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On the Narrative Style of "Penelope" in *Ulysses* from an Inter-textual Perspective

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Abstract

When commenting on his own masterpiece, *Ulysses*, James Joyce once said that the value of this novel was its new style. From his preparation for writing this novel in 1907 to its publication in 1922, Joyce spent 15 years working on his different styles for the 18 episodes; therefore, he was confident that this novel would keep scholars busy for several centuries to explore his true meaning. Before reading this novel, readers are prepared for the kaleidoscopic narrative features; however, it still seems to many readers that the narrative style of the last episode of *Ulysses*, "Penelope", is abrupt, and the unpunctuated stream of consciousness of Molly without any interruption for more than 60 pages appears to come from nowhere. Actually, Joyce has dropped some clues in the previous episodes to indicate the making of the narrative style of this last episode. This paper aims to analyze the relation of "Penelope" and such episodes as "Proteus" and "Wandering Rocks" from the perspective of intertextuality in the hope of showing that the narrative style of this episode is the result of the evolution of some structurally important episodes.

Keywords

Inter-textual perspective; narrative style; "Penelope"; *Ulysses*

1. Introduction

Although Arnold Bennett thought that "the best portions of *Ulysses*, chiefly Circe and Penelope… were superb, magical even" (Ellmann, 1983, p. 532), yet the fact that "Penelope" "has no beginning, middle or end" as indicated by Joyce(Laurence, 1981, p. 203) and that at the proof stage of the publication process, Joyce revised almost one-third of this novel by adding and arranging codependent details throughout the novel (Hastings, 2022, p. 8), and that the unpunctuated episode lasts for 62 pages long really takes many readers by surprise. Even if reading is not for the sole purpose of finding the hidden meaning the text may possess (Piglia & Clayton, 2024), it is still hoped that by careful reading, readers can have a better understanding of the novel. Speaking of *Ulysses*, Marilyn French once said, it "is an epic of relativity" (1982, p. 252). By "epic of relativity" she refers to the fact that Joyce plays with language, which issues in the shake-up of all the obvious certitude and in order to find the reality, readers must cut through the seeming chaos until they reach the essence of this novel. Nevertheless, the phrase "epic of relativity" can be understood from other perspectives as well: there exist certain hidden relations between each seemingly separate episode and these hidden relations make it a necessity for the narrative style of each episode. This paper is aimed to focus on the narrative style of the last episode of *Ulysses* and the foreshadowing in the previous episodes: "Proteus"—the ending episode of the first part, "Wandering Rocks"—the middle episode of the whole novel, so as to show the inter-textual web in this novel.

2. "Telemachus" and "Penelope"

Joyce's precise organization of time, "place and movement and the explorations into psychological realism, are

unquestionably fundamental aspects of this novel and indissolubly linked with Joyce's literary achievements" (Mészáros & Vanderbeke, 2021, p. 93). With regard to the time when each episode takes place, the ending episode nearly joins hands with the opening episode. In the last episode, Molly complains about Bloom' s coming home at four in the morning; it must have happened on the early morning of the next day, that is, June 17. And a few hours later, the young hero of the novel, Stephen—Telemachus—started his journey on June 16, so temporarily the end of the novel connects the beginning of the novel but with a difference, in that the new morning not only starts a different day, but also closes tie with a deep night. This difference enables the narrative style of the last episode to turn the initial style (the third person narration getting an upper hand over the interior monologue) inside out and wipe out the third person narration. The stream of consciousness overturns the dominant position of the third person narration and when it puts everything under control, it sends the conventional mode of narration to early grave. This change not only takes the mornings "old" and "new" but also the "deep night" into account. The third person narration used to offer the reliable information to the readers; however, in the succeeding episodes after "Circe", it becomes unreliable, which prompts the interior monologue to make a final decision to remove this stumbling block. Various narrative styles of wandering are employed to narrate the twelve hours in nine episodes from noon to midnight (from "Aeolus" to "Circe"), while the initial style or altered initial style are adopted for the twelve hours in nine episodes (from "Telemachus" to "Hades" and from "Eumaeus" to "Penelope") from previous morning to noon and from midnight to a new morning. As is shown, such an arrangement seems to take on a chiasmatic structure, in terms of narration. This chiasmus makes a sense of circular movement in "Aeolus" and "Sirens" episodes but when the novel is regarded as a whole, it gives a sense of spiral movement. Moreover, when the last episode begins, it is already deep night as indicated by Bloom's imagination, "Martin Cunningham (in bed), Jack power (in bed), Simon Dedalus (in bed).... Paddy Dignam (in the grave)" (Joyce, 1996, p. 827). At that time, there is almost no external event to interrupt the flow of the consciousness; hence, the consciousness meets no obstruction and even the punctuation marks have to efface themselves to give way to the deluge. In a word, the narrative style of the last episode is also the result of Joyce's strict stylistic correspondence to the temporal schema and the result of the structural balance.

