

JOYCE STUDIES IN ITALY

1 New Series

14 Old Series

# JOYCE IN/AND ITALY

*edited by*

FRANCA RUGGIERI

ENRICO TERRINONI

EDIZIONI   
ROMA 2013

*Volume pubblicato con il contributo  
dell'Università degli Studi Roma Tre*

TUTTI I DIRITTI RISERVATI

È vietata la traduzione, la memorizzazione elettronica,  
la riproduzione totale o parziale, con qualsiasi mezzo,  
compresa la fotocopia, anche ad uso interno o didattico.  
L'illecito sarà penalmente perseguibile a norma dell'art. 171  
della legge n. 633 del 22/04/1941

ISSN 2281-373X

© 2013, Edizioni Q – Roma

[www.edizioniq.it](http://www.edizioniq.it)

e-mail: [info@edizioniq.it](mailto:info@edizioniq.it)

Single copy Price € 18

Subscription Rates (one issue annually):

Personal: € 18

Institutional: € 30

Address: James Joyce Italian Foundation  
Dipartimento di Lingue, Culture e Letterature Straniere  
Via Valco di San Paolo, 19  
00146 Roma  
[joyce\\_found@os.uniroma3.it](mailto:joyce_found@os.uniroma3.it)  
[franca.ruggieri@uniroma3.it](mailto:franca.ruggieri@uniroma3.it)

## CONTENTS

Franca Ruggieri <i>Foreword</i> .....	p. 11
--	-------

### JOYCE AND/IN ITALY

Andrea Binelli <i>Isotopy as a Critical and Translational Paradigm in the 'Italian' Ulysses</i> .....	15
--	----

Francesca Caraceni <i>A study of Anthony Burgess's Italian version of Finnegans Wake's incipit</i> .....	29
---	----

Gabriele Frasca <i>Gadda a reader of Joyce? / Gadda lettore di Joyce?</i> .....	39
--	----

Francesco Marroni <i>Horcynus Orca and Ulysses: Stefano D'arrigo's Dialogic Vortex</i> .....	49
---	----

Franco Marucci <i>Translator de Angelis and critic Pagnini on how to render a passage in Ulysses</i> .....	67
---	----

### JOYCEAN GLEANINGS

Jacques Aubert <i>Lacan and the Joyce-effect</i> .....	79
---	----

Geert Lernout  
*In the Track of the Sun and Joyce's use of sources  
in Ulysses: a case-study*..... 89

Fritz Senn  
*Ulyssean Historionics in Everyday Life*..... 100

#### BOOK REVIEWS

Maria Domenica Mangialavori, *La memoria intermittente  
e la musica lontana. Joyce. Woolf, Berio.*  
Luca Aversano ..... 123

James Joyce, *Ulisse. Trans. Gianni Celati*  
Elisabetta D'Erme ..... 127

Franca Ruggieri, *James Joyce, la vita, le lettere*  
John McCourt..... 135

Maria Cristina Cavecchi, *Cerchi e cicli. Sulle forme della memoria in Ulisse;*  
Roberto Baronti Marchiò, *A Thought-Tormented Music. Browning and Joyce;*  
Maria Grazia Tonetto, *The Beauty of Mortal Conditions*  
Enrico Terrinoni..... 139

*HORCYNUS ORCA* AND *ULYSSES*:  
STEFANO D'ARRIGO'S DIALOGIC VORTEX

---

I.

Stefano D'Arrigo conceived *Horcynus Orca* as a monumental work of fiction whose meaning, language and plot were the result of painstaking elaboration, involving a continuous multilevel revision along with a constant textual expansion towards a totalizing system grafted on a *nostos* of epic proportions. Defined "un romanzo d'amore [...] amore per le parole" (Pedulla, 1983, 2009, 316)<sup>1</sup>, *Horcynus Orca* is founded on a densely elaborated intertextuality ranging from the Scriptures to *Moby-Dick*, from Dante to Giovanni Verga, from the Sicilian Opera dei Pupi to Vittorini's *Conversazione in Sicilia*, and, above all, from Homer's *Odyssey* to Joyce's *Ulysses*. These are only a few of the many threads and allusions constituting the novel's complex structure, which, because of its ideological tension towards totality, urges us to define it as an "encyclopedic narrative" (Mendelson, 1976)<sup>2</sup>. It is undeniable, however, that such a rich intertextual combination of literary and nonliterary sources is encoded into a wholly original language stemming from D'Arrigo's mythopoeic imagination as well as his lifelong investigation into Sicilian and, in particular, into the diverse vernaculars of the populations living between Scylla and Charibdis. In fact, the peculiarly mythic valence of the location overdetermines the narrative arena in which many stories meet and merge so as to shape a complex novel whose semiotic fluidity seems to mirror the eventful and wild expanse of water known as the strait of Messina, which, characteristically, D'Arrigo prefers to rename with a single word, "duemari" ("two seas", i.e., the Ionian and Tyrrhenian seas).

<sup>1</sup> Trans: "a novel of love [...] love for words".

<sup>2</sup> Among the masterpieces of the world literature to which Mendelson applies this definition are the *Divina Commedia*, Goethe's *Faust*, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and, of course, *Moby-Dick* and *Ulysses*.

Interestingly, when *Horcynus Orca* was published in 1975<sup>3</sup>, Maria Corti noticed, in a concise but particularly perceptive review article, that the novel's linguistic virtuosity stems from "la coscienza che nelle parole è racchiuso l'inferno e il paradiso delle cose" (1975, 2009, 453)<sup>4</sup>. Here it may be worth remarking that, ten years after the novel's publication, D'Arrigo was willing to subscribe to Corti's definition, while complaining about the approach to *Horcynus Orca* of those critics who had overlooked "l'aspetto più impegnativo e, credo, più importante: la nascita di una lingua" (Lanuzza, 1985, 2009, 52)<sup>5</sup>. In many respects, D'Arrigo regarded himself as a writer who was not simply narrating a story of a tortuous homecoming set in the second world war, featuring a hero, 'Ndrja Cambria, whose destiny would anticlimactically culminate in his death by a stray bullet, shortly before reaching Charybdis, the place of his birth.

