Milly’s dream, Bloom’s body and the medieval technique of interlace

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MILLY'S DREAM, BLOOM'S BODY AND
THE MEDIEVAL TECHNIQUE OF INTERLACE

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Medievalist scholars (Vinaver, Leyerle) have recognised an
equivalent of ornamental pictorial interlaces in a literary technique
used in certain French and Anglo-Saxon texts. The purpose of this
paper is to show that Joyce probably employed a very similar tech-
nique in Ulysses. To this end, I analyse a portion of the larger inter-
laced network in Ulysses, in which Milly's dream in "Ithaca" is of
central importance. Indeed, the apparently non-sensical and quite
comical idea of a horse drinking lemonade becomes highly signifi-
cant when the interlaced lines created by the reiteration of the
signifiers lemon and horse are connected with the other occur-
cences of these lexical units and interconnected with other
interlaced lines partaking in the elaboration of aspects of the plot
distinct from the diegesis. The paper focuses on one of these
aspects, namely the transformation of Bloom's body image. The
interlaced narration of this transformation involves other signifiers
such as soap and Aztecs. Joyce expressed his fascination for the
Book of Kells and reinvented in Ulysses the interlaced technique,
which in the Medieval Irish manuscript allows bodies to emerge
out of letters and words to be created by bodies of men and
animals.

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Joyce expressed his admiration for the Book of Kells to Arthur
Power: "In all the places I have been to, Rome, Zurich, Trieste, I
have taken it about with me, and have pored over its workmanship
for hours. It is the most purely Irish thing we have, and some of the
big initial letters which swing right across a page have the essential
quality of a chapter of Ulysses. Indeed, you can compare much of
my work to the intricate illumination”.¹ The Book of Kells is an illuminated manuscript dating to the eighth or ninth century. The pictorial style used in this remarkable work of art is called “interlace” or “ribbon” ornament, and it has been paralleled by medievalists to a literary technique. My purpose in this article is to consider the notion of literary interlace, in order then to examine how it may apply to Ulysses. “Epic of the human body” as it is, Ulysses narrates an event that involves the body in a crucial way. I will focus on Bloom, and I will argue that the analysis of a specific interlaced pattern indicates that Bloom’s body image is gradually modified through the text.

### Medieval Interlaces

A historian of Medieval institutions, Ferdinando Lot used in 1918 the term *entrelacement* in reference to the narrative technique of the *Lancelot en prose*.² He was followed in 1966 by Eugène Vinaver in his Presidential Address to the Modern Humanities Research Association. Vinaver published the content of his lecture in 1971 in a chapter of his *The Rise of Romance* called “The Poetry of Interlace”. Whereas Vinaver focused on the thirteenth-century Arthurian Prose Cycle, John Leyerle in 1967 considered the use of the art of interlace in *Beowulf*. So did Lewis Nicholson in 1980 and Morton Bloomfield in 1986. Although they used the same designation, these scholars did not always agree as to the implications of an analogy between pictorial and literary interlaces.

The basic meaning of “interlace” is “to indicate physical interweaving as in cloth and in art, especially borders where various strands cross over each other”.³ For Vinaver, this type of

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³ Morton W. Bloomfield, “‘Interlace’ as a Medieval Narrative Technique with Special Reference to ‘Beowulf’”, *Magister Regis. Studies in*
ornament is characteristic of Romanesque art.

Historians of Romanesque art have shown us, among other things, that the so-called "ribbon" ornament, which has no beginning, no end, and above all no center — no "means of guidance", as one critic puts it — is nevertheless a remarkably coherent composition. It contains the same seemingly impossible combination of acentricity and cohesion as that which characterizes the structure of cyclic romances.⁴

"Straightforward progression is abandoned in favour of intertwined patterns", adds Vinaver describing the narrative devices used by thirteenth-century romance writers. The literary interweaving applies to "earlier or later adventures [that] are recalled or announced" and to "a number of separate themes".⁵ For Vinaver, an interlace is constitutive of the plot and is to be recognized in the narrative or diegesis.

Leyerle sees an analogy between pictorial and literary interlaces in the Anglo-Saxon art of the seventh and eighth centuries:

From the early Anglo-Saxon period there are thousands of interlace designs surviving in illuminations of manuscripts, in carving on bone, ivory and stone, and in metal work for weapons and jewellery. They are so prolific that the seventh and eighth centuries might justly be known as the interlace period.⁶

For Leyerle, "there is ample evidence that interlace design has literary parallels in both style and structure". Seventh and eighth


5. _ibid_, p. 71.

century Latin writers in England used the art of interlace as they produced “verbal braids in which allusive literary references from the past cross and recross with the present subject”. The poets describe the technique with phrases such as fingere sertum or texere sertum, “to fashion or weave intertwinings”. 7 Leyerle recognizes the same art in Beowulf: “The poet interlaces ... episodes to achieve juxtapositions impossible in a linear narrative.” 8 The notion of interlace applies to Beowulf as a structural principle for organizing “narrative threads”.

Bloomfield criticizes the use of the interlace analogy as referring to narrative threads, for “the basic element of narration is sequentiaity”.

