

# Compositional Thought and Musical Structure in Joyce's Works

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Recibido: 16 de enero, 2007

Aceptado: 23 de mayo, 2008

## ABSTRACT

Scholars have catalogued literally thousands of musical allusions — to singers, composers, instruments, musical venues and, of course, songs of various stripes — many of them integral to the understanding of his poems, stories, and novels. Joyce's books are saturated with a deep affection for music with which he grew up and which stayed with him all his life. Joyce enjoyed giving literary interpretations of the contrapuntal techniques in music. This turned into a kind of intellectual exercise in which he professed to use the devices for his own purposes in his own medium. This article proposes a bibliographical revision and studies how significant are different systems of coetaneous musical composition to right understand the structure and architecture of his works.

**Keywords:** James Joyce; Music; Aesthetic; Interrelationship of Arts.

## Proceder compositivo y estructura musical en las obras de Joyce

## RESUMEN

La crítica literaria ha localizado numerosas alusiones en la obra de Joyce —cantantes, compositores, instrumentos, canciones de distintos géneros, etc.— muchas de ellas determinantes para comprender sus poemas, relatos y novelas. Sus obras, en consecuencia, rebosan de esa profunda devoción que desde niño sintió —y en la que se educó desde sus primeros años— y que le acompañaría durante el resto de su vida. Es un hecho que Joyce disfrutó dando adaptando las técnicas contrapuntísticas musicales al hecho literario consiguiendo nuevos recursos y procedimientos expresivos adecuados a sus propósitos estéticos. Este artículo propone una revisión bibliográfica y estudia de qué modo los diferentes sistemas compositivos contemporáneos son relevantes para entender adecuadamente la estructura y arquitectura de sus obras.

**Palabras claves:** James Joyce, Música, Estética, Relación entre las Artes

There are innumerable accounts of the musical aptitude of James Joyce (*vid.* Bowen, 1974 and 1995; Bauerle, 1982 and 1993). Constant references are made to

a well-trained tenor voice<sup>1</sup>, a course of singing classes<sup>2</sup> in Trieste and to his youthful ambitions to be a professional singer, which were nurtured and developed by his mother (Sheehy, 1951:17). Neither should we ignore some of the images that Joyce's friends had of him, sitting in front of the piano on numerous occasions when they had all met up (Renzo, 1996:132), or their recollections of the experience of the writer in relation to liturgical song and choral works<sup>3</sup>. Nowadays, we know of an extensive musical heritage that spans the first medieval works of English music up until the time of Joyce (Rabaté, 1990:95), and

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<sup>1</sup> "When he could, he spent his time in the National Library. Here, he taught himself Danish. It was little trouble for him to acquire a language. His memory was marvellous, and he had a good ear. He was also skilled in music. He once wrote me a letter in which he told of a plan to tour the coastwise towns of England singing the old English ballads to the accompaniment for a lute by Dolmetsch. That was in 1904. A singer has made a fortune by doing that very thing in recent years. Joyce's voice was clarion clear. John McCormack may not have heard it, for he described it as baritone. It was tenor. He would have won first prize at the Feis that year, which is the annual musical festival and competition, but for his bad sight that prevented him scoring at sight singing. As it was, he got the bronze medal which indignantly he threw into the Liffey" (St. John Gogarty, 1948:56). For other accounts vid. Joyce Monaghan (1964a:25 and 1964b:35); Eglinton (1935:131); Fonsa Savio, A. & Fonda Savio L. (1972:320-322); Joyce Schaurek (1963:6 and 7); Budgen (1934:23), and Hamnett (1932:341-342).

<sup>2</sup> "Joyce also thought of joining the Conservatory (which he never did) to train his beautiful tenor voice in the hope of embarking upon a "fruitful" singing career. He did, however, take singing classes from Maestro Sinico. In those days there were two Sinicos teaching music in Trieste: one of them was Giuseppe, the famous composer of the *Inno di San Giusto*, who was already 69 and was to die just two years later; the other was his son Francesco Riccardo, who, in 1905, was 36 and was much more active than his father, being the choirmaster of the second Israelitic Temple, of the Serbo-Orthodox church of San Spiridione and of the Greek-Orthodox church of San Nicolò (where, as has already been stated, Joyce went very often). According to Stelio Crise, Joyce very probably took lessons from Francesco Riccardo who, at that time, was the most popular singing teacher in the city. He praised Joyce's voice and told him he could make it to the stage after only two years of study [...]. But the singing lessons were very expensive and Joyce could afford to attend for only a few months" (Renzo, 1996:46).

