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ISOTOPY AS A CRITICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL PARADIGM IN THE 'ITALIAN' *ULYSSES*

The two terms of the heading “Joyce” and “Italy” are respectively reformulated within the framework of this article as *Ulysses* and two quite special sub-groups of the Italian community of Joyce’s readers: critics and translators. In particular, this essay will focus on the notion of isotopy – one that was crucial to the work of several Joycean scholars in Italy, and especially of Umberto Eco, Paola Pugliatti and Romana Zacchi – in the attempt to question its validity as an interpretive and translational paradigm in the three Italian translations of *Ulysses*: the first, ‘canonical’, translation carried out by Giulio De Angelis – with the help of Glauco Cambon, Carlo Izzo and Giorgio Melchiori – and published by Mondadori in 1960; the more recent ones by Enrico Terrinoni, with the help of Carlo Bigazzi, for Newton Compton (2012), and by Gianni Celati for Einaudi (2013).

Algirdas J. Greimas drew the term “isotopy” from physics and introduced it to linguistics and literary theory through his *Sémantique structurale* (1966), a ground-breaking study which quickly turned into a seminal contribution to the establishment of contemporary semiotics. Here Greimas greatly expanded the formal description of the structure of language initiated by Ferdinand de Saussure in *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916) and subsequently developed by Louis Hjelmslev in *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*.¹ In fact, the whole of Greimas’s work seemed to take its cue from Hjelmslev’s stated ambition to depart from a certain “linguistic science, cultivated by philologists with a transcendent objective and under the strong

¹ The original version of *Prolegomena* was published in Copenhagen in 1943 under the title *Omkring sprogteoriens grundlæggelse*. Several years later, an American scholar, Francis J. Whitfield, took an interest in the subject and translated it into English. His translation was published in *The International Journal of American Linguistics* in 1953. In this article, I will make reference to the English version published in 1961 by the University of Wisconsin Press and edited by both Hjelmslev and Whitfield during a stay of the former in the US.

influence of a humanism that has rejected the idea of system” (Hjelmslev 1961, 10). This tradition, as Hjelmslev explained in the opening pages of his *Prolegomena*, held that “humanistic, as opposed to natural, phenomena are not recurrent, and for that very reason cannot, like natural phenomena, be subjected to exact and generalizing treatment” (8). This *a priori* denial of structural regularities and the consequent failure “to recognize the legitimacy and possibility of any such systematization” (9), condemned traditional linguistics to a methodology that was “mere description, which would be nearer to poetry than to exact science” (8-9), and finally accounted for its “vague and subjective, metaphysical and æstheticizing” character (10). In contrast to such a “discursive” approach (9), Hjelmslev called for “a systematic, exact, and generalizing science” (9), maintained that the aim of linguistic theory should be “[t]he search for [...] an aggregating and integrating constancy” (8) and claimed that such constancy had to be sought within language itself, not “in some «reality» outside language” (8). In *Language: An Introduction*, a “more popular” work of his (Lepschy, vii-viii), Hjelmslev made it clear that, in order to understand language, it is necessary to “give an account of the relationships into which it enters or which enter into it. Such relationships, or dependences, registered by scientific description, we shall call functions” (1970, 8). As I hope this work will demonstrate, Greimas’s exploration of discursive coherence and his subsequent conceptualization of linguistic isotopy are precisely the outcomes of an attempt to enforce the Danish linguist’s research agenda.

What is of special interest to this essay is Greimas’s inquiry into Hjelmslev’s quadripartite development of the Saussurean signifier/signified dichotomy, including the following insights into the concepts of substance of content and form of content:

The substance of content must not be then considered as an extralinguistic reality – psychic or physical – but as the linguistic manifestation of the content, situated at another level than the form. The opposition of the form and substance, then, can be entirely located in the analysis of the content; it is not the opposition of the signifier (form) and signified (content), as a long tradition of the nineteenth century wanted us to believe. Form is just as significant as substance, and it is surprising that this Hjelmslevian formulation has not yet found the audience it deserves (1966a, 27).