Indeed, during the novel's long gestation, D'Arrigo's artistic sensibility had increasingly espoused the conviction that only if he succeeded in creating a new language, different from Italian and also from any other language or dialect, would he be able to convey the full significance of his epic narrative. In this sense, D'Arrigo's inventiveness meant, first of all, the coinage of many words, idioms and phrases which were an integral part of his own tension towards a transition from multiplicity to oneness. As such, this oneness also entailed a textual inimitability that could be expressed only through a language unmistakably recognizable for its uniqueness. Essentially, it is this particular aspect of his poetics that establishes a relationship of dialogic closeness with Joyce. Because of their commitment and devotion to their respective literary projects, which absorbed every instant of their life, it is fair to hold that, *mutatis mutandis*, they shared the severe territory of a monomaniac linguistic and metalinguistic research carried to the extreme.

Following the Joycean notion of language as an unending process of combination, transformation and creation, D'Arrigo considered the lin-

<sup>3</sup> After waiting for over twenty years, Arnoldo Mondadori published the first edition of *Horcynus Orca* which was 1,257 pages long. The book launch was so shrewdly and well prepared by the publisher that D'Arrigo's novel was already famous and hotly debated even before its actual publication. On the genesis of *Horcynus Orca*, see, Sgavicchia (2012, 2013), and Nimis (2013).

<sup>4</sup> Trans: "[D'Arrigo's] awareness that in words are encapsulated the hell and the paradise of things".

<sup>5</sup> Trans: "the most engaging and, I deem, the most important aspect: the birth of a language".

guistic code as a “riverrun”. In his view, the fluid nature of language always involved not only the possibility of a mythical circularity negating both history and its representations, but also a relationship of metaphorical continuity with the sea whose mutability and formlessness might be equated to life itself.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, in *Horcynus Orca* great emphasis is placed on the Mediterranean sea as the beginning and the end of everything: the duemari becomes the very centre of the Mediterranean whose epistemic and linguistic vortexes exceedingly fascinated D’Arrigo. Moreover, in his imagination, the coexistence of life and death between Scylla and Charybdis is a clear index of universality, while, on a more general level, the persistence of the sea and water mirrors the persistence of language as opposed to the transitoriness and brevity of human life. Significantly, in the “Ithaca” episode of *Ulysses*, Joyce’s narrator expresses an attitude towards the sea which may have surfaced as a subliminal echo in D’Arrigo’s inspiration, if not as a direct influence:

What in water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier, returning to the range, admire?

Its universality: its democratic equality and constancy to its nature in seeking its own level: its vastness in the ocean of Mercator’s projection [...] its violence in seaquakes, waterspouts, Artesian wells, eruptions, torrents, eddies, freshets, spates, groundswells, watersheds, waterpartings, geysers, cataracts, whirlpools, maelstroms, inundations, deluges, cloudbursts [...] its infallibility as paradigm and paragon: its metamorphoses as vapour, mist, cloud, rain, sleet, snow, hail: its strength in rigid hydrants: its variety of form in loughs and bays and gulfs and bights and guts and lagoons and atolls and archipelagos and sounds and fjords and minches and tidal estuaries and arms of sea: its solidity in glaciers, icebergs, icefloes [...] (*U*, 549).

Because of the intensely hybrid quality of the “Ithaca” chapter, it would not be an overstatement to claim that its structuring dialogic sequence –

<sup>6</sup> In Joyce’s and D’Arrigo’s conception of the art of the novel, language is much more than a matter of encoding and decoding messages – for them language meant culture and its manifold manifestation on every level of the social ladder. In this respect, what F. R. Leavis wrote on John Bunyan’s prose may be fruitfully applied to Joyce and D’Arrigo: “A language is much more than such phrases as ‘means of expression’ or ‘instrument of communication’ suggest; it is a vehicle of collective wisdom and basic assumption, a currency of criteria and valuations collaboratively determined; itself it entails on the user a large measure of accepting participation in the culture of which he is an active living presence” (1967, 41).

“Joyce’s appropriation of catechistical method” (Hampson, 1996, 230) – apparently simulates the movement of the sea whose “infallibility” suggests permanence in time, while its enormous violence seems to hark back to the universal flood, and to the time of Noah and biblical beginnings (Gen 6:5). However, there is no doubt that D’Arrigo was fascinated by the way *Ulysses* celebrates through the Ithacan narrator a “tension between a desire to amalgamate and an insistence on dispersion and separation, a will to harmonization and a principle of ongoing discord” (Gibson, 1996, 10). In fact, it is precisely this wavering, if not contradictory, attitude that corresponds to D’Arrigo’s idea of novel writing. He aims to attain a degree of creativity capable of transforming epistemic hybridity into a strenuous quest after a harmonizing form, without neglecting his deeply ingrained awareness regarding “l’inafferrabile complessità del mondo, dove ognuno soffre le pene sue, secondo l’angolo in cui si trova nella matassa intricata” (Frasnedi, 2002, 45)<sup>7</sup>. On another level, the metalinguistic dynamic between centripetal forces (linguistic order, orthodoxy and conservation) and centrifugal ones (invention, transgression and new coinage), besides being the artistic lesson received from Joyce, configures a text constantly oscillating between progression and digression, in a sequence of circular fluctuations that are not very dissimilar from those textualized in *Ulysses*.