In painting we can see and understand (even if not fully) two or more events, happenings, or objects (or people) present at the same time; whereas in reading we cannot read of two events at the same time in order to get (when appropriate) the illusion of simultaneity. 10

Narrative threads may overlap, but they cannot interweave, writes Bloomfield, for, “unlike art, the very nature of narration demands one line of action at a time. This fact of verbal art makes interlace based on simultaneous events impossible.” 11 Finally, Bloomfield remarks that “the use of several narrative strands is a commonplace in literature of all periods and all countries.” 12

Indeed, the interlace analogy between visual art and literature as being applied to the diegesis is questionable. Nicholson suggests that attention should be paid instead to the “microstructure” of the

7. Serta is the past participle of serere, “to interweave, entwine, interlace”. It is related to Sanskrit sarata, “thread”, and to Greek seira, “rope”; cf. Leyerle, “The Interlace Structure of Beowulf”, p. 149.
10. ibid, p. 50.
11. ibid, p. 51.
12. ibid, p. 54.
text, and that the interlaced elements should be considered to be "themes and motifs". I believe that the interlaced elements should be even more precisely defined as signifiers: a thread in an interlaced pattern is formed by lexical reiterations, whether one signifier is repeated or its synonyms (e.g. "nag" for "horse"). As such, it participates in the weaving of narrative aspects which are at the same time correlated to and distinct from the diegesis. The plot is made of both the diegesis and the pattern woven by means of interlacings. I will attempt to demonstrate this in my analysis of Ulysses. I will argue that the idea of drinking lemonade plays an important role in the narration of Bloom's transformation, even though Bloom never drinks lemonade in the diegesis, as opposed to his drinking Burgundy.

Vinaver argues that the art of interlace as literary technique soared in the thirteenth century among the followers of Chrétien de Troyes, but that Chrétien himself did not use it, as he was more concerned with the "systematic and careful elucidation" of the narrative proper. I believe, on the contrary, that the Champenois author did use this technique in Le Chevalier de la Charrette, for a close reading of the text reveals that each physical description, each wound, becomes significant when related to the others, even when the wounded body is not that of the same character. Beyond the love story of the knight and the queen, a coherent corporeal event is exclusively narrated by means of lexical threads constitutive of an interlaced pattern. This aspect of the plot is at the same time distinct from and related to the diegesis. I will give a brief example of this technique in Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrette.

Lancelot accepts the hospitality of a woman who is shortly afterwards assaulted and raped in her own castle. After a long internal debate, Lancelot flies to her rescue and fights bare-handed

against heavily armed men. He has to face two sword-wielding knights and four servants, each equipped with an ax "tel don l’en poïst une vache / Tranchier outre parmi l’eschine / Tot autresi con la racine / D’un genoivre ou d’une geneste" (1092-1095)\(^{16}\) ("the sort with which one could split a cow down the spine as easily as a root of juniper or broom"). The sergeants stand on each side of the door which opens on the rape scene. Lancelot cautiously ventures first his head and neck through the door ("Et bote anz le col et la teste", 1127), and quickly draws back upon seeing the swords coming down. Then he plunges into the room, elbowing his way into the fray. He levels three of the servants, but the fourth reaches him with his ax:

\[
\begin{align*}
Fiert si que lo mantel li tranche  
Et la chemise, et la char blanche  
Li ront anprès l’espaule tote  
Si que li sans jus an degote (1145-1148).
\end{align*}
\]

("He [the servant] strikes a blow which slits [Lancelot’s] mantle and shirt, and he slices his white flesh near the shoulder, so that blood trickles down.")

This, however, does not stop Lancelot, who hurls himself at the man raping the damsel, grabs him by the temples, pulls him upright, and positions him before the pursuing sergeant. The latter, believing that he is about to split open the skull of Lancelot, mortally strikes the rapist:

\[
\begin{align*}
Et cil de la hache l’ancontre  
La ou l’espaule au col se joint,  
Si que l’un de l’autre desjoint (1164-1166).
\end{align*}
\]

("He strikes him with the ax just where the shoulder joins the neck, so that they are cleaved apart.")

Four passages refer to the wounding of one body area in a progression that leads to the climactic moment of beheading:

1. the axes of the sergeants are capable of easily severing a spine much larger than that of a man;
2. Lancelot ventures his head and neck inside the room and draws back just in time to avoid being beheaded by the swords;
3. Lancelot is wounded near the shoulder by an ax;
4. in one blow, the same ax kills the rapist, separating his shoulder from his neck.

It is the reiteration and association of the words meaning *shoulder, neck* and *ax* that creates a link between the four passages, and this link reveals two related aspects. On a purely physical level, the fact that the beheading is narrated in four stages gives a specific orientation to Lancelot’s wound. If the information that *Lancelot is wounded near the shoulder* was not framed by the other pieces of information, the wound could conceivably be located anywhere around the shoulder. Instead, the text mentions a spine cut down, a neck which is almost cut off, and a shoulder cut off from the neck. This strongly influences the reading of Lancelot’s wound, which is *directed* towards the neck, or more precisely towards the junction of the shoulder and of the neck.

The signifiers are organized in such a way as to link Lancelot’s wound to that of the rapist. Lancelot is wounded where the rapist is killed. This makes Lancelot’s position strikingly ambiguous. Of course, Lancelot rescues the damsel. Of course, he cannot be a rapist since he is the ultimate *fin’amant*; he precisely resists the temptation of the very same lady, when she comes during the night and lies by his side. Yet, the text weaves an image in which the opposition between the perfect knight and the aggressor is everything but sharp. In this sense, the interlace technique adds to the plot and renders the diegesis more complex by introducing an idea apparently contradictory to it.

