Maps of Time: Rhetoric of Place in *Ulysses*, by James Joyce

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Abstract

Ulysses' episodes feature a correspondence with figures or events in the history of the *Odyssey*, with the sole exception of the central episode, "Wandering Rocks", whose title alludes to a possible voyage by Odysseus that does not take place. As for Odysseus in Homer, also for Joyce's main characters (Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus) "Wandering Rocks" designates a non-episode, as their participation in it is (almost) non-existent. Without a Homeric parallelism "Wandering Rocks" has thus for sole reference the city of Dublin, where a lot of characters move and meet and who all together only relate to each other by sharing the same geographical space. In this article I try to show the existence of rhetorical similitudes between the use of Dublin's map (or geography) in the representation of community in "Wandering Rocks" and the use of the character's interiority (or psychology) in the representation of consciousness in many of the other episodes of the novel.

Keywords: Joyce; *Ulysses*; "Wandering Rocks"; Rhetoric; Maps

Resumo

Os episódios de *Ulysses* apresentam uma correspondência com figuras ou eventos na história da *Odisseia*, com a única exceção do episódio central, "Wandering Rocks", cujo título alude a uma possível viagem de Ulisses que não chega a ter lugar. Tal como para Ulisses em Homero, também para as personagens principais de Joyce (Leopold e Molly Bloom e Stephen Dedalus) "Wandering Rocks" designa um não-episódio, já que a sua participação é aqui (quase) não existente. Sem paralelismo homérico, "Wandering Rocks" tem assim por único referente a cidade de Dublin, onde se movimentam e cruzam um grande número de personagens no seu conjunto apenas relacionadas entre si pela partilha de um mesmo espaço geográfico. Neste artigo tento mostrar a existência de similitudes retóricas entre o uso do mapa (da geografia) de Dublin na representação da comunidade de "Wandering Rocks" e o uso da interioridade (da psicologia) da personagem na representação da consciência em muitos outros episódios do romance.

Palavras-chave: Joyce; *Ulysses*; "Wandering Rocks"; retórica; mapas

At the beginning of Canto XII of the *Odyssey*, when Ulysses and his men prepare to leave Circe's island, the sorceress informs and advises the hero about the difficulties he will encounter in continuing his journey to Ithaca. She tells him that after rowing beyond the Mermaids, Ulysses will have to choose between two alternative routes: one of them requires the passage through the Planctae, as the "blissful gods" (Fagles 273) call the wandering rocks that had only once been transposed by humans, during the return trip of Jason at the the command of the Argo; the other route involves taking the risks anticipated by Circe if the trip passes through Scylla and Charybdis. Ulysses will opt for the second alternative, so the Planctae, or wandering rocks, end up constituting only a mythical reference that in the *Odyssey* never comes to give way to any episode.

James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* is composed of eighteen episodes organised in three parts. In their Homeric parallelism, the first of these parts corresponds to the Telemachia or voyages of Telemachus, the second to the voyages of Ulysses (the Odyssey proper), and the third to the Nostos or homecoming. The arrangement is symmetrical: three episodes in Part I, twelve in Part II and three in Part III. Each of the episodes is known for a title referring to characters, places or events in the *Odyssey.*[1] These titles, or at least some of them, seem to have been taken not directly from Homer's work but from his study by Victor Bérard, entitled *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée* and published in 1902-3, a work Joyce recommended to those who wished for a more complete knowledge of the *Odyssey.*[2]

Although there is no direct correspondence between the titles of the *Ulysses* episodes and their Homeric referents, neither in terms of their importance in the story nor even in terms of the simple narrative sequence, the titles however address, *almost always*, some figure or event in the stories of Telemachus, Ulysses or Penelope. These figures and events can contribute in their turn to the meanings of figures or events in the stories of Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom or Molly Bloom, the three modern characters who, in Joyce's novel, without knowing it, echo and renew that mythical triad. And I say "almost always" because in all eighteen titles there is one that does not refer to anything that has happened in the *Odyssey*: it is the title of episode number 10, "Wandering Rocks", which refers precisely to that alternative route to which Circe alludes but which Ulysses does not take. In the story of the *Odyssey* the Planctae, or wandering rocks, constitute a non-episode. In this paper I'll focus my attention on this episode.

