

On Local Disturbances: Reflections on Joyce's Use of Language in "Sirens"

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Abstract: *This article explores the issue of language in the "Sirens" episode of Ulysses. "Sirens" begins enigmatically with "Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing". Glossing this requires something more than tying it to the consciousness of the two barmaids or indeed to the wider theme of the episode. With the help of some such awkward sentences and phrases taken for the most part from the Overture or Prelude to "Sirens", I want to consider the processes at work here and especially how they might connect with politics and the colonial encounter. In particular I focus on how Joyce translators "French, Spanish, German, Italian, and modern Greek "tackle such phrases such as 'Imperthnthn thnthnthn". The sounds in the Overture are often detached from meaning, or their meaning is deferred until later in the episode, or their semantic field or phonological system is peculiar to English. In wrestling with Joyce's texts, the translators remind us of what we might describe as "local disturbances", which surround not only the Overture to "Sirens" but Joyce's language in general. I then complicate this idea by suggesting a possible parallel in "Sirens" "an episode which is sometimes read in terms of the 1790s when the United Irishmen attempted to break the connection with the United Kingdom and which includes repeated pointed references to the '98 song "The Croppy Boy" " between local disturbances in language and local disturbances in Irish history.*

From the "pok!" in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" and the "pick, pack, pock, puck" sequence of sounds in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to the constant play on sounds throughout *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce reveals he is a sound writer.¹ While in the earlier texts the sounds can be quickly identified and eventually slotted into the narrative or characterisation or theme, in *Ulysses* this is often less possible as if something else is at work. My focus in this article is "Sirens", for this episode is where a peculiar kind of tension can be most keenly felt. The tension I have in mind concerns not so much the figure of the Arranger or linguistic contamination as what we might term the "local disturbances" that surround particular passages or sentences.

“Sirens” begins enigmatically with “Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing” (*U* 11:1). Glossing this requires something more than tying it to the consciousness of the two barmaids or indeed to the wider theme of the episode. With the help of some such awkward sentences and phrases taken for the most part from the Overture or Prelude to “Sirens”, I want to consider the processes at work here and especially how they might connect with politics and the colonial encounter.

Whether in terms of syntax or phonology, symbols or themes, character development or narrative unfolding, the Overture is frequently seen as a forerunner for the music episode which follows. John Gordon, in keeping with his stress on “reality”, adopts a more agnostic view. The Overture he describes as a “cacophony” which resembles, “simply, the random plonks, toots, and sawings of an orchestra tuning up, waiting for the conductor to begin” (Gordon 75). But music still exerts an influence over Gordon’s view: a “cacophony” is a collection of sounds, the conductor is tapping on his baton, and the orchestra is preparing to play. My own preoccupation in this chapter is not primarily with the way sounds connect with meaning (whether that is understood in metaphoric or literal terms), but with the gulf between sounds and meaning. At times the phonological and semantic fields overlap; at other times there is no overlap and all we are left with is sound sense. At times a translator – and translation gives us the sharpest insight into what’s at stake here – may emphasise sounds independent of meaning; at other times the translator may resort to a semantic equivalent independent of the original sound. A focus on the gulf between sounds and meaning helps to reduce the pressure to read the episode in the light of the Overture, and at the same time it frees up the possibility of interpreting “Sirens” in terms of “local disturbances” or of establishing an analogy or parallel between language and politics.

As if to thwart or prevent a smooth or Conmee-like reading, the language of “Sirens” is surrounded by “local disturbances”. We are constantly delayed in this episode and frequently have recourse to micro readings which yield a peculiar kind of local satisfaction. “Bronze by gold” is often read in terms of the previous episode and the colour of the barmaids’ hair. After the Vice-Regal cavalcade comes the female reply to the metallic sound of the horses and their tackle. As with other opening sentences to episodes in *Ulysses*, “Sirens” begins in search of meaning, in this case with metonymy, with parts for the whole, with coins of the realm, with a commodity, with barmaids and service and commodification. My purpose in deploying the phrase “local disturbances” is to give shape to something that might otherwise go unnoticed. The phrase itself I have borrowed from George Cornwall Lewis, *On Local Disturbances in Ireland and On the Irish Church Question* (1836), and the direction of my argument is toward establishing not so much a connection as a parallel between local disturbances in language and local disturbances in Irish history.

Lewis’s study begins: “For the last seventy years Ireland has been the scene of constantly recurring disturbances; sometimes consisting only of the murder of a few persons, or the burning of a few houses, and sometimes rising to general insurrection.”

(Lewis 1) The disturbances Lewis has in mind date from 1761 with the appearance in Munster of the Whiteboys, an agrarian association which was formed initially to resist the payment of tithes to Protestant clergymen but which later broadened out to agitate on behalf of the peasantry and tenant farmer against landlords and their agents. The 1780s witnessed the rise of militancy in the north of Ireland with the establishment of the Peep or Break-of-day-Boys, a sectarian militia who took to searching for arms among the homes of their Catholic neighbours; Catholics responded by forming their own association, the Defenders. Then in the 1790s the temperature increased significantly when the Peep-of-day-Boys founded the Orange Order and the Defenders merged their interests with Wolfe Tone's United Irishmen. The reference by Lewis to "general insurrection" is to the 1798 Rising ("rebellion" according to Lewis), which sought by a series of military risings largely centred on the South East, the Midlands, and the North of Ireland, to break the connection with Britain and establish an independent republic. All these are considered "local disturbances" by the Whig commentator Lewis, but, inadvertently, in summarising all these in a single sentence, he provides us with a way of connecting the local with the national, the land question with the nationalist issue, history and politics. In "Wandering Rocks", the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland smiles benevolently on the King's subjects, but in "Sirens", away from the gaze of the Crown, the colonised are impertinent, mock the conquering hero, and sing rebel songs about the croppies who cropped their hair as a sign of sympathy with the French Revolution. According to Lewis, "every Irish Catholic was presumed to be disaffected to the State, and was treated as an open or concealed rebel" (Lewis 46-7). "Sirens" is not a revolutionary tract, but its local disturbances suggest it can be read in rebellious terms and this is what I attempt to do here.

