JOYCE'S FICTION
AND
THE NEW RISE
OF
THE NOVEL

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The assumption that literature more than any other art (and fiction more than any other genre) necessarily represents, reproduces and imitates individual and broadly cultural human experience is so widely accepted that it has become almost a commonplace. Many novelists and critics have laid claim to the novel as distinctively capable of representing reality, associating such mimetic capacity with the referentiality of its linguistic medium, which is also the substrate of culture. To name but a few notable examples, Henry James categorically states in "The Art of Fiction" that "the only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life" (1972: 30), while in his essay entitled "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality", Paul Ricoeur has more recently highlighted the central role of language in enabling imagination to create a fictional world: "imagination at work – in a [fictional/literary] work – produces itself a world" (1979: 128). Fictional writing, therefore, is both an imitative and a creative act, in that it necessarily evokes in the mind of the reader a wide array of preexisting concepts, images and sociocultural entities, as well as elements other than those explicitly referred to by the words on the page. Therefore, we respond to literary language by recognising in it a familiar representation of the reality we inhabit and, at the same time, fashioning an imaginative world sufficient to provide context and continuity for whatever is specifically described in the text. Such world-evoking capacity of the genre is based on an implicit pact with the reader, who is able to construct a whole out of a narrative that is necessarily only given to a certain extent, because it is based on conventions of selectivity and relevance. This seems to hold true throughout the whole his-

tory of the novel, regardless of the degree of faithfulness to subjective or objective reality that every fictional work may display.

In *Ulysses*, a book combining realism's adherence to facts with modernist formal experimentation, "Joyce never abandoned", as Clive Hart argues, "the realist side of the book represented by the drive towards seamless continuity. He merely coupled the development of the illusion of continuity with its vigorous breakup. […] *Ulysses* pretends to offer a complete account of Bloomsday, but of course it is full of gaps – huge gaps. Despite its local densities and continuities, it is very porous. Joyce is the most synecdochic of writers. In the case of the represented world, at least, most of the gaps invite filling-in by the reader" (1993: 434). Other scholars as well have noted the apparent contradiction between the novelist's endeavour to include everything in his "sort of encyclopaedia"[1] and the objective impossibility of doing so. As Olson remarks, "by cataloging the experiences of a single day, *Ulysses* both attempts to represent the reality of a particular moment in Dublin 1904 and necessarily gestures toward what cannot be included in a literary text, acknowledging a difference between an ordinary event and a representation that often changes the event into something extraordinary" (2009: 34). In his seminal work *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Erich Auerbach acutely perceives that modernist writers "invented their own methods […] of making the reality which they adopt as their subject appear in the changing lights and in the changing strata" of subjectivism (2003: 545). In other words, they blurred the distinction between the physical and the psychic – a distinction that Freud proved to be far from definite – and adopted a kind of psychological realism which could faith-

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[1] I am of course referring to the famous letter to Carlo Linati dated 21 September 1920, in which Joyce describes *Ulysses* in these terms: "it is an epic of two races (Israelite – Irish) and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day (life). […] For seven years I have been working at this book – blast it! It is also a sort of encyclopaedia" (*Letters I*: 146). *Ulysses* qualifies as an "encyclopedic narrative" also according to Edward Mendelson's definition of the genre: cf. Mendelson 1976, as well as Saint-Amour 2015.

fully represent human nature in all its complexity, in both its inner and its outer aspects. While Auerbach perceives the stream-of-consciousness novel as widening the scope of Western realism, and Joyce's *Ulysses*, in particular, as "an encyclopedic work, a mirror of Dublin, of Ireland, a mirror too of Europe and its millennia" (547), Georg Lukács, in his *Studies in European Realism*, considers such a form of psychologism as a deviation from the realist norm. He briefly mentions Joyce as belonging to the group of what he names the "psychologists", arguing that their "punctilious probing into the human soul and their transformation of human beings into a chaotic flow of ideas destroy […] every possibility of a literary presentation of the complete human personality" (1964: 8).

