Joyce after Nietzsche: Irony and the Will to Truth

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Abstract

This thesis explores and evaluates the work of James Joyce using the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche. It does so not only by examining Joyce's knowledge of Nietzsche's writings, but also through demonstrating how effectively they can illuminate Joyce's themes and techniques, and aid in a general reconceptualisation of his literary project.

My analysis draws on several of Nietzsche's key concepts – perspectivism, ressentiment, the will to power – and applies them to Joyce's work. The main idea I use however is the will to truth. I argue that Joyce's primary concern as an artist was the depiction of what he saw as the truth of contemporary existence, in Dublin and more generally. This aim determines his technē, the origin and form of his work of art. Various manifestations of irony, a key element of Joyce's technique, help illustrate the importance of this will to truth. This understanding of his work eliminates the false division between form and content and through an emphasis on Joyce's artistry and philosophy, rather than the historical context in which he wrote (that is, on the author rather than the man), allows for a truly critical assessment.

The five chapters that follow my introduction are chronologically ordered. They examine the early works, *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and especially *Ulysses*, in considerable detail and from various angles. Though careful to respect the individuality of each, my analyses find a common thread of realism uniting the three major works of prose fiction; beginning with the French naturalism of the short stories, moving on to a new development of perspectival irony and a unique mode of allegory in his first novel, and ending in what Joyce called 'the new realism' of his epic. My study then explains how and why realism is problematised in the later chapters of *Ulysses* as the will to truth comes

to question itself. The thesis concludes with an assessment of *Finnegans Wake*, considering how it marks a radical departure from Joyce's earlier practice, and why I regard it a failure.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandmother, Patricia Sinnott.

Abbreviations

References to these editions of works by Joyce are given in parentheses in the text. The abbreviations are followed by page number; or, for *Finnegans Wake*, page and line number. References to *Ulysses* are followed by episode and line number.

D	*Dubliners*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
FW	*Finnegans Wake* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975)
OCPW	*Occasional, Critical, and Political Writings*, ed. Kevin Barry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
P	*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
PSW	*Poems and Shorter Writings*, ed. Richard Ellmann et al. (London: Faber & Faber, 1991)
SH	*Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (New York: New Directions, 1963)
U	*Ulysses*, The Corrected Text [1986], ed. Hans Walter Gabler et al. (London: The Bodley Head, 2002)

Abbreviations are also used for the following frequently cited works:

JJ	*James Joyce* by Richard Ellmann, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982)
JJQ	*James Joyce Quarterly*, University of Tulsa, 1963 –
L I	*Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber & Faber, 1957)
L II	*Letters of James Joyce*, vol. II, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber & Faber, 1966)
L III	*Letters of James Joyce*, vol. III, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber & Faber, 1966)
SL	*Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber & Faber, 1975)

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‘All experiment is made on a basis of tradition; all tradition is the crystallisation of experiment.’

–Louis MacNeice

Introduction

The most fundamental aim of this thesis is to demonstrate *how* we can understand the realism of Joyce's works, culminating in *Ulysses*. It argues that to do so, we must approach old yet vital questions once again, but not necessarily directly or via the better trodden routes. To this end, the work of Friedrich Nietzsche is employed throughout, as its boldness and innovation allow us to capture and appreciate anew Joyce's own originality as a writer. What is envisioned is neither repudiation nor renovation of Joyce criticism but a radical reorientation of our readings, accompanied by a move from hagiography to genuine evaluation.

The *after* of my title is a bridge to a dialectical 'and'. That is to say, its deliberate ambiguity contains and suggests the twofold thrust of this work: to consider Joyce as writing in Nietzsche's wake, in the aftermath of his works' deferred prevalence, *and* to elucidate the fiction using concepts derived from Nietzschean thought. I invoke dialectic to convey the dialogic nature of this exchange, one which oscillates between influence and interpretation, but which can never wholly resolve itself into a Hegelian synthesis or a total victory of one over the other. In a sense, the first half of my division is itself ambiguous and a fusion of two different, but related, aspects. Joyce was writing in Nietzsche's shadow in as much as he was familiar with his work, but also because Nietzsche's powerful, prophetic masterpieces captured the spiritual condition, the zeitgeist of Joyce's era. These books, with their incisive, revelatory reflections on the death of God and its repercussions, could be seen as the philosophical ground on which Joyce erected his monuments. To borrow an analogy from Erich Heller, Nietzsche was something like the Aquinas to Joyce's Dante.[1] Of course,

[1] Erich Heller, in *The Importance of Nietzsche: Ten Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 2. Heller was referring to Nietzsche's enormous influence on twentieth century German letters. It is crucial to note that I am not here making a comparison between the two writers' respective knowledge of these philosophers, or a point about direct influence, but rather pointing towards an awareness of the intellectual climates of the ages in which they wrote, and the implicit philosophical bases of their works.

many would have it that St. Thomas himself – or perhaps Aristotle – was Joyce's Aquinas, but their metaphysical systems had vanished into the abyss he and Nietzsche confronted.[2] As George Orwell helpfully explained, '[w]hat Joyce is saying is "Here is life without God. Just look at it!"'[3] Scholars are necessarily and understandably cautious of the sort of 'X was "in the air"' argument I have just rehearsed (and will continue shortly), but subsequent chapters will show that Nietzsche is also very much *in the texts*. Nevertheless, the other, more interpretative, strand of my work offers an alternative to those whose sceptical disposition regarding Joyce's knowledge of, influence by, or affinity with Nietzsche is not allayed by my readings. For instance, in my fifth chapter, the use of the notions of perspectivism and *ressentiment* does not presume familiarity with these ideas on Joyce's part, nor does my central concept of will to truth. In much of what follows, my approach is no more reliant on *proving* any direct connection than an application of anyone from Arendt to Zizek's thought to the fiction would have to be. I have referred to the *after* in my title as a bridge, and it is one that can lead to a new appreciation of Nietzsche's presence in Joyce, or of Joyce's work through Nietzsche, but ideally it will do both.

This introductory chapter will begin empirically, by outlining Joyce's knowledge of Nietzsche's work, and the context in which he first encountered it, as a prelude to examining his occasional engagement with it in subsequent chapters. The remainder of the introduction will be devoted to a matrix of more theoretical or philosophical questions, setting out essential terms as well as my critical approach. These sections are intended to act as an explanation of the pragmatic rationale by which the rest of the thesis operates, and are more

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[2] Ezra Pound put it well when he replied tersely to a reader enquiring why his imitation of Dante's epic (*The Cantos*) lacked formal coherence: 'Don't have an Aquinas map. Aquinas not valid now.' *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound*, ed. D.D. Paige (New York: New Directions, 1971), p. 323. Cited by Lucia Boldrini in the introduction to her edited collection, *Medieval Joyce* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), p. 10.
[3] 'Inside the Whale', in *Collected Essays* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961), p. 136.

prolegomenon than summary or overview. As such, they are designed to smooth the way for detailed discussion of Joyce to begin in earnest in the next chapter.

* * *

Influence

'With the enthusiasm of our twenties we read *The Wanderings of Oisin* and talked about Nietzsche and Ibsen and prepared ourselves to take part in a revival of the Celtic spirit.'

-Padraic Colum on Joyce and himself[4]

One occasionally comes across graffiti saying: "'God is dead.'-Nietzsche" Then, sometimes, below, the inevitable rejoinder: "'Nietzsche is dead.'-God." The famed Nietzsche scholar and translator Walter Kaufmann wrote that the best third line he had seen appended to this tired exchange was: "'Some are born posthumously.'-Nietzsche."[5] Nietzsche was of course speaking of himself when he composed those fateful words, and the extent to which he was correct in his prediction of his eventual ubiquity is testified to by the writing on the toilet wall. From his death in 1900 on, Nietzsche was *everywhere*, the most influential thinker in pre-1945 Europe.

An outline of the cultural milieu in which Joyce initially encountered Nietzsche in the years of his intellectual formation, if necessarily speculative, has, as a happy by-product, a demonstration of just how pervasive the thinker's influence was. It is hoped that the inevitability of Joyce's coming into contact with Nietzsche's ideas will become clear, an inevitability which has not hitherto been countenanced in either critical or biographical studies.

In 1900, at the age of just seventeen, Joyce had an article on Ibsen's final play published in *The Fortnightly Review* in London. This was one of the foremost literary periodicals of the day, whose other Irish contributors included Yeats, Moore, and Stephen Gwynn. This

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[4] In *Our Friend James Joyce*, Padraic and Mary Colum (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959), p. 88. Colum is referring to when he and Joyce were students.

[5] See Kaufmann's translation of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science: with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 321, footnote 102.

youthful coup on Joyce's part highlights not only his precocious knowledge of continental literature, but also his intimate familiarity with the intellectual culture of the neighbouring isle from an early age. Beginning with three sympathetic and informed articles by Havelock Ellis in the *Savoy* 1896, Nietzsche became a highly visible figure in English letters; for instance, in 1898 *The Fortnightly Review* featured an essay on his work. As David S. Thatcher has shown, Nietzsche's reception in England was greatly mediated by Max Nordau's highly successful *Degeneration* (translated 1895).[6] This was a sensationalist all-out attack on supposedly unhealthy writers, such as Baudelaire, Huysmans, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Wilde, Wagner, and, above all, Nietzsche. Obviously, the company to which Nietzsche was consigned seems misguided now – one can scarcely think of a writer to whose views he would have been more antipathetic than Tolstoy – but however wide of the mark, it helped shape the general perception of Nietzsche. He was linked in the popular imagination with exactly the sort of artists Joyce most admired. Writers Joyce read avidly, such as Gabrielle d'Annunzio, Georg Brandes[7] and Arthur Symons, had championed or appropriated this dangerous new name in the 1890s, and as the new century began, possible routes to Nietzsche seemed to open at every turn.

In 1903, George Bernard Shaw, who had been alluding to Nietzsche in important books such as *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* and *The Perfect Wagnerite* for some years, had his play *Man and Superman* premiered on the London stage. Its quasi-Nietzschean title and theme aroused further comment on the philosopher in the British press. Though Joyce was ambivalent toward Shaw, he could scarcely have failed to miss the furore the play of his

[6] See *Nietzsche in England, 1890-1914: The Growth of a Reputation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), esp. pp. 27-8.
[7] Brandes, for whom Joyce's respect was deep and lasting, had corresponded with Nietzsche and was the first intellectual of major prominence to realise Nietzsche's importance and publicise it before the philosopher's mental collapse.

most prominent compatriot caused. By then however, Nietzsche had penetrated the city Shaw had left behind to seek his fortune: Zarathustra had come to Dublin.

Yeats first encountered Nietzsche's texts in 1902 – he was completely enraptured.[8] It would be no exaggeration to call this a transformative moment. He wrote that year to his old friend and fellow writer Lady Gregory about 'Nietzsche, that strong enchanter. I have read him so much that I have made my eyes bad again.'[9] And where Yeats led, the Dublin literati, including Joyce, invariably followed.[10] Oliver St. John Gogarty, Joyce's best friend in those days, and an ardent disciple of Yeats, was soon immersed in Nietzsche. John Eglinton, friend of Yeats and Joyce, published a knowledgeable, if not wholly enthusiastic article on Nietzsche in his journal *Dana* in 1904 (the same year Joyce tried to get an article published in that periodical). Dublin's writers were a small, close-knit group, and this strange German name would have been on the lips of its prominent members like George Moore and A.E., even if their actual knowledge or understanding of his work probably remained highly superficial.[11] At this time, Joyce prided himself, above all, on being cosmopolitan – the lure of Nietzsche, widely discussed among his artistic acquaintances, would surely have proven irresistible. In 1904, he signed a postcard to a friend, 'James Overman'.[12] Of course, one need hardly be an expert on Nietzsche to use such a common

[8] Frances Nesbitt Oppel argues convincingly that given Yeats' position in the intellectual life of London and his friendships, he would have at least known of some of Nietzsche's more famous ideas before actually reading him in 1902. See her *Mask and Tragedy: Yeats and Nietzsche, 1902-10* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987).
[9] Letter to Lady Augusta Gregory, 26 December 1902, in *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats: Volume Three, 1901-1904*, ed. John Kelly and Ronald Schuchard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 284.
[10] J.M. Synge however discovered and absorbed Nietzsche independently of Yeats (and well before him, in the mid-1890s), as Joyce might have, and they may have discussed his ideas during their meetings in Paris in 1902.
[11] That this fashion was not just a fad for all concerned is attested to by Joseph Hone's 1911 translation of Daniel Halévy's *Life of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Joyce did not know Hone very well (his publishing house was to have published *Dubliners* but withdrew the offer). However, he was close friends with Thomas Kettle, who provided a knowledgeable introduction to the translation, demonstrating a deep and prolonged engagement with Nietzsche's work (some of which at least he had read in German). An example of the sort of fatuous association with Nietzsche (very much a desire to be *à la mode*, as exemplified by Mulligan in *Ulysses*) is the laughable claim of George Moore (himself a friend of Halévy) in a 1904 preface to his *Confessions of a Young Man* to have anticipated Zarathustra's 'doctrine' in that memoir.
[12] *L I*, p. 56 (to George Roberts, 13 July 1904).

buzz-word, but it does demonstrate that Joyce was *au courant* with the zeitgeist. As we shall see later, the trend is reflected in *Ulysses*.

There is a lasting critical consensus, instigated by Ellmann's biography, that, to quote a 2010 work, 'Joyce outgrew Nietzsche.'[13] Not only is this flat three word summary deeply reductive, it is wholly unjustified. What evidence there is strongly suggests the contrary: Joyce's interest in Nietzsche grew. He bought several of Nietzsche's books *after* 1909. Commenting on the 1904 postcard, Ellmann made the highly questionable statement that '[a]t heart Joyce could hardly have been a Nietzschean any more than he was a socialist'. His only justification for this is the rather irrelevant (not to mention tendentious regarding the young man of 1904) assertion that 'his interest was in the ordinary rather than in the extraordinary'.[14] Later in the work he wilfully distorted evidence to suggest Joyce disliked or disapproved of Nietzsche: '[Boris] Furlan [a student of Joyce's in Trieste] was in a phase of enthusiasm for Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which Joyce tried to choke by urging that Thomas Aquinas was the greatest philosopher because his reasoning was "like a sharp sword."'[15] The letters from Furlan Ellmann is relying upon here suggest otherwise: Joyce certainly did not try to 'choke' anything; Furlan explicitly stated that he could recall no comment (good, bad, or indifferent) made by Joyce on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.[16] The fact of his great admiration for Aquinas (an admiration I would suggest is similar to Beckett's for Geulincx: one that valued ingenuity and precision rather than believed *per se*) need not preclude an interest in later thinkers, and Furlan never suggested anything of the sort.

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[13] Pericles Lewis, *Religious Experience and the Modernist Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 179. Lewis simply cites the Ellmann biography to back up this claim.
[14] *JJ*, p. 142.
[15] Ibid., p. 342.
[16] Letter from Boris Furlan to Richard Ellmann, 24 January 1954 (from The Richard Ellmann Papers, Special Collection, University of Tulsa library), p. 1.

During his time on the continent Joyce socialised with men whose knowledge of, and enthusiasm for Nietzsche ranged from shallow (Frank Budgen), to deep (Italo Svevo), to profound (Stefan Zweig). His Trieste library contained *The Joyful Wisdom* [or *The Gay Science*]; *The Birth of Tragedy*; and, in one volume, *The Case of Wagner*, *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* and *Selected Aphorisms* [about Wagner]. This does not mean of course that Joyce's knowledge of Nietzsche was limited to these texts - indeed *Ulysses* strongly suggests Joyce was familiar with *The Antichrist*, and with Nietzsche's most influential work by some distance, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, in German.[17] J.S. Atherton has detected the presence of that work and of *Ecce Homo* in *Finnegans Wake*.[18] Having disposed in this overview of the perception of Joyce as having no interest in Nietzsche in his mature creative period, in the following chapters the possible impact of this influence on his fiction will be explored.

* * *

Truth

'The only valid tribute to thought such as Nietzsche's is to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest.

-Michel Foucault[19]

Nietzsche's views on truth are diffuse, complex and highly disputed. I will now outline what I take them to have been, how they relate to his general philosophical project, and

[17] Appropriately, given Carlyle's enthusiastic promotion of German literature, a phrase from *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (part I, section 5, 'On enjoying and suffering the passions') appears in the pastiche of his bombastic style at the end of chapter 14: 'How saith Zarathustra? *Deine Kuh Trübsal melkest Du. Nun trinkst Du die süsse Milch des Euters.*' (*U*, 14.1431-2) So central was *Zarathustra* to Nietzsche's canon at the time that it is hard to imagine anyone owning several of his other books as Joyce did and not being familiar with it. Carlyle's hero-worship was occasionally compared to Nietzsche's exaltation of higher types though the similarity is superficial and Nietzsche vehemently denied any resemblance or influence. Joyce perhaps included the phrase because he saw some connection between the two writers; he may even have been playfully alluding to Nietzsche's objections by making Carlyle a spokesman for a thinker whom he could not have known. Perhaps, more banally, it might be a coincidence that Nietzsche appears in this part of the chapter, Joyce simply recalling a German phrase that fitted well.

[18] J.S. Atherton, *The Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in James Joyce's 'Finnegans Wake'* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 270. Atherton says that the following sentence 'parodies the chapter titles of *Ecce Homo*': 'Why I am not born like a Gentileman and why I am now so speakable about my own eatables.' Atherton is correct, but it should also be added that the sentence is referring to the content of Nietzsche's extraordinary autobiography as well, in which he discusses his family's roots and his diet (on which he places great emphasis).

[19] From an interview in 1975. Quoted in *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 116.

indicate their relevance to this thesis. I have thought it best, both here and throughout, to distil my own understandings of Nietzsche's complex ideas rather than engage with the vicissitudes of the vast secondary literature, though I am of course highly indebted to it and many scholars for elucidation. My aim, after all, is to engage readers of Joyce, who might well feel that they have quite enough secondary literature of their own to deal with, and not academic philosophers. Inevitably given the range and length of Nietzsche's corpus, I am also highly selective of which parts of it I choose to engage with; nevertheless I hope I am at least true to its general thrust. I have no intention of offering an original interpretation of Nietzschean thought, but I do hope to demonstrate the validity and utility of a new application of it.

For Nietzsche perspectivism is not to be understood as a metaphor but as 'the basic condition of all life'.[20] What he means by perspectivism is 'this world for the eye, tongue, and ear'[21] – in other words, the only world we know, that of our sensory impressions: '[a]s if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective!'[22] He claims that traditionally many philosophers have sought to ignore our perspectival condition and hence 'these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense.'[23]

Of course, the sceptic would object that Nietzsche cannot *prove* that our sensory impressions are actually 'real' – as Descartes asked, what if there were a demon deceiving

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[20] *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990), 'Preface', p. 32

[21] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967), § 602, p. 326.

[22] Ibid., § 567, p. 305.

[23] Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (printed in an edition with *Ecce Homo*) (New York: Vintage, 1989), III.12, p. 119.

us about what we thought we saw, what if our perspective were simply an illusion? Nietzsche has no answer, and no time, for such concerns, and this is partly why many have doubted his claim to be a philosopher at all – he was simply uninterested in solving such alleged 'problems'. His attitude is captured nicely by Heidegger's remark in *Being and Time* that the scandal of philosophy was not as Kant had it that nobody had proved the reality of the external world but that such attempts had been continuously made.[24] Perspectivism is our state of being in the world, and precludes the assumption of a split between subject and object or self and world.

Nietzsche regarded Plato as culpable for 'standing truth on her head and denying *perspective* itself'.[25] Plato argued that our perspectival world was false, one of mere *appearance*, concealing the true world, that of transcendent Ideas. This, Nietzsche claims, is how the true world became a fable.[26] Christianity, or 'Platonism for "the people"',[27] extended this idea so that the idea of a beyond denigrated actual existence (this world a mere prelude to eternity), and this is one of the reasons its demise is so desirable and significant: 'The concept of "God" was until now the greatest objection to existence. We deny God, we deny the responsibility in God: only thereby do we redeem the world.'[28] This Platonist dichotomy of a true world and one of appearances is obliterated when we consider our actual, perspectival condition, but this does not mean we simply live in an insubstantial world of false appearances, cut off from truth, rather '*with the true world we have also*

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[24] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), p. 249. For Nietzsche's kindred views, see § 11 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'synthetic judgements *a priori* should not "be possible" at all: we have no right to them; in our mouths they are nothing but false judgements. But belief in their truth is, of course, necessary as foreground belief and ocular evidence belonging to the perspective optics of life.', p. 42.

[25] *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'Preface', p. 32.

[26] See 'How the "true world" finally became a fable: The History of an Error', Nietzsche's six point summary of this process, in *Twilight of the Idols: Or, How One Philosophizes With a Hammer*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 485-6.

[27] *Beyond Good and Evil*, 'Preface', p. 32.

[28] *Twilight of the Idols*, 'The Four Great Errors', § 8, p. 501.

abolished the apparent one.'[29] There is no *true* world (inasmuch as this entails there could be a false one): there is only *the* world.

Viewing perspectivism as a metaphor inevitably leads one to interpret Nietzsche as saying that there are infinite perspectives, all perfectly viable. This is the *relativistic* Nietzsche many of us will recognise from second-hand knowledge of his work. But if one contemplates the actuality of our perspectival condition, this can easily be discounted – there *are* infinite perspectives, but one can still make evaluative judgements of them: there's a reason the front row seats cost more than those at the back of the theatre. Analogously, having multiple perspectives, looking at something from a range of angles, is clearly superior.

The relativistic Nietzsche was and is so widespread that leading Nietzsche scholar Brian Leiter dubbed it the 'Received View'.[30] It is arguably the received view in anglophone literary criticism and theory generally. It is not hard to see why it has gained prominence; Nietzsche does after all often denounce or question the notion of truth. But if we accept such pronouncements at face-value and without seeking to understand them within the context of Nietzsche's general philosophical project, we are faced with the paradox that Nietzsche often claims that his own views *are* true (as opposed to the mendacious lies of Plato or Christianity, for instance). I think we can avoid this paradox if we accept that Nietzsche is questioning certain ingrained, seldom examined ideas of truth (such as Absolute Truth), but not denying the possibility of true and false statements.

There is no such thing as truth *if* we mean *the* truth or Truth, any more than there is such a thing as Falsity. As Wittgenstein would say, language has here created a problem – by creating a noun from an essential adjective – which appears philosophical and serious,

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[29] Ibid., 'How the "true world" finally became a fable: The History of an Error', p. 486.
[30] Brian Leiter, 'Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's 'Genealogy of Morals'*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 334.

but is not. Whereas reality is a useful term, if only to contrast with fantasy, truth has only a limited applicability. When we say 'she speaks the truth', for example, we mean 'what she says is true'. Its only other purpose is to designate the goal of an investigation (the truth about . . .). Under the influence of Platonism and Christianity (God is Truth) the term has been hypostatised into a non-linguistic concept. Of course, one still understands what 'truth-seeking' entails, an attempt to describe some facet of actuality, but one must acknowledge that what will be achieved (at best) is an accurate, or true, description of how something *is*, but never *the* truth. The Greek root of truth, 'aletheia' which means 'showing forth', 'unconcealedness', 'disclosure', allows one to better understand the word's meaning. We use language to describe reality – some statements are true, others false, and some are more accurate or informative, truer, than others. The relativist's mistake is to think that because there are so many perspectives, one cannot arbitrate between them; they are all equally true (the 'true for you' argument). But it is meaningless to say a perspective is true (again, once one sees things literally, not metaphorically), only a sentence or statement can be true.

Nietzsche notoriously stated that 'facts [are] precisely what there [are] not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing.'[31] At first glance, this might seem to support the view of him as a relativist. Is he not saying that there are no true statements, only various interpretations we cannot decide between? I think not. What he is questioning is the correspondence theory of truth. This theory is that language somehow corresponds exactly to reality. But of course, language is a system of arbitrary signs, there is no *relation* between word and object. The coherence theory is the traditional opponent of the correspondence theory (ever since Plato's *Cratylus*, wherein they were first argued over). According to this view, language is a self-contained system with no relation whatever to reality, a collection of signs with internal coherence but

[31] Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, § 481, p. 267.

nothing more. Both views are to my mind inaccurate. Language is arbitrary, but it is nothing if it is not a system *of reference*. It has no definite relation to reality, but it does refer to it: this is its *raison d'être*.

To understand Nietzsche's view of facts as nothing more than interpretations, it is useful to turn to Heidegger's hermeneutic circle. The idea is that our being-in-the-world, our perspectival state, is always within this circle – our understanding is constantly determined by our preconceived notions (our prejudices) about reality. It is not that we objectively or neutrally observe an object and then interpret it: rather that an interpretive framework, our perspective, directs and shapes our observation of it (hence it is a vicious circle). Thomas Kuhn argued in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* that humanity has adopted a series of paradigms through which it has sought to understand the world (crises lead to paradigms being replaced, in the scientific revolutions of his title). We might say that a paradigm is like a collective vision, the interpretive framework determined by and determining our individual perspectives. Science *explains* reality, but what is explanation if not an understandable description? Facts are neither transcendent nor exact presentations of how things are, they are simply the most accurate descriptions we have within our paradigm – they are our best interpretations.

Nietzsche does then believe in truth, albeit in a rather more limited way than is traditional in the philosophical and scientific traditions. Indeed, he sees the will to truth as central to human activity, most obviously science. What really makes him radical and original is that he questions the high value or precedence usually given to this knowledge drive within us:

> Granted that we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance? […] And, would you believe it, it has finally almost come to seem to us that this problem had never before been proposed – that we have been the

> first to see it, to fix our eye on it, to *hazard* it? For there is a hazard in it and perhaps there exists no greater hazard.[32]

He sees our continued devotion to this will to truth as unconsciously rooted in Platonism and Christianity, in the ascetic ideal underlying both systems. The ascetic devotes himself to the revelation of Truth, believing that the here and now must be sacrificed for a higher, more worthy life, the *true* life; that knowledge is Good, and ignorance Evil. Modern scientists, though (usually) no longer Platonists or Christians, are still immersed in these ascetic principles. Nietzsche does not stop short of implicating himself in all of this (after all, he too seeks to reveal truth):

> But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests – that even we seekers after knowledge of today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine.[33]

As will be evident from the above, Nietzsche was trying to identify and challenge prevalent assumptions of European civilisation generally and necessarily had to speak in broad terms. This thesis on the other hand focuses on just one man and his will to truth and tries to examine the vicissitudes and subtleties in one very specific application of this quasi-psychological notion and explain how it can help us understand Joyce's work better. Nietzsche's conception of art and culture was obviously a product of his intellectual context, with Goethe as the ultimate figure of the complete renaissance man, and Wagner as the romantic artist par excellence, and aside from his admiration for the psychological observations of certain fiction writers (Stendhal, de Maupassant, Dostoyevsky), it is not particularly pertinent for an examination of Joyce's writing and therefore plays perhaps surprisingly little part in what follows.[34] His diagnoses of Europe's existential and cultural

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[32] *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 1, p. 33.

[33] *The Gay Science*, § 344, p. 283.

[34] Nietzsche was hostile towards several of the artists most important to Joyce, such as Ibsen, Flaubert, and Baudelaire, though it is extremely unlikely he actually knew their work first-hand. Incidentally, he also despised Ernest Renan, whom Joyce admired.

condition, and not his understanding of art, are generally a surer guide to Joyce's themes and techniques.

Nietzsche never considered the will to truth in artists, but then he never examined it specifically or in detail in relation to any group or individual, rather he was pointing to a general, widely observable mindset or phenomenon. The most obvious objection to its use in relation to a writer of fiction is that fiction is, by definition, not true. But how helpful is the term fiction aside from its use to distinguish narratives thus designated from historical ones? Surely realist fiction – fiction which attempts to portray individuals or society at a particular historical juncture – is better contrasted with fantastic fiction than historical narrative, which it supplements more than it opposes. Fantastic fiction can bear on a historical situation, particularly if it is allegorical, but it sacrifices the specificity of the contexts which give our lives their meaning. My concern in this thesis is not the metaphysical question of the ontological or truth status of Joyce's fiction, but rather how the will to truth led him to bring literary realism to its limits, without thereby sacrificing that which gives it its unique power – an ability to transcend the details of which it is made up and thematise and embody contemporary concerns and issues in characters. Since truth is the description of reality in language, and fiction the depiction of life in narrative form, surely speaking of Joyce's will to truth in his art cannot be so paradoxical. Granted, a work of fiction cannot be true; but most readers will be concerned that it is at least *true to* life. What is of concern here are not facts but how Joyce's work captures the facticity of the human condition. Realist fiction strives for authenticity and Joyce's manifestation of this general impulse in novelists is so strong that the will to truth seems an appropriate label for his ruling drive as an artist from *Dubliners* to *Ulysses*. His art obeys Zarathustra's injunction

to '*remain faithful to the earth*' in a manner that would have been incomprehensible to Nietzsche as aesthetician but which is Nietzschean in spirit for all that.[35]

[35] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 'Zarathustra's Prologue', § 3, p. 123.

* * *

Irony

'Recently all seriousness seems to have departed from the word [ironical]. The slightest and most banal coincidence or point of resemblance or even just-perceptible absence of one, unworthy of a single grunt of interest, gets called ironical. The other day I read somewhere of how ironical it was that the going at last year's particular horse-race was perceptibly either better or worse than that predicted this year, I forget which.'

-Kingsley Amis, *The King's English*[36]

Defining irony is a bit like trying to pick up mercury with a fork; very tricky and perhaps somewhat pointless, since it always seems to slip away. But this is only because the word has been applied so widely that it is in danger of becoming obsolete through ambiguity. Here, its most common contemporary meanings shall be explained. Expounding the history of the word, though substantially easier than a definition, is unnecessary here, but a look back at its origin will at least tell us its first and still primary meaning. Irony is so generally considered to have originated with Socrates that it makes little difference if he invented it or was simply its greatest practitioner. It was the word used to describe his rhetorical strategy of *saying otherwise* than what he actually meant; this being distinguishable from lying inasmuch as some of the audience were meant to understand that he was not wholly sincere and thereby grasp the implications of his urbane, knowing dissimulation.[37] Socrates' incisive device was assimilated into the arsenal of rhetoric and hence is commonly known as rhetorical irony, though I would insist that this should mean 'saying *otherwise* than what one meant', rather than the more common, but less accurate, definition of 'saying *the opposite* of what one meant'.

Rhetorical irony is a deliberately exclusionary form of communication. It always has a potential victim, *the excluded* (those who fail to see it) **or** *the target* (the object of the irony), and this is why it is such an effective rhetorical weapon. It is like a fork move in chess,

[36] Kingsley Amis, *The King's English : a guide to modern usage* [1997] (London: Penguin, 2011), p. 103.

[37] Urbane dissimulation, *urbana dissimulatio*, is how Cicero influentially described irony in *De Oratore*, stressing that it was not merely saying the opposite of what one meant and explicitly linking it with Socrates' practice.

where the attacker is in a position to take two of his or her opponent's pieces in the next move – one of the pieces must go. In Mark Antony's famous oration over the eponymous character's body in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the victim is the intended target, Brutus, if his audience understand that Brutus is *not* an honourable man, or the audience themselves fall victim to the irony if they fail to see Antony's true intention (to discredit his target). I shall borrow a term coined by Linda Hutcheon for the distinguishing mark of rhetorical irony, its essential quality of always having a victim, and call it irony's *edge*.[38]

That Hutcheon's term is vague might seem to some an understatement; but I believe it is necessarily so, given the wide scope of irony, and a helpful designation nonetheless. A concentrated analysis of an example will allow me to illustrate what I understand by her term. Imagine someone has been asked to write a reference for a former employee of hers. Her letter contains the conclusion: 'You would be very lucky if you got him to work for you.'[39] At first glance, this is unadulterated praise. But upon further reflection perhaps, a sly irony reveals itself. Now compare this concluding sentence: 'He will certainly be an addition to your team.' The lack of qualifying adjective before 'addition' here renders the sentence *ambiguous*, but not ironic. We could surmise that either the referee is a careless writer or that she dislikes her former employee but in keeping with professional etiquette does not want to write a bad reference. We could even conclude that she is trying to communicate indirectly that one shouldn't hire this person. But what we could not conclude is that this sentence is ironic, it lacks the edge of the first example; even if it is a deflation of the person referred to, it is hardly cutting. So, both examples involve uncertainty for the

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[38] What Hutcheon means by edge is its tendency towards exclusion and use as a (rhetorical) weapon. She stresses that 'it is the defining feature of irony as a rhetorical and structural device, no matter how protean its actual manifestations.' *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 56. She shies away from the logical conclusion that this edge means that irony always has a victim or target however.

[39] I have taken this example from Andrew Cross, 'Neither either nor or: The perils of reflective irony', in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. by Alistair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 130.

reader, the first as to whether it is ironic or not, the second because it is ambiguous. Uncertainty should not be equated with irony, even if irony often causes it; on the contrary, to appreciate rhetorical irony means, if nothing else, deciding upon what the ironist's true intention is not (that much at least *is* certain). If the letter's recipient grasps the irony, he or she enters an exclusive communion with the ironist wherein the potential employee is the victim; otherwise, he or she themselves are the victims of the letter-writer's subtle irony. For the edge to be present, the ironist's intention must be somewhat discernable. If the former employer had written 'He certainly knows how to get a job done.', but she was implying or thinking of how, despite his expertise, he nevertheless never got anything done, this would be a private irony, too subtle for the potential employer to grasp, and as such indistinguishable from outright lying. In this case, we would consider the potential employer the innocent victim of a lie, or of making a false but reasonable inference, not of irony; he or she would be blameless. The target is also unscathed, as no one can appreciate this private irony, and hence there is no edge to this sentence. Finally, we come to sarcasm, wherein the edge has been blunted. If the author of the letter told a colleague familiar with the lazy former employee that he had asked for a reference and then remarked how very hardworking he had been, there is really no chance that the colleague will take this as her actual belief. Sarcasm is not as exclusive as irony; there is little chance one's audience will fall victim to it. Moreover, the target is relatively unscathed: it is simply not a particularly effective rhetorical device, and hence is known as the lowest form of wit.

Socratic irony then is a very complex, but nevertheless understandable, rhetorical device. What makes things much more confusing is the existence of several further types of irony and their perplexing relations, or lack of relation, to each other and the rhetorical variety. Firstly, there is *cosmic* irony. This is nothing other than those meaningful, amusing, fitting, tragic, or seemingly significant coincidences we, like Hardy, are wont to call life's

little ironies. A thief's getaway car is stolen while he is robbing a bank, and other such slow news-day stories fall into this category. Ironic here usually means 'it is mildly amusing that fate has unfolded such that . . .' The ironist in this case is God (or fate, or existence) and appreciating cosmic irony means sharing His (or its) little joke at the victim's expense. Alanis Morrisette's popular song 'Ironic', full of inanities of the kind Amis deplored, is the anthem of this vague type. There is little use grumbling that this is not 'really' irony, or that its elasticity hopelessly dilutes the word's meaning, since it is probably the most popular understanding of the term at present.

The second type (though one should note that the schema is non-hierarchical) I shall call *perspectival* irony. Here there is an awareness of a disparity between someone's perspective and reality. This type is extremely common in novels, for example in *Don Quixote* or Austen's work. Take for instance a story about an inventor who believes his new device has saved his country, whereas in fact it has done nothing of the kind. Perspectival irony will be appreciated by the reader observing the scientist's conceitedness develop, as they know full well that he is completely mistaken. When this sort of irony is used in plays, as it very frequently is, it is known as *dramatic* irony. Perspectival irony can also be much more subtle than the example I have given, giving tiny glimpses and nudges in a cumulative process, fissures between the target's perspective and their actual circumstances.

Tragic irony predates Socrates, though the Greeks would not have called it irony. This is a sort of union of cosmic and dramatic irony, wherein fate (or more precisely, the author) conspires to undo a character's perspective through an act of cosmic irony. In such a case, the inventor's device, which he believes will save his country, actually brings about its destruction. If the audience know the story, as is usually the case, they can appreciate the dramatic irony in the lead up to the cosmically ironic climax. Unsurprisingly, given its roots

in Greek tragedy, Fate's irony is certainly not designed to amuse either its victim or its audience in such cases.

Since dramatic and tragic irony are lacking even in Joyce's only play, they have no further role herein. Cosmic irony, though it does feature in some novels (generally of the more implausible sort – to serve up poetic justice or a pleasing circularity) is also absent, as it is irrelevant to Joyce's practice, unless one insists on listing the coincidences in *Ulysses* and labelling them ironic. Rhetorical irony does feature in the works however, generally through the ironic modes of parody. What links it to the other type of irony we shall be exploring, perspectival, is the notion of *edge* described above. For perspectival irony too has this distinguishing feature. The situation is the same as before: the victim will be *the excluded reader*, perhaps believing in the romantic delusions of a character ironically presented, or *the target*, the character(s) whose perspectives are being undermined or mocked. Victim might seem too harsh a term here, perhaps feeding into the mistaken belief that the ironist is simply unsympathetically mocking – a belief which that master ironist, Flaubert, strenuously denied. Nevertheless, Madame Bovary (to choose a famous target) *is* being deflated or her ideals punctured, even if we still have sympathy for her. It cannot be denied that there is an edge, a sting in missing the irony too, hence the shame and foolishness one feels if caught up in such a mistake and then informed of the irony. This a complex matter, and one which will require further explanation, but henceforth the unique desideratum for detecting irony in textual matters this study provides is this idea of edge.

There is another candidate for inclusion into my types of irony, *romantic* irony, and I shall now justify its exclusion. This new conception of irony sprang forth from the writings of Friedrich Schlegel, though as Joseph A. Dane has warned, '[t]here is simply no theory of irony propounded [in them]'.[40] What we get instead is a mystification of irony and a series

[40] Joseph A. Dane, *The Critical Mythology of Irony* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), p. 109.

of pseudo-profound proclamations about its importance for philosophy and art. Whereas the other types co-exist, if antagonistically, romantic irony cannot be coerced into my schema, since it subsumes the other categories through its claim to be true irony itself. This irony is not comparable to rhetorical irony, which Schlegel confines to oratory (and dissociates from Socrates, who was *really* practicing romantic irony), and cannot be found in specific passages – rather it is the spirit pervading great art and philosophy. Romantic irony is a sort of endless, unstoppable state of self-reflexive play. It champions paradox and ambiguity rather than the relative clarity of my other types. According to Schlegel, the 'irony of irony' is that it is inescapable, an infinite regression of meaning.

My concern here is not in tracing the genealogy of romantic irony, but rather its pragmatic implications for literary criticism. If irony is most commonly used in the cosmic sense outside of the academy, irony in the romantic sense is arguably the most common usage within.[41] Many contemporary discussions of irony in literature are indebted (even if unknowingly) to Schlegel's understanding:

> There are ancient and modern poems which breathe in their entirety, and in every detail, the divine breath of irony. In such poems, there lives a real transcendental buffoonery. Their interior is permeated by the mood which surveys everything and rises infinitely above everything limited, even above the poet's own art, virtue, and genius; and their exterior form by the histrionic style of an ordinary good Italian *buffo*.[42]

Whilst few would adhere to his more grandiose claims, Schlegel's aesthetic agenda is present in the popular understanding of ironic literature as that which is preoccupied with its own origin or genesis, constantly calls attention to or ruminates on its own artificiality, and/or has fiction or art as one of its main themes or points of discussion. *Tristam Shandy* is a prime example. Formally speaking, what Schlegel is championing is *parabasis* (hence

[41] Since I believe many modern understandings of irony (New Critical, and Postmodernist for example) to essentially be the same as what I am calling romantic irony, I do not discuss them individually – my criticism of romantic irony holds for all its progeny.
42 Friedrich Schlegel, 'Critical Fragments', § 42, in *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 148.

the mention of the *buffo*): this 'is the interruption of a discourse by a shift in the rhetorical register. It's what you would get in Sterne, precisely, the constant interruption of the narrative illusion by intrusion'.[43] But, of course, we already have a perfectly serviceable word for such works, *metafictional*, and one moreover that is uncomplicated by a host of other meanings. Irony, Schlegel says, is 'permanent parabasis', but this idea is as nonsensical as the idea that a work's interior (content?) is pervaded by some sort of transcendental, infinite mood. Rhetorical and perspectival irony are formal textual strategies which can be interpreted and their meanings discerned, while cosmic irony on the other hand can be a plot device. If romantic irony is immanent but always elusive and ultimately indefinable in literary works, why should we worry about it? It is perhaps due to the unyoking of irony from its linguistic understanding and the specificity of the text that it has achieved such prominence in literary criticism. The word is disingenuously proffered as an interpretation – as if it masked the lack of one.

Whilst insisting upon the primacy of irony as a linguistic and textual strategy, it must be acknowledged that its influence extends beyond the page and stage. After all, it was not just Socrates' signature trope; in a way, it was his persona. The reflection necessary for its use or understanding can lead to a crippling self-consciousness, a constant looking over one's shoulder, wherein one fears the *edge* to such a degree that sincerity cannot be risked. In this sense, 'irony tyrannizes us', creating a paranoiac self-reflexivity.[44] Concomitantly, this can cause a deep sense of inauthenticity, since one's life would be nothing more than perpetual ironic dissembling. In such a case (dramatically overstated for clarity), we are dealing with a quasi-psychological state, induced by irony but in no way constitutive of it.

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43 Paul de Man, 'The Concept of Irony', in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. by Andrzej Warminski (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 178.

[44] David Foster Wallace, 'E Unibus Pluram: television and U.S. Fiction', in *A supposedly fun thing I'll never do again: Essays and Arguments* (London: Abacus, 1997), pp. 21-82, p. 67. It is important to note (and it supports my emphasis on irony as a textual practice) that the 'us' Foster Wallace referred to here were contemporary American novelists.

Even here, the demarcation between existential or philosophical positions and irony as a linguistic practice holds firm. Irony is both theme and technique in Joyce, and its existential ramifications will be examined in this thesis through the character of Stephen Dedalus, who comes to represent the figure of the ironist. The multiple meanings and implications of irony tend to coalesce around him in my discussions.

There is no spirit of irony. The ironist is simply someone who uses irony: the word does not imply a worldview or ideology in the same sense as, say, Catholic or communist does. This is why Richard Rorty's influential attempt to claim the word to describe one sharing his philosophical beliefs seems to me so perverse: what kind of understanding of an ironist would have to exclude Socrates and Swift from being cited as examples?[45] Nevertheless, it must be admitted that 'ironical' or 'ironic', when used in describing someone's attitude *to* something usually means 'having a sceptical disposition regarding', and, following from this, an ironic temperament is generally regarded as one which is inherently sceptical, if not downright cynical.[46] It is the antithesis of idealism. This brings us to Kierkegaard's fear that irony is absolute, infinite negativity,[47] that is, nihilistic through and through. This is the reasonable, and widespread, anxiety that irony is nothing more than negation. After all, it is possible to simply use irony to deflate the beliefs of others, without necessarily holding a concrete alternate view oneself. In such a case, the ironist would be an inveterately cynical

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[45] See *Contingency, irony, and solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. p. 73, for his definition of an ironist. The difficulty of such attempts at commandeering irony is nicely illustrated by the fact that whereas Rorty sees the ironist as essentially liberal, Thomas Mann was unequivocal that '[t]he ironist is conservative.' *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, trans. Walter D. Morris (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), p. 419.

[46] A weaker, but very similar characterisation of an ironical attitude would be that it is essentially one of ambivalence; holding things in balance and refraining from commitment one way or the other. This is basically the understanding Rorty takes to its logical conclusion – i.e. relativism. In this case however, what is really being described is an overall viewpoint or philosophy ('She had an ironic disposition/attitude.'), not an attitude to x, y, or z.

[47] This is how Soren Kierkegaard characterises irony throughout his monumental *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates*, ed. & trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989). He takes this understanding from Hegel's *Aesthetics*. Both philosophers were reacting to Schlegel's romantic irony.

sceptic, or nihilist, pouring scorn on others but proffering nothing in return. What lies behind the masks of dissimulation is an abyss. Here however I do not think we could say that nihilism is a product of irony, but rather the reverse. Irony *can be* the manifestation of a nihilistic worldview, but is by no means necessarily so.

Relatively few books on Joyce do not at some point discuss or mention irony, but they usually do so only in passing, and almost always without due consideration or indication of what is meant by the term. Though the full extent of the scholarship on this topic cannot be outlined here, the majority of the more substantial discussions of the term focus primarily on *A Portrait*, and the most important and influential of these will be dealt with in my examination of that novel in chapter two.

The first book-length study in Joycean criticism to make the topic of irony its primary focus was L.A. Murillo's 1968 work *The Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges*. The basic thesis is that 'Joyce, in the evolution of his styles, posits the uses of irony toward an encompassing equipoise of myth.'[48] His questionable notion of irony is not so much a textual strategy that can be isolated and analysed as the general structural principle or mode of Joyce's fiction. It is 'the literary practice of a simultaneous expression of multiple and opposed 'ironical' meanings conveyed by techniques of prose to a reader's perceptive resources as a simulation of that meaning they are designed to establish by the totally indirect means of the technique which convey it: the *what* identified by the *how* of the verbal, metaphorical or conceptual simulation of it.'[49] This complicated process might be comprehensible if it were borne out by his analyses of specific passages or works, but sadly remains vague, even unfathomable. Ultimately, his conception of irony boils down to a belief that Joyce's work becomes more objectified as his fiction develops. On this

[48] *The Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), introduction (no page numbers given).
[49] Ibid.

understanding, irony is equated with Eliotic impersonality. For the reader, it is akin to the view of romantic irony wherein a spirit permeates the works: '[t]his will be an irony directed more to the balance our apprehension is to achieve between the elements offered for our contemplation than a contrast between what is expressed and what is implied.'[50] Murillo's work is tied up in a critical apparatus with which, as will become clearer, this study has little sympathy – one valuing artistic 'objectivity', symbolism and universal mythical meanings – and thus incomprehension is perhaps inevitable. In a sense, the more limited understanding of irony I advocate precludes the sort of all-encompassing role Murillo envisions for it in charting Joyce's achievement.

While Murillo's study fails by dint of its insubstantial generality, David G. Wright's 1991 *Ironies of 'Ulysses'* does so example by specific example. Irony is an elastic term for Wright, and almost anything in *Ulysses* can serve to illustrate several of its numerous, though undefined, meanings. Generally speaking, his introduction is initially clear that irony is about a divide between the literal meaning of a passage and its contrasting underlying meanings, though he admits that there is not much difference between his conception and ambiguity, or puns. This loose discussion continues to extend its horizons until it becomes difficult to discern what would *not* be ironic on his account. A summary of Wright's first analysis of an example after the introduction, in a discussion of 'local' ironies, will be sufficient to differentiate his approach from my own. He takes a sentence from Bloom's musings in the thirteenth episode: 'Ten bob I got for Molly's combings when we were on the rocks in Holles street'. (*U*, 13.840-1) Firstly, Wright notes that Bloom is literally sitting on rocks when he thinks this metaphor, and thus the reader is prompted 'to notice similarities between the two situations' (past and present). Bloom's marriage may also, in the present, be on the rocks metaphorically (as evidenced by his very recent masturbation). Since Bloom

[50] Murillo, p. 32.

is on a beach, 'the metaphor needs to be further literalised', and thus we can imagine 'the "shipwreck" of his personal and marital fortunes.' Detecting an allusion to Odysseus will apparently add an 'additional layer of ironic suggestion'. There is also a faint echo of Molly's earlier 'O rocks!', and such intratextual links enrich our understanding of the Blooms' relationship. Finally, the importance and appositeness of using the phrase 'on the rocks' for Joyce is evident: in several of his letters he used the phrase (one is quoted).[51] Wright feels that *all* of the interpretations he has offered indicate irony, and this example of his technique is by no means atypical, whereas I see nothing ironic in the sentence analysed.

The latest book-length study to explore the topic is Brian Cosgrove's *James Joyce's Negations: Irony, Indeterminacy and Nihilism in 'Ulysses' and Other Writings* (2007). The incommensurability of our perspectives is evident on the second page: 'in referring to irony in Joyce, it is in fact irony as a metaphysical stance, as the word *Weltanschauung* suggests, rather than, as in David Wright's book, irony as rhetorical device that is of central importance.'[52] Cosgrove champions Schlegel's view of irony and nothing in his book allays the suspicions of that understanding I have set out above. Unsurprisingly, though it is far better written and informed than the other two efforts, I find his metaphysical conception of irony highly objectionable, and his attempt to claim Nietzsche and Joyce's affinity to it even more so. Since irony simply cannot be a *weltanschauung* in my view, there seems little point in progressing to specific interpretive disputes – though using the same word, we are simply not writing about the same thing.

Perhaps the only thing these three books share is a belief that Joyce had some form of *ironic vision* (others frequently cited as sharing this mysterious privilege include Mann, T.S. Eliot, and Borges). But this is less than helpful, since we cannot occupy Joyce's perspective:

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[51] All of the quotations from Wright are from page 20. [Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1991]
[52] Cosgrove's *James Joyce's Negations: Irony, Indeterminacy and Nihilism in 'Ulysses' and Other Writings* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2007), p. 2.

his vision, ironic or otherwise, is not for our eyes. In a sense, irony is always a matter of sallies from a dead centre, masks without a face – as Sartre observed,

> [i]n irony a man annihilates what he posits within one and the same act; he leads us to believe in order not to be believed; he affirms to deny, and denies to affirm; he creates a positive object but it has no being other than its nothingness.[53]

The notion of edge will be the litmus test by which we will detect and analyse this nothingness in the only place it has being: the texts.

* * *

Technē

César Abin's portrait of Joyce as a question mark, executed according to the writer's detailed instructions in 1932, is the perfect illustration or visual analogue for this study.[54] Joyce is not only a perplexing puzzle, but also a questioner, a seeker after knowledge; his body, or corpus, neither question or answer but the spirit of enquiry itself, inarticulable ? – *the will to truth.* Appropriately enough, the *point d'ironie* is a backwards question-mark (⸮), and irony could be seen as the mirror image of Joyce's will to truth, another by-product or manifestation of it but a distorted one (a saying otherwise). Having outlined the understanding of irony and truth this study will draw on and expand, I will now set out the role of the will to truth. Nietzsche's views on agency inform this discussion of the relations between author and text.

> A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect – more, it is nothing other than precisely this very driving, willing, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language (and of the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) which conceives and misconceives all actions as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a 'subject,' can it appear otherwise. For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is a fiction added to the deed – the deed is

[53] *Being and Nothingness: an essay on phenomenological ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 47.
[54] See *JJ*, p. 645 for details of the portrait's composition and Joyce's ideas for it. Ellmann also includes a reproduction of it.

> everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect.[55]

Nietzsche's views are important for literary criticism because they will enable us to avoid the intentional fallacy but still respect the importance of the author. Far from being 'a proto-deconstructionist who advocates the disappearance of the author',[56] as a superficial reading of certain passages such as the above might suggest, Nietzsche wanted to destroy the artificial division between cause (doer) and effect (deed) so he could stress their unity and refuse their detachment. His insistence on the inextricability of agent and action is evident in such reflections as: '[i]t has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir'.[57] There is a reason that when we invoke the name of Joyce we mean both the alcoholic father of two and the words he wrote – Joyce is not only the cause, but also the sum of effects.

Nevertheless, we are by no means in thrall to the author's intentions; Joyce presumably intended to write a good play for example, but alas he did not. And that is the primary reason why it is not considered herein. Though its themes have a particular resonance for this study, and form an important backdrop for it, I cannot help but agree with Kenner that a 'discussion [of them] is apt to protract itself by way of evading what the critic feels is his sad, unwelcome, duty: to state that *Exiles* is not much of a play.'[58] It is precisely because one is a critic, and therefore evaluative, that one can dismiss the author's intentions (though one is

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[55] *Genealogy*, I.13, p. 45. Nietzsche is discussing agency in relation to his critique of morality here, but I am applying his ideas to literature. Here and throughout, I follow Foucault in trying 'as far as possible, on a certain number of issues, to see with the help of Nietzsche's texts […] what can be done in this or that domain.' Michel Foucault, 'The Return of Morality', trans. John Johnston, in *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961-1984*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), p. 471

[56] Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, 2nd Ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 113. Burke dubs this view a 'misreception'.

[57] *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 6, p. 37.

[58] Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), p. 24.

by no means obliged to do so). Authorial intentions usually *are* relevant; just not to judging a work. There can be no doubt that sustained analysis of the play could lead to startling insights into Joyce's psychological and/or philosophical make-up, and though such material will assuredly prove extremely important for the critic, her aim is to elucidate the work, if necessary by reference to the author, not the reverse. If *Exiles* had been a better play it would have embodied Joyce's intentions, fulfilled his theatrical ambition. Since it wasn't; we can speculate, suspect, or simply ignore it. It was a solidly realist play in the tradition of Ibsen, Shaw, and Chekhov, and this is perhaps why it failed – unlike in the novel, Joyce could not adjust the form to his ends. As such, I do not see it as a deviation in Joyce's trajectory from *Dubliners* to *Ulysses*, if anything it is a regression.

It is the notion of the *author*'s will to truth that guides this study, and here the author *is* his texts. Perhaps the best way to explain a thesis reliant on an apparently psychological notion but unconcerned with Joyce's psychology as a biographer or Lacanian might be, is to invoke the ancient Greek word for art or craft, *technē*. The will to truth is part of Joyce's *technē*, described by Aristotle as 'the origin and form of the object that is made.'[59] Of course, our focus here is on the object(s), and given the essential but immaterial nature of *technē* (the hand moulding the clay so to speak), the will to truth is less an object of enquiry in its own right than an interpretative framework within which to explore the particularities of the works. It is in them as part of their origin and form, determining their realist (and even, as we shall see, parodic) modes; it is the empty space defining them as monuments. My thesis takes place within its limits.

* * *

Interpretation and technique

'**criticism** The art or science of literary criticism is devoted to the comparison and analysis, to the interpretation and evaluation of works of literature.'

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[59] Quoted by Henry Staten, 'Art as Techne, or, The Intentional Fallacy and the Unfinished Project of Formalism', in Garry L. Hagberg and Walter Jost, eds, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), p. 422.

-J.A. Cuddon, *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*[60]

Nietzsche is above all the pre-eminent philosopher of value, his stated aim to bring about the revaluation of all values. This is one reason his thought remains so continuously challenging. In line with this concern with value, this thesis aims to offer a critical assessment of Joyce's work and, though it draws on original research, attempts to move beyond the diligence of the scholarly study (however laudable and necessary such diligence might be). This is why this work is not conceived as a study of influence; whilst it certainly does shed new light on Joyce's connections with Nietzsche, it also attempts the sort of synthesising overview – wide-ranging and opinionated, detailed without being forbidding – that has largely fallen out of favour.[61] However unfashionable my approach might be, it at least has the advantage of having more probity than most specialist productions (of the Joyce *and* X variety), since these tend to make exaggerated claims for the importance of their chosen subject to Joyce, usually in a bid to hide a lack of insight into the texts themselves. It is because the question of the *value* of scholarly work on his oeuvre (not the value of literary scholarship *per se*) never arises that so much pointless contextualisation and symbol-hunting has been published. I would argue that this vacuum in critical standards originates in a failure to discern and thus evaluate Joyce's central project, here called the will to truth; in other words, in a fundamental failure of interpretation. To complain that Joyce's productions have not been sufficiently praised or condemned would be preposterous, but the need to explain the nature of what he achieved and how he went about it – the task of the critic – remains.

That infinite interpretations of Joyce's work are possible will not be a new idea to anyone with even a passing acquaintance with the secondary literature. However, that most

[60] *The Penguin Dicitonary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4th edition (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 196.
[61] I am thinking particularly of the work of Hugh Kenner and S.L. Goldberg.

of these interpretations are wrongheaded, unconvincing and usually mutually exclusive if compared shows the extent to which the desirability of variety overrides the criterion of value. Were the ideas set forth in many books and especially articles on Joyce simply taken seriously, they would immediately be recognised as invalid, often even absurd. What is offered here then is an interpretation that, if nothing else, can withstand sustained scrutiny, as its basic contention of Joyce's deep concern with truth cannot be denied. That a total interpretation is not possible need not preclude critical ambition – every aspect of the entire body of work cannot be accounted for here, but getting to its heart is still a possibility. As my discussions of the notions of truth and irony have demonstrated, my methodology is pragmatic; a pragmatism governed by value (hence the dismissal of romantic irony for its vagueness and lack of utility) and unafraid to use imagination for heuristic ends (as the chapters that follow will demonstrate). Whilst I would resist assimilation, or rather reduction, to any school or branch of criticism (to speak crudely, as one always must in such cases), I am not so immodest as to imagine myself one of a kind: where I most differ from other critics is in my premises, not in the means by which I attempt to demonstrate them.

Irony is a central interpretive concern of this thesis because it is key to Joyce's technique (a word of course deriving from technē). And technique, or form to give it a more common name, is of primary importance. What irony demonstrates is the extent to which reading, interpretation, relies on a (perfectly valid) belief in the author's will. For in experiencing the edge of irony we retain faith in the notion that the act and its agent are never wholly separable, that every text is an instance of communication, since we enter into communion with the author in grasping irony (we get the message that has been sent so to speak), from which the target – the author parodied, say, or the character undercut – is excluded. Fear of the intentional fallacy has led to a greater fallacy, that of arguing or, more often, assuming that the author's will is irrelevant (or inaccessible). His or her unrealised

ambitions and retrospective interpretations *are* irrelevant (to the critic, though not the biographer) but their technē, the origin and form of their work of art, the action immanent within it, is anything but. This is implicit even in works of criticism clearly uncomfortable with such notions (why else has no critic had the courage to admit their study of his work has nothing to do with Joyce?), hence we will read, for example, that 'Joyce problematises Y' (Y invariably being something the critic disapproves of), where it is unclear whether 'Joyce' here means the texts or the man who wrote them (particularly if Y is something Joyce himself is unlikely to have been interested in). This is not a lament at imprecision but an illustration, pragmatic in spirit, of how authorial agency remains central to interpretation.