In terms of the place where each episode proceeds, *Ulysses* moves back towards its beginning. In "Telemachiad", there is a tendency of moving outdoors: the scene of "Telemachiad" changes from the "Tower" to "school" to "Strand" while the scene of "Nostos" moves from "shelter" to "house" to "bed"—a tendency of moving indoors. The outdoor tendency makes it possible for Stephen to be alone and to have his consciousness flow as freely as possible and this is also true of the indoor tendency. The inward tendency when joined to the beginning of the novel is identical with the outward tendency in that they form a circle and the symmetrical rule inevitably makes each of the three episodes in the last part find its counterpart in the first part of the novel; thus, "Eumaeus" corresponds to "Telemachus", "Ithaca" to "Nestor" and "Penelope" to "Proteus". As a result, the end of the "Telemachiad" joining momentarily Stephen's physical and mental wandering in the morning precedes the wandering mind of Molly unlimited by time or place late into the night.

3. "Wandering Rocks" and "Penelope"

In novels, the goal is not explanation but rather exploration, a process of unfolding (Lukes, 2022, p. 352). This part is devoted to explore and unfold the inter-textual relationship in terms of structure, theme and characters of these two episodes. *Ulysses* is a novel full of wanderers. Bloom, the wandering Jew and Stephen, the searching artist cover many miles in the day, while Molly wanders in her stream of consciousness at night, and so do many of the other characters.

3.1 Structural and Thematic Features Within "Wandering Rocks"

"Wandering Rocks" that ends the first half of the novel gives 19 vivid sections of the descriptions of the activities of some Dubliners. A close observation will render the fact that some of the elements of this episode are related to other elements inside or outside their respective sections. For example, in the first section, there is a pair of relative elements:

> Father Conmee smiled and nodded and smiled and walked along Mountjoy square east.
>
> Mr. Denis J. Maginni, professor of dancing, &c., in silk hat, slate frockcoat with silk facings, white kerchief tie, tight lavender trousers, canary gloves and pointed patent boots, walking with grave deportment most respectfully took the curbstone as he passed lady Maxwell at the corner of Dignam's court. (Joyce, 1996, p. 282)

The Dignam's court serves to link these two events. Father Conmee is attending to the affairs of the Dignam family immediately after the funeral of Mr. Dignam, while Maginni is walking past the inanimate Dignam court with indifference. Father Conmee's smiling is a sign of making himself agreeable because he is a priest while Maginni's walking and dressing are associated with that of self-advertisement since he is a professor of dancing. Another example of the same kind is "he [the sailor] swung himself violently forward past Katey and Boody Dedalus, halted and growled 'home and beauty'"; "J. J. O'Molloy's white careworn face was told that Mr. Lambert was in the warehouse with a visitor" (Joyce, 1996, p. 289). Both of the sailor and J. J. O'Molloy are begging. The sailor with one leg bitten off is stripped of the ability of working on ship and of making a living by himself while J. J. O'Molloy's predicament serves him right because he dwindles his possessions away and has to be in the pitfall of debts.

Some examples will be given to further illustrate the intersecting relations. This episode begins with Father Conmee, who travels by train and on foot to the suburbs, first to the east and then to the north east, and it ends with the Viceroy, who travels by carriage from his lodge in Phoenix Park roughly east to open a charity bazaar. Father Conmee's route goes parallel at first, and then turns at right angle with the route of Viceroy. Father Conmee and the viceroy represent church and state respectively. In history, church and state had common interests for some time, but they separated from each other as early as the 16th century in England. In section five Boylan "walked here and there in new tan shoes about the fruit smelling shop, lifting fruits, young juicy crinkled and plump red tomatoes, sniffing smells" (Joyce, 1996, p. 291); in section 10, Bloom "read the other title: *Sweets of Sin*. More in her line. Let us see" (Joyce, 1996, p. 302). Both Boylan and Bloom, selecting presents for Molly, find immediate sexual stimulation. Boylan finds interest in the shop-girl and Bloom is aroused by the content of his chosen book. Irony goes with these two actions: Boylan flirts with the shop-girl when he is on his way to Bloom's house to have sex with Molly while Bloom, though having been aware of his wife's appointment with Boylan that afternoon, chooses books attentively so as to cater to the taste of his disloyal wife. There are many kinds of relation like this in "Wandering Rocks" both within a section and between sections. Since "Wandering Rocks" ends the first half of the book, this kind of structural balance must find its echoes in "Penelope", which ends the whole book.

