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*“A kind of retrospective arrangement”*: Some remarks on *Ulysses* and *Stylistics*

When confronted with *Ulysses*, any stylistic analysis based on essentialist premises, dreams of scientific objectivity and clear-cut oppositions shows its inadequacy, and all too often ends up confirming Fish's (1980) famous indictment of a discipline that wrongly hopes to be rigorous and that just yields tautological findings, since “formal patterns are themselves the products of interpretation and [...] therefore there is no such thing as a formal pattern, at least in the sense necessary for the practice of stylistics” (Fish 1980: 267).<sup>1</sup> Even at a superficial reading, it is clear that *Ulysses* denies one of the central tenets of stylistics by constantly showing that it would not be possible to say the same thing in different words, because in Joyce's text the structural and semantic components are so necessarily interrelated that the distinction between them is meaningless.

At a more general level, if the hunt after general, objective patterns is frustrated by a text that constantly breaks those patterns by a glut of unpredictable elements, all narrowly formalist or functionalist attitudes are of little use. Even a classic like Leech and Short (1981), despite its undisputable merits, seems inadequate with its emphasis on style as a measurable system in terms of frequency and consistency: in *Ulysses* deviance is the rule (or as stylisticians would say, there is no set up norm against which we can detect internal deviations or identify stylistic value in quantitative or qualitative terms), so it is necessary to rely on a different basis, leaving behind all stiff interpretative categories which are inevitably disrupted by an exhilarating, exuberant textuality that produces:

an experience comparable to that of experiencing that haphazardly evidential quality of life; and, moreover, what art is supposed to offer that life can not, a permanence to be revisited at will but not exhausted. (Kenner 1987: 81)

After all, what to do with a “book of many turns” whose main feature is “its lofty reluctance to conform, its resistance to any of our categories, to any kind of methodization” (Senn 1984: 199), yet provides an almost encyclopedic taxonomy of human life? How to deal with an author who blatantly denounces the inadequacy of his mother tongue<sup>2</sup> and torments it to let all the potentialities of language out, while offering a meticulous description of “a day in the life” with rigorous linguistic accuracy? How to classify a language that exasperates the reliance on its own plastic and sonorous aspects and even encompasses the whole “chapter” dedicated to music with a distinctive mix of farts and interior monologues (*U* 11.61-62 and 1286-1294)<sup>3</sup>? How to cope with a text that might be described as an echo chamber in which “virtually every scene [...] is narrated at least twice” (Kenner 1987: 76) and that even exposes its own propensity to iteration<sup>4</sup>? How can one fruitfully analyze the way language is used (and produces effects) if foregrounded

and nonstandard uses of language are the norm, if every adjective makes an exception,<sup>5</sup> if “Everything speaks in its own way” (*U* 7.177), if every chapter creates its own technique?

Joyce’s radical experimentation virtually leaves no space to stylistic speculations because the whole book in its entirety is a question of style: at best, one could produce a sterile, descriptive list of exceptions that would ultimately coincide with the text itself. The final, supreme irony of all this is that the instability of the text at all levels, from its symbolic correspondences to its plot to its basic components (words, letters,<sup>6</sup> sounds), is triggered off by a narrative that can be apparently contained by schemes of interpretation, from Joyce’s own schemas to the “mythical method”, from the classical and Homeric parallels to the allusions concerning the contemporary Irish historical and political scene.

As Derek Attridge points out in his introduction to Derrida’s “Ulysses Gramophone”, Joyce’s text, with his pseudo-comprehensive synthesis, amounts to a

derisive mockery of the efforts of those who analyze and systematize, who try to say something *new*. Yet it is precisely the overdetermined complexity of this textual program that makes *possible* the new, the advent of the completely other, the chance collocation that results in a new invention. (Derrida 1992: 254)

In other words, the text’s ability of constantly eluding the limits of referentiality, linguistic fixity and teleological narration can become the starting point for an open, liberating encounter with its expression of a plural sensibility. In fact, if our sense of reality as a coherent unity explodes, the result is not a celebration of the omnipresence and inescapability of chaos:

There can be no doubt that Ulysses would have long ago been consigned to the pile of interesting but fruitless experiments were it not for the vividness with which it conveys the twists and turns of people’s minds as they go about their daily business. Or, more accurately, minds and bodies. (Attridge 2004: 5)

The dislocation of apparent certainties, the relativization of identities and cultural norms, the fragmentation of the real, are then radical instruments to set up new reading possibilities and new modes of approaching the text, to appreciate its miraculous ability of turning every single word, sound or smell into a fertile, meaningful element.