<sup>3</sup> "On one occasion when Joyce and myself went to High Mass at Westminster Cathedral, I noticed that he listened with rapt attention to the music —it was Taverner's Plainsong. When the service was over he analysed both the chanting and also the organ performance of Sir Richard Terry meticulously, and commented on flaws which had eluded my crasser and less-sensitive ears. The *Ite, Missa Est* especially, he found too tenuous and spiritless. "It should have rung out more like a triumphal chant", he said, swinging his ashplant with the same dramatic *élan* with which he had brandished its prototype many years previously when he was denouncing Yeats, Moore and Co. Outside the National Library in Dublin" (Griffin, 1938:32). For another, similar account vid. Renzo (1996:46).

especially his mastery of traditional Irish folk music<sup>4</sup>, which was revealed in the analysis of his works by Mathew J. C. Hodgart (1959:1-23)<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, Joyce's preference for the lyrical-dramatic genre has been the mainstay of critical thought for many years, revealing that the operas which stand out as of special importance to the writer are *William Tell* (according to Myers, 1971:243-244 and Griffin, 1938:28), *Aida* and *Tosca* (Joyce Monaghan, 1964:35); and we are even familiar with his favourite arias<sup>6</sup>.

Joyce's participation in the musical sphere, by virtue of the accounts gathered, are, as a result, unquestionable. The relationship which he had with his mother and the musical education he received whilst under the Jesuits<sup>7</sup> afforded Joyce a variety of technical abilities which enabled him to strike up friendship and conversation with some of the composers in his sphere, of which the following are worth mentioning: Antonio Smereglia, a neighbour who lived in the street of *Barriera Vecchia* (Trieste) and the composer of *Nozze Istriane* (1908), a work which our author admired greatly, (Renzo, 1996:112-114) – Smereglia endured the same fate

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<sup>4</sup> “One day we were in that café which is half-way up the Champs-Élysées, on the left-hand side—very famous, and I can't remember its name—and he told me at table that he was the only person living who knew a certain folk-song. He had learned it from his grandfather, and his grandfather had asserted that it was, one, a lost song and, two, that it was the best loved-song in the world. He sang it to me in his careful tenor voice, while three devoted waiters listened in and bowed respectfully at the end of each verse” (Stephens, 1946:566).

<sup>5</sup> “After reading *Ulysses* there can be no doubt that his nose is not very good, but his ear is that of a poet and musician. I know that when Joyce has written a page of prose he thinks that he has paralleled some page of music that he delights in. This feeling—I cannot say whether it accompanies his inspiration because I only know that it follows it—proves his desire. In regard to music he is oddly fastidious. He understands the German classics, old Italian music, popular music where Richard Wagner found it, even our composers of operas from Spontini down, and the Frenchmen as far as Debussy” (Svevo, 1950:45). Other accounts can be found in Stephens (1946:565-566).

<sup>6</sup> “When they were not all busy arguing in their *unliveable* apartment, there were occasional pleasurable moments at home, where they enjoyed music together (the big room that looked out on via della Pescheria was certainly a convivial place). Nearly everyone knew how to play an instrument or to sing. Bozena Berta Delimata, daughter of Joyce's sister Eileen, remembered that the favourite arias were *L'amico Fritz*, *Una furtiva lacrima* and *The Last Rose of Summer*. “Uncle Jim composed some music, my mother learned... He wrote for Lucia a little song in Italian with simple words: *Era una piccola bambina che rideva durante il giorno e non dormiva durante la notte*—which was to be repeated as a refrain”...” (Renzo, 1996:20).

<sup>7</sup> “With Joyce's Jesuit training, it is not surprising that his knowledge of music embraced ancient and scholastic philosophy in addition to his native discernment and experience as a singer. The ultimate return of the octave symbolizes the ultimate return of God in Everyman, the commercial traveller of Dublin, the “usylesly” Ulysses” (Sternfeld, 1956:47).

as Joyce in terms of blindness; Arthur Bliss, an English composer who set to music some of the poems of *Pomes Penyeach* for a book which paid tribute to Joyce, published in Paris on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 1933, (Bliss, 1970:100-101); Geoffrey Molineaux Palmer, whom the writer encouraged to work on certain texts of *Chamber Music* (Mahaffey, 1990:196-197); and, finally, George Antheil, an American pianist and composer, and a very close friend of Joyce's, for whom he interpreted English Renaissance music on his birthdays and who, as with those already mentioned, participated in *The Joyce Book* (1933). Thanks to Antheil we have one of the most interesting and valuable accounts regarding Joyce's technical musical knowledge<sup>8</sup>.

