

Retrosemantics: How Understanding Trails Behind

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That there is nothing new under the sun is a truism for which Joyce found new reincarnations. He rephrased it (“And there is nihil nuder under the clothing moon” [*FW* 493.18]) and applied it in manifold practice. One such commonplace is that in daily experience understanding usually does not occur on the spot, right away, but gradually as the result of a chancy process of accumulating observations and facts in inferential speculation.

Conjectures are facilitated by a sufficient assortment of relevant details. Joyce provides details in profusion but often without an instant context or tutorial guidance. The lack of a neat exposition and narrative guidance feels like a breach of a tacit contract in narrative fiction. In his departure from such an unwritten agreement, Joyce creates suspense that is different from that of the detective novel, which depends on postponed clarification but still sets its scenes in a way that the plot can be followed except for a central mystery. Many of Joyce’s tales are games of detection in plot as well, but a detective endeavour is called for also in the settings, the semantics and language in general, on a large scale as well as in minute particulars.

A paradigmatic illustration of procedures that affect the reading experience is grafted into an early passage in *Ulysses*. Stephen Dedalus agonizingly remembers his mother’s death scene with reverberations from a Prayer for the Dying in ecclesiastical Latin. English is a language that favours a clear order within the sentence (subject—verb—complement), but inflected Latin, even in the relatively straightforward usage of the Church, has considerable latitude. The Latin quotation is rendered lucidly and ingenuously by “*Ulysses*” *Annotated* as: “May the glittering throng of confessors, bright as lilies, gather about you”.¹ The annotator is doing his best with a substantially adequate translation which inevitably but essentially falsifies a process of gradual understanding.² The first word “May . . .” instantly heralds a hope or a wish and sets the mood of the entire sequel. There is no such anticipation in the Latin “*Liliata rutilantium . . .*” (*U* 1.276), where two participles are put side by side, one passive (something is made like, or supplied with, or

in some metaphorical relation to, lilies), one active (giving off a shining or reddish gleam) in unexplained genitive plural. The collocation is irritatingly opaque, no significant pattern can be made out. Then a pronoun is added, “te”, “you”, in the accusative case, without a governing verb or any causal connection. The next two items, “*confessorum turma*”, at last introduce the subject, *turma*, a throng or crowd; it can now be linked back to *Liliata*. At this point we can know that a crowd is “liliated”, and it is a crowd of confessors”: *confessorum* now determines *rutilantium*. The reddish glow of the confessors has preceded them. It is the concluding verb “*circumdet*” that unscrambles the sequence, it literally surrounds (*circum-dare*) the sentence. What the initial “May” in the translation signals right away is revealed in the very last syllable: *circumdet*, which indicates a conjunctive, something wished or prayed for. The English “May the liliated throng of shining confessors surround you” salvages most of the substance, but none of the progressive comprehension of the Latin scattered structure: “liliated — shining — you — confessors — throng — surround may”. The inflection of classical and other languages allows for semantic retardation and minuscule suspense. Such a lesson in suspended expectation and the consequent need for patience may be coincidental, possibly not a didactic authorial hint, but the process of storing things in the mind for further configuration is set forth (and commented above in slow motion). Much of *Ulysses* is of the *Liliata rutilantium* kind (think of “Deshil Holles” [U 14.1]). Postponement is a key feature in Joyce and is increasingly applied to syntax and words, as will be expatiated upon in concrete detail.³ The emphasis is on the hazards and dynamics of understanding.

Tradition

In day to day reality, lack of background information is the norm, neither persons that move into our orbit nor events are generally footnoted, further experience and observation may or may not piece things together. If anything, storytelling is the exception, its strategic selection and mainly chronological arrangement of disparate material and conventional guidance allow an audience to follow the plots. In good epic tradition, for example, an assembly is convened in the second book of the *Odyssey*, and “lord Aigyptios was the first to speak”. At that point Homer pauses to fill us in about the new figure, “a man bowed with age and wise. . . . He spoke because his dear son had gone in the hollow ships to Ilios, . . . the warrior Antiphos. . .” (*Od.* 2:15–9). Such informative thoughtfulness is still carried into some *Dubliners* stories and even into *Ulysses*, but there

mainly in parodic passages, style in cheek.⁴ New characters may be deftly sketched: “Mrs Mooney was a butcher’s daughter. . . . She had married her father’s foreman. . . .” (*D* 61). But “The Sisters” begins with a clear breach of this convention:

There was no hope for him this time: it was the third stroke. (*D* 9)

There is not even a name, we start in unexplained *medias res*, a device that is familiar in drama where often we start in mid-conversation. Pronouns without antecedents (who is “him”?) or deictic references (“this time”) involve unknown antecedent events. A momentary uncertainty about “stroke” is possible as well, most likely it is the medical and not the temporal sense (clock striking) that prevails (as will in fact be borne out very soon). The unnamed character turns out to be “Father Flynn” in the second scene of the story, this in conversation between the boy and his uncle and aunt (otherwise unnamed) and an unspecified “Mr Cotter”. Relationships gradually reveal themselves, but never completely, and so the first story is the one that mystifyingly introduces fragments, questions and gaps and almost didactically augurs narrative idiosyncrasies yet to come. It is no wonder that interpretive attempts to align the dubious information provided in “The Sisters” have varied considerably. In Joyce’s earlier, “realistic”, prose delayed exposition is caused by the subjective presentation; we do not have to tell to ourselves what we already have in our mind. Bloom’s first act in *Ulysses* is “righting her breakfast things” (*U* 4.7). He knows who she is and we will learn it in our own good time.

This can be accounted for an aspect of realism, the depiction of experience without meddlesome comment. A perspective that is confined to the characters’ subjective point of view eliminates a habitual exposition. The process of gradual learning is shown in the opening of *A Portrait* where young Stephen Dedalus gradually explores and understands his environment and himself. Setting and background have to be intimated as they occur to the protagonist or, in dramatic fashion, as they crop up in conversation. Seemingly haphazard fragments have to be pieced together; in this manner Stephen Dedalus is finding his way in the world in widening perception. A very early perception is that “his father looked at him through a glass” (*P* 7). What kind of glass is that? Not, presumably, a drinking glass, though that would not be impossible either. As it turns out, much later, Stephen’s father has, not glasses, but only one: “Mr Dedalus screwed his glass into his eye” (*P* 72). The technical term for this, a monocle, would not be suitable for an infant. Coincidental

or not, “looked at him through a glass” would have called up a famous passage by St. Paul: “For now we see through a glass, darkly.” As it happens, St. Paul puts the learning process into a theological framework: now our sights are dimmed, but “then” we see “face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known” (1 Cor.13:12). It is as though Joyce had enlisted the New Testament to enforce a point, we understand partially and gradually, and the preceding words of the Gospel even comment on what Joyce is doing with his tale about a young child: “When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things”. The promise, true to mission, may be overly optimistic, but St. Paul almost provided an epilogue for Joyce’s novel, and advice for the Joycean reader into the bargain.

“pointing to the leaf”

In a first inkling of the future,⁵ Stephen “was going to marry Eileen”, a girl next door. Right afterwards he “hid under the table”, a victim of threats (*P* 8). No causal connection is given, a pristine sexual taboo seems to have been infringed. Unexpected additional reason for disapproval is postponed several weeks and several pages: “Eileen was a protestant” (*P* 35). At this point the former censure may be attributed to bigoted Mrs Riordan, whose first mention *followed* Stephen’s hiding under the table. She was introduced as “Dante”, possibly a form of “auntie”, but it will also turn out that she is no relative at all and reputed to be a “spoiled nun”. Backward links lead to provisional contours of events and relations.