In particular, the incessant metamorphosis of genres and perspectives denies the possibility of any univocal definition of style, and reinforces the impression of a text in a perpetual state of transition. The “mosaic of movements” (*U* 15: 4100) mentioned in “Circe” can, thus, be considered the proxemic counterpart of the stylistic jigsaw that features so prominently in the text. Accordingly, Joyce’s resourceful language must be engaged with by a similarly dynamic, wily reader willing to modify his positionings continuously in order to exchange unifocality for multivocality. In my contribution, then, I will try to discuss the possible scope of a programmatically wide stylistic approach, which implies waiving the expectations of a communicative language for a heuristic one that amounts to a method for learning anew how to read.

“*Finish. You can’t.*”

A first aspect to take into account is the “immarginable” quality of *Ulysses*: Joyce’s “scrupulous meanness”, that in *Dubliners* had already proved too radical to be considered just a realist mode, in *Ulysses* becomes an investigation on the value and function of a language that is

taken to its limits: some of its descriptions are the most accurate we can think of, including a whole array of apparently trivial or negligible elements, yet the impression we get is not of a superior clarity: the one reality of 16th June 1904 increasingly shows its infinite variety and the more thorough or objective the description is, the more we understand that the magmatic universe of man and of Dublin cannot be dominated.

The “mathematical catechism” of “Ithaca”, for example, is the most detached and cold way to present facts, and yet the piling up of fact after fact destroys any possibility of establishing priorities among them, or is so exhaustive and “anatomical” that reality is completely defamiliarized. Even the ubiquitous presence of onomatopoeias stresses the demise of mimetic form, since their unmediated presentation of reality can never transcend the materiality of a volatile language.<sup>7</sup> The same is true for the accurate recordings of “thoughts in the way they occur” (Budgen 1964: 92), which cannot claim any inherent warrant of authenticity if not accompanied by a parallel exploration of their “unspoken, unacted” quality.

The innumerable instances in which the text tries to exhaust reality only show the hopeless inadequacy of these attempts: the apparently reassuring presence of headlines in “Aeolus” exposes the inevitable, increasing dyscrasia between captions and text; the exhibition of excess in “Wandering Rocks” goes hand in hand with the necessity for each character to make an unforgettable performance, to show off his own idiosyncratic presence as a form of survival in a flow of words where “plot and digression became almost synonymous” (Lawrence 1980: 566); the minutely inclusive lists in “Cyclops” cannot but become self-contaminating counter-lists where every item peacefully coexists with its opposites; the catechistic thoroughness of “Ithaca” shows the Shandean paradox that the simplest questions cannot but be answered by absurdly detailed answers. In short, as we go on reading, we have the ironic perception that the text “tells us too much and not enough” (Lawrence 1980: 562).

The continuous metamorphosis of genres, styles, and points of view,<sup>8</sup> democratically appearing on the page without being mutually exclusive, transforms the text into a sort of music hall in which not only the various characters but also language with all its various rhetorical peculiarities are given free rein to organize themselves into new patterns and modes, entitled to present their own tricks and “acts” to the reader. In this sense, the text relentlessly opens up new meaning possibilities and becomes a proper character in itself, the one who best embodies Odysseus’ polytropic qualities, recycling and refunctionalising old materials (words, characters, allusions and so on).<sup>9</sup>