As such, it does not seem strange that some works have touched on the musical nature of his texts, even though they have not been successful in terms of the risks of metaphorical translation in the attribution of certain methods but instead have pushed an already complex area into further obscurity. Minor details apart we shall

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<sup>8</sup> "His fastidious taste in music leads him to throw his arms wide open to the future. Last year Mlle Monnier of the *Navire d'Argent* gathered some cultured musicians together one evening to hear the latest thing in modern music by an American composer, Antheil or Antheil. After a quarter of an hour of it many of the guests rose and went away, protesting and shouting. But Joyce declared, "He reminds me of Mozart". I cannot doubt Joyce's sincerity. He had attempted perhaps succeeded in the attempt, to superimpose on music some literary dream of his own. Of course, the connection between literature and music cannot be wholly musical because it is also literary" (Svevo, 1950:46). See also vid. Reid (1990:113) and Paul (1932:156-159). Antheil himself provides the following reflections: "James Joyce loved music, and that is probably the only reason he and I became good friends. Certainly I was totally unprepared to understand his colossal stature as a writer. My friendship with Joyce commenced shortly after the riotous concert at the Ballet Suédois. During that concert Joyce had sat in a box near Erik Satie; later he was to report everything that happened in Erik Satie's box up until the time they had turned the floodlights upon him and temporarily hurt his very sensitive eyes. Sylvia Beach introduced us one day in the bookshop, and he had come upstairs to have some tea and look at my music manuscripts [...]. It so happened that both of us were very fond of Purcell, but hearing Purcell in a Paris possessing its own Rameau was as difficult as getting Gertrude Stein to say that *Ulysses* was a great work [...]. Joyce was good enough to take a deep interest in my own composition, write several articles in French magazines upon my music (which deeply impressed less prejudiced French persons than our lady of the Purcell operas), and suggest writing an opera libretto for me to set to music. We often used to discuss this libretto, in the course of which Boski and I were often invited to his home [...]. Conversation with Joyce was always deeply interesting. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of music, this of all times and climes. Occasional conversations on music often extended far into the night and developed many new ideas. He would have special knowledge, for instance, about many a rare music manuscript secreted away in some almost unknown museum of Paris, and I often took my advantage of this knowledge" (Antheil, 1945:150-155). Clearly, all of these pieces of news were reminiscent of the Spanish translations of *Ulysses*. Vid. Fernández de la Reguera (1963:192).

clarify what the relationship is between certain processes of writing that appear in Joyce's works and the musical practice of the time, the literary mechanisms of which include musical references, and how on numerous occasions we witness a veiled aptitude for these—albeit almost always consciously so.

The multiple fractions within the distinct scientific paradigms at the beginning of the century (Egri, 1988:103) had their artistic equivalent in terms of the avant-garde, characterised by a certain technical *syncretism*, a common phenomenon from which Joyce was not free (Egri, 1988:113). Indeed, the Futuristic movement—the initial members of which Joyce knew personally<sup>9</sup>—offered, sometime around 1916, the work of Luigi Russolo —*L'Arte dei rumori*— a new system of musical organisation which transcended the syntactic logic of poetic discourse. (Russolo, 1916:7-18). The technique, known as “bricolage phonématique”, (Court, 1987:67), had, as a consequence, already developed its first theoretical formulas.

In this cultural environment, it is hardly surprising that other contemporaries of Joyce started to adapt certain musical structures (Amorós, 1989:90-92)<sup>10</sup> in the writing of their novels, making use of either main sources to be found within one art form or another—through repetition, variation, contrast, or *leitmoiv*— or others of an exclusively musical nature—counterpoint, tonality, form, polyphonic, etc. (Scher, 1968:6). What is clear is that the musical sensitivity of Joyce—which Budgen is testament to<sup>11</sup> and which is demonstrated in his particular concept of

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<sup>9</sup> “The couple, moreover, went to the theatre fairly often as Joyce had a passion for melodrama. (Two years later, he recalled having watched Nora at the opera sitting “with the grey ribbon in her hair, listening to music and observed by men”). As has already been seen, in addition to attending Teatro “Verdi” they also went to the Teatro Politeama “Rossetti”. It was there, in mid-January, that an electrifying “Serata futurista” (Futurist Evening) was held. It was given lots of pre-publicity and involved the entire cultural world of the city. Joyce showed an ongoing interest in Futurism and among the books in his Triestini library, which he was to leave in the apartment in via della Sanità after his final departure for Paris, there were two books by Marinetti” (Renzo, 1996:110).

<sup>10</sup> “The number of literary adaptations of musical structures, though certainly not as great as instances of word music, is substantial enough, I think, to establish a definite trend; and conscious attempts by such authors as Tieck, Mallarmé, Hermann Broch, and Paul Celan offer a rewarding area for investigation. It must be admitted, however, that critical treatment has not been extensive, and musical analogies have often been forced. Even in the few convincing analyses, critics have chiefly been concerned with demonstrating the presence of a particular musical structure in a literary work” (Scher, 1968:5). Vid. also Backes (1994:257).

<sup>11</sup> This is one of the occasions which shows: “The talk turned on music, and I mentioned that Taylor had heard him singing in the Stadttheater. “Yes, I remember”, said Joyce. “I went there to ask Kerridge something about the disposition of the instruments in the orchestra, and to put him up to some of the commoner mistakes his chorus was likely to make in singing Italian. What I sang was the tenor Romanza ‘Amor Ti Vieta’ from

rhythm as a element which is applicable to all artistic works (Brunel, 1997:5)<sup>12</sup>— is only comparable with that shown by Hermann Hesse, Henry James and Virginia Woolf<sup>13</sup>. The latter two were particularly conscious, in the same way our author was (Fogel, 1990:164-167), that music was a rigorously formal art, an idea which the American expressed very well in *The Art of Fiction* (1884) pointing out that what was fundamental in a novel, over and above the plot, was the form, the structure, in short, the composition<sup>14</sup>.

