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**JOYCE'S FICTION
AND
THE NEW RISE
OF
THE NOVEL**

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*edited by
Franca Ruggieri*

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF ODOUR IN JAMES
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The past several decades of research on olfaction have revealed that odour is the focus of numerous interdisciplinary studies positioned at the crossroads of nature-based sciences and the humanities. Against a backdrop of this synthesis within Literary Studies, attention to the representation of olfactory modality in a literary text has recently intensified. Research claims that the basic theoretical issue of literary olfaction is on the one hand connected to the obvious contradiction between the presence of an infinite number of smells and their nuances, and the absence of a language classification system for them on the other. According to Sperber, “There is no semantic field for smells”, but only general lexical subcategories such as “stench” and “perfume” (Sperber 1975: 116). As “language has not developed an abstract terminology for referring to smells” (Rindisbacher 1992: 15), descriptions of olfactory modality involve references to the material sources of the smell; that is, they are rendered as “smells of something” or are attached to such value judgments as being on a scale of “good” and “bad” smells.

The lack of lexical tools is due primarily to the fact that the olfactory system of each person is genetically unique, which means that any olfactory experience of the external world is purely individual. The uniqueness of smell intended in its subjectivity can be traced to Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (Kant 2006: 49) and remains as relevant as the philosopher's general question: “What is man?”

Thus, the topic of this paper is postulated, first, by the profound connection between the olfactory dimension and human life, nature and culture; second, by the ability of literature to provide a deeper understanding of the capacity of language to verbalize olfactory phenomena; and third, by the conviction that manifestations of odour in a literary text characterize the extent to which the human condition is seen in the literature of a particular period.

Our central premise is that James Joyce's *Ulysses* can be regarded as an encyclopedia-sized literary-odour document that echoes modern scientific knowledge and, in some ways, outpaces it. The aromatic axis of the novel comprises an incredibly wide palette of smells (ranging from "good" smells – "the very palatable odour of our daily bread" (*U* 16.570) – to "bad" ones – "you skunk" (*U* 15.504)) which are natural and artificial, individual and social. Consequently, odour in *Ulysses* functions as a means of personal identification and a medium of interpersonal communication, as well as presenting a considerable range of olfactory symbols illustrating the ways in which the writer encodes information supplied by the perception of smell in the text.

Choosing an anthropological approach as a research method for studying olfaction in *Ulysses*, we can assume that smell is an anthropological universal, and the study of its artistic representation leads to identifying the ways in which the non-articulated phenomena of human sensory experience are encoded in a literary text. Our choice is inspired by the general guidelines of philosophical anthropology which lead to a unique categorical interconnection between biology and the humanities¹.

One could argue that Joyce in his work seeks to answer the main question of anthropology: what it means to be human. Moreover, he elaborates a language to describe what is human. The distinctive feature of his characters is a particular plasticity visualized in such micro-

¹ The issues of the anthropology of smell, namely, of the cultural history of smells, smells in social, gender and other interactions across cultures are often the focus of studies in cultural anthropology (*Empire of the Senses* 2005).

motions as sigh, glance, or gesture. These narrated micro-events render elementary sensory experiences without which the fullness of human subjectivity is unrepresentable.

From this angle, *Ulysses* creates an anthropological model of a stunning scale of diverse self-transformative and communicative human manifestations and strategies – external and internal, bodily, mentally, intellectually. On the whole, identifying a Man, his biological and social nature and unique personality in terms of dynamic integrity, instability, creativity, and openness, is a key feature of Joyce’s design. Having undertaken the task to verbalize visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and gustatory experiences, the writer manages to uncover unexpected areas of the human body, consciousness and sensations.

Of course, these multifaceted representations of odour in James Joyce’s novels and short stories have been thoroughly studied, though among many recent comments on the subject, an in-depth analysis in Bernard Benstock’s essay “James Joyce: The Olfactory Factor” (Benstock 1991) and Laura Frost’s chapter “James Joyce and the Scent of Modernity” in her *The Problem with Pleasure* (Frost 2013) should be singled out.