## II.

D’Arrigo greatly admired Joyce. For him the author of *Ulysses* was a demiurge of words, the creator of a universe made of words. It is no surprise, therefore, to discover that D’Arrigo wrote an essay on Joyce which he left unpublished. In addition to confirming Joyce’s towering ‘shadow’ in the making of *Horcynus Orca*, D’Arrigo is by no means hesitant about recognizing *Ulysses*’s stylistic perfection, while at the same time he evinces his extreme admiration for the final episode (“Penelope”) in which “James Joyce, più che nel resto dello *Ulisses* [*sic*] accarezza il linguaggio come un bambino quando tocca l’erba” (2009, 71)<sup>8</sup>. What is more, after having admitted that Molly’s

<sup>7</sup> Trans: “the inapprehensible complexity of the world, in which everyone suffers his own pains, according to the corner he inhabits of the tangled skein”.

<sup>8</sup> Trans: “James Joyce, more so than in the rest of *Ulysses*, caresses language as a child does when he touches grass”.



long and “illogic” monologue is very taxing even for the best reader, he perceptively observes:

Joyce organizza dunque il materiale linguistico con l'intento non solo di imitare la realtà ma di integrarla e arricchirla con l'esperienza della scrittura. Allora, nell'uguaglianza di forma e contenuto, non v'è scarto fra scrittura e lettura; il viaggio del testo e l'itinerario del viaggio viene scandito dal tempo degli eventi di cui è portatore Ulisse-Bloom (2009, 72).<sup>9</sup>

Underlying these concise remarks is a literary worldview which subordinates the real to artistic creativity. According to D'Arrigo's interpretation, Joyce is a perfect creator of languages: each of his words possesses a shaping force capable of radically transforming individual and collective experience. It is rather difficult to say to what extent D'Arrigo derives from *Ulysses* the idea of narrating a modern odyssey, but it is only too obvious that he was greatly impressed by the parodic parallelism between the hero of Homer's poem and Joyce's Leopold Bloom. Still, more than this, in the essay, a paramount key to literary convergence is represented by those lines in which he explicitly identifies with Joyce, whose biography as an artist and man becomes a model and a paradigm for D'Arrigo's life:

E ora toccherebbe a me, lettore-scrittore e scrittore-lettore, spiegare perché amo più di ogni altro libro del Novecento questo primo, grande, rivoluzionario romanzo moderno, malgrado sia stato tanto e tanto alla cieca citato per il mio *Horcynus Orca*, sino a farci sentire, io a Joyce e lui a me, ostili. Semplicemente perché quando conobbi l'autore col suo libro [...] sentii immediatamente che né io a lui né lui avremmo mai potuto essere ostili. Sentivo ciò poiché da una prima conoscenza del romanzo avevo ricevuto l'impressione lucida, tenera quanto esaltante, che al suo autore il libro, nella sua imponenza e affascinante perfezione, nelle sue invenzioni lessicali a perdifiato, era costato lacrime e sangue. Ed io, così lontano da lui, mi trovavo a sprovare nelle sue lacrime e nel suo sangue le mie lacrime e il mio sangue (2009, 72)<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Trans: “Joyce organizes his linguistic material with the intent, not only to imitate reality, but to integrate and enrich it with the experience of writing. Thus, as is the case of equal relationship between form and content, there is no disparity between writing and reading: the journey of the text and the itinerary of the journey are marked by the time of the events whose bearer is Ulysses-Bloom”.

<sup>10</sup> Trans: “And now it would be my turn, as reader-writer and writer-reader, to explain why I love this first great revolutionary modern novel above all the other books of the twentieth

Tellingly, D'Arrigo's words express more than simple admiration for Joyce. The passage is a sort of confession that, on the one hand, delineates an enthusiastic convergence entailing brotherhood and mutual understanding, so much so that their blood and tears seem to merge into a complete and gratifying artistic communion. On the other hand, D'Arrigo's essay reveals how, while writing *Horcynus Orca*, he felt the necessity of silently competing with his own model, whose "fascinating perfection" became a hidden cornerstone for his novel. The writing process, in fact, was marked by a deep-seated linguistic obsession along with an endless textual expansion aimed at giving a most refined expression to a great metaphor of the human predicament.

There is, at this juncture, another aspect which deserves attention. Indeed, what D'Arrigo writes in the concluding paragraph of the essay is symptomatic of the way he was strategically prepared to control the diverse intertextual presences and influences of his models: "a proposito delle quasi cento pagine del Monologo di Molly [...] per quanto splendide, eccelse esse siano, da quelle cento pagine dal flusso ininterrotto e scritte come in stato di raptus, io ho saputo subito di dovermi guardare" (2009, 73)<sup>11</sup>. Basically, the pages in *Ulysses* which had particularly stimulated his imaginative response were also the pages from which he consciously intended to guard himself in that he feared their direct influence on his writing. In brief, he aimed to write something which was to go far beyond his models – a coherent and fully original novel not only in terms of inspiration and method, but also in its linguistic texture which was to be the perfect interface between form and content. It must be said in this regard that one of D'Arrigo's main pre-occupations while writing *Horcynus Orca* was to demonstrate the total autonomy of his own voice; indeed, especially when he considered the Italian literary tradition, he was very scrupulous in distinguishing and separating

century, in spite of the fact that it has been randomly cited again and again in connection with my own *Horcynus Orca*, to the point of making myself and Joyce feel hostile to each other. It is simply because when I first encountered the author and his book [...] I immediately felt that neither he nor I could ever be hostile to each other. I felt this because from my very first acquaintance with the novel I felt the lucid, tender as well as exhilarating impression that, in its imposing scale, its fascinating perfection and breathless lexical inventions, the book had cost its author tears and blood. And I myself, so distant from him, felt I was experiencing through his tears and his blood my own tears and my own blood".