Analogously, Dante’s two brushes are puzzling; the one with the maroon velvet back “was for Michael Davitt’ and the other, with the green velvet back, “for Parnell” (*P* 7). Stephen may get the implication as little as do modern uninformed readers. It is only in the next sentence that we find out that “Dante” is a woman: she gave Stephen “a cachou every time he brought her a piece of tissue paper”. In fact we learn that the child is called “Stephen” only a few paragraphs later, when his name is spoken aloud (*P* 7-8). Dante probably told Stephen the names of Parnell and Michael Davitt, unknown to him. In the course of the novel, Michael Davitt will get only one brief mention (without further enlightenment), but Parnell suffuses all of Joyce’s prose works. His scattered but rarely elucidated presence is typical for the way in which themes are woven into the text without a formal introduction. At the end of the second section in chapter I of *A Portrait* it is obvious that news of Parnell’s death has dimly reached Stephen’s mind. In the third part, the “Christmas Dinner”, recent

events and controversies surrounding Parnell's decline and end are so familiar to the grown-ups that no elaboration is required. "Kitty O'Shea", the evil one in the drama, is merely a name without context. This is where commentators come to our aid, they tend to explain what is outside Stephen's own range. A constant demand for annotation, elucidation from outside, in Joyce is ample evidence for the topic that will be expanded here.

Parnell's earliest entry is characteristic. He first surfaces in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" in *Dubliners*. Similar to the Christmas dinner scene in *A Portrait*, the story will pivot around Parnell more and more at the end, but his entrance is oblique:

Mr Hynes turned down the collar of his coat, displaying, as he did so, an ivy leaf in the lapel.

—If this man was alive, he said, pointing to the leaf, we'd have no talk of an address of welcome. (*D* 122)

An identification of "this man" as "an ivy leaf" is far from self-explanatory. The name itself follows much later, and very little can be gathered about Parnell except that he is dead and surrounded by glorification and doubt ("a fit man to lead us?", [*D* 132]). The climactic poem recited at the end is notable for patriotic stereotype more than instructive facts, it only insinuates that Parnell might have achieved great things, but was shamefully betrayed and died a martyr. "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" remains the story most dependent on commentaries, the one least likely to be appreciated entirely on its own.⁶ Insiders at the time would have picked up every hint, but not so later generations or readers outside of Ireland. The ambitious young writer in Trieste in search of publication was already taking grave risks.

Parnell is dispersed all over *Ulysses* and omnipresent in *Finnegans Wake*. A few dominant items surface, yet collectively they do not add up to an outline of his role in Irish history. That fictional Bloom picked up his hat in a scuffle is not a salient incident. In the *Wake* Parnell is mainly reduced to his entanglement with Katherine O'Shea, some utterances that have become hackneyed echoes, and the misspelling "hesitency" which helped to detect forged letters. In true *Wake* fashion, facts are hardly separated from rumours. From all such clues, patent or veiled, no adequate account of Parnell's life or achievement could be patched together. Charles Stewart Parnell remains partly hidden, literally so in a stuttered approximation, "Chawleses Skewered parparaparnelligoes" (*FW* 303), amidst accidental pieces on a skewer and paraphernalia.

Orientation: “in the act of getting his bearings” (U 16.924)

It is easy to easily forget how much of our understanding of *Ulysses* in actual fact has come through tutorial instruction or commentaries. Exactly where, for example, does the book open? On that particular Martello Tower in Sandycove of course, which can be visited now as a Joyce Museum. But how could we, unaided, find out? The setting is Ireland, no doubt, somewhere on the seaboard, and to narrow it down, in sight of “Dublin bay” and “the harbourmoth of Kingstown” (U 1.75, 83). Later we also see “a sail tacking by the Muglins” (U 1.575)—not that the Muglins are part of everybody’s geographical knowledge. One seemingly give-away bit of location is when Mulligan and Stephen Dedalus are “looking towards the blunt cape of Bray Head that lay on the water like the snout of a sleeping whale” (U 1.181), since Bray is a coastal town south of Dublin. As it happens in geographical fact Bray Head is not even visible from the Tower,⁷ as the comparison to a sleeping whale indicated. We cannot know what to trust. One possible pointer is supplied by Buck Mulligan:

—O damn you and your Paris fads! Buck Mulligan said, I want Sandycove milk. (U 1.342)

Sandycove might indicate the place, but demands for Sandycove milk are conceivable anywhere (just as Paris fads in Ireland). In the long run the Sandymount surmise will be substantiated. A person McCoy indicates that “a drowning case at Sandymount may turn up” (U 5.170); this may connect with a conversation about a drowning case that was overheard in Telemachus (U 1.670). But certainty is delayed into the 15th episode when Bloom and Kelleher are guessing about Stephen’s home:

—Where does he hang out? somewhere in Cabra, what?
—No, in Sandycove, I believe, from what he let drop.
—Sandycove! (U 15.4886–90)

Any further doubts would be dispelled in Eumaeus (“Walking to Sandycove is out of the question. . . . [I]t was altogether too far for the Sandymount or Sandycove suggestion” [U 16.249, 1610-11]) and objectively so in Ithaca (“. . . a matutinal cloud . . . perceived by both from two different points of observation, Sandycove and Dublin”, [U

17.40-42]). This is not the average way in which most readers—if they care about the location in the first place—orient themselves.

Similarly, what is the time of the opening? The first episode establishes quite clearly a morning hour; the second one fixes the day of the week (“Half day, sir. Thursday” [U 2.293]). Anyone circumspect enough could figure out the date at the end of Proteus (“By the way next when is it [payday]? Tuesday will be the longest day” [U 3.491]). The year still remains undetermined. This will have to wait until the date is typed out neatly in a letter: “16 June 1904” (U 10.376).⁸ Circumstantial guessing might have hit on the year before, but the presumably best known date in all literature is gradually approximated and explicitly stated fairly late in the book. It is all the more odd then that some editions of *Ulysses*, notable of the Book Club variety, herald the date, “16 June 1904”, right after the title page, before the book even begins. A half-truth is unveiled before the race has even begun, a partial misinformation since almost half of *Ulysses* takes place the following night, June 17. After the Centenary Bloomsday reverberations of 2004 the date will probably never have to be ferreted out by scrupulous close reading.

Very often clarification follows within a few sentences. Bloom does not understand something he hears indistinctly and which does not even appear on the page: “—Met him what? he asked”, and right after the mispronounced word is legible in print: “Metempsychosis” (U 4.336–9). At times a potential wrong lead is set right within a sentence. As Bloom is crossing the Liffey his “eyes sought answer from the river and saw a rowboat rock at anchor on the treacly swells. . .” (U 8.88-89). A rowboat is rocking in the water?⁹ Yet the sequence modifies the impression by turning the apparently intransitive verb “rock” into an active one: “. . . rock . . . lazily its plastered boards” (U 8.88-89). A boat is rocking passively but is, as further perception bears out, also actively rocking an attached board.