In other words, reading *Ulysses* means to undergo a Stephen-like experience of seeing “all kinds of words changing colour”. Everything can be itself and something else at the same time: even such trivial objects as a potato or a hat are not just a potato or a hat, though undeniably keeping their physical quality.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, it is perfectly normal to find out that a throwaway is first a worthless leaflet placed in Bloom’s hand by a “sombre Y.M.C.A. young man” (*U* 8.5-6), then rides as a crumpled piece of paper lightly down the water, a pebble amid the various Wandering Rocks scattered about the central chapter (*U* 10.294-295; 753 and 1096), turns into a winning horse in “Cyclops”, “Circe” and “Eumaeus”, regains its own identity and meaning (a piece of paper that can eventually be thrown away, *U* 17.332), till the wheel comes full circle with the cursory mention of a “distributor of throwaways” (*U* 17.1940). In the meantime, however, the term has acquired a polyhedric volume by going through this circular process, enriched by horse-racing slang (*U* 12.1219, 1226, and 1563; *U* 15.2936 and 4814; *U* 16.1278-1282) or journalistic style (*U* 16.1242-1243), and introducing racial connotations (*U* 12.1550-1551), narrative prolepsis (of Bloom’s Elijahian ascension in *U* 12.1910-1918), and parodic imitations (in particular of W.S. Landor’s *Imaginary conversations* in *U* 14.1131-1133).

If everything has its own communicative potential and voice, from the typewriter (*U* 7.174-177) to Boylan's shoes (*U* 11.337-338 and 761), to the coin (*U* 11.371), not to mention the button, Bella's sowcunt, the boots, the pianola or the waterfall in "Circe" (see, respectively, *U* 15.3441; 3490; 3733-3734; 4051-4052 and 3299-3300), it means that the material elements of reality must be tackled as they offer themselves to reading, appreciated in their inherent polyfunctionality and in their unpredictable configurations, perfectly embodying Joyce's own hope of creating "a language which is above all languages, a language to which all will do service" (Ellmann 1982: 397).

As to that revolutionary narrative technique of the text, the interior monologue, Joyce himself denounced the normalizing tendency of critics ("Now they want another phrase", *Selected Letters* 297) and prevented its being considered a realist device<sup>11</sup> And while commentators try to catch up with the text, even inventing new labels such as "the Arranger" (see Hayman 1970 and Kenner 1987), it slips through their analytic fingers invariably producing instances that deny the validity of this classification or that narratological typology.

A good example in case is provided by such a seemingly straightforward chapter as "Eumaeus": its "prosa rilassata" is in fact characterized by a fumbling narrative voice that constantly undermines monologic certainties and demonstrates that what one sees and hears can never be trusted, let alone the identity of characters. This is not only stressed by the incessant repetition of "or", "rather", "to be more accurate" that intersperse the chapter, but also by the fact that the constant shifts of point of view make it impossible to distinguish the different narratorial perspectives. In the case of Skin-the-Goat, for example, it is as if there were several narrators who alternately insinuate doubts – "the keeper of it said to be the once famous Skin-the-Goat, Fitzharris" (323), "Skin-the-Goat, alias the keeper" (596), "Skin-the-Goat, assuming he was he" (985) — or take his identity for granted — "Skin-the-Goat, who this time stretched over" (688-689), "Fitz, nicknamed Skin-the" (1066), "Ay, Skin-the-Goat amusingly added" (1357). The narration itself seems polluted by this general atmosphere of wavering possibilities, and any narrative voice stands for a "soi-disant" reliable storyteller.

Just like Bloom, who slowly reads the throwaway placed in his hand and makes a hypothesis only to be immediately belied ("Bloo ... Me? No. Blood of the Lamb.", *U* 8.8-9), so the reader must accept the fact that there are things he shall never know, others that must be reconstructed putting together pieces of information very far from one other, others that can lead him astray: for example, the passing ship at the end of "Proteus" (*U* 3.505) might be a confirmation of Murphy's suspicious story (*U* 16.450-451), it might just be a cursory descriptive detail or it might even pass unnoticed because of the "warp in the order of presentation" (Kenner 1987: 80), thus reinforcing the impression of the narrative as a Bakhtinian dialogue of plurivocal forms.

