

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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THE PRINTED WORD IN JOYCE'S ULYSSES:

A VISUAL PATH TO INTERPRETATION

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Reynaldo Ales

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To: Dean Michael R. Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

This thesis, written by Reynaldo Ales, and entitled *The Printed Word in Joyce's Ulysses: A Visual Path to Interpretation*, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

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Anna Luszczynska

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Vernon Dickson

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Michael Patrick Gillespie, Major Professor

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The thesis of Reynaldo Ales is approved.

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Dean Michael R. Heithaus  
College of Arts, Sciences and Education

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Andres G. Gil  
Vice President for Research and Economic Development  
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2017

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS  
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by

Reynaldo Ales

Florida International University, 2017

Miami, Florida

Professor Michael Patrick Gillespie, Major Professor

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the ways the printed word in James Joyce's *Ulysses* opens new and alternative paths towards the interpretation of the text. We show how it induces multiple chains of associations beyond the act of reading, which start at the visual, spatialized sequencing and contiguity of letters, words and sentences, their layout on the page, or the persistence or absence of punctuation.

After initial observations of the visual prevalence of the written word over its auditory capabilities as noted in the "Aeolus" chapter (e.g.: puns that can be realized only in writing; meanings that can be accessed not by reading but by observing the spatial arrangement of text), two other chapters of the book—"Ithaca" and "Penelope"—were analyzed to determine if such assumptions could be applied to other sections of the novel. Random passages from yet other sections were used as illustration. Our analysis suggests that throughout "Ulysses" meaning derivation may take place beyond the effect of rhetorical figures, and often can be the result of a visual/spatial associative chain.

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## I. Introduction

After liberating myself from the constraints of metonymic metaphorizing, and coming to terms with having to explore paths that would challenge all uniform reading experience, I reread *Ulysses*, revising and readjusting how I read, in the same way that the text and the very act of its writing are being questioned and exposed in the book. In a conventional novel, by the seventh chapter readers have already learned its codes and can navigate the text fairly easily, but by the time they get to chapter seven in *Ulysses*, while it is evident that the expected new connections have already been made, some of the codes of the previous chapters have changed, and a few connections have to be reassigned and relearned from chapter to chapter. Many of these connections stray from the typical referential paths and often suggest a visual inquiry into the text. How else can I explain catching myself *seeing* “livin groom” instead of *reading* “living room” (1.313)?<sup>1</sup> In *Ulysses* the text leads us into a world of hearing, smelling, touching, and seeing, and into imagining language and consuming it through another dimension. As language is destabilized in the novel, and as reading and discourse lose temporality and become spatialized, words and sentences often lose their linear predictability and appear arranged as a piece of visual art. As a result, readers are challenged to rethink their expectations and rewire their network of associations. Nothing, as it has been established, had prepared them for making sense of “underdarkneath the night: mouth south: tomb womb” (7.223-4).

I will not try here to recommend a way to read *Ulysses*, or dissect the rhetoric of its writing. My purpose is to show how this text not only invites the reader to reflect,

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers separated by a period in parentheses always refer to the chapter and line(s) in the *Ulysses* edition listed in Works Cited.

reread, and recompose, as most difficult texts do, but also induces multiple (some would say chaotic) chains of associations that start at the visual sequencing and contiguity of letters, words and sentences, their layout on the page, or the persistence or absence of punctuation.

Our reading habits tend to predicate the reading of difficult texts on the deciphering of stylistic devices, predictable literary lures of sorts—Anthony Burgess calls them booby-traps (135)—that lead us through a path the author has preconceived for us. As we look at these devices from the perspective of their constitution, they exude intentionality for the most part and presuppose a recognition, understanding, and application by the reader of such constitutive mechanisms. However, appreciating the author’s dexterity in devising a polyptoton does not take the ordinary or domesticated reader<sup>2</sup> any further than the illusion of discovering the text. Successful identification of figures helps readers have a grasp on how they *should* read, but provides no orientation or validation as to where they *could* go in their interpretation. Rita Felski warns of the emphasis on learning to decipher “formal devices that systematically block readers from taking words at face value” (42). The profusion and recurrence of such devices in *Ulysses* almost turn metaphoricity into precisely that: face value. Some metaphors even become trite in the course of a single novel, and turn into everyday language before our eyes. Sophisticated readers,<sup>3</sup> on the other hand, have been trained for and by difficult texts, and

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<sup>2</sup> As defined by Rita Felski, to mention one modern view, domesticated readers are those with “an insufficiently subtle reading practice” (16), who appear content, as they have been trained, with identifying origin and successfully responding to formulaic metaphorizing.

<sup>3</sup> Eco reduces the distinction between domesticated and sophisticated readers to the measure of their reading experience, somehow echoing formalists, who do not subscribe to the idea that ordinary or domesticated readers cannot discern verbal nuances. Gillespie agrees and points out that readers “have consistently met those challenges [that] literary works offer to the reader.” I bring out the distinction to

they are expected to look beyond the obvious clues. In *The Aesthetics of Chaos*, Michael Patrick Gillespie advocates for a consideration of how texts provoke the readers to deviate from regularized explorations. “Sophisticated readers have learned to balance ambiguity with such dexterity that the process moves forward without conscious effort,” observes Gillespie. “So far, formal criticism has not generated a metaphoric system that can articulate the complexity of that process” (25). Short of embarking in the daunting task of generating such a system, I will venture to offer some ideas that might help start the discussion. If any ambition is to be associated with this project, it would be to initiate the groundwork for bringing other approaches to the engagement of this text.

In the absence of “nonlinear guidelines for comprehending non-repetitive conditions” (Gillespie, *Aesthetics* 40) that would systemically describe and categorize the reading of difficult texts like *Ulysses*, the first thing we can critically say is that the reader engages in an associative chain (however disrupted, interrupted or corrupted), that springs from a personal frame of reference, experience with other texts, particular sensitivities or resistance to rhetorical devices, and, as the reader adjusts to the text, the capacity to learn and adjust to unexpected reading paths. But even domesticated readers do not follow a preconceived map in their interpretations. The repeated triggers of new associations (lateral in movement, rather than linear) motivate all kinds of readers to add to the chain from the stock of their interpretive frame or to open themselves to learning new interpretive strategies. What guides the reading in *Ulysses* appears to be no guide at all, but a chaotic sequence of associations reined in by the words as chosen by the author. Random and chaotic as these associations can be, there is a limit to how far or wide

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argue that *Ulysses* is one of those exemplary difficult texts which can undomesticate a reader. As Daniel Schwarz writes, “*Ulysses* teaches us how to read itself, or put, another way...it creates its own readers” (7).

readers can get in their interpretive quest. “Even the more ‘open’ among experimental texts direct their own free interpretation and preestablish the movement of their Model Reader,”<sup>4</sup> writes Umberto Eco (24), maybe because “you cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it” (9). This is not meant, I think, to refer to the commonplace prescriptive subjection that defines domesticated readers, like those misled by Allais’s “A Most Parisian Episode,” or to the sententious subjection that kills the reader-character in Cortazar’s “Continuity of Parks.” Eco means a subjection that both frames and liberates the reader’s associative possibilities. In a chapter aptly called “The Poetics of the Open Work,” he proposes a new classification under “open” works: *works in movement* would be those which “display an intrinsic mobility, a kaleidoscopic capacity to suggest themselves in constantly renewed aspects to the consumer.” Though Eco sees these works as typically “consist[ing] of unplanned or physically incomplete structural units” (56), we could say that *Ulysses* is indeed an artistic product that can in many ways be approached as incomplete, meaning not insufficient, but rather requiring supplementarity. Agent and witness of the unfolding of the interpretive process, the reader should “derive meaning associatively,” Gillespie suggests (*Aesthetics* 26).

How to categorize exponential, random associative responses to a reading? How to advance a pattern that would include an infinite variety and complexity?<sup>5</sup> I could suggest several categories: *orthographic*, *sensorial*, *spatial*, and *referential*. But should

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<sup>4</sup> In what resembles Felski’s definition of domesticated reader, Eco speaks of a Model Reader of a particular text as one “supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals generatively with them.” For Eco, “the text creates the competence of its Model Reader” (7).

<sup>5</sup> Gillespie, informed by chaos/complexity theory, brings “strange attractors” to literary criticism as they, he writes, “exist through the pattern that emerges from infinite paths moving within a confined space” (*Aesthetics* 20). If we were to incorporate the concept for our analysis, strange attractors could hypothetically contribute a thread for the plausibility of a particular interpretation, which makes it possible to entertain many alternative readings simultaneously. Strange attractors could be, in the case of textual meaning derivation, the possible kinds of paths an associative or interpretive chain can take.

categories reflect the direction of the association? Or should they reflect the triggers responsible, or the plane at which associations work, be it semantic or orthographical, for example? An attempt at classifying associative paths could certainly shed more light into the ideas I sketch in this paper. Such an attempt, as tempting as it sounds, clearly falls outside the scope of our analysis.

