2411-H-110-012-B5) supported by the National Science Council.