This is one of the reasons why Joyce chose the English madrigal as the paradigm for his first compositions —and here we refer to the poems of *Chamber Music*—(Russel, 1981:133-145). The madrigal is a hybrid genre of musical character which would find continuity not only in his lyrical works, but in some fragments of his literature too: Dowland, Tennyson and Ben Jonson are some of

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Giordano's *Fedora*. I wanted to show the vocal necessity for putting an atonic vowel between two consonants. Listen". He began to sing: "Amor ti vieta di non amar la man tua lieve che mi respinge". He turned to me again: "You hear", he said. "It would be impossible to sing that 'respinge' without interpolating a vowel breath between the 'n' and the 'g'.." (Budgen 1934:21).

<sup>12</sup> "The rhythm seems to be the first or formal relationship between a part and a part of a whole, or between the whole and its part or parts, or between whichever part and the whole of which it forms a part.. the parts constitute a whole when the have a common objective (25<sup>th</sup> March, 1903, Paris)" (Joyce, 1959:184).

<sup>13</sup> In relation to the function of melody in Hesse vid. Freedman (1963:77). On the other hand, the musical sensitivity of Virginia Woolf should not be forgotten. Vid. Fromm (1968:3-54), Jacobs (1993:145-164), Lawrence (1992:43-62) and Lehmann (1975:141). The following words of Backès are worth noting: "Récit musical", "livre à six personnage, a six instruments plutôt", "qui n'est pas sans rappeler *L'Art de la fugue*", écrit Marguerite Yourcenar dans le préface à sa traduction des *Vagues*. "Musical" suggère clairement que, dans le livre de Virginia Woolf, la composition n'est pas soumise aux principes de la rhétorique argumentative, mais joue des échos. La musique est prise ici à la fois comme un prétexte à laisser jouer des associations, grâce au réalisme prétendu du fameux courant de conscience, comme un modèle d'organisation des séquences et comme l'un des objets possibles de l'interrogation sur ce que cachent les innombrables rapprochements» (Backès, 1994:259).

<sup>14</sup> In *The Art of Fiction* we find fragments such as the following: "We are discussing of the Art of Fiction; questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution" (James, 1884:73). As much as the technique as the certain aesthetic affinity, in Spain Valle-Inclán is one of the intellectuals who are closest to the Irishman in terms of style. Both are united by the same concern to find the musical effect of words and, as pointed out by Morales Padrón, "both writers chose two musical terms as the title for their works which bizarrely were also published during the same period: *Sonatas* (1902-1905) and *Chamber Music* (1905)" (1994:75). In relation to the musical processes implicit in *Chamber Music*, vid. Mahaffey (1990:194-197), Howarth (1966:11-27), Stewart (1957:6-7) and Rusel (1981:133-145).

the musical poets that, as has been demonstrated by Sternfeld<sup>15</sup>, came after *Ulysses*. Milton also is clearly a precursor to the new style of writing, a poet whose sense of music and imaginative ear led him to place syntax over logic<sup>16</sup>.

Joyce did not confine his works to include poets whose literary structure was closely linked with music. It is possible, in consequence, to associate Stephen Dedalus' work —*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916, end of chapter II)— with a poem by Shelley —“To the Moon” (1824)— which clearly evokes not only the sonatas of Beethoven, but also Schumann's *Lieder* op. 95 and op. 104 (Brunel, 1997:201-203). This obscure reference helps to throw light on the young writer's first encounter with literary creation and the music is expressed as single poetic seed, like a silent echo.

This attitude to the craft of writing has meant that Joyce is considered, along with Mallarmé, as one of the fundamental pillars of reflection regarding the musical nature of literature<sup>17</sup>. Bearing in mind his fascination with tone, his hostility to the order of logical syntax and, above all, his desire to create an original and distinct world within a work, the *symbolistic* movement —and as a consequence some of the ideas which Joyce was in agreement with— constituted

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<sup>15</sup> “The technique of lines of uneven length is so inherent in musical composition that it is a characteristic of all madrigal and lutenist verse. Dowland's famous “Weep you no more sad fountains” ends its stanza, after eight lines of seven, six or five syllables, with one of only two syllables, the single word, “sleeping”. Similar Elizabethan musical rhythms occur in *Ulysses*: “And in London. And therefore when he was urged, // As I believe, to name her, // He //left her his // Secondbest // Bed”. [...]. To use of repetition in poetic creation is still another exercise of musical procedure —repetition that frequently does not make sense but that does make superb sound. The penultimate line from Ben Jonson's “Slow, slow, fresh fount” is a good example of the cumulative impact of the fourfold repetition of a monosyllable: “Drop, drop, drop, drop” gathers momentum as it moves along, in striking contrast to merely rhetorica repetition which is essentially motionless, as Tennyson's “Break, break, break / On thy cold gray stones, O Sea”. But Joyce's “Look: look, look, look, look, look, you look at us” moves forward.” (Sternfeld, 1956:37-38).

