

Transformations of Sterne's Tristramshandiness' in Joyce's era

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Key words: aposiopesis, epiphanic model, macrostructure, literary discourse, textual ellipsis
Ключевые слова: апозиопезис, эпифаническая модель, макроструктура, литературный дискурс, текстовый эллипсис

Roots of Sternization in Joyce's Era

This autumn the world is celebrating Lawrence Sterne's 300-year jubilee. Many scholars, among them, to mention only a few, – Peter Briggs, Frank Brady, Wayce C. Booth, Dennis W. Allen, Marcus Walsh, Hudith Hawley, Robert Folkenflik, discussed various aspects of Sterne's literary discourse. Academic research on Sterne is representative. Literary criticism has contributed to Sterne's unique style by classifying his novel *Tristram Shandy* [Murphy 1969] as one of the experimental works in world fiction that can compete in textual extremes with very few ones, namely, James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Sterne is known for locating sensibility vocabulary in the gaps between words [Brodey 2008: 19]; his way of writing, "sternization", dislocates narrativity and temporality and explores how to visualize the implicit in literary discourse by paratextual means and individual-authorial punctuation.

However, in light of Sterne's recognized experimental textuality, his deviant language with regard to a twentieth-century shift from a conventional hierarchical narrative model (grounded in action) to Joyce's epiphanic model (based on the primacy of language) need closer investigations. The reasons for that are as follows.

To begin with, Sterne is known for having frustrated reliable, coherent narration (from birth to death) by violating the expectations of chronological order in *Tristram Shandy* (the main character is born in Vol. 4). Sterne's openly declares his intention to be innovative: *Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring out of one vessel into another?* [Sterne 2000: 275]. Shandy's life is described in terms of his belonging to a close group of people whose ideas have shaped his. The event of life is depicted in multiple scenes intermingled with tales and stories that serve as this life's background and decoration. So, it remains unclear what constituents of the conventional pyramidal shape plot (defined by Gustav Freytag in the 19th c.) frustrate the traditional plot structure. The inciting moment, the birth of a hero, replaces the conventional inciting moment of this hero's life who loves sitting in his study writing. The reader knows a lot about the event of Tristram's coming into life. His opinions expressed years later after his birth within the plot pyramid that is broken *to be tristram'd* [Ibid: 187]. Priority is given to an act of writing as a scene whose ink and pen attributes, as well as a sheet of paper, are associative tools for putting consciousness on paper. Sterne collects scenes to build associations of consciousness. He avoids conventional exposition and denouement, as his *Tristram Shandy* has neither beginning nor end. Sterne has to break with a conventional chronological order because he verbalizes consciousness from *some trains of certain ideas <...> and there is a consciousness of it, somewhere about the heart, which serves but to make these etchings the stronger – we see, spell, and put them together without a dictionary* [Ibid: 278]. Similarly, Joyce uses words that are not found in standard dictionaries; in *Finnegans Wake* he explores meanings that can be placed in one deviant linguistic form. His switching codes within one linguistic form empower pluralism of readings by analogy, association, and alternating language codes. Joyce uses language fusion in a new mixed code of simultaneity of flexible differentiating

meanings. In Stewart's view, Joyce's "mind is not captured by text, the stream of language is the flow of consciousness, an ultimate record of the inner life of language" [Stewart 1990: 245].

Second, Sterne's language experiments need to be linked to the problem of cumulating the language potential for forthcoming epochs as a prerequisite for linguistic-typological formation by forthcoming idiostyles of fiction writers. It remains a pressing issue of today to define Sternian language innovations that contributed to literary discourse development in Joyce's era. It can be assumed that Sterne was at the beginning of multiple ways of creating silences in literary discourse. In *Tristram Shandy* he experiments with chapters that have a blank page (Ch. XVIII, Ch. XIX Vol. IX); with one-sentence chapters (Ch. IX Vol. IX, Ch. XXVII Vol. IX), drawings in Ch. XL Vol. VI, and torn out chapters (Ch. XXIV Vol. IV). In *Tristram Shandy* Sterne wonders, *what has this book done more than the Legation of Moses, or the Tale of a Tub, that it may not swim down the gutter of Time along with them?* [Sterne 2000: 497]. Tristram's journey of a pen across the pages of his book brings together memories, doings, judgments, ideas, and thoughts of Tristram, a person *with such weak nerves and spirits, and in the condition I am in at present* [Ibid: 158]. Circularity of consciousness is what Sterne verbalizes in his book.