Emphasis on context is perfectly acceptable and often illuminating. This thesis, for instance, generally focuses on that which is curiously neglected though obviously crucial; the literary and philosophical backgrounds informing the work, the intellectual climate in which it was created. Too often however, contextualisation descends into a kind of determinism, and moreover, one that neglects the whole matter of form, regarding it as the packaging in which finished content is wrapped rather than the means of selection by which content is *formed*. The point of Sartre's famous dictum that 'Valéry is a petit bourgeois intellectual, but not every petit bourgeois individual is Valéry.' [62] is worth bearing in mind here lest we lose sight of why Joyce matters at all – his artistic will.

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[62] Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Problem of Method*, trans. Hazel Barnes (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 59.

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Possibilities and Actualisation

I: PERSONAE

'*Every historian, to explain what did happen, asks himself what might have happened.*'
-Raymond Aron, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*[63]

The literary critic, no less than the historian, though to a different end, faces always the necessity of defatalising the past. It is only by immersion in the past, by the examination of the possibilities latent within the writer which become manifest through his production, by returning to the moment of conception itself so to speak, that the critic can escape what Aron called '*the retrospective illusion of fatality*.'[64]

In what follows I do not claim to adhere strictly to chronology in my presentation, but rather at all points to *respect* it. This is where biography and literary criticism diverge, since the latter is concerned with texts above all, and with the circumstances of their composition only secondarily. Nevertheless, the critic has an obligation to the historical background. But it is precisely *background* that it should remain; critics need not emphasise it inordinately, but they are always anchored to it, and must never let it escape their sight.

This section aims, through a selective analysis of the young Joyce's output, to delineate the disparate impulses to which he gave expression in the opening years of the last century. It traces Joyce's development as it comes to actualisation through the texts, never engaging in the delusive thesis that they work towards any one goal, but respecting (or castigating) them for what they are in themselves. Consequently, I am often highly critical, as I refuse the teleological logic of justifying them by what followed. This period saw Joyce try on many different masks – dramatist, poet, critic, singer, novelist, short-story writer, and

[63] *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: An Essay on the limits of Historical Objectivity*, trans. George J. Irwin (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1968), p. 160.
[64] Ibid., p. 183.

journalist – and if not all of them fitted particularly well, the critic is not to blame for pointing this out. In fact, (s)he is obliged to.

* * *

Posturing

'Never […] have I encountered so much pretension with so little to show for it.'
-Yeats on the young Joyce, in John Eglinton, *Irish Literary Portraits*[65]

To begin we will examine three early essays of Joyce. They are of interest because in them we see him outlining his views on literature for the first time (in writing, at least), and beginning to construct his public image. I have selected these pieces over other possible candidates because they were not commissioned, and gave free rein to the aspiring writer to define himself. There were other potentialities latent within him of course, but here we concern ourselves with the tendencies he gave expression to at this point. By entering into their examination without presumptions, without the illusory assurance of a definitive teleological trajectory, we open ourselves to the heterogeneity and confusion inherent within them and their youthful author. Two of the essays were originally delivered as speeches, and all three share a declamatory air, a rather deafening one at times – they are full of the bombastic rhetoric of a young intellectual who has little of substance to say as of yet. Perhaps the most notable (and irksome) factor overall, aside from the rather extravagant style, is the utter assurance with which Joyce assumed the mantle of the artist and spokesman on art despite there being little to suggest he merited it.

The figures of Richard Wagner (particularly his essay 'The Artwork of the Future' (1849)) and Henrik Ibsen loom large over the allusive and highly wrought 1900 paper 'Drama and Life'. Inspired by Wagner, Joyce posits an unconvincing distinction between drama and literature, the former being for him superior. Inconsistency enters into this evaluation early when Joyce claims that Shakespeare's output was 'far from *mere drama*, it

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[65] (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 137.

was literature in dialogue'(*OCPW*, 23, my italics). To summarise Joyce's argument as best I can: drama deals with changeless laws underlying society, literature with what we might call the surface of society primarily. This is so vague as to be meaningless, and does not become any clearer as the essay develops. However, lest I be perceived as being too harsh on a writer who was only seventeen at the time, I shall move on, extrapolating the most salient points from the often contradictory claims embedded in the intricate prose. The distinguishing mark of drama is its portrayal of truth, and to attain this it should not be limited by conventions of form. Furthermore, drama, in its pursuit of truth, should not be restrained by ethical imperatives, or by striving for beauty (which is inferior to truth). The overall purpose of the paper might be most appropriately termed a defence of realism (specifically, that of Ibsen). The essay would have benefitted from being more honest about this intention and avoiding weak generalisations. As it stands, with all its sweeping statements, it is easy to see why it has been construed as a declaration of intent on its author's part.

The keynote of the 'Day of the Rabblement' (1901), declared in its opening sentence, is the need for the artist to stand independent of the crowd. In it, Joyce attacks the Irish Literary Theatre for what he perceives as its betrayal of its founding principles and capitulation to (nationalist) public opinion. W.B. Yeats, Edward Martyn, and George Moore are summarily dismissed. Yeats is condemned for his 'treacherous instinct of adaptability' (*OCPW*, 51); Martyn for his 'incorrigible style' and 'lack of breadth and distinction' (*OCPW*, 51); and Moore for being outdated and oblivious or impervious to newer developments in European prose.[66] In the final paragraph Joyce diagnoses the position of

[66] Bizarrely, Joyce's objection seems to be that Moore has not been keeping up in his aping of continental fashions, revealing an oddly teleological view of literature and a rather embarrassing predilection for d'Annunzio's egotistical bombast: 'Mr Moore is really struggling in the backwash of that tide which has advanced from Flaubert through Jakobsen to D'Aununzio [*sic*]; for two entire eras lie between *Madame Bovary* and *Il Fuoco*.' (*OCPW*, 51)

the artist in relation to society and rather surreptitiously announces himself as the heir of Ibsen and Hauptmann (though if anyone was their Irish successor in drama it was obviously Martyn). He had so far managed a poor translation of Hauptmann, a scattering of weak juvenile verse, and what we can surmise was a disastrous imitation of Ibsen in the (perhaps mercifully) lost play entitled ‘A Brilliant Career’. What might have been a penetrating critique of the young theatrical movement had simply descended into hysterical impetuosity and hybris.

The two essays just examined look straightforward when set beside the convoluted prose of Joyce’s next effort, ‘James Clarence Mangan’, in which he stretches his rhetorical style to its utmost limits. Near the beginning of this essay he briefly draws a contrast between poetry and literature, though to what end, besides championing the former (though by his definition such eminent poets as Baudelaire and Wordsworth did not write poetry), is unclear. He inexplicably claims that ‘Mangan has been a stranger in his country’ (*OCPW*, 54-5), which we can only attribute to ignorance or (more likely) a love of cultivating obscurity which is evident elsewhere in these youthful works, and a desire to be seen as original and daring in his championing of the nineteenth century poet.[67] He sketches Mangan’s life and work, emphasising its Byronic elements (love affairs, alienation from the home) over political engagement or the poet’s less romantic employment as a librarian and scrivener. The rather puzzling statement is made that Mangan ‘wrote with no native literary tradition to guide him’ (*OCPW*, 56) – a claim of originality, an apology of sorts for deficiencies, and an unjust dismissal of the Irish (language) literature which did in fact greatly influence the poet. Mangan is ‘the type of his race’ (*OCPW*, 59), an imaginative

[67] ‘…Mangan had been included in lectures, articles, anthologies, collections, and biographies by Mitchel, Hercules Ellis, Guiney, Meehan, McCall, O’Donoughue, Lionel Johnson, Yeats, Wilde, and others, mostly between 1880 and 1900…’ Heyward Ehrlich, ‘Inventing Parsimony: Joyce, Mangan, and the Self-Inventing Self’, in *Joyce through the Ages: A Nonlinear View*, ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1999), p. 141.

dreamer unable to effect change on the reality with which he wars; in short, a Celt in the Arnoldian vein.

Joyce begins the essay by imperiously declaring that ‘the highest praise must be withheld from the romantic school’ (*OCPW*, 53), but as far as is ascertainable from the confusing sweep of the remainder of the essay he belies this claim.[68] He places great emphasis on Mangan’s *imagination* (that sacred word of the Romantics). He invokes the Yeatsian great (collective) memory. He works his prose up to such dizzying heights as the following (note the italicised allusions to Blake’s poetry):

> Poetry, even when apparently most fantastic, is always a revolt against artifice, a revolt in a sense, against actuality. It speaks of what seems fantastic and unreal to those who have lost the simple intuitions which are the tests of reality; and, as it is often found at war with its age, so it makes no account of history, which is *fabled by the daughters of memory,* but sets store by *every time less than the pulsation of an artery,* the time in which its intuitions start forth, holding it *equal in its period and value to six thousand years.* (*OCPW*, 59, my italics)

It is extremely difficult to reconcile quasi-mystical flourishes such as these with the claims of the critic who championed austere realism and the singleminded pursuit of truth in 1900. The concluding paragraph attempts a tenuous *rapprochement*:

> Beauty, the splendour of truth, is a gracious presence when the imagination contemplates intensely the truth of its own being or the visible world, and the spirit which proceeds out of truth and beauty is the holy spirit of joy. (*OCPW*, 60)

If the reader is inclined to puzzlement and annoyance that no more coherent picture of Joyce between 1900 and 1902 has been presented, I can only answer that this is because no clearer picture can be given without resort to a false retrospective reconstruction of those years. All that a defatalised survey can give us is a glimpse of a young man with divided impulses: *because that is all there is to be found.*

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[68] Joyce immediately adds the following caveat to this statement: ‘(though the most enlightened of Western poets be thereby passed over)’ (*OCPW*, 53). This qualifier betrays how divided his allegiances really are. According to Stanislaus Joyce, his brother was referring to Blake here. It is typical that the allusion is so deliberately obtuse (cp. the opening line of ‘The Day of the Rabblement’).

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Poetry

'Pretty lyrics with a delusive title'

-Evening Standard, 1907[69]

Joyce agreed to the publication of the delicate verses of *Chamber Music* with considerable reluctance. He had mainly composed them in 1901-1904, and by 1907 had lost much of his enthusiasm for the collection, believing them to do little more than strike a series of false notes.[70] Few would disagree with this judgement. They are slight, and though occasionally pretty, they are unmistakably the work of a minor poet. They are extremely difficult to reconcile with his later work in prose; and this is not due to some critical oversight, the poems have valiantly resisted any such interpretation precisely because they are so utterly inferior and different from what followed.

In a contemporary review of the collection Joyce's friend Tom Kettle correctly surmised that the 'inspiration of the book is almost entirely literary.'[71] But this does not mean that knowledge of its dominant influences (Verlaine, Shakespeare, Jonson, Yeats) will enhance, or rather make more bearable, our reading of *Chamber Music*. Indeed, reading these great poets is rather more likely to make the paucity of the young Joyce's poetic talent all the more obvious to us. The frequency with which what are ostensibly discussions of *Chamber Music* descend into speculation about predecessors, biography, and his other works betrays how little there is to say concerning his ephemeral and rather shallow verse. One wonders how often music would actually be referred to in discussing them if they bore a different title. They are after all lyric poems, and not songs. Their much vaunted musical

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[69] One of the press notices of *Chamber Music* that Joyce had printed in Trieste, quoted in *L II*, pp. 332-3, note 3.

[70] For Joyce's reservations, see *JJ*, p. 260, and his (?1) March 1907 letter to Stanislaus, *L II*, p. 219. Looking forward momentarily, we can see that the condemnation of the poems because of their falsity and insincerity is a result of the development of the will to truth since their composition.

[71] Thomas Kettle, 'Review', *Freeman's Journal*, 1 June 1907. Reprinted in *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robert H. Deming, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), vol. I, p. 37.

quality is rather slight. Joyce never mentioned setting them to music (as far as can be ascertained) until a composer wrote to him suggesting it, at which point Joyce claimed that this had been a long standing ambition of his. If it were not for this fortuitous intervention critics would not have this dubious means of evading the mediocrity of the poems *as poems*. Yeats occasionally recited his poems to musical accompaniment from a harp or psaltery (something which undoubtedly influenced Joyce) – yet his lyrics endure in print alone.

In poem XXXI Donnycarney is mentioned, but this is incongruous.[72] It is the only mention of the poet's native city (or country for that matter). The setting of the suite is pastoral and idyllic, a place of forests and valleys, with 'odorous winds' (XIV.5) and 'dappled grass' (XXIV.6) where one might hear the 'flowery bells of morn' (XV.10) and even 'the wise choirs of faery' (XV.11). The time of the poems is similarly obtuse, the archaic vocabulary puzzling. Nevertheless, there is temporal progression: the lovers' affair is paralleled by the seasons. It begins in spring, climaxes in summer, and dissipates with autumn and the approaching winter.[73]

There is little to be said about the narrative of the sequence – the poet falls in love with a girl, is betrayed by a friend and comforted by said girl, and eventually the affair ends – except to note some similarity to song cycles such as Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*. This is not a criticism in itself, but since the overall vagueness and the beloved's lack of substance constitute a failure to convey any wider significance or stimulation for the reader we are forced to judge the lyrics on their own individual merit, and they have little aside from a certain economy of expression and a pleasantly lilting air to recommend themselves.

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[72] Since the ordering of the poems is the same across all editions, I shall simply refer to them by their number parenthetically in the text. If they are quoted from, the line number follows the poem number. The collection appears on pages 13-48 of the edition I am using: *Poems and Shorter Writings*, edited by Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson (London: Faber & Faber, 1991).

[73] See poems VIII, IX, XXXI, XXXIII, and XXXIV for mentions of the seasons.

Yeats' encouraging letter of advice to Joyce after hearing one of the poems eventually included in the collection, along with some others which weren't, includes some succinct observations which hold for many of the pieces in *Chamber Music*:

> *I think that the thought is a little thin. Perhaps I will make you angry when I say that it is the poetry of a young man who is practising his instrument, taking pleasure in the mere handling of the stops.* It went very nicely in place with the others, getting a certain richness from the general impression of all taken together and from your own beautiful reading. Taken by itself it would please a reader who had got to know your work, but it would not itself draw attention to the work. It has a distinction but I cannot say more than this.[74]

Yeats, in his diplomatic way, went on to praise Joyce's technique but one feels that however sincere he may have been about this, he was simply trying to sweeten the criticism of the first two sentences italicised above. For this reader at least these incisive sentences of Yeats get to the heart of the problem. We shall never know the poet's overall judgement on the collection, but his and Ezra Pound's exalted opinion of its finest moment, the atypical final poem (XXXVI), surely did not blind him to the lesser quality of many of those that preceded it.

Joyce does occasionally attempt pieces with more substance, but then his verse becomes muddled and cannot sustain whatever thought he is trying to convey through it. Poem XII is a particularly bad offender in that respect:

What counsel has the hooded moon
Put in thy heart, my shyly sweet,
Of love in ancient plenilune,
Glory and stars beneath his feet –
A sage that is kith and kin
With the comedian capuchin?

Believe me rather that am wise
In disregard of the divine.
A glory kindles in those eyes,
Trembles to starlight. Mine, O mine!
No more be tears in moon or mist
For thee, sweet sentimentalist.

[74] Letter of 18 December, 1902, *L II*, p. 23, my italics.

Even knowing the background to this poem's composition does not elucidate its meaning, and overall the imagery and diction is hopelessly confused.[75] Here, and in other pieces in the collection (XXVI, XXXIV), the poet's jumble of emotions and ideas is inadequately expressed and sense is sacrificed to the rhyming scheme. The slightness of the form employed eliminates depth.

A passage in the autobiographical novel fragment *Stephen Hero* clearly pertains to the poems of *Chamber Music*:

> The *Vita Nuova* of Dante suggested to him that he should make his scattered love verses into a perfect wreath and he explained to Cranly at great length the difficulties of the verse-maker. [...] [I]n his expressions of love he found himself compelled to use what he called the feudal terminology and as he could not use it with the same faith and purpose as animated the feudal poets themselves he was compelled to express his love a little ironically. This suggestion of relativity, he said, mingling itself with so immune a passion is a modern note: we cannot swear or expect eternal fealty because we recognise too accurately the limits of every human energy. (*SH*, 174)

Joyce only very occasionally matches up to his high theoretical standards in *Chamber Music*, and indeed this desire for distancing may only have developed after several pieces had been written. One of the better lyrics, XXVII, effectively fulfils his (retrospective?) programmatic pronouncement:

> For elegant and antique phrase,
> Dearest, my lips wax all too wise;
> Nor have I known a love whose praise
> Our piping poets solemnise,
> Neither a love where may not be
> Ever so little falsity.

[75] The background is given by Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 157-8. The poem was inspired by an outing to the Dublin mountains with, amongst others, Mary Sheehy: 'Mary, gazing at the moon, thought it looked tearful, while Joyce, with mild daring, contended that it was "like the chubby face of some jolly fat Capuchin."' (*JJ*, 150) Note how reliant Robert Spoo, in his article 'Rival Confessors in "Chamber Music": Meaning and Narrative in Joyce's Lyric Mode' (*JJQ*, vol. 26, No. 4 (Summer, 1989), pp. 483-98), is on this information as well as on *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait.* Yet even with all of this material his reading is unconvincing.

Yet there is too little of such detachment, and though the reservations about eternal love certainly do come through in several lyrics, overall such sardonic undertones are lost in the saccharine swirl of the suite as a whole. Irony and sentimentality do not go well together, and even if they could be satisfactorily fused, Joyce's limited poetic ability meant he was not the man for the job.

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Portraiture: James Overman and the herd[76]

The essay 'A Portrait of the Artist' was composed in January 1904 and submitted to the magazine *Dana* for publication. Unsurprisingly, one of the magazine's editors, John Eglinton, rejected it, frankly admitting that he could not understand it. It is easy to sympathise. Almost as puzzling as the excesses of its turgid prose is why Joyce thought anyone (except his faithful brother Stanislaus perhaps) would be interested in such a sketch – who wants to read the spiritual autobiography of a self-proclaimed artist who has achieved next to nothing? There is only one phrase in the entire essay to which one can give wholehearted assent, this is the artist's 'ineradicable egoism' (*PSW*, 212) – it is safe to say that we would have detected this trait even if Joyce had not deigned to point it out.

There is not much to be salvaged for discussion from this first attempt at self-portraiture. There are four main themes: the crisis of faith (from piety to leaving the church), the artist's utter alienation from his crass peers, his distance from other writers in Dublin ('Isolation […] is the first principle of artistic economy' (*PSW*, 215)), his encounters with women (virgin and whore). Joyce writes that 'mastery of art had been achieved through irony' (*PSW*, 216), but really neither mastery nor irony is at all evident here. Joyce can be quite scathing, albeit in a rather oblique way, about his peers and their mindless conformity, but he is far too in love with the image he is creating of himself to seriously call it into

[76] As already mentioned in the introduction, in a postcard to George Roberts of 13 July 1904, Joyce signed himself 'James Overman', *L I*, p. 56.

question. One of the reasons this essay makes such uncomfortable reading is that it is blatantly as much a sublimated fulfilment of youthful fantasies as it is an exercise in description. It ends rather unexpectedly on a socialistic note[77] (this theme of solidarity only enters in the last paragraph) in which the artist's word seems to engender a future revolution – Joyce was as ambitious as he was ridiculously naive.

In the summer of 1904, buoyed with confidence (never lacking anyway) by the publication of a short story in *The Irish Homestead* and by his relationship with Nora Barnacle, Joyce composed his poem 'The Holy Office'.[78] Therein he defines himself by opposition, contrasting himself with the other Dublin poets who would subsequently be collectively dubbed the Irish Literary Revival. I shall not dwell on the reality of Dublin literary society at this time, suffice to say that Joyce is being unduly rude and harsh to many who had tried to nurture his talent and certainly had not excluded him as he claims in the poem. What is of interest to the critic (rather than the literary historian or biographer) is how Joyce constructed himself as artist here.

The poem is usually referred to as a satirical broadside, but this fails to adequately classify its blend of vituperation *and self-exaltation*. 'I think the Holy Office is so clever'[79], he wrote – and it shows. Joyce paints himself as an Aristotelian and student of Aquinas. This boast reflects his rather meagre study of these philosophers; and far more importantly in the context of the poem, places him in opposition to the Platonic mysticism of Yeats, Russell and their followers. In addition, Joyce indulges himself in some gratuitous heroic posturing, aligning himself with a satanic Leviathan and imaging himself standing above his contemporaries, alone and contemptuous.

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[77] Christopher Butler calls the whole essay 'a mixture of Zarathustra and Marx', in 'Joyce the Modernist', *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 84, endnote 3.
[78] *PSW*, 97-9. When quoted, the line numbers, not the page numbers, are given.
[79] *L II*, p. 73, to Stanislaus, 3 December, 1904.

The accusation Joyce levels against other Irish writers is basically one of timidity and hypocrisy, their hopelessly conventional lives do not live up to their work or ideals. Some of the satirical barbs are better than others, the one aimed at Yeats comes first, and we can guess that he was Joyce's chief target:

> ..him who hies him to appease
> His giddy dames' frivolities
> While they console him when he whinges
> With gold-embroidered Celtic fringes – (25-8)

This is the most effective and recognisable caricature, attacking the lovelorn Yeats' reliance on patronage from Lady Gregory and Annie Horniman. The next lines of the poem are amongst its worst:

> Or him who sober all the day
> Mixes a naggin in his play – (29-30)

This shows how ineffectual Joyce's satire is. It relies upon the reader's knowledge of John Millington Synge's personal habits. More importantly it is an utterly absurd argument: Synge had written great plays and would write greater ones before his tragically early death, what does it matter if his characters drank and he didn't? Irrelevance and immaturity are evident throughout. Joyce writes of fingering a girl, presumably trying to show rebelliousness against prudishness and perhaps a more realistic picture of women than the idealised ones of his rivals. However it comes across as much like an adolescent boasting of his conquests to his peers as any kind of point scored over his opponents.

By far the greatest achievement of these years (aside of course from the stories which would together become *Dubliners*) was the eventually abandoned novel *Stephen Hero*, begun immediately after the 'A Portrait' essay was rejected. This highly autobiographical novel tells the story of Stephen Daedalus, the surname of course linking him with the mythic craftsman or artist. It was to follow the trajectory of Joyce's own life through his education, his flight to Paris and return to Dublin to live in the Martello tower.

In many ways, the novel can be seen as a protracted response to the revelation that, as Stephen is so fond of saying, 'the Absolute is dead' (*SH*, 206). There can be no doubt how closely the protagonist and the author were identified; the novel was to end with the words 'Stephanus Daedalus pinxit.'[80]

The title for the novel was suggested by Stanislaus Joyce, from the Irish ballad 'Turpin Hero'. The ballad tells of a clever outlaw (an image Joyce had already cultivated), who leaves his native land. He outwits a lawyer, and our sympathy is with the outlaw as Turpin knows the lawyer is a liar: in other words, Turpin punishes the representative of greed and hypocrisy using his quick wits. It is not hard to see the appeal of this for Joyce or the analogy between Stephen's character and Turpin's.

From the extant fragments of the novel we can see that it is composed with the same blend of satire towards others and glorification of the author that we observed in 'The Holy Office'. Stephen is never anything less than Stephen *Hero*. As S.L. Goldberg pithily observed: 'Ultimately, […] the general effect becomes one of monotonous self-vindication.'[81] Just as in the earlier unpublished essay, Joyce is far too enamoured with his mouthpiece to treat him with any effective irony. Occasionally a distancing phrase is voiced, but it is always utterly nullified by the context and Stephen's rightness in every judgment (according to the narrator). It is rather hard to satirise someone with whom you totally agree.

Stephen Hero is hampered with serious defects in tone, a rather frequent clumsiness in syntax, and a sprawling unfocussed form. It is, after all, unrevised and uncompleted. Despite the unevenness there are amusing moments, and the satire can be quite acute. The mode is not ironic; there is no subtlety or juxtaposition, rather there are

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[80] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 244.
[81] S.L. Goldberg, *Joyce* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 34.

frequent descents into invectives such as the following, which is strikingly reminiscent of Nietzsche in its imagery, its thrust and its portentousness:

> In a stupor of powerlessness he reviewed the plague of Catholicism. He seemed to see the vermin begotten in the catacombs in an age of sickness and cruelty issuing forth upon the plains and mountains of Europe. Like the plague of locusts described in Callista they seemed to choke the rivers and fill the valley up. They obscured the sun. Contempt of [the body] human nature, weakness, nervous tremblings, fear of day and joy, distrust of man and life, hemiplegia of the will, beset the body burdened and disaffected in its members by its black tyrannous lice. (*SH*, 194, parentheses in edition used)

The bitter righteousness with which Joyce excoriates the hypocrisies of Irish society can be quite invigorating (if one can get past the adulation of the pretentious Stephen), and the work certainly marks a clear departure from the fey *Chamber Music*. The tension between wishing to help his countrymen in their state of spiritual and moral servitude and the tendency to condescendingly mock them for being in it is never resolved however. It is doubtful that it would have been even if the novel had been completed, and overall one feels no great loss in its abandonment. Is such a reconciliation of differing positions (liberator and satirist) possible anyway; and, furthermore, where would it leave heroism?

Our discussion now returns to its beginnings, Joyce's speeches in university. He revisits 'Drama and Life' and 'James Clarence Mangan' in *Stephen Hero*, eliding them and making them more coherent. He now unambiguously advocates the classical temper over the romantic, characterising the former (vaguely) as a realistic presentation without overt authorial comment.[82] Joyce was already using this technique in the short stories he was writing, but in *Stephen Hero* itself it is only a theory.

Before I conclude it behoves me to discuss that behemoth of Joycean critical discourse: the epiphany.[83] The theory is utterly unconvincing. Stephen conflates *claritas* (a

[82] 'The classical temper […], ever mindful of limitations, chooses rather to bend upon these present things and so to work upon them and fashion them that the quick intelligence may go beyond them to their meaning which is still unuttered. […] For so long as this place in nature is given us it is right that art should do no violence to the gift.' (*SH*, 78-9)

[83] See *SH*, 211-3 for Stephen Daedalus' discussion of the epiphany.

quality of perception: in the mind of the observer) with *quidditas*, whatness (a quality of the object: outside the mind of the observer). The incoherence of this is obvious, no amount of scholarship into Aquinas will make it more acceptable – in fact it would tend to problematise it further. What this theory, and all the works we have just examined, illustrate is the earnestness and seriousness with which the young Joyce took his artistic vocation. With *Dubliners* he emerged from this realm of possibility and finally created the masterpiece he had been rather blindly striving towards. The next section examines this creative leap.

II: HOW ONE BECOMES WHAT ONE IS

'The will to truth, which is still going to tempt us to many a hazardous exercise; that celebrated veracity of which all philosophers have hitherto spoken with reverence: what questions this will to truth has already set before us! What strange, wicked, questionable questions! It is already a long story – yet does it not seem as if it has only just begun?'

-Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*[84]

In the summer of 1902, a young Joyce made his first foray into contact with the Irish literary revival, calling upon George Russell (A.E.). At the end of their meeting, Russell remarked to his young visitor: 'You have not enough chaos in you to make a world.'[85] But as we saw above, the young man had a surplus of chaos within him; what he needed was discipline, and to find his mode and form. It was Russell's fortuitous intervention two years after this first meeting - an invitation to write a short story for his paper – that set Joyce upon the path he needed. Joyce was not going to make a world however, but to scrupulously render into prose the city he inhabited. Joyce became a realist writer *through* the composition of the realist stories which comprise *Dubliners*; it was not a matter of deciding upon a direction and setting out, but rather a process of discovery and development. Once the journey was properly underway, the goal was never in doubt: in writing *Dubliners* he never wavered in pursuit of the truth. He might have accidentally stumbled upon his path, been pushed onto it by Russell even, but he was loath to desert it.

Truth became for Joyce both a means and an end. He would use it as a criterion by which to condemn his fellow Irish writers, whose work he characterised as 'blatant lying in the face of the truth.'[86] Joyce now had a serviceable stick with which to bash his contemporaries and a new way of defining himself by contrast - by his stronger commitment to this ideal: 'Am I the only honest person who has come out of Ireland in our time?'[87] What

[84] § 1, p. 33.
[85] *JJ*, p. 99. Russell was probably paraphrasing Nietzsche: 'one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.' *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* 'Zarathustra's Prologue', § 5, p. 129.
[86] To Stanislaus, 13 November 1906, *L II*, p. 192.
[87] To Stanislaus, 26 September 1906, *L II*, p. 171.

is clear is the deep seriousness this goal and its achievement acquired for Joyce. His wholehearted plunge into realism, this will to truth, allowed him to assuage niggling doubts about literary pursuit: 'Is it possible that, after all, men of letters are no more than mere entertainers?'[88] he worried. Since his end was accurate depiction and not diversion the answer in his case must be no, he might have reasoned.

During the composition of his short stories, truth had a moral claim in and of itself for Joyce: 'I have written [*Dubliners*] … with the conviction that he is a very bold man who dares to alter in the presentment, still more to deform, whatever he has seen and heard.'[89] With this conviction, with this unconditional will to truth, '*we stand on moral ground*' as Nietzsche wrote.[90] The true, as is traditional in philosophy is identified as unequivocally good, the way to freedom from paralysis; the writer's achievement of his aim (truth) will bring about a release from conventional morality: 'in composing my chapter of moral history in exactly the way I have composed it I have taken the first step towards the spiritual liberation of my country.'[91] The truth shall set them free.

I believe that if we are to properly understand Joyce's belief that he was conveying the truth through his fiction (a statement that might sound wholly paradoxical), we should remind ourselves of the original twofold meaning of *to invent* as both to discover *and* to create. What is perhaps most remarkable about the correspondence dealing with *Dubliners* is how tenaciously Joyce is concerned to conserve what I dub the veridical aspect of his stories, the pub names et cetera he refused to change. Most realist fiction deals in verisimilitude, presenting characters, places, situations which are like reality. Joyce of course does this too, but he more or less limits it to his characters. What is really remarkable and unprecedented is how closely he was determined to stay to reality, how powerful the

[88] To Stanislaus, 19 July 1905, *L II*, p. 99.
[89] To Grant Richards, 5 May 1906, *L II*, p. 134.
[90] *The Gay Science*, § 344, p. 282.
[91] To Grant Richards (20 May 1906), *L I*, pp. 62-3.

will to truth was: in terms of verisimilitude, expressions or character traits couldn't be changed because they were exactly like how a man in Dublin at the time would say something or would *be*; and in terms of the veridical, nothing but exactitude would do – Joyce wasn't content to say 'a street', he was determined it be named and if needs be, walked down.

* * *

Not reading literally

> Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was *literally* run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also. (*D*, 138, my italics)

Let us begin at the end so to speak, by examining these three opening sentences of 'The Dead'. The first, by the inclusion of the incorrect *literally*, indicates that it is affected by the idiom of the character it is describing. This is what Hugh Kenner called the Uncle Charles Principle, and indeed was the first example he gave of it in his influential exposition. Remove *literally* and the sentence would instead be a rather colloquial descriptive sentence in the third person narrative mode. The long unpunctuated second sentence conveys the breathless activity in which Lily is engaged. The final sentence quoted here is an instance of free indirect discourse; it is clearly a reflection of Lily's thought though the narrative does not signpost it as such. Having identified the first sentence as an example of his principle, Kenner continued: 'sure enough, the paragraph goes on to designate the shabby crew who attend that party as the ladies and the gentlemen, which would be Lily's idiom likewise.'[92] We can assent to this - but would it not also be the narrative's idiom? We are not all as snobbish as Kenner is here, and we should bear in mind that wealth is a relative concept, reminding ourselves that most of the guests were probably quite well off comparatively

[92] Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), p. 15.

speaking given the time and place, and not by any means a 'shabby crew'. Furthermore, the terms employed are not *necessarily* designations of class, nor do they presume gentility or distinction. My contention is that this famous opening line is literally the *only* instance of the Uncle Charles Principle in *Dubliners*.

I believe Kenner's to be a useful term, but if it is to be deployed meaningfully it must be refined more fully and precisely than in his original formulation. Free indirect discourse is prevalent in the novels of Jane Austen and is hardly revolutionary - to grasp Joyce's innovation it is necessary to more clearly delineate the difference between this device and the Uncle Charles Principle. In the former the thoughts or feelings of the character are conveyed, and since thought and language are inextricable the character's idiom is often discernable: 'It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also.' Lily's direct thought might have been: 'It's well for me I haven't to attend to the ladies also.' In the Uncle Charles Principle the novelty is in the introduction of the character's idiom into sentences of objective descriptions of actions or situation, into places where we would not expect to find it. In some cases, we can tell the narrative has been permeated through sheer incongruity (it is inconceivable that the narrative means 'literally') whilst in others we are alerted by prior exposure to the character's idiom (Uncle Charles' use of words like 'salubrious' and 'mollifying' (*AP*, 50) originally alerted Kenner as to what was going on).

Kenner took the name for his principle from a character in *A Portrait*, and it dominates that novel from the opening invocation of a child-like discourse mediated by a third-person narration. Compare the first three stories of *Dubliners*: they are simply accounts of his boyhood by a mature first-person narrator. Thereafter, there is no narrator in the short stories, only a third-person narrative which occasionally uses free indirect discourse. It is intriguing to contemplate what the shape of our criticism of *Dubliners* would be like if Joyce had never included that *literally*. The problem is that since Kenner identified what its careful

deployment signified, critics have seen it operative everywhere and introduced an excess of uncertainty and puzzlement into their analyses of this subtle collection of naturalistic stories.

We have much to gain from viewing *Dubliners* within the tradition of nineteenth century realism from which it emerged; namely, a balanced, defatalised, contextualised appreciation of its importance. I see Joyce's first work of prose fiction in a line of descent from authors he admired such as Turgenev, Tolstoy, de Maupassant, and Flaubert, and not simply as a step on the road towards *Finnegans Wake*. The influence of French realism runs much deeper than the refusal of inverted commas.[93] To quote a contemporary review, the collection is 'nothing if not naturalistic.'[94] One of the most eminent interpreters of *Dubliners*, Margot Norris, labels her readings 'suspicious'. However I see them, and those of many others, as deeply *paranoid*. Most commentators, mainly due to a tendency to see the Uncle Charles Principle everywhere, exhibit a scepticism towards the narrative idiom in *Dubliners* so thoroughgoing as to be a dead end for meaningful or plausible interpretation – they fail to appreciate the naturalism and so come up with nothing. To briefly explore the narrative technique in the book we will focus upon just one story, 'Clay'.

I have chosen 'Clay' as my grounds of discussion because it is generally held that, in Brandon R. Kershner's words, 'the text of the story [...] might be regarded as a stylization of [the protagonist's] inner narrative'.[95] What both Kershner and Margot Norris, along with the vast majority of critics before and since, see in the story is basically an extended example of the Uncle Charles Principle at work, Maria's voice blending with that of the narrative idiom. Furthermore, her consciousness is generally thought to be somehow guiding the

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[93] Bizarrely, Colin MacCabe interprets this choice of punctuation as working against classic realism and authority: 'those sections in a work which are contained in inverted commas may offer different ways of regarding and analysing the world, they are negated as real alternatives by the unspoken prose that surrounds and controls them.' (p. 14) – as if the hyphen that replaces the inverted commas did not clearly delineate speech. MacCabe's *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003) is riddled with such highly questionable assertions, supported (when supported at all) by unconvincing readings.
[94] Unsigned review, *Athenaeum*, 20 June 1914, reprinted in Deming, ed., vol. I, p. 61.
[95] R.B. Kershner, *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), p. 110.

narrative, rather than just influencing its vocabulary. Here is Kershner again: 'virtually the whole of the narrative depends upon Maria's consciousness'.[96] Norris' position is, as always, the most fanciful and contentious:

> narrative speech in 'Clay' is, for the most part, uttered in the language of Maria's desire; it is Maria's desire speaking. And because it is the function of the narrative to restore significance to Maria, it preserves the triangular structure of an eavesdropped conversation: the narrative voice of 'Clay' describes Maria as she would like to catch someone speaking about her to someone else.[97]

I do not intend to engage in a point by point argument with Norris or anyone else; my intention here has simply been to briefly set out the consensus, in its various manifestations, that I am arguing against.

The obvious literary precedent for 'Clay' is Flaubert's masterful 'Un Coeur Simple', in which the ageing ironist took up a friend's challenge to portray a humble life compassionately and succeeded magnificently. In much less space than Flaubert, a single evening rather than a whole life, Joyce evokes a similar sense of pity in his reader for a lonely life with little fulfilment. The opening paragraph of 'Clay', with its simple homely vocabulary ('spick and span', 'nice and bright') and cheery sense of a job well done ('Maria had cut them herself' (*D*, 76)) conveys a certain sense of satisfaction and childish pride on Maria's part. The effect is similar to that achieved in the second sentence of 'The Dead' examined above, in which Lily's duty is described in such a way as to give the reader a feeling for her stressed experience of it. In treating narrative voice I believe it is only valid to seriously doubt what we are being told if we have reasonable grounds to do so. 'Everyone was so fond of Maria.' (*D*, 76) I see no reason to question this statement, *as long as* we realise that everyone here means everyone in the confined insular space of the institution in which Maria works (this is clear from the context), and that there is no inherent respect

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[96] Kershner, p. 104.

[97] Margot Norris, *Suspicious Readings of Joyce's 'Dubliners'* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 143.

implicit in fondness (one can be fond of a child, or a slave). We grasp the little universe in which Maria is enclosed, but it is assumed the reader will not be as naïve and limited as the protagonist. This is not (self) deception on the part of the narrative voice. Nor is it free indirect discourse, since Maria is named; it is unlikely she would think of herself by name. It is not a disingenuous statement, but a deliberately limited perspective, *far from the whole story*, and it calls for alertness on the reader's part. We already know from the first sentence that Maria has a subordinate role in the institution (she needs permission to leave for the evening) and her menial role becomes clearer as the story progresses. We see a similar strategy at work in the incident on the tram when an elderly man politely converses with Maria. This is a pleasant enough encounter, some polite chitchat, but its full significance is deferred – we only realise afterwards that the man was inebriated, and that Maria had been flustered enough by the exchange to forget her precious present.

The first instance of free indirect discourse in the story is actually found in the last sentences of the fourth paragraph (italicised here): '*What a nice evening they would have, all the children singing!* Only she hoped Joe wouldn't come in drunk. *He was so different when he took any drink.*' (*D*, 76) Joe's fondness for drink, anger (over Alphy), along with the 'smart answer which he had made to the manager' (*D*, 79), inevitably remind the reader of Farrington in the previous story: a neat illustration of how the stories in the collection subtly coalesce through inference and suggestion, insidiously reverberating one to the other.

Ultimately it is impossible to reassure the paranoiac: how is one to dispel the unfounded suspicions and delusions which Norris seems engulfed in? 'The prank with the garden dirt expresses and gratifies the Donnelly children's aggression toward Maria with minimal risk to themselves. It is perpetrated by the older next-door girls'[98] What cunning children! However I am in agreement with Norris that Maria 'is subjected to a […] primitive,

[98] Norris, *Suspicious Readings*, p. 152.

conventional, universal childish trick'.[99] So, the children need not have known the folk game originally included this option or have intended to give Maria an intimation of her mortality, but that *is* what we as readers, guided by the title, understand. Together with her suggestive omission of the stanza of her song dealing with romantic love and marriage, and numerous other light-handed textual nods, we are given a heart-rending insight into a lonely life of celibacy and servitude and a hint of its inevitably sad end. The brilliant final sentence deftly conveys Joe's sentimentality, emotion, and his reliance on alcohol through the detached third person narration which has been Joyce's mode throughout the story:

> He said that there was no time like the long ago and no music for him like poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say; and his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was. (*D*, 81)

[99] Norris, *Suspicious Readings*, p. 152.

* * *

Hemiplegia of the will[100]

'Paralysis of will; where do we not find this cripple sitting today!'
-Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*[101]

In the opening paragraph of 'The Sisters' Joyce tacitly announced his agenda for the entire collection; to observe *paralysis* and its effects upon the people of Dublin.

> Every night as I gazed up at the window I said softly to myself the word *paralysis*. It had always sounded strangely in my ears, like the word *gnomon* in the Euclid and the word *simony* in the Catechism. But now it sounded to me like the name of some maleficent and sinful being. It filled me with fear, and yet I longed to be nearer to it and to look upon its deadly work. (*D*, 3)

The paralysis Joyce was concerned with was not the physical condition, but a paralysis of the will; how the individual's will is constantly frustrated, sublimated or coerced in Dublin. This theme, perhaps precisely because of its universal applicability, pervades every story in *Dubliners*, though it is more prominent in some (e.g. 'Counterparts', 'Eveline') than others. It is clear that the will was for Joyce paramount in explaining life: 'there cannot be any substitute for the individual passion as the motive power of everything – art and philosophy included.'[102] Other commentators have dwelt inordinately upon *simony* and *gnomon* in their discussions of *Dubliners*, both briefly mentioned in passing above as a point of comparison, but as far as this investigation is concerned they are no more than precisely what they are

[100] 'I call the series *Dubliners* to betray the soul of that hemiplegia or paralysis which many consider a city' letter to Constantine Curran, 23 June 1904, *L I*, p. 55. What Joyce meant by this term is evident in his remarks to his brother Stanislaus: 'What's the matter with you is that you're afraid to live. You and people like you. This city is suffering from hemiplegia of the will.', *JJ*, p. 132. 'The will to live, he would say, was paralyzed in Ireland.' Stanislaus Joyce, 'James Joyce: A Memoir', trans. Felix Giovanelli, *The Hudson Review*, vol. 2, No. 4 (Winter 1950), pp. 485-514, p. 499.

[101] § 208, p. 137.

[102] To Stanislaus, 7 February 1905, L II, p. 81.The sentence quoted begins: 'I am sure however that the whole structure of heroism is, and always was, a damned lie and …' Earlier in it he had asked: 'Do you not think the search for heroics damn vulgar – and yet how are we to explain Ibsen?' (pp.80-1) This shows how divided Joyce still was, already developing the mature restrained naturalism of the short stories and questioning the notion of heroism but unwilling to betray his artist-idol (Ibsen) and still writing a novel called *Stephen Hero*. In a sense, the stories were forming Joyce as much as he was forming them.

identified as – unusual sounding words, and they have no further relevance within the collection.[103]

Of course, stating it in this dry, reductive manner, *every story is about paralysis of the will*, makes *Dubliners* seem predictable and formulaic, whereas in truth each story is distinct and interesting in its own right. To avoid glib generalisation and respect the individuality of the stories, I will limit my investigation here to 'Grace', which seems appropriate given that it was originally supposed to be the final story, and the longest. Whilst 'The Dead' stands outside the schematic plan of the collection, working like a coda, 'Grace' was rather supposed to be a climactic finale, revealing the greatest source of paralysis in the public life of Dublin, the Church. It still does of course but its power of indictment is somewhat muted by the story that follows, its impact smothered by that famous snow. For the purposes of my study here I ask that my readers think of it as it was originally conceived, as the brilliant last flourish of the collection.

'Grace' is the most comic story in *Dubliners*; Joyce relishes acutely exposing his characters' foibles, small mindedness and hypocrisy. To take just one example from the many available:

> Though [Harford] had never embraced more than the Jewish ethical code his fellow-Catholics, whenever they had smarted in person or by proxy under his exaction spoke of him bitterly as an Irish Jew and an illiterate and saw divine disapproval of usury made manifest through the person of his idiot son.

But then, immediately following, the perfectly understated punchline: 'At other times they remembered his good points.' (*D*, 124) The conversation in the sickroom not only betrays the men's ignorance of their faith, but also Joyce's perfect ear for Dublin chat. Overall, the

[103] Simony is mentioned again in 'The Sisters', in a reference to the priest. In fact the term can only be applied to clergy, one sign of its ineffectiveness for interpreting the collection as a whole. I not only think it unhelpful, I find its application distorting, as will be evident in my argument below.

treatment is almost flawless, a perfect blend of ironic detachment and accurate portrayal of lower middle class society at the time.[104]

The story's tripartite structure, it seems safe to conclude, is modelled on Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, but what function does this analogy serve? It parodically points to the disparity between the mundanity and sordid nature of contemporary Dublin life and the realm of poetry or myth, but not to indict the present for failing to live up to these standards. Rather, in keeping with the strenuous realism of the entire collection, the analogy indicates Joyce's relation to one of his great poetic models: Dante wrote of heaven and hell, but in Dublin there is no inferno, only a dirty pub toilet; no paradise, only a Jesuit church on Gardiner Street. This is religion in a godless world.

Undoubtedly Father Purdon's man to man talk, with its crude financial metaphors, is an indication of the crass vulgarity and hypocrisy of the Church. But the story's point is not simony; this is not a criticism of the clergy for having failed to meet higher standards. Rather it is a subtle denunciation of the Church in its very fundamental teachings and purpose. Many years later Samuel Beckett would do something similar rather more savagely in his poem 'Ooftish' (1938). By comparing this piece to 'Grace' we can learn much about the story's import and technique, contrasting its extremely restrained treatment with Beckett's furious satire:

> Offer it up plank it down
> Golgotha was only the potegg
> cancer angina it is all one to us
> cough up your T.B. don't be stingy
> no trifle is too trifling not even a thrombus
> anything venereal is especially welcome
> that old toga in the mothballs
> don't be sentimental you won't be wanting it again
> send it along we'll put it in the pot with the rest
> with your love requited and unrequited
> the things taken too late the things taken too soon

[104] I would like to say that not one word is out of place, however I think that the sentence 'He asked in a suspicious provincial accent' (*D*, 118) is wrong, since surely the man's accent is not suspicious. Perhaps what Joyce meant was 'He asked suspiciously in a provincial accent'.

the spirit aching bullock's scrotum
you won't cure it you won't endure it
it is you it equals you any fool has to pity you
so parcel up the whole issue and send it along
the whole misery diagnosed undiagnosed misdiagnosed
get your friends to do the same we'll make use of it
we'll make sense of it we'll put it in the pot with the rest
it all boils down to blood of lamb[105]

Beckett and Joyce are not calling for a reformation of the ruling hierarchy or suchlike, they are fundamentally opposed to the ruling philosophy of the church: its doctrine. Beckett is objecting to the Christian interpretation of human suffering, and the Church's justification of that suffering; Joyce's more theologically weighted objection is to how the Church deprives humanity of its will. Joyce's story is best understood from the radically anti-Christian perspective Beckett's poem offers, rather than as criticism of the Church from within the faith in the vein of Dante.

Tom Kernan, an alcoholic and wifebeater, rather than having to confront his drinking problem, or even acknowledge it, is instead brought to a religious retreat. I am not concerned here with the difficult biblical passage Father Purdon examines in his sermon (Luke: 16), but, like a good Catholic, only with his interpretation of it. This is the final paragraph of the story (and in this reading, of *Dubliners*): '*Well, I have looked into my accounts. I find this wrong and this wrong. But, with God's grace, I will rectify this and this. I will set right my accounts.*' (*D*, 137, my underlining) This is the first time the all important word grace has been used in the story in its religious sense. After much playful teasing with the nuances of the word (it has been used several times already in different ways), the story finally, irrevocably reveals the proper sense of the title and its major theme. Grace is both unearned and needed; freely given out of divine generosity, it is nevertheless necessary to attain salvation. Therefore a man's will is not enough, he needs grace also. Hence Tom Kernan

[105] *Samuel Beckett: The Grove Centenary Edition*, vol. IV, ed. Paul Auster (New York: Grove Press, 2006), p. 35.

will not try and change his ways, he will simply await divine aid. Alcohol is undoubtedly Kernan's refuge, but it is the theoretical underpinning of the doctrine of grace provided by the Church which means he will never come to terms with his addiction. Eveline, in the story of that title, is on the point of embracing her desire but at the moment of decision 'she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty' (*D*, 28); we last see her 'passive, like a helpless animal.' (*D*, 29) She is only free to serve. The prevalent Christian morality of Dublin is inherently, doctrinally, opposed to full realisation of the will. The diagnosis of paralysis is complete and Joyce's truthful exposition has laid bare a primary source of it, if we can recognise this his spiritual liberation has begun to take place.

But of course *Dubliners* did not end with 'Grace', but with 'The Dead', its greatest story. Why this change of heart on Joyce's part? He seemed to be worried that, despite his non-didactic naturalistic style, the stories were too sharp and reductive in their selection and treatment of Dubliners' lives: 'The Dublin papers will object to my stories as to a caricature of Dublin life. Do you think there is any truth in this?'[106] With time he would come to see his stories as insufficiently panoramic, failing to capture the whole reality of the city:

> Sometimes thinking of Ireland it seems to me that I have been unnecessarily harsh. I have reproduced (in *Dubliners* at least) none of the attraction of the city [...] I have not reproduced its ingenuous insularity and its hospitality. The latter 'virtue' so far as I can see does not exist elsewhere in Europe. I have not been just to its beauty: for it is more beautiful naturally in my opinion than what I have seen of England, Switzerland, France, Austria or Italy.[107]

Clearly this formed part of the impetus for 'The Dead', begun in the months following this letter. The will to truth again manifested itself.

[106] To Stanislaus, 19 July 1905, *L II*, p. 99.
[107] To Stanislaus, 25 September 1906, *L II*, p. 166.

* * *

A case study

'[S]o long as our consciousness is filled by our will, so long as we are given up to the throng of desires with its constant hopes and fears, so long as we are the subject of willing, we never attain lasting happiness or peace….Thus the subject of willing is constantly lying on the revolving wheel of Ixion, is always drawing water in the sieve of Danaids, and is the eternally thirsting Tantalus.'

-Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*[108]

The intention of writing 'a chapter in the moral *history* of [his] country', together with his use of medical terms to define what was for him its greatest problem are indicative of the impartial viewpoint Joyce was aiming for.[109] Objectivity cannot be claimed, since the writer is treating persons and situations he has selected, *created*; but detachment from his subject is everywhere evident. Like the doctor or the historian, Joyce describes or diagnoses: he never condemns. His morality is one of truth, of exposure – he wishes to reveal the city, not to judge it – this is the cool irony of Flaubert, not the righteous satire of Swift.

Writing of one of his greatest predecessors in the genre he was now working, a writer he read extensively, Joyce commented upon Guy de Maupassant's 'rather obtuse' moral sense.[110] The difference between the Frenchman and his Irish admirer is fruitful for understanding the latter. A contemporary French critic of *Dubliners* captured the divide between them well when he wrote of 'Two Gallants': 'Imagine with what hidden indignation, with what sarcasm Maupassant or Huysmans would have told this story'.[111] Many have felt, as Joyce did, that de Maupassant was annoyingly slow to understand his characters. Henry James wrote of him that he 'fixes a hard eye upon some spot of human life, usually some dreary, ugly, shabby, sordid one, takes up the particle, and squeezes it till

[108] Quoted in Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 71.
[109] To Grant Richards (20 May 1906), *L I*, p. 62, my italics.
[110] To Stanislaus, 19 July 1905, *L II*, p. 99. Stanislaus Joyce attests: 'Joyce admired Maussapant's works, but objected that at times the French writer was too summary in his insistent desire to achieve definition in a single phrase and often harsh in judging the characters of his short stories.' 'James Joyce: A Memoir', p. 499.
[111] Edmond Jaloux, 'l'Esprit des livres', *Les Nouvelles litteraires* (29 May 1926), reprinted in Deming, ed., vol. I, p. 69.

it grimaces or till it bleeds.'[112] Often de Maupassant's characters do something foolish or contemptible; they are punished irrevocably by the story's unfolding of events, or at least by the author's lacerating irony. The author rarely tries to appreciate or explicate their motives properly, he simply condemns their actions. Joyce clearly disagreed with this approach, as is shown in this instructive insight into one of his stories: 'I am no friend of tyranny, as you know, but if many husbands are brutal the atmosphere in which they live (vide Counterparts) is brutal and few wives and homes can satisfy the desire for happiness.'[113] Joyce is all about presentation, fulfilling his moral duty to truth. His characters are on trial in a manner of speaking, but Joyce does not give his verdict:

> To make a judgement, to demonstrate, to instruct - these are for us the very consequences of thinking. However detached from all moral end Flaubert, Maupassant or Huysmans may seem, they do not escape this law . . . Now take any work of Mr. James Joyce, 'An Encounter', 'Two Gallants', and try to disentangle the author's intention.[114]

To cement the claims made in my preceding subsections on *Dubliners*, and to more fully understand Joyce's non-didactic approach to his characters, let us focus upon 'A Painful Case'. This story is best understood as a case outlined for the reader to judge: we are given the facts through the third person narration with a newspaper report of a courtroom inquiry interpolated; it is then up to us to form our opinion of the characters, to sentence or exonerate. It is of course possible for us to refuse this duty, to abstain, but not if we are to properly engage with the text – to read deeply is to interpret.

Almost every critic has condemned Mr Duffy, usually implying that this is also Joyce's view of the case he presents (a typical delusion of critics, this conjunction). I deny the latter assumption, I could hardly fail to if I am to maintain that Joyce is diagnosing these Dubliners and not damning them. But I too believe that Duffy ought to be criticised, if from

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[112] Quoted in Guy de Maupassant, *A Day in the Country and Other Stories*, trans. David Coward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 311.
[113] To Stanislaus, 13 November 1906, *L II*, p. 192. Hence the title of the story Joyce mentions.
[114] Jaloux, p. 69.

a different perspective from that of other critics. As stated above, I do not (indeed, I could not) claim Joyce to have been objective; I believe he too disapproved of this character and expected readers to share his feelings, but he was nevertheless willing to allow us to sympathise, to *understand* this painful case.

Mr Duffy, like the Schopenhauerian ascetic, is engaged in an attempted renunciation of the will. The atheistic Duffy's solitude is wholly self-imposed. His detachment from his desires and drives (his 'liv[ing] at a little distance from his body' (*D*, 83)), from his own will, is evident in his 'odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense.' (*D*, 83)[115] As well as reflecting his literary aspirations (a manifestation of the very will he tries to repress), this surely is what Sartre dubbed *bad faith*; 'in bad faith it is from myself that I am hiding the truth'.[116] Duffy has denied his will, and so will not accept that he has the freedom to act, preferring to think of himself as a character directed by someone else rather than the author of his actions. Sartre argues that 'bad faith can even be the normal aspect of life for a very great number of people.'[117] Duffy is such a person; 'He allowed himself to think that in certain circumstances he would rob his bank but, as circumstances never arose, his life rolled out evenly – an adventureless tale.' (*D*, 83) He deludes himself into thinking he can renounce his will, hiding behind his ironic distance from the quotidian, and thereby comforts himself for his career in a commercial bank and excuses himself from properly pursuing his literary ambitions. His entire existence is an attempt to justify to himself his voluntary exclusion from fulfilment:

> as if it were not in [his] power to confer their value and their urgency upon [his] duties and the rights of [his] position, as if it were not [his] free choice to get up

[115] The fact that this sentence is itself in the form it describes has led many critics to speculate that Duffy has himself composed it, and by implication perhaps the entire story. Since no one has drawn any convincing reading or implications from this, I dismiss the notion as fanciful.
[116] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 49.
[117] Ibid., p. 50.

> each morning at five o'clock [for Duffy probably slightly later] or to remain in bed, even though it meant getting fired.[118]

Duffy is very much a Germanophile; a translator of Hauptmann and an admirer of Mozart, he even keeps an apple in his desk, perhaps to emulate Schiller. Later, after he has broken with Mrs Sinico, he will purchase two books by Nietzsche. His only relief from his work is in intellectual pursuit: art is another haven from the will. In the German philosophic tradition (Kant, Schopenhauer) with which Duffy is surely familiar, intellectual enjoyment of the arts is seen as disinterested and a release from emotion. Given everything we know about him he would surely approve of this common view of his interests as will-less. What he wants from Mrs Sinico is intellectual companionship, once emotion and desire (the will) enter he wants no more to do with her. Nietzsche accused Schopenhauer of being effectively a Christian in disguise, and the same charge could be levelled at Duffy. Despite his pessimism ('the soul's incurable loneliness' (*D*, 85)), he still seems hungry for some sort of transcendence through the intellect: 'he would ascend to an angelical stature' (*D*, 85). After the break, he reflects on the sad pervasiveness of the will and its tendency to pervade life in terms and a style Schopenhauer would surely have approved of: 'Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse.'[119] (*D*, 86) His initial disgusted reaction to her death sees Duffy at his least compassionate; righteous and fierily aloof in his solitude – much like the hero in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, a book he owns. This is undeniably Duffy at his most contemptible, condemning his former friend for her

[118] *Being and Nothingness*, p. 60.

[119] Marvin Magalaner, as part of an unpersuasive argument that Duffy is intended as a critique of Nietzsche's superman (which requires Magalaner to overlook the fact that Duffy doesn't acquire Nietzsche's works until late in the story, and after his decision to abandon Mrs. Sinico), sees this aphorism as a direct echo of one in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Book I, section 14, 'On the Friend'), but the section he cites (aside from not resembling Duffy's aphorism) ends with Zarathustra exhorting 'let there be friendship!' (p. 169) This obviously implies Nietzsche does not feel friendship is impossible! Moreover, even before reading Nietzsche Duffy feels 'every bond […] is a bond to sorrow' (p. 85) See Magalaner, 'Joyce, Nietzsche, and Hauptmann in James Joyce's "A Painful Case"', *PMLA*, vol. 68, No. 1 (March 1953), pp. 95-102, pp. 97-8.

weakness in resisting the will, and egotistically reflecting on its implications for himself given their former association.[120] But he swiftly repents, reflecting movingly not only on how his renunciation of the will and bad faith had led to her loneliness, but most of all to his.

