

Joycean Refractions: Around Several Corners

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Abstract

With its author's inimitable erudition, this paper channels a prodigious grasp of the Joyce oeuvre into the grooves of narrative suggestion, deflection, distortion, indirection, and allusion. These phenomena are placed, at the bidding of a slip by Bloom, under the optical heading of refraction, which unites the paper's angles of study, among them variation in translation, evinced by the recent Aubert-directed *Ulysse* and the García Tortosa and Venegas Lagüéns *Ulises*. Though dismissing its novelty as "putting a different label on fairly familiar bottles containing the same old wine of what we already knew," the paper's sustaining insight stands undiminished.

Franks Budgen reports how Joyce described to him his narrative method: "But I want the reader to understand always through suggestion rather than direct statement".¹ Not that Joyce—if those were indeed his actual words remembered years later—was revealing the whole truth; "always" is no doubt an exaggeration, there are numerous parts when Joyce can be disarmingly or shockingly direct. But, certainly departing from Mr Deasy's proud motto, "*per vias rectas*", there is an increasing bias towards indirection in the prose works. The term "suggestion" may well comprise a more original meaning of carrying or bringing (*gerere, gestus*) something underneath (*sub*), as something that is not visible on the surface. Suggestion, indirection, implication is not something that Joyce invented, but he amplified the device into a distinctive feature that eventually resulted in the abstruseness of *Finnegans Wake*, where hardly anything is straightforward any more.

The key term to be used in the following application is borrowed from one of Bloom's earliest and best-known fumbles in *Ulysses*. Feeling the heat in his funeral suit, he tries to recall what he once learned at

school, in physics: “Black conducts, reflects, (refracts is it?), the heat” (*U* 4.79). What Bloom gropes for (heat is “absorbed”) gets confused in a synaesthetic muddle; the respective verbs are similar, Latin-derived compounds. This instance of a common fuzzy memory will here be exploited to show up a Joycean trademark. What he called “suggestion” to Budgen will here be named and extended as “refraction”. The visual metaphor, of light that passes through a surface being re-directed, serves to rephrase old insights or even commonplaces. To refract is to alter the course, to change direction, to deviate, divert or distort;² all of these actions are part of Joyce’s best-known techniques. Possibly the term “diffraction” might serve as illustration as well, the breaking of a beam of light.

As it happens, Bloom’s minor slip in itself is already a refraction: he moves from heat to electricity and then to optics. The topic at hand then is *Refractory Joyce*, though not in the emotional sense that Joyce as a person was in fact refractory, recalcitrant, stubborn, autonomous and immune to ordinary pressures. It was one of his great strengths and not always easy to endure for his entourage. The focus is on Joyce as a writer who could utilize much of what he came across by bending it to his purposes. All was potential grill to his Daedalian mill. He refracted experience, prototypes, topics, words, down to minutiae. Refraction in Joyce is both theme and technique.

Analogous processes, sometimes chance or coincidences, determined Joyce’s own migrations as they do most of our lives. A literary agency sent him on to Europe with the promise of a teaching position in Zürich, which turned out to be a misinformation. From Zürich he was sent on to Trieste, which he and Nora reached via Ljubliana, where they got off the train by mistake. In Trieste he was passed on to Pola, but then returned to stay in Trieste, with a brief diversion to Rome, and so on. Later Ezra Pound directed him to Paris, which was first considered merely a transitory stay but became fairly permanent, although with a constant change of residences. All in all, it was an unsettling life, often determined by coincidence or opportunity, but in essence a series of redirections.

To trace all of Joyce’s wanderings, and even more his attitudes and views at any given time, is a matter of interpreting extant documents and accounts of witnesses who, even with the best intentions, may not be reliable. Some reports are downright wrong.³ Right or wrong, they may become biography.

Plotting

Joyce makes it hard to overlook that refraction is not an occasional irregularity but more in the nature of a norm. In fiction it is paramount. Only what departs from a norm or disrupts (breaks) the expected progress of any action is worth telling. But Joyce also departs from *this* norm, as in the pedantry of Ithaca where commonplace facts can be laboriously detailed.⁴ Joyce's deviations accentuate the norm and make us aware of tacit narrative practice. If nothing goes wrong, or awry, there is no plot. The *Odyssey* is the classical archetype, a journey home is delayed by adversities and diverting encounters. It began when the ships were "driven headlong", sideways, misdirected (*Od.* 5:70), and the calamities took their course.

Joyce's tales follow the same lines. In "An Encounter" a goal, the Pigeonhouse, is not reached, but somewhere along the way something not budgeted for turns up in the shape of a strange man who has been described as a pervert, which means that something in his life took a peculiar turn, a psychological refraction. Most *Dubliners* stories depict everyday failures which can be decisive turning points or missed opportunities. We do not know what Eveline misses or gains by not joining Frank on the departing ship. On the surface "A Boarding House" is a success story, at least it is from the perspective of Mrs Mooney, who succeeds in marrying her daughter off by devious tactics. The trapped husband, Mr Doran, may see it differently, as he is thrown off course, and his reappearance in *Ulysses*, where he is drunk and maudlin at five o'clock in the afternoon, seems to confirm most readers' misgivings. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* depicts not a straight line of development, but a broken one, roughly a zigzag from shy infant to obedient young student, with a fall into precocious sin, followed by purification and Christian devotion until Stephen Dedalus redirects himself towards independence and creation. The same Stephen Dedalus at the outset of *Ulysses* has again come down to earth.

In *Ulysses* Leopold Bloom's plans for the day included a visit to the cemetery, a spot of work in the newspaper office and perhaps a bath, possibly attendance at a theatre, vaguely a few meals. But he was deflected to the Ormond hotel, later to Barney Kiernan's, to the Dignam family in Sandymount, then to the Lying-in Hospital and finally, and totally unscheduled, a chain of unscheduled events brought him to Nighttown. Chance encounters and chance impacts determine his day.

Textual Vagaries

Joyce's works underwent transformations during their extended composition. Not one of his prose works ended up as what they first were conceived. The delays of *Dubliners* resulted in the addition of "The Dead", which gave the whole collection a different feel and added resonances as well as a circular structure. What started out as "Stephen Hero" was drastically remoulded into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and as early responses show, it defied traditional expectations and norms. Its chapters follow an almost biological, evolutionary course. The plan for a story intended for *Dubliners* was shelved, taken up later, grew into something to which the term "novel" no longer applies; its ground plan essentially changed in the artist's workshop, as two variant Schemas demonstrate, and the intricate process of composition can be traced in multiple documents. Joyce could not possibly predict where he would go when he embarked on his last work. It began with a few relatively simple sketches and after numerous vicissitudes became *Finnegans Wake*.

Due to Joyce's erratic procedures and re-workings the texts themselves also got out of hand. Errors of enlisted scribes or the interference of well-meaning proofreaders, along with authorial oversights, left their mark on *Ulysses* and the *Wake* so that now refined editorial skills or controversial methods are called for to establish optimal approximations of what Joyce may have had in mind at different stages.⁵

Interior Monologue

What struck early readers of *Ulysses* so much that a term had to be created, the interior monologue, is by nature refractory. It takes great mental concentration to keep our thoughts on a projected line; in practice we proceed by fits and new starts, or drift sideways by chance associations. The mind is by nature flexible, changeable, volatile and subject to impulses. The soul "hath the virtue of the chameleon to change her hue at every approach"; "a chance word will call . . . forth" memories (*U* 14.1038, 1348).

Perhaps not by coincidence, the most manifest introduction of the technique (leaving aside an early, already deviant one-word sentence, "Chrysostomos"; [*U* 1.26]) is by way of a mirror when Stephen Dedalus is looking at himself and addresses himself (literally in internal monologue): "As he and others see me" (*U* 1.136). It also amounts to a syntactical redirection, introducing present tense and subjective pronouns. Revealingly, Stephen is looking at himself, the mirror provides an optical

reflection. Figuratively “reflect” is also when the mind turns back on itself and starts to connect ideas or memories, logical or by association. In the Homeric epics thinking is often expressed as talking to oneself.

Instances can be taken almost at random. When Stephen in Proteus sees two women approaching, a specific bag makes him imagine them as midwives. This leads to his own birth, the evocation of navelcords, to a hypothetical series of linked navelcords back through time and ultimately to Ur-mother Eve in Paradise, with a few minor tangents along the way (*U* 3.29–40)—as instructive a chain of refractions as one can imagine. One corollary is that readers easily get lost in the seemingly chancy steps. Links may be concealed or missing.