The linearity of cause-effect, intention-result, and repetition-predictability permeates the interpretations and derivations of meaning of domesticated readers. Yet the reading (understood here in its broader sense of textual interpretation) of difficult texts can take us beyond the process of decoding metaphors. If we agree with Gleick<sup>6</sup> that “[n]onlinearity means that the act of playing the game has a way of changing the rules” (qtd. in Gillespie, *Aesthetics* 24), saying that *Ulysses* forces us to nonlinear reading is definitely an understatement. Discovering rhetorical devices in the “Aeolus” chapter of the novel, as catalogued to the tune of more than a hundred (Gilbert 194-8), sheds no light on how the reader digests *Ulysses*, where the boundaries of metaphoricity are often violated, and the quest for meaning often multiplies after the rhetorical figure has exhausted its reach. Jean-Paul Rabaté rightly complains that many of the so-called musical tropes in the chapter “Circe” are no more than classical rhetorics at play (82). However, in “Aeolus” the typical devices do play their classical roles, and also extend their impact in their combination with other elements. I made “Aeolus” the center of my initial analysis not because of the heavy use of stylistic devices, the dozens of references to “wind,” the many temptations to justify excursions into newspaper practices or the

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<sup>6</sup> James Gleick is author of *Chaos: Making a New Science* (1984), a work which popularized the principles of chaos theory, born from the observation of weather patterns. Its applicability in the sciences has been predictably extensive, yet it is becoming a welcome approach also in the humanities (see Gillespie, *The Aesthetics of Chaos* 17-18).

obvious metadiscourse on speech and writing. It is what the reader sees after the literary dust settles, the added connection, the chain reaction that first caught my attention. Only later did I learn that “Aeolus” was a pivotal chapter in the novel. As Gaipa, Latham and Scholes write in their commentaries on *Ulysses* as published in *The Little Review*, “It is here that Joyce dramatically altered his compositional method during the process of revision” (Joyce, *Little Review* 361). It is not uncommon, I concede, for rhetorical figures to open up paths towards various interpretations. For example: The simple metonymy in “the bold blue eyes stared about them and a harsh voice asked” (7.344-6) can also suggest instinctive, involuntary or uncontrollable actions, as agency is transferred to body parts away from a decision-making mind. But there is no visual trigger here; there is nothing that would lead the eye into a new meaning. Let us illustrate further the impact of a visual trigger. “Vestal virgins” (7.952) shows typical alliterative styling combined with mythological allusion. But there’s more: the letter shape of “v” (serifs and all) might continue what was started by the already sexually loaded semantic propositions of “virgins.” Then we go back to “Wise virgins” in 7.937 and see the “w” in “wise” doubling the associative dose. And if we share M. J. C. Hodgart’s view that these are women “who gaze up in paralysis at the phallic Nelson” (126), the letter-shape association appears far from chaotic. What starts as simple alliteration based on grapheme-phoneme repetition may turn into a visual associative undertaking for the reader. Another example: through prosopopeia, reels show obedience (7.36); arms become elocutionary (7.487), and a door either whispers (7.50), tries to speak, or asks to be shut (7.176-7). Nothing out of the ordinary, but when the door’s whisper comes structured in one of Joyce’s typical analogical triads: “whispered: ee: cree,” how can

rhetorical devices be of any help? Where to go from here? The text will lead the way; and we will follow its lead until “the eye is always cautious and suspicious,” Roy Gottfried notes, “reading ever more slowly, seeing words separately and letters discretely, so that letters are disrupted, words untie and unite the surface and the substance” (15).

We can safely establish that reading is determined to a large extent by what happens between the reader and the published text. Then how can we expect to approach reading from the perspective of writing with any degree of success? One type of rhetorical figure can turn into a different type in the eyes of a particular reader at a particular time. In “He looked about him round his loud unanswering machines” (7.183), the prosopopoeia in “unanswering” attributes the capacity to answer—and thus volition, agency, decision-making—to an inanimate object. It may also attribute to the object the frustration resulting from the impossibility to answer, or bring into the mix the notion of the modern answering machine, which, even if immediately dismissed as anachronistic, foregrounds the issue of machines either having a voice or echoing one. Once an association is made, reading embraces new connections and takes off on a new path. Linear reading stops, and meaning derivation (or creation) starts.

“Understanding comes [...] through the expansion of the assumptions of linearity,” writes Gillespie (*Aesthetics* 76). To understand this “expansion”—as opposed to, say, replacement—we can follow Eco when he writes: “In reading a literary text one is obliged to look backward many times, and, in general, the more complex the text, the more it has to be read twice...” This is still, we might think, linearity at its most typical: to approach a difficult text, we read once, then a second time, or a third, until we are satisfied with findings that respond to an equally linear process of discovery, of accessing

meaning. But we know Eco is not one to settle for such conventionality. Here is how he finishes his argument: "...and the second time from the end" (26). His suggestion is none other than reading backwards, most likely not in a proofreading sense, but definitely in a nonlinear way that would generate new levels of meaning. Shouldn't we take this backward reading as a clue to one of multiple ways to engage the text? A mere dismissal of linearity would in itself still be linear, conditional, and exclusionary. Gillespie's "expansion" implies, then, alternativity, allowing for simultaneous disparate paths, adding towards a multiplicity, towards a new "whole [that] exceeds the sum of its parts" (*Aesthetics* 30). Felski traces and premises the surplus of the whole to the text itself: "These texts are more than the sum of our projections: they can surprise or startle us, nudge into unexpected moods or states of mind, cause us to do things we had not anticipated" (84).

The year before publication, Joyce announces that the "Aeolus" chapter has been "recast," a term that, in the context of *Ulysses*, has come to mean the insertion of the enigmatic headings, often equated to newspaper headlines in their style. I personally favor a surface reading of the headings, and agree with Kevin Dettmar that they "could be more accurately described as a species of visual pun" (152), and with Karen Lawrence that "each heading is only one randomly chosen sentence within numerous possibilities" (75). Hodgart, in turn, offers an alternative that conforms to the wide range of possible visual associations I allude to in this paper: "They are rather captions under imaginary illustrations, probably photographs" (129).

As it would drown me in a futile quest for sources or a regurgitation of archaeological findings, I offer no explication for the headings in "Aeolus." Rather, I take

them as they appear on the page, in all their disruptive weight. In the face of the random nature of the divisions of the text in the chapter, and the equally random thematic or climactic unity of the sections of the text as separated by the headings, the only constant seems to be the interruption. And once the visual attributes of these narratorial intrusions have forced us into constant stops, we look at them as we would any other unit of body text. Or we just don't look at them at all. It is from this perspective that I try to show the freedom with which readers might attempt to interpret them, and decipher by themselves how they echo or foreground parts of other texts. In December 1922, eleven months after *Ulysses* was published, a third edition of *The Waste Land* appeared with T. S. Eliot's explanatory notes, which the author disavowed thirty-five years later, revealing that they had been added "to provide more pages of printed matter," since the poem "was inconveniently short" for publication as a book. In the same breath, Eliot apologizes for "having sent so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase" with these notes (122). The headings in "Aeolus," similarly planted in the novel shortly before publication, have enjoyed the same treasure-hunting scrutiny by "seekers of sources" and much the same disparity in scholarly theorizing. It is possible then, as many other interpretations are, that Joyce meant nothing else than the interruption of the text when he introduced the headings. I bring up Eliot's *Waste Land* as a cautionary note not to rush to invalidate readings in which origin and intentionality are dismissed. In a general sense, a reader's response to a text can be as varied, simple, unexpected or source-accurate as most academic elucidations. Unaware of any authorial intention, the reader is free, without dismissing the interpretations the headings have produced for more than ninety years, to extend the assumptions of linearity, to paraphrase Gillespie, and take a surface approach

that simply places the headings as enforcers of stops or pauses that allow for yet another recalibration of the text, no matter how much suspicion or confusion they raise.

I have refrained from trying to make the case for spatial or visual reading through references to how the text was constituted or to Joyce's explicit or inferred intentions. Joyce's late insertion of the headings—a fraction of the revisions that increased the text of "Aeolus" from 8,000 to 10,000 words—have no relevance on how the reader perceives them. It would be no doubt difficult to find other literary texts with this level of experimentation and playfulness in the use of the language to the extent that they would allow, at least visually, if not ethically, for so many typographical errors.<sup>7</sup> Daniel Ferrer ponders whether Joyce's text may have generated many of the printer's mistakes, or whether it had predicted and expected them (196)<sup>8</sup>. Gottfried argues that "Joyce would want his text free of unintentional errors so that he would have it filled with intentional ones" (9). These premises, however, become irrelevant at the time of reading the printed page. Once readers engage the text, authorial intent dissolves into an extraneous fact, and the text becomes theirs. Even though a case could be made that "[n]o text written or edited can be wholly divorced from the process of writing and editing and the decisions and judgments that they entail" (Joyce, *Ulysses* xviii) as claimed by Hans Gabler in his foreword to this edition, whatever the circumstances, the printed page before us is the

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<sup>7</sup> French printers are said to have introduced some 5,000 typos; many other errors were presumably introduced by Joyce while proofing galleys; and certainly no few were irremediably overlooked. To add to the confusion, some of the errors corrected for the Gabler edition have been considered by some scholars as newly introduced errors.