Examples of delayed orientation are abundant and can almost be picked at random. Some of the headlines in Aeolus misbehave when, contrary to their prime function of heralding the news at hand, they are understood only by the subsequent text, which of course is by now a common newspaper ploy. Little sense can be gained from “DIMINISHED DIGITS PROVE TOO TITILLATING FOR FRISKY FRUMPS. ANNE WIMBLES, FLO WANGLES—YET CAN YOU BLAME THEM?” (U 7.1069-71). The subsequent dialogue translates the “diminished digits”, with poetic license, into the one arm that Admiral Nelson lost in a battle. The “frisky frumps” are the two women in Stephen’s story who climbed to the top of Nelson’s Pillar: “Tickled the

old ones too. . . (U 7.1074)". But their wangling and wimbling occurs in the titillating title alone and remains a blur, open to our imagination. Delayed illumination mingles with bewilderment. Incidentally, tickling is hardly facilitated by diminished digits, the absence of fingers.

“The loamsome roam to Laffayette” (FW 26.16)

A typical, exemplary instant of delayed identification is found in a passage in *Oxen of the Sun*. Within its simulation of historical prose styles, Bloom is depicted with customary period distortions, in this case in prose reminiscent of Macaulay:

. . . that vigilant wanderer . . . from whose steadfast and constant heart no lure or peril or threat or degradation could ever efface the image of that voluptuous loveliness which the inspired pencil of Lafayette has limned for ages yet to come. (U 14.1217-21)

The enduring portrait of, obviously, Molly Bloom appears as something drawn in pencil, by an unknown artist whose un-Irish name has distracting historical overtones. Two episodes and many pages later the voluptuous loveliness is given physical contours when Bloom presents Stephen with

a photo showing a large sized lady with her fleshy charms on evidence in an open fashion . . . with more than vision of breasts. . . Lafayette of Westmoreland street, Dublin’s premier photographic artist, being responsible for the esthetic execution. (U 16.1427-35)

The earlier passage was a wrong, or doubtful, lead; Lafayette is not someone famous, but a Dublin photographer (whose studio was still in business into the 90’s), the “inspired pencil” was period distortion and not a graphic tool. Yet the newly evolving technique of photography (as it happens during Macaulay’s lifetime) tended to replace artistic portraiture. By hindsight the rare, precious verb “limn” (to portray) is etymologically apt; deriving from *enlumine* = illuminate and thus containing *lumen*, light, it brings out the original meaning of “photo-graphy”, a writing or drawing by light. In the same vein, a *pencil* was originally a small brush used in painting. *Oxen of the Sun* transposes things present into a spurious past which we then have to bring up to date with renewed backward glances—an intricate shuttling in time, “scruting foreback into the fargoneahead”, as *Finnegans Wake* puts it (FW 426.22).

The 10th episode of *Ulysses*, the one of spatial alternatives, splits up into separate sections and locations. Simultaneity is simulated by abrupt scene shifts from another place. These external intrusions are never marked *as* intrusions, short close-ups that would rightly belong to their own narrative area. Some dislocations may go unnoticed at first, or always; others are blatant transpositions. There is hardly a doubt that the brief paragraph

J.J. O'Molloy's white careworn face was told that Mr Lambert was in the warehouse with a visitor (*U* 10.236)

is not placed in Eccles street where a onelegged sailor moves about. The same O'Molloy soon reappears in St. Mary's Abbey, apparently the warehouse mentioned before (*U* 10.407); this was anticipated by the intrusion, in chronological order. On the other hand there may well be a slight momentary uncertainty about an interpolation in the Dedalus kitchen:

The lacquey rang his bell.
—Barang! (*U* 10.281)

The Dedalus sisters, shown in dreary destitution, are unlikely to afford a lacquey, yet conceivably a noise from nearby might impinge. Any such doubt is dispelled once the lacquey appears in person and shakes his bell "by the door of Dillon's auctionrooms" in Bachelor's Walk where the "Barang!" is sounded again (*U* 10.642).

A somewhat surrealist vignette—"From a long face a beard and gaze hung on a chessboard" (*U* 10.425)—will be clarified pages later. In a Dublin café a "longfaced man whose beard and gaze hung down on a chessboard" is identified as "Parnell's brother" (*U* 10.1046).

The arrangement of scenes in *Wandering Rocks* is only in part chronological; later passages help determine what was recounted before. Yet on the whole the interlocations in *Wandering Rocks* are not puzzling, they merely introduce a new subject (or else continue an existing one). A clear view of events, however, is possible only in recollection, which here literally amounts to collecting bits of information for re-arrangement.

"Afterwits"

The most flagrant instance of postponed familiarization is the opening of the Sirens episode, with its jumble of strange phrases only some of which

are recognizable as echoes. The first item, “Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons. . .” (*U* 11.1) links back to two occurrences in the previous episode: “Bronze by gold, Miss Kennedy and Miss Douce”, who first appear above the crossblind of the Ormond hotel; and then “watched and admired” the viceregal cavalcade (*U* 10.962, 1398). So we move back in time to a previous moment, the two episodes partially overlap. Sirens might be yet another elaboration of an earlier insert; its first pages coincide with the second part of the viceregal cavalcade but transpose it into the world of sound. But now the barmaids *hear* the hoofs, cityscape gives way to sound.

In contrast the next phrase, “Imperththn thnthnthn” (*U* 11.2), is enigmatic, even phonetically (which of three “thns” of the consonantal sequence in the second non-word should be stressed?) until a haughty “impertinent insolence” is rudely mocked as “Imperththn thnthnthn” (*U* 11.99). Now, and only now, the two words are back-translated into “impertinent insolence” and can be pronounced accordingly.

“A husky fifenote blew” (*U* 11.5) makes independent sense, but less so its extended repetition: “Blew. Blue bloom is on the” (*U* 11.6). “Blew” from “blowing” changes to its homonym “blue”, the colour, sound gives way to sight. Almost automatically Bloom is conjured up, though he is not nominally present; Lenehan has already connected a song title to Bloom: “*Leopoldo or the Bloom is on the Rye*” (*U* 10.524). So Bloom is echoed and—in a *Finnegans Wake* manner of approximation—later playful variations are foreshadowed: “Bloom. Old Bloom. Blue bloom is on the rye”, and Bloom is being led by “ryebloom flowered tables” (*U* 11.230, 390).

From “Full tup. Full throb” (*U* 11.25) scant precise prediction can be deduced. What is a “full tup”? The noun “tup” for a male sheep is hardly in use any more and the verb (for copulating sheep) doesn’t fit the vague context. In this case a whole cluster of later occurrences, spread over a few complex, spirited paragraphs, has been contracted in anticipation: “. . . full it throbbed. . . . Throb, a throb, a pulsing proud erect. . . . Tipping her tepping her tapping here topping her. Tup. . . . Tup. . . . Tup . . . tupthrob” (*U* 11.701–09).¹⁰ Comprehension of “Full tup. Full throb” works from behind—“comprehension” can be taken in its primary meaning of grasping fully, or tying together all relevant parts.

That Joyce’s procedure here is unprecedented on this scale was expressed long ago by Ernst Robert Curtius. An early critic of great reputation and appreciative of *Ulysses*, he had serious reservations about the Overture (as it is often called) in Sirens: “These two pages of seemingly meaningless text form in reality a carefully thought out

composition, which can only be understood when the reader has perused the whole chapter, and studied it with the greatest attention.” Curtius recognized the musical technique but stressed a crucial difference: “. . . the musical *motif* is complete in itself and aesthetically satisfying. . . . But the *word-motif*, unintelligible in itself, acquires a meaning only when I relate it to its context. . . . Joyce has deliberately ignored this essential difference between sounds and words, and, for this reason, his experiment is of questionable value.”¹¹ Professor Curtius’ disapproval shows how strikingly new Joyce’s technique of delayed recognition appeared to contemporaries.