“running round corners” (*U* 5.271)

Much of what disaffects readers in Joyce has to do with the lack of clear guidance or, to put it differently, the concealment around corners. Joyce tends to fragment information, to insinuate, allude, suggest, as he indicated to Budgen. Readers have to proceed by cautious attention to details and by provisional inference. Right at the opening of *Ulysses* it is not simple to discern what this character Buck Mulligan is doing when, “catching of sight of Stephen Dedalus” (when we were expecting someone named “Kinch”, and perhaps a Jesuit), he makes “crosses in the air, gurgling in his throat and shaking his head” (*U* 1.11). It does not look like predictable behaviour. A situational context has to be made out by imaginative speculation. The most plausible conjecture so far seems to be that Mulligan is acting like a priest (which he has started doing already moments before) who in mock fright encounters someone possessed by a devil or demon. Since Dedalus is not possessed by a devil (though it turns out he can play the role of Lucifer), several implications are at the back of such a hypothesis which cannot ever be proved with certainty. Joyce could have provided lucid orientation but he preferred convoluted shorthand to narrative explicitness. The *mise en scène* is left to the readers and acts have to be put in their context, which in this case is a dramatic one of ecclesiastical playacting.

The opening paragraph of Proteus is a forbidding trial run of indirection. It sets off with an abstract “Ineluctable modality of visible” but soon lists concrete visual impressions. Foreign terms creep in, “diaphane” and “adiaphane”, Greek words that are far from diaphanous. Soon a person is introduced: “But he adds. . . . Then he was aware of them coloured. . . . Bald he was and a millionaire, *maestro di color che sanno*. . . .” (*U* 3.1–11). The unnamed subject may remain securely

unknown; an astute reader may deduce something from theories of vision or trace *diaphane* in Greek philosophy. Someone familiar with Dante may remember that the “master of those who know”, the philosophers, was Aristotle, who in Dante’s *Inferno* is also not named, but just alluded to. In equally withholding names, Joyce is following a tradition. What look like the most obvious pointers, “bald” and “millionaire”, are singularly unhelpful and depend on remote and doubtful peripheral documentation. So Aristotle is both ubiquitous and invisible in a paragraph concerned with vision. In fact not a single name is given in that first paragraph though it is haunted by the ghosts of Jakob Boehme, Bishop Berkeley and Dr. Johnson, as well as Dante, who are all obliquely present.

In the line from Dante’s *Inferno*, the word “*color*” is potentially misleading; it does not mean “colour” as the preceding items, “coloured signs . . . before of them coloured” might insinuate, but an Italian demonstrative (“those”). In other words, a bald millionaire may turn out to be a specific Greek philosopher, and *color* is not Latin (or American) “color”. Appearances are deceptive, which is also one of Aristotles main concerns; he distinguishes substance from accidents (like colour). That a prism refracts light into the various colours is merely a fringe benefit for this essay.

Understanding can amount to puzzling out what a given item is a refraction of. When Bloom politely listens to a rambling and tedious M’Coy, most of his attention is diverted to a stylish woman across the street who is accompanied by a man. In a complex paragraph Joyce blends what Bloom sees and what he reflects upon with the soundtrack of M’Coy’s conversation. The synaesthetic ingredients can be told apart without excessive effort:

Doran Lyons in Conway’s. She raised a gloved hand to her hair. In came Hoppy. Having a wet. Drawing back his head . . . he saw the bright fawn skin shine in the glare, the braided drums. Clearly I can see today. Moisture about gives long sight perhaps. Talking of one thing or another. Lady’s hand. Which side will she get up? (*U* 5.109-14)

It is obvious that Bloom first hears the echo of what M’Coy has told at some length (“Doran Lyons in Conway’s”) and then sees the woman raise a hand. “In came Hoppy. Having a wet” must be the talking voice. Then there is again visual observation, followed by Bloom’s typical enquiry into causation. The next item “Talking of one thing or another” sounds again like what M’Coy pedantically details in the aural report, but it is

conceivable that it is Bloom who observes, impatiently, that the couple across the street are engaged in further talk, delaying the moment of a glimpse at an ankle. What is seen or what is heard?—alternatives or ambiguity. Typically, Danis Rose in *The Reader's Edition of Ulysses* offers what Joyce pointedly avoided, narrative guidance. So he puts "In came Hoppy. Having a wet" on a separate line and precedes it by the dash which in Joycean practice clearly marks dialogue.⁶ This relieves the reader of the task to sort out the elements in the way that has been exemplified above. But since "Talking of one thing or another" is not treated analogously as speech it must be taken as Bloom's observation, and not what he hears. No alternative is indicated. The point is made not to argue against an editorial decision and interference, but to show an underlying assumption that readers would benefit from alternatives being cleared out of the way. A potential ambiguity is thereby eliminated.

"Parallax stalks behind" (U 14.1089)

Refraction is related to parallax, another term borrowed from optics, in fact it is its reverse. Parallax observes the same object from different viewpoints, refraction changes the direction of light and, as it is used here, may disperse an object. Take the Catholic Mass in *Ulysses*. We first get a glimpse of it in Buck Mulligan's mock imitation, with shaving bowl and imaginary slow music. Later on in All Hallows Bloom attends a real mass in progress and does not understand what is going on: women have "halters" round their necks, the priest stows "the communion cup away" (U 5.353–93). With only Mulligan's mockery and Bloom's mis-constructions to go on, anyone not familiar with the technicalities and significance of the Mass itself would be reduced to guesswork.

In Eumaeus the locality that Bloom and Stephen pass induces diverse associations: "Stephen thought to think of Ibsen, associated with Baird's the stonecutter's in his mind, while the other who was acting as his *fidus Achates* inhaled the smell of James Rourke's city bakery . . . , the very palatable odour indeed of our daily bread . . . , the staff of life, earn your bread, O tell me where is fancy bread, at Rourke's the baker's it is said" (U 16.52–9). Typically, Stephen's thoughts turn to literature, this in a habitual, almost mechanical reflex and a memory of previous walks. In *A Portrait* already, "as he went by Baird's stonecutting works in Talbot place the spirit of Ibsen would blow through him" (P 176). In Bloom's case not a spirit but the sensual odour of bread is operative. So the two characters reveal their nature. Incidentally, when Bloom is referred to as Stephen's *fidus Achates*, we are momentarily sidetracked into a different

epic, away from the *Odyssey*. In Virgil's *Aeneid* Achates is the trusty companion of Aeneas and always submissive, just like Bloom in the episode. Actually, the analogy to the *Aeneid* is much closer: Bloom and Stephen are together right from the start in Eumaeus, as are Aeneas and Achates, whereas in the *Odyssey* Telemachos is going to meet his father for the first time in one of the climactic recognition scenes. Recognitions or revelations tend to be absent in Eumaeus. In the given context here, *Ulysses* has changed tracks, away from the Greek *Odyssey* into the Latin *Aeneid*⁷ (which is also in part its imitation or adaptation).

In an analogous bifurcation the bells of St. George late after midnight remind Bloom simply of the same sound in the previous morning, with associations of Dignam, whereas Stephen calls up the death of his mother, "*Liliata rutilantium. . .*" (*U* 17.1228).

The diffraction of Bloom's bee illustrates the prevalent dynamism. Evidently Bloom was stung by a bee, as he remembers: "That bee or bluebottle here Whitmonday". With excessive concern he had the wound medically inspected: "Nice young student that was dressed that bite the bee gave me". The pedantic report given in Ithaca looks objective: ". . . a cicatrice in the left infracostal region below the diaphragm resulting from a sting inflicted 2 weeks and 3 days previously (23 May 1904) by a bee". Molly confirms the event within a framework of superstition, "Monday is a cursed day too no wonder that bee bit him". The bluebottle alternative, which also occurs in a visual memory ("Bee or bluebottle too other day butting shadow on wall"), still needs explication. A second bee is also involved: "That bee last week got into the room playing with his shadow. Might be the one bit me, come back to see". Another memory has been triggered. Beyond these realistic variants the event is mockingly distorted in the words of, presumably, Dixon, the doctor who treated the injury: "Got bet be a boumblebee whenever he was settin sleepin in hes bit garten". A writer like Mandeville would not bother with common or garden bees, and so in the historical metamorphoses of Oxen of the Sun the subject conforms to the stylistic mannerism of the episode rather than trite facts: "for he was sore wounded in his breast by a spear wherewith a horrible and dreadful dragon was smitten him". That bite of the bee has in fact been "dressed" (*U* 4.483, 6.381, 17.1449, 18.953, 15.2429, 13.1143, 14.1473, 14.130).

"create its own technique"⁸

The most conspicuous instances of refraction are the modes of *Ulysses'* episodes in their striking variety. Each one of them organizes itself

according to a different agenda. Bloom's bee as just shown adapts to the prevalent chapter textures. The episodes change track. The first conspicuous divergence is Aeolus with its novel typographical device, separate lines in capital letters, something not met with before which heralds a distinctly new perspective. It sets off right away the trams that "slowed, shunted, changed trolley" (*U* 7.1) and depart in different directions. Alternative lines are indicated.