Imperthnthn thnthnthn

Anyone approaching the Overture to "Sirens" with meaning in mind is in for a bit of a shock. Simply filtering the sounds that jostle in the ear is enough for many readers. "Imperthnthn thnthnthn", to take one example, will challenge anyone not advanced in elocution. Eleven letters in one word and nine in the other with only two vowels and those in the first word. Im-per-thn-thn – four syllables in the first word; thn-thn-thn – three in the second. To make sense of the pronunciation is to pronounce the words, or, vice versa, to pronounce the words is a sign that they have been understood: that seems to be the challenge. The individual sounds can be broken down into phonemes, or gathered together into syllables, into morphemes, but, whichever approach is adopted, top-down or history-from-below as it were, the aim is to produce a sound for the whole word. Reducing the word to, say, I-m-p-e-r-t-h-n-t-h-n wouldn't be right – more like a not very good English lesson, one that would certainly have been avoided by a good teacher at the Berlitz School in Pola or Trieste. The pressure lies in achieving a sound for the whole word.

The sound in this case seems suspended until some other clue comes along. Im- indicates a negative, as in the English words "imprecise" or "implausible". Imper-

suggests the beginning of a number of English words such as “impermanent”, “impermissible”, or “impersonal”. Add the “thn” and you almost have “impertinent”. “Impertinent” is not quite the same as “not pertinent”, unlike “impermissible”, which is “not permissible”, or “impermanent”, which is “not permanent”. The word itself is odd, and so too is the other word used later by Miss Douce “insolence”, which again is not “not solence”. When we return to the sound, we find that deciphering the sound is dependent on meaning, on there being a word to link with the sound. But at this point in “Sirens” there isn’t a word. We have to wait for “bootssnout”, the general helper, to set down the tea for Misses Douce and Kennedy before we can connect sound and meaning:

– There’s your teas, he said.

Miss Kennedy with manners transposed the teatray down to an upturned lithia crate, safe from eyes, low.

– What is it? loud boots unmannerly asked.

– Find out, miss Douce retorted, leaving her spyingpoint.

– Your beau, is it?

A haughty bronze replied:

– I’ll complain to Mrs de Massey on you if I hear any more of your impertinent insolence.

– Imperthnthn thnthnthn, bootssnout sniffed rudely, as he retreated as she threatened as he had come. (*U* 11:91-101)

It becomes clear that you can only translate or read this phrase in the Overture in the light of what’s to come in the episode, so delay and re-reading, as Fritz Senn has rightly suggested, are part of the reading experience. “Imperthnthn” is a negative, and close to negation, to parody. It offers itself as a parody of subservience, a parody of female dominance, a parody of sounds in search of meaning, and perhaps also a parody of those who imagine difficulty belongs to major protagonists, for what is this but a minor spat among the junior staff in the Ormond Hotel. As it happens, the discourse on class repeatedly surfaces in this episode, often linked with gender inequality, as if Joyce’s aim is to suggest that, even if they are unfocussed, the local disturbances have a political point. Miss Douce shares a joke with her fellow barmaid Miss Kennedy about a “snuffy fogey” with a “goggle” eye they encountered at the Antient Concert Hall. The narrator informs us that Miss Douce “snorted down her nostrils that quivered imperthnthn like a snout in quest”. Here the nose is in quest of haughty imitation, but haughtiness evades her as the sound she makes is compared to snorting like a pig, the snout an echo of “bootssnout”, close that is to parody or merely answering back, a rebel without a cause.

What do translators make of “Imperthnthn”? How in other words do they tackle the issue of sounds raised by Joyce in this episode? Unlike “Rrrpr. Kraa. Kraandl.”, the farting sound at the end of the Overture, “Imperthnthn” is more than just a physical sound but contains a lexical item. The French translation by Auguste Morel, who was assisted by one of Joyce’s tried associates Stuart Gilbert, has “Impertnent” followed by “tnentnent” (Morel 392). This is closer to meaning than sound, but, ironically, to English ears this

could suggest the letter “i” is missing or that someone has a speech impairment, given to slurs in speech. “Impertintín” followed by “tntntn” is how it is rendered in Spanish by Valverde (Valverde 229). Valverde provides a surer reflection of the original effect where a gulf divides sounds from meaning. “Impertinente” is impertinent with an e. “tntntn” is nasal, the sound reverberating round the nose, the after-effect. In this translation the first word is close to meaning, the second to pure sound. Bona Flecchia’s Italian translation is near to the original except that she adds a syllable to both words as if to give them an extra twang: “Impertntntn tntntntn”. Giulio de Angelis’ 1960s Italian translation is more reliable: “Impertnt tntntn” (de Angelis 345). These different versions, then, each have their own effect, but all these translators are keen to allow the sounds to stand as sounds. The Argentine translator J. Salas Subirat mixes things. In the Overture he has “Impertnent tntntntn”, two pages later “Impertntn tntntn” (Subirat 285, 287). In the most recent Spanish translation, Francisco García Tortosa reads the phrase in the light of what’s to come, placing more weight thereby on meaning than on sound, in the process inadvertently collapsing Miss Douce and the insolent boy into the one figure: “Impertintnt insolentnt” (Tortosa 293:2). In this regard, Senn makes the valuable point, sometimes missed by translators as here by Tortosa, that once we learn “Imperthnthn thnthnthn” means impertinent insolence “we are likely to think [it] actually *means* “impertinent insolence”, but it only does so by proleptic and unwarranted foresight” (Senn, 1995: 84). But then, looking back on history sometimes allows us to discern that what appear at the time merely spats, such as the Whiteboy disturbances, are in fact part of a larger struggle for articulation.

A Husky Fifenote Blew. Blew. Blue Bloom is on the.