<sup>16</sup> T. S. Eliot had the skill to compare Milton with Joyce “With various important reservations and expectations, I think it is still beneficial to compare the development of Milton with that of James Joyce. The initial similarities are the musical taste and capacity, their musical education, a vast and curious culture, the talent to learn languages and an incredible memory perhaps strengthened by their poor sight. The important difference is that Joyce's imagination is not naturally as good as Milton's in terms of hearing” (1957:157).

<sup>17</sup> «Sont ici visés principalement Mallarmé et Joyce, les deux auteurs littéraires qui ont suscité avec le plus de force la réflexion contemporaine sur les structures musicales. Sans trancher la question d'une influence éventuell du poète sur le romancier, il nous suffira de signaler les convergences profondes entre les deux recherches esthétiques et notamment entre deux oeuvres qui en marquent le point d'aboutissement extrême, *Un Coup de dés* et *Finnegan's Wake* » (Court, 1987:55).

one of the greatest efforts in history to turn a poetic text into a fragment of music (Winn, 1981:296).

In this sense, Pound's *Cantos* compliments *Finnegan's Wake* perfectly. The ideograms of the former, which goes beyond its allegoric condition in terms of visual expression, aspires to harmonic satisfaction at the same time, in other words, the condition of *acorde*; for our author, however, the polyphonic sensation is achieved through verbal creationism. The juxtaposition of lexical roots allows for a semantic ambiguity related to the system of language, although in a somewhat arbitrary manner<sup>18</sup>. This process can be understood from two different perspectives and, as a consequence, it is comparable to two phenomena that come across as innovations within the field of musical discourse of the time: if we accept Butler's position (1990:274) that in *Finnegan's Wake* we see a total renunciation of linguistic agreement—that is to say, the rejection of the consensus within the field of language and, as such, a similar denial of the fact that producing music involves the negation of the arbitrary conventionalism of tone—we would be looking at a lexical conglomeration very similar to the technique of audible conglomerations—also known as “clusters”—characteristic of the atonal language emerging at the time (Atridge, 1990:13-14). The breakdown of syntax in a field—when no faithful translation is attempted—is related to the succession of degrees within a harmonic-functional system. If, as we believe, rather than a total breakdown, in the work of Joyce we are looking at an indefinite expansion of the possibilities inherent in the linguistic consensus, perhaps we should relate this verbal creationism to the resources of expanded tonality characterised by a change that goes down to each chord and which is inspired by a relaxed syntactic coherence<sup>19</sup>. We can perceive in this last case, as much as in the musical ambit as

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<sup>18</sup> “Hanslick's claim that music is not finally a language is correct, but these poets (like many of their predecessors) have seen in the musical possibilities for simultaneity, density, and design attractive models for poetry” (Winn, 1981:297).

<sup>19</sup> “Symbolist poetry, starved of linear statement, had to be outgrown as well, though Pound salvaged from it some of his most memorable techniques. James Joyce, in prose, moved in the opposite direction: *Ulysses* constructs a giant counterpoint of ancient myth and tawdry Dublin reality, but in *Finnegan's Wake* those elements have been fused, at the level of the individual word, into chords. On the first page “Sri Tristram, violer d'amores” arrives “from North Armórica... to wielderfight his penisolate war” and in one word we hear “penis”, “penultimate”, “peninsular”, “isolate”, and perhaps “desolate”. Other Joycean coinages involve several languages, performing chordally the combinations the *Cantos* perform contrapuntally [...]. It is also a superior literary method, as we may discover by comparing the rewards of rereading the *Cantos* with those of rereading the *Wake*: rereading Joyce, we will gain local explosions of understanding, many of them comic, as we hear more of the component notes in the chordal words from which the work is forged; rereading Pound, we will begin to hear the “long lines” of thought, argument, and design which cross each other in every canto. For Pound had no Symbolist distaste for statement, narrative,



in literature, the extremes of an imminent renunciation. The similar attitude of Arnold Schoenberg is worth remembering in this sense, who, in his efforts to surpass tonality —and before developing the principles of a serial system, undertook to use —just as Joyce had— a language pushed to the limits of language —for example, the *Three pieces for piano*, op. 11, or in an act of his opera, *Erwartung*, op. 17.