<sup>8</sup> When analyzing the cryptogram in "Ithaca," Gilbert quotes a passage: "in *reserved* alphabetic boustrophedonic punctuated quadrilinear cryptogram (vowels suppressed)" (17.1799-01, emphasis mine). In a related footnote, he mentions that the second word of the puzzle is "reserved," and cites a place where a clue to this reservation may be found. Actually, the passage in the chapter reads "in *reversed* alphabetic..." (emphasis mine). What prompted this discrepancy (or was it Gilbert's error?) is an example of the textual complexities at hand.

only text that matters for our purpose.<sup>9</sup> So, even when a particular word placement, sequencing or repetition is the result of an omission or addition by author, editor or printer, what should concern us is how the reader reacts to it, and the possible meaning and associations that it brings.

It is usually not too difficult to find patterns, instances or plausible evidence for a critical argument if we circumscribe ourselves to a chapter, let's say, for any given analysis. "Aeolus" turned out to be the obvious sample copy for this study, but could I apply the same assumptions to other chapters in *Ulysses*? What was the extent of the spatial conception of text that Joyce explores in this chapter? After a chapter devoted mainly to "Aeolus," I devote another section to two other chapters, "Ithaca" and "Penelope," with passing references to other episodes.

Where would it be easier to start a discussion about associative patterns in *Ulysses* than in the much-explored territory of sensorial references? All throughout the novel, meaning is accessed more often through sounds *evoked*, rather than sounds *enacted*. On one level, the visible (printed words or, more appropriately, letter combinations) leads to a path of auditory perception that renders conventional phoneme-grapheme associations insufficient. Derek Attridge leans towards the prevalence of the visual properties of the language of this novel: "Sound is a source of stability in the novel. Unfamiliar as the visual representations of sounds turn out to be here, they evoke a full sensorial experience beyond the expected auditory reference. Even onomatopoeia, a typically aural rhetorical device, has in this text a significant visual component" (*Language as Immitation* 1124).

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<sup>9</sup> There might appear to be a hint at the tenets of Russian formalism in this approach in that they saw no connection of the text with its author or its historical background. I do, however, unlike formalist approaches, emphasize a strong connection with the reader, who is, in my view, the agent for the actualization of the text as literature.

The visual appearance of the letters and their repetition make lexical onomatopoeia (and even regular words) vulnerable (or beneficiary) to yet further associations. “A letter added or left out, the sound of a vowel or consonant modified—and a host of associations is admitted within the gates,” explains Frank Budgen in defense of *Finnegan’s Wake* (39).<sup>10</sup> “And one letter may stand pregnant with meaning as a rune,” he adds. “Through this similar compactness a page of Joyce’s composition acquires some of the potency of a picture. The words seem to glitter with significance as they lie on the printed page” (20). Let us illustrate Budgen’s “one letter” claim. The famous feline utterances in *Ulysses*, from “miaow” (4.462) to “mkgnao” (4.17), “mrkgnao” (4.25), and “Mrkrngnao” (4.32), definitely carry a variety of moods, depending on the addition of particular letters to the onomatopoeic representation. The matutinal “Mkgnao” is a greeting that precedes repeated purrs for attention until it becomes a hungry growl in “Mrkgnao!” and then an assertive demand in “mrkrngnao,” with the added “r.” “It is to be looked at and listened to,” claims Samuel Beckett. “His writing is not about something; it is that something itself”(10).

Several authors confirm these attributions as applied to *Ulysses*. Gottfried observes that the reader’s attempt “to focus on and traverse every letter accounts for the insistence and prominence of the graphemic quality of *Ulysses*, although the work is heavily laden with the echoes of voice” (12). Robert Sage notes that “the reader must be prepared at times to visualize several related images simultaneously, realizing that these images are not necessarily bound together by surface-obvious associational chains”

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<sup>10</sup> It may be argued that I am engaging in opportunistic referencing. Yet, these and other assessments by Budgen, Jolas, Becket, and McAlmon, intended for *Finnegan’s Wake* and published in *Our Exagmination...*, or by Burgess, published in *Re Joyce*, also referring to *Finnegan’s Wake*, are pertinent to Joyce’s work in *Ulysses*, and I will refer to them in this light. In few instances, some of these writers do refer to *Ulysses* in their defense of *Finnegan’s Wake*, and we note it.

(156). For Gottfried, “rather than merely processing the lines and reading past the words, the reader is forced into pausing: the sight of the text is unsure” (17).

Looked at. Listened to. Which one is it? Can it be both? The auditory dimension of modernist texts has been discussed at length by critics. “Modernists wanted their novels,” Angela Frattarola observes, “to sound out, to be listened to” (147). In an attempt to compensate for the sensory limitations of the naked eye, they “use sound to counteract traditional, Cartesian concepts of subjectivity,” she explains, “and by extension, rational and linear narrative conventions” (137). Yet the text in *Ulysses* goes a step further: Rather than resorting to representation of reality in the reader’s ear, it realigns itself spatially for visual apprehension, dismissing limitations the eye could have.

In particular, the auditory world of *Ulysses* has received more than its share of attention. And some critics, like Burgess, have called it “an auditory work” where “sounds carry the sense” (177). Joyce, writes Cordell D. K. Yee, “conceives his work at least partly in terms of visual analogy” (41). In a reference to *Finnegan’s Wake*, Burgess concedes: “Many of the puns have a strong visual element, ‘hesitancy’ and ‘hesitency’ sound the same, and the whole point of the Shem-Shaun lesson is that we should imagine ourselves looking at a book with marginal glosses and footnotes.” And a couple of lines later he insists on the prevalence of audition: “But the appeal is ultimately to the auditory imagination, which is what Joyce *probably* meant” (*Re Joyce* 268, italics mine). Burgess seeks to conform with what he thinks Joyce meant and loses sight—literally—of the word play at hand, which just happened to refer to auditory perception, while actually eliciting visual engagement. As in the case of ‘hesitancy’ and ‘hesitency,’ the same can be said of the pun in “Aeolus” between “cemetery” and “symmetry,” which, as we see

further in this paper, can only work in print (7.169-70). When referring to the “hundred-letter thunder-word” in *Finnegan’s Wake*—the likes of which we find in *Ulysses* in lengths from 15 to 30 letters, Burgess admits that “paradoxically, it is only the eye that can recognize the thunder” (268). It does not matter which sensorial event is represented by the text, but which sense makes the most of it.

We have no choice over what we hear or not, and a speaker cannot decide what the listener hears or does not hear of his speech. Therefore, the auditory medium appears to be the least appropriate channel for approaching *Ulysses*, where we are *guided* in what we hear: the printed word is what walks us through this day in the life of Bloom. And the novel rests on *how* we are guided rather than on the day’s events. It is a diversion of attention away from these events of June 16, 1904, to the *account* of such events. “On nothing is *Ulysses* more insistent,” writes Hugh Kenner, “than on the fact that there is no Bloom there, Stephen there, Molly there, or Dublin there, simply language” (*Ulysses* 156). *Ulysses* is not, I insist, a book to be listened to. It is instead the visual that overpowers and disconcerts readers, as it leads them towards meaning.

By listening to an audio version of *Ulysses*, for instance, we would miss as much as we would by reading a Shakespeare play: about half. Much has been written about Joyce’s choice and delivery of a passage in “Aeolus” in his only recording of *Ulysses* (7.827-69), which includes an unemphatic reading of the text under the heading “FROM THE FATHERS” that does not add much to our perception or understanding of the novel, or the passage. After all that’s been discussed about the auditory mother lodes of *Ulysses*, Joyce’s delivery is painfully anticlimactic. He does not read the passage like a reader, with uncertain pauses and abrupt stops, doubting what to do with one- or three-word

sentences. Rather, his delivery sounds like that of a student standing up reading for a class assignment. In the recording, the impact of the spatial arrangement of the words and the ramifications suggested by the interjection of the colon in the following excerpt are lost:

“Nile.

Child, man, effigy.

By the Nilebank the babemaries kneel, cradle of bulrushes: a man supple in combat: stonehorned, stonebearded, heart of stone” (7.851-4).