The literary interlace technique is more than an aesthetic parallel to the Medieval ribbon ornaments: it constructs meanings. The repetition of specific words creates lines that intersect and
gradually weave meaningful patterns. I believe that Joyce was not only fascinated by the Book of Kells’s beauty, but applied the interlace technique in *Ulysses* to a large extent. The network at stake is fascinatingly rich and complex, and the only way to approach it at first is to trace a small number of threads. I will consequently focus on two lexical lines: *horse* and *lemon*. The reason for this choice is a passage in “Ithaca”:

Furthermore, silly Milly, she dreamed of having had an unspoken unremembered conversation with a horse whose name had been Joseph to whom (which) she had offered a tumblingful of lemonade which it (he) had appeared to have accepted. (*U* 17.903-906)

In terms of interlace, this passage is the crossing point of *horse* and *lemon* (in the derivative form *lemonade*). Humorous as it is, the dreamed idea of a horse drinking lemonade becomes surprisingly significant when integrated in the pattern made of the separate occurrences of these lexical units.

**The horse**

The crossing points of lexical lines are crucial to the elaboration of meaning: this represents a difficulty in itself since it is always possible to shift lines and follow a new thread with the risk of losing track of the first. On the other hand, it is often indispensable to precisely follow new lines to fall back onto the previous track which in the meantime had disappeared. For instance, *horse* crosses with *piss, limp* and *throwaway* which in its turn leads on to *tract, ship, sailor*, until *sailor* finally crosses with *piss* which reconnects with *horse*.

Interlaces are crucial to the understanding of body images in *Ulysses*. I focus in this paper on some aspects of Bloom’s body, but the same could be done with interlaces concerning Stephen’s and Molly’s bodies, as all three body images are correlated not only in terms of the diegesis but also through interlaces. Besides, it is noteworthy that the weaving metaphor, so similar to that of interlacing, is applied by Stephen to bodies and to the image of the artist:
– As we, or mother Dana, weave and unweave our bodies, Stephen said, from day to day, their molecules shuttled to and fro, so does the artist weave and unweave his image. (U 9.376-378)

The artist’s weaving and unweaving of his own image by means of his text is paralleled to the weaving and unweaving of bodies. To this may be added the parallel of reading and unravelling body images via interlaces, as the intertwined lines need to be followed in all possible directions, “to and fro”, in a text to be treated like a concrete spatial surface, like an illuminated manuscript, on which backward steps may prove indispensable. The act of reading here cannot solely obey the linear chronological direction of the diegesis: it also needs to follow textual moves which resemble Stephen’s and Zoe’s dance: “(Arabesquing wearily, they weave a pattern on the floor, weaving, unweaving, curtseying, twisting, simply swirling)” (U 15.4092-4093).

The mention of one same place, the cabman’s shelter, links several passages in which the signifier horse weaves the image of a body in transformation. We will see that this body echoes Bloom’s body image. The different stages of this transformation are expressed in the following terms: 1) the horse is gelded; 2) his dead body is eaten; 3) he is woken by a sailor; 4) he wins the Gold cup race; and 5) he projects a renewed body image. The fact that the signifier refers to different horses in the diegesis is irrelevant to the technique of interlace – what counts is only the reiteration of the signifier horse.

Just after remembering the death of his father, Bloom walks near gelded horses:

Mr Bloom went round the corner and passed the drooping nags of the hazard. No use thinking of it any more. Nosebag time.... He came nearer and heard a crunching of gilded oats, the gently champing teeth. Their full buck eyes regarded him as he went by, amid the sweet oaten reek of horsepiss. Their Eldorado. Poor jugginses! Damn all they know or care about
anything with their long noses stuck in nosebags. Too full for words. Still they get their feed all right and their doss. Gelded too: a stump of black guttapercha wagging limp between their haunches. (U 5.210-218)

The signifier horse appears, after its synonym “nag”, in the compound horsepiss. The association of horse and piss (or urine) will reappear in “Eumaeus” when a horse is woken by the splash of a sailor’s urine. Additionally, the adjective limp, used here to describe the genitals of the gelded horses, is reiterated several times in the text to denote Bloom’s body and more specifically his sex. In his bath, “[Bloom] saw the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands, a languid floating flower” (U 5.570-572). At Bella’s, Bloom is subjected to a torrent of abuse: “What else are you good for, an impotent thing like you? ... Sing, birdy, sing. It’s as limp as a boy of six’s doing his pooly behind a cart” (U 15.3127-3131). In the “Cyclops” episode, Bloom’s entire body is limp: he defends himself against antisemitic attacks until “he collapses all of a sudden, twisting around all the opposite, as limp as a wet rag” (U 12.1479-1480). And in “Circe” again, Bloom says: “My spine’s a bit limp” (U 15.657).

After seeing the gelded horses, Bloom walks by the cabman’s shelter (U 5.223). Five hundred pages later, he walks into the same shelter with Stephen, and when departing, he sees a horse endowed with a body that seems new to him. In the meantime a horse race has taken place.

The importance of the Gold cup race is signified through several moments which gradually indicate an association between Bloom and the winning horse. Bloom meets Bantam Lyons, who borrows his newspaper and, misinterpreting Bloom’s words, decides to bet on a horse called Throwaway.

– I want to see about that French horse that’s running today, Bantam Lyons said.

... 

– You can keep it, Mr Bloom said.