Any attentive reader would instantly recognize a snippet from, say, Aeolus, Sirens, Ithaca or Penelope, often with just a glance at the page. It is not necessary to describe those chapter properties one more time; it is enough to rephrase from a particular angle what we know already. It may appear at first glance as though a narrative norm, or the norm that Joyce established in the first six episodes, were refracted from a certain point onward in often innovative ways, perhaps whimsical or bizarre ways, as some early readers but also at times stalwart admirers like Ezra Pound or Harriet Weaver commented.⁹

Possibly no episode is more convoluted than the 14th, which breaks its narrative into a progression of what can be called, inadequately, parodies, or imitations, simulacra, etc. of certain historical fashions of prose writing. All these terms suggest a refraction of a particular manner of writing. The action is displaced back in time in a sequence of period pieces, of how earlier writers might have processed the contemporary material. The wayward series displays the author's mimetic ingenuity as well as the patent counterfeit nature of the second-hand treatment.

That material is bent around several corners. One paragraph, in the so-called style of the Gothic Novel, is a case in point: "But Malachias' tale began to freeze them with horror. . . . Murderer's ground" (*U* 14.1010–37). Buck Mulligan seems to report on the party in George Moore's house in Ely Place from where he just arrived. We cannot infer what his exact words are since they are transposed into mannerisms of the Gothic Novel, which at least provides a basic framework. Haines, who must have appeared briefly at the party, is changed into the role of a guilt-driven criminal who, in one salient diversion into the present time, expresses himself in the cadences of John Millington Synge ("what way would I be resting at all . . . and I tramping Dublin this while back"). Already this is a multiple diversion of what Haines would have spoken; clearly Mulligan, the one who can skilfully parody Synge's confection of an Irish dialect, lends him the voice. When Haines is quoted directly ("Meet me at Westland row station at ten past eleven") we briefly move again forward to 1904. More incongruous elements are taken from the Childs Murder Case in recent memory and from the third brother motif

(as it was aired in the Library chapter). A quotation from Meredith (“The sentimentalist . . .”) refers to the telegramme of today. The Gothic Novel drifts, as historically it did in the 19th century, into the modern detective story with its final denouement: “Haines was the third brother . . .”). An echo of Le Fanu’s novel of detection, *The House by the Churchyard*, fits into this context (“The lonely house by the graveyard. . .”). The morning’s conversation about the black panther is echoed, and a quotation from *Hamlet*, “For this relief much thanks” (which Bloom already mentally deflected to a sexual relief [U 13.940]) is worked into the texture, which ends with snatches from Bloom’s interior monologue as the funeral passage went by the house of Childs (“It is haunted. Murderer’s ground” [U 6.476]). An echo of a remark in *Aeolus* like “*Lex talionis*” (U 7.756) can hardly have been in Mulligan’s mind or tale except by some odd and unlikely coincidence. Nor would Mulligan have overheard Haines’ remark that “History is to blame” (U 1.649), which must therefore be a memory of Stephen, who is merely listening. All in all the paragraph boils down to a heterogeneous jumble of lines that we can all trace but which are multiply broken. What otherwise can be called “broken English” (as at U 3.162) has been extended to a larger, anachronistic scale.

“strictly accurate gospel”? (U 16.829)

In Antiquity what was known of the mythical past was attributed to the Muses, daughters of Memnosyne or Memory. Homer invokes them, and so does Hesiod. But Hesiod’s omniscient historians give early warning: “We know how to speak many false things as though they were true: but we know, when we will, to utter true things”. The first line of the wording, “*idmen pseudea polla legein etumoisin homoia / idmen d’, eut’ ethelômen, alêtheia gêrusasthai*”, is similar to the rhetorical skills of Odysseus (*Od.* 19:203).¹⁰ So scepticism about truth goes far back to the sources. Mistrust in information is deeply ingrained in *Ulysses*. Reports can be tampered with, by design or inadvertently, and memory modifies what is passes on.

It happens on a small scale. Bloom on seeing Bob Doran, who some hours ago had been mentioned in talk: “on his annual bend, M’Coy said”. But M’Coy said something else, Bob Doran “is on one of his periodical bends” (U 8.595, 5.107). There is little substantial change, but a mental transformation (or, figuratively, bend) is at work nevertheless. The disparity between event and its report becomes a major issue in later episodes like Cyclops or Eumaeus. Oxen of the Sun bends the action

stylistically as well as substantially, or even periodically. The Nestor episode emphasizes that certain reports that have survived, as against many that have faded out of memory, become solidified in what is passed on as History.

Facts tend to dissolve into rumours with possibly a grain of truth but a lot of distortion or elaboration. The particular refraction which is called rumour is propagated "in continued fractions of veridicity", as a passage in Ithaca has it (*U* 17.846). Gossip or rumour, not unknown in Dublin, suffuse Joyce's works. It was known, as we read in "Grace", that Mr Cunningham "had married an unpresentable woman who was an incurable drunkard. He had set up house for her six times and each time she pawned the furniture on him" (*D* 157). This may or may not be true, but since a very similar wording, "Setting up house for her time after time and then pawning the furniture on him every Saturday almost", occurs in Bloom's mind (*U* 6.350), chances are that the rumour has assumed a narrative form of its own and become words that are passed around. Gossip also surrounds Mr Power: "Who knows is that true about the woman he keeps?" (*U* 6.246). Bloom himself is the object of many rumours, and so were Parnell or King Edward and, incidentally, James Joyce.

Gossipy episodes like Cyclops and Eumaeus add their own quota. It is hard to gauge what, if anything, is behind a story that Bloom once led a young man "the rounds of Dublin" and brought him home drunk (*U* 12.505). We can be sure that he is not, as Lenahan claims, gone to "gather in the shekels", the winnings of a bet Bloom never engaged in (*U* 12.1551). That he, outsider, is credited with being the grey eminence behind Arthur Griffith, to whom "he gave the ideas for Sinn Fein" (*U* 12.1574), seems to be believed in the pub, unlikely as it is, but does not even confer any favour on him with the nationalists. The keeper of the cabmen's shelter may or may not be Skin-the-Goat of marginal historical fame; that a man with the rare name of Simon Dedalus should have performed in a circus in Stockholm remains a mystery. The dubitable reminiscences of a sailor who calls himself Murphy, and who may have been in far away Bolivia or Odessa, are yarns but, if perpetuated, might well turn into rumours. We can trace how the man in the macintosh at the funeral came to be misnamed "M'Intosh". It is precisely the chain of errors that turns this peripheral character into an intriguing mystery figure. By the time we reach *Finnegans Wake* there are no more rumours. For they could only be set apart within a framework of facts. The *Wake* has ceased to separate facts, history, reality, from hearsay, legend, gossip, slander.

The Latin for rumour is *fama*, what is being “said”. In our context, it might be revealing to see Joyce from the perspective of how Ovid, in *Metamorphoses*, portrays a personified Fama:

There is a spot in the middle of the world, between the land and the sea, and the regions of heaven, the confine of the threefold universe, whence, although it may be in far regions, and every sound pierces the hollow ears. [Of this place] Fama is possessed, and has closed the entrances with no gates. Night and day they are open. It is all of sounding brass; it is all resounding, and it reechoes the voice, and repeats what it hears. Within there is no rest, and silence in no part. Nor yet is there a clamour, but the murmur of low voices, such as is wont to arise from the waves of the the sea, if one listens at a distance, or like the sound which the end of the thundering [makes] when Jupiter has clashed the black clouds together. A crowd occupies the hall: the fickle vulgar come and go, and a thousand rumours [*rumorum*], false mixed with true, wander up and down, and circulate confused words [*confusaque verba volutant*]. Of these, some fill the empty ears with conversation; some are carrying elsewhere what is told them; the measure of the fiction is ever on the increase, and each fresh narrator adds something to what he has heard. There, is Credulity [*Credulitas*], rash Mistake [*temerarious Error*], and empty Joy [*vanaque Laetitia*], and alarmed Fears [*consternatique Timores*], and sudden Sedition [*Seditioque recens*], and Whispers of doubtful origin [*dubioque auctore Susurri*]. She sees what things are done in heaven and on the sea, and on earth: and she pries into the whole universe. (*Metamorphoses*, 12.39–63)¹¹

This evocation of Rumour and its effects can metaphorically illustrate at least some aspects of what comes to a climax in *Finnegans Wake*. That each fresh narrator adds something to what he has heard (“*et auditis aliquid novus adicit auctor*”) almost looks like a description of chapter two, the gossip about Earwicker’s sin in the Park.