No jury in the world would convict Duffy for the death, except one made up of Joyceans (if their criticism is any indicator). Mrs Sinico's alcoholism dates from two years after the break with Duffy, and her absent, unloving husband might have more to do with it than the abstemious bank clerk. Certainly, Duffy thinks he is responsible, and we can partially assent to this with reservations (it does not seem unlikely). He would think that way, given his selfish and conceited nature. Duffy comes out of the affair looking rather bad, that cannot be denied, but we can stop well short of accusing him of murder.

With *Dubliners* Joyce emerged from the cornucopia of potentialities and grasped his will to truth - it was both the road and the destination; he reached the truth by telling it in these stories. Having dissected his hometown he was now steeled to turn the scalpel on himself: heroism was dead, Joyce had a moral duty to perform. Stephen Dedalus was born, and in a book 'utterly unlike'[121] his first aborted attempt at self-portraiture, Joyce set out to exorcise those early romantic tendencies *Dubliners* had pushed him past.

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[120] It should be noted that this is *my* negative opinion of Duffy – nothing in the narrative tone indicates an authorial judgement of any kind.

[121] Joyce in a letter to Sylvia Beach, quoted in Margot Norris, *Joyce's Web: The Social Unravelling of Modernism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), p. 51.

2

The Last Romantic

'And what did not lie behind me then! This stretch of desert, exhaustion, disbelief, icing up in the midst of youth, this interlude of old age at the wrong time, this tyranny of pain even excelled by the tyranny of pride that refused the *conclusions* of pain – and conclusions are consolations – this radical retreat into solitude as a self-defence against a contempt for men that had become pathologically clairvoyant – this determined self-limitation to what was bitter, harsh, and hurtful to know, prescribed by the *nausea* that had gradually developed out of an incautious and pampering spiritual diet, called romanticism – oh, who could reexperience all of this?'

-Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*[122]

I: A SACRIFICIAL BULL

In his important and influential essay 'The Problem of Distance in *A Portrait of the Artist*', Wayne C. Booth outlined the difficulties of reading Joyce's novel, particularly in relation to irony.[123] Booth pointed out that ironic readings of Stephen had not existed (in print, at least) prior to the publication of *Ulysses*, and had not become popular until *Stephen Hero* finally appeared in 1944. Booth's point here was that without these supplementary texts and various remarks of the author et cetera (in other words, extraneous materials), a reader would find it impossible to read *A Portrait* ironically.

Since I am concerned here to show the workings of irony in *A Portrait*, I shall take up Booth's implicit challenge, though always bearing in mind the extent to which the debate about Joyce's debut novel has evolved since. To this end, I propose a *limited* thought experiment: What if Joyce had died after the completion of *A Portrait*, say in 1916, having first destroyed the manuscript for *Stephen Hero*, all correspondence relating to both novels, and any materials intended for *Ulysses*?

[122] 'Preface for the Second Edition' (1886), § 1, pp. 32-3. As already mentioned in my introduction, Joyce owned a copy of this work.

[123] This widely reprinted essay formed a chapter of Booth's landmark *The Rhetoric of Fiction* [1961] (London: Penguin, 1991).

A touch of common-sense is perhaps a prerequisite here; my experiment is limited in the sense that I do not wish to speculate on the repercussions of this for Joycean criticism, his posthumous reputation (perhaps romanticised for his early death like Byron et al.?), or more pedantically, say, his corrections to editions of *A Portrait*. A useful analogy here may be what was once set as an examination question for English literature students: 'What would the lasting critical judgement on Yeats have been if he had ended his poetic career in 1907?' The good student could immediately grasp the point of this and answer accordingly, evaluating and examining the poetry up to 1907, without engaging in irrelevancies or speculation. In that respect, my question is akin.

One paradoxically beneficial outcome of my proposal is that *Stephen Hero*, the ungainly precursor to *A Portrait*, is eliminated from consideration. Whilst there is nothing methodologically objectionable about its study as a point of comparison, it has rarely been a fruitful procedure. Indeed, it has often been occlusive, since consideration of the abandoned roman à clef prevents us from seeing Stephen Dedalus without the phantom of Stephen D*a*edalus. Such a confusion of *character* is inconceivable here.

The question of irony in *A Portrait*, though still acknowledged as important, indeed central, is rarely addressed by critics anymore. The premature sacrifice of Joyce imagined here is necessary if we are to revive what Vicki Mahaffey has dubbed 'the now moribund controversy over Stephen'.[124]

* * *

Representing reality

''Réalisme' was apparently first used as an aesthetic description in 1835 to denote the 'vérité humaine' of Rembrandt as opposed to the 'idealité poétique' of neo-classical painting'

-Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*[125]

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[124] Vicki Mahaffey, *Reauthorizing Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 140.

[125] *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* [1957] (London: Pimlico, 2000), p. 10.

During his ill-fated 1902 sojourn in Paris Joyce read Aristotle and Jonson. Though much (perhaps too much) has been made of the importance of the former for his first novel, the influence of the Englishman has scarcely been remarked. Yet it is the traces of his brand of neo-classical allegory and not Aristotle's largely irrelevant aesthetic strictures that we can clearly discern in Joyce's highly idiosyncratic work.

A Portrait is an inspired combination of the realism of Rembrandt's paintings (the titles of which it consciously recalls) and the neo-classical personification against which they are contrasted above. Writing in 1918, Hart Crane was deeply impressed by the novel's spiritual quality and hence asserted that it was 'Bunyan raised to art and then raised to the ninth power.'[126] Inadvertently, Crane had hit upon a useful analogy. For it is *like* Bunyan 'raised to art' inasmuch as instead of Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* we get Dedalus, the figure of the artist; instead of redemption through religion, destiny realised through art. The ambiguity begins with the title – *A Portrait of* ***the*** *Artist* – Stephen is both the author as a young man *and* an archetype.[127]

Realism is always caught between personality and personification, between representation and representatives. Its characters must be both plausible individuals and in some ways epitomise types or trends in society. The precursor most important to Joyce in prose fiction, Flaubert, wrote of the need to both observe and epitomise thus:

> *Madame Bovary* is a pure invention. All of the characters in the book are completely imagined, and Yonville-l'Abbaye itself is a place that does not exist, like La Rieulle, and so on. Which has not prevented everyone, here in Normandy, from discovering a host of allusions in my novel. If I had worked in that way, my portraits would have been less true to life, because I would have been focusing on individual personalities and my aim was to reproduce various types.[128]

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[126] *Little Review*, 5/3 (July 1918), 65; repr. in Robert H. Deming, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) vol. I, p. 124.

[127] This double signification of the title is reflected in the French translation*: Dedalus: Portrait de l'artiste jeune par lui-même*, trans. Ludmila Savitzky (Paris: Éditions de la Sirène, 1924).

[128] Flaubert, letter to Émile Cailteaux (4 June 1857), *Selected Letters*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 251.

Of course, Joyce's will to truth meant that his novel was far more veridical than Flaubert's, and his critics, like the denizens of Normandy, have quite legitimately found a host of correspondences to Joyce's own life in his autobiographical novel. What is most important however is to acknowledge how the allegorical aspect of *A Portrait* allows these to be transcended: this is not pure autobiography, but rather a unique representation of the crux of realism's dialectical strategy of representing. Through his innovative reintegration of the neoclassical allegory realism had supplanted, Joyce had found a way of thrusting the unspoken premise of the *bildungsroman* and *künstlerroman* to the fore.

The epigraph, a new device for Joyce (not having been used in either *Chamber Music* or *Dubliners*), is derived from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and refers to Daedalus as he prepares to begin the creative process ('unimagined arts') that will allow him to escape the labyrinth with his son, Icarus.[129] Linking the epigraph with the title the reader will immediately link Daedalus with *the Artist* and Icarus with the *Young Man*. Very swiftly however we are to learn that there is more to it than that, for on the second page we find that the protagonist of the novel, upon being asked, gives the 'queer name' (*P*, 7) of Stephen Dedalus. We might well ask, with another of Stephen's interlocutors, 'What kind of a name is that?' (*P*, 6) The implausibility of an Irishman having this name at the turn of the last century is highlighted on several other occasions by characters in the novel, perhaps most amusingly in the episode where Stephen, stung by a challenge to his Irishness, offers to bring the offending party to the office of arms and show him the Dedalus family tree (*P*, 170). Our uncertainty about this name is of course quelled by the epigraph, at least momentarily, but then we face another interpretive dilemma. Is Stephen then Daedalus, or rather, his son? Since Stephen is just a

[129] '*Et ignotas animum dimittit in artes.*' The full lines in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as translated by A.D. Melville, are: 'So then to unimagined arts/He set his mind and altered nature's laws.' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), VIII.189-90, p. 177.

boy, ‘blithely unaware’ like ‘Young Icarus’[130] and we have already encountered his storytelling father, the choice seems obvious. However, since the novel then proceeds without the question seeming to be at all pertinent it dissolves into something of a moot issue until, at the end of the fourth chapter, it again rises to prominence. We shall return to this chapter shortly.

David Hayman has gone to great lengths to establish multiple interconnections between *A Portrait* and Ovid’s reworking of the myth.[131] He has done so against great odds considering his own admission that the word ‘labyrinth’ does not occur once in the novel, and whilst one cannot help admiring the rather ingenious contortions he resorts to in order to prove his point, the strongest refutation of his argument is simply a level-headed reading of the text. His extensive reliance on imagery (always a highly dubious and fallible approach to this novel) fails to acknowledge that each image has significance, or indeed insignificance, only within the context in which it is placed. Though Hayman is right to stress the importance of the myth, ultimately one cannot view it as a structural device pervading the entire novel as he does. His argument is that:

> In terms of the Daedalian pattern each chapter epitomizes Stephen’s total progression, creating an aura of inevitability which contributes to the aesthetic stasis of the novel. Meaningful repetitions and cross-references enable Joyce to re-enforce the idea that his hero is repeatedly remaking himself through a series of deaths and rebirths *which can hardly end with Stephen’s departure from Ireland.*[132]

Thus, Hayman can be seen to be partaking in the general consensus initiated by Hugh Kenner that ‘the action of each of the five chapters is really the same action. Each chapter

[130] Ovid, VIII.199, p. 177. It is worth remarking at this point that Icarus’ fall is in no way due to pride, Ovid portrays him simply as an innocent child. Furthermore, though Joyce scholars tend to insist on the connection, the text evinces no hints that Stephen’s first name is derived from the first Christian martyr. Naturally, it almost certainly is; my point is that this fact is nevertheless insignificant within the novel, in a way that the Ovid connection blatantly is not.

[131] In his article ‘Daedalian Imagery in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*’, in *Hereditas: Seven Essays on the Modern Experience of the Classical*, ed. Frederic Wills (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[132] Hayman, p. 50, my italics. The part I have highlighted shows how in Hayman (and Kenner) everything is built towards showing that Stephen is always Icarus, which rather makes one wonder why, if this were meant to be the case, he was not given that name by Joyce.

closes with a synthesis or triumph which the next destroys.'[133] The main problem with such a reading is that, whilst to some extent correct, it fails to fully acknowledge the pervasive flashes of irony that disrupt such a movement. It lends the novel a coherence and stasis, a set pattern of progression, each chapter leading to a crescendo, the next bringing the narrative down to earth, that the text itself resists. A more banal objection to Kenner's schema is that what he describes is an inevitable process: as the protagonist grows older he will inevitably become wiser; maturing is progression. In fact even the temporal progression, inevitable in the novel of disillusionment genre, is tampered with by the irruption of memory, for example in Chapter II when Stephen and the reader are transferred back to some years previously when Stephen had been accused of heresy by Mr. Tate and then defended Byron from his peers (*P*, 65-9). The novel, though impelled forward by its nature as the story of a life, resists strict linear progression.

To further illustrate my point, and in a spirit of economy also give a concrete example of how irony operates in the novel, let us take the third chapter, revolving thematically around the question of religion. The chapter ends with an amusingly pious and contrite Stephen returning to the fold of the Church. This action and his attendant purification from sin have led to an exalted view of life which replaces his earlier alienation, self-hatred, despair and dread. We find him as follows at the chapter's close:

> He sat by the fire in the kitchen, not daring to speak for happiness. Till that moment he had not known how beautiful and peaceful life could be. […] On the dresser was a plate of sausages and white pudding and on the shelf there were eggs. They would be for breakfast in the morning after the communion in the college chapel. White pudding and eggs and sausages and cups of tea. How simple was life after all! (*P*, 123)

But there is to be no suspense here, we are not waiting until the following chapter for the deflation, since Chapter III has itself opened with a less exalted culinary vision:

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[133] Hugh Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce* [1955] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 129.

> […] he felt his body crave for its food. He hoped there would be stew for dinner, turnips and carrots and bruised potatoes and fat mutton pieces to be ladled out in thick peppered flour-fattened sauce. Stuff into you, his belly counselled him. (*P*, 86)

This, we need hardly be told, is not the hallowed simple fare of the blessed but the 'gluttonous enjoyment of food' (*P*, 89), named in his catalogue of sins. The irony stems from what we have already read, not from what follows. The incompatibility between the two competing interpretations of similar phenomena renders both problematic and thus irony emerges. Stephen is its victim because with heartfelt sincerity he believes both (first one, then the other), they are after all *his* interpretations, and cannot discern their problematic disjunction. If the reader can, (s)he savours the irony.

Throughout the first three chapters Stephen has identified himself with various romantic heroes; Parnell, Edmond Dantès, Napoleon, Byron, though never the obvious predecessors his name suggests. Concomitant with this is his desire to know his own future vocation:

> The hour when he too would take part in the life of that world seemed drawing near and in secret he began to make ready for the great part which he felt awaited him the nature of which he only dimly apprehended. (*P*, 52)

The brilliance of the allegory in *A Portrait* is that it simultaneously points towards two destinies, and then manages to keep both in suspension until they burst out in the climactic finale to the fourth chapter. With this ambiguity and delayed development of the figure, the stultifying consequences of using allegory as 'a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts the suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered'[134] as in, say, Bunyan, are bypassed. Stephen's revelation is precipitated by his rejection of the priesthood despite the fact that '[a]ll through his childhood he had mused upon that which he had so often thought to be his destiny' (*P*, 139). He leaves Byron's, the suggestively named public house,

[134] Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, second revised edition (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 188.

walks out to Bull Island (the labyrinth) and finally, after four chapters and an excellent education (which emphasised Latin), 'Now, as never before his strange name seemed to him a prophecy.' It is, he realises, 'a symbol of the artist' (*P*, 142). What follows is the famous, pivotal scene in which his destiny is realised: he is to be the romantic artist, contemplating 'an inner world of individual emotions' (*P*, 140), 'alone and young and wilful and wildhearted,' (*P*, 144), creating amidst the splendour of an untainted nature.

The reader will be struck first of all by the mechanical and highly artificial way in which Stephen realises his destiny as an artist. We of course have known all along (from the novel's title) and one will be perhaps rather surprised that Stephen has not realised it before. As Patrick Parrinder observed, it 'comes pat like the solution to a detective story which has been kept hidden by simply diverting the reader's attention.'[135] The cries of his peers, 'O, Cripes, I'm drownded!' (*P*, 142) lightly suggest he may be Icarus, but not in such a way as to disrupt the power of destiny finally realised; they merely nod to the reader, reminding one of the duality of the allegorical figure and that Stephen is still young after all. Even now, the closure and absolute identification of allegory is resisted: Stephen has resolved to fly, to dedicate himself to art, but we do not know whether he will be successful.

In his rejection of the priestly vocation ('He had refused' (*P*, 139)) and his aloof detachment from his peers in 'mild proud sovereignty' (*P*, 142. Stephen is linked with pride several times in this sequence, and elsewhere), we can identify him as Satan, who had figured so prominently in the third chapter and with whom he was subtly aligned there. Satan, like Icarus, also suffered a fall, and an astute reader will not make the same mistake with Stephen and this novel as the Romantics had with Lucifer, that is, rather than simply

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[135] Patrick Parrinder, *James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 75.

admiring his positive qualities, identifying him unequivocally as 'the Hero of *Paradise Lost*'.[136]

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The role of the artist

At the end of chapter four Stephen recognised or discovered his destiny, in the final chapter he must go about realising it. He believes that to do so he must discover the 'essence of beauty' (*P*, 148) through the construction of 'an esthetic philosophy' (*P*, 149). Opposing his advocacy of art for art's sake are peers of a more political bent, Davin and McCann. Whereas Balzac's Lucien Chardon must learn how to become a poet in practical terms (i.e. get published), and Dickens' David Copperfield simply knocks out some stories, Joyce dramatises the vicissitudes of finding the muse.

That Stephen's thoughts on aesthetics (to dub them theories, as many do, is far too generous an appellation) are not meant to be read as terribly original is highlighted by his conversation with the Dean of Studies in which the Jesuit casually lists some of the ideas he might consider and succinctly summarises Stephen's core belief that the 'object of the artist is the creation of the beautiful' (*P*, 156). This is not to say that they would agree, but that Stephen is on well-trodden turf here: anyone that has ever considered or studied aesthetic questions can see that Stephen is supposed to be intellectually curious, precocious even, but not necessarily convincing. The excessive importance and attention granted his ideas, which after all are only about appreciation not creation, is due to an inordinate emphasis on the autobiographical aspect (or *anti*-autobiographical: Joyce was *not* like this) rather than on Stephen as the artistic type.

[136] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*', in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, seventh edition, vol. 2 (New York: Norton, 2000), p. 734. William Blake held similar views. It is perhaps interesting to note that Joyce refers to Lucifer as 'the majestic protagonist of *Paradise Lost*', 'Realism and Idealism in English Literature', in *OCPW*, p. 171, my underlining.

The form in which Stephen's exposition to Lynch is presented, a dialogue, and his friend's demands for cigarettes, along with the tenor of the presentation itself, strongly call to mind Oscar Wilde's 'The Decay of Lying – An Observation'[137] (from *Intentions* (1891)). However here a rather shabby bourgeois Dublin setting replaces the refinements of London aristocracy, the dialogue being interrupted by such things as a noisy dray (*P*, 175) – reality rather rudely impinges on the aspiring aesthete. Furthermore, that bugbear of the Aesthetic movement (and indeed antecedent Romantic poets), crass materialism, disrupts proceedings in the form of Donovan (*P*, 177) with his news of the civil service examination results (in this Irish context, materialism with the added twist of imperialism), and his membership of the field club (a very Victorian institution, with scientific aspirations). Moreover, Stephen's interlocutor is a crude cynic who mocks his ideas rather than a suave, sympathetic disciple who draws them out. As in the bird-girl sequence, we need to take the whole scene into account, not just the principal player.

Stephen defines art as 'the human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an esthetic end.' (*P*, 174) Beauty is '*akin*' (*P*, 174, my emphasis) to truth in their mode of comprehension: the former by imagination, the latter by intellect. They are similar in this matter, but clearly differentiated as separate categories. As 'esthetic end' suggests, it is only beauty with which Stephen is concerned here since, and this is the most salient point, beauty is the object of art, truth most emphatically is not. As Vivian, the Aesthete in Wilde's aforementioned dialogue, remarks 'those who do not love Beauty more than Truth never know the inmost shrine of Art.'[138] It is now clear to the reader that Stephen has rapidly evolved, following a well-worn path, from being a Romantic to one of those often called their last heirs, namely, the Aesthetes. Whilst he would still agree with Shelley that the

[137] Margot Norris makes this comparison, in *Joyce's Web*, p. 58.
[138] Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying – An Observation', in *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 318.

imagination is central to art, and indeed quotes him to that effect (*P*, 179), it is clear that he would not subscribe to his belief that 'to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful',[139] for Stephen it can only be the latter. And since art cannot be concerned with truth, it follows that Stephen would advocate Wilde's total division of aesthetics and ethics, rather than Shelley's dictum that the 'great instrument of moral good is the imagination.'[140] The setting and the context may be much different, aestheticism channelled through a rigorous Jesuit education (Aristotle, but predominantly Aquinas)[141] and preached on the streets of Dublin, but the tenets are essentially the same.

Aestheticism had had a long flirtation with Catholicism, and *A Portrait* exploits this to full effect, achieving a wonderful coherence and unity by doing so. As Marguerite Harkness (amongst others) has demonstrated, the linking of priesthood and the artist was a long and variegated motif, most relevantly to this novel in the works of Wilde and, most of all, Yeats' prose writings of the 1890's.[142] Stephen, unlike his compatriots, is a Catholic and thus the narrative arc of his contemplating joining the Society of Jesus as a priest, only to choose art as his vocation instead and become 'a priest of the eternal imagination' (*P*, 186) is seamless, and an utterly convincing, logical progression.

No one would dispute that Catholicism dominates *A Portrait*. Less easy to acknowledge is the idea obvious in the novel, and indeed in Ireland, that religious affiliation is more a matter of ethnicity than theological intricacies. Mr. Casey's indignant reply, in the famous Christmas dinner scene, to Dante's imputation that he is a 'renegade Catholic' (that is, one who under the Penal Laws changed faith to Protestantism to avoid persecution) is indicative in this respect:

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[139] Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry', in *The Norton Anthology*, vol. 2, p. 792.
[140] Ibid., p. 796.
[141] Whether they were on the curriculum of Belvedere and U.C.D. at the time is irrelevant; they are clearly two of the most important thinkers for the Church: its so-called first philosopher and first doctor respectively.
[142] See chapter 2 of Marguerite Harkness' *The Aesthetics of Dedalus and Bloom* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1984).

> - And I may tell you, ma'am, that I, if you mean me, am no renegade catholic. I am as catholic as my father was and his father before him and his father before him again when we gave up our lives rather than sell our faith.
> […]
> - Catholic indeed! repeated Dante ironically. The blackest protestant in the land would not speak the language I have heard this evening.
> […]
> - I am no protestant, I tell you again, said Mr Casey flushing. (*P*, 28-9)

Yet shortly afterwards this proud Catholic is shouting: 'Away with God!' (*P*, 32) It would be comforting to dismiss this as the unwarranted prejudice of an older generation but the novel suggests the idea is more pervasive than that. Questioned by Cranly about his renunciation of the religion into which he was born, and if he now intends to convert to Protestantism, Stephen gives the superb reply: 'I said that I had lost my faith, […] not that I had lost my selfrespect.' (*P*, 205) He goes on to elaborate his answer but one feels that his initial bigoted witticism, an instinctive reaction of upbringing though it may be, says much more. This question of ethnicity is to be a powerful element in Stephen's self-formulation as Irish artist, and in a Dublin dominated by the largely Anglo-Irish literary revival it is a very relevant one.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Yeats' presence, despite the text's strenuous avoidance of naming him, haunts the final chapter of *A Portrait*. The most pre-eminent Irish poet of the day, an aesthete and romantic; it could hardly fail to do so. Stephen recalls a memorial to Wolfe Tone, but the fact that Yeats spoke at the meeting is not recorded (*P*, 154). Yeats' first play is quoted from, its opening night recalled, but again its author is unacknowledged (*P*, 190). Here we can discern what Harold Bloom has coined as the anxiety of influence played out before us in a rather submerged, muted manner. [143] It is the divergences that are important, more so than the similarities. Firstly, in terms of aesthetics, Yeats' essays such as 'The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry' make clear he was far more of

[143] First outlined in his book *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), and then further explored in *A Map of Misreading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

a Romantic, particularly in his conception of the imagination.[144] Rather more important (in the novel), though almost certainly related, are the demands of nationalism and politics. Stephen's views on his country and its independence movement are brought to focus in his discussions with Davin, a sort of representative in the novel for the various strands of nationalism (the Gaelic League, the G.A.A., the I.R.B.). What is most remarkable, and this relates to the earlier points about ethnicity and Catholicism, is the emphasis placed on race by Stephen. This is where Stephen's name causes some trouble ('Are you Irish at all?' (*P*, 170)) in the novel's balancing of allegory with acute realism. As we saw above (the offer to bring Davin to the office of arms), the novel is keen to establish Stephen's authenticity as an Irishman, raised in a Republican tradition by his father who constantly emphasises (nationalist) Irish history, and whose own grandfather was condemned to death as a whiteboy (*P*, 31). Nevertheless it is clear that Stephen will have nothing to do with the (unmentioned) Revival, thinking disparagingly of: '[Irish] myth upon which no individual mind had ever drawn out a line of beauty' (*P*, 152) He muses on the peasant woman Davin has described to him (this whole anecdote bears a resemblance to Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen* (1903)) as 'a type of her race and his own' (*P*, 154), but it is clear who is not part of this race, 'a tourist from England or a student of Trinity' (*P*, 154).[145] The two are aligned as potential betrayers with no differentiation between them, the Anglo-Irish portrayed unequivocally as allies of the Empire in oppression. Later, opposite Maple's Hotel, Stephen gazes in contemptuously at the 'patricians of Ireland' (*P*, 200), the Ascendancy:

> How could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a

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[144] In *Ideas of Good and Evil*, collected in *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

[145] Synge himself was of course a graduate of Trinity. As Anthony Roche has pointed out, the John Alphonsus Mulrennan Stephen sardonically records on 14 April as returned from visiting the peasantry in the west of Ireland (*P*, 212) is clearly a poorly disguised John Millington Synge; see '"The Strange Light of Some New World: Stephen's Vision in *A Portrait*', *JJQ*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring, 1988), pp. 323-332, p. 330.

> race less ignoble than *their own*? And under the deepening dusk he felt the thoughts and desires of *the race to which he belonged* (*P*, 200, my emphasis).

It is clear here that Stephen is making a racial distinction. So, what is the point of all this talk of race and ethnicity in the novel?

> A tide began to surge beneath the calm surface of Stephen's friendliness.
> - This race and this country and this life produced me, he said. I shall express myself as I am. (*P*, 170)

The thrust of the argument is that since Stephen is authentically Irish (unlike, we may surmise, the Anglo-Irish revivalists), he has no need to conform to contemporary notions of Irishness; he is, so to speak, the real deal. This point is made again in the text's final allusion to Yeats in Stephen's diary:

> Michael Robartes remembers forgotten beauty and, when his arms wrap her round, he presses in his arms the loveliness which has long faded from the world. Not this. Not at all. I desire to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world. (*P*, 212)

The reference is to the opening lines of Yeats' 'Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty'[146], and the implication is that whilst Yeats and the other Revivalists struggle to resurrect a dead Irish past and reinvigorate the native myths, Stephen shall press ahead, embodying in his native being the living present and striving to, as he famously puts it, 'forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of *my race*.' (*P*, 213, my emphasis) Like Yeats, Stephen is torn between his personal brand of aestheticism and his country, and driven by a need to reconcile them.

His grandiose yet vague aspiration – rather like pledging to be the voice of a generation or a national poet – perfectly captures a young writer's ambition for his work *and* his uncertainty about how to achieve it. What Stephen's philosophising and mediocre poem

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[146] In Yeats' 1899 collection *The Wind Among the Reeds*, where it is renamed 'He remembers Forgotten Beauty', *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright (London: J.M. Dent, 1994), p. 80.

represent are necessary phases in the artist's evolution, not the resolution of Stephen's (or Joyce's) artistic agenda once and for all.

* * *

Non serviam

We have already seen how the text's irony reverberates against Stephen's naivety and enthusiasms, making him the victim of the reader's superior understanding. Now we shall explore how he himself has become an ironist in the novel's final chapter. To that end, we shall utilise the well-established method of contrasting him with other characters. But, departing from tradition, we shall first focus on the long neglected Temple.

Temple is a less mature Stephen, asking in university the kind of questions Stephen delighted in during the end of his time at Belvedere.[147] He shares Stephen's interest in history (*P*, 193/4), literature (see below), language (*P*, 195), and politics (*P*, 165), and his anti-religious sentiments (*P*, 198-9) but nevertheless Stephen refuses to befriend him despite, or rather because of, his embarrassingly cloying solicitation. Temple is above all characterised by enthusiasm, he is proud, he boasts, to be 'an emotionalist' (*P*, 168). He is eager to sound Stephen out:

> -Excuse me, I wanted to ask you do you believe that Jean Jacques Rousseau was a sincere man?
> Stephen laughed outright. (*P*, 168)

This exchange gets to the heart of the matter - Temple is all sincerity; Stephen is the ironist laughing at his interlocutor's immature folly. Another aspect of Temple's problem is that like a younger Stephen he cannot take an ironical view of himself; he cannot see why his earnest question makes him absurd here. Observing Cranly's hostile attitude towards Temple, Stephen recognises 'his friend's listless silence, his harsh comments, the sudden

[147] '- Very well, then, Temple continued, still addressing Glynn, and if Jesus suffered the children to come why does the Church send them all to hell if they die unbaptised? Why is that?' (*P*, 198) Compare, for example, Stephen here: 'How comes it that while the first beatitude promises the kingdom of heaven to the poor of heart the second beatitude promises also to the meek that they shall possess the land?' (*P*, 89)

intrusions of rude speech' as identical to the behaviour with which Cranly 'had shattered so often Stephen's ardent wayward confessions' (*P*, 195). The key difference is that 'Stephen had forgiven freely *for he had found this rudeness also in himself towards himself.*' (*AP*, 195, my italics) Stephen is capable of self-mockery in and for itself, whereas Temple only admits he is a 'ballocks' (*P*, 196) to best Cranly and assert his equality. In the journal entries we see an instance of Stephen being able to step back from himself and laugh ruefully:

> Talked rapidly of myself and my plans. In the midst of it unluckily I made a sudden gesture of a revolutionary nature. I must have looked like a fellow throwing a handful of peas into the air. People began to look at us. (*P*, 213)

In his rebellion, the only weapons of defence Stephen will allow himself are 'silence, exile, and cunning' (*P*, 208). Whilst not ignoring the literal meaning of exile we could summarise his position as essentially an attitude of ironic detachment.

I now turn to Stephen's satanic renunciation of his faith, 'I will not serve' (*P*, 201). Why this *non serviam*, and not rather *nego* or *non credo*?[148] Again, the contrast with his peers is illuminating. Temple is the only other character who is as outspokenly irreligious as Stephen. Like Rousseau, to whom he is compared by Stephen ('He was like you, I fancy, said Stephen, an emotional man' (*P*, 168)), Temple believes in man (*P*, 166), 'universal brotherhood' (*P*, 165), 'the power of mind', and he 'admire[s] the mind of man independent of all religions.'[149] (*P*, 166) He also appears to be an advocate of scientific materialism, or put less vaguely, Darwinism. He asks Stephen if he believes in heredity, and then contends that, '[t]he most profound sentence ever written […] is the sentence at the end of zoology. Reproduction is the beginning of death.' (*P*, 194) Temple's humanist attitudes are paralleled by those of the political agitator MacCann, whom Stephen pictures suggestively 'with one hand on *The Origin of Species* and the other hand on the new testament' (*P*, 175). It is

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[148] For instance, Joyce had used 'Nego' in the early (1904) essay, 'A Portrait of the Artist', though in a different context. See *PSW*, p. 218.

[149] Rousseau did of course believe in God, but he was critical of aspects of organised religion and opposed to dogma.

MacCann who urges Stephen that he must 'learn the dignity of altruism and the responsibility of the human individual' (*P*, 167), and of the utilitarian 'new humanity and the new gospel of life' (*P*, 165). This attitude is perfectly captured by Nietzsche in *Twilight of the Idols* when he attacks George Eliot as symptomatic of a general tendency in nineteenth century English intellectual life. Substitute England for Ireland in the following quotation and one can surmise where MacCann and Temple stand:

> They are rid of the Christian God and now believe all the more firmly that they must cling to Christian morality […] In England one must rehabilitate oneself after every little emancipation from theology by showing in a veritably awe-inspiring manner what a moral fanatic one is. That is the penance they pay there.[150]

We are now better placed to take stock of Stephen's position. He feels Catholicism to be the only viable Christian religion.[151] The complexity of his struggle is highlighted in his talk with Cranly. He is explicit that he no longer believes, that he has lost faith, but on several points of Catholic dogma he is unwilling to commit himself, preferring instead to remain in a state of doubt (*P*, 201). This is most obviously why he is aligning himself with Milton's Satan, since Satan could hardly deny God's existence but nevertheless chose to rebel against His value system. Like Nietzsche, Stephen is uninterested in proving logically the non-existence of God, or any such enterprise, he is simply renouncing his faith in Christianity. The consequences of this, for Nietzsche and Stephen, as opposed to Goerge Eliot, MacCann and Temple, are cataclysmic:

> We others hold otherwise. When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one's feet. […] Christian morality is a command; its origin is transcendental; it is beyond all criticism, all right to criticism; it has truth only if God is the truth – it stands and falls with faith in God.[152]

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[150] *Twilight of the Idols*, 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', § 5, p. 515.
[151] 'I said that I had lost the faith, Stephen answered, but not that I had lost selfrespect. What kind of liberation would that be to forsake an absurdity which is logical and coherent [Catholicism] and to embrace one which is illogical and incoherent? [Protestantism]' (*AP*, 205)
[152] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols,* 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', § 5, pp. 515-6.

Hence Stephen says to MacCann of the Russian Czar, with his plea for universal peace: 'Keep your icon. If we must have a Jesus let us have a legitimate Jesus.' (*P*, 166) Nietzsche gives voice to a similar sentiment, though typically in a more radical manner, in *The Antichrist*: 'in truth, there was only ever *one* Christian, and he died on the cross.'[153]

[153] *The Antichrist: An Attempted Critique of Christianity*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, § 39, p. 612.

* * *

The portrait of perspective

'The world is *my* world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of *language* (of that language which I alone understand) mean the limits of *my* world.'

-Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*[154]

The blending of the narrator and the characters' idiolects in *A Portrait*, the 'Uncle Charles Principle' we discussed in the last chapter, has been the main source of critical confusion.[155] Kenner realised that at the beginning of the second chapter we are very briefly outside of Stephen's perspective and that the vocabulary changes accordingly: Joyce uses Uncle Charles' lexis rather than the young boy's. This passage is a sort of clue to Joyce's technique, this trip to the outhouse being our only step away from Stephen, and luckily Kenner was ingenious enough to grasp its significance. Though we have third-person narration its energies are directed throughout towards conveying Stephen's impression of the world rather than an objective impression of Stephen. Thus, rather than begin as the bildungsroman typically does, with some scene-setting and an account of the protagonist's parents, we are immediately within his perceptual field – and, accordingly, within his linguistic range.

It is precisely because of this perspectival mode of representation that Booth castigated the novel, arguing that since we do not have a definite position from which to view Stephen, or enough (or rather, any) authorial intervention, the novel's irony therefore fails. Booth's difficulty stems from his somewhat limited conception of irony, and his reliance on authorial intention – that is, his belief that the author (in his guise as narrator) should put a clear ironic distance between the character depicted and the reader, from which one can then judge.[156]

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[154] Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.62, p. 68.

[155] ' 'Idiolect' – an individual's own distinctive form of speech [...] The etymological implication is that one's peculiar mode of speaking, the particular arrangement of these words in this order, is one's private property' Jeri Johnson, in her 'Introduction' to *P*, p. xx, n. 32. Kenner put forward his brilliant theory and its name in a chapter of *Joyce's Voices*, pp. 15-38.

[156] 'Whether a given word or passage or work *is* ironic depends, in our present view, not on the ingenuity of the reader but on the intentions that constitute the creative act. And whether it is *seen* as ironic depends on the

Kenner falls into the same trap, arguing that 'the themes of the last forty pages, though they give the illusion of focusing, don't really focus until we have read well into *Ulysses*. […] This problem Joyce didn't wholly solve; there remains a moral ambiguity (how seriously are we to take Stephen?) which makes the last forty pages painful reading.'[157] But judge Stephen, and very harshly at that, Kenner nevertheless does. As is obvious from the above quote he uses *Ulysses* to do so, an impermissible move by the terms of this essay's thought experiment. This pair of critics are mistaken, hence disappointed, in their reliance on the author behind the text to spell out the inherent ironies explicitly, and their related hope for a definitive view (or rather, judgement) of Stephen is therefore dashed. Ultimately, neither can accept that, as Linda Hutcheon argues in *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*: 'the final responsibility for deciding whether irony actually happens in an utterance [or here, text] or not (and what the ironic meaning is) rests in the end, solely with the interpreter.'[158] Hence, Kenner resorts to his (flawed, as I will demonstrate below) reading of *Ulysses*, fleeing to authorial intention (or rather his presumptuous reading of that intention), and Booth, missing the helping hand of a Fielding or Austen, simply throws his arms up in despair and laments. Many readers of *A Portrait*, like these two great critics, will be familiar with the feeling of 'salutary discomfort' which Roland Barthes experienced in reading Flaubert, arising from the fact that '*one never knows if he is responsible for what he writes*'.[159]

Perspectival irony is a major feature of the novel generally and is deployed particularly effectively in novels of youth, in which the naivety of the maturing protagonists was usually exposed (James' technical triumph *What Maisie Knew* is a good example). It relies on the

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reader's catching the proper clues to those intentions.' *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 91, my underlining.

[157] Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 121.

[158] Hutcheon, p.45.

[159] *S/Z* , trans. Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 140.

reader noticing a discrepancy between a character's perspective and the reality of a situation. It is most difficult to detect when we are given no viewpoint other than the character's own, and this is what leads to the unease we feel when confronted with the work of Flaubert or, to an even greater extent, with that of his disciple, Joyce. This unease is what prompted Booth's castigation; it actually stems from our fear of irony's edge, of missing the point as it were. It is observable amongst many first-time (usually younger) readers of *A Portrait* who are crestfallen and embarrassed when they read Kenner for instance and realise that they were *supposed* to be laughing at Stephen; they then feel themselves the victims, with Stephen, of Kenner's and (Kenner implies) Joyce's disdainful condescension.

Perspectival irony is not necessarily a satiric, or even comic, mode: it need not be cruel.[160] It is 'a disciplinarian feared only by those who do not know it but loved by those that do.'[161] We can appreciate the distance between Stephen's conception of the world and its actuality in the earlier chapters with ease. It is rather like understanding sarcasm (as discussed in the introduction): it is not difficult and hence both its rewards and punishments are lesser – nothing ventured, nothing gained. The irony sharpens as the book advances to the key scene in the fourth chapter (a pivotal one for critical discussions). The style of Stephen's visions is perpetually dismissed as overly ornate and Pateresque, but Pater was one of the great prose stylists of the nineteenth century (Joyce was an admirer) and the passage's luscious lyricism captures Stephen's excess of emotion perfectly, just as the opening chapter's terse, simple diction evokes a childish mindset and *Madame Bovary* moods of romantic reverie. Given the perspectival technique used throughout, if one is to dismiss the style in which the vision is presented as sentimental and overdone then one

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[160] Flaubert wrote to Louise Colet of *Madame Bovary* that 'The irony does not detract from the pathetic aspect, but rather intensifies it.' (9 October, 1852), *The Letters of Gustave Flaubert, 1830-1857* ed. and trans. Francis Steegmuller (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1980), p. 172.

[161] Kierkegaard, p. 326. Kierkegaard was referring to irony generally, not perspectival irony.

should really condemn the book's beginning as toddler-like nonsense. Nevertheless we *can* see that Stephen is acting rather embarrassingly and appreciate the disparity (i.e. the irony) between his exalted melodrama and the fairly paltry reality. The edge is sharpest here because, as in *Madame Bovary*, the temptation to succumb to the romantic lyricism and identify with Stephen and thus open oneself to the irony of others, is at its strongest. Joyce, as part of his agenda to depict things as they were, refused the didacticism typical of, say, George Eliot: he does not direct irony against his characters to point a moral, rather his perspectival irony demands that Stephen be evaluated by each reader in turn. The point is not to decide whether Joyce was of the Devil's party or not, but to judge his aspirant Lucifer for oneself.

* * *

Dear Diary

Stephen's diary, comprising the final pages of *A Portrait*, is an appropriate point at which to bring our discussion of that novel to a close. The narrative shifts from the complexities of the third person narration to the first person, thus severing any remaining hopes of an authorial judgement on the protagonist. In the final entry 'Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead,' (*P*, 213) the two presiding deities of our discussion (allegory and irony) converge in a final embrace. Critics have been keen to seize on the invocation of the father and artificer as indicative of Stephen's role as Icarus and his imminent fall, but what has never been examined (or even mentioned) is the more troublesome fact that Stephen himself *must* be aware of the implications of what he is writing. In the beach scene where Stephen finally realised/created his artistic vocation as Daedalus he did so in full and moving sincerity; here he ironically assumes the mantle of Icarus. The privilege of allegory as a stable entity (of definitive correspondence from text to some extratextual referent, here the *Metamorphoses*) is refused through the protagonist's realisation of his personification's potentialities. Here realism destroys literary conventions

– if the text is to be truly realistic, then a character can hardly inhabit the same world as the reader and not recognise the same cultural signifiers as ourselves. In other words, Stephen has read Ovid too.[162] Whereas before the context suggested ironies to the reader behind Stephen's back so to speak, now it is he who controls that context (since he 'writes' the diary) and the irony generally emanates from him, not around him.[163] His rather puzzling statement that he goes forth 'to encounter for the millionth time the reality of existence' (*P*, 213) only makes sense if we grant him an ironic self-consciousness, aware of his paradoxical welcoming of life as somewhat absurd, but excited at the prospect of escape nonetheless. This hyperbolic overstatement suggests a desired detachment: we often couch our deepest wishes in a way that tries to persuade ourselves that we could be reconciled to disappointment – not daring admit, even to ourselves, how precious their fulfilment is to us. Those final two entries with their strange mixture of irony, solemnity and excitement cannot be reduced to anything less than themselves: they eloquently capture the confusion and exhilaration of being on the cusp of freedom. If Joyce *had* died in 1916, a significantly smaller critical community might still be debating the outcome of Stephen's flight.

Our entrance into Joyce's text was the epigraph that preceded it; at the end of our journey we come to another border:

Dublin 1904
Trieste 1914 (*P*, 213)

I use the term border here as it perfectly captures how the above is both a part of, and the ultimate limit of, the text, yet also somehow outside it. The first entry in the novel of Stephen's diary is dated 20 March, the date of birth of Ovid according to his *Tristia*.[164] It

[162] '[H]e recalled the shrewd northern face of the rector who had taught him to construe the Metamorphoses of Ovid in a courtly English' (*P*, 150).
[163] I say 'generally' here because of course Stephen cannot wholly control irony, the interpreter (the reader) can see irony in, for example, the discrepancy between his making of grandiloquent declarations of independence whilst his longsuffering mother is in the background packing his clothes for him (*P*, 213).
[164] See Margaret McBride, *Ulysses and the Metamorphosis of Stephen Dedalus* (Lewsiburg: Bucknell University Press, 2001), p. 15.

seems highly unlikely that this is actually the first entry Stephen has ever written - at least nothing indicates it is; rather the choice of date points subtly to the novelist, just as the places and dates of the border do far more explicitly. Stephen wavers between Daedalus and Icarus, but Joyce identifies with their creator Ovid, another great author writing in exile.

The implications of our thought experiment having now been drawn out, we are at liberty to restore Joyce to his life in the dead past. It seems that he was not wholly happy with the generally laudatory reception of *A Portrait*, complaining that his audience had failed to see the novel's humour. On this point, it must be said that Joyce himself consistently found his work significantly funnier than even the most sympathetic critics: his first novel may not be humourless, but it is hardly comic. Joyce may have achieved *'L'acceptation ironique de l'existence et sa refonte plastique et compléte par l'Art'*, but it seems the majority of his readers were somewhat puzzled by these continentally influenced innovations, or missed them completely, and this is easy to understand.[165] Indeed, it appears that in some quarters something similar to Stephen's promised aesthetic theory was eagerly awaited: '"They seem to think," [Joyce] said, "that after writing the *Portrait* I should have sat down to write something like a sermon. I ought to have a message, it seems."'[166] Joyce made this complaint when *Ulysses* was well underway, and it is to that we shall now turn.

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[165] Flaubert, *Correspondance*, vol. II, letter of May 1852 (Oeuvres Complétes, Paris, 1926-38), p. 407. Quoted by L.A. Murillo in *The Cyclical Night: Irony in James Joyce and Jorge Luis Borges* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968). My own translation: 'the ironic acceptance of life and its complete formal recasting by art'.

[166] Joyce was referring to admirers of *AP* who 'had expressed disappointment at the way *Ulysses* was shaping' in the serialization. Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of 'Ulysses'* [1934], ed. Clive Hart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 57.

II: THE SEQUEL TO *A PORTRAIT*

‘Maurice suggested that the verses should be sent to a publisher.
- I cannot send them to a publisher, said Stephen, because I have burned them.
- Burned them!
- Yes, said Stephen curtly, they were romantic.’ (*SH*, 226)

‘As regards the new edition [of *A Portrait*] by all means check the proofs yourself but please cancel […] the words *The End*, substituting nothing.’
-Joyce, letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver (22 October, 1917)[167]

My thought experiment has untied the knot linking *A Portrait* and its sequel, this severance, an opening of interpretive possibility, has successfully led us through the labyrinth. Therefore, we are now in a position to bind the knot again all the more firmly. Whereas reading the first novel through the lens of its successor can be a severe impediment, the opposite is far from being the case: *Ulysses* can only be enriched by keeping *Dubliners*, and more importantly *A Portrait*, to the forefront of our minds.

Kenner, to support his negative evaluation of Stephen in both novels, quoted Joyce’s remark to Budgen that Stephen had ‘a shape that can’t be changed’, interpreting it thus: ‘which appears to mean that by Bloomsday [Stephen’s] metamorphoses have ended.’[168] It might have *appeared* so to Kenner, but it more obviously indicates that since Stephen’s background has already been so comprehensively delineated in *A Portrait*, he is far less malleable than Bloom. The Stephen depicted in *A Portrait* was only a young man, as Joyce was keen to stress, and he has developed considerably by the time of *Ulysses*.[169] Dedalus still has one more metamorphosis to enact.

In *A Portrait* Stephen’s romantic realisation of his artistic vocation is preceded episodically by his interview with the director of Belvedere College, S. J. The third chapter

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[167] *L II*, p. 408.
[168] Kenner, ‘The Cubist *Portrait*’, in *Approaches to Joyce’s Portrait: ten essays*, ed. Thomas F. Staley and Bernard Benstock (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976) p. 177. The Joyce quote is from Budgen’s *James Joyce and the Making of “Ulysses”*.
[169] ‘[Joyce:] “Some people who read my book, *A Portrait of the Artist* forget that it is called *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.”
He underlined with his voice the last four words of the title.’ Budgen, p. 57.

of *Ulysses* follows his interview with another headmaster, Mr Deasy. Stephen teaches in Dalkey but Joyce contrives to have him on Sandymount strand in the next episode, ostensibly to visit his relatives, though he does not actually do so. Sandymount is directly parallel to Dollymount, Stephen's flight 'sunward above the sea, a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve' (*P*, 142) has ended with him in the same place, albeit on the southside of Dublin rather than the north. His earlier vision took place in a suitably hazy twilight, he now walks exposed in the full light before midday. He urinates and picks his nose. He had watched a beautiful girl on Dollymount strand, with '[h]er thighs, fuller and softhued as ivory, […] bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down.'(*P*, 144) On Sandymount, in a rather less exalted tone, he observes a cocklepicker: 'I see her skirties. Pinned up, I bet. […] A shefiend's whiteness under her rancid rags.' (*U*, 3.331, 378-9)

All of the parallels just elucidated are of course the context, working, like the cries of his peers on the beach at Dollymount, to undermine Stephen. The text unmercifully foregrounds his failure. But the comprehensive, and savage, denunciation of his earlier posing emanates from within the bitterly ironic Stephen himself: 'You were going to do wonders, what?' (*U*, 3.192) He unmercifully mocks his younger selves (e.g. *U*, 3.128-146), including his most recent incarnation as aesthete in exile (e.g. *U*, 3.192-8). Stephen might have failed, but nobody is more painfully aware of it than himself. Through depicting Stephen's own consciousness Joyce presented an aspect of 'that sudden reality which smashes romanticism into a pulp.'[170]

It is perhaps surprising that the Ovidian connection is so completely absent from the opening chapters of *Ulysses*. It is reasonable to assume that this is due to a desire to not confuse the new interpretative framework of *Ulysses* in the reader's mind, with its Homeric

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[170] Joyce, in Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1999), p. 113.

analogies and echoes of *Hamlet*, with that of the novel which preceded it. Nevertheless, that Stephen is Icarus run to ground is clear enough. In the ninth chapter, an allusion to Stephen's strange name leads to a reintroduction of the *Metamorphoses* motif: 'Fabulous artificer. The hawklike man. You flew. Whereto? Newhaven-Dieppe, steerage passenger. Paris and back. Lapwing. Icarus. *Pater, ait*. Seabedabbled, fallen, weltering. Lapwing you are. Lapwing be.'(*U*, 9.952-5) Stephen sardonically juxtaposes his grandiose, mythically inspired ambitions with sordid reality, and resolves to substitute Daedalus and Icarus for Lapwing. This allows him to maintain belief in his artistic vocation, since Lapwing (or Perdix) was so brilliantly skilled that he provoked Daedalus' jealousy, whilst abandoning his earlier pride and idealism:

> But this bird [Lapwing] never lifts itself aloft,
> Nor builds its nest on boughs or high tree-tops,
> But flits along the ground and lays its eggs
> In hedgerows, dreading heights for they recall
> The memory of that old fearful fall.[171]

[171] Ovid, VIII. 258-62, p. 179.

* * *

Reading the book of himself

> '—«Contemplons à loisir cette caricature
> Et cette ombre d'Hamlet imitant sa posture,
> Le regard indécis et les cheveux au vent.
> N'est-ce pas grand'pitié de voir ce bon vivant,
> Ce gueux, cet histrion en vacances, ce drôle,
> Parce qu'il sait jouer artistement son rôle,
> Vouloir intéresser au chant de ses douleurs
> Les aigles, les grillons, les ruisseaux et les fleurs…'
>
> -Baudelaire, 'La Béatrice'[172]

Stephen has adopted a new persona in *Ulysses*: he is now *un poète maudit*. He is immersed in 'Paris fads' (*U*, 1.342) and even looks like a communard (6.599) to his elders after his sojourn in that city's artistic quarters. David M. Earle has unearthed a 1901 French cartoon 'which depicts an unshaven bohemian, dressed in black and replete with a brimmed hat, an ashplant cane, and of course, a glass of absinthe. The caption states, "Il est symboliste. L'absinthe, c'est tout pour lui."'[173] The similarity of Stephen to this stereotype is obvious (to him, as well as the reader; 'My latin quarter hat. God, we simply must dress the character.' (*U*, 3.174)), and he is certainly familiar with the work of these poets.[174]

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[172] Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), p. 153 The person being mocked at in these lines, the shadow of Hamlet, is the poet himself. My translation:
'Take a good look at this caricature,
This Hamlet wannabe aping his posture;
The air of indecision, the messy hair.
Isn't it a great pity to see this debonair
Bum, this actor drawing dole –
Wasn't he just born for the role? –
Trying to get every damn thing
To listen to the blues he's singing.'

[173] '"Green Eyes, I See You. Fang, I Feel": The Symbol of Absinthe in *Ulysses*', *JJQ* vol. 40, no. 4 (Summer 2003), pp. 691-709, p. 696. Earle rightly stresses how much the cult of absinthe and attendant hallucinatory drunkenness stems from the Symbolists and, above all, Baudelaire.

[174] For example, his thought is coloured by Mallarmé's 'L'Après-midi d'un faune' (*U*, 3.441-4) and he knows his (very obscure) essay on *Hamlet* well enough to quote from it (*U*, 9.129). His musings on 'Other fellow did it: other me. Hat, tie, overcoat, nose. *Lui, c'est moi*.' (*U*, 3. 182-3) are reminiscent of (the proto-symbolist) Baudelaire's lines in 'Les Septs Vieillards': 'His double followed him: beard, eye, back, stick, rags,| No trait different, come from the same hell' [my translation] *Les Fleurs du Mal*, p. 122. Kenner argues that Joyce's conception of Stephen as Hamlet may also have been influenced by the Hamlet of Jules Laforgue, *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 196.

The quatrain Stephen composes, with its morbid sexuality, colourful imagery, and figure of the vampire, strongly calls to mind Baudelaire. It is also, of course, strongly reminiscent of a translation of Douglas Hyde's in his *Love Songs of Connacht*, though, as Robert Martin Adams has pointed out, it is clearly meant to be seen as an original verse of Stephen's.[175] We can surmise that Stephen is unconsciously plagiarising, that Joyce is, or that Joyce is subtly remarking on the derivative nature of his own poetry. This puzzling textual aporia – one to which I have no solution – raises once again the question of the relation between Joyce and Stephen.

However, the question of the closeness of Stephen Dedalus to Joyce in factual accuracy is, in the context of this study, an irrelevance. What threatens to be lost in speculation about biographical origins is that, as will be shown below, in *Ulysses* Stephen is playfully flagged as the representative of the young Joyce, the presentation in fiction of his artistic development, not of his life (there is a big difference between a self-portrait and confession or autobiography). As in *A Portrait*, Joyce uses an allusive framework for his characterisation. Stephen is to be understood as Hamlet for two reasons. Firstly, it is because Hamlet is *the* figure of the young poet, veering between spleen and ideal, full of ennui and melancholy. Like Stephen, Hamlet suffers from a surfeit of self-consciousness and his sharp intelligence famously curbs his ability to act. In the midst of his irony-suffused disquisition in chapter nine, Stephen, who has already been compared to Anisthenes due to his bitter self-awareness (*U*, 7.1035-6), thinks of himself as: '*Autontimorumenos. Bous Stephanoumenos*.' (*U*, 9.939) The second allusion recalls the cries of Stephen's peers at Dollymount and links him to the sacrificial bull but the first, from the Greek meaning 'self-

[175] Adams quite rightly bases this assertion on the lines 'Mouth to her kiss. No. Must be two of em. Glue em well. Mouth to her mouth's kiss.' (*U*, 3.399-400), which show Stephen making an artistic decision. He notes that 'it is exercised, curiously, on the one line which is almost word for word identical with Douglas Hyde's.' *Surface and Symbol: The Consistency of James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 121. Furthermore, Stephen knows Hyde's poetry well enough to quote a verse from it later (*U*, 9.96-9), though from a different work.

tormentor', shows how he is his own executioner. The following stanzas from Baudelaire's 'L'Héautontimorouménos' encapsulate Stephen's existential quandary perfectly:

> Ne suis-je pas un faux accord
> Dans la divine symphonie,
> Grâce à la vorace Ironie
> Qui me secoue et qui me mord?
>
> Elle est dans ma voix, la criarde!
> C'est tout mon sang ce poison noir!
> Je suis le sinistre miroir
> Où la mégère se regarde!
>
> Je suis la plaie et le couteau!
> Je suis le soufflet et la joue!
> Je suis les membres et la roue,
> Et la victime et le bourreau!
>
> Je suis de mon coeur le vampire,
> —Un de ces grands abandonnés
> Au rire éternel condamnés,
> Et qui ne peuvent plus sourire![176]

As in the previous novel, Stephen veers between representative type *and* self-portrait. The second way in which his identification with Hamlet is important is illustrated through his own Shakespeare theory. A full analysis of the significance of Stephen's theory will be

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[176] Baudelaire, pp. 110-1. My translation:
What am I but a false note
In the divine symphony,
Thanks to voracious irony
Shaking and biting hope?

She's in my voice, the lout!
The poison's even gotten there!
I'm the funhouse mirror where
The slut checks herself out.

I am the wound and the knife!
I am the slap and the cheek!
I am the oppressor and the weak;
The corpse and the taker of life!

I'm the vampire at my own neck,
Cruelly condemned to eternal laughter
But fated never, ever after
To smile, much less to expect.

given in the next chapter, but for now it is worth examining the extent and nature of his development and how Joyce uses him to illustrate the formation of his artistic agenda.

Stephen now realises that the 'elements which he [had] deemed common and insignificant' (*P*, 59) and thus excluded are the essential 'local colour' (*U*, 9.158) which lends authenticity. They are the very stuff of his art, hence the heavy emphasis on detail in his 'Dubliners' (*U*, 7.922) sketch. Moreover, Shakespeare (the writer who has replaced Byron and other poets as Stephen's artist-hero) was not solely inspired by his own emotions, but also by everyday contemporary news and the major political and social issues of his day: 'All events brought grist to his mill' (*U*, 9.748) In the first novel Stephen had envisaged that: 'The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails.'(*P*, 181) Thus, he attributes to the artist a divine serenity. But his emphasis in the ninth chapter of *Ulysses* on Shakespeare's obsessive return to his seduction by Anne Hathaway, her later infidelities, and the death of his son suggest this is not at all the case. These very real pains cannot be transmitted definitively into art and hence removed from actuality, leaving an 'indifferent' artist: this is inspiration, not purgation. The reconciliatory themes of the later plays came about through the birth of a grandchild. The despair and anguish of the period in which the tragedies were written was not expelled through some cathartic effect of their creation; only biography, Stephen argues, can explain the end of that troubled period and the return to happier endings. In the *Portrait*, Stephen had felt that through the creation of characters the artist's personality 'impersonalises itself' (*P*, 181), in effect attains a religious or mystical state whereby the dread of existential reality is transferred to the artist's creations and out of the artist himself. His analysis of Shakespeare's life and work suggests that he has come to see things altogether differently.