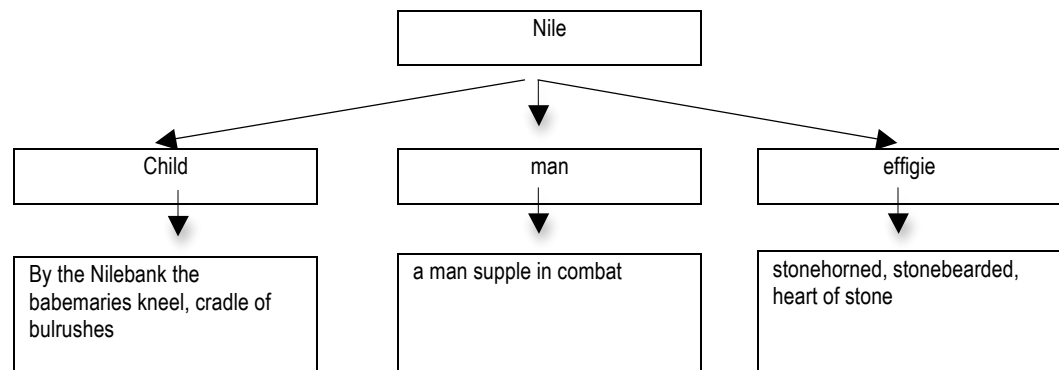


Fig. 1.

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How to appreciate this pyramidal arrangement (see fig. 1) merely through auditory stimulus? This is not an ornamental disposition of text, like a swan-shaped poem; it is meaning derivation by geometry.

Even the long exercise on transposition of 17.2322-6, which does carry a sonorous charge, is too repetitive for the ear, whereas for the eye it provides opportunities for reviewing and reframing. Burgess claims this passage carries “the rhythms of steady

breathing” (*Re Joyce* 173), as Bloom falls asleep. Only to the eye does this paragraph cease to be a litany and become a treasure map for meaning hunting:

Sinbad the Sailor and Tinbad the Tailor and Jinbad the Jailer and Whinbad the Whaler and Ninbad the Nailer and Findbad the Failer and Binbad the Bailer and Pinpad the Pailer and Minbad the Mailer and Hinbad the Hailer and Rinbad the Railer and Dinbad the Kailer and Vinbad the Quailer and Linbad the Yailer and Xinbad the Phthailer.

Highlighting just the sounding-out qualities of *Ulysses* would risk reductiveness. It is in whole sensorial invocations—not only auditory, but also, and more importantly, visual—where much of the art of this text lies. It is, I would add, a book to be read in silence. If sounding out the text turns out to be enlightening, it is because the auditory effect has been first initiated in writing and meant to be consumed as writing. The pun on “keys” and “Keyes” (7.126-7), for instance, can only be effective in writing. The wonder lies precisely in the ideation in writing of auditory possibilities.

Have we ever imagined Molly uttering the words of the “Penelope” chapter? Have we ever felt urged to imagine such a thing? The moment we give voice to thoughts they become linear and ephemeral: Thinking out loud is an illusion and an oxymoron. Though writing is by no means an ideal representation of thought, it is no doubt closer than speaking. In Joyce’s textual representation of stream of thought we can see intimations, traces, go back a few words, a few lines, and then discover or predict. The text, framed within a stream of thought, seems to be leading us to an interpretive path of associations. How to read stream of thought if not by looking at the words and question their placement, sequence, and frequency? Archie K. Loss offers a visual rationale:



The sequence “Bloom, soft Bloom, I feel so lonely Bloom” relates most readily to a spatial configuration. Kenner does not invoke here some expected auditory analogies; instead, he reaffirms a style that is pervasive in Joyce’s representation throughout the novel.

The “Aeolus” chapter openly opposes words spoken to words printed. Characters “consume, greedily, the written and spoken word,” says Hodgart (116). Recitation and other speech acts are consistently interrupted by typography. “Literary art is the tomb of speech. It may pervasively mimic speech, may serve as a memorial to, record of, testimony to speech or words spoken. That does not crucially change matters,” sentences Gibson (640). And, after all, the spoken word can be misleading: “We mustn’t be led by words, by sounds of words” (7.485-6), says professor MacHugh. Stephen fails every time he attempts to make art out of his verbal performances, quite notably his “Parable of the Plum,” maybe not realizing yet that the truth of his art is but in the his words as printed, as they are perceived visually, as objects placed or displaced, absent or repeated. Verbal interventions are not the only ones at a disadvantage. Machines speak “almost human,” “doing [their] best level to speak,” and they attain at the end of the paragraph, it seems, the stature of human voice: “Everything speaks in its own way” (7.176-7). Machines may indeed have a voice, but only writers have the agency to create. Even after machines have begun to “speak,” writers can interrupt: Joyce introduced about a third of the novel at the printing stages, while the machine-led process was still in progress.

It is not only the written word that annuls voice in the “Aeolus” chapter. Silence brings to the foreground the craft of producing text. In this context, as in the rest of

*Ulysses*, a case could be made for the necessary silence of the craft of writing, the necessary absence of words spoken, with its lasting and evocative visual uniqueness opposed to the “windy” consistency of the spoken word, always performative and ephemeral. While most of the action in the chapter revolves around the spoken word, silence in “Aeolus” appears as the only respite, the only sensible and productive time, the only genuine moment of creation; here all spoken attempts at successful speech (art) fail. Silence is not denying the verb; it is simply leading us to contemplate word assemblage. In the first silent action in the chapter, Bloom stands by the foreman. “Mr. Bloom halted behind the foreman’s spare body, admiring a glossy crown” (7.85-6). The next silent action has the foreman at work, who “without answering, scribbled press on a corner of the sheet and made a sign to a typesetter.” Later, as a typesetter brings him a galley page, he “began to check it silently. Mr. Bloom stood by, hearing the loud throbs of cranks, watching the silent typesetters at their cases” (7.161). In another instance, Stephen, always the artist, stays silent when the editor asks him to write something for him. He can’t bring himself to do it; he can only write for himself. Not only are these actions performed in silence, but they also impose a standstill, a slow freezing of time, the time it takes to create.

Even the printing presses and, in general, the mechanization of publishing, are represented as loud, invasive and even eager to “speak” and take part of the “windy” conversations in the chapter. The foreman “looked about him round his loud unanswering machines” (7.183), as if there’s nothing they can respond, create even if they’re doing their “level best to speak” (7.176). Printing machines, personified in the passage, cannot produce, only reproduce; they are quiet and unresponsive because they do not possess

art-making abilities. The repetition of “sllt” (7.174-8), six times in four lines, may evoke precisely the machines’ failed attempt at utterance:

Sllt. The nethermost neck of the first machine jogged forward its flyboard  
with sllt the first batch of quirefolded papers. Sllt. Almost human the way  
it sllt to call attention. Doing its best level to speak. That door too sllt  
creaking, asking to be shut. Everything speaks its own way. Sllt.

Readers are aware of the failure, and enjoy the benefit of hearing the “sllts,” almost contemplating the sheets as they slide, almost smelling the paper and the ink. Whereas lines 7.71 and 7.75 include “Thumping. Thumping,” and “Thumping. Thump,” and again 7.101 (“Thump, thump, thump”), as a way to interject the revolving sound of machines, now “sllt” is intermittently inserted with and without the constraints of punctuation. Train of thought and ambient sound are mechanically undistinguishable from each other, syntactically paired in a seamless flow. Adding to the onomatopoeia, the level of detail, the sequencing and positioning of the word show the potential for association in the word. In “the way it sllt to call attention,” “sllt” is verbalized. The verb could signify “cry out,” or simply “slit.” After all, these are large sheets of paper that cut through air as they are handled by the machines. Even if “sllt” does not come to us in a particular chain, the initial “s” in “sllt” alone can account for the rapid passing of the paper’s edges through air. Elsewhere it might lead to “still.”

Writing is obviously a silent art, and more specifically, a voiceless act. Typesetters and proofreaders happen to have no voice. Is it that there’s no art in voice? Is it that ideas can only become art if assembled, written, and then printed? For Joyce, these laborers are part of the creative process and thus silent in their performance. They work

their composed lines silently, and constitute the last trench of creation before the sound and mechanicity of machines take over. Quite fittingly, Bloom pauses in admiration at the sight of the foreman. Bloom “stay[s] in his walk to watch a typesetter neatly distributing type” (7.204), a silent act by both watcher and watched.

Other chapters in *Ulysses* are perhaps more representative of a variety of styles reminding the reader about the constant composition of language, but it is in “Aeolus” where we see a persistent transparency in the novel as being written, where the authority of the speaking voice vanishes, never to return. We have, of course, characters explicitly confirming this transparency, “You put a false construction on my words” (7.729), says J. J. O’Molloy to Miles, as well as the use of terms like “typescript,” “typesheet,” “typesetter,” “pen.” But it is at the level of the visual that language constructedness is fully manifested.

What transcends is not so much what is heard, but what is voiced, thus implying an ideation that preceded; not what is written, but what is printed, foregrounding the shape and not the content of the text; not what is read, but what is seen, giving the reader the last word, and trusting that the reader will see before reading. As soon as we see the word, before and even after we read it, a door opens—Ruttledge’s door, let’s say, and we are thrust into an unexpected convocation of images and associations, far beyond any auditory or semantic dimension.