It is not therefore surprising that critics have established a relationship between Joyce and the most characteristic representative of the School of Vienna, as it was also known, albeit the exact nature of the connection between the two remains unknown<sup>20</sup>. The mutual references that can be found between them correspond to a practice which it would seem was very common during this period, the loan of formal structure (Backès, 1994:227-228); just as writers make use of musical forms, composers look to the expressive forms which are to be found in poetry<sup>21</sup>. This is how the work of Joyce has affected the avant-garde musicians of this century—especially Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio (Delalande, 1974:45-72) and John Cage— and in it composers seek a pillar of support to sustain the coherence of their acoustic experiments<sup>22</sup>. Finally, it is worth remembering that in 1962,

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opinion; like Goethe Auden admired, he wished his poetry were truth: “I have tried”, he confessed at the end, “to write Paradise...” (Winn, 1981:335-336).

<sup>20</sup> “Joyce’s project thus resembles that of works like Berg’s *Wozzeck* (1922), Schoenberg’s *Moses and Aaron* (1930-1932), Duchamp’s *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (1915-1923), and ultimately of even so conservative a work as Eliot’s *Four Quartets* (1943), all of which thrive on occult hidden orders, which are independent of the usual mimetic aims associated with a particular content. What his book also has in common with music, rather than with the language of his predecessors and successors, is the aim of reinventing the basic elements of the language of his art, in what McAlmon called “an esperanto of the subconscious” [...] For rather as pitches freed from traditional tonal relationships manage to enter into hitherto prohibited relationships with one another, and so to require the invention of wholly new principles for their ordering (which may also involve the revival of neo-classical forms as underlying structure, as in Berg), so Joyce invents a vocabulary which allows the words of different languages to interact” (Butler, 1990:276).

<sup>21</sup> “Similarly, the greatest of twentieth-century composers, while convinced of the autonomy of music, have not by any means cut themselves off from the expressive possibilities we associate with poetry. At the simplest level, we ought to remember that the revolutionary works of Schönberg’s “Expressionist” period —the *George Lieder*, *Erwartung*, and *Pierrot Lunaire*— all employs texts, and that the *Sprechstunde* introduced *Pierrot Lunaire*, while it dramatizes the difference between speech and song, acknowledges the expressiveness of spoken poetry by incorporating its shifting and uncertain pitch into a carefully designed musical setting. Schönberg was neither naive nor sentimental about the relations between music and poetry; many of his pronouncements on the subject sound like the orthodox Hanslickian doctrine of autonomy” (Winn, 1981:297-298).

<sup>22</sup> “The relationship of *Finnegan’s Wake* to pre-war modernism is thus tenuous; but it has served as a major source of inspiration to post-modernists, not alone to writers and theorists but also to musicians (such as Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio, and John Cage) who

Berio's *Omaggio a Joyce* caused profound reflection over art as being considered to be in its most radical "opening moment"; here, as is probably already obvious, we refer to the book entitled *Opera aperta* by Umberto Eco (1962:567). The work of Berio was

“a type of radiophonic transmission lasting forty minutes which began with the reading of chapter 22 of *Ulysses* (called “the Sirens”, an orgy of onomatopoeia and aliterations) in three languages: in English, in the French version and in Italian. However, afterwards, given that Joyce himself had said that the structure of the chapter was a *fuga per canonem*, Berio began to superimpose the texts in the manner of a fugue, firstly in English, then in French and so on, in a type of multilingual and Rabelaisian Friar Martino Campanaro style, with great orchestral effects (albeit for voice only) and finally he worked with the English text alone (read by Cathy Berberian) filtering certain phonemes, until all of this ended in an authentic musical composition, which is available on vinyl under the same title *Omaggio a Joyce* [...]» (Eco, 1962:5-6).

The flexible nature of the text aided the work of the composer and, without doubt, in the sense pointed out by Patrick Parrinder (in relation to Joyce): a concept of narrativity similar to the structuring of a musical pattern (1984:169-171). Taking into consideration the fugue form in the “Sirens” chapter (Margotton, 1995:218-222)<sup>23</sup>, it is possible to perceive a group of musical processes: the structural development of minor figures and phrases, a continual “symphonic” manipulation of formally recognised themes, the emphatic use of certain rhythmic models and figures, variety of tonal contrasty, a rich onomatopoeic “orchestration”, the presence of complete and partial repetitions, almost canonic echos and allusions, the construction of counterpoint “phrase against phrase”, recapitulations from different perspectives —in distinct tones— and so on and so forth<sup>24</sup>.

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have like Joyce been concerned to invent alternative languages for their art, and who have wished to turn even further away from the consensual forms of discourse in the society which surrounds it” (Butler, 1990:279).

<sup>23</sup> In relation to the structure of a canonic fugue —fundamentally in relation to its literary assumption—, vid. Brown (1948:149-151), the same with the assessment that he makes of the *Dream-Fugue* of De Quincey (1949:151-159).

<sup>24</sup> “This technical experimentation apart, Joyce peppers the episode with lines and phrases taken from opera, and operetta popular at the time, from Victorian and Edwardian drawing-room ballads, from music-hall favourites and from traditional songs” (Blamires, 1996:106).