Elsewhere Ovid refers to “*Fama loquax . . . , quae veris addere falsa gaudet et e minimo sua per mendacia crescit*” (*Met.* 9:137–9): “tattling Rumour . . . , who loves to mingle false and true and, though very small at first, grows huge through lying”. No claim is made that Joyce ever pored over these lines and chose to exploit them. They are adduced to provide an illustrative sidelight.

Virgil's goddess Fama is less static, but swift and agile, she acquires strength on her way. She has many plumes and eyes beneath, "so many tongues, so many babbling mouths, pricks up so many listening ears". By night she flies buzzing, while "Watchful by day, she perches either on some housetops, or on lofty turrets, and fills the mighty city with dismay; as obstinately bent on falsehood and iniquity as on reporting truth [*tam ficti pravique tenax, quam nuntia veri*]. She then, delighted with various rumours, filled the people's ear, and uttered facts, and fictions indifferently [*et pariter facta atque infecta canebat*]. . ." (*Aeneid*, IV, 173–91).¹² What Fama does is, "Putting truth and untruth together" (*FW* 169.11). At any rate, both Virgil and Ovid paint vivid pictures of what in this perspective is termed refraction.

"in classical idiom" (U 16.1716)

A telling example of mental twists has been on record for a long time. Bloom remarks that hearts on statues in cemeteries (referring to the Sacred Heart) are not anatomically correct: ". . . sideways and red it should be painted like a real heart". If this were done, would birds be taken in by the illusion? In the line of a number of related anecdotes about lifelike paintings of a basket of fruit, he remembers that the birds would "have been afraid of the boy" in the picture. So far one can follow the train of thoughts. But unexpected, he concludes "Apollo that was" (*U* 6.949–59). It is not immediately obvious how a Greek god enters the picture. Commentators have filled the gap, some such story was attributed to a painter of antiquity, Zeuxis, but the classical painter best known was Apelles, whose name is confused with the much better known Apollo. Apelles is the missing, external link in a chain of refractions, around a few corners.

The Eumaeus episode abounds in trite classical tags that are meant to embellish the meandering prose. The night watchman Gumley, temporarily awake, is said to be "composing his limbs again in to the arms of Morpheus" (*U* 16.948). The arms of Morpheus have become a stereotype for sleep, and a slightly misdirected one, for Morpheus, the son of the God of Sleep, when aroused becomes very active indeed. He is a "cunning imitator of the human form, . . . no other is more skilled than he in representing the gait, the features and the speech of men";¹³ therefore he is sent on errands to deceive humans in the shape of someone known that appears in dreams. But tradition has mainly put him to sleep again. So the misappropriation fits the mode of Eumaeus and even more so when Gumley is remembered again, "still to all intents and purposes

wrapped in the arms of Murphy". But this time, appropriately, he is "dreaming of fresh fields and pastures new" (*U* 16.1727). Morpheus has changed to Murphy, under the impact of the sailor who calls himself Murphy and who butted into the conversation when he heard Stephen say that "Shakespeares were as common as Murphies" (*U* 16.365). It is suitable that Morpheus, the god of shapes (*morphe*), should have his name changed in turn. He might function as a presiding spirit of the chapter, which has to do with disguises, doubtful identities and deceitful appearances. Odysseus too adopted a different shape and invented fake identities.¹⁴

Bloom had unconsciously called up the particular skills of Morpheus, who as above can imitate "the gait, the features and the speech of men", when he wondered "how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice" in the cemetery (*U* 6.962). Morpheus, incidentally, takes care of human shapes, his brother Ikelos (*ikelos* = similar) is assigned to imitate animals, and Phantasos puts on "deceptive shapes of earth, rocks, water, trees, all lifeless things (*Metamorphoses*, XI.638–43). Eumaeus is full of likenesses and fantasies. The three sons of Sleep (Somnus, who would be responsible for the drowsiness of the episode that mingles with its animation) could be elevated to the patron saints of fiction or sources of inspiration, say for a chapter which contains shapes ("shape" as word occurs 7 times, "form" 9 times), gaits, faces, voices of men, real and figurative horses as well as rocks, and at least one "likeness" that can be left to "speak for itself" (*U* 16.1457).

The heel or "tendon" of Achilles undergoes analogous transformations and becomes "tender Achilles" twice (*U* 16.1003, 1640, 1716). Fierce Achilles is not known for his tenderness,¹⁵ and Bloom seems to project something of himself into the vulnerable hero. But then there was a tender side to Achilles, at least in his affection for Patroklos in the *Iliad*, and critics who have found homoerotic tendencies in the Eumaeus episode might take up the spurious tenderness. The upshot is that *prima facie* misdirections may turn out to become circuitously apposite.

In an overall context *Ulysses* is of course an essentially refracted *Odyssey*, at times out of recognition and with eclectic latitude. It is much less than the ancient epic, a pale shadow and a wilful falsification. And at the same time its perhaps its most vital reincarnation.

"Commudication"

Communication and how it tends to go wrong is another dominant concern in Joyce. Its hazards are implemented throughout. We talk, listen and understand at cross purposes. Again the Eumaeus episode may exemplify this best. Stephen talks theology over Bloom's head and declares the soul "a simple substance", which Bloom mundanely transposes to a "simple soul" (*U* 16.752–65). There as elsewhere Stephen hardly even attempts to express himself clearly. His "disappointed bridge" in the classroom must sound as bewildering to the innocent students as his casual reference of "the isosceles triangle miss Portinari" must be to Bloom (*U* 2.39, 16.886). No wonder that Bloom mistakes Stephen's question about "that first epistle to the Hebrews" in the newspaper as a letter from an archbishop. If, as most likely, Stephen has in mind Mr Deasy's letter that he delivered to the paper, he cannot possibly assume that Bloom would know what he is talking about. Mr Deasy's letter, moreover, was in no way written to the "Hebrews", but he had talked scornfully about the Jews. (There is, incidentally, no "First Epistle to the Hebrews", there is only one, again a false lead.) So Stephen's non-message makes sense only around several corners. The question was caused by Bloom pointing out a "crop of nonsensical howlers" in the newspaper's report about Dignam's funeral. The report listed absent Stephen Dedalus himself as well as M'Coy among the mourners, it misspelled Bloom as "L. Boom" and misnamed the man in the macintosh as "M'Intosh" (*U* 16.1238–73). The funeral account in the paper is perhaps the most glaring instance of a pervasive theme in *Ulysses*, and Eumaeus in particular, that news, oral or printed, cannot be trusted. There is some inherent wisdom in the idiom that news is "broken".¹⁶

Ironically Bloom is often trying his best to make himself clear, though with more perseverance than dexterity. His account of the Keyes advertisement to Myles Crawford: "I spoke with Mr Keyes just now. . . . And he wants it copied if it's not too late I told councillor Nanetti from the *Kilkenny People*" (see *U* 7.970–79) could hardly be absorbed by the editor, even if he had the slightest interest in the matter and were not, above all, delayed on his way for a drink. But Bloom's explanation of "metempsychosis" is faultless; he is correct, though on the wrong, erudite, register with "transmigration of souls". Stalled for a moment, he comes back with "reincarnation", offers concrete instances and even works in a pictorial illustration (*U* 4.341–77). It is tough luck that Molly, his listener, is neither attentive nor interested (chances are that, aware of his penchant to lecture, she has thrown him the word mainly to divert the conversation from Boylan). As it turns out, Bloom's correct, if somewhat

academic, theosophical term “reincarnation” will again be twisted in Molly’s recall to “some jawbreakers about the incarnation” (*U* 18.566). She would know about the Christian “incarnation” from her Catholic instruction and so once more deflects a notion into her own frame of reference. Bloom with characteristic resilience aims at clarity but often fumbles and, lacking oratorical skills, rarely finds an audience.

“Communicate” aptly becomes “Commudicate” in *Finnegans Wake* (536.4); something like mud seems to interfere continually. The *Wake*’s conversations abound in echoing variations: “Apot the buttle, surd, / —Whose poddle?”; “Efter thousand yaws . . . / Ofter thousand yores . . .”, “Fieluhr? Filou!”, “Dorminus master . . . / Diminussed aster!” (*FW* 16.20, 156.19–21, 213.14, 609.28–30; etc., etc.). These may be termed misunderstandings, mirror distortions, retorts, or refractions. Sender and receiver are on different wavelengths.