The metamorphic quality of this porous language is manifestly clear in the case of such a key term as *metempsychosis*: apart from its exotic flavor that reminds one of *gnomon*, *simony* and *paralysis*, it has all the characteristics to appear one of Bloom's and Molly's *ipsissima verba*. Yet it is repeatedly retorted against itself, since it reappears ten times in the text, even distorted to become a statue ("*Venus Metempsychosis*"; *U* 15.1706) or a sort of editorial comment to Molly's transformation ("metempsychosis (met him pike hoses)"; *U* 17.686). Its most interesting transmutation, however, is one of its first misspellings,<sup>12</sup> Bloom's "metamspychosis" (*U* 4.351), because it is a confirmation that the text presents itself as a living body following, as it were, an evolutionary pattern: we go from Molly's absent<sup>13</sup> malapropism (*U* 4.336) to the right Greek term (*U* 4.339 and 341) to Bloom's distortion (*U* 4.351), which contains not only a telescoping of two words, but also a significant prolepsis predicting his voyeuristic predisposition (*spy*).

Bloom's and Molly's interior monologues are then presented in their unconscious juggling with words, playing out several combinations of letters, sounds and reminiscences, reinforcing

the reader’s puzzlement. Moreover, in the end not only are we denied the literal transcription of Molly’s word; it also takes a long evolutionary time (four chapters) before we read the “surviving” form, the more sexually allusive “met him pike hoses” (*U* 8.112), that is presented as the “real” transcriptions of her words which the text crystallizes as a sequence of meaningful and allusive words through Bloom’s interior monologue, further confirmed by a circumstantial evidence, the literal repetition of Molly’s “O, rocks!” (*U* 4.344 and *U* 8.113). To make things worse, Molly’s reminiscence in her interior monologue (*U* 18.565-566) seems more a textual recollection of Bloom’s “version” than of her actual words, and there is the lingering suspect that, after all, she might have uttered yet another combination of words that her memory was not able to retain.

If any dream of pigeonholing or defining is doomed, despite the hopes of those critical approaches which give in to the ever-present temptation of finding an explanation<sup>14</sup> — in Kenner’s lapidarian sentence (1987: 80), “No one comprehensive reading is thinkable” of a book that makes “the notion of a ‘competent’ scholar in Joyce studies impossible” (Derrida 1992: 255) — the “retrospective arrangement” repeatedly mentioned in the text is the paradoxical but fundamental stylistic procedure to adopt in order to enjoy *Ulysses* and the meaningfully distorted reading it imposes. The almost infinite number of details, and the even more infinite interconnections they can establish through internal allusions, mean that the reader must accept to play the game, leaving everything pending in order to reuse it if and when it comes in handy, even retrace his hermeneutic steps.

*Ulysses*, in other words, is a blatant demonstration that any productive approach to the text can only be stylistic, provided we abandon any hope of defining style univocally and consider it as an effect produced by a mobile interaction of text and reader in order to accomplish new forms of communication. The linguistic errancy must be tackled by a dynamic hermeneutic approach<sup>15</sup> bearing in mind that, whenever confronted with restricted perspectives, the text opts for a quintessentially Bloomian strategic withdrawal, in the hope of appealing to the reader and induce him to follow it on in its search for a renewed expressibility of the world.

#### “Long and the short of it”

The strategy of displacement is not limited to the preclusion of textual closure. *Ulysses* postpones and eventually denies its final realization, frustrates readers’ expectations,<sup>16</sup> and though the late pages sometimes shed light on, or supply missing information for, so many suspended facts and events, we can never dream of a complete, definitive revelation.<sup>17</sup> Even the tendency to iteration never falls into mere replication<sup>18</sup> because “by varying what he tells and emphasizes Joyce ensures that repetition shall not dilute but intensify” (Kenner 1987: 76), thus producing a deepening rather than redundancy, let alone entirety.

This means, one would be tempted to say, that *Ulysses* not only imposes itself as unattainable totality, but fosters the impression that its laconicity prevails over its verbosity, with condensation and intensification as the only ways of approaching in a tangential, tentative way, the teeming alterity of the real. In other words, despite its inherent tendency to incorporate the most heterogeneous materials, the text miraculously succeeds in extolling subtraction as its key feature.<sup>19</sup> In fact, this is the necessary reverse of the already discussed exuberant productivity of textual elements: the impossibility of exhausting even the most irrelevant event or object transforms the hermeneutic process into an infinite opening of possibilities that can only emerge from the gaps and silences that we can sense behind the surface of an apparently overwhelming text.

