Interpreting the *Trauermarsch* in "Hades"

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Abstract

This paper aims to show how to perceive the music in "Hades" as a *Trauermarsch*. The reader can sense Paddy Dignam's funeral cortège as an interdisciplinary experience thanks to a series of devices that become the soundtrack of the episode, such as the same characteristic syncopated rhythm, the alliteration of soundless plosives in combination with laterals, a number of musical allusions, and the ineluctability of silence. As a result, the text is enriched by acoustic features that improve the reader's level of involvement within this composition of "music of the uncanny" by Joyce, which resembles considerably to Handel's "Dead March" from *Saul*.

Keywords: Handel's *Trauermarsch,* Joyce's "Hades," rhythm, interdisciplinary studies.

Despite the documented amount of musicality in Joyce's work, "Hades" is definitely not one of the most musical episodes in *Ulysses*. In fact, most studies on the music of Joyce's works hardly deal with this chapter. For instance, Jack W. Weaver's *Joyce's Music and Noise*[1] refers to "Hades" in two paragraphs that take less than one page, and Zack Bowen's *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry*

Through "Ulysses"[2] identifies scarcely 21 musical allusions within this episode. One should not forget that in "Hades," Joyce portrays Paddy Dignam's funeral cortège on its way to Prospect Cemetery in Glasnevin, north of Dublin. The reader notices how the sphere of the scene is mainly influenced by the solemnity of the situation and by Bloom's reflective disposition.

The contents of this chapter and its main concern, death, are the reason why Joyce provides this episode with a sombre mood, contributing to the atmosphere by using the stereotypical marked rhythm found in funeral marches as a rhetoric device. There is a predominant focus on silence, as well as on the repeated allusions to "The Pauper's Drive," a dirge which, in Zack Bowen's words, "provides the background music for much of the chapter,"[3] and to Handel's "Dead March" from *Saul*. The continuous return to these musical compositions and devices helps achieve the emphasis of the solemnity found in this funeral scene.

In "Hades," the world of the dead, we find Bloom's reflections on death during his friend Paddy Dignam's funeral, which embellish and strengthen the solemn mood of this scene. The narration of the whole episode is led once again by Bloom's focalisation, which contains elements that produce a comparable effect to the music played in a *Trauermarsch* or funeral march. The *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is, according to Susan Brown's recent discoveries in genetic studies,[4] the source Joyce made use of when he needed to check any musical concept during the stage of documentation. Therefore, the source used for this research is also the *GDM*. This dictionary explains the distinguishing features of this musical expression, *Trauermarsch*, in the definition of the term "march":

> Of the many possible non-military uses of march music, the most important category is probably the funeral march. […] Funeral marches stand as slow movements in Beethoven's Third

Symphony and Mahler's First. Beethoven's march imitates the muffled drums of a funeral cortège, and includes a recurring trio, a fugal development and an expressive coda that greatly expand the usual march form. Mahler's parody of a funeral march, based on a minor-mode version of the folktune *Frère Jacques*, was suggested by the nursery picture *The Hunter's Funeral*. The tune lends itself well to such treatment and, as each bar is immediately repeated, the quality of the movement is lugubrious, despite its inclusion of a grotesquely mocking trio. The funeral march in his Fifth Symphony emulates the sound of a military band.

Therefore, the funeral march selected by the author as the background music for "Hades" is suitable in this context and can be identified by the use of a characteristic rhythmical pattern that is repeatedly found throughout the whole episode. This pulse can be identified from the beginning of the episode, where we find a repeated syncopation in the very first phrase that sets off the definite pattern:

Martin **Cun**ningham, **first**, **poked** his **silk**hatted **head** into the **creak**ing **car**riage and, **en**tering **deft**ly, **sea**ted him**self**.[5]

Here we find a marked rhythm consisting of a combination of trochees and dactyls which implies an alternation of a binary and ternary beat. This syncopated rhythmical combination found in the initial stage of the chapter suggests the pulse of the riding cab that brings the four characters –Martin Cunningham, Mr Power, Simon Dedalus, and Leopold Bloom– to the cemetery. The rhythm of this *Trauermarsch* is not only evident from the lyricism of the text, but it is also reinforced by the

allusion to the percussion of the rattling bones of the corps[6] as the carriage marches through the cobbled streets.

