Comedy in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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The comic in *Ulysses* needs more attention. The few studies that exist disregard the problems: the adoption of assumptions which limit discussion, the inconsistent terminology, the lingering prejudice regarding comedy as inferior to tragedy. This study begins by examining the common assumption that comedy in *Ulysses* is either a restraint on Joyce's *saeva indignatio*, or an affirmation of life; and then looks at the difficulties of comic criticism.

Chapter two considers modern comedy, distinguishes three schools of theory, and indicates how these will be considered in relation to *Ulysses*. Chapter three, countering the assumptions observed in chapter one, discusses the book's refusal to indulge the reader's desire for certainty, illustrating this with a criticism of Kenner's conception of Joycean irony and Goldberg's reading of the `Nausicaa' episode.

Chapter four examines Mulligan: "*in risu veritas*: for nothing so reveals us as our laughter" (Joyce). Using Freud's study of aggressive jokes, it works backwards from `Circe,' where Mulligan is revealed in his true (motley) colours. Chapter five evaluates Bloom's comic/heroism, working with Bergson's study of social laughter and against Darcy O'Brien. The final chapter considers farce, particularly in `Cyclops' and `Circe,' using Bergson's body-as-machine theory and Bakhtin's study of the medieval carnival in *Rabelais and his World*.

# COMEDY IN JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*

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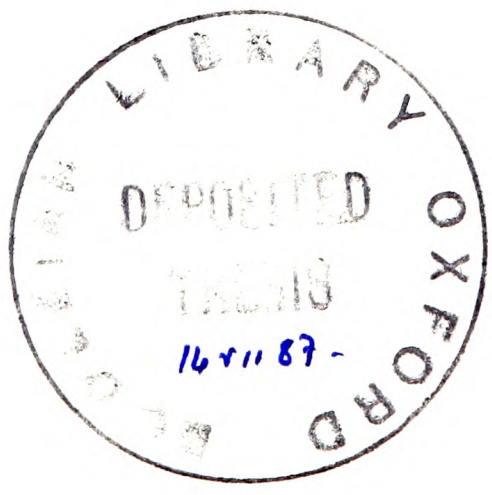
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*Pour ce que rire est le propre de l´homme*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*Archive* - Michael Groden, gen. ed, *The James Joyce Archive* (New York: Garland, 1977-1980).
- *Archive* 12:79 is vol. 12, p. 79.

*Deming* - Robert Deming, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

*Handlist* - *A Handlist to James Joyce's* Ulysses*: A Complete Alphabetical Index to the Critical Reading Text* (New York: Garland, 1986).

*JJ* - Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982).

*JJQ* - *James Joyce Quarterly.*

*Letters* - *The Letters of James Joyce*: vol. I, ed. Stuart Gilbert (London: Faber and Faber, 1957); vols. II, III, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber, 1966).
- *Letters* II:125 is vol. II, p. 125.

*Selected Letters* - Richard Ellmann, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

*D.* - *Dubliners: The Corrected Text with an Explanatory Note by Robert Scholes, and Fifteen Drawings by Robin Jacques* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967).

*FW.* - *Finnegans Wake*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

*SH.* - *Stephen Hero: Part of the First Draft of* A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, ed. Theodore Spencer, rev. John J. Slocum and Herbert Cahoon (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956).

*P.* - *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: The Definitive Text, Corrected from the Dublin Holograph by Chester G. Anderson and edited by Richard Ellmann* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968).

*Ulysses* - refs. are to episode and line number in the Gabler critical and synoptic text, in 3 vols., (New York: Garland, 1984). (The Bodley Head and Random House corrected text eds., and the Penguin Students ed. have the same line numbering as the Gabler.)

## PREFACE

Discussions of comedy in *Ulysses* have been deficient in quantity and quality. Partly this is because the subject seems inexorably to slip, either into platitude when mentioned in passing, or out of grasp when seized vigorously. One readily forgives introducers of Joyce - and there have been many - who have time only to observe in passing that *Ulysses* is a comic book, for they have more obviously contentious fish to fry, such as why it has the title it does. More blameworthy are those who treat the comic aspects of the book in detail - and these have been relatively few - yet who turn a blind eye to the questions begged by the employment of the vocabulary of comic criticism. Thelma Kintanar, for example, whose "Significance of the Comic in *Ulysses*" is not untypical (except, that is, in being a full length treatment of the subject) has no time to question the precise meaning of her terms. I don't promise that my study is built on foundations any firmer than hers, but at least I have carried out a survey of the area. Recognition of problems does not solve them, it is true, but the recognition itself can serve a purpose: Stephen Tifft, for one, demonstrates to some effect how comic theory and criticism emphasises the more stable and respectable tendentious elements of comedy, thereby disabling its playful aspect. Thus his chapter on 'Cyclops' shows how "the very language we use to describe the workings of comedy,"

> - terms such as irony, parody, mock-heroic - is invested with a tendentious bias that would seem to establish the meaning and function of a comic text even before its rhetorical actions take place. The complex rhetorical operation of comic tropes in Joyce's text, however, continually displaces and undermines such tendentious predilections, dissolving and reformulating patterns of meaning that are commonly taken for granted, but that under the volatile pressures of Joyce's comic writing are inevitably subjected to a shifting pattern of competing voices.[1]

Such insights come from questioning one's vocabulary, not from ignoring the issues.

My approach requires explanation, if not indeed justification. This subject is close to its writer's heart, to whom it seems foolish to pretend that we are all equally adept at reading in each different way. For various mostly personal reasons this is the aspect of *Ulysses* I find most congenial. Let other pens, then, dwell on Stephen's guilt and Bloom's misery. This says a lot about me, but I hope too what I say may illuminate my subject to some degree. For the same reasons that I wanted to write this study, I have resisted trying to put comedy, most supple of subjects, into a critical straitjacket - saying, for example, that it exists to restrain Joyce's *saeva indignatio*, or to promote "the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature" about which Bloom and Stephen differ (17.29). Neither on the other hand have I chopped comedy into a large number of small parts - wit *versus* humour, puns *versus* wordplay, etc. Rather I have limited discussion to a small number of large areas, intending depth instead of breadth: the high (irony)

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[1] Stephen Joseph Tifft, "Figures of Diversion: Studies in Comic Form," Cornell, unpubl. Ph.D., 1984, p. 16.

and the low (farce), the left (Mulligan's false comedy) and the right (Bloom's comic heroism). *Ulysses*, I suggest, works by gradation, things shading gradually into one another as do "Roybgiv" (13.1075), so that "From the sublime to the ridiculous" - and back - "is but a step" (15.2401): a spectrum, to employ the optical imagery explicit in the book's twelfth chapter, and implicit everywhere. My discussion of irony lends itself to a general theory of reading the book, and my chapter on farce suggests both the importance of the body in the book, and Joyce's ability to invest despised comic modes with symbolic and thematic significance. (Jokes and parody, which I discuss intermittently, are other examples of this.) My reading of Mulligan's laughter provides pointers for a reading of Boylan on the one hand, as one who usurps and invades without scruple; and, on the other, Conmee as a figure who serves the *status quo* without consideration. My discussion of Bloom's comic heroism should work in conjunction with that of Mulligan to suggest why it is the conventionally masculine hero is so often subjected to the book's comedy - be it in Molly's laughter (6.1013; 11.556), or the diminishment of the hero's role to a man in a manhole (10.498-503), whose own "main drainage" subsequently develops sympathetic dyspepsia (8.1000-1012). - But this is to bias the discussion, for men in manholes really are heroes: and perhaps, in the absence of general approbation and admiration, all the greater.

So the ambition of this study, like its range, is modest. It is to focus the reader's attention on one aspect of the book, not to the exclusion of the others, but as a

complement to them. "To those who read the book as an ordinary work of fiction," Richard Ellmann observes, Joyce "wished to make clear its elaborate structure; to those who addressed themselves to the structure, he pointed to the novelistic element."[2] To those who see only the intricacy and solemnity of *Ulysses* I wish to point out its comedy, and to those who see only its comedy - the book as "*Everybody's Book of Jokes* (1000 pages and a laugh in every one)" (17. 442) - to demonstrate how that comedy is used to intricate purpose.

I have some people to thank: my parents, for everything; my wife, for supporting, encouraging and bearing with me; my brothers and sisters; Prof. Richard Ellmann, who started me off; Dr. John Kelly, my supervisor, who kept me going, and read my work when it had even less to commend it than it does now; Martin and Alison; Jesus College, for the word processor which helped me write, a grant which enabled me to finish, and above all a number of very close friends; the endlessly patient staff of the Bodleian upper reading room; and finally Uday, Andrew and Howard, making up, with me, the four old men who have stayed a*t the* wake. To them all - and to you - a long and happy laugh.

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[2] Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (1977; rpt. with corrections, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 24.

# CHAPTER ONE:

# INTRODUCTION

*its early stages passed unnoticed, because it was not yet taken up in a serious way.*
-Aristotle on comedy[1]

## i. *Jim the comedian singing*

The "perfect manner in art," Joyce declared in 1903, was not tragedy, as had been thought, but comedy.[2] Writing to his mother the following month he says that his "first comedy" will appear about five years after his book of songs (and, five years after that, his "Esthetic"). He goes on:

> (This *must* interest you!) Yeats (who is impressionable) said he knew me only a little time and in that time I had roared laughing at the mention of Balzac, Swinburne &c. I have more than once upset a whole French cafe by laughing. An old woman shook her umbrella in my face one day in Dublin - I was laughing so loudly.[3]

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[1] *Poetics*, Ch. 5, 1449$^{a}$38; in *The Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Revised Oxford Translation, Bollingen Series 71.2, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), p. 2319.

[2] Paris notebook (1903), in Herbert Gorman, *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (London: John Lane-Bodley Head, 1941), pp. 96-9; rpt. in Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, eds., *Critical Writings of James Joyce* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), p. 144.

[3] 20 March 1903, *Letters* II:38. Joyce's laughter, "more like a howl of agony," is well attested: see J. F. Byrne,

In 1922, interviewed by Djuna Barnes about *Ulysses*, Joyce hints:

> The pity is the public will demand and find a moral in my book, or worse they may take it in some serious way, and on the honour of a gentleman, there is not one single serious line in it.[4]

"I think that there is something very inhuman," he told Arthur Power, "about an author who has no sense of humour."[5] To Georg Goyert in 1932 he writes:

> Did you see Jung's article and his letter to me. He seems to have read *Ulysses* from first to last without one smile. The only thing to do in such a case is to change one's drink![6]

The same year, Eugene Jolas relates, at a dinner which he and Madame Jolas gave on the occasion of Joyce's fiftieth birthday, someone gave voice to "a dislike for the adage: *in vino veritas*, which he held to be untrue and bromidic." Joyce agreed warmly, adding: "It should really be: *in riso veritas*; for nothing so reveals us as our laughter." (This remark brackets Joyce's career, appearing in an entry of 1904 in his brother's diary - which Joyce read - and again, suitably distorted, in the last section of *Finnegans Wake*, early readings of which, as *Work in Progress*, are said to

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*Silent Years* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Young, 1953), pp. 139-40, 186; and Arthur Power, *Conversations with James Joyce* (London: Millington, 1974), p. 57. Oliver Gogarty, on the other hand, claimed that Joyce had "a grim sense of humour; he never laughed at all. He guffawed; but it was his way of being scornful." *It Isn't This Time of the Year At All!* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1954), p. 74.

[4] Djuna Barnes, "James Joyce," *Vanity Fair*, 18 (April 1922), p. 65; in *Deming* p. 22. (*Deming* has "make" for "may.")

[5] Power, p. 88.

[6] 22 October 1932, *Letters* III:262.

have been ended by Joyce's own laughter.)[7] Recalling this incident, Jolas reports that Joyce was "always astonished that so few people had commented on the comic spirit in his writings."[8] On the occasion of Joyce's death three years later, Ezra Pound remembered that *Ulysses* was "in its author's own mind a mine of rich COMEDY, not a crucifix set in a chapel or a bag of saint's bones to be worshipped," and notes his "one mild complaint" about the storm that received it - giving it, he claims, verbatim: "If only someone had said among all those critics, that the book is really damn *funny*!"[9]

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[7] [2 October 1904] "people betray themselves more in laughter than in drink, not being on their guard against betrayal - *in risu veritas.*" Stanislaus Joyce, *Complete Dublin Diary* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971), p. 113. "*In voina viritas,*" *FW* 518:31. The story, undocumented, about Joyce's laughter comes from Niall Montgomery, "Joyce Quicum Ulysse," in Brian Nolan, ed. *Envoy* 5:17 (April - May on some copies for the American market - 1951), p. 42.

[8] "My Friend James Joyce," in *James Joyce: Two Decades of Criticism*, ed. Seon Givens, 2nd ed. (New York: Vanguard, 1963), p. 8.

[9] Broadcast talk, "James Joyce: To His Memory," (1941) in *"If This Be Treason....."* (Siena, Italy: 1948; printed for Olga Rudge by Tip. Nuova, 1948) p. 18; rpt. in *Pound/Joyce*, ed. Forrest Read (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 271. The phrase "Jim the comedian singing" quoted at the beginning of this chapter is from Canto LXXIV, line 272; in *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1954; Revised Collected Ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 433.

The "damn," so unlike Joyce and so like Pound, and the origin of the quotation in Pound's wartime broadcasts, is suspicious. When Hugh Kenner quoted Pound, he neither included the unlikely adjective nor gave a reference: *Dublin's Joyce* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p. 167. When he quoted the remark in a later book, again without a reference, it had become: "If only someone would say the book was so damn' funny": *Ulysses*, Unwin Critical Library (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. 169.

Joyce, then, is indicating by these remarks that his book may be read as a comedy; that laughter is an integral part of the responsive reader's experience of it; and that the importance of laughter must not be understated. But these remarks and their implications have not been given full attention by critics of *Ulysses*, for this image of the "playboy of the western word," whose brother recalled that he had "such a cheerful and amiable disposition that in the family circle he was given the nickname...of `Sunny Jim,'" and who described himself as "nothing but an Irish clown... a great joker at the universe," does not accord well with the reserved, stiff and stern figure that is the more generally accepted portrait of the artist.[10] In 1929, it seems, Joyce proposed following *Our Exagmination* with a book of four essays on *Finnegans Wake*.[11] Two of the three subjects he had decided upon - night; and mechanics and chemistry - would be quite at home in Joycean scholarship: the other was "the humour."[12] Of *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, two centuries after its publication, Voltaire wrote that:

> Only a few eccentric persons pride themselves on understanding and esteeming this work as a whole; the rest of the nation laughs at the jokes of Rabelais and holds his book in contempt.[13]

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[10] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper* (1958; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 45. Joyce's self-description comes from 1938: Jacques Mercanton, "The Hours of James Joyce, *Part 1*," *Kenyon Review*, 24 (1962), 728.

[11] Samuel Beckett et al., *Our Exagmination...of Work in Progress* (1929; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1972).

[12] Letter to Harriet Weaver, 28 May 1929, *Selected Letters* pp. 341-2; *JJ* pp. 613-4.

[13] *Lettres Philosophiques*, qtd. by Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 117.

The unlikely fate of *Ulysses* has been to suffer the reverse: critics still "pride themselves on understanding and esteeming this work as a whole," naturally, but in general they are inclined to hold its jokes in contempt; or take them for granted; or ignore them. As Joyce implies in the motive behind his claim to Djuna Barnes that "there is not one serious line in it," there never seemed much likelihood that *Ulysses* was going to be classified as a (mere) comic novel. Rather, to the book's first readers it seemed without form and significance, as if in depicting chaos Joyce had mistakenly chosen imitative form. Then the publication of Stuart Gilbert's book on the Homeric parallels (1930), which included one of Joyce's schemata for the book, gradually began to swing the pendulum in the other direction, a direction in which it has been travelling more or less ever since.[14] For, after the initial bracing effect Gilbert had on Joyce's readers and reviewers, who were forced to accept that *Ulysses* was not devoid of patterns of meaning, and might be too full of them, his book has led to an enormous number of source studies and symbol hunts. No doubt the density, technical innovation and allusiveness of Joyce's prose have encouraged such ventures, but, too busy trying to dissect and find patterns in and sources for *Ulysses*, critics have paid less attention to some of its other qualities as a text, and particularly its comedy. The index to Robert Deming's *Critical Heritage*, for example, has fewer references for humour and wit in the whole of Joyce's work

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[14] Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's* Ulysses (London: Faber and Faber, 1930).

than for the Homeric parallels in *Ulysses*.[15] Yet Arthur Power remembers Joyce commenting that "*Ulysses* is fundamentally a humorous work, and when all this critical confusion about it has died down, people will see it for what it is."[16] One critic predicts just such a turning of the tide:

> we are now moving away from the direct influence of Joyce's *Odyssey*, and as we drop discussion of its technical values, we will find a fresh enjoyment of its comedy and then accept the figure of Leopold Bloom as one of the great comic characters of all literature.

But Horace Gregory's optimism, over fifty years old now, was premature.[17]

## ii. The Critical Tradition

*Bloom dissented tacitly from Stephen's views on the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature* (17.29)

Of course there has been discussion of what Jolas, or perhaps even Joyce himself, called "the comic spirit in his writings." Indeed, in 1914, without the hindsight of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, there were reviewers able to see through the gloom of *Dubliners* to its humour: "He has humour," conceded one. "The work is not all morbid, however," wrote

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[15] See *Deming*. A crude survey: the index to Thomas Rice, *James Joyce: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1982), has the following numbers of references: Narrative form, structure, and spatiality, 114; Language and linguistics, 107; Narrative technique (point of view), 73; Prose and rhetorical devices, 84; Psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychoanalytical criticism, 51; Realism, 45; Comedy, 42.

[16] Power, p. 89.

[17] Review of American ed., *New York Herald Tribune*, 21 January 1934, Book Section, pp. 1-2; in *Deming* p. 240.

another: "for here and there there are flashes of humour, rendered more forceful by their settings." A third is more perceptive yet:

> He has plenty of humour, but it is always the humour of the fact, not of the comment. He dares to let people speak for themselves with the awkward meticulousness, the persistent incompetent repetition, of actual human intercourse.

In a letter to Joyce Arthur Symons (1914) writes: "`Counterparts´ is quite fine - grim humour - a sense of Dublin as I saw it - a lurid glare over it."[18] In general, however, the horror of Joyce´s chapter in the moral history of his country was more apparent than its humour.

No-one, it seems, found anything humorous about *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: but then, 1916 was not a time for seeing jokes.[19] (It is hardly a comic novel: but there are a surprising number of references to laughter in it.)[20] Reviews and critical discussions of *Ulysses*, though, yield a good crop of those who saw its comedy - due in part no doubt to the nature of the respective books, but in part also to the much greater attention it received.

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[18] In order of quotation: unsigned review, *Athenaeum*, 20 June 1914, p. 875; in *Deming* p. 61. Unsigned review, *Academy*, 87 (11 July 1914), 49; in *Deming* p. 65. Gerald Gould, *New Statesman*, 3 (27 June 1914), 374-75; in *Deming* p. 63. Arthur Symons, letter to Joyce (29 June 1914), qtd. in Karl Beckson and John Munro, "Letters from Arthur Symons to James Joyce: 1904-1932," *JJQ* 4 (1967), 98; in *Deming* p. 59.

[19] *Deming* includes no reference to the humour of *Portrait*. More recently, A. Kopper has argued that the Christmas Dinner scene is "more of a *come-all-you* than a profound representation of a boyhood trauma...Perhaps Joyce saw the humor in the fall of Parnell...." "*Ulysses* and James Joyce´s Use of Comedy," *Mosaic* 6:I (Fall, 1972), p. 47.

[20] Eighty, in fact. See *Word Index to* Portrait..., comp. Leslie Hancock (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1967).

There is, nonetheless, little agreement about the *nature* of Joyce's comedy. At the one extreme is the Gogarty tactic, which is to dismiss Joyce as "the greatest schizophrene who ever wrote this side of a mental hospital," and his entire literary career as "a gigantic hoax...one of the most enormous leg-pulls in history": "the hoax," as *Finnegans Wake* (511.34) puts it, "that jokes bilked."[21] (Joyce told Budgen that the only critic he resented was "[t]he kind that affects to believe that I am writing with my tongue in my cheek.")[22] At the other extreme are the scattered responses of Brian Nolan/Brian O'Nolan/Brian O Nuallain/Myles Na Gopaleen berating the gullibility of, it must be said, mostly American critics and scholars:

> Nearly all the commentators he attracted may be classified as literary scruff, quite unaware of the nature of Joyce's true felicity, which was in writing comic stuff.

(Myles would be delighted to learn that these remarks have been collected in an article for the *James Joyce Quarterly*.)[23] In between disgust at the frivolity of the author and disbelief at the lack of it in his professional readers is a wide spectrum of views on the comic in Joyce, and

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[21] First quotation: *This Time of the Year*, p. 73; second quotation: "They Think They Know Joyce," *Saturday Review*, 33 (18 March, 1950), p. 6; in *Deming*, p. 764.

[22] Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of* Ulysses (1934; rpt. with additional material, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 108.

[23] "Myles Na Gopaleen," *Irish Times*, 6 June, 1957; rpt. David Powell, "An Annotated Bibliography of Myles Na Gopaleen's (Flann O'Brien's) `Cruiskeen Lawn' Commentaries on James Joyce," *JJQ* 9 (1971), pp. 56-7. (Powell has "unanware.") For Irish amusement at American Joyce scholarship see the contributions by Nolan, Kavanagh (two), Johnston and Montgomery in Nolan, ed., *Envoy*.

without some way of categorising them they become simply overwhelming in their diversity. Perhaps the simplest is to consider their guiding metaphor, which is most often either of rejection or embrace of the world. One school has Joyce using comedy and irony to distance himself from his subject, and typically this Joyce writes a mock-heroic, declaiming the decadence and degradation of the modern world, contrasting poor little Leopold Bloom as mock Ulysses against his heroic and in every way greater archetype. The other has a Joyce embracing warmly the modern world, celebrating life in all its infinite variety and mundanity. The former school subscribes to what Northrop Frye in his study of T. S. Eliot calls the "down we went" theory, while the latter doubts that things really are much worse or indeed much better than they have ever been.[24] Responses to Joyce's comedy generally fall into one or other of these two groups. The problem however is that the celebration or rejection is rarely stated as part of the argument, and is presented instead as a datum. When critics differ, they often disagree not principally about Joyce's techniques, but about what they perceive as the underlying motivation for his comedy: like Bloom and Stephen, they hold differing views "on the eternal affirmation of the spirit of man in literature" (17.29: what those respective views are we are not told, though we think we can guess). Ellmann and Kenner, who stand out as representative of the two groups, are like Sidney Smith's

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[24] Frye, *T. S. Eliot*, Writers and Critics (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), p. 7.

two women at windows on either side of a narrow street: they will never agree, for they are arguing from different premises.

The rejection/disgust "harsh laughter" reading dominated, at least at first: it is therefore appropriate to consider this response by the book's early critics first. Among the earliest Arnold Bennett in April 1922 refers to Joyce's "ingenuity," "wit" and "prodigious humor," before going on to judge *Ulysses* as "more indecent, obscene, scatalogical, and licentious than the majority of professedly pornographical books." "Many persons," he continues, "could not continue reading *Ulysses*; they would be obliged, by mere shock, to drop it" - than which a more effective advertisement can hardly be imagined.[25] Similarly Cecil Maitland (August 1922), discussing "Mr Joyce and the Catholic Tradition" in Chesterton's *New Witness*, saw "enough fun to make the reputation of a dozen humorous writers," but accuses Joyce of conceiving of the human body as a walking drain-pipe, and of failing to conceive of "pride of life, or of any nobility but that of a pride of intellect...."[26] In both Bennett and Maitland there is an unstated assumption that Joyce's comedy is a direct and cynical response to the filth and degradation he presents. This argument is openly stated by Richard Aldington (April 1921), who concedes that there is laughter in *Ulysses*, but complains that it is of a

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[25] "James Joyce's *Ulysses*," *Outlook* (29 April 1922), 337-9; in *Deming* p. 221.

[26] "Mr Joyce and the Catholic Tradition," *New Witness*, 20 (4 August 1922), 70-1; in *Deming* p. 273.

"harsh, sneering kind, very different from the *gros rire* of Rabelais...."[27] Here in embryo is the history of the general reception of the book for the next fifteen years: references to its wit, but concentration on its "obscenity." More generally, in these three responses there is the assumption that Joyce's comedy is a defence against degradation.

The best discussion in the twenties of *Ulysses* as a comedy, by Edwin Muir (1925), examines more closely the ways in which Joyce's comedy provides a defence from his material.[28] In an attempt at an *explanation* of Joyce's comedy, as opposed to a bare acknowedgement of its presence, Muir cites the thoughts of Gerty MacDowell as an instance of "a unique and poignant form of expression, a doubly indirect, a multiple utterance" (p. 333), and argues that Joyce's comedy is a serious criticism of life. "One feels again and again in *Ulysses*," he argues, "that the uproariousness of the farce, the recklessness of the blasphemy, is wildest where the suffering of the artist has been most intense." He distinguishes two comic techniques in the book: "On the one hand an infinite immensity, on the other an infinitesimal smallness." There is in *Ulysses* "more comedy in the grand style than has appeared in our literature since the Elizabethan age." The principal comic

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[27] "The Influence of Mr. James Joyce," *English Review*, 32 (April 1921), 333-41; in *Deming* p. 188.

[28] "James Joyce: The Meaning of *Ulysses*," *Calendar of Modern Letters*, 1:5 (July 1925), 347-55; in *Deming* pp. 328-29, 332-33: subsequent references in parenthesis.

technique of the book is contrast, which enables Joyce to set in the plane of low comedy firstly "professional seriousness of all kinds, and secondly,

> the objects about which people are serious in this way: religion, to which the comic reaction is blasphemy; patriotism, to which it is little less; literature, to which it is parody; the claims of science, to which it is an application of anti-climax; sex, to which it is obscenity (p. 330).

But, Muir insists, "To see religion with the eyes of comedy is not, of course, to laugh it out of existence, any more than to see sex comically is to destroy it." Disregarding the fashion of centuries, Joyce has "recaptured the boundlessness of primitive humor and has set laughter back on its roots." He has not been ashamed

> to play the clown, to resurrect the mock-heroic, which everybody thought was safely buried, and to practise parody, which nobody considered a form worth the notice of an artist of serious purpose. And to all these he has given new significance, proving their possibilities, carrying them by that sheer courage which is intuition to a plane where they reach cosmic absurdity (p. 333).

These responses assume that the motivating force of Joyce's comedy is his disgust at humanity. T. S. Eliot, while never remarking upon the comic elements of *Ulysses*, provides connections between the mock-heroic analysis of *Ulysses*, the "down we went" theory and Joyce's laughter as defence. Some fifteen years ago Walton Litz suggested that Joyce criticism may be viewed as an "extended conversation ...between the spiritual descendants of Pound and Eliot."[29]

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[29] "Pound and Eliot on *Ulysses*: The Critical Tradition," in Ulysses: *Fifty Years*, ed. Thomas Staley (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 5-18. Litz proposes Ellmann and Kenner as the most prominent inheritors

Eliot's "*Ulysses* and Myth" sees Joyce's book as the development of a new method for charting moral decline, and it is not far from this to the view, proposed in the 1950s by, among others, Fr William T. Noon SJ (1957).[30] Noon argues that Joyce's comedy holds his moral judgment in check, and that *Ulysses* shows values by presenting their opposites, and ideals by portraying the pitiful inadequacy of reality. The Homeric parallels, he argues, are "ironic in the ethical sense, as though Joyce were telling his readers on every page that this is no golden Homeric age. This is a very different age!"[31] *Ulysses* is an Aristotelian comedy which measures contemporary actuality against the Aquinan yardstick of the ideal (p. 92). The book's comedy, particularly in `Circe,' involves us "in a fundamentally serious criticism of our contemporary sexual mores." The position of *Ulysses*, he goes on, is conservative and normative, in that it "covertly affirms the familial tradition which overtly it seems to attack" (p. 98). Indeed, *Ulysses* affirms the ideal of religious values while criticising its actual - and therefore imperfect - manifestations. "[T]hough Joyce succeeds in presenting a searching and exhaustive critique of contemporary society," however,

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of this dialogue; but if Ellmann's *Ulysses on the Liffey*, with its return to the schema, echoes Eliot's use of the Homeric myth, are we then to associate Ellmann with Eliot? It is Kenner who has followed Eliot in treating *Ulysses* as diagnosis of decay, while Ellmann has tended to regard Joyce as humanity's great romantic, his comedy a way of ironically shielding sentimentality from banality.

[30] Eliot, *Dial*, 75 (November 1923), 480-83; rpt. in *Deming*, pp. 198-202.

[31] *Joyce and Aquinas* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957), p. 89: subsequent references in parenthesis.

> the tone is nowhere that of *saeva indignatio*. Religious mores are satirized and burlesqued, sentimental patriotism is parodied, modern science is mocked, contemporary commercialism and journalism are presented as fraudulent - but at the same time there is an absence of anger. Joyce's tone is nowhere pleading. He does not set out to deplore the evil; he is content with making us see those deviations from the norm as absurdities. (p. 101)

Lawrance Thompson's study of *A Comic Principle in Sterne - Joyce - Meredith* (1954) finds that the tone of *Ulysses* is *saeva indignatio*: "mockery, mockery, mockery," he finds: "bitterness, anger, indignation, kept under control by mockery."[32] Darcy O'Brien's *The Conscience of James Joyce* (1968), dedicated to Thompson, which we shall discuss in chapter four, takes the same tack. Preeminent, however, is Hugh Kenner, whose reading of *Ulysses* as mock-heroic, parodic and ironic has exerted an enormous influence.[33]

There is, as I have indicated, another wing of Joyce criticism, whose Joyce embraces rather than rejects the world. Edmund Wilson (1922) saw *Ulysses* as, in essence, "an ironic and amusing anecdote without philosophic moral," and refers to the remark made by Joyce to Djuna Barnes I have already quoted.[34] He takes issue with Arnold Bennett, refusing to accept that Joyce has a "colossal `down' on humanity" (p.

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[32] (Oslo: British Institute, 1954), p. 29.

[33] O'Brien (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968); Kenner, most notably *Dublin's Joyce.*

[34] "*Ulysses*," *New Republic*, 31, No. 396 (5 July 1922), 164-6; in *Deming* p. 227: subsequent references in parenthesis.

228). "The only question now," he proposes, "is whether Joyce will ever write a tragic masterpiece to set beside this comic one..." (p. 230). Similar praise for Joyce's "vast and genial" humour comes from an unexpected source, and one who might have been expected to be among those who saw Joyce as the great mocker. John Eglinton (W. K. Magee), who is himself portrayed in the `Scylla and Charybdis' episode, cites the scene in the cabman's shelter as one of the book's "incomparable flights":

> Here the author proves himself one of the world's great humorists. The humour, as always, is pitiless, but where we laugh we love, and after his portrait of the sailor in this chapter I reckon Joyce, after all, a lover of men.[35]

More recent critics in this group include Richard Ellmann, Arnold Kaplan and Leo Knuth.[36] Their Joyce is not satirical, but the celebrator of the physical and the mundane. Put this way - and it often is - this seems a very threadbare argument against the combined weight of Eliot and Kenner.[37] It

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[35] "The Beginnings of Joyce", *Life and Letters*, 8 (December 1932), 400-14; in *Deming* p. 579.

[36] Ellmann, especially Ulysses *on the Liffey* (2nd ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1984); Kaplan, "Stoom: the universal comedy of James Joyce," in *The Passive Voice* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 43-91; and A. M. L. Knuth, *Wink of the Word* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1976).

[37] This division does not account for all critics, of course: see for example Shane Leslie (October 1922), in *Deming*, pp. 200-03; Louis Cazamian (December 1924), in *Deming*, pp. 314-19; and Jean Cassou (March 1929), in *Deming* pp. 470-73.