Thus, having changed, figuratively speaking, our “anthropological gaze” to an “anthropological smelling”, the following aesthetic functions of odour should be further elucidated:

(1) Odour in scenes of integrated sensory expression as regards Joyce’s concept of man; from this standpoint, the way Joyce verbalizes the phenomenon of synesthesia will be overviewed;

(2) The olfactory factor in Joyce’s model of memory; the case of Stephen’s painful memories of his mother’s death will be viewed by way of example;

(3) Odour as a means of anthropologizing the fictional universe of *Ulysses* through odour; a smellscape of Dublin will serve as an illustration.

Synesthesia in *Ulysses*

Interconnectedness of the senses in human perception is the key idea in interdisciplinary sensory scholarship². The extra normal (or abnormal) connection of sensory realms is a focal point of the neurological phenomenon known as “synesthesia”. According to Cytowic, synesthesia is “an involuntary joining in which the real information of one sense is accompanied by a perception in another sense” (Cytowic 1989: 1), that is, “it denotes the rare capacity to hear colors, taste shapes, or experience other equally startling sensory blendings” (Cytowic 1995). For instance, a synesthete claims the ability to shape sounds, to smell voice or taste colours. Scholars argue that visual and auditory information plays a pivotal role in the cognitive process; consequently, sight and sound are involved much more often in synesthetic procedures than other senses. Interestingly, smell rarely serves as the trigger or as the synesthetic response (ibid.: 5).

Multisensory fusion, which is the basis both of synesthetic experience and all forms of art, suggests that synesthesia can be determined as an artistic phenomenon. Alleging that art and synesthesia go hand-in-hand, Dr. H. Heyrman defines literary synesthesia as “a poetic expression or metaphorical articulation of a sensorial correspondence” (Heyrman 2005).

Thus, stemming from the fact that a great number of olfactory nuances are represented in *Ulysses* interacting with a whole set of human sense perceptions, it is important to consider literary manifestations of olfactory synesthesia in Joyce’s metatext.

Though Joyce is not listed as a synesthete, a sufficient number

² For instance, “Intersensoriality, or the multi-directional interaction of the senses and of sensory ideologies”, (*Empire of the Senses* 2005, 9) preconditions cultural meanings of human sensorium in the anthropology of the senses; “intersensory unity of the world” is the basic notion in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception (Merleau-Ponty 2013).

of synesthetic metaphors are introduced in *Ulysses*³. Moreover, the writer often exploits smell, characterized in terms of touch, sight, or taste, despite the difficulty in verbalizing this sensory modality precisely. The following examples express odour in the synesthetic metaphors:

“palatable odour” (*U* 16: 570), “dainty scented hand” (*U* 15.515), and “a cloying breath” (*U* 15.451) convert smell into taste;

“cold smell” (*U* 5.77), “cosy smell” (*U* 8.148), “tepid effluvium” (*U* 15.477), and “shrivelled smell” (*U* 5.81) render smell in terms of touch;

“melonsmellonous osculation” (*U* 17.686) vice versa touch brings forth smell;

“red reek” (*U* 2: 28), “a putrid carcased breath” (*U* 15.447), and “ashen breath” (*U* 15.541), describe smell in terms of sight.

Some synesthetic metaphors are more complicated, rendering smell through two or more senses: “heavy, greasy smell” (*U* 15.451), “heavy, sweet, wild perfume” (*U* 7.118), and “a sweet smoky breath” (*U* 14.381). To summarize, synesthetic metaphors in *Ulysses* illustrate Joyce’s excellence linguistic skills in rendering non-articulated phenomena.