<sup>11</sup> Trans: "As for those almost one hundred pages of Molly's Monologue [...] splendid and sublime though they are, those hundred pages of uninterrupted flux and written as if carried away, made me immediately realise that I had to guard myself from them".

his stylistic choices from any genealogical line. Among the anecdotes which are part of D'Arrigo's biography is the account that, before beginning to write *Horcynus Orca*, he had prepared a note with the following cautionary phrase: "Non fare Verga, non fare Vittorini" (de Santis, 2002, 24-5).<sup>12</sup> From the very beginning D'Arrigo focuses attention on the problem of adopting a linguistic code corresponding to the "two seas" lore as well as to his attitude of radical scepticism regarding the readability of the world. Like him, Verga and Vittorini were Sicilian and therefore linguistically close to his sensibility. This is why they were 'dangerous' and could contaminate his active delving into the lexical sedimentation of the duemari. On the contrary, such writers as Joyce and Melville<sup>13</sup> did not pose any peril through any form of linguistic contagion, in spite of the fact that their novels and poetics may have exerted an exceptionally strong impact on D'Arrigo's imagination.

To some extent, however, it is pertinent to argue that, in its tension towards inclusiveness, *Horcynus Orca* breaks every sort of linguistic barrier and makes the most of its founding paradigms. Nemi D'Agostino is right in this regard when he observes that "D'Arrigo deriva da Melville, oltre all'invenzione del mostro allegorico ed alcuni schemi narrativi [...] soprattutto un linguaggio, quella mistura di stile alto e basso cui Melville seppe dare forti intensità metafisiche" (1977, 2009, 294).<sup>14</sup> All considered, it seems to me that *Horcynus Orca* can be regarded as a most protracted and strenuous literary effort to write a novel which accomplishes a perfect correspondence between the diegetic development and its linguistic code, without any waste of words, but simply by making the economy of the story coincide with the economy of language<sup>15</sup>. It is an uncharacteristic *nostos*

<sup>12</sup> Trans: "Don't try to imitate Verga, don't try to imitate Vittorini". According to Giuseppe Pontiggia, both Verga and Vittorini are an active presence in *Horcynus Orca*. The former for his pathos and lyrical rhythm of the narrative; the latter for his technique in representing popular polyphony, a multiplicity of voices which D'Arrigo invests with an epic dimension.

<sup>13</sup> It may be of some interest to notice that, through Ishmael's voice, Melville unambiguously declares that the pages on cetology are not only a form of knowledge derived from a direct marine experience, but also the result of hard work in libraries: "I have swam through libraries and sailed through oceans [...]" (Melville, 1967, 118).

<sup>14</sup> Trans: "D'Arrigo derives from Melville, besides the invention of the allegoric sea monster and some narrative patterns [...] primarily a language, a mixture of high and low style which Melville invested with strong metaphysical intensities".

<sup>15</sup> On the obsessive centrality of each word, see Pedullà (1983, 2009, 346): "La parola viene osservata da tutte le parti per una perlustrazione totale e microscopica di ogni parola [...] Dopo *Finnegans Wake* non c'è scrittore che abbia saputo più di D'Arrigo ricondurre la parola alla sua matrice e materia fonica". (Trans: "Words are observed from all angles for a total and

since it also involves a return to the word, which is discovered, verified, transformed and radically renovated in ways that bring 'Ndrja Cambria's journey towards a zero point, to a simultaneous ending of myth and history. This is why, almost four decades from its publication, critics refer to the peculiar code adopted by D'Arrigo as la lingua orcinusa (i.e., *Horcynus Orca's* language). Again, this is why the author peremptorily rejected the idea of a glossary when the first two episodes were published by Vittorini in his literary review, *Il Menabò* in 1960. In a way, the lingua orcinusa can be neither translated nor glossed. The very beginning of the novel is written in a precise stylistic code which places emphasis at the same time on history and myth:

Il sole tramontò quattro volte sul suo viaggio e alla fine del quarto giorno, che era il quattro di ottobre del millenovecentoquarantatre, il marinaio, nocchiero semplice della fu regia Marina 'Ndrja Cambria arrivò al paese delle Femmine, sui mari dello scill'e cariddi.

Imbruniva a vista d'occhio e un filo di ventilazione alitava dal mare in rema sul basso promontorio. Per tutto quel giorno il mare si era allisciato ancora alla grande calmeria di scirocco che durava, senza mutamento alcuno, sino dalla partenza da Napoli: levante, ponente e levante, ieri, oggi, domani e quello sventolio flacco flacco dell'onda grigia, d'argento o di ferro, ripetuta a perdita d'occhio (2003, 3).<sup>16</sup>

In addition to being characterised by evident Dantesque overtones, the prose of the first two paragraphs is intensely poetic. Its rhythm seems to imitate the movements of the sea while giving precise spatiotemporal coordinates to the reader who, on another level, cannot help perceiving a tension

microscopic searching of each lexical item [...] After *Finnegans Wake* there is no writer who has been finer than D'Arrigo in tracing words to their phonic matrix and matter”.

<sup>16</sup> Trans: “The sun set four times over his journey and at the end of the fourth day, which was the fourth of October nineteen forty-three, the sailor, a simple helmsman of the ex-Royal Navy, 'Ndrja Cambria, arrived in the land of the Women, in the seas of *scylla 'n' charybdis*.”

It was becoming visibly darker and a wisp of a breeze from the ebbing sea breathed onto the low headland. All that day the sea had never ceased to be smooth in the great lull of the sirocco that lasted, with no change whatsoever, until the departure for Naples: east, west and east, yesterday, today, tomorrow and that feeble flapping of the grey wave, of silver or iron, repeating itself as far as the eye could see”. (Further references to this edition will be given in the text with page numbers following *HO*).

towards a mythical dimension connected with the hero's will and anxiety to leave behind him the nightmare of history. His one desire is to enter the seas of his lost innocence which, although still contaminated by the horrors of the Second World War, are also the seas in which, generation after generation, the prodigious harpooners of Charybdis have dominated and killed sea monsters as well as a rich variety of the cetological population.