These lines, which provide another example of sound sense, present a different challenge, for the focus is in part on homophones, on words with same sounds but different spellings. We can begin, however, with grammar and history. “Blew”, the past tense of verb to blow, requires a subject and it is only later in the episode that we learn that the reference is to Simon Dedalus blowing into his pipe and transforming it into a musical instrument, producing the sound of a fife. Fife in turn recalls drums and the military and the period of the croppy boys and the local disturbances throughout Ireland in 1798, the Year of the French. The word “husky” recalls the “fury hoarse” of the yeoman captain in “The Croppy Boy” as he casts off his priestly robes to reveal his true identity (see Appendix 1 for the song’s lyrics). The phrase “husky fifenote” is not meant, therefore, to be lyrical. Deception or “decoy” is one of the themes of this chapter, a view also in evidence in the series “blew Blew Blue”, which suggests frustration rather than flow. Morel, we might notice in passing, possibly on account of the “Soft word” which follows or of Lenehan’s lipping to Miss Kennedy a “low whistle of decoy” (*U* 11:328), mistranslates “decoy” as “séduction”, and Subirat, Hans Wollschläger and de Angelis follow in his wake with “Seducción”, “Verlocken” (to entice) and “lusinga” (flattery).

Lenehan would like his decoy to be part of a seductive encounter, but that is another matter. In answer to Stephen's expression of desire in "Proteus" – "Touch me. Soft eyes." (*U* 3:434-6) – "Sirens" replies "Decoy. Soft word." "blew", another Sirens word, is continued in the next line. "Blew. Blue bloom is on the". The alliteration is nicely captured in the German translation: "Blus. Blau Bloomelein im" (Wollschläger 355). A characteristic procedure in this episode is the switching from one consciousness to another via the same word or sound. Normally it marks a shift to Bloom, who doesn't arrive at the Ormond until much later in episode. At this point there is a switch from Simon Dedalus and his pipe blowing to blue Bloom. In the song "The Bloom is on the Rye" it is late spring, summer is coming, and the bloom is on the rye (rye does have a blue colour when in bloom). We might also discern another aspect to this switch from Simon to Bloom, from biography to fiction, from sound to association, history to the present, for Joyce's father sang this particular song to May Joyce. The song is upbeat, Bloom, on the other hand, is blue. "Blew. Blue bloom is on the."

The Spanish translation by Valverde is "Sopló. *Bloom* (italicised), flor azul hay en el." The translator makes no attempt to reproduce the assonance of bl bl bl or ew ue oom. As for Bloom, he is described as "flor azul", a blue flower. This is not without merit, especially the lower case "bloom", which allows scope for the song to be heard first. But it is not so much a translation as a paraphrase, a paraphrase which makes no attempt at a phonological equivalence either. We know the reference is to Bloom; indeed, in the Rosenbach manuscript Joyce writes it in upper case. The English is not "Bloom, blue flower" but the more enigmatic "Blue bloom". A little later in the episode, "en el" is completed by "centeno" or rye, but this would only work if there was a song or phrase such as "flor azul hay en el centeno". Otherwise the missing word is entirely dependent on the unfolding text. Tortosa invites a different reading when he suggests an alternative meaning to "Blue", not the colour but blue, the substance once widely used in washing clothes: "Sopló. Brotebloom añil en el" (Tortosa 293:8). "Brotebloom" brings together Bloom's name and a word which contains several meanings: to sprout or appear as in plants; to rise as in the morning; an outbreak (of violence) or rash. In translating this back into English, the literal reading – "He blew. Sprouting Bloom blue in the" – conveys the idea of something that is forced or being forced. Other translations produce a slightly different effect: "Bloom appears blue in the" or "Bloom rises blue in the". Less dramatically, the sentence is later completed, like Valverde, with "centeno" or rye, but then the blue in washing looks even more out of place. Subirat's translation also departs from the original and insists on closure at this point: "Floreció. La azul floración está sobre los cabellos coronados de oro" (Subirat 285). Literally: "He bloomed. The blue flowering is on the crowned gold hair." Here "blew" has been changed into bloom and "rye" has been rendered metaphorically and painted a different colour.

Contrary to what one might think given Joyce's choice of blue and white (the Greek flag) for the cover of the Shakespeare and Company edition of *Ulysses*, the Greek translation amends blue to milky white. Again, this provides an interesting modification especially in the light of the reference to the Milky Way in "Hades" or when we recall the derivation of

the English word galaxy: “Galaxios anthos pano ste’ (Ἐάθῦόεçò 304). A milky white flower is in bloom. Here Bloom is “anthos”, a flower, and linked therefore with the word anthology, his identity composed of little refrains, flowers that adorn an anthology. “Sirens” repeatedly anticipates the language of *Finnegans Wake*, and in retrospect we can discern how in the character of Bloom Joyce is learning to exploit the “paradigmatic ear”, one of the distinctive features of the *Wake*. In the Greek translation Bloom’s name is Mploum, the sound made on diving into the sea; sometimes it means the dive itself as in the phrase “let’s go for a mploum” (mp constitutes the equivalent of b in modern Greek). In the Greek translation there is a descant of sorts on Bloom’s name and flowers. The French translation, which elsewhere plays ingeniously on “florit”, “fleury” and “fleuri”, has Bloom “aux champs” or in the fields as if he were in some physical location. Bleuet is cornflower; French Canadians use bleuet for blueberry. “Bluet Bloom est aux.” There is little suggestion here of melancholy unless the bleu in bluet can carry that inflection. “Boccio” in Flecchia’s Italian translation is bud. “Blu boccio è sulla.’ Blue bud, where an attempt at assonance can be discerned in bl and b, but this is not quite the meaning of bloom on the rye. De Angelis’ “Bloom blu è la patina sul” brings together “blu” and “sul”, blue and on, a colour adjective and a preposition without an object. “Patina”, for “bloom”, sets up a different set of associations, not yet a flower but a glaze or varnish. Later, the sentence is completed with “fior de segale”, flower of rye (de Angelis 353). In German, blue little Bloom is blooming in a cornfield: “Blau Bloomelein im Kornfeld blüht” (Wollschläger 363). Few translations give us anything of blue’s range of meanings in English (blue as in melancholy, blue as in blue joke, blue as in the blues, blue as in bolt from the blue) or of its recurring interest both for the author of the “Blue Book of Eccles” (*FW* 179:26) and for critics alike from John Addington Symonds’s *In the Key of Blue And Other Prose Essays* (1893) to William H. Gass’s *On Being Blue: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1975).