In discussing the aspects and nature of the relationships/functions articulated on the level of content, Greimas rethought some very basic as-

sumptions regarding linguistic communication and eventually seemed to question Hjelmslev's definition of language as a "system of figurae that can be used to construct signs" (Hjelmslev 1961, 47). As he pointed out, "it is at the level of the structures, and not at the level of the elements, that the elementary signifying units must be sought [...] Language is, not a system of signs, but an assemblage [...] of structures of signification" (Greimas 1983, 20). However, this only apparent departure from the Danish master can actually be already envisaged in the analytical methodology, or "principle of analysis" (1961, 21), laid down by Hjelmslev himself:

Naïve realism would probably suppose that analysis consisted merely in dividing a given object into parts [...] the important thing is not the division of an object into parts, but the conduct of the analysis so that it conforms to the mutual dependences between these parts, and permits us to give an adequate account of them [...] both the object under examination and its parts have existence only by virtue of these dependences; the whole of the object under examination can be defined only by their sum total; and each of its parts can be defined only by the dependences joining it to other coordinated parts, to the whole, and to its parts of the next degree, and by the sum of the dependences that these parts of the next degree contract with each other. After we have recognized this, the "objects" of naïve realism are, from our point of view, nothing but intersections of bundles of such dependences. [...] A totality does not consist of things but of relationships (1961, 22-23).

It is thus clear that, when Greimas published *Sémantique structurale* and shifted the focus of linguistics – and consequently of semiotics – from signs to signification (Bertrand, 13), he was actually following Hjelmslev's suggestion, whereby the manifested units of language should no longer be regarded as the proper terms of linguistic meaning-making processes, but as mere intersections of dependences, or, in his own terms, as "forms in the manifestation of interrelations" (Greimas 1983, 42).

The theoretical assumptions which framed Hjelmslev's "principle of analysis" also provided the basis for Greimas's definition of message as a "*totalité de signification*" (1966a, 53) – "a meaningful whole" (1983, 59) – and for his analysis of content as the semiological universe shaped by interrelated functions within a structural model. Such analysis was meant to develop a consistent theory of signification, one that would explain the semantic arrangements – "the modes of existence and the modes of manifestation of signifying structures" (1983, 46) – that enable a listener / reader to carry

out a uniform and coherent interpretation of messages despite the multiple semantic virtualities these may express. Such theory of signification would certainly be welcomed by readers, critics and translators who have to deal with the wavering symbolism of *Ulysses*. As Eco famously claimed in *Le poétique di Joyce*, intentional polysemy has always been a staple of literature and does not characterize the style of contemporary writers only, even though Joyce is surely an emblematic case in point (1966, 116). With respect to ambiguous and polysemous communicative acts, Greimas found out that homogeneous readings of texts result from the semantic relationships realised by linguistic elements on a discursive level (beyond the sentence) and on a nuclear level (within the word). In fact, lexical items – and, as we will see below, this also applies to such formal elements as phonological, morphological, syntactical and enunciative ones – often enter these relationships of coherence through their atomic level. This claim was made possible by a micro-analysis of the atoms of content that accounted for their contextual and therefore relative constituency. In particular, Greimas’s dissection of the signifying potential of lexical units was to be known as “semic analysis” and was subsequently discussed by Bernard Pottier and Eco, among others.

In Greimas’s terminology, “lexemes”, or entries in the dictionary, are the minimum units of discourse: “unités de communication” (1966a, 42). Being a virtual unit of content, only when actualized within an utterance a lexeme can acquire a meaning, or better an “*effet de sens*” (1966a, 45). Meaning effects can be as many as the contexts² in which a lexeme is used. They are called “sememes” and each of them amounts to a sum of minimum units of signification, i.e. of “semes”, or semantic markers. Semes are further distinguished into a) specific, permanent and invariant semes, called “nuclear semes”, and b) generic, contextual and variable semes, called “classemes” (1983, 50-60).³ Lexemes are usually graphically represented between slashes, as with /flowed/, sememes are represented between non-English quotation marks, as with «flowed», and semes are represented in italic type, as with *flowed*.