It is worth noting that Joyce never declared himself a synesthete, whereas such an announcement plays a key role in determining one’s synaesthesia. In our opinion, his cross-sensory metaphors represent both his acute inter-sensory perception of the world and his successful effort to artistically recreate what was defined by Merleau-Ponty as “an absolute reality”. The latter can be explained as a com-

³ The synesthetic metaphors in Joyce’s works require special attention, taking into account a considerable theoretical corpus of studies on this type of metaphor. We adhere to the definition proposed by Werning, Fleischhauer, Be, seo’glu: “A metaphor is synaesthetic if and only if its source domain is perceptual. It is only weakly synaesthetic if its target is not also perceptual, and strongly synaesthetic if its target domain, too, is perceptual” (Werning, Fleischhauer, Be, seo’glu 2006, 2365-2366). Based on this definition, the subtypes and the functions of synesthetic metaphors in the novel are to be thoroughly studied. The goal of this paper is to determine the presence of a great number of synesthetic metaphors as a means of verbalizing olfactory phenomena in *Ulysses*.

plete co-activity of all senses in creating artistic images when one sense calls forth the corresponding others: "... a thing would not have that color if it did not have this form, these tactile properties, that sonority, or that odor; and that the thing is the absolute plenitude" (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 332-333). Thus, sensory fusion can be considered an essential component in Joyce's literary aesthetics, and *Ulysses* exemplifies literary synesthesia, creating a unique universe of smell, colour, touch and sound.

It can also be assumed that Joyce's synesthetic ability to mix senses is a result of his half-blindness. According to Ellmann, in his university years, "nearsightedness was becoming part of his personality" (*JIII*: 64); then during the rest of his life the writer experienced sporadic blindness (*JIII*: 574). Although the biographer emphasizes that Joyce was not permanently blind (*JIII*: 716), this state was obviously very familiar to him.

The episode in which Bloom is escorting a blind young man, a synesthete-character, across the street in "Lestrygonians" lends insight into synesthesia activated by blindness:

Do you want to cross? [...] The blind stripling did not answer. His wallface frowned weakly. [...] There's nothing in the way.

The cane moved out trembling to the left. Mr Bloom's eye followed its line and saw again the dyeworks' van [...] How on earth did he know that van was there? Must have felt it. See things in their forehead perhaps: kind of sense of volume. Weight or size of it, something blacker than the dark. Wonder would he feel it if something was removed. Feel a gap (*U* 8.172-173).

Joyce is very precise in rendering the excellent ability of some blind people to differentiate sounds, shapes and forms. Furthermore, working on several textual levels simultaneously, the writer shifts from capturing Bloom's reflections on the event to a metatextual commentary on synesthesia. Enclosed in Bloom's stream of consciousness, the author's explanation of how the lack of sight

boosts other sensory modalities, the sense of odour among them, is directly related to a scientific description of the phenomenon:

Sense of smell must be stronger too. Smells on all sides, bunched together. [...] Tastes? They say you can't taste wines with your eyes shut or a cold in the head. Also smoke in the dark they say get no pleasure. [...] And with a woman, for instance. [...] Kind of a form in his mind's eye. The voice, temperatures: when he touches her with his fingers must almost see the lines, the curves. His hands on her hair, for instance. Say it was black, for instance. Good. We call it black. Then passing over her white skin. Different feel perhaps. Feeling of white.... (U 8.173).

In reporting the redistributing and transmission mechanisms of different human senses (in our case, vision and temperature induce taste), Joyce reflects on the emergence of perceptual illusions in the process of their verbalization (touch induces colour), and points out that they are activated by imagination, according to his artistic expression, "in his mind's eye". Verbalizing the interconnectedness of odour and other senses, Joyce does not give precedence to sight or hearing, smell or touch. He endows his characters with sense-modal plasticity, as a characteristic of a person. No less important is that the writer registers and depicts the slightest reactions, tiny movements and transformations, e.g., "his wallface frowned weakly", "the cane moved out trembling", which are a direct follow-up to sensory perception.

Thus, the sensual organization and the bodily dynamics of the characters in *Ulysses* form a psychosomatic unity. Indeed, it is important to discuss Joyce's anthropological discourse in terms of a particular artistic innovation which incorporates the phenomenon of synesthesia and images of smell.