3.2 Structural and Thematic Features Within "Penelope"

In "Penelope", there are 8 sentences altogether: the first four are principally governed by the mature Molly, 33 years old while the second four are loosely controlled by young Molly, 15-18 years old. The first sentence corresponds somewhat with the fifth, the second with the sixth, the third with the seventh and the fourth with the eighth. To some extent, each sentence is a unit whose ending echoes its beginning. Following is a sentence by sentence analysis to prove the conclusion mentioned above.

The first sentence begins with Molly's response to Bloom's demand, "to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs" (Joyce, 1996, p. 871). This demand reminds Molly of her stay in City Arms hotel where Mrs. Riordan is often in her bathing suits and lownecks. Molly suspects that Bloom has got some affairs with some women, because she once found that Bloom tried to cover a letter he was writing when she came into the room. Molly describes her affairs with Boylan and she is frightened that they might be punished. However, compared with Mr. Purefoys who makes his wife pregnant once a year and Mr. Breen who "used to go to bed with his muddy boots on" (Joyce, 1996, pp. 879-880), Molly believes Bloom is much better as a decent husband. The first sentence ends with the husband murderer, Mrs. Maybrick, whose punishment, Molly hopes, will not be hanging. From Molly's attitude toward Mrs. Maybrick, we can feel Molly's potential fear of the punishment on her and Boylan because she is aware of the existence of her husband, Bloom.

The second sentence starts with Boylan's talking of the shape of Molly's feet, mixed with Bloom's courtship of Molly, and continues with her remembrance of her other lovers, such as Bartell d'Arcy, Gardener, Henny Doyle and Boylan, and ends with Mr. Cuffe, Bloom's former employer, whom Molly tries to tempt but unsuccessfully in order to get Bloom promoted to be the manager. Most part of this sentence is devoted to the flirtation between Molly and Boylan with Bloom inserted here and there in her stream of consciousness to form a contrast.

The third sentence begins with Boylan's sucking Molly's breasts and Molly's meditation on the beauty of women and the attraction of women's breasts to men, mixed with a recollection of Molly's breastfeeding Milly and Bloom's sucking her breasts to wean Milly, and ends with the pleasure she enjoys during the intercourse with Boylan and the counting of the days before they meet next time. In the whole sentence, Molly's consciousness focuses on Boylan because of the sexual pleasure she has enjoyed and the same pleasure she will enjoy when they meet next time.

The fourth sentence starts with the whistling of a distant train. The heat in the daytime and the rain after the heat

remind Molly of her life in Gibraltar. Molly's consciousness wanders from the letter written to her by her father's friend, Mrs. Stanhope and their close relation, her friendship with Hester, through the guns' bursting and booming in Gibraltar to a recalling of her father's friend, Captain Groves. Mrs. Stanhope's letter then leads Molly to think of her last letter from Mrs. Dwenn and her complaint of having to answer the letter. This reluctance to answer the letter reminds her of a letter of condolence she once wrote under the guidance of Bloom. Besides, Molly's thoughts stay a moment on the card and letter from Milly to Bloom. The sentence ends with Molly's expectation of a love letter from Boylan and how she will answer his letter. "Letter" has been the key word in this sentence and Molly's consciousness never leaves the letter and her life in Gibraltar too long. The fact that the life and friends in Gibraltar occupy the main body of this sentence foretells the reader that the next four sentences may be fully devoted to the young Molly. The distant train ends sentence five.