² In the footsteps of Henry Widdowson, the context is here assumed to be a “set of premises [...] a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer’s assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual state of the world that affect the interpretation of a utterance” (115-16).

³ Bernard Pottier’s classification of semes differed from Greimas’s in that the former actually distinguished three subsets of semes: specific and constant (which he called *semantemes*), generic and variable (*classemes*), and connotative semes (*virtuemes*).

Greimas's semic analysis and the relative terminology are also employed in *Terribilia Meditans* by Pugliatti and Zacchi. In fact, both scholars drew heavily from structural semantics in their analysis of the interior monologue in *Ulysses*. For instance, according to Pugliatti, when found at the end of "Telemachus" the lexeme /flowed/ turns into a sememe, «flowed», whose semantic potential is composed by the interaction of several semes including the nuclear seme *fluidity*; the classemes *mutability*, *continuity*, *visibility*, and *audibility*; their opposites *stagnation*, *fixity*, *discontinuity*, *invisibility*, and *inaudibility*; and other semes. Most of these semes recur in the stream of consciousness that follows and are found to be relevant classemes of several sememes and phrases («water», «lake», «floating foampool», «swirling», and others). Moreover, these very semes are argued to be connotatively referred to on the formal level by the dissemination of the phonemes of /flowed/ in several lexemes or phrases (/fullness/, /lifted/, /low/, /flooded/, /let fall/, etc). and by morpho-syntactical features characterizing the fluent prose of the excerpt and symbolizing – acting as connotative signifiers of – the same fluidity expressed on the content level (34-63). With respect to these last two observations, Pugliatti contended that not only does the plane of expression partake in the textual meaning-making process by conveying connotative effects – a position that reminds of Halliday's "textual meaning" (23) – but also does so through semantic realizations that can be completely autonomous from those of the denotative content (17-18). Thus, in a Hjelmslevian fashion, she acknowledged that the formal level of Joyce's stream of consciousness is not separate from its content, as it actually carries significant meaning. All this considered, the experience of reading Stephen's interior monologue is reported to be strongly marked by a dogged and presumably central insistence on the idea of fluidity.

What is crucial to the theoretical considerations that will be looked into later on is that such insistence is induced by the almost constant iteration of manifested and non-manifested content units and formal properties that enter a range of conjunctive as well disjunctive (paradigmatic) relationships. In Pugliatti's interpretation, the excerpt she scrutinized in her work can ultimately be seen as the expansion of the sememe «fluidity» and of its three main denotations, *flowing*, *continuity*, *mutability*, through the recurrence of the following six predicates: *flows*, *stagnates*, *breathes*, *is visible*, *is audible*, *transforms* (62-65). Finally, her essay deliberately unfolds as a brilliant examination of the isotopies featuring in an excerpt from an interior

monologue in *Ulysses* and, especially, of the role covered by the isotopy of fluidity within the organized totality of that excerpt.⁴

Greimas termed “isotopy” such relationship of semantic coherence among lexemes, longer chunks of text and formal sometimes non-manifested elements including, for instance, the tense, the rhetorical devices and the syntactical properties that create either symmetry or imbalance throughout a text. In fact, his idea of isotopy was originally confined to the level of content and, more precisely, to the iterativeness⁵ of *classemes*. His first definition was: an “ensemble redondant de catégories sémantiques qui rend possible la lecture uniforme du récit, telle qu’elle résulte des lectures partielles des énoncés après résolution de leurs ambiguïtés, cette résolution elle-même était guidée par la recherche de la lecture unique” (Greimas 1966b, 30). And what he meant by “catégories sémantiques” is better explained, once again, in *Sémantique structurale*:

[...] what we understand by the isotopy of a text: it is the permanence of a hierarchical *classematic* base which, because the *classematic* categories are the opening of the paradigms, allows variations of the units of manifestation, variations which, instead of destroying the isotopy, on the contrary only confirm it (1983, 108).