Reversing Molly's mispronunciation (*U* 18.1170), the text constantly reminds one that "omissions" are always "emissions", as it is evident in the constant stressing of the physical quality of language: the "noisy" description of diners at Burton's (*U* 8.650 ff.),<sup>20</sup> Dollard's "bearded abundant laughter" (*U* 11.538), the "steelhoofs ringhoof ring," (*U* 11.545), Dedalus' puffs (*U* 11.509-514), the "satiny bosom" (*U* 11.1134), all emphasize the sensuous quality of a text that wants to involve the reader in a synaesthetic experience.<sup>21</sup> However, the senses, so pervasively present<sup>22</sup> are not mere extensions of the body and of the mind so that the reader better dominates what he reads, nor do they want to sharpen his perception of reality. Rather, like the libidinal ghosts embodied by the nightmarish characters in "Circe", they oblige the reader to be perceptive in a different way and appreciate *Ulysses* for what it does not tell, or tells in its interstices.

If we read that "Davy Byrne smiledyawnednodded all in one" (*U* 8.969), it is not because the text is in a hurry and looking for the quickest way to describe facts, but because it needs to catch the instant "à la gorge" in its temporary, precarious meaning, thus condensing and expressing concepts as units that go beyond the limits imposed by the separation of language into words. When in "Wandering Rocks" the same verbs return in a fully developed guise ("Father Conmee smiled and nodded and smiled and walked along Mountjoy square east", *U* 10.53-55), they have a totally different meaning because, by stressing their temporal succession, they underscore Father Conmee's repetitive, ceremonious act.

The same is true for the innumerable word agglutinations and compounds, from "stickumbrelladustcoat" (*U* 8.316) to "The boys sixeyed Father Conmee and laughed" (*U* 10.49) from the hilarious list of the members of the delegation in "Cyclops" (*U* 12.555-569) to the amusing "handsomemarriedwomanrubbedagainstwidebehindinClonskeatram" (*U* 15.4353-4354), a compound made up of a complete sentence:<sup>23</sup> they impose the umpteenth pressure on language and remind the reader that sentences may also signify by resorting to new syntactic patterns or what Derrida (1992) termed "gramophone effect". The text can also mean by gathering together all the verbs in a sentence in such cases as "He smellsipped the cordial juice" (*U* 8.795) or "He seehears lipspeech." (*U* 11.1002), while in other cases it uses metagrams to produce echoic effects: "doggybowwowsywowsy" (*U* 8.849), "Yogibogeybox" (*U* 9.279), "Tipping her tepping her tapping her topping her. Tup." (*U* 11.706-707), "wavyavyeavyheavyeavyevyevyhair" (*U* 11.809), thus demonstrating that the semantics of sounds takes the place of regular grammatical structures. The sheer number and variety of these agglutinations further confirms that the text is indefatigably elaborating new ways for sidestepping any referential limitation through concentration and synthesis, in order to remind the reader of the existence of larger (or smaller) units than words to convey ideas.

In this sense, not even the single "chapters" of *Ulysses* feature a monologic, definite style, because their language is inherently streaked by mental and physical worlds that claim their rights. In taking up this challenge, the text is a "jusqu'aboutist" just like its eponymous Greek hero, and imposes a similar heavy hermeneutic responsibility on the reader, who must agree to arrive at the end of his tether to interact with it in a new way, both in its conscious and unconscious aspects, to unravel its reserves and gaps, reconnect its many narrative threads, and pursue its myriad unexpressed reading possibilities.

The wanderings of the text and its characters find a linguistic counterpart in the "mosaic" of an almost cinematic sequence of stylistic frames, whose pattern can be appreciated only by a dynamic act of reading. And by the time the narrative mentions "the necessity for repose, obviating movement" (*U* 17: 2031), the reader has already been convinced of the 'necessity of movement, obviating repose' as the only way to grasp the "actuality of the possible as possible" (*U* 2: 67) at all textual levels.