Third, the Sternean echo in modern literary language can be traced by observing one's own act of writing with regard to structural books. Sterne mentions Rabelais and Cervantes (both Rabelais and Sterne were priests). He carefully points out the unique features of his style, as if it were a prompt for those critics that would not be able to understand his novelty. For example, Sterne evokes in *Tristram Shandy* the importance of aposiopesis [Bloom 2004: 390]: *Make this dash, – 'tis an Aposiopesis. – Take this dash away, and write Backside, – 'tis Bawdy. – Scratch Backside out, and put Cover'd-way in, – 'tis a Metaphor; – and, I dare say, as fortification ran so much in my uncle Toby's head, that if he had been left to have added one word to the sentence, – that word was it* [Sterne 2000: 81]. By this Sterne explains how dashes replace something that is silenced and interrupted by consciousness. Although this can be linked to implied readership, a feature of *Tristram Shandy's* poetic syntax [Austin 1984: 132], the presence of aposiopesis and similar structures of textual ellipsis can be connected with innovative language use as transitory from a traditional narrative model to an epiphanic one. Punctuation in Sterne becomes as important as his sensibility's vocabulary which, he rightly feels, is not regulated by meanings of words fixed in dictionaries.

Fourth, Sterne himself points to aposiopesis as his stylistic norm. Aposiopesis is a figure of silence which technically is the sudden breaking of a sentence shown by a punctuation mark. The sentence remains unfinished, so the reader can guess what stands behind this sudden silence. Scholars claim that Sterne practises a play of the aposiopesis with a view of filling in "the textual ellipsis that aposiopetic stops create" [Goring 2005: 190]. Similar aposiopetic stops are used by Joyce as a means of leading to an epiphanic moment. Joyce likes using such aposiopetic stops in a space between sentences. For example: *I felt that I had been very far away, in some land where the customs were strange – in Persia, I thought. . . . But I could not remember the end of the dream* [Sterne 2000: 12].

In Flint's view, Sterne starts using multi-word aposiopesis in Vol. 3 of *Tristram Shandy*, so that "from then on, emasculation and asterism seem perpetually conjoined" [Flint 2011: 141]. This text is full of varied dashes and asterisks. Sentence fragmentation by means of individual-authorial punctuation is a remarkable feature of Sterne's idiostyle. Dash, long dash, double dash, and triple dash are well-recognized traces of his individual-authorial punctuation. But it is likely that there is much more under Sterne's deviant punctuation than it seems at first sight. He comments on his leaving an empty page in Ch. XXXVIII Vol. VI: *Thrice happy book! Thou wilt have one page, at least, within thy covers, which MALICE will not blacken, and which IGNORANCE cannot misrepresent* [Sterne 2000: 378]. Later, Joyce

would also experiment with blank spaces to put together 50 fragments of *Giacomo Joyce*. He would go further avoiding any punctuation marks in the last chapter of *Ulysses*.

The rhetoric figure of aposiopesis was a favorite of Demosthenes who used it to avoid “ill-omened words”; ancient rhetoricians resorted to euphemistic aposiopesis as “a logos, a verbal strategy around something unsaid” [Montinglio 2000: 133, 138]. This syntactic iconism is based on dislocation, similar to ellipsis, bricolage or anacoluthon. It can be found in Virgil and Shakespeare when it is necessary to iconize confusion or emotional turmoil [Bloom 2004: 298]. In his *Arte of English Poesie* George Puttenham states that aposiopesis is a figure of speech that signifies such emotional states as shame, fear or anger [Anderson 1998: 89].

Edgecombe states that the markers of true absence in modern literature are aposiopesis, ellipsis, and a blank page; in his view, aposiopesis contributes to new meanings “even as it breaks up” [Edgecombe 2003: 11]. Edgecombe claims that “sentence fermata”, for example, a drama-generating dash as a mid-sentence pause, became standard practice in the 20th century [Edgecombe 2010: 591]. According to this line of thought, aposiopesis has its own expressive punctuation which shows a sudden interruption of some emotional, threatening or hesitating nature – of any length, as in Sterne’s empty spaces that are left for chapter numbers without any text to follow.