Sentence five begins with Molly's first letter from Mulvey and a passionate description of her love affair with him in Gibraltar, the departure of him and the ring from him. Mulvey is the center of this sentence but several other persons appear in this sentence as well: Gardener (killed in a war in South Africa), Bloom and Boylan. Molly is proud of her rich experience with men, "I knew more about men and life when I was 15 than theyll all know at 50" (Joyce, 1996, p. 905). The sentence ends with Molly's desire for an intercourse with Boylan and her farting. The distant train, echoing the train in the beginning of sentence four, is like her train of memory that brings her back to her adolescence in Gibraltar. In this sentence, Molly's present lover in Dublin echoes her first lover in Gibraltar.

The sixth sentence begins with Molly's account of her own life in Gibraltar and her complaint against Bloom about his coming home late at four in the morning and her disappointment at Bloom for his being unable to fulfill many promises. A part of this sentence centers upon Milly and Molly's dissatisfaction with Milly's behaviors, though Molly admits Milly is like her when she was at Milly's age. Then Molly wishes to have a servant but she is afraid that Bloom may flirt with the servant. Molly grumbles about Bloom's climbing over the railings and taking Stephen into their dirty kitchen. The sentence ends with Molly's menstruation, which probably means that she can do nothing intimate with Boylan when they meet next Monday.

Sentence seven begins with Molly's suspicion that she has got something wrong inside, her going to see a doctor for women's diseases and her recollection of her 16-year married life, her dissatisfaction with Bloom and her suspicion that Bloom may have some lovers. Then Molly thinks of Stephen and hopes to be a lover of Stephen. This sentence ends with Molly's worry about Bloom. Therefore, somehow Bloom manages to occupy an important position in Molly's mind. Molly's irregular menstruation indicates she is old and in comparison with Stephen who is in his early 20s, Molly is reluctant to abandon Bloom.

The eighth sentence begins with Molly's accusation of Boylan's lack of manners, and refinement, and Bloom's coldness in marital relation with her. Bloom's demand to have his breakfast in bed in the morning gives rise to Molly's thoughts of the importance of female care and the lack of female care in turn causes Molly to think of poor Stephen and Molly's plan of caring for him. Then Molly's consciousness comes back to Bloom again: she agrees to prepare for his breakfast. This sentence ends with Bloom's proposal to Molly and Molly's mixing up of Mulvey's kiss under the Moorish wall with Bloom's proposal—the two most important events in her life, and finally her "Yes" to Bloom's proposal puts an end to this sentence.

The above analysis shows that the first four sentences mainly deal with mature Molly and the last four sentences largely deal with the young Molly and to some extent, the ending of each sentence echoes its own beginning.

3.3 Character Reappearance Within Each Episode and Between These Two Episodes

In "Wandering Rocks", more than fifty Dubliners are described and most of them appear at least twice. For example, the character Father Cowley appears two times: "Hello, Simon, Father Cowley said" (Joyce, 1996, p. 308); "Why then not much, Father Cowley said. I'm barricaded up, Simon, with two men prowling around the house trying to effect an entrance" (Joyce, 1996, p. 313). Other characters such as Simon Dedalus, Dilly Dedalus, Almidano Artifoni (Joyce, 1996, pp. 292, 321, 328), Master Patrick Dignam (Joyce, 1996, pp. 302, 322, 328) and so on appear three times. All characters who appear in episodes before "Wandering Rocks" reappear in this episode and they at least appear twice in this episode. These two discoveries foreshadow the narrative style of "Penelope" that ends the whole novel. In "Penelope", a little more than fifty characters turn up in Molly's flow of consciousness and most of the main characters in "Wandering Rocks" reappear in "Penelope". The main characters in each section of "Wandering Rocks" are as follow:

Section 1: Father John Conmee goes a long way to handle the matter of the Dignams;

Section 2: Corny Kelleher, an undertaker, talks with Constable 57C;
Section 3: A one-legged sailor begs money along the streets;
Section 4: The poor Dedalus girls fail to pawn shirts for money and have got almost nothing to eat;
Section 5: Blazes Boylan buys some fruits in a shop for Molly;
Section 6: Stephen talks with his singing teacher, Almidano Artifoni;
Section 7: Miss Dunne, Boylan's secretary, thinks about her employer's love affairs and types and answers the phone from him;
Section 8: Ned Lambert shows the historical Abbey of St. Mary to the Rev. Hugh C. Love;
Section 9: Nosey Flynn, Lenehan and M'Coy admire a gadget invented by Tom Rochford; Lenehan and M'Coy talk about horse racing and the Blooms;
Section 10: Bloom buys books in a bookstore for Molly;
Section 11: Dilly Dedalus asks for more money from her reluctant father, Mr. Dedalus;
Section 12: Mr. Kernan pleased with the order he books, walks along several streets;
Section 13: Stephen meets his sister Dilly at the bookcart;
Section 14: Father Cowley comes across Simon Dedalus first and then they go with Ben Dollard to the Rev. Mr. Love's;
Section 15: Martin Cunningham goes to subsheriff's to raise money for the Dignams;
Section 16: Mulligan and Haines talk about Stephen's failure to becoming a poet;
Section 17: Almidano Artifoni strides past many streets and places;
Section 18: Young Dignam, carrying his newly-bought pork-steak, walks along the roads, thinking about his poor dead father;
Section 19: The Viceroy is greeted by almost all the characters in this episode on his way to the metropolis.