Maximum the second.
– I was just going to throw it away, Mr Bloom said.
Bantam Lyons raised his eyes suddenly and leered weakly.
– What’s that? his sharp voice said.
– I say you can keep it, Mr Bloom answered. I was going to
throw it away that moment.
Bantam Lyons doubted an instant, leering; then thrust the
outspread sheets back on Mr Bloom’s arms.
– I’ll risk it, he said. (U 5.526-541)

The horse called Throwaway will win indeed, and it is in fact
only after the race that its name is revealed.

– Who won, Mr Lenehan? says Terry.
– Throwaway, says he, at twenty to one. A rank outsider. And
the rest nowhere. (U 12.1218-1220)

Bantam Lyons claims that Bloom gave him the tip (“That’s
the man now that gave it to me, Bantam Lyons whispered”, U
8.1023). Lenehan will repeat the information with contempt:

– ...I knocked against Bantam Lyons in there going to back a
bloody horse someone gave him that hasn’t an earthly.
Through here.
They went up the steps and under Merchants’ arch. A
darkbacked figure scanned books on the hawker’s cart.
– There he is, Lenehan said. (U 10.517-522)

The darkbacked figure is Bloom, who in fact almost gave
Lenehan’s tip at lunch to a sighing Nosey Flynn: “Mr Bloom,
champing, standing, looked upon his sigh. Nosey numskull. Will I
tell him that horse Lenehan? He knows already. Better let him
forget” (U 8.843-845). In “Cyclops”, Lenehan continues to believe
Lyons’ allegations and asserts that Bloom knew about the dark
horse which unexpectedly won:

– I know where he’s gone, says Lenehan, cracking his fingers.
– Who? says I.
– Bloom, says he. The courthouse is blind. He had a few bob on Throwaway and he’s gone to gather in the shekels.
– Is it that white-eyed kaffir? says the citizen, that never backed a horse in anger in his life.
– That’s where he’s gone, says Lenehan. I met Bantam Lyons going to back that horse only I put him off it and he told me Bloom gave him the tip. Bet you what you like he has a hundred shillings to five on. He’s the only man in Dublin has it. A dark horse.
– He’s a bloody dark horse himself, says Joe. (U 12.1548-1558)

Throwaway is again referred to as a dark horse in a description of the race:

Huzzah! Sceptre wins! But in the straight on the run home when all were in close order the dark horse Throwaway drew level, reached, outstripped her. (U 14.1131-1133)

And again fantastically in “Circe”, “(A dark horse, riderless, bolts like a phantom past the winningpost, his mane moonfoaming, his eyeballs stars)” (U 15.3974-3975). The assimilation of Bloom, the “darkbacked figure”, with the “dark horse” is further supported by the fact that Throwaway is also said to be “a rank outsider” (U 12.1219). A competition won by a mysterious outsider evokes its Homeric counterpart: unrecognized, a foreigner (“xeinos”, Odyssey XXI, 334) in his own house, Odysseus wins a competition which consists in using the bow he himself owned and left twenty years ago when he sailed away. Only he is capable to bend his bow and throw an arrow through twelve axes placed ahead of him. His victory marks the beginning of his revenge as he uses his bow to kill the suitors. If it is correct to compare the Homeric and the Joycean competitions, the importance of the act of throwing in Ulysses – to be considered now – may be seen as an echo of the crucial role played by Odysseus’ bow.

The word throwaway appears again in “Lestrygonians”, this time denoting a “tract” (“A sombre Y. M. C. A. young man,
watchful among the warm sweet fumes of Graham Lemon’s, placed a throwaway in a hand of Mr Bloom”, (U 8.5-6). Announcing the coming of Elijah, the tract aims at proselytizing, and it is literally thrown away by Bloom: “He threw down among them [gulls] a crumpled paper ball” (U 8.57). Just before he does so, Bloom thinks: “If I threw myself down?” (U 8.52). The act of throwing away thus appears in the name of the winning horse and in the word meaning tract, which is thrown away by Bloom, just as he thought he would do with the newspaper listing the horses’ names. Bloom imagines throwing himself into the water, but in fact it is the tract that is thrown down, carrying away the name Elijah, which reappears at the end of “Cyclops”, when Bloom is himself called Elijah, flying up and away on the celestial chariot.

The horse race is replicated by the course of the crumpled tract likened to a skiff floating on the Liffey. The interlace technique is manifest in a thread made of references to a tract appearing and disappearing in the text. This line starts when the signifier throwaway intersects and mingles with horse, tract, and paper ball and it ends when the throwaway, intertwined with skiff, reaches yet another ship, the Rosevean, a schooner bringing home a sailor:

He threw down among them [gulls] a crumpled paper ball.... The ball bobbed unheeded on the wake of swells, floated under by the bridgepiers. (U 8.57-59)

A skiff, a crumpled throwaway, Elijah is coming, rode lightly down the Liffey, under Loopline bridge, shooting the rapids where water chafed around the bridgepiers, sailing eastward past hulls and anchorchains, between the Customhouse old dock and George’s quay. (U 10.294-297)

North wall and sir John Rogerson’s quay, with hulls and anchorchains, sailing westward, sailed by a skiff, a crumpled throwaway, rocked on the ferrywash, Elijah is coming. (U 10.752-754)

Elijah, skiff, light crumpled throwaway, sailed eastward by flanks of ships and trawlers, amid an archipelago of corks,
beyond new Wapping street past Benson's ferry, and by the threemasted schooner Rosevean from Bridgwater with bricks. (U 10.1096-1099)

The throwaway reaches the Rosevean. Later in the day, in the cabman’s shelter, Bloom and Stephen meet a sailor arrived in Dublin on the Rosevean: “—We come up this morning eleven o’clock. The threemaster Rosevean from Bridgwater with bricks” (U 16.450-451). The importance of the sailor is made clear in numerous ways. I will only mention the aspects that have to do with the signifier horse.