Idolores

“Trilling, trilling: Idolores.” In the song “The Shade of the Palm” the line goes “O my Dolores, Queen of the Eastern Sea”. In Miss Douce’s rendition she alters “my Dolores” to “Idolores”; in other words Lydia becomes the object of worship, she as I, as idol. This is a nice touch by Joyce, unconscious on her part, for Miss Douce is what she hears or thinks she hears. Trilling, trillante, trinando, trillernd, fredonne in English, Italian, Spanish, German and Italian. In whichever language, she is like a bird: Idolores. Like a bird, she also wants to be noticed. Look at me, she says, sensuous barmaid, recently returned from my holidays down the country with my body suitably tanned, or hopefully giving the impression of being tanned. In the one word, Joyce combines an array of associations: I, idol, Dolores, dolours, sorrows. The word also allows Joyce scope later in the episode to substitute the “I” for “he” when Bloom, listening to Ben Dollard’s rendition of “The Croppy Boy”, expresses a confusion as to the identity of “he”: “At Geneva barrack that young man died. At Passage was his body laid. Dolor! O, he dolores!” (*U* 11:1131-2) The French translation of the original is more

narrowly conceived. “Adolores” (Morel 392) is an acceptance that there is no idol here. In Subirat’s and Valverde’s Spanish translation “Aydolores” carries “ay”, perhaps an expression of pain. Even if it remains outside the category we might assign to an insight, it is worth noting that the initial syllable in “Idolores” can also be spelt “eyed”, precisely the word that the narrator deploys in connection with Boylan’s male gaze on hearing Miss Douce’s garter smack against her thigh: “Boylan, eyed, eyed” (*U* 11:419). Here the comma separating the subject from the verb reminds us of the constant recourse to metonymy throughout this episode; it also highlights the rush of blood and the idea of an action not symbolising but enveloping the person, for Boylan is all eyes. Boylan is also being eyed by Miss Douce; hence the repetition “eyed, eyed”. In Valverde’s translation the original is reproduced as “Boylan observaba, observaba” (Valverde 340), in Subirat as “miró, miró” (Subirat 296), but observing and eyeing are not the same thing. Tortosa, in contrast, reminds us that Spanish, too, has a similar way of indicating what is at stake here: “Boylan, ojeaba, ojeaba.” (Tortosa 306:526) “Boylan la fixe, fixe” (Morel 409) is the French translation, which picks up on one aspect of the original for, while Miss Douce is gliding, the male gaze fixes her, fixes.

Later in the episode, we learn that the mare carrying Boylan for his rendezvous with Molly is too slow for the carriage’s occupant: “Too slow for Boylan, blazes Boylan, impatience Boylan, joggled the mare” (*U* 11:765-6). Uncharacteristically, at this point Valverde decides to throw caution to the wind and produce a translation for “blazes Boylan” that potentially links him with every playboy of the world including Synge’s western playboy Christy Mahon: “playboylan” (Valverde 350). Nowhere in *Ulysses* is Joyce tempted to make such a comparison, or even call Boylan a “boy”, yet, in spite of confining his day to 1904, he might have done so by a form of “retrospective arrangement”. Not to be outdone, Tortosa in the next phrase plays on Boylan’s name: “Boylando de impatencia” (Tortosa 317:979-80), where, alongside the Spanish “bailando” or dancing, the English “boiling” can also be heard in the gerund construction, boiling with impatience – in contrast with the patience of the modern Odysseus or indeed Molly’s “penelopean patience” (*FW* 123:4-5). De Angelis also plays on Boylan’s name as here with “impazienza Boylante” (373), a collocation he had anticipated when he translates “With patience Lenehan waited for Boylan with impatience, for jinglejaunty blazes boy” by making use of the phrase “Boylan boylente d’impazienza” (355). Wollschläger, too, enjoys this combination “die boylende Ungeduld”, where “boylende” perhaps carries the idea of a bruise or swelling, and perhaps also a page boy plus loin, a loin boy.

Peep! Who’s in the...Peepofgold?

The preceding line in the Overture begins “Trilling, trilling”, and one can see why some translators have felt the pressure to continue with the sound of a bird such as a cuckoo. This is how Valverde and Morel render “Peep”, complete with flying exclamation marks: “¡Cu-cú!” and “Coucou!” Presumably the intention is to suggest an

analogy between the bird which steals nests and Boylan stealing Bloom's bed and thereby cuckolding him. Tortosa imagines "Peep" is simply a bird sound, a tweet, "pio" in Spanish. The problem with this line of interpretation is what to do with the "peepofgold", for, unless it's the fleck or markings in flight, there's little that is bird-like in "peepofgold". Valverde, following Morel and de Angelis, is inventive and coins a word "cucudeoro" ("coucoudor" in French, "cucudoro" in Italian), a golden cuckoo, but that seems strained: "Who's in the golden cuckoo?" Tortosa, who is equally astray at this point, takes his cue from Subirat's "piodeoro", shortening it to "piodoro", a golden tweet or peep. Unfortunately, the confusion is compounded by Morel: "Coucou. Ah la voilà!" (Morel 402) "Cuckoo. Ah here it is!" Ironically, these versions pay too much attention to sound, too little to meaning. "Peep! Who's in the corner?" (11:242), not "Who's in the peepofgold?", is how the sentence later appears in "Sirens", where "peep" refers not so much to a bird sound as concealment, a meaning incidentally available to both the French and Spanish translators in their own languages. This is its primary meaning here, a switch, therefore, from sound to meaning, a move which is confirmed by the odd joined-up phrase "peepofgold" and by the later reference to "corner". "Kiek mal an", the German translation for "peep", is a dialect expression used in Berlin and Northern Germany, but it is more straightforward, free of ornithology or sexual association, restricting itself to the idea of being curious, perhaps with cheek added on.