Let me start with a brief presentation. At the end of the previous episode ("Scylla and Charybdis") we are exactly in the middle of the novel in terms of the narrative organisation, since this is the ninth in the eighteen-episode sequence. "Wandering Rocks" is therefore the tenth episode, and, contrary to what happened in all the previous ones and will happen in all of the following, here we do not come across an event, or situation, involving any of the three main characters. Instead we will find in the initial pages of the episode the minute account of Father Conmee's journey, partly on foot and partly on public transport, on a route through the city of Dublin with a view to intercede with a friend in favour of a young man who had become orphaned. This episode is divided into nineteen short sections, and Father Conmee, who had only been named in passing in episode 5 and will not play a relevant role again in the rest of the novel, literally occupies the entire first section (in which approximately half of the circa fifty paragraphs begins with the words "Father Conmee"). The last section is in turn occupied with the route taken by the Viceroy, Earl of Dudley, on his journey by carriage from his official residence to the opening ceremony of a kermess for financial support to a Dublin hospital. In the intermediate sections we find many of the characters that appear throughout the novel, almost all of them on the move, while a rigorous location in the topography of Dublin is provided for each of them.

The multiple movements of the inhabitants of Dublin are thus framed by these two paths, which never intersect, from representatives respectively of Rome and London, of ecclesiastical power and political power, that is, of those instances that in the universe of this novel represent the powers that oppress Ireland: as if replicating the mythical image of those two huge rocks that when they clashed against each other would destroy any vessel that risked to pass between them and that only with Athena’s help were passed by the Argonauts. According to Victor Bérard, these "clashing rocks", the Greek Symplegades mentioned in the account of the voyage of Jason but not in the Homeric journey of Ulysses, were assimilated by poets and rhetoricians of later times to the Odyssean Planctae: a confusion apparently assumed by Joyce when in notes on the novel dated 1921 (the episode "Wandering Rocks" had been written two to three years earlier) gives the indication that the Symplegades correspond in this episode to "groups of citizens". Indeed, the diverse groups of citizens who are successively paraded in the many sections of this episode might correspond to the multiple "wandering rocks" through which the ship Argos is guided by the Nereids, but would hardly be comparable to the two "clashing rocks" that crush whatever dare pass between them.

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Frank Budgen, a friend of Joyce's during his Zurich years (1915-19), said that "Joyce wrote the *Wandering Rocks* with a map of Dublin before him on which were traced in red ink the paths of the Earl of Dudley and Father Conmee," adding that Joyce “calculated to a minute the time necessary for his characters to cover a given distance of the city." I transcribe this quote from an essay by Clive Hart (199), who took the trouble to replicate on the streets of Dublin the paths of about three dozen characters, thus confirming the topographic and chronological rigour of Budgen’s information. The accuracy of the characters' movements in time and space on that day of June 16, 1904 in the city of Dublin is a compositional mark of *Ulysses*, and the present episode seems in this respect to be a kind of a miniature where those formal processes of the novel are highlighted, being worked up as if in filigree. For this centralization of the narrative attention in certain compositional elements contributes decisively the fact that the action of the main characters is minimal in this episode, making the development of the plot therefore small, almost non-existent: as if in the exact measure as the corresponding episode in the *Odyssey* is also non-existent, a non-episode. Attesting to this character of the sequence is also the fact that the narrator does not seem to have here any memory of the narrative, not even recognizing the figure of Leopold Bloom when he first appears, in section 5, “[a] darkbacked figure under Merchants’ arch" (Joyce 291).

Joyce's father once said that if his son “was dropped in the middle of the Sahara, he’d sit, be God, and make a map of it” (quoted in Ellmann 28). We must qualify Joyce's interest in cartography: it is not an interest in maps like that revealed by his contemporary Joseph Conrad, whose narrator and at times alter-ego Marlow states: "Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia and lose myself in all the glories of exploration" (Conrad 8). The beginnings of the 20th century culminate a long tradition of the map as an instrument of the empire, or of cartography as a discourse of territorial naming, identification and appropriation, and it is at this culminating point of the tradition that we must insert Conrad. However, without excluding the possible presence of this political dimension of the map in *Ulysses*, Joyce's interest as stated in his father’s words seems rather to reside in the possibilities of narrative representation that the map offers, above all in terms of detail and in terms of scale. It seems thus to reside in what Denis Wood designated as the "rhetorical code” of the map: “it is the

rhetorical code that sets the tone that . . . most completely orients the map in its culture, pointing . . . to itself, to its *author*, to the society that produced it" (Wood 113-4).