That fleeting echoes actually *precede* their reports will be a feature of *Finnegans Wake*, where events are not predominantly chronological—but our reading of them is.

In Sirens sounds have to be recognised or interpreted, and they frequently emerge in isolation, without a given context. At times they take up a whole one word paragraph:

Tap. (*U* 11.933)

A single word appears unconnected with its surrounding and is one of those transitions from place to place or theme to theme that characterises the episode. The monosyllable will be repeated and multiplied finally to an eightfold, “Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.” (*U* 11.1223). An increasing, autonomous “Tap” is not immediately identifiable; elsewhere a measure of whisky is “tapped from” a keg, or “one rapped on a door, one tapped with a knock” (*U* 11.986); the motif points to the playful variation of “Tipping her tepping her tapping her tuppung her” (*U* 11.707). Identification will set in somewhere along the way, at the latest when “Tap blind walked tapping by the tap the curbstone tapping, tap by tap” (*U* 11.1190) unmistakably points to the “blind stripling” who has already “tapped the curbstone” around midday, in the Lestrygonians episode (*U* 8.1104). From now on “Tap” equals the blind piano tuner’s slow approach, and ever after we simply know what tap stands for, and we may wonder that we ever had any doubt. “Tap” also comes to signal “blind”, in mirror correlation to “Pat”, the waiter who is hard of hearing. “Tap”, in other words, gradually *becomes* and in future readings *remains* the piano tuner. Similarly, “Jingle jingle jaunted jingling” (*U* 11.15), echoed in “Jingle. Bloo” (*U* 11.19), is announced as a motif in the Overture, but we do not know what it is a motif of (if anything, it seems to relate to Bloom). The note is struck, first in a single “jingle”, then in elaboration, “Jingle jaunty jingle” (*U* 11.245). The connection is made

when Lenehan “waited for Boylan with impatience, for jinglejaunty blazes boy” (*U* 11.289), and from now on “jingle” or “jaunty, jaunting” etc., denotes Blazes Boylan, with a disquieting echo of Molly’s bed whose quoits jingled in the morning (*U* 4.59). On further readings Boylan may now even be retrojected into Molly’s bed, and once more the book’s past is affected by its future.

By meta-coincidence, another Joycean device, the episode marks the reading technique itself. When Miss Douce, urged on by Lenehan to do her performance, coyly promises “Afterwits” (*U* 11.403), she is jocularly transposing “afterwards”. In essence, “afterwit” is later knowledge (“wit” = know), second thought, often too late, or wisdom after the event.¹²

Suspended Wondrous Revealment

Readers cannot step into the same *Ulysses* twice. Not only meanings, situations will change as well. Gerty MacDowell sitting on a rock in more and more becoming postures is very much conscious of herself and the impression she creates. An unidentified “gentleman” surveying the scene is noticed when one of the twins has to be moved out of sight: “. . . behind the pushcar where the gentleman couldn’t see” (*U* 13.75). This gentleman (provided it remains the same one) later throws back a ball that has rolled towards his feet and on a further occasion is unable to tell the exact time. Gradually he takes on familiar features. When she is teased by Edy Boardman, Gerty MacDowell attributes her attitude to rivalry: “Pure jealousy of course it was nothing else to draw attention on account of the gentleman opposite looking” (*U* 13.349), which moves him into her own focus as well: “Till then they had only exchanged glances of the most casual” (*U* 13.367). These previous casual glances throw new light on her and her previous posturing. She knew—as readers did not yet—she was being observed.

Similarly, while her companions and the children move off to have a better view of the beginning fireworks, she remains seated: “If they could run like the rossies she could sit so she said she could see from where she was” (*U* 13.688). Indeed she has a full view of the fireworks from her position as she arranges her clothes with cunning innocence under Bloom’s avid gaze, with no rivals prying. One main motive for remaining charmingly static becomes manifest only when her departure can no longer be put off and she starts to walk away “with a certain quiet dignity” (*U* 13.769). Such dignity is precarious to keep on ‘the uneven strand’, with its “stones and bits of wood . . . and slippery seaweed” (*U*

13.766-69), until at last (with as much deferment as possible) the transition to Bloom's view exposes her defect: "Tight boots? No. She's lame! O!" (*U* 13.771). Her "limp[ing] away" (*U* 13.772) now puts pathetic weight on the "one shortcoming" briefly mentioned in passing before ("... and that was an accident coming down Dalkey hill and she always tried to conceal it" [*U* 13.649]). It is now disclosed as a lasting and crucial impediment. On all subsequent readings the earlier half of the chapter will read differently in this new light; Gerty's limp can in part explain her motivation right from the start.

Gerty MacDowell does not know that she is in silent collusion with her Homeric prototype, the princess Nausikaa, who did not tell her father the real reason for attending to her laundry. Athene in a dream had intimated young suitors and impending marriage, but in appealing to her father she forwarded other reasons and concealed her ambitions, for "she was ashamed to name gladsome marriage" (*Od.* 6.31-66, Loeb I. 211). Joyce's Nausicaa episode is a tangle of precarious concealment and "wondrous revealment" (*U* 13.731).

Ithacan Delays: "constant uniform retardation" (*U* 17.2088)

"There's a word I wanted to ask you" (*U* 4.331), says Molly Bloom, anticipating a reaction of many readers of *Ulysses*; the unpronounceable word is "metempsychosis", which she assimilates to "Met him pike hoses". A preceding "Met him what?" (*U* 4.336) is explained a few seconds afterwards. Bloom, in his role of competent annotator, explains the word twice, as "transmigration of souls" and, with typical resilience, as "reincarnation", though as Molly complains, not "in plain words" (*U* 4.342-63). Many strange words will never be explained, but often they are determined by their context.¹³

The first episode in *Ulysses* contains words not known to all men with annoying frequency: "jejune", "*omphalos*" (from Greek), "heresiarchs", etc. Stephen Dedalus above all seems to savour odd and foreign terms, or they may disturb him, like "Agenbite of inwit" (*U* 1.481). This is a non-surviving phrase from Middle English, its second term is appended right away: "conscience". It is up to us, or glosses, to detect the literal translation of Latin *re-morsus* into "agen-bite" and *conscientia* as "in-wit", an interior knowledge. Such a translation, in this case within the English language in its evolution, is necessary. It is not immediately apparent that "a symbol of Irish art" differs from "Symbol of the apostles" (*U* 1.146, 653); in this case "symbol" is an old term for the Creed. Such well known instances merely illustrate a delay in mental

absorption. Either a meaning has to be explored or else a minor act of translation is interposed. Seemingly familiar words may be tricky. “Fair day and all the beef to the heels were in”, writes Milly Bloom to her father (*U* 4.402), and many readers consider it as referring to the weather (at least most translators did), but “Fair” is much more likely to be a noun; a country fair would naturally attract the local girls.¹⁴

Familiar words turn up in strange configurations: “This is the appearance is on me” has been recognised as an Irish (Gaelic) way of saying “this is the condition I am in” (*U* 14.1018)—the underlying meaning obviously differs from its appearance. Oxen of the Sun in many ways is written in obsolete forms of English, foreign in temporal expansion, and has to be rendered into a contemporary idiom for understanding. Because of its double vocabulary, native Anglo-Saxon and imported French-Latin, things could always be put at a distance, also out of reach of the simple-minded. Joyce makes full use of it: “. . . no man knows the ubicity of his tumulus” (*U* 14.396) is practically Latin and could also be told in plain words: where (*ubi*) is one’s grave (*tumulus*)?