Ulysses contains several playful metafictional premonitions of its own inception in the ninth chapter. At the beginning of the Library scene, John Eglinton opines that: '-Our young Irish bards, […] have yet to create a figure which the world will set beside Saxon Shakespeare's Hamlet' (*U*, 9.43-4). But of course the figure he is censuring, Stephen, is himself just such a figure in this novel. A little later, Stephen admonishes himself to listen, and the babble of the Dublin literati produces this presumptuous gem for the knowing reader: 'Our national epic has yet to be written, Dr Sigerson says. Moore is the man for it.' (*U*, 9.309-10) Stephen's urging of himself to 'See this. Remember.' (*U*, 9.294) is easily explicable by the time he has finished expounding his theory: '-Are you going to write it? Mr Best said. You ought to make it a dialogue, don't you know, like the Platonic dialogues Wilde wrote.' (*U*, 9.1068-9) Indeed, and what are we reading but that dialogue? Stephen's own theory, going against an interpretation that had reigned since Goethe, is that Shakespeare could not be the immature young prince. Moving the analogy from Shakespeare to Joyce, it might be pointed out that since Stephen is Hamlet in the novel, he cannot be Shakespeare (i.e. Joyce), but the point is that in this case the prince *will become* the playwright. Through conflating Stephen with Hamlet, Joyce manages to claim a kinship with his creation (the child is father of the man), and to stress their distance ('Paternity may be a legal fiction.'(*U*, 9.844))

Stephen *knows* he is Hamlet, he is very self-consciously playing that role. Whereas he had ended *A Portrait* believing his apprenticeship over, he now knows it is only beginning: 'Dublin. I have much, much to learn.' (*U*, 7.915) As he has learned from his conscious assumption of the role of Icarus, ironised identification is no replacement for experience. Chastened by his Icarian flight, and realising that ironic detachment from his fate had not saved him from it, he will now 'Cease to strive' (*U*, 9.1221) and open himself to the experience he needs to create.

The greatest impediment to Stephen's becoming an artist is diagnosed by the medical student Buck Mulligan: 'They drove his wits astray, [Buck] said, by visions of hell. He will never capture the Attic note. The note of Swinburne, of all poets, the white death and the ruddy birth. That is his tragedy. He can never be a poet. The joy of creation ….' (*U*, 10.1072-5) Whilst we might stop short of giving full assent to Stephen's principal rival's observations, they seem in this case to be fairly accurate. As we shall see below, Stephen has not yet fully exorcised his guilt-ridden tie to his family's faith. In this scene between Buck and Haines Joyce could not resist another of those tongue-in-cheek self-references we examined above:

> -Ten years, he said, chewing and laughing. He is going to write something in ten years.
> - Seems a long way off, Haines said, thoughtfully lifting his spoon. Still, I shouldn't wonder if he did after all. (*U*, 10.1089-92)

The final line of *Ulysses*, a self-fulfilling prophecy: '1914-1921' (*U*, 18.1611)

* * *

Either/Or

The tumultuous relationship between Oliver St. John Gogarty and James Joyce is another point at which biography has all too often impinged upon readings of the fiction. Therefore all reference to this will be omitted as I seek to define and explicate the relations between Stephen and Buck Mulligan. An examination of Dedalus' and Mulligan's differences, like that of Temple's and Stephen's earlier, will bring out more strongly what Stephen is, by contrasting him with what he is not.

In the *Portrait*, though Cranly and Lynch serve as Stephen's whetstones, it is Moynihan who seems closest in character to the exuberant Buck Mulligan. The similarity of the names Moynihan/Mulligan perhaps explains why the surname Doherty was dropped for Buck's character. Moynihan's mixture of religious irreverence through parody[177], bawdy

[177] '-In case of necessity any layman or woman can do it'(*P*, 207)

sexual innuendo[178], mimicry[179], and cuttingly witty deflation of earnestness[180] all appeal to Stephen's sense of humour in a manner markedly similar to Buck's. Despite his enjoyment of these jokes Stephen wonders why Moynihan 'pours his soul so freely into my ear' (*P*, 164), linking him with Claudius and strengthening the connection to Stephen's latest 'gay betrayer' (*U*, 1.405). The imminent break with Buck is prominent in Stephen's mind from the outset of the day, but why must it take place? Aesthetic (and political) considerations have as much bearing on the answer as personal. Thinking of Moynihan Stephen ponders, 'Can you say with certitude by whom the soul of your race was bartered and its elect betrayed - by the questioner or by the mocker?'(*P*, 162) In *Ulysses* this is definitively answered and it is the latter who is the guilty party. Buck is continually aligned with 'the brood of mockers' (*U*, 1.656-7), but Stephen realises that their wit is an inadequate response to their country's situation, it is but another form of servility: '*Was Du verlachst wirst Du noch dienen.*'[181](*U*, 9.491) Buck cannot understand Stephen's stance on this point, 'Why don't you play them as I do?'(*U*, 1.506) But it makes sense as an extension of the method of Stephen's refutation of one master (the Church) to the other (the Empire): 'I fear [..] the chemical reaction which would be set up in my soul by a false homage to a symbol behind which are massed twenty centuries of authority and veneration.'(*P*, 205) He realizes that to choose Buck's part is merely to play the 'jester at the court of his master' (*U*, 2.43-4).

After Stephen's impressive theory has been aired, Buck produces his own literary effort, a bawdy piece of sexual innuendo which he has wisely decided to read only now that they are safely away from the older men, who would obviously disapprove (*U*, 9.1170-90).

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[178] '-What price ellipsoidal balls! Chase me, ladies, I'm in the cavalry!'(*P*, 161)

[179] '[Moynihan] began to call with the voice of a slobbering urchin:
-Please, teacher! Please, teacher! This boy is after saying a bad word, teacher.'(*P*, 162)

[180] '-MacCann is in tiptop form. Ready to shed the last drop. Brandnew world. No stimulants and votes for the bitches.'(*P*, 163)

[181] Don Gifford, with Robert J. Seidman, '*Ulysses' Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's 'Ulysses*', rev. 2nd ed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p.224: 'German proverb: "What you laugh at, you will nevertheless serve."'

It is mildly amusing perhaps, but immature and completely overshadowed by what we have just witnessed in the library; the satyr play to Stephen's great tragedy. Stephen, stung by Buck's obvious attempts to embarrass and discredit him in front of the older men (Buck mentions Stephen's encounters with prostitutes) and to steal the limelight, ponders the great distance now between them: 'My will: his will that fronts me. Seas between.' (*U*, 9.1202)

Both Buck and Stephen are ironists, but despite that fact their respective positions are far from being identical. In the context of a discussion about faith and ethics, Buck asserts to Stephen: 'I'm hyperborean as much as you.'[182] (*U*, 1.92) He allies them both with Nietzsche in *The Antichrist*, above Christian morality, but for him this can only mean a relativistic nihilism: '-And what is death, he asked, your mother's or yours or my own? […] It's a beastly thing and nothing else. It simply doesn't matter. […] To me it's all a mockery and beastly.' (*U*, 1. 205-10) His failure to understand Nietzsche's thought, or his wilful misinterpretation of that thinker manifests itself again at the end of the first chapter. There, he identifies himself and Stephen (humorously) with the Nietzschean supermen, and then proclaims: '- He who stealeth from the poor lendeth to the Lord. Thus spake Zarathustra.' (*U*, 1.727-8) Zarathustra assuredly never spoke thus; Buck's jejune atheism (his Swinburnian paganism) seems to do nothing more than invert Christianity, whereas Nietzsche sought to *overcome* it.[183] Buck's irony serves as a protection from all ethical questions – hence he cannot understand the seriousness with which Stephen takes his apostasy and his unwillingness to humour Haines; such Blakean rebellion is incomprehensible to the frivolous aesthete. Stephen's pointed telegram makes a great deal more sense when read in this light: '- *The sentimentalist is he who would enjoy without*

[182] See Nietzsche's description of himself and his fellow hyperboreans in *The Antichrist*, § 1, p. 569.
[183] Stephen's engagement with Nietzsche is evidently deeper; later in the novel, after attributing a mangled quote from Jesus to Zarathustra, he says of Nietzsche's character that 'nor breathed there ever that man to whom mankind was more beholden.' (*U*, 14.364-5) It is not clear whether it is he or Buck (though probably the latter) who raises a toast to the übermensch at the end of the chapter (*U*, 14.1467).

incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done.' (*U*, 9.550-1) We do not need to scurry back to George Meredith for elucidation. The implication is clear enough: Buck will not face the consequences of his apostasy - he would rather revel in ironised blasphemy (cf. 'The Ballad of Joking Jesus' and his mock Eucharistic rite) than seriously confront how to live one's life. The plump epicurean wants to have his cake and eat it.

The two titles that Stephen gives his 'Dubliners' (*U*, 7.922) sketch indicate the tension between irony and ethics in his aesthetic agenda: '*A Pigsah Sight of Palestine* or *The Parable of the Plums*.' (*U*, 7.1057-8) The first title indicates its role as a possibly liberating diagnosis of Dublin's subservient status, a sighting of the Promised Land, but this is tempered by irony since nothing in the story indicates that this desired freedom is at all attainable. It is similar to the title 'Grace' in *Dubliners* itself; a marked disparity exists between the hinted at salvation of the title and the actual story narrated. The second title, invoking Jesus' instructional homely fictions more obviously points to a moral purpose in the telling of the tale. Even without the text's pointed indicator (cited above) it would be easy enough to identify Stephen's tale with those in Joyce's collection of short stories; the emphasis on Dublin geography, the irreverent reference to Nelson (cf. King Edward in 'Ivy Day..'), the piety and meniality of the characters' lives, the ostensible lack of plot, and the anti-climactic ending ('-Finished? Myles Crawford said.'(*U*, 7.1031)) The men are somewhat disappointed with the story having expected a traditional Dublin anecdote, hence Crawford's 'Easy all' (U, 7.1015) when the women pull up their skirts and his assumption that they are 'Out on the waxie's Dargle' (*U*, 7.1088-9). When Stephen's story does not deliver the required (bawdy) punchline Crawford must improvise his own (*U*, 7.1074-5). Stephen refuses to patronise or mock his characters for his audience. He simply describes their trip without literary showiness. The story illustrates Dublin's paralytic state (the seeds falling on concrete) and alludes to its possible causes (Church and Empire).

We can be assured that Buck Mulligan would not have failed to disappoint, and that that consummate joker would have provided a suitably ribald and witty denouement. Stephen's strenuous realism is not yet perfected ('-But what do you call it, Myles Crawford asked. Where did they get the plums?' (*U*, 7.1051-2), but the distance between his drab naturalism and the condescending portraits of peasants which Haines is interested in collecting is obvious. We can ascertain more clearly the strategy of using irony in the service of fiction faithful to the reality of Dublin life as Stephen does, by imagining how Buck might tell a similar story. To help us in this task, let us return to *Ulysses'* first chapter, as Buck entertains and capers for Haines:

> Buck Mulligan, hewing thick slices from the loaf, said in an old woman's wheedling voice:
> - When I makes tea I makes tea, as old mother Grogan said. And when I makes water I makes water.
> - By Jove, it is tea, Haines said.
> Buck Mulligan went on hewing and wheedling:
> - *So I do, Mrs Cahill*, says she. *Begob, ma'am*, says Mrs Cahill, *God send you don't make them in the one pot*.
> He lunged towards his messmates in turn a thick slice of bread, impaled on his knife.
> - That's folk, he said very earnestly, for your book, Haines. Five lines of text and ten pages of notes about the folk and fishgods of Dundrum. Printed by the weird sisters in the year of the big wind. (*U*, 1.355-67)

Of course Buck the ironist knows exactly what he is up to, making fun of (but simultaneously further ingratiating himself with) the naïve Haines for Stephen's benefit.[184] The point is that his irony does not alter the relations between himself and Haines. It is a refuge, a consolation for an inferior position – not a weapon that could change that position. The jester mocks the king, but only a true fool would think he thereby wins sovereignty.

[184] He is also implicitly mocking the activities of the Revival (as the allusion to Yeats and his sisters' Cuala Press in the final paragraph suggests), with which he is himself involved.

* * *

God's shadow

'*New struggles*. – After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave–a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. –And we–we will have to vanquish his shadow, too.'

-Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*[185]

'Of him that walked the waves. Here also over these craven hearts his shadow lies and on the scoffer's heart and lips and on mine.' (*U*, 2.83-5)

We will conclude this chapter with a close reading of a short but highly significant scene from the fifteenth chapter of *Ulysses*. This chapter is a kind of surrealist play, which in its recycling of material from throughout the novel simulates the actions of dreams in their juxtaposition of various elements of the day into a new narrative as the subject sleeps. Its form will be more fully discussed elsewhere (see Chapter 4, part III), but for now it will suffice to say that though the entire chapter is rendered as a dream, the workings of the textual unconscious, it is nevertheless insightful regarding the characters' psychic dilemmas. What distinguishes Stephen's hallucination is that it is *really* taking place (the other characters are aware of it), so Kenner is right in calling it 'the only genuine hallucination'; but it is taking place *within* a dream.[186]

The origin of this hallucination is a dream Stephen has had in which his dead mother appeared to him. He had revisited it in chapter one (*U*, 1.270-9). It reflects Stephen's guilty feelings towards his mother's death, particularly the implication that he has been responsible for it, or made it unnecessarily painful, through his refusal to pray at her deathbed. As she first appears she '*fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word.*' (*U*, 15.4160-1) This is the word that Stephen has pondered twice throughout the day, in each case it seems to be love, and his request to his mother for

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[185] § 182, p. 167. This is the first occurrence of Nietzsche's famous phrase in his work.

[186] Hugh Kenner, 'Circe', in *James Joyce's 'Ulysses': Critical Essays*, ed. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 352.

it in this scene is prompted by her mention of '*Love's bitter mystery.*' (*U*, 15.4190)[187] Such an apparently simple conclusion is complicated by two factors: firstly, since Stephen knows the word, why ask for it? Secondly, how could this be the word *known to all men*? I believe that Stephen's gnawing incertitude stems from an existential crisis which is first hinted at in his childhood musings on theology and language:

> But though there are different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. (*P*, 13)

The transcendental *logos* Stephen contemplated here – the Word known to all men – appears to be incompatible with the contingency of this world and the attendant materiality of languages. Furthermore, since God *is* love, can there still be love in a world devoid of Him? Stephen's mother exemplifies genuine, selfless love for another.[188] He knows the word but, having never felt such love for another himself, worries that that is all it is: a sign without a referent ('Was that then real? The only true thing in life?' (*U*, 2.143)). *Ulysses* does not propose any solution to these complex problems; rather it is a powerful representation of a crisis of faith and, most of all, its consequences. The bitter mystery is whether love exists.

Stephen's mother next urges him to repent, and reminds him of her love and devotion. Swiftly however, the scene changes dramatically, and the mother becomes less pleading and more threatening:

THE MOTHER

(*with smouldering eyes*) Repent! O, the fire of hell!

[187] In the second instance this is quite unambiguous (*U*, 9.429-30). In the first (*U*, 1.435) it is not clear, but 'love' certainly fits extremely well; Stephen is thinking about women, his loneliness and his desire for human contact.

[188] See Stephen's reflection on Aquinas directly after he has identified love as the word (*U*, 9.430-1).

STEPHEN

(*panting*) His noncorrosive sublimate! The corpsechewer! Raw head and bloody bones.

THE MOTHER

(*her face drawing nearer and nearer, sending out an ashen breath*) Beware! (*she raises her blackened withered right arm slowly towards Stephen's breast with outstretched finger*) Beware God's hand! (*U*, 15.4211-9)

Gifford, in his annotations to the text, glosses 'His noncorrosive sublimate!' as 'the fires of hell, which punish sinners without consuming or destroying them.'[189] This explains 'noncorrosive', but how are they (a) 'sublimate'? I would contend rather that this is a reference to May Goulding's metamorphosis into the 'corpsechewer', that is, *dio boia*, hangman god. She speaks of her own hand as 'God's hand'. The next time she speaks she is returned to her old role, begging for Jesus' mercy for her son. But in her final moments in the text, her roles are curiously elided:

THE MOTHER

(*in the agony of her deathrattle*) Have mercy on Stephen, Lord, for my sake! Inexpressible was my anguish when expiring with love, grief and agony on Mount Calvary. (*U*, 15.4238-40)

Here she is initially in her familiar role as beseeching mother, but the next sentence complicates matters. If she was 'expiring' on Mount Calvary, then she must be Jesus, in which case her first sentence would be an echo of Christ's sacrifice of himself for humanity's sins. Alternately, reading 'expiring' more metaphorically, she is the Virgin Mary, despairing for her son. The personal and the theological are entangled in a knot of guilt.

Stephen, we know from his conversation with Haines in the first chapter, has not repented of his earlier intellectual abandonment of the faith. What we see dramatised here is a demonstration of the Church's emotional appeal (to which Stephen has previously been

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[189] Gifford, p. 518.

susceptible), his mother becoming Mother Church in a way. Stephen must wrestle with the full implications of his apostasy, they are deeply personal, but he resolves nevertheless to stay true to his rebellion:

STEPHEN

> *Ah, non, par exemple!* The intellectual imagination! With me all or not at all.
> *Non serviam!* (*U*, 15.4226-8)

The phrase 'all or not at all' here refers to Ibsen's Kierkegaardian *Brand*, in which a young Joyce saw 'will-glorification'.[190] Its placing directly beside *Non serviam* supports my earlier reading of that phrase, and highlights how one's attitude to Christianity must be a total one, even if it is a negation of that creed: all or nothing.[191]

The scene climaxes with Stephen shouting '*Nothung!*', and then using his ashplant to smash the chandelier. Thus, Stephen becomes Siegfried in Wagner's *Ring* cycle.[192] This identification is highly significant. Shaw, in *The Perfect Wagnerite*, saw this character as nothing less than 'an anticipation of the "overman" of Nietzsche'.[193] Nietzsche himself certainly seems to have seen Siegfried in similar terms, and almost every one of his references to him is related to Siegfried's rebellion from conventional morality and to his status as symbol of a new spirit: 'Let us imagine a rising generation with this undauntedness of vision, with this heroic desire for the prodigious, let us imagine the bold step of these dragon-slayers, the proud and daring spirit with which they turn their backs on all the effeminate doctrines of optimism in order 'to live resolutely' in the Whole and in the

[190] 'Ibsen's New Drama' (*OCPW*, 36).
[191] '–There's only one meaning of the word [believer], it seems to me, Stephen said.' (*U*, 1.614)
[192] This has been signalled earlier when Stephen '*chants* [another lyric from *The Ring*] *to the air of the blood oath in* The Dusk of the Gods' (15.3649-50) Lynch then calls Stephen (ironically) the 'youth who could not shiver and shake' (15.3660), i.e. Siegfried, who does not know fear. I am much indebted to Gifford's indispensable *Annotations* and William Blissett's 'James Joyce in the Smithy of his Soul', in *James Joyce Today: Essays*, ed. Thomas F. Staley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966) on this matter. For more on Joyce and Wagner, see Timothy Martin's *Joyce and Wagner: A study of influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Vicki Mahaffey's 'Wagner, Joyce and Revolution', *JJQ*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Winter, 1988), pp. 237-247.
[193] Bernard Shaw, 'The Perfect Wagnerite', in *Major Critical Essays* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 227.

Full…'[194] A specific moment in Wagner's operas is not evoked by the brandishing of the sword (Stephen could be thinking of the splitting of Mime's anvil, the slaying of the dragon or the destruction of Wotan's spear) but the implication is clear: Siegfried is the destroyer of the old order and eventually brings about the downfall of the gods.

We are, in a sense – irony is never far away – witnessing the death of God. But what has *really* happened? Noth*u*ng: some minor damage to the furniture by a drunken customer. Unimpressive as it is when put like that, this is nevertheless Stephen's cathartic self-absolution from guilt over his mother's death, the anagnorisis of this dream play. Kenner writes of 'Bloom's psychic purgation' in this chapter, but that term would be more appropriate if applied to Stephen.[195] The phrase 'Raw head and bloody bones,' quoted in Stephen's speech above, originates in Bloom's consciousness in the eighth chapter; this hints that as in the rest of this 'play' in nighttown, we are not being presented with a literal representation here – just as in a dream, the events of the day (in this case, the text) are reformulated and dissimulated in metaphors of our mental anxieties.[196] Here the text is truly straining at its limits, enclosing Stephen's hallucination within its own dream logic.

Such a complex phenomenon as the liberation from faith is not something easily written about, much less dramatised. Critics like to condescendingly point out that Stephen has *only* dented the lamp shade and read this scene as an ironic reduction by Joyce of his posturing rebelliousness.[197] This is easily refuted - let us allow Stephen himself to do so:

[194] From the edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* Joyce owned, quoted in Martin, p. 36. Siegfried as rebel against the Gods and morality is also discussed in section 5 of *The Case of Wagner* (also owned by Joyce) and in section 256 of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

[195] Kenner, 'Circe', p. 356. I mean more appropriate in terms of the action of the chapter, due to its dubious ontological status (see 4. III below) I do not think we can necessarily speak of it as having had any effect on Stephen.

[196] In addition,'Non serviam' has already appeared in *A Portrait*, and 'All or not all' in the third chapter of *Ulysses* (*U*, 3.452). This recycling of material is typical of chapter 15 as a whole, and is meant to suggest the dream-work (see 4.III below).

[197] For example: 'The climax in the action of the novel is a representation of the futility of Stephen's struggle to defy God.' Stanley Sultan, *The Argument of 'Ulysses'* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1965), p. 338-9.

'(*he taps his brow*) But in here it is I must kill the priest and the king.' (*U*, (15.4437-8) Stephen has not literally brought about the death of god, impossible to conceive for an atheist anyway, except metaphorically; but *he has* freed himself from mental bondage, in this chapter at least. The realist in Joyce has contrived to display the complex inner workings of consciousness and dramatise guilt and a spiritual crisis; however the ironist is there to remind us that Stephen's liberation has all been a dream.

This is far from being a dismissal of Stephen. It is a reflection of the perpetuity of guilt and, above all, grief (one suspects Kenner and Stephen's other detractors rather miss this and actually believe he has in a way killed his mother). Underlying all of this is the pain of atheism for a once ardent believer. Joyce quite rightly mocked vague talk of a Catholic structure of mind, but in Stephen he has shown the difficulty of extricating oneself from a belief which is central to one's family, formation and identity.[198] Stephen, despite his artistic evolution, perhaps still yearns to be a romantic hero – Satan, Shelley's Prometheus, Brand, or Siegfried – but there is no dragon to slay, there is only a shadow in the cave where it once dwelt. Rebellion can be a rather mundane business in real life. Nietzsche perhaps never evoked or even acknowledged the difficulties of overcoming faith on a personal level in his work; though he undoubtedly knew them better than most, he acted as though it were a *fait accompli*. It was an intellectual affair for the philosopher, the death of logos rather than love. Stephen feels himself under Jesus's shadow (rather than God's) and his battle is as much an emotional trial as a confrontation with metaphysics: he is haunted by the *human* face of Christianity as much as its doctrinal power.[199]

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[198] 'When I told James Joyce about [Jacques] Maritain's statement about Baudelaire ['The intellectual structure of his mind was Catholic'], he was very satirical and made considerable fun of anyone having a Catholic structure for his mind.' Mary Colum, *Life and the Dream* (London: Macmillan, 1947), p. 381.

[199] At the very close of part I of the novel (*U,* 3.502-5), Stephen turns, wondering if there is someone behind him, and is confronted by the cruciform crosstrees of a ship; there both is and isn't. To achieve this effect, Joyce was forced to violate his usual fanatical fidelity to reality: see Budgen, p. 57. The crosstree is explicitly linked with Jesus' cross at *U*, 9.496.

This episode of *Ulysses* ends with Stephen being revived; it is hoped that my chapter, through its careful attention to the fluctuations of irony in both novels, has staged something of a rehabilitation of his character. Humour and irony, despite their popular association, are not necessarily related in any way. Stephen might be rather humourless and difficult to like, but this is not a valid reason to dismiss him. As this chapter has shown, irony - like apostasy - can be a rather serious business.

3

The Work as Will and Representation

'The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other.'

-Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art'[200]

I: ON THE CONSUBSTANTIALITY OF CRITICISM AND CREATIVITY

In the first ever book-length critical study of *Ulysses*, Stuart Gilbert characterised its ninth chapter as 'the subtlest and hardest to epitomize of all'.[201] Time has proven his assessment accurate, as no critic has yet adequately faced the challenge posed by the intransigent difficulties and ingenuities of Stephen's inventive and freewheeling theory. To begin to do so is to realise that for Stephen, as for Heidegger, 'the question of the origin of the work of art [in this case, *Hamlet*] becomes a question of the essence of art.'[202]

The procedure followed below stems from a conviction that we must first seriously engage with the theory, and only then examine Stephen's attitude toward it. To enquire first how serious Stephen is about his theory is to ask the wrong preliminary question, to make a false start based on mistaken priorities. The very asking of such a question betrays our longing to escape the difficulty Gilbert clearly realised; we seek to bring the theorist into disrepute and thereby justify ignoring his puzzling proclamations. Such an *ad hominem* approach is unacceptable. The presentation of, and the content of, the theory are one and the same - we can reject, question, modify or embrace the theory, but we owe it to the text not to ignore it. Before we do anything though, we must understand what the theory is, and to delineate that is the modest task I have attempted in what follows. I do not question the implications of Stephen's theories, being content to simply outline them clearly for the first

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[200] In *Basic Writings: from 'Being and Time' to 'The Task of Thinking'*, trans. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 143.
[201] *James Joyce's 'Ulysses': A Study*, rev. ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1952), p. 209.
[202] Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 164.

time. My writing here is akin to the commentaries designed to accompany and elucidate abstruse philosophical texts rather than to the treatises, independent texts in their own right, written to challenge them. Success will have been achieved if after the patient explanations of the critic the brilliance of Stephen's creative literary theory, and Joyce's masterly composition of this chapter, still shines through; perhaps even that much clearer for my exposition.

* * *

Philoctetes' wound

'Your wound is what you feed on, Philoctetes.'

-Heaney, *The Cure at Troy*[203]

In his essay 'The Wound and the Bow', Edmund Wilson draws upon the classical figure of Philoctetes, a character in Homer and Sophocles, to produce a theory that the artist's creativity is linked to some (psychic) wound – 'the idea [is] that genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together.'[204] In truth, Wilson's idea is mythologically unfounded; being entirely absent in the most extended extant ancient treatment of the myth (that of Sophocles), and is really his tenuous expansion of an idea suggested to him by André Gide's rather idiosyncratic version of the legend.[205] Nevertheless, it is apposite to my purposes here; as the notion of artistic productivity being given impetus by – *feeding on* – a psychological wound is strikingly similar to Stephen Dedalus' account of Shakespeare's life and work.

Disregarding standard biographical (and, importantly, psychoanalytic) procedures of documenting childhood, parentage and development, Stephen's account of Shakespeare's

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[203] Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy: A version of Sophocles's 'Philoctetes'* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), p. 61.

[204] *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature*, rev. ed. (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 259. Interestingly, in an interview with Misha Berson for the Seattle Times (published 6 April 2008), Seamus Heaney stated that he first learnt of the myth through Wilson's book: see http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/thearts/2004325045_cure06.html (accessed 6 April 2012).

[205] Gide's version is entitled *Philoctète, ou, Le traité des trois morales*.

life begins by focussing upon what is for him the integral act: Ann Hathaway's seduction of the poet: 'He chose badly? He was chosen, it seems to me. If others have their will Ann hath a way. By cock, she was to blame.' (*U*, 9.256-7) Stephen identifies Ann with Venus: 'The greyeyed goddess who bends over the boy Adonis, stooping to conquer, as prologue to the swelling act, is a boldfaced Stratford wench who tumbles in a cornfield a lover younger than herself.' (*U*, 9.258-60) The seduction by Venus (Ann) is then later compared to the boar's attack on Adonis (*U*, 9.459-60): there can be no doubt who inflicted Shakespeare's wound.[206]

But if, as Stephen alleges, Ann is to blame, what is she to blame *for*? Though the seduction seems perilously close to rape, this is not what Stephen is alleging. In a passage we will have recourse to return to shortly, he clarifies analogously that it was indeed consensual: 'and like original sin, committed by another in whose sin he too has sinned.' (*U*, 9.1008-9) The only thing we can surmise that Ann is unequivocally to blame for is Shakespeare's '[b]elief in himself [having] been untimely killed.' (*U*, 9.455-6)

The wound may be somewhat vaguely defined, but what cannot be questioned is its central importance in Stephen's conception of Shakespeare:

> it was the original sin that darkened his understanding, weakened his will and left in him a strong inclination to evil. The words are those of my lords bishops of Maynooth. […] It is between the lines of his last written words, it is petrified on his tombstone under which her four bones are not to be laid. Age has not withered it. Beauty and peace have not done it away. It is in infinite variety everywhere in the world he has created (*U*, 9.1006-13)

The wound permeates his work until the end, a spur constantly urging him onward. But even his enormous artistic achievement cannot compensate or comfort him for the pain endured. Heaney, in his treatment of the Philoctetes myth, perfectly captures why the bard in Stephen's portrait remains to the end 'an old dog licking an old sore' (*U*, 9.475-6):

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[206] It should be noted that all of Stephen's interpretations of Shakespeare's work, however wrong, are accepted (or rather, presented) without question herein.

No poem or play or song
Can fully right a wrong
Inflicted and endured.[207]

[207] Heaney, p. 77.

* * *

Anti-Oedipus

'English-speaking psychologists have as yet paid relatively little attention to the study of genius and of artistic creativeness, at least so far as the method of analysing in detail the life-history of individual men of genius is concerned.'

-Jones, 'The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery'[208]

The philoctetian reading of Shakespeare Stephen is proposing stands opposed to a distinctly more renowned reworking of Greek literature to contemporary psychological concerns. Joyce owned the document most obviously relevant to a discussion of Shakespeare in relation to Freud; the article by Ernest Jones quoted above. Clearly this document is pertinent for our discussion here, but we need not necessarily worry that Joyce is being anachronistic (the article having been published after 1904) since the kernel of Jones' reading is in a footnote to his master's *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Richard Ellmann goes so far as to state that 'Stephen's theory is almost the opposite of Jones's,' and I am certainly in agreement that Stephen completely rejects Jones' oedipal interpretation of *Hamlet*.[209] This rejection is not limited to the play however, as his entire account of Shakespeare's life is thoroughly anti-oedipal in tenor.

Jones equates the protagonist and the playwright: '[i]t is here maintained that this conflict [of Hamlet's Oedipal desires] is an echo of a similar one in Shakspere himself'.[210] Stephen's radical novelty is to reject this time-honoured identification of prince and poet (as well as Jones'/Freud's new twist on it) and claim Shakespeare expressed his own personality through the dead king, Hamlet's father. It is immediately obvious from this fundamental difference of emphasis alone that Stephen's view is incompatible with the Freudian interpretation of the play. It could be argued that this does not invalidate Jones' analysis of the character of Hamlet, but neither Jones nor Stephen is really interested in the play in and

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[208] Ernest Jones, 'The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery: A Study in Motive', in *The American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 21, no. 1 (Jan., 1910), pp. 72-113, p. 72.
[209] *The Consciousness of Joyce* (London: Faber, 1977), p. 56.
[210] Jones, p. 102.

of itself. They are working from the same premises, or assumptions, towards the same goal: both wish to reveal something about Shakespeare, and indeed creativity more generally, and believe they can do so by examining his writings.

Restricting ourselves to the interpretive framework Jones and Stephen are working within we can explicitly contrast their opposing ideas. Let us look at a pivotal biographical moment for Jones:

> Highly suggestive […] of the subjective origin of the psychical conflict in the play is the fact that it was in September, 1601, that Shakspere's father died, an event which might well have had the same awakening effect on old 'repressed' memories that the death of Hamlet's father had with Hamlet; his mother lived till some seven years later.[211]

For Stephen on the other hand, this salient and suggestive fact (of Shakespeare's father's death) is something of a hindrance, and one he is determined to dismiss:

> He wrote the play in the months that followed his father's death. If you hold that he, a greying man with two marriageable daughters, with thirtyfive years of life, *nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*, with fifty of experience, is the beardless undergraduate from Wittenberg then you must hold that his seventyyear old mother is the lustful queen. No. The ghost of John Shakespeare does not walk the night. From hour to hour it rots and rots. (*U*, 9.829-35)

What is really striking about this refutation is its overcompensation. For generations people had associated Shakespeare and the prince, but none to the degree that Stephen is suggesting – commentators were content with the thought that Hamlet somehow expressed Shakespeare's poetic soul, not that the circumstances of his life in any way correlated with those of his creator. Jones had come closest to the interpretation Stephen is attacking. There are enough otherwise incongruous and inexplicable aspects of Stephen's presentation to suggest that Joyce was directly engaging with psychoanalytic thought. Joyce had borrowed a technique and method of explication pioneered by Freud and his followers, but he was not therefore ready to automatically bow to their conclusions.

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[211] Jones, p. 103.

Several of Stephen's meditations on fatherhood cannot be explained solely by the consubstantial theory of creation we shall examine below.[212] He seeks to justify intergenerational conflict between father and son without deferring to the oedipal theory:

> –They are sundered by a bodily shame so steadfast that the criminal annals of the world, stained with all other incests and bestialities, hardly record its breach. *Sons with mothers*, sires with daughters, lesbic sisters, loves that dare not speak their name, nephews with grandmothers, jailbirds with keyholes, queens with prize bulls. The son unborn mars beauty: born, he brings pain, divides affection, increases care. He is a new male: his growth is his father's decline, his youth his father's envy, his friend his father's enemy. (*U*, 9.850-7, my italics)[213]

The signature Freudian motif is enticingly mentioned first in the list of incestuous activities, but it is not even considered as the source of conflict, and is merely one in a long list of sexual perversions.

To conclude this examination of Stephen's anti-oedipal bent, we shall turn to the text's only direct, if rather obscure, allusion to Freud and his followers. The reference is admittedly incidental, and merely a footnote to the evidence presented above. Nevertheless, the fact that Stephen bothers to slip it in at all points tellingly to his opposition to the oedipal line of interpretation:

> –Saint Thomas, […] writing of incest from a standpoint different from that of the new Viennese school Mr Magee spoke of, likens it in his wise and curious way to an avarice of the emotions. (*U*, 9.778-81)

It is initially puzzling as to what Eglinton uttered to prompt this, but the answer must be something he had said a few minutes earlier: '–Antiquity mentions famous beds'. (*U*, 9. 718) Eglinton was almost certainly thinking of the bed of Penelope and Odysseus (as well as the discussion of the bed in Book X of Plato's *Republic*), but Stephen deliberately misinterprets him to mean the union of Oedipus and Jocasta. The sheer irrelevance of

[212] Stephen seems to realise the irrelevance of much of his speculations on fatherhood to his argument, admonishing himself: 'What the hell are you driving at? // I know. Shut up. Blast you. I have reasons.' (*U*, 9.846-7)

[213] See also: 'The images of other males of his blood will repel [a man of genius]. He will see in them grotesque attempts of nature to foretell or to repeat himself.' (*U*, 9.433-5)

Stephen's comment (it adds nothing to his argument) suggests he is going out of his way to discount this line of Freudian thought.

I am aware that the often sophistical ingenuity of Freudian interpretation could have one line of argument to counter mine. That is, that Stephen does not countenance the oedipal theory for the very good reason that he is repressing his own desires for his mother and antagonism towards his father. Regarding the father, I cannot deny that Stephen certainly does seem to harbor somewhat hostile feelings for Simon, but I maintain that we do not have to resort to Freud to explain them. Simon Dedalus is a domineering, manipulative, reckless alcoholic, and a bad father – little wonder his children resent him to some degree. As for the mother, as I have argued in the last chapter, Stephen's relation to her is characterised primarily by guilt. If any critic wishes to argue for Stephen's forbidden desire for her, the onus is upon them to produce textual evidence – I find none; Stephen Dedalus is not Paul Morel. To take the most audacious form of this line of argument, it could be said that the very fact that there is *not* evidence for such an interpretation is the strongest indicator that this desire exists in a deeply repressed form. But here the critic fails to acknowledge that the character has no psyche beyond what we read; he is, after all, only a nexus of words. With this unacceptable presumption (that the character has an extratextual psyche *and* that we can read it somehow), the critic necessarily goes beyond the text, and thereby bids the realm of legitimate literary criticism farewell.

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Sublimation

Joyce's familiarity with Freud's work was not limited to Jones' literary criticism, and he owned one essay by the great founder of psychoanalysis himself which has a direct bearing on the ninth chapter of *Ulysses*. This is 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood'. It operates from the same premises as Jones' and Stephen's speculations, and I believe it had a decisive and profound impact on Joyce's thoughts on creativity.

The most important element of Freud's discussion for us here is *sublimation*, an idea Freud and Joyce could have found in their reading of Nietzsche: 'Nietzsche believed that a sexual impulse, *for example*, could be channeled into a creative spiritual activity, instead of being fulfilled directly.'[214] Already, with that *for example*, we find the key divergence between Freud and Nietzsche. For it is not at all clear that Freud saw a wider application for sublimation, for him it was simply 'the redirecting of a repressed sexual drive toward a nonsexual aim.'[215] My view is that Stephen's account of Shakespeare's sublimation is ultimately far closer to a Nietzschean understanding than a Freudian, even if (and it *is* only an 'if') Joyce derived the basic idea from Freud. But as my concern is Stephen's use of the concept of sublimation and its divergence from Freud's article, and since I am aware that Joyce possibly never considered Nietzsche's views on sublimation, I shall restrict myself here (as elsewhere in the thesis) to only offering Nietzschean commentary when it helps to explicate the matter at hand.

It is important to note firstly that Shakespeare's philoctetian wound is not sexual in nature, even if it originated in a sexual encounter. As noted above, what has been affected is his self-confidence, hence he sends Lord Herbert to woo Mary Fitton (*U*, 9.452-7).[216] Stephen explicitly links all this with that original wound:

> He was overborne in a cornfield first […] and he will never be a victor in his own eyes after *nor* play victoriously the game of laugh and lie down. Assumed dongiovannism will not save him. (*U*, 9.456-9, my italics)

Note that *nor*: the sexual aspect is secondary and simply part of the larger problem of inhibited will. Furthermore, to talk of sex in terms of struggle shows that for Stephen, as for

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[214] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 220, my italics.

[215] Ken Gemes, 'Freud and Nietzsche on Sublimation', in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 38, Autumn 2009, pp. 38-59, p. 38. It should be noted that I am only referring to the one essay by Freud mentioned and in all discussion of Freud's views on sublimation hereafter what is meant are his views in this essay – 'perhaps his most sustained surviving piece covering the topic of sublimation.' Gemes, p. 41.

[216] As Lyster points up (*U*, 9.442), Stephen is here following Frank Harris' interpretation of the story behind the Sonnets in his 1898 *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life-Story*. See Gifford's annotations for this chapter (esp. p. 221) for more details.

Nietzsche, it was a matter of power and conflict. Dongiovannism might not be a means of salvation or reparation but it certainly is an option, as is clear from Stephen's recounting of his numerous amorous adventures in London (*U*, 9.631-40). Whatever else he might emerge as Shakespeare is not a sexually unfulfilled neurotic.

Characteristically, Freud attributes the origin of Leonardo's homosexuality (that which he sublimates) to the artist's childhood. Freud reads the childhood memory of his article's title as Leonardo's disclosure through displacement that 'It was through this erotic relation with my mother that I became a homosexual.'[217] It is surely not coincidental that Stephen chooses to ignore the two areas Freud most emphasises; the artist's oedipal urges and his homosexual impulses.[218] Leonardo emerges as a very different individual than Shakespeare, in both the origin and the repercussions of their pivotal psychological experiences. Leonardo is afflicted with a repressed oedipal impulse stemming from childhood, and is effectively a neurotic, 'represent[ing] the cool repudiation of sexuality.'[219] It cannot be disputed that what Leonardo is sublimating (in Freud's account) are solely his sexual desires. I shall demonstrate below that the nature of Shakespeare's sublimation is rather different and that Stephen's description is akin to 'Nietzsche's theory of sublimation [which] avoids one of the most serious difficulties of its psychoanalytic equivalent'.[220]

So, what *is* Shakespeare sublimating? Principally, he is sublimating his sexual desire for his wife. He obviously was attracted to her initially: 'Is Katharine the shrew illfavoured? Hortensio calls her young and beautiful. Do you think that the writer of *Antony and Cleopatra* […] had his eyes in the back of his head that he chose the ugliest doxy in all

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[217] Sigmund Freud, 'Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood', in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 466.
[218] Stephen is certainly aware of Shakespeare's homosexual tendencies, principally through Wilde, see for example *U*, 9.659.
[219] Freud, p. 448. Gemes summarises the tension in Freud's essay between neurosis and sublimation nicely: 'After holding up Leonardo as a model of sublimation throughout […] and then […] protesting that he has not reckoned Leonardo to be a neurotic, Freud […] concludes that we must place Leonardo close to the obsessional neurotic. The distance between sublimation and neurotic symptoms seems vanishingly small.', p. 40.
[220] Kaufmann, p. 222.

Warwickshire to lie withal?' (*U*, 9.250-4) Moreover, his lust for her did not abate after her wooing of him: 'If the shrew is worsted yet there remains to her woman's invisible weapon.'[221] (*U*, 9.460-1) Indeed, there seems to have been more than physical appetite: 'What was lost [Ann] is given back to him: his daughter's child. *My dearest wife*, Pericles says, *was like this maid*. Will any man love the daughter [Susanna Shakespeare] if he has not loved the mother [Ann]?' (*U*, 9.422-4) But Shakespeare's frustration is not purely sexual or amatory, there is a second impulse to be sublimated – as becomes manifest through his self-representation as Hamlet's father, he also craves revenge: 'Two deeds are rank in the ghost's mind: a broken vow and the dullbrained yokel on whom her favour has declined' (*U*, 9.666-8) Shakespeare has sublimated his longing for sexual gratification and aggressive recompense into his masterpiece.

So, as both in the philoctetian wound, and in the process of sublimation, Stephen has avoided Freud's solely sexual emphasis, I am justified in my assertion that he is akin to Nietzsche in this respect. To further elucidate what I have been arguing, and to make the contrast I am delineating between Stephen's Shakespeare and Freud's Leonardo as explicit as possible, I again quote Walter Kaufmann:

> Nietzsche did not decide to reduce the will to power to a sexual *libido*; for sexuality is that very aspect of the basic drive which is cancelled in sublimation and cannot, for that reason, be considered the essence of the drive. Sexuality is merely a foreground of something else that is more basic and hence preserved in sublimation: the will to power.[222]

To summarise my condensation of Stephen's argument thus far: Shakespeare's will was initially thwarted by Ann's seduction; thereafter he invested a significant proportion of his will to power into his work; but this, though it did divert his energy into brilliant artistic achievement, could not fully comfort him, as the memory of his undoing (or the subjugation

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[221] Gifford glosses: 'The implication is that woman uses her sexuality (invisible) to seduce', p. 223. It is clear from the context that the woman here referred to is Ann.
[222] Kaufmann, p. 222.

of his will) and subsequent betrayal continued to haunt him. The philoctetian wound is the initial (and a continuous) impetus, but it itself cannot be sublimated, nor can his wife's infidelity with his brother, for these are ineradicable events – only will to power can be converted into artistic creation: '[s]ublimation is possible because there is a basic force (the will to power) which is defined in terms of an objective (power) which remains the same throughout all "metamorphoses"'.[223] We are dealing with two different planes here: the memories the artist feeds on, and the energy he draws upon.

* * *

That queer thing genius

> 'To become what one is, one must not have the slightest idea *what* one is.[…] The whole surface of consciousness – consciousness is a surface – must be kept clear of all great imperatives. […] Meanwhile the organising "idea" that is destined to rule keeps growing deep down – it begins to command; slowly it leads us back from side roads and wrong roads; it prepares *single* qualities and fitnesses that will one day prove indispensable as means toward a whole – one by one, it trains all *subservient* capacities before giving any hint of the dominant task, "goal," "aim," or "meaning."'
>
> -Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*[224]

Stephen's complex exposition works through wordplay and paradox. 'What's in a name?' he asks, and following the example of the sonnets, makes much punning use of Will's. If we are to extricate his theory from his dazzlingly allusive and rich presentation of it, I believe it is best to now introduce a distinction for the purposes of clarity. Therefore, hereafter I will speak of two wills: firstly **Will** – William Shakespeare, the man; and secondly, *will* – the creative will or ruling idea of Shakespeare the playwright and poet. The vague concept of genius – and after all, Shakespeare is more regularly called one than almost anyone else – shall be useful here, in its origins it meant a person's guiding spirit, and this is basically what I mean by *will* here. In his own early study of a genius, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth', Nietzsche wrote: 'The dramatic element in Wagner's development is quite

[223] Kaufmann, p. 236. The word "metamorphoses" appears in quotation marks, as Kaufmann is here quoting from Nietzsche's notes.

[224] *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (in an edition with *On the Genealogy of Morals*) (New York: Vintage, 1989), 'Why I am so clever', § 9, p. 254.

unmistakable from the moment when his ruling passion became aware of itself and took his whole nature in its charge: from that time on there was an end to fumbling, straying, to the proliferation of secondary shoots, and within the most convoluted courses and often daring trajectories assumed by his artistic plans there rules a single inner law, a will by which they can be explained, however strange this explanation will often sound.'[225]

By means of the distinction I am making here between two wills, we can properly comprehend some of Stephen's superficially more nonsensical statements. Stephen dismisses Eglinton's orthodox interpretation that Shakespeare's marriage was simply a mistake by seemingly illogically claiming that the 'man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery.' (*U*, 9.228-9) Using my terms, this paradox makes sense, reading: "*will* makes no mistakes. **Will's** errors are *willed* and are portals of discovery for *will*." The interpretative crux is in <u>errors</u>, by definition unwilled, being volitional, willed. Stephen is not denying that **Will's** marriage was disastrous for him emotionally, sexually etc, but creatively, for the *will* which creates the works, it was anything but, being the philoctetian wound *will* thrives on.

By the insertion of my twin terms and some further clarifying glosses into a difficult but crucial passage, in which Stephen plays brilliantly with the relative indeterminacy of *he* and *his*, we can get to the essence of the integral dual figure I am arguing for, and see how **Will** plus *will* adds up to William Shakespeare.

> He [**Will**] goes back [to Stratford], weary of the creation he has piled up to hide him from himself, an old dog licking an old sore. But, because [**Will's**] loss is his [*will's*] gain, [**Will**] passes on toward eternity in undiminished personality [as King Hamlet], untaught by the wisdom he [*will*] has written or by the laws he [*will*] has revealed. His [**Will's**] beaver is up. He [**Will**] is a ghost, […] (*U*, 9. 474-8)

[225] This essay is one of the four *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 200.

Will's loss is *will's* gain, and Shakespeare is both, unable to escape his own bittersweet life of artistic triumph and marital pain (the first being reliant on the second): 'He found in the world without as actual what was in his world within as possible.'[226] If Shakespeare leaves his house today (*U*, 9.160), he will find the bard awaiting him when he gets home (*U*, 9.1042-4), Prospero (and *will*) might triumph but **Will** returns to the unfaithful Ann.[227]

In the fifteenth chapter, Stephen drunkenly, but very articulately, rants, and his 'proof' (note the standard scholastic use of *ecco*[228]) is directly related to, is actually a summation of, his theory in the library:

> What went forth to the ends of the world to traverse not itself, God, the sun, Shakespeare, a commercial traveller, having itself traversed in reality itself becomes that self. […] Self which it itself was ineluctably preconditioned to become. *Ecco!* (*U*, 15.2117-2121)

Again, I feel that by translating this into my terms we can unfold the meaning of these cryptic utterances. Before doing so, let us return to the epigraph of this subsection, where Nietzsche writes that 'To become what one is, one must not have the slightest notion *what* one is.'[229] This is analogous to what Stephen is saying, which I render thus: **Will** sets out, without the intention of self-overcoming, but nevertheless his *will* exceeds, surpasses **Will** and therefore *will* has caused **Will** to overcome himself and thereafter they are together Will(iam Shakespeare, more than the man **Will** who set out, rather the greatest writer in the English language).

Stephen seems to be caught in something of a double bind here: he has set out to provide a psychological, empiricist account of Shakespeare's artistic production in opposition to the

[226] Aristotle defines literature in his *Poetics* as being the expression of the possible (as opposed to history, the expression of the actual). The implication is clear: the source of Shakespeare's creativity is not some romantic inspiration, but what he encountered in his life.
[227] Interestingly, Stanislaus reports that his brother referred to himself as 'the foolish author of a wise book', 'James Joyce: A Memoir', p. 511.
[228] 'In medieval Scholastic argument the word meant: "It has been definitively stated."' Gifford, p. 488.
[229] Nietzsche also notes: 'Insight into the origin of a work [of art] concerns the physiologists and vivisectionists of the spirit; never the aesthetic man, the artist!' *Genealogy*, III.4, p. 101.

men present who prefer to believe in a more romantic version of a poet who plucks ideas out of the air as it were. But he has arrived at the conclusion that Shakespeare himself was scarcely conscious of what he was composing – that the troubled life was his, but the work was the creation of his will or genius. Nietzsche remarked in *Beyond Good and Evil* that the will is just a name we give a very complex process and I think this is how we can best understand genius; it is simply a name that we give to a nexus of factors that neither we nor the artist fully understand.[230] Whereas the notion of inspiration had once seemed to demand a supernatural explanation, the artist having access to a muse or higher realm of vision than us, we can now see that this inaccessible realm lies within. Stephen shows convincingly that Shakespeare's art derives from them the circumstances of his own life, but he can never say definitively *how* it has done so, and nor could Shakespeare if he were to try.

* * *

The essence of Wilde
or
Why Stephen doesn't believe his own theory

'Criticism is itself an art. And just as artistic creation implies the working of the critical faculty, and, indeed, without it cannot be said to exist at all, so Criticism is really creative in the highest sense of the word. Criticism is, in fact, both creative and independent.'
-Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist'[231]

The first time we hear of Stephen's theory is in the opening chapter of the novel. Haines is eager to learn of it, and Buck finally relents with an enigmatic précis: 'He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father.' (*U*, 1.555-7) This is a rather vague and unhelpful summary of the argument, but it does at least show Buck's familiarity with it. Just as Stephen has heard the 'Ballad of Joking Jesus' far too often, Buck has heard Stephen's trademark piece before,

[230] See *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 19, pp. 47-9.
[231] In *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: W.H. Allen, 1970), p. 364.

and it is he who has told Haines and Eglinton of it.[232] If King Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather then it follows that Prince Hamlet is Shakespeare's father, John, and that Shakespeare is King Hamlet himself. Furthermore, Shakespeare 'is the ghost of his own father', a phrase irreducible to sense, but one which foreshadows the complexity and playfulness of Stephen's presentation, and illustrates that he was never just arguing that Shakespeare is Hamlet's father. It is important to stress that Stephen doesn't change his theory spontaneously in the library, as many critics assume. Haines is the first victim of the confusion of pronouns that is to become rife in Stephen's presentation, and Buck laughs at his mistake, little wonder then that he decides to sit out the session in the library.

The debate in the ninth chapter is clearly modelled on the Platonic dialogues, and indeed several references to them and their central figure, Socrates, occur. In this scene, Stephen, earlier compared to Socrates' pupil Antisthenes, is to Socrates as Joyce is to Plato. The important difference is that we have access to the inner thoughts of the sly ironist, and can see his conscious manipulation of his interlocutors, flattering and distorting evidence, urging himself to '[m]ake them accomplices.' (*U*, 9.158) Very tellingly, Stephen is willing to have the interview, i.e. the Socratic dialogue, published but is unwilling to write his theory up as an article or essay (*U*, 9.1085).

So, what is the point of contention in this dialectic? It is whether or not Shakespeare is Prince Hamlet.[233] Much as Socrates always proceeds, Stephen is out to contest the popular and little examined assumptions of his opponents. To do so, he takes an extreme and wholly unique approach to the play as we have seen above. But Stephen never intends to conclude

[232] Importantly for my argument later, Buck knows that Thomas Aquinas is involved, so the consubstantial theme has evidently always been a part of the theory (*U*, 1.546-7). Eglinton mentions that 'We were prepared for paradoxes from what Malachi Mulligan told us' (*U*, 9.369).
[233] The argument is never precisely defined, but from Eglinton's assertion that Stephen 'will have it *Hamlet* is a ghost story' (*U*, 9.141), and from his avowal 'that if you want to shake my belief that Shakespeare is Hamlet you have a stern task before you' (*U*, 9.370-1), it is obvious that this is the focus.

on the reductive notion that Shakespeare simply *is* the king.[234] Even before Buck's entrance and the ensuing interval he has come to his decisive point: 'the son [is] consubstantial with the father.' (*U*, 9.481) By the end, in true Socratic fashion, Stephen has led his opponents to agree with him. He has first positioned himself as far from them as possible, pushing the premises to their logical absurdity in the manner of Socrates, only to guide them away from their initial stance and to the consubstantial theory he has always held: '-The truth is midway, [Eglinton] affirmed. He is the ghost and the prince. He is all in all.' (*U*, 9.1018-9) In Plato's dialogues, Socrates' opponent often voices the conclusion in precisely this manner. That is why Socrates is the midwife of thought, giving birth to ideas others have apparently had. In truth, he is the father of the idea, posing as the solicitous attendant.

But then, my reader will ask, if Stephen occupies a more moderate position why does he pose as advocating a more extreme theory initially? There are three reasons. The first is that he is using the Socratic method to gain acceptance for his consubstantial theory, as explained. Secondly, he wants to outline a wholly new conception of Shakespeare. Lastly, he wishes to introduce his original theory of literary creation.

Stephen wants to destroy the identification of Shakespeare with Hamlet: why? This goes deeper than the consubstantial theory. Through this conflation, Shakespeare emerges as a type of the romantic poet – precisely the identity Stephen once aspired to, but now disparages. In the two writers his opponents cite, Goethe and Mallarmé, this is exactly how Hamlet is painted: '[t]he beautiful ineffectual dreamer who comes to grief against hard facts.' (*U*, 9.9-10) It is precisely because of Hamlet's philosophical tendencies, his poetic melancholy, his tendency towards abstraction and idealism, in other words all of the reasons he is usually aligned with his creator, that Stephen most wants to deny their relation. So he

[234] Stephen's eventual position that Shakespeare is all in all and that his characters are consubstantial, is discernable, if only very opaquely, in his internal rebuff to Best's attempt to grasp the argument: 'Has the wrong sow by the lug. He is in my father. I am in his son.' (*U*, 9.390)

must first disrupt this easy tendency, and in clearing away this sedimented fallacy, ready the canvas for a fresh portrait. Having done so in as radical a fashion as possible, Stephen is then free to speak of a very different Shakespeare. His bard draws his inspiration from the world around and within him, current affairs (*U*, 9.741-60) and his own life, and is oblivious to Platonic Ideas. In this respect Stephen's account anticipates the new historicist criticism that was to revolutionise Shakespeare studies in the 1980's. Stephen would certainly share the antipathy to the notion of creation *ex nihilo*, poetic inspiration in the romantic sense, visible in the work of Stephen Greenblatt: 'I believe that nothing comes of nothing, even in Shakespeare. I wanted to know where he got the matter he was working with and what he did with that matter.'[235] Stephen is not a scholar, and would be content to let his namesake Greenblatt or someone similar rummage for this material,[236] but the point is his dedication to grounding Shakespeare in his context and not allowing him to float off into some spurious idealist eternity. Hamlet is a figure who undoubtedly appeals to Stephen and with whom he very much identifies, but he must ignore or forfeit him here if he is to reclaim his creator.

As I have outlined above, Stephen has introduced a significant and coherent sublimation theory of artistic creation by means of his emphasis upon Shakespeare as the king. Ultimately however he recants his belief in his own theory, and to best understand why he does so, we must turn to the writings of Oscar Wilde. By doing so, we will see why Stephen's stated disbelief does not allow us to discount his original insights.

Buck, though he superficially resembles Wilde in many ways, intellectually and physically, is keen to stress that he and Stephen have outgrown 'Wilde and paradoxes.' (*U*, 1. 554) Nevertheless he is still amused by a Wildean phrase uttered by Stephen, failing to recognise its provenance (*U*, 1.154). Richard Best, who is very unflatteringly portrayed in

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[235] *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 4.

[236] '[L]et some meinherr from Almany grope his life long for deephid meanings in the depths of the buckbasket.' (*U*, 9.759-60)

the ninth chapter, makes no such claim, and is still openly in thrall to the great wit. When the opportunity arises he introduces his hero into the discussion:

> -The most brilliant of all is that story of Wilde's, Mr Best said, lifting his brilliant notebook. That *Portrait of Mr W.H.* where he proves that the sonnets were written by a Willie Hughes, a man of all hues.
> -For Willie Hughes, is it not? The quaker librarian asked.
> […]
> -I mean, for Willie Hughes, Mr Best said, amending his gloss easily. Of course it's all a paradox, don't you know, Hughes and hews and hues, the colour, but it's so typical the way he works it out. It's the very essence of Wilde, don't you know. The light touch.
> His glance touched their faces lightly as he smiled, a blond ephebe. Tame essence of Wilde. (*U*, 9.522-30)

Best is wrong on three counts. One of his mistakes is pointed out to him, and he immediately accepts it, it may just have been a slip of the tongue, but the fact that he made it at all is an indicator of how superficial a reader of Wilde he is. His second mistake is that the essence of Wilde is the light touch, for which he is silently reproved by Stephen, who correctly recognizes the shallowness of this view and dubs it the *tame* essence of Wilde. His other error is not pointed out in the text; that is that Wilde *proves* something, like a scientist or historian, in his story. This again is a ridiculously simpleminded and reductive reading of Wilde's rich text, and is akin to taking seriously Buck's claim that Stephen 'proves by algebra' (*U*, 1.555) the identification of the playwright and the ghost.