### III.

That D'Arrigo was significantly interested in the *Odyssey* as a mythic frame for his narration is clear. *Horcynus Orca* draws from Homer not only the idea of homecoming, but also, rhizomatically, many situations, characters and, at least in one case, a distorted onomastics – indeed, the mythic sorceress Circe is adumbrated in the name of a prostitute, Ciccina Circé, who will ferry 'Ndrja Cambria from Scylla to Charydbis overnight. It is not a matter of imitation. Rather, considering the all-embracing role played by the Mediterranean in D'Arrigo's imagination, the *Odyssey* becomes naturally a text from which he astutely absorbs diegetic segments, poetic suggestions and, on a more general level, inspirational traces which the reader will find disseminated in many pages of *Horcynus Orca*. It is not easy to determine the extent to which the *Odyssey* framework descended from Joyce, since D'Arrigo always proclaimed his autonomy from any other work, while insisting on the fact that the very frequent references by critics and reviewers to Joyce's masterpiece were only a misleading obstacle which precluded a genuine appreciation of his novel.

Even though the complex intertextual organization of *Horcynus Orca* seems to form an opaque if not impenetrable screen to its interpretation, in my view, *Ulysses* may be regarded as D'Arrigo's meaning-generating hypotext as far as his novel's transformation into a parodic work is concerned. In other words, *Ulysses* becomes an intermediate and fundamental step to a modernist appropriation of Homer's poem to D'Arrigo's literary horizon, an active hypotext whose meaning is built on another hypotext (Homer's *Odyssey*). In this respect, the episode which focuses on Ciccina Circé may be a case in point. Indeed, in its oscillation between dream and reality, and its uninterrupted flow of images, which are more often founded on an extravagant excess than on logical diegetic order and a minimum of interpretive transparency, these pages are very close to the "Circe" chapter in *Ulysses*. As a

consequence of the armistice signed on 8th October 1943, 'Ndrja Cambria discovers that he has been turned into one of the many disoriented soldiers of the disbanded Italian army, cast adrift, without guidance, without any purpose but a longing to reach home.

After a tiring and dangerous journey, 'Ndrja arrives at Scylla from where he hopes to cross the strait and embrace his father Caitanello, an old and distracted Laërtes, lost in a world of his own. He also hopes to see his promised bride Marosa,<sup>17</sup> a waiting Penelope whose main occupation is to slowly embroider centrepieces with colourful fish which are unthreaded and destroyed “non appena Dio voltava gli occhi” (*HO*, 712).<sup>18</sup> But, despite his pressing desire, 'Ndrja seems to be gradually drifting into a dreamy nocturnal world, in which images of sea monsters and underworld cemeteries intertwine. The oneiric valence of his psychophysical condition is clearly expressed by the narrator: “Il suo sonno era talmente arretrato e risentito, che non appena gli abbassava un poco la guardia davanti, subito, come nuvolosità nera di vento, gli dilagava nella mente” (*HO*, 138).<sup>19</sup> After wandering for quite some time along the Scylla shore, anxious to reach his village with its many sea tales and be again in contact with the mythic world of the “pellisquadre” (i.e., harpooners), dolphins and killer whales, the protagonist meets Ciccina Circé, the dark woman who will ferry him to Charybdis. Her mysterious ways immediately capture the young man's attention:<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> The name Marosa is a feminilization of *maroso*, which means a heavy sea wave, a breaker – in Italian also *cavallone*, huge horse. Her life is connected with the sea and, therefore, it is no surprise that she likes to embroider fish. Her father, don Luigi Orioles, with some untranslatable punning, tells her: “Marosa ti chiami and maroso ti riveli, un cavallone che non c'è speranza che viene leggero” (*HO*, 339; trans: “Marosa is your name and as a breaker you reveal yourself: there is no hope that a breaker will arrive with a light foot”).

<sup>18</sup> Trans: “as soon as God turned his eyes”.

<sup>19</sup> Trans: “His sleep was so old and deep-seated that, as soon as it was less guarded, immediately, as a black cloudiness swept by wind, this sleep flooded into his mind”.

<sup>20</sup> Ciccina Circé represents an enigma for 'Ndrja Cambria: “«Ma allora, che andate a barattare in Sicilia? Per me, se vi devo dire, siete un vero mistero. Parola d'onore, mi piacerebbe capirvi...» «Ma voi non mi dovete capire» fece allora lei, parlando a labbro stretto, altezzosa. «Non dovete e non potete capire, pirdeu, pirdeu, che pretese, oh, veramente, pirdeu, pirdeu... » aggiunse in un mormorio”. (Trans: “«So what are you going to go trading in Sicily for? For me, I must confess, you are a real mystery. Upon my word, I wish I could understand you...» «But you don't have to understand me» she said, talking through pursed lips, haughtily. «You don't have to and you can't understand me, good God, good God, how presumptuous, oh, really, good God, good God...» she added with a murmur”).

C'era un che di sdegnoso e di rancoroso in questo suo figurare appartata dalle altre, come se lei non volesse avere nulla a che vedere e a che dividere con quelle. Di fronte a questa scongnita, mezza mutangola, nera e sigillata come una cozza, quelle sembravano limpide e trasparenti come acque pure (*HO*, 280)<sup>21</sup>.

More an enchantress than a woman, Ciccina Circé is a character whose words, lifestyle and sexuality, to a significant extent, seem to stem from a series of Joycean reverberations. D'Arrigo takes more than sixty pages to describe a crossing which culminates in their sexual intercourse during which, in a phantasmal atmosphere, 'Ndrja succumbs to the overflowing corporeality of the woman who seems to be taking him to Hades where he is metamorphosed into a ghost, sadly wandering between a dark and lifeless shore and a gaping underworld.