In the Ithaca episode such distancing becomes dominant: the majority of its content words are of Latin (also Greek or Romance languages) origin. It sports erudite, remote words: “supererogatory, occultation, ipsorelative” etc., based on Latin, or “protasis, apodosis, anapocryphal, glyphic, homothetic, paraphenomenon”, of Greek origin, etc. One effect is the objective, almost clinical distance of learned terms, and so attention is turned to them first *as* words. The prevailing note is struck right at the beginning:

What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning? (*U* 17.1)

Some pedantry is evident: “parallel” is a geometrical term which suggests an exact spatial relation, it is normally static but hardly appropriate for two men walking side by side, one considerably less than sober (they may of course still be walking “arm in arm”, [*U* 16.1735]). Stephen, moreover, is not returning. The intended accuracy turns out to be a bit askew. The second question depends on internal rendering into the vernacular.

Of what did the duumvirate deliberate during their itinerary? (*U* 17.11)

Bloom and Stephen have become a “duumvirate”, suggestive of Roman history where “duumvirate” meant a joint administrative office held by two men (*duumviri*); the related term “triumvirate” is much better known. Neither Bloom nor Stephen hold any office, they are conspicuous as outsiders, so the word which mainly flaunts itself appears to be just a take-over from Latin, in a primary sense of “two men”. “Itinerary”, for “way” or “route”, seems somewhat in excess (it is used more often for the description of an extended journey). A ponderous “deliberate” originally referred to weighing on a pair of scales. So right from the start, jocular terminological elevation takes precedence over a precise *mot juste*. The point raised here amounts to the platitude that finding what is meant occurs in time, minute time in most cases, but time nevertheless. Deciphering can amount to small scale translations, and the act of translation defers understanding.

To figure out that “eructation consequent upon repletion” (*U* 17.1928) is something as trivial as “belching after meals”, but at a sanitarily verbal remove from such a vulgarity, is a small step but a minuscule delay. No similar charge is put on the reader in languages that do not have a corresponding lexical variety.¹⁵

Wrong directions are intimated in the case of deviant usage. What is a “revelation” among the “visible signs of antesatisfaction” that are listed when Bloom finally enters his bed, occupied by Molly?

An approximate erection: a solicitous aversion, a gradual elevation: a tentative revelation: a silent contemplation. (*U* 17.2238-39)

A slightly jocular “revelation” of a human body is conceivable, but the subsequent “visible signs of postsatisfaction” in chiasmic order reveal a more literal sense:

A silent contemplation: a tentative velation: a gradual abasement: a solicitous aversion: a proximate erection (*U* 17.2237–46)

No secret or divine message is disclosed, but quite literally a “veil” (*velum*) is removed¹⁶, in all probability a bed sheet and then put back (“velation”). Similarly, “contemplation” is not as a mental activity with possible religious overtones,¹⁷ but a physical gaze. The “aversion” is not a strong dislike but a simple basic “turning away” (Lat. *a-vertere*), just as “adversion” amounts to a “turning towards”.

Apparently common words may be troublesome. Bloom internally runs over “imperfections in a perfect day” and lists a few omissions (*U* 17.2071). The events of June 16 and 17 are hardly to be judged “perfect” under any circumstances. The inexpedient adjective “perfect” may be a casual euphemism, perhaps some ingenious interpretation will still come forth, or else a root meaning is reverted to, the day has been “per-fected”, completed, carried through, in a merely temporal sense. The example shows another prominent feature of Ithaca, the repetition of key terms or root terms, like “imperfections” and “perfect”. They often accumulate within a paragraph in verbal choreography:

What proposal did Bloom, diambulist, father of Milly, somnambulist, make to Stephen, noctambulist? (*U* 17.927)

Bloom’s characterisation as a “diambulist” would remain enigmatic if it were not followed by Milly described as a “somnambulist” and Stephen a “noctambulist”. It appears that “noct-ambulist” has spawned a corresponding neologism “di-ambulist”, someone walking during the day (Lat *dies*); once more a later word defines a former one. Terminological resonance prevails over pertinent differentiation: both Bloom and Stephen have been walking by day *and* at night (in fact in Eumaeus they were “our two noctambules” [*U* 16.326]). Moreover, “noctambulist” and “somnambulist” are sometimes used as synonyms; and, to judge from the evidence within *Ulysses*, Milly who twice “had uttered in sleep an exclamation of terror” (*U* 17.861) seems less of a somnambulist than Bloom himself, who on the basis of one minor incident was “not totally immune . . . from Somnambulism” (*U* 7.850–7). All in all, a formal pattern of echoing “ambulations” is prominent as a patterning device of fairly limited distinctive value. The need for categorization takes precedence over the neatness of the categories—which implicates both a necessity for categorization and its inherent impossibility.

There is a thematic correspondence between the “irreparability of the past” and a lexically deviate “imprevidibility of the future” (*U* 17.975, 980). Though the meaning is evident, the construction of “im-previdibility” (compared with “visibility”, [*U* 17.582]) is not in tune with Latin morphology, but possibly with Italian *imprevedibile*.

Postponed elucidation plays its role in Ithaca at least in the sense that meanings have to be brought from elevated nomenclature down to earth “in plain words”. Metempsychosis, transmigration of souls or reincarnation on a mundane level is reducible to a simple “that we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before” (*U* 4.362-63).

“virtue of retroratiocination” in *Finnegans Wake*

“Retroratiocination” (*FW* 142.17) indicates reasoning that is oriented backwards, a prevalent feature in the *Wake*, where understanding of phrases, sentences, paragraphs is slow in coming. Struggles to get a hold on provisional significance again amounts to translation. An opening like

As our revelant Columnfiller predicted . . .

might first call to mind a journalist until the sequence

. . . in last mount’s chattiry sermon . . . (*FW* 324.26)

shifts into an ecclesiastical track. Though “sermon” could refer to a general lecture, the term adds another role to “our revelant Columnfiller”, a *prima facie* filler of newspaper columns; he becomes a professional clergyman; thereby “relevant”, which at first does not require any processing, converts to “reverend”. In this light the Irish Saint Columcill takes on more decisive contours (he was said to make predictions). Last month’s sermon is chatty and probably on charity, Christ’s Sermon on the Mount shines through the texture (“last mount” by itself could suggest a number of things). Within an overall context of a weather forecast, “predicted” is appropriate, but now Latin *predicare* also functions as the origin for “preach” (and German *Predigt*, sermon). What was first “predicted” (said before) is modified by a following sermon; *sermo* in its Latin infancy was anything spoken before it was narrowed down in later usage. These comments are not aimed at more or better interpretation but to exemplify how meaning is created, by bouncing forward as well as backward, and in particular by retro-stimulation. To repeat, “revelant” does not mean “reverend” but will come to mean it in delayed revelation.¹⁸

That a specific sense is first rejected as too far out, but will be confirmed a few steps later, is a common experience. When Shaun “would rather spinooze” a fable, the component parts “spin” and “ooze” appear sufficient to account for the non-word, while Spinoza the philosopher looks like a spurious and gratuitous shadow. Once the fable of the Ondt and the Gracehoper gets under way, words like “akkant”, “schoppinhour” in their cumulative effect announce further philosophers, and Spinoza is verified as a *bona fide* member of the lot by hindsight, and others will, from now on, be detected even in faint rumblings.¹⁹