It is also essential to consider that Joyce significantly expands the concept of smell in *Finnegans Wake*. In particular, the complication of the synesthetic metaphors pertaining to olfactory percep-

tion, combined with an infinite number of neologisms and puns that run through the novel, can be illustrated by an episode in chapter 1.4. During proceedings brought on ambiguous charges, Earwicker, identified, among many other names, by his initials H.C.E., one of the trial participants declares:

Sure, 'tis well I can telesmell him H_2CE_3 that would take a township's breath away! Gob and I nose him too well as I do meself, heaving up the Kay Wall by the 32 to 11 with his limelooking horsebags full of sesameseed, the Whiteside Kaffir, and his sayman's effluvium and his scentpainted voice ... (*FW*, 95).

First, the focus needs to be on the metaphor "scentpainted voice". This conceptual synesthetic metaphor operates on the abstract concepts of sound, smell and vision. Determining "voice" by "scent" and "paint", Joyce breaks a general rule as regards the metaphorical rendering of abstract concepts via concrete (non-metaphorical) terms. Actually, he is playing with the very notion of metaphor, which can be defined as "the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning" (Lakoff 1993, 244). Secondly, though it is not exactly clear who says the phrase, Earwicker's character is rendered negatively, since his initials, H.C.E., transformed into H_2CE_3 , are thus associated with the formula of an acid. In our view, this is H_2SO_4 , sulfuric acid which, smelling of rotten eggs, is able to "take a township's breath away". Finally, the word "telesmell", prefixed with tele-, renders the idea of the "transmission of odour over a long distance". The writer anticipates a new level of olfactory interactivity as well as new artistic synesthetic experiences linked to the development of tele/computer technologies in the late 20th century. In current research, smell as a "travelling" sense is attributed to the phenomenon of tele-synesthesia defined as "a synesthetic experience evoked by a telematic use of new media" (Heyrman, 2005).

Memory model and odour in *Ulysses*

Ulysses, as Franca Ruggieri outlines, provides “a new synchronical and diachronical theatre of the mind, of memory and imagination that can both confirm our own identity and open us to the experience of others” (Ruggieri 2014: 13-14). In the novel, each spontaneous sensation or image created in a character’s consciousness entails complex mental processes in which a “short-circuit between memory and imagination” (Ricoeur 2009: 5) occurs. Without doubt, it is all-important to consider how Joyce connects the mechanisms of memory and imagination with a large range of sensory correspondences that accompany each recollection. Although considered the most subtle of the human senses, smell is also a powerful enhancer of remembrance.

It is therefore not surprising that smell is fully inscribed in a complex set of memory structures in *Ulysses*. Indeed, all Joyce’s main characters are endowed with olfactory memory. Yet, the most complicated memory model in the novel is associated with Stephen’s mother’s death, a persistent and painful vision which evokes numerous memories of the smell of her dead body. The dream where the mother appears after her death is repeated twice in *Telemachus* almost unchanged:

Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes... (*U* 1: 5).

The writer, as is evident, accurately conveys Stephen’s painful impressions of past experiences together with the affective marks left in his mind. In Ricoeur’s conceptualization, “inscriptions-affectations” leave “mnemonic traces” which save, and after a considerable length of time, can evoke personal memory-images:

The inscriptions-affectations contain the secret of enigma of the mnemonic trace: they would be the depository of the most hidden but most original meaning of the verb “to remain”, synonym of “to endure.

(Ricoeur 2009: 427)

Thus, representing an instance of the author's highly traumatic, autobiographic memory, the image of Stephen's mother's "wasted body within its loose graveclothes" serves as an illustration of the mnemonic phenomenon, that is, "the exact superimposition of the image present to the mind and psychical trace, also called an image, left by the initial impression" (Ricoeur 2009: 430). The precision of "superimposition" in Stephen's recollections consists of the fact that the visual and mental processing of a traumatic event is accompanied by olfactory memories of those esters which are released by a decomposing body, in Joyce's rendition, "a faint odour of wetted ashes" associated with the human "smell of death".