The sailor and the horse have the same maritime origin: they come from the sea: “Airs romped round him [Stephen], nipping and eager airs. They are coming, waves. The whitemaned seahorses, champing, brightwindbridled, the steeds of Mananaan” (U 3.55-57). A similar image appears in Stephen’s monologue: “Vehement breath of waters, amid seasnakes, rearing horses, rocks” (U 3.457-458). A metaphor of the waves and of the winds, mythical steeds of a Celtic god, the horses, like the sailor, emerge from the aqueous horizon. Stephen thinks:

Behind. Perhaps there is someone.
He turned his face over a shoulder, rere regardant. Moving through the air high spars of a threemaster, her sails brailed up on the crosstrees, homing, upstream, silently moving, a silent ship. (U 3.502-505)

The Rosevean is a threemaster (U 16.450). The ship noticed by Stephen is also called a “mailboat” (U 1.575), and the sailor, Murphy, will proudly show around a unique postcard.

The sailor, who has “circumnavigated a bit” (U 16.458-459), explains to his eager audience in the cabman’s shelter that he has seen “maneaters in Peru that eats corpses and the livers of horses” (U 16.470-471). As if to prove his statement, he pulls out a picture postcard showing Bolivian women, and comments: “See them sitting there stark ballocknaked eating a dead horse’s liver raw” (U 16.481). Murphy uses the compound man-eaters to refer to
cannibals, and then specifies that they eat horses. This tends to confirm a human / animal correspondence, which also appears in Milly’s dream in the alternation of neutral and personal relative pronouns: “a horse ... to whom (which) she had offered a tumblingful of lemonade which it (he) had appeared to have accepted” (U 17.904-906). Besides, the idea of a dead horse whose liver is eaten up is repeated twice by the sailor, and the inconsistency of the alleged practice located first in Peru and then in Bolivia suggests some sort of personal preoccupation on the part of the speaker. The vagueness of his statement also points toward the more generic “South-American” category, which will be complemented later by the word Aztec. Finally, the importance of the eaten organ is emphasized by other occurrences of the signifier liver, particularly in “Sirens”. Bloom, who famously relishes “the inner organs of beasts and fowls” (U 4.1-2), eats “liverslices” (U 11.519) at the Ormond hall. A few pages later, as he gradually sinks into despair, “Bloom askance over liverless saw. Face of the all is lost” (U 11.646). Liverless creates a lexical link between Bloom and a horse deprived of liver.

Liverless Bloom eats liver slices. Bloom is at the same time subject and object of the action. The Odyssean theme of the returning father is played out in the text through various figures, among which a sailor, a racing horse, and Leopold Bloom. I will argue that the return of the father is assimilated to an awakening prosaically translated into the idea of a sleeping horse woken up by a sailor who is seized by a pressing need to urinate. The father is thus both subject (sailor) and object (horse) of the action. This may be read as a reflexive action; it corresponds to the French reflexive form of the verb “se réveiller”: “le père se réveille”, the father wakes himself up.

Some person or persons invisible directed him to the male urinal erected by the cleansing committee all over the place for the purpose but after a brief space of time during which silence reigned supreme the sailor, evidently giving it a wide berth, eased himself closer at hand, the noise of his bilgewater some little time subsequently splashing on the ground where it apparently woke a horse of the cabrank. (U 16.935-940)
The act of urinating has a considerable impact since the sailor’s micturition wakes up a horse. In terms of interlace, the dead horse of Murphy’s postcard is now awake. While in Homer Telemachus is searching for tidings from his father, in Ulysses a home-coming sailor pulls out a postcard that is passed down by Bloom to an equally searching Stephen. As in the Odyssey, a multifaceted father brings the son news about himself, and soon the son finds out that his father is not only alive but present.

Leaving the cabman’s shelter, Bloom and Stephen walk by a horse dragging a roadsweeper. The machine is called “ship of the street” (U 16.1798), evoking the presence of the sailor. As Bloom is watching the horse, his perception of the animal suddenly changes.

Bloom looked at the head of a horse not worth anything like sixtyfive guineas, suddenly in evidence in the dark quite near so that it seemed new, a different grouping of bones and even flesh because palpably it was a fourwalker, a hipshaker, a blackbuttocker, a taildangler, a headhanger putting his hind foot foremost the while the lord of his creation sat on the perch, busy with his thoughts. (U 16.1781-1786)

The contradictory phrase “in evidence in the dark” emphasizes the self-reflective nature of Bloom’s perception. “Suddenly” and “quite near, so that it seemed new” also indicate that the description is really about Bloom’s suddenly modified perception. The string of compounds is noteworthy for its non-connotative quality, which contradicts the supposedly explanatory conjunction “because”; in short, the horse seemed new because it was a horse. This redundant information becomes quite significant, however, if the passage is connected with the other occurrences of horse. The horse interlace suggests that Bloom’s perception of his analogically equine body is no longer that of a limp gelded liverless body. It was “not worth anything like sixtyfive guineas” and it is now conducted by no less than “the lord of his creation”.