Notice how a sentence that deals with recognition also suspends it:

You will hardly reconnoitre the old wife in the new bustle and the farmer shinner in his latterday paint. (*FW* 455.3-5)

In itself the sentence is *about* a chancy recognition (older French *reconnoitre*). Re-cognition is finding what we already know, but the mainly military “reconnoitre” looks forward onto a territory yet to be invaded. The sentence acts this out, though; with the exception of “shinner”,²⁰ all words are in plain English in no apparent need of decoding. Things are hidden, the old wife has to be made out in the new bustle (something women used to wear under their bulging skirts), disguising paint has been put on a farmer. In the bustling act of recognition, at some point a religious lick of paint will show forth, “latterday paint” resolves itself into Latterday Saint. Saints are often former sinners reformed in their later days; conversely, Latter-day Saints may be seen as polygamous public sinners. Given this context we can reform “the old wife in the new bustle” into the old wine in new bottles, uncovering the biblical phrasing (Matt. 9:17). The lengthy illustration merely underlines that “old wife” is turned into “wine” in a constructive flashback. A premature note informing us that “old wife” means “old wine” is procedurally wrong; “old wife” only *becomes* “old wine” for the astute reader potentially already with “bustle”, for most others probably a bit later, but in any case by retroactive metamorphosis which takes place in time, no matter how short. The *latter* day paint has to be removed to see what lies under it.

A short sentence—“Het wis if ee newt. Lissom! Lissom!”—has a vague Germanic ring with Dutch overtones. A “newt” (newts are lissom) may link up with a “norewhig” one line before (an echo a preceding “earwig”); the second part might translate phonetically into “if he knew it” (reinforced by “wis” as leading to German *wissen*). As it happens, a neat English translation is appended almost immediately, a clarifying resonance: “It was of a night” (*FW* 21.1–5). The distortion has preceded the basic shape. Such an early instance of corrective reiteration may have a didactic ring, as though the author wanted to teach us to “lissom” attentively and to wait patiently for further clues lying in wait.

In “And there is nihil nuder under the clothing moon” (*FW* 493.17, quoted above) few readers will intuit the Biblical echo until the whole pattern emerges in the second part. The *end* of the sentence transforms the beginning to “there is nothing new”; the initial “nihil” by itself would

hardly be enough to call up “*Nihil sub sole novum*” from Ecclesiastes (1:10), but it is corroborated from behind.

“Britus and Gothius shall no more joustle for that sonneplace . . .” (FW 568.8-9) at first suggests two rivals jostling for a place in the sun; they look like representatives of the Brits (British, Bretons) and the Goths, tribes that invaded the Roman Empire. The sequel, “. . . but mark one autonement . . .”, apart from a presumably autonomous atonement, shows the outlines of Mark Antony, the opponent of (as it now turns out) of Brutus and Cassius, which propels us back in Roman History to a decisive moment, celebrated by Shakespeare and Joyce. “Gothius” as Roman Cassius is initially a faint possibility at best, not quite close enough, but retrospectively both “Burrus and Caseous have . . . sysentangled themselves”, as a former passage puts it (FW 161.12).

Recurrent motifs, repeated phrases, tend to work against the basically expansive nature of the *Wake*. Each item seems to open in many directions, but repetitions at least create a sense of *dejà vu*, even if what has been seen before is anything but transparent. A primal “mishe mishe” and “tauftauf” (FW 3.9-10) will reverberate throughout in manifold variants and at least denote a murkily familiar theme. One recurring motif is the riddle of the Prankquean, “why do I am alook alike a poss of porterpease?”, twice varied in the same passage (FW 21.18), which will resound in varying shapes. The riddle’s wording has not yet been solved, but at least it will be detected in its approximate reincarnations, down to faint echoes. Such varied repetition is one of the many devices to counteract the apparent random chaos of the *Wake*. But another even more frequent motif, whose exact formulation we do know, is never spelled out in full. There is not a single *verbatim* occurrence of “Buckley Shot the Russian General”—it does not exist in *Finnegans Wake*, it only resounds some thirty times in everchanging approximation. It definitely could not be extracted from a first phonetic inkling, “how the bouckaleens shout their roscan generally” (FW 42.11), where there is no hint of shooting or a Russian general, or a name like Buckley. Once the matrix intrudes through dozens of near misses, where the event is rehashed, but never really told (FW 335–90), the transformation becomes almost inevitable. By itself, “rahjahn gerachknell” (FW 388.33) is a far cry from a Russian General, but it is a cry so often resounded that it is accepted without misgivings.

Retrospective Coherence

Once Joyce's works are seen not only as highly eccentric units but as one continuous, though evolutionary, series, the later works reflect their predecessors. The escalating verbal licence in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* has inspired extravagant readings in *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* that otherwise would not have been imagined. With Wakean accretions in mind, an ignorant slip like "the notice for the *Freemans General*" in "The Sisters" (*D* 17) becomes more resonant and possibly paves the way for such excrescencies as "the Rumjar Journal" (*FW* 341.6)—a way that was hardly envisaged by an author in his early twenties. Or was it?

The infantile contraction "O, the geen wothe botheth" (*P* 7) foreshadows techniques of *Finnegans Wake*, where the phrase would not look out of place. In the *Wake* meanings tend to "both" (duplicate) in syntactic overlays.²¹ Young Stephen's pristine erroneous creation condenses "O, the wild rose blossoms / On the little green place" and with the same stroke makes it much more complex. The passage is visibly recapitulated in the *Wake*: "for wilde erthe blothoms", in an obvious conflation with Oscar Wilde and "whispered sins" (*FW* 69.2). Does this much later elaboration then colour the original wild or "geen" rose? Does Oscar Wilde and an undercurrent of homoeroticism already vibrate in the harmless song and its distortions, as has been claimed, and what would be implicated?

At the end of *A Portrait*, the pretentious proclamation "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*P* 253) in all likelihood was taken straight at the time by many readers (and possibly in Stephen's or even Joyce's own mind?). Yet Shem, a fictional descendent of Stephen Dedalus, is also a counterfeiter, a penman, and his "epical forged check on the public" and "many piously forged palimpsests" (*FW* 181.16, 182.2) have irretrievably rubbed off on the peroration of *A Portrait* and made it difficult to accept it without at least some equivocal slant.

Later events cast their shadows behind. Some hazards are inherent in the procedure. Joyce's first published work, poetry, was aptly entitled "Chamber Music" and has inspired numerous composers: the poems have in fact been turned into songs. The title's primary innocence is called in question when Bloom, in the Ormond hotel, reflects:

Chamber music. Could make a kind of pun on that. It is a kind of music I often thought when she. Acoustics that is. Tinkling. Empty vessels make most noise. (*U* 11.979)

Does Bloom's remark lend a suggestive tinkle to the poems composed more than a decade earlier? An American scholar, William York Tindall, took this position and found, or invented, traces of girls making water in the poems.²² Such a undercurrent makes the collection much more titillating. If Bloom hadn't "made a kind of pun on" it, or if Joyce had not amplified the theme of micturition in *Finnegans Wake*, with its ubiquitous brace of urinating girls, so persistently, Tindall might have had much less of a case. In Shem's *curriculum vitae* "we roam through a period of pure lyricism of shamebred music" (*FW* 164.15-16), so the problem arises whether the shame had been bred already when Joyce gave a label to his cycle of delicate, conventional looking poems. Similarly, The Boarding House in the story of that name in *Dubliners* appears like a residence that aims at, but may not quite achieve, respectability. A mainly jocular reference to the landlady, Mrs Mooney, as "the Madame" tends to raise suspicion. Such suspicion is reinforced in the punchy hyperbole of the narrator in Cyclops: ". . . Mooney, the bumbailiff's daughter, mother kept a kip in Hardwicke street, that used to be stravaging about the landings . . . at two in the morning without a stitch on her, exposing her person, open to all comers, fair field and no favour" (*U* 12.398-402); "And the old prostitute of a mother procuring rooms to street couples" (*U* 12.814-15). Though such gossip need not be taken at face value, together with a passing mention of a "boardelhouse" in *Finnegans Wake* (*FW* 186.31, a paragraph containing the names of the *Dubliners* stories), these distant echoes potentially cast a different, though problematic, light on "The Boarding House".