In *Ulysses*, mnemonic impulses revive this painful olfactory recollection in Stephen's mind twice more during the day – in connection with his reflections on Sargent's mother in *Nestor* (*U* 2. 28), and in the vision of his mother "breathing upon him softly her breath of wetted ashes" in "Circe" (*U* 15. 539-540). This recurrence of odour fits in what Nabokov identified in his lecture on *Ulysses* as "a deliberate pattern of recurrent themes and synchronization of trivial events" which is "one of the most striking features" of the novel (Nabokov 1980: 289).

In Joyce's memory model, particularly in recollections of human death, odour is shown as an extension of the body; accordingly, smell is regarded as a two-component phenomenon within which a mental act doubles as a physiological process.

In this regard, it should be stated that the writer depicts threshold forms of corporeality in *Ulysses*. In "Circe", the image of the dead mother's body is close to final decay:

Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word (*U* 15. 539).

In this scene, the author gives an example of a “short-circuit between memory and imagination”, creating the image of Stephen’s mother in the final stages of decomposition that could be only imagined, not remembered. Furthermore, demonstrating the idea that “a strong imagination and memory always employs synesthetic imagery and a metaphoric reading of life” (Heyrman 2007), he complements its visual presentation with the smell of “an ashen breath” and voice “moaning desperately”.

The words “I was once the beautiful May Goulding” (*U* 15.539) uttered by the ghost of the mother are of vital importance in “Circe”, because they expand the perception of the character as regards Joyce’s metatext, dynamizing it diachronically. This offers an opportunity to reinvent an inherently interrelated unity of her artistic image, and to decode its sensory characteristics through evolutionary dynamics. From this perspective, the first mention of Stephen’s mother at the very beginning of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* assigns an olfactory significance to the character, emphasizing the pleasant smell she exudes: “His mother had a nicer smell than his father” (*P.* 223), and even her slippers “had such a lovely warm smell” (*P.* 226).

As can be seen, Joyce chooses smells to be the signs of the human life cycle – from “such a lovely warm smell” of the mother in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to her “faint odour of wetted ashes” in *Ulysses*.

Another image of the dead body is illustrated in “Proteus”; again on the border between life and death, Joyce portrays the body of the man drowned nine days earlier: “A corpse rising salt-white from the undertow, bobbing landward, a pace a pace a porpoise [...] A bag of corsegas sopping in foul brine” (*U* 3.49). In this case, by utilizing smells and crossing the threshold between life and death the writer situates human life in the circle of nature: “God becomes man becomes fish becomes barnacle goose becomes featherbed mountain. Dead breaths I living breathe...” (*U* 3.49).

All in all, by putting smell at the center of the human sensory experience, Joyce creates a concentric memory model in *Ulysses*: individual olfactory memory and perception are enclosed in the whole

cycle of human life, which, in turn, is part of the cycle of nature. And what is most important in our case is that Joyce manages to harmonize the olfactory image of the individual life span with a universal image of smell.

Dublin Smellscape

The discussion of the urban space in *Ulysses* occupies a significant place in Joyce studies. The debate was triggered by the famous claim of the author “to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of his book” (Budgen 1972: 69). Among the many and varied points of view, there prevails an opinion that confirms Joyce’s implementation of an artistic project “to outlive the physical city, that was more real and vital and convincing than the historical Dublin” (Levitt 2002: 191). On the other hand, in “Making Space in the Works of James Joyce” Valerie Benejam argues that the novel paradoxically exposes the limited scope of Joyce’s visual rendering of the space, and suggests that the architectural space of *Ulysses* can be more fruitfully investigated in its acoustic rendition, since acoustic elements constitute a key element in Joyce’s construction of Dublin’s spatial environment (Benejam 2012: 66).