My primary **aim** here is to pull a strand from Sterne’s deviant language (first and foremost, his individual-authorial punctuation) to the linguistic-typological norms in Joyce’s epiphanic model. The theoretical assumption must be that Sterne and Joyce are connected by their understanding of literary discourse as a space of streamed, flexible human consciousness.

“Tristramshandiness” of Lockean Association

According to the Lockean line of thought that human consciousness has manifestations in memory, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* incorporates some other person’s past action into Tristram’s own self by erasing temporal distance between his adult life and the moment of birth. The Lockean growing association of life and consciousness, as well as his freedom of mixture [Schmidgen 2007], are fundamental to Sterne’s adoption of Lockean psychology as a structural principle. However, in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* Locke’s freedom of mixture is practised to the extremes. Joyce uses about sixty languages by integrating them into the English literary discourse that questions its own Englishness due to idiosyncratic orthography of a phonotext.

Similar to his contemporaries, Sterne got interested in Locke’s doctrine of the perceiving and thinking mind: *This determination <...> how contrary soever it may seem to the stream of vulgar ideas* [Sterne 2000: 262]. Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* [Locke 1894] states, in the view of Murphy and Murphy, that the object of art is **understanding** [Murphy 1969: 160]. Locke’s association of ideas, together with his claim concerning language imperfection [Locke 1894: 397], is at the heart of Sterne’s search between opinion and knowledge, in accordance with the Lockean method of associationism. To Locke, ideas originate from sensation and reflection. Understanding comes from experience through “perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing” [Montinglio 2000: 162]. Sterne’s book is grounded in Locke’s theoretical assumption:

The ends of language, in our discourse with others, being chiefly these three; First, To make known one man's thoughts or ideas to another: Secondly, To do it with as much ease and quickness as is possible: and, Thirdly, Thereby to convey the knowledge of things. Language is either abused or deficient when it fails of any of these three [Locke 1894: 408].

In a similar vein, Sterne gives his idea of “life”: *What is the life of man! Is it not to shift from side to side? – from sorrow to sorrow? – to button up one cause of vexation! – and unbutton another!* [Sterne 2000: 268]. Sterne emphasizes the idea of action by considering

“life” as a movement-shift from one idea to another. In this shift he recognizes similar ideas (sameness of sorrow, for example) and causal effects between ideas. It is worth noting that Sterne’s view of “shifting” is “from side to side” with a question mark (the questioned idea of shifting “from ... to”). In fact, Sterne speaks of consciousness that stimulates shifts by exhausting one idea to start exploring another prompted by the prior one.

As a philosopher of language, Locke claims that language can disguise the absence of thought by abusing words. Locke considers language to be an artificially compiled system of signs that reveal ideas. Tristram Shandy’s mind selects the ideas of sensible qualities. Throughout the book, new sensations are added to old ones (*In books of strict morality and close reasoning, such as this I am engaged in, – the neglect is inexcusable* [Ibid: 173]). Sterne follows in the footsteps of Locke’s growing association of life and consciousness that opens up the joy of the unstable self (*Inconsistent soul that man is!* [Ibid: 161]). In *Tristram Shandy* characters use words to verbalize their ideas as a means of communicating them – Tristram quotes other people’s words and they go through his mind by associating with his own ideas shaped under their influences. Too many I’s on one page make it difficult to follow who is who because all is pushed through Tristram’s consciousness that nurtures associations to bring fragments of human life together. Tristram, a mouthpiece of Sterne, considers Locke’s *Essay* to be *a history-book <...> of what passes in a man’s own mind* [Ibid: 70]. The mind of Tristram, involved in a stream of ideas, is empowered by the spoken words of many people; and it is in his power to silence parts of that stream or to put them on a page in a flow of articulated speech.