Only afterwards did Greimas accept the suggestion by Michel Arrivé, Francois Rastier, Jean Marie Klinkenberg and Group M (1970; 1976) that the isotopies of the expression be addressed too, as they could be successfully exploited to interrogate the correlation between the level of form and that of content: “Théoriquement, rien ne s’oppose à l’emprunt au plan du contenu du concept d’isotopie [...] Un niveau phonémique donnant lieu à une lecture isotope semble pouvoir être postulé” (1972, 16). On the other hand, he expressed some doubts about Rastier’s proposal to consider the isotopy as a property of the discourse produced on all textual levels – “produites à tous les niveaux d’un texte” (83) – one that would cover all iterations of any linguistic unit – “toute itération d’une unité linguistique” (82) – no matter

⁴ Zacchi and Pugliatti repeatedly questioned the legitimacy – and the “methodological challenge” (68) – of selecting fragments from *Ulysses* and addressing them as texts. See 10-11; 16; 68; 118-19.

⁵ As one can read in Greimas and Courtés’s *Dictionary*, “iterativeness is the reproduction, along the syntagmatic axis, of identical or comparable dimensions to be found on the same level of analysis” (173).

whether these units belonged to the planes of content or of expression, and regardless of their semantic input (Greimas and Courtés, 173). To make an example of how the analysis of the level of the expression may disclose relevant information about the content of a text, it is worth quoting Group M and their reading of Molly Bloom's monologue in *Ulysses*: “[d]ans l'exemple de James Joyce, les ruptures non réévaluées connotent précisément le monologue intérieur et l'isotopie serait alors constituée par l'unité de l'instance énonciatrice. On parlera dans tous ces cas d'*isotopie de connotation*” (1976, 52). Likewise, Pugliatti defined “isotopia dell'espressione un significato di connotazione veicolato da una qualche manipolazione del significante la quale tenda, consapevolmente o no, ad opporre ostacoli alla irregolarità del livello espressivo della manifestazione linguistica” (31) and also focused on these very isotopies of the expression in her search for the semantic organization of Stephen's monologue at the end of “Telemachus”.

As Denis Bertrand recorded, Greimas himself, while working on the isotopy, gradually widened his focus so as to include not only the iterativeness of *classemes*, but also that of other elements of signification within the scope of the isotopy (119). In so doing, he paved the way for discussions on the poly-isotopic nature of texts, the possibility to arrange hierarchies of isotopies, and the opportunity to select the most strategic ones, a heuristic process whose importance cannot be overemphasized when it comes to translating literary texts. A risk, for instance, would be that the original isotopic approach (from the *classeme* to the text, i.e., from the part to the whole) may turn into a whole-to-the-part approach with the selection of a certain isotopy accordingly guiding translators in a search for figures within the source text that may be consistent with their isotopic reading. In other terms, this approach would account for an inductive generative process whereby, following the thematization of certain figurative isotopies,⁶ what remains of the text may then be questioned in the attempt to fit it in the interpretive framework provided by that thematization. Logically, this risk is inherent to any translation and can only be avoided by relying exclusively on textual evidence for one's interpretation, as is the case of the translations of *Ulysses* examined in this essay.

⁶ Figurative isotopies concern the figures of time, place, and actors to be found on the surface of a text and providing an effect of real. Their thematization is a more general and abstract interpretation, an act of hermeneutic appropriation that charges these figures with a narrative value and inscribes their sense within a precise framework (Bertrand 28).