Joyce's well-known declarations of intent in writing *Ulysses* reveal a deep interest in the problematic relationship between word and world, fiction and reality, as well as the attempt to mediate between the opposing terms of such dichotomies by changing psychological realism and even surrealism into a form of post-modernist hyperrealism *avant la lettre*[2], in which the fictional world purports to substitute the real one, while exposing its own patently unreal, artificial character. Joyce's realist attitude was not just synonymous with faithfully recreating hard, dry facts, whether outside or inside the mind; he notoriously took pains to develop a range of techniques and devices which could be instrumental in evoking the subconscious dimensions of the characters as well as the collective psychic milieu in which they exist, thus immensely enriching our experience of the fictive world of the novel. In his conversations, for instance, Joyce appears to consider his masterpiece as faithful to a realist spirit, and "Circe" – quite surprisingly – as the result of his strenuous effort to approach reality. As he declared to Arthur Power, his aim was to record experience without the delusions of romantic idealism:

[2] On the supposed "postmodernity of Joyce" see Attridge 1995, Butler 1990 and Dettmar 1996.

In realism, you are down to facts on which the world is based: that sudden reality which smashes romanticism into a pulp. What makes most people's lives unhappy is some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable or misconceived ideal. In fact you may say that idealism is the ruin of man, and if we lived down to fact, as primitive man had to do, we would be better off. That is what we were made for. Nature is quite unromantic. It is we who put romance into her, which is a false attitude, an egotism, absurd like all egotisms. In *Ulysses* I tried to keep close to fact.

(Power 1999: 113-114)

In another conversation, however, he expands his notion of objective realism by making the concept comprehensive of the fundamentally subjective perspective of the inner workings of the mind. Interviewed by Djuna Barnes, he famously affirmed: "in *Ulysses* I have recorded, simultaneously, what a man says, sees, thinks, and what such seeing, thinking, saying does, to what you Freudians call the subconscious" (Barnes 1922: 65). It is instructive that the two tendencies – faithfulness to hard, observable facts, described in minute detail on the one hand, and the psychological, even irrational and unconscious, sphere on the other – are not mutually exclusive, but rather overlap and combine in the name of an accentuated form of realism. Such an attitude is evident in another conversation with Power, where, in an apparent paradox, Joyce conceives of "Circe" – notably his most visionary, unreal or even surreal episode – as the point of greatest realism in the whole novel: "in my Mabbot Street scene […] I approached reality closer in my opinion than anywhere else in the book, except perhaps for moments in the last chapter. Sensation is our object, heightened even to the point of hallucination" (1999: 86). Unsurprisingly, therefore, Rosa Maria Bosinelli points out that "Joyce's representation of the world constantly oscillates between reality and imagination", and that his writing strategy reminds one "of the oscillation between a maniacal representation of reality and its projection into dreamy scenery that is typical of pictorial movements such as surrealism and hyperrealism" (2014: 52-53).