In "Penelope", Molly remembers she has thrown "the penny to that lame sailor 'for England home and beauty'" (Joyce, 1996, p. 884) and she recollects that she sees "Dedalus girls coming from school" (Joyce, 1996, p. 884). Lenehan appears when Boylan curses him on account of his wrong tip. M'Coy appears along with Tom Kernan and Martin Cunningham when Molly recalls the paper Boylan buys back. Simon Dedalus appears twice: "such a criticiser with his glasses up with his tall hat on him at the cricket match and a great big hole in his sock" (Joyce, 1996, p. 913); "he was always turning up half screwed singing the second verse first the old love is the new was one of his so sweetly sang..." (Joyce, 1996, pp. 920-921). Ben Dollard turns up when Molly thinks of his bad voice "Ben Dollard base barreltone the night he borrowed the swallowtail to sing out of..." (Joyce, 1996, p. 920). As for the Dignams, Molly has "poor Paddy Dignam...what are his wife and 5 children going to do unless he was insured" (Joyce, 1996, p. 920). For the absentees, Molly has persons to replace: Molly herself is about to replace Stephen's singing teacher Artifoni and Father Cowley is substituted for Dean of Bishop (Joyce, 1996, p. 874) and the Viceroy is substituted by Mayor Val Dillon. Of course, Leopold Bloom, Blazes Boylan and Stephen Dedalus are the main characters centering around whom Molly's consciousness flows on and on. Even the unknown person in brown mackintosh has this counterpart in a strange person: "that gentleman of fashion staring down at me with his glasses" (Joyce, 1996, p. 914). In addition, some minor characters appear on Molly's mind more than once, let alone the three major characters. For example, Gardner appears three times: "I lifted them a bit and touched his trousers outside the way I used to Gardner" (Joyce, 1996, p. 883); "I hate the mention of politics after the war that Pretoria... where Gardner Lieut Stanley G. 8th Bn 2nd East Lancs Rgt of enteric fever he was a lovely fellow in khaki and just the right height over me..." (Joyce, 1996, p. 886); "he [Melvey] gave me that clumsy Claddagh ring for luck that I gave Gardner going to south Africa where those Boers killed him with their war and fever..." (Joyce, 1996, p. 904).

3.4 Inter-textual Features of These Two Episodes

In "Penelope", there are lots of echoes of "Wandering Rocks" both structurally and thematically. Their similarities can be summed up from four respects: firstly, the self-balance of each section in "Wandering Rocks" is counter-balanced by the echoes of the beginning and ending of each sentence in "Penelope"; secondly, the inter-sectional balance of the former episode is counter-balanced by the echoes of the first four sentences and the second four sentences; thirdly, the cluster of persons in the former episode is a summary of the episodes before it while the latter episode is a summary of the main characters of the whole novel and Molly's thirty three-year-old life; fourthly, the repetitious appearance of characters in the former episode finds its twin sister in the latter episode. Based on the four points, it can be concluded that "Wandering Rocks" has laid a solid foundation for the narrative style of the last episode "Penelope".

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this paper analyzes the evolution of the narrative style of "Penelope" from the relation between "Proteus" and "Penelope", "Wandering Rocks" and "Penelope" from an inter-textual perspective of the struggling dominance of the third person narration and the character's interior monologue, from the perspective of the characters involved in both the third person narrative and the interior monologue and from the perspective of structure and content of the episodes. From the analysis, we can come up with a conclusion that the author has dropped enough clues in the previous episodes to prepare the reader for the unpunctuated, capitalized letter-free, 62-page long, consciousness of Molly, the third leading character of the novel.

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