Finnegans Wake dysfunctionally miscommunicates. Many of its items have to be divided into fragments, and the fragments that go their separate ways often are in need semantic repair work. The best known examples can be re-described in the light of re-fragmentation. A phrase like “my Jungfrau’s Messongebook” (*FW* 460.21) works by near misses which will be amended in our minds in no given order. A German reader will spot the word “Jungfrau” immediately, a young woman, but mainly in the meaning of virgin. A book of messages seems obvious; a German reader again may associate “Messe”, the Mass, within the religious context. Scripture of course contains messages, and in this vein we might also extract “songbook”. The item “fraud” will leap to mind almost instantly; it seems to change “Messonge” to *mensonge*, a lie. Holy messages may turn out to be falsehoods (as incidentally almost every single element exposed here is, lexically, false). Jung as the name of a psychoanalyst will call up his former mentor and later adversary Freud. Psychoanalysis tended to refract what patients uttered into underlying conflicts; they investigated dreams (*songe*) and uncovered frauds and lies, some of them in accepted religions. At some stage the two were also in opposition; their views may be frauds or lies. Two non-words dissolve into parts that can refractorily lead to corroboration, expansion or dissension.

Even plain (English) words are under the same unsettling impact. A “fragrant saint” (*FW* 461.5) makes independent sense and can call up a special odour of sanctity, or less than enticing relics. But “fragrant” makes “saint” squint at a more conforming “scent”; reciprocally “fragrant” may cover a more fitting “patron”. Saints and scents intermingle.

Wakean refraction shows in examples like the deformations of “pontifex maximus”, which in itself already entails historical processes: originally the chief bridge-builder, it became the name for Roman priests and was then transferred to the Pope. The title is twisted into such shapes as “pointefox”, “in pontofacts massimust”, “old Pantifox”, “the potifex miximhost”, “Plentifox Mixymost”, and translated into “maximost bridgesmaker” (*FW* 242.35, 532.9, 293 f2, 345.29, 567.31, 126.10). Elements like “fox”, “in point of fact,” or the Mass impinge. Often H.C.E. is seen in his role as builder and constructor of bridges, but he may also be mine host and mix drinks behind a bar. Each one of these ingredients, like *fox*, can proliferate in turn and induce more semantic vibrations.

“errears and erroriboose” (*FW* 140.32)

Much of what has been detailed here could also be subsumed under the heading of Error, Mistake, Misunderstanding. Plans have a way of going wrong; we have an innate bent to get things wrong. Joyce institutes such truisms right from the start in his prose works. Things went wrong in Father Flynn’s life, as we read in “The Sisters”. Not that we can quite make out how it did, as there is scant reliable information. A chalice was broken (but can one break a chalice?); Father Flynn behaved strangely. His life, one might say, and Eliza says it, “was crossed”, that is, broken into a different direction. Eliza also mentions the “Freeman’s General” and “rheumatic wheels” (*D* 16–7). A dream distorts memory, changes a priest into someone who tries to confess. *A Portrait* sets off with a misappropriation when the young boy compresses ten words of a song, “O, the wild rose blossoms / On the little green place”, into five mainly distorted ones: “O, the geen wothe botheth” (*P* 7). The erroneous infantile connotations result in a defective imitation but are also a new creative departure (and, though Joyce hardly foresaw that, an anticipation of the *Wake*).

Many of the errors that are turned into driving forces in *Ulysses* are all too well-known: Metempsychosis becomes “Met him pike hoses”; a dismissive sentence, “I was going to throw [a newspaper] away”, is misconstrued into a racing tip and comes back to haunt Bloom. Bloom overhears “Fergus” when Stephen Dedalus regains consciousness and quotes from a Yeats poem, and he benignly deduces that a young Miss Fergusson might be the best thing that could happen to a shiftless young man.

Language, naturally, is misused constantly, but that also shows how flexible norms are and how applications change. So it is not always easy to determine if a certain phrase is used correctly, that is, in tune with conventional practice. Bloom reflects on one of his handicaps: “Course I could never throw anything straight at school. Crooked as a ram’s horns” (*U* 13.952). Rams’ horns are crooked, so the simile is appropriate and Bloom may employ a common saying. But P. W. Joyce, the expert on Irish uses of English, explained that “That fellow is as crooked as a ram’s horn” indicates that “he is a great schemer”¹⁷. In this view Bloom’s application is creatively off target. If Joyce should have been aware of a (possible) deviation from the figurative to the literal, he would have turned Bloom into a scheming Odysseus. Lexicographers of course have to deal with semantic refractions.

“quashed quotatoes” (*FW* 183.22)

Much in Joyce is second hand, *déja lu*, quotation or the echo of what has been written before. Each quotation is a momentary crossroad, it invites readers to swerve from the narrative path and stray sideways. Quotes or allusions mark potential subcurrents that can profitably be explored and linked back. They can also lead “towards the bypaths of apocrypha” (*U* 9.408), and an episode like Scylla and Charybdis features a lot of ingenious bypaths. Bloom, who is aware that we never know whose thoughts we’re chewing, has some Shakespeare at his fingertips too: “We come to bury Caesar”, he thinks at Dignam’s gravesite (*U* 6.803). It can then be argued whether or not the sequel of the quote (“not to praise him”) is relevant to the situation at hand. There is in fact little serious praise of Dignam, but the question is raised merely to indicate how far the tip-of-the-iceberg principle should be taken. *Julius Ceasar* pointedly *is* plugged into *Ulysses*, and it may link back, strandentwiningly, to Roman history and to how an Elizabethan dramatist refracted the material to his own, inspired purposes.

Joyce indulges in devious paths and refracted quotations. Either they can be transposed to a new context as happens when the topic of conversation in a pub turns to the physiological and entertaining fact that hanging leads to a powerful erection. When an instance of an execution is forwarded where the organ of the victim “was standing up in their faces like a poker”, it gives rise to a clever quip: “Ruling passion strong in death . . . , as someone said” (*U* 12.463). The quote is not changed but merely excised and derailed. Alexander Pope (the “someone” who said it) had praised a dead friend with a peroration: “And you! Brave Cobham, to

the latest breath / Shall feel your ruling passion strong in death" (*Moral Essays*, Epistle 1). He did not refer to erections, but his poem ever after may well be affected by what Joyce did to it, at least in the warped minds of readers of *Ulysses*.

Quotations are frequently perverted, as when Thomas Moore's well-known song of the "Harp that once through Tara's halls / The should of music shed" is altered to "The harp that once did starve us all" (*U* 8.606). Not only does "starve" fit well into a chapter that is concerned with all aspects of eating, the emended version serves also as a synopsis of Irish History, all the way from the legendary glories of Tara to the reality of the Famine. It is also a comment on nationalism. Such changes, mistakes, aberrations, puns, or whatever they may be called, are also devices of economy. The wrong version implies the correct one: "did starve us all" comprises "though Tara's halls" at no extra semantic cost. When Bloom is lost in the maze of conducting, reflecting or refracting, the correct term, absorb, is not stated, but supplied by the context as a gratuity.

In the finale or coda of *Oxen of the Sun* Buck Mulligan once more refers to the telegramme that Stephen sent him with a quotation from Meredith: "Mummer's wire. Cribbed out of Meredith" (*U* 14.1486). An apt word is chosen, for a lot of what Joyce makes use of was born in another's crib. Yet "Mummer wire" is only one letter away from a novel by George Moore (from whose party Buck Mulligan has arrived earlier in the evening), *Mummer's Wife*. Telegramme's are notorious for errant letters and may become curiosities like "Nother dying" (*U* 3.199).

That *Finnegans Wake* is full of doctored quotations, "quashed quotatoes" (*FW* 183.22) and inventive misappropriations needs no further demonstration.

Heresy

Theologically, when the light of truth is broken by erroneous notions, refractions are called heresy. The true path of orthodoxy is deviated from and new branches are formed. The History of the Church, in fact most religions, is full of such schisms. Young Stephen Dedalus, who wrote that the soul, presumably, was "*without a possibility of ever approaching nearer*" the Creator, was accused of heresy, and he amended the error deferentially with "*ever reaching*" and was absolved (*P* 79). It is revealing that he did not recant in an analogous scene on matters of literature, but held out for Lord Byron in the face of physical threats (*P* 82). The teacher whose duties would seem to correct Stephen's English,

incidentally, was sidetracked so eagerly into religious issues that he did not mark the obvious tautology of *approaching nearer*.

Stephen seems to cherish affinities to heresies like Giordano Bruno's ("a terrible heretic" who was "terribly burned" [P 249]). He carries them into *Ulysses* in a string of "heresiarchs", those who strayed from the true path in matters of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. He must have delved into the arguments, as he conjures up no fewer than four leading heretics: Arius, Sabellius, Photius, and Valentine (*U* 1.656–60)¹⁸. This may warrant a detour to Dante, who lists two of them whose views of Scripture were warped:

*Sì fù Sabellio ed Arrio e quegli stolti
Che furono come spade alle Scritture
In render torti li diritti volti. (Paradiso, XIII, 127–9)*
[So with Sabellius, Arius and each sect
of fools which were as swords to Scripture pure,
distorting features otherwise correct.]¹⁹

The idea seems to be that a sword gives back a distorted image, so again a mirror reflection would be invoked. Mirrors at best give an accurate reflection, but even so they invert right and left. Stephen also recalls "Averroes and Moses Maimonides, dark in mien and movement, flashing in their mocking mirrors the obscure soul of the world" (*U* 2.158). Joyce has his own ways of rendering "*diritti volti*" into "*torti*" ones.