I would like to suggest two other ways of interpreting this phrase, one of which emphasises the idea of a peepshow, of the part for the whole. The "gold" in "peepofgold", we might agree, is a reference to "goldgirl" Miss Kennedy. Miss Douce sings "Idolores", shows off her figure, and smacks her thigh with her garter. Miss Kennedy shrieks and stops her ears but, as "gold flushed more" suggests, she is more reserved than her colleague. She also has something to show but not to Lenehan. At this juncture in "Sirens" she is reading, her head is down, and her face is concealed by her golden hair. "Who's in the peepofgold" seems to concern the printed matter Miss Kennedy is reading. "Did she fall or was she pushed?" (U 11:333) Lenehan enquires, only to be rebuffed. Who or what in other words is absorbing her attention? And what is she reading? Could it be a salacious novel such as *Sweets of Sin*, the novel which Bloom has bought for Molly and which carries in its title a pun on the English name of her rival Miss Douce? Joyce leaves it open, in line therefore with the enigma of the phrase itself. We might also discern a link with the confession scene in "The Croppy Boy", where in the phrase "Who's in the corner?" can possibly be heard "Who's in the confessional?"

A second line of interpretation, which is essentially historical and political, might seek to anchor the phrase in the period of "The Croppy Boy". Behind the phrase "peepofgold" I hear "Peep-o'-day-Boys". In contrast with the Whiteboys, who would attack the landowning classes and their agents at night wearing white sheets, the "peep of day" boys would attack their Catholic enemies at break of day, an idea continued four lines later in the Overture in "The morn is breaking". We might also recall at this juncture that at the Christmas Dinner in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Simon Dedalus

points to a portrait of his grandfather to remind his family that he was condemned to death as a whiteboy. So “peepofgold”, which has a specific sectarian origin, seems to invoke a wider context which links eighteenth-century agrarian agitation with the emergence of Irish nationalism and Joyce’s own family history.

Beneath the robes of the yeoman captain who’s impersonating Father Green, the croppy boy catches sight of the soldier’s scarlet:

The priest said nought, but a rustling noise
Made the youth look above in wild surprise;
The robes were off, and in scarlet there
Sat a yeoman captain with fiery glare

“Peep” carries an echo of that period when the Irish were cornered by various decoys and betrayals and suffered defeat at the hands of the Crown. Many of the exclamation marks in the Overture – not all, as references to Verdi’s *Otello*, Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*, Flotow’s *Martha* remind us – capture a sense of loss and alarm associated with that period in Irish history. The episode also marks Bloom’s closest identification with Irish nationalism, perhaps providing a backdrop to the “Cyclops” episode which follows. The last reference in the Overture, which is also the most scurrilous, is to Robert Emmet’s Speech from the Dock in 1803: “When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth then and not till then, let my epitaph be written. I have done.” But Joyce is not out to destroy but to enforce the connection. In this regard, we might also make something of the way “Sirens” begins with “Bronze by gold”, a phrase normally interpreted as the colour of the colour-co-ordinated barmaids’ hair or, following Gifford and Seidman (1989), as connected with “the principal metals in the Homeric world”. But the phrase also lends itself to a reading in terms of the scarlet and the green, the harp and the crown. Bronze and gold are traditional colours of merit and of regiments in the British Army. It is “Bronze by gold”, not “Bronze et Or” or “Bronce y hierro” as Morel and Subirat have it, a deliberate placing to convey an order or rank. Against the yeoman captain’s wish forcibly expressed in “The Croppy Boy” “may all traitors swing!”, and against the “steelyringing” of the stately procession of the Vice-Regal cavalcade that concludes “Wandering Rocks” and that begins “Sirens”, “Bronze by gold” and Ben Dollard’s rendering of the song provide a modern less dramatic reply. It may be only a “peepofgold” but it’s enough to suggest that the crown doesn’t have a monopoly on worth and esteem.

Sonnez.... La cloche!

In the Spanish, Italian and Greek translations, “Sonnez” and “La cloche” are left as in the original and italicised; in the French only “sonnez” is italicised. The clock sounds in French but the primary reference is not to a clock – often a word for something

else in *Ulysses* – but to Miss Douce’s garter smacking against her thigh, the sound Lenehan is anxious to hear again. Appropriately, it is French, the language of the “beau”, that carries the erotic note. In contrast to the more business-like Boylan, who has an instrumental view of his body, Bloom, who’s more in tune with his body, knows that “Time makes the tune” (*U* 11:841). It’s a view he shares with the blind piano-tuner, who has left behind his tuning-fork at the Ormond Hotel. With “prongs buzzing” (*U* 11:316), the tuning-fork is given new life in the Spanish translation where it is rendered as “cuernos zumbando” (Valverde 337), and linked with the phrase “Horn. Hawhorn.” from the Overture where it is translated as “Cuerno. Cocuerno.” In Valverde’s translation, the horn in the Overture suggestively anticipates the prongs of the piano-tuner’s tuning-fork. Traditionally, piano-tuners were blind but handy and they feature in English folksongs (and European folktales) playing their part in scenes of seduction. “Zumbando” is also suggestive – insects “zumbando”, insects buzzing, but the image cannot be sustained. A little later we read that a clock buzzed – “Zumbó el reloj” (Valverde 339) – when in the original text the clock “whirred” (*U* 11:380). Subirat has “Cuerno. Corneta”, horn, bugle. The play on horn as penis is continued with “Cuerno. ¿Tienes el? Cuer cuer cuerno” (Subirat 299). Words and sounds, therefore, set up different associations. At times the phonological and semantic fields overlap; at other times they create interesting divergences. De Angelis renders the original “Corno. Coccocorno” (345), which mixes something that is heard with something that is eaten, a horn with a coconut or an egg (or the berry that lurks in the “haw” of “hawhorn”). With “corno” in Italian close to “cornuto” or cuckold, Bloom’s predicament is never far from the sound. The German translation pulls no punches: “Ständer, Stistaständer” (Wollschläger 355), a stand (for an instrument), a stutter, a “hawhorn”, an erection that is.

Wait While You Wait. Hee Hee. Wait While you Hee.

The meaning of this line becomes clear later in the episode. “Pat is a waiter who waits while you wait. Hee hee hee hee. He waits while you wait. Hee hee. A waiter is he. Hee hee hee hee.” A possible source for this particular series of puns might be the song that keeps recurring in “Sirens”. In “The Croppy Boy”, the rebel wants to make a last confession:

“But you must wait till I go and see
If the holy father alone may be.”