Wilde's Platonic dialogues are the most obvious model for this chapter of *Ulysses* (as is playfully acknowledged at 9.1069), although Joyce is actually much closer to the original Socratic model than his predecessor (both structurally and because, like Plato, he uses prominent men of the day as interlocutors). But the story Best mentions exerts a more profound and imbedded influence, and is a compelling site of comparison. The story is of the same methodological, rather than structural, family. In this fictional tale about manufactured evidence, Wilde's characters argue convincingly that Shakespeare's Sonnets are addressed to a young male, named Willie Hughes. By the story's end, Wilde through his

skilful distancing, has allowed the façade he has built to collapse, has shown the data built up to be a hollow construct, but nevertheless the seed has been sown. By using this fictional strategy, by not publishing his theory as a piece of scholarship, Wilde can discount belief in his theory, whilst at the same time propagating it. The sonnets might not be to Willie Hughes, if indeed such a person can ever be proved to have existed at all, but the reader will never again be able to read the Sonnets without noticing their homosexual thrust. Willie Hughes is a heuristic device through which Wilde has shown what the overwhelming majority of readers would now accept, that many of the amorous poems are addressed to a male.

This is precisely how Stephen is operating, he cannot prove (by algebra, or any other means) the infidelity of Ann Hathaway, but by entertaining the possibility he has introduced a new perspective on the bard and smuggled in his theory of artistic creation. When all of the unconvincing details about Shakespeare's brothers and so on fall away, we are left with some intriguing observations – there is substance beneath all the style. In the true spirit of Wilde's story and his dialogues, Stephen has combined creativity and criticism. Wilde, at his best, is only superficial to the superficial; to understand the real essence of his meditations on literature is to understand why Stephen does not believe the details of his theory, yet still presents it.

II: PLATO AS PHARMAKOS

'Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism—there the sincerest advocate of the "beyond," the great slanderer of life; here the instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature.'

-Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*[237]

In Nietzsche's intense scrutiny of the western philosophical tradition, Plato is the arch-villain.[238] As well as some enjoyable mudslinging, Nietzsche has serious charges to lay at the Academy's door. In the remainder of this chapter, Plato adopts the role of Socrates as *pharmakos* – as in Nietzsche's corpus, his name becomes the byword for the point of opposition, in this case Joyce's.[239] It might very well be claimed that this monumental presence is not treated fairly in what follows; but then scapegoats never are.

I will refer throughout to Plato, but only on the understanding that it would be as well to say *Platonism*, 'because we are here dealing with the conception of knowledge that corresponds to that term, not by way of an original and detailed examination of Plato's works, but only by setting in rough relief one particular aspect of his work.'[240] Analogously, I use Homer to signify the implied author of the two epics; the name is the production of the texts as much as their producer. It is irrelevant here whether some historical personage actually produced both poems.

This second section is very much predicated upon its epigraph. Pulling it from its proper context without thereby violating its sense, I take seriously Nietzsche's binary formulation and work from it. So what is the nature of the conflict? Plato posits an ideal, supersensuous realm (wherein the ideal Forms abide) over and above our immediate perception: through

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[237] III.25, p. 154.

[238] To take just one of the many examples available: 'the Platonic dialogue, this horribly self-satisfied and childish kind of dialectic […] Plato is boring. In the end, my distrust of Plato goes deep: he represents such an aberration from all the basic instincts of the Hellene, is so moralistic, so pre-existently Christian […] that for the whole phenomenon Plato I would sooner use the harsh phrase "higher swindle," or, if it sounds better, "idealism," than any other.' *Twilight of the Idols*, 'What I owe to the Ancients', § 2, pp. 557-8.

[239] A pharmakos was a slave or criminal sacrificed for the good of the community in ancient Greece, it is best translated as scapegoat.

[240] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume One: The Will to Power as Art*, trans. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 151.

this move what we are accustomed to name reality (the world we dwell in) becomes mere appearance, the true reality now being the supersensuous. Hence life is devalued, jettisoned for the supersensuous beyond: 'Plato is a coward before reality, consequently he flees into the ideal'.[241] Homer on the other hand embodies a pre-Socratic plenitude of life, converting the sensuous reality into art. The aptness of Nietzsche's calling him 'the instinctive deifier' will become clear in what follows, and elucidates the distance of Homer from Plato, his total commitment to reality, despite the apparent contradiction of there being gods roaming his world.

The assumption throughout will be that Joyce understood Plato or Platonism in much the same way I am outlining here, but my justification for this must be forestalled whilst we turn to the philosopher's opponent in this staged battle. How then did Joyce think of Homer?

* * *

Homer; or some other poet of the same name

'So we talk on about Joyce and his use of Homer without feeling obliged to specify *which* Homer, as though "Homer" were an immutable constant like *pi* and not a mental possession as subject to redefinition at need as any other mental possession, for instance the elephant.'
-Kenner, 'Homer's Sticks and Stones'[242]

As is so often the case, Kenner has hit upon the pertinent point here. But in choosing *which* Homer he backed the wrong horse, plumping for the poet as constructed (and translated) by Samuel Butler. I agree with Kenner's insight that the Homer of Joyce's day was 'the archaeologist's Homer', but the evidence strongly suggests that Joyce was far more influenced by the work of Victor Bérard than by Butler's eccentric literalism.[243]

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[241] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 'What I owe to the Ancients', § 2, p. 559.
[242] Hugh Kenner, 'Homer's Sticks and Stones', *JJQ*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Summer, 1969), pp. 285-298, p. 286.
[243] Ibid., p. 293. R.J. Schork has shown that Joyce relied upon the Butcher and Lang translation of the *Odyssey* and not Butler's, as Kenner had contended: *Greek and Hellenic Culture in Joyce* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), p. 122. The only evidence we have is that Joyce owned Butler's book, and claims such as Kenner's for its pervasive influence, and even Michael Seidel's that 'Joyce read [Butler] with *keen* interest', are purely speculative; Seidel, *Epic Geography: James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 47, my italics.

In *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée*, Bérard had argued that the *Odyssey* was based upon Phoenician (semitic) travel logs which Homer converted into poetry: 'le Sémite aurait fourni le bloc; l'Hellène en aurait tiré la statue.'[244] Joyce evidently enjoyed the coincidence of Bérard's assertion of the poem's semitic origins, and the etymological basis for many of his points.[245] But since he had already decided upon Bloom's Jewish origins it seems reasonable to assert that this was not the primary reason for his attraction to the French classicist. Rather, I contend that this lay in the total veridicality of Homer's poem as related by Bérard: 'les poèmes homériques sont une description ou tout au moins un souvenir fidèle de cette Méditerranée des origins.'[246]

In *Epic Geography*, Michael Seidel has charted exhaustively the impact of Bérard's work upon the composition of *Ulysses*. But his account, to my mind at least, offers little real insight into the completed novel. In discussing Pound's famous dismissal of the scaffolding of the novel, Seidel revealingly remarked that 'if the process of building is as important as the result, the scaffold never disappears.'[247] I deny that the genesis of the text matches the importance of the final product, but do not therefore dismiss the importance of the compositional stage outright. The utility of Bérard's text for understanding *Ulysses* is its conception of Homer, its overall argument, rather than the many minor details Seidel catalogues.

Bérard not only emphasises the very real basis for the epic, grounding it consistently in fact, he also provides a means to understand how this empiricist data became transformed into the fantastic poem we now possess: the process of anthropomorphism. Through this the

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[244] Victor Bérard, *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssée*, 2 vols (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1902), vol. II, p. 565. My translation: 'the Semite provided the block; the Hellene sculpted a statue from it.'

[245] See *JJ*, p. 408.

[246] Bérard, vol. I, p. 52. My translation: 'the Homeric poems are a description or more or less a faithful recollection of the Mediterranean from which they originated.'

[247] Seidel, p. xv. He was referring to Pound's famous remark that '[t]hese [Homeric] correspondences are part of Joyce's mediaevalism and are chiefly his own affair, a scaffold, a means of construction, justified by the result, and justifiable by it only.' 'Paris Letter', *Pound/Joyce: the letters of Ezra Pound to James Joyce: with Pound's essays on Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read (New York: New Directions, 1967), p. 197.

scholar faced with the monsters which populate the *Odyssey* can maintain that 'le poète n'a presque rien inventé.'[248] Bérard never explains how this poetic process came about, but another writer with an intense interest in Homer had; Giambattista Vico. By going back to Vico, who had in many ways anticipated and surpassed Bérard, we can see beyond Seidel's accretion of data; the aim here is not to see Joyce's working methods (thoroughly documented by Seidel), but *Joyce's Homer*.

* * *

Vera narratio

'For a genuine poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept. How is it that Homer's descriptions are so much more vivid than those of any other poet? Because he visualises so much more vividly. We talk so abstractly about poetry because all of us are usually bad poets.'

-Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*[249]

Joyce came to Vico before he read Bérard, and whilst the exact date of the encounter has not been ascertained, it was before the writing of *Ulysses* began.[250] This chapter differs from the vast majority of work on the relation between Joyce and Vico in focussing on *Ulysses* rather than *Finnegans Wake* and upon the first three books of *La Scienza Nuova* rather than the last two (which deal with Vico's conception of history).[251] Setting aside historical cycles, I turn to the second and third books of Vico's work, 'Poetic Wisdom' and 'The Discovery of the True Homer', the titles of which would surely have ensured Joyce's

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[248] Bérard, vol. II, p. 357. My translation: 'the poet has hardly invented anything.'

[249] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (in an edition with *The Case of Wagner*) (New York: Vintage, 1967), § 8, p. 64. In the same section he writes: 'The sphere of poetry does not lie outside the world as a fantastic impossibility spawned by a poet's brain: it desires to be just the opposite, the unvarnished expression of the truth', p. 61. As will become clear, there is a real correlation between some of Nietzsche's and Vico's ideas on ancient literature; it should be borne in mind here that Joyce owned a copy of Nietzsche's famous first work.

[250] See *JJ*, p. 340.

[251] The chapter entitled 'Homer Dante Vico Croce Joyce' in Reed Way Dasenbrook's *Imitating the Italians: Wyatt, Spenser, Synge, Pound, Joyce* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), has a similar starting point to mine here (inasmuch as it focuses on the second and third books of *The New Science*) but heads in a rather different direction. Beckett's early essay 'Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . Joyce', though it is about the *Wake* and discusses Vico's historical cycles, is more concerned with the second book of the *New Science*. The essay is in *Our Exagmination Round his Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress* [1929] (London: Faber & Faber, 1961).

attention.[252] It should be noted at the outset that Vico himself denied the existence of any actual person named Homer, and contended that the two epics ascribed to him were the product of the collective culture of their age. Nevertheless, he continued to use the name Homer as shorthand for the author(s) of the epics, as is my practice here.

Vico's main contention, repeated *ad nauseam* in his *New Science*, is that myths, particularly the Homeric epics, are true narratives. But Vico does not arrive at this conclusion by scouring the Mediterranean as Schliemann and Bérard did, but through a deep and radical meditation on the birth of civilization:

> In seeking the basic principle of the common origins of languages and letters, we find that the first peoples of pagan antiquity were, by a demonstrable necessity of their nature, *poets* who spoke by means of *poetic symbols*. This discovery provides the master key to my New Science, but making it has cost me nearly an entire scholarly career spent in tireless researches.[253]

Through this *master key*, Vico can unlock the epics as true stories formed by anthropomorphising metaphors. Vico's basic idea is simple, but its implications are important. In his account, it was precisely the lack of rationality of primitive people (their inability to form concepts) which led them, like children, to personify natural phenomena (Vico's favourite example is the anthropomorphisation of thunder into Jupiter). Thus, for Homer metaphor was the natural mode of expression, used to express the reality of the world he inhabited – and used truthfully precisely because metaphor lacked its characteristic feature of being figurative. Poetic language in its origins was based on identity, not analogy. Homer did not choose to use metaphor for figurative expression; he did not choose to use metaphor at all. He may not have told the truth exactly, but he did not lie: like a child, he simply didn't know any better.

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[252] If he needed any further inducement, Vico also discusses Dante as the heir of Homer.

[253] Giambattista Vico, *New Science: Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations*, trans. David Marsh (London: Penguin, 1999), § 34, p. 24, my underlining.

It is for this reason that metaphysics and ancient poetry are, for Vico as much as for Nietzsche, inherently antipathetic. What he repeatedly lambasts as the conceit of scholars is their inability to appreciate the distance from their own mindset of these primitive peoples. This failure to defatalise leads to their attributing ideas to these people they could not possibly have conceived of. The chief reason for this chasm is also related to language, it comes with the advent of irony. It is the introduction of irony which divides the naive and figurative uses of metonymy, synecdoche, and metaphor. In a key passage he writes: 'Irony could clearly arise only in an age capable of reflection, because it consists of a falsehood which reflection disguises in a mask of truth.'[254] Homer's, Vico argues again and again, was not such an age.

Two of Vico's personal heroes were not spared constant censure on this score, Francis Bacon and Plato (the latter frequently granted the epithet 'divine' by Vico). They too had failed to appreciate the non-figurative use of metaphor and read metaphysical meaning into the innocent myths. I do not wish to engage with Plato's conception of Homer here, since it is complex and varies from dialogue to dialogue. What Vico is attacking is his mystical (allegorical) interpretation of myth – the myth of the cave in the *Republic*, with its metaphysical explanation which denies any literal truth to the fable exemplifies this practice. In many other instances Plato interprets myths (including Homeric ones) in this manner, hence the common use of the term 'Platonic' to describe this exegetical mode. The work of Bacon entitled *The Wisdom of the Ancients*, frequently cited by Vico, is a prime example of such readings.[255] Much of the *New Science* is spent refuting what these Platonic interpretations imply, that Homer was some sort of philosopher. From a Nietzschean perspective we can see how they would devalue reality; denying the veracity of the

[254] Vico, § 408, p. 162.
[255] Joyce owned two copies of this relatively obscure work, and I suspect he first learned of it through Vico.

immediate and sensuous and instead designating the ideas as the truth, they carry out the same operation as Plato's philosophy more generally.[256]

Such readings would have been inimical to Joyce, who passionately detested didacticism. But it was a mode he would certainly have been familiar with, long before he read Bacon or Plato. His first encounter with the story of the *Odyssey* was at Belvedere, where he read Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*. Since Lamb's book is not in fact allegorical, as Joyce seemed to remember, we can surmise that his teachers performed this exegesis on the text, probably relating the voyages to the wanderings of the soul towards salvation. Speaking to Georges Borach of this formative experience in 1917, Joyce remarked: 'I want to be candid: at twelve I liked the mysticism in Ulysses.'[257] The fact that the remark is prefaced with a plea of sincerity (almost as if admitting something shameful), and by Joyce stressing his age at the time, show that he had distanced himself from this view. Understanding the realist Homer as Joyce did helps resist the urge to perform fatuous allegoresis upon *Ulysses*.

* * *

A terrible mistake

'"Your plan isn't poetic; it's grotesque. […] [T]he *Iliad* endures, full of meaning, because it's all clear, limpid. Your Rosicrucian manifestoes are neither clear nor limpid; they're mud, hot air, and promises. That is why so many people have tried to make them come true, each finding in them what he wants to find. In Homer there's no secret, but your plan is full of secrets, full of contradictions. For that reason you could find thousands of insecure people ready to identify with it. Throw the whole thing out. Homer wasn't faking, but you […] have been faking. Beware of faking: people will believe you."'

-Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*[258]

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[256] This was also intuited by Beckett: 'if we consider the myth as being essentially allegorical, we are not obliged to accept the form in which it is cast as a statement of fact.' 'Dante . . . Bruno . Vico . . Joyce', p. 12.

[257] 'Conversations with James Joyce', Georges Borach and Joseph Prescott, *College English*, vol. 15, no. 6 (March, 1954), pp. 325-327, p. 325.

[258] Eco, Umberto, *Foucault's Pendulum*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Ballantine, 1990), p. 444. It is tempting to think that Eco, a prominent Joyce scholar after all, had Joyce in mind when composing this passage.

It is highly regrettable that no one was there to deliver such a speech to Joyce and that the Linati and Gilbert schemata were not consigned to the obscurity they surely deserve. Of course such an attack on Joyce would be extremely unfair and unbalanced, since he had achieved what Homer had, he wrote the epic so full of meaning as well as the tiresome, overelaborated and, frankly, rather pretentious plan. Whatever reservation or regrets Joyce might have had, the plans are in the public arena, and I will not reprise their history here.[259] We must face them down, neither bowing reverentially before them nor ignoring them, but definitively dismissing them. There can only be one criterion if they are to be anything other than curios: are they useful in interpreting the text?

Since it would be unnecessarily tedious to plough through the entire book, I propose that a detailed examination of one chapter in relation to the schemata will suffice. Since this chapter of my thesis has dealt with the ninth episode, entitled 'Scylla and Charybdis' in the schemata, we shall take that as our example.[260]

Gilbert Schema:							
Scene	**Hour**	**Organ**	**Art**	**Colour**	**Symbol**	**Technic**	**Correspondences**
The Library	2 p.m.	Brain	Literature		Stratford, London	Dialectic	Rock: Aristotle, Dogma, Stratford; Whirlpool: Plato, Mysticism, London; Ulysses: Socrates, Jesus, Shakespeare.
Linati Schema:							
Colour	**Hour**	**Persons**	**Technic**	**Science, Art**	**Sense (Meaning)**	**Organ**	**Symbol**
-	2 – 3	Scylla and Charybdis	Whirlpools	Literature	The Two-edged Sword	Brain	Hamlet, Shakespeare, Christ, Socrates, London & Stratford, Scholasticism & Mysticism, Plato & Aristotle, Youth & Maturity

The two schemes are in complete agreement on three points: the hour, the art (or science), and the organ. With the first two I certainly cannot quibble. The appositeness of

[259] Joyce's regret is evident in the following conversation with Vladimir Nabokov in 1937: 'Joyce said something disparaging about the use of mythology in modern literature. Nabokov replied in amazement, 'But you employed Homer!' 'A whim,' was Joyce's comment. 'But you collaborated with Gilbert,' Nabokov persisted. 'A terrible mistake,' said Joyce, 'an advertisement for the book. I regret it very much.' *JJ*, footnote on p. 616. As will be evident, whatever Joyce's feelings were, I regard the schemata's publication as a terrible mistake.

[260] The entries in this table are taken from *Ulysses* [The 1922 Text], ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Appendix A, pp. 734-9.

the brain being the organ is debatable, the third chapter is surely another contender;[261] but it matters little, like much else in the schemata the most it can elicit is a shrug of the shoulders, perhaps even a stifled yawn. The same goes for the category of colour: this chapter does not have a colour – what possible difference would it make if it had? For the technic, the Linati gives whirlpools, perhaps a suitable description considering the confusing swirl of ideas discussed and one which of course fits the Homeric chapter title. But the Gilbert entry of dialectic seems eminently more suitable, given the nature of the debate.

I must confess that the category of symbol seems to me utterly absurd. What are Stratford and London, and all of the things listed by the Linati schema, symbols *of*? This question I would argue is unanswerable, each item is far too nuanced and complex to symbolise *anything* other than itself. What does Plato symbolise but Platonism? Perhaps a more appropriate title for these things would have been topics – but then that doesn't sound as impressive, does it?

In the Linati schema Scylla and Charybdis, though they are a whirlpool and a monster in the *Odyssey*, are persons. This begs the question: *who* are they? Any identification would be so vague and partial as to be meaningless, and thus the question is moot. Ignoring for a moment the contradictory evidence of the other schema, it would seem that Bloom is Ulysses, since that is his role elsewhere, but he is only an extremely marginal presence in the episode and does nothing much to merit comparison with the hero of the *Odyssey*, aside from walking between Stephen and Buck at the end. Using the rest of the book as a guide, Stephen must be Telemachus (assuming he is not either Scylla or Charbydis to Bloom's Ulysses at the end), who does not appear in this episode of the *Odyssey*. Buck Mulligan is Antinous since he attempts to ruin Stephen's (Telemachus') performance (in the epic poem,

[261] Or would be, if the first three chapters were assigned organs. They are not because 'Telemachus does not yet bear a body' according to the Linati schema.

he tries to assassinate him). Though, again, this character is not in this episode in Homer. The sense or meaning is the two-edged sword, a reference to the difficult decision Odysseus faced, but its relevance here can only result in bland clichés which ignore the intricate texture of the dialogue, as is evident in much criticism concerning this chapter.

The correspondences column of the Gilbert schema appears far more promising. For the first time the point of the chapter being called Scylla and Charybdis becomes clear. Such is Joyce's opposition to Plato that he attempts to adopt allegory to undermine him. Stephen must stay close to Aristotle and dogma to avoid being engulfed in Plato and mysticism. But the slipperiness of the identifications soon haunts us again, as this makes Stephen Ulysses, which completely contradicts what follows: for Socrates, Jesus, and Shakespeare apparently have that role. Socrates and Jesus are too much of a stretch, but I shall return to the alignment of Shakespeare and the polytropic Ithacan shortly. The confusion generated by the schemata is irresolvable. Joyce had not written an allegorical novel, the ninth chapter is the closest he came to a parable, and even that, as I have just demonstrated, is too unstable to merit the name. Edmund Wilson prefaces his explanation of this apparent parable with 'we should never have guessed […] that…'[262] - a fair indication of its inefficacy. The fact that his interpretation of it differs from those of so many other critics strengthens my point. No matter how hard Joyce tried to emulate the systematic polysemy of Dante his will to truth was too strong, even if the schemata try to tell us otherwise. Nietzsche offers sage advice for those facing our dilemma here:

> In such a case as this, embarrassing in many ways, my view is […] that one does best to separate the artist from his work, not taking him as seriously as his work. He is, after all, only the precondition of his work, the womb, the soil, sometimes the dung and manure on which, out of which, it grows – and therefore in most cases something we must forget if one is to enjoy the work itself.[263]

[262] *Axel's castle: a study in the imaginative literature of 1870-1930* [1931] (London, Flamingo, 1984), p. 170.
[263] Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, III.4, p. 100.

To conclude, these plans are valuable if we are attempting to understand the composition of *Ulysses* (which we are not), but rather useless if our interest is in the finished product.[264] It is now time we re-entered the edifice of the text itself and stopped rooting about in the debris of its scaffolding; ultimately the schemata are nothing but a structural support and what Pound cannily recognised as 'les restes d'une culture moyanâgeuse allégorique'.[265]

* * *

From allegory to analogy

'Where then is the key? It is, I venture to say, in the door, or rather on the cover. It is the title: *Ulysses*.'

-Valèry Larbaud, 'James Joyce'[266]

Larbaud was correct: the means of understanding the relation of *Ulysses* to the *Odyssey* is hiding in plain sight – *Ulysses*: not *Ulixēs*; or *Odysseus*; and certainly not *Ὀδυσσεύς*. That is, the anglicisation of the latinisation of the Ancient Greek. When one reflects that it is the name of the hero and not the poem, the gap widens again. The title simultaneously invites comparison, and signals a distance. We have taken several steps away from Homer's epic, but we can still see it looming in the background.

As should already be clear from the discussion of the schemata, one strangely enduring word needs to be excised from critical discussions of Homer and Joyce: 'parallel'. Whatever else there might be, *there is definitely no parallel*. To persist in the use of this word in the

[264] The evidence seems to suggest that Joyce's interest in correspondences only developed in the final stages of *Ulysses* and that he revised chapters he had written already accordingly – hence many of the changes he made were superficial rather than structural or significant. In at least some cases, the schemata were Joyce's interpretation of what he had *already* written rather than an agenda for composition (though he certainly did have the correspondences the schemata list in mind when writing from at least 1920 on). For the best accounts of the schemata, correspondences and the composition of *Ulysses* see Claude Jacquet, 'Les Plans de Joyce pour *Ulysse*', in *Ulysses: Cinquante Ans Après*, ed. Bonnerot et al., pp. 45-81, A. Walton Litz, *The Art of James Joyce: Method and Design in 'Ulysses' and 'Finnegans Wake'*, and Michael Groden, *'Ulysses' in Progess*.

[265] Pound, 'James Joyce et Pécuchet', in *Pound/Joyce*, p. 206. My translation: 'the leftovers of a medieval allegorical culture'.

[266] In *Nouvelle Revue Française*, xxiii (April, 1922), 385-405. Reprinted in Deming, ed., vol. I, p. 260.

face of the facts betrays either an ignorance of, or a disregard for, its meaning. The term *analogy* is far more apt.[267]

Of course, as we have already explored, Joyce had used classical myth before, in the hobbled allegory of *A Portrait*. There, Dedalus wavered between Daedalus and Icarus, but here identification is even more elusive since Bloom is simply Bloom, not Ulysses. We shall continue to mine the rich and playful ninth chapter with its distinctive metafictional asides in seeking to show how Joyce had moved beyond his previous novel's unique mode of allegory.

It is worth asking at this point if one *does* think of Homer? So ingrained is the practice of generously 'recognising' the Homeric 'parallels' that we are liable to forget or ignore the rather obvious: namely, how very *unlike* the *Odyssey Ulysses* actually is. Again, the title is the key – try removing it, replacing it with say *June 16, 1904*, and see how similar to its epic precursor it is. It is only in the ninth chapter that the name Ulysses actually appears, and it is there that the alert reader who has steadfastly borne the title in mind throughout (as a nagging question) will finally grasp its (in)significance.

Homer is mentioned twice in this chapter (*U*, 9.110, 1165), but nowhere else in the book. Ulysses is also mentioned twice (again, but nowhere else in the book), once when Stephen compares Shakespeare to him (*U*, 9.402-4) and once when Eglinton mistakenly refers to his character in *Troilus and Cressida* (*U*, 9.996).[268] Ann Hathaway is characterised as Penelope three times (*U*, 9.620, 623, 649). What has been lightly built up is a comparison between Shakespeare, man and wife, and Ulysses and Penelope. And in turn, Leopold Bloom and his wife sound rather similar to the Shakespeares. As in the title, there is a tantalising thread of connection, but there are still steps between: Bloom is (somewhat) like

[267] By this term I mean nothing more complex than its common understanding and am not invoking Aquinas or Dante (whilst not denying their huge importance for Joyce).
[268] Eglinton is mistaken in saying that Shakespeare 'makes Ulysses quote Aristotle', as it is Hector who does so in the play.

Shakespeare who is (somewhat) like Ulysses. As Beckett wrote so perceptively in a different context, 'the danger is in the neatness of identifications.'[269] The relation to Homer's work is *analogous*, and that is all, no matter how hard we push. Joyce is akin to the Homer of Vico, Bérard and Nietzsche, an artist thoroughly committed to depicting sensuous reality. But one living in a period unlike the Ancient Greek's, an age which through reflection has long known irony, and whose literature is marked not by identification but the very thing Homer could never have understood – *analogy*.

* * *

Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu[270]

> '[James] upholds Aristotle against his friends, and boasts himself an Aristotelian.'
> -Stanislaus Joyce, diary entry for August 13, 1904[271]

At this juncture we must allow another giant of the classical world to enter the fray. Following an ancient tradition, Aristotle too stands in opposition to his former teacher. As in the case of Plato, Aristotle here is shorthand for one aspect of his thought, nicely summarized in the title of this subsection. Aristotle *is* the empiricism to Plato's supersensuous idealism. This is the *maestro* evoked by Stephen in the book's third chapter when he refers to the '[i]neluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes.' (*U*, 3.1-2) Despite numerous critics' worthy attempts to mine more meaning from such phrases, all Stephen is referring to is 'what you damn well have to see' (*U*, 9.86)[272] Contra Plato, the senses are the only means of access to the sole reality, the one

[269] Beckett, 'Dante. .', p. 3.
[270] This is known as the Peripatetic axiom and is used by Aquinas amongst others (there are occasional variations in the phrasing but the sense is always the same).
[271] *The Complete Dublin Diary*, ed. George H. Healey (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 53, footnote 2.
[272] The beginning of chapter three is 'a vindication of the Aristotelian conception of substance as matter, actualized in sensible forms and made available to the eye as colors: that is, a reassertion of the common sense refutation of idealism.' Pierre Vitoux, 'Aristotle, Berkeley, and Newman in "Proteus" and "Finnegans Wake"', *JJQ* vol. 18, no. 2 (winter 1981), pp. 161-175, p. 164. Thomas Karr Richards' 'Provisional Fixity in James Joyce's "Proteus"', *JJQ* vol. 20, no. 4 (summer 1983), pp. 385-398, is by far the best explication of the philosophical thrust of this dense and difficult chapter.

'[t]here all the time without you' (*U*, 3.27). Stephen's identification of Aristotle *as* empiricism personified is evident in his self-congratulation for a joke he made in the second chapter with Deasy; 'God: noise in the street: *very peripatetic*' (*U*, 9.85-6, my italics) he assures himself.

As the diary entry from Stanislaus, along with Joyce's notes from the period and 'The Holy Office' attest, Joyce fancied himself an Aristotelian at the beginning of the century (and beyond). When Stanislaus writes of Joyce defending Aristotle against his friends, he is probably primarily referring to Oliver St. John Gogarty, like most of those associated with the Revival, a committed Platonist. So, Joyce's position is clear, but what of Stephen's? Frankly, the evidence from *A Portrait*, as I have already demonstrated, is too slim to characterise Stephen as anything other than an enthusiastic but pretentious aesthete with a very slim knowledge of philosophy.[273] But since then, as we learn in the second chapter of *Ulysses*, he has studied Aristotle in Paris and is now quite conversant with his ideas, as numerous references to them illustrate.

The opposition between Plato, represented by Russell and Eglinton, and Aristotle, whom Stephen champions, is set out very clearly at the beginning of the ninth chapter (*U*, 9.48-89, 76-88), but it is not the main theme of that episode, despite what the schemata say. All that can be gleaned from the discussion is Stephen's fierce antagonism to Plato, and to some extent his subsequent materialistic arguments are implicitly anti-Platonic in tenor. Stephen's distance from the Revival is a major undercurrent in this chapter, and shows an evolution from his ethnically oriented stance against its members in *A Portrait*. Joyce here

[273] Joyce commented in a letter of 1925 on a passage in Stephen's aesthetically oriented discussion in *A Portrait* that there is a 'reference to Plato's theory of ideas, or more strictly speaking to Neo-Platonism, two philosophical tendencies with which the speaker at that moment [Stephen] is not in sympathy.' (To Dámaso Alonso, 31 October 1925, *L III*, p. 130) This shows that Joyce had perhaps always conceived of Stephen as anti-Platonist, but overall it would be safer to say that Stephen's philosophical position in the first novel is ill-defined – he might not be a Platonist, but we would be hard pressed to call him an Aristotelian or anything else.

depicts his own self-realisation through his will to truth; crucially, a will towards a conception of truth very definitely not the same as Plato's supersensuous one.

When condemning someone as a pharmakos the evidence is often quite nebulous. Plato is never properly confronted and defeated in *Ulysses*, he is simply demonised. Stephen denigrates Plato, but this is really only a prelude to something altogether different than a stale rehearsal of ancient grievances - a fact for which we should be grateful. One is tempted to say that Joyce has taken the Platonic dialogue and turned it against Plato, and this was his ambitious intention if the schemata are any safe guide, but Joyce's real achievement was in revitalising this form and making it his own. Joyce could never rival Plato as a philosopher, but as an artist, critic, and psychologist, the victory may be his.

III: EPIC ASPIRATIONS

'. . . I inclined
To lose my faith in Ballyrush and Gortin
Till Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind.
He said: I made the Iliad from such
A local row. Gods make their own importance.'
-Patrick Kavanagh, 'Epic'[274]

One question still haunts us, obfuscated by our overfamiliarity with the alleged Homeric parallels yet utterly obvious to non-Joyceans: but *why* is it called *Ulysses*? By naming his work thus Joyce signals his epic ambition, seeking alignment with a tradition stretching back to Homer. Whereas Pound and Eliot suffered from an almost crippling sense of their belatedness, *Ulysses* simply states itself heir to a succession of masterpieces which both show some sense of continuity and are radically innovative. What is signalled is a full awareness of the past, and a refusal to be inhibited by it. The title simultaneously declares an intention, and its fulfilment.

The writing of an epic is, to many minds, the culmination of a writer's work and the apex of literary achievement. This hallowed path leads back to Virgil, the first to consciously set out in Homer's footsteps, and is most obviously exemplified in the lives of Milton and Spenser – both of whom purposely modelled their poetic careers (from pastoral to epic) on the Mantuan's example. Joyce's will to power spurred him on to join the ranks of his heroes Dante, Ovid et al., by following them on this odyssey.

We are now forced to confront the vexed issue of whether *Ulysses* is, in fact, an epic. As above with the question of the Homeric relation, I believe *analogy* is key to understanding *Ulysses* in this regard. Such a matter cannot be tallied up through a cumulation of appropriate features; as Jerome McGann wisely noted, 'If, at any particular historical moment, one were to hypothesize certain essential norms for epic, a true epic

[274] *Collected Poems*, ed. Antoinette Quinn (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 184.

might still emerge which does not meet these norms. The fact is that the rules for epic are defined in practice, not in theory, as a survey of the history of the epic will quickly show.'[275] McGann thus dubs the question we are discussing ('Is *x* an epic?') a 'pseudo-problem'. It is not just the common features but the daring innovations which are required to earn admittance to the pantheon. Epic retains something of its evaluative rather than descriptive meaning as a term due to this; hence *Ulysses* is widely regarded as an epic on the world stage whereas Lady Gregory's *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne* is not. A work becomes, or rather *is*, an epic by dint of its author's *will* and the subsequent historical consensus: a masterpiece does not stand at the threshold begging admittance to the canon (whereas a weaker work does – pleading that it has ticked all the right boxes), it simply forces its way in and the tradition re-forms around its unapologetic entry. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is exemplary in this regard: the epic tradition bent to its will, not vice-versa. The wisdom of Kavanagh's Homer is apposite here: *Gods make their own importance*. Joyce's Homer, along with Stephen's Shakespeare, whispered the same thing.

* * *

Agon

'What a problem opens before us when we enquire into the relationship of the contest to the conception of the work of art!'

-Nietzsche, 'Homer's Contest'[276]

When Stephen thinks of himself as competing with his opponents for the palm of beauty[277] or when we recall Nora's comment that Joyce only had Shakespeare left to beat it

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[275] Jerome J. McGann, *Don Juan in Context* (London: John Murray, 1976), p. xii. McGann's brief discussion of the status of Byron's poem as epic is thoroughly admirable for its pragmatic levelheadedness and is instructive regarding the epic even if one is unfamiliar with *Don Juan* (pp. xi-xiii).

[276] This quote is from a fragment of an early essay of Nietzsche's, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 38.

[277] 'Will they wrest from us, from me, the palm of beauty?' (*U*, 9.740) The evidence suggests that the *they* here refers to the Protestant or Ascendancy writers in Dublin (Stephen is responding to Eglinton and they are discussing the sectarian Trinity professor, Edward Dowden; though no great fan of the Revival, Dowden was friendly with several of its most eminent writers and is clearly respected by Eglinton et al.). I think 'the palm of beauty' is a euphemism for the prize (i.e. victory in the argument rather than beauty *per se*, since Eglinton, Lyster, Best and Dowden never wrote fiction or poetry). As Nietzsche stressed, dialectic is but another form of *agon*.

is easy to appreciate the extent of the problem Nietzsche was pointing to.[278] As an aspirant epic author Joyce would have been only too aware that 'even a dead man can still spur a live one to consuming jealousy'[279] and I want to briefly consider here the dynamics underlying this psychopoetic conflict.

For Nietzsche a competitive element dominates *all* of our endeavours, not just art. Many of his psychological observations stem from a notion which he considered of paramount importance: *the will to power*. Human activity is a manifestation of will to power; it is the basic energy driving us forward, always seeking resistances to overcome – Zarathustra tells us it is essentially the hidden basis of life:

> And life itself confided this secret to me: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am *that which must always overcome itself*. Indeed, you call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold: but all this is one, and one secret.'[280]

Agon, involving pushing oneself to the limits to defeat others, is a particularly powerful illustration of this will to power and of how competition always involves self-overcoming. By bearing in mind the two meanings of power as force or energy *and* domination or sovereignty, both aspects being relevant here, we can better understand how Nietzsche's idea is as relevant to artists or thinkers as to politicians (as he continually stressed). Hence, as we have seen in part I of this chapter, Shakespeare could sublimate his desire for domination and revenge, his will to power, into artistic achievement.

The relationship between Joyce and his major predecessors exhibits none of the friction evident in his earlier attempts to distinguish himself from Yeats and his acolytes. This does not mean antagonism is lacking, but that the personal edge of those youthful local rows is.

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[278] 'Ah, there's only one man he's got to get the better of now, and that's that Shakespeare!', reported by Budgen, quoted by Vincent Cheng, *Shakespeare and Joyce: A Study of 'Finnegans Wake'* (Buckinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1984), p. 1. It seems fair to say that Nora got this idea from Joyce since it is hardly her own (she hadn't read enough of her partner's work, never mind Shakespeare's, to make such a comparison).
[279] 'Homer's Contest', p. 35.
[280] *Zarathustra*, Book II, § 12, 'On Self-Overcoming', p. 227.

The emphasis on influence in literary studies is surely somewhat misleading, tending as it does to obscure the actual psychopoetic relations between writers. Great artists like Joyce, though certainly conscious of competing against the canon tend to focus on their own innovations rather than the tradition, just as in ancient Greece a good charioteer concentrated on his own chariot rather than simply attacking his opponents; the will to power is about overcoming resistance through creation and not destruction. It is telling that Joyce's study of the artist's psychology (Stephen on Shakespeare) at no point discusses literary influence. Moreover, the extent to which Joyce emphasises Shakespeare's legacy throughout his novel shows more admiration than oedipal envy. A useful way of understanding this relation to predecessors, one of aspiration not anxiety, is the ancient Greek conception of education as *paideia*, the ideal 'of trying to be like the excellence, or *arete*, that we have come to admire'.[281] For Joyce, as for Kavanagh, Homer helpfully points the way rather than obstructing the path.

Zarathustra asserts that the 'will to power walks on the heels of [one's] will to truth.'[282] There is no detached, ego-free search for truth: the acquisition of knowledge or representation of reality is simply another way we expend our energy and thereby assert ourselves. In Joyce's case, his will to truth is what facilitates his striving for *arete* or power – his art is that by which he dominates and the will to truth is the means by which his art is produced and to a large extent that which distinguishes it and earns it its place as the latest in a series or tradition of innovations.

[281] W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971), p. 132.
[282] *Zarathustra*, Book II, § 12, 'On Self-Overcoming', p. 227.

* * *

One eye on the future

'Only our supermen can write the history of the future.'
-Joyce, 'Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages'[283]

Joyce's work offers a clear-sighted view of a city under colonial rule, populated by what he once scathingly called 'the gratefully oppressed' (*D*, 30) ranging in their opinions from happy acceptance (Molly), cynical rejection (Stephen) to slightly naïve hope (Leopold). It would be mistaken however to say that the work is really political in tenor. Politics are everywhere present but as in Flaubert this is all medium, *no message*. This is not to say that Joyce was wholly oblivious to politics – indeed he was knowledgeable regarding the nationalist milieu of Dublin and well read in socialist and anarchist thought – but that he never articulated any meaningful political position in his major writings. His opposition to didacticism and desire for balanced realistic portrayal foreclosed the possibility of his works conveying a political programme, and there is little reason to suppose he could have formulated one anyway. Of course, he had opinions and priorities like everyone else, and perhaps more antipathies than most. But criticism and sharp irony do not constitute an alternative to what one's opponents are advocating; they are simply a negation. Searching for signs of political preferences or ideas in Joyce's work is a rather profitless pursuit and the most that can be extracted from his letters are the man's own rather unimpressive and vague musings on a subject in which he showed little interest after 1912. The fact of the pervasive attention to politics in Joyce's work should be subsumed by his voracious will to truth – he represents people talking about politics in Dublin for the same reason he shows people drinking, singing, or urinating; that is what people in Dublin did. The only instances of the presence of Irish politics in *Ulysses* which cannot be explained solely by Joyce's realism I shall examine below, though even they refuse much more than

[283] *OCPW*, p. 125. I need hardly remark how Nietzschean this is.

vague politicised implications (i.e. a strong dislike of *some* aspects of nationalism). A very drunk Stephen Dedalus remarks that 'Ireland must be important because it belongs to me' (*U*, 16. 1164-5), a crass, egotistical statement undoubtedly but a more accurate reflection of his creator's will to power than the widespread misconception that *Ulysses* served anything or anyone other than Joyce's epic aspirations.

Yet, whatever about his ambivalent personal stance on nationalism, his novel *is* Joyce's attempt to write a national epic – an epic for a nation not yet a political reality at the time *Ulysses* is set in. In as much as *Ulysses* gives a wide-ranging, realistic vision of life in Dublin, massive in scale, it qualifies as that which it aspires to be. But *Ulysses* also subtly yokes itself to the political entity emerging during the years of its composition. In this, Joyce follows Virgil's *Aeneid*; the first great, consciously national epic, composed during the consolidation of the Augustan empire. But his manner of doing so is radically distant tonally from the gravity and clear-sighted patriotism that characterise the Roman masterpiece – Joyce's treatment smacks of Ovidian high-spirited playfulness and earthy Rabelaisian carnival. Joyce the ironist was not one to slavishly follow literary traditions, nor politicians for that matter. In choosing to depict the daughter of a British army man, born in Gibraltar and Bloom, with his unusual lineage, Joyce was something of a revisionist *avant la lettre* as it were, subtly undermining the myth of monoculturalism and rewriting of history that the revolution would bring about, but even this can be explained by the will to truth; after all, the point is not whether it is better to have loyalist leanings like Molly or be a nationalist like her husband, but to represent the past faithfully.

On two famous occasions in the *Aeneid*, Virgil allows the time he is writing in to impinge upon the past he is composing.[284] In books VI and VIII, Aeneas is given glimpses of the glory that will be Roman history (events future to him, but past and present for Virgil

[284] Though it should be noted that prolepsis is also present in the *Iliad*.

and his audience). Joyce was certainly familiar with these proleptic passages and in the twelfth chapter of his epic, he introduces a more subtle instance of such temporal discordance. Whereas Virgil is blatant in these visionary moments, the Joycean equivalent is but an intimation. Before examining it I will first show how the ground is laid for its intervention into the narrative.

In the eleventh chapter Ben Dollard gives his impassioned version of the rebel song 'The Croppy Boy' in a quayside bar to almost universal acclaim. The performance is underscored by Bloom's caustic thoughts on the men's enjoyment of the song ('The thrill they itch for' (*U*, 11.1083)), and their desire '[t]o wipe away a tear for martyrs that want to, dying to, die.' (*U*, 11.1101-2) This second comment takes him beyond analysis of the specific song into the wider issue of the general psychology of Irish republican martyrdom. Bloom's later thought that the song's hero 'must have been a bit of a natural not to see it was a yeoman cap' (*U*, 11.1248-9) is nothing short of blasphemy in this context. Having left the bar he finds himself gazing at Robert Emmet's picture and his famous last words. Emmet was quite literally the poster boy for republican martyrdom (he would be replaced by Pearse, later Sands). Bloom farts whilst reading his final speech – the pairing of two types of noxious gas. The feelings induced in Bloom by the song are his own (though Joyce certainly shared them), but the final riposte is unmistakeably satiric. The proximity of the song and the Emmet incident are too close to be anything but a meaningful, highly contrived coincidence: Joyce has gone out of his way to identify and deflate the cult of patriotic blood sacrifice.

The interpolations of the next chapter take their impetus in terms of content from what is going on in the pub. Bloom enters and soon becomes embroiled in an argument with the Citizen (abetted by Joe Hynes) about nationalist martyrdom (*U*, 12.479-501). We don't get the specifics of the argument, our narrator is thoroughly bored by the subject, but it ends

with the Citizen proposing a toast to the republican dead (*U*, 12.519). Faced with Bloom's intransigence, he remains defiantly bellicose: '-*Sinn Fein!* says the citizen. *Sinn fein amhain!* The friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us.' (*U*, 12.524-5) What follows is what Kenner describes as 'the longest single set piece in *Ulysses*'[285]. This execution scene is commonly labelled a parody of that of Robert Emmet; in the course of demonstrating why things aren't quite as straightforward as this, I will convey the significance of this passage.

This textual crux is Joyce's foreshadowing of the 1916 Easter rising. The idea might be Virgilian in origin, but the execution is anything but. This is truly gallows humour. There is an Emmet connection present, in as much as he was the prototype for the 1916 leaders, especially Pearse, but the condemned party certainly isn't him. Emmet's lover, as Joyce knew only too well, was named Sarah Curran. The fiancée here has the distinctly more Gaelic name of Sheila. The romantic rebel image had not stopped with Emmet; Joseph Plunkett was married hours before he was shot in 1916. Nevertheless, Sheila's swift engagement to the Englishman is undoubtedly based on Emmet's story – therein lies the confusion. The hero is as truly gaelicised or cultural nationalist as his beloved's chosen name, for he looks 'as if he were but going to a hurling match in Clonturk park.' (*U*, 12.645-6) Obviously, this reference also has temporal reverberations, as does the presence of the Dublin Metropolitan Police (*U*, 12.534): the G.A.A. and D.M.P. had little enough in common besides their nonexistence in 1803. The man 'presid[ing] on this sad occasion' (*U*, 12.670-1) shares both one of his many surnames (Maxwell) and a certain zeal in the punishment of native rebels (*U*, 12.671-2) with the British officer who was in command of putting down the rebellion and dealing with its ringleaders. Much emphasis is put upon the

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[285] Kenner, *Ulysses*, rev. ed. (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 93. Kenner singled this 'beplumed set piece' (p. 96) out for attention in discussing this chapter, rightly seeing that it was central. He points out the attention Joyce lavished upon it, constantly adding to it in countless revisions.

gargantuan size of the crowd, apparently the entire population of Dublin is present (500,000), and this is a feature unique to this interpolation – despite the long lists, no other part of the chapter has anywhere near as many inhabitants. The accounts of the gaelic sports revival meeting and boxing match soon after have no such inflation of the numbers of observers. This grotesque exaggeration is more than stylistically motivated: the overdetermined public execution in *Ulysses* – this fun-for-all-the-family spectacle to end all spectacles - stands as an ironic counterpoint to the secretive way in which the Easter rebels were dispatched, very much out of the public eye.

When Joyce was composing this chapter he asked Frank Budgen if he thought it was futuristic, Budgen got the wrong end of the stick and misinterpreted the question as being about aesthetic schools (he concluded that he thought the chapter more cubist than futurist!).[286] Budgen does not record Joyce's response, but we might guess he was somewhat disappointed - then again, Budgen was hardly an expert on Irish politics, and can be forgiven for missing Joyce's elusive allusions. The citizen's utterance of 'Sinn Fein' just before the interpolation is anything but coincidental.[287] The Easter rising was widely known as the Sinn Féin rebellion at the time; and Joyce deliberately places emphasis upon the party (not founded until 1905) and its leader which is vastly disproportionate considering their obscurity at the time. Hence the suggestion that Bloom came up with the Hungarian policy advocated by Arthur Griffith (*U*, 12.1574). Even if this is never precisely confirmed, Bloom certainly does know Griffith. This is hardly a Virgilian encomium, (Molly has some unkind thoughts about Griffith's appearance and adds an 's' to his name) but there is something of

[286] Budgen, p. 156.
[287] In an earlier draft Joyce, obviously aiming for the same future-foretelling effect but unsure of the method to employ, has the speaker forecast an Irish insurrection (this is clear from the context) and a war with Germany directly after '*Sinn Fein!*' is uttered: 'there's a war coming for the English and the Germans will give them a hell of a gate of a going. What they got from the boers is only what might call an hors d'oeuvre', *Joyce's Notes and Drafts for 'Ulysses': Selections from the Buffalo Collection*, ed. Phillip F. Herring (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), p. 169.

the prophecy in Bloom's describing this none too popular writer as 'the coming man', even if Molly reckons 'he doesn't look it thats all I can say' (18.386). Molly would have been better off betting on this dark horse than Sceptre; the odds against it were colossal. But she'd have had a while to wait before collecting her winnings, as it was to take the events of 1916 to push Griffith and his party to prominence.

A few months after *Ulysses* was published Griffith became the first Irish president. On the day *Ulysses* was published Joyce became the first Irish epic novelist.[288] Joyce could have it both ways; he could step back from Stephen Dedalus' more grandiose ambitions, and yet still try to fulfil them – scorn the notion of race, and offer the first accurate representation of Irish Catholic culture at the turn of the century (i.e. what was in his blood, figuratively speaking).[289] How do you *forge* the conscience of a race, we can ask, understandably puzzled. To which the only decent reply might be to cite another mystery: how can a work be experimental novel *and* national epic? And yet *Ulysses* is – thus Joyce *willed* it, and his gamble somehow came off.

[288] Fielding, with his comic prose epics, offers an important precedent in this respect. As with Joyce's admiration for the realism of Defoe, this shows how Joyce was continuing within a tradition rather than simply destroying one.

[289] 'I am one of the writers of this generation who are perhaps creating at last a conscience in the soul of this wretched race.' Joyce to Nora, letter of 22 August 1912, *L II*, p. 311.

4

To the Limits of Mimesis

I: THE NEW REALISM

‘Artistic form, correctly understood, does not shape already prepared and found content, but rather permits content to be found and seen for the first time.’

-Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*[290]

Ulysses is the apex of Joyce’s achievement as a realist writer. With it, Joyce took mimesis to its very limits. To understand how he did so, it is necessary to start at the centre of his mimetic practice and work outwards towards its self-interrogation. By examining the permutations of narrative technique individually, as they unfold, the persistence of the will to truth through each will be demonstrated.

Joyce asserted to Arthur Power that ‘from [*Ulysses*] you may date a new orientation in literature–the new realism’.[291] This designation nicely encapsulates both the fundamental commitment to the depiction of reality (the continuity of a tradition), and also the innovative, radical novelty of the book. In a sense, the technical originality of *Ulysses* entails a new vision of reality. Style is not something grafted onto content, a final lick of paint to brighten the work up – it is a way of seeing the world.

* * *

Perspectivism

parallax • n. 1 the apparent difference in the position of an object when viewed from different positions **2** Astronomy the angular difference in the apparent positions of a star observed from opposite sides of the earth’s orbit.

Leopold Bloom, who ponders parallax in *Ulysses* (*U*, 8.110) does not have the concise definition above to hand and registers his uncertainty as to the word’s meaning. It is to appear a further five times in the course of the novel but has ceased to concern Bloom.

[290] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 43.
[291] Power, p. 64.

Nevertheless, it will be a matter of some importance in what follows as it is an apt metaphorical point of departure for understanding the novelty of Joyce's realism.

Parallax concerns an *apparent* difference; it is in no way casting doubt upon the precise location (or indeed, existence) of the object in question. The dominant narrative technique of *Ulysses* is readily understandable as parallactic: we are given many different views of an object (Dublin; reality), mainly from two perspectives (those of Stephen and Bloom). Parallax is all about the play of perspectives – and so too is *Ulysses*.

Perspectivism, as we saw in the introduction, is of course one of Nietzsche's best known and most fiercely contested philosophical themes. It is perhaps most definitively stated in *The Genealogy of Morals*:

> There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be.[292]

Nietzsche is ridiculing the idea of a disinterested objectivity in the section from which this sentence comes, what we might call a god's eye view of the world. There is always someone directing the eye: vision is not detachable from the will 'behind' it. Whilst the focus will be on Joyce throughout, Nietzsche's radical questioning of the notions of subjectivity and objectivity will never be far from sight.

Reading *Ulysses*, we witness the dismantling of Cartesian dualism, a dualism which would distinguish between a bodily eye seeing and a mind's eye receiving (and interpreting) its images. Perception and thought cannot be so radically distinguished – Stephen's awareness of 'thought through [his] eyes' (*U*, 3.1-2) is a far better model. Our vision is always interpretive, and our experience is always perspectival. The mind-body dichotomy is swept away by the stream of consciousness.

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[292] *Genealogy,* III.12, p.119.

* * *

Parallactic mimesis

'To communicate a state, an inward tension of pathos, by means of signs, including the tempo of these signs – that is the meaning of every style; […] Good style *in itself* – a pure folly, mere "idealism," on a level with the "beautiful in itself," the "good in itself," the "thing in itself."'

-Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*[293]

The Joycean will to truth had only one logical artistic manifestation: *mimesis*, the representation or imitation of reality. In *Ulysses*, mimesis is strained to breaking point. For here it is no longer enough to simply show *what* the reality is (as in, say, *Dubliners*), rather *how* it is experienced. Whereas traditional literary realism sought to narrate normal lives, this new realism attempted to depict quotidian experience in its actual unfolding; to display the actual experience of *living*, rather than the cumulative narrative of life.

In this first part of the chapter, we shall examine what Joyce dubbed 'the initial style',[294] which continues until the tenth episode, and re-emerges in the thirteenth. This initial style is a blend of detached, elegant, and concise third-person narration and what I call *parallactic mimesis*: that is, the interaction of the imitation of different perspectives. Parallactic mimesis is the river made up of all the streams of consciousness. This 'narrative norm'[295] is far from pure or sharply divided between its elements however, as the streams of consciousness are partly composed of the third person narration. The latter persists throughout, with other effects being gradually layered upon it – it is the skeleton upon which Joyce builds the body of the text.

Joyce insisted on attributing his major narrative innovation (aside from the Uncle Charles Principle) to Edouard Dujardin's little-known *Les lauriers sont coupés*.

> '[I]n that book,' Joyce said, 'the reader finds himself established, from the first lines, in the thought of the principal personage, and the uninterrupted unrolling

[293] 'Why I write such good books', § 4, p. 265.
[294] Letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, 6 August 1919, *L I*, p. 129.
[295] The term used for the initial style by Karen Lawrence in her excellent *The Odyssey of Style in 'Ulysses'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 43.

> of that thought, replacing the usual form of narrative, conveys to us what this personage is doing or what is happening to him.'[296]

It should be immediately obvious from this comment how relevant Dujardin's book is to Joyce's work, but also how very different. Whereas 'from the first lines' of *Les lauriers* the reader is plunged into the protagonist's perspective, *Ulysses* begins with standard third-person narration. But once Stephen joins Buck on the tower top we are eased into sharing his perspective. Until the introduction of Bloom in the fourth chapter we only ever either see Stephen or (more commonly) see through his eyes; we never see through another character's eyes or see anything Stephen cannot see.

In order to elucidate the elements in the composition of Joyce's stream of consciousness, and to further show its distinction from, and technical superiority to, Dujardin's method, we will now examine two passages from their respective novels which are markedly similar in terms of content. Indeed, it is hard to believe that Joyce did not take direct inspiration from the following extract. Leopold Bloom, one of Joyce's two main characters, and Daniel Prince, Dujardin's narrator-protagonist, are both trying to get a good look at an attractive woman whilst maintaining a conversation.

> **1** Nous voici sous les arcades; près des magasins; dans la foule. **2** Si nous marchions sur la chaussée? Trop de voitures. Ici on se pousse; tant pis. Une femme devant nous; grande, svelte; oh! cette taille cambrée, ce parfum violent et ces cheveux roux luisants; **3** je voudrais voir son visage; elle doit être jolie.
>
> -Venez avec moi ce soir au théâtre...**4** C'est Chavainne qui me parle... Nous irons ensuite flâner une heure n'importe où.
>
> -Je vous ai dit que j'avais un rendez-vous.
>
> La femme rousse s'arrête devant la vitrine; un fort profil de rousse, oui; une mine très éveillée; des yeux peints de noir; à son cou, un gros nœud blanc; elle regarde de notre côté; elle ma regardé; quels yeux provocants! Nous sommes près d'elle. La superbe fille.
>
> [...]
>
> Nous nous taisons; je crois qu'il sourit; quelle niaiserie! La place du Palais-Royal. Et la jeune femme rousse, où est-elle? disparue; quel ennui! je ne la vois pas. Chavainne:
>
> -Qu'est-ce que vous cherchez?
>
> -Rien.

[296] Quoted in *JJ*, p. 519-20. From Valery Larbaud's 'Préface' to Dujardin's novel (Paris, 1924), p. 7.

Disparue. Tout cela par la faute de ce monsieur...[297]

1 This is the most obvious difference: Daniel has to tell the reader what is happening, the drudgery and implausibility of this in terms of a representation of consciousness is avoided by Joyce's use of the third-person narration. **2** Plausible interior monologue, adopted by Joyce in *Ulysses*. Note particularly the ellipsis in the answer to the question (not '*Il y a* trop de voitures'): ellipsis is perhaps the most obvious stylistic feature of the streams of consciousness in *Ulysses*. For example, **3** would almost certainly have been significantly shortened if it had appeared in Bloom's consciousness (e.g. Like to see the face. Bet she's pretty.) **4** The cumulative effect is that of being told something as it unfolds. With Joyce, it is far more akin to being shown it.

> **1** Mr Bloom gazed across the road at the outsider drawn up before the door of the Grosvenor. The porter hoisted the valise up on the well. **2** She stood still, waiting, while the man, husband, brother, like her, searched his pockets for change. Stylish kind of coat with that roll collar, warm for a day like this, looks like blanketcloth. **3** Careless stand of her with her hands in those patch pockets. **4** Like that haughty creature at the polo match. Woman all for caste till you touch the spot. Handsome is and handsome does. Reserved about to yield. The honourable Mrs and Brutus is an honourable man. Possess her once take the starch out of her.
> [...]
> -Why? I said. What's wrong with him? I said.
> **5** Proud: rich: silk stockings.
> -Yes, Mr Bloom said.
> [...]
> **6** Watch! Watch! Silk flash rich stockings white. Watch!
> **7** A heavy tramcar honking its gong slewed between.
> **8** Lost it. Curse your noisy pugnose... (U, 5.98-132, my underlining)

1 The first two sentences are in the third-person mode; as is **7**, which has, in addition, that distinctive vocabulary and precision Joyce brings to his descriptions. **2** The welding together of the third-person narration and the character's inner musings: parallactic mimesis throws up a series of permutations and blurrings, as well as standard inner monologue. Here (see underlined), the detached description is interrupted midway by Bloom's speculations on the

[297] Edouard Dujardin, *Les lauriers sont coupés* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), pp.43-4.

man's identity – as stated previously, perception and thought are inseparable. **3** Cleverly, Joyce has Bloom do the narration for him, so to speak; it is his perception and judgement that describe the woman's stance to us. **4** Bloom compares the woman with a memory. Memories as experienced by the characters are the principal means of giving them depth, and with Bloom in particular (since we have *A Portrait* for Stephen), it is almost the sole means of giving him a history without moving into exposition, i.e. of doing so mimetically. As such, it is remarkably effective. **5** A flash or train of thought; associations elliptically delivered. (A conjecture of the thought: 'She's very proud. This is probably due to her wealth, to which her silk stockings testify.') **6** The thrill of voyeurism, if only a glance thereof: sensuous enjoyment and its compulsive, driving force ('Watch!'). **8** An example of the unique vulgarity, its force distinctly muted now, that Joyce's realism entailed, and his sense of humour enjoyed (compare Daniel's equivalent above for a better measure of the extent of transgression). The iridescent richness and technical ingenuity of Joyce's prose convey a brilliant, *and highly plausible*, sketch of consciousness.

It is important to note before going any further that the abundance of ocular metaphors employed above must be recognised as metaphors. One has only to watch a film version of *Ulysses* or even just imagine one to realise how poorly a cinematic treatment would serve Joyce's initial style. *Ulysses* demonstrates that vision is nothing like a camera. In almost every film of a novel much of the text is lost, but with *Ulysses* almost everything that makes it distinctive and worthwhile in the first place inevitably is.

Parallactic mimesis is novelistic mimesis taken to a new extreme. Aside from one notable exception, discussed below, we are never *told* anything – just like in reality.

* * *

Potential problems of Joyce's poetics

Just as we share Stephen's view for almost three chapters (starting in the first paragraphs of the novel), we then share Bloom's for a further three. In the sixth chapter however, there are three brief incidents when we witness things Bloom is not privy to (*U*, 6.526-534, 690-738, 917-28). This chapter features the largest cast Joyce has yet worked with, and the camera (figuratively speaking) occasionally flits between its supporting characters. In the first two incidents, the opportunity is cleverly taken to clarify aporias in the reader's understanding of the narrative, without resorting to exposition. Firstly, a major aspect of Bloom's past is introduced, and tangentially the faux pas on the way to Glasnevin regarding suicide is explained retrospectively (*U*, 6.526-34). Then (*U*, 6.690-738), the genteel hostility of Bloom and his old rival John Henry Menton is presaged (in anticipation of the fuss over the latter's hat at the chapter's close). The third incident, Hynes' lament for Parnell, is something of a backward glance at, and melancholy coda to, 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' (*U*, 6.917-27). In the seventh chapter, after the initial scene-setting opening sequence, we are outside of parallactic mimesis on two occasions. The first time is in the gap between Bloom exiting and Stephen entering (7.436-506). It is difficult to see how this transition could have been achieved otherwise in this, the first chapter to feature both streams of consciousness. The second gap is almost too small to merit mention (*U*, 7.996-1001), the perspective had switched from Stephen to Bloom, and we stay with Myles Crawford as he hurries to move from one to the other. It is another bridging sequence. And finally, in the eighth chapter Bloom goes to the toilet and we wait for him in the bar, gaining insight from the gossip into the general attitude toward Bloom (*U*, 8.937-1028). None of the breaks are capricious or jarring. This is another advantage of the third person narrative skeleton, that such diversions are interwoven seamlessly and without undue disruption. If the novel had begun in the stream of consciousness these gaps would be perplexing. But we

are aware from the beginning that the novel is not intended to be wholly parallactic, and therefore can hardly be surprised when it steps out of the perspectives momentarily.

As a consequence of the extreme mimesis being practised the third-person narrative refrains from evaluative descriptions of characters or situations. There is one exception to this, and the adjective ascribed is pointedly insincere. It is in the final sentence of the second chapter: 'On his *wise* shoulders through the checkerwork of leaves the sun flung spangles, dancing coins.' (*U*, 2.448-9, my italics) Undoubtedly it was the desire to ironically contrast Deasy with the Homeric Nestor which forced Joyce into showing his hand on this occasion (though the irony works without knowledge of the Homeric counterpoint: Deasy is obviously not wise).

Another instance of Joyce breaking his own rules is altogether subtler in its reverberations:

> Mr Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liverslices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencods' roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine. (U, 4.1-5)

The initial sentence might momentarily deceive the reader acclimatised to the mimetic precedent into thinking that the narration is showing (*ate*) what Bloom is doing, rather than being a general statement about his tastes and appetite. The obliging specificity of the rest of the paragraph will appear teasing in retrospect: of all the things to be told! Yet this is the only instance. Its placement at the beginning of the second part of the novel is highly significant. Thus in an act of comic perversity, the hope of clear exposition or traditional novelistic practice (e.g. Mr Leopold Bloom had been married for x years), is held out, used for irrelevant information, and then snatched away. It is a far from satisfying introduction to Bloom. Henceforth however, on this slight acquaintance, we will have to live with him.

It need hardly be said at this point that I do not subscribe to the view that *Ulysses* has a different style for each chapter, an untenable notion stemming from the stranglehold the

schemata and sundry remarks of Joyce have all too often exercised upon criticism. Curiously, both Karen Lawrence and Hugh Kenner see the style of the first chapter as being somehow different from others in the initial style. Ignoring the flagrant contradiction that this brings into their stated positions (both see a continuity in style across the book's first half), we will now outline their argument and seek to dissolve it.

To do so, we will turn to Kenner's inspiration for his argument, which is in a passage of Wyndham Lewis':

> Mulligan asks the hero for his handkerchief. 'Stephen *suffered* him to pull out' the handkerchief, etc. The word 'suffered' and the bathos of the gesture involved in the offering of the pocket, are characteristic.
> Buck Mulligan 'turned abruptly his *great searching eyes* from the sea,' etc. Great searching eyes! Oh, where were the great searching eyes of the author, from whom no verbal cliché may escape, when he wrote that?. . .
> '"Then what is it?" Buck Mulligan asked impatiently. "Cough it up." Stephen freed his arm quietly.' Stephen does everything 'quietly,' whether he 'quietly' touches Mulligan on the arm or 'quietly' frees his own. He is a very quiet man indeed.[298]

Before engaging with Kenner and Lawrence, I wish to dispute Lewis' mocking denigration of Joyce. His first complaint is not to my mind stylistic. Lewis seems to be more objecting to Stephen's personality: even if the gesture is bathetic, that has nothing to do with the writing. The second criticism is biting and very amusingly voiced, and though I am not entirely sure how clichéd Joyce's phrase is, I am willing to concede its banality. The final criticism again seems directed at the character of Stephen (whom Lewis identifies with Joyce); he does not of course do everything quietly, he never quietly touches Mulligan on the arm for instance, and in fact this word is used of him only once aside from the example Lewis uses (*U*, 1.47). The overuse of adverbs such as 'quietly', if that *is* what Lewis is criticising here, will be dealt with below.

[298] From *Time and Western Man*, quoted by Kenner in *Joyce's Voices*, pp. 69-70.

Having earlier in *Joyce's Voices* used Lewis' criticisms to identify the Uncle Charles Principle, Kenner now proceeds to work from the above extract towards his own ends. There are, he claims, traces of 'Edwardian novelese' throughout the first chapter (though not extending beyond it), and this is apparently the style of 'the kind of novel in which Dedalus and Mulligan imagine they are characters', though no justification is given for this puzzling statement.[299] The logic at work here seems to be that the first chapter contains sentences that Kenner thinks are examples of bad or outdated writing; but Joyce was a genius and incapable of such gaffes, therefore he must have been being ironic and up to something else. Unsurprisingly, Kenner ascribes the blame (partially, at least) to his bête noire, Stephen. Thus any bits Kenner dislikes (e.g. 'great searching eyes') are to be ascribed to Buck or Stephen, the phrases being a result of the Uncle Charles Principle and caused by their self-perception. I do not see Kenner's extremely slippery position as being easily refutable; it is similar to the paranoia I mentioned in my discussion of *Dubliners*. However, I do believe that my model of parallactic mimesis is far more plausible and transparent, and that once it is accepted many apparent anomalies disappear (most obviously paranoia surrounding Buck's influence). To give a final example, Kenner sees the following sentence as symptomatic of Edwardian novelese: 'Two shafts of soft daylight fell across the flagged floor from the high barbicans: and at the meeting of their rays a cloud of coalsmoke and fumes of fried grease floated, turning.' I see the sentence as typical of the narrative norm and excellently written.[300] It is a perception of Stephen's described in the third person voice, *not* (as Kenner would have us believe) a descriptive sentence infected by Stephen's presence and therefore in Edwardian novelese (whatever that is). Kenner's insecurity about Lewis' skepticism regarding Joyce has led him into manufacturing parodies that only he can enjoy.

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[299] *Joyce's Voices*, p. 69.

[300] As Lawrence points out, so did Kenner at one point: he quoted it approvingly in *The Stoic Comedians*. See Lawrence, pp. 43-4, footnote 10. Lawrence herself agrees with my view of the sentence.

In contriving to explain away aspects he dislikes he has backed himself into a vacuum of irony – trying to champion the aspects of Joyce's style he approves of, and simultaneously absolve him of those he doesn't.

Lawrence's argument is based upon the Gilbert's schema's designation of the technic of this chapter as 'Narrative (young)'.[301] There is, she claims, a 'naïve quality' to a strand of the narration.[302] Of course, the fourth chapter is 'Narrative (mature)' in the same schema, but this is never mentioned. This is rather strange, considering there is held to be something more to these typically vague and unhelpful suggestions than simply the fact that the first is about young men, and the fourth about an older couple.[303] But perhaps the style of the fourth chapter is just the style proper, grown out of its immaturity. Lawrence's best characterisation of this parodic, naïve narrative strand is 'adverbial mania'; the profusion of adverbs and adverbial phrases, typically attached to the word *said*.[304] In the same vein, she writes of 'the repeated use of certain formulaic narrative constructions of which no student of creative writing, however inexperienced, would be proud.'[305] Yet in the apparently mature narration of the fourth chapter, we find: 'he said mockingly' (*U*, 4.30), 'the cat said loudly' (*U*, 4.32), 'He said softly (*U*, 4.52)', 'he said freshly in greeting' (*U*, 4.120), 'he said carefully' (*U*, 4.251), 'he cried suddenly'(*U*, 4.381). Any of these could have been used in place of the quotations Lawrence takes from chapter one to justify her claims. I certainly cannot deny that there are an abundance of adverbs and so on in chapter one, but there is also far more dialogue and general interaction between characters. Crucially, there is the presence of the particularly animated and theatrical Mulligan to be narrated, and this must be taken into

[301] Kenner also cites this as pertinent, *Joyce's Voices*, p. 69. Lawrence's argument, though different, clearly owes much to Kenner.
[302] Lawrence, p. 44.
[303] '[T]his description [narrative (young)], while it probably refers to Stephen to some extent, also applies to the quality of the narration', Ibid., p. 45.
[304] Ibid., p. 46.
[305] Ibid., p. 45.

account. I attribute any excessive verbiage or fussy diction (though I find little) to Joyce's desire for precision, and I still find this chapter remarkably well-written. One rather yearns for a critic like Lewis who would say otherwise without special pleading for Joyce's supposedly parodic intentions.

* * *

Because it was

'…when Dr. Daniel Brody asked Joyce later, "[…] why is [Bloom] the son of a Hungarian?" Joyce, taking off his glasses and looking at him casually yet with an air of pronouncement, replied, "Because he was."'

-Ellmann, *James Joyce*[306]

In *Ulysses* we are faced with a nimiety of detail, the detritus of Dublin 1904, and its utter refusal to *mean* anything. Hence the excessive symbol-hunting, the desperate grasping for some *reason* to justify all this defiantly intransigent insignifance on the part of Joyce's readers. The only explanation however is Joyce's voracious will to truth. Nietzsche thought that what humanity was unable to bear was not suffering, but its meaninglessness. Many of Joyce's critics seem to have been in a similar predicament with *Ulysses*.

Joyce had read Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and surely would have recognised that underlying all of the myriad examples of forgetting etc supplied was one central psychological notion: repression.[307] *Ulysses* was the most convincing depiction of consciousness in literature, but in Bloom it also included the most masterly and understated portrait of repression and masochism yet published. Flaubert and Tolstoy's focus in their novels of adultery had been on unfaithful wives, but Joyce turned to a knowing, acquiescent husband. So deftly is the issue handled, the overwhelming stylistic force helping to occlude it, that Joyce's muted study of quiet desperation makes his great realist models (one could

[306] *JJ*, p. 374.

[307] Freud's book might have also highlighted the associative nature of thought for Joyce. John S. Rickard gives a specific instance of Joyce employing an insight almost certainly directly gleaned from Freud's work; see *Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of 'Ulysses'* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 53.

add Ibsen and Dostoyevsky to this roll-call of honour), look almost melodramatic in comparison.

If Joyce's new realism wasn't to be outdone in terms of technique, neither was it to be trumped in terms of subject matter. The style screams innovation, the scenario whispers its modest verisimilitude, and we need to listen for both. What gives the later chapters of *Ulysses* such force is that Joyce was questioning a tradition he himself was at the forefront of. Why was showing Bloom going to the toilet or masturbating so radical when Ulysses was published? *Because it was*. The same answer applies to why it was written; *because such things were*, and Joyce was determined to record them.

* * *

Supplements

Appropriately for a chapter set in a newspaper office, the seventh chapter is interrupted by a series of captions in the style of the popular press. For the most part, these roughly summarise what follows as best they can. Occasionally they use a teasing air of invitation, as if trying to pique curiosity (e.g. 'WHAT WETHERUP SAID', '? ? ?' (*U*, 7.337, 512)), engage in humorous misdirection ('THE WEARER OF THE CROWN' (*U*, 7.14) refers to mailcars), or are blatantly ironic ('WITH UNFEIGNED REGRET IT IS WE ANNOUNCE THE DISSOLUTION OF A MOST RESPECTED DUBLIN BURGESS' (*U*, 7.77-9)).

The headings are not a scathing satire of the Dublin press, though they do amusingly expose its pretensions, but simply playful asides to the text; a supplement. The implications of this supplement, beyond its immediate comic function, are twofold. Firstly, by their very presence, these interpolations obviously highlight the artificiality or textual nature of the novel. Of course, if this were their sole purpose, they would be rather redundant and heavy-handed – who needs to be reminded that the text is a text? This is why the second, far subtler, meaning of the supplement is much more important: through the inadequacy of the headlines to encompass what is happening, and their blatant artificiality, parallactic mimesis is

implicitly valorised. Even if the authenticity of parallactic mimesis, which continues obliviously, is called into question by the headlines, it is nonetheless *more real* than them. For example, we would not be able to see the irony of 'WITH UNFEIGNED REGRET …', if we did not know that Patrick Dignam was 'really' an unemployed alcoholic. The humour is reliant on our faith in the initial style. The narrative norm is questioned by the supplement, but it is ultimately strengthened by its incorporation.

Two further, more unambiguous, emphases of the novel's textual status (to describe them rather reductively) in the ninth chapter retain the playful spirit of the captions. As with them, a move beyond pure mimesis follows naturally from the scenario; thus, a dramatic discussion of theatre is presently typographically in the form of a play (*U*, 9.893-954). Earlier, a decisive moment of Stephen's argument had been rendered in pseudo-Miltonic blank verse (in terms of lay-out; the dialogue is unaffected), with Stephen reprising his old role (from *A Portrait*) of Satan (*U*, 9.684-99). These textual in-jokes, along with the mildly mocking deployment of adjectives and adverbs scattered throughout, enliven this technically transparent but intellectually taxing episode. In both chapters parallactic mimesis is enhanced by these extraneous additions, never challenged. Monarchs were once so powerful they could employ jesters without fear of their power being seriously questioned; similarly, the initial style indulges itself with humorous supplements.

* * *

Parallax lost

The narrative norm has a strong finish in the bravura performance that is the tenth chapter. There, a panoply of perspectives from all over the city centre is skilfully rendered through the usual mix of streams of consciousness and third person narration. It is the predominance of the latter that allows a novel twist to be added by the effect of simultaneity between the vignettes. This is achieved through what Fritz Senn has cleverly dubbed 'the

interlocations'.[308] Perspectivism finally proves too confining and is stretched to breaking point: the thirty-one interlocations break its boundaries and signal its demise (for without these cuts to things outside the characters' perspectives, the chapter would mainly just be parallactic mimesis expanded). This is the first manifestation of a self-de(con)structive narrative impulse which will become increasingly prominent in the book. Before abandoning it, Joyce showed the great elasticity and technical dexterity of his initial style in a stylish, cinematically inspired kaleidoscope of characters' viewpoints.

The opening of the next chapter, the eleventh, is clearly a distinct departure from what precedes; what, then, is the nature and significance of this break? The baffling assemblage at the beginning is best described as an *overture*, a medley of phrases that, in variations, are repeated throughout the episode. They are analogous to the leitmotifs of a musical piece. This overture ends with the invocation to 'Begin!' (*U*, 11.63). Aside from the occasional discernable ironic or comic touch, pure mimesis has meant that the book hitherto has eschewed a narrative personality, but this 'Begin!' seems to herald the birth of something approaching one. Whereas before explanation was jettisoned for representation, this voice both gleefully misdirects (making it seem as if the barmaids are discussing Bloom, not someone in Boyd's (*U*, 11.180)), and is happy to clarify or confirm from time to time: 'That is to say she.' (*U*, 11.369), 'There was.' (*U*, 11.469), 'as said before' (*U*, 11.519), 'Eh? This is the jingle that joggled and jingled.'(*U*, 11.883-4). It also playfully poses questions, teasing us about Bloom's absence 'But Bloom?'(*U*, 11.133), or (using parentheses) about our confusion concerning the action, before clarifying: 'Upholding the lid he (who?) gazed in

[308] '[T]he interlocations, trademarks of the chapter, are also alternatives within the episode, paths not taken by the main narrative, but flashed on quickly as reminders of some action elsewhere, and, incidentally, reminders that numerous events are constantly taking place outside of one's perceptual range.' Fritz Senn, 'Charting Elsewhereness: Erratic Interlocations', in *Joyce's "Wandering Rocks"*, ed. Andrew Gibson and Steven Morrison (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), p. 159.

the coffin (coffin?) at the oblique triple (piano!) wires. He pressed (the same who presses indulgently her hand [i.e. Simon Dedalus])…' (*U*, 11.291-2)

The perspectival approach is willfully and thoroughly sabotaged in this chapter. Though we still have access to Bloom's interior monologue, parallax has now been lost. The third-person narration had been a key component of the depiction of Bloom's stream of consciousness (as well as acting as a sort of bridging device), and so its new-found caprice is somewhat detrimental to the presentation of his perspective:

> Bald Pat who is bothered mitred the napkins. Pat is a waiter hard of his hearing. Pat is a waiter who waits while you wait. Hee hee hee hee. He waits while you wait. Hee hee. A waiter is he. Hee hee hee hee. He waits while you wait. While you wait if you wait he will wait while you wait. Hee hee hee hee. Hoh. Wait while you wait. (*U*, 11.915-9)[309]

Are these Bloom's perception of, and thoughts about, Pat (as they would have been in previous sections)? It seems so initially, but we cannot really believe that even Bloom could be this repetitive, or so amused by such a lame joke; clearly something is going on beyond mimesis here. Bloom is no longer our sole focus: the narrative oscillates rapidly between him, the bar, and Boylan. But this is not the play of perspectives: there are no other streams of consciousness. Furthermore, the rendering of the barmaids' thoughts deliberately forgoes entering their viewpoint (the brackets used are crucial), instead giving glimpses from without, so to speak: '(flower in his coat: who gave him?)' (*U*, 11.366), '(flower, wonder who gave)' (*U*, 11.380) Two textual cruces are essential to understanding how far we are from the initial technique here. It is their deliberate arbitrariness which bespeaks their significance. A mention of the blind youth leads to a snatch of his dialogue from the previous chapter for no discernable reason: 'God's curse on bitch's bastard.' (*U*, 11.285) Similarly, Bloom's musing on Shakespeare is followed by an excerpt which is recognisably from

[309] It is worth remarking in passing, since it has not been before to my knowledge, at the aptness of Joyce's invented verb, 'mitred', for how napkins are arranged to look like bishops' mitres.

Stephen's stream of consciousness: 'In Gerard's rosary of Fetter lane he walks, greyedauburn.' (*U*, 11.907) The conclusion is inevitable: the logic underlying parallactic mimesis has been deliberately destroyed.

Even if one is rather nonplussed by its alleged musical qualities, as I for one certainly am, music is nevertheless indispensable for comprehending this forbidding chapter. Music is an essentially non-mimetic art, and that is why this episode constitutes such a radical change. Though mimesis is not wholly abandoned, the narrative manipulations are impelled by auditory associations and are non-mimetic in intention and function. Hence the text constantly teeters perilously on the brink of non-sense, but the break is never effected; the referential nature of language ensures literature can never attain the status of music. The impetus of the following sentences might be derived from sound, but we cannot help but read the sexual innuendos as well:

> Yes, Mr Bloom crossed bridge of Yessex. (*U*, 11.229)
>
> One rapped on a door, one tapped with a knock, did he knock Paul de Kock with a loud proud knocker with a cock carracarracarra cock. Cockcock. (*U*, 11. 986-8)

Sound can never be totally detached from sense: the onomatopoeia in the second sentence is reliant on our knowing what it is supposed to sound *like*, and it cannot preclude (indeed, it obviously invites) the imposition of surplus meaning. Having taken literary mimesis further than ever before in the first ten chapters, Joyce now explicitly engages with its antithesis (music; non-mimesis) and thereby exposes what lies at the core of textual mimesis, its purpose *and* mode: *referentiality*.

To call this musical, parodic or even just self-reflexive does not do it justice. It is a radical expansion of the self-sabotage we saw in the previous chapter. It is what I will call hereafter the *meta-discursive*: an auto-anatomy in which a text exposes or enacts the limits of the logic it operates under.

II: INCIPIT PARODIA

'Alas, it is not only the poets and their beautiful "lyrical sentiments" on whom the resurrected author has to vent his sarcasm: who knows what victim he is looking for, what monster of material for parody will soon attract him? […] Beware! Something downright wicked and malicious is announced here: *incipit parodia*, no doubt.'

-Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*[310]

The first ten chapters of *Ulysses* represented perspectives, but the twelfth chapter heralds the arrival of distinctive diegetic personalities: we now move from Joycean narrative to Joyce's narrators.[311] From here on, rather than imitate reality, Joyce will don various masks and imitate an array of discourses.

The twelfth chapter is the birth of parody in *Ulysses*. The initial style has bowed out and the satyrs take the stage, speaking in borrowed voices. The performance amuses so much that it rather forgets to instruct – and yet, amidst all the irony, there are ethical implications after all. It is typical of Joyce that he leaves us to draw them out from amidst the layers of irony ourselves. The modes, on the other hand, are unprecedented for him, utterly unlike anything he had previously attempted; he was now playing for belly laughs as well as arched eyebrows.

* * *

Thersites' tale

Since I see the nameless narrator of the chapter as nothing less than 'the Picture of a pernicious Creature of Wit'[312] that Pope found Homer's Thersites to be, I follow Joyce's lead and give our storyteller that name. However, I do so with the qualification that this

[310] 'Preface for the Second Edition', § 1, p. 33.

[311] As already discussed, there is a playful narrative voice (or departure from mimesis) of some kind in the eleventh chapter but it could not be called a narrator in the same way as those in the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth chapters.

[312] Alexander Pope, *The Iliad of Homer, Books I-IX*, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1967), note to line 255 of book II, p. 140.

Thersites is so amusing in his vicious cynicism that he is really closer to Shakespeare's clown in *Troilus and Cressida*, 'whose gall coins slanders like a mint.'[313]

Christening complete, we now address the tale told. The narrative method is best described by the Russian formalist term *skaz*: '[s]tylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration', or 'vernacular extraliterary narration'.[314] The word comes from the Russian for folktale, and that is precisely what is being imitated here: Joyce returns to the origin of narrative, and imitates the oral. It is generally in the past tense, except for moments of heightened excitement or vituperation when Thersites dramatically switches to the present tense. This is Joyce's attempt to become a voice in print.

The dispute in the 1970s between David Hayman and Herbert Schneidau about *when* precisely Thersites was telling this story came about through their failure to realise that this is a dramatisation of how the tale would be told *if* he were to do so.[315] Thersites' toilet break is central to resolving this issue. In it, the recounting is interrupted by phrases in parentheses which seem to be Thersites' thoughts on, or immediate reactions to, matters such as how much he's drunk, his painful urination, and Bloom's supposed winnings. Hayman denies this is inner monologue, and claims these thoughts in brackets are unprecedented, but we have already seen this technique in chapter eleven (see p. 168 above).[316] Joyce has here deliberately confused the time of narration and the time of the action: by interrupting Thersites' tale with his thoughts at the time of its happening he has betrayed the artificiality of the convention being used. In a similar vein, Thersites cannot

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[313] *Troilus and Cressida* (I.iii.193) in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Greenblatt et al. (New York: Norton, 1997), p. 1849. 'According to Stanislaus Joyce, the idea of Thersites as principal narrator of this episode came to his brother while watching a German performance of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* in Zurich.' *JJ*, p. 459, footnote.

[314] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 262, 266.

[315] Hayman argued that he is telling the story later in another pub ('Cyclops' in *Ulysses: Critical Essays*); Schneidau that he is rehearsing it in his mind (to tell later) *as* the action unfolds ('One Eye on Two Levels: On Joyce's "Cyclops"', *JJQ*, vol. 16, no. 1/2 (Fall 1978-Winter 1979), pp. 95-103).

[316] Hayman, 'Two Eyes at Two Levels: A Response to Herbert Schneidau on Joyce's "Cyclops"', *JJQ*, vol. 16, no. 1/2 (Fall 1978-Winter 1979), pp. 105-9, p.106.

quite remember certain details when narrating, 'Crofter or Crofton […] or Crawford' (*U*, 12.1589-91), but Ned Lambert gets the name correct, even if Thersites mixes it up again two lines later (*U*, 12.1632,4). This non sequitir both assures us that the dialogue is 'real' or being reported accurately, but is also a pleasing piece of verisimilitude; after all, who could believe in a flawless raconteur?

What makes this so very remarkable is that it is simultaneously an innovation and a deconstruction of this new narrative method. It is brilliant mimesis *and* it is meta-discursive. Searching for examples of *skaz* in fiction in English (and even Russian) prior to *Ulysses* is a rather fruitless venture. Perhaps the closest thing this episode has to a predecessor is Twain's masterpiece *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, told in a voice approximate to how Huck might speak, but even this novel must bend to convention in the end and implausibly purport to have been *written* by Huck himself. Conrad's way out was the frame narrative (also much used by Turgenev): having Marlow tell his story to someone. Marlow often proves implausible as a voice, but Thersites seems authentic. In this sense, Thersites' narration is a kind of qualified realism: it feels utterly genuine, whilst obliquely confessing its own impossibility. Joyce exploits a new arena for narration (to be developed in Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* and Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn* for instance), but also cannot help pointing to its logical absurdity.

* * *

Four modes of parody

'First, the etymology: *ode*, that is the chant; *para*, "along," "beside." *Parodeia*, whence *parodia*, would (therefore?) mean singing beside'

-Genette, *Palimpsests*[317]

[317] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 10.

Parody here is an umbrella term covering various forms of imitation of discourse. The 'beside' in the Greek signals parody's derivative nature – one can't have a counterfeit without an original. Parody is, like Socratic irony, an urbane dissimulation which is reliant for its effect on speaking in a voice not one's own (or airing opinions one does not hold) and trusting that the audience will discern the target of one's roundabout attack. I recognise four modes of parody, all of which have ironic potential to some degree. By distinguishing between these four manifestations of the parodic impulse as far as is possible given the resistance to categorisation therein, we will be in a position to better understand the complex discursive interactions in this chapter of *Ulysses*. This done, we can return to Thersites.

Pastiche is parody at its most basic level, in which there is no attempt to move beyond imitation of the hypotext.[318] Buck Mulligan's parody of Synge in the ninth chapter is (excellent) pastiche: '-It's what I'm telling you, mister honey, it's queer and sick we were, Haines and myself, the time himself brought it in. 'Twas murmur we did for a gallus potion would rouse a friar I'm thinking, and he limp with leching.' (*U*, 9.558-60) As we will see, there are numerous examples in the fourteenth chapter of *Ulysses*. In isolation, pastiche is mere tribute but if juxtaposed with a more realistic style, the shortcomings of the hypertext in comparison serve as an indictment of its model. For example, in *Don Quixote*, the parodies are not particularly exaggerated but they seem ridiculous because of the context; in this sense, contextual ironies can be generated, as there is a widening gap between appearance and reality. This is a familiar strategy in the realist novel tradition springing from Cervantes: it is a way of slaying rival modes or genres. Here, Joyce ridicules revivalist

[318] I use the terms *hypotext* and *hypertext*, both taken from Genette, throughout. The former is the discourse or text parodied, the latter the parody.

texts for their lack of realism, partly by placing them alongside the inimitable salt of the earth Dubliner, Thersites.

Burlesque is an imitation in which there is deliberate incongruity between form and content, i.e. the subject is rendered in an inappropriate style. The earliest example is the *Batrachomyomachia*, a battle between frogs and mice told as an epic poem. This is *high burlesque*, 'low' subject matter told in a comically ill-fitting high style. In *Ulysses*, Cunningham, Power and Crofton show up to the pub:

> Our travelers reached the rustic hostelry and alighted from their palfreys.
> -Ho, varlet! cried he, who by his mien seemed the leader of the party. Saucy knave! To us!
> So saying he knocked loudly with his swordhilt upon the open lattice. (*U*, 12.1593-7)

And so it goes on for a further twenty lines. *Low burlesque*, far less common in *Ulysses* and elsewhere, is when a 'high' (noble) character is depicted as lowly (e.g. Odysseus as a stupid slave). For instance, the extravagantly titled and presumably aristocratic 'provostmarshal, lieutenantcolonel Tomkin-Maxwell ffrenchmullan Tomlinson' (*U*, 12.669-70) speaks thus: '-God blimey if she aint a clinker, that there bleeding tart.' (*U*, 12.676) Burlesque, like pastiche, is non-ironic, but it does have a comic function which pastiche lacks. It is a joke without a victim, inasmuch as neither the style nor the content is truly denigrated; in the mock-epic *Batrachomyomachia*, the epic style is not mocked and neither are the mice and frogs. Here again, there is weak contextual irony – if we see the disparity between the form and content.

I am taking *travesty* as the term for ironic pastiche. Typically a slightly exaggerated manner in the hypertext betrays the critical intent. Though travesty makes ridiculous to achieve its ends, it does not necessarily ridicule (it can range from affectionate mockery to scornful denunciation). The first parody of chapter twelve is a travesty of legalese which creates obfuscation through overspecification (note the profusion of 'said', *U*, 12.33-51). It

does not go deeper than syntactical criticism. This rather sets the trend for what follows, and overall there is not much diversity in degree of criticism; the travesties are more amusing than devastating. Of course, travesty can also work by making fun of the content as well as the style; this is used, for example, in the amusing spiritualist séance skit (*U*, 12.338-73). Travesty is rhetorical irony writ large; its edge cuts through the imitation. Like irony, parody always has a target or model, but the edge in travesty ensures that there will be a victim; either the reader duped by the imitation, or the hypotext mocked.

Satirical parody is a parody in which irony is directed beyond the hypotext to something else (normally a social or political target). A *lampoon* is a scurrilous variety of this, directed at a specific person or persons, e.g. Buck Mulligan virulently attacks Eglinton and Atkinson using Yeats' poem 'Baile and Aillinn' (*U*, 9.1143-52) as a template (but not a target). Notably, the sole example of satire in the Swiftian vein is differentiated from the other parodies by being read aloud from a republican newspaper by the citizen, it recounts a visit between a native sovereign and British dignitaries, and is not criticising the style of the popular press (as many of the other parodies do) but the collusion of capitalism and colonialism (*U*, 12.1514-33).[319] Without knowing the subtext of imperialism in Africa and elsewhere, the edge would be missed and the fact that the piece is dripping in irony overlooked (rather like taking Swift's 'A Modest Proposal' at face-value).

Since we are here discussing parody, it is pertinent to briefly touch on the Homeric relation again. *Ulysses* is occasionally invoked regarding the mock-heroic, and Joyce cast as some modern version of Alexander Pope, with Bloom the object through parody of his sneering condescension. But the text simply will not sustain such an interpretation; unlike *The Rape of the Lock*, the tone is not consistent and Bloom is by no means ironically

[319] John Wyse Nolan asks if it is by Arthur Griffith (*U*, 12.1538) and though it is not, it certainly has something of his satirical style (which Joyce enjoyed).

portrayed as heroic. There is much of Thersites in Pope, although the latter valorised the very period and ethos which raised the former's ire, and the latter-day heir of his fastidious disdain is surely not Joyce, the least snobby of the major modernists. Implicit in the attempts to mock-heroicise *Ulysses* is the mistaken assumption, beginning with Pound and Eliot, that Joyce shared their despair at contemporary society and conservative nostalgia.

Clearly the aim of Joyce's parodies is not political or moral improvement, they appear to have no agenda beyond pervasive mockery. There is as little reason for some of the inflated styles as for the (somewhat tedious) Rabelaisian lists, aside from comic glee that is. The ironies proliferate pell-mell, but the cumulative effect is more exuberant *jouissance* than incisive critique. The overall strategy seems to be jokey juxtaposition – placing the grandiloquence of dated, clichéd literary or journalistic styles alongside the earthy brio of Thersites' caustic voice.

* * *

Ressentiment

In the second part of Goethe's *Faust*, Thersites appears onstage briefly but no sooner has he done so than:

> Lo, how this double dwarf, this ape,
> Curls in a ball, a loathsome shape!
> The shape turns egg-like! Wondrous view!
> Puffs itself out, and breaks in two!
> And strange twin-progeny appear . . .[320]

This is a fruitful way of seeing the twin paths of narration in the twelfth chapter: as both being aspects of Thersites. Thersites' two modes in *Troilus and Cressida* are invective (spitefully slagging everybody) and imitation (mockingly pretending to be dull-witted Ajax), and in *Ulysses* these two impulses are split.

[320] *Faust: Part Two*, trans. Philip Wayne (London: Penguin, 1959), pp. 51-2.

The twins can be seen as a double act, working in concert. The parodist builds them up: 'there passed an elder of noble gait and countenance, bearing the sacred scrolls of law and with him his lady wife a dame of peerless lineage, fairest of her race.' (*U*, 12.256-8) So his twin can knock them down: 'And begob what was it only that bloody old pantaloon Denis Breen in his bathslippers with two bloody big books tucked under his oxter and the wife hotfoot after him, unfortunate wretched woman, trotting like a poodle.' (*U*, 12.252-5)

Whilst the connection between the two strands is generally recognisable, if tenuous, the parodies nevertheless flirt with absurdity from time to time. There is a sort of nihilistic virtuosity for virtuosity's sake at work here, and an invitation to share in the delight, but with a spirit inimical to that of Swift, or even Cervantes. The instance where Thersites really lets his mask slip is infamous. It follows Bloom's rather weak attempt to define love (by antithesis): 'Love loves to love love. […] You love a certain person. And this person loves that other person because everybody loves somebody but God loves everybody.' (*U*, 12.1493-1501) What, then, is being parodied here? The *idea* of sentimentality, or the attitude, is being ridiculed, but no discourse is being parodied – there is no hypotext for this. Thersites, Shakespeare's 'damnable box of envy', is simply venting his spleen.[321] The twin impulses finally confirm themselves as identical in the final sentence, when they morph into each other: 'And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness at an angle of fortyfive degrees over Donohoe's in Little Green street *like a shot off a shovel*.' (*U*, 12.1915-8, my italics) Joyce exploits parody for his own purposes but also cannot help pointing to its parasitism; it is as much cowardice as legitimate *agon*, since with it one simply attacks others rather than forging one's own path.

[321]*Troilus and Cressida*, V.i.20, p. 1896.

Thersites is nothing more than a 'core of envy'[322]: in fact, Joyce remarked to Budgen that ''I' is a great admirer of Bloom.'[323] He epitomises what Nietzsche dubbed *ressentiment*. For him, stewing in his suppressed rancour, 'action is fundamentally reaction.'[324] He scorns all present but never expresses any opinion of his own and the parodies are, of necessity, parasitic: '[t]his *need* to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself – is of the essence of *ressentiment*'.[325] Importantly for our discussion here, Nietzsche explicitly links anti-Semites with this psychological phenomenon: 'They are all men of *ressentiment*, physiologically unfortunate and worm-eaten, a whole tremulous realm of subterranean revenge, inexhaustible and insatiable in outbursts against the fortunate and happy.'[326]

* * *

Anti-anti-Semitism

'Bloom Jewish? Yes, because only a foreigner would do. The Jews were foreigners at the time in Dublin. There was no hostility toward them, but contempt, yes, the contempt people always show for the unknown. Marion too, she is half-Jewish, on her mother's side.'
-Joyce, in conversation with Jacques Mercanton[327]

Joyce was here discussing the *general* anti-Semitic attitude of Dublin at the time, one of close-minded contempt, but in the twelfth chapter hostility *does* break out, as the key sociopolitical theme of the novel takes centre-stage. The pervasiveness of anti-Semitism has been heavily foregrounded since the novel's opening of course, Haines, Mulligan and Deasy have all aired their prejudices, but it is only at this point that the *ressentiment* that has been simmering beneath the surface erupts. It has been somewhat muted since the first section by the fact that we have mainly been within Bloom's perspective and naturally people are

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[322] Ibid., V.i.4, p. 1895.
[323] Budgen, p. 169. He continued: 'If you reread *Troilus and Cressida* you will see that of all the heroes Thersites respects only Ulysses. Thersites admires Ulysses.'
[324] *Genealogy,* I.10, p. 37.
[325] Ibid., pp. 36-7. *Ressentiment* differs from resentment. Nietzsche uses the word *ressentiment* to emphasise the role of the one doing the resenting and their jealousy and wish to usurp power from the resented rather than resentment which is more general and denotes the anger directed at the resented.
[326] *Genealogy*, III.14, p. 124.
[327] Jacques Mercanton, 'The Hours of James Joyce', in *Portraits of the Artist in Exile: Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans*, ed. Willard Potts (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1979), p. 208.

reluctant to display their hate-filled paranoia to his face. But he is aware of it nonetheless. Though uninterested in Zionism, taking the view of most assimilated Jews at the time that it is an impractical and unattractive proposition ('Nothing doing.'), he nevertheless recognizes that there is '[s]till an idea behind it.' (*U*, 4.200) That idea is simply anti-Semitism: early Zionism was not a straightforward desire to return to Palestine, but a belief that such a mass exodus was the only solution to anti-Semitism. The second sentence of the movement's key text, Theodor Herzl's *Judenstaat* (which Joyce owned), states: 'The world resounds with outcries against the Jews, and these outcries have awakened the slumbering idea [the restoration of the Jewish state].'[328] What Bloom is acknowledging is what Herzl calls Zionism's 'propelling force': the 'misery of the Jews.'[329]

It is perhaps difficult for us now to fully understand the depth of European anti-Semitism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nietzsche eventually overcame his own anti-Semitism to become one of the most outspoken critics of the phenomenon in this era (as well as seeing just how widespread it was). After admitting to and begging the reader's forgiveness for his earlier prejudice, he offered some typically clear-eyed insight:

> I have never met a German who was favourably inclined towards the Jews; and however unconditionally all cautious and politic men may have repudiated real anti-Jewism, even this caution and policy is not directed against this class of feeling itself but only against its dangerous immoderation, and especially against the distasteful and shameful way in which this immoderate feeling is expressed – one must not deceive oneself about that.[330]

[328] *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution to the Jewish Question*, trans. Sylvie d'Avidgor (London: Rita Searl, 1946), p. 7.
[329] Ibid., p. 8.
[330] *Beyond Good and Evil*, § 251, pp. 181-2. The same section includes Nietzsche's brilliant put-down of anti-semites' tendencies to dismiss and undervalue the Jews as well as to (often simultaneously) entertain paranoid conspiracies: 'That the Jews *could*, if they wanted – or if they were compelled, as the anti-Semites seem to want – even now predominate, indeed quite literally rule over Europe, is certain; that they are *not* planning and working towards that is equally certain.'

Joyce managed to either resist or overcome cultural inculcation into anti-semitism. Through reading and his interaction and friendships with Jewish people in Trieste, he came to overcome his (understandable) ignorance.[331] Having done so, he wrote his anti-anti-Semitic, though not necessarily philo-Semitic, epic. *Ulysses* is more a condemnation of an irrational impulse than a celebration of any religion or people. This is why Bloom is so thoroughly assimilated and (as many critics have noted and puzzled over) *un*Jewish – the primary concern is to register reactions to one perceived as a Jew rather than to explore what it is to be one. Hence in chapter twelve we are completely outside of Bloom's consciousness; to adapt one of Sartre's essay titles, this is *a portrait of the anti-Semites* (Thersites, the citizen et al.), not a portrait of the Jew.

Bloom is uncircumcised, has been baptised and raised Christian, and is an atheist. Furthermore, his mother is not Jewish (and Jewish descent is matrilineal). Yet, despite all of this, 'he cannot choose not to be a Jew' in the eyes of his fellow Dubliners.[332] Joyce may have gained insight into this plight through a book he owned, Maurice Fishberg's *The Jews*, in which Georg Brandes (whom Joyce admired) is quoted thus:

> As a rule, writers when speaking of me refer to my Jewish origin. I may remark *en passant* that there is no danger that I should overlook in which religious community I was born. I confess that if all my life I were not reminded of this fact by others, I should have forgotten it, so little significance has it had for me.[333]

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[331] John McCourt provides the most extensive account of this process, in *The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste, 1914-1920* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2000). Neil Davison, in the best book on the subject of Joyce and Jews, devotes a chapter to how Nietzsche's writing led to Joyce's having a more positive conception of Jews. However, his case is weakened by his presumptuousness, as he takes it for granted that Joyce had read practically all of Nietzsche's work. Nevertheless the basic point (that Nietzsche contributed to Joyce's understanding of the Jews and Judaism and to the dangers of anti-semitism) cannot be discounted. See *James Joyce, 'Ulysses', and the Construction of Jewish Identity: culture, biography and "the Jew" in modernist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 5.

[332] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Portrait of the Anti-Semite*, trans. Erik de Maury (London: Secker & Warburg, 1948), p. 75.

[333] *The Jews: A Study of Race and Environment* (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1911), pp. 467-8.

Amongst Joyce's notes for this episode is one stating simply 'the jew hates the jew in the jew'.[334] I would suggest that Bloom's complex relation to this strand of his heritage is best understood through Sartre's astute observation that '[t]o be a Jew is to be flung into, and *abandoned* in, the Jewish situation, and at the same time, to be responsible in and through one's person for the destiny and very nature of the Jewish people.'[335] In the eyes of the anti-Semites Bloom is not an individual but a type, *the* Jew. Hence his pacifism is not treated as a philosophical or political decision (whereas John Wyse Nolan's similar views are) but as symptomatic of his Jewish unmanliness (Jews were commonly regarded as somehow female). Likewise, he is stingy because he is a Jew, and because he is a Jew he is stingy. He is forced to be the Jew, and hence his final word in this chapter, though he does not consider himself Jewish, is: 'Christ was a jew like me.' (*U*, 12.1808-9) Irony at the citizen's expense is perhaps too heavyhanded here ('-By Jesus, says he, I'll brain that bloody jewman for using the holy name. By Jesus, I'll crucify him so I will.' (*U*, 12.1811-2)), but the farcical air cannot dull the serious implications of the entire incident. Bloom is identified with Christ and Elijah in the final, biblical burlesque 'because the situation which he must assume and live within is quite simply that of martyr.'[336]

It is *ressentiment* which unites the drinkers against the hated other; in fact, it is probably the only thing Thersites and the citizen have in common besides alcoholism and a way with words. Joyce is anything but subtle in his exposé of the psychology of prejudice. He goes out of his way to debunk stereotyping: Bloom is only present to help the Dignams further (he has already given a very generous donation) and far from trying to avoid buying drinks he is in a sense already getting rounds in, since Hynes is using money owed to Bloom to stand them. It is perhaps Bloom's finest hour: he faces down both the citizen's machismo

[334] In *Joyce's 'Ulysses' Notesheets in the British Museum*, ed. Phillip F. Herring (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1972), p. 119, line 11.
[335] Sartre, *Portrait*, p. 75.
[336] Sartre, *Portrait*, p. 76.

and the Thersitean twins' corrosive mockery. Rather than cast a Jew as a type (as *the* Jew), Joyce shows how others try to do so and asks us to appreciate the injustice.

Thersites is one of Joyce's finest creations, and certainly his funniest. In him Joyce has captured perfectly the dangerous charm of Dublin wit – devilishly funny, but always derogatory, and ultimately, demeaning. The citizen is probably the closest that Joyce has strayed toward allegory in this novel; the name suggests his representative nature. It is extremely hard not to see him as symbolising the republicanism of the day, and of course, this is precisely how he wishes to be seen; he has sacrificed his individuality, his humanity even, to the cause. He would rather be a caricature than a character. What links Thersites - apathetic, scornful, and friendly with the police - with the citizen is their cowardly hatred of otherness, and that, and not politics, is what the chapter is primarily about.

* * *

Victims

'What makes most people's lives unhappy is some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable or misconceived ideal.'

-Joyce, in conversation with Arthur Power[337]

The thirteenth chapter begins with, and sustains, a pastiche of Victorian romantic fiction, but as the focus shifts to Gerty MacDowell the Uncle Charles Principle begins to infiltrate this clichéd discourse:

> Her figure was slight and graceful, inclining even to fragility but those iron jelloids she had been taking of late had done her a world of good *much better than the Widow Welch's female pills and she was much better of those discharges she used to get and that tired feeling.* (*U*, 13.83-7, my italics)

The sentimental narration will increasingly lapse into Gerty's idiolect and is also inflected by other modes which have formed her blinkered worldview, those of popular advertising and women's magazines: 'because it was expected in the *Lady's Pictorial* that electric blue would be worn' (*U*, 13.150-1) The narrative shifts between the scene on the beach and a

[337] Power, pp. 113-4.

retreat service at a nearby church, as if to suggest the pervasive power of Catholicism (evident in Gerty's piety). This chapter reintroduces parallactic mimesis (we get Gerty's perspective, then Bloom's, with interlocations at the end), but though Bloom's half is in the initial style, Gerty's is filtered through parody.

'But who was Gerty?' (*U*, 13.78) She is an unemployed twenty-two year old woman, living with her parents. Her education has been limited (*U*, 13.100). Her father is a heavy drinker and beats his wife and possibly Gerty when drunk. She is fond of shopping and reading and takes great pride in her appearance. She was injured in an accident and now, much to her chagrin, walks with a noticeable limp. She has recently found out that Reggie Wylie (whom she had hoped to marry) has gotten over his boyhood crush on her and is no longer interested.[338] Her main ambition is to be married, but her prospects are grim. Displaying herself for a middle-aged man to masturbate over and being kissed by a child might well be the pinnacles of her love life.[339]

It is a bleak picture. Hence S.L. Goldberg for one feels that the mocking parody is rather too much of an affront: '[i]f we once think of Gerty with any compassion as a human being [...] we may conclude that Joyce's ironic parody is breaking a butterfly on its wheel.'[340] But *is* Gerty the victim of Joyce's irony? I think not. Firstly, crucially, it is not a travesty (an 'ironic parody'), but a pastiche (as defined above: the imitation of a hypotext). Many passages (basically any devoid of the Uncle Charles Principle) could easily be mistaken for excerpts from Maria Cummins' *The Lamplighter* or other nineteenth century novels of that ilk. But the effect of the entries of Gerty's voice, bitter and scornful of her companions, is to highlight the inadequacy of this pastiched style – its idealisation is undermined from within. So it is the hypotext being ridiculed, not Gerty. The narration is neither stream of

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[338] Reggie is studying for the Intermediate examination, as Gifford notes 'the implication is that [he] is at most 16 or 17 years old.', p. 386.
[339] Reggie once kissed her at a party 'long ago', but 'he was still in short trousers' (*U*, 13.201).
[340] *The Classical Temper: A Study of James Joyce's 'Ulysses*' (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), p. 141.

consciousness or straight parody but a blend which suggests how Gerty has been shaped by her reading. The point goes deeper than merely dismissing this kind of fiction as insufficiently realistic: Joyce is demonstrating how the illusions and expectations it fosters are harmful and inevitably lead to disappointment. It is a rather bittersweet tragicomedy, in which we laugh at the excellent pastiche but lament Gerty's fate. Gerty is a victim of the society she lives in and the discourses which have nourished her, and those discourses in turn are Joyce's victims.

Bloom's half of the chapter is where Gerty's flights of fancy come home to roost. The initial style seems even more shockingly realistic after the sugared tones of the parody, though admittedly its interest has rather palled at this point. Pointedly, the majority of Bloom's cynical reflections centre on sex and marriage. Joyce sees to it that Bloom comprehensively smashes every hope and dream Gerty cherishes. In fact, the effect is that of overkill: we already have our victims, dancing on their graves seems a bit much.

* * *

The multifarious art of pastiche

'I have many stylistic possibilities – the most multifarious art of style that has ever been at the disposal of one man.'

-Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*[341]

In setting out to write the fourteenth chapter Joyce seemingly had two ambitions in mind, neither of which were adequately brought to fruition and should properly be left to languish. These are what I will call the embryological and evolutionary impulses – that the chapter should mirror the development of the foetus in embryo, and concomitantly that the styles should imitate the evolution of English prose. The first was pretentious and pointless, symptomatic of an overweening urge for ingenuity, and is so irrelevant to a reading of the novel that its only life is in monstrously convoluted scholarship. The second was scarcely

[341] 'Why I write such good books', § 4, p. 265.

possible but is discernable in the structure of the chapter; it lives on as a suggestive, though hardly adequate, description of the tenuously chronological series of styles utilised. It is however, to my mind at least, a dangerous, unsteady designation. It can lead to perplexing questions such as the implications of this Darwinian term (is Carlyle, the last writer parodied, to be seen as most apt for the environment, as 'fitter' than Ruskin, Pater et al.?), and even to the eugenicist-tinged (and Eliotic) imprecations of Stuart Gilbert on the closing paragraphs: 'Thus, after long labour, from precedent to precedent, the mountains have brought forth – a grinning golliwog, *enfant terrible*, the language of the future.'[342] I would prefer to see the chapter as a perspectival pageant, wending its way through sundry stylistic phases and through parody allowing us to look at the art of style afresh. The chapter illustrates nothing more controversial than the notion that '[a]s life changes, the style to express it must change also.'[343]

Roddy Doyle once impishly suggested that what *Ulysses* needed was a good editor, and if I were to be landed with such a chore I have no doubt where the knife would first fall. The first seventy lines of this chapter are wholly superfluous and only there due to the highly questionable evolutionary concept. The three thrice repeated opening invocations are tedious nonsense. Presumably the following paragraphs are, together, a misguided attempt to display the two major sources of English: Latin and Old English. Only with the entrance of Bloom in the seventy-first line and the resumption of narrative proper does the pageant really begin. We can only appreciate the pastiches once we have a firm basis for comparison: the incongruities emerge when we see the characters beneath their changing costumes. Our point of *reference* throughout is the Dublin we have seen through parallactic mimesis.

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[342] Gilbert, p. 304.
[343] Joyce in Power, p. 91.

The first pastiche that could be deemed reasonably successful is that of Sir John Mandeville (*U*, 14.123-66). Much that has gone before has been hampered by Joyce's need to manufacture an approximation of the language he is attempting to imitate: rather than writing in Old or Middle English or Latin he has been doing an impression of an overly syntactically faithful translation of it, peppered with archaic words to lend authenticity. But by entering into the style of Mandeville's *Travels* he has hit upon a feasible model for imitation. For the first time he is able to go beyond linguistic impersonation and engage fully with form and content. Thus, Bloom becomes a traveller entering an unfamiliar castle who has had extraordinary adventures with monsters ('he was sore wounded in his breast by a spear wherewith a horrible and dreadful dragon was smitten him' (*U*, 14.129-30)), and is confronted with exotic sights ('in the castle was set a board that was of the land of Finlandy and it was upheld by four dwarfmen of that country but they durst not move more for enchantment' (*U*, 14.141-3)). The pastiche is amusing here because it exceeds the imitation of vocabulary and sentence structure (at times rather too close to Malory for comfort) and allows us to see from Mandeville's perspective, wherein the familiar, whether a bee sting or tin of sardines, becomes comically strange.

It is something of a rule of parody, and an instructive one with regard to the notion of style, that success depends on aping form *and* content. More often than not, one finds that the parodist (Max Beerbohm's classic *A Christmas Garland* is a good example) treats similar *situations* to his target. This is perhaps why the sections in an amalgam of Elizabethan voices (*U*, 14.277-428) leading up to the masterly take-off of Bunyan's righteous religious rancour (*U*, 14.428-73) are, if not failures, certainly not funny or particularly sharp. Commentators frequently disagree on who precisely is being imitated, and one gets a patchwork period flavour rather than the tang of perfect pastiche. It is notable

that they contain more speech from the characters than the Mandeville and Bunyan parts and no ‘authorial’ comment.

Whereas the Mandeville piece worked through incongruity, the Swift pastiche relies on the most contrived assimilation of hypotext and hypertext in this chapter. We have seen such deliberate coincidence of interests before; the religious crises of the Elizabethan era had been mirrored, or hinted at, in Stephen’s theological improprieties and its pious prose in his biblically laden discourse, but here the difference is that the characters themselves ‘create’ the Swiftian story. In the midst of the Defoe pastiche, the drinkers collaborate upon an allegorical fable unmistakably in the mould of the Dublin Dean (*U*, 14.581-646). The papal bull is personified; just as Jack, Peter, Paul are embodiments of Christian faiths in *A Tale of a Tub*, the bull represents Catholicism in Ireland, and his conquests its steady domination. Lord Harry, initially King Henry II, becomes Henry VIII, discovers himself a descendant of bulls (*U*, 14.627-9) and, like Gulliver with the Houyhnhnms, accordingly begins to imitate one (an allegory of the English reformation). The pastiche perfectly captures Swift’s scathing denunciations of English mismanagement of Ireland and his scorn for Catholicism, and does so in the manner of his synecdochic satires. The piece is a brilliant, scabrous joke and, far from being at Swift’s expense, is rather a tribute to his abiding genius.

Indeed, none of the parodies are travesties, but pastiches. Nevertheless, it is clear that Joyce was rather out of his depth with this chapter – he simply did not know many of the writers well enough to convincingly parody them. The parodies tend not only to lack an ironic edge, but also a point. Rather than an indictment of the canon Joyce mounts a display of his rather limited gift for mimicry and the multiplicity of styles at his disposal. He even inexplicably includes a paragraph in the convoluted style of chapter sixteen (*U*, 14.1173-97). Arguably, the pasticheur is not merely being self-indulgent however, as the cumulation allows us to question each – the limits of all are foregrounded by their coexistence. All style

is perspectival, thus discussion of pure prose style is redundant. This is perhaps what Joyce was referring to when he complained that ‘a lot of nonsense is talked about style’.[344] Style is necessarily selective - someone is training the eye - and this selection is as important as syntax, in a sense they are mutually determinant. The pastiches all affirm the inextricable tie between style and subject matter. For instance, Joyce greatly admired Newman’s prose, but the thought is not separable from his graceful sentences; could Joyce have convincingly parodied Newman without touching on religion at all? Fashion is ephemeral, but the style is the man himself. Newman is still a cardinal, even naked.

Direct speech has hitherto been the norm in *Ulysses*, and as in Joyce’s previous works, has been indicated by a long hyphen, but this is used only three times in this chapter, each for a snatch of song (*U*, 14.317, 405-8, 649-50). The songs have been unaffected by the pastiche, unlike the reported speech. There has been much direct speech, though without quotation marks or the French dash, and this speech has been clearly identifiable as such (‘he said’, etc.). When the pastiches end, we have nothing but direct speech, but the speakers are not identified or their situations described, and there are no dashes or quotation marks (*U*, 14.1440-1591).[345] It is as if someone unable to differentiate between voices is transcribing the conversation of the drunken carousers. Throughout the pastiches we have strained to hear what is *really* being said by the men, now we are being given it - but without that which has made it something more than a drink-fuelled din: narration. The pastiches often had a recognisable authorial voice, whether Junius’ disgusted castigation or Carlyle’s hortatory bluster, whereas parallactic mimesis aimed to eliminate this through representing the perspectives of the characters. If the pastiches have shown how far Joyce’s mode is from *some* of his forebears, the deliberately baffling slew of slang which follows reminds us, in

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[344] Budgen, p. 179. Budgen notes that the comment was made in regard to this chapter of the novel.

[345] John Noel Turner, in an admirable work of scholarship, has attempted to decipher what is going on here: ‘A Commentary on the Closing of "Oxen of the Sun"’, *JJQ*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Fall, 1997), pp. 83-111.

a meta-discursive move whereby the parameters of his mimesis are invoked, how much he still has in common with what went before. Parallactic mimesis is about representing reality, not trying to transcribe it (absurd anyhow). The final paragraphs aim to record, not represent - there is, at last, no perspective; we are stumbling after the revellers in the dark, microphone in hand. The only escape from being perspectival is blindness.

III: STAGING THE SUBCONSCIOUS

'In my Mabbot Street scene […] I approached reality closer in my opinion than anywhere else in the book, except perhaps for moments in the last chapter.'

-Joyce, in conversation with Arthur Power[346]

The reign of parody finishes with Stephen's mocking take-off of an American evangelist's exhortatory sermon at the close of the fourteenth chapter. But *parallactic* mimesis does not return to replace it; it too has had its time. Instead, we are presented with drama, *the* mimetic genre. Paradoxically, Joyce employs the trappings of that most externalised of literary forms to explore the innermost depths of consciousness. The play's the thing wherein he'll catch the conscience of the living, those 'subterranean complexities which dominate the average man and compose his life.'[347]

'[C]onsciousness *is* a surface'[348], as Nietzsche constantly emphasised, and having portrayed it with unprecedented accuracy through parallactic mimesis, Joyce was now 'anxious to explore the hidden world, those undercurrents that flow beneath the apparently firm surface.'[349] The fifteenth chapter is the outermost bounds of realism – an advance, an expansion, even its *ne plus ultra* – not its repudiation.

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An armchair psychologist

'Never yet has a *deeper* world of insight revealed itself to daring travellers and adventurers: and the psychologist who in this fashion 'brings a sacrifice' – it is *not* the *sacrifizio dell'intelletto*, on the contrary! – will at least be entitled to demand in return that psychology shall again be recognized as the queen of the sciences, to serve and prepare for which the other sciences exist. For psychology is now once again the road to the fundamental problems.'

-Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*[350]

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[346] Power, p. 86.
[347] Ibid., p. 85.
[348] *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am so Clever', § 9, p. 254.
[349] Power. p. 85.
[350] § 23, p. 54.

Nietzsche, with typical frankness, claimed that 'a psychologist without equal speaks from my writings'.[351] However immodest such an assertion might be, Nietzsche was certainly an extremely astute observer of human behavior and as much a psychologist as a philosopher. He considered Dostoyevsky alone to have come near his achievement.[352] Nietzsche acknowledged, as Freud was later to, that novelists were the foremost recorders of psychological actuality (aside from himself, of course), and he also praised Maupassant and Stendhal on this score. Here we see two principal sources of Joyce's psychological acuity converge – Nietzsche, of whom Freud remarked that 'the degree of introspection achieved by [him] had never been reached by anyone, nor is it ever likely to be reached again', and realist fiction, of which Joyce's knowledge was naturally considerable.[353]

As many commentators have noted, and he himself admitted, Freud was not the discoverer of the unconscious, but rather its great publicist and systematiser.[354] By bringing it within the provenance of science, he ensured the concept a fair hearing at long last. Nietzsche has a strong claim to being the most strident and important champion of its importance prior to Freud, and it seems likely that it was through him that Joyce first encountered the idea. In *The Gay Science* for instance, Nietzsche lamented 'the ridiculous overestimation and misunderstanding of consciousness'[355] and asserted that 'the greatest

[351] *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I write such good books', § 5, p. 266.
[352] '[Dostoyevsky was] the only psychologist […] from whom I had something to learn: he ranks amongst the most beautiful strokes of fortune in my life, even more than my discovery of Stendhal.' (*Twilight of the Idols*, 'Skirmishes of an Untimely Man', § 45, p. 549) Joyce held a similarly exalted view of Dostoyevsky (and for similar reasons): '[H]e is the man more than any other who has created modern prose, and intensified it to its present day pitch.' Power, p. 69.
[353] Quoted in Ronald Lehrer, *Nietzsche's Presence in Freud's Life and Thought: On the Origins of A Psychology of Dynamic Unconscious Mental Functioning* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 5.
[354] See, for instance, L.L. Whyte's comprehensive *The Unconscious before Freud* (London: Julian Friedmann, 1978)
[355] *The Gay Science*, § 11, p. 85.

part of our spirit's activity remains unconscious and unfelt'.[356] He would never tire of repeating this fundamental point.

Of course, Joyce's major fund of psychological insight came from careful observation of himself and those around him. Hearing a friend was to attend a lecture by Pierre Janet, he advised: 'You could learn as much psychology from yourself as from those fellows.'[357] He emphasised the importance of psychology from early on, Stanislaus remembered that '[h]e regarded psychology, which he was then studying [1902], as the basis for philosophy'.[358] Indeed, Stanislaus' description of the youthful epiphanies is more insightful in this regard than his brother's pseudo-Aquinian explanations: 'these were in the beginning ironical observations of slips, and little errors and gestures – mere straws in the wind – by which people betrayed the things they were most careful to conceal. […] The revelation and importance of the subconscious had caught his interest.'[359] Stanislaus' reminiscences are inaccurate as far as the extant epiphanies are concerned and naturally coloured by what was to follow, but even if Joyce's epiphanies were not particularly revelatory regarding the *significance* of what was recorded, they do reveal that he felt his careful observation of seemingly unimportant minutiae to be literally noteworthy. For Joyce, as for Freud, nothing was too trivial to escape notice.

As we have already seen, Joyce owned several Freudian works, and he attempted to (and probably did) obtain others. Several of his friends could have lent him, and certainly did discuss with him, books by Freud and his followers.[360] He could scarcely have ignored

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[356] Ibid., § 333, p. 262. This is a constant, major theme of Nietzsche's (particularly prominent in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*).
[357] Mary and Padraic Colum, *Our Friend James Joyce*, p. 134.
[358] *My Brother's Keeper*, p. 181. Joyce is here (probably unknowingly) echoing a view of Nietzsche's.
[359] Ibid., pp. 134-5. Stanislaus makes several dubious assertions concerning what his brother was trying to achieve with these epiphanies, which, without evidence, have to be dismissed as retrospective invention.
[360] Ellmann notes that Joyce discussed Freud with Paolo Cuzzi, who was reading him (c. 1911), and that Joyce probably first heard of psychoanalysis from 'Ettore Schmitz [Italo Svevo], whose nephew, Dr. Edoardo Weiss, introduced [it] into Italy.', *JJ*, p. 340 The extent of Schmitz's own interest in the field should not be underestimated: it is writ large in his fiction. Joyce also discussed the topic with Oscar Schwarz (*JJ*, p. 382). In 1919 Joyce was writing to Budgen to complain that a promised copy of Jung's *Wandlungen der Libido* had

this aspect of the zeitgeist, any more than he could have avoided Nietzsche a decade before; after all, when he lived in Zurich 'you couldn't escape it.'[361]

Arguably Freud's greatest innovation was not revealing the existence of the unconscious, but demonstrating that dreams were a means of accessing and interpreting it. Despite his many disavowals and denigration of Freud and his profession, Joyce *was* influenced by this remarkable idea. Caught up in the mystical haze emitted by Yeats and A.E., Joyce had followed their example and recorded his dreams: but these were considered revelatory in the pre-Freudian sense – portentous, or emanations from the beyond. The spiritual aspect swiftly fell away, but over a decade later Joyce was recording his own dreams and those of his wife and others.[362] These interpretations show clearly Freud's influence. It may be that Joyce had continued to record his dreams from 1902 onwards, but it is far more likely that his interest had abated and then was revived by exposure to Freud's intriguing theories. As his interpretations attest, it is overwhelmingly likely that Joyce was familiar with *The Interpretation of Dreams*. His protests too reveal his knowledge; for instance, his complaint to Schwarz about the mechanical nature of Freud's symbolism, where the examples he cites are exactly of the kind Freud was fond of in his masterpiece ('a house being a womb, a fire a phallus').[363] To think that Joyce was willing to read relatively obscure Freudian works in German and not read the central text of a movement which clearly had implications for his work is rather like imagining him leafing through Milton's Latin works and not deigning to open his epic.

On one occasion in the early thirties, Mary Colum, hearing Joyce explain the origin of the interior monologue technique in Dujardin (no doubt for the umpteenth time), lost her

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not yet been sent (n.d., December 1919, *L I*, p. 131) – the mocking tone of the letter cannot wholly disguise Joyce's evident interest.

[361] Budgen, p. 323. It should be noted that Budgen records that the topic bored and annoyed a perhaps jealous Joyce.

[362] See *JJ*, pp. 317, 436-8, 546-50.

[363] Ibid., p. 382.

temper and confronted him: 'Haven't you had enough fun with this? Haven't you pulled enough people's legs? And anyway, why deny your indebtedness to Freud and Jung? Isn't it better to be indebted to great originators like that than to------?'[364] In fact, Joyce was not being dishonest in acknowledging his debt to Dujardin (though he undoubtedly could have been more forthcoming about *other* influences). After all, Joyce was a novelist and his narrative technique did owe more to previous fiction and stylistic innovation than any theory. Joyce was highly affronted by this attack, and this probably had as much to do with its wording as its implications: Joyce would never admit to being *indebted* to anyone. He was willing to read Freud and learn from him, but as we saw in chapter 9 of *Ulysses*, he had a few thoughts of his own on these matters. Joyce considered himself a psychologist in his own right, not a Freudian. He was only an amateur, granted, but then Nietzsche and Freud's greatest insights came in their armchairs too. Joyce would not have seen himself as following Freud, but as travelling down the same road.

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Oneiric play

'In this dream play the author has […] attempted to imitate the inconsequent yet apparently logical form of a dream. Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and place do not exist: on an insignificant basis of reality the imagination spins and weaves new patterns: a blend of memories, experiences, spontaneous ideas, absurdities, and improvisations.'

-Strindberg, 'Author's Note' to *A Dream Play*[365]

In the fifteenth chapter we encounter mimesis in the *oneiric mode*. The question of who is directing the antics onstage is – as in most dreams – ignored, the immersion means we are incapable of contemplating it. The reader is the dreamer, the text the dream, and the author is nowhere to be seen. Every dream is a performance, and we often wander onstage, but in this show we only spectate, never participate. By the oneiric mode I mean that this chapter

[364] Ibid., p. 634.

[365] August Strindberg, *Miss Julie and Other Plays*, trans. Michael Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 176.

is an attempt to emulate dream discourse, imagery and plot, just as the previous chapter imitated a range of writers' styles. All of the ludic symbolisation of the dream work is present, its form and content perfectly pastiched. Freud showed that the dream is a play of representation, and Joyce staged one for us.

Since the entire chapter is a dream, we cannot regard anything that takes place as having 'actually' happened *as we have seen it*. There was nowhere called nighttown in Dublin. Whereas in the previous chapter we could infer what was 'really' happening *despite* the style pastiched as it were, here the oneiric mode prevents that. The chapter is highly deceptive in this respect, since we assume that the less fantastic moments can be distinguished from the others. But once it is realised that some of the ostensibly more naturalistic events are highly suspect in terms of actuality (e.g. Bloom buying meat – no butchers would be open; it is obviously a memory from earlier in the day), we must acknowledge they all are. We know from the preceding chapter that Stephen and Lynch were heading to the red-light district with Bloom in pursuit, and from the succeeding that Bloom had narrowly avoided being knocked down, Corny Kelleher had dealt with the policemen, and that Bloom helped Stephen up. But we know nothing of the time that has elapsed between these events, and oddly (considering there was apparently a lamp smashed and a fight) neither character mentions this period. The seventeenth chapter mentions Stephen's 'collapse', but this ambiguous noun does not even establish if he was knocked to the ground or simply fainted.[366] Bloom neglects to mention his education at the university of life '[b]ecause of his fluctuating incertitude as to whether this observation had or had not been already made by him to Stephen or by Stephen to him' (*U*, 17.557-8), when in fact he had said it in the dream to someone else. This means that either one of them had said it to

[366] It seems likely he was, as there was a 'brawl and chance medley in Beaver street' after 'the visit to the disorderly house of Mrs Bella Cohen, 82 Tyrone street' (*U*, 17. 2054-6), but it is strange he has no bruises or cuts from the blow and resulting fall.

the other (perhaps in the time between the fourteenth and sixteenth chapters) or Bloom is mistaken and neither had mentioned it; it need not be that Bloom vaguely remembers the dream in a confused manner (since it is not *his* dream anyway). Bloom's budget for the day shows he did buy meat, but not when. Similarly, it confirms Stephen did give Bloom his money (though this does not confirm he did so as we saw in the dream). Tellingly, the budget omits the shilling given by Bloom to Bella Cohen.[367] Fostering incertitude is far from being my aim, but one must accept the highly disconcerting ontological status of this chapter. The stage is nighttown, not Dublin. We can't have it both ways: even if some of the events seem extremely plausible (as I acknowledge), the oneiric mode never relents and the following chapters collude in the mystery by their general silence. By presenting the chapter as a parody of a dream (an imitation of a distorted imitation of reality) rather than as the dream of a character, Joyce puts an almost intolerable strain on the division between fantasy and reality. What Joyce achieves is a mimesis of the unconscious which does not diminish its unfathomability, an imitation of the reality of fantasy.

After Freud (and Nietzsche) it is impossible to dismiss this dream as being entirely meaningless. It *does* give insight into what lies below the surface of Bloom's consciousness, the unseen motives, the wishes, anxieties, and memories, which have been repressed or latent during parallactic mimesis, despite its not being his dream. His masochism, guilt, voyeuristic tendencies, sense of emasculation, utopian reforming urge, desire for recognition and respect, and fear of hostility toward his otherness – all of which we have suspected due to Joyce's masterfully circumspect characterisation of his consciousness – are projected through the dream's representational strategy. As Bloom says, 'Sleep reveals the worst side of everyone, children perhaps excepted.' (*U*, 15.3272-3)

[367] Kenner argues that this calls the budget into question, but it is much more logical to say that it calls the most bizarre and distorted chapter of the book (further) into question.

This chapter was shockingly obscene for its time, and it was mainly because of it that Bloom was often viewed as a monstrous pervert. Its sexual content meant it was far more risqué than not only previous realism, but also, in some ways, than Freudian psychology. Though influenced by Freud's reading of dreams, Joyce seems to have differed from him in two respects. Firstly, the dream play seems a lot more accurate than Freud's rather prim, heavily censored bourgeois puzzles – people dream about sex, not just extremely contrived symbols of it. Wittgenstein picked up on this strange discrepancy in Freud's account: 'Freud very commonly gives what we might call a sexual interpretation. But it is interesting that among all the reports of dreams he gives, there is not a single example of a straightforward sexual dream. Yet these are as common as rain.'[368] Secondly, Joyce would not seem to have accepted Freud's central claim that *all* dreams are wish-fulfillments. Bloom's anxiety-laden, persecution-filled nightmares would be hard to square with this idea (though I have no doubt a Freudian could manage it). Joyce's analysis of his wife's dream sees it as purely anxiety and makes no mention of a wish.[369] This second point is obviously less important, since it pertains to interpretation and not representation: Joyce was determined to *show* life, not necessarily to analyse it.

To repeat, it is the reader who is the dreamer, and not Bloom or Stephen. As has often been noted, the boundaries between their minds are dissolved. The foregoing text is treated as the site (partially constituted by their perspectives) from which the immanent textual unconscious derives the residues from which it will fashion its dream play – just as the unconscious manufactures its representations from the events of our lives, particularly the preceding day, in our dreams. Hence its associative logic utilises Black Liz (*U*, 12.846-9), a creature accessible to the reader but not the characters, at the mention of 'henpecked' (*U*,

[368] Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'Conversations on Freud', in *Philosophical essays on Freud*, ed. Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 5.
[369] *JJ*, p. 437.

15.3706-11). Paul Ricoeur notes that 'the proper path of interpretation is the dreamer's associations and not the pregiven connections of the symbols themselves.'[370] Thus, having been present all day, we can see upon analysing it that the reason Richie Goulding seemingly inexplicably appears (*U*, 15.2788) is the mention of Bloom's father sharing his bed with his dog, as the Dedalus family suspect Richie does with his daughter.

If people known to us appear in our dreams, it is as if they were playing a part. We realise upon waking that their actions in the dreams need not have any real relation to them – like an actor and the character they depict. But Bloom and Stephen *are* characters: they have no real selves behind the words on the page. Their consciousness has been created for us through parallactic mimesis, and now the curtain is raised on their subconscious. There, as in all theatre, what pretends to be – acts like – a revelation is simply a show. The theatrical conceit allows Joyce to have things both ways (as always); it draws attention to the artificial, staged aspect of constructing manifestations of the unconscious for fictional characters, but also allows a highly plausible performance demonstrating the dream work to unfold.

Stephen's vision of his mother is when the fourth wall collapses. It is similar to Thersites' urination earlier, in that an original narrative mode is deliberately sabotaged – in both cases an 'as if' situation is exposed as implausible (in chapter twelve, it is 'as if' Thersites were telling us the story; and it is 'as if' we were having this dream in chapter fifteen). Stephen's vision is clearly distinguished from the others, being acknowledged by the other characters as taking place *for him* (not them). He has done the one thing he couldn't in a dream, *hallucinate*, and thus the text comes under intolerable strain. This is the inscrutable nodal point of the chapter, the point from which all else unravels. Even if it is enclosed within the oneiric representation (it has elements from the text Stephen could not

[370] *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 102.

have known about), it transcends and calls into question the dream logic. There often comes a moment in which we realise we're dreaming, and this stunning moment of meta-discursive revelation is it. Stephen's dream within a dream, like Hamlet's *The Mousetrap*, confirms what's long been suspected.

IV: OVER THE EDGE

The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters – the parodic section of the novel – were necessarily reliant on irony to varying extents, but the sixteenth (and indeed, the entire third part) have some claim to being beyond it, aside from Stephen's that is. One cannot understand irony in isolation, and so our investigation returns to the nexus of entwined narrative issues that have guided us throughout, particularly in this chapter of the thesis: mimesis, perspective, and style.

The second part of this chapter ('INCIPIT PARODIA') has demonstrated that we ought to distrust the sweeping statements usually employed to justify the break from the initial style (if that style is even acknowledged), principally by respecting the individuality of each chapter's parodic and meta-discursive strategies and their implications. This insight will inform the analysis of the heterogeneous sixteenth chapter and its uniquely awful prose, and allow appreciation of it as an essential component of the novel's interrogation of the medium of representation in its latter half.

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Hypotheses

To introduce parody into discussion of the sixteenth chapter is to implicitly hypothesise a hypotext. However, as of yet no viable model has been proposed. Stanislaus Joyce was

reminded of journalese,[371] but though Joyce was no doubt partially *inspired* by the poor prose of the press, just as he mined books on style and correct usage for mistakes, it is really too much of a stretch to say that a chapter which does not resemble reportage or rhetorical advice in terms of form, content, or tone, should be read with an eye on either of them. This is one of the ways in which this chapter is beyond irony – unlike some earlier chapters, parody as an ironic mode is entirely absent. The reason it is occasionally classed with them, and discussed as somehow similar, is the chapter's humour. But one can have humour without irony: the convoluted circumlocutions are amusing in themselves, not due to some ironic relation to other texts or writers.[372] The narrator of the chapter, if one wishes to postulate such an entity, is the only victim.

The best example of the other most common hypothesis is found in Kenner's work. With it, we return for the final time to that constant point of contention, the Uncle Charles Principle. The sixteenth chapter is, for Kenner, 'Joyce's return to the tonic of his method, the Uncle Charles Principle *in excelsis*, a stylistic homage in Bloom's style to Bloom', wherein it is 'as though for these fifty pages he held the pen'.[373] As discussed earlier in relation to the novel's first chapter, I do not think it is legitimate to discuss characters' desires in relation to the Principle – it is no more plausible that Bloom would *wish* to write or be written about in this prolix manner (after all, he admires reason and clarity, even if he could scarcely attain them), than that Stephen wishes to be described in Edwardian novelese. Nor can we say that this is how Bloom *would* write it: as Derek Attridge has noted, its exemplary mediocrity is quite beyond his range, and almost everyone else's.[374] The

[371] Letter of 22 February 1922, *L III*, p. 58.
[372] Many newspapers include a section in their sports pages quoting the delightfully mixed metaphors, malapropisms, and inanities of footballers. This shows that people find verbal confusion amusing, and that irony has little to do with it.
[373] *Joyce's Voices*, p. 38.
[374] *Peculiar Language: Literature as difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce* [1988] (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 174.

modified Principle that I advocate *is* present and there *is* much slippage between Bloom and the narrator. In other words, it is often understandable why Kenner made his daring hypothesis. A closer examination of the narration and style will help us understand the origin of his exaggerations.

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With thanks to Lindley Murray

'Perspicuity is the fundamental quality of style: a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that for the want of it nothing can atone. […] We are pleased with an author, and consider him as deserving praise, who frees us from all fatigue of searching for his meaning; who carries us through his subject without any embarrassment or confusion; whose style flows away like a limpid stream, through which we see to the very bottom.'

-Lindley Murray, *English Grammar*[375]

Andrew Gibson has claimed that this chapter of *Ulysses*, though not parodic, is nevertheless somehow antagonistic to Lindley Murray, and, indeed, to grammarians generally. I feel rather that – *if anything* – it shows Joyce's affinity to Murray and other champions of clarity. After all, Joyce had a penchant for pedantry[376] and had even asked his brother: 'Would you be surprised if I wrote a very good English grammar some day?'[377] Serious or not, he was well qualified: he had been a prize-winner for composition, a student steeped in the classical rhetorical tradition and languages, and a teacher of English. Typically, Gibson employs insinuation, obfuscation and unjustified inference to set up the

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[375] Lindley Murray, *An English Grammar*, 3rd ed. (York: Thomas Wilson, 1816), vol. I, p. 425.

[376] 'Joyce always took a particular delight in collecting examples of grammatical solecisms, especially when they occurred in the poems of Yeats and his contemporaries.', Katie Wales, '"With Apologies to Lindley Murray": The Narrative method of the "Eumaeus" Episode in *Ulysses*', in *Two Hundred Years of Lindley Murray*, ed. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (Münster: Nodus Publikationen, 1996), p. 209.

[377] *L II*, 15 March 1905, p. 86.

straw man Joyce will apparently oppose using 'a form of aestheticized warfare.'[378] Murray's work is linked with colonialism and the conjunction of linguistic prescriptiveness and English nationalism Gibson had discussed earlier, though Murray's work was not about historical or political issues, nor indeed can his book be said to have any concern except better usage of language. Drawing on Katie Wales, Gibson claims Murray was 'much concerned with questions of morality'[379], when in fact his (vague) moral aims were unobtrusive, typical of an educator of his day, and scarcely extended beyond a desire to shield the young from immoral sentiments in the examples he used. A far more serious problem with Gibson's argument is that even if one accepts this caricature of Murray as emblematic of all Joyce scorned, and the attendant portrait of Joyce as obsessed with flouting a fairly harmless grammar book (however influential) as part of a general strategy against English rule in Ireland, it is extremely difficult to see *how* this is subversive. In other words, what, aside from a lot of hot air about Joyce's revolutionary tactics, distinguishes Gibson's account from earlier ones that helpfully pointed out that Joyce used books like Murray's to get ideas for howlers to incorporate into his casebook of stylistic gaffes? What would be political about ignoring the recommendations of a grammarian? Surely better to accept there is no political subtext to this stylistic issue, despite Gibson's best efforts to manufacture one, and acknowledge that if the chapter is funny at all it is because we have some similar notions of bad style to Joyce, and Murray.

I think it is useful to speak of a *narrator* for this chapter. The initial style featured detached third-person narration, whereas the narration here is definitely imbued with personality. For instance, the narrator is an unashamed admirer of Bloom's, and shares his

[378] Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: history, politics and aesthetics in 'Ulysses'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 226.

[379] Gibson, p. 223. He cites Murray's emphasis on purity and propriety in this regard, implying they are connected with morality, whereas their meaning is as follows: 'Purity requires that those words only shall be employed, which are of classical authority: Propriety, that, of the classical words, those shall always be selected, which are best adapted to express the meaning' Murray, p. 427.

suspicions about the sailor, Murphy. Earlier narration was neutral and purely descriptive, but the narrator is judgemental and evaluative in ascribing adjectives (hence we can gauge partiality to Bloom, etc.) At times, sarcasm even emerges: ‘Cooks rats in your soup, he *appetisingly* added’ (*U*, 16.573, my italics), ‘Silence with a yawn or two accompanied this *thrilling* announcement.’ (*U*, 16.1664-5, my italics) Sarcasm is irony without any edge. Fittingly, the debased ironies of sarcasm join the dead metaphors of cliché in this chapter. The narrator, rather amusingly, hankers after clarification and exactitude, but the more qualification and detail is added, the worse things get:

> No, it was the daughter of the mother in the washkitchen that was fostersister to the heir of the house or else they were connected through the mother in some way, both occurrences happening at the same time if the whole thing wasn’t a fabrication from start to finish. (*U*, 16.150-3)

What really marks off this chapter from the initial style is not just narrative personality, but comically blundering syntax; ill-matched, poorly employed vocabulary; and botched tropes: in a word, *imprecision*. The scene is rendered so obliquely by the opaque, rambling prose that contextual or circumstantial irony cannot be made out: the reader’s perspective is too out of focus to discern disparities. The only irony that the chapter contains is Stephen’s Socratic variety, as the dialogue is the sole thing unaffected by the narrator (as always, the dashes denoting actual speech are the only things that can be wholly trusted).[380] The most striking narrative divergence is the extensive reliance, from the second sentence in, on reported speech and thought, and this is a primary source of difficulties for the reader.

> Corley at the first go-off was inclined to suspect it [Stephen’s having nowhere to sleep] was something to do with Stephen being fired out of his digs for bringing in a bloody tart off the street. There was a dosshouse in Marlborough

[380] Fritz Senn claims that the dashes are no longer to be trusted, but I do not see why this is so: see *Joyce’s Dislocutions: Essays on Reading as Translation*, ed. John Paul Riquelme (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 157. Bloom speaks a lot and uses relatively complicated vocabulary, but there is evidence he has also done so in the twelfth chapter, only the bored and uncomprehending narrator has not related it (‘the he starts with his jawbreakers about phenomenon …’ (*U*, 12.466). In fact, Bloom has scarcely said a thing during the day, and what he has said is not wildly incompatible with what he says when we see him at his most voluble in this chapter. There is no valid reason to doubt the plausibility of anything said by anyone else here.

> Street, Mrs Mahoney's, but it was only a tanner touch and full of undesirables but McConachie told him you got a decent enough do in the Brazen Head over in Winetavern street (which was distinctly suggestive to the person addressed of friar Bacon) for a bob. He was starving too though he hadn't said a word about it. (*U*, 16.164-71)

It is ambiguous whether the first sentence is an account of what Corley is saying or what he is thinking. It is permeated with his idiolect ('a bloody tart'), but this does not help us resolve the dilemma. This is even more difficult when, in the vast majority of cases, it is Bloom the narrator is focusing on, since his manner of speaking, and loose train of thought, can be quite close to the narrator's own muddled syntax and vocabulary. Hence Kenner's confusion about Bloom's relation to the narrator. Since characters' idiolects are perceptible in all indirect discourse here (speech or thought), they are an unreliable means of distinguishing the two. In the second sentence, much is plausibly verbatim, though not all (Corley would probably not speak of 'undesirables'), and there is no way of distinguishing once and for all. The third sentence could either be a statement, or Corley could now be mentioning his hunger for the first time, in which case the sentence should have finished: 'until now.'

In addition to its being difficult, often impossible, to distinguish between what a character thinks and what he actually says, it is even hard to tell at times if what we are being told is not the narrator's opinion, rather than the character's, e.g. 'Needless to say the fumes of his recent orgy spoke then with some asperity in a curious bitter way foreign to his sober state.' (*U*, 16.1175-7) Is this Bloom's view of Stephen, or the narrator's? In this, and countless other instances, we are inclined to see it as Bloom's (from context; knowledge of Bloom), but we cannot say for sure. At times, it is actually far more likely that the narrator is airing his own opinions, but such is their ostensible similarity to Bloom's thoughts that we automatically attribute them to him despite lacking warrant to do so. Since this seems never to have been pointed out before, I will cite two examples. In the first, the narrator has temporarily stopped relating Bloom's reflections and is narrating events outside of his

perception. The narrator then goes on to excoriate the fecklessness of Gumley (*U*, 16.948-56), a man whom, importantly, Bloom did not recognise earlier and does not appear to be acquainted with.[381] Though Bloom might agree with the general disapproval of alcohol abuse and irresponsibility, he surely would not judge as harshly as this, the narrator calls Gumley a 'doublebarrelled ass' for instance. This is far from Bloom's usual empathy. The second example is similar to the instance already cited in which the narrator returned to the topic of Corley's genealogy. Here he reverts to the discussion of some time before concerning Parnell's fall, in order to have his say on the matter:

> And *apropos* of coffin of stones the analogy was not at all bad as it was in fact a stoning to death on the part of seventytwo out of eighty odd constituencies that ratted at the time of the split and chiefly the belauded peasant class, probably the selfsame evicted tenants he had put in their holdings. (*U*, 16. 1728-32)

This intervention jars for two reasons: firstly, the context; if this had come in the midst of a report of Bloom's thoughts we could accept it as his, but instead it comes whilst the narrator is simply describing the movements of the characters. Second, it seems rather too extreme an opinion for the pragmatic Bloom, who prides himself on his reliance on reason over emotion.

At one point what is clearly Bloom's interior monologue seeps in: 'Suppose she was gone when he? I looked for the lamp . . .' (*U*, 16.1470) At another, Stephen's thoughts seem to interrupt Bloom's (presumably spoken) ramblings on art: 'Yes, puritanisme, it does though Saint Joseph's sovereign thievery alors (Bandez!) Figne toi trop.' (*U*, 16.1452-4) From time to time the narrator's sentences are subject to the kind of ellipsis we have come to associate with the stream of consciousness: 'He turned away from the others who probably and spoke nearer to, as the others in case they.' (*U*, 16.1117-8) Even more

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[381] The narrator certainly knows the facts of the matter: Gumley was 'given the temporary job by Pat Tobin' (*U*, 16. 945), according to Gifford, in 1904 the 'secretary to the Paving Committee' (p. 547), but how would Bloom know this? (This is however incidental to my point which is that we should not confuse the narrator's opinion of Gumley for Bloom's.)

confusingly, there are other instances where what *seems* like the associative thought of interior monologue crops up, though it could well be the narrator's own improvisation: 'Bread, staff of life, earn your bread, O tell me where is fancy bread, at Rourke's the baker's it is said.' (*U*, 16.58-9), 'the *Telegraph* tell a graphic lie lay' (*U*, 16.1232) Parallactic mimesis was necessarily confusing at first, but when read alongside this mess it is a model of clarity. Perhaps the most disconcerting puzzle of all is the final paragraph, with the interruptions of the song about the lowbacked car. This seems to be an attempt to emulate the eleventh chapter, in which songs were frequently interspersed within the text, or earlier ones where lyrics had popped into the streams of consciousness, but here it is nonsensical as it is not clear any such song is being performed or thought of.

Troublingly to the attentive reader, all of these questions of attribution are wholly irresolvable. People, particularly those who write poorly, are wont to denigrate the question of good style as mere snobbery, of relevance only to those obsessed with some antiquated or bourgeois notion of good taste. And perhaps there is something in this. Nevertheless, the narrator's bad style has not merely drained language of vitality through its reliance on cliché – it has robbed it of all precision. Grammarians seem ridiculous to most of us when they fulminate against the impurity of television (etymologically speaking), but surely one can agree with their censure of atrocious prose. Many have found this chapter intolerably dull, and with good cause. Not even the humour derived from its banality can appease us totally for its frustrating inadequacy.

Joyce was an extremely fastidious stylist, and the third-person narration of the initial style is conspicuous for its perspicuity. Contrast this chapter, which Karen Lawrence has called 'a travesty […] of the initial style.'[382] Once we understand this not as a technical term, i.e. ironic pastiche, but rather as meaning a debased or grotesque likeness, we can fully

[382] Lawrence, p. 171.

agree. If we remember that travesty in this sense also has to do with *mis*representation, the aptness of the term is confirmed. Joyce's mimetic agenda, a product of the will to truth, had meant that aside from the graceful lucidity of third person narration, his style, his signature, has been erased. To realistically depict his characters he had initially restricted himself to their range of vocabulary (*A Portrait*), and in parallactic mimesis he could not mimic their thought processes without imitating its form; hence beautiful cadences were largely drowned out by telegraph-like non sequiturs. As discussed in depth in section I here, one cannot speak of a narrator (as found in traditional realist novels), whether a character or an omniscient presence, in the initial style – no one is *telling* a story, we are being *shown* one unfolding. This chapter, the only in the book wholly entrusted to a narrator, illustrates why Joyce had to move beyond this convention. He has presented a sort of caricature of his stylistic antithesis.

The tendency to personify a narrator, who, after all, *does* have a personality, is natural and harmless, indeed useful (viz. Thersites' twin), if one does not forget it is simply invention. One could imagine our narrator here as a struggling student of English composition, like one of Joyce's on the continent. He duly apologises to Lindley Murray (*U*, 16.1474-5), having broken almost every one of his strictures, and is rather anxious to please (obsessively employing elegant variation for example).[383] His biggest problem is overambition, he attempts to incorporate aspects of the initial style (numerous turns of phrase suggest familiarity with previous chapters) and, as we have seen, falls flat on his face. Yet one cannot imagine any of his classmates' efforts being so amusing, and it is rather tempting to pass him for effort alone. It has truly been a glorious failure.

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Realism and the will to truth

[383] As pointed out in Attridge, *Peculiar Language*, p. 176.

This chapter has shown the three main currents that eddy and flow within *Ulysses*, directing its narrative techniques – the mimetic, the parodic, and the meta-discursive. All three can be found in *Don Quixote* of course, but we are not here engaged in a genealogy of the novel, and what must be identified are Joyce's innovations and divergences. That the most significant things that can be said of the last chapter examined are that it showed, through comic ineptitude, that style is the most vital aspect of literary representation, and that it makes us again reflect on the art of narration, is extremely telling. This powerful deconstructive strand is where Joyce can really be said to have most decisively parted with his realist forebears.

Kenner's unconvincing contention that in this chapter's allegedly Bloomian style Bloom 'has his reward'[384] illustrates the lengths those advocating the Homeric framework can be forced to, and their determination to find some meaning therein. The other side of this coin, its Barthes-reading doppelganger, is Lawrence's similarly desperate contention that Joyce has deliberately sabotaged 'the dramatic climax'[385] of the novel, the meeting of our two protagonists. This, she unconvincingly argues, in tandem with the clichéd language, allows emotion to enter obliquely (though she never says how).[386] It might be profitable to consider whether the meeting of father and son is in any way considered the climax or central theme of *The Odyssey* outside of Joyce criticism. In other words, who was expecting a dramatic climax anyway? Nevertheless, it must be admitted that even compared to other modernist novels such as *Mrs Dalloway*, *Ulysses* is quite remarkably uneventful. There is a tense moment in this chapter when the sailor (very implausibly) asks Stephen if he knows Simon Dedalus (*U*, 16.378) but this Dickensian possibility of a highly contrived fortuitous meeting quickly passes, for Murphy is *not* referring to Stephen's father, who, for all his

[384] *Joyce's Voices*, p. 35.
[385] Lawrence, p. 176.
[386] Ibid., pp. 177-8.

occupations, has never run away with the circus, and so we return to the boredom of reality where coincidences stubbornly remain random and meaningless.[387] There are two reasons for this uneventfulness, and both lead us back to the will to truth. Firstly, Joyce had always emphasised the drabness of Dublin life, and the muted plot of *Ulysses* is simply the extension of a project to represent the quotidian accurately and plausibly. Secondly, at this point in the novel, Joyce was clearly more interested in the problem of representation than dramatic development or emotional contours.

This second assertion is very much a commonplace, but my location of its source within the will to truth is far from being so. As we saw in discussing parallactic mimesis, the will to truth entailed superseding conventional realism, not slavishly conforming to it. By the eleventh chapter, the will to truth has turned back on itself, and is now ready to interrogate the notions of mimesis and representation themselves, hence the various stylistic sorties we have examined below. Joyce had long debated the idea of the artist (though initially mainly for egotistic purposes, one suspects) and the value of art, and in the second half of his major work he dramatised this internal dialogue, and moved from the narrative of the artist to a consideration of the art of narrative: the meta-discursive strand is as much a manifestation of his will to truth as the parodic or the mimetic.

[387] Bloom, along with the narrator, certainly views the sailor in a picturesque, Dickensian light, suspecting he travels under an assumed identity and even labeling him ‘Our mutual friend’ (*U*, 16.821).

5

Vouloir Conclure

‘Oui, la bêtise consiste à vouloir conclure. Nous sommes un fil et nous voulons savoir la trame. Cela revient à ces éternelles discussions sur la decadence de l’art. Maintenant on passe son temps à se dire: Nous sommes complètement finis, nous voilà arrivés au dernier terme, etc., etc. Quel est l’esprit un peu fort qui ait conclu, à commencer par Homère? Contentons-nous du tableau; c’est aussi bon.’

-Flaubert, letter to Louis Bouilhet[388]

I: QUESTIONING QUESTIONING

In *Inferno* XXVI we learn from Ulysses himself that he urged his men not to head homewards but to cultivate their will to truth through further travel:

> ‘Brothers,’ I said, ‘o you, who having crossed
> a hundred thousand dangers, reach the west,
> to this brief waking-time that is still left
> unto your senses, you must not deny
> experience of that which lies beyond
> the sun, and of the world which is unpeopled.
> Consider well the seed that gave you birth:
> you were not made to live your lives as brutes,
> but to be followers of worth and knowledge.’[389]

As a consequence of this ceaseless pursuit of knowledge, he and his men perish (though we know not how exactly). On the level of action *Ulysses* ends far less spectacularly, with a safe homecoming, but through its formal adventurousness the will to truth comes to question itself. Pushing realism into uncharted waters, Joyce reveals the binary opposition of objectivity and subjectivity to be a convenient fiction. Due to the emphasis put on representation, it is the artist, the technē itself which is undergoing an odyssey more than any of the characters; indeed Joyce appears to have seen Ulysses to some extent as Dante

[388] 4 September 1850, *Correspondance*, vol. II (Paris: Louis Conard, 1926), p. 239. ‘Yes, stupidity is the need for conclusions. We are but one thread and we want to know the pattern. It comes back to those eternal discussions about the decadence of art. These days we spend our time telling ourselves: We are completely finished, this is the last moment, and so on. Since the time of Homer, what mind of any stature has ever reached a conclusion? Let us be content with the tableau, this is the way things are, very well then.’ *Selected Letters*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 156.

[389] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Everyman, 1995), Inferno, XXVI.112-20, p. 173.

did, as the embodiment of an insatiable will to truth, manifested in a desire to experience everything (or, in the case of technē, *represent* everything). In a comment to Georges Borach that reveals much more about Joyce's conception of the artist than it does the ancient Ithacan, he remembered how, during the encounter with the Sirens, Odysseus 'has himself tied to the mast. The motif of the artist, who will lay down his life rather than renounce his interest.'[390]

Despite what the resonances of the title might intimate, there is no quest structure here – Bloom has deliberately avoided going home until as late as possible and Stephen has no intention of staying at the tower or on Eccles Street. There is no journey, no destination, no *telos*: as we will see in this chapter, Joyce attempts to end in openness, to affirm the void without imposing any meaning upon it.

* * *

Horror vacui

Joyce lived not just in a very different world from Dante, but in a wholly different universe. After the Copernican revolution and the discoveries that followed, man (i.e. humanity) could no longer think in terms of a closed universe with himself at its centre. This total reconceptualisation or paradigm shift meant that a void opened at the heart of society and philosophy, a void which would eventually be named the death of God by Nietzsche. Blaise Pascal, who proved (contra Aristotle) that there *was* a vacuum in nature, captured the trauma of living in this decentred universe when he confessed in the seventeenth century that: 'The eternal silence of those infinite spaces fills me with terror.'[391]

One does not need to look at the scientific developments roughly contemporaneous with *Ulysses* to understand the universe in which it takes place; as we shall see shortly, Joyce certainly didn't. Relativism and nihilism – those voids which issue from *the* void – exist

[390] Borach, p. 326.
[391] *The Pensées*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1961), § 91, p. 57.

quite independently of relativity (as Einstein was keen to stress). What the oppressive auditing and detached distancing of the seventeenth chapter evokes is not an Einsteinian universe but 'the incertitude of the void.' (*U*, 17.1015)

As we saw in section I of the last chapter, *Ulysses* began by capturing the *Dasein* (the being-in-the-world) of Bloom and Stephen through the perspectival initial style. In the novel's seventeenth episode we are presented with a body-less (non-perspectival) questioner and respondent or, more exactly, with a list of questions and answers. Whilst the sixteenth chapter was a sort of *travesty*, a grotesque caricature, of the initial style (see 4.IV above); this chapter is its *opposite*, the furthest Joyce could move from it. Mimesis gives way to diegesis, perspectivism to catechism (from *Dasein* to the spirit of enquiry) and the specificity of Dublin as lived to the ceaseless cataloguing of a contingent world. Mimesis and the stage on which it was played out have collapsed into the void. Joyce manages to convey the vastness of the universe and man's infinitesimal place within it to such an extent that a Pascalian sense of our utter insignificance in the face of infinity emerges.[392] We move from the novel's beginnings in sensuous experience to 'the apathy of the stars.'(*U*, 17.2226)

* * *

Truth and error

'The pedants are right: the mistakes are there; but the wide river of the new realism sweeps them majestically away like bushes and rushes uprooted by the flood.'

-Joyce, 'Realism and Idealism in English Literature'[393]

The seventeenth chapter is often discussing in terms of mocking parody but so far no plausible hypotext has been posited. Two likely *sources* for Joyce's catechistic format have been identified: the catechisms of the Catholic Church and the question and answer format popular in nineteenth century textbooks for schools.[394] However, the similarities are too

[392] It is worth noting that even if Joyce had not read Pascal, Nietzsche repeatedly evokes a similar sense of man's place in the universe in *The Gay Science*.

[393] *OCPW*, p. 167.

[394] See R. A. Copland and G. W. Turner, 'The Nature of James Joyce's Parody in "Ithaca"', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (Oct., 1969), pp. 759-763; Harry C. Staley, 'Joyce's Catechisms', *JJQ*, Vol.

superficial for them to be thought of as models. In what is known as the Maynooth catechism for instance (the one Joyce knew best), the questions and answers are much shorter and simpler and they are divided into thirty lessons on specific topics. The vocabulary is clear and simple and the answer includes the terms of the question. It need hardly be added that there is no resemblance between the topics covered in this chapter of *Ulysses* and the catechisms designed for religious instruction. The same obviously goes for the educational textbooks – Joyce undoubtedly had them in mind (or at least was familiar with them) but the recognition of some link should not blind us to a much greater distance; surely it is best to investigate what Joyce *did* with these memories of his schooldays than to assume they are his major concern or satirical butt here.

The sharp eyes of various critics have identified numerous errors in this episode. These include various implausibilities, factual inaccuracies, misapplications of scientific principles, and a series of computational errors.[395] Joyce himself was aware of this problem of mistakes, writing to his patron of his need for assistance:

> As regards *Ithaca* the question of printer's errors is not the chief point. The episode should be read by some person who is a physicist, mathematician and astronomer and a number of other things. I hope to find one however.[396]

He never did though. I follow Kenner in assuming that all of the errors in the episode are accidental for two reasons. Firstly, Kenner has shown convincingly how Joyce made several

6, No. 2 (Winter, 1969), pp. 137-153; and W. Milgate, 'Joyce's Scientific Dialogue', *JJQ*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Fall, 1971), pp. 143-145.

[395] Robert M. Adams was the first to itemise errors, in *Surface and Symbol*. See also Gifford's *Annotations*, and Patrick A. McCarthy, 'Joyce's Unreliable Catechist: Mathematics and the Narration of "Ithaca"', *ELH*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 605-618.

[396] To Harriet Shaw Weaver, 6 December 1921, *L I*, p. 178. He confessed to her the year before that: 'I could never learn it [chemistry] or understand in the least what it was about.' 25 February 1920, *L I*, p. 137. Joyce's examination results suggest he had little enough interest and/or ability in mathematics or science (see Mario Salvadori and Myron Schwartzman, 'Musemathematics: The Literary Use of Science and Mathematics in Joyce's *Ulysses*', *JJQ*, 29 (Winter 1992), pp. 339-55, p. 355, for a table usefully collating all of his results in these subjects). Michael Livingston surmises that he 'was familiar with algebra and basic Euclidean geometry, but his knowledge seems limited to these mathematical fields.' '"Dividends and Divisors Ever Diminishing": Joyce's Use of Mathematics in "Ithaca"', *JJQ*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (Spring, 2004), pp. 441-454, p. 444. Kenner is blunter: 'his science but a smattering of terms, his very arithmetic deplorable', *Ulysses*, p. 153. Joyce did however work hard to familiarise himself with mathematics and science to write the seventeenth chapter, but his knowledge remained quite superficial and whatever aptitude he had had for arithmetic at school did not return to him.

of them.[397] Echoing Kenner's emphasis on Joyce's fallibility, Michael Livingston has argued that the failure to acknowledge them as blunders stems from 'a fallacy often entertained among Joyce scholars: in effect, that Joyce is smarter than he really is.'[398] Secondly, there is no reason for the inclusion of errors, as they in no way add to the episode (and since most do not recognise them, in no way detract). They do not constitute an indictment of science – in fact scientists would deplore them *more* than most. What is being put on trial here are not systems of measurement or scientific practice but our *desire* to measure, to describe, to know. When reading the relentless ratio of the two men's ages (*U*, 17.447-61), it is surely more interesting to ponder the cause of such a pointless exercise (why *this* rather than some other information) than to check the incorrect calculations.

Joyce is not engaged here in a pastiche of scientific discourse. He uses technical terms and scientific concepts – he speaks in its language – but he is employing its methodology rather than simply mimicking it. The German word *Wissenschaft* (usually translated as science) best expresses what Joyce is trying to interrogate and deconstruct here. *Wissenschaft*, like *scientia* which Joyce would of course also have known, encompasses what we could call science but is far broader, basically including all knowledge or systematic enquiry. It is the totality of the systems driven by our will to truth. The broad range of disciplines Joyce incorporates into this chapter are just different expressions of the same impulse. This is not an anticipation of the two cultures divide, with art on one side and science on the other; the concept of *Wissenschaft* reminds us to disregard such dualistic

[397] See 'Bloom's Chest', appendix 2 in Kenner's *Ulysses*, pp. 164-5, and 'Vagaries of Ithacan Math', *JJQ*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Spring, 1988), pp. 371-374.
[398] Livingston, p. 441. He is referring to those critics who have sought to attribute Joyce's mathematical errors not to his lack of understanding or attention but to a very sophisticated grasp of difficult developments in mathematics (see for instance: Ray Mines and Reed Way Dasenbrock, '"Nought nowhere was never reached": Mathematics in *Ulysses*', *JJQ*, 35 (Fall 1997), pp. 25-36; Salvadori and Schwartzman, op. cit.; Joan Parisi Wilcox, 'Joyce, Euclid, and "Ithaca"', *JJQ*, 28 (Spring 1991), pp. 643-49; Phillip F. Herring, *Joyce's Uncertainty Principle* (Princeton:Princeton Univ, Press, 1987)).

thinking and realise that most of us, like Bloom and Stephen, have aspects of both the artistic and scientific temperaments.[399]

Science is often considered the enemy or opposite of religion (an assumption that prevails today) but Nietzsche argued that this was illusory and that both sprang from the same ascetic ideal or desire to transcend or go beyond this world. They shared a *faith* in Truth, even if only one called it God. Having been impelled to unparalleled experiments with form and language by his own will to truth (the faith of an atheist realist writer in his own work), Joyce closed his novel by confronting both the urge itself and what truth could mean. Through his great range and power as an artist he produced a fictional analogue to what Nietzsche defined as his own task – that 'the value of truth be experimentally *called into question*.'[400]

* * *

The meaning of science

'[W]hat indeed is the meaning of all science, viewed as a symptom of life? What is the purpose, and, worse still, what is the *origin* of all science? What? Is scientific method perhaps no more than fear of and flight from pessimism? A subtle defence against – *truth*?'

-Nietzsche, 'An Attempt at Self-Criticism'[401]

During its composition, Joyce described this penultimate chapter as 'a mathematico-astronomico-physico-mechanico-geometrico-chemico sublimation of Bloom and Stephen'.[402] By sublimation he did not mean the transfer of psychic power discussed in chapter 3 above in relation to Shakespeare but rather the chemical operation. Nevertheless, the psychological process still has pertinence, for the expression of emotion is here replaced

[399] Whereas many see Bloom as representing the scientific and Stephen the artistic temperament (see for instance Richard M. Kain, 'The Significance of Stephen's Meeting Bloom: A Survey of Interpretations' *JJQ*, Vol. 10, No. 1, (Fall, 1972) pp. 147-60, p. 147), I think the question and answer indicate that they each individually represent both: 'What two temperaments did they individually represent? //The scientific. The artistic.' (*U*, 17.559-60)

[400] *Genealogy*, III.24, p. 153. If Joyce had read the 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, the fifth book of *The Gay Science* (he owned both), or several other books by Nietzsche he would have been familiar with the philosopher's interrogation of the meaning of science and truth (it is one of Nietzsche's main themes).

[401] The 1886 preface to the second edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, §1, p. 4.

[402] To Claude W. Sykes, n.d., Spring 1921, *L I*, p. 164.

by an obsessive chronicling of factual detail. The narrative's energy is invested in scientific investigation rather than solely in the characters. Stephen and Bloom are here *reduced* from being agents to objects of enquiry.

Though the mode has now shifted away from the grounded showing of the initial style to a timeless telling (or rather asking and answering), this chapter is not simply an inventory or taxonomy, though it does contain sections resembling them; there is still a narrative being recounted. The queries are guided by the action. Whilst they seem to arise from nowhere – 'Had Bloom discussed similar subjects during nocturnal perambulations in the past?' (*U*, 17.46-7) – it is usually soon made clear that the questions have in fact been generated from what the characters are talking or thinking about. Thus, in this instance the question obviously stems from Bloom's reflections on the similitude of walks past and present, as the next questions emphasise (*U*, 17.60-9). It is a general rule that the catechist follows the action rather than an absolute one, at many junctures it is undecidable whether or not this is the case and in some cases highly unlikely. Nevertheless, the catechism consists of a temporally arranged sequence, i.e. a narrative, rather than a random interrogation.

The questions and answers are collaborative: 'Why was he doubly irritated?'(*U*, 17.77) is asked before we know he *was* doubly irritated. At other times, there are simply commands or requests instead of enquiries (e.g. 'Describe them.' (*U*, 17.1291)). If we were to personify this narrative mode, interviewer and interviewee would be the same person. Our perspectival state means that there can be no objectivity if it is understood as observation without interest (something Nietzsche labelled 'a nonsensical absurdity'),[403] and the chapter's catechistical form reflects this: this is not the truth but the *will to* truth. There is always a will behind the eye, directing and interpreting. Joyce deconstructs 'the dangerous old conceptual fiction that

[403] Genealogy, III.12, p. 119. This does not mean that Nietzsche thinks objectivity is altogether impossible. In the same section, he defines it as 'the ability to *control* one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge.'

posited a "pure, will-less, timeless knowing subject"'[404] by illustrating how far science falls short of its ideal of objectivity. The catechist is like the scientist, answering the questions he posed himself in a detached manner, investigating a field he has himself fenced in. This chapter attempts a God's-eye view of the action but consistently shows why the devil is said to be in the detail – as Spinoza saw, the only thing that could encompass everything would *be* everything, and therefore nothing. Science, rather than questioning the will to truth, simply aspires to God's omniscience.

For the most part, the style of the chapter is notable for its fastidiousness, formal diction, and difficult vocabulary (the wide range and obscurity of which reflects Joyce's desire to be precise rather than derivative). It is somewhat difficult to speak of pastiche here because there is no specific hypotext, but nevertheless one can agree with the consensus that it is the general methodology of science which is being employed and parodied. This is Joyce's attempt at a scientific enquiry into, and analysis of, this chapter's action; the objective diegesis to the initial style's subjective mimesis. He is not parodying any particular author or genre but rather enacting aspects of the scientific spirit and its discourse. The deliberately disinterested and tedious enumeration of items and numbers in what Joyce called his 'mathematical catechism' and his revelation of everything 'in the coldest, baldest way'[405] seem to ask us: 'What? Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this – reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians?'[406]

The discourse is most liable to become obtuse when dealing with issues which cause Bloom some emotional distress (for instance, his sense of alienation (*U*, 17.67-9) or reaction to Stephen's provocative song (*U*, 17.839-40)) and it is here that we most feel its inadequacy. What we feel then and during its meticulous attention to irrelevant items of

[404] Ibid.
[405] To Budgen, End February 1921, *L I*, pp. 159-60.
[406] *The Gay Science*, § 373, p. 335.

furniture or the process of boiling water rather than the characters' feelings is its inhuman, mechanical quality. This was what Nietzsche meant by his seemingly paradoxical claim that science might be an evasion of truth, of the reality of human existence: it busies itself so intently on measuring the void because it cannot face the consequences and implications of this void in our lives.[407] In this episode, Joyce shows how science has utterly changed the universe or paradigm of modernity but also how its will to knowledge is in some respects an inadequate interpretation of our existence. In what is perhaps the episode's best loved sentence (*U*, 17.1039), the visual impact or aesthetic effect of the night sky (as opposed to its actual state, which will be detailed later) is rendered using figurative, poetic language.[408] This glimpse of the heavens makes us feel the aridity and insufficiency of our surroundings all the more.

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[407] Katie Wales points out that the essay entitled 'Modern Science' in Joyce's copy of Tolstoy's *Essays and Letters* (trans. Aylmer Maude) is heavily marked. Though we cannot be sure the markings are Joyce's, we do know of Joyce's deep admiration for Tolstoy and the essay's critique is very similar in some points to the one I have been outlining above (particularly in its emphasis on science's evasiveness and inadequacy). See Wales, '"Stagnant pools in the waning moon": the Beauty of the "Ithaca" Episode of *Ulysses*' in *A Collideorscape of Joyce: Festschrift for Fritz Senn*, ed. Ruth Frehner and Ursula Zeller (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1998), pp. 156-70, p. 159.

[408] Similarly, when Bloom kisses his wife's bottom the description seems phenomenological, i.e. as if it is striving to represent the subjective sensations experienced whilst doing so rather than describe the action in a detached manner (*U*, 17.2241-3).

* * *

Infinite interpretations

'[T]he world has become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*.'

-Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*[409]

The first deviation from the literal-minded specificity of the chapter's style comes in a listing of incidents relating Bloom to the Gold Cup race. It ends with a brilliant punning reworking of a biblically inspired motif first introduced in the seventh chapter:

> he had proceeded towards the oriental edifice of the Turkish and Warm Baths, 11 Leinster street, *with the light of inspiration shining in his countenance and bearing in his arms the secret of the race, graven in the language of prediction.* (*U*, 17.337-41, my italics)

The effect is not just humorous; it is also disconcerting, since the neutral tone and mode, the sounds of science, have been inflected with a religiously derived idiom. Pointedly, the very next question highlights our hermeneutic dilemma, speaking of the 'difficulties of interpretation since the significance of any event followed its occurrence as variably as the acoustic report followed the electrical discharge' (*U*, 17.343-5). In this case, we might say that the significance (i.e. the difficulty of interpretation) has followed immediately on the event. The biblical continues to impinge upon the scientific from time to time and a certain capricious playfulness to subvert the staid chronicling, though the import of these interventions is difficult to fathom; perhaps they are simply there to remind us that we will always see through a glass, darkly.[410]

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[409] § 374, p. 336.

[410] The Bible is incongruously called upon as a factual document in the middle of the mathematical musings over the ratio of the men's ages: 'Bloom […] would have surpassed the maximum antediluvian age, that of Methusalah, 969 years' (*U*, 17.456-8) Similarly, a very scientific speculation on other planets perorates with a biblically derived acknowledgement that even there humanity would remain 'attached to vanities, to vanities of vanities and to all that is vanity.' (*U*, 17.1099-1100) These two examples (others could be given) might simply point to the persistence of and huge influence of Judaeo-Christian tradition (another mode of interpretation) on our language and culture. Other deviations range from the humorous (e.g. 'Substituting Stephen for Bloom Stoom…' (*U*, 17.549)) to the capricious (e.g. 'Peatmot. Trumplee. Moutpat. Plamtroo.'(*U*, 17.604-5)).

As well as evoking the contingency of our life on this planet, this chapter brings out the contingency of our interpretative systems, our ways of reading the world, and also their centrality. Through exploring the similarities between Milly and a cat (*U*, 17.896-908), noting water's 'infallibility as paradigm and paragon' (*U*, 17.216) and stressing the many significances of two armchairs (*U*, 17.1294-1301) we see how Vico was right to stress humanity's poetic imagination – Joyce shows through Bloom how we are naturally inclined to symbol-making and analogy. Of this episode he wrote that what he aimed to achieve through it was that Bloom and Stephen would 'become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which they gaze.'[411] And so they do; like stars they wander through a multitude of interpretations. The one poetic conceit the text has allowed itself is dismantled by Bloom's logic ('it was not a heaventree'(*U*, 17.1139)) though he admits the stars must have some aesthetic value 'in consequence of the reiterated examples of poets in the delirium of the frenzy of attachment or in the abasement of rejection invoking ardent sympathetic constellations or the frigidity of the satellite of their planet.' (*U*, 17.1147-50) As if to further emphasise the malleability consequent on the universality of the night sky as repository of symbols, Bloom then compares woman to the moon. (*U*, 17.1157-70)

When Stephen and Bloom go outside to urinate and then take leave of each other, Stephen sings the 113th psalm in Latin: 'When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language.'[412] This is not at all as strange as it would be in another novel, since it strikes one as exactly the sort of thing Stephen would do. His reason, aside from a fondness for the music of the mass, might simply be that he and Bloom, like Israel, are leaving or perhaps he is even associating himself alone with Israel leaving the dangerous land of Egypt (i.e. he is subtly singing of his own redemption from the boredom of Bloom).