However, if we agree with Eco's – and, as we have seen, with Pugliatti's – ideas of sememe as a “text-oriented instruction” and of text as the “expansion of a sememe” (Eco 1979, 19; 23), then, not only can we regard the isotopy as an effective criterion to erase ambiguities (Group M 1976, 44), but we can also see it as a means to identify what is at stakes in a text. According to Group M, Greimas's conceptualization of isotopy was in fact meant to revise the old and imprecise notions of “thème” and “sujet” – theme and subject – traditionally employed by critics (1976, 42). In Pozuelo Yvancos's view, its aim is part of a broader plan to employ more “scientific” tools in literary studies: “la descripción isotópica es una manera de ordenar más científicamente lo que en la teoría literaria se llamaba *tema* de un texto” (209). The similarities and differences between isotopy and topic are also discussed by Eco in *Lector in fabula*:

[t]he topic is a meta-textual tool, an abductive scheme proposed by the reader (88) [...] the identification of the topic is a matter of inference, that is of what Peirce would call abduction. To identify a topic means to formulate an hypothesis regarding a certain regularity in the textual behaviour. This type of regularity is what, we believe, fixes the limits and terms of coherence in a text (90). [...] the topic is a pragmatic phenomenon while the isotopy is a semantic one. The topic is an hypothesis that depends on the reader [...] Starting from the topic, the reader may decide either to magnify or narcotise the semantic properties of lexemes, thus establishing the level of interpretive coherence called isotopy (92).

Arguably, “the cooperative (pragmatic) movement that”, in Eco's understanding, “prompts the reader to locate the isotopies” and to identify the theme/topic⁷ of a text (1979, 101) overlaps the process of thematization as intended by semioticians: the abstract semantic investment of a syntactic form obtained through the conversion of figures into conceptual values (Courtés, 41-62). This semiotic perspective is consistent with Teun A. van Dijk's assertion that the main isotopic patterns of a given text can reproduce its deep semantic structures (180). How readers can trace an hierarchy of these isotopies⁸ in order to appreciate the deep textual structures has been largely debat-

⁷ Eco does not distinguish the concepts of topic and theme. Actually, while discussing Žolkovskij's work on the theme, he argues that no serious danger may come from using the two terms interchangeably (1979, 88).

⁸ According to Pugliatti, this possibility is a misunderstanding of Greimas's words, “hierarchical classematic base”, that would actually refer to a hierarchy of classemes and not of isotopies (22).

ed. While Eco stressed the importance of the distribution of relevant sememes in strategic positions (1979, 91), van Dijk noticed that central isotopies are usually built on the classemes that recur in the highest number of sememes (202). This statistical criterion was also accepted by Arrivé.

It goes without saying that the central isotopies of literary texts are precisely what translators must not fail to focus on in their negotiation with the source texts so as to ensure the reproduction of their dianoetic nuclei in the target texts. One may even suggest that different translations are often accounted for by the selection of different isotopies by the translators and therefore by a different hierarchization of isotopies. For instance, this is clearly the case of sememes that are connected to more isotopies (also called shifters or *embrayeurs*) and are translated in the light of one isotopy and therefore of one classeme only. As a consequence, the context to which that classeme is considered to be more relevant by pragmatic inference is “magnified”, whereas the other isotopic level(s) is/are subordinated or “narcotised” (Eco 2002, 139).

Despite its importance, the notion of isotopy has been unexpectedly neglected by translation theorists, with just few exceptions (Gerzymisch-Arbogast; Mudersbach and Gerzymisch-Arbogast; Nord). On the other hand, great translators seldom disregard the networks of semantic coherence that establish the isotopic levels of literary works, even though they are not always aware of their mechanisms and consequences. This unawareness should not surprise and merely mirrors the non-intentionality component that is intrinsic to all communicative acts, including literary ones (see Eco 2002 on *intentio operis*). At all rates, as Greimas pointed out, unintentional does not mean non-existent: “Whether the complex isotopy of discourse is caused by the conscious intention of the speaker or whether it is set there without his knowledge does not change anything about the very structure of its manifestation” (1983, 111).