Josef Baake, *Das Riesenscherzbuch* Ulysses (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1937), makes *Ulysses* just what his title says, a colossal jestbook:

> Diese Leere überwindet Joyce durch unaufhörliches Gelächter; von einer Tragik seines Entwicklungsganges ist im *Ulysses* selbst nichts zu spüren; sie mag sich hinter seinen Kulissen abgespielt haben: *Ulysses* ist ein

may be significant, however, that two men who knew Joyce well, Frank Budgen and Jacques Mercanton, remember him as filled not with *saeva indignatio*, but with affection, tinged with amusement, for the ways of the world.[38] "Joyce contemplated with a friendly and mocking smile this sad and cheerful world," Mercanton recalls; and, much as Cantlemate and Watt analyse their own, Budgen observed Joyce laughing a "long clear laugh of full enjoyment at his mistake. A laugh is a significant gesture," he went on:

> Joyce's laughter is free and spontaneous. It is the kind of laughter called forth by the solemn incongruities, the monkeyish trickeries and odd mistakes of social life, but there was no malice in it or real Schadenfreude. His is the kind of laugh one would expect to hear if the president of the republic took the wrong hat, but not if an old man's hat blew off into the gutter.[39]

These then are the two attitudes, one or other of which is adopted in discussions of the comic in *Ulysses*. This brief selection, while disallowing any general statement that Joyce's critics have been unable to see the book's comedy, demonstrates that there is a singular lack of agreement about the comic in *Ulysses* beyond the simple acknowledgement of its existence. There is a kind of critical synechdoche in operation, a mistaking of the part for the whole which often afflicts Joycean critics and in which, as Harry Levin said of early attempts to come to

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Riesenscherzbuch. (p. 97.)

[38] Mercanton, "The Hours of James Joyce" (in two parts), *Kenyon Review* 24 (1962), 700-30; and vol. 25 (1963), 93-118.

[39] Mercanton, "*Part 2*," p. 98; Budgen, p. 14; and see Budgen, pp. 192-93.

terms with *Finnegans Wake*, they rather resemble the fabled blind men attempting to describe an elephant.[40] In this, it is true, the critics are merely reflecting the wide range of views taken on every issue in *Ulysses*; but beyond that there is a further difficulty, to do with the attempt to discuss the comic in literature at all. Following on from the seeming impossibility of defining and explaining the comic there has developed a certain prejudice against it. What cannot be defined cannot easily be discussed, and what cannot be discussed tends to be ignored. Yet in this century, and in *Ulysses*, comedy has been accorded a vital role.

### iii. *Ulysses* as a Comedy

> Thus Gina Ekdal is, before all else, a comic figure, and Hedda Gabler a tragic one - if such old-world terms may be employed without incongruity. But Irene cannot be so readily classified; the very aloofness from passion, which is not separable from her, forbids classification.[41]

Granted that more and closer attention is due to the comedy of *Ulysses*: but how to prevent "comedy," in any case smacking too strongly for modern tastes of genre criticism, from developing into a thoroughly unhelpful and cumbersome term? Joyce here implies in his first formal publication (1900) that such blanket terms as comedy and tragedy may be

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[40] Levin, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), p. 121.

[41] Joyce, "Ibsen's New Drama," *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. v.67 (1 April 1900), 575-90; rpt. in *Critical Writings*, p. 64.

losing their effectiveness; and at the same time he is struck by the unclassifiability of Irene, attributing it to her aloofness from passion. Both observations can be applied to *Ulysses*, where a finely developed ironical aloofness prevents its exhaustion by analysis. Each thing one says about the book is inadequate, because by necessity it fails to take account of other elements, contradictory to it but also present within the work. This is similar to Wolfgang Iser's reading of the book:

> By constantly changing the style, Joyce not only conveys the preconditioned, one-sided nature of each approach but also seems to set both object and observer in motion, thus accumulating an assembly of mobile views that show the essential expansiveness of reality.[42]

> In order to orient ourselves, we constantly and automatically leave things out, but the density of the repertoire in *Ulysses* prevents us from doing this. Furthermore, the successive changes of style, each restricted to its own perspective, indicate the extent to which perception and interpretation depend upon the standpoint of the observer.[43]

Iser's reading suggests one reason why criticism finds *Ulysses* such a slippery fish: it breaks rules. Among the conventions it refuses is the distinction between the comic and the serious. In its own word, the book is "jocoserious" (17.369).

The old labels, sparingly applied, can still however have their uses. It would, for example, be inappropriate to call *Ulysses* a tragedy, although it has sad and solemn

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[42] *The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1974), p. 194.

[43] *The Act of Reading* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 84.

moments; but to call it in some senses a comic text (if not a comedy) would not be so clearly and self-evidently misleading. Certainly the book has been known to make readers laugh - although even this much is not as easy to establish as it might appear. There are few if any set pieces we could offer as samplers to readers keen to see the funny side of Joyce, if even Fritz Senn can say that he is "not even so sure *Ulysses is* a funny book. I think *Ulysses becomes* a funny book..." As one goes on, "it becomes the most hilarious book we have." (Emphasis his.)[44] This is one way we may justify applying the term comedy to *Ulysses*: it makes people laugh. Thus William Empson, in a broadcast talk on Bloomsday 1954, says "a lot of it is so funny that I can't read it aloud at home of an evening, as I have sometimes tried to do, without breaking down and going into fits."[45] There are, however, difficulties in an equation of comedy and laughter - what about laughing sickness, shock and nitrous oxide? - as a parenthetic and disingenuously robust remark Empson lets slip indicates:

> By the way, I have no patience with critics who say it is impossible ever to tell whether Joyce means a literary effect to be ironical or not; if they don't know this part isn't funny, they ought to.[46]

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[44] "*Ulysse* ou le changement," in "James(on) Joyce" (a discussion), *Etudes Irlandaises*, James Joyce Centenary Issue, Numero Special, 1982, eds. by Patrick Rafroidi and Pierre Joannon, p. 48.

[45] "The Theme of *Ulysses*," *Kenyon Review* 18 (1956), 28.

[46] Empson, p. 31. For a strong attack on the identification of comedy with laughter, see L. C. Knights, "Notes on Comedy," rpt. in *Determinations: Critical Essays*, ed. F. R. Leavis (London: Chatto & Windus, 1934), pp. 109-31.

As soon as there is disagreement about whether something is funny, then the equation of laughter and comedy becomes problematic.

But there are other ways besides head-counting. The plot, such as it is, has certain affinities with the direction comic plots generally take. That is, Leopold Bloom begins comfortably, is disturbed by threats to his security and eventually makes it safely home. Bitter enemies are not reconciled, but at least no one slays or is slain. The status quo is restored and the book finishes like the curtain coming down on a comedy, even if there is not quite "the distribution," of which Henry James speaks, "at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs, and cheerful remarks."[47] Life goes on, we assume, much as before. This is a quality of comedy neatly contrasted by Byron with the more definite resolution of tragedy:

> All tragedies are finish'd by a death,
> All comedies are ended by a marriage.[48]

In *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear* it falls to lesser beings to try to pick up the pieces, but as one of them ruefully reflects,

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[47] "The Art of Fiction," *Longman's Magazine* (1884), rpt. in his *Partial Portraits* (1888); and in his *Literary Criticism: Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers*, ed. Leon Edel, with Mark Wilson (New York: Library of America-Viking Press, 1984), p. 48. Thanks to Dr. Bernard Richards (Brasenose College, Oxford), for identifying the source.

[48] *Don Juan*, Canto the Third, stanza IX; in *Works* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), p. 674.

> The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
> Shall never see so much nor live so long[49]

and there is the strong sense of falling away typical of tragedy. Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, as Henry James remarked; but by using the structural beginning, middle and end suggested by a single day, Joyce also excludes the necessity of treating the death of his protagonists.[50] The relative triviality of the plot and its beginning and completion all in one day suggest, then, that *Ulysses* has affinities with the traditional shape of comic plots. So too, in another way, does its title. Without entering upon the vexed issue of the *nature* of the Homeric parallel, which I shall be discussing later, it is sufficient to notice here that the parallel exists to move the discussion towards the comic. Prompted by a picture of a tramp leaning on a new O'Connell statue, both in the same pose, Joyce made a similar observation about *Finnegans Wake*: "History repeats itself comically," he remarked, "this is our funnanimal world."[51] All facts and personages of great importance in world history, as Marx put it, adding to Hegel, occur twice: "the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."[52]

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[49] *King Lear*, V.ii.327-28. I use the *Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), throughout this thesis.

[50] See Henry James, Preface to the New York edn. of *Roderick Hudson* (rpt. London: Macmillan, 1921), p. x.

[51] Mercanton, "Hours of James Joyce, *Part II*," p. 96.

[52] Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 3rd ed. (Hamburg, 1885; rpt. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954), p. 10.

Other indications that the book may be considered a comedy are its treatment of everyday life, with the consequent attention paid to sex and the plight of the cuckold; its large cast, and its characterisation of stock types and eccentrics such as the citizen, `Professor´ Denis J. Maginni, `Sir´ Davy Stephens, Dennis Breen, Simon Dedalus, Cashel Boyle O´Connor Fitzmaurice Tisdall Farrell,[53] Uncle Richie Goulding and all; and its inclusion of parodies, jokes and running gags (Bloom´s soap´s odyssey, the garbled report of the funeral, Stephen´s accumulation of debts). Even the fact that the book´s action transpires on a warm, sunny day in midsummer suggests a comic treatment: when the sun is up for almost seventeen hours, it´s easier to be optimistic.[54] Of course drawing attention to such features to the exclusion of others not at all typical of comedy distorts the book, but the distortion allows us to see one of its aspects - an aspect which I have already argued is not seen often enough - more clearly. The Homeric, Shakespearean and Dantean parallels and correspondences can be ignored for the moment: they will not go away.

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[53] Real name James Boyle Tisdell Burke Stewart Fitzsimmons Farrell. He described himself as "Endymion, whom the moon loved: a lunatic." See Peter Somerville-Large, *Irish Eccentrics* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p. 15; Lionel Fleming, *Head or Harp* (London: Barrie and Rocklif, 1965), p. 137; and Oliver Gogarty, *As I Was Going Down Sackville Street* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1937), pp. 1-8. Sighle Kennedy, *Murphy´s Bed* (1971), which I have not seen, suggests Endymion as a model for some of Beckett´s characters. For Stephens, Maginni and others, see Cyril Pearl´s pleasant *Dublin in Bloomtime* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1969), pp. 49-50.

[54] Sunrise on 16 June 1904, 3.33am; sunset, 8.27pm. *Thom´s Official Directory...for the Year 1904* (Dublin: Alex. Thom, 1904), p. 14.

A study of the comic in a text as complex as *Ulysses* would do well, however, to begin by setting out a theoretical framework, for as Alan Rodway remarks, "terms relevant to the discussion of comedy are, and always have been used in hopelessly confused and contradictory ways."[55] The comic is a way of seeing the world and only with difficulty can it be sectioned off as a subject for discussion, but without a commonly held and therefore understood theory of comedy such as there is of tragedy, the argument may all too swiftly degenerate into problematic attempts to identify amusing elements and justify the identification. To prevent this we need some consideration of comic theory - or more exactly, comic theories. This will not establish common ground, and need not necessarily mean privileging one theory over another, but it will at least keep us mindful that there are differences between theories, and that confining our discussion to, say, the comedy of incongruity or of misunderstanding in *Ulysses* will blind us to its other comic possibilities. There are, however, three reasons why this necessary consideration of comic theory is avoided in the study of *Ulysses*, as it is in the study of literary texts in general.

Firstly, it may seem pretentious to discuss the subject of comedy or of jokes theoretically at all: in the old saw, "a Jest is spoiled the Moment it must be commented on."[56]

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[55] "Terms for Comedy," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 6 (1962), 103.

[56] Meier, *The Merry Philosopher* (London: 1765), p. 15.

Bernard Shaw recommended that Max Eastman, who was proposing a study of humour, visit a sanitorium: "There is no more dangerous literary symptom," he remarked, "than a temptation to write about wit and humour. It indicates a loss of both."[57] Thus in Joyce criticism Thelma Kintanar's doctoral study of the comic in *Ulysses* contains no consideration of theory, nor any explanation for its absence.[58] Freud's book on jokes is sometimes dismissed as an example of what can happen if we take laughter too seriously. W. K. Wimsatt warns the comic theorist that

> No matter how successful he is in other areas as a wit, or perhaps all the more especially if he is a noted wit, he ought not to attempt the illustrated lecture...

and cites Freud's "lugubriously heavy German jokes" as a cautionary example.[59] But if, as Freud argues, many of our jokes expend unconscious hostile and aggressive emotion, then an explanation of them *will* be unfunny. Richard Keller Simon puts it neatly:

> What makes the joke is the form, the contribution from the unconscious, for once the joke is summarized and reduced to pure content the joke disappears.[60]

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57 Eastman, *The Sense of Humour* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. viii.

58 "The Significance of the Comic in James Joyce's *Ulysses*," Diss. Stanford Univ., 1968.

59 "The Criticism of Comedy," rpt. in his *Hateful Contraries* (Kentucky: Kentucky Univ. Press, 1965), p. 102.

60 *The Labyrinth of the Comic* (Tallahassee: Florida State Univ. Press, 1985), p. 223.

In Freud's own explanation:

> [A] joke loses its effect of laughter even in the third person as soon as he is required to make an expenditure on intellectual work in connection with it. The allusions made in a joke must be obvious and the omissions easy to fill; an awakening of conscious intellectual interest usually makes the effect of the joke impossible.[61]

Or, to put it Eric Bentley's way, timing and context is at least as important as content.[62] Furthermore, we would not expect a study of tragedy to be tragic, so why should a study of comedy be comic?[63]

A second and stronger objection argues that discussion of comedy as a preliminary to a consideration of the comic in *Ulysses* is pointless anyway because of the theoretical mess the subject is in. It is not that it has been ignored, for comedy has been scrutinised, conclusions reached; each study brings its own insights. The problem is that nothing is agreed and contradictory findings abound and multiply. It is often said that efforts to define comedy are in any event misplaced, for although there are no new jokes each age discovers its own laughter. The laughter of the Greeks, it will be argued, was malice; for Lamb, Hazlitt and the romantics, and later for Meredith, laughter was sympathy, a

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[61] *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 202-03. Also: "[T]he joke invariably disappears as soon as we eliminate the operation of [its] technique...from its form of expression" (p. 77), and: "if we undo the technique of a joke it disappears" (p. 113).

[62] *Life of the Drama* (London: Methuen, 1965), pp. 234-5.

[63] James Feibleman, *In Praise of Comedy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1939), pp. 168-72, shows why comic theory need not be comic writing and defends the study of the aesthetics of comedy.

recognition of shared human imperfection. Freud and Bergson conceive of laughter as a weapon of aggression, whether individual, or of society arming against the outcast eccentric. But the Nietzschean laughter of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Wilde is the opposite, a half-mad exultation in lust and scorn, a condemnation of social cohesion and unity and an embrace of the role of outsider.[64] How then can we define comedy for all time? At a psychologists' conference on humour and laughter a few years ago, the question was asked at the final session whether a definition of humour should be attempted: the answer, overwhelmingly, was no.[65] Wylie Sypher writes:

> The ambivalence of comedy reappears in its social meanings, for comedy is both hatred and revel, rebellion and defense, attack and escape. It is revolutionary and conservative. Socially, it is both sympathy and persecution.[66]

Similarly Susanne Langer says that the human feeling which is the essence of comedy is "at once religious and ribald, knowing and defiant, social and freakishly individual."[67] If this is the nearest we can come to definition, runs the

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[64] I depend for this brief history of laughter on Wylie Sypher, Appendix, "The Meanings of Comedy," in *Comedy: An Essay on Comedy* [by] *George Meredith; Laughter* [by] *Henri Bergson,* ed. Sypher (1956; rpt. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1980), pp. 202-05.

[65] *It's A Funny Thing, Humour*, eds. Antony Chapman and Hugh Foot (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1977), p. xiii. The conference of which this book is a record was held in Cardiff, Wales, the previous year.

[66] Sypher, p. 242.

[67] *Feeling and Form* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953). p. 331.

objection, is the attempt worth making? In his study of irony - a related subject which suffers from the same difficulties for the same reasons - A. E. Dyson claims it is not:

> My main contention is that no embracing theories or criteria are possible and that the attempts to seek for them are misplaced. Nearly all of the classic definitions of "satire" and "comedy" overlook the deviousness of the writings on which they purport to be based.[68]

Whereof man cannot speak...

Granted that comic theory is in a mess, that attempts to define comedy are misplaced, and that Dyson's argument is sound. Must we take his example and, plunging in recklessly, abandon the theoretical consideration of our subject altogether? I submit not, for although there is no consensus on the essence of comedy, the attempt to arrive at one has helped us towards understanding it. The essence of the comic, like the song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions, are not beyond all conjecture. Dr. Johnson noted that "Comedy has been particularly unpropitious to definers," and it seems probable that an adequate account of comedy is impossible, and no doubt to add another stone to the pile would be pointless.[69] Yet, if we cannot discover the necessary or sufficient features of comedy, we can at least make use of the available studies. This might at least

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[68] *The Crazy Fabric* (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. ix.

[69] *Rambler*, 125, 28 May 1751; rpt. in *The Rambler*, eds. W. J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), vol. IV of *The Yale Edition*, p. 300.

alert us to the inadequacies of any single theory, and keep us from single vision: essential requirements if we are to make headway with *Ulysses*.

There remains however, as promised, a third objection, a greater obstacle to the study of comic theory than its inherent difficulties. Despite the achievement of comedy there has been - and still persists - an assumption that while the high seriousness of tragedy is proof enough of its importance, comedy is good only as an entertainment, or at best as a sweetener for moral instruction. To paraphrase Sidney Smith, tragedy rose with gravity, while comedy sank with levity. Importance versus impotence: this is a serious misunderstanding, and a low evaluation of comedy is in any case contradicted by the achievement of Joyce. I am not about to launch into the tirade against the excesses of the "Joyce industry" or its ten thousand publications traditionally made by those about to add to it, but *Ulysses* has suffered from the prejudice against comedy and in favour of tragedy, and some consideration of the origins of this prejudice is appropriate.[70]

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[70] "[M]ore than 10,000 scholarly and critical publications on Joyce..." *A Companion to Joyce Studies*, eds. Zack Bowen and James F. Carens (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. xiii.

## iv. Tragedy and Comedy

There are two sides to this discrimination in favour of tragedy and against comedy. On the one hand there is the historical evidence of the greater respect accorded tragedy, partially caused by the difficulty in defining comedy or finding a consistent vocabulary with which to discuss it. On the other hand, there is the prejudice that lingers on in our own century. This prejudice is inappropriate, for it is clear that the old lines drawn between the tragic and the comic, the serious and the absurd, and the significant and the trivial have become blurred to the extent that the distinction no longer seems a valid one. In Kafka, Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Albee, and of course Joyce - to take six of the best - nihilistic despair and knockabout comedy are intertwined: and the sense of incongruity seems not a vice but a virtue. Before going on to discuss why this distinction has very largely broken down in our century, it is worthwhile examining a few manifestations of the *historical* distinction between tragedy and comedy, if only to demonstrate that the theory that would keep them separate was an imposition which artists have been reluctant to observe. Indeed, R. W. Corrigan argues for a distinction between the presence of both forms in a single work, which can be found at every period of history, and their interpenetration, which has only been found since Chekhov and which has since become virtually the characteristic feature of contemporary literature. He makes his point forcefully:

> This has not been a process of commingling as so many critics have, I believe, erroneously asserted. The combining of the tragic and the comic in a single play is nearly as old as the drama itself - I can trace it back to Sophocles. But what is happening today is quite different. So much so, that it is questionable whether we should even use the terms comedy and tragedy any longer.[71]

One should offer a *caveat* here, however, for it may not be possible to justify a rigid distinction between past and present practice with regard to the presence in a single work of both tragic and comic elements. It is true that Gilbert Murray notes as the "peculiar characteristic of classical Greek drama,"

> the sharp and untransgressed division between tragedy and comedy. The two styles are separate and never combined. No classical author is known to have written in both.[72]

But Aristotle refers to the lost *Margites* of Homer, a masterpiece of comedy as the *Odyssey* is of tragedy.[73] Besides, as Moelwyn Merchant demonstrates, there are numerous instances in the Greek drama where comedy and tragedy are to be found working together in a way which defies easy classification.[74] An early example of a theoretical observation of the effectiveness of mixing tragedy and comedy is that by Guarini in the late sixteenth century.[75] Dr. Johnson famously described Shakespeare's work

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[71] Robert Corrigan, ed., *Comedy: Meaning and Form* (Scranton, Pennsylvania: Chandler, 1965), p. 9.

[72] *The Classical Tradition in Poetry* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1927), p. 52.

[73] *Poetics* ch. 4, 1448$^{b}$40; in *Works*, p. 2318.

[74] *Comedy*, Critical Idiom (London: Methuen, 1972), e.g. pp. 13-19.

[75] Guarini, *Compendio della poesia tragicomica* (1599);

as neither tragedies nor comedies but "compositions of a distinct kind."[76] *Don Quixote*, too, to take an example from prose, is not quite so obviously "pre-twentieth century" in this respect as Corrigan's blanket statement implies, and Erich Auerbach is surely mistaken to argue that there is "very little of problem or tragedy in Cervantes' book...."[77] Dyson's judicious probing of the incident of the death of Le Fever in *Tristram Shandy* is more convincing:

> Some of his subtlest explorations are of moments when the tragic and comic do in fact mingle, in a manner which defies us to try to separate, or even distinguish them again.... Sterne, by the deeply serious quality of his jesting, avoids excesses of either kind. Both the sentimental and the cynical are modified by their curious conjunction. A very moving, if somewhat strange realism is achieved.[78]

Still, since tragedy seems to be a form now quite beyond us, perhaps Corrigan is right. But as I intend to show, it is not so much that what is now written does not fit the old label of comedy-as-opposed-to-tragedy (although this is undoubtedly true), but rather that comedy has expanded, has so to speak leaked into every corner of our sensibility.

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see Marvin Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 53-4.

[76] Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare, 1765; rpt. in *Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Sherbo (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), vol. VII of *The Yale Edition*, p. 66.

[77] *Mimesis*, trans. Willard Trask (1953; rpt. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 347. Robert Torrance, *The Comic Hero* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 311, notes Auerbach's refusal to "acknowledge that comedy might involve problematic dimensions."

[78] Dyson, pp. 41-2.

The pages that follow, then, offer no more than an outline of the relationship of the two genres in the centuries before the present one, the chronological thrust following the argument of George Steiner for the death of tragedy.[79] Then, at the beginning of the second chapter, I go on to an examination of the causes for the expansion of the comic mode in our time. What these sections together demonstrate is that the longstanding critical and social association of the tragic with the serious and the comic with the ludicrous has left its mark when the distinction no longer seems a worthwhile one.

The tradition that there was once a second book of the *Poetics* in which Aristotle discussed comedy is conducive to the belief that we have not sorted out comedy only because the answer got mislaid.[80] We have Aristotle's theory of tragedy; for comedy, in the absence of Aristotelian authority, we have only theories. But comedy by its nature until recently deterred commentators: seriousness, which until the twentieth century has generally been thought to rule out comedy, is more seemly to scholars. Thus Paul Lauter, introducing a collection of classical comic theory, speaks of "the vast disproportion between the amount written

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[79] *The Death of Tragedy* (1961; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1963).

[80] Richard Janko, *Aristotle on Comedy* (London: Duckworth, 1984), argues that the *Codex Coislinianus* can be used to reconstruct Aristotle's lost discussion of comedy. But this codex does little more than apply to comedy the categories already established for tragedy.

on tragic as opposed to comic art."[81] Aristotle himself delays discussion of the subject of comedy until he has treated tragedy, and although no hierarchy of values is necessarily implied in such an arrangement, of course, his example was frequently followed as if it were.[82] (So a young James Joyce, writing in Paris in 1903: "Of comedy later.")[83] Tragedy, unlike mere comedy, was thought to say something permanent and solemn about the human condition. Comedy according to the classical model could never have been unbearable in the way that Dr. Johnson and Nahum Tate in their different ways considered *King Lear*, and was therefore often dismissed as a distraction from life, time off: tragedy was more important. Evanthius' is as good an example of this distinction as any:

> In comedy the fortunes of men are middle-class, the dangers are slight, and the ends of the action are happy; but in tragedy everything is the opposite - the characters are great men, the fears are intense, and the ends disastrous. In comedy the beginning is troubled, the end tranquil; in tragedy the events follow the reverse order. And in tragedy the kind of life is shown that is to be shunned; while in comedy the kind is shown that is to be sought after. Finally, in comedy the story is always fictitious; while tragedy is often based on historical truth.[84]

This does not explicitly denigrate comedy, admittedly: but a tabulation of the passage's terms shows why comedy, if defined in relation to tragedy, must appear trivial:

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[81] *Theories of Comedy* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1964), p. xv.

[82] *Poetics*, ch. 6, 1449$^{b}$21; *Works*, p. 2320.

[83] Paris notebook, *Critical Writings*, p. 143.

[84] Evanthius, *De Fabula* (4th century), qtd. in Carlson, p. 26.

| *Comedy* | *Tragedy* |
|---|---|
| middle-class | great |
| slight | intense |
| happy | disastrous |
| troubled - tranquil | tranquil - troubled |
| life to be sought | life to be shunned |
| fictitious | (historical) truth. |

Tragedy is great and true: comedy isn't. Tragedy is honest; it faces up to reality. We are born by separation and die alone. Religious, and particularly Christian, eschatology offers the hope that we shall be united, but this remains a future and, for most, too distant possibility: the present actuality, according to the same Christian theology, is that we are born into a state of sin and a lifetime of repeated lapses. We have a divine, rather than a human, comedy. - Such considerations made it (and make it still) commonplace to rank tragedy above comedy. "Comedy," George Meredith admits, "was never one of the most honored of the Muses."[85] A good description of this denigration of comedy - which inevitably leads to the depreciation of laughter - is offered by Mikhail Bakhtin, who proposes that it dates from the seventeenth century, and that during the Renaissance laughter had a much higher reputation:

> The attitude toward laughter of the seventeenth century and of the years that followed can be characterized thus. Laughter is not a universal, philosophical form. It can refer only to individual and individually typical phenomena of social life. That which is important and essential cannot be comical. Neither can history and persons representing it - kings, generals, heroes - be shown in a comic aspect. The sphere of the comic is narrow and specific (private and social vices); the essential truth about the world and about man cannot be told in the language

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85 *Essay on Comedy*, rpt. in Sypher, p. 5.

> of laughter. Therefore, the place of laughter in literature belongs only to the low genres, showing the life of private individuals and the inferior social levels. Laughter is a light amusement or a form of salutary social punishment of corrupt and low persons.[86]

This was reinforced in the self-consciousness of the age of Steele, for example, which regarded public tears as the hallmark of moral superiority, and therefore found little to praise in laughter. Steele indeed (1712) praised Terence's *Heautontimorumenos* for containing "not one Passage that could raise a Laugh." "There cannot be a greater Argument of the general good Understanding of a People," he observed, somewhat patronisingly, "than a sudden Consent to give their Approbation of a Sentiment which has no Emotion in it."[87] So we find Steele's contemporary Lord Chesterfield famously advising his son that "there is nothing so illiberal, and so ill-bred as audible laughter."[88] The insistence in certain periods upon the moral purpose of comedy, comedy as the scourge of vice, suggests that laughter needed to be performing some socially useful function to be beyond reproach.[89]

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[86] Bakhtin, p. 67.

[87] *Spectator* Nº 502, 6 October 1712; rpt. in *The Spectator*, ed. Donald Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), vol. 4, p. 280.

[88] *Lord Chesterfield's Advice to His Son: On Men and Manners* [i.e. extracts from the letters] (London: 1788), "Graces: Laughter," p. 62.

[89] W. D. Howarth, "Introduction: theoretical considerations," *Comic Drama: The European Heritage*, ed. Howarth, Critical Heritage Series (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 15-17.

In the old genre distinction, then, comedy depicted everyday, as opposed to "great," events: it generally concerned the social group, while tragedy focused on the individual. The best known modern formulation of this axiom is by Diderot (1757):

> Comedy deals with general types, tragedy with individuals...The tragic hero represents a certain individual, be it Regulus, Brutus, or Cato, who cannot be mistaken for anyone else. The comic hero on the other hand represents a great many men: if by mistake the playwright were to give him a character which could be identified with that of a recognizable individual, he would have failed, and his comedy would have degenerated into satire.[90]

Harry Levin expands this formula, finding in classical theory a dividing line between "comedy, with its many trivial mistakes, and tragedy, with its monstrously grand ones." For all his vices, he goes on, the hero has his tragic flaw, and a single error may have fatal consequences. "Your buffoon," by contrast,

> is constantly way-laid by pitfalls, familiar and not terribly consequential, or else upset by pratfalls, from which he scrambles to his feet not very badly harmed, so that he may come closer to us - to the stuff of our experience - after all....

"Hence," he says, "it is comedy which typifies, where it is tragedy which individualizes; where tragedy observes the nice distinctions between man and man, comedy stresses those broad resemblances which make it so difficult to tell people apart..."[91]

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90 "Entretiens sur le *Fils naturel*," 3rd Entretien, in his *Writings on the Theatre*, ed. F. C. Green (Cambridge: 1936), p. 76.

91 "Two Comedies of Errors," in his *Refractions* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 129-30.

Yet these observations often led to the erroneous conclusion that comedy is an evening's entertainment and that we must turn to tragedy for drama of real importance. An example is the misinterpretation of Aristotle's observation that comedy treats of men "worse than the average."[92] His insistence on the moral superiority of tragic characters ("better than the average") was distorted by French critics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into a social debarring of the lower classes from the ranks of tragedy:[93]

> the most notable action of a citizen can never be made the subject of an epic poem, when the most indifferent one of a king or general of an army will be such, and always with success.[94]

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[92] *Poetics* ch. 5, 1449ª32; *Works*, p. 2319. See Carlson, p. 20.

[93] They may have been following the fourth century a.d. grammarian Evanthius, who proposed - or assumed Aristotle had proposed - that comedy concerns men who inhabit country towns and tragedy those who live in "kingly halls." (*De Tragoedia et Comoedia*, attributed to Donatus; trans. Mildred Rogers, in *European Theories of the Drama*, ed. Barrett Clark (rev. ed. New York: Appleton, 1929),p. 43.)

Perhaps behind it lies also, as D. J. Palmer, in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, ed. Palmer, Macmillan Casebook Series (London: Macmillan, 1984) p. 10, suggests, an inference drawn from the unlikely etymological association mentioned by Aristotle of comedy with *kome*, a village (*Poetics* ch. 3, 1448ª36; *Works*, p. 2318). The alternative Aristotle suggests, *komos*, a festive procession, is now more commonly accepted. It suits modern theory about the origin of comedy to do so - although the common origin theory has been challenged by A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), Appendix B: "Mr. Cornford's Theory of the Origin of Comedy"; and Gerard Else, *Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965).

[94] Dacier, qtd. in S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art* (London: 1895), p. 220; see also Butcher, pp. 218-21.

The tendency of genre theory from Aristotle until our own century, then, has been to distinguish and contrast tragedy and comedy, a tactic which leads inevitably to the imposition, disguised as a discovery, of a hierarchy of literary values in which comedy just as inevitably comes off worse.[95] Aristotle thought that a comic work of art could not, by definition, be serious, and comedy has often been lazily and vaguely defined as everything tragedy is not.[96] Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* is against mixing the two genres:

> for by bringing in other stuff that appertains not at all to the present matter, you must needs mar and pervert the play that is at hand, even though the stuff you bring in be much better.[97]

Sidney also objects - in his *Defence of Poesie* (1590), a theoretical work, note - to the mingling of kings and clowns, creating plays which are "neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies...so as neither the admiration and Commiseration, nor the right sportfulnesse, is by their mongrell Tragicomedie obtained." (He could hardly be expected to guess that he was writing in the dawn of a fifty-year golden age of such "mongrel tragicomedy.") So too

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[95] There is no absolute necessity to define comedy in opposition to tragedy - Robert Bernard Martin, for example, suggests that a "more valid distinction would be between comedy and tragedy on the one hand, and satire on the other." Satire, he remarks, "is the mode of rejection, while comedy and tragedy are both modes of acceptance." "Notes Toward A Comic Fiction," in *The Theory of the Novel*, ed. John Halperin (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 78-9.

[96] There is little point, however, in merely inverting this hierarchy and claiming that "comedy transcends tragedy [and] is the more comprehensive term...." Fred Robinson, "The Comedy of Language," Diss. Univ of Washington: 1972, p. 33. The fact is that for various reasons comedy rather than tragedy speaks to us. We are all comedians now.

[97] Qtd. in Carlson, p. 76.