In his kitchen, Bloom’s hand is said to be firm:
Why did absence of light disturb him less than presence of noise?

Because of the surety of the sense of touch in his firm full masculine feminine passive active hand. (U 17.288-290)

While the transformed horse was “palpably” different (hence probably not limp), Bloom’s sense of touch is sure and his hand is firm. Bloom’s body image has changed, and with it the quality of a fundamental organ of contact and self-perception, the hand. Bloom’s sexual impotence is also “treated” via the horse interlace. Before leaving the shelter, Bloom has time to read in the newspaper about the victory of the horse Throwaway. This fact is only mentioned in the following chapter.

What reminiscences temporarily corrugated his brow?

Reminiscences of coincidences, truth stranger than fiction, preindicative of the result of the Gold Cup flat handicap, the official and definitive result of which he had read in the Evening Telegraph, late pink edition, in the cabman’s shelter, at Butt bridge. (U 17.322-326)

The lines preceding this passage are:

What attracted his attention lying on the apron of the dresser?

Four polygonal fragments of two lacerated scarlet betting tickets, numbered 8 87, 88 6. (U 17.319-321)

These tickets were bought by Boylan, who bet on the mare Sceptre and lost (U 12.1222-1223). Boylan’s defeat is narrated in Molly’s monologue:

but he was like a perfect devil for a few minutes after he came back with the stoppress tearing up the tickets and swearing
blazes because he lost 20 quid he said he lost over that outsider that won and half he put on for me on account of Lenehans tip cursing him to the lowest pits (U 18.422-426)

The outsider’s victory implies that the returning husband has won over his rival. The implications of this victory are articulated in terms of sexual potency by Molly.

like a Stallion driving it up into you ... still he hasnt such a tremendous amount of spunk in him when I made him pull out and do it on me considering how big it is ... supposing I risked having another not off him though still if he was married Im sure hed have a fine strong child but I dont know Poldy has more spunk in him yes (U 18.152-168)

Boylan is compared to a stallion, yet he is not able to produce as much sperm as Bloom. Bloom’s inability to make his wife pregnant seems to be overcome, not through sexual intercourse in the diegesis, but in the fact that Molly’s body image now includes the possibility of a pregnancy, a pregnancy that Boylan would not be responsible for (“supposing I risked having another not off him though ... Poldy has more spunk in him yes”). And as for Bloom:

What possibility suggested itself?

The possibility of exercising virile power of fascination in the not immediate future after an expensive repast in a private apartment in the company of an elegant courtesan, of corporal beauty, moderately mercenary, variously instructed, a lady by origin. (U 17.1849-1853)

Phantasmatically both lady and courtesan, the woman Bloom is thinking of is Molly.17 Although Molly and Bloom have strikingly different ways of expressing the idea of sexual intercourse with each other, they nonetheless do fantasize about the

17. For more on this, see Christine Froula, Modernism’s Body: Sex, Culture, and Joyce, New York: Columbia UP, 1996, pp. 170-196.
possibility of it. In this very sense, the Gold cup race has been won, Ulysses has returned.

Lemonade

Before fully returning, Odysseus has to meet with his child. Although the Joycean Telemachus is of course Stephen, Bloom’s daughter, Milly, is of crucial importance in the very fact – as strange as it may seem – that she dreamed about offering lemonade to a horse. The conjunction of horse and lemon exists in the reference to a past unspoken, unremembered and dreamed exchange during which a horse appears to have accepted a lemonade from the dreamer. It would be difficult to better stress the uncertainty of the information. The sole verifiable data the reader is ostensibly left with is the reality of the printed letters, which makes the words horse and lemonade stand out even more clearly.

Following the line made of lemon implies paying attention to its crossing points with kidney, soap and sun. As he reads the throwaway in front of Graham Lemon’s, Bloom thinks of sacrifice: “Birth, hymen, martyr, war, foundation of a building, sacrifice, kidney burnt-offering, druid’s altars” (U 8.11-13). The phrase “kidney burnt-offering” is particularly noticeable in this enumeration, since Bloom burnt the kidney he was cooking in the morning (U 4.380-387 and 18.568). The kidney takes a new dimension in “Circe”, in a passage where kidney again crosses lemon.

BLOOM

I was just going back for that lotion whitewax, orangeflower water. Shop closes early on Thursday. But the first thing in the morning. (He pats divers pockets) This moving kidney. Ah!

(He points to the south, then to the east. A cake of new clean lemon soap arises, diffusing light and perfume.)

THE SOAP

We’re a capital couple are Bloom and I.
He brightens the earth. I polish the sky.

(The freckled face of Sweny, the druggist, appears in the disc of the soapsun.) (U 15.331-341)

The floating kidney is associated with a lemon soap which is itself likened to the sun. In the morning, Bloom buys a cake of lemon scented soap with the intention of taking a bath, and the soap travels through the text in Bloom’s pockets. Similarly to the references to the throwaway skiff, the appearances and disappearances of the soap lexically mime the moves of interlaced pictorial threads. Bloom puts the soap in one pocket, then in another on his way to the cemetery (U 6.494-496); he feels it in his back pocket, “rather sticky”, in “Sirens” (U 11.1127); he smells its scent when, in “Nausicaa”, he opens his jacket to smell his own body (U 13.1042-1043); he uses it to wash his hands in his kitchen in the presence of Stephen (U 17.231-235). In the quotation above, Bloom pats his pockets but talks about a kidney that seems to have vanished into thin air until it reappears in the sky as a soap, a soapsun polishing the sky.