## II. Chapter I

### “Aeolus” beyond the Headings

As has been pointed out by scholars, the headings highlight the constructedness of language, and help standardize interruption and install spatial references. The headings (composed typically by hand) bring attention to an intentional voice, whether authorial or characterial. We have learned that we can look at the headings as visual interventions without specific semantic weight but rather a multiplicity of associations, so by the time we find in one of the headings the sequence “PEN IS CHAMP” (7.1034), our reading has already become visual scanning—like the silent contemplation of a painting, only here the senses are being subjected to the printed word as visual art. Where does the scanning take us? This word combination could well be a reference to Penelope, or to a pen as the archetypal metonym for writing. Or, if we have learned anything from *looking at* Bloom’s imagined proofreading, the first two words of “PEN IS CHAMP” may well be meant as one. All three readings, and others that may come up as one learns, or returns, to read “Aeolus,” are authentic inquiries into the meaning of this text. In the same heading, “HAUGHTY HELEN” may lead our associations to “naughty Helen” (7.1032) if we note that “naughty” appears twenty times in the novel, six of them before this chapter.<sup>11</sup>

When the typesetter proofreads, as Bloom watches, he does not read the text (most professional proofreaders don’t either, as intuitive reading interferes with bringing the task to completion); he looks at the text and searches for visual, spatial, distributive incongruities:

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<sup>11</sup> Curiously, Bloom misreads “n” for “h” in 11.149-50: “Bloowhose dark eye read Aaron Figatner’s name. Why do I always think Figather? Gathering figs.” These two letters, notes Gottfried, are “similar enough in the possibilities of their form...that the eyes mistakes them, especially when the mind can provide by thought a context for the misreading” (44).

It is amusing to view the unpar one ar alleled embarra two ars is it? double  
ess ment of a harassed pedlar while gauging au the symmetry with a y of a  
peeled pear under a cemetery wall. Silly, isn't it? Cemetery put in of  
course on account of the symmetry (7.165-70).

The interpolation of foreign elements (underlining mine) into the linear reading (more frequent and pervasive than we have been trained to think), is duly accounted for here. “The juxtaposition of such elements in the text,” says Loss, “has typically the same effect as in collage, one element impinging upon another and influencing our interpretation of the whole” (46).

This is not only a reminder of text as being constructed, but it's also a statement about the spatiality of words and letters, and a visual redefinition of intelligibility. The words feel like they have been placed; the lines, assembled. This could be what Yee refers to as “a linguistic sequence [that] can be analyzed almost as a piece of visual art” (43). We see a pendular process of accessing meaning: Our eyes are forced to step back and look left and right for a spatial sequencing of letters, parsing to find sense. “While the spoken word moves forward...,” writes Maud Ellmann, “the written word moves backward” (200). The pun on “symmetry” and “cemetery” certainly plays on homophonic echoes, but it can only work effectively in print. Through a representation of proofreading as a task that ensures the spatial integrity of the text, intuitive reading turns into an undertaking, bringing visual play (and quite possibly the detached inquisitiveness of the proofreader/typesetter) to the reader. “Although reading is a temporal process,” says Yee, “a verbal artwork can be spatialized—constructed to have the same effect as visual art” (42).

The chiasmus in lines 7.21-24 seems to be doing more than effecting rhythm echoes, violating the customary temporality of reading:

Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels dullthudding out of Prince's stores and  
bumped them on the brewery float. On the brewery float bumped  
dullthudding barrels rolled by grossbooted draymen out of Prince's stores.  
(7.21-24)

In the second sentence, the change in order suggests a multiplicity of meanings: (a) nothing substantially new, (b) something lost, (c) something gained, (d) the futility of word order, or (e) the power of redundancy, etc., all at the same time. Because the permutations seem random, the repetition might not seem obvious. Visual perception takes precedence; one has to look (not read, as reading would render the same meaning, thus raising no flag) to find it. Andre Topia, speaking about the style in the novel, says that “we have the feeling that there is no syntactic framework able to maintain the words in specific positions” (77). “Order, as such,” says Eco, “is nonexistent; it is just one of the infinite possible states of repose which disorder occasionally arrives at” (103). Linear progression becomes spatial permutation.

Other lines are connected by similar placements: “It passed stately up the staircase, steered by an umbrella, a solemn beardframed face” finds echoes in “Our Saviours: beardframed oval face: talking in the dusk. Mary Martha. Steered by an umbrella swords to footlights: Mario the tenor” (7.45-52). Two-hundred lines later we see repetition at play again: “He ate off the crescent of the waterbiscuit he had been nibbling and, hungered, made ready to nibble the biscuit in his other hand” (7.258).

More about going back and forth in the reading. The headings “K. M. A.” and “K. M. R. I. A.” (7.980, 7.990) are one example of accessing meaning in retrospect. The text that follows the headings explains them, but the association is not immediate. One has to go back find the referent to enjoy the “kiss-my-arse” game. Ah, but it can also work forward. In line 7.337, “WHAT WETHERUP SAID” anticipates the reference in 7.342. In 7.614 and 7.612, the words in the heading “YOU CAN DO IT” appear in the text under the next heading. The reader stops and wonders why here and not before (7.612, 7.614). The heading “A POLISHED PERIOD” (7.776) echoes a phrase in the text under another heading in the previous page (7.747-8).

When we encounter a 17-word heading introducing a 27-word section (7.1070) we should not be surprised. As early as in Chapter I, there is a reference by Mulligan to “five lines of text and ten pages of notes” (1.365-7) covering a particular passage of a book. In this reversal of roles what needs to be concise wanders for too long; and what follows is only a few sentences. Text and composition are perceived as random and chaotic, and still take us for a ride.

In lines 7.1043-9, it is not the particular names of places that matter, it is the contraposition of inaction and action: one place after another in the first half of the paragraph, one action after another in the second half. The names do not mean much as *read*, but as *grouped*. Paralysis is first invoked, to be followed by hectic mobility, in a contrast that foreshadows the silence-noise opposition we find later in the chapter. “Fat folds of neck, neck, fat, neck” (7.48) triggers an image through the physical placement of the words, not through a conceptual description.

Patterns are broken to make for spatial recognition. The expected visual patterning is disrupted when the line starts with “stonehorned, stone bearded” and finishes with “heart of stone,” instead of the predictable “stonehearted” (7.854). The break is first visual; and if we happen to miss the metaphor in the first two adjectives and yet don’t see stones and horns and beards, now we *see* a heart and a stone.

In a highly visual paragraph, “Mouth, south. Is the mouth south, someway? Or the south a mouth? Must be some. South, pout, out, shout, drouth.” (7.714), the reading becomes more difficult by the recurrence of the “ou” sequence, and only two of the words stay with us: “mouth” and “south,” the ones we *see* the most and which suggest a pattern. And ten lines later we encounter: “mouth south: tomb womb,” the kind of visual analogy Jolas suggests above. The lines refer to four lines of verse in 7.522, and it echoes a couple of lines of the “Proteus” chapter (3.401-2).

“Bloom’s task in ‘Aeolus,’” writes Ellmann, “is to reveal the mutinous orthography within the word that undermines the linearity of language” (200). Bloom stops to watch, and sees the words “.mangiD kcirtaP.” (7.206). Is this an opportunity to see uppercase conventionality in a different light? Should we read further into the reversed text? We will not find the answer in reading, but in seeing. And then there is “Poor papa with his hagadah book reading backward with his finger to me” (7.206-7). The spelling of “hagadah” almost calls for reverse, palindromic reading. We are presented with quite distinct instances of right-to-left-reading: the technical act of proofreading, and the act of real reading in another language, seen as reversed in the eyes of English readers who are unfamiliar with Hebrew.

Lenehan fails in his attempts at verbal puns. He offers “I hear feetstoops” (7.393), “Clamn dever” (7.695),<sup>12</sup> the palindromes “Madam, I’m Adam” and “Able was I ere I saw Elba” (7.683), and the hyphenated chain “A sudden-at-the-moment-though-from-lingering-illness-often-previously-expectorated-demise” (7.875), to no effect: the punch lines materialize in the seeing, not in the hearing. The hyphen consolidates twelve words into one unit, only valid in that narrow context, and not effective if processed through the ephemeral and limited capabilities of verbalized communication. When Lenehan demands silence for his new riddle to be heard, nobody listens (7.477); it’s a pun to be read rather than heard. Stephen silently dismisses it, and instead hands over some typed sheets to the editor.

From lines 7.210 to 7.212, the word “and” conjoins a long series. The repetition confounds for a second or two until the next sentence awakes us: “Sounds a bit silly till you come to look into it well.” Incidentally, “silly till” somehow reminds us of “sllt,” a sound representation already discussed in this paper. I concede I intuited a false construction, but cause-and-effect logic should not be guiding our quest for meaning because, as Gillespie writes, it “blunts the possibilities of even the most creative interpretive approaches” (5).