Maria Grazia Tonetto (2012) has convincingly argued that "an evolution of the categories of imitation and realism took place in Joyce's aesthetics between the completion of *Dubliners*, the rewriting of the *Portrait*, and the early stages of *Ulysses*. The articles, lectures, and examination papers that Joyce wrote during those years of study and self-refashioning, were of special significance in bringing to a reconciliation early dichotomies". The elusive concept of realism – denoting a kind of writing which aims to represent what is material, chiefly what is external, verifiable and empirical, as authentic objective reality – first appears in Joyce's critical essays in the 1899 piece "Royal Hibernian Academy 'Ecce Homo'", where, though discussing painting, he refers to "the sense of life, the realistic illusion" and distinguishes realism from mimetic faithfulness to reality and from the "execution of faultless forms"; more than a mere copy of the world, what he commends is, rather, "the infusion of life" (*OCPW* 17). In his critical writings praising drama, and especially the drama of Henrik Ibsen, Joyce advocates an unmediated realism, a style that he believes accurately reflects everyday experience. In "Drama and Life" (1900), the realist attitude coincides with an attempt to record life "as we see it before our eyes, men and women as we meet them in the real world, not as we apprehend them in the world of faery" (*OCPW* 28). Inspired by Ibsen's aesthetics of the ordinary, Joyce seems to overlook the Norwegian dramatist's symbolism, emphasising instead how he breaks with literary conventions to make art out of commonplace experiences. In "Ibsen's New Drama" (1900), for instance, Joyce praises Ibsen for portraying "average lives in their uncompromising truth" (*OCPW* 45), a description that certainly foresees his own early work. The two essays on James Clarence Mangan (1902, 1907), however, show a progressive refining of the author's notion of realism. Here he mentions a method which looks at "present things and so works upon them and fashions them that the quick intelligence may go beyond them to their meaning, which is still unuttered" (*OCPW* 53), also referring to those "dreams" (55) which, for the artist, are no less real than reality itself. To put it differently, Joyce here hints at a more comprehensive and authentic experience of the real, which can only be

attained through art, thus reformulating his own personal vision of literary realism by means of an expansion of the very category of reality.

It is my contention in this paper that the different forms of realism – realism *tout court*, psycho-realism, surrealism – that Joyce advocates in his conversations and critical writings can be subsumed under the idea of hyperrealism emerging from what he always recognised as his chief purpose in writing *Ulysses*, that is, the famous declaration to Frank Budgen that he intended "to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of [his] book" (Budgen 1972: 69). The imitative as well as creative nature of Joyce's realism revealed by this bold statement has become a true critical commonplace: it is widely recognised, as Hugh Kenner points out, that Joyce is "reputedly the supreme exponent of a fiction subdued to scrupulous documentation" (1978: xii), or that in *Ulysses*, as Nicholson argues, "we are provided [...] with texture, fabric, and character, an ambience so convincingly constructed that, should indeed Dublin never have existed, the city of Joyce's novels would be sufficient to fill the gap" (2008: 389). However, scholars such as Rosa Maria Bosinelli have pointed out that "Joyce's realism is not so closely linked to reality as is often argued", or suggest that the author's statement to Budgen "should not be taken at face value as is often the case in Joyce criticism" (2014: 41). Discussing the paradoxical nature of Joyce's claim, Anne Fogarty has highlighted the coexistence of dichotomous aspects, most notably the interplay between referentiality and self-referentiality, in *Ulysses*. As she interestingly remarks,

> Although Joyce suggests that fiction can wholly substitute reality, he simultaneously maintains that his text makes fullest sense in terms of its referentiality. Dublin, it would appear as well in the double take of Joycean aesthetics, is both mirrored and eclipsed by the fictional work conceived in its likeness. The material realities of life on June 16, 1904, supply significant coordinates for our reading of *Ulysses* and yet seem also to be erased by the very processes of fictionalization and re-invention. Joyce's memorial-

izing textuality obliterates, rearranges and deconstructs the history and geopolitical spaces that he also pretends to safeguard and salvage (2004: 56).

Joyce's novel, therefore, refers to or reflects reality and at the same time *creates* its own reality, or a fictional world ideally replacing the real one. In so doing, it both adheres to and violates realist principles. This mainly happens either through deviations from mimetic norms – that is to say through errors and patent divergences from the truth, which represent an antirealist drive at work in the novel – or through a plethora of superfluous details, in other words through a form of hyperrealism intentionally disregarding the conventions of relevance and significance on which fiction as genre is based. Moreover, it is precisely by means of a mistake, or perhaps a revealing slip of the pen, that the central dichotomy between word and world, fiction and reality is foregrounded in the novel. I am of course referring to one of Martha Clifford's solecisms in the love letter she writes to Bloom – "I called you naughty boy because I do not like that other world. Please tell me what is the real meaning of that word?" (*U* 5.244-246) – which represents just one example among the "many instances of factual error, misinterpretation, misreading, and misunderstanding on the characters' part, and even narrative errors such as some plainly wrong mathematical calculations in 'Ithaca'" (McCarthy 2013: 196).