Sterne associates ideas in the Lockean sense because he emphasizes connections (*the finding out the agreement or disagreement of two ideas one with another* [Ibid: 189]). In a Lockean way, Sterne transfers consciousness from one mind to another in endless circularity. Tristram’s identity is TOGETHERNESS OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *...my heart stops me to pay to thee, my dear uncle Toby, once for all, the tribute I owe thy goodness* [Ibid: 178]. Sterne strongly believe that association of consciousness is what makes a book different from those book that focus on action. He suggests his book should be a grand tour of consciousness that uses the material provided by conentional events, similar to Tristram’s birth or his brother’s death. Henceforth, Sterne’s book deals with Tristram’s consciousness revealed through *the upsteady uses of words which have perplexed the clearest and most exalted understandings* [Ibid: 71]. In order not to abuse words in the Lockean sense, Sterne uses textual ellipses, including aposiopesis, so that he would not spoil *the subtleties of these learned discourses* [Ibid: 265].

With his intent not to abuse words, Sterne carefully arranges ideas by associating root repetitions and conversions, for example: *Of all the **cants** which are **canted** in this **canting** world, – though **the cant** of hypocrites may be the worst, – **the cant** of criticism is the most tormenting!* [Ibid:144]. “Cant” is a statement made by a person who does not sincerely believe in what s(he) says (cant was defined as “insincere talk” in 1709). Here, the practices of critics and hypocrites are put together through the abstract idea of cant which is defined, in line with Locke, from particulars (different kinds of cants – two particulars related to hypocrites and critics). These resemblances are signalled by repetitions of four different forms of the word “cant”, nouns and verbs. Sterne defines “the canting world” as fragments of life put together by particulars of opinions about them.

Locke’s rationality regarding association of ideas was modified into David Hume’s stream of a person’s associations. David Hartley developed Locke’s association by claiming that association influences opinions and affections [Murphy 1969: 170]. It was Hartley who addressed Locke’s association in the direction of memory, free association, and fantasy [Murphy 1969: 175]: Hartley developed Locke’s association by cementing associations in generated ideas that can be linked or broken apart.

As it seems to me, Sterne masters conceptual UNITY whose language dominant is the adverb “together”, a marker of unifying atoms of sensation. This idea of UNITY is consequently conceptualized across *Tristram Shandy*. Sterne cultivates UNITY (*for all these reasons put together* [Sterne 2000: 159]) and ACTION (*nine parts in ten of a man’s sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend upon their motions and activity* [Sterne 2000: 5]) by sitting in his study, in NON-UNITY. One of Sterne’s finest quotes is: *Solitude is the best nurse of wisdom*. Henceforth, Sterne’s individual-authorial conception is grounded in NON-UNITY of NON-ACTION embedded in UNITY of ACTION. Ideas are grouped under these associative dominants.

From Sterne Joyce’s era inherited literary discourse that is an act of writing that can tell a story in fragments of life through ideas or opinions. In Sterne, the matrix of opinion-making consists of ACTION (something must be done to receive an idea or opinion) in the context of UNITY (people are together to promote ideas or opinions). NON-ACTION is tested by textual ellipsis which also triggers NON-UNITY (verbalized rhetoricity vs. silences). In Joyce, ACTION, NON-ACTION, UNITY, and NON-UNITY are conceptualized thinking processes of which UNITY is in the implicit. In Joyce’s era a human being suffers from solitude and lacks togetherness that unites under certain epiphanic moments.

As action is subdued in Joyce’s era, Sterne’s focus on scenes that illustrate opinions develops into Joyce’s building of meaning on conceptualizations provided by the scenes and conventional predicted events. In Sterne, the act of writing reveals a person’s consciousness which is a stream of ideas that are arranged as agreements and disagreements. These juxtapositions of opinions are interwoven in a space of literary discourse.

So, what is “tristramshandiness” of Lockean association? The reason for Sterne’s innovative language use, I believe, lies in associative fragmentation as a macrostructural principle. Sterne succeeds in describing the UNITY of things by combining them with ACTION. He places his Tristram somewhat apart from the agents of his UNITY-ACTION (NON-ACTION is implied, since Tristram’s father and Uncle Toby, for example, are already dead). Tristram’s NON-ACTION is conceptualized by a chair on which he sits alone to write from his memories. He lives in a culture that values “togetherness”, so “together” is the word that is said many times in Sterne’s book.