In many respects, the sailor's homecoming becomes a descent into the realm of the dead, in which he imaginatively experiences the iron in his soul before his sudden physical death at the end of the novel. Indeed, if it is true that the protagonist always hallucinates and his gaze gives shape to an invariable spectralization of whatever he sees, it is nonetheless true that his journey from Naples to Charybdis is marked by the same visionary and oneiric texture as the "Circe" episode in *Ulysses*. Significantly, while crossing the strait of Messina in Ciccina Circé's boat, she is perceived by 'Ndrja as a "deissa", a goddess, surfacing from the mythical context of the duemari, with long dark plaits and tiny peeling bells on their ends. But when the timeless dimension dwindles and historical events come to the fore, she reveals her identity: she is an experienced prostitute whose main occupation is to have sex with, and provide enjoyment for, the American soldiers in Messina. It is no surprise that the protagonist intends his homecoming to be a return to the pure and the innocent, whereas, once he is on the shore of his beloved village, he immediately understands that those values have been ousted by the impure and the corrupt. For 'Ndrja Cambria this is the beginning of his death.

Given the novel's densely linguistic and metalinguistic organization, each episode generates many levels of interpretation. Thus, the mythic method becomes an element of order in a text in which, at any given mo-

<sup>21</sup> Trans: "There was something rather scornful and rancorous in the way she held herself aloof from the other women, as if she wanted to have nothing to do with them and nothing to share with them. Compared to this almost voiceless stranger, who was as black and withdrawn as a mussel shell, the others seemed to him as clear and transparent as pure water".

ment, meaning seems on the verge of deflagration, in a dialectic oscillation between diegetic progression and the urgent need to deepen personal histories, to delve stratigraphically into individual or collective pasts, to analyse incidents and points of time, to catalogue private conversations and historical events, hypotheses of reality, actual and potential catastrophes, folktales, names and nicknames, protagonists and minor figures of a society which is doomed to end. In this procedural flow, we can hear the voice of Melville, but there is also much of Joyce's way of anatomizing and encoding the real. After recognizing his exhausted son on the threshold of his house, 'Ndrja's father confesses to him that he wishes to tell him "two simple words" but, in fact, what the old man narrates is the endless fairylike story of his love for 'Ndrja's dead mother which takes up many pages of *Horcynus Orca* – "Due parolette, e gli contò l'arcalamecca, le mille una notte" (*HO*, 420).<sup>22</sup> As I have said, D'Arrigo worked rigorously on the novel, which absorbed all his energy for decades. Accordingly, his ability to transform two words into a long story was by no means the result of a strategy based on an artful expansion of an initial narrative segment. Rather, D'Arrigo was very selective in his lexical elaboration and he did not hesitate to eliminate words, paragraphs, and entire pages in order to attain a perfect correspondence between what he had in mind and the words which were necessary to express such a concept. In this sense, Joyce represented for him a genius of words, an inimitable writer who had taught him that the real can be significantly "enriched and integrated" by the power of words.

#### IV.

"The ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawrack, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured sign. Limits of the diaphane" (*U*, 31): *Horcynus Orca* is a novel in which the shores are intensely semanticized just as they are in *Ulysses*. In the "Proteus" chapter, the line along which land and water meet is also the line capable of stimulating Stephen Dedalus's reflections on the visible and the audible. Joyce is aware that there is a peculiar connection between the strand

<sup>22</sup> Trans: "Two simple words and he narrated an astonishingly wondrous romance, the Arabian nights".



and human thought, considering that, vis-à-vis the sea horizon, one is inclined to turn one's own contingent condition into a timeless state whose effect conveys – as Stephen ironically declares – an epiphanic perception of eternity: “Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?” (*U*, 31). In brief, the marine setting, more often than not, involves a meditative attitude which, in Stephen's case, is also an invitation to move from the visible to the invisible.

Although D'Arrigo would never admit that his literary imagination was directly inspired by the “Proteus” episode, it is my contention that the many pages he devotes to represent a hesitant and tired 'Ndrja Cambrià who wanders like a tormented spirit on the Scylla strand, owe much to *Ulysses*. Indeed, the theme of the visible, whose ineluctability is voiced in the first line of “Proteus”, seems to find a perfect narrative correspondence particularly in the character of an old man with whom 'Ndrja engages in a long conversation on the shore of Scylla. This solitary man is called “lo spiaggiatore” simply because the strand is his home: he knows everything about the life on the shore since he has lived on that stretch of land for many years – he has always been there night and day, ready to observe, scrutinize and register every sort of event, the bloodshed of the second world war included. In many ways, *Horcynus Orca* is a novel made up of things seen which, in turn, become objects of narrations which are heard and narrated again by hearers in a continuous textual expansion: this is precisely what “the ineluctable modality of the visible” means for D'Arrigo. The duemari people see the “orcaferone” (i.e., the killer whale) and from this vision many prodigious hyperbolic stories stem and propagate between Scylla and Charybdis. Of the many characters of *Horcynus Orca*, the beach man may be deemed to be a subtle interpreter of the nuances of the visible, of which his daily experience of the visible also includes his obsession for the mysterious women who survive by smuggling goods between Scylla and Carybdis. These women are called “le femminote”, a matriarchal community whose role becomes extraordinarily relevant in terms of corporeality and sexuality in the beach man's imaginative drives. Simple and unemphatic as his words are, they often configure a philosophical meditation on the contrast between fiction and facts:

Però, sino a che punto era veritiero quel sentitodire? Che assegnamento si poteva fare sopra un sentito dire? Capace che d'origine era una la barca persa e poi, di bocca in bocca, ognuno ci aggiunse la barca sua, del suo sentitodire.