In “The Rose of Castile. See the wheeze. Rows of cast steel. Gee!” (7.591), our auditory perception is the first to intervene: we sound out the words, but only to be able to *see* the pun. Then we realize that the “ee” in “wheeze,” “steel,” and “Gee” can take us

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<sup>12</sup> Gilbert lists “feetstoops” as an anagram (194) and “clam dever” as a metathesis (197). Actually, “feetstoops” is not an anagram of “footsteps” (one “o” too many), but a variant of a metathesis. I mention this inexactitude, not to undermine Gilbert’s judgment, but precisely as evidence of how one can be misled by reading tradition. At first (and for several weeks), I accepted “feetstoops” as an anagram for one reason: I mistakenly read “feetstops.” Now, and this is where alternative associative paths become relevant, how do we react to “feetstoops” as opposed to “feetstops”? Should we read anything into the distinction between “stoop” and “stops”?

there too. Don't the prompts "What opera is like a railway line?" (7.514) and "What opera resembles a railway line?" (7.588) suggest a visual response to the pun? In 7.600 the play continues: Upon encountering "Bastile," I could not but find an echo of "Castile."

"Poor Penelope. Penelope Rich" (7.1040) shows alliteration at work. But there is a twist: the device works best because it is interrupted. Some five-hundred lines before, we had already encountered "Poor, poor, poor Pyrrhus" (7.575) and then "Paris, past and present" (7.599). We should expect then a fourth initial "P" after "Poor Penelope. Penelope..." We get instead an "R," which cancels out the alliteration and leaves us with "Rich" to start anew another route in search of meaning. In "Poor Penelope. Penelope Rich" the mirror line on the period as the axis of reflection not only works semantically, opposing "Poor" to "Rich," but also applies to capitalization. And of course, the allusion to Penelope Rich, Philip Sidney's object of affection, adds another layer of possible associations.

The act of writing is exposed—"the foreman waved his pencil towards it" (7.125), "Reads it backwards first" (7.205), "The vowels" and "word" (7.562)—, no doubt, but the exposure reveals more about possible interpretations than about intentionality. Can we derive alternative meanings from "A pen behind his ear" (7.34) beyond the obvious invocation of a blue-collar, note-taking foreman? Could this be a reference to writing as being necessary to produce a satisfactory auditory experience of language?

There seems to be a connection, a complicity, between the written or printed word and the instrument(s) that make it possible: the written word and the pen, the printed word and typesetting. How much of words' tactile nature, invoked or suggested, should

we incorporate into our search for meaning, based on the references to writing and typesetting in this chapter? Maybe for the reader it would suffice to know that words can be tangible entities. We should note that typesetting, unlike writing with a pen, is a collective endeavor. This is how language was published at the time *Ulysses* got published: You create, write, typeset (you learn to read the letters reversed), proofread, and then you have the printed text.

For instance, reading “with an accent on the whose” (7.274-5) not only brings attention to the act of writing, but also may invoke the accentuating action of a speaker, or, for speakers of Irish or other languages, the visualization of a diacritic mark on the accented vowel. The usual typographical representation of such emphasis as simply having the word “whose” in italics is substituted by a worded articulation of the emphasis, adding another layer to the possibilities of written language.

To make sense of the punctuation (or absence of it) in this novel, often we have to *look* beyond any and all grammatical elucidations that would dwell interminably on the possible uses of the colon. In what constitutes, as Yee has written, “spatialization of discourse as representing visual experience” (44), in “Just to see: before: dressing” (7.231), we divide the sentence in three parts, all with the same weight, at the same level, all three equidistant from our eyes, yet each in its own place, separated by an equalizing mark. The sentence “ceases to unfold in time but becomes, as it were, projected into space,” says Topia. “From linear it becomes tabular” (77). Other such notable examples in the chapter include: “The door of Rutledge’s office whispers: ee: cree.” (7.50), “Our Saviours: beardframed oval face: talking in the dusk” (7.52), “Rub in August: good idea:

horseshow month” (7.192), “underdarkneath the night: mouth south: tomb womb” (7.223-4), “I could go home still: tram: something I forgot” (7.230-1).

Let me digress here to suggest one possible escape route from the usual epistemologies straitjacketed on *Ulysses*. As has been extensively documented, in “Aeolus,” and throughout the novel, typical instances of literary synaesthesia (the attribution of sensory perception or stimulus to a different sense) abound: “Seems to see with his fingers” (7.215), Bloom concludes, in a synaesthetic judgment that also suggests “seems to hear with his eyes” or “seems to write with his fingers.” In fact, the suggestion is already realized in 7.207 with “reading backward with his finger to me” (there is also “Read with their fingers” in 8.1115). Quite notably, “seems to see with his fingers” favors *seeing* over *reading*. Incidentally, could this be another clue that makes the case for a visual approach beyond reading? When Eugene Jolas claims that “James Joyce gives his words odors and sounds that the conventional standard does not know” (89), it means that something happens to or because of the text when the reader perceives it. In the passage above, we see sensorial play at a textual, metaphorical level, and synaesthesia is no more than a manifestation of style. In “*fingers touch*” vs. “*eyes see*,” *semantic capacity is extended by trading sensorial agency: “fingers see”; “eyes touch.”*

Now, in physiological and neurological terms, synaesthesia is typically referred to as “a sensory output in one modality [that] directly elicits an additional sensory activation in another sensory modality” (Mroczko-Wąsowicz and Nikolić 1). For some people, called *synesthetes*, Monday can be red, and some sounds can produce certain smells. *Perception of a color triggers or induces the perception of a smell. The letter A induces the experience of the color red.*

This sensory-sensory approach has been questioned recently. New research suggests that semantic representations can induce synesthesia; in other words, concepts—not only physical stimuli—can be responsible for the induction of a sensory experience (Mroczko-Wąsowicz and Nikolić 1). “Synaesthetic experiences are largely internally-driven by mental representation of objects, higher order types and semantic categories, cognitive states and events, or other internal determinants such as concepts, thoughts, words, memories and imagery” (4). This association of concept and sensation, which can be qualified as “language as conveying sense experience” (Yee 44), is called ideasthesia. *Concepts precede sensory-like experiences. The concept of the letter A induces the perception of a color. The concept of a sound induces the perception of a smell.*

All this happens at the level of physiology, but if we stretch the concept, can we speak then of a dually conceptual ideasthesia, a *literary ideasthesia* of sorts, the same way that we speak of a dually conceptual synaesthesia (the synaesthesia we know as a rhetorical device)? Upon entertaining a concept at the sight of a word, can a reader then arrive at the concept of a smell? It is not necessary to have had the experience of the actual smell of paper as the fresh ink dries and fills the air to imagine those sensations upon reading lines 7.174-8. The reader sometimes reaches a place reserved for a particular sensation, even if the perceptual instantiation does not come through. The reader recognizes the presence of the smell, or the sound, and is free to create it, to imagine it. *The concept of a sound can trigger the concept of a smell. The place of a word can induce the concept of a sound.*

How does this notion relate to the visual properties of language as exploited (and exploded) in *Ulysses*? As we have suggested, the text extends beyond traditional

onomatopoeias and trains the reader on new reading paths. Readers quickly create (in a matter of seconds, as a single try could suffice) new associations particular to the text of *Ulysses*, among them, of course, those related to the senses. Joyce “uses language to approximate visual experience,” writes Yee, “then auditory experience, and finally synthesize aspects of both” (105). The arrangement of words, and of letters in particular, can play a role in the workings of literary ideasthesia, as “synaesthetic associations to new graphemes are established quickly and are not created from scratch but are inherited from existing associations” (Mroczko-Wąsowicz and Nikolić 4). Even chaotic spelling and experimental graphemic scenarios, or the many foreign-language insertions, have a place: “Synaesthesia can be experienced also for alphabets different from the one used in the first language” (Mroczko-Wąsowicz and Nikolić 4).

In the case of non-lexical onomatopoeias, the sequential arrangement of letters might not be relevant for the reader precisely because and inasmuch as they are unpronounceable, they may be simply saying to the reader, “a sound goes here,” or “a sound of this particular type goes here”: Take “Ppprpfrrppfff” (11.1293) or “Bbbblllllblodschbg” (15.3381). And why would they be unpronounceable? Simply because these onomatopoeias are not meant to be uttered, even when they occasionally are. Their unnatural articulation does not lead to auditory resolution, which leaves us at a juncture where we scrutinize them for meaning. “Onomatopoeia requires interpretation,” writes Attridge, “as much as any other system of signs” (*Language as Imitation* 1124).

### III. Chapter II

#### The Final Episodes

Bloom reads a letter sent by Martha Clifford with a yellow flower enclosed. Then he smells the flower and reads it again. This is how he reads it the second time: “Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don’t please poor forgetmenot how I long violets to dear roses when we soon anemone meet all naughty nightstalk wife Martha’s perfume” (5.265-7). Upon comparing his reading with the actual letter, we get a snapshot of Bloom’s associative workings: Between words from the letter, Bloom interjects names of flowers (emphasis mine), and a response to her “when will we meet?”: *soon*.

Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don’t please poor forgetmenot how I long violets to dear roses when we soon anemone meet all naughty nightstalk wife Martha’s perfume.

We find another example of this layered reading in the proofreading passage in “Aeolus,” and another in “Ithaca” in the representation of Milly’s letter:

an infantile epistle, dated small em monday, reading: capital pee Papli comma capital aitch How are you note of interrogation capital eye I am very well full stop new paragraph signature with flourishes capital em Milly no stop (17.1791-4)

In “Ithaca” senses seem to be left out. All through the chapter runs an unemotional, dry tone. The questions remind us of the headings in “Aeolus,” as just as parodic, though in this case they carry meaning, sometimes more than the answers themselves, and just, at times, as superfluous. It is in the relationship between questions

and answers, between sets of question/answers, and even between elements in the answer where the visual/spatial arrangement becomes relevant. See lines 17.776-80:

What was Stephen's auditive sensation?

He heard in a profound ancient male unfamiliar melody the accumulation of the past.

What was Stephen's visual sensation?

He saw in a quick young male familiar form of the predestination of a future.

Here, drawing an imaginary horizontal axis between the questions, auditive in the first contrasts with visual in the second. And then the two answers are contrasted through heard/saw, profound/quick, ancient/young, familiar/unfamiliar, melody/form, accumulation/predestination, past/future.

The same happens with this two-part answer (17.2237-9, 17.2244-6), again divided by a horizontal mirror axis. For this I would propose a more graphic illustration of the "reflections" over the axis:

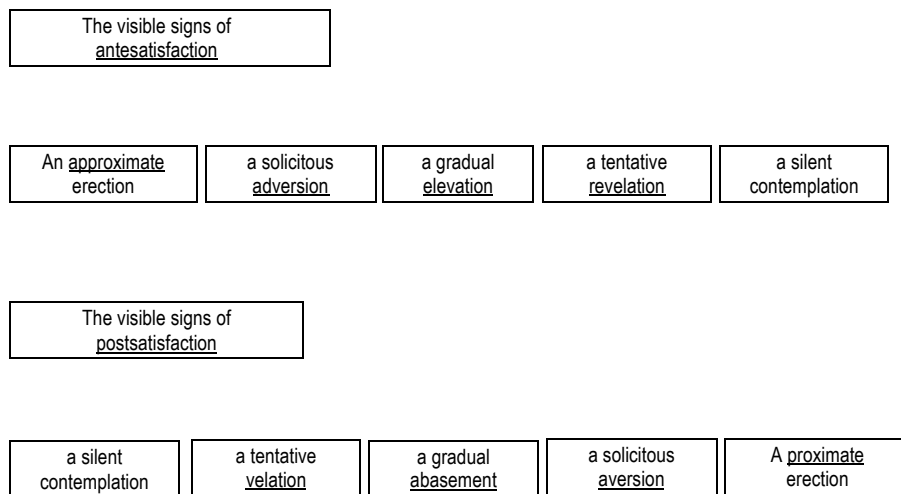


Fig. 2.

The paragraph below can certainly be approached with a spatial perspective in mind, one that would have the reader going back and forth between “liked” and “disliked,” “umbrella,” “rain,” and “new hat,” to try to make sense at the end of “bought” and “carried.”

She disliked umbrella with rain, he liked woman with umbrella, she disliked new hat with rain, he liked woman with new hat, he bought new hat with rain, she carried umbrella with new hat (17.706-8).

In the following exchange (17.527-31, underlining mine), intelligibility is not possible without going through the sequential arrangement of pronouns and referents, trying to determine which “he” is Bloom, and which one is Stephen:

What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom’s thoughts about Stephen’s thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen’s thoughts about Bloom’s thoughts about Stephen’s thoughts?

He thought that he thought that he was a jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not.

In the answer “Very gratefully, with grateful appreciation, with sincere appreciative gratitude, in appreciatively grateful sincerity of regret, he declined” (17.475-6), the verbose triple polyptoton (repeating the same root in related words) works to cancel out relevance. After dismissing the self-destructive excess, we are left with what counts: “with regret, he declined.”

Sometimes the look on the page disrupts the question/answer pattern. In the 41 lines of a whole page, from 17.185 to 17.226 (p. 549), a total of 35 colons dominate the

text, as the answer goes through a catalogued series. It is not until we reach the next and last chapter that a whole page almost becomes an organic unity as the starting point for meaning derivation.

And so we reach “Penelope.” Insurmountable blocs of text fill 36 pages. More than 1600 lines and plenty of monosyllables. That seems to be all there is to see at first “sight,” until we notice the absences. No interruption. No commas, and just two periods. Only five paragraphs. “Again, all is words, words. All the book, the book has been insisting, is words, arranged, rearranged,” Kenner says (*Joyce’s Voices* 49), as if we could find solace in his reassurance.

From the first page, it feels like entering a room with hundreds on photographs spread on the floor “like a pattern in a tapestry,” as Topia would say (77), and being asked to connect them. All markers of syntactical sense gone, readers instinctively turn to look for patterns, any pattern. They slowly begin to apprehend image *after* image, but prepositions of time become useless for these connections. Time becomes an obstacle because it won’t let us see everything. Then it becomes image *within* image, and image *next to* image, yet here stasis cripples the view, which should be that of a flow, a “torrent.” We are led then to see image *through* image, image *into* image, image *towards* image, until movement appears the only condition possible for what we see.

“Ulysses is the first book to be a kind of hologram of language,” writes Kenner, “creating a three-dimensional illusion out of the controlled interference between our experience of language and its arrangement of language” (*Ulysses* 157). A hologram. Thinking wrapped in words that give up their place to other words bubbling up from inside the hologrammed female body or to others contributed by the reader. Printed

wrapping paper... wrapping skin inked by memories and bodily fluids—Molly’s and those of her lovers, as Budgen would likely say.

Molly’s stream of thought printed on the page is one of which we can only see the movement, not the thing itself. What an illusion. What is it that we see printed then, if not her thoughts flowing? Well, we see the flowing alright, but not *the* thoughts, only *some* thoughts. Bloom himself talked about the fluidity of life and reality: “[Water] is always in a stream, never the same, which is the stream of life we trace. Because life is a stream” (8.95-5). We see hints, leanings, connected dots, some multilayered, multidirectional paths, a cross-sectional view of a trace. So yes, Molly’s thoughts show on the page as a bubbling hologram of a boiling body.

In the much quoted last lines of the novel (18.1605-9), Molly does not sound like she is simply succumbing to sleep. She is quite alert to her reminiscences, which seem to control her pulse at this moment. While “his heart was going like mad” (18.1608), hers shows no visible sign of sanity (emphasis mine).

...and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

There are only three pages without a “yes” in “Penelope.” They are all spread throughout the chapter, until rapid succession indicates thoughts and breathing accelerating as she re-creates, at least in one instance, an intimate encounter. Without ornaments or accessories, this text is as bare as Molly’s body probably is as she descends into sleep, or, rather, as she ascends into an orgasmic, capitalized, punctuated “Yes.”

Bare and intimidating, like Molly likes to be, and like Homer's Penelope is almost forced to end up, this text waits for someone's presence, as Molly does, as Penelope does, both challenging and validating Bloom/Ulysses, and the reader. "The nakedness is total," writes Burgess (*Re Joyce* 174). The climax in these lines can certainly be disputed, and Kenner refers to Joyce's own words to argue the case of a woman going to sleep (*Ulysses* 147). However, the words in question, "I had found the word 'yes,' which is barely pronounced, which denotes acquiescence, self-abandon, relaxation, the end of all resistance" (qtd. In Kenner, *Ulysses* 147) do not rule out orgasm. In a letter to Budgen, Joyce wrote that this monologue's "four cardinal points are the female breasts, arse, womb and sex expressed by the word *because, bottom... woman, yes*" (qtd. in Budgen, *The Making* 263). Here Joyce has the word "yes" be *the* expression of sex. And even if "Irish voices do not rise to climaxes," as Kenner claims (*Ulysses* 147), associative connections could still effortlessly point in that direction. I cite this authorial explication not to validate a plausible interpretation, but to illustrate that excessive reliance on and divination of the author's intention can be, as we stated in our introduction, a futile "wild goose chase." We would not lose much if we let ourselves be guided by what we *see* on the page.

Another such build-up in lines 18.1573-81 may easily fail at conveying somnolence (underlining mine). Also here authorial intent appears doomed. Not few readers will see ecstasy of a "mountain flower":

...the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leap year like now yes 16 years ago I was my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the

mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing  
he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked  
him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could  
always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on  
till he asked me to say yes...