The above mentioned features would be developed in Joyce’s epiphanic model, as shown below.

Discontinuous Syntax in Interior Monologue

Interior monologue is marked by abbreviated syntax, which can be not articulated or pre-articulated. Similar to Sterne who played with dashes and asterisks, Joyce varies the number of dots in *Giacomo Joyce*. He also uses the dashes that frame the utterance, for example: – *I am not convinced that such activities of the mind or body can be called unhealthy* – [Joyce 1968: 15]. Three dots, or suspension points, are Joyce’s favorites: in *Dubliners* he uses a stop that is followed by a combination of three dots. Formally, Joycean sentences are complete but the thought remains unspoken, like in the following: *It was that chalice he broke. . . . That was the beginning of it. Of course, they say it was all right, that it contained nothing, I mean. But still. . . . They say it was the boy’s fault* [Joyce 1996: 17].

It remains in the implicit – what has happened to the chalice (ACTION) that isolated the priest from others (NON-UNITY) and led him to paralysis and death (NON-ACTION), but an encounter with something through the chalice (the desired UNITY) made a change in a boy who was freed by the burden of the priest’s thought about the broken chalice. Two broken sentences are marked by parallel three dots (ACTION leads to NON-UNITY of NON-ACTION – something happened that made a change and separated the priest from others). The same device is used twice in the final passage of the story. Three dots after the full stop indicate something that was not like as it was expected to be. The same three dots are present

in Old Cotter's opinion remarks. He uses aposiopesis between the demonstrative pronoun and the word combination the pronoun defines together with a silence marked by three dots between the adjacent sentences: "*I think it was one of those . . . peculiar cases. . . . But it's hard to say. . . .*" [Ibid: 8]. The hints are dropped within the text of Joyce's story. Nothing is said whether the chalice was broken before the liturgic service, during it or after it. But the event of a broken chalice led to an encounter whose outcomes negatively influenced his consciousness. The broken chalice ruined the physical body of the priest, whereas the encounter with the effect of a broken chalice liberated the storyteller and continued his work of consciousness in the direction away from the duties of priesthood.

Unlike Sterne's associative consciousness that measures ideas for sameness and differences, Joyce's epiphanic model focusses on the centrality of consciousness by taking into account the unconsciousness nature of the thinking process. Sterne lived during the age of senses and reasons; he was influenced by British associationism represented by Lockean associationism, Hume's radical associationism, and Hartley's association of ideas – all of them sharing a perception of the conscious stream of images and ideas. Joyce was influenced by William James, Freud, and Jung. For example, James's psychology is attributable to a shift from associationism to functional textuality, from the atomic view of sensation to a stream of thought, or a stream of consciousness.

Let's study aposiopesis in Joyce's short story *A little cloud* in order to define the role it plays in breaking the hierarchy of narrative categories and creating the space of silenced consciousness. In this text there are many traces of aposiopesis, both within sentences and between them. Aposiopesis is used for the first time to reveal the thoughts of Little Chandler before the event of seeing Gallaher at a restaurant takes place: *There was always a certain . . . something in Ignatius Gallaher that impressed you in spite of yourself* [Ibid: 79]. In his thoughts on the way to the restaurant Little Chandler examines "a certain ... something" in relation to himself. He is a failure in comparison with Gallaher, and Little Chandler feels it. He dreams of publishing a book that will be reviewed with appraisal: *'Mr. Chandler has the gift of easy and graceful verse.'* . . . *'A wiful sadness persuades these poems.'* . . . [Ibid: 80]. When Chandler and Gallaher meet, Chandler's embarrassment grows. Gallaher's speech is full of fragmentation: he is a former Dubliner (*I feel a ton better since I landed again in dear, dirty Dublin. . . .* [Ibid: 82]) who has seen the world (*Ay, there's no city like Paris for gaiety, movement, excitement. . . .* [Joyce 1996: 83]) and can reveal *cases of . . . immorality. . . .* [Ibid: 85]. His speech reminds of newspaper headlines. Unlike Chandler, Gallaher is a loner: *That's human nature. . . . But tell me something about yourself. Hogan told me you had . . . tasted the joys of connubial bliss* [Ibid: 86]. Chandler invites Gallaher to his home: *We can have a little music and* – [Ibid: 87]. But Gallaher excuses himself. At home, alone with his sleeping son, Chandler refreshes his view of his family life: *Hm! . . .* [Ibid: 91]. Throughout the story the repetitive rhythm (. . . .) gets more and more disturbing as the embodiment of weakness: *It's nothing. . . . He . . . he began to cry. . . . I couldn't . . . I didn't do anything. . . . What?* [Ibid: 93].