Doveva essere proprio una riffa, il sentitodire, aveva ragione lui, il vecchio spiaggiatore. Chissà quante volte in vita sua si era dovuto mettere sotto i piedi il sentitodire, per innalzare il solo vistocongiocchi, chissà quanti castelli di sabbia aveva parato il sentitodire, e poi magari aveva potuto spararli solo il vistocongiocchi. Si capiva che mostrasse tanto sprezzo per il sentitodire, che non si sognasse nemmeno di fondarsi su quello. Aveva 'sperienza di mondo, quel vecchio pezzentiere, doveva saperlo per scienza sua, scienza di spiaggiante, che sulle cose cogita e confronta, che nel sentitodire non c'è fondamento alcuno e che solo col vistocongiocchi uno si può dare una certa orientata e insomma, basarsi per questo o per quello (*HO*, 97).<sup>23</sup>

This epistemological lesson is what 'Ndrja receives from an old man who, in his detailed representation of the visible, will explain to the young man that, along with the words-heard and the seen-by-sight, there is a third possibility: the seen-by-the-mental-sight. It is this inner eye which allows him to penetrate the mystery of things and see what other people cannot see. Thus, in his lengthy narration, he will reveal to 'Ndrja that the war has transformed the sea into a hell by describing many sceneries of disheartening destruction and by preparing him for a marine setting dominated by death: “[...] l’ammazzammazza della ritirata fece arraggiare e fumigare di sangue e nafta lo scill’e cariddi, incatramato e rosseggiante come un mare d’inferno” (*HO*, 95).<sup>24</sup> On a more practical level, the old man tells 'Ndrja that if he wants to reach Charybdis there is only one possibility: one of the femminote could help him because they know how to cross the strait of Messina and, despite the risks of the war, they might safely take him to Sicily. But, more than this, it is important to notice how the pages focus-

<sup>23</sup> Trans: “And yet, to what extent were those words-heard truthful? How could you rely on words-heard? I bet at the very beginning it was only one boat that was lost and then, by word of mouth, everyone added his own boat, the one of his own words-heard. It must have really been a raffle, pure hearsay, he was right that old beach-man. Who knows how many times in his life he had to crush under his feet words-heard to promote instead only the things seen-by-sight, who knows how many sand castles had been protected by words-heard and which he then could shoot down only by what was seen-by-sight. You could tell he had a lot of scorn for words-heard, that he never dreamt of depending on them. He knew his way in the world, the old ragman did, he must have known from his own knowledge, from the knowledge of a beach man, who meditates on things and compares them, that there is no foundation whatsoever on words-heard and one can only find a certain orientation in what is seen-by-sight which, in brief, can help to understand this or that”.

<sup>24</sup> Trans: “[...] the endless slaughter of the retreat made the *scylla* ‘n’ *charybdis* vibrate and fume of blood and naphtha, tarred and reddened like an infernal sea”.

ing on the spiaggia seem dialogically connected with Stephen Dedalus's meditations on the perception of reality – when he closes his eyes in order to assume another sensory perspective on the surrounding world, it is the audible which posits its language.

Nevertheless, it seems only too obvious to conclude that, as a response to different sounds, the images Stephen configures are the result of something which is seen by the mind's eye. He declares that he is on Sandymount strand in order to read “the signature of all things” and to see their essence behind the surface, as Jacob Boehme had postulated in his writings.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the densely intertextual structure of the “Proteus” chapter, which is rich in allusions and quotations, it seems to me that D'Arrigo derived from these pages at least the epistemological approach to visual experience which characterizes the old man's melancholy discourse. After decades of observation and meditation, what he sees in all things is not the imprint of God, but simply an intimation of death. That is why he equates each sunset of his life to a revelation of mortality:

Si era posato nel tramonto, in quel momento di verità della sua vita, perché per nessuno, come per uno spiaggiatore, il tramonto sembrava cadere ogni volta non solo sul giorno breve di ore, ma su quello lungo della vita. E per lo spiaggiatore dev'essere ogni volta come trovarsi in punto di morte e ricordarsi del tempo vissuto e rivedere tutta la propria vita, come se il mare gliela rovesci, ondata su ondata, lì davanti, sulla riva, anni e anni, scoppi di spume che durano attimi (*HO*, 113).<sup>26</sup>

For the protagonist the old beach man is similar to a street storyteller, who is prone to fabulistic exaggeration and is practically capable of interpreting only the tragic side of events. Unsurprisingly, when he sees the spiaggia preparing himself for the night, he concludes that “faceva senso vedere come s'incarogniva alla calata del sole, come s'andava a insabbiare,

<sup>25</sup> Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) published *Signatura Rerum* in 1621. On this point see Gabel (1977), Jaurretche (1997, 88-90), and Terrinoni (2007, 167-72).

<sup>26</sup> Trans: “He had been gazing at the sunset, at that moment of truth in his life, because for no-one like a beach-man did the sun seem to go down every time not only on the short hours of the day but on the long day of his life. And every time for the beach-man it must have been like seeing himself on the point of death and remembering the time he had lived and looking back at his whole life, as if the sea were pouring it over him, wave after wave, there before him on the shore, year after year, bursts of foam lasting but short moments”.

preparandosi per la notte come per la sua morte” (*HO*, 111).<sup>27</sup> This is 'Ndrja Cambria's interpretation of what he sees at nightfall: he sees only images of death which are an anticipation of his own end. On a psychological level, this spectralization of the landscape is a creation of his thanatological response to the situations and the people he meets. In a sense, in *Horcynus Orca* the recurring signature of all things is death. It is no coincidence that the story of the killing of the orcaferone is paralleled with the story of the protagonist's death whose destiny seems to subsume the end of everything – the end of the long agony of the monstrous killer whale close to the Charybdis strand, the end of the harpooners' lore and work, the end of Sicily and of the whole world. Because of these and many other aspects connected with a strong biblical intertextuality, *Horcynus Orca* has been defined an apocalyptic novel.