Absence of Hindsight

Hindsight clarification does not follow automatically, many loose ends will remain. No clue is given about characters like Sinclair ("Or will I drop into old Harris' and have a chat with young Sinclair?" [*U* 8.852]). We remain in the dark about Bloom's involvement in the Royal Hungarian Lottery, which in itself does not seem to have been traced. Who is M'Intosh? Most riddles in *Finnegans Wake* remain riddles.

Even outside of the *Wake* Joyce can push obscurity very far. A murky passage in the dense welter of voices that ends the Oxen of the Sun episode can hardly be worked out; it occurs within the context of the recent race at Ascot:

The ruffin cly the nab of Stephen Hand as give me the jady
coppaleen. He strike a telegramboy paddock wire big bug Bass to
the depot. Shove him a joey and grahamise. (*U* 14.1514-16)

The initial wording has been located as a line from a 17th century work, *The Canting Academy*, “The Ruffin cly the nab of. . .” (the devil take the head of . . .). It might have been discovered without the author’s help. Joyce did help his German translator, Georg Goyert, who had asked for enlightenment, and supplied the background of a seemingly real event: “S. H. met a telegramboy who was bringing a private racing telegram from the stable of the celebrated English brewer Bass to the police depot in Dublin to a friend there to back B's horse *Sceptre* for the Cup. S.H. gives boy 4 pence, opens the telegram over steam (grahamising), recloses it and sends the boy on with it, backs *Sceptre* to win and loses. (This really happened and his name was Stephen Hand though it was not the Gold Cup)” (6 March 1927).²³ So far no scholar or archivist has unearthed this minor local episode. Without Joyce's own tip from the stable we would be at a severe loss; no textual reinforcement accounts for a peripheral Stephen Hand. Interestingly enough, two strands of racing complications are interwoven; while the Throwaway entanglement can be resolved by sufficient alertness, the Stephen Hand muddle is beyond the range of any reader.

The title “Ulysses” is of a different order. Its promise is never fulfilled, no real Ulysses/Odysseus of mythical fame will ever turn up, except in two fleeting Shakespearean allusions. One of them, that Shakespeare “makes Ulysses quote Aristotle” (*U* 9.996), has been noted to be doubly wrong. Ulysses of course could not possibly know Aristotle, but “That was Will’s way” (*U* 9.993); and the words are not spoken by Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*, but by Hector. So one of the two occurrences of Ulysses (in Elizabethan refraction) is spurious. Such duplication of errors ironically involves the fact that *Ulysses* (the book) does quote Aristotle. The relationship of the title to Homer’s *Odyssey* is indirect, it works by analogy, a matter of ingenious comparisons and cultural transformations, to take or leave. It may therefore be—at least in the minds of some readers—all the more pervasive.

Do you follow me?

External pertinent clarification must set in, for better or worse, where the text coyly withholds it. Few readers will follow Stephen Dedalus in one

of his more obscure musings when he remembers an argument that he might have used in the library discussion:

Forgot . . . any more than he [Shakespeare] forgot the whipping lousy Lucy gave him. (*U* 9.1134)

Aggressive, lousy Lucy, who is she? Only Shakespearean experts would be acquainted with the name of Sir Thomas Lucy, who, according to some sources, had Shakespeare whipped for poaching. In a ballad, possibly written by Shakespeare, he is referred to as “lowsie Lucy”. Without such remote source most readers would be misled, possibly imagining a lady of bad reputation and coarse manners. As it happens, the mystery is never cleared up in *Ulysses*, and we are at the mercy of outside information, which was helpfully provided by William Schutte and is now available in Gifford’s “*Ulysses*” *Annotated*. Lousy Lucy is the kind of glaring obstacle that demands a gloss.²⁴

But on occasion no obstacle is in sight and there is correspondingly no need for an illuminating nudge. When the funeral carriage in Hades gets under way, conversation awkwardly turns to the less than immaculate vehicle the four occupants travel in:

—Corny might have given us a more commodious yoke, Mr Power said.

—He might, Mr Dedalus said, if he hadn’t that squint troubling him. Do you follow me?

He closed his left eye. Mr Cunningham began to brush away crustcrumbs from under his thighs. (*U* 6.92)

Corny Kelleher is the man in charge of the funeral, an undertaker, who has supplied a somewhat shabby, cheap carriage that shows signs of former use. Mr Dedalus jokingly attributes this to a squint and even imitates the defect by closing one eye. We do indeed follow him without the slightest unrest. It is much later, in the closing pages of the 15th chapter, in Nighttown, that Corny Kelleher makes a last appearance. In an exchange of not too many words he repeats “Do you follow me?” three times (*U* 15.4814, 4828, 4870). The expression must be among his set phrases, familiar to Simon Dedalus, who has obviously—obviously *now*—imitated it in the mourning coach, something no one could possibly have surmised then. But once “Do you follow me?” is recognized as vocal mimicry, its tone changes from a simple question to a comical act. The minor modal change might introduce one more latent reference to death, for it is true that we all sooner or later follow the undertaker.

Secondary meanings do not always assert themselves, if at all, on the spot; these too can be delayed. In *Lestrygonians* Bloom constantly has food on his mind:

A nice salad, cool as a cucumber, Kernan can dress. Puts gusto into it. (*U* 8.759)

Once more in the episode an alimentary sense is dominant. Later when we see Mr Kernan proudly looking at his frockcoat, “Dress does it. Nothing like a dressy appearance. . . . Stylish coat. . . . Fits me down to the ground” (*U* 10.738-45), a subsidiary meaning may apply to “dress”. As though in trailing corroboration Mr Kernan will greet the viceking “vainly from afar” (*U* 10.1184), where futility smoothly blends with vanity. A little bit of the plain innocence of “can dress” has been lost.²⁵ Coincidentally, it is Kernan who supplies the label “retrospective arrangement” for *Ulysses*—a term which is applicable for the present survey as well.

“Then he read the letter again: twice” (*U* 4.437)

The emphasis on hindsight revelation underlines the vital difference between a first reading and all subsequent ones. A first reading progresses in time from the known, from whatever has been absorbed along the way (understood or not), into a future not yet opened up. It is based on *ad hoc* conjectures as more and more fragments temporarily cohere into provisional contours. Once we come to the end of *Ulysses*, or “The Sisters”, everything is *potentially* retrievable, on call, given an ideal memory.