Silence acquires a relevant role as a musical device in this episode and as a supporting element for both the solemnity that accompanies the funeral cortège, and the presence of the dead. It is only interrupted by the creaking sounds of the carriage:

> All waited. Nothing was said. Stowing in the wreaths probably. I am sitting on something hard. Ah, that soap in my hip pocket. Better shift it out of that. Wait for an opportunity. All waited. Then wheels were heard from in front turning: then nearer: then horses' hoofs. A jolt. Their carriage began to move, creaking and swaying. Other hoofs and creaking wheels started behind. The blinds of the avenue passed and number nine with its craped knocker, door ajar. At walking pace. They waited still, their knees jogging, till they had turned and were passing along the tramtracks. Tritonville road. Quicker. The wheels rattled rolling over the cobbled causeway and the crazy glasses shook rattling in the doorframes.[7]

The silence of the crowd is repeatedly expressed by means of a direct reference –in the repetition of "wait," "all waited," "nothing was said," "they waited still"– and by juxtaposing these references to the sounds produced by the carriage, which are noticeable thanks to the alliteration of soundless plosives, [k],[8] and [t],[9] and occasionally in combination with the lateral [r].[10] The alliteration of these soundless plosives are reminiscent of the sound of percussion instruments, typically found in processions of all kinds, and, therefore, suitable in the performance of this funeral march. Additionally, the use of percussion is mainly associated with rhythm, and in this

passage, the alternation of long and short sentences, typically found in earlier passages of Bloom's stream of consciousness,[11] makes the reader aware of the syncopated beat that already appeared in the beginning of this episode, and that now provides this *Trauermarsch* with a homogeneous pattern. As we can see, the rhythmical pattern and the percussive sound of the carriage would not be outlined to such an extent without the absolute vocal silence of the rest of the funeral cortège during the fragments of Bloom's soliloquy, which stresses the instrumental nature and solemn mood of this scene. Joyce seems to be muffling the voices of the characters involved by enhancing Bloom's rhythmical interior monologue.

The percussive sounds come back during this episode on a number of occasions emphasising the silence that surrounds this funeral cortège. When the characters do speak, they do so in low tones, thus strengthening the solemn mood that frames this scene. And once again alliteration and a marked rhythm characterise the passages in which the carriage sounds are most audible, such as when the dirge is suggested:

> ─Poor little thing, Mr Dedalus said. It's well out of it.
> The carriage climbed more slowly the hill of Rutland square. Rattle his bones. Over the stones. Only a pauper. Nobody owns.[12]

The reader can also notice in this passage how Mr Dedalus speaks in a syncopated ternary rhythm in his two utterances: "**poor** little **thing**" and "it's **well** out of **it**." This character's rhythm combines with the narrating part where, again, an iambic binary pattern − "[t]he **ca**rriage **climbed** more **slow**ly the **hill** of **Rut**land **square**"− alternates with a ternary succession from Thomas Noel's song "The Pauper's Drive" − "[**r**]**at**tle his **bones**. **O**ver the **stones**. **On**ly a **pau**per. **No**body **owns**." This last ternary succession coincides in pattern with Mr Dedalus' utterance. It is significant how both the quotation

of the song and the character's words keep a ternary rhythm whereas the "intrusive" reporting sentence is binary. Here Joyce maintains the same recurring syncopation from the funeral march that was outlined earlier. Percussion is performed in this occasion by the deceased's bones rattling over the stones, taking this *Trauermarsch* to another dimension.

These sounds come back later on as an echo in the same way, interrupting dialogues and internal monologues, as in the case of Bloom's:

> Death by misadventure. The letter. For my son Leopold. No more pain. Wake no more. Nobody owns. The carriage rattled swiftly along Blessington street. Over the stones.
> ─We are going the pace, I think, Martin Cunningham said.[13]

The sentences "nobody owns" and "over the stones" are inserted here among others marking the rhythm as in the former passage. Martin Cunningham's sentence "we are going the pace" underlines the importance of the rhythmical pattern in this passage to understand how the whole funeral cortège is actually performing this *Trauermarsch* in unison.

Simultaneously, the alliteration of "the letter" and "the carriage rattled swiftly" resound as well in the same monotonous way Bloom's traumatic recollections on his father's suicide keep on coming back repetitively to his thoughts. Bloom's stream of consciousness shows more musical associations immediately after that, in particular when he hears the sound of "a streetorgan near the Basin" that sends "over and after them a rollicking rattling song of the halls."[14] He identifies it as the "Dead March" from *Saul*, the *Trauermarsch* par excellence according to a number of musical sources, such as the *Oxford Dictionary of Music*.[15] Zack Bowen points out that, as regards the allusion to Handel's march, "underlying the passage and the music is the theme of the continual cycle of life […],

Joyce's view that all men live consubstantial lives is broadened to include the dead as well as the living."[16] In fact, Bowen's remark can be completed by adding that, in this occasion, one can speak of a metamusical allusion in the text considering that the whole fragment is inserted within a funeral march.