Ulysses' Homeric parallelisms have been studied in cartographic terms, as documented by Harry Levin's emblematic statement according to which in this work "the myth of the *Odyssey* is superimposed upon the map of Dublin" (Levin 76). The most meticulous comparison of these texts in geographical terms was made by Michael Seidel, who in *Epic Geography: James Joyce's Ulysses* (1976) seeks to demonstrate how Stephen's and Bloom's journeys approximately overlap Telemachus' and Ulysses' travels as these are cartographed by Victor Bérard. According to Seidel these routes follow even a common geographical axis, southeast-northwest, which would be further proof of Joyce's concern in establishing a thorough correspondence, also cartographic, between the two works. This reduction of the O*dyssey's* epic journeys to the triviality of U*lysses* characters' journeys in Dublin necessarily leads to a comic effect, as in the generality of Homeric parallelisms in this novel, be it at the level of the characters, of the intrigue, of the themes, or of the motives. We must not forget that Ulysses is a comic novel, cartography being thus a rhetorical component of the mock-heroic mode adopted by Joyce.

But to the extent that there is no correspondence in Ulysses' travels, the episode "Wandering Rocks" seems to be out of this rhetorical dimension of Homeric parallelism. Without mythical correspondence the geography of the episode has no referents other than the city of Dublin and its inhabitants (which does not mean that there is no place to the comic, but created in other ways). The community in "Wandering Rocks" is therefore just a geographical community. Joyce is careful about giving in detail the location of actions and characters in this episode because that's the only thing they share, a space that the rhetorical use of cartography institutes as a place. From section to section the narrative of "Wandering Rocks" randomly jumps from one point to another on the map while the narrator tells us of what is visible and audible at this point. The community, be it as in this case the city or the nation it represents, exists as a fiction supported by a map. It might be said that this episode carries out the theorization of Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* at its two fundamental levels: it is an imagined community, which only exists in the space of a map *and* in the time of a calendar (and, in this case, of a clock).

A typical form of representation of the stream of consciousness in *Ulysses* consists of an inner discourse that implies what could be called a "tectonic" understanding of consciousness, according to which it consists of a surface, a kind of

language layer likely to be articulated in a discursive linearity, and depth zones, implicit on the surface but which do not appear on it directly. Let's look at a well-known passage, taken from the opening of episode 3, “Proteus”:

> 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 signs. Limits of the diaphane. But he adds: in bodies. Then he was aware of them bodies before of them coloured. How? By knocking his sconce against them, sure. Go easy. Bald he was and a millionaire, *maestro di color che sanno*. Limit of the diaphane in. Why in? Diaphane, adiaphane. If you can put your five fingers through it, it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see. (Joyce 45).

In this excerpt of Stephen's inner monologue (a character very given to philosophical ramblings), the third person that is more than once used ("he") refers to Aristotle, but his name never appears for the simple reason that it never occurs to Stephen's consciousness, that is, although implied the name never comes to the surface. Stephen thinks "but he adds" and not "but Aristotle adds", because the identity of the philosopher is present in his mind before, or (to keep the tectonic metaphor) below a discursive articulation always deferred from its referents in the associative sequence.

This use of the inner discourse is very scarce in "Wandering Rocks”. Instead, Joyce uses in this episode a process of representation of time very peculiar, which does not appear in the rest of the novel: it is the use of interpolations or intrusions, consisting of short narrative segments referring to events supposedly simultaneous to the action being narrated but occurring in a different place in the city. Let's look at an example, taken from two of the sections of this episode (the highlights in bold are mine):

> (*from Section 1*)
> Father Conmee, reading his office, watched a flock of muttoning clouds over Rathcoffey. **His thinsocked ankles were tickled by the stubble of Clongowes field**. He walked there, reading in the evening, and heard the cries of the boys’ lines at their play . . . (Joyce 287)
>
> (*from Section 4*)
> Katey and Boody Dedalus shoved in the door of the close-steaming kitchen.
> —Did you put in the books? Boody asked.