Apart from the divergent opinions in relation to the correct or inappropriate assumption of the fugue form<sup>25</sup>, we are especially interested in knowing about the mechanism through which Joyce conceived the sense of counterpoint. Stephen Ullmann offers the following explanation:

“Joyce had a special theory about what he called the “polyphonie” word which would emit two meanings just as a chord emits several notes in one sound” (1957:12)<sup>26</sup>.

Along with that of the fugue, another process which has traditionally been attributed to Joyce is the use of the Wagnerian *leitmotiv* (Brown, 1948:209-210). On numerous occasions throughout his life, our author expressed his thoughts in relation to Wagner (Joyce, 1959:234), and this has enabled criticism to compare the position of both against the myth<sup>27</sup>. It is not possible to say that Wagner was Joyce's favourite composer, and even in *Ulysses* he points out that the music of Wagner, despite its greatness, was too much for Bloom and difficult to follow (Sternfeld, 1956:20). In the novel, from an argumentative perspective, Joyce actively went against the dense philosophy of the *Tetralogia* in a critique that would have been worthy of Hanslick himself<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> For Brown “More exact in interesting than these is James Joyce's fugato section in *Ulysses*. In this scene in a Dublin pub there are recurrences and combinations of themes which are clearly based on the fugue, but as far as I have been able to determine there is no working out of the complete musical pattern. Also (and this is perhaps more important), the cumulative excitement of the fugue, which De Quincey so perfectly captured, is entirely lacking. If this chapter really be a fugue, it is certainly an academic one” (Brown, 1948:159-160). Egri's assessment is far more benevolent. Vid. Egri (1988:225).

<sup>26</sup> Vid. Scher (1968:7) and Petri (1964:35-40).

<sup>27</sup> “He believed [Wagner] that the myths that had been given literary form in the Middle Ages were still part, however shapelessly and unknowingly, of some kind of collective unconscious of his people, and that they thus structured and conditioned their behaviour. Or vice versa: under the various shapes of outer appearance (of “characters” as well as of institutions) could still be seen the old forms and motivations at work. It is easy to see what use Joyce would make of an approach to a myth of this sort” (Reichert 1990:74-75).

<sup>28</sup> “As we have already seen, Wagner's operas were well known to him from his youth, but the fact that they were scored for symphony orchestra with voice obbligato was alien to the Irish Joyce's love of cantabile [...]. For the commercial traveller from Dublin, having avowed that Wagnerian music was a bit too heavy for his palate, goes on to enumerate his favourite cantabile composers: “On the whole, though favoring preferably light opera of the *Don Giovanni* description, and *Martha*, a gem in its line, he had a *penchant*... for the severe classical school such as Mendelssohn” (*Ulysses*). *Mutatis mutandis*, this might have been written by Wagner's most notorious critic, Eduard Hanslick!” (Sternfeld, 1956:48 y 49).

However, and despite these insinuations, it is surprising that he adopted this as a model of writing<sup>29</sup>. Let us not forget that Dujardin (Guichard, 1963:217) confessed to having attempted to portray in interior monologue the dramatic function of *leitmotiv* as a process of semantic expansion (Brown, 1948:217). This is precisely what Joyce does thanks to the repetition of certain sections which interlink different contexts, and which in their following “appearances”, provide new semantic nuances that they have been acquiring during the course of the narrative (Conely, 1993)<sup>30</sup>. It should be added that in the case of *Ulysses*, the use of distinct *leitmotifs* not only fulfills with the function previously mentioned but also represents the value of the Greek epithet in the Homeric epic<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> “It is, however, the *technique* of Wagner from which Joyce seems to have profited most. Wagner worked from relatively small musical units —of melody, of chords, of rhythm, of instruments— which he assigned to the different themes and characters (or groups of characters) of his operas. They are introduced in such a way that from them the listener can immediately recognize the themes or characters; thus the listener knows that when a certain horn signal sounds as certain character is about to enter the stage” (Reichert, 1990:73).

<sup>30</sup> Brown defines the *leitmotiv* accordingly “A genuine Leitmotiv in literature is hard to define, for its existence is determined more by its use than by its nature. One might say that it is a verbal formula which is deliberately repeated, which is easily recognized at each recurrence, and which serves, by means of this recognition, to link the context in which the repetition occurs with earlier contexts in which the motive has appeared. (It will be noted that this definition, written entirely for the literary use of the Leitmotiv, will apply equally well to the musical use if we merely change *verbal* to *musical*). Perhaps we should add that in both music and literature the Leitmotiv has to be comparatively short and must have a programmatic association —must refer to something beyond the tones of words which it contains” (1948:211). For Reichert “Most important however was that he could technically learn from Wagner: the technique of the leit-motif which allowed him to introduce comparatively small units of language into the text, to work from and to expand, in order to establish an evergrowing system of references and cross-references. This is quite obvious from the moment Joyce was in full possession of his artistic powers, from the first pages of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* (notice, for instance, the adjective “nice” that structures the first chapter of *A Portrait*). As he went on to *Ulysses* the Wagnerian technique taught him how to present the multi-layered facets of his characters. He learned from Wagner how a simultaneous presentation of characters —at once focusing on both conscious and preconscious or unconscious layers— was to be achieved on the various planes of the language. Seen from the point of view of technique or, equally, the point of view of the unheard-of possibilities that extended the boundaries of the arts so immeasurably, it was, I believe, Wagner who had the most fundamental and the most lasting influence on the writing of Joyce” (1990:76-77). Regarding the possibilities of development of the leitmotiv, vid. Brown (1948:218).