The potentially inane, jingling, repetition of “see” and “be”, together with the heavy obligation to “wait” and the deception regarding the true identity of “he” (“the holy father”), point to a potential source. “But wait” is a phrase also from the song and it is later used by Miss Douce in gossipy conversation with her colleague: “But wait till I tell you” (*U*: 11:128). A little later in the Overture the song is also recalled along with

the stress on “he”: “*Naminedamine*. Preacher is he”. The glee of the yeomen who capture the boy can also be possibly heard in the triumph of “hee hee”. As for “wait”, Pat is a deaf waiter, is “bothered” (Irish: “bodhar”, meaning deaf), so hears nothing in an episode devoted to sounds, but he does wait on those who wait. In translation, the play on wait-as-waiter and wait-as-waiting is less straightforward than might be imagined. Morel distinguishes two meanings: “Pose pendant que vous pausez. Hi hi.” (Morel 304) He avoids “servir” (à table) or “attendre” and can make nothing of “wait” and “waiter”. “Rest or pose while you pause or take a break.” The “pose” and “pausez” is a good attempt at phonological insistence. However, it isn’t “Wait while you wait”, which is how Subirat renders it “Espera mientras esperas” (Subirat 286), but something much more ordinary and transactional, like a management notice on the wall of an office or factory. Valverde makes use of “sirvir”, to wait, sirvir a la mesa, to wait at table, and, instead of the more normal camerero, he deploys “sirvidor”, a waiter, in his translation. “Sirve a un sirvidor. Ji Ji.” In contrast, Tortosa attends or takes care of: “Atiende mientras atiendes. Je je.” “He attends or takes care of while you attend or take care of” is a possible translation, which shows something of the problem in getting the same word to face each other in Spanish. “Attento mentre attendi” (de Angelis: 346), careful while you attend, looks a similar construction in Italian but, in the interplay between the letters t and d in “attento” and “attendi”, de Angelis manages to capture something more of the original. As for “Hee hee”, this is difficult enough in English. There is clearly a play on the personal pronoun, for what is “Sirens” but a language exercise in identifying deictic markers? Joyce sets up a constant play in this episode on “he”, and the reader needs to be, like the reader of the *Wake*, wideawake, ever alert as to the identity of “he” throughout. The phrase also conveys an attitude which is part cynical, part gleeful. “Hee, hee, serves him right” is a common enough idiomatic phrase in the language. “Hee-haw” is the sound of a donkey braying, and, not unexpectedly, both “hee” and “haw” can be heard in the Overture. “Hi hi” in French, “Ji ji” or “Je je” in Spanish, capture something of the inanity of the original but little or nothing of the identity issue.

None Nought Said Nothing.

If everything in *Ulysses* speaks in its own way – door hinges creak, noses snort, back passages fart, sometimes with a p, sometimes with a double ff – then so too does nothing. “None nought said nothing” (*U* 11:224) is a phrase that might well have appeared in the Overture but in fact it comes later in the episode. The context can be quickly noted. Simon Dedalus has been musing on his name, his drink, the Mourne Mountains, holidays, Miss Douce, and now his musing, his music, has come to a stop. “Musing. Mute” (11:223). The next line is “None nought said nothing.” In many respects, this is the strangest sentence in “Sirens”, and this is true even if one includes the lines from the Overture, nearly all of which can be on reflection deciphered. It isn’t “There was nothing to be said” but “None nought said nothing.” Like other interruptions to word order, “said” is here the problem

word – as it is elsewhere in phrases such as the Arranger’s “as said before” (in connection with eating liver) or the delightful cautionary moment in “Sirens” itself “Who said four?” (in connection with Boylan’s rendezvous with Molly). As a verb we assume it is surrounded on either side by a subject and an object. “None said nothing. Nought.” Or “Nothing said nought. None.” Or “Nought said none, nothing.” The muse, that is, runs out of anything to muse on. “Nothing, nought, none.” But even negatives have a voice, make some sound. As we learn from “The Croppy Boy”, the priest listens to the boy’s confession and because he doesn’t reply we sense danger for the boy – “The priest said nought.”

“Ninguno no decía nada” (Valverde 335) is Valverde’s Spanish translation, not dissimilar to de Angelis’ Italian translation “Nessuno non diceva nulla”. No-one said anything / nothing, where a double negative would sometimes produce a positive. Either way, this isn’t really what the original is asserting. The alliteration in the initial “n” in the Spanish has merit, but the original is “None nought...nothing”, which, unlike “ninguno no decía nada”, is not something you’d hear in ordinary conversation. “Naide cosa nada decía nada” is Tortosa’s translation. “Naide” is a humorous rendering of “Nadie”, not Blake’s Old Testament God “Nobadaddy” but closer to a regional non-standard form of the word, perhaps akin to a word like “naybody” in English – or “Noman”, the name Odysseus gives to the Cyclops. “Naide” conveys something of the oddness of the original but it isn’t the sober statement “None nought said nothing.” Tortosa reminds us of another problem. In English there is an ambiguity at the level of both syntax and meaning: “none” can be both a person and a thing; “nadie”, on the other hand, is restricted to a person. The process of disentangling a meaning to the original sentence leads us to further entanglements in part because an ambiguity is made unambiguous. “Pas un mot, personne ne sonne” is the French translation, “not a word, nobody makes a sound”. Again, this isn’t nothing, and, moreover, in the original “nothing” is governed by something.