Mocking mirrors abound, not alone in Circe, where Bloom is distorted to "Boooloohoom" (*U* 15.146). *Finnegans Wake* is panheretical; it substitutes choices (the original meaning of *haireisis*) for orthodox readings. Almost everything is distorted away from the norm. A footnote in II,2 may sum it up most succinctly: "*Hearasay in paradox lust*" (*FW* 279L4), where distorted fragments can be realigned. Hearsay (or rumour) is less than truth, generally warped. A paradox is what is beside, or contrary to, received and approved opinion, or expectation. But as usual in the *Wake*, the spelling itself is heretical and in this case approximates "heresy", the wrong choice of Adam and Eve by which Paradise was lost. Milton's *Paradise Lost* is a refraction of the story in Genesis which, for all we may guess, could be based on hearsay. Heresy has also been seen in sexual lust, and there is a whole literary tradition that indulges in paradoxical statements, culminating in *Finnegans Wake*. In the Gospels "paradox" means something out of the way. After Jesus had healed the man taken with palsy, the onlookers marveled: "We have seen "*paradoxa*", generally translated as "strange things" (Luke 5:26). It is

precisely the lexical heresies, or built-in refractions, that allow readers to play constructively, or capriciously, with the unorthodox items.

“translatentic” (FW 311.21)

Translation deflects its objects into different languages and cultural contexts and in its nature must distort its material. What should remain the same, though in altered sounds or letters, must become something that cannot be identical. It elicits no surprise that the opening of *Ulysses*, “Stately, plump Buck Mulligan”, has so far found three different avatars in Spanish: “Imponente, el rollizo Buck Mulligan . . .” / “Solenne, el gordo Buck Mulligan . . .” / “Majestuoso, el orondo Buck Mulligan . . .” According to whether we take “Stately” to be an adverb (to go with “came” in the sentence) or an adjective paired with “plump”, translations pursue individual possibilities: an older French version begins with “Majestueux et dodu”; a newer one opts for an alternative construction: “En majesté, dodu . . .”²⁰ According to understanding, preferences, matters of style or rhythm, dispersal sets in right away.

Convolutions increase when a hybrid, heterogeneous work like *Ulysses* already includes internal translations, at times literally when, for example, Stephen Dedalus finds English words for a Latin “*Descende, calve, ut ne amplius decalveris*”. First he renders only the beginning in a colloquial “Get down, baldpoll”; later on he tries his wits at a playful “Down, baldynoddle, or we’ll wool your wool” (*U* 3.113–6, 10.852). What might be “Descend, bald one, lest you become excessively bald” is expanded; an original absence of hair seems to have turned into curly wool. Above such cases translation is called for when, for example, an order of drinks in a pub is framed in code: “What will you have?” is answered cryptically: “An imperial yeomanry. . . .” That demands a clarifying paraphrase: “Half one, Terry, says John Wyse”, but a further coded order is added: “. . . and a hands up”. The barkeeper, to get things straight, translates it all into common parlance: “Small whisky and a bottle of Allsop” (*U* 12.1317–20). Outsiders would be at a loss. Drinks, drinking and being drunk have spawned many terms, slang and otherwise. It is conceivable that the British Imperial Yeomen fortified themselves with whisky, but in any case the path from soldiers to a drink is full of accidental twists. Hardly a non-native would ever know that “a handsup” is a brand of local beer, though there may be some phonetic similarity. That the Allsop label actually pictured a hand, the Red Hand of Ulster, is now a matter for commentaries. In the Cyclops episode, whose underlying current is Irish history and politics, even drinks have

undertones of British suppression, Irish legends and grievances and internal conflicts. Undertones, however, do not translate.²¹

When the Croppy Boy, the hero of a patriotic song in *Sirens*, takes centre stage in *Circe* and is hanged his utterance is strangulated: “Horhot ho hray hor hother’s hest” (*U* 15.4537). In a similar vein, the gulls that Bloom generously fed with a Banbury cake and in return gave “[n]ot even a caw”, now testify for him in court in fluent Gullish: “Kaw kave kankury kake” (*U* 8.84,15.586).

The end of *Oxen of the Sun* in Joyce’s own words is “a frightful jumble of Pidgin English, nigger English, Cockney, Irish, Bowery slang and broken doggerel” (*Letters I*, 140). He could have added French, Latin, German, or Spanish. Scholars are still busy extracting what the various young men involved are actually saying; our decoding has not yet been complete. One sentence, “*Tiens, tiens*, but it is well sad, that, my faith, yes” (*U* 14.1558), is a word-by-word adaptation from the French “*mais c’est bien triste, ça, ma foi, oui*”, where it sounds a trifle less trivial. The method is in keeping with Buck Mulligan’s straight transposition of the Gaelic way of saying “Do you know Gaelic?”: “Is there Gaelic on you?” (*U* 1.427). One may wonder, incidentally, how the interglossary French phrase is done *into* French: “Aoh, ce été bocow thriste, oh yes”.²² It seems to imitate an English person trying to pronounce French. Some oddity had to be reproduced, for a simple restitution of the plain phrase in the original French would not have been out of place in a context where everything is.

When in *Wandering Rocks*, an episode of predominant movement in space, a “white bishop” is “translated quietly” (*U* 10.1050), the verb is taken back to its original meaning of carrying something across, from one chess field to another. As it happens, in Church terminology real bishops can be “translated” from one see to another. For readers of *Ulysses* the word *translate* itself has to be translated into a former, now obsolete usage. Though an old joke says that bishops are the only things that cannot lose in translation, Joyce’s particular white bishop loses a lot, for in other languages bishops move differently.

Each later *Ulysses* episode strives towards its own vocabulary, and it is most conspicuous in *Ithaca* where Joyce switches on an erudite prose with words of Latin derivation. When water is heated on the stove, the simple act is dignified in pompous quasi-scientific jargon: “What concomitant phenomenon took place in the vessel of liquid by the agency of fire? The phenomenon of ebullition” (*U* 17.255). It may well involve a minute act of internal translation to realize what is meant by “repristination” (either “of juvenile agility” or “of passenger or goods

traffic" [*U* 17.513, 1724]). A smattering of Latin would help but even then the process takes time, maybe very little or infinitesimal time, but some time nevertheless.²³ Joyce, as could be characterized, was more and more writing Foreign English.²⁴

Given the patently different texture of the eighteen episodes, the French team of the new *Ulysse* turned this into a procedural strategy by dividing the episodes among eight translators. This naturally ensured a diversity of modes and styles. It also made it possible to bring out the new version in time for the Bloomsday Anniversary of 2004, within an incredibly scant three years. The gain was that the various translators could devote themselves to episodes that were congenial to their idiosyncratic skills and so do justice to the variant refractions and create individual styles. After all, one could imagine that the widely dissimilar sections of *Ulysses*, say Sirens, Ithaca or Penelope, might have been written by different authors.

On the other hand, one possible, in fact inevitable, drawback is that the various translators hit on divergent solutions for recurring motifs. So "homerule sun" can be rendered "un soleil de l'autonomie qui se lève au nord-ouest" in its first occurrence, but "home rule" ever after: "Allusion au home rule" / "Le soleil du Home Rule se lèvera au nord-ouest" / "Soleil du homerule se couchant au sudest" / "le projet de Home Rule de William Ewart Gladstone" / "toutes ses sornettes sur le home rule".²⁵ Plumtree's Potted is equally dispersed in *Ulysses*. It first surfaces in Lotuseaters, "What is home without / Plumtree's potted meat? / Incomplete./ With it an abode of bliss", and is repeated when Bloom is deciding on his lunch (*U* 4.144, 8.742). One variation is found in Circe, "The home without potted meat is incomplete", and the next morning Molly, without any reference to the advertisement, remembers "we took the port and the potted meat" (*U* 15.495, 18.132), to mention just a few instances among many more. In the French reincarnation the advertisement runs "Que serait une maison / Sans les conserves Plumtree? / Incomplète. / Avec elles un paradis".²⁶ In the pub what Bloom recalls is "Pâté en boîte. Une maison n'est pas une maison sans les conserves Plumtree. Il lui manque quelque chose. . . . Avec, c'est le paradis". In Circe Bloom says: "Une maison sans conserve de viande est incomplète"; and Molly recalls "porto et de la terrine".²⁷

To streamline and unify all these hundreds of scattered coherent but also variant motifs would have been downright impossible. Not even single translators can meaningfully coalesce all of them (just think of "throw away", "a throwaway" and the horse "Throwaway", sired, incidentally, by "Rightaway"). To coordinate the various and in part

ingenious solutions of eight individuals, living apart from each other, even with electronic media, would have been a gigantic task far beyond anyone's ability or endurance. For each single change suggested to one member of the team might entail numerous modifications within an episode's internal network. So the procedure of this particular translation just illuminates that the ineluctable refractions might take on a life of their own in every translation. The results may be flawed but at least the process itself is fittingly Joycean

Aberrations

Sir Robert Ball, whose book is in Bloom's library, deals with Refraction and Parallax and also has a whole chapter about the "Aberration of Light".²⁸ It may or may not be deflected metaphorically in Bloom's fear of "an aberration of the light of reason" during sleep (*U* 17.1766), but Joyce's works are full of aberrations, a liberal sample of which have been given here. Many more are stylistic, as mainly in Eumaeus where figures of speech jostle each other discomfittingly.