More often than not, mistakes and inaccuracies in *Ulysses* derive precisely from the strenuous effort to stick to facts and objectively depict reality. It is well known that Joyce was so obsessed with precise details that he compulsively verified the exactness of the particulars inserted in his novel by means of other people's evidence, as his letters clearly demonstrate. Furthermore, he made extensive use of instruments such as almanacs, anthologies, dictionaries, maps, encyclopaedias and, chiefly, the 1904 *Thom's Official Directory of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*, which supplied *Ulysses* with the most disparate details about Dublin life, including the time of sunrise and sunset, ships in Dublin port, weather conditions, births and deaths, as well as alphabetical lists of street addresses, residents and

trades by category. However, it has become apparent that not all of these facts are exact. In their *James Joyce's Dublin: A Topographical Guide to the Dublin of "Ulysses"* (2004: 14), Ian Gunn and Clive Hart suggest that *Thom's* itself is replete with mistakes such as misprints, inconsistent spellings, duplications of addresses, wrong shop names. Therefore, Joyce may have inadvertently and/or on purpose transposed them, and created several errors of the same kind. While all of this emphasizes the author's commitment to a realist aesthetics, it also shows his own attempt to expose the limits of realism. The errors in *Ulysses* are of a transgressively innovative modernist text which subverts the idea of correctness: despite his claims, Joyce devised a narrative containing inaccuracies and inconsistencies that undermine its apparently authoritative status as an encyclopaedic, totalising account of Dublin on June 16, 1904. Joyce's reliance on *Thom's Official Directory* highlights his concern with the particular, to the point that Sam Slote draws a basic analogy between the two texts: "both *Thom's* and *Ulysses* aim toward the comprehensive and the commodious" (2011: 192). However, although Joyce made extensive use of the directory and imitated, on the level of style, its comprehensiveness, he did so imperfectly, perhaps to *mine* – other than *mime* – his source, and chiefly to show that his own purposes in writing the novel were not just confined to topographical exactness.

Patrick McCarthy defines *Ulysses* as "a book of many errors" (2013: 199), showing how its author intentionally violated and redefined most norms of writing (and of reading) while meticulously sticking to others. Moreover, Fritz Senn finds it both "annoying and wholly appropriate" that Joyce's text is full of "derailment[s], deviation[s], dislocution[s], omissions, chance delays, and collisions", and argues that such apparent flaws are actually "intrinsic" to the programmed "malfunction" of the novel (1986: 161, 164)[3]. One could also add that perhaps no work can claim to be comprehensive unless it also includes

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[3] On the theme of Joyce and error, see also McCarthy 1990, Conley 2003, Lamos 2004, Creasy 2011.

error: as Joyce's attempt was to reproduce a reality far from faultless, the presence of mistakes can be considered as appropriate, even essential, to the representation of Dublin life in *Ulysses*. It seems evident, therefore, that realism conceived as fidelity to true facts on the one hand, and deliberate errors or deviations from realist principles on the other, are complementary opposites in *Ulysses*. Similarly, the overabundance of details and, paradoxically, the concomitant impossibility of keeping up with the world outside the novel appear to be mutually determining conditions. The seemingly infinite number of verbal elements contained in the text suggests that, no matter how comprehensive the narrative is, it can never totally exhaust reality. The tension between the traditional rooting of the realist text in objects and facts, the presence of mistakes or other forms of "unreality", and the surplus of details in *Ulysses*, creates a form of realism that is unique to the novel, merging realist, antirealist and hyperrealist stances. By means of his special technique, Joyce expands the concept of realism and at the same time, as Karen Lawrence argues, "abjures the notion of closure and shape to which fictions usually submit; the details of the text overflow all neat aesthetic patterns, signifying the arbitrariness and pluri-significance of life. *Ulysses* is both spectacularly artificial and, in its own way, realistic" (1981: 12). The critic, for instance, attributes this way of flouting mimesis, which I also mentioned above, to the multiplication of details and the change from initial to later styles occurring more or less midway in the novel, where form begins to work against content, veiling it from the reader. She interestingly remarks that "as the styles and forms of the chapters proliferate, so do the 'facts' included in the narrative. The book becomes an encyclopedia of possibilities of plot as well as style, deliberately breaking the conventions of selectivity and relevance upon which most novels are based" (10). Other scholars, instead, have attributed the antirealist quality of *Ulysses* to the opacity that language progressively acquires throughout the novel:

> The proponents of an antirealist Joyce would extend that inward turn to language. The language of *Ulysses* no longer functions as

an instrument of knowledge; instead it becomes self-absorbed. This self-absorption manifests itself in the multiplication of styles, especially in the second half of *Ulysses*. [...] As a result of the multiplication of styles, the language of *Ulysses* becomes impenetrable; language, the book, Marilyn French has argued, becomes world. Or, as Brook Thomas has extended this line of thought, Joyce forces one to read the book as book, reminding us of the book's counterfeit nature – that there is no real connection between book and world.

<div align="right">(Yee 1997: 46-47)</div>

Whatever the reason for the fissure, or rather the dichotomy, between word and world, fiction and reality in *Ulysses*, the question is evident most explicitly in the errors and inaccuracies disseminated in the book, many of which are deliberately introduced by the author to undermine the principles of realism, or result from his inexhaustible experimentalism. For instance, in playing with proper nouns in the later chapters of the novel, Joyce seems to destabilise language by showing how the idea that words express particular fixed significations is merely illusory. In "Sirens", where the one-to-one correspondence between lexical items and objects begins to break down, the names "Simon" (Dedalus) and "Leopold" (Bloom) merge in "Siopold" (*U* 11.752). Although the reader understands such a bizarre occurrence in the light of the overall style of the episode, as far as the realistic surface of the novel is concerned there is no physical entity which corresponds to "Siopold", just as there is no individual that might be associated with "Lionelleopold" in the same chapter (*U* 11.1187), or with the many identities assumed by Bloom in his Circean metamorphoses or, finally, with the mysterious "*L. Boom*" – the mere product of a typographical error – appearing on an inexact list of participants in Patrick Dignam's funeral in "Eumaeus" (*U* 16.1260). Not only does Joyce play with names and their referents, he also sets up realist norms – spatial as well as temporal – and self-consciously violates them, as though to raise metanarrative questions about fictional correctness. The result of this self-reflexive ludic exercise is the recur-

rence of topographical errors, anachronisms and historical inaccuracies. To quote one example among many, in "Telemachus" the impersonal narrator mentions Stephen and Mulligan as having "halted, looking towards the blunt cape of Bray Head that lay on the water like the snout of a sleeping whale" (*U* 1.181-182). However, as Gifford (1988: 17) notes, Bray Head, the headland that rises 791 feet above the shoreline, is approximately seven miles south of, but not visible from, the Martello tower at Sandycove, where Joyce's fictional characters stand. The artful "arranger" of the first episodes also takes other liberties, and anachronisms frequently appear alongside topographical displacements. In the "Nestor" episode, for instance, Mr Deasy seeks Stephen's assistance in publishing a letter on the implementation of urgent measures against foot-and-mouth disease, although we know that there was, in fact, no outbreak of it in Ireland before 1912. In other words, there was no historical incident which would cause Deasy to write a missive aimed at the "*prompt ventilation of this allimportant question*" (*U* 2.305-306). To quote another example, in "Circe", Bloom's oriental fantasies (adumbrated for the first time in "Calypso") eventually come to the fore, and the "*chief rabbi*" even appears in the long and detailed stage direction describing a list of eminent figures attending Bloom's mock ascension to power (*U* 15.1398-1449). As a matter of fact, the Chief Rabbinate was established only in 1919, which allows us to interpret what we read in this episode as an instance of narrating time intruding into the narrated time. It frequently happens that some events which took place during the historical time when Joyce was planning and writing *Ulysses* came to be transposed to the period about which he was writing. On the one hand we, as readers, feel comfortable with the idea that anything can be expected to happen in "Circe", a dramatisation of the unconscious, where the real and the fictional merge and where it is impossible to distinguish between what takes place in the characters' minds and what occurs in the external world. On the other hand, we cannot refrain from enquiring about the ways and the reasons these and many other patent inaccuracies coexist with Joyce's maniacal search for truth or verifiable facts. Why would a meticulous writer allow for textual errors in his