The sentence is clearly a problem, as much for native speakers as for translators. What does it mean? With its emphasis on “nichts” and the philosophical associations that accompany “nichts”, the German translation gives us a clue: “Keiner nichtsagte nichts” (Wollschläger 362), Nobody said nothing. *Ex nihilo nihil fit* was the old Thomist / Aristotelian adage, which Joyce would have been familiar with from his schooldays, that out of nothing nothing comes. The sentence we might read as a one-sentence reply or challenge to the philosophical issue of *esse* and *potentia*, of being and potentiality, an issue that occupied the Medieval, Jesuit-educated Joyce as well as his character Stephen. The theme of Yeats’s Medieval play *Where There Is Nothing* (1902) is the individual’s search for authenticity away from civilisation as embodied in the monastery. This is not Joyce’s concern here. For Joyce, nothing is indeed something, nothing can occasion something; it also has something to say, for negation is also a positive. In this we might compare it with the opening of “Proteus” where we catch Stephen responding to the solipsist dilemma about external reality: “Ineluctable modality of the visible” (*U* 3:1). In “Sirens”, the philosophical moment is disturbed by the sexual encounter in a hotel bar. None of the males make much headway in interesting the barmaids; they might

hold their hands but, except for the “smack”, there is little by way of reciprocity. So nothing is in part a rejection. Perhaps, like three strokes referred to at the beginning of “The Sisters”, there is something decisive about three zeros – none nought nothing. The answer they’re looking for is Yes, a Molly O word, the word that completes Simon Dedalus’ musing. “Yes.” But the males get nought at this juncture, only the sonnez of Miss Douce’s smack (which might be all they are seeking).

As for “Musing. Mute.”, Valverde and Tortosa provide contrasting views of the thinking process. For Valverde, Simon is “cavilando”, thinking deeply, deliberating; for Tortosa he is “recapacitando”, recalling to mind. Neither manage to capture the echo in the vowel sound between musing and mute. Indeed the – ando ending tends to dominate in a way that –ing in “Musing” does not. Partly because it can also be used as a noun, “Mudo” is a strong word in Spanish, much stronger than “mute” in English (whose field today is largely confined to adjectival use), but in this collocation the mudo effect is softened. Simon’s musings, not his deliberations or indeed his recalling to mind, have come suddenly to a dead end: this is how “Musing. Mute.” with the period repeated after each word reads in English. Without the two words and just with the punctuation it reads: ... Musing is close to reverie, the mind turning things over, not so much recalling as allowing images and associations and half-formed thoughts to surface and run on. In this episode it is a Sirens word, the male held by the female muse unable in the end to speak. “Rêveur. En silence.” (401) is the French translation: “Dreamy. In silence.” But this misses nearly all of the inner drama of “Musing. Mute.”

From the rock of Gibraltar... all the way.

“From the rock of Gibraltar...all the way” (*U* 11:515). In the Rosenbach manuscript there are no elliptical points but in inserting them Joyce must have realised that these too have a sound or contribution to make. In the same passage we read that Marion was “a daughter of...” and the reply is “Daughter of the regiment”. In the sentence “From the rock of Gibraltar...all the way”, the elliptical points might suggest one of her exotic advertising puffs as a singer – all the way from Hickville, Tennessee or wherever. On the other hand, in an episode about Boylan going all the way, the phrase might hint at her sexual determination or indeed prowess. Elliptical points are missing points, are cryptic in that they hide something, but nevertheless also make a sound in writing. What’s left out also has a noise to make, none more so we might add than the wink and nod by males in conversation about women. “Del peñón de Gibraltar...nada menos” (Valverde 343) is Valverde’s and Tortosa’s Spanish translation. From the rock of Gibraltar...nothing less. Not quite. De Angelis keeps the meaning slightly ambiguous: “Dalla roccia di Gibilterra... tutta quella strada” (de Angelis 363), from the rock of Gibraltar... all that road. The French translation seems innocent by comparison. No elliptical points and this: “Du rocher de Gibraltar, en ligne droite” (Morel 413). From the rock of Gibraltar in a straight line. Au contraire, as Beckett might say.

Concluding Remarks

Suggest a connective tissue and, as I indicate in my article on the Berlin Wall, Joyce blocks it. This is partly why I have drawn back from suggesting a strong link between disturbances in language and disturbances in history. After all, Bloom leaves the Ormond Hotel before Dollard finishes “The Croppy Boy”, and, in an episode devoted to music, the Odyssean figure, strapped as it were to the mast, gives voice to the most heretical and double-edged remark in “Sirens”: “Music. Gets on your nerves” (*U* 11:1182). Equally, not everything fits, for Bloom does not speak Irish, does not, like Haynes, collect Irish sayings, and might only recognise “*buachaill*” as boy because of its continuing use in an Ireland no longer bi-lingual. Moreover, Bloom does not love his country above his king, for, as we learn in the following episode, his nation is simply the place where he was born. But, as other scholars have noticed, there is enough in “Sirens” to suggest a link between Bloom and the events surrounding 1798. My concern in this essay has been slightly different, not to go over this old ground for the sake of it but to set out a case for drawing a parallel between local disturbances in Ireland with local disturbances in language.

“The Croppy Boy” begins:

Good men and true in this house who dwell,
To a stranger *buachaill* I pray you tell.

Bloom is the stranger, the Ormond Hotel “this house”, “Good men” the company in the bar (or the reader). Like the croppy boy, Bloom is on the point of being dispossessed of his home, if only temporarily. He is both of this house and a stranger, both Irish and not-Irish. But without the song and the issue of identity it trails, “Sirens” would be a poorer episode. Bloom’s predicament intensifies as the song’s tension builds, but it a predicament that affords no release in confession. Instead, Bloom tries the art of distraction amid his familiar comfort zone as human observer: “What do they think when they hear music?” (*U* 11:1049), where “they” refers to women in general. As we see with Maria in “Clay”, lyrics have the capacity to speak to people directly and even reduce them to a catatonic state. They can play that is on the nerves. Hence Bloom’s attempt to remove himself from the bar, for he knows enough of identity and himself to stop it, to keep his distance from “good men and true”. In all these moves Joyce shows us that the representation of identity never fits like a glove, but we would be wrong to conclude there is no lyrical soul behind the “poisoner of his word” (*FW* 463:13).