Parnell, in martial mixed imagery, "notoriously stuck to his guns to the last drop even when clothed in the mantle of adultery" (*U* 16.1497). A momentary picture of a blood-stained mantle being extended over a gun may emerge in one's mind. Figurative mantles, moreover, are used to conceal rather than display adultery; what may be behind Bloom's phrase is a proverbial "mantle of fidelity". It is better not to enquire into the technicalities of "those who had forced their way to the top from the lowest rung by the aid of their bootstraps" (*U* 16.1213). If bootstraps can be instrumental in climbing to the top, elsewhere they may mark a decline: "Four bootlaces a penny" signals the "[t]errible comedown" of a former lawyer whom Bloom passed on the way to the cemetery. Stereotypes in Eumaeus can be anything but solid or fixed ("*stereo*-") and are encroached upon by marring elements. In an episode of fumbles and circumlocutions ("This gratuitous contribution of a humorous character" [*U* 16.1358]) there seems to be an ironic touch in the description that Bloom and Stephen "made a beeline across the back of the Customhouse" (*U* 16.100). It is hard to imagine that Stephen in particular, minutes after being knocked unconscious, with numerous drinks to his credit and "a bit weak on his pins" (*U* 16.1717), would negotiate a beeline—the very opposite of a refracted one. Syntactically, beelines do not characterize the style of Eumaeus with its abundance of minute aberrations. Stephen's mind may not be "exactly what you may call wandering", as we learn in

the chapter's second sentence (*U* 16.4), but Bloom's mind is no doubt wandering inexactly in a maze of digressions.²⁹

The items in Joyce's many enumerations or lists tend to step out of line. A Cyclopean parody of an idyllic Irish countryside comprises "fishful streams" and then specifies some of the fish, "where sport the gurnard, the plaice, the roach, the halibut, the gibbed haddock, the grilse, the dab, the brill, the flounder, the Pollock, the mixed coarse fish generally. . ." (*U* 12.71). Such lists are probably given scant attention, but a closer look would reveal that some of the fish are in fact marine and not to be found in inland streams. An arbitrary piscine momentum has taken on a life of its own, a common feature of comic, aberrant catalogues that would otherwise become tedious.³⁰

The catalogue of "Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity" begins compliantly with "Cuchulin, Conn of the hundred battles" but it derails conspicuously when Goliath is interjected. He at least accords with the episode's gigantism but predates Irish national identity. After "Dante Alighieri" and similar non-conformists like Julius Cesar, William Tell or even places like Sidney Parade, the names cause little further surprise (*U* 12.176–99).

The lists in Ithaca can be equally erratic, the most obvious probably the tantalising "previous series" which moves from "Mulvey" all the way to "Hugh E. (Blazes) Boylan" (*U* 17.2132–41), a minor roll call of males who, it was once assumed by negligent readers, seem to have shared Molly's bed in the past. Careful cross-referencing, apart from common sense, clearly eliminates most of the men in the list, but then the question of its common denominator arises. These are men, most likely, who at one time or another gave Bloom some unrest and caused a pang of jealousy. The foregoing cautious "most likely" is a reminder that we cannot possibly ferret out what the refractions in each single case may have been.

When Joyce characterised the Ithaca episode, then under construction, to Frank Budgen in February 1921, he called the form a "mathematical catechism. All events are resolved into their cosmic, physical, psychical, etc. equivalents" (*Letters* I, 159). He thereby detailed a few of the areas into which the events are refracted. Reductions, another appropriate term, abound (variants of "reduce" occur no fewer than 10 times, out of a total of 12 in the whole book) and become excessive. They also result in a nominal style; actions are condensed into verbal nouns, and most of them are Latin, a few in learned Greek.

On a first quick reading it is a challenge to realize what is meant by the question "Positing what protasis would the contraction for such

several schemes become a natural and necessary apodosis?" (*U* 17.1744). The Greek logical terms for the parts of a conditional sentence, *protasis*, the conditional clause, and *apodosis*, the conclusion, get in the way of understanding something that might be expressed by a simple "under what conditions". The scientific or pseudo-scientific machinery of Ithaca often moves into the foreground and on many occasions results in disorientation.

Within the predominantly abstract, Latinate, nominal ambiance of Ithaca, a few parts stand out as erratic deviations in common or even emotional diction. A "domestic problem" that "as much as, if not more than, any other frequently engaged" Bloom's mind is a refreshingly simple "What to do with our wives" (*U* 17.653). Maybe the problem is so disquieting that it for once escapes the translation into Ithacanese. From time to time a rare lyrical burst disrupts the show of objective precision or neutral astronomical distance: "The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit" (*U* 17.1039). Many episodes contain analogously incongruous parts,³¹ like the poised final paragraph of Lotuseaters with Bloom envisaging himself in the bath, in wholly un-Bloominan language: "He foresaw his body reclined . . . softly laved. . ." (*U* 5.567-72).

"The difficulties of interpretation" (*U* 17.343)

Finally, and inconclusively, all of Joyce's like any other literary works refract themselves through the prism of our absorptive minds and achieve a subjective and deviant autonomy. The result is understanding, confusion, fascination, conjecture—or interpretation and criticism. Stephen Dedalus sets an example with his view on Shakespeare, an elaborate algebra of identity and correspondences which is based on the ingenious use of documents and quite a number of distortions. It may reveal more about Stephen than Shakespeare. As readers we are in the same predicament.

Through the lenses of interpreters Joyce himself has become a genius, a charlatan, an Irish nationalist, a liberal, a freethinker, a Catholic haunted by sin, a reckless exploiter of others, a devoted family man or an irresponsible father. Inevitably he is remade in our own image. We extrapolate even more inventively from the works. Some readers see a great universal affirmation in Molly's final *Yes*, others discover an implementation of *vanitas vanitatum*, an extended joke, the novel of the century or a grandiose failure. Bloom's marriage may be amended, Stephen Dedalus may become the artificer who is capable of writing *Ulysses*, or it is all the same whole jingbang lot, the same anew, "the

hundrund and badst pageans of unthowsent and wonst nice”, the “untireties of livesliving” (*FW* 597.6).

Our minds convert what we read. We hardly hesitate to apply “One thinks of Homer” in the Library chapter to the whole book, prompted by its title. This valid misapplication depends on several turns: fictional Mulligan censures fictional Stephen Dedalus for writing a scathing review of the book of a benefactress of his, Lady Gregory. He jokingly proposes what Yeats might have said in a similar situation, a dishonest “One thinks of Homer” (*U* 9.1165). It is only by potent self-refractions that *Ulysses* is thus characterized.

What has been done here is to subsume the whole Joyce universe under one heading and to press it into the mould of one particular perspective, an optical metaphor. It is putting a different label on fairly familiar bottles containing the same old wine of what we knew already, but it served to show Joyce under one of many possible aspects.

Joyce’s refractory technique, as it finds its climax in the *Wake*, is not just a quirk that got out of hands, but an ultimate excess of something that is basically realism. We do not recognize directly. We perceive subjectively, we adapt reality within our given psychological framework. Reports are incomplete and partly off target. As soon as something, an event, is put into language, it is distorted. Joyce once more parades what is commonplace yet in such variety that it can no more be overlooked or dismissed.

Zürich James Joyce Foundation

Notes

¹ Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of “Ulysses”* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 [1934]) 45.

² Sir Robert Ball in *The Story of the Heavens*, a book in Bloom’s library, defines refraction: “When a ray of light . . . falls upon the prism, it passes through the transparent glass and emerges on the other side; a remarkable change is, however, impressed upon the ray by the influence of the glass. It is bent by refraction from the path it originally pursued and is compelled to follow a different path.” See Sir Robert Ball, *The Story of the Heavens* (London: Cassell & Co, 1901) 45.