Similar to Sterne, "something" comes into mind and is phenomenologically perceived by consciousness in the thought's medium of literary discourse. In *Tristram Shandy* Sterne cites Aristotle: *...when a man doth think of any thing which is past, – he looketh down upon the ground, – but when he thinketh of something which is to come, he looketh up towards the heavens*" [Sterne 2000: 82]. To compare with Joyce: *There was something vulgar in his friend which he had not observed before* [Joyce 1996: 83]. But Sterne's "something" does not develop into new meaning, whereas Joyce fills in the "something" gap by saying, *Gallaher was only patronizing him by his friendliness just as he was patronizing Ireland by his visit* [Joyce 1996: 88]. This UNITY is false, as well as "friendliness" can be opposite to TOGETHERNESS. Thus, Little Chandler's ACTION (meeting Gallaher at the restaurant)

results in NON-ACTION (he tells his former friend nothing about publishing poetry, as he had planned), which UNITY of being in one place ends in their NON-UNITY (Chandler's living in Dublin and Gallaher's living in London, Chandler's failure despite his talents and Gallaher's success despite his limited intellectual powers).

In the epiphanic model, the hierarchy of narrative categories is broken. In Joyce's story the encounter with a partonizing friend is backed by the memories of his leaving Ireland for England eight years ago. The scene at the restaurant builds on itself, similar to Sterne's coming back to the moment of Tristram's birth, in order to identify the change in two former friends. Sterne also attempts at breaking the hierarchy of narrative categories by narrating other stories in relation to the same scene, to the same event. There is no epiphanic moment because Tristram's present consciousness is dependent on his past memories of what was said and could have been said by others. Sterne remains within the tenets of action which drives consciousness in his model of narration. Joyce breaks the hierarchy of narrative categories and builds meanings on them without unfolding the plot pyramid as it was prescribed by Freitag.

From this, I can assume that Joyce borrows from Sterne the following:

- Literary discourse is empowered by words that are not found in standard dictionaries because associative networks can be built on all levels of literary discourse.
- Literary discourse that gives priority to consciousness is grounded in shifts of focus.
- Locke's freedom of mixture.
- Imitative textuality.
- Concentration of ideas in the form of a matrix in which conceptualizations are arranged.
- Circularity of an open text whose beginning and end are relative.

Conclusions

As shown, the Sternian echo in Joyce's epiphanic model can be traced in the representation of mental phenomena in associative choppy strings (streams of thoughts and mentalities), and silences signalled by individual-authorial punctuation by means of fragmentation to achieve the effect of simultaneity. Joyce transforms Sterne's "tristramshandiness" from circularity of associative ideas into associative blocks of meanings within the mental matrix ACTION, NON-ACTION, UNITY, NON-UNITY. Deviant language use holds literary discourse within the framework of the known by triggering the unknown. Sterne enjoys suspension of the unspoken, whereas Joyce arranges the unspoken for interpreting the implicit. Sterne's literary discourse focusses on "something" signalled by absent verbalizations; his "dislocated" silences, however, are not sudden manifestations of meaning as it is in Joyce's epiphanic model. Yet, both Sterne and Joyce are closely linked together due to their bold deviations from established norms of producing literary discourse. Their deviant language practices pattern the flows of consciousness that conceptualize literary discourse, including intertextual reference and broken narration.

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Резюме

Статья посвящена преобразованию языковых экспериментов Л. Стерна в «Тристраме Шенди» в лингвотипологические принципы, внесшие вклад в эпифаническую модель Джеймса Джойса, включая внутренний монолог. Языковое новаторство Стера, в особенности, его ранние формы свободной ассоциации и индивидуально-авторская пунктуация, получают целостное развитие у Джойса.