novel? Remembering Stephen's famous claim that "a man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery" (*U* 9.228-229), we may attribute the decision to a confidence that the erroneous elements would somehow fit into the text's ever-expanding network of meaning.

Ulysses is an elaborate contrivance, a complex web of correspondences, motifs and symbols, capable of expansion beyond any assumed authorial intention. Therefore, many textual elements which appear as inexact or anomalous in a linear, mimetic narrative may attain validity if interpreted as part of a particular network of meaning. In other words, an item which is a mistake of one sort or another when considered in isolation might prove not only appropriate, but also essential, in combination with other textual elements. The truth is that Joyce was both a realist – at times even a hyperrealist – and an antirealist; or rather, it was precisely his commitment to true facts and myriads of minute, verifiable details that allowed him to violate basic norms of verisimilitude and economy. Indeed, we are so familiar with the image of Joyce as a modernist-realist divided between the two poles of self-imposed meticulousness and self-conscious innovation that such errors and inconsistencies – unless we can boast an extremely vast knowledge, or rely on critical apparatuses – mainly go unnoticed. If they don't, we perceive them as knowingly devised, or as the result of the author's innate experimentalism. As a matter of fact, it is only towards the end of the book that readers come to understand that not only inaccuracies, but especially the plethora of superfluous details typical of certain episodes – "Ithaca" first and foremost – actually detach them from reality. In *Ulysses*, Joyce attempts to recreate in all possible conformity and with microscopic exactitude – both spatial and temporal – an existing state of affairs in the urban reality of Dublin, amid which he places his characters with their past, present and future incidents. As with hyperrealist painters, however, Joyce's depiction of June 16, 1904 becomes infinitely dilated as it gradually aspires to be more real than the real; by playfully laying bare narrative conventions and assumptions, it ends up by drawing attention to its own artificiality and unreality.

As Henry Staten has pointed out, "mimesis in *Ulysses* is entangled with its deconstruction in complex ways" (1997: 382) and errors are manifestations of a self-reflexive strategy to foreground fictional writing. However, Joyce's antirealism is also evident from the long catalogues, lists, and questions and answers in "Cyclops", "Circe" and "Ithaca", where the author intentionally includes excesses and irrelevances to eschew the traditional economy of fiction and demonstrate the arbitrariness of the very realist principles upon which his novel rests. Considering Joyce's endeavour to record the exact history of one day in Dublin, some scholars have focused attention on the enumerations that populate the prose of the novel, particularly in the final chapters. Liesl Olson aptly remarks that, in *Ulysses*, lists constitute both a mimetic and an anti-mimetic strategy, as they "attempt to register and record the variety of ordinary moments that flood experience, while gleefully acknowledging realism's defeat" (2009: 35). As a matter of fact, they represent a technique that is functional to the comprehensive and encyclopaedic aspect of the novel, while pointing to ambiguous qualities such as openness and arbitrariness. On the one hand, just as the many inventories of *Ulysses* cannot totally capture reality – though virtually infinite elements can be added to them – so the novel, all-inclusive as it may be, cannot keep up with the complexity and variety of experience; on the other hand, no element on a list is more relevant than the others, as the use of parataxis shows[4]. The critic also maintains that "the lists in *Ulysses* contribute to Joyce's epic reconstruction of June 16, 1904, while challenging the notion that one day can be accurately recorded. Lists are part of what makes *Ulysses* an overwhelmingly descriptive novel, in which Dublin 1904 is brought to life: the ethos of the novel is totalizing. And yet the list always points beyond itself and remains open" (ibid.).