<sup>31</sup> “The leitmotiv, chiefly associated today with Richard Wagner as the decisive technique underlying his *Gesamtkunstwerk*, is by no means an exclusively musical element. A passing reference to the Homeric *epitheton ornans* or the conscious use of recurrent

Before finishing, we must make reference to the particular use of parody. The songs that are outlined in *Ulysses*, but which are never heard, (Levine, 1990:136) provide parodical counterpoint to the narrative plot<sup>32</sup> and it is in this sense that the allusion in the novel to Mozart's *Don Giovanni* should be understood<sup>33</sup>: the text comes across as a parody of itself (Egri, 1988:113). Even the parodies that our author offers of the style of Dickens<sup>34</sup> are comparable to those which, shortly afterwards, Stravinsky made in his *Pulcinella* in relation to classical language<sup>35</sup>. Nevertheless, putting the Russian to one side, it would be the British composer, Benjamin Britten<sup>36</sup> who would display the greatest similarities to Joyce, in the technical field as much as in his use of parodical effect: its transitional effects between choir and orchestra in his *Variations on Theme of Frank Bridge* in which the first is treated in an instrumental form and the latter in a vocal form, are inevitably reminiscent of certain creative processes in the works of Joyce, in which

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descriptive phrases or character traits in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, Dickens' *David Copperfield*, and Fontane's *Effi Briest* suffices to suggest that a similar device in literature existed well before or independent of Wagner. More recent literary employment of the leitmotiv, however, does indeed exhibit the direct influence of Wagner's operatic practice" (Scher, 1968:6-7). In the same sense *vid* Brown (1948:11) and Reichert (1990:75).

<sup>32</sup> "Music is chanted, as background and foreground, expressing what words cannot and should not say. There is the mind of the author himself, of which we are constantly aware. We hear the characters of the novel through his inner ear in which fragments of his countless models sound, providing counterpoint to Bloomsday and giving a depth to the happenings in Dublin that removes them from the parochial" (Sternfeld, 1956:45).

<sup>33</sup> "There remains the symbolic importance of a work of music for a work of poetry. "Words? Music? No, it's what's behind" is Joyce's sensitive observation (*Ulysses*, p. 270). It explains his choice of *Don Giovanni*, along with the *Odyssey* and *Hamlet*, as his model for *Ulysses*. Undoubtedly there were many aspects of the opera that attracted Joyce over and above the tunes it yielded to the storehouse of his wandering melodies. (There are at least two other songs from the opera, not mentioned previously, that loom large in *Ulysses* —one is the duet between Don Giovanni and Zerlina, "La ci darem la mano", and the other is the Commander's "Don Giovanni, a cenar teco"). To be sure, these melodies were important building stones in the total edifice of the novel, but the ultimate significance of the opera lies deeper and on various levels. The obvious one to be observed at a first reading is the plot of *Don Giovanni*" (Sternfeld, 1956:44).

<sup>34</sup> See the development of this parody in Egri (1988:115 and 119). In the same vein, consult the study of Célis regarding Dickens and music, *vid*. Célis (1982:15-56).

<sup>35</sup> "But even when writing in a strictly diatonic idiom, Stravinsky manages to indicate that that idiom is a mask, a *persona*; he is arguably the most rhetorical composer who ever lived. Because older music was more frequently heard in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth, thanks to recording and greatly expanded publication, neo-classic procedures which had been available to poets for centuries —allusion, parody, burlesque— were newly available to twentieth-century composers, a situation brilliantly exploited by Stravinsky" (Winn, 1981:298).

<sup>36</sup> Regarding Britten, *vid*. Evans (1989), Mitchell (1981) and Reverter (1998).

subjectivity is “reificated” and objectivity is subjective (Egri, 1988:130). The admiration that both felt for Purcell<sup>37</sup>—admiration which Stravinsky translated into his *Purcell Variations*— continues to be an important reference point in the art we have looked at.

We cannot stress strongly enough the relevance of some musical processes for composition that in the first half of the century were adapted for literary creation by our author: instruments which were highly significant for Joyce in the aesthetic universe that he proposed.

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<sup>37</sup> Vid. Egri (1988:130-132) and Antheil (1945:153).

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