In our opinion, the smell factor is an equally important component in mapping the city. In order to portray a “real and vital and convincing Dublin”, Joyce constructs a smellscape of the early 20th-century metropolis. In contemporary humanities, the term “smellscape” is used “to describe the totality of the olfactory landscape, accommodating both episodic (fore-grounded or time limited) and involuntary (background) odors” (Henshaw 2013: 5). That is exactly how Joyce determined his priorities. When writing *Ulysses*, he explained to Arthur Power that he “tried to give colour and tone to Dublin [...] the drab, yet glittering atmosphere of Dublin, its hallucinatory vapours, its tattered confusion, the atmosphere of its bars...” [Power 1999: 113].

It seems necessary to specify, that the notion of “atmosphere” is crucial in Joyce’s representation of space, ranging from Bloom’s speculations about “the terrestrial atmosphere” (*U* 17.653) and “line of

demarcation between troposphere and stratosphere” (*U* 17.653), through to his remark that “the body feels the atmosphere” (*U* 13.359) and the dynamic picture of the olfactory aura of Dublin streets, e.g., with “the distinctly fetid atmosphere of the livery stables” (*U* 16.569) and “the congenial atmosphere of the Old Ireland tavern” (*U* 16.597). By capturing the diversity of urban smells and identifying their sources – restaurants, bakeries, baths, drug shops, brothels and body odours of Dubliners – Joyce recreates a mimetically precise atmosphere of Dublin.

In representations of space, which always involve a viewer’s perspective, a distinction between “route-maps” and “survey maps” is often traced. In *Ulysses*, Joyce chooses a model in which space is organized by the trajectories of his characters’ movements. Primarily, this is the route of Bloom, whom Bernard Benstock qualifies as “olfactory priest of olfactory imagination” (Benstock 1991: 153) because “his receptivity to the entire range of olfactory sensations, his tolerance for the rank odour and his pleasures in appreciating the most fragrant consists of both effluvia and manufactured scent” (Benstock 1991: 145). Moving around the city, Bloom passes through “hot mockturtle vapour and steam of newbaked jampuffs rolypoly poured out from Harrison’s” (*U* 8.150); turns “Combridge’s corner” where he is met by “perfumed bodies, warm, full” (*U* 8.161); and, in a moment “in the door of the Burton restaurant ... Stinky gripped his trembling breath” (*U* 8.161). Later, he recalls the smells emanating “in Lombard street”, a place of artists’ gathering, – “Like flowers. [...] Violets. Came from the turpentine probably in the paint” (*U* 13.357), and at night he inhales “with internal satisfaction the smell of James Rourke’s city bakery [...] the very palatable odour indeed of our daily bread, of all commodities of the public the primary and most indispensable” (*U* 16.570).

Bloom’s identification of urban odours is very important from an anthropological point of view. Depicting the character’s personal olfactory perception of the city (which is critically reasoned, though more positive than negative), Joyce shapes his worldview, and therefore, more fully reveals his human characteristics. Besides, the author

acknowledges that it is impossible for people to perceive an entire smellscape simultaneously; thus, the image of Joyce's Dublin absorbs the social odours of the lower-middle-class city, i.e., the environment being keenly experienced by Leopold Bloom, as well as by Stephen Dedalus.

In sum, olfactory modalities are crucial in producing a lively and airy atmosphere of the city truly inhabited by sentient characters. By locating the phenomenon of smell at the very core of Dublin identity, and imbuing the metropolis with multiple shades of odours, Joyce creates a truly dynamic "personality" profile of his home town.

Conclusion

Ulysses is permeated by so many nuances of smells that Joyce's artistic language becomes a generator of olfactory knowledge. The writer's experiments with a language representing smell evidence the artistic rediscovery of the human condition in modernist fiction. They clearly confirm that "it is sufficient to define modernism just as that: the surfacing of the olfactory as an essential element in writing" (Rindisbacher 1992, 146).

It is hoped that an anthropological inquiry into the vast area of odour in Joyce's oeuvre will continue. The ineradicable presence of intersensoriality in the portrayal of his characters and their environments serves many tasks in representing the basic structure of the human being, the incompleteness and openness of the human world, and dual dialogical relations – with Others and with the inner Self.

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