Moreover, the rhythm found in Joyce's prose is also present in Handel's musical composition. After reading the musical score of the "Dead March" from *Saul*, one notices how the bass line remains with the same rhythm marking the four four time (4/4) during most bars, while the melody is characterised by a syncopated rhythm throughout the whole performance. The musical score of this composition has been attached in the Annex as evidence of this parallel between Joyce's text and Handel's work.[17] Accordingly, the "Dead March" from *Saul* seems to reverberate as background music within Paddy

Dignam's rhythmical cortège in the same way Bloom's reflections on his father's death keep on returning during his interior narration of his friend's funeral. One can identify how musical reverberation works as an emphatic device in the text during a character's interior soliloquy, in the same way as it occurs with metaliterary overtones.

The importance of silence during this funeral cortège highlights Bloom's personal vision and thoughts throughout the whole scene. Additionally, the crowd's vocal silence resounds as well, as the carriage moves along, enhanced by the noticeable presence of the accompanying characters in combination with the absence of spoken discourse. The crucial role of silence can be perceived together with its "sound" in the way the action is presented in Bloom's internal remark:

> In silence they drove along Phibsborough road. An empty hearse trotted by, coming from the cemetery: looks relieved.[18]

Here silence is used to depict the sombre scene of the cemetery. The lack of sound is strengthened by the rest of the

sentence, with adjectives that focus on the visual sense, like in the "empty hearse" as well as the connotations of "looks relieved." Joyce creates a homogenous context in which the reader finds a stress in the silence, and no coffin in the hearse, emphasising the idea of emptiness, lack of worries, and relief. In short, Joyce depicts the scene of the cemetery with a lack of everything, highlighted mainly by the suggestion of the void and the absence of character's utterances during the drive of the funeral cortège along one of the cemetery adjacent streets.

The text presents clearly the opposition between life and death with music and silence. In fact, the associations presented in this chapter are those between percussion and death on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the absence of melodies with the lack of life, with the only exception of the dirge. In the same way, the supernatural setting of "Hades" is also portrayed with the symbiosis of these elements: a soundtrack in which there is neither melody nor vocal music, but sounds that are associated with percussion and instrumental music. In this chapter Joyce represents spiritual existence by playing his personal version of what one could call "the music of the uncanny" performed by the orchestra of the carriage, the bones, and the stones. The contradiction implied in the expression "life after death" is conveyed by the harmony between percussive instrumental music and vocal silence, which Joyce uses in order to parody this religious conventional belief, as well as to provide a burlesque representation of spiritism séances. The distinguishing element of this incongruous musical composition is precisely the sound of percussion, which is present in the text thanks to the rattling bones and stones that create the harmonious accompaniment for the rhythm of the carriage. Some readers may recognise Handel's "Dead March" from *Saul* not only as musical allusion as Zack Bowen did, but also as Joyce's inspiration source to design the rhythm of the carriage, the bones, and the stones throughout the episode. These are the constituents and their arrangement –or rather, the instruments and the performance–

within the musical score of the Joycean *Trauermarsch* in "Hades."

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Annex 1

Dead March In Saul

Handel

Notes

[1] Weaver, Jack W. *Joyce's Music and Noise: Theme and Variation in His Writings.* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

[2] Bowen, Zack. *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry through "Ulysses."* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974).

[3] Bowen, Zack. *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry through "Ulysses."* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974) 102.

[4] Brown, Susan. "The Mystery of the *Fuga per Canonem* Solved."
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[5] *U* 6.1, 2.

[6] "Rattle his bones" (*U* 6.332; and 6.358).

[7] *U* 6.21-32.

[8] In "carriage," "creaking," "craped knocker," "quicker," and "crazy."

[9] In "turned," "tramtracks," and "Tritonville."

[10] In "road," "rattled rolling," "rattling."

[11] Both in "Calypso" and in "Lotus-Eaters."

[12] *U* 6.331-333.

[13] *U* 6.364-367.

[14] *U* 6.372-373.

[15] For instance, the definition of "funeral march" included in the
Oxford Dictionary of Music makes use of this composition as first example and states that "[a]mong the best known of these [funeral marches] (all of them in some public use on occasions of mourning) are the following: (1) Handel's *Dead March in Saul* (from the oratorio of that name)." *Oxford Dictionary of Music*. ed. Kennedy, Michael. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 325.

[16] Bowen, Zack. *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce: Early Poetry through "Ulysses."* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974) 108.

[17] See Annex.

[18] *U* 6.436-437.