While the horse cleans Dublin’s streets, the lemon participates in the cleaning both of the sky and of Bloom’s skin:

He foresaw his pale body reclined in it [water] at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved. He saw his trunk and limbs rippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward, lemonyellow: his navel, bud of flesh... (U 5.567-572)

Bloom’s limp body oiled by the wax lemon soap becomes lemonyellow. I will now consider one last portion of the pattern by following yellow and wax which lead to statue and god, in order then to return to lemon.

During Stephen and Bloom’s conversation in the cabman’s shelter, Bloom says, “I just happened to be in the Kildare street museum today, shortly prior to our meeting if I can so call it, and I was just looking at those antique statues there” (U 16.890-892).
Molly compares Bloom lying on their bed to a statue she saw in the same Kildare street museum ("breathing with his hand on his nose like that Indian god he took me to show one wet Sunday in the museum in Kildare street all yellow in a pinafore lying on his side", *U* 18.1200-1202); and shortly before talking about the Kildare street museum, Bloom mentions a waxworks museum: "In those waxworks in Henry street I myself saw some Aztecs, as they are called, sitting bowlegged ... being adored as gods" (*U* 16.850-856).

Molly saw the yellow statue of an Indian god and Bloom the wax statues of Aztecs adored as gods. The word wax takes us back to the soap, since the soap has wax in it: "Mr Bloom raised a cake to his nostrils. Sweet lemony wax" (*U* 5.512). In short, 1) Bloom’s body is cleaned by a wax lemon yellow soap, 2) Bloom is compared by Molly to the statue of a yellow Indian god, and 3) statues of Aztecs adored as gods are made of wax. The association of yellow and wax with statue and god accentuates the importance of the soap and of the anointment of Bloom’s bodily envelope with yellow wax.

The horse in Milly’s dream is said to have been called Joseph, a name which is used in *Ulysses* to refer to Christ’s earthly father: "— Qui vous a mis dans cette fichue position? — C’est le pigeon, Joseph" (*U* 3.161-162). This strengthens the association of the horse with the father figure. In addition to being cleaned with lemon soap, the father in the shape of a horse supposedly ingests lemon, as Milly’s oneric horse drinks perhaps the lemonade he apparently accepted. Again, the highlighted uncertainty of the information helps the reader focus on the doubtless presence of the signifiers which connect on a larger scale. Moreover, the dreamed image of a child giving a drink to a father responds to that of a father giving a drink to a child, namely Bloom offering a hot cocoa drink to Stephen. The Eucharistic connotation of the kitchen scene has long been noticed. 18 “Epps’s massproduct, the creature cocoa” (*U* 17.369-370) is drunk similarly as Christ’s blood is during a Mass. The cocoa tree is originally from South-America, Mayas cultivated it, and the scientific name of the bean is *Theobroma*

cacao, “god food”. Thus, Bloom, anointed with a lemon yellow wax soap, is lexically linked to the wax statue of the South-American figure of an Aztec and to the yellow statue of an Indian god, and he paternally feeds a child with the South-American divine food called cocoa. In counterpart, lemon quenches the thirst of the father through the dream of his child.

Joyce’s treatment of the Eucharist does not end with the ingestion of sacred food: it continues with the expulsion of it. The Eucharistic drinks are transformed by their voyage through the body – and especially through kidneys – into urine. The expulsion of urine takes place in Bloom’s garden right after Bloom’s and Stephen’s mutual contemplation of their reciprocal flesh, when “At Stephen’s suggestion, at Bloom’s instigation both, first Stephen, then Bloom, in penumbra urinated...” (U 17.1186-2287). In “Eumaeus”, the sailor urinates and wakes up a horse. In “Ithaca”, Molly is said to be awake when Stephen and Bloom urinate in the direction of her shadow. The tidings conveyed by the postcard have proven to be fallacious: the horse is not dead; he wakes up, he wins the race over his rivals and his body is renewed. This last aspect echoes Odysseus’ physical transformation through Athena’s intervention when the king prepares to be recognised by his wife after he has defeated the suitors (Odyssey XXIII, 152-165). The queen may now appear, Molly’s Penelopean monologue may start. The kingdom has been cleaned by a transformed horse leading the ship of the streets, by Bloom brightening the earth. In order to become an “earth cleaner”, Bloom had to be himself washed in and out by the lemon soapsun: in with some oneiric lemonade traversing his kidneys, out by rubbing his skin with a lemon wax soap. Throwaway, the outsider, like an arrow, has reached his goal; “Darkinbad the Brightdayler” (U 17.2329-2330) may now rest next to “her”, the queen “in the attitude of Gea-Tellus, fulfilled, recumbent, big with seed” (U 17.2313-2314).

I have tried to show that the apparently nonsensical dream of Milly needs to be apprehended by means of the Medieval literary

technique of interlace, for it becomes unexpectedly significant when the lexical lines that constitute this passage of "Ithaca" are linked with other parts of the interlaced pattern. The sense of *lemonade* in the text arises from the use by the author of this specific technique. To read according to this technique is to follow the track of signifiers throughout the text. Conversely, no specific technique is needed to find out that Bloom drinks a glass of wine, as this piece of information belongs to the diegesis: "Wine. He smellsipped the cordial juice and, bidding his throat strongly to speed it, set wineglass delicately down" (*U* 8.794-796). The information is stated as such, which does not preclude, of course, elaborate symbolical inferences.