Maggy at the range rammed down a greyish mass beneath bubbling suds twice with her potstick and wiped her brow.

—They wouldn't give anything on them, she said.

Father Conmee walked through Clongowes fields, his thinsocked ankles tickled by stubble.

—Where did you try? Boody asked.

—M'Guinness's. (Joyce 289-90)

The scene in Section 4 takes place at Stephen's house and involves his sisters, and the occurrence marked in bold is one of the said intrusions, in this case from Section 1, where the walk that Father Conmee is making at that moment in a distinct place of the city is reported. It should be noted that the interference is exclusively textual, having no relevance to the dialogue that is interrupted only in the discursive continuity on the page. This procedure, technically analogous to film montage, occurs thirty-one times, each creating a kind of a hole in time in total violation of the transparency of cartographic logic that in this episode distributes characters and events in the space of Dublin.

Comparing the two modalities of representation here exemplified (Stephen's inner monologue in "Proteus" and the intrusions in "Wandering Rocks"), we see that in both of them the narrative articulates the occurrences in a moment, or in a sequence of moments, that is, in time, be it the individual's (psychological) inner time, as happens in "Proteus", or be it the chronological time (or clock time) of the geographic community in "Wandering Rocks". Psychology and cartography are thus similar rhetorics, only differentiated by the object or, more precisely, by the reality whose discursivity they express: characters and their acts occur on the surface of the city (or of its time) as ideas on the surface of the mind (or of its time). These are, in both cases, forms of narrative organisation that convey a discursive strategy.

When Joyce pencils in red ink on the Dublin map his characters' paths he is projecting on a plane – the map plane – a sequence of events that occurred in time, making this sequence synchronous. A projection of this nature implies reducing the temporal dimension to a zero thickness, as Denis Wood shows in *The Power of Maps* (Wood 130). Strictly speaking the temporal sequentiality of the episode does not give us a map of Dublin, as the map requires this synchronization of narrated events, or collapse of the temporal dimension in a pure two-dimensional spatial representation, in principle incompatible with the thickness of narrative time. Cartography is assumed thus in this episode as rhetoric, by implying precisely the narrative creation of the illusion of the map, obtained through this emptying, or "flattening", of the characters

and events that figuratively brings narrative temporality closer to cartographic spatiality. Reading the episode as a map creates a fiction that drains narrative thickness into a “homogeneous, empty time", in the sense given by Benedict Anderson to the formula of Walter Benjamin (Anderson 24), a time that establishes the community as a fiction. It is curious to see how "Wandering Rocks" matches Anderson's words regarding this concept of time: "So deep-lying is this new idea that one could argue that every essential modern conception is based on a conception of 'meanwhile'" (Anderson 24n). "Meanwhile" is in effect the word that is implicit in that intrusive passage in Section 4 as transcribed above.

The peculiarity of intrusions or interpolations lies in reversing that synchronization procedure that allows one to project a temporal sequence on the spatial plane of the map (or diagram). Instead of a projection of the temporal dimension on the spatial plane we have in interpolations a collapse of the spatial dimension, as it is projected on moments of the narrative time that, given the inescapable linearity of the discursive sequence, have to appear as contiguities on the space of the page (as we have seen in that example from Section 4). As well as maps of space also these maps of time are narrative fictions that in this case allow Joyce to take advantage of this unique moment when Dublin is out of the *Odyssey* to create as if it were a consciousness of the place in terms formally analogous to those by which, in other episodes, he represents the individual consciousnesses of the characters: that is, as outcrops of fragments of identity at the surface of the discourse.

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1 These titles, though dropped by Joyce in the final published work, were widely used by him during the composition of *Ulysses* and constitute agreed pointers when referring to the episodes and their organisation.

[2] It is probably due to the influence of this French text that Joyce preferred the name "Ulysses" to the more common (in English) "Odysseus".