A strong reading might want to insist that before the dramatic staging of late-nineteenth-century Irish nationalism in the cave of the “Cyclops”, Joyce provides in the episode of the “Sirens” a tying down, a securing, of Irish nationalism to its eighteenth-century roots in the agitation of hidden Ireland. But I wouldn’t go that far. “Sirens” is about impertinence, corners, avoidance, things not meeting, feelings of betrayal, the struggle for articulation. Sounds in “Sirens”, along with their exclamation marks, resemble the

local disturbances in rural Ireland in the eighteenth century, disturbances which a commentator such as Lewis in *On Local Disturbances in Ireland* (1836) was anxious to stress were not national in origin or purpose. But such a line became more difficult to sustain after the activity of the United Irishmen and the 1798 Rising, for then local disturbances in various parts of Ireland heralded in one sense the end of localism. Hence the fusion in the Joyce family mind between the Whiteboys in the 1760s, an organisation which was not national in character, and the Fenians in the 1860s, who were nothing if not national. Perhaps this is an added reason that sounds and meaning present particular problems for translators, for the local disturbances seem to have a separate life of their own but they also partake of a wider struggle which because of Joyce's characteristic use of overdetermination has been insufficiently noticed. As I have suggested elsewhere in relation to "pick, pack, pock, puck" and cricket (Pierce 2005), Joyce is a politically sound writer, but, in the light of "Sirens", we might also add he shows us how all kinds of sound are waiting to be folded into the political landscape in Ireland.

Appendix 1

"The Croppy Boy" (1845) by "Carrol Malone" (James McBurney)

A Ballad of '98

"Good men and true in this house who dwell,
To a stranger *buachail* I pray you tell
Is the priest at home, or may he be seen?
I would speak a word with Father Green."

"The Priest's at home, boy, and may be seen,
'Tis easy speaking with Father Green.
But you must wait till I go and see
If the holy father alone may be."

The youth has entered an empty hall;
What a hollow sound his light footfall!
And the gloomy chamber is chill and bare,
With a vested priest in a lonely chair.

The youth has knelt to tell his sins:
"Nomine Dei," the youth begins;
At "*mea culpa*," he beats his breast,
And in broken murmurs he speaks the rest.

"At the siege of Ross did my father fall,
And at Gorey my loving brothers all,

I alone am left of my name and race;
I will go to Wexford and take their place.

‘I cursed three times since last Easter day;
At mass-time once I went to play;
I passed the churchyard one day in haste,
And forgot to pray for my mother’s rest.

“I bear no hate against living thing,
But I love my country above my king;
Now, father, bless me and let me go
To die, if God has ordained it so.”

The priest said nought, but a rustling noise
Made the youth look above in wild surprise;
The robes were off, and in scarlet there
Sat a yeoman captain with fiery glare-

With fiery glare and with fury hoarse,
Instead of blessing, he breathed a curse-
“Twas a good thought, boy, to come here and shrive,
For one short hour is your time alive.”

“Upon yon river three tenders float;
The Priest’s in one, if he isn’t shot-
We hold his house for our Lord the King,
And, amen I say, may all traitors swing!”

At Geneva barrack that young man died,
And at Passage they have his body laid.
Good people who live in peace and joy,
Breathe a prayer and a tear for the Croppy Boy.

Appendix 2

Overture with references to “The Croppy Boy” in bold and possible associations in italics

Bronze by gold heard the hoofirons, steelyringing
Imperthnthn thnthnthn.
Chips, picking chips off rocky thumbnail, chips.

Horrid! And gold flushed more.
 A *husky fifenote* blew.
 Blew. Blue bloom is on the.
 Goldpinnacled hair.
 A jumping rose on satiny *breast* of satin, rose of Castile.
 Trilling, trilling: Idolores.
Peep! Who's in the...peepofgold?
 Tink cried to bronze in *pity*.
 And a call, pure, long and throbbing. *Longindying call*.
Decoy. Soft word. But look: the bright stars fade. Notes chirruping answer.
 O rose! Castile. The morn is breaking.
 Jingle jingle jaunted jingling.
 Coin rang. Clock clacked.
 Avowal. Sonnez. I could. Rebound of garter. Not leave thee. Smack. La cloche!
 Thigh smack. Avowal. Warm. Sweetheart, goodbye!
 Jingle. Bloo.
 Boomed crashing chords. When love absorbs. War! War! The tympanum.
 A sail! A veil awake upon the waves.
 Lost. Throstle fluted. *All is lost now*.
 Horn. Hawhorn.
 When first he saw. Alas!
 Full tup. Full throb.
 Warbling. Ah, *lure!* Alluring.
 Martha! Come!
 Clapclap. Clipclap. Clappyclap.
 Goodgod henev erheard inall.
 Deaf bald Pat brought pad knife took up.
 A moonlit nightcall: far, far.
 I feel so sad. *P. S.* So lonely blooming.
Listen!
 The spiked and winding cold seahorn. Have you the? Each, and for other, plash
 and silent roar.
 Pearls: when she. Liszt's rhapsodies. Hissss.
 You don't?
 Did not: no, no: believe: Lidlyd. With a cock with a carra.
 Black. Deepsounding. *Do, Ben, do*.
 Wait while you wait. Hee hee. Wait while you hee.
 But wait!
 Low in dark middle earth. Embedded ore.
 Naminedamine. Preacher is he:
All gone. All fallen.

Tiny, her tremulous fernfoils of maidenhair.
 Amen! He *gnashed in fury*.
 Fro. To, fro. A baton cool protruding.
 Bronzelydia by Minagold.
 By bronze, by gold, in oceangreen of shadow. Bloom. Old Bloom.
 One rapped, one tapped, with a carra, with a cock.
 Pray for him! Pray, good people!
 His gouty fingers nakkering.
 Big Benaben. Big Benben.
 Last rose Castile of summer left bloom I feel so sad alone.
 Pwee! Little wind piped wee.
 True men. Lid Ker Cow De and Doll. Ay, ay. Like you men. Will lift your
 tschink
 with tschunk.
 Fff! Oo!
 Where bronze from anear? Where gold from afar? Where hoofs?
 Rrrpr. Kraa. Kraandl.
 Then not till then. My eppripftaph. Be pfrwritt.
 Done.

Abbreviations

U James Joyce, *Ulysses: The Corrected Text* (ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior) (London: The Bodley Head, 1986). Chapter number is followed by line number.

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