As the "Ithaca" chapter demonstrates, lists may synecdochically represent the whole book, thus foregrounding its artificial and constructed character. For instance, Bloom's "budget for 16 June 1904"

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[4] See also, in this regard, Thwaites 2009.

(*U* 17.1455) sums up his experience and accounts for what he has done during the day by way of how much he has spent. The "*Debit*" list begins with the morning activities ("Pork kidney", "Copy *Freeman's Journal*", "Bath and Gratification", "Tramfare", "In Memoriam Patrick Dignam"), goes on with "lunch" and ends with the expenses at the cabman's shelter ("Coffee and Bun" and "Loan" to Stephen Dedalus) (*U* 17.1456-1478). In substance, the list recapitulates, though in a different form, what the reader has traced in previous episodes, from Bloom's breakfast in "Calypso", his self-indulgence in "Lotus-Eaters", Paddy Dignam's funeral in "Hades", to the final communion with Stephen in "Eumaeus". It is interesting to note, however, that missing from Bloom's budget is, among other things, the expenditure of eleven shillings at Bella Cohen's, which readers surely remember from "Circe". Therefore, the event is deemed to be uncertain (is it truth, or a mere hallucination?) and this also suggests that Bloom's inventory of expenses is not totally accurate. Just as the list cannot include all elements of experience, not even of a single day in the life of a character, so the trustworthiness of the fictional text as a faithful representation of reality is once more called into question. To quote Olson again, "the catechistic prose of 'Ithaca' also reveals how even the most exacting language of lists cannot render a clear account of action [...], but in fact makes events seem far removed from the language describing them" (2009: 50). Apart from the bizarre enumerations characterising some of the stage directions in "Circe", which readers interpret in the light of the surreal tone of the episode, another interesting example of overabundance of details which produces, paradoxically, separation between world and word is the description, in the form of a list, of the Citizen's girdle in "Cyclops" (*U* 12.176-199). The chapter is famous for its catalogues and inventories of the most disparate items: foreign delegates witnessing a public execution (*U* 12.555-569), clergy attending a committee meeting on the revival of Gaelic sports (*U* 12.927-938), wedding guests with fanciful horticultural names (*U* 12.1269-1278), Irish popular sites – mistakenly including Fingal's cave, which is in Scotland – (*U* 12.1451-1461), and a procession of saints and martyrs featuring a detailed description of their

clothing and accessories (*U* 12.1676-1719). The list of "Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity" (*U* 12.176) engraved on the citizen's girdle – very few of which are Irish – is emblematic because it so evidently departs from the novel's realism and verisimilitude to point to the ar-bitrariness of list-making (including disparate items that in no way fit) and eventually of all fictional language.

"Ithaca", together with "Sirens", "Cyclops" and "Circe", is un-doubtedly the episode whose style most dramatically illustrates the gap between reality and its representation. Through this and many other instances of *mise en abyme* or self-reflexivity, Joyce plays with the conventions of realism, pushing it to the extremes of hyperrealism and at the same time unveiling its unreal, artificial character. Or, as Saint-Amour puts it, "by interrupting its bid to encompass the world in order to be the encyclopedia of itself, *Ulysses* engages in an immanent critique of any totalizing project, enacting the tendency of a supposed-ly total model or portrait to refer more insistently, more accurately, and more meaningfully to itself than to the world" (2015: 258).

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