A capitalized “Yes” also begins the chapter. As we reach the end and make sense of or give sense to the final “Yes,” we wonder if the initial affirmation is the beginning of something new, the truncated attempt to find some sleep, or simply the completion of another orgasm. Kenner goes further back in the circularity of “Yes.” “The letters of *Yes*, the last word, run backward through *Stately*, the first,” he writes (*Ulysses* 155). Riquelme adds associative triggers of contiguity to the conversation: “Her eyes are not literally looking at us, but we look at her word *eyes*, and the implied *yes* looks back at us.” (*Critical Perspective* 31). The addition is not without merit. There are as many as 25 occurrences of “eyes” in the chapter, another seven of “eye,” one of “eyeful,” and four of “yesterday.”<sup>13</sup>

Vichnar highlights the period after this “Yes” as analogous to “the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil [that] sets off a tornado in Texas,” alluding to Edward Lorenz’s work (374).<sup>14</sup> This analogy has to do more with semantic and performative repercussions, as is the case of Derrida’s take on it: “In my short essay on Joyce, I tried to

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<sup>13</sup> Riquelme observes that “eyes” is “a word which, as Jacques Derrida has pointed out in “Ulysses Gramophone,” suggests its homonym ‘ayes’ and contains already the word *yes*, which we see in the typography of the printed page” (*Critical Perspective* 31). Naturally, “eye” does invoke affirmation through “ayes,” not through typography. Riquelme also includes “yesterday” in his examples of implicit affirmations.

<sup>14</sup> Lorenz was a pioneer of chaos theory, and this phrase attributed to him, meant to be applied to weather, is understood as the capacity of a small change to result in events of much larger proportions.

deal only with the words ‘yes,’ as it was performed, so to speak, in *Ulysses*”(27). This is not, however, the angle of our approach.

No order. No sense of beginning or end. Pronouns lose their referent; verbs lose their subjects and objects. Pauses lose their place and we lose our breath, as we read to find a pause. And Molly loses her breath hurrying to celebrate hers. Or, to acknowledge Kenner’s interpretation, she loses her alertness trying to succumb to repose. The little order there is in the convention of reading left to right and top to bottom goes out the window once we are forced to go from right to left, from bottom to top, flipping pages back to front to make sense of one and any line. Where Burgess “listen[s] to an incredible torrent of reminiscence” (*Re Joyce* 174), readers often perform visual searches. To Yee, “the act of reading ‘Penelope’ becomes an ebb and flow of the eye reading back and forth across the page” (66). Words like “Frseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeefrong” (18.874), “frseeeeeeeffronnnng” (18.596), “rrrsssstt awokwokawok” (18.813), says Attridge, “rely even more on apprehension by means of the eye: they remain resolutely visual, rendering any attempt to convert them into sound arbitrary and inadequate” (*Language as Imitation* 1125).

If punctuation is the graphic representation of our efforts to make our communication intelligible to others, why should thoughts have any punctuation at all? How do you punctuate language that is not meant to be heard or read? Of course, for a novel, more than one stylistic compromise would have to be reached. Punctuating the written representation of thought, however, should not be one of them. But oh wait. What if we are dealing with thoughts about our own writing? In “symp~~h~~aty I always make that mistake and new~~p~~hew with 2 double yous in” (18.730-1), Molly is reminiscing of

language as *written*, and she visualizes her crossing of the “h” and the “w.” On that note, should we understand that she would spell the name of the letter as “double you,” instead of “double-u”? Should we make something out of the use of “you” instead of “u”? Could this be an intentional personalization, or is it just a homophonically induced spelling? “In the interior monologue words became disjointed from their traditional arrangements,” writes Jolas, “and new possibilities for timbre and associations were discovered” (86).

Molly’s monologue is then that tapestry which we can start looking at from any angle of our choosing, which we can start reading at any page, confident that each trace will take us to the next, until we get the whole *picture*, literally. Burgess writes that he has “preferred to take [*Ulysses*] in chapters” (*Re Joyce* 177). Maybe if we apply this holistic approach to “Penelope,” if we tried to read it starting not at the beginning, we would find more rewarding entry points to the text.

#### IV. Conclusion

What I have presented is merely a collection of “possibilities among a vast number of other perspectives,” which is all, Brivic suggests, views of Joyce’s works can aspire to be (*Critical Perspective* 53). This study shows reading in its circularity, interruptions, detours and digressions, dead ends and progressions, as if embracing Gillespie’s “quixotic cultivation of ambiguity” (110). I am aware of the fallibility of an exclusionary visual/spatial perspective in the reading of *Ulysses*. In fact, it is a fallibility that I happily welcome. No single approach would ever suffice to exhaust the interpretive possibilities of a text, least of all *Ulysses*.

The approach that I acknowledge (I hesitate to use the word “recommend”) for the reading of *Ulysses* may amount to no more than a fraction of the multitude of epistemological possibilities. By shifting our focus to the spatial disposition of the text on the page, we move towards adding one more layer to a reading that would “encompass the multiple responses that grow out of a creative engagement with words on the printed page” (Gillespie, *Aesthetics* 31). It is clear that too much emphasis on visual chain reactions misses the point of the reader’s mission. Let me illustrate. I admit that I was puzzled by the subdued typographical presence of the headings in “Aeolus.” Inserted as they were late in the printing process in such an imposing and disruptive manner, not having them in the typical boldface type makes little if any sense. Gabler seems to have refused to carry that much emphasis into his edition. Although I disagree with his choice, I think devoting six pages to protestations, as Giovanni Cianci does (16-21), about the editor’s typographical decision not to keep the bold type in the headings from the 1922 edition, is an excess.

There will always be a surplus of associations, a surplus of textual instances motivating the act of association. I agree with Burgess that “*Ulysses*, then, is a labyrinth which we can enter at any point” (*Re Joyce* 178), precisely because, first, it is more a painting than a reading, and, once we submit to its pictoriality, we see it is more a spatial collage than a cinematic newsreel. Second, the invitation to entry at any point destroys all conventions of linearity, temporal, sequential or chronological. Where guesswork might seem convoluted, the sensorial artifactness of the word, of the letter, the page, the book, comes to the rescue to guide, without the reader having to rationalize that print foregrounds the visual prevalence of language. If a “visually based epistemology,” as Yee calls it (56), can provide new ways into the text by offering readings for nonlinear occurrences, we are not far from genuine meaning derivation. “The interpretation of what seems arbitrary, erroneous or haphazard,” says Gilbert, “[is] in fact [a] portal of discovery” (48).

When Vichnar claims that *Ulysses* deals “not with the representation of experience through language, but rather with the experience of language by means of destroying representation” (27), I almost immediately think that this text often does not treat representation through channels of one-to-one correspondence, through resemblance or even through contiguity. In many ways, what we see here is representation through context of content or language, a circumstantial or even unique correspondence.

That is why, at one point, I allowed myself a brief digression into synaesthesia, as I think this is one avenue that should be explored further if we are to pursue in length the perceptual impact of Joyce’s work, starting at the visual ramifications of the printed word. John D. Caputo, in his commentary to Derrida’s intervention at the 1994

Roundtable states that “yes” is “a supplement of words, enhancing them, *perfuming* them (like Molly’s perfume)” (qtd. in Derrida 194, emphasis mine). In “Eumaeus,” Stephen “could hear, of course, all kinds of words changing colour like those crabs around Ringsend in the morning burrowing quickly into all colours of different sorts of the same sand” (16.1145-5). There is an abundance of synaesthetic analogies like these, by both critics and characters of the novel, which warrants at least an attempt at exploration.

Speaking about “Les Chats,” Eco qualifies it as “a text that not only calls for the cooperation of its own reader, but also wants the reader to make a series of interpretive choices” (4). Maybe this is, after all, what literature should be, and what *Ulysses* is: the act of sharing literary creation in all its freedom, in the actualization of the text by the reader. John Rodker speaks of this actualization as foreshadowed in *Ulysses*: “the possibility of a complete symbiosis of reader and writer” (143). I would not presume of having reached anywhere near that sort of connection with James Joyce, but I remember that during the process of writing this paper, as I was going over my notes of a meeting, I came upon the phrase “it might cause address.” I scratched my head several times at the nonsensical construction, until I remembered what was actually said: “it might cause additional stress.” I could almost feel Joyce smiling behind my back.

Noises and voices do not survive the chapter; they interrupt written language until they are engulfed by it, and everything becomes printed language, a “medium capable of suggestion, implication and evocation; a medium as free as any art medium should be, and as the dance at its best can be,” writes Robert McAlmon (106-7). Everything that needs to *be* becomes the printed word. We should engage *Ulysses*, then, with the assumption, or rather the freedom to assume, that the printed word is not the end result of

the act of creation, that there should be something beyond the mechanical reproduction of written language. Gottfried assures us that “all acts of reading in *Ulysses* are foremost and essentially acts of seeing” (42). Though the claim risks overgeneralization, it is certainly an assumption that sets an alternative epistemological tone to the quest for meaning in this novel. We have before us the silent craft of creating an experience of the senses and the imagination through the word on the page, an experience to be enacted in its typographical presence, as a sustained evocation of new meanings, a printed clarion call to adventures of the mind.

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