It stands to reason that, from such an angle as well as many others, D'Arrigo's novel is very different from *Ulysses*. It would be, of course, simplistic to look for precise analogies. Undoubtedly, a level of convergence in both novels must be seen in the way Joyce and D'Arrigo regarded their respective works as if they were writing a Great Code for the literature to come. In a way, *Ulysses* and *Horcynus Orca* share a common ground because of their search for a unifying principle whose intent is to attain a powerful meaning. As such, this principle was motivated by a complexity and connectedness of vision which, on a metanarrative plane, implies an investigation into the word intended as an epiphanic expression of the text itself: Joyce and D'Arrigo share the same epistemological posture whose proto-model, according to Frye, is the Bible: “That unifying principle, for a critic, would have to be one of shape rather than meaning; or, more accurately, no book can have a coherent meaning unless there is some coherence in its shape” (Frye, 1983, xi). For this reason, in my view, any sort of definition, ostensibly correct and pertinent though it may be, becomes a prison-house for such novels as *Ulysses* and *Horcynus Orca*, that is, more a limitation than an introduction to their reading.

On the other hand, if we consider the viewpoint of the reception of *Horcynus Orca* in Italy, we cannot help noticing the extent to which, since its first publication, the novel was immediately associated with Joyce's *Ulysses*. From then on, in a sort of orgiastic chain reaction, no one has ever omitted

<sup>27</sup> Trans: “it made him shudder to see how he became angry at the sunset, how he started to sink into the sand, preparing himself for the night as if for his own death”.

to cite the Joycean model when reviewing or investigating the meaning of *Horcynus Orca*. However, this kind of critical response is not out of place. Given the explicit centrality of the Homeric model and the restricted time of the action (precisely four days), given also the remarkable elaboration of a unique and inimitable language, the association of D'Arrigo with Joyce is only too obvious. In my attempt to offer a closer look at the way in which *Ulysses* may have influenced *Horcynus Orca* it has been my primary purpose to avoid oversimplifications and shortcuts since, axiomatically, every masterpiece always goes far beyond influences and models in order to conquer a territory of its own.

### *Works cited*

- Cedola, Andrea (ed). 2012. "*Horcynus Orca*" di Stefano D'Arrigo. Pisa: ETS.
- Corti, Maria. 1975, 2009. "Dalla parola-cosa allo strabilio". In *Il Giorno* [26 febbraio 1975]; now in *L'illuminista*, 9, 25/26: Special issue on Stefano D'Arrigo, 452-453.
- D'Agostino, Nemi. 1977, 2009. "Prime perlustrazioni di *Horcynus Orca*". In *Nuovi Argomenti*, 56; now in *L'illuminista*, op. cit. 275-296.
- D'Arrigo, Stefano. 1960. *I fatti della fera*. In *Il Menabò*, 3, 7-109.
- . 2003. *Horcynus Orca*, Introduction by Walter Pedullà, Milan: Rizzoli.
- . 2009. "James Joyce", in *L'illuminista*, op. cit. 71-73.
- De Santis, Cristiana. 2002. "Intervista a Giuseppe Pontiggia". In Gatta, Francesca (ed). *Il mare di sangue pestato. Studi su Stefano D'Arrigo*. Soveria Mannelli (CZ): Rubbettino, 9-27.
- Frasnedi, Fabrizio. 2002. "La soglia". In *Il mare di sangue pestato*, op. cit. 35-76.
- Frye, Northrop. 1983. *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. London and Melbourne: Ark Editions.
- Gabel, Generose. 1977. *James Joyce, Jacob Boehme, and the Mystic Way*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.
- Gibson, Gibson (ed). 1996. *Joyce's "Ithaca"*. Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi.
- Hampson, Robert. 1996. "'Allowing for possible Error': Education and Catechism in 'Ithaca'". In *Joyce's "Ithaca"*, op. cit. 229-267.
- Jaurretche, Colleen. 1997. *The Sensual Philosophy: Joyce and the Aesthetics of Mysticism*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.
- Joyce, James. 1986. *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. Harmondsworth: Penguin in association with The Bodley Head.
- Lanuzza, Stefano. 1985, 2009. "Intervista a Stefano D'Arrigo". In *Scill'e Cariddi. Luoghi di "Horcynus Orca"*. Acireale: Lunarionuovo; ora in *L'illuminista*, op. cit., 49-55.

- Leavis, F. R. 1967. *“Anna Karenina” and Other Essays*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Melville, Herman. 1967. *Moby-Dick*. Ed. Harrison Hayford and Herschel Parker. New York and London: W. W. Norton.
- Mendelson, Edward. 1976. “Encyclopedic Narrative: From Dante to Pynchon”. In *Modern Language Notes* 91, 1267-1275.
- Nimis, Jean (ed). 2013. *Stefano D’Arrigo: un (anti)classico del Novecento?* In *Collezione de l’E.C.R.I.T.*, 13.
- Pedullà, Walter. 1983, 2009. “L’infinito passato di Stefano D’Arrigo”. In *Miti, finzioni e buone maniere di fine millennio*. Milan: Rusconi; now in *L’illuminista*, op. cit., 307-348.
- Sgavicchia, Siriana. 2012. “Note sul laboratorio del romanzo”. In *“Horcynus Orca” di Stefano D’Arrigo*, op. cit. 87-98.
- Sgavicchia, Siriana. 2013. “Stefano D’Arrigo e la scrittura di un capolavoro”. In *Stefano D’Arrigo: un (anti)classico del Novecento?*, op. cit., 13-30.
- Terrinoni, Enrico. 2007. *Occult Joyce. The Hidden in Ulysses*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.