In the Book of Kells, carefully designed letters and bodies are often tightly intertwined, and in fact cannot be dissociated from each other as bodies shape letters and vice versa. The association of letters and of a human and animal flexible corporeality is enhanced by the splendid materiality of the manuscript, which forces the reader to constantly pay attention to the concrete quality of lines (letters and bodies) indispensable for the elaboration of meaning. Textual materiality is very much emphasized in *Ulysses* as well, especially in Joyce's use of the technique of interlace. Indeed, the interlaced network of the text exists through the recurrence of lines shaped into meaning, a multifarious and inexhaustible meaning itself involved in the construction of body images.

He [Joyce] liked to work his prose into patterns as intricate and individualized as the initial letters in the Book of Kells, and he agreed with Ezra Pound that "great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost degree".... [H]e conceived of his entire book as a silent, unspoken portrayal of an archetypal man who would never appear and yet whose body would slowly materialize as the book progressed, linguafied as it were into life.²⁰

The body images of Bloom, Stephen and Molly are intertwined by means of interlaces, and form the gigantic textual body Ellmann indicates Joyce planned to weave. In a double movement of weaving and unweaving, the artist gives shape to the link – impossible to unravel – that unites the Word and the Flesh. In St. John, the Word became flesh, *ho logos sarx egeneto;* 21 In *Ulysses,* Joyce reinvents the moment of junction of both terms, when the body is “linguafied into life” and the Word given the splendid materiality of Flesh. And most importantly, the junction at stake is shaped by means of discontinuities: signifiers must momentarily disappear to allow invisible lines to cross and design a coherent interlaced pattern which narrates an event concerning the materiality of the soul and the spirituality of the body. The literary process perceptible in *Ulysses* combines coherence and discontinuity, thus partaking of aspects that may be seen as characterizing both Medievality and Modernity.

The Medieval tendency to reinforce the *auctoritas* of the past results in a reinvention of it; a thorough reinvestment of a canon at the same time strengthens its status and transcends it, resulting in a liberation from it. 22 Joyce’s attitude towards canons, simultaneously one of endorsement and independence, may be exemplified by one such transformation – among so many – staged through Bloom’s words, “All are washed in the blood of the sun” (*U* 16.889-890) for “All are washed in the blood of the lamb” (*U* 8.10-11). In Bloom’s version of the Eucharist, the blood is of the sun. This gives again a South-American flavor to the Christian ritual, since Aztecs were known to offer sacrificial victims to the sun. With remarkable freedom, Joyce uses available information; he creates new connections, but the connected objects are not invented by him, whence the encyclopedic nature of his text. I have dealt with a very limited portion of *Ulysses’* vast network, and I have chosen this part of the general design for it involves an element that is historically alien to the art of interlace: a Western Medieval


22. Jean de Meun’s continuation of Guillaume de Lorris’s *Roman de la Rose* is a clear example of such a double move.
The Medieval Technique of Interlace

...technique is used to give a South-American coloration to the Eucharist. America and the Western Middle Ages are usually kept apart, and yet the art of interlace characterizes the style of ornamentation of Northern populations, including the Vikings who discovered the New World long before 1492. Joyce at the same time reinvents and consolidates the past.

The sun is a soap in the pragmatic mind of Bloom since it cleans; and it contains lemon, for lemon cleaning power is noticeably superior to that of blood. Bloom’s pragmatism modernizes a myth of purification, while it simultaneously connects Joyce’s hero to the ancients. Virgil reported how the Medes utilized the purifying virtue of citron.

Media fert tristes sucum tardumque saporem felicis mali, quo non prasentius ullam, pocula si quando saevae infecere novercae, miscueruntque herbas et non innoxia verba, auxilium venit ac membris agit atra venena.

*(Georgics II, 126-130)*

(Media bears the sour juices and lingering flavor of the beneficent citron, which, if cruel stepmothers have ever drugged drinks mixing herbs and non-harmless words, comes as help more efficacious and drives the dark venoms from the limbs.)

Lemon juice is a remedy against the lethal action of herbs and toxic words (*non innoxia verba*). In *Ulysses*, words – among which *lemon* – create an interlaced pattern conveying the idea that Bloom’s body image has been cured from lethargy: a dreamed “tumblerful of lemonade” has driven the dark venoms from his

23. Virgil, *Georgics*, ed. W. Heinemann, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1965, my translation. The authority used by Virgil concerning the *Citrus medica* is Theophrastus, who explains that the citron is called apple of Media or of Persia and that it is most efficacious when a mortal poison has been ingested (*Historia Plantorum* IV.4.2). The stepmother motif was added by Virgil.
limp equine limbs. By reinvesting an ancient idea (Homer’s, Virgil’s, or anyone else’s), Joyce reinvented it, which implies that he connected with it and continued it, but with a considerable sense of freedom, probably the most efficient way to become an *auctor*. Indeed, Joyce had to be radically innovative in his reinvestment of the past to become part of the *auctoritas*, and a most compelling way to reinvent Medieval Irish interlacings was to weave *soap* and *Aztecs* into the texture of his illuminating scriptures.

Geneva