Only by retrieving the multifaceted, variegated linguistic and non-linguistic materials can we appreciate and reconstruct the full significance and thrill of the text’s linguistic games of pleasure and its probing the very depths of language, bearing in mind that the need to “re-collect in retrospect”, as the narrator in “Eumaeus” reminds us (*U* 16.1583-1584), is “a source of keen satisfaction in itself”.

<sup>1</sup> It would be absurd to lump everything together and dismiss such stylistic-based studies as Gottfried (1980) or Lawrence (1981), yet, the risk of inconclusiveness is always present in many simplistic contributions vaguely based on linguistics or stylistics. This is also true of analyses of stories from *Dubliners* that often come up with discomfiting, obvious conclusions: Azar and Yazdchi (2012: 1055), for example, propose a rigid stylistic analysis of “Clay” just to get “to the same conclusion as the one” literary critics end up with. Concentrating on point of view, Yang (2011) makes an intolerably mechanical interpretation, claiming that a certain sentence or word has clearly one particular meaning, till we get to such truisms as “Joyce successfully portrays a picture of paralysis, which is appropriately in keeping with the theme of the story” (342). Jasim and Ghailan (2007: 17) contend that for Joyce “style is a means of presenting the reader with a problem: why is the text written in this particular way?” only to solve such a thorny problem by noticing that characters are presented using different constructions and each “presents a specific character: Eveline is passive and led by circumstances, and Frank is active and determined”. From this point of view, the more didactic approach of the so called “Pedagogical stylistics” seems more fruitful. On the topic see Widdowson (1975), Widdowson (1992) and Short (1989).

<sup>2</sup> As Ellmann (1982: 397) reports, Joyce “sometimes used Ulysses to demonstrate that even English, that best of languages, was inadequate. ‘Aren’t there enough words for you in English?’ they asked him. ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘there are enough, but they aren’t the right ones.’”

<sup>3</sup> All the quotations are from Joyce (1986) and follow the usual chapter and line number convention.

<sup>4</sup> An emblematic instance is provided by the sudden realization in “Sirens” that a sentence has already appeared before (“Blazes Boylan’s smart tan shoes creaked on the barfloor where he strode.”, *U* 11.337-338; “Blazes Boylan’s smart tan shoes creaked on the barfloor, said before.”, *U* 11.761).

<sup>5</sup> As Carla Vaglio demonstrated, the adjective in “whiteeyed kaffir” (*U* 12.1552), being an allusion to British music hall star George H. Chirgwin, implies a singular, although it is wrongly interpreted as a plural in most translations. Incidentally, one of the best known autographed photographs of white-eyed Chirgwin is dated “21.3.04”, few months before Bloomsday.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, the anagrams of Bloom’s name (*U* 17.406-409), the meaningfulness of the vocal sequence “A.E.I.O.U.” (*U* 9.213) or the sandwichmen who, whenever they leave their proper place while wandering about the city (as in *U* 8.126-128), highlight the autonomization of the letters they are bearing.

<sup>7</sup> On onomatopoeias and the textual decomposition they produce see Staten (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, Tymoczko links the stylistic experimentation, the episodic structure and the use of narrative gaps that feature so prominently in *Ulysses* to “the intertextuality between Joyce’s narrative and Irish hero tale” (1997: 61) claiming that “insofar as Joyce was writing within the generic conventions of Irish epic, such stylistic variety was de rigueur” (1997: 69).

<sup>9</sup> Senn (1984: 208) proposed the term “dislocation” to label this tendency: “each chapter reprocesses its ingredients according to different and, on occasion, highly deviant preferences. In their entirety, these serial approaches, or perspectives, also become a polytropic endeavor to comprehend all possible modes of being”.

<sup>10</sup> On Bloom’s potato see Kenner (1987: 79-80); on hats and their function in “Hades” see Pugliatti in Bosinelli-Ruggieri (2002).

<sup>11</sup> As Herr (Attridge 2004: 63) maintains, “whatever the stream of consciousness accomplishes in terms of artistic technique, it does not provide even the shadow of an access to a mythical human nature within or behind or beyond or above those informing texts. The art that seems to bring us closer to life, seems to show us that art constitutes life and that nature as we can know it is always only culture.”