³ A Swiss newspaper once reported that Joyce had a longstanding affection for the city of Winterthur, which began when he heard a classmate talk about it in Clongowes College. Once in Zürich he made a point of traveling there frequently, even in the company of Lenin and Tzara. When he returned to Zürich in 1940 he took a dozen trips to Winterthur. Little of this can be true, there is no documentation of the letters quoted that Joyce wrote about this town, and the question is what kind of minute fact or off statement gave rise to the fiction. The article is not amusing enough to count as a spoof or a parody of scholarship. See Maurice Métral, "Joyce à la découverte de Winterthour", *Trente Jours*, Lausanne, 7 September 1969.

⁴ A conventional storyteller normally does not dwell on what is expected. It is not customary to ask "Did it flow?" when a faucet is turned on, as Joyce does in Ithaca where the question leads to an account of the Dublin water supply (*U* 17.163). But the fastidiousness is also a comment on a modern attitude of taking a daily infrastructure for granted. Homer devotes a great deal of attention to ordinary performances.

⁵ A prime sample of a refracted passage is in *Wandering Rocks*, where Boylan is, originally in Joyce's hand, "lifting fruits, eying juicy crinkled . . . tomatoes". A typesetter curtailed "eying" to "ying", and in proofreading Joyce, perhaps forgetful, perhaps inadvertent, perhaps even amending, changed the erratic "ying" to "young", so that the sentence acquired a different meaning as well as a different construction: Boylan is now "lifting fruits, young juicy crinkled . . . tomatoes" (*U* 10.308).

⁶ James Joyce, *Ulysses: A Reader's Edition*, ed. Danis Rose (London: Picador, 1997).

⁷ Aeneas is often called *dux*, the leader, while Achates is his faithful *comes*, companion, in the *Aeneid*. As it happens, Stephen will later bring up, way above Bloom's head, "Farnaby and son with their *dux et comes* conceits" (*U* 16.1766). These are musical terms (for main theme and answer) and have obviously been redirected from classical, straightforward usage. This note too is removed from the textual clue, the result of multiply broken associations.

⁸ "Each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the structural scheme of the whole) should not only condition but create its own technique." (*Letters* I, 147)

⁹ In fact critics like Goldberg took Joyce to task precisely for departing from a more realistic norm. Somehow he went astray in the middle episodes of *Ulysses* and would have been a greater writer if he had desisted. S. L. Goldberg's *The Classical Temper* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) may still be one of the best studies written against Joyce.

¹⁰ Hesiod, *Theogony*, in Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homeric*, with an English translation by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, The Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1967) 27–8. As it happens, "the new nine muses" in Circe instantly extend to a dozen and are assigned new departments, like "Plural Voting" (*U* 15.7–10). That the *Odyssey* is divided into 24 books, that is twice 12,

and *Ulysses* into 18 (twice 9) episodes, is probably more coincidence than numerological subtlety.

¹¹ The translation is by Henry Riley, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1889) 416. It tries to be fairly literal, but each translation, with its own digressive variants, would give a similar picture.

The original Latin is appended for comparison:

Orbe locus medio est inter terrasque fretumque caelestesque
 plagas, triplicis confinia mundi, unde quod est usquam,
 quamvis regionibus absit, inspicitur, penetratque cavas vox
 omnis ad aures. Fama tenet summaque domum sibi legit in
 arce, innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis addidit et
 nullis inclusit limina portis: nocte dieque patet. Tota est ex aere
 sonanti, tota fremit vocesque refert iteratque quod audit. Nulla
 quies intus nullaque silentia parte, nec tamen est clamor, sed
 parvae murmura vocis, qualia de pelagi, siquis procul audiat,
 undis esse solent, qualemve sonum, cum Iuppiter atras
 increpuit nubes, extrema tonitrua reddunt. Atria turba tenet:
 veniunt, leve vulgus, euntque mixtae cum veris passim
 commenta vagantur milia rumorum confusaque verba volutant.
 E quibus hi vacuas implent sermonibus aures, hi narrata ferunt
 alio; mensuraque ficti crescit, et auditis aliquid novus adicit
 auctor. Illic Credulitas, illic temerarius Error vanaque Laetitia
 est consternatque Timores Seditioque recens dubioque auctore
 Susurri. Ipsa, quid in caelo rerum pelagoque geratur et tellure,
 videt totumque inquirat in orbem.

¹² *The Works of Virgil*, literally translated by Davidson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1871) 180.

¹³ “*artificem simulatoremque figurae . . . non illo quisquam sollertius alter exprimit incessus vultumque sonumque loquendi*” (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, with an English translation by Frank Justus Miller, The Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1916) (XI.634–6). It is Somnus, the father, Sleep itself, who droops his head and settles it down upon his high couch (“*deposuitque caput stratoque recondidit alto*” [XIII.649]).

¹⁴ Ovid applies the adjective *sollers* both to Morpheus and Odysseus.

¹⁵ Oddly and remotely enough, R. J. Schork has traced two occurrence of “*tener Achilles*” in recondite classical authors (Statius *Silvae*, 2.1.88-89; Claudian *Epithalamium*, 10.16-18), but there *tener* is used in the sense of “young”, and not “tender, mild”. A mere coincidence as Joyce would hardly have penetrated to such recondite sources.

¹⁶ “Break the news to her gently” (*U* 1.167) is the twisted echo of a song (“Break the News to Mother”), and yet the adverb already implies that the impact of possibly bad news has to be softened, “broken”.

¹⁷ P. W. Joyce. *English As We Speak It in Ireland* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1988 [1910]) 140.

¹⁸ As it happens, we know of those heretics only by refracted reports. Their books were suppressed and what is passed on derives from the refutation of the orthodox father of the Church.

¹⁹ Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, translated by Melville B. Anderson (London: Oxford University Press, 1921) 470.

²⁰ James Joyce, *Ulyses*, trans J. Salas Subirat (Buenos Aires: Santiago Editor, 1959) 33; James Joyce *Ulisse*, traducción par José Maria Valverde. (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen. 1976) I,71; James Joyce, *Ulyses*, trans. Francisco García Tortosa y María Luisa Venegas (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999) 3; James Joyce, *Ulysse*, traduction intégrale par Auguste Morel, assisté de Stuart Gilbert, entièrement revue par Valery Larbaud et l'auteur (Paris: Gallimard, 1948) 5; James Joyce, *Ulysse*, nouvelle traduction sous la direction de Jacques Aubert (Paris: Gallimard, 2005) 11.

²¹ Francisco García Tortosa resourcefully recreates a series of internal translations: “Un infante de caballereía. . . . Que sea media . . . y un arribalasmaños. . . . Medio güisqui y una botella de Allsop” (Tortosa 376), Irish vibrations apart.

²² Morel 421.

²³ Joyce can be seen translating plain English words into those of Latin origin, when in the page proofs he changed “he put his hand” to “inserted”, “to get his latchkey” to “obtain”, or “shocked by the impact” to “concussed” (*U* 17.70-1, 101; *JJA* 27:141-2).

²⁴ See Fritz Senn, “Mr Joyce is Writing Foreign English”, *focus*: Papers in English Literary and Cultural Studies: Special Issue on James Joyce, eds. Mária Kurdi, Antal Bókai (Pécs: Department of English Literatures and Cultures, University of Pécs, 2002) 13-29.

²⁵ Aubert 76, 156, 206, 466, 891, 954.

²⁶ Aubert 98, in accordance with a repetition in Ithaca, 848.

²⁷ Aubert 217, 553, 916.

²⁸ Sir Robert Ball, *The Story of the Heavens*: “Refraction” 45; “Parallax” 181-2, 214 443; “The Aberration of Light”, 503-12. See *U* 17.1373.

²⁹ The Latin for a mind wandering is “(h)alucinari” or “allucinari”, which led to English “hallucinate”. Joyce called the “technic” of the wayward imaginative aberrations of the Circe episode “Hallucination”. The grotesque Circean refractions could serve as so many more instances of what is under inspection in this essay.

³⁰ Minor refractions could be adduced: “fishful streams” are reminiscent of Homer’s recurrent formula of the “fishful (*ichthyoeis*) sea”; it is also transferred to the Irish mainland. Late at night, Molly also thinks of one of the listed fish: “that lovely fresh plaice I bought” (*U* 18.938). The Gabler text reinstalled what Joyce wrote; he changed “plaice” back into “place” (*JJA* 121:260), but some editions retrofracted the mistake into a correct “plaice”. Molly of course does not spell at all, she does not even speak, but the reasons

seems to be, if she were to spell “plaice”, she would probably confuse it with the common word.

³¹ Such intrusions are dealt with in Fritz Senn, “Charting Black Holes in *Ulysses*”, in *Against the Grain / Gegen den Strich gelesen: Studies in English and American Literature and Literary Theory: Festschrift für Wolfgang Wicht*, eds. Peter Drexler and Rainer Schnoor (Berlin: trafo verlag, 2004) 369–90.