The isotopies listed by Pugliatti and Zacchi in *Terribilia Meditans* can be found in all the Italian translations of Telemachus, even though with some critical differences. The complex isotopy of fluidity is somehow perceived to be so central in the translation process that sometimes terms were selected from the semantic field of water and related fields, even when the sememes in the source text would not directly justify this selection. This is, for instance, the case of De Angelis’s “sguazza” for “slops”, “rete” for “toil”; of Celati’s “lasciate andar sul fondo” translating “let fall”; of Terrinoni’s “squamata” for “leptous”. These are typical examples of compensation in a

content-oriented translation and are determined by what Zacchi calls the “lexematic attraction” induced by isotopic lines (88): essentially these compensations unveil the paradigmatic role granted by the Italian translators to the complex isotopy of fluidity in their reconstructions of a possible world. In other terms, isotopies act as constraints on the work of translators and this property of theirs is a powerful tool that can greatly help guide translational choices. Isotopies can thus be thought of as gravitational centres around which the textual coherence of texts is organized. To a reader the isotopy is a map that tells you where you are. To a translator the isotopy is a compass that tells you where to go.

Isotopies can influence and ‘prime’ the lexical choices by a translator and be neglected by other translators when the interpretation is not so uniform as in the examples above. This occurs more frequently when only two lexemes or a brief phrase are concerned.⁹ The following examples are however no less indicative of the important role of isotopies as interpretive and translational paradigms than the previous ones illustrating the structural force of central isotopies. For instance, Joyce’s “long lassoes” at the beginning of a paragraph became “larghi giri di cappio” in Celati’s version,¹⁰ a solution that presumably owes much to the recurrence of the classeme *death* and to the relative isotopy manifested later in the source text passage through the lexemes /drowned/, /dead/, /corpse/, /corpsegas/, /stark/ and /grave/. The link between these figures is made possible – and the text is accordingly perceived by the reader as a semantic continuum – thanks to a frame or intertextual script that is stored in our memory. In Marvin Minsky’s definition, frames are traces of previous experience stored in our knowledge which we identify according to the influence exerted by the context. It is therefore through a “contextual pressure” that readers and listeners recognize the recurrence of the classeme *death*, thematize «death» as the relevant topic in the communicative act, and eventually interpret other figures in the text in the light of this general frame or explanation (Eco 1984, 182-83). Should we use Eco’s terms, the sememe «lassoes» is thus “disambiguated” according to a “contextual selection” (2003, 29-31): this is the selection of the contextual seme *dead* among the semes that our encyclopedic knowledge associates to «lassoes» as well as to the other sememe(s) of the text that is/are felt to be joined to (the understanding of) «lassoes» on account of Hjelmslevian se-

⁹ On the minimal conditions for the existence of isotopies, see Group M 1970.

¹⁰ «Cappio» translates «noose».

mantic dependences. As a consequence of these dependences, the selection of /cappio/ finally sheds a lethal light on the overall Italian co-text or verbal environment. Moreover, it should be observed that Celati's dissemination of the isotopy of death in a place of the text where it is actually much less explicit was obviously an arbitrary choice of no small consequence, as it provided the scene with a funeral setting right from the beginning.

Celati was consistent with his choice and insisted on this isotopy also when it came to translating the unusual repetitions of forms of the verb 'to pass' in just one sentence: "will pass on", "passing", "passing". Accordingly, he translated "will pass on" into "scorrerà tutto", where the deliberate addition of "tutto" – everything – is arguably meant to articulate the fatalistic attitude typical of Stephen's personality and to hint at the transient nature of animate and inanimate beings all around the monologuing character. It is worth noting that De Angelis translated all three occurrences into forms of the verb /correre/,¹¹ thus inscribing also this sentence within the frame of the isotopy of fluidity, while Terrinoni safely opted for the polysemous, more ambiguous, and, as such, perfectly Joycean sememes «passeranno» and «passando», that encompass both the seme of *fluency* and that of *mortality*. These sememes amount to *embrayeurs* or shifters, as they enter more isotopies.

Also De Angelis carried out original lexical choices according to the isotopies he found to be temporarily prevalent in phrases or sentences. For instance, by translating "bounded in barrels" into "imbrigliata in barili", he semantically connected a complex metaphor to the metaphorical "rearing horses"¹² of the previous line. Moreover, his solution "plop, blop, blap: imbrigliata in barili" did not fail to reproduce a similarly euphonic pattern to the alliteration [b+vowel] of the original.