<sup>12</sup> As Gabler points out in the *Critical and Synoptic Edition of Ulysses* (1984: 1732), this form “which survived through the first two editions, is either a double misprint, as no doubt assumed by Stuart Gilbert for the 1932 edition, or it is what Joyce wrote. If so, it is Bloom’s acknowledgment of one attempt of Molly’s at pronouncing the word”.

<sup>13</sup> As Kenner noted (1987: 82), what seems an undoubted fact, is in fact absent: in (*U* 4.333) we only read Bloom’s back question but we do not hear Molly’s real word, even though “the grotesque phrase comes up again and again and again, seven more times in all, till we’re quite sure we heard her say it though we never did”.

<sup>14</sup> This also happens to the political readings of *Ulysses*. For example, Eagleton’s (1990: 376) interesting study of Joyce’s “dissolution of all stable identity” and “promiscuous signifier” starts from the assumption that linguistic experimentation is linked with political radicalism. For a discussion of the opposite tendency of interpreting experimentalism as a retreat from politics see Hawthorn (1982). See Lawrence (1992) and Rasmussen Goloubeva (2013) for more recent discussions of Joyce’s attitude to history.

<sup>15</sup> A similar approach, specifically applied to translation as a form of “recherche en mouvement”, was discussed during the round table at the 21st meeting of ATLAS (Assises de la Traduction littéraire en ArleS; see Association ATLAS 2005) and is at the basis of the recent French “retranslation” of *Ulysses* directed by Jacques Aubert.

<sup>16</sup> As Lawrence (1980: 560) has it: “We strain for signs of human characters and are told of physical objects; we try to understand the relationship among characters and encounter mathematical tangents and algebraic equations”.

<sup>17</sup> As Kenner (1987: 79) claims, a reader “equipped with perfect knowledge of the rest of the book, would experience bewilderment from the very profusion of small elements dropping into place. And he would be deceived, this reader, if he supposed the whole book had declared itself to him”. Also Tymoczko (1997: 66) maintains that “The everyday Bloom is merely a collection of individual moments in the course of his life — a collection which is infinitely smaller than that of the unlimited possibilities of the Bloom that might be”.

<sup>18</sup> Senn (1984: 203) stresses that “*Ulysses* is a redistribution of its material, a matter of internal transferences, of kaleidoscopic diversion. *Ulysses* reshuffles its elements, and with a difference”.

<sup>19</sup> McBride studied the “stylistics of suppression” that is “couched paradoxically in the stylistics of accretion” (1978: 356) and proposed “Nausicaa” as a paradigmatic example of “verbiage that conceals rather than reveals” (1978: 358).

<sup>20</sup> It is tempting to read such passages in the light of Joyce’s letter to Nora quoted in Ellmann (1982: 170): “When you went in tonight I wandered along towards Grafton St. where I stood for a long time leaning against a lamp-post, smoking. The street was full of a life which I have poured a stream of my youth upon. While I stood there I thought of a few sentences I wrote some years ago when I lived in Paris — these sentences which follow — ‘They pass in twos and threes amid the life of the boulevard, walking like people who have leisure in a place lit up for them. They are in the pastry cook’s, chattering, crushing little fabrics of pastry, or seated silently at tables by the café door, or descending from carriages with a busy stir of garments soft as the voice of the adulterer. They pass in an air of perfumes. Under the perfumes their bodies have a warm humid smell’.

<sup>21</sup> As Jolas already noticed, Joyce “gives his words odors and sounds that the conventional standard does not know” (Jolas 1928: 113) and his “disintegration of Words and their subsequent reconstruction on other planes constitute some of the most important phenomena of our epoch” (Jolas 1928: 109).

<sup>22</sup> Among the recent contributions on the “senses” in *Ulysses* see Danius (2002) and Ellmann (2009).

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed analysis of word agglutinations in *Ulysses* see Evans (1974). On the contrary, the recent article on the same topic by Xianyou (2011) tries to investigate some examples of conversion or compounds “by means of classification and comparison” (1176), with the obvious consequence that it often borders on descriptive or even obvious statements, such as “When you come across such a deviation, a careful reading is absolutely needed” (1177).

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