Abstract: Joyce was always serious about every aspect of the publishing of his works. One aspect that never made it beyond his manuscripts is his particular use of the speech dash, which he intended not to flush left, or indent, but ‘exdent’, as his manuscripts, from *A Portrait* as well as *Ulysses*, plainly show. A recent Dutch translation of *Ulysses* (2012) is the first to implement this exdented dash. The translators explain the why and how.

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Punctuation is the life and breath of an author, as we learned when we were translating *Finnegans Wake*. You can, indeed have to do every immarginable thing with the words to transport them from the non-English into the non-Dutch, but you can’t really touch the rhythm of the sentences, subdivided and propelled by the naturalness of the punctuation marks. A novel is not a collection of words, but a concatenation of discreet sentences.

Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge, for the evolution of life on this planet, invented the term ‘punctuated equilibria’: long stretches of hardly any major mutations, punctuated by moments of tremendous genetic activity and the appearance of a bevvy of new species and genera.¹ We’d like to apply the term to the sentences of Joyce: his are truly punctuated equilibria, well-balanced periods, every sentence forged in the smithy of his black soul, being hammered away at for years and years (1904-1914; 1914-1921; 1922-1939), with a very idiosyncratic life beat. Wayriver they ebb and flow, winding and unwinding, musical phrases that revolve and resolve.

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— Well Joyce, you worked hard?
— Yes, I did two sentences.
— Ah, le mot juste!
— No, the words were there: it was getting them in the right order.

As the famous anecdote told by Frank Budgen goes.² And the right order is the order circumscribed by the commas, colons, hyphens, fullstops, exclamation & interrogation marks and what have you not.

Keeping the punctuation of *Finnegans Wake* intact provided a very useful foothold for getting the sound of a Joycean sentence right, in translation.

Punctuation is the closest approximation of what is not there – what is implied in between the lines, what is connotation and not denotation, the blank spaces in between, in between the atoms of the words. It is the rhythm and the measure of the voice of the author himself.

As translators (not only of *Finnegans Wake*, but also of *Ulysses*) we felt the obligation to translate everything, not just what was on the page, written, there, *sub oculos*, but also what wasn’t there. Our predeceasing *Ulysses*-translators, for instance, notoriously cut up the first sentence of the big blue book, and made two separate statements out of it. Which not only destroyed the sense but also the rhythm, and with it the sense. (“Stately plump Buck Mulligan” etc. “He was carrying” etc. – No, it is not a book about a buck. The vision is one and undivided: someone carrying something, and not the start of a cut-and-dried, wash-and-go novelette.)

So this is one respect in which we followed the unwritten law of the author (or actually very much written: it was there, right in front of us!). Leave my periods alone. Period.

²
The second instance of respect we showed to the author’s intentions is the way in which we handled the dashing dashes of direct speech.

Joyce famously hated the perverted commas and had them removed by the sergeant-at-arms (*LIII* 99-100). Quotation marks, our

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