It should be evident by now how fundamental isotopies are in the translation of literary texts, also when these texts exhibit the apparently disconnected combinations along the syntagmatic axis that are distinctive of a stream of consciousness. Besides, by virtue of a range of morpho-syntactical peculiarities, the narrative technique of the stream of consciousness tends to be rich with isotopies of the expression. As far as *Ulysses* is concerned, also when the three Italian translators carried out different versions of this type of isotopies, their aim often seemed to be the same: to reproduce the meaning effects

¹¹ «Scorrere» translates «to run», «to flow», «to stream».

¹² «Imbrigliata» denotatively translates «bridled».

conveyed by the phonetic, syntactical, prosodic or enunciative arrangements of the original. This is certainly what occurred with the Italian translations of the many onomatopoeias in Joyce's masterwork and with the reproduction of the phonosymbolic texture of several other phrases connotatively mimicking, reinforcing, or even ironically questioning the content. Just think of the idea of watery movement in De Angelis's "**Fluisce barbugliando, fluendo possente, fiottando fiocchi** di spuma, **fiore sbocciante**", or of the whispering waves in Terrinoni's "signore, sono stanche: e, **se sussurri loro, sospirano**". Celati laid even more emphasis on this point. He actually devoted the entire – if brief – introduction to his *Ulisse* to explain the poetic and cultural reasons of his successful effort to maintain the phonetic iconicity (Boase-Beier, 11-12; 30) of Joyce's idiolect, i.e., the stylistic phenomenon by means of which formal aspects of a linguistic representation resembles what is represented.

As seen above, the textual features articulating this iconic property can be explored and consequently reproduced in translation through an isotopic analysis. The same can obviously be argued about the translation of several syntactical patterns. Celati and Terrinoni sometimes appeared to be more at ease than De Angelis when Joyce's hypotaxis and laconism had to be transferred into Italian. Suffice it to compare Terrinoni's "meglio farla finita subito" and De Angelis's "meglio finire questa faccenda presto" (that translate Joyce's "better get this job over quick") or Terrinoni's reformulation of demotic dialogues, "Eccolo qui. Aggancialo subito. [...] Ce l'abbiamo. Piano ora" with De Angelis's apparent resistance against vernacular varieties of language: "Eccolo là. Uncinalo presto. [...] Lo teniamo. Piano ora". This difference can possibly be explained by the translators' relative familiarity with the low register often triggered by the rhetorical and syntactical qualities of Joyce's interior monologue.

Obviously enough, however interesting, the examples of translation of isotopies – these being thematic, of the expression, or metaphorical alike – would be too many for the size of this article. However, I hope that the above examples are sufficient to show that the notion of isotopy provides a key not only to the theme of the text but also to the formal – stylistic – elements that govern the relationship between the form and the content of *Ulysses*. In other terms, isotopies can be regarded as illustrative of an author's style, this being what characterizes a book beyond its content. Such connection between isotopy and style mirrors the relationship between the interpretation induced and oriented by a frame and the relative hierarchy of isotopies, on the one hand, and its figurative and even sensorial manifesta-

tion, on the other hand. An author's style can therefore be considered the outcome of references, knowledge, sensibilities, projections that are seldom made explicit in their writing and yet pervade and structure the possible world shaped in their representations. The paradigmatic role of isotopies in translating literature accordingly becomes evident if one agrees with Friedrich Schleiermacher's and many others' idea that to translate a literary text primarily means to translate its genius or style. In the same understanding its validity as a means to analyse and evaluate translations is also paramount, as this essay may have demonstrated.

In *Terribilia Meditans*, Pugliatti argued that it is impossible to summarize *Ulysses*, to define its theme (15-16), unless we accept Eco's suggestion that one should thematize the stream of consciousness itself (1979, 90). Finally, the thesis of this article is that despite the impossibility to summarize what is to be found in *Ulysses*, it is possible, through the help of isotopies, to translate it into another language.

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