The intricate cluster around (first) Bantam Lyons misconstruing Bloom’s innocent “I was just going to throw it away” (*U* 5.534), (second) Lenehan’s intervention and (finally) the outcome of the Gold Cup race is not possibly unravelled before the Cyclops episode, when “Throwaway” appears as the name of a horse. At this point readers are able to understand Bantam Lyons’s inexplicable, sudden “I’ll risk it” in the morning (*U* 5.541). In actual practice the tangled chain of misunderstandings is not inevitably grasped even by attentive readers. The Ithaca chapter steps in helpfully with one of its many recapitulations when it lists “the previous intimations of the result, effected or projected”, an enumeration in reverse order (*U* 17.328–41).

It is a matter of didactic strategies or subjective preferences whether Bloom’s “I was going to throw it away” at the end of *Lotuseaters*

should be explained right away. In Gifford's *Ulysses Annotated* Throwaway and all other horses in the Ascot Gold Cup are listed, prematurely let out of the bag, and Bloom's innocent, dismissive "throw it away" is glossed: "The point is that Bloom has just unwittingly given a tip on the Gold Cup race".²⁶ Instructed like this, a reader at this early point knows more than Bloom himself realizes. It is a dilemma of Annotation that its duty to explain is at variance with the narrative game of delayed revelation. Annotation, inevitably, through no one's fault, substitutes instant information for gradual discovery. It freezes dynamic adventure into static knowledge. Where Joyce put a puzzling cart before an unnamed horse, the notes reverse the procedure and transpose intriguing Odyssean reading adventures into plain sailing.

Every reader of narrative fiction becomes, as the *Wake* puts it, a "retrospector", but in Joyce much more so; "all is for the retrospectioner" (*FW* 137.31, 265.5). It has been said, in flippant exaggeration, that Joyce can be read forwards and backwards, but there is truth in it, literal—down the very letters. A drive seems to inhere in the prose that prods us to plough the field "furrowards, bagawards" (*FW* 18.31), and who knows if the second forged word does not imply the awards of looking back?

Notes

¹ Don Gifford, *"Ulysses" Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 19.

² A different wording given in Weldon Thornton's *Allusions* follows the same pattern: "May the liliated throng of radiant Confessors encompass thee". See Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in "Ulysses"* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P) 17.

³ The point made here is reiterated—and considerably extended—in Fritz Senn, "Anagnostic Probes", *Inductive Scrutinies: Focus on Joyce*, ed. Christine O'Neill (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1995) 79.

⁴ The Cyclops ("I was just passing the time of the day [*U* 12.1]) and Nausicaa episodes are cases in point: "The summer evening was enfolding. . . . Gerty MacDowell who was seated. . . (*U* 13.1, 79)". The tradition is also echoed in Oxen of the Sun.

⁵ "When they were grown up he was going to marry Eileen" (*P* 8) is the earliest use of the future tense in the novel whose opening section resembles a series of language lessons, phrases of increasing lexical and syntactic complexity. Simple sentences gradually contain comparisons or subordination.

⁶ One might claim that the title itself already refers to Parnell's betrayal (which took place in a London committee room) and that death is present in the title; and at least it was in Ireland at the turn of the century, but hardly far beyond that. By 1904 Bloom is doubtful about historical memories: "People ... forget you. Even Parnell. Ivy day dying out" (*U* 6.853). In *A Portrait* already "[t]he Ireland of Tone and of Parnell seemed to have receded in space" (*P* 184).

⁷ The disparity needs some speculation: Joyce may have simply forgotten, which would be unusual, or else the vision of Bray Head is purely imagined by the character(s) familiar with the scenery; they may merely gaze in the direction. Or else. . . ?

⁸ There is an earlier reference to the year, but it is inconclusive, part of Stephen's imagination: "On the night of the seventeenth of February 1904 the prisoner was seen by two witnesses" (*U* 3.181).

⁹ Compare the intransitive use in "the waves and the boats with their high heads rocking" (*U* 18.669).

¹⁰ No wonder translations have a hard time to render it adequately, and their solutions are so wide apart that one could never guess at the original.

¹¹ Quoted and translated by Stuart Gilbert in *James Joyce's "Ulysses"* (London: Faber & Faber, 1952 [1933]) 239–40.

¹² Stephen uses it in this sense, for something forgotten at the time but remembered too late: "Afterwit. Go back" (*U* 9.1137).

¹³ At times wrongly. Bloom is trying common sense at his best with Italian: "*A cenar teco / M'invitasti*. . . . What does that *teco* mean? Tonight perhaps?" (*U* 8.1039–52).

¹⁴ Fortunately, "beef to the heels" can be found in P.W. Joyce, *English as We Speak it in Ireland* (London: 1910): "When a woman has very thick legs . . . she is 'like a Mullingar heifer, beef to the heels'" (136). Milly writes from Mullingar, and in due course it may dawn on us that she is conscious of her own "slim legs" (as Bloom recalls, [*U* 4.430]), in contrast to the country girls. Her mother bears this out: "I had to tell her not to cock her legs up like that on show on the windowsill before all the people passing" (*U* 18.1035).

¹⁵ There is hardly a way of pushing a vulgar act like belching at some refined distance, so in German the abstract evasiveness is rendered as "Rülpsen nach dem Essen" or a more refined "das Aufstoßen nach fülligen Mahlzeiten" (Goyert 746, Wollschläger 922). Any interpretative delays have been removed.

¹⁶ The French translation clarified this by opting for "dévêlation" (*FW* 658).

¹⁷ Which is not to say that such overtones cannot also be utilized.

¹⁸ In this sense it is conceivable that the initial word "riverrun", overglossed as it must be, on recirculation *might* have picked up the sense of "Reverend", prominent as the first word of ALP's letter (*FW* 615.12). On a first reading it is non-sense. Just as "Howth Castle and Environs" cannot possibly be an ubiquitous male character type HCE at first sight, but will be recognized as it in the course of further reading and on all subsequent re-courses.

¹⁹ In such a magnetic field, and only there, the Greek bee that is extracted from “melissiously” (*FW* 424.30), *melissa*, might refer to Plato, who was referred to as a bee because of his honeyed words.

²⁰ If “shinner” is a Sinn Feiner, as in “the fein shiner” and “shiners true” (*FW* 147.7, 465.18), the sentence may also have a local historical undercurrent.

²¹ Joyce did write “geen”, not “green”, which is a well-meant editorial emendation in all editions of *Portrait* prior to Hans Gabler’s. It so happens that “geen” occurs in *Finnegans Wake*: “As soon as we sale him geen we gates a sprise” (*FW* 606.36), and in a Parnellite context. Which is not to say that therefore “geen” must substitute again for “green”.

²² James Joyce, *Chamber Music*, ed. William York Tindall (New York: Columbia UP, 1954).

²³ See *JJQ* 4.3 (Spring 1967) 194–6, and also Gifford’s “*Ulysses*” *Annotated*. Lucidity was not improved when some editions introduced a misleading full stop between “Stephen” and “Hand”.

²⁴ Early translators had to proceed without such a gloss, and Joyce himself did not volunteer the information to his French translator, who rendered the person as “l’ignoble Lucie la pouilleuse” (F 211); the first German translation of 1928 also has “die lausige Lucy” (G 245). Even the new French translation, under the competent supervision of Jacques Aubert, opted for “Lucy la pouilleuse” (271)—possibly in full awareness and the view that the misleading sense is more important than the correct source.

²⁵ That Tom Kernan, who “had never been seen in the city without a silk hat of some decency and a pair of gaiters”, is proud of his outward appearance has already emerged from “Grace” (*D* 154).

²⁶ Gifford 98-99.