Milton's prefatory essay to *Samson Agonistes* speaks of the "Poets error of intermixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity...." In both there is the explicit condemnation of mingling disparate genres; and the implicit hierarchy of tragedy over comedy.98

On the other hand there is, of course, the famous occasion at the end of the *Symposium* when a half-awake Aristodemus hears Socrates compelling Aristophanes and Agathon to admit that the genius of comedy is the same as that of tragedy.[99] Unfortunately the demonstration itself has gone unrecorded, a loss which rivals that of the second book of the *Poetics*. Indeed, since the "essence of the comic" slips through even the subtlest fingers, it seems we are being teased here with a Socratic proof of what is beyond proving. The joke has backfired, however, for we, more accustomed to tragic farce and noble comedy, find ourselves not laughing at the audacity and manipulative skill of Socrates, as presumably the Greeks did, but wondering just what form the proof might have taken...

The distinction, furthermore, was perhaps somewhat clearer in theory than in practice. Moelwyn Merchant offers examples of the transcendence of the categories in Greek and Shakespearean drama, arguing that "comedy has a peculiar power when seen in relation to tragedy," and that, perhaps,

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98 Sir Philip Sidney, rpt. in *The Prose Works*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1923), III.39. John Milton, rpt. in *The Works* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931), I.332.

99 *Symposium* 223; in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B[enjamin] Jowett (4th ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), I.555.

"the comic vision penetrates the secret of man's condition best when it is seen in relation to the structure of tragic art."[100] Plautus coined the term "tragico-comoedia," significantly in Mercury's prologue to *Amphitruo* - that is, in practice - and in our own century Joyce in *Ulysses* conflates the jocose and the serious in "jocoserious" (17.369).[101] Nonetheless, even if practice has been more permissive than theory, Jonson and Milton's complaints against the unseemly mingling of genres are more typical of the classical attitudes towards tragedy and comedy, and if they illustrate the failure of theory to encompass practice, they illustrate too how deeply rooted has been the assumption that comedy is inferior to tragedy. Even the "hybrid growth" of the Elizabethan drama was part of an aesthetic of contrasts rather than of unities, while in our own age the very comic/tragic distinction upon which an aesthetic of contrasts must be based is no longer shared. We no longer have tragedy, nor in practice recognise comedy as a "lower" form. My second chapter begins by examining in brief the causes for the change.

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100 Merchant, pp. 13-36, 32-33.

101 Carlson, p. 22. "Jocoserious": not Joyce's own coinage, of course. O.E.D. (1901) has two interesting instances, one of which may be relevant to the cocoa Bloom shares with Stephen, the other to Joyce's genius: "1737 M. Green *Spleen* 176 Drink a jocoserious cup With souls who've took their freedom up. 1885 E. Johnson in *Browning Society Papers* vii.29 Our own poet has lately characterized himself as a *jocoserious* genius; and in fact this jocoseriosity seems of much the same quality with the eironeia of the Greek."

## CHAPTER TWO:

## THE `DEATH OF GOD,´ THE BIRTH OF MODERN COMEDY

*How Tragedy and Comedy embrace;*
*How Farce and Epic get a jumbled race*[1]

### i. death of god

On or about December 1910, Virginia Woolf thought, human nature changed:

> All human relations have shifted - those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.[2]

Nietzche´s proclamation in 1882, the year Woolf was born - "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" - is often cited as the beginning of the modern era.[3] Frank Kermode presents a case for 1900 itself, for it was during this year that works were published which,

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[1] Pope, *The Dunciad*, Bk I, ll. 67-8; rpt. in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 355.

[2] "Character in Fiction," *Criterion* 2:8 (July 1924), 409-30; rpt. as "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in her *Collected Essays*, vol 1 (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), pp. 320-21.

[3] *The Gay Science*, section 125; extract qtd. in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufman (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 95.

> transformed or transvalued spirituality, the relation of language to knowing, and the locus of human uncertainty, henceforth to be thought of not as an imperfection of the human apparatus but part of the nature of things, a condition of what we may know.[4]

W. B. Yeats, with customary sweep, claims that in this year, "everybody got down off his stilts; henceforth nobody drank absinthe with his black coffee; nobody went mad; nobody committed suicide; nobody joined the Catholic Church; or if they did I have forgotten."[5] Finally, D. H. Lawrence: "It was in 1915 the old world ended."[6]

Caution is necessary: these writers are not identifying or attempting to identify the same phenomenon, and besides, as their scatter suggests, "[a]ny date can be justified on some calculation or other."[7] Still, if Kermode argues against the uniqueness of our situation, our crisis against all the other past proclaimed crises (pp. 94-96), he acknowledges at the same time that "all general assumptions concerning crisis and transition...have a paradigmatic aspect, and can be studied in historical depth" (p. 103). It is in his sense then a useful and generally agreed fiction that between 1859 (or even 1848) and 1918 - a large gap, to be sure - gradually or suddenly Western man's confidence in the "old stable self of the ego," in the world and in God

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4 *The Sense of an Ending* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 97.

5 Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1936), p. xi-xii.

6 Ch. XII, "The Nightmare," of *Kangaroo* (1923, rpt. Phoenix Edition, intro. Richard Aldington, London: Heinemann, 1955), p. 220.

7 Kermode, p. 98; subsequent references in parenthesis.

dissolved. For when God "died" - such a concept emphasising the fictiveness of the image, for if He could die He could never have lived - the world ceased to have a beginning and an end: a *meaning.* And tragedy, which as George Steiner remarks, "requires the intolerable burden of God's presence," died too.[8] (This is not of course beyond contradiction, and Elder Olson, Arthur Miller, Raymond Williams and John Orr argue in their different ways and with differing emphases that tragedy *has* continued in the twentieth-century drama, and that the Aristotelian strictures are too severe to encompass what is in fact a third flowering of world-historical tragedy.)[9]

With the downturn in the fortunes of tragedy came an upswing in a kind of comedy to a new position of importance which came to eclipse both classical tragedy and classical comedy. The reasons for this remarkable transformation -

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[8] Steiner, p. 353: subsequent references in parenthesis. In his final chapter, from which this quotation comes, Steiner considers also the possibilities that "tragedy has merely altered in style and convention," and "the more remote hope" that it "may have before it a new life and future," pp. 353-4. He also asserts, however, that the metaphysics of Christianity are fundamentally anti-tragic, pp. 331-2.

[9] Elder Olson can see nothing preventing modern tragedy. Raymond Williams' general formula - that the essential tragic experience is that of irreparable human loss (pp. 56ff.) - and Orr's adoption of it, it seems to me, seek to harness the power of the term tragedy to dignify a different phenomenon. Time will tell.

Refs. for the above: Elder Olson, *Tragedy and the Theory of Drama* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 237-60. Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man," *New York Times* (27 February 1949), II. pp. 1,3, rpt. in his Death of A Salesman: *Text and Criticism*, ed. Gerald Weales, Viking Critical Library (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), pp. 143-47. Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (1966; rev. ed. London: Verso, 1979). John Orr, *Tragic Drama and Modern Society* (London: Macmillan, 1981).)

from genres into a single form that encompasses and transcends both, and yet is more comic than tragic - are so far widespread that in discussing them one is on the borderline, at least, of facile generalisation where evidence is scarce - or too plentiful - and the possibility of contradiction (falsifiability) rarer still. The causes are so deep, disparate and complex that a full account of them would be hopelessly long and very likely impossible to document, and which in any case, explaining everything, would leave us where we were before. But some explanation, such as for the death of tragedy, may be attempted. Steiner connects the fall of tragedy with the rise of the novel (p. 195), and argues that "the decline of tragedy is inseparably related to the decline of the organic world view and of its attendant context of mythological, symbolic, and ritual reference" (p. 292). "The classic," he writes, "leads to a dead past. The metaphysics of Christianity and Marxism are anti-tragic. That, in essence, is the dilemma of modern tragedy" (p. 324). Corrigan takes a similar position: tragedy and comedy depend on generally accepted values,and when these have gone, "all experience becomes equally serious or equally ludicrous."[10] George Brandt's explanation is that the "idealized picture of man that made tragedy possible was based...on the concept of rigid social divisions," and the "blurring of *felt* distinctions among men has led to a blurring of the genre distinctions in drama."[11]

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[10] Corrigan, p. 10.

[11] George Brandt, "Twentieth-century comedy," in Howarth, pp. 166-7. For a critical survey of some explanations see Walter Kerr, *Tragedy and Comedy* (London:

Lionel Abel believes that tragedy died in the seveneteenth century as a consequence of a radical change in human consciousness: the dawning of *self*-consciousness.[12] But whatever the reasons, in this century there is a new comic response very different from that of the past:

> Internally, the distinctions between the various branches of comedy have weakened; high comedy mixes with farce, satire frequently intrudes. Externally, the realms of comedy and tragedy now share certain border territories or coalesce.[13]

Walter Kerr notes that in the twentieth century comedy has gradually turned black, spitting out "images and tirades that suggest a terrible impatience, inviting us to share what seems a very real insanity."[14]

The concentration camps and the atom bombs confirmed our worst suspicions that human nature had changed, and not for the better. In a world where history is a nightmare from which none of us awake there can be no sense, no meaning. To some, comedy seems a shocking or cynical response, or evasion: laughter, in such times? Yet the lightening of a heavy heart has always been recognised as one of the purposes of comedy, and one definition of the comic has been

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Bodley Head, 1967), pp. 267-71. Steiner, pp. 194-98 and 313-23, concentrates on the stability of hierarchy in Athens, in Shakespeare's England and at Versailles, and the modern breakdown of this organic world view.

[12] *Metatheater*, Dramabook Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963).

[13] Brandt, p. 168.

[14] Kerr, p. 17. See also Ellen Douglas Leyburn, "Comedy and Tragedy Transposed," *Yale Review* LIII (Summer 1964), 553-62. She contrasts "humorless writers of serious plays with weak heroes" (p. 559; Miller, Williams, pp. 556-59) with writers of absurd comedy "highly conscious of the doubleness of their plays" (p. 559; Ionesco, Beckett, pp. 559-62), and finds in favour of the latter.

the incongruous. So it seems that in the blackest of situations, with God guilty of not existing and man's sense of self no longer secure, black humour is appropriate. Such an account may also in part explain the development of modern irony in literature, which has come about as man's certainty that he understood the world leaked away. Thus Glicksberg connects irony with the elision of tragic and comic, remarking that it is only in this century that the term *irony* has acquired its complex of ambivalent meaning:

> Today it enters constitutively into the making of both tragedy and comedy, fusing the two in a kind of interdependent unity, so that neither is ever pure.[15]

A claim different from, but intimately connected with, those quoted above is made by George Brandt that the twentieth century, as far as comedy is concerned, began on 10 December 1896 with the first performance at Lugne-Poe's Theatre de l'Oeuvre in Paris of Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Rex (Ubu Roi)*.[16] With that "*Merdre!*" something new had most certainly arrived. Now, as Friedrich Duerrenmatt has observed, "[c]omedy alone is suitable for us."[17] Albert Camus explains succintly why the death of God and the birth of modern comedy coincide:

> in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as

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[15] Charles Glicksberg, *The Ironic Vision*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 4.

[16] Brandt, p. 166.

[17] "Problems of the Theatre," *Tulane Drama Review* 3:1 (October 1958), p. 20.

> much as he lacks hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.[18]

In speaking or conceiving of "the Theatre of the Absurd," however, we isolate a movement that would oppose such tidy definitions, and which in any case is much more than a type of the drama. The notion of the death of God, and all that that critical shorthand stands for, has more deeply affected our conception of comedy and its relation to seriousness than this. When the freedom to choose is rendered pointless by a world of absurdity, the comic becomes a crucial mode for the exploration of the world in art, and while it would be foolish to pretend that it is the *only* mode, we can perhaps say that it is the mode most responsive to and representative of the times in which we live. Expression of the absurdity of life in the sober conventions inherited from a God-centred universe is absurd only in the sense of being a refusal to confront reality. "One of the most striking characteristics of the modern drama," Corrigan notes:

> is the way in which the age-old distinctions between the tragic and the comic (the serious and the ludicrous, the painful and the painless) have been obliterated.[19]

Kerr too remarks upon this modern development of serious

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[18] *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p. 18. Qtd. in Martin Esslin, *Theatre of the Absurd* 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 5.

[19] Corrigan, p. 9.

comedy, suggesting that almost every play of importance we regard as "serious" is in fact "conveyed to us in the language of laughter."[20]

Neither has this obliteration been restricted to the drama, and *Ulysses*, if it is not also one of the causes, is among the earliest fruits of this obliteration. In *Ulysses* myth and the quotidian, pathos and bathos, the important and the trivial, farce and high seriousness of purpose meet and are fused in a work which refuses to recognise the boundary lines between those previously disparate genres. Inevitably this demands and creates an ironic perception of the important in the trivial and the triviality of the important. Dramatic distinctions between tragic and comic do not, it is true, fit the novel perfectly: we speak of the comic, but not of the tragic, novel.[21] It would be inappropriate to speak of *Ulysses* as combining the two forms, as one might of *Waiting for Godot*, for example.[22] But at the same time the label "comedy," if we are to think of it in classical terms, does less than justice to *Ulysses* and our experience of it. As in so many ways, the book extends beyond such a simple and reductive description, and in this it is part of what

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[20] Kerr, p. 325. The best comedy occurs, he argues, when tragedy flourishes; and tragedy was prior to, and a source of, comedy (pp. 19-35). Comedy is the "lesser form, because it comes into existence as a comment upon tragedy..." As a species of criticism, it is "parasitical" (p. 266).

[21] Kerr, p. 263.

[22] Brandt, pp. 170-71.

has happened to comedy in the drama this century. If tragedy is no longer "our" form, comedy is no longer quite what it was either.

It is thus significant that Joyce's personal history should so accurately reflect the history of his times: as Lukacs says of Gorki, Rousseau, Goethe and Tolstoy, Joyce - who summed up the essential traits of his epoch - had himself experienced in his own life the "emergence and maturing of the problems of the age."[23] Born in the year of Nietzsche's proclamation, his first formal publication was an essay in 1900 on Ibsen - himself a pioneer of modern comedy - in which, as we have seen, Joyce questions the validity of the "old-world terms" tragedy and comedy. The title of his first preserved attempt at a novel, *Stephen Hero*, is "satirical," but an interest in heroism is also displayed.[24] In it too is Stephen Daedalus' recognition that relativity has found its way into the heart of man: he is "fond of saying that the Absolute is dead" (*SH.*211). He disagrees with Cranly, who recognizes no effect upon the individual life of the civil life and no distinction between the ancient and the modern: Stephen

> 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

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[23] George Lukacs, *Studies in European Realism* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), p. 221, qtd. by Thomas Staley, "Stephen Dedalus and the Temper of the Modern Hero," in *Approaches to* Ulysses, eds. Thomas Staley and Bernard Benstock (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), p. 8.

[24] Stanislaus Joyce, *Complete Dublin Diary* [2nd February 1904], p. 12.

> said, mingling itself with so immune a passion is a modern note: we cannot swear or expect eternal fealty because we recognize too accurately the limits of every human energy. (*SH.* 179)

As Joyce progressed from *Stephen Hero* to *Portrait* and from *Portrait* to *Ulysses*, the heroism of his protagonists becomes more and more finely tempered with just this note of irony until, in Leopold Bloom, we have a comic-heroic character, not in the classical sense of a loveable rogue, but as a genuinely convincing mixture of qualities. Our laughter does not diminish him, nor his goodness diminish our laughter. Joyce's growth as a writer sees him move toward the mingling of modes in a way I have argued is characteristic of the modern artist. The comedy of *Dubliners* is mostly that of dialogue, a satirical observation of the failings of his subjects. *Portrait* too has little in it of comedy, except at the most local of levels. In *Ulysses* however there is both lofty comic irony and earthy farce, both refined wit and symbolic allusiveness and a delight in the comedy of the flesh.

If a tendency toward comedy rather than tragedy may legitimately be linked to the death of God, then Joyce's religious life becomes important too. Catholicism remained important to him long after he had ceased to take the sacrament, and, at the end of *Portrait*, the long conversation on the subject with Cranly is the portrait of a dissonance between the mind and the heart of the artist as a young man:

> --Do you fear then, Cranly asked, that the God of the Roman catholics would strike you dead and damn you if you made a sacrilegious communion?

> --The God of the Roman catholics could do that now, Stephen said. I fear more than that the chemical action 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.
> --Would you, Cranly asked, in extreme danger commit that particular sacrilege? For instance, if you lived in the ~~penal~~ days?
> --I cannot answer for the past, Stephen replied. Possibly not. (*P.*247-8)

Joyce´s loss of faith affected him deeply, as his lifelong tendency to superstition on the one hand and blasphemy on the other indicate: for him the death of God was more than merely part of some vague and questionable *Zeitgeist.* He had to find meaning in the world without the crutch of religious belief to aid him, and for him this meaning involved some appreciation of the pointlessness and absurdity of human endeavour. He began believing in heroism, then in heresy, and in maturity came to a belief in common humanity - and humour. Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker is made up of what makes us human, and what lives through generations. His resurrection and cyclical history is drawn from the wellsprings of the comic, which seems to have had its historical origins in phallic festival processions - the celebration of the return of life: the "plot" of *Finnegans Wake.*

## ii. *comedy; and the heroic choice*[25]

Early in his life Joyce followed Aristotle's example and defined comedy in its relation to tragedy: Joyce, however, found comedy superior. The significance of this is muffled by the latinate obscurities of early Joycean critical prose, and his conclusion more interesting than his argument, but it is fascinating to see him, in February 1903, finding in theory what he would take a decade to discover in practice:

> All art which excites in us the feeling of joy is so far comic and according as this feeling of joy is excited by whatever is substantial or accidental in human fortunes the art is to be judged more or less excellent: and even tragic art may be said to participate in the nature of comic art so far as the possession of a work of tragic art (a tragedy) excites in us the feeling of joy.

And now the hub: "From this it may be seen that tragedy is the imperfect manner and comedy the perfect manner in art."[26] After Joyce comes Beckett, in whose work the comic and the tragic are most perfectly blended, until attempting to separate them leads only to distorted judgment. (For Ionesco, comedy and the tragic are "merely two aspects of the same situation, and I have now reached the stage where I find it hard to distinguish one from the other.")[27] Compare these, Joyce and Beckett, with their fellow countryman W. B.

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[25] W. B. Yeats, letter to Dorothy Wellesley, 3 January 1932, concerning vacillations on "Vacillation," quoted in Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 271.

[26] Paris Notebook, entry 13 February 1903, *Critical Writings*, p. 144.

[27] Eugene Ionesco, "The World of Ionesco," *Tulane Drama Review*, 3:1 (October, 1958), p. 47.

Yeats. He was present at that first performance of *Ubu Roi* in 1896 mentioned above as the birthday of modern comedy, and later recalled:

> Feeling bound to support the most spirited party, we have shouted for the play, but that night at the Hotel Corneille I am very sad, for comedy, objectivity, has displayed its growing power once more. I say: "...[A]fter all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, after the faint mixed tints of Conder, what more is possible? After us the Savage God."[28]

In *On the Boiler*, he explains why comedy is inferior to tragedy:

> Some Frenchman has said that farce is the struggle against a ridiculous object, comedy against a movable object, tragedy against an immovable; and because the will, or energy, is greatest in tragedy, tragedy is the more noble; but I add that "will or energy is eternal delight," and when its limit is reached it may become a pure, aimless joy, though the man, the shade, still mourns his lost object.[29]

But Yeats' best and best known argument in favour of tragedy over comedy is an essay of August 1910, "The Tragic Theatre," in which he maintains that "tragedy must always be a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man, and...it is upon these dykes that comedy keeps house." He finds "an antagonism between all the old art and our new art of comedy...."[30] The essay draws to a close with a

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[28] From Book IV, "The Tragic Generation," of *The Trembling of the Veil*; in his *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 348-49.

[29] *On the Boiler* (Dublin: Cuala Press, n.d. [second printing, 1939]), p. 35. The Frenchman in question is possibly Brunetiere: see Sylvan Barnet, "W. B. Yeats and Brunetiere on Drama," *Notes and Queries* o.s. 214/ n.s. 16:7 (July 1969), 255-56.

[30] "The Tragic Theatre," in "II: The Cutting of An Agate," *Essays and Introductions* (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. 241.

recognition of the conflict between the two, and with a note of regret that "we have taken delight in a confusion of crossing branches" - a phrase that could stand for the relation of comedy and tragedy in the twentieth century.[31]

Hugh Kenner has argued that Yeats as Tragic Hero provided an anti-type for the young Joyce, who found that *Stephen Hero*, his own early attempt at the creation of a heroic mask, simply refused to accept the desired climax he was trying to force on it: so in *Portrait* he created Stephen Dedalus, "a more taut, neurotic, and less intelligent character than himself...."[32] Yeats thought in terms of tragedy, and it is the heroic song he longed for, while Joyce, once he had found his mature voice, was always thinking comically.[33] (Of course this is plainly not the same as saying that Yeats was without humour, any more than Joyce was without feeling for the tragic and heroic, merely

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[31] *Essays and Introductions*, p. 245. See also the letter to Dorothy Wellesley (6 July 1935) on the genesis of "Lapis Lazuli":

> Ascetic, pupil, hard stone, eternal theme of the sensual east. The heroic cry in the midst of despair. But no, I am wrong, the east has its solution always and therefore knows nothing of tragedy. It is we, not the east, that must raise the heroic cry.

*Letters on Poetry from W. B. Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1940), p. 9.

Other treatments of Yeats and tragedy: Ellmann, *Identity of Yeats*, pp. 185-7 and 246-7, and B. L. Reid, *Yeats: The Lyric of Tragedy* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961).

[32] *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 38. See "Yeats as Tragic Hero," pp. 45-6, and pp. 36-47.

[33] William Blissett contrasts Joyce's comic and ironic with Wagner's heroic and tragic mode. "James Joyce in the Smithy of his Soul," in *James Joyce Today*, ed. Thomas F. Staley (Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), p. 121.

that one mode of the two was dominant in each case.)[34] Were it not debatable whether Joyce or Yeats could have chosen otherwise, one might use Yeats' words: "That is the choice of choices - the way of the bird until common eyes have lost us, or to the market carts."[35]

Rather than Yeats, and unlikely as it might seem, one would have to compare Joyce to Bernard Shaw. In "Tolstoy: Tragedian or Comedian?" (1921) Shaw argues that traditional comedy, a simple and sublime form unable to evolve, ended with Wagner, and was succeeded by a Comedy more open to change, which gradually evolved into a "higher form" - what Shaw, for want of a better term, calls "tragi-comedy." "In its tragedy and comedy alike," he says, "the modern tragi-comedy begins where the old tragedies and comedies left off...." The pioneer is Ibsen, "the dramatic poet who firmly established tragi-comedy as a much deeper and grimmer entertainment than tragedy." His suffering heroes are yet comic, and their trials are no longer "soul-purifying convulsions of pity and horror..."[36] For an Irish exponent one might turn to Sean O'Casey, whose first two plays, which exhibit just this quality, were published four years after Shaw's essay, and three years after *Ulysses*.[37]

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[34] For discussions of the comedy in Yeats' prose, see Hazard Adams, "Some Yeatsian Versions of Comedy," in A. Norman Jeffares and K. Cross, eds., *In Excited Reverie* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 152-70, and Vincent Buckley, "Yeats: The Great Comedian," *Malahat Review* 5 (January 1968), pp. 77-89.

[35] "Discoveries" (1906), rpt. in *Essays*, p. 267.

[36] In his *Pen Portraits and Reviews* (London: Constable, 1931), vol. 29 of *Complete Works*, pp. 274-80.

[37] *Two Plays: Juno and the Paycock; The Shadow of A*

## iii. Theories of Comedy

We have seen, then, why it is important that some consideration of the theory of comedy should precede judgments about the comic qualities of a text and three reasons why this does not in fact happen. We have seen too how the term "comedy" has changed, expanding its meaning and range of reference in the twentieth century. But what *is* comedy? There is a problem with phrasing the question in this way, however, for it conflates a series of questions, such as: what causes comedy? what are its effects? (i.e., is laughter a necessary result of comedy, and if not what is the connection between them?) And, can a single formula ("comedy is..."), in the presence of this new comedy, encompass the whole subject?

I am less concerned to find the single best answer to each of these questions than to apply different answers to *Ulysses*. The protean qualities that characterise comedy are unlikely to yield to yet another grasp at them: and neither is *Ulysses*. For, despite the erosion of the boundary between tragedy and comedy, despite evidence that the strictness of the boundary owed more to theory than to practice, and despite a status in this century greater than it has previously enjoyed, we are still, it seems, no nearer to

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*Gunman* (London: Macmillan, 1925). The interested reader is referred to Vivian Mercier, *The Irish Comic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Richard Kain, *Dublin In the Age of William Butler Yeats and James Joyce* (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1962), ch. V, "Humor"; and David Krause, *The Profane Book of Irish Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1983), p. 277 et al - each of which has valuable remarks about Joyce and the Irish comic tradition.

defining comedy. Indeed, the lack of a firm corpus of agreed theory and terminology contributes considerably to the difficulty criticism has experienced in coming to terms with, and finding terms for, the comic; and in its turn, this inability has not helped the cause of comedy. The problem is not that there is too little literature on the subject - far from it - but that so little has been agreed. While an examination of the various theories is therefore appropriate, these theories have taken various forms, and approaching their subject from different angles they can look very different indeed. Theories that concentrate on the *cause* of laughter, for example, will appear very different from those that speculate about its *effects* - moral, physical or social - but they may not in fact be exclusive. Perceptions about the relationship of laughter to comedy are the most significant differences between the groups: theories that begin with the assumption, tacit or otherwise, that *laughter* is a necessary part of comedy will have very little in common with those that attempt to delineate the features typically present in comedy as a *genre.* One could distinguish as Moelwyn Merchant does two traditions of the comic drama: the intellectual argumentative line of Aristophanes, Jonson, Moliere, that can be traced down to Pinter and T. S. Eliot; against the Shakespearean, the compassionate examination of human relationships which he finds typical of Shakespeare and Brecht.[38] But this distinction is between modes of practice, not of theory,

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[38] Merchant, pp. 69-78.

even if the theoretical assumptions held by the playwrights concerned will greatly influence their practice. What is required here is some way of dividing comic theories into manageable packets.

Instead of attempting to survey all the chief theories - "theories," applied to observations about comedy, may mislead, if the word implies a fully worked out system - I shall instead divide the main contributions into three opposing groups. In this way their varied concerns and assumptions can be presented and the difficulties of resolving these differences demonstrated. No attempt is made to group them historically, for although comedy has come to occupy a more central place in our experience in this century, its methods, and therefore the theories appropriate to analyse and discuss them, have remained little changed. Nor is there any attempt to include all of the theories. My thesis deals with comedy in *Ulysses*; comedy, however, is a wide-ranging animal that refuses to be tethered, and the difficulty with most theories of the comic is that they attempt to do just that, limiting the subject to one area. Many are illuminating in their chosen area, but almost all are unaware that they are too restrictive. (In this studies of Joycean comedy follow the pattern of studies of the comic in general.) There are, however, three main areas into which theories can be divided: the physical, the ritual and the metaphysical. The purpose of the section that follows is to demonstrate the hyper-exclusiveness of most theories of the comic, and suggest how their different concerns can operate as a context for the different chapters of this thesis.

The first group, those of physical theories, contains several sharply divergent attitudes to comedy, but all share the view that comedy can be accounted for at the physical level, has specific causes and is aroused in particular situations. Thus theories of this kind are invaluable in discussions of situation comedy - the comic dialogue, the physical comedy of farce and slapstick, the laughter aroused by the eccentricities of the outsider. On the one hand are those who follow the tradition of Aristotle and explain comedy and laughter as forms of release. Aristotle's *katharsis*, if it applies to comedy at all, is probably a medical metaphor, implying that the purgation caused by comedy, like that caused by tragedy, is good for you. Herbert Spencer theorises that the abrupt transition of thought from an elevated idea to a trivial one leaves an unexpended fund of nervous energy released in laughter.[39] Freud, developing this model, divides jokes into harmless and purposive forms and considers the latter to be means of discharge by the individual of sexual hostility and aggression in a socially acceptable way, while Bergson, in certain respects similar, explains laughter as the herd's fear of the outsider/eccentric.[40] On the other hand are theories that posit malice or a sense of superiority as the emotional force that motivates laughter. So Plato has Socrates argue that those who combine self-delusion with

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[39] "The Physiology of Laughter," in *Essays on Education and Kindred Subjects*, Everyman's Library (Dent and Sons, London: n.d. [1911]), pp. 301-12.

[40] Freud, *Jokes*. Bergson, *Laughter* (1900), in *Comedy*, ed. Sypher.

weakness and incapacity to be revenged on a scoffer may truly be called comic figures.[41] Hobbes, in the best-known theory of laughter as superiority over others, defines it in *Leviathan* (1641) thus:

> *Sudden glory*, is the passion which maketh those *Grimaces* called LAUGHTER; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleaseth them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favour, by observing the imperfections of other men.[42]

In *Human Nature* (1651) Hobbes concludes that:

> the passion of Laughter is nothing else but *sudden Glory* arising from a sudden conception of some Eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the Infirmity of others, or with our own formerly....43

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41 *Philebus* 50; in *Dialogues*, vol. I, p. 555.

42 *Leviathan* Part I, ch 6 (rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 45.

43 Chapter IX, *Human Nature* (rpt. London: 1812), p. 65.

Bergson, already mentioned above, argues that we laugh when we feel superior to anyone who behaves mechanically or without responding to altered circumstances. When we consider malicious comedy in *Ulysses*, then, in chapters four (on Mulligan), five (on Bloom) and six (on farce), theories which concentrate upon the cruelty or personal spite that lies behind much comedy will be of assistance in developing insights into this Hobbesean laughter of superiority.

The idea that comedy is malicious, however, is rather difficult to bear, and there has often been a tendency either to excuse it on health grounds or to justify it by attributing to it instructive powers. Thus Nicholas Udall's prologue to *Ralph Roister-Doister* defends comedy. To laugh is healthy:

> For Mirth prolongeth life, and causeth health,
> Mirth recreates our spirits and voideth pensiveness,
> Mirth increaseth amity, not hindering our wealth.[44]

This is a recurrent argument: that mirth - or at least, laughter - "causeth health" is indirectly present in Spencer's theory of an unexpended fund of nervous energy released in laughter, and in Freud's theory of wit as a discharge by joking of sexual hostility and aggression in a socially acceptable way. Its classical form is mildly satirized in *The Taming of the Shrew*:

> Your honour's players, hearing your amendment
> Are come to play a pleasant comedy;
> For so your doctors hold it very meet,
> Seeing too much sadness hath congeal'd your blood,
> And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy.

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[44] Prologue to *Ralph Roister Doister* (1552), rpt. in *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies*, ed. Frederick Boas, The World's Classics, 418 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, n.d.), p. 115.

Fielding, too, recommends "exquisite mirth and laughter"; they are "probably more wholesome physic for the mind, and conduce better to purge away spleen, melancholy, and ill affections, than is generally imagined."[45] So too *Tristram Shandy*; and although once again the satirical element is at work there is probably some serious intent present also:

> -If ´tis wrote against any thing, ---´tis wrote, an´please your worships, against the spleen; in order, by a more frequent and a more convulsive elevation and depression of the diaphragm, and the succussations of the intercostal and abdominal muscles in laughter, to drive the *gall* and other *bitter juices* from the gall bladder, liver and sweet-bread of his majesty´s subjects, with all the inimicitious passions which belong to them, down into their duodenums.[46]

"True *Shandeism*, think what you will against it," Shandy protests,

> opens the hearts and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely thro´ its channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and chearfully round.[47]

This argument - we laugh to purge ourselves of some imbalance or tension - originates in the medieval humours, and may also indirectly be linked to Aristotle´s *katharsis*. The notion of humours has of course itself had a vital influence on comic theory and indeed the language used to

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[45] Shakespeare, *Taming of the Shrew*, Induction, scene ii.126-30 (and see down to line 133); Henry Fielding, Preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742), in *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Martin C. Battestin (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 9.

[46] *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, IV. 22; ed. Ian Campbell Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 239.

[47] *Tristram Shandy*, IV. 32; p. 270.

discuss comedy: "Humour," now a word so vague in English as to be almost meaningless, has a long history as a precise and important concept, and the comedy of character derives from it. Of Humour, Ben Jonson's Asper observes (1599):

> It may, by Metaphore, apply it selfe
> Vnto the generall disposition:
> As when some one peculiar quality
> Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
> In their confluctions, all to runne one way,
> This may be truly said to be a Humour.[48]

When we come to consider the farcical physical comedy to which the body of Bloom is subjected we shall need to consider the social and personal significance of the scapegoat-victim, the *schlemiel* or fool who, Christlike, takes the cross of our mortality on his shoulders. Closely allied to this, and considered in the same chapter, is the view that laughter is a cover, as it were, for discussing and so defusing our fears and eradicating our scrupulousness and shame about bodily functions.

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[48] Induction, *Every Man out of his Humour* (1599); in *Ben Jonson*, eds. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, vol III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 432.

To this group we may also add the various theories of incongruity - from Kant and Schopenhauer to Koestler[49] - that have have been proposed as the essence of the comic, for at bottom they interpret laughter as a response to an imbalance perceived. It is true that the imbalance is external and objective rather than internal and subjective, but if it is traced back to its roots there is most often an assumption that equilibrium - stasis - does not provoke laughter, and that laughter in some undefined way restores in the subject the balance disturbed by incongruity. I have found these theories of little use for the present purpose: they explain comedy away.

Related to the idea of laughter as a tonic, and perhaps more popular because it is less honest about human motives in laughter, is that proposed in England by Sidney, among others, and predominant among theories of the Renaissance and neoclassical periods, which distinguishes laughter and

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[49] Immanuel Kant: "Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing." *Critique of Judgement* (1790), First Division, section 53, trans. J. H. Bernard (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 223. Arthur Schopenhauer: "The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity." *The World as Will and Idea* (1819), First Book, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp in 3 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1907), I.76; see also Chapter VIII, "On the Theory of the Ludicrous," in vol II, pp. 270-84. Arthur Koestler, *Insight and Outlook* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), a summary of which argument appears in art., "Humour and Wit," *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* (15th. ed, 1974).

delight ("Wee laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly wee cannot delight")[50] and takes the line that laughter is a good way of teaching:

> *Comedy* is an imitation of the comon errors of our life, which he representeth in the most ridiculous & scornefull sort that may be: so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one.[51]

"Comedies," says Thomas Heywood, "make men see and shame at their [own] faults," and Vanbrugh observes that "the Business of Comedy is to shew People what they shou'd do, by representing them upon the Stage, doing what they shou'd not."[52] This is a specialised justification of the comic as a deviation from normal human behaviour which calls down our ridicule. Because of what it suggests about human nature - that humanity hates eccentricity, that it revels in humiliating it - there is a tendency to make the value judgment, implicit in most theories of comedy, obtrusive and turn mockery for its own sake into a desire to teach those mocked how to better their behaviour. Plato's insistence

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[50] Sidney, III.23.

[51] Jonson also finds the laughter in comedy uncomfortable, and similarly wishes to explain it by assigning comedy a "bitter and profitable" moral purpose:

> Nor, is the moving of laughter alwaies the end of *Comedy*, that is rather a fowling for the peoples delight, or their fooling. For, as *Aristotle* saies rightly, the moving of laughter is a fault in Comedie, a kind of turpitude, that depraves some part of a mans nature without a disease.

*Timber: or, Discoveries* (1641), in *Works*, vol. VIII (1947; rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p. 643.

[52] Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors: Containing Three Brief Treatises* (London: 1612), F[4]$^{r}$; Sir John Vanbrugh, "A Short Vindication of the *Relapse* and the *Provok'd Wife*, from Immorality and Prophaneness," in *The Complete Works*, ed. Bonamy Dobree (Bloomsbury: Nonesuch Press, 1927), vol. I, p. 206.

that comedy incites immorality is turned neatly on its head. This is Bergson's thinking too: we are malicious, it is admitted, when we laugh, but we do so for the good of the individual and the greater good of society.

All physical theories have in common the assumption that comedy must be excused or explained, and that if all was well we wouldn't need it: if the equilibrium of the spirit were not disrupted, or the moral good not disturbed, comedy would cease to be useful. The inherent improbability of these theories is suggested by William Hazlitt in his *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819), in which he says that the comedy of manners is dying out because it has been so successful in previous generations in ridiculing and thereby eradicating follies and eccentricity![53] In the chapter on farce I put forward the argument that this comforting excuse is no more than a sophistry designed to allay our guilt for laughing. We wish to think better of ourselves and of humanity, and are aghast to think that the real reason for our laughter is our happiness at the misery of others - the shaming theory that "[a]ll comedy is based on man's delight in man's inhumanity to man."[54] *Ulysses*, in confronting such truths, serves a valuable purpose. But at the same time I stress the importance of the aesthetic frame

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[53] From the beginning of Lecture VIII; rpt. in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe (London: Dent, 1931), vol. 6, pp. 149-50: comedy, "by constantly and successfully exposing the follies and weaknesses of mankind to ridicule, in the end leaves itself nothing worth laughing at."

[54] Al Capp, "The Comedy of Charlie Chaplin," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 185, No. 2 (February, 1950); rpt. Corrigan, ed., p. 220.

within which this laughter takes place. - Nonetheless it is undeniable that the outsider *is* laughed at and ridiculed, so that these essentially dramatic theories have some relevance outside the drama also.

Between the physical and the metaphysical is the ritual, based on notion of the comic carnival or holiday as a means of necessary relief. In the light of the renewed appreciation of the comic as a philosophy of life and the blurring of the tragic/comic distinction that we saw earlier, Cornford's study of *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (1914), has had a great influence on comic theory. Cornford, one of the Cambridge group of historical and anthropological scholars of comedy and tragedy, proposes that they can be traced back to a common ritual.[55] This suggests that Aristotle's speculation of a ritual origin of comedy was correct, and that modern feelings about the greater importance of the comic than was hitherto acknowledged might have a historical basis in fact. To Wylie Sypher, Cornford's theory seems to offer,

> our only means of understanding the incompatibles in comedy without laying ourselves open to a charge of willful illogicality.[56]

While apologists for comedy have been eager to accept his argument, however, they have been embarrassed by the scantiness of his evidence and the unwarranted confidence of his conclusions, and under criticism from Pickard-Cambridge

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[55] F[rancis] M[acdonald] Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914). For the "Cambridge group," see Carlson, *Theories of the Theatre*, p. 337.

[56] *Comedy*, pp. 256-7.

(1927) and more recently Gerard Else (1965), theorists have tended to move the goalposts.[57] D. J. Palmer, for instance, claims that:

> The significance of Cornford's approach, as a contribution to the theory of comedy, *lies not in the precise detail of his historical recontruction* but in his general perception of an association between comedy and the theme of the triumphant renewal of life, celebrated in various types of archaic games and rituals. (Italics added.)[58]

Yet if the historical evidence Cornford adduces is insufficient to justify the conclusion, then its value as a hypothesis is very severely compromised. Palmer's argument, however, has some validity: ritual theories of the comic are very closely allied to what he calls "the triumphant renewal of life," and it is not necessary to argue for a common origin of tragedy and comedy to find comedy performing this function.

A different reading of the meaning of the comic, Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism, comedy as the `Mythos of Spring,' is within its terms a major contribution. Instead of Cornford's common origin, Frye suggests that "[t]he theme of the comic is the integration of society, which usually takes the form of incorporating a central character into it."[59] In comedy, he argues:

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[57] A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), Appendix B: "Mr. Cornford's Theory of the Origin of Comedy": Gerard Else, *The Origin and Early Form of Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965).

[58] Palmer, p. 17.

[59] *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 43: subsequent references in parenthesis.

> What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will. (p. 163)

For Frye the movement of comedy is usually from one kind of society to another. At the beginning the obstructing characters are in charge; by the end, hero and heroine are brought together to crystallise a new society. This root form, or formula, proves remarkably resilient, and it enables Frye to trace recurring themes from Plautus and Terence down to Charlie Chaplin. While it is invaluable for an understanding of traditional ("new") comedy as plot, however, Frye's argument largely - if, given the premises of his argument, quite logically - ignores the specific comic impulse in a moment's joke or a stroke of wit, and concentrates on the skeleton of dramatic comedy. Frye's understanding alone, however, is not enough. Furthermore, if the movement towards the obliteration of the tragic/comic contrast mentioned earlier holds true, then these archetypal distinctions may in fact not work so well with the products of such an age, and using them on twentieth century texts, and particularly *Ulysses*, may be inappropriate. In Frye's scheme the moment of crystallisation is the point of resolution in the action, the "comic discovery." This may perhaps account for the faint aura of homosexuality between Stephen and Bloom and for Molly's, and indeed Bloom's, phantasies involving Stephen.[60] More importantly, it may

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[60] See William Empson, "The Ultimate Novel," in his *Using Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus-Hogarth Press, 1984), pp. 243, 252-9.

explain in a negative way why Stephen and Bloom do *not* fuse: Joyce is simply not interested in the simple resolution of difficulties with a blanket "comic discovery." The problem, however, with attempts to apply the Frye ritual reading to *Ulysses* is that there is a strong temptation to make the book illustrate the theory rather than the theory assist our apprehension of the book.[61]

More helpful in a study of Joyce's comedy than Frye is Enid Welsford's *The Fool* (1935). She avoids the abstract theory of Cornford and Frye and traces the history of the Saturnalia and the court jester, proposing that the anarchic holiday reinforces the structure of society by allowing, within strictly defined limits, its conventions to be broken.[62] C. L. Barber in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* examines the saturnalian element in Shakespearean comedy as derived from festival and holiday; while Ian Donaldson in *The World Upside Down* traces the image of the judge judged and the tables turned as an element in comedy from Jonson to Fielding.[63] Another such work is Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* (written in 1940 but only known in the west

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[61] Michael Klug, "Comic Structures in the Early Fiction of James Joyce," unpubl. Ph.D., Univ. Illinois, 1967, applies Frye's model. See Klug, "The Comic Structure of Joyce's *Ulysses*," *Eire*, 11:i (1976), pp. 63-84.

[62] *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (1935; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1968).

[63] C[esar] L[ombardi] Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959; Donaldson, *The World Upside Down* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). See also Max Gluckman, "Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa," in his *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), and Umberto Eco, "The Frames of Comic Freedom," in *Carnival!* ed. Thomas Sebeok, Approaches to Semiotics, 64 (Berlin: Mouton, 1984).

since 1965), from which I have already quoted, and which underpins my final chapter, on farce. These detailed historical studies seek to relate social ritual to common comic themes, and differ from Freud and Bergson in that their aim is primarily to document the various forms these rituals have taken, and only secondarily to suggest what it is that connects them. Thus they do not speculate in abstract terms what forms it would be logical for these rituals to take, nor, like Cornford, propose where comedy may have originated. But this type of theory has its drawbacks too: it can hardly account for wordplay or the comedy of manners, for instance, and seems inadequate as a means of distinguishing between different types of comedy. What all of the ritual theories share, however, is a close connection with the celebratory side of man's existence: holiday, carnival, party. On these alcoholidays men and women eat, drink and are merry, live only for the moment and forget tomorrow. The hilarity characteristic on such occasions has its own meaning. If, as we shall see, metaphysical comedy laughs from above the human perspective, ritual comedy laughs from within it: not because ultimately life and death are one, as Erasmus' Folly would say, but because, as Joyce puts it: "Children may just as well play as not. The ogre will come in any case."[64] The social Feast of Fools, and the comic mainspring of farce, which is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis, are closely related.

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[64] Letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, 16 October 1926; *Letters* III: 144. The context is crucial.

In opposition to both physical and ritual theories of comedy, which have in common the attempt to find an explanation for comedy, either in its motivation or its purpose, is comedy as a counterpart to the tragic vision, what I have called the metaphysical theory:

> Laughter may seem to be only like an exhalation of air, but out of that air we came; in the beginning we inhaled it; it is a truth, not a fantasy, a truth voluble of good which comedy stoutly maintains.[65]

This philosophy of the comic, here expounded by Christopher Fry, Cazamian finds in Chaucer: his humour, he writes, "is a way of thinking, an attitude to life, the natural out come of which

> is a tolerance, a readiness to understand, almost to sympathize; a broad genial humanity, if not necessarily, as has often been said, a tenderness and a love.[66]

The attitude may or may not involve the tenderness and love of which Cazamian speaks, but Chaucer's Christian acceptance exemplifies the religious, almost mystical, quality of the comic philosophy which is most clearly evident in the remarkable lofty laughter at the conclusion of *Troilus and Criseyde*. At such a distance, it seems, strife and even death no longer matter:

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[65] Christopher Fry, "Comedy," *Vogue* (January), 1951. Rpt. in Corrigan, p. 17.

[66] *The Development of English Humor*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1952), I, 64.

> And in hymself he lough right at the wo
> Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;
> And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so
> The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,
> And sholden al oure herte on heven caste.[67]

*Mutatis mutandis* this withdrawal from the muddled ways and transient concerns of the world strikes a very modern note. But the tradition of emphasising rather than rationalising the ludicrous and illogical stretches back to Christ, whose sympathies lay with children, outcasts and the victims of society rather than with its rulers: "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1Cor. 1.20). As Christianity became part of the political status quo, however, and no longer a threat it became reluctant, with exceptions such as Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium*, to admit comedy as a philosophy or way of life, recognising the social and political dangers of accepting the foolishness of this world as wisdom with God. Robert Polhemus traces an alternative "Great Tradition" - of the comic philosophy in the novel from Jane Austen to James Joyce - and observes that laughter and comic revelry have been "tinged with an aura of blasphemy; the comic has traditionally had to bear the stigma of sacrilege." It is remarkable that Erasmus, Rabelais, Swift and Sterne should all be ordained clerics:

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[67] *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk V: 1821-25; in *The Poetical Works of Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson (London: Oxford Univ. Press, n.d.), p. 564. His retraction of *The Canterbury Tales*, however, suggests the strength of Christian hostility to such an attitude: see Robert Polhemus, *Comic Faith: The Great Tradition from Austen to Joyce* (Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press, 1980), p. 10.

> In their own ways they all tried to reconcile their comic and satirical impulses with a Christian vocation, and in each case comic expression and a sense of humor gave them a way of rationalizing their faith.[68]

This religious or quasi-religious appreciation of comedy is a recurrent theme, found often in "humorists," and suggested in Tristram Shandy's report of his father's philosophy: "Every thing in this world, said my father, is big with jest, - and has wit in it, and instruction too, - if we can but find it out."[69] Though it develops from the medical model which Shandy often refers to, this is less the moral instruction of Jonson and Sidney, or the prescription of the medieval humours, of Udall and of Shakespeare, than a lesson that laughter is good simply *for itself.*

One such argument is that proposed by Bakhtin. I have mentioned him among the ritual theorists, but I quote him here because his praise of laughter is in many ways typical of the mystique attached to it by those who are concerned with the "meaning of the comic":

> Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare represent an important turning point in the history of laughter. Nowhere else do we see so clearly marked the lines dividing the Renaissance from the seventeenth century and the period that followed.
>
> The Renaissance conception of laughter can be roughly described as follows: Laughter has a deep philosophical meaning, it is one of the essential forms of the truth concerning the world as a whole, concerning history and man; it is a peculiar point of view relative to the world; the world is seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly than when seen from the serious standpoint. Therefore,

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[68] Polhemus, pp. 7, 13.

[69] *Tristram Shandy* V, 32; p. 314.

> laughter is just as admissible in great literature, posing universal problems, as seriousness. Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter.[70]

In Shakespearean comedy, argues Polhemus, there is "an almost holy comic impulse asserting itself beyond the orthodox vision of Christian dogma," partaking of both comic and religious experience.[71] Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (1509), the most eloquent sustained encomium to the comic philosophy, also of this age, takes Troilus' lofty view of humanity. All human affairs, Folly informs us, "have two aspects, each quite different from the other; even to the point that what at first blush (as the phrase goes) seems to be death may prove, if you look further into it, to be life."[72] The disdain typically felt by praisers of the comic spirit for those who attempt to define their subject was never so strongly expressed as by Erasmus' Folly, who refuses to define herself, laughs at the *morosophous* (`Foolosophers') and heaps scorn on the heads of the rhetoricians who "besides much other nonsense...have written so critically and so much on the method of joking." In Quintilian, the prince of this realm, so scornful Folly would have us know (p. 73), there is a section longer than the *Iliad* on the subject of raising laughter!

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70 Bakhtin, p. 66. This passage immediately precedes that quoted above in my first chapter.

71 Polhemus, p. 11.

72 *The Praise of Folly*, trans. Hoyt Hudson; (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1941), p. 36: subsequent reference in parenthesis.

Twentieth-century comic theory has returned to this view of comedy with the mysticism intact, even if the religious context no longer applies: the fool offers a higher wisdom inaccessible to the strictly rational intelligence, a laughter neither malicious nor aggressive, and the the evidence not of psychical imbalance but of a higher sanity. Alternatively it has presented the absurd as the only way to cope with an ever more bewildering reality, and laughter as an appropriate and responsible response to - and not merely an escape from - suffering. Comedy, according to Christopher Fry, "says, in effect, that, groaning as we may be, we move in the figure of a dance, and, so moving, we trace the outline of the mystery."[73]

In three chapters of this thesis I consider the meaning of Joyce's comedy. The next chapter discusses the ironic strategies of *Ulysses* as a device for the undercutting of certainties. This is in itself a comic enterprise - we have seen already how difficult it is to define the comic - and thus Joyce's method, not to say his medium, is his meaning, not to say his message. Then in the fifth chapter, on Bloom's comic heroism, and in the sixth, on farce, I discuss Bloom's humiliations. It would be a mistake to suppose that because Bloom is physically degraded, and subjected, on one level, to a mock-heroic comparison with Ulysses, that he is therefore dismissed by Joyce as no more than mere mortal flesh; just as we are mistaken if we believe that because

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[73] Fry, p. 16. See Freud's "Humour" (1927), trans. Joan Riviere in *Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson, Pelican Freud Library, 14 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 425-33, for an account of how humour defends the individual from suffering.

Gerty is in some senses a parody both of Nausicaa and of the romantic heroine she is no more than a parody (see Chapter Three, "Tense With Suppressed Meaning"). Both Gerty and Bloom ultimately exceed the bounds created for them by the fictions or myths they echo, and in doing so they challenge the explanations of them in limiting and restricting terms of parody and mock-heroic. This is truly an ironic method of procedure.

The division of theories into physical, ritual and metaphysical is arbitrary, as the inclusion of one author - Bakhtin - in two groups implies. Cornford and Frye's ritual comedy, for example, could be aligned with the "psychological school" of Freud, Bergson and Spencer, as well as with the apologists Jonson and Sidney, in that all understand comedy as therapeutic whether individually or socially. On the other hand the latter part of Frye's argument, where comedy is part of a religious order that "seems to be drawing away from human experience altogether" has much in common with the mystical metaphysical comedy of Chaucer and Erasmus.[74] So no hard and fast division exists between these groups: the purpose in distinguishing them is to suggest relationships between the various theories. Where these attempts fail, however, is in excluding either too much or too little. Most theories mistake an aspect of comedy for the whole. Individual theories cast light on various aspects of comedy, but none is adequate by itself to account for all. Frederick Robinson is right to point out that "Generic

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[74] Frye, p. 185.

theories are descriptive but they should not attempt to be inclusive. In fact, *no* theory of comedy...should attempt to be inclusive."[75] As D. H. Monro has demonstrated, comedy in its various manifestations - and he lists what he considers the main humorous situations - can be explained adequately only if we enlist each of the available theories at the relevant point.[76] Thus satire, laughter at small misfortunes and the simpler kinds of irony (such as sarcasm) are explained well in the theory of superiority summed up in Hobbes´ well-known definition. The theory of superiority has nothing to say, however, about wordplay, nonsense or indecency, for explanation of which we must turn to Kant´s theory of incongruity. Relief theories account for malice and indecency - and even nonsense - but tell us little about wordplay or the finding of unexpected connections. Bergson´s theory goes some way towards explaining why clowning and pratfalls are funny, but doesn´t help much with less physical humour.

That the shortcoming of the great majority of discussions of comedy should be exclusiveness is all the more regrettable, since most begin with censures of the desperate inadequacies of the theories that have preceded them, before confidently moving the entire kingdom of comedy lock, stock and barrel - or "seed, breed and generation" as Stephen Dedalus puts it (14.301) - into a tiny basement flat. One would have to agree with L. C. Knights that "Profitless

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[75] Robinson, p. 8.

[76] "Humor," *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967).

generalizations are more frequent in criticism of Comedy than in criticism of other forms of literature."[77] James Feibleman's *In Praise of Comedy* (1939), for example, pushes a valid and illuminating observation so that it becomes the sole principle of all comedy. His Joyce is a good example:

> *Like all comedians*, he is thinking always of an ideal order in contrast with which the failures and disvalues of actuality appear funny, and, *like all great comedians*, he takes the whole of existence as his subject-matter and compares it with the whole conception of an ideal order. (Italics added.)[78]

The predictable result is that Feibleman paints himself into a corner, and has to make what he can fit his theory, and discard everything else. One hardly needs to read on to discover that Joyce's last work is "a universal parody upon the predicament of humanity" (p. 235), for in Feibleman's bedsit of comedy what else could it be? Ten years later Albert Cook's *Dark Voyage and the Golden Mean* appears, partly in response to Feibleman. Cook's book is founded on a distinction between the probable (social, rational, empirical) as the subject of comedy against the wonderful (individual, artist, searcher-mystic-saint) as the subject of tragedy: his comedy is affirmative. It is true, Cook concedes, that all comic drama is partly satire. "But basically comedy is approval, not disapproval, of present society;

> it is conservative, not liberal, however much the socialist Feibleman would like it to be. It expels the intellectual and his futuristic

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[77] Knights, p. 114. Knights takes a bracingly sceptical view of generalisations or formulae as explanations of the comic, but if anything goes too far in the Leavisite direction and discards theory altogether.

[78] Feibleman, p. 232.

> programs. If comedians like Shaw are liberal, to that degree they are noncomedians. The liberal element in Shaw's drama is the noncomic element.[79]

Against Feibleman's despicable socialism, Cook finds that comedy is in fact "the only form of social criticism" the Russians permit (p. 45). There Feibleman and Cook remain, glowering at each other from opposite corners of a room twice freshly painted. Like the *Wake's* Mutt and Jeff, they are emblematic, representing all the duelling oppositions; and, like them, opposing comic theorists become more interested in the argument than the subject, so that as more and more heat is generated, the light diminishes. One can't help thinking that comic theory could do with fewer *ingénieurs* and more *bricoleurs*: fewer new theories, more applications.

Inclusive theories of comedy invite suspicion, for the *variety* of comedy seems its most obvious characteristic. Ribot has a point:

> Pour conclure, le rire se manifeste dans des circonstances si hetérogènes et si multiples - sensations, physiques, joie, contraste, surprise, bizarrerie, étrangeté, bassesse, etc. - que la reduction de toutes ces causes à une seule reste bien problématique. Après tant de travaux sur un fait aussi banal, la question est loin d'être complètement élucidée.[80]

One approach which avoids the difficulties of reconciling theoretical studies of comedy is W. D. Howarth's "minimal definition," or "highest common factor," by which the

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[79] *The Dark Voyage* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1949), p. 49.

[80] Theodore Ribot, *Psychologie des Sentiments* (1896), p. 348, quoted by J. Y. T. Greig, *The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1923), p. 266.

different types of comedy are "traduced by their comedy nominator to the loaferst terms" (*FW.*283.6-7).[81] We need to know, however, not what the varieties of comedy in *Ulysses* have in common (which may not be very much), so much as what is distinctive about them, how and why they work, and what purpose they serve in *Ulysses*.

If as I argue here these theories of comedy are individually inadequate and collectively contradictory, then to claim one as the key to the comic in *Ulysses* would unacceptably limit the range of discussion: and yet to adopt all of them would apparently lead to inconsistency. But while these various attitudes towards the essence and meaning of the comic are incapable of resolution, in practice they complement each other, for each is individually set to work on those areas of *Ulysses* that offer most to it. It is important to have both sides of theory - the technical and the metaphysical, one might loosely term them - represented, for while the former explains the techniques and devices of the comic, and the latter the meaning of it, the technical loses sight of the comic motive and the metaphysical neglects the forms taken by comic expression. The method adopted here allows shortcomings and overstatement to be compensated by the adoption elsewhere of theories which, while having their drawbacks, have also

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[81] W. D. Howarth, pp. 1, 1-21.

their merits.[82] Part of the reason for the inadequacies of most comic theories, it must be admitted, is that many of them are not designed to be used as precision instruments so much as signposts. This thesis uses theories when and where they are useful, without worrying too much that they are not universally applicable.

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[82] I am not directly concerned with Joyce's own familiarity with the theories, since evidence is lacking.

## CHAPTER THREE:

## *TENSE WITH SUPPRESSED MEANING* (13.105)

*Ironical opposition cheers* (12.877)

*A classical text must never be entirely comprehensible. But those who are cultivated and who cultivate themselves must always want to learn more from it.*

-Schlegel[1]

A consideration of the comedy of *Ulysses* demands an understanding of Joyce's irony. Without that one cannot discern his attitude towards his material: heroic or mock-heroic, satirical or affirmative? or is there more to it than this? And without deciding *that*, one cannot come to conclusions about functions of comedy in the book. There are points of similarity, for both irony and comedy may raise a smile or a laugh, although neither is necessary. Both too require and impose in their different ways a distance between the observer and the observed. In theory then they operate together to insist on the gap between expectation and experience, between the reader's expectation of meaning and the incongruities discovered in the reading. In practice, however, irony in Joyce is an attitude and comedy works as

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[1] Frederick Schlegel, in Lucinde *and the Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minneapolis Press, 1971), pp. 144-5.

one of the chief means whereby the ironic effect is communicated. Irony is the form, comedy the substance. Thus irony and comedy come together in this thesis not because of their shared features but for their shared purpose in *Ulysses*: irony and comedy combine. As a way of establishing Joyce's attitude toward his material, I intend in this chapter first to respond to one strand of the argument about irony in *Ulysses*; then to extend the discussion to include the theory of irony, distinguishing between irony as a technique and irony as a mode of perception, and offering `Nausicaa' as an example; and finally to draw some conclusions about the way irony in *Ulysses* frustrates a simplifying or interpretative reading of the book.

### i. *ten per cent of the truth*

The strand of argument I am responding to begins with Wyndham Lewis' dissection of the mind of James Joyce in *Time and Western Man* (1927). The attack, which appears at times personally motivated, was dismissed by Joyce in an unusual way: "Allowing that the whole of what Lewis says about my book is true, is it more than ten per cent of the truth?"[2] Secondly, in 1955 Hugh Kenner published *Dublin's Joyce*: he

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[2] Wyndham Lewis, Chapter XVI of Book I, "The Revolutionary Simpleton," *Time and Western Man* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1927). Joyce's reaction is recorded by Frank Budgen, "Further Recollections of James Joyce," rpt. in his *James Joyce and the Making of* Ulysses *and Other Writings* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 359. A more oblique response is contained in question 11 in *Finnegans Wake* (*FW*. 148.33-168.12), which includes Joyce's portrait of Lewis as the pedantic Welsh professor who relates the Mookse-Gripes fable.

acknowledged the force of Lewis' "brilliant misreading" and offered one of his own.[3] Thirdly, S. L. Goldberg's *The Classical Temper* (1961) took issue with Kenner's allegedly one-sided reading of Joyce's irony in *Ulysses*, arguing that Kenner made it out to sound all rather boring, and went on to speak of the "obvious" failings of *Ulysses*: its "enormous elaboration of the material, the rather pretentious parade of literary machinery, the encumbering and mortifying boredom."[4] To present the argument over Joyce's irony in this way as chronologically progressing is however somewhat misleading: it suggests a developing series moving ever onward and upward towards a full appreciation of Joycean irony. Instead Lewis, Kenner and Goldberg present three different and independent responses to *Ulysses*.

Wyndham Lewis takes Joyce's writing in general and *Ulysses* in particular as illustrative, with Proust, Stein, Pound and others, of what he calls the "time-philosophy," and his book explores

> How the "timelessness" of einsteinian physics, and the time-obsessed flux of Bergson, merge in each other; and how they have conspired to produce...a sort of mystical time-cult.... (p. 3)

The "inner meaning" of this time-philosophy is

> the doctrine of a mechanistic universe; periodic; timeless, or nothing but "time," whichever you prefer; and, above all, essentially *dead*. A certain *deadness*, a lack

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[3] *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 167: subsequent references in parenthesis.

[4] *The Classical Temper* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 22.

> of nervous power, an aversion to anything suggesting animal vigour, characterizes all the art...issuing from this philosophy. (p. 110)

Joyce is "not so much an inventive intelligence as an executant," and what stimulates him is "*ways of doing* things, and technical processes, and not *things to be done.*" The result, Lewis says, is "an immense *nature-morte*" which "ensues from the method of confining the reader in a circumscribed psychological space into which several encyclopaedias have been emptied" (pp. 106-07). Joyce's ability as a mere craftsman to hunt down verbal cliche paradoxically combines with a blindness to the cliches he presents as characters: "a stage Jew (Bloom), a stage Irishman (Mulligan), [and] a stage Anglo-Saxon (Haines)," and Lewis offers a number of examples of cliched characterisation from the book's first pages (pp. 113-16). Joyce is unable to observe directly, and has a deeply rooted habit of "always looking at people through other people's eyes, and not through his own." He can see detail or idiosyncrasy, but

> the secret of an *entire* organism escapes him. Not being observant where entire people (that is, people at all) are concerned, he depicts them conventionally always, under some general label. For it is in the fragmentation of a personality - by isolating some characteristic weakness, mood or time-self - that you arrive at the mechanical and abstract, the opposite of living. This, however, leaves him free to achieve with a mass of detail a superficial appearance of life; and also to exercise his imitative talents without check where the technical problem is concerned. (p. 118)

Hugh Kenner in *Dublin's Joyce* calls Lewis' essay a "misreading," though a "brilliant" one. His own explanation of the irony of *Ulysses*, however, agrees very substantially with Lewis in perceiving only the negative, corrosive aspect of it:[5]

> A huge and intricate machine clanking and whirring for eighteen hours - at one level *Ulysses* is just that. Its characters walking cliches, as Wyndham Lewis had the want of tact to point out - of course they are. Its psychological insights dry, hard, somehow obvious, devoid of Freudian romance - naturally. This tesselated mosaic belongs to a world of gears and sidewalks, of bricks laid side by side, of data thrust into a computer and whirled through permutations baffling to the imagination but always traceable by careful reason. There is much more to it than that, but that, at one level, is *Ulysses*. It is essential first of all to see it like that, and not as a solemn mystery; that is the way to see, ultimately, its laughter. (p. 166)

The ingenuity of Kenner's argument - that Lewis is right, but that his perception does not go far enough - commands admiration, but its problems are apparent. "Joyce's Dublin," Kenner argues, "was in fact an eighteenth-century parody. The technique he developed," he goes on:

> the technique which underlies everything from the first pages of *Dubliners* to the end of *Finnegans Wake*, came out of the subject: parody: double-writing. The music-halls parodied the heroic dramas; Joyce parodies the music-halls. Journalism parodies heroic elegance: Joyce parodied journalism. He focussed, that is to say, on what was actually there, and strove so to set it down that it would reveal itself as what it was, in its double nature: a distortion, but a distortion of something real. All his characters are walking cliches, because the Dubliners were; a Leopold Bloom is simul-

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[5] Kenner has warmed to Bloom, it seems to me: see *Joyce's Voices* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), pp. 62, 91, 117-18.

> taneously a "case" and a person. All his dialogue is an assemblage of *locutions recues* into unexpected patterns: unexpected because he was dealing with human beings, whose spontaneity the past could not quite batten down.... (p. 11)

Joyce's central technique is "parody of the once vital to enact a null appreciation of the null" (p. 19). Irony for Kenner is a distancing tactic pure and simple, and consequently, when obliged to acknowledge Bloom's qualities, he sidesteps: "Irony is one-sided," he says: "it pushes the characters away from the author. Joyce's presentation of Bloom is far more than mere irony." (p. 23)

In practice, however, Kenner makes fragments of Joyce's texts spark brilliantly. Where, at the opening of the second chapter of *Portrait*, Wyndham Lewis had seized upon the verb "*repair*" as an instance of Joyce's lack of care -

> Every morning, therefore, Uncle Charles repaired to his outhouse (*P.*61)

- Kenner explains it convincingly as a seepage into the narration from the sensibility of Uncle Charles, who would use precisely that word.[6] "The Dead," Kenner reminds us, begins with a similar device: "Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her feet" (*D.*199).

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[6] See Lewis, p. 126; and Kenner, "The Uncle Charles Principle," in *Joyce's Voices*.

In a chapter of *The Classical Temper*, Goldberg replies to Kenner.[7] He observes that Kenner's tactics "are those of judo: he adds momentum to Lewis's attack only to turn him neatly on his head" (p. 103). Kenner's reading of Joycean irony multiplies all of *Ulysses* by -1, and has some curious effects:

> wherever Joyce's reader may think the characters or the writing not so impressive as they were intended to be, Mr Kenner is at hand with his irony to transubstantiate all....Joyce's irony is so comprehensive that it turns [Molly's] "Yes" into "No," and so fine that only one reader in ten thousand perceives the fact. (p. 109)

Goldberg then goes on to his key point, an observation crucial to an understanding of the balance in the irony of *Ulysses*:

> But in perceiving the irony Joyce directs at his heroes, Mr Kenner concludes that he rejects the characters themselves. He assumes that such critical detachment *dissolves* the object. One only need state the assumption to see its extravagance. It is equally possible, and in Joyce's work is in fact the case, that irony is a qualifying criticism, which does not imply a total rejection of its object in the least.[8]

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[7] Goldberg, "The Modes of Irony in *Ulysses*." He summarises Lewis (pp. 101-02) and Kenner (pp. 103-06) concisely and fairly before offering a critique of the latter (pp. 106-13).

[8] He illustrates this by probing Kenner's now familiar ironic reading of *Portrait* (pp. 109-10).

L. A. Murillo, *The Cyclical Night* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), has gone over the same ground, stressing the "poise" or "balance" as the "determining factor of the quality of Joyce's irony" (p. 48). Goldberg, he says, "has not modified his conception of irony as primarily providing isolated satirical and conflicting effects rather than a resolution of these in the condition of *stasis*, or balance" (p. 45). In theory, at least, Goldberg recognises the balance in Joycean irony; and, since Murillo offers little detailed illustration of his own formula in action, it is difficult to evaluate it.

This he illustrates with a probing of Kenner's now familiar ironic reading of *Portrait* (pp. 109-10).

Where Goldberg succeeds in theory and Kenner fails in practice is in avoiding the two poles of Joycean criticism - that is, *Ulysses* either as outright denial or outright affirmation of life: satire or celebration. Curiously, however, just as Kenner's close readings of *Ulysses* undermine by their intelligence his rather negative theory of the book, so Goldberg's narrow readings contradict his theory of Joycean irony as a balance. He favours some aspects of the book to the exclusion of others:

> in one sense it hardly needs a full-scale volume to point out what is vividly alive in *Ulysses*; it stares one in the face: the crisp realization of Dublin itself, the comedy, the sharp satirical observation and a mastery (like Sean O'Casey's) of a rich and racy idiom both of speech and of character. What is wrong with the book is equally obvious: the enormous elaboration of the material, the rather pretentious parade of literary machinery, the encumbering and mortifying boredom. All this is so obviously true that it is almost always taken for granted... (pp. 21-22)

To say that the book is so obviously boring that one does not need to justify the statement that it is boring is to evade the issue and instead offer impressionistic criticism as the statement of the obvious. It stems from Goldberg's Leavisite insistence on what Kenner calls "How *Ulysses* would read if it were a novel."[9] He cannot approve of `Nausicaa' because it lacks dramatic action. This remark pertains to `Wandering Rocks,' `Eumaeus' and `Nausicaa':

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[9] *Ulysses*, Unwin Critical Library (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. 177. This criticism is made in more detail by Michael Groden, Ulysses *in Progress* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 19-20.

> At its richest, Joyce's attitude emerges in a subtly responsive humour, a wit that is warm and positive as well as level-headed and alert. These three episodes illustrate his tendency to lapse into something more simple and more negative - in a word, *parody*. (p. 138)

More specifically:

> Aiming only to mock, the art can hardly respond to the full complexity of life it reveals elsewhere: we need only compare the writing in the first section of "Nausicaa," for instance, where Gerty's sentimental romanticism is ruthlessly parodied, with the second part, where Bloom's complexly ironic condition is rendered, to see the basic rigidity of the one against the deeper vitality of the other.[10]

> As Joyce conceives her, Gerty and all she represents are surely, for all the comedy, no very difficult target for the social critic. ...So hostile and so extended is Joyce's satirical attack, indeed, that we wonder if she is quite worth twenty pages of his powder and shot....If we once think of Gerty with any compassion as a human being during those twenty pages (as Bloom does afterwards), we may conclude that Joyce's ironic parody is breaking a butterfly on its wheel. It is always a danger with extended parody that the joke will wear thin. (p. 141)

But `Nausicaa,' I wish to demonstrate, illustrates just that "complex, compassionate irony" which Goldberg admires and does not find. In theory, Goldberg finds in Joycean irony a balance which does not destroy completely its objects of attack. This chapter maintains a different emphasis: that Joycean ironies create multiplicity and allow us to observe without condemning. But what irony in `Nausicaa' does not do is to subject little Gerty to the unrestrained mockery of James Joyce. That would be a great squandering of effort,

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[10] Goldberg, *Joyce*, Writers and Critics (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), p. 95.

hardly the "Longest way round [as] the shortest way home" (13.1110). This chapter, then, is a counter to the theory of Kenner and the practice of Goldberg.

It would be foolish to deny that there is satirical parody at work in `Nausicaa´:

> she was something aloof, apart, in another sphere [...] she was not of them and never would be and there was somebody else too that knew it and saw it so they could put that in their pipe and smoke it. (13.602)

When she silently threatens to tear a postcard into "a dozen pieces" (13.596) we know she hasn´t thought about, hasn´t *visualised*, what she is saying.[11] If `Nausicaa´ is no more than a satirical parody of Gerty´s limitations, then Goldberg is right, and this is indeed the thinnest episode of the book. But we need to consider Joyce´s use of parody for a moment. `Lestrygonians´ never degenerates into didacticism, nor does the tone rise to hysteria. The symbolic conflict between meat-eater and vegetarian is not insisted upon and its resolution in Bloom´s moderate choice of the gorgonzola sandwich lacks any sense of predictability.[12] Indeed the symbolism becomes apparent only when we wonder why, this being Joyce writing, he chooses that particular item: and in any case he ate a pork kidney for breakfast, and later eats liver and bacon at the Ormond hotel (11.519-20). In `Cyclops´ too, where the citizen is

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[11] Humbert Humbert - who knows his Joyce - knows better: "I carefully tore it into two, four, eight pieces." Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, ch. 33 (1959; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 287.

[12] See Ellmann, Ulysses *on the Liffey*, p. 78.

subjected to a sustained barrage of Joyce's "powder and shot," his emotional defence of his motherland is not wholly compromised by its source, nor does it redeem him: emotional involvement is not out of place in our reading of him, but nor does it overwhelm our judgment. His oddly moving lament for lost Ireland (12.1239-1264, 1300-1310) is undermined, first by the society wedding of one family tree to another (12.1266-1295), and then by Thersites' revelations about the Citizen's activities, "grabbing the holding of an evicted tenant" (12.1315), and thereby directly benefitting from the very activities of the English he has been so furiously denouncing. Yet his bloated speeches somehow still retain power:

> Our harbours that are empty will be full again, Queenstown, Kinsale, Galway, Blacksod Bay, Ventry in the kingdom of Kerry, Killybegs, the third largest natural harbour in the wide world with a fleet of masts of the Galway Lynches and the Cavan O'Reillys and the O'Kennedys of Dublin when the earl of Desmond could make a treaty with the emperor Charles the Fifth himself. (12.1301)

Nothing - not even the sneers of Thersites ("All wind and piss like a tanyard cat" 12.1311) nor the revelations of massive historical inaccuracies (Killybegs has a *tiny* harbour: what use is a giant if his lies aren't whoppers?)[13] - nothing can entirely obliterate the effect of this speech. Instead we are invited to notice how the citizen uses emotional feeling as a justification for hatred. Bernard Benstock makes the point well:

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[13] Don Gifford with Robert Seidman, *Notes for Joyce: An Annotation of James Joyce's* Ulysses (New York: Dutton, 1974), entry 322:12-14; see also their notes at 320:26-27 (Juvenal) and 320:36-37 (Giraldus Cambrensis) for further evidence of the citizen's partial view of Irish history.

> For the moment the citizen is not being the bullying bigot that is often his primary characteristic, but an eloquent spokesman for the pathos of the Irish condition, voicing the legitimate complaint of the ruined Irishman, who nonetheless compounds that ruin with an attitude of self-pity and narrow patriotism.[14]

The Cyclopean citizen is able to see only one side of any argument: we are required by the text to do better. Mikhail Bakhtin's study of Dostoevsky is suggestive here, for he finds that:

> *A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels.* What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness; rather a *plurality of consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world,* combine but are not merged in the unity of the event. (Italics his.)[15]

*Ulysses*, as befitting comedy, abstains from judging people or actions as good or bad,[16] but recognises a continuum of human virtues and failings: worse off than he, who is metaphorically one-eyed, is the blind man, who cannot even identify his mad assailant (10.1119), the equivalent for him of the citizen's England. Worse off than lame Gerty is another victim, the English sailor. Better off than the citizen is Edy Boardman, who as we shall see is both

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[14] "The Making of an Irish Myth," in Staley and Benstock, eds., p. 220.

[15] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson, Theory and History of Literature 8 (Manchester: Univ. of Manchester Press, 1984), p. 6.

[16] This point is made with specific reference to *Ulysses* as a comedy by David Daiches, *The Novel and the Modern World* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 80-81, 137-38.

literally and metaphorically shortsighted; better off still is Stephen, who is briefly, wilfully blind at the beginning of `Proteus.´ Bloom, possessing fine eyesight (5.112) and good balance (17.101), is the Aristotelian mean in this respect.

Furthermore, it has been pointed out by Richard Ellmann and Fritz Senn, among others, that, besides the parody of popular romantic fiction in `Nausicaa´ - written in what Joyce called a "namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto la!) style" - the setting and situation of the episode recall and partly parody the beach scene from *Portrait.*[17] So we have *three* levels of parody at work: and two of them are parodies of Joyce, by Joyce. Goldberg´s argument that Gerty is parodied, and is therefore Joyce´s victim, ignores Joyce´s attitude towards his own previous work. And this attitude is not a simple rejection, either: remember he wrote that for his book of poems he desired a title "which to a certain extent repudiated the book, without altogether disparaging it" - and the ambiguity of *Chamber Music,* despite his doubts, is a fair enough attempt.[18] Repudiation of former enthusiasms without total disparagement is a characteristic of his work throughout: of *Dubliners* he remarked with regret that it did not reward him "with any feeling of having overcome difficulties."[19] In *Finnegans Wake* too there

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[17] *JJ.*374; Senn, "Nausicaa," pp. 284-88; letter to Budgen, 3 January 1920, *Letters* I:135.

[18] Letter to Stanislaus, 18 October 1906; *Letters* II:182.

[19] Letter (fragment) to Stanislaus, 19 July 1905; *Letters* II:99.

are references to earlier work. The first line of *Portrait* becomes, "Once upon a drunk and a fairly good drunk it was and the rest of your blatherumskite!" (*FW.*453.20); and its penultimate sentence, in which Stephen goes to "forge" in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race becomes an "epical forged cheque" uttered on the public for Shem's own private profit (*FW.*181.16). *Ulysses* becomes the "usylessly unreadable Blue Book of Eccles" (*FW.*179.26). Like Shem, Joyce is "for ever cracking quips on himself" (*FW.*463.8).[20]

Clive Hart argues persuasively that Joyce seems "compelled to turn on himself and parody his own achievement. It is as if he could never allow himself to be committed to anything that might be called `his' style."[21] But it would be a mistake to suppose that this is Joyce rejecting by parody, and here as elsewhere he is the expert at having his cake and eating it. Bloom's unwitting restaging in a different key of Stephen's vision in *Portrait* is not of necessity a complete rejection of it. Joyce seems to have had a *generous* notion of parody, and have realised more than most how much affection lies behind it.

It is unlikely, then, that his ambivalent attitude towards his material should have suddenly abandoned him, as Goldberg - without offering any explanation - maintains; and

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[20] *JJ.*374. The Shem chapter (*FW.*169-95), as an examination of Joyce by Joyce, is almost frighteningly honest: and funny.

[21] *Structure and Motif in* Finnegans Wake (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), p. 42. The same ground is covered more thoroughly in "James Joyce's Sentimentality," *Philological Quarterly* 46 (1976), 516-26.

though it will hardly do to suggest that the episode must be as good as the others and therefore cannot be bad, it is a spur to further examination of the text. Before I offer an alternative reading of the episode, however, it is necessary for us to consider something of the theory of irony.

### ii. *What gods will rescue us from all these ironies?*

- Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility"[22]

Insofar as it serves two distinct if related concepts, "irony" is an unfortunate term, and its ambiguity may be illustrated with a phrase from Andrew Wright (who, though, is quite clear about the distinction): Jane Austen, he says, can use "irony as a stylistic device and for quite un-ironic purposes..."[23] The root sense is of something local and specific, a device or technique that can be identified and, it is claimed, translated by inversion. Kierkegaard says of the ironic figure of speech that it cancels itself:

> for the speaker presupposes his listeners understand him, hence through a negation of the immediate phenomenon the essence remains identical with the phenomenon.

To understand what the ironist intends we merely invert the values apparent in what he says, or perform some variant of this operation. "We say of such an ironic turn of speech: it

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[22] Schlegel, p. 267.

[23] *Jane Austen's Novels* (1953, London: Pelican, 1972), p. 174. The first chapter of Norman Knox's excellent study of *The Word Irony: and its Context, 1500-1755* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke Univ. Press, 1961) summarises the word's history and meanings from origins to modern implications.

is not serious about its seriousness."[24] Wayne Booth has described in some detail the operation of inverting local irony into a more solid meaning.[25] But it is doubtful that a mere inversion of irony-as-a-turn-of-phrase can give us a meaning that corresponds to what the ironist "really" meant. At one level this is obviously not so, for it creates a meaning that does not embrace irony. More radically, however, the pretence of seriousness or sympathy inherent in the ironic turn of phrase often implies some qualified feeling that does not altogether detach itself from the apparent meaning. Jane Austen laughs at Mr. Collins, certainly, and treats him very ironically; but this is not the same as her saying that Mr. Collins is silly. The former, ironic, treatment recognises silliness as a human quality; the latter dismisses Mr. Collins altogether. The notion that mere conversion by inversion will restore the text so that it reflects the true pure intention of the author is suspect, even when, or perhaps because, we keep reminding ourselves of how complicated it can become. Allan Rodway is more persuasive:

> [I]rony is not merely a matter of seeing a `true' meaning beneath a `false,' but of seeing a double exposure (in both senses of the word) on one plate. The fact of opposition must be as apparent as the fact that it is overcome.[26]

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[24] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony: with Constant Reference to Socrates* (1841). Trans. Lee M. Capel (London: Collins, 1966), p. 265.

[25] *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), e.g. pp. 33-44.

[26] Rodway, p. 113.

Irony in this sense has particular techniques and devices, and these can profitably be studied, both in abstract by typology and *in situ* by close reading of texts. It is a literary convention and begins, at least, with a subversion of expectation. An ironical statement depends upon, or sets itself in opposition to, other literatures, imaginary or real, more naive and unsophisticated than itself, to let us know that something is being said beyond what seems to be the case. Joyce's *Dubliners* and Stephen Dedalus' gnomic Dublin "*Parable of the Plums*" in *Ulysses* (7.922) work against the conventions that, for example, all is made clear in the final paragraph, that the tensions raised by the presence in the story of unexplained events are relieved by a conclusion that accounts for them. Three stories that were to become part of *Dubliners* first appeared in the *Irish Homestead*, in "*Our Weekly Story*" (often fortnightly), where the competition tended to end with a heavy thud:

> But now I always look at the watchmen on the tram lines and wonder if they have a story like `my old man's!'

or:

> IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND.

or begin:

> Far, far away beyond the sunlight lies a land which is called the land of Idealism...[27]

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[27] Joyce's stories, under the pseudonym "Stephen Daedalus" in the *Irish Homestead* (1904): "The Sisters," 13 August, pp. 676-7; "Eveline," 10 September, p. 761; and "After the Races," 17 December, pp. 1039-40. The competition: Berkeley Campbell, "The Old Watchman," 2 July, p. 556; Alice Milligan, "A Farmyard Tragedy," 16 July, p. 597, concluded 30 July, p. 636; `Connaught Girl' (pseud.) "The Finding of Love," 13 August, p. 675.

Such a story, we must presume, is Philip Beaufoy's *Matcham's Masterstroke*, for its fundamental application in *Ulysses* is an ironic one (4.537).[28] That this convention is invoked only to be flouted creates a form of irony, the difference between expectation and fulfilment.

But irony has a second, more recent and complex meaning, for besides being a turn of phrase, as comedy can be a pun or a stroke of wit, it is or can be like comedy also an attitude, a "vision," a "Spirit." The clumsiness of these terms has contributed to critical confusion and neglect, and is probably connected with the meanings contained in the term irony: besides being a *way* of saying something, irony says something about the person employing it; but it can also be *what* is said. Irony can be a rhetorical device, or it can be the language itself: *langue*, as well as *parole*. There are instances when irony cannot possibly be translated to produce a statement that corresponds even superficially to what the author "really" means: to use Kierkegaard's terms, the essence is not identical with the phenomenon, and no amount of translation can make it so. This is irony as a way of seeing things, a view of the world, a method of understanding. Irony in a deeper sense than momentary unserious seriousness has been around since Socrates, its greatest exponent. Of this

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[28] A fair idea of the type of thing *Matcham's Masterstroke* was, and what a perceptive critic Bloom is, can be gathered from comparison with Philip Beaufoy's "For Vera's Sake": see Hugh Kenner, "Beaufoy's Masterplaster," *JJQ* 24 (1986), 11-18, where the story is reprinted whole.

"dialectic irony," Connop Thirwall - the first British writer to analyse the phenomenon, and who indeed coined the phrase - wrote a century and a half ago:

> This, instead of being concentrated in insulated passages, and rendered prominent by its contrast with the prevailing tone of the composition, pervades every part, and is spread over the whole like a transparent vesture closely fitted to every limb of the body.[29]

Beyond the ironic turn of phrase that can be identified and - if you follow Kierkegaard, Booth and Muecke - translated, there is in Chaucer, Cervantes, Swift, Sterne and Joyce an ironic mind or cast of thought. Irony in this sense, as constituting a writer's means, his way of seeing *everything* - including, naturally, his own irony - has burgeoned enormously in the past two hundred years or so, because individuals have seen more and more to be ironic about.[30]

If we think of irony as merely a device, the most important fact about it in Joyce is obscured: irony is a way of seeing the world, a point of view. D. C. Muecke postulates that the ironic and the non-ironic may in part be complementary opposites, "each desirable and necessary but

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[29] C[onnop] T[hirlwall], "On the Irony of Sophocles," *The Philological Museum* Vol II (Cambridge: 1833), p. 484.

[30] Spy and horror stories, short magazine fiction, thrillers, romances and science fiction, as well as the majority of plays and most of what is produced for television - in short, forms generally ignored by traditional university courses and examination syllabuses - are probably no more ironic in the secondary, complex sense than they have ever been. A similar qualification applies when a literary critic claims that "everybody" is ironic now: what is meant is, anyone likely to read the critic.

neither sufficient for all [man's] needs." But this is to understate the difference between them, and Muecke's call upon the support of Thomas Mann is misleading:

> Irony and radicalism - this is an alternative and an Either-Or. An intelligent man has the choice (*if* he has it) to be either ironical or radical. There is, in all decency, no third possibility. Which he is depends on the argument that he accepts as ultimately and absolutely valid: life or spirit....For the radical man life is no argument. *Fiat spiritus, pereat vita!* But the words of irony are: "Can truth be an argument if it is a matter of life?"[31]

In fact Mann is saying that, far from being complementary (what Muecke would like him to be saying), the two modes are exclusive. "*If* he has the choice..." - Mann's doubt is well-founded, and Joyce at least has no choice about how he sees, for unlike the tragedian he is aware that he knows and this immediately introduces an ironic self-awareness that works against the tragic sensibility. One's circumstances, upbringing, education and experience have more to do with whether one is ironic or radical than a rational consideration of the arguments.[32]

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[31] *Irony and the Ironic*, Critical Idiom Series 13 (London: Methuen, 2nd ed., 1982 [substantially different from 1st ed., 1970]), p. 6. See also William Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Criticism: A Short History* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London: 1957, 1970), pp. 615-23 and 632-33 (I. A. Richards), 637-39 (Empson) and 674-75 (Eliot). Irony as understood by Wimsatt and Brooks, however, is too vague to be useful: "Irony...acknowledges the pressure of the total context upon the individual word or image, the slight warping of signification continually made by the poet as he shades the word to its precise meaning in his context" (p. 674).

[32] See Kenneth Burke, "Mainsprings of Character," rpt. in *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 418-21.

But, says Wayne Booth, there is every difference between "dialectic irony," the ignorance of a Socrates which is at least a knowledge that one is ignorant (and so superior to the complacent ignorance, even of ignorance, of one´s opponents), and the "infinite instabilities" of a Joyce or a Beckett in which "no truth, no passion, no political commitment, no moral judgment, will stand up under ironic examination."[33] It is easy to see, from such remarks, why ethics inevitably infiltrates discussion of irony. The question is whether irony, and in particular general or unstable irony, such as characterises Joyce, is or is not destructive or corrosive or cancerous. Kierkegaard, Muecke and Booth all recognise in complex irony a potential to be unethical, because it is negative (Kierkegaard), and can be destructive (Booth) or corrosive (Muecke) of meaning; and even Joseph Moses, who argues in favour of Meredith´s ironic treatment of morality and truth, has a section entitled "The Ethical Context."[34] Muecke has gone so far as to revise completely one of his books on irony and - in the light of modern theories of discourse, with their concentration on writing rather than on the expression of the intention of a writing subject - sees no future at all for irony. "Of writing that is designed to prevent interpretation in terms of intent," he argues, "one could use the word `irony´ only, it seems, as a synonym for `uncertainty,´ that is as a word

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[33] Booth, p. 253. Booth spends 50 pages on "unstable irony": on stable irony, 230.

[34] Kierkegaard, p. 278; Muecke, *Compass of Irony*, p. 242; Booth, p. 253; and Moses, *The Novelist as Comedian* (New York: Schocken, 1983), pp. 45-92.

without any additional content and therefore redundant."[35] Open or Paradoxical Irony tends to develop "galloping relativism," he claims, from which it can be saved - in theory at least -

> by a call to order in the form of renewed ironic laughter from on high, but more probably by the practical exigencies of life.[36]

The assumption, of course, is that irony can and should be "saved" from galloping relativism, for otherwise an ironical work becomes absolutely impenetrable, with nothing being said because nothing can possibly be meant. Irony, like Ouroboros, is eating itself.

But in what sense, precisely, is complex irony negative, corrosive or destructive? Clearly the argument is that if all values are challenged then none remain. Booth´s discussion, illustrated with a brilliant reading of submerged values in Samuel Beckett and his readers, suggests that everything is fine as long as we can perform the reconstruction of the implied author´s original meaning; but when we have "infinite instabilities" we no longer have values underlying the irony upon which to build our reconstruction.[37] Booth and Muecke are disturbed by the development of general or unstable irony, for it creates what Booth calls "infinite instabilities": we can no longer

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[35] Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*, pp. 100-01.

[36] Muecke, *Irony and the Ironic*, p. 50. David Worcester preempts most of Muecke and Booth´s objections to modern irony´s supposed potential for negativity on pp. 141-44 and in his final few pages, "Sphinxes without Secrets," of *The Art of Satire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1940).

[37] Booth, pp. 257-67.

translate irony into the author's original meaning. It follows that meaning is stable; language is a code; the subject of literature - the reality it refers to - is fixed; meaning is set only by the implied author; and whatever tone of voice he may assume, the implied author says what he means and means what he says. No wonder they are worried by complex irony.

Booth and Muecke know what is important and what trivial. But what if, as in *Ulysses* and later in *Finnegans Wake*, old cabbage stumps and a shout in the street are as significant as Homer and Holy Communion; what if, as Robert Polhemus puts it, "shit is as sacred as Scripture"?[38] *Then* what is the possible importance of importance, the meaning of meaning? The fun comes when this is turned into a liberating and comic insight: everything is grist to the mill. As the narrator of *A Tale of A Tub* observes, "I believe one of the Authors Designs was to set curious Men a hunting thro' Indexes, and enquiring for Books out of the common Road."[39] *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are not crossword puzzles to be solved; but in one sense the error is only an inability to conceive of the puzzle on a sufficiently grand scale. The crucial and comic clue that many critics miss is that the solution is: everything. To these, inconsistency is a difficulty or a nuisance to be overcome, but to Joyce it

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[38] Polhemus, p. 295.

[39] Swift, *A Tale of A Tub* (1704), ed. A. C. Guthkelch and D. Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed., 1958), p. 187n.

is the contradictions that make the whole enterprise worth engaging upon. As Goethe wrote of Sterne, so we might say of Joyce:

> He felt a definite hatred for seriousness because it is didactic and dogmatic and very easily becomes pedantic, qualities which he despised. Thus his antipathy toward terminology.[40]

(A bad mistake: Sterne, it is true, parodies terminology by embracing different forms of it, thereby demonstrating its inadequacies and contradictions, but both he and Joyce nonetheless have a real relish for it.) Totality incorporates contradiction or it is not totality. Being ironic in the complex sense - and that is close to being a portrait of the artist in the twentieth century - is being able to make something of contradiction; the critic, on the other hand, must foreclose discussion by reconciling or ignoring contradiction, even if only for the time being. A further irony makes the work of the critic in explicating Joyce's texts necessary as a precondition of Joycean irony at his expense. Thus Joyce was obliged to feed his schemata into the critical tradition and to have Stuart Gilbert construct his guide to the *Ulysses* maze only so that it could become apparent, as time went on and the "solution" to *Ulysses* obstinately refused to appear, that such methods were and are doomed to defeat, if by success one means the "unlocking" of *Ulysses* by a "key" - revealing terms. The temptation to think of *Ulysses* as a puzzle to be solved has always been great. Indeed, *Ulysses* is so inviting to systems

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[40] Goethe, qtd. in *Sterne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Alan Howes (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 433.

that we may invent them at will. "Do anything you like with figures juggling," Bloom thinks: "Always find out this equal to that" (11.832):

> sagittarius, the archer: Bloom´s slaughter of the suitors.
> capricorn, the goat: `Buck´ Mulligan.
> aquarius, the water carrier: Molly´s chamber pot.
> pisces, the fish: Bloom, often associated with fish.
> aries, the ram: Blazes Boylan.
> taurus,the bull: Stephen´s bullockbefriending, Oxen/Alpha.
> gemini, the twins: Tommy and Jacky Caffrey, sirens, etc.
> cancer, the crab: the death of Stephen´s mother.
> leo, the lion: Leopold.
> virgo, the virgin: Gerty.
> libra, the scales: Bloom´s evenhandedness.
> scorpio: ?

- Bloom is after all interested in astronomy and "parallax," invented a kaleidoscope that showed the twelve constellations of the zodiac (17.572), and he and Stephen gaze at the star. When Guy Davenport insists that each chapter of *Ulysses* has "an appropriate tree or shrub, corresponding to letters in the Old English tree alphabet as given in Roderick O´Flaherty´s *Ogygia*," and can adduce the slenderest of connections as support, and indeed can find no correspondence at all for three of them, one wonders what might count as failure in such a venture.[41] Rather than the basis of judgment being whether Joyce "put them there" - a problematic criterion of often unrecoverable intention which is central to Booth and Muecke´s theories of complex irony - we should think in terms of fitness, of how much a system contributes to our understanding of the book. (We now know a good deal, though not enough, about Joyce´s writing of the book: enough at least to know that, paradoxically, he

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[41] "James Joyce´s Use of Symbolism in *Ulysses*" (M.Litt Oxford 1950), pp. 133-38. See also "Joyce´s Forest of Symbols," rpt. in his *Geography of the Imagination* (San Fransisco: North Point Press, 1981), pp. 286-99.

sometimes did not know as much about what he was revising and supplementing as we do. We can sometimes observe him trying to patch up his text, having forgotten what it was he originally wanted to say.[42] More often the creative process remains a mystery: Joyce's remarks against intention as the benchmark of critical validity are worth recalling.)[43] The wheels having been set in motion, however, Joyce much later stated his regret, perhaps because the explicatory path was being pursued to the virtual exclusion of any consideration of the irony that undercuts the whole enterprise. It is

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[42] For example, concerning 9.911: "Spotting the form `villian,' as descending from TS [typescript], in the page proofs, Joyce corrected it. However, `villian' would have been a possible Elizabethan spelling for the word and, as a pun on `William', it may even be what Joyce originally wrote in the lost working draft." (Gabler, *Ulysses*, textual note 448.17.) Three other examples: firstly, Joyce's confusion between the pair of black trousers Stephen is wearing and the grey pair offered by Mulligan (see 2.225 and 3.16-17, and textual notes to 60.17 and 74.17); secondly, textual note on "Whipser," textual note 922.7 (see 14.1575); and thirdly, textual note on 1366.12 (see 16.452), on how D. B. Murphy "became" W. B. Murphy. For obvious reasons these notes are conjectural to some extent, and therefore open to argument. See also Brook Thomas, "Formal Re-creation: Re-reading and Re-joycing the Re-rightings of *Ulysses*" (better than it sounds) in *The Seventh of Joyce*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 5-9.

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> -Then in your opinion, [Power] said, the critics and the intellectuals have boggled the issue, have not seen your intention clearly, and have put meanings into it which did not exist, which they have invented for themselves.
> -Yes and no, replied Joyce shrugging his shoulders evasively, for who knows but that they are right. What do we know about what we put into anything? Though people may read more into *Ulysses* than I ever intended, who is to say that they are wrong: do any of us know what we are creating? (Power, p. 89.)

reported that in a conversation with Vladimir Nabokov Joyce described his collaboration with Gilbert as "a terrible mistake," an advertisement of the book which he regretted very much.[44]

A reading of *Ulysses* that concentrates upon its irony, however, will be no more a "correct solution" to the "mystery" of *Ulysses* than any other, for such a reading is itself subject to irony. (It may, however, be a more appropriate response to the book, and, in excluding less, a better way of reading it.) An ironic reading cannot save itself from the implications of irony by acknowledging them, and an explication of a work of art that states that its meaning is the meaninglessness of meaning can hardly itself escape the difficulties of such a position. The ironies of interpreting the ironic are well put by Jonathan Culler:

> If irony as a mode carries any single warning it is that concluding is dangerous. But on the other hand...many of the delights come from the call to interpretation that it issues. An ironic sentence, by definition, requires the interpreter to prove his own ingenuity in supplying an absent meaning; and it is thus a form of language which defers and tantalizes, which confers importance on the process of interpretation, while simultaneously bearing implicit warning of its dangers. How can the reader enter the space of irony and confidently join in the interpretative play when he is simultaneously being asked to smile at the interpretations of others - as often as not simply on the grounds that they are interpretations?[45]

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[44] In the same conversation Joyce is said to have described his employment of Homer as "a whim." Note however that Ellmann had this from someone else who had it from Nabokov, who was recalling in 1974 words spoken in "about 1937." *JJ.* 616n.

[45] *Flaubert: The Uses of Uncertainty*, Novelists and Their World (London: Paul Elek, 1974), p. 211.

Joyce's solution to the problems inherent in sitting down to attempt greatness is to have *Ulysses* contain multiple and therefore contrary systems of parallels, and so ensure that each is transcended. Homer, the description of a day, Shakespeare, Dublin, the various styles in which the episodes are narrated: these are overlapping sets, worlds in collision. *Ulysses* is overdetermined by allusion, so that three systems may be contained even in the same sentence: "Some people," to take Bloom's observation as one obvious example, "can see the mote in others' eyes but they can't see the beam in their own" (12.1237). This conflates Bloom's day with Odysseus' action and Christ's words. Kierkegaard explains:

> The humorist can never really be a systematiser because he looks upon every philosophical system as a renewed attempt to explode the world with a syllogism...The systematiser believes that he can say everything, and that anything that cannot be expressed is false and unimportant.[46]

Muecke posits the dilemma as a choice between having a system and thereby committing ourselves to inadequacy at some points and contradiction at others, and not having one, by which we are condemned to incoherence. He quotes Friedrich Schlegel: "It's equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none." But Muecke fails to include the second half of the aphorism: "It will simply have to decide to combine the two."[47] This is Joyce's novel, elegant and self-ironising solution: neither to have nor not to have a

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[46] *Journals*, ed. Alexander Dru (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), p. 50.

[47] Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 156; Schlegel, p. 167.

system, but instead to have several. What do we make of a work of art that is neither allegory nor symbolic construct, but both, and indeed two, or three, or more systems combined and multiplied? Realist transcript or Homeric/Shakespearean parallel - *Ulysses* avoids Schlegel's Scylla and Charybdis by ironically pushing the dilemma through to an illogical logical conclusion. We seek out the allegory and symbolism, and find ourselves anticipated by the book's irony. Our reading is being read.

### iii. `Nausicaa´

Irony, argues Andrew Wright, "comes as the result of the quest for meaning in the universe, as the result of human experience; it is not a piece of equipment, like an entrenching tool, with which a man starts out."[48] It is present to a high degree in Joyce, or goes very deep in him. We now return to `Nausicaa,´ arguing, against Goldberg, that Gerty's limitations merely provide Joyce - and the reader - with a *frame* for the episode, and that her self-betrayal as young, gullible and easily-swayed is only one of its elements. Gerty's fragility, her coy and prurient gentle probing at the mysteries of sexual attraction, her naive calculation and her *idees recues* are not Joyce's object of attack, but rather his point of departure. To paint the Cyclops is one thing, even if it includes a not entirely corrupt love of country, but to depict the fragility of a young girl without relaxing into mere parody is a problem of

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[48] Wright, p. 36.

a different order. At the level of dramatic irony, for one thing, it must be admitted that `Nausicaa´ is indeed the measure of the difference between Gerty´s inexperience, naivete and sexual curiosity and the superior knowledge of the implied reader. Just as Gerty, Cissy and Edy smile at the little world of Tommy and Jacky, so important to themselves and so trivial viewed from above; so we smile at the miniature crises and triumphs of Gerty MacDowell. This is a form of dramatic irony, that her superiority over the twins, whom she finds such "darling little fellows," should reflect our smiling participation in her world. It would be an inept reading, however, that argued for Gerty´s aggression towards or hatred of the twins on the grounds that she feels superiority to them. So too Joyce´s and the reader´s superiority over Gerty does not necessarily imply exultation in superiority. A smile, even an ironic smile, is not always a sneer. In any case, if we as readers are amused because we see Gerty (a fictional character) attempting to treat life like a fiction, are we not doing the same thing in reverse, and attributing to her qualities (of naivete, for example) that, as a fictional character, she cannot possibly possess?

Secondly, there is the Homeric parallel. Goldberg distinguishes usefully between two modes of irony operating in Joyce´s uses of the Homeric parallels: on the one hand the sharp, diagnostic irony of the exposure of the protagonists´ inadequacies and contradictions; and, on the other, the irony which cuts back on the supposed grandiosites of the past in order to reveal the living clay

of humanity in every age. "These two aspects of the Homeric parallel," Goldberg had written, "may serve to mark the extremes between which Joyce's irony maintains a poise far too little understood."[49] Yet in his reading of `Nausicaa' he refers to Homer only in a single phrase, the "clear freshness of the Homeric episode."[50] Ignoring the *Odyssey*, Goldberg naturally does not see the second, unifying aspect of Joyce's irony at work, creating just the poise we are called upon to understand. Once we consider this aspect of the episode, Goldberg's objections disintegrate.

There is, however, another source for `Nausicaa' of which Goldberg is unaware. Some three decades before Joyce wrote `Nausicaa' a lesser novelist had proposed that the *Odyssey* was the work of the girl who appears in the poem as Nausicaa, and that her lively mind had flirtatiously and coquettishly penned portraits of her family and friends to people her poem.[51] When she had strayed beyond her own very limited experience, she made mistakes: how else to explain curious lapses, such as the ship with a rudder at both ends, men wrestling on full stomachs, and ewes milked at morning and evening and still expected to feed their lambs as well? Samuel Butler's Nausicaa - the authoress of the Odyssey - is not Joyce's Gerty, but the idea of creating her world from

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[49] Goldberg, pp. 118-9.

[50] Goldberg, p. 141.

[51] Samuel Butler, *The Authoress of the Odyssey* (1897); rpt. as Vol. 12 of Shrewsbury Ed. *Complete Works*, eds. Henry Festing Jones and A. T. Bartholemew (London: Jonathan Cape, 1925). The connection with *Ulysses* has been explored by Hugh Kenner in *The Pound Era* (1972; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 45-50.

within, and from within the limitations of Nausicaa of the *Odyssey*, challenged Joyce. Follow Goldberg's reading and we should be obliged to speak of mock-heroic, if we mention the parallel at all: the transposition of high events to a low key. But Joyce never uses the *Odyssey* merely as an ironic contrast to our present dark and benighted age - Eliot's "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history"[52] - without at the same time casting light on the Homeric world. Often he will indicate the unity of human experience, dia- and synchronically, as he was to in *Finnegans Wake*. If we look at the *Odyssey* less through the eyes of Butcher and Lang and their predecessors and more through the eyes of Schliemann who took it for fact, and Butler and Joyce who took it for truth, we are less likely to be blinded by the light cast by heroic splendour. It may be that we are no longer capable of seeing a godlike man without (after Joyce) wondering what he had for breakfast, for this is an ironical age. That, however, does not foreclose our appreciation of the heroic literature but merely realigns it; and still less does it shut off Ulysses from us, for he of all the heroes possesses qualities least likely to be despised now: durability, brain rather than brawn, a cool head in a crisis.[53] In the touching meeting and brief friendship between Ulysses and Nausicaa we can see the heart of Joyce's episode. Homer's Nausicaa is a lovely but young girl, and in her is combined that vivacity and

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[52] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth," *The Dial* 71 (November 1923), 480-83; rpt. in *Deming*, p. 270.

[53] This paragraph anticipates the argument of chapter five, "Leopold Hero, A Bite from a Sheep," of this study.

sexual curiosity that makes her seem so real and human to us - one of the few human encounters Ulysses is privileged to enjoy. This is not to deny the ironic scrutiny she - like Gerty - undergoes, but to suggest that it does not exhaust the text.

Joyce´s Gerty is lame. It is never quite clear that this lameness is permanent ("but for that one shortcoming [...] and that was an accident coming down Dalkey hill and she always tried to conceal it," 13.649): in any case it is an emblem of her limitations. Her upbringing, her restrictions as a female and the phantasy world she inhabits as a reader of romantic fiction all handicap her in the human race. Goldberg sees this, and believes that Joyce sees this, to the exclusion of her other qualities. Her emotions and loyalties are fickle and her desire to inhabit the world of the ideal regrettable. But a youngster´s emotions would hardly be otherwise, given the miserable nature of her reality, and at least her dreams are a safer and more dependable escape route than the one Eveline Hill contemplates. Catherine Morland learns the inadequacies of believing the gothic novel to represent reality, but she is never exposed to Jane Austen´s hostility, and Joyce does not have the option of resolving the conflict between ideal and reality in the way that Austen does. The tendency of a sympathetic reading of this episode towards sentimentality, pathos inevitably leaning towards bathos, indicates precisely why Joyce´s approach is acerbic and apparently so unsympathetic.[54] Only by contrasting the ironical, the

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[54] Clive Hart, "James Joyce´s Sentimentality," criti-

experienced and the worldly, against her naivete, inexperience and phantasy life can Joyce draw our sympathy for her. Unfortunately the irony necessary to create that sympathy-despite-ourselves can be mistaken for parody, as it is by Goldberg. Of course, it would be foolish to ignore the parody of poor fiction sewn through the first half of the episode, but regarding the episode *as* a parody does not seem to me to be a challenging, complex and satisfying reading.

Gerty´s sisters, those whom she most resembles, are Nausicaa and the Virgin Mary, emblems of innocence. She is a tonic to Bloom, and, in what is not solely a parodic phrase, relief for the "stormtossed heart of man" (13.8), a breath of pure fresh air after the beery stench of male hatred and bigotry he experienced in Barney Kiernan´s. It is fitting that her cliched, penny fiction ambition is to "make him forget the memory of the past" (13.438). "For this relief much thanks. In *Hamlet*, that is" (13.940), Bloom remembers: and for Bloom as for Hamlet, "´tis bitter cold / And I am sick at heart." But the favour is not all onesided, and Bloom´s presence helps Gerty too forget the memory of the past, for it is when she is laughed at by Edy and Cissy that Gerty begins to imagine the romantic possibilities of Bloom´s presence:

> Pure jealousy of course it was nothing else to draw attention on account of the gentleman opposite looking.[...] Till then they had only exchanged glances of the most casual but now [...] the face that met her gaze [...] seemed to her the saddest she had ever seen. (13.364)

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cises the strong pull of sentimentality in Joyce and in his readers: then twists the tail.

One´s future is conditioned to a great extent by the past and present:

> Then there was blushing scientifically cured and how to be tall increase your height and you have a beautiful face but your nose? (13.113)

"[T]he years were slipping by for her, one by one" (13.649). But in the daily game of inventing one´s identity, and therefore delimiting one´s possibilities, she is a relative beginner. What she may become is not settled in quite the way that it is for the citizen, and to a lesser extent for Bloom. Bloom finds it difficult to overturn the weight of the past, and Stephen too finds the past a burden: for all, personal history is a nightmare from which one cannot awake. Gerty however has very little past. We don´t find in her that oppressed trapped helplessness that characterises Eveline Hill, for example - whose name is nearly an anagram of "lives in hell" - the Joycean character whom she most closely resembles. It is likely that just as the Bob Doran of *Dubliners* collapses into the Bob Doran of *Ulysses*, so Gerty will become another of Joyce´s Dubliners - the poor limping wife of a drunk, perhaps, or a bitter spinster. But which of these it will be is not decided, and she may even find a brighter future such as Eveline thought she might have. Futures, though, are not what concerns this episode, but rather present as potential, as possibility. As of baby Boardman, "who would certainly turn out to be something great, they said" (13.390), so Gerty´s future is not as yet the mere fulfilment of the present, and no amount of ironical knowledge on the part of the reader that baby

Boardman is most unlikely to turn out to be something great and that Gerty's future will in all probability collapse into banality can entirely spoil that promise.

Gerty's inexperience and her ambitions are nicely captured in her dreams of marriage, of which she knows so little she remembers only the rhythm of the vows, garbling their content: "his affianced bride for riches for poor, in sickness in health, till death us two part, from this to this day forward" (13.215). To Gerty, language is composed of formulae - the hackneyed prose, the botched recollections, the meaninglessness (for her, as for Bloom) of Latin hymns turned into literal nonsense by the rhythm of her body: "*tantumer gosa cramen tum*" (13.499). Joyce cruelly exposing Gerty? Or smiling at the dreams of eighteen, seeing in her simplicity as in Bloom's untutored curiosity a part picture of humanity? Our response may be laughter, but not the laughter of her two companions: "she gave a kick but she missed and Edy and Cissy laughed" (13.358), which is as close to Hobbes' superiority as anything in Barney Kiernan's. A clue is provided by Gerty herself. "His eyes," she feels, "burned into her as though they would search her through and through, *read* her very soul" (13.412, emphasis mine), which implies close scrutiny of the sort she is subjected to by Joyce, Bloom and the reader, but which hardly suggests indifference. When her narrow horizons are exposed unconsciously - "a sinner, a wicked man, she cared not. Even if he was a protestant or a methodist" (13.433) - how do we respond? Judgment is surely tinged with affection, and the effect is somewhat different from the condemnation

Goldberg reads there. It reminds us of Butler's Nausicaa, an unconscious and somewhat endearing snob, or even of Homer's Nausicaa, who artlessly sends Ulysses into the town before her lest people should talk.

Gerty loves Bloom; Nausicaa loves Ulysses. There is a characteristic irony in *Ulysses* that depends on the odd effects to be discovered in the juxtaposition of different things happening at the same time, different worlds, different systems separate yet joined. It is the principle on which parts of `Wandering Rocks' are constructed. There is the similar dramatic irony of Bloom and Stephen's brief encounters, foreshadowing the night, during the day: they both see a morning cloud; and, it has been suggested, even share a tram in the morning, Bloom on his way to the Dignam household, Stephen after giving his lesson.[55] More explicitly, and fittingly in the context of a discussion of `Nausicaa,' in which a sacrament is a symbol of voyeurism, Stephen early in `Proteus' ponders Occam's problem of hypostasis: "And at the same instant perhaps a priest round the corner is elevating it. Dringdring! And two streets off another locking it into a pyx" (3.120). A similar irony operates here:

> and he put in the incense and censed the Blessed Sacrament and Cissy Caffrey caught the two twins and she was itching to give them a ringing good clip [..] Gerty could see without looking that he never took his eyes off of her and then Canon O'Hanlon [...] knelt down looking up at the Blessed

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[55] Clive Hart and Leo Knuth, *A Topographical Guide to* Ulysses (Colchester: A Wake Newslitter Press, 1975), p. 24.

> Sacrament and the choir began to sing the *Tantum ergo* and she just swung her foot in and out in time as the music rose and fell to the *tantumer gosa cramen tum.* (13.491-499).

The initial effect is of the incongruity of the juxtaposition of sacred and profane. Gradually, however, odd connections appear, like figures in the carpet. The Blessed Sacrament and Cissy are both "incensed," it transitively, her intransitively; and they are both "censed" (well, Gerty's presence is "sensed" by Bloom); and the "ringing good clip" that Cissy wants to give chimes with the ringing of the bells. Bloom's eyes are on Gerty as, of course, Canon O'Hanlon's are on the Blessed Sacrament, the object in both cases of male adoration, in both cases the present time being a male "retreat" (13.282). The Latin hymn *Tantum ergo sacramentum* is usually translated, "Therefore we before him bending," and here is Gerty bends over backwards to please Bloom. When "one of the candles was just going to set fire to the flowers" (13.554) an additional irony is established, because the candle involved outside the church is the Roman candle (13.719) and the star of the sea Mary and/as Gerty; the fire is sexual excitement, and the flower is Bloom "literally worshipping at her shrine" (13.564).[56] So events are connected, establishing a dramatic irony which operates on those involved who remain unaware of any greater significance to their actions: "You could see there was a story behind it" (13.337), as Gerty has it. There are

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[56] Compare Lily the caretaker's daughter's use of the word "literally" in "The Dead," *D.* 199.

connections between little events and big ones, events near and far: Gerty´s period (which coincides with Molly´s) is connected with the new moon. As Bloom thinks:

> Also that now is magnetism. Back of everything magnetism. [...] Magnetic needle tells you what´s going on in the sun, the stars. Little piece of steel iron. (13.987-992)

In another dramatic irony, Bloom´s watch stops at half past four, at which time - probably - Bloom´s cuckolding becomes fact. Suitably, however, the language at this point becomes clogged, as if events themselves come together. Miss Cissy, in reply to Edy´s question about the time, says it is "half past kissing time, time to kiss again" (13.532) - an innocent enough response, except that it is half past four by Bloom´s watch, and four o´clock was the time of the rendezvous between Molly and Boylan: so, (half past) four is (half past) kissing time. "I´ll run ask my uncle Peter over there what´s the time by his conundrum," says Cissy (13.535). (She probably doesn´t know the origin of the word "conundrum." This is not surprising, since no-one else does either: it´s a conundrum.) Bloom, whose "selfcontrol" is "expressed in every line of his distinguishedlooking figure" (13.542: not very effective, then), consults his watch and finds that "his watch was stopped"; Cissy returns with the information that "uncle said his waterworks were out of order" (13.546, 550). Cissy does not know that Bloom is symbolically related to keys (Peter), nor does Bloom realise the pun: his watch is stopped/he is prevented from watching. Cissy is unaware also that Bloom´s "waterworks were out of order" in two senses, including one to do with his physical

arousal. (A few pages later, Bloom's observation that "Wristwatches are always going wrong" 13.984, contradicts the evidence of the original incident, where Bloom takes his watch out of his pocket and plays with his watchchain, 13.538: Joyce making a joke, perhaps, about voyeuristic masturbation as "wristwatching.")[57]

Considering that things get complicated like this, Edy's confidence is to be suspected:

> --I know, Edy Boardman said none too amiably with an arch glance from her *shortsighted* eyes, I know who is Tommy's sweetheart, Gerty is Tommy's sweetheart. (emphasis mine, 13.71)

Edy's malice and shortsightedness both affect what she sees. She is unaware that there are things of which she is unaware - the Homeric parallel, for example, to which she, as a less than fully realised character, owes her existence. (Concerning the presence of Edy and Cissy as Homeric necessity: Cissy at one point is thought by Gerty to be "like a caricature" 13.509.) Edy is unaware too of what is happening (we read her say these words) and of what is about to happen (between Gerty and Bloom). She sees no problems: reality is what you see, but she is shortsighted and so her reality will be "squinty" (13.128; Bloom agrees: 13.777). Edy Boardman's confident shortsightedness stands as a caricature of the inadequacy of systems. To think of the episode as merely mock-heroic or parody is not enough, although both are present. Tommy and Jacky's squabble (13. 40-48) is read by Kenner as mock-heroic:

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57 As Bloom himself remarks, "Very strange about my watch," 13.983: see Kenner *Joyce's Voices*, pp. 113-16.

> Amid this twilight of civilization, the masculine world consists of four-year-old twins and a baby, surrounded by nursemaids. In their sailor caps with H.M.S. Bellisle, (Ireland) insignia, they battle over a sand-castle like Irish revolutionaries differing on policy, and succeed in demolishing the sand-castle (Ireland) itself.[58]

"[T]he troubles of childhood are but as fleeting summer showers" (13.381). There is mock-heroic here: boys will be boys, but why do they never grow up and stop fighting? "How can people aim guns at each other." asks Bloom: "Sometimes they go off" (13.1193). There is too the parenthetical observation that "the girl chums had of course their little tiffs from time to time like the rest of mortals" (13.94). But in both instances the irony cuts both ways, and the "mock-heroic" label does not exhaust the text. The squabble, Bloom's thoughts on guns, Gerty's ambition to make him "forget the memory of the past" (13.438), the reference to the "stormtossed heart of man" (13.8), the restfulness of evening lit by fireworks and broken by their noise: all these things are perhaps echoes of war and the emotions it arouses. But while Tommy and Jacky's altercation means everything to them, if we concentrate upon it as a political parable it can very quickly mean everything to us, too. To say that mortal conflict is resolvable to the terms of sand castles and little tiffs is a gesture, not a fully fledged political satire: the point is made, but not developed. To allow one's reading to foreground such a suggestion is to become committed, if only for the moment, to a single vision. Our reading of *Ulysses* must be ready to interpret,

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58 Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce*, p. 256.

but we must remain open to further and even contradictory perceptions if we are not to risk the judgment of `Cyclops.´ Fritz Senn, discussing the `Nausicaa´ episode, makes just this point:

> The reading experience is characterized by shifts of perspective (one of the structural devices of *Ulysses*), which should also make us wary of singling out any one of the stages of cognition, however convincing, as the decisive one.[59]

This does not prevent us from offering readings, but should remind us that an interpretation of the episode as a war story is a delimitation. If we take it more seriously than Joyce does, *we* become the victim of its irony. We must not become part of "the fashionable intelligence" (13.197).

Earlier we saw that one level of irony in the `Nausicaa´ episode is the dramatic irony that has us watching Gerty and companions watching the twins. But of course there are ironies on ironies here. In the first place, Gerty inhabits the same world as the twins, and not our world; thus at least she is living in her own world, however much her relationship to it may be attenuated by phantasy. Secondly, behind her and the twins there is someone filtering this apparently direct experience, switching attention from Gerty to Bloom, interpolating paragraphs of external narrative (e.g. 13.1166-81) and shaping what we read. The episode could have had us sharing Bloom´s thoughts

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[59] Fritz Senn, "Nausicaa," in *James Joyce´s* Ulysses: *Critical Essays*, eds. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley, California: Univ. of California Press, 1974), p. 286. (The essay is rpt. in his *Joyce´s Dislocutions*, ed. John Paul Riquelme (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 160-87: I refer to Hart and Hayman throughout.)

where we have Gerty´s, and Gerty´s where we have Bloom´s. This is true, of course, in all fiction but it functions here as irony, rather than as an inevitable obstacle to the fiction that must be overcome or at least forgotten, because of just this assumption on our part of superiority over Gerty. We smugly dissect her inadequacies and phantasies, aware of them as she is aware of the twins´ tantrums: and all the time a shaping mind controls the range of our responses. Thirdly, our inability to encompass all the various possibilities of meaning in the text further mocks our pretensions to superiority. An example: how seriously are we to take the symbolism here?

> for her breath caught as she caught the expression in his eyes. He was eying her as a snake eyes its prey. Her woman´s instinct told her that she had raised the devil in him [...] (13.516)

As Gerty catching Bloom´s eye catches her breath, so the reader, catching his eye upon the repetition of "caught," has to reread the sentence: and is caught. As the political implications of the twins´ altercation oblige us either to view the episode as in some measure, however small, an allegory of war or, if we refuse to accept this, to admit that our apprehension of the episode must "stick to the facts" (nothing but Facts, sir, nothing but Facts), so in this sentence: is she Eve, then, and Bloom Satan? And if so, in what senses? If we accept the symbolism we inevitably give it a disproportionate attention, and if we ignore it we are then condemned to an impoverished reading. But we already know that Joyce named the episode `Nausicaa´ and struck out the chapter titles, so where do the "facts" end?

Irony in *Ulysses* prevents us from settling upon a reading that we can accept as the starting place for a full interpretation of the text. This is probably true of all story-telling: but by wearing its artificiality and awkwardness on its sleeve (see 6.954), *Ulysses* refuses to take us seriously. With the homeric parallel operating in the background always, and sometimes in the foreground, and a text teeming with marginal and central significances that only the text itself can possibly encompass, this book insists on the arbitrary and provisional nature of reader response.

## iv. Implications

Joycean irony in *Ulysses* is a method, a principle of conciliation. The book includes disparate experiences, recondite observations, unlikely parallels, and is indeed a kind of encyclopaedia - Hibernia and Universalis - but with a difference. In a way it reminds one of *A Tale of A Tub*, in which we find the narrator complaining that:

> I cannot but bewail, that no famous *Modern* hath ever yet attempted an universal System in a small portable Volume, of all Things that are to be Known, or Believed, or Imagined, or Practised in Life.[60]

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[60] Swift, p. 125. Over the page (p. 127) we find that such a work was "never atchieved or undertaken before, but by a certain Author called *Homer*..." - but he neglected some bodies of knowledge, and was very imperfect in the rest. Joyce aimed to neglect nothing and be imperfect only when he wanted to: it's always difficult to feel confident that his errors aren't volitional.

In such systems, however, different forms of truth - "Human, Divine, Political, and Mechanick" - are included discretely, as self-contained systems; *Ulysses*, however, is art and there must therefore be selection and distribution of material. Joyce wrote that the various parts of an episode would only `fuse´ after a long acquaintance, and it is crucial to understand the nature of the fusion of elements in *Ulysses*. By fusion is not meant the reduction of disparate forms of truth to artistic truth, nor is it meant that various forms should be fused in that they are confused together. What is meant is that they become parts of the world of *Ulysses*. In a less inclusive and eclectic mind than Joyce´s it would not occur (or certainly would not have occurred in the years before 1922) to bring together such disparate experience; in a less organisational and systematic mind their only connection would be the fact of their inclusion between the front and back covers of the book. Frank O´Connor complained of Joyce´s "associative mania," citing his picture of Cork with its cork frame, and while this may only be ten per cent of the truth, it is a crucial ten per cent.[61] This central dichotomy between connection and separation is the essence of Joycean irony in *Ulysses*, and it is crucial too to what plot the book possesses. Every observation one makes about connection must be corrected by an acknowledgement of separation, and *vice versa*. Stephen and Bloom meet, but that meeting is banal; Bloom is Ulysses and a little modern man, a little modern man and Ulysses. Is there, though, no truth to which words refer, is there no

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61 *JJ*. 551.

such thing as reality? Is there no such thing as the world outside and beyond language and man's understanding of the world? If there is it does not get us far, for we cannot separate the world and man's apprehension of it. Joyce's irony provides a fulcrum of perception, which see-saws from one side - connection, communication, organic unity - slowly over to the other - separation, alienation, the mechanical, confusion. The heart is with connection, and for Bloom and Stephen's fusion; the head accepts that the odds are against it. Each statement, each symbolic gesture in *Ulysses* implies more or less than it says. At times there is optimism, eagerness and willing to `only connect,' and at such times the reader seizes upon unities of colour, character, experience: as Bloom says of Gerty and himself, "Still it was a kind of language between us" (13.944). But then ironic refocusing comes into operation to correct our vision: no words, in fact, were spoken and there was no intercourse, only teleorgasmic voyeurism. Which one is the truth, when neither one includes the other?

An open apprehension of Joyce's art is easier to achieve in theory than in practice, but the rewards are worth the effort. Allan Rodway, for example, associates Chaucer's Canterbury Tales marriage group, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, and *Ulysses* under the mood of "acceptance" (he would prefer "festive"), and although he disagrees with calling this attitude a mode, and in calling this mode irony, the essence of Joyce's irony is well caught:

> All these are shotsilk comedies, the product of myriadminded men, who seem conscious of the complexity of experience and the limitations of every view, so that one mood tends to be given depth by a shading of some other.
>
> All these writers relish the absurd at the same time as they expose it, and have a good deal of charity for the failings of human nature....
>
> Such writers tend to be empirical humanists rather than systematic moralists.[62]

Arnold Goldman - who speaks of the "drama of the alternatives" - Richard Kain and Fr. Thomas Merton are among those who have argued that openness of meaning is the Joycean method in *Ulysses.*[63] Michael Groden, in his study of Joyce's writing of the book, argues that attempts to reduce *Ulysses* to a message are suspect. Joyce went through three different stages of writing, and "only partly reworked the episodes...as if to present *Ulysses* as a palimpsest involving all three stages." We must recognise the presence of each of these.[64] Similarly Karen Lawrence's examination of *The Odyssey of Style in* Ulysses finds the book

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[62] Rodway, p. 112.

[63] Goldman, *The Joyce Paradox* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 78 and passim.; Richard Kain, "Motif as Meaning: The Case of Leopold Bloom," in Staley and Benstock, eds., pp. 61-101, and see *JJQ* 12 (1975), p. 329; Father Thomas Merton, "News of the Joyce Industry," *Sewanee Review* 77 (Summer 1969), 546. Similarly Fr. Robert Boyle, S. J., in an essay on `Penelope,' argues that Joyce introduces mysteries which are not reducible or soluble: Hart and Hayman, eds., pp. 414-5. Perhaps the Catholic concept of mystery helps.

Alan Wilde, *Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981), insofar as I understand him, connects what he calls "suspensive irony," which is something like what I am arguing for in this chapter, with postmodernism.

[64] Ulysses *in Progress*. The argument is summarised on p. 4

"deliberately antirevelatory...[it] ultimately subverts the notion of an `ideal reader´ who arrives at a single truth." Joyce "presents possibilities of meaning rather than a final revelation."[65] Fritz Senn has protested most eloquently against dogmatic readings of Joyce. Already in this chapter I have quoted his simple but telling point that we should be "wary of singling out any one of the stages of cognition, however convincing, as the decisive one."[66] His "Principle of the Disrupted Pattern" likewise proposes that we should not falsify our experience of reading Joyce by pretending that everything can be reduced to a handful of explanations. "As commentators," he agrees, "we show and analyze underlying patterns of the text." But it is also

> part of our job to recognize that such patterns are limited, and that there are many of them, sometimes at variance with each other, and that none of them is wholly reliable or reliably whole.[67]

In "Dogmad or Dubliboused," required reading for all Joyceans, he wonders how it is that readers of Joyce, whose works from *Dubliners* to *Finnegans Wake* warn against the traps of certainty, should contrive to create their own. His text has ever been that phrase from *Finnegans Wake*: "Thus the unfacts, did we possess them, are too imprecisely few to warrant our certitude" (*FW* 57.16-17).[68] "Once we know what

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[65] *The Odyssey of Styles in* Ulysses (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), p. 7.

[66] "Nausicaa," p. 286.

[67] Fritz Senn, "Weaving, Unweaving," in *A Starchamber Quiry*, ed. Edmund Epstein (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 48.

[68] Senn, "Dogmad or Dubliboused," *JJQ* 17 (1980), 237-61

[*Ulysses*] *is*," he says, "we are sure to be wrong."[69] Many of the most influential responses to *Ulysses* have been presented in book-length studies, which form encourages the critic to make and reinforce a single point of view to the exclusion of others, rather than a complex one "spoiled" by qualifications. It is significant that Senn has remained on the sidelines of academic life in the university, and has never written such a book. His major project has been to examine the impossibilities of satisfactorily translating Joyce, and the rewards of attempting to. (The ironies of *Ulysses*, I have argued, are similarly untranslatable into "plain language.") There is also a more general tendency for literary criticism to insist upon discovering the moral content of the works it considers. Take your Joyce: here are Joyces moral, immoral and amoral, indifferent, restraining a negative judgement, casting a cold eye or a condemning sneer: *Ulysses*, a book "in which," as Lyster puts it, "everyone can find his own" (9.582). This does not interest Senn. "One of the potential moral effects of *Ulysses*," he has argued,

> is that it can condition us, more than any previous novel, to suspend or, at any rate, postpone the moralizing tendency that consists in dispensing blame and credit, in favour of a series of constant readjustments and a fluctuating awareness of the complexity of motivation.[70]

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[69] Senn, "Righting *Ulysses*," in *James Joyce: New Perspectives*, ed. Colin MacCabe (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 27. Culler sensitively explores Flaubertian indeterminacy and irony: see in particular pp. 185-228, and especially p. 211.

[70] Senn, "Nausicaa," p. 279. Similarly, the last chapter of Helmut Bonheim's *Joyce's Benefictions* (Berkeley: Univ. of Carolina Press, 1964), "A Rebel's Metier: Comedy

Senn's qualified, unjudging, unpolemical readings constitute the most helpful and authentic response to *Ulysses*, and irony in the sense I have been discussing is an appropriate description of the uncertainties in it. Perhaps a useful metaphor is that of vision, for Joyce's symbolism is never more seriously meant: it was a subject he was incapable of considering unimportant. The citizen's lack of perspective and lack of ironic self-appraisal make him grotesque, and in the succeeding episode there are enough suggestions to make the imagery follow on. Bloom and Gerty gaze at each other across distance, and it requires two pairs of eyes for them to judge that distance. Afterwards he reflects that it is a "Pity they can't see themselves," and observes that "Onlookers see most of the game" (13.792, 903: onlookers - that's us.) It is vital for selfknowledge that we "See ourselves as others see us," and the denizens of Barney Kiernan's "Ought to go home and laugh at themselves" (13.1058, 1217). Henri Bergson's "reciprocal interference of series" is too abstract to be illuminating, but the phrase itself, taken from optics, provides a neat encapsulation of the virtues of seeing whole, and of seeing ironically. One eye is not enough, as Joyce knew, and seeing through a single system - Roman Catholicism, or Ireland, or English

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and Obscurity," argues that Joyce:

> developed a stance of amused detachment which never left him. So we cannot claim either that Joyce simply rejected or simply accepted his world. His reaction is more complex than that of either acceptance or rejection; it is rather a comic ambivalence which thrives on a tension of opposites, on a tension which may not be resolved" (p. 138).

literature - is not sufficient. Irony is the point of view of the man who sees the limitations of points of view, to whom, like Bloom, parallax is an issue (8.110). True, one cannot be in more than one place at one time, but imagination, empathy - which is to say, the characteristics of Leopold Bloom, and those Stephen needs to develop - can overcome that myopia.

It requires, then, two eyes to appreciate distance; and irony to gain perspective. Equally, of course, it requires distance and perspective to allow two eyes to focus. The notion that comedy allows distance is a familiar one, from Walpole's dictum that this world is "a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel,"[71] from Bergson's argument that a lack of sympathy frees us to laugh ("an anaesthesia of the heart," he calls it), and from Freud's observation that black humour depends upon a momentary deep-freezing of the emotions.[72] Joyce began loftily with talk of the artist as god paring his fingernails, the understated alternative to whistling as a sign that one wishes to be thought indifferent, and in *Ulysses* developed a comic refusal, unfamiliar and even disconcerting, to judge the propriety or morality of the actions of his creations. But a refusal to judge is not the same as indifference, and disinterestedness not a lack of interest. Joyce after all,

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[71] Horace Walpole, letter, Thursday 5 March 1772, *Letters to Sir Horace Mann*, vol. 23 of *Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 387. This is four years before the usually quoted source, letter to Lady Ossory, 15 August 1776.

[72] Bergson, pp. 63-4; Freud, *Jokes*, e.g. p. 294.

if anyone, chooses what actions Bloom performs. It might be more accurate, if less clinical, to say that Joyce loves his creations no matter what - a different image of God. This is not the ostentatious stringpulling of a Thackeray, nor the sentimental comedy of the eighteenth century drama, but instead a sentimental comedy with a little grain of salt, the flavouring of irony which according to Goethe alone makes the dish worth tasting.[73] Joyce is neither stern nor indulgent: he sees whole, and if the reader cannot muster that same steady gaze, then so much the worse for the reader. Joyce, even middle-aged, would neither apologise nor excuse.

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73 Qtd. by Thomas Mann, "The Art of the Novel," in *The Creative Vision*, eds. Haskell M. Block and Herman Salinger

## CHAPTER FOUR:

## BUCK MULLIGAN, "A COWARD´S MASK"

*feeling that his coarseness of speech was not a blasphemy of the spirit but a coward´s mask*[1]

### i. Introduction: `Circe´

Before `Circe´ there have been three battles of wits between Mulligan and Stephen: at the Tower in `Telemachus,´ in the Library in `Scylla and Charybdis,´ and in and out of the Holles street maternity hospital in `Oxen of the Sun.´ On each occasion Mulligan has won. The extent to which his teasing has been a disguise for his hostility, however, only gradually becomes apparent, and it is in `Circe´ that the full extent of his hatred is revealed in the recycling in this episode of words, phrases and situations from those earlier confrontations. By drawing on previous passages `Circe´ demonstrates the conflict in Mulligan between, on the one hand, revealing his feelings towards Stephen, and on the other continuing to profit from his association with him and perhaps preventing future humiliation from Stephen´s writings.

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[1] Walton A. Litz, "Early Vestiges of Joyce´s *Ulysses*," *PMLA* LXXI (March 1956), 51-60. For further details, see below, where I quote more from this material.

"There are sins or (let us call them as the world calls them) evil memories," `Oxen of the Sun´ had said, "which are hidden away by man in the darkest places of the heart but they abide there and wait." It had continued: "Yet a chance word will call them forth suddenly and they will rise up to confront him in the most various circumstances, a vision or a dream" (14. 1344). For "man" we may read Mulligan, whose sins or evil memories are his inner feelings. In `Circe´ his secret thoughts are paraded, stripped of their protective layers of joke and jest, and without it we would be left guessing at those secret thoughts: with it, we can reread the whole day, backwards.[2] Buck Mulligan is "onstage" - speaking, present or referred to - for some 97 of the Penguin edition´s 695 pages,[3] and he appears or is mentioned in all but four of the book´s eighteen episodes, being wholly absent only from `Calypso,´ `Lestrygonians,´ `Nausicaa´ and `Penelope´ - episodes in which Stephen does not directly feature either, of course. In the light of `Circe,´ my method in this chapter is to perform, with a good deal of flicking between episodes, just this rereading of Mulligan´s four principal appearances: `Telemachus,´ `Scylla and Charybdis,´ `Wandering Rocks´ (10.1042-1099) and `Oxen of the Sun.´ Adopting and adapting Freud´s study of jokes, I argue that Mulligan and Bloom´s laughters are the

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[2] Critics who fail to recognise the importance of this rereading, such as William Schutte, *Joyce and Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957), inevitably favour Mulligan over Stephen: see, e.g. Schutte, pp. 73-4. Fritz Senn has made an interesting connection between diverse opinions on Mulligan and Mulligan´s own mercurial nature: *Joyce´s Dislocutions*, p. 125.

[3] Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

outward manifestations of two opposed and exclusive comedies, and that the part Mulligan plays in *Ulysses* as Stephen's Satan is also a challenge to the book's comic values.

Buck Mulligan appears four times in `Circe.' His first entry is as "Dr Malachi Mulligan, sex specialist" (15.1772), one of five medical men to diagnose Bloom, whose Messianic career is now just beyond its brief zenith and already heading fast for a protracted nadir. Mulligan's judgment, like J.J. O'Molloy's earlier speeches as plaintiff for the defence (15.938-983), is a comic compendium of possibilities determined by the associations of cliches and catchphrases. An allusion to foolish fond old Lear, for instance, suggests self-punishing Bloom's marital failure and refusal to confront the obvious:

> In consequence of a family complex he has temporarily lost his memory and I believe him to be more sinned against than sinning. (15.1782)

Bloom's bisexual abnormality (15.1775) is another motif that has recurred through *Ulysses*: Mulligan earlier speaks of the "womanly bloom" lost by "agreeable females" in illicit embraces (1.674,6). Bloom, as Joyce wrote of Ibsen, has "a curious admixture of the woman in his nature."[4]

In his second appearance in `Circe,' Mulligan, one of the eight "beastly beatitudes," achieves apotheosis as a representative of English values:

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[4] "Ibsen's New Drama" (1900), in *Critical Writings*, p. 64.

*(The beatitudes, Dixon, Madden, Crotthers, Costello, Lenehan, Bannon, Mulligan and Lynch in white surgical students´ gowns, four abreast, goose-stepping, tramp fast past in noisy marching.)*

THE BEATITUDES

*(incoherently)* Beer beef battledog buybull businum barnum buggerum bishop. (15.2238)

These have been referred to at the end of `Oxen´ (14.1459), and are now arranged so that, if the beatitudes correspond to their qualities, Mulligan is associated with the incoherently muttered "buggerum." Hints of Mulligan´s homosexual threat to Stephen have already been made (e.g. 3. 450-52), and now in `Circe´ the Joycean association between England and homosexuality is made with Mulligan as the connection.[5]

The third appearance, as Stephen´s frenzied "dance of death" culminates in the apparition of his dead mother (15.4166), puts the seal on Mulligan´s damnation, and is therefore the most important. All day Mulligan´s "teasing" has masked his true feelings: now, nothing remains of comedy or of jests but for the clothing, the outward show, the shell. The visitation is a diabolical inversion of the opening episode. The confrontation between the guilt- and

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[5] "As an Englishman," Eglinton remarks, "he loved a lord" (9.660). Stephen thinks of Mulligan: "Staunch friend, a brother soul: Wilde´s love that dare not speak its name" (3.450). The notion is associated with Joyce´s ideas of homosexuality between himself and close male companions: it is implied in *Portrait*, for example, where Cranly speaks ambivalently to Stephen *(P.* 251-2), and in the relationships between Hand/Rowan in *Exiles*, Stephen/Mulligan and Stephen/ Bloom in *Ulysses*, and Shem/Shaun in *Finnegans Wake*. See also Empson, *Using Biography* pp. 243, 252-9; and Herbert Howarth, "The Joycean Comedy: Wilde, Jonson, and Others," in *A James Joyce Miscellany, Second Series*, ed. Marvin Magalaner (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 179-194, which has some remarks about Joyce, Wilde and homosexuality.

horrorstricken Stephen and the hallucination he (or *Ulysses*) has conjured up is in some way related to the part played by Mulligan; the various elements of his character as exhibited during the day have been condensed. Adding Mulligan´s final, and Haines´ only, appearance in `Circe´ (15.4693), we have a further selection of elements from `Telemachus.´ We shall consider the elements of their "camp mass" together with those present in the ghostscene. There Malachi Mulligan is partially present in the person of Fr *Malachi* O´Flynn, who has already briefly appeared attended by Malachi and Patrick (see 12.1727), and who here - like Mulligan at the book´s opening - celebrates a diabolic parody of the mass on the belly of Mina Purefoy, conscripted as "goddess of unreason" (15.4692). The priestly figure also incorporates "Fr Gogarty," from Moore´s *The Lake*, a connection to which we shall return in due course. Suffice it to recall here that Joyce wrote derisively to Stanislaus of the fictional Fr Gogarty´s "grey buttocks," and here, as a supreme insult, they suffer penetration by a carrot, symbol *par excellence* of penis and excrement.[6] The composite picture includes also "The Reverend Mr Hugh C Haines Love M.A." (15.4695, *la haine*, French: hate). He is in part "the reverend Hugh C. Love" who appears, obscured by the darkness, in `Wandering Rocks´ (10.398-439), and mostly Haines, the English - and therefore protestant - counterpart to O´Flynn´s Irish Roman Catholicism.

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[6] Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 31 August 1906, *Letters* II:154. The phrase used is "tall and grey in the moonlight - buttocks hard as a faun´s...": George Moore, *The Lake* (1905, rpt. London: William Heinemann, Ebury Edition, 1936), p. 200.

The most important component of both `Circe´ scenes, however, is `Telemachus.´ From it come the tower (15.4690), its "barbacans" and "shafts of light" (15.4690 - see 1.315 and 3.272); the reference to the "centre of the earth" (15.4688, via 14.685 - Martello tower as *omphalos*, see 1.176); the accusation of matricide (15.4178; see 1.122); and many of Mulligan´s phrases and allusions - mercurial Malachi (1.518), beastly dead (1.198), our great sweet mother, *epi oinopa ponton* (1.77-8), mockery of it (1.34) and kinch (1.8) - all come from `Telemachus.´ The form of the black mass and the presence of Haines both come from the book´s first episode; and the brimstone fires that spring up and dense clouds that roll past (15.4661) derive from the "cloud of coalsmoke and fumes of fried grease" (1.316) that threaten to choke the partakers of the Martello breakfast.[7] Mulligan´s role as a jester, the central motif of his appearance in `Circe,´ built up from `Telemachus´ onwards, is particularly emphasised in `Scylla and Charybdis´; and from `Wandering Rocks´ comes the "smoking buttered split scone" (15.4168: see 10.1087). Thus each of four previous appearances of Mulligan are incorporated into these two diabolical moments, and they are to be read with those previous episodes in mind. As Mulligan examines Bloom in `Circe,´ let us now examine Mulligan.

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[7] Robert Boyle, S.J., "The Priesthoods of Stephen and Buck," in Staley and Benstock, p. 37. This article (pp. 29-60) is the best treatment of the Buck/Stephen relationship I have seen.

Malachi Roland St John "Buck" Mulligan (14.1213), stately and plump, the greatest in Joyce´s extensive gallery - which includes Cranly, Robert Hand, Lynch and Shem´s eternal opponent Shaun - of Judases and "gay betrayer[s]" (1.405), does not, it seems, have a chance. Yet to him fall some of the most memorable skits, jokes and quips in *Ulysses*: old mother Grogan´s retort to Mrs Cahill (1.357-62), the "ballad of Joking Jesus" (1.584-99), the obscene "Everyman His own Wife" (9.1171-89) and the neat parody of Yeats´ "I hardly hear the curlew cry" (9.1143). The "monster crowd" attending the execution in `Cyclops´ is entertained by him and Lenehan in appropriately gruesome style: "Considerable amusement was caused," records the anonymous reporter, "by the favourite Dublin streetsingers L-n-h-n and M-ll-g-n who sang *The Night before Larry was stretched* in their usual mirthprovoking fashion" (12.541).[8] Mulligan´s bawdy burlesque of his and Stephen´s Omphalos project is "very favourably entertained by his auditors" and wins "hearty eulogies from all" (14.701). Shortly afterwards "in that vein of pleasantry which none knew better than he how to affect," Mr Candidate (Latin: *candidus*, white) Mulligan postulates as "the supremest object of desire a nice clean old man" (14.997), and conjures up the Gothic apparition of Haines, the murderer of Samuel Childs (14.1010). (Note the union in him of violence, blasphèmy and bawdy.) In `Circe´ as we have seen Mulligan makes further appearances, as one of the eight "beastly beatitudes" (15.2238), and contrib-

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[8] An afterthought: Groden, p. 164, describes it as an "addition within an addition within an addition."

uting a telling comic diagnosis of the "sexually abnormal" Bloom (15.1774). As Bloom contemplates "in rotation" the rearranged articles of furniture in his front room, he remembers with amusement Mulligan's "scheme of colour containing the gradation of green" (17.1315). On each of these occasions Mulligan, as Bloom puts it, "contributes the humorous element" (16.280). In addition his mass parody provides *Ulysses* with an opening as well known as that of the *Canterbury Tales*. His anecdotes are amusing and his conversation brilliant, but it seems that to be a Joycean, to read *Ulysses* sensitively and with sympathy, is to be anti-Mulligan.

His guilt is assumed. In fact, *Ulysses* itself parodies the typical reading of the Buck:

> --No, Mr Bloom repeated again, I wouldn't personally repose much trust in that boon companion of yours who contributes the humorous element, Dr Mulligan, as a guide, philosopher, and friend, if I were in your shoes. He knows which side his bread is buttered on though in all probability he never realised what it is to be without regular meals. Of course you didn't notice as much as I did. But it wouldn't occasion me the least surprise to learn that a pinch of tobacco or some narcotic was put in your drink for some ulterior object. (16.279)

The cloddish "if I were in your shoes" springs to life when we recall that Stephen is in Mulligan's (9.947).[9] Bloom suggests that his motive is "sheer cussedness or jealousy, pure and simple" (16.297). Mulligan has been picking Stephen's brains, he ventures, and has been,

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[9] Stephen's boots are "spoiling the shape of [his] feet," but they occasion Joyce's editors some discomfort also: see Gabler's textual note at 74.17.

> prone to disparage and even to a slight extent with some hilarious pretext when not present, deprecate him, or whatever you like to call it which in Bloom's humble opinion threw a nasty sidelight on that side of a person's character, no pun intended. (16. 1869)[10]

The scenario of a Stephen betrayed by Mulligan suits Bloom, who takes a strong fancy to Stephen and has some typically imaginative futures in store for him, which I would quote if Bloom did not ramble on so (16.1820-65). In "advising him to sever his connection with a certain budding practitioner" (16.1868), Bloom has Stephen's best interests at heart; but it should not be forgotten that those interests and his own may coincide. Thus we must treat his statements with caution, remembering that he too, like Stephen, has something up his nose (1.161, 1.500) against Mulligan.

Similarly the events at Westland Row station are usually assumed to be Mulligan's fault, or his come-uppance, and are accordingly reconstructed. Yet all we know is that Stephen may have hurt his hand there (15.3720), but the only report we have is Bloom's (16.249), who is prejudiced on Stephen's behalf. It is true that the event is resonant with vague implications. The very location, *Westland Row terminus*, may indicate the end of the road (*terminus*) and the end of the day (*west-land*) after a violent disagreement (*row*). Yet this is one of several gaps in Bloomsday, an offstage occasion. We have a few clues, but not enough to be

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[10] This fictional misreading of Mulligan - part fact, part speculation - is bettered by the normally reliable Harry Levin, who accuses him of stealing the key to the tower from Stephen at Westland Row, *James Joyce*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1960) pp. 65-6. In fact Stephen had willingly surrendered the key in response to Mulligan's request in the first episode of the book (1.721).

sure of Kenner's reconstruction, for example, in which Stephen takes a swing at Mulligan.[11] Kenner argues that we are meant to deduce the scene from the scraps of evidence we do have, and it is certainly possible that Joyce should have obscured, as so often, a climactic moment; but, as with Kenner's guess about who moved the furniture, this is more stimulating than convincing.[12] We might try to deduce what happened in the Marabar caves, but we would need to put up a convincing case before expecting agreement.[13] Mulligan - even Mulligan - must be assumed innocent until proven guilty. It is, as Martin Cunningham says, "Better for ninetynine guilty to escape than for one innocent person to be wrongfully condemned" (6.474).

He mocks Stephen, it is true, and has spoken lightly of the death of Stephen's mother. But Stephen is too serious by half and his period of mourning excessive, for others no less than for himself. Indeed, in `Proteus' (e.g. 3.128-46) and `Scylla and Charybdis' (e.g. 9.1134-7) he mocks himself, although this aspect of his character is never displayed in public. And when Mulligan attempts in his own way to doctor the wound of his remarks about Stephen's mother, the latter's unexpected response is to alter the chargesheet:

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11 Kenner, "Circe," in Hart and Hayman, p. 353.

12 Kenner, "Molly's Masterstroke," *JJQ* 10 (1972), pp. 19-28. See Bernard Benstock's reply, "The Kenner Conundrum: Or Who Does What with Which to Whom," *JJQ* 13 (1976), 428-35.

13 E. M. Forster said that he did not know either: see his letter to Dickinson, 26 June 1924, quoted in *E. M. Forster: A Life*, by P. N. Furbank, vol 2, *Polycrates' Ring (1914-1970)* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978), p. 125.

> --I am not thinking of the offence to my mother.
> --Of what, then? Buck Mulligan asked.
> --Of the offence to me, Stephen answered. (1.218)

One sympathises with Mulligan - "O, an impossible person!" (1.222) - but it is important to establish just why Stephen speaks of the offence to himself. Gose's explanation - that if Stephen's mother is dead "like any other animal, Stephen can also suffer the same fate, is in fact being dragged down from the God-like heights towards which he had flown" - and Schutte's - that Mulligan's offence is merely in the use of the word "beastly" - are convincing only if one accepts their dismal portrait of a Stephen "[o]bsessed by death and sensuality," which itself needs to be justified.[14] As we shall see, part of what underlies Stephen's apparently pointless and selfish remark is a response to Mulligan's tendency to assume and assign roles, something Stephen is actively concerned to resist.[15] His reply implies not that he is offended on his mother's behalf (although observe that the tense of his reply - I *am* not thinking - does not rule

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[14] Eliot Gose, *The Transformation Process* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 17; Schutte, pp. 73-4. Schutte says of Stephen that: "The qualities which were objectionable in the Stephen of the earlier book - his arrogance, his personal uncleanliness, his lack of sympathy for others - are intensified in the Stephen of *Ulysses*..." Schutte, p. 18. The case against Stephen is led by Levin, Kenner, Schutte, Hayman, O'Brien and Gose; while Goldberg, Ellmann and French among others give him the benefit of the doubt.

[15] It may be legitimate to quote Gogarty here: "He must have regarded my efforts," he recalls, "as the efforts of one who wanted to master him and shape him after the figure and likeness of the would-be mentor." *This Time of the Year*, p. 73.

out that possibility at the time of the incident), but that he refuses to be defined in terms of someone else: he will not be "*only* Stephen *whose* mother is beastly dead."

Neither is Buck's behaviour in the library as self-evidently bad as Stephen thinks it is, just as Stephen's treatment by the others is not as bad as he thinks it is. Mulligan can hardly help being invited to Moore's and being asked to bring Haines along (9.305), while Stephen - an unusually diffident and consequently to us rather more engaging Stephen - sits ignored, a shy stranger at the feast of the world's, or at any rate Dublin's, learning, steeling himself against humiliation by performing "Aristotle's experiment" (9.295). Only some of Stephen's aloofness stems from his realisation that he is on the outskirts of the outskirts - or as Lyster unwittingly puts it, of "[a]ll the leading provincial...." (9.598). He refuses to play by the rules, and sulks when he is not asked to join in. His pose, an unhappy blend of adolescent awkwardness and Aestheticist inconsistency, appears calculated to throw would-be sponsors off balance and oblige them to join, however reluctantly, the swelling ranks of those who would like to help a poet threatening to blossom but can find no way of doing so without causing offence. Mulligan, on the other hand, is quite frank about his own more mercenary attitude: "Why don't you play them as I do?" he exhorted earlier in the day (1.506), meaning Haines and his like, and suggests the application of "the Yeats touch" - a more pragmatic although less authentic approach than Stephen's: "[Lady Gregory] gets you a job on the paper and then you go and slate her drivel

to Jaysus" (9.1159). The present chapter is not an attempt to rehabilitate Mulligan, but we must be more precise than this about our reasons for disliking him so much.

One reason, and not a very good one, is the biographical background to *Ulysses*, which prejudices most readers, who absorb the young Joyce's distrust of Gogarty, in favour of Stephen's distrust of Mulligan - and then vice versa.[16] This is unfair, as much on Mulligan as on Gogarty, and it neglects the subtle but important differences between the two, besides ignoring the fact that Mulligan is a fictional character. One example: Gogarty was three and a half years older than Joyce.[17] We are never told of the age difference, if there is any, between Mulligan and Stephen - except once perhaps by implication in `Telemachus,' when Mulligan's flush "made him seem younger" (1.200) - but by not specifying Joyce heightens the contrast between Stephen's lack of social acceptance and ease and Mulligan's brash confidence and patronisation by the Dublin literary set. Mulligan hasn't the head start on Dedalus that Gogarty had on Joyce. Furthermore, what would come naturally from an

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[16] For Joyce's observations of Gogarty, see the major entry under "*Gogarty* (Oliver Saint John)" in the Trieste Notebook, in Scholes and Kain, pp. 97-8. For his feelings toward him at the time see his published letters to Stanislaus mentioning Gogarty, e.g. *Letters* 2:96, 187. For the way Gogarty felt about Joyce at the time see Oliver St. John Gogarty, *Many Lines to Thee*, ed. James Carens (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1971), especially the letter of 27 August, 1904, p. 33. For a criticism of Ellmann's anti-Gogarty bias, see James Carens, *Surpassing Wit* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 11-18.

[17] Oliver Joseph St John Gogarty was born 17 August 1878: Ulick O'Connor, *Oliver St John Gogarty: A Poet and His Times* (1964. Rpt. London: Granada, 1981) p. 13.

older companion - "I must teach you," for instance (1.79) - sounds rather different from someone of the same age. But even those who approach the book from Yeats´ or Moore´s perspective, for example, favouring Gogarty, find that Mulligan´s frantic charm soon fades.[18] There are good reasons for this, but again he requires closer scrutiny than he usually receives if we are to discover them. Any presumption about *Ulysses* is dangerous.

Oliver Gogarty suffered a long drawn out and unjust fate as "the man who was Buck Mulligan in *Ulysses*," and he would have been fully justified in applying another victim´s irritated retort, "I am not a character in fiction. I am a living being,"[19] but in fact Joyce drew on him to create at least three figures in his fictions even before Mulligan. Two, Goggins in *Stephen Hero* and Moynihan in *Portrait*, are only very loosely based on him and are of little interest, although there are suggestions in the portrait of Moynihan of the potential of such a character.[20] The third comes from the earliest known passages associated with *Ulysses*, five

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[18] Yeats´ ed. of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, for example, rates Gogarty as "one of the great lyric poets of our age," p. xv; and George Moore was being favourable when he described Gogarty as "the arch mocker...the author of all the jokes that enable us to live in Dublin": *Salve*, ch. XI, in *Hail and Farewell: Ave, Salve, Vale* (1911), ed. Richard Cave (Gerrards Cross, Bucks: Colin Smythe, 1976), p. 354.

[19] The offended speaker is Dr. Richard Best, *JJ.*363-4.

[20] See, e.g. *P.*195-6. One critic finds antagonism towards Gogarty in the characters of Corley ("Two Gallants") and Ignatius Gallaher ("A Little Cloud"), and a residue of it in "The Dead." Rodney Wilson Owen, *James Joyce and the Beginnings of* Ulysses, Studies in Modern Literature No. 23 (Bowker, Epping: UMI Research Press [cancelled], 1983), p. 4 and note. He also says that Goggins in *Portrait* is the "stout ruddy student," Owen, pp. 48-9.

manuscript sheets later given to Harriet Weaver by Sylvia Beach. This is Doherty, a contraction in both senses of Dr Gogarty. I quote from what Scholes and Kain label "Fragment 2," which the other fragment situates as something Stephen recalls as he sits in the kitchen with his crying mother.

> Doherty´s gibes flashed to and fro through the torpor of his mind and he thought without mirth of his friend´s face, equine and pallid and of his pallid hair, grained and hued like oak. He had tried to receive coldly these memories of his friend´s boisterous humour, feeling that his coarseness of speech was not a blasphemy of the spirit but a coward´s mask, but in the end the troop of swinish images broke down his reserve and went trampling through his memory, followed by his laughter:
>
> *I´m the queerest young fellow that ever you heard.*
> *My mother´s a jew, my father´s a bird.*
> *With Joseph the joiner I cannot agree*
> *So here´s to disciples and Calvary!*
>
> *My methods are new and are causing surprise.*
> *To make the blind see I throw dust in their eyes....*
>
> But the echo of his laughter had been the remembrance of Doherty, standing on the steps of his house the night before, saying:
> -And on Sunday I consume the particle. Christine. *semel in die.* The mockery of it all! But it´s for the sake of the poor aunt. God, we must be human first. Doherty meets his afflicted aunt. I am writing a mystery-play in half an act. Scene: Heaven. Enter two bonzes from Leitrim wearing blue spectacles. From Leitrim! "What was it at all? Was it electric light or the *aurora borealis*?" "That was himself" "Glory be to God! It is the grandest thing I ever saw". I think that´s <a> lovely touch. The mockery of it! Ireland secretes priests: that´s my new phrase. I must go. A woman waits for me. God, the humanity of Whitman! I contain all. I embrace all. Farewell. Did you notice Yeats´s new touch with the hand up. It´s the Roman salute. *Salve*! Pip! pip! O, a lovely mummer!

> Dedalus, we must retire to the tower, you and I. Our lives are precious. I'll try to touch the aunt. We are the super-artists. *Dedalus and Doherty have left Ireland for the Omphalos* - [21]

This passage captures nearly all of the characteristics of Mulligan; already we have the discursive monologues, the "gibes," the "boisterous humour" and the mock play - a device kept for `Scylla and Charybdis.' Joyce needed to add little to make Mulligan, for even though Doherty is a fragment we recognise the Buck at once in him. His *lack of depth* is what defines him, his essence a lack of essence: he is larger than life, and less solid. Although Mulligan's charm is evident; although Joyce draws a superficially attractive portrait which is never directly criticised; although Stephen's resentment of him is undercut with irony sufficient to make its claim to be considered as mature judgment dubious; and although Bloom's dislike is based partly on self-interest we still share Stephen's dislike of him. Indeed, if what was argued in the previous chapter of this study holds good - that *Ulysses* does not deal in moral

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[21] Among British Museum Add. MS 49975; reprod. in *Arch* 10:1218-22, with a note by Groden (10:1217) tentatively dating them 1912-1913. The material was first published by Litz, "Early Vestiges" (see fn. 1 to this chapter). It has been reprinted, rearranged and retitled as "Fragments from a Late *Portrait* Manuscript" in *The Workshop of Daedalus*, eds. Robert Scholes and Richard M. Kain (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 106-08: only the first part of Fragment 2, pp. 107-8, concerns us. For a discussion of the passage see Hans Walter Gabler "The Seven Lost Years of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," in *Approaches to Joyce's* Portrait: *Ten Essays*, ed. Thomas Staley and Benstock (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1976), pp. 38-42.

The transcription in Scholes and Kain is rather careless, omitting "his" in the fifth line, and a space between the fourth and fifth lines of Doherty's verse; and indenting Doherty's speech and dash. I have transcribed the passage from *Archive*, using <> to indicate an inserted `a'.

certainties - then we should expect a character whom the book appears to condemn to have some powerful arguments in his favour. These we have seen: now we turn to the other side, which I have divided into sections dealing with the false and aggressive comedy in Ulysses, and Mulligan's betrayal and roleplaying.

## ii. *in risu veritas: for nothing so reveals us as our laughter*[22]

Knowing Stephen better than anyone, Mulligan is in a special position of trust. His betrayal is not that he "teases" Stephen - Mulligan's term (1.150) - but rather the way he teases. To him nothing is sacred, not even friendship. Yet his mockery of Stephen is also a fertile source of comedy. What is perhaps most revealing of all in the second passage quoted above is that Doherty's high spirits break the resistance of the narrator, who is evidently Stephen, making him laugh despite himself. So in *Ulysses* Stephen laughs (9.567) and so too Bloom, despite his mistrust of Mulligan, recalls with amusement his "scheme of colour containing the gradation of green" (17.1316). Like Bloom we too are amused, and like him we take Stephen's side against Mulligan. S. Foster Damon calls Buck Mulligan "perhaps the pleasantest character in the book," and James Carens he claims that "Buck Mulligan's witty sallies are a necessary relief from the sullennes of Stephen Dedalus..."[23] Mulligan's comic

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22 Joyce to Jolas in Givens, p. 8.

23 S. Foster Damon, "The Odyssey in Dublin," in Givens, p. 225: of *Ulysses* in general he says: "Terror, pity, and

turns in the book, however, are not merely to be dismissed, nor claimed as his redeeming feature. Even his comedy is false.

Aristotle, in a passage of *The Nicomachean Ethics* to which we shall be returning, opposes the man who laughs too much and he who laughs too little, with an ideal mean in between:

> Evidently...there is both an excess and a deficiency as compared with the mean. Those who carry humour to excess are thought to be vulgar buffoons, striving after humour at all costs, and aiming rather at raising a laugh than at saying what is becoming and at avoiding pain to the object of their fun; while those who can neither make a joke themselves nor put up with those who do are thought to be boorish and unpolished. But those who joke in a tasteful way are called ready-witted....[24]

(George Meredith was to anglicise these extremes via Rabelais as the hypergelasts and the agelasts.)[25] Evidently laughing too much is a sign of low standards, and Thomas Fuller's *Holy and Profane State* (1642) predictably warns of the dangers of the jest: "Let not thy jests," for example, "like mummy, be made of dead men's flesh."[26] An Italian astrologer, the Abbe Damascene, is alleged to have published an essay in 1662 "wherein he distinguished the different temperaments of mankind, by their different manner of

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above all, disgust, assail us on all sides. It seldom occurs to us to laugh" (p. 208); Carens, *Surpassing Wit*, p. 11. See also Darcy O'Brien, p. 79.

[24] *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. IV, ch. 8, 1128$^{a}$4-11; in *Works*, p. 1780.

[25] *Essay on Comedy*, in Sypher, p. 4.

[26] *Holy and Profane State* (1642, rpt. Cambridge: 1831), p. 153.

*laughing*...."[27] In *The Spectator* No 35 Addison distinguishes False and True Humour, which differ, he says, "as a Monkey does from a Man." He remarks that:

> For as TRUE HUMOUR generally looks serious, whilst every Body laughs about him; FALSE HUMOUR is always laughing, whilst every Body about him looks serious.

"For," Addison continues, FALSE HUMOUR, "having but small Talents...must be merry where he *can*, not where he *should*."[28] This type of distinction led to such works as George Frederick Meier's *The Merry Philosopher* (1765), which claims to offer *the Criterion for distinguishing True and Genuine Wit from that which is False and Spurious*,[29] and ultimately to William Lynch's similar recent distinction between true and false images of comedy.[30] Lynch argues that in pseudocomedy there are what he calls false forms of remembrance, which may elicit laughter but do not generate the joy, acceptance and triumphant confidence which come

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[27] See *An Essay on Laughter, wherein are displayed, its Natural and Moral Causes, with the Arts of Exciting It*, Trans. from the French by Dr. Hissernan [?] (Londonxx: 1769), p. 70. This is bound with the Bodleian Library's copy of *The Merry Philosopher* (see footnote below, p. xx).

[28] Joseph Addison, *Spectator* No. 35, Tuesday, 10 April, 1711; in *The Spectator*, 5 vols., ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I.147-48. This paper is preliminary to a series of critical essays in *The Spectator* on true and false wit: Nos. 58-63, Bond pp. 244-74.

[29] George Frederick Meier, *The Merry Philosopher; or, Thoughts on Jesting.* Subtitled, *Containing Rules by which a proper Judgment of Jests may be formed; and the Criterion for distinguishing True and Genuine Wit from that which is False and Spurious: Together with Instructions for improving the Taste of those, who have a natural Turn for Pleasantry and Good Humour* (London: 1765).

[30] *Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960).

from true comedy.[31] The four false forms of remembrance are those of the clown and the meticulous man, of disgust, and of hatred; and his examples Chaplin, Shaw, Roman laughter at deformed children, and Leverkuhn in Mann's *Dr Faustus*. Edward Galligan founds his "false comedy" on Lynch's concept of pseudocomedy, and notes that:

> False comedy tends to flatter its audience; the intellectual and psychic demands that it makes are few and unthreatening. The false comedian strikes a bargain with his audience, though either or both may not permit themselves to be aware of it. The bargain is that if you will let me mock you a little and if you will admire my cleverness in mocking, I will let you admire your own cleverness in responding to the mocking and send you forth with a reinforced conviction of your own superiority to those things and those persons you wish to feel superior to.[32]

Now we may find fault with Lynch's catalogue of false forms, of which only the briefest summary is given here: it divides malice, for example, between disgust and hatred in a rather artificial way. A more serious difficulty with both Lynch's "pseudocomedy" and Galligan's "false comedy," of course, is that they turn a descriptive into an evaluative term. A bad joke is not a "pseudojoke" and bad art is still art: calling those forms of comedy that do not accord with one's theory of what comedy should be "false-" or "pseudo-comedy" is a worthless rhetorical gesture.[33] Even so it makes sense to recognise that comedy in itself is neutral and can be used

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[31] Lynch, pp. 38-44.

[32] *The Comic Vision in Literature* (Atlanta, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1984), p. 40.

[33] This objection appears to have occurred to Galligan, although too late. Towards the end of his book he confesses that "the odor of smugness about the terms *true* and *false* [comedy] disturbs me," p. 185.

for malicious or benificent purposes depending on who is directing the laughter. As Hogarth's "The Laughing Audience" (1733) shows, Samuel Johnson was well wide of the mark when he said that though men have been wise in very different modes, they have always laughed the same way.[34] There is some suggestion that Joyce was aware of this, and was interested in the effects it could produce. Simon Dedalus' laughter in *Portrait* (*P.*74), for example, several times repeated in this passage, serves as ironic counterpoint to Stephen's bravery in complaining to the rector. Furthermore, it appears that while writing *Ulysses* Joyce considered laughter as an expression of the values of the person laughing, for among the British Museum notesheets may be found the following, all apparently attempts to find an equivalent for the Greek "Moly" which we know caused Joyce problems:

Moly - indifference
Moly - beauty
Moly - laughter
Moly - satire
Moly - pessimism.[35]

Another interesting cluster:

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[34] William Hogarth, "The Laughing Audience" (December 1733), subscription ticket for *Southwark Fair* and *A Rake's Progress*, reprod. in *William Hogarth: His Original Engravings and Etchings* (London: Heinemann, 1913), Plate XVII. I take it the one who isn't laughing is a critic. Johnson, "Life of Cowley," in his *Lives of the English Poets*, ed. George Birkbeck-Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), vol. I, p. 40.

[35] *Archive*, 12:57; see *Joyce's* Ulysses *Notesheets in the British Museum*, ed. Phillip F. Herring (Charlottesville, Virginia: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1972), "`Circe' 10," lines 26-30, p. 321. All struck through in blue. See also "`Circe' 12," lines 32, 36, Herring p. 329 (*Archive* 12:55), where "Moly = escape from prison," and "Moly = conscience"; and see letter to Budgen, September 1920, *Letters* I:144, where `moly' can be "laughter, the enchantment killer."

Laughter A (frank) E (? enclose) I (weak)
O (bold) U (misanthrop.)

her risibles, giggle, chuckling, chortled
Loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind.
odd laughs infectious, laundered, bedraggled[36]

There is a world of difference between what makes Bloom laugh - insofar as it is possible, he laughs "innocefree" (*FW* 204.19) - and what makes Mulligan laugh; as there is too between, on the one hand, the jokes Mulligan makes and the humiliations Bloom suffers, and, on the other, the zestful linguistic dalliance in which the book as it were indulges itself. Galligan in passing suggests that Joyce in *Ulysses* "deals pungently" with the distinction between true and false comedy, "most notably in his portrait of Buck Mulligan."[37] Unfortunately he does not develop this suggestive remark. But laughter, as Cantleman and Watt know, is a significant gesture, and Mulligan's more than most.[38]

*Ulysses* begins with a series of illustrations of false laughter, the "loud laugh that bespeaks the vacant mind" (15.3826), and all day there are intermittent examples of it. It is typically male - though not exclusively so (see

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[36] *Archive*, 12:47; see Herring, *Notesheets*, "`Circe' 5," lines 86-9, p. 294. My transcription follows Joyce's layout more accurately than Herring does.

[37] Galligan, p. 47.

[38] Wyndham Lewis, "Cantleman's Spring-Mate," *Little Review* IV.6 (October 1917), pp. 8-14, rpt. in his *Blasting and Bombardiering* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), pp. 304-11; Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (1953. Rpt. A Jupiter Book, London: Calder & Boyars, 1963), pp. 46-7.

13.358) - and usually associated with a group response dependent upon the exclusion of one. Perhaps the best observation and analysis of it comes at the beginning of `Nestor´:

> All laughed. Mirthless high malicious laughter. Armstrong looked round at his classmates, silly glee in profile. In a moment they will laugh more loudly, aware of my lack of rule and of the fees their papas pay. (2.27)[39]

This laughter - "mirthless but with meaning" (2.34) - links the boys´ financial advantages backwards to "Young shouts of *moneyed* voices" and laughter attendant on the ragging of Clive Kempthorpe (1.165, emphasis mine), and forwards, via the name Armstrong, to the strongarm tactics of that truculent troglodyte the citizen and the mirthless malicious laughter that echoes round Barney Kiernan´s.[40] Indeed in the `Cyclops´ episode it is endemic, from its first appearance in the snarling nameless narrator´s "Jesus, I had to laugh at the little jewy getting his shirt out" (12.30), right down through the "monster audience" which "simply rocked with delight" at the execution scene (12.650), to "all the populace shouting and laughing" at Bloom´s expulsion (12.1856). This is a million miles away from Howth Head: "Screened under ferns she laughed warmfolded" (8.912). Bloom, probably because he has often been the victim of such Hobbesean laughter, sees the "Cruelty of it all" and sums it up in a phrase: "Break your neck and we´ll break our sides"

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[39] The phrase "mirthless laughter" occurs in *Portrait* (*P.*77).

[40] "And Ned and J.J. paralysed with the laughing" (12.1848). "Paralysed," from the author of *Dubliners*, is not a casual image

(4.349-350).[41] It is thus suggestive that Mulligan should generate that first example of the genre, the image of the ragging of Kempthorpe. Furthermore, Deasy, who laughs with "*rich* delight" (2.261, emphasis mine), shares with Mulligan the superiority of the haves over the have nots (in this case, Stephen). The two are connected: Deasy, teacher quintessential, is linked to Mulligan's patronising of Stephen: "I must teach you" (1.79) comes from Mulligan, and "You were not born to be a teacher" (2.402) from Deasy. It is therefore a further indication of Mulligan's nature that Deasy's laughter, provoked by his own anti-semitic joke (laughing at one's own jokes is not a good idea), should be another example of the laugh of superiority, and that Mulligan, in parallel, should also be flippantly anti-Jewish for a cheap - indeed, worthless - laugh:[42]

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[41] This is no exaggeration:

> Mr Dedalus looked after the stumping figure and said mildly:
> --The devil break the hasp of your back!
> Mr Power, collapsing in laughter... (6.255)

Collapse: close to paralysis. A moment later Power's laugh is "choked" (6.291). This all on the way to a funeral. As Bloom puts it, Mrs Dignam "Has the laugh at him now" (6.543). The high spirits in the funeral carriage are not despite, but *because of*, where they are going and why.

[42] Haines too blames the Jews (1.666-8). Deasy's joke may owe something to *Notes and Queries*, 11 May 1867, 3rd. ser., xi. p. 377:

> It is said that in Ireland the Jew never was persecuted! Was it from a more exalted view of civil and religious liberty, or because the Jew was an absentee from that country? I am inclined to think that the Jew was a non-resident in Ireland until late years.

See Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland: From Earliest Times to the Year 1910* (Shannon: Irish Univ. Press, 1972), p. 184 and n. 154, p. 336.

--The sheeny! Buck Mulligan cried.
He jumped up and snatched the card.
--What´s his name? Ikey Moses? Bloom. (9.605)

The remark, however, rebounds, for the comic strip tag ironically invests Bloom with a hint of biblical resonance, granted here in `Scylla and Charybdis´ only a Pisgah sight of the intellectual promised land.[43]

It will not do to apply "dagger definitions" to all the instances of laughter in *Ulysses*, for many of them probably reveal little about their authors. (Stephen´s laughter, however, is a cause for concern. On the rare occasions it appears it is a burst of nervous release: in `Nestor´ he stands up and gives a "shout of nervous laughter," 2.116, and in `Scylla and Charybdis´ he laughs "to free his mind from his mind´s bondage," 9.1016.) Nonetheless there is a strain running through *Ulysses* of superior laughter: the rich over the poor, the sexually knowing over the innocent, the strong over the weak, the able over the disabled, the many over the one, even the living over the dead. Mulligan´s laughter is qualitatively different from Bloom´s, and his "mockery" different from Molly´s:

--O, rocks! she said. Tell us in plain words.
He smiled, glancing askance at her mock-ing eyes. (4.343-4)

(Martin Grotjahn remarks that wit is related to aggression, hostility, and sadism, while "humor is related to depress-ion, narcissism, and masochism. Wit finds its psychomotor expression in laughter; humor, in the smile."[44] This

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[43] Shari and Bernard Benstock, *Who´s He When He´s at Home?* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p. 20.

[44] *Beyond Laughter* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. 33.

distinction could apply to Mulligan´s strident wit and laughter versus Bloom´s quiet humour and smile.) But what is the difference, exactly? Haines´ response to the "ballad of Joking Jesus" - in which, incidentally, we may notice his own "guarded laughter" - points a few clues:

> Haines, who had been laughing guardedly, walked on beside Stephen and said:
> --We oughtn´t to laugh, I suppose. He´s rather blasphemous. I´m not a believer myself, that is to say. *Still his gaiety takes the harm out of it somehow, doesn´t it?* What did he call it? Joseph the Joiner? (1.603, emphasis mine)

Haines sees that comedy enables us to treat subjects otherwise too sensitive, and that something that is made the object of laughter loses for that moment its power over us. What neither he nor Mulligan recognise, as Stephen does, is that Mulligan´s clowning cannot break the spell of religion, for his coarseness, as Joyce´s narrator of the early vestiges of *Ulysses* had observed, "was not a blasphemy of the spirit but a coward´s mask." He is in Aristotle´s sense a buffoon and a boor:

> The buffoon...is the slave of his sense of humour, and spares neither himself nor others if he can raise a laugh....The boor, again, is useless for such social intercourse; for he contributes nothing and finds fault with everything.[45]

Theories and discussion of comedy rarely take account of who is speaking. In Mulligan´s mouth, such a superficially blasphemous skit on the incarnation of Christ does not challenge it. In Stephen´s, the ballad of Joking Jesus would be unthinkable, for while he refuses to bow to Christ, he

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[45] *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. IV, ch. 8, $1128^{a}35$-$1128^{b}3$; in *Works*, p. 1780.

still acknowledges the emotional hold the Church has on him: as Cranly had told him near the end of *Portrait*, "you are not free enough yet to commit a sacrilege." It would be impossible for Stephen because of his fear of what he had rejected: "I imagine," he had said, "that there is a malevolent reality behind those things I fear" (*P.*250,247). Nor could he allow himself the role of licensed fool that Mulligan has so happily assumed. Comedy that has the power to free our thought and emotions can be all too easily absorbed by the status quo and then be neutralised by it, finally becoming a means of preserving it. The mockers of everything, as G. K. Chesterton observed, are really mockers of nothing: "For in a world where everything is ridiculous, nothing can be ridiculed. You cannot unmask a mask; when it is admittedly as hollow as a mask."[46] Mulligan's blasphemy is shielded by its joking envelope, and what Freud, to whom we shall shortly be turning, says of "smut" can equally be applied to other offensive jests:

> Only when we rise to a society of a more refined education do the formal conditions for jokes play a part. The smut becomes a joke and *is only tolerated when it has the character of a joke.* (Italics added.)[47]

Mikhail Bakhtin distinguishes the medieval carnival from the officially sanctioned and controlled feasts, and we might associate Mulligan with the latter - and perhaps the book's farcical comedy with the former (see this study's last

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[46] "On the Comic Spirit," in his *Generally Speaking* (London: Methuen, 1928); rpt. in *Eight Great Comedies*, eds. Sylvan Barnet *et al*, A Mentor Book (New York: New American Library, 1958), p. 452.

[47] Freud, *Wit*, p. 144.

chapter).[48] His apparent attacks on the status quo while seeking refuge behind the shield of humour are in fact false and cowardly.

Stephen knows the danger of abandoning oneself to such a role, that of licensed buffoon, and sees a connection with the historical relationship between England and Ireland:

> For Haines´s chapbook. No-one here to hear. Tonight deftly amid wild drink and talk, to pierce the polished mail of his mind. What then? A jester at the court of his master, indulged and disesteemed, winning a clement master´s praise. Why had they chosen all that part? Not wholly for the smooth caress. For them too history was a tale like any other too often heard, their land a pawnshop. (2.42)

His refusal to perform in this way for Haines, and his blatant insistence on the solely financial nature of their relationship - "Would I make money by it?" (1.490)[49] - show that he is resisting the lure. He feels too that he is being appointed Mulligan´s apprentice - and hence, partly, his awkwardness about accepting the Buck´s castoffs.[50] The chief court jester, however, is clearly Mulligan - at least in Stephen´s estimation, which in turn often influences narrative descriptions of him. Thus his rather garish

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[48] Bakhtin, pp. 9-10.

[49] Echoed in `Scylla and Charybdis,´ where Stephen is "the only contributor to *Dana* who asks for pieces of silver," 9.1081. Here the gesture is Stephen´s attempt to be recognised as an artist, deserving of pay.

[50] The fourteenth-century novels of Sacchetti concern Ribi, a satellite of the Lombard nobility, who "gave words and received coats and garments." Welsford, p. 9.

costume ("God, we´ll simply have to dress the character. I want puce gloves and green boots." 1.515) suggests to Stephen the court jester, most insistently in `Scylla and Charybdis´:

> Stephen, greeting, then all amort, followed a lubber jester, a *wellkempt* head, newbarbered [...] (9.1110, emphasis mine)
>
> Jest on. Know thyself. (9.1153)
>
> He turned a happy patch´s smirk [...](9.1177)

"Wellkempt," in this Shakespearean context, may suggest Will Kempe (as perhaps did the ragged Clive *Kemp*thorpe? 1.165); while "patch" refers not only to the particoloured clown´s uniform but possibly also to Patch, a fool presented to Henry VIII by Cardinal Wolsey in 1529: thus in Mulligan is united servitude both to Church and England.[51] He is also, of course, associated with mockery (1.34,116,210,657; 15.4178). The importance of this role is clear, for in `Circe,´ when he is reduced to his essence, it predominates:

> *From the top of a tower Buck Mulligan, in particoloured jester´s dress of puce and yellow and clown´s cap with curling bell, stands gaping at her* [... He] *shakes his curling capbell* [...] (15.4166-4178)[52]

There is in the buffoon an essential ambiguity well captured in Viola´s oxymoron:

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51 Welsford, pp. 158-9. In this context it is perhaps worth remarking that Stanislaus records in his diary that, "Gogarty´s hooked nose and pointed chin and rotund form remind me of Punch. He wears a Punch-built waistcoat." *Complete Dublin Diary*, p. 36.

52 David Hayman, *The Mechanics of Meaning* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), has a passage on Mulligan and his clowning ancestry: pp. 60-61.

> This fellow's wise enough to play the fool
> And to do that well craves a kind of wit.[53]

He is, as Welsford puts it, a slippery customer. Appearing half-witted, the buffoons nonetheless "treated the world as their theatre, plotted their dramas in real life, exploited their own and other people's failings, and were artists who were at once their own creators and their own creations...."[54] Paradox: the buffoon, wise half-wit, earns his master's affection and protection by insulting and humiliating him. But no matter how clever, the buffoon by his nature is a parasite who depends for his living - and often his life - on knowing just what he can get away with, and by pleasing those in authority: the rich and powerful, the noble and the cleric. It is for this reason, rather than because Mulligan is stealing his limelight, that Stephen resents Mulligan and his appointment of Stephen as Second Jester at the Court of King Haines. For one unguarded moment Stephen comes near to an explicit statement of this:

> --I am a servant of two masters, Stephen said, an English and an Italian.
> --Italian? Haines said [...] What do you mean?
> --The imperial British state, Stephen answered, his colour rising, and the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church. (1.638)

Stephen's apparently personal animosity towards Mulligan, then, is in fact bound up with his own vow of *non serviam.*

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53 *Twelfth Night,* III.i.67-8 (and see down to line 73).

54 Welsford, p. 14.

As the second line of Whitman's "Song of Myself," from which Mulligan quotes, has it, "And what I assume you shall assume...."[55] It is not buffoonery to which Stephen objects, but the uses to which it is put.[56]

### iii. Freud, and Mulligan's Aggressive Comedy

An illustration of the malice of Mulligan's laughter comes in `Scylla and Charybdis,' when in a nicely ambiguous phrase Mulligan reveals more than he knows:

> Buck Mulligan gleefully bent back, laughing to the dark eavesdropping ceiling.
> --Murder you! he laughed. (9.573)

`Murder you!' he laughed: Bloom later in the afternoon will think: "I'll murder you. Is it only half fun?" (13.1192). "Murder" is "a true word spoken in jest."[57] Another, subtler instance suggests itself in `Telemachus,' as Stephen, Mulligan and Haines leave the tower:

> He walked on. Behind him he heard Buck Mulligan club with his heavy bathtowel the leader shoots of ferns or grasses.
> --Down, sir! How dare you, sir! (1.534)[58]

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[55] "Song of Myself" (1855, 1881), in *Leaves of Grass*, Comprehensive Reader's Edition, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), p. 28.

[56] In my last chapter I discuss Bloom as a farcical figure. He is never bounden to anyone as buffoon, and so is not subject to the book's indirect hostility as Mulligan is.

[57] This important phrase recurs three times in Ulysses: once, by Thersites, questioning Bloom's masculinity (12.1658); once by Bloom, against himself (15.207), and once by Molly, in an unwitting prophecy of her marriage to Bloom (18.775).

[58] See the entry for "*Gogarty* (Oliver Saint John)" in "The Trieste Notebook" (1907-1909), in Scholes and Kain, p. 78: "He addresses lifeless objects and hits them smartly

This reminds one of the story, which Vico here repeats, of Tarquinius Superbus:

> witness the mute heroic answer which Tarquinius Superbus sends to his son in Gabii, when in the presence of the messenger he cuts off the heads of the poppies with the stick he has in his hands.[59]

Evidence that this is the story probably alluded to in Mulligan's apparently innocent clowning is to be found in `Circe,' when Bloom Messiah does the same:

> *Bloom with his sceptre strikes down poppies. The instantaneous deaths of many powerful enemies, graziers, members of parliament, members of standing committees, are reported.* (15.1564)

Besides contributing the false "humorous element," then, Mulligan provides a challenge to Stephen's values and person.[60] Darcy O'Brien makes the right observations but, surely, draws the wrong conclusion:

> Mulligan's humor does place the reader at a certain distance from Stephen...for while one sympathizes with Stephen's predicament, Mulligan's lightheartedness makes this would-be artist seem somewhat self-indulgent. Stephen lacks Mulligan's sense of humor, while Mulligan lacks Stephen's conscience.[61]

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with his cane: the naturalism of the Celtic mind."

[59] *The New Science*, Book Two, Chapter IV, 3rd ed. (1744), trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1948), p. 128. The story is borrowed from Thrasybulus' reply to Periander, Herodotus iii.54, v.92. Mulligan's heavy bathtowel is related to the Wakean "deathbone" (*FW*.193.29), and the wooden sword of *Portrait* (*P*.xx), for the significance of which see Morris Beja, "The Wooden Sword: Threatener and Threatened in the Fiction of James Joyce," *JJQ* 2 (1964), 33-41.

[60] Polhemus, pp. 297-98, has a valuable if brief section on how in Joyce's major work "beauty and goodness can emerge in people only when their lives have been subjected to mockery" (p. 297). As Clive Hart, "James Joyce's Sentimentality," shows very well, Joyce's sentimentality is subjected to a barrage of parody.

[61] O'Brien, p. 79.

The accusation against Stephen is shrewd, for while a lack of conscience is regrettable, no-one would admit to or could forgive a lack of humour. (One study has found only 6%, and another as low as 1·4%, of college students prepared to admit to a lower than average sense of humour.)[62] O´Brien neglects however to notice how Mulligan´s frantic charm wears out during the day. His wit must be acknowledged, but we eventually come to despise Mulligan for the reasons Stephen despises him, for his hidden shallows. Yet it is because of his presence we give Stephen our qualified approval. Mulligan knows Stephen´s weaknesses as well as his strengths: if Stephen can pass this test, he has truly achieved something. To expose the extent of Mulligan´s malice towards Stephen, however, disguised as it is beneath a veneer of *bonhomie* and "boisterous humour," we need an account of such aggressive joking.

Freud´s *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) serves that purpose.[63] We know from external evidence that Joyce was aware of Freud´s book, for "Wit. read Freud:

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[62] Cited in *Humour and Laughter*, eds. Anthony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (London: John Wiley, 1976), p. 1.

[63] Freud, *Jokes*: subsequent references in parenthesis. The book differs from the bulk of his work, being concerned with the workings of the normal rather than the pathological mind. Thus, although his terminology suggests otherwise, it does not depend on specifically Freudian classifications of mental activity. Neither does my use of Freud imply acceptance of his theory of the comic: with Paul Kline, I consider it "not as a unified theory but as a collection of hypotheses." "The Psychoanalytic Theory of Humour and Laughter," in *It´s a Funny Thing, Humour*, eds. Chapman and Foot, p. 11. As Eric Bentley puts it, "This is a Freudian formula, but not surely one that only Freudians can accept." "Introduction," *Let´s Get A Divorce*, ed. Bentley, A Mermaid Dramabook (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), p. x.

(are you shitting, honey?)" appears on a notesheet for *Ulysses*.[64] We do not know that he read it, of course, but the note is proof Joyce was aware that Freud had something to say on the subject, and that it might be worth seeing. More importantly, while the present study is not concerned with the extent or nature of Joyce's reading in comic theory, this note, combined with his own early working out of an esthetic which embraces comedy, demonstrates an interest in comic theory which, I would suggest, is reflected in the care with which his characters' jokes are chosen and their laughter depicted.

Herbert Spencer had theorised that comedy consisted of the abrupt slip from the noble to the humble, laughter being the release of the consequent fund of unexpended energy: this was the explanation accepted also by Darwin.[65] Freud adapts this concept and proposes that the humour derives

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[64] *Archive* 12:7; see Phillip Herring, *Notesheets* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1972), "Cyclops 5," line 48, p. 101. The scatalogical joke appears neither in *Ulysses* nor in Freud. For Joyce's knowledge and use of Freud's work see Frederick J. Hoffman, "Infroyce," rpt. in his *Freudianism and the Literary Mind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1945), pp. 114-48; Chester Anderson, "Leopold Bloom as Dr. Sigmund Freud," *Mosaic* 6:1 (1972), pp. 23-43, which argues that in `Lestrygonians' Joyce "intentionally refers, frequently and comprehensively, to Sigmund Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*" (p. 24); Sheldon Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung*, National Univ. Publications, Literary Criticism Series (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1980), pp. 9-10; and, for a catalogue of Joyce's Trieste library, which included works by Freud and Ernest Jones, see Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), Appendix, "Joyce's Library in 1920." For an extended bibliography of Wit, Humour and Jokes considered in Psychological terms, see *Pyschoanalysis, Psychology, and Literature: A Bibliography*, ed. Norman Kiel, 2nd ed. (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1982), pp. 899-922.

[65] Spencer; and Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: 1872); see Freud, *Jokes*, p. 198n.

from the "psychic economy" with which the repressed emotion is released (e.g. p. 79). The element of aggression in jokes is socially acceptable and useful as a means of expressing one member's hostility for another.[66] In particular, he argues that we must presume in people who make jokes special inherited dispositions or psychical determinants that permit or favour the joke-work (p. 191). If this is true, we should be able to find out why Mulligan makes the jokes he does.

Distinguishing between "innocent" and "tendentious" jokes (pp. 132-3; 161), Freud proposes that a tendentious joke serves one of two purposes:[67]

> It is either a *hostile* joke (serving the purpose of aggressiveness, satire, or defence) or an *obscene* joke (serving the purpose of exposure). (p. 140)[68]

In either case, such jokes

> make possible the satisfaction of an instinct (whether lustful or hostile) in the face of an obstacle that stands in its way. They circumvent this obstacle and in that way draw pleasure from a source which the obstacle had made inaccessible. (p. 144)

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[66] Freud's emphasis on Jewish jokes, a subject which seems too intimately linked to his own sense of identity to be of much use to us here, may be an influence on Bloom's identity as a jew. Prof. Sander Gilman has spoken on the connection between Freud's identity as a Jew and the book, but I do not know if this lecture has been published: "Freud and the Jewish Joke Book," Oxford Psycho-Analytical Forum, Corpus Christi, Oxford, 25 January 1985.

[67] Translator's footnote: "The German substantive "*Tendenz*" is throughout this book translated "purpose" (cf. `a play with a purpose'). The German adjective derived from it, however, (*tendenzios*) has become a naturalized English word and is accordingly translated here `tendentious'" (p. 132).

[68] In fact he adds a subset to the hostile joke, comprised of the cynical and the blasphemous, pp. 153-56.

Discussing the obscene joke, Freud points to the element of sexual encounter, and theorises that when the response of the female is one of rejection, or when a third person, an onlooker, prevents immediate capitulation, libidinal aggressiveness becomes hostile and cruel aggression, summoning to its aid the sadistic components of the sexual instinct.[69] In certain forms of society, however, such open sexual expression is discouraged, so that gradually,

> in place of the woman, the onlooker, now the listener, becomes the person to whom the smut is addressed, and owing to this transformation it is already near to assuming the character of a joke. (p. 143)

Smut directed at women is now out of bounds; but refined obscene jokes can serve the same purpose.

The second category of tendentious jokes, the hostile, works in the same way: what would formerly be settled with knives is now settled with sharp tongues. Prevented by civilization and higher education - represented by the

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[69] For our purposes it is unfortunate, though understandable, that Freud, preoccupied with the difficulties of getting his ideas on sexuality generally accepted, should have concentrated upon jokes with sexual connotations rather more than on those expressing aggression. In the sexually reserved society of nineteenth century Vienna, Freud had little time to spare for the study of aggression. Indeed he was later to admit candidly his own resistance to the subject:

> I can remember my own defensive attitude when the idea of an instinct of destruction first made its appearance in psychoanalytical literature, and how long it took before I became accessible to it.

Qtd. in *Sigmund Freud*, Ernest Jones (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), vol. 3. p. 296.

Later, of course, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud was to develop a fullscale theory of aggression, but as an essentially self-directed force.

presence of the listener - from taking his satisfaction violently, the aggressor frames his aggression as a joke, which "will evade restrictions and open sources of pleasure that have become inaccessible" (p. 147). It will, further,

> bribe the hearer with its yield of pleasure into taking sides with us without any very close investigation.... (p. 147)[70]

In *Ulysses*, the hostile aggressor is Buck Mulligan; Stephen is the object of that aggression; and the listener, bribed with a yield of pleasure into taking sides without any very close investigation, is variously Haines (`Telemachus´) and the medics in `Oxen of the Sun.´ (To a lesser extent the men in the library in `Scylla and Charybdis´ serve the same purpose.) "Generally speaking," Freud remarks,

> a tendentious joke calls for three people: in addition to the one who makes the joke, there must be a second who is taken as the object of the hostile or sexual aggressiveness, and a third in whom the joke´s aim of producing pleasure is fulfilled. (p. 143)

Let us put this theory to work on `Oxen of the Sun.´

Mulligan´s absence from the party at the National Maternity Hospital in Holles street is noted as the fusion of Stephen and Bloom is beginning to be emphasised (14.195-99), and they are united and isolated together in failing to see the humour in "young Malachi´s" reported "praise of that beast the unicorn" (14.237). When "Mal. Mulligan," a

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[70] His examples of jokes are the tail wagging the dog and often concern a person under authority getting his own back without stepping out of bounds. Example: the servant, asked by the king because of his own resemblance to him if his mother was ever a servant in the palace, replies, "No, your Highness, but my father was" (p. 107). This is reminiscent of Bloom, in particular his observation about a bite from a sheep (16.1638).

"gentleman's gentleman," does arrive, fresh from Moore's (14.495) - another implied snub to Stephen - he has a bawdy proposal to establish a one-man stud farm, "*Omphalos*," which serves a dual purpose in the narrative (14.685).[71] Primarily, of course, like everything he does it is a performance, a brutal jest to pass the time and amuse and titillate his drinking companions. Behind that, however, lurks what dictates the form the scheme takes. The image of Mulligan Le Fecondateur (14.778) underlines his association with Blazes Boylan, Bloom's usurper as Mulligan is Stephen's.[72] Thus the subject matter and the title of the plan indicate that the amusement masks Mulligan's "honeying malice" (9.1087), directed specifically, spitefully and solely at Stephen. What Mulligan had taken seriously enough, insofar as he is capable, in the morning -

> God, Kinch, if you and I could only work together we might do something for the island. Hellenise it. [...]
> To ourselves .... new paganism .... omphalos. (1.157-8,176)

- has become the subject of the night's mockery. He does so among his - and Stephen's - peers, for as Freud tells us an aggressive joke turns the hearer, indifferent to begin with, "into a co-hater or co-despiser, and creates for the enemy a host of opponents where at first there was only one" (p. 183). In `Scylla and Charybdis' he interrupted and frust-

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71 Clive Hart and Knuth, p. 36, deduce that Mulligan has his card printed at George Quinnell's, probably ordering them at about 4.30 p.m. the same day.

72 Another instance: in `Scylla and Charybdis' Mulligan demands of Stephen, "Whom do you suspect?" (9.656). This connects Mulligan as Stephen's persecutor with the citizen as Bloom's, of whom the same question is asked: 12.1657.

rated Stephen's performance before their elders: now, among their contemporaries, he holds him up to ridicule. The saying quoted by Freud neatly sums up Mulligan's intentions: "*die Lacher auf seine Seite ziehen*," to bring the laughers over to our side (p. 147). Here, as so often, "a jest betrays something serious" (p. 152).[73] The moment, easily overlooked, rewards close attention. "Let us assume that there is an urge to insult a certain person," Freud hypothesises:

> but this is so strongly opposed by feelings of propriety or of aesthetic culture that the insult cannot take place. (p. 186)

This is the situation in *Ulysses*, with Mulligan despising Stephen and relishing the opportunity to reveal his true feelings. He does not do so openly, and Stephen is quite sure why: "He fears the lancet of my art as I fear that of his" (1.152).[74] "Let us now suppose, however," Freud continues,

> that the possibility is presented of deriving a good joke from the material of the words and thoughts used for the insult - the possibility, that is, of releasing pleasure from other sources which are not obstructed by the same suppression....Experience with tendentious jokes shows that in such circumstances the suppressed purpose can, with the

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[73] Compare *Ulysses*: "many a true word spoken in jest" (and variants: 12.1658, 15.207, 18.775).

[74] A similar state of affairs existed between young Joyce and Gogarty (the biographical leap is permissible in this direction, I feel). Stanislaus wrote at the time [14 September 1904]:

> Gogarty wants to put Jim out [of the tower], but he is afraid that if Jim made a name someday, it would be remembered against him (Gogarty) that though he pretended to be a Bohemian friend of Jim's he put him out.

*Complete Dublin Diary*, pp. 85-6.

> assistance of the pleasure of the joke, gain sufficient strength to overcome the inhibition, which would otherwise be stronger than it. (p. 187)

Such an opportunity has come the Buck's way, whether he realises it or not - and Freud remarks that "it is most doubtful whether a person who gives free play to a joke must necessarily know its precise intention" (p. 148). He can now relieve his pent-up antagonism for Stephen in the context of a joke. And, because he is the Buck, and tends to the obscene, lewdly to lewd men speaking, his joke takes the form of an obscene skit on the morning's discussion:

> [I]ndividual components of a person's sexual constitution, in particular, can appear as motives for the construction of a joke. A whole class of obscene jokes allows one to infer the presence of a concealed inclination to exhibitionism in their inventors; aggressive tendentious jokes succeed best in people in whose sexuality a powerful sadistic component is demonstrable, which is more or less inhibited in real life. (p. 194)[75]

"The insult takes place," Freud argues, "because the joke is thus made possible. But," he goes on,

> the enjoyment obtained is not only that produced by the joke: it is incomparably greater. It is so much greater than the pleasure from the joke that we must suppose that the hitherto suppressed purpose has succeeded in making its way through, perhaps without any dimunition whatever. It is in such circumstances that the tendentious joke is received with the heartiest laughter. (p. 187)

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[75] A good example of how one may be "bribed" into overrating a joke's form by the suitability of its content to one's psyche occurs in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. J. Strachey (London: Ernest Benn, 1966), p. 249.