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[411] To Budgen, End February 1921, *L I*, p. 160.
[412] See *U*, 17. 1030-1. Translation from Gifford, p. 581.

Given Bloom's Jewish connections and the extent to which they have figured in the men's conversation, for many readers *he* will no doubt figure as Israel here, especially given the Mosaic motif which he has been associated with, though one would really be very hard pushed to see what significance if any attaches to this tenuous link, and I would further suggest that Joyce was all too aware of the puzzling, contradictory reverberations this snatch of song would unleash. Stephen, a student of Dante, might also be thinking of the psalm's appearance in the second canto of *Purgatorio*, though in this case the meaning would not be any different from the interpretation I have already given (redemption).

Whatever about Stephen, Joyce, himself a serious student of Dante, was surely aware that the Florentine by birth but not custom had twice used this psalm to explain the levels of allegory, once in the *Convivio* (II.i.6) and more extensively in his famous letter to his patron Can Grande della Scala.[413] In the latter he uses it to illustrate how the *Divine Comedy* is

> 'polysemous', that is having several meanings; for the first meaning is that which is conveyed by the letter, and the next is that which is conveyed by what the letter signifies; the former of which is called literal, while the latter is called allegorical, or mystical.[414]

After then using the psalm to show the four levels of meaning, Dante continues:

> This being understood, it is clear that the subject, with regard to which the alternative meanings are brought into play, must be twofold. And therefore the subject of this work [the *Divine Comedy*] must be considered in the first place from the point of view of literal meaning, and next from that of allegorical interpretation.[415]

[413] The letter was included in the introduction to the edition of Dante Joyce used; see Dirk van Hulle, *Joyce and Beckett Discovering Dante* (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 2004), p. 12. Though doubt has periodically been cast on whether Dante had written the letter, the general consensus in Joyce's time was that it was genuine. I think it unlikely that Joyce's Jesuit instructors would have cast a doubt on a document emphasising the poem's religiosity. Furthermore, Camerini, the editor who provided the extensive commentary to the edition Joyce used in university and then deliberately sought out again on the continent believed it to be genuine.

[414] 'Letter to Can Grande della Scala: Extract' in *Medieval Theory and Criticism c. 1100 – c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*, ed. A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 458-69, p. 459.

[415] 'Letter to Can Grande', p. 460.

It was William York Tindall who first wrote about this allusion to Dante and he argued that Joyce included it as a clue to his own method.[416] I agree with this assertion, though I understand this clue very differently than Tindall who assumed that it indicated the similarity of Joyce's epic to Dante's in terms of allegory rather than the difference between them.

Joyce's epic is not allegorical or mystical (see 3.II above) because he denies the authority on which Dante's work relies. The expression 'worldview' neatly expresses the relation between one's cultural and philosophical paradigm and general conception of the physical world – Dante's rested on a hierarchical cosmos founded on the *primum movens* whereas Joyce opined that 'Life is suspended in doubt like the world in the void.'[417] The title of Beckett's 1929 essay on *Work in Progess* aptly conveys Joyce's sense of debt and lineal succession from Dante but also his distance from him: 'Dante…Bruno.Vico..Joyce'.[418] As we have seen in chapter 3, Vico's historicist conception of the origins of language and myth was a crucial point of departure for Joyce. For Vico, 'verum esse ipsum factum' ('the true is precisely what is made') whereas Dante held in his famous letter that 'the truth concerning a thing […] is the perfect likeness of the thing as it is.'[419] Dante distinguished between what was 'conveyed by the letter' and that 'conveyed by what the letter signifies', while for Joyce there could only be the latter. Joyce's epic is polysemous, but then all discourse is; as Nietzsche observed, the potential play of signification and interpretation is infinite. By including the psalm without any clear allusive framework (it can be read several ways, as we saw above) and more importantly without any explication in the middle of a chapter which constantly plays with ideas of

[416] *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), p. 225.
[417] Joyce asked Arthur Laubenstein in the early twenties if he thought faith or doubt had greater power for holding people together. Laubenstein inclined toward faith but Joyce was emphatic that it was doubt. See *JJ*, p. 557.
[418] Joyce chose the writers he wished Beckett to cover.
[419] 'Letter to Can Grande', p. 458.

interpretation, Joyce intimated that the search for certainty, the wish to conclude Flaubert mocks, was as central to, and elusive in, reading literature as any other branch of *wissenschaft*.

* * *

What's the point?

'[…] he himself had applied to the works of William Shakespeare more than once for the solution of difficult problems in imaginary or real life.

Had he found their solution?

In spite of careful and repeated reading of certain classical passages, aided by a glossary, he had derived imperfect conviction from the text, the answers not bearing on all points.' (*U*, 17.385-91)

That Joyce chose the Latin version of Odysseus' name for his title should warn us against automatically presuming that Bloom's Homeric predecessor is altogether good or a hero, for though this is widely assumed within Joyce scholarship, it is far from being so clear-cut in the literature that spans the centuries before it.[420] In the Latinate tradition in particular, Odysseus was more often villain than hero. Recognising this is the first step in the decanonisation of Bloom, who through decades of often highly sentimental readings (perhaps best exemplified by those of Richard Ellmann) has become a sort of secular saint. By acknowledging that Odysseus was not a paragon of virtue or exemplum of good conduct we can move beyond believing that his modern day incarnation is intended as one. Amusingly, Bloom foolishly tries to read Shakespeare's work as if it were a self-help manual or guide to good conduct – we must avoid doing Joyce the same disservice.

This decanonisation is not intended as a denigration of Bloom's character, since he is certainly likeable and in some ways admirable, but a realignment of our interpretive criteria – by removing the assumption that Bloom is heroic and the discredited Homeric framework on which it rests for its validity we can appreciate Bloom in his human, all too human facticity rather than as a Christ-like everyman. For instance, when Stuart Gilbert tells us solemnly that Bloom's flicking of the ash on his cigar whilst the citizen is talking in chapter

[420] See W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968) for an account of the various characterisations of Odysseus in literature through the ages.

twelve is equivalent to Odysseus thrusting the stake into Polyphemus's eye we are inclined to retort, as Freud supposedly once did, that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.[421] Bloom emerges well from this episode of course, bravely standing up to bigoted cowards, but this should not blind us to his shortcomings – he is a poor speaker and debater and has to be effectively rescued from the situation by Cunningham and others (which is not at all to condone anyone else in the pub's behaviour). He has failed by the standards of Christian morality (he has not turned the other cheek); by those of the rationality he himself champions (he has risen to provocation); and by those of heroism (he has failed to defeat his opponents, either by words or deeds, as Odysseus would have done). Again, this is not an indictment, but an antidote to sentimentality and emotional investment which lead to Bloom being exalted too highly. As Joyce noted, Bloom is not so much good as decent.[422] Tellingly, in the next episode after Bloom's act of bravery, he is depicted in a much more unappealing light, as if to emphasise his humanity rather than his heroism: his thoughts are markedly more unkind than usual and he masturbates in public (with children nearby). Having done so, he writes 'I AM A' (*U*, 13.1258, 1264) on the sand beside the sea. This tantalisingly unfinished sentence epitomises the profundity of Joyce's achievement in creating and conveying Bloom – it pithily demonstrates that, as Sartre phrased it, in man existence precedes essence and also the contingency, fragility and arbitrariness of human existence in the face of time's tide. To finish the sentence would be to falsify the facticity Joyce depicts through Bloom.

'No one is anything.' (*U*, 8.137) Bloom had mused earlier in the day, but as one who is identified against his will as a Jew, he is more aware than most of humanity's urge to fix the flux through language. In the penultimate chapter, Bloom's identity is constantly played

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[421] Gilbert, p. 266.
[422] *JJ*, p. 436.

with and his destiny disputed – the catechism (following his consciousness) hypothesises a range of roles for him, from tramp to fabulously wealthy romantic figure of revenge, ranging across potentialities (what he could have been; could still be) and actuality. But it is around Jewishness that the politics of identity in this chapter are played out. After the text's first deviation into biblical idiom (*U*, 17.339-41, discussed above), the second swiftly follows; Bloom's inadvertent tip-off to Bantam Lyons is characterised as 'Light to the gentiles.' (*U*, 17.353), this is unremarkable enough, the phrase is common after all, though of course it has extra significance here given Bloom's quasi-Jewishness. But when in the very next line Bloom prepares 'a collation for a gentile' (i.e. Stephen) (*U*, 17.354), our suspicion that the specificity sought by the catechist might be belied by the shifting sands of signification is aroused. To paraphrase Stephen: perhaps words are impostures. Bloom is certainly very conscious of his ethnic origins and the tendency of others to identify him through them alone:

> What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom's thoughts about Stephen?
>
> He thought that he thought that he was a jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not. (*U*, 17.527-9)

In other words: Bloom thinks Stephen thinks that Bloom is Jewish.[423] Whatever Stephen thinks, it is hard to explain or excuse the chapter's most controversial (and only dramatic) incident; his singing of an anti-semitic song.[424]

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[423] Substituting proper names into Joyce's answer: Bloom thought that Stephen thought that Bloom was a Jew whereas Bloom knew that Stephen knew that Bloom knew that Stephen was not. The second part is rather redundant (of course Bloom doesn't think Stephen is Jewish – why would he?), but perhaps serves to show the extent of Bloom's worry about this issue or is simply the result of the text's fastidious comprehensiveness.
[424] Bloom has mentioned that he is not wholly Jewish, but in a typically unclear way (especially given Stephen is very drunk) (*U*, 16.1082-4). Moreover, Stephen has certainly heard of Bloom's Jewishness (this more than likely being the primary identity of Bloom in his fellow Dubliners' eyes (e.g. see Mulligan: *U*, 9.1209)) and Bloom talks about Judaism with Stephen. Stephen certainly could not plead ignorance to justify his insensitivity.

Having listened to Bloom's singing of the first two lines of the *Hatikvah* and no doubt hopelessly garbled summary of the rest of it, Stephen asks permission to sing a song in exchange as it were and Bloom encourages him 'reassuringly' (*U*, 17.797). The song is apparently 'a strange legend on an allied theme' (*U*, 17.795-6) though that theme is rather elusive. Given that they have been comparing Jewish and Irish history and culture, Bloom probably expects an Irish nationalist ballad of hope and redemption to match his Zionist anthem, but instead he finds himself returned to being identified as 'a jew' (*U*, 17.810) once the ballad is underway. Moreover, Stephen surely knows from the context exactly what Bloom is expecting so his choice of song is all the more shocking (its dramatic reproduction with musical score is suitably eye-catching). Stephen is not anti-semitic, he respects many Jewish thinkers and is the only character aside from Bloom to combat anti-semitism; so why does he sing this song? We will never know of course, but in my opinion the most plausible explanation is that he is being sardonically ironic. We have seen him act this way often, making private jokes for himself (especially in the previous chapter where he has been rather mercilessly mocking of the uncomprehending Bloom) so it is not altogether out of character, though it suggests the very callousness he deplores in Mulligan. His behaviour here smacks of that of the much-feared nihilistic ironist (as castigated by Kierkegaard for instance) who revels in irony for its own sake. Successive critics' attempts to rationalise or explain away the ballad's inclusion have failed to cover over the void of irony. It is like a 'trap-door through which one suddenly plunges down – not one thousand fathoms, […] but into irony's infinite nothing.'[425]

The succinct summary of Stephen's commentary upon it is deliberately obtuse (inviting the widest possible range of interpretation through its vagueness) – *pace* Kenner, it is not an oblique description of Stephen's own situation but a transformation of the ballad into the

[425] Kierkegaard, p.26.

sort of parable typical of Stephen (note the emphasis on fate, a favourite topic of his).[426] The text itself teasingly invites us to read significance into this summary and the conflation of characters that results should be sufficient warning against such attempts: Bloom is initially the 'victim predestined' (*U*, 17.838), 'relentless, unresisting' (*U*, 17.841) but swiftly becomes the 'secret infidel' (*U*, 17.842); later, in another retelling as it were, Stephen and Milly figure as 'a schoolfellow and a jew's daughter' (*U*, 17.942). *Ulysses* is a novel in which meaninglessness refuses to yield and settle into neat patterns, where coincidences stubbornly remain chance and contingency. The last we hear of Stephen are the sounds of his footsteps and the playing of a *jew's* harp (*U*, 17.1243-4), our eye cannot help but alight on the instrument's name and try and force some symbolic meaning from it, yet for all our fury it still signifies nothing.

In parallactic mimesis the narration is the action – we are not being told what has happened but being shown what is happening. Aristotle used 'mimesis' to refer to drama of course and the seventeenth chapter is as far from his term as could be; it is not a living dialogue in the present but a catalogic investigation into events past. As I have argued above however, the questions are very much guided by the action, by what the characters are doing, thinking and saying. And it is evidently Bloom who is of prime concern, since we hear no more of Stephen's actions once he is outside of Bloom's range. The final four questions differ substantially from the others:

> Womb? Weary?
>
> He rests. He has travelled.
>
> With?
>
> Sinbad the Sailor and Tinbad the Tailor and Jinbad the Jailer and Whinbad the Whaler and Ninbad the Nailer and Finbad the Failer and Binbad the Bailer and

[426] Kenner, *Ulysses*, p. 139. Surprisingly, Kenner seems to sympathise with Stephen here, justifying his actions and even suggesting that 'Bloom poses a serious danger' to Stephen's freedom.

> Pinbad the Pailer and Minbad the Mailer and Hinbad the Hailer and Rinbad the Railer and Dinbad the Kailer and Vinbad the Quailer and Linbad the Yailer and Xinbad the Phthailer.
>
> When?
>
> Going to dark bed there was a square round Sinbad the Sailor roc's auk's egg in the night of the bed of all the auks of the rocs of Darkinbad the Brightdayler.
>
> Where?
>
> • (*U*, 17.2319-2332)

The answer to the first of these moves into the present tense ('rests'), as if the action had finally caught up with the narration and diegesis is to become mimesis once again. The next answer is effectively nonsense; the only answer in keeping with what went before would have been Molly. Importantly, this answer differs substantially from earlier deviations from the narrative norm (some of which are discussed above) wherein the answer is still discernible so to speak, i.e. it is the form of the answer rather than its content which is incongruous. With the Sinbad answer however this is not the case: it is an imitation (we surmise) of the mind falling asleep, an approximation of something extremely difficult to convey; the stream of consciousness trickling into unconsciousness.[427] The final two questions raise the issue of time and space. If they had been asked earlier we know precisely what we would have gotten: an exhaustive list of coordinates, specifying the time and geographic location. The answer as to when seems to imply that we are now inside Bloom's mind, having abandoned scientific objectivity for subjectivity. The final question has unsurprisingly generated much debate.[428] What are we to make of this large black dot? I think that at this moment the text collapses in on itself and declares both its materiality (its

[427] Of course, as with the jew's harp and so on, we desperately grab at some significance in the tantalising mention of Sinbad, like Odysseus a seafarer often far from home, but ultimately cannot locate any beyond a tenuous analogy.

[428] See Austin Briggs, 'The Full Stop at the End of 'Ithaca': Thirteen Ways- and Then Some-of Looking at a Black Dot' *Joyce Studies Annual* 7 (1996), pp. 125-144, for a survey of interpretations.

status as book) and insubstantiality (its status as novel). Where? Right here - • - on the page, the only place Bloom has ever existed.

II: SPEAKING HER MIND

The seventeenth chapter might best be characterised as a demonstration of the impossibility of objectivity. What follows this *reductio ad ridiculum* is the swansong of the subjectivity this novel has represented in such an unprecedented manner through parallactic mimesis. By this point however, the stream of consciousness has burst its boundaries and is no longer framed or accompanied by third-person narration.[429] Plato defined mimesis as when the author speaks in a voice not his own, and that is all we can hear here, as Joyce speaks Molly's mind.

The effect is akin to watching a male actor brilliantly play a female role. It is remarkable how realistic and credible the performance is but we are all the time aware of its being a play. It is this feeling of how *real* this manifestly unreal thing is which characterises all great mimesis – whether it is in the theatre or the text. In what follows this and other effects of what Joyce called his star turn are examined.[430]

* * *

Chercher la femme

'. . . lastly, when all is zed and done, the penelopean patience of its last paraphe, a colophon of no fewer than seven hundred and thirtytwo strokes tailed by a leaping lasso – who thus at all this marvelling but will press on hotly to see the vaulting feminine libido of those interbranching ogham sex upandinsweeps sternly controlled and easily repersuaded by the uniform matteroffactness of a meandering male fist?' (*FW*, 123.4-10)

Molly's silent soliloquy was to be 'the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity',[431] guaranteeing Joyce and his characters literary immortality. He was surely right to note the importance of the final chapter, rightly anticipating that it would be pivotal for his reputation and place in the canon. Thanks to numerous stage adaptations, the length

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[429] Dorrit Cohn gives an excellent account of Joyce's skill in conveying action without third-person narration; see *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 226-7.
[430] 'Penelope is the clou of the book.' To Budgen, 16 August 1921, *L I*, p. 170. In his note to this letter, Ellmann translates 'clou' as 'star turn' or 'topper', *SL*, p. 285.
[431] To Budgen, End February 1921, *L I*, p. 160.

of its so-called sentences and its sexual content it is probably the best-known thing Joyce ever wrote. But these are not the reasons he thought it would be remembered.

Nietzsche claimed that he was perhaps 'the first psychologist of the eternally feminine' and that he *knew* Woman,[432] but the male desire for this elusive knowledge, for the 'truth' women conceal, predates him, Schopenhauer (whom Joyce also read), and Jules Michelet (from whom Patrice Egan seeks answers). As Freud remarked, '[t]hroughout history people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity'.[433] And Freud and his followers were no exceptions. Perhaps the most important of these followers, Carl Jung, wrote admiringly to Joyce in 1932. Joyce proudly read the letter aloud, no doubt most pleased with this passage:

> The 40 pages of non stop run at the end is a string of veritable psychological peaches. I suppose the devil's grandmother knows so much about the real psychology of a woman, I didn't.[434]

As well as chasing woman's truth, men had also sought to give her voice and Joyce would have been acutely conscious of continuing in a literary tradition stretching back to antiquity. Interestingly, he originally planned the chapter as a series of letters by Molly Bloom, an abandoned idea that calls to mind an important precursor, Ovid, the first of whose *Heroides* (a collection of fictional epistles from famous women) was a letter from Penelope to Odysseus.[435] Joyce had plenty of more recent examples to emulate as well; most importantly, the two novelists he admired above all others, Flaubert and Tolstoy, had both written masterpieces centred on an adulterous woman. The Master, Henry James, in his preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, stressed the supreme difficulty of concentrating upon a

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[432] *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I write such good books', § 5, p. 266. In an earlier draft he had written: 'The judgment which he brings to bear on the 'Eternal feminine' is the measure and probe of a psychologist.' Quoted by Sarah Kofman (trans. Madeleine Dobie) in 'The Psychologist of the Eternal Feminine (Why I Write Such Good Books, 5)', *Yale French Studies*, No. 87 (1995), pp. 173-189, p. 180.
[433] 'Femininity', *The Essentials of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 413. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* comprehensively demonstrates the validity of Freud's claim.
[434] ? August 1932, *L III*, p. 253. See *JJ*, p. 629.
[435] *JJ*, p. 501.

female consciousness. It was an irresistible challenge.[436] Clearly a large part of Ibsen's appeal to the young Joyce centred on the superiority of his depiction of women:

> [T]hat he knows women is an incontrovertible fact. He appears to have sounded them to almost unfathomable depths. Beside his portraits the psychological studies of Hardy and Turgénieff, or the exhaustive elaborations of Meredith, seem no more than sciolism. [...] Ibsen's women are uniformly true[437]

Nowhere is the will to power concealed within the will to truth more noticeable than in this fight for the 'truth' of female psychology. Through showing a woman's thoughts, Joyce proclaimed his mastery.

* * *

A fictional female's facticity

'About the nature of women he read in Michelet.' (*U*, 3.166-7)

As is the case with Nietzsche, there can be little doubt that Joyce was a misogynist through and through – his fear and dislike of women was not a passing phase of youth (as was arguably the case with Beckett) but something that never waned.[438] Due to his commitment to the detached depiction of actuality however, along with his possession of the imagination and empathy common to every great novelist, Joyce did not allow his own prejudices to mar his published work (regrettably, Nietzsche did). Like all of Joyce's characters, Molly is portrayed within the singularity of her situation. Once Molly is accepted in all of her individuality – if we take her for herself – she is a very credible example of a type; it is only as an archetype that she is implausible.

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[436] At least one of his fellow novelists felt he had more than met the challenge: Arnold Bennett wrote that the chapter 'might in its utterly convincing realism be an actual document, the magical record of inmost thoughts thought by a woman that existed. Talk about understanding 'feminine psychology' . . . I have never read anything to surpass it, and I doubt if I have ever read anything to equal it.' 'James Joyce's *Ulysses*' in *Outlook* (29 April 1922), reprinted in Deming (ed.), pp. 219-22, p. 221

[437] 'Ibsen's New Drama', *OCPW*, p. 46

[438] I say misogynist and not sexist because Joyce's consistently hostile comments about women exhibit fear and intense dislike of them rather than just the prevalent low estimation of their abilities.

Joyce felt that Molly, like her husband, was generally underestimated.[439] But whereas Leopold has become ever more admired, Molly is still often looked down upon. Many pages have been filled pondering her lovers, yet enquiries into whether Bloom has ever transgressed are hard to find. Similarly, whilst his love for her is never questioned despite his evident interest in other women, her adulterous act (one hesitates to say affair) means that hers for him is something which must be established again and again. It is natural that our sympathy should lie with Bloom, we spend most of the novel with this agreeable and humane man, but this should not blind us to his shortcomings as a spouse or to his wife's quite legitimate sense of dissatisfaction. After all, we just spend one day with him; Bloom's grandiose plans he never fulfils (*U*, 18.989), endless boring chatter about advertising (*U*, 18.1341-3), general eccentricity, and pedantry ('hed say its from the greek leave us as wise as we were before' (*U*, 18.241-1)) would be fairly unbearable if we had to put up with them *every* day. Molly also has some cause for complaint concerning Bloom's role as breadwinner, what with his patchy employment record and long string of addresses (*U*, 18.1222-7). What most comes across is Molly's acute boredom and loneliness, the latter perhaps most obvious in how well she remembers the only real friendship of her life with Hester in Gibraltar. Deprived of even her daughter's company (Bloom has packed Milly off to Mullingar) and confined to a house that suddenly feels too big and empty, she is, like Emma Bovary, simply looking for some romance to brighten her dreary existence. Her fling with Boylan is for her more the result of emotional turmoil than of libido. For him, as she now sees, it was only ever the latter.

Molly's thoughts are disordered and rambling – more so than any other character's. It is not just an illusion created by the lack of punctuation. Problems only arise when this is

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[439] In 'The Hours of James Joyce', Jacques Mercanton recounted that 'when I spoke of the artist's nature of the hero, Leopold Bloom, [Joyce] lent an ear: "You must be one of the first to have noticed it. In general readers have looked down on Bloom. Like the women who say to me about Marion Bloom: 'Yes, women are like that.' Then I stare at a corner of the ceiling.", p. 207-8.

seen as being a sexist comment on women's irrationality or flightiness rather than as the consequence of tiredness. It is simply not true that her thought is riddled with contradictions, as James Van Dyck Card has alleged; it is full of opinions and qualifications, just as her husband's is.[440] The question we are dealing with here is whether Molly is not a stereotype? The critic who has argued most forcefully that she is basically nothing more than an accumulation of derogatory assumptions about women or female nature is Elaine Unkeless. But in seeking to call Joyce to account, Unkeless often does Molly herself a disservice. For example, though one would think that Molly's having a career (unusual for a married woman at the time in Dublin) showed her independence, Unkeless feels otherwise; apparently for Molly 'singing is a talent which helps to create her identity not as a singer or as an independent person but as a lover.'[441] When she claims that '[m]ost of Molly's actions are associated directly or indirectly with sex, and non-sexual activities are scarcely mentioned',[442] we are bound to ask first if she is not exaggerating here, and second if it is surprising that a woman who has had sex for the first time in a decade should think more of it as she falls asleep than she does the laundry? Unkeless is seeking a representative, a model, where there is only verisimilitude. Molly's sexuality *is* foregrounded, but it is always with the bitter sense that this has always been her only means of gaining power or esteem in a man's world: 'its all very fine for them but as for being a woman as soon as youre old they might as well throw you out in the bottom of the ashpit'. (*U*, 18.745-7)

Long before he began writing it, Joyce told his brother that he wanted *Ulysses* to be a kind of Irish *Faust* and though too much should not be read into this – it meant he wanted to write a modern European epic, not an unstageable play (though he did that too, with

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[440] '"Contradicting": The Word for Joyce's "Penelope"' *JJQ*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Fall, 1973), pp. 17-26.
[441] 'The Conventional Molly Bloom', in *Women in Joyce*, ed. Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), p. 153. Furthermore, Unkeless goes on to claim that singing 'can hardly be considered independent of her sexual activities'.
[442] Ibid., p. 150.

Exiles) – the comparison persisted in Joyce's mind.[443] Writing to Budgen, he explained the final chapter thus: 'Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent *Weib. Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht*.'[444] As Ellmann notes, the last sentence is a reversal of Mephistophele's phrase, 'I am the spirit that always denies.'[445] Prompted by this allusion, William York Tindall writes: 'Unflattering word perhaps, *Weib* recalls Goethe's "*ewig Weibliche*" or female principle. More than individual woman, more than everywoman, Molly is woman's essence.'[446] Not only did Joyce see Molly as some sort of eternal feminine but he also seems to have subscribed to the widespread identification of women with nature. He said of Molly's monologue that '[i]n conception and technique [he] tried to depict the earth which is prehuman and presumably posthuman.'[447] Joyce tries to have mother earth with her proliferation of yeses evoke natural plenitude. As his knowing citation of Goethe shows, Joyce was well aware of what he was doing here. *Faust* ends with the title character's insatiable will to knowledge being quenched by death and his salvation coming in the form of womanhood; as the chorus remind us, the Eternal Feminine draws us upward.[448] This mystical idealism of course recalls another of Joyce's models, Dante, whose epic culminates in a sacred woman leading the poet to heaven. Joyce's epic is rather different

[443] *JJ*, p. 275.
[444] 16 August 1921, *Letters* 1:170. 'Woman. I am the flesh that always affirms.' Ellmann's translation is in *SL*, p. 285.
[445] See *SL*, p. 285.
[446] Tindall, p. 223. Harry Levin, in his *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (London: Faber and Faber, 1944), saw the connection even prior to the publication of this letter: 'The concluding episode, like the last distich of *Faust*, attaches its hopes to the eternal feminine: '*Das Ewig-Weibliche Zieht uns hinan*'. Joyce's heroine does not lead us in so spiritualised a direction as Goethe's', p. 92.
[447] To Harriet Shaw Weaver, 8 February 1922, *L I*, p.180.
[448] Harold Jantz summarises what the Eternal Feminine means in Goethe thus: 'The fairly solid consensus of opinion seems to be that it means the feminine principle of love, of mercy and grace, which leads the spirit upward to the highest perfection. It is the beauty of the ideal, symbolized in womanly form, most exaltedly in the Madonna, upon whom we fix our spiritual gaze in adoration as the mediatorial figure expressive of the attributes of divine love and grace which draw us upward to God.' 'The Place of the "Eternal-Womanly" in Goethe's Faust Drama', *PMLA* Vol. 68, No. 4 (Sep., 1953), pp. 791-805, p. 792.

in as much as his figure of the eternal feminine is meant to represent the earth and her affirmation is of her life upon it, not of some vague beyond.

Now all of this is problematic but not to my mind insuperable. Even had Joyce at one point (or indeed forever) thought of Molly as epitomising womanhood, this does not mean we must think the same and either applaud or attack him on this basis. This is certainly not to say his sexism should not be censured, but that we judge him *as an author* on what he published and not on what he wrote to a friend. We have disregarded the schemata in our critical evaluation, let us disregard this too. Molly is simply flesh in the letter to Budgen, but not necessarily in the novel (where she is in fact nothing but mind). Much has been made of Molly's status as some sort of earth-goddess (essentially an outgrowth of Molly as Woman, Nature) but there is no getting around the fact that she seems a lot more like a bourgeois housewife. Those of the mythological persuasion seize upon the *comparison* in the previous chapter when Molly is said to be 'in the attitude of Gea-Tellus' (*U*, 17.2313) but this is simply a description in a chapter which, as we have examined, plays endlessly with identification. Reclining like a divinity does not make you one. Otherwise we could all be Buddha. Whatever Joyce thought about what Molly represented before or after, once he came on stage he embraced the role and transcended the twin pitfalls of stereotype and archetype.[449] Ellmann supplies a highly convoluted and symbolic explanation of *why* Molly Bloom menstruates but one rather feels that he is giving an unconvincing answer to a question that did not need to be asked.[450] It is only natural that a woman should menstruate and Joyce depicted the physical, tangible reality of life rather than some nebulous ideal. It does not seem at all unlikely that he had some idea of the period as showing woman's

[449] See Kimberley J. Devlin for an illuminating discussion of stereotype and archetype: 'Pretending in "Penelope": Masquerade, Mimicry and Molly Bloom' in *Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on "Penelope" and Cultural Studies*, ed. Richard Pearce (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

[450] See 'Why Molly Bloom Menstruates' in *Ulysses on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 159-76.

closeness to nature and that was why he included it but here once again we rub up against the difference between his sometimes confused intentions and his assured execution.

* * *

Character/type

When Molly praises Bloom because ‘he understood or felt what a woman is’ (*U*, 18.1578-9) it is hard to resist the feeling that Joyce is quietly patting himself on the back for this bravura final flourish. As we saw, Joyce called it a star turn – but who’s the star here? Unlike Cheryl Herr and Kimberley J. Devlin, who have both convincingly argued for Molly’s theatricality and performativity, I am inclined to think it is Joyce.[451] After all, it is not Lady Macbeth who performs but an actress, and it is the latter we quite rightly praise (with due acknowledgement of the playwright for creating such an extraordinary role for her to play of course). Joyce is both author and leading lady here.

This episode has a sort of irresistible attraction as far as the usually tenuous Homeric connection is concerned; for once there is a direct relation, even if it is a reversal, since Penelope is here unfaithful. But we should not let this ruin our conception of Joyce’s novel and its analogous relation to *The Odyssey*: this is by no means a mock-epic. Were it so, we should have instead a lusty burlesque, more Wife of Bath than Anna Karenina, a sort of pantomime dame revelling in innuendos and infidelity (ironically, this was for a long time how Molly was read). What makes Joyce’s coda so electrifying is that he does not stoop to caricature but instead plays it straight.

The most immediate question that arises on reading is why it is unpunctuated, save for two full stops? A popular answer has been that this is somehow linked to Molly’s gender, either negatively (she is illogical and scatter-brained) or positively (*l’écriture féminine*). Often the fact that both Nora Joyce and Joyce’s aunt Josephine both had a poor grasp of

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[451] See Devlin, op.cit., and Cheryl Herr, ‘“Penelope” as Period Piece’, in Pearce, ed.

punctuation is adduced to support this dubious supposition. Surely Joyce was aware that this was not a general female mode of discourse – he had probably read things written by other women too after all![452] Perhaps I am being too generous to Joyce here however; he *does* seem to have had extremely questionable beliefs about women. Better to say we have no evidence that he associated Molly's being a woman with the absence of commas et cetera (whereas he did see a connection between it and vocabulary).[453] Whatever his beliefs, I cannot see any correlation at all between style or grammar and one's sex, so I cannot accept the equation of femininity and scant punctuation.

Molly's thoughts are almost uninterrupted by the external stimuli which helps shape Stephen's and Bloom's thoughts. Furthermore, she is very tired, and has just woken up, so her thoughts are bound to be somewhat loose and in a jumble. For these reasons, we *might* say, her monologue is unpunctuated: the flow of text indicates the relaxation of normal or daytime norms. This is almost credible, but not quite. The removal and, even more so, the persistence – those two enigmatic periods – of punctuation stills feels arbitrary. It should, for through it we get the frisson of realistic artifice. At every turn, this chapter forces us to ask why. The next question that is bound to strike us is why it is divided into eight pieces – is there some reasoning behind the division we wonder. Apparently not. Some words are randomly capitalised, others which we feel should be aren't. Some numbers are written as words (one), others as, well, numbers (1). One word is often assumed to be misspelt, but since Molly isn't writing or spelling it out we should really say it is wrong ('carrot' for carat (*U*, 18.870)).[454] Attention is repeatedly drawn to the print, whether Molly is thinking of

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[452] His well-educated female students in Trieste for example. He does not seem to have been much interested in female authors however.
[453] As his letter to Budgen attests: 'There are eight sentences in the episode. It begins and ends with the female word *yes*. It turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning, its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words *because*, *bottom* (in all senses bottom button, bottom of the class, bottom of the sea, bottom of his heart), *woman*, *yes*.' 16 August 1921, *L I*, p. 170. (The word 'cunt' is omitted in this edition of the letters, but restored in *SL*.)
[454] By this I mean that since Molly is obviously bad at spelling and everything else is spelt correctly, I assume that we are not meant to believe she has misspelt 'carat' but that she thinks the word actually is carrot.

Rabelais (‘a—e as if any fool wouldnt know what that meant’ (*U*, 18.490-1)) or her own spelling mistakes (*U*, 18.730). The noise of a passing train is transcribed onomatopoeically as she would hear it; again, why? Why does she not simply think ‘O theres a train’ or something to that effect? Why this deliberate confusion of external and internal?

All of these decisions are there to draw attention to themselves *as* decisions of Joyce’s and force us to confront the typographical status of the text. We are constantly subtly reminded that this character before us is nothing but characters, type. Joyce does not show his hand, he remains invisible, but he wants us to know he is there nevertheless: ‘O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh’ (*U*, 18.1128-9), ‘I don’t like books with a Molly in them’ (*U*, 18.657-8). What is really distinctive about both of these extratextual references is how they are playful interventions but more importantly, also plausibly realistic. Molly does know of some books with heroines sharing her name, including *Moll Flanders* by the founder of the novel in English, the beginning of the tradition of realism culminating in this very chapter. Jamesy is, as Gifford notes, a plausible substitution for the exclamation ‘Jesus!’ as well as being her creator’s first name.[455] Despite Joyce’s never stepping out of character, we are all the time aware of him - just as we never believe we have left the theatre and are watching real life - but not in such a way as to spoil the believability of the spectacle. They are just words on a page, but look what he has done with them.

The will to truth is manifested in a double movement – towards the truth of Molly’s mind (the return to perspectival realism) and in the declaration of the artificiality of its discourse (the ostentatious manipulation). Like Penelope at her loom, what Joyce gives with one hand, he takes away with the other. The novel has gone from the new realism of parallactic mimesis; to the interrogation of modes of representation; to this final

[455] Gifford, p. 626. Such avoidances of taking the Lord’s name in vain are still relatively common in Dublin (e.g. ‘Janey Mac!’). Jamesy seems less of a stretch when it is remembered that many Dubliners pronounce Jesus ‘Jaysus’; my aunt informs me that people used to say ‘James’s Street’ (in the nineteen forties). I am unsure whether this has anything to do with Jesus’s brother being James (in some accounts).

deconstruction of its own major innovation. The will to truth demands that it announce itself as art but it still feels truer than the scientific 'objectivity' of the previous chapter.

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Ending the novel to end all novels

'I think Nietzsche would have cared for the tragic gaiety of *Ulysses*.'
-Gilbert Seldes, review, *Nation*[456]

I think so too, even if it would have been far too radical for his taste, and moreover feel that this phrase 'tragic gaiety' nicely captures the novel's open-eyed evocation of our contingent existence. When Joyce was told his book had been called unfit to read, he retorted that if this was so, life wasn't fit to live.[457] The implication is unmistakeable: *Ulysses* had captured the truth of life; even if that truth was simply that it had no essence or meaning. Like Nietzsche, Joyce sought to reveal reality rather than idealise it, but also to affirm it for what it was and not for what it should be. It is hard not to think of 'Stephen's views on the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature' (*U*, 17.29-30) at this point.[458]

Nietzsche appears to have been on Joyce's mind as he composed the final chapter. He explained to Budgen that the 'last word (*human, all too human*) is left to Penelope.'[459] What would it mean to say the ending of *Ulysses* is somehow Nietzschean however? What aspect of Nietzsche's thought was Joyce thinking of when he included this telling phrase? And, most importantly, how can this connection help us as readers? Obviously, answering these questions means returning to Nietzsche's thought.

In a famous section of *The Gay Science* entitled 'The Greatest Weight' Nietzsche outlines his idea of the eternal recurrence of the same:

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[456] 30 August 1922, reprinted in Deming, ed., pp. 235-9, p. 238. Mary Colum wrote that this was one of the three reviews which pleased Joyce most, *Life and the Dream*, p. 306.
[457] *JJ*, p. 537.
[458] It is also worth noting that Joyce has both Stephen and Bloom affirm their existence in that chapter (*U*, 17.1012-5, 1019-20). It is the last thing they say to each other in Bloom's house and the very last thing Stephen says in the novel, aside from suggesting he and Bloom urinate.
[459] End February 1921, *L I*, p. 160, my italics.

> What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!'[460]

What Nietzsche wants to know is whether this prospect would fill us with joy or despair, in other words, would we say yes or be struck down in horror at the demon's proposal? Surveying his own works in the characteristically idiosyncratic autobiography *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche wrote that 'the idea of the eternal recurrence, this highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable' was the 'fundamental conception' of what was by far his most influential book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.[461] The last word of *Ulysses*, which Joyce explicitly linked with Nietzsche, is of course 'Yes', demonstrating his knowledge of and sympathy with Nietzsche's burning desire to say yes to life.[462] I think bearing in mind the eternal recurrence of the same, Nietzsche's antidote or mythic counter to the idea of the Christian afterlife, is important when discussing his constant yea-saying, if only to dissociate his affirmation of life in all its pain as well its pleasure from such fatuous notions as the power of positive thinking. Acknowledging what the affirmation entails should help us to see through the rather desperate attempts to try and read Molly's words as some sort of happy ending.

Nietzsche often expresses himself in terms of *fate*, something Stephen is also prone to: 'Self which it itself was ineluctably preconditioned to become.' (*U*, 15.2120-1) What Nietzsche means by fate is as well expressed by facticity as by destiny; it is the totality of external circumstances with which our will is confronted. Its importance for him cannot be

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[460] § 341, p. 273.
[461] *Ecce Homo,* 'Why I Write Such Good Books', 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra', § 1, p. 295.
[462] 'And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish only to be a Yes-sayer.' *The Gay Science*, § 276, p. 223.

underestimated: ‘My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati* [love of fate]: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity. Not merely bear what is necessary, still less conceal it – all idealism is mendaciousness in the face of what is necessary – but *love* it.’[463] As his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, shows, the presocratic Greeks were *the* exemplary society for Nietzsche. Their tragic conception of life is something enviable he argues, for what their plays show is the acceptance of fate’s inexorability.[464] This stoic affirmation of nature’s course was, in Nietzsche’s highly controversial account, ruined by Socratic reason, which, instead of facing fate, questioned it. Once Socrates asked ‘why?’ the tragic gaiety of life was lost in seeking a meaning. Whence lay the path from Platonism to Christianity to contemporary nihilism. What Nietzsche was really concerned with was the death of tragedy and the birth of what would become the will to truth.

Let us now turn to the passage of *Ulysses* in question. Molly is remembering the day of Leopold’s wedding proposal on Howth Head (*U*, 18.1571-82), as she considered his offer she thought of her life up to that point and now, in bed, memories of Gibraltar flash through her head again, finishing with Mulvey’s kissing her under the Moorish wall, before she returns to thinking of Howth and Bloom’s question:

> and I thought as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms all around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.(*U*, 18.1604-9)

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[463] *Ecce Homo*, ‘Why I Am So Clever’, § 10, p. 258.

[464] Joyce’s remarks to Power, which are strikingly reminiscent of Nietzsche’s ideas, are very pertinent to our discussion here: ‘you may say that idealism is the ruin of man, and if we lived down to fact, as primitive man had to do, we would be better off. That is what we were made for. Nature is quite unromantic. It is we who put romance into her, which is a false attitude, an egotism, absurd like all egotism. In *Ulysses* I tried to keep close to fact. […] That is why we admire the primitives nowadays. They were down to reality – reality which always triumphs in the end.’ Power, p. 114.

What precedes this reminiscence is a reverie on nature and Molly's scorn for those who say there is no God, who she concludes 'might as well try and stop the sun rising tomorrow' (*U*, 18.1571). Molly lacks Stephen's theological training and what God appears to mean for her is nature's fecundity. Once the happy memory of Bloom's proposal begins, the word yes proliferates as an affirmative refrain. Whilst we might be wary of taking it literally, the hackneyed phrase 'her whole life flashed before her eyes' is not inappropriate. I am sceptical of seeing this as a new start for the Blooms or even a recommitment to her marriage by Molly, it is after all a memory, but it is hard not to see it as an embracing of the life she has spent most of her monologue disparaging in one way or another. Of course, we are again aware of Joyce's manipulation, since this could have ended anywhere or, as in the last chapter, with her falling asleep but instead ends on this capitalised word. Furthermore, the erratic presentation opens up the interpretive possibilities. For how would we punctuate this sentence (for want of a better word for this line of type)? Molly might simply have been saying, 'Yes, I will. Yes' or 'I will, yes.' and so on. This is undoubtedly what she is thinking of. There is no possibility a demon has appeared to her and offered the eternal recurrence. But in speaking of her affirmation (as almost every critic does) we surely mean something more than her acceptance of Bloom's proposal. For because of the presentation we can see that she could be saying that, like Nietzsche, she wills Yes.

Conclusion

As we have seen in chapter one, his earliest extant essays show Joyce's concern, above all else, with the function of art and the role of the artist – or, to put it another way, with his technē. Technique only rose to match his grandiose theorising with *Dubliners*, which though solidly realist in practice was fuelled by the vestiges of a rather romantic belief in the artist as emancipator. As the letters show, Joyce still thought the truth of his art could set the *polis* free. His first novel offered a sobering corrective to his own earlier naivety and that of young artists generally, and a more honest account of artistic motivation, though thankfully without descending into a humourless cautionary tale in the process. In writing it he showed through Stephen the nineteenth century's Byronic cult of individual heroism and through its form his own unique development of Flaubert's graceful, ironic detachment into a sort of stylistic perspectivism. In continuing the depiction of his artistic development in his next novel, Joyce acknowledged the moralistic intention (but not execution) of *Dubliners* in having Stephen dub his version of those stories a parable, though it is not one.[465] He then uses Stephen as a mouthpiece to voice his determinedly anti-idealistic, psychological account of literary creation. The source of one's technē is apparently something more complex and yet more basic than a political agenda, a desire to beautify, or a wish for fame and fortune.

Having begun with stylistically simple stories trying to represent the truth, with his epic he came through formal dexterity to depict our modes of apprehension and interrogate the truth of representation. *Ulysses* is the summit and swansong of Joyce's will to truth; its apotheosis. It takes realism's commitment to depicting life to new heights (or depths) and serves as a sort of logical conclusion not only to Joyce's artistic trajectory but to an entire

[465] The story does not actually illustrate a clear, simple moral point or teach any lesson. See my discussion of it in 2.II.

tradition. Whilst by no means the death of the novel, it was certainly the death of Joyce as a novelist.

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The emperor's new style

'[N]othing is more easily corrupted than an artist.'
-Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*[466]

Joyce had effectively sacrificed his own style upon the altar of truth in writing *Ulysses*, particularly in the verisimilitude of the last chapter's ventriloquism. His next work might be seen as a reaction to or departure from, rather than a development of, its predecessor, in which he bravely attempted to forge an unprecedentedly novel style. Whilst we might laud Joyce for not resting on his laurels and for his commitment to innovation, we are by no means compelled to judge his experiment a success. Attempts to justify the radical linguistic experimentation have led even the most intelligent and eloquent of Joyce's defenders into a righteous indignation that borders on incoherence (though appropriately enough, lesser incoherence than that of their master). Beckett upbraids our decadent ignorance: 'You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all.'[467] Whilst Kenner is so appalled by it that he seems to have entirely forgotten what language is for: 'Joyce worked seventeen years to push it [*Finnegans Wake*] away from "meaning", adrift into language: nothing is to be gained by trying to push it back'.[468] Other members of the faithful would have us believe that they are too overcome with laughter at the work's comic brilliance to spare breath to articulate a meaningful defence.

Kenner's mention of the work's seventeen year gestation is entirely typical – almost every commentator feels the need to emphasise it (usually along with other difficulties of the 'heroic' Joyce, such as eye trouble) and this probably originates in attempts to quell the

[466] III.25, p. 154.
[467] Beckett, 'Dante…', p. 17.
[468] *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 304.

fear that the whole thing was a gigantic hoax. This emphasis on the earnestness of its origins as a means of defending the work started with Joyce himself: he seemed to think that because he entirely understood his work and had laboured so hard upon it that this automatically justified it.[469] Appropriately enough therefore, we could say that the seeds of the genetic fallacy prevalent within studies of *Finnegans Wake* were planted by Joyce. What I call the genetic fallacy is the belief that because a phrase or sentence meant something to Joyce as he wrote it (as is usually ascertained through looking at the avant-text; the notes for or drafts of a passage), i.e. because of its origin, it must have the same meaning or value for us now. More broadly speaking, we could say that the belief in Joyce's genius and the difficulty of his final work's gestation have led readers to believe that it is worth reading and even if incomprehensible to themselves, surely a masterpiece nevertheless. Judgement (or assent) is thus based on the text's pedigree rather than its power. They cannot see its alleged magnificence, but they are sure it is there.

* * *

How many words does a man need?

'Here form *is* content, content is form. […] His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself.*'

-Beckett, '*Dante...Bruno.Vico..Joyce*'[470]

In the spirit of my thought experiment in chapter two and indeed with the emphasis upon technē over intentions which pervades the entire thesis, it is surely worth seriously considering how *Finnegans Wake* would now be viewed if Joyce had foregone serial publication of it as *Work in Progress*, had destroyed all of his notes and drafts and had

[469] Ellmann gives this comment of Joyce to Beckett on (avant-garde) 'modern writers': 'If you took a characteristic obscure passage of one of these people and asked him what it meant, he couldn't tell you; whereas I can justify every line of my book.' *JJ*, p. 702. Speaking of the Anna Livia section in the twenties he said: 'Critics who were most appreciative of *Ulysses* are complaining about my new work. They cannot understand it. Therefore they say it is meaningless. Now if it were meaningless it could be written quickly, without thought, without pains, without erudition; but I assure you that these twenty pages now before us cost me twelve hundred hours and an enormous expense of spirit.' *JJ*, p. 598.

[470] Op. cit., p. 17.

elected never to comment upon it or encourage his supporters to do so (as in *Exagmination*, which he orchestrated). This might seem absurd, but after all we have no avant-texts for most literary masterpieces, yet we still regard them as such and are really no poorer for lacking the record of their genesis and their creators' intentions.

Joyce's final work is far, far more radical than is generally acknowledged in the rush to domesticate it and none of the inadequate explanations or rationalisations we possess could have taken place without consultations of drafts or premises derived from Joyce (such as the belief that the work is somehow connected with dreaming – since it bears no resemblance to a dream whatsoever, this would hardly have come up otherwise).[471] The most persistent delusion, one foisted upon exegetes by sources other than the text itself is that there is a sort of base narrative running through the book. Hence we are often told what is *really* happening in a passage, or that this a manifestation of such and such a character or archetype (though we cannot actually recall anything about this 'character' as such except that we are repeatedly told about him or her). Perhaps the most infuriatingly obtuse of these indiscernible stories are the allegedly hilarious anecdotes about Buckley and the Russian General and the tailor and the Norwegian captain. Joyce clearly took a jumble of material – anecdotes from his father, a family running a pub in Chapelizod, a drinking song, incidents from Irish history, his quarrels with Wyndham Lewis, etc. – and failed to make the disparate elements fuse in any meaningful way. He then went about obfuscating them through the accretion of linguistic puzzles and vaguely connected precedents.[472] In the fourteenth chapter of *Ulysses* we enjoy the pastiches because we can still see the actors under the

[471] As shown by Derek Attridge, *Joyce Effects: On Language, Theory and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 141-8.

[472] As A. Walton Litz comments in a study of the successive stages of composition: 'Too often the process of deformation diffuses the basic effect instead of intensifying it; in many cases the earlier versions of a passage contain essential elements which are blurred in the final text. This is an inherent defect of Joyce's method.', *The Art of James Joyce: Method and Design in 'Ulysses' and 'Finnegans Wake'* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 92.

disguises but here the attempt to suggest simultaneity or similarities throughout history obscures the stage altogether. In other words, there might well have been a base narrative, though not a very coherent one, at some earlier time, but in his attempt to lend it depth Joyce has destroyed this story. Would anyone have missed a chapter or even an entire section? (Indeed, are there not many for whom the deletion would have been a blessing?) We simply cannot make out the content and therefore form is here precisely what Beckett protested it was not: 'a bold outward division, a bare skeleton for the housing of material' derived from Vico.[473]

Ultimately, Joyce chose novelty over the novel. He went from a concern with the fate of people, with their freedom and their facticity and with evolving forms to encapsulate these themes to an obsession with technique which he unconvincingly attempted to argue was necessary for representation (of the night, for example). In the mid-thirties he wrote to his daughter that he regarded Tolstoy's 'How much land does a man need?' as the greatest story in literature.[474] S.L. Goldberg remarked that he would not have been Joyce if he had failed to see the relevance of Tolstoy's parable to his own situation.[475] Let us tell a parable of our own: a man claims he has a wonderful story to tell, a sort of universal history that encompasses many ages and cultures within a tale set in his native village. However, so fantastic is this tale that the village's usual method of storytelling will not suffice and he will need to travel and expand his horizons. Eventually his fellow villagers grow tired of his promises and boasting and agree to finance him on a research expedition. He travels all across the land, from village to village and since he is naturally clever he picks up many new dialects and hears a wide variety of fantastic tales. After several long years he returns to his native village. The locals gather to hear his story. The story is extremely long and no

[473] Beckett, 'Dante…', p. 14.
[474] To Lucia, 27 April, 1935, *L I*, p. 364.
[475] *Joyce*, p. 114.

one can understand it. It does seem to be about their village, as he had promised, or it at least mentions places and names they recognise. No one in the village has been everywhere the traveller has but those who have travelled pick up a word here and there from other dialects. The tale is not told in these dialects however. Nor is it told in the villagers' dialect. When the traveller has finished, he makes as if to start again but some of the few who have not wandered off or fallen asleep come to him. They ask him what his story means. He tells them that during his travels he has learnt every dialect and that when he tells his story he simply chooses whatever word seems best from amongst them and uses that. The villagers put him to death. Now they tell their children the tale of the man who learnt every word but forgot how to tell a story.

As Wittgenstein so elegantly demonstrated in his *Philosophical Investigations*, we are all creatures of convention, particularly when it comes to linguistic usage. Joyce's mastery of language appears to have resulted in a rather cavalier disregard for the necessary limits which facilitate its operations: when he remarked that 'I have discovered I can do anything with language I want', he did not seem to grasp that whilst this was true he could not therefore expect to be understood.[476] In his urge for freedom from constraint he tried to create a text somehow beyond context and contingency (not the story of one man or family, but all): 'I'd like a language which is above all languages, a language to which all will do service. I cannot express myself in English without enclosing myself in a tradition.'[477] Joyce seems to have decided that if the English language belonged to others, he could forge a new language of his own; but language is communal, it can never be private. Great literature transcends the context of its creation through its specificity (i.e. its use of language to evoke

[476] *JJ*, p. 702.
[477] Ibid., p. 397.

something to which the reader connects across time). With *Finnegans Wake* Joyce tried to transcend language and hence its significance died with him.

To avoid this conclusion, those who admire Joyce's last work have generally ignored how much it resists attempts to be read at a very fundamental level. The refusal of convention is in truth too deep to ever allow the reader to learn to read (as we learn to read *Ulysses* say). Let us take the first paragraphs:

> **1** riverrun, past **2** Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a **3** commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs.
>
> Sir Tristram, **4** violer d'amores, **5** fr'over the short sea, had **6** passencore rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war: nor had topsawyer's rocks by the stream Oconee exaggerated themselse to Laurens County's gorgios while they went doublin their mumper all the time: nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to tauftauf thuartpeatrick: not yet, though venissoon after, had a kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all's fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathandjoe. Rot a peck of pa's malt had Jhem or Shen brewed by arclight and rory end to the regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface. (*FW*, 3.1-14)

Firstly, since so many loudly protest that it must be read aloud to be understood or appreciated I feel it is only fair I be allowed a note of dissent on this score, for I do not find this to be the case, nor do I find it amusing (and furthermore, my having a Dublin accent does not make a difference to this). **1** The first letter is uncapitalised and the first word is not a word I know. From the rest of the sentence I can guess that it should read 'The river's run' or simply 'The river' but then why the conjunction with run? It could be a command: river, run. If so, from whom and again, why the conjunction and lack of capitalisation? **2** 'Eve and Adam's' is most likely a place by which the river passes, though I do not know it (though this is not uncommon in reading Joyce as few know Dublin as he did). It is strange that Eve comes before Adam. **3** I assume by position and sound that 'commodius' is 'commodious' or if it is not an adjective then it is perhaps related to the Emperor Commodus. Also, the dictionary tells me that the Latin root of 'commodious' is 'commodus', meaning 'measure'. 'Vicus' is Latin for street or village. Usually Latin

phrases, if that is what this is, are italicised and are not used in this manner in a sentence. Perhaps it means the river goes by a commodious street (route). There are no rivers in Howth to my knowledge, though I am no expert on its geography. **4** ‘violer’ is ‘to violate’ in French. Amore is Italian and Spanish I think. To violate of loves? Why isn’t the phrase italicised? **5** I have no idea why there is a contraction, nor what the short sea is. **6** ‘Pass’ (English) and ‘encore’ (French)? Or ‘passen’ (Dutch, Catalan) and ‘core’ (English)? From its position before a verb (rearrived) it is probably an adverb, but is it really an adverb if it is not in any language? How am I to decide what it means? It might be ‘pas encore’ (Fr.: not yet): but in that case why not write that or better still write ‘not yet’? I will end my illustration of utter confusion here before things become unbearably complicated as I think I have made my point sufficiently. To understand new vocabulary we are reliant on the context and on tradition; because he disregarded both, Joyce’s neologisms here are simply nonsense.

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The last laugh

‘Now they are bombing Spain. Isn’t it better to make a great joke instead, as I have done?’
-Joyce in conversation, 1936[478]

This incredibly childish comment is by no means atypical. For me, it encapsulates everything that is wrong with the later Joyce. What seems to have been lost was a sense of proportion: yes, writing a book is better than bombing people but what kind of comparison is that? The sense of solipsism (‘as I have done’) is astounding and perhaps explains why he could not grasp why his new book was incomprehensible. Joyce’s demands on his readers had always been high but by now his will to power, bereft of the will to truth as an outlet of creative energy, was fully unleashed in a despotic egotism that is evident both in his personal affairs (his team of lackeys and general callousness) and his attitude towards his audience:

[478] *JJ*, p. 693.

'The demand that I make of my reader is that he should devote his whole life to reading my works.'[479]

Finnegans Wake is, it is commonly agreed, a comic work ('a great joke'). Constant passing reference is made by critics to its parodic elements (though there is a dearth of explication of this). There is also a broad consensus about the book's profundity and importance and this is held to be inextricably tied to its comic effects. Often we are told that it is satirising or ironising our pretensions or those of its time: it might as well be eulogising them for all the evidence that has been presented to support these claims (beyond guesses based on genetic analysis). Swift and Sterne constantly crop up as our eye skims the pages, as if Joyce were trying to be classed with them through sheer insistence on a connection, and are often cited as primary precursors; it would therefore be appropriate to examine the work's significance within this (Anglo-) Irish comic tradition. However, without being able to discuss style, tone, character, narration (no study of the narrative raises itself above recounting the alleged story) it is difficult to see how one could discuss pastiche, parody, satire, irony. Whatever edge there might once have been has been blunted by the linguistic opacity. Sentences most often heralded as parody are usually the vague acoustic echoing of a famous phrase.[480] The genial absurdity of Sterne or the scathing attrition of Swift is altogether lacking.

It is hard to escape the conclusion that Joyce fled into nihilistic nonsense, that he became the aesthete and ironist ineffectually mocking at the absurdity of it all because he

[479] Ibid., p. 703.

[480] To give one of the better – i.e. relatively recognisable – examples, a rendering of lines from *Macbeth*: 'For a burning would is come to dance inane. Glamours hath moidered's lieb and herefore Coldours must leap no more. Lack breath must leap no more.' (250.16-8) It need hardly be added that this would be a lot more impressive if the sentences meant something rather than simply sounding like Shakespeare's lines – after all, that is the skill in punning.

could think of no better response.[481] Ultimately, he had the last laugh, and there is no better indictment of his misconceived final project than that.

[481] 'I am only an Irish clown, a great joker at the universe.', *JJ*, p. 703. He told Ernst Robert Curtius: 'I have absolutely no convictions whatsoever', quoted in '*Finnegans Wake:* "The most formidable anti-fascist book produced between the two wars"?', Simon Carnell, in *'Finnegans Wake': Teems of Times*, ed. Andrew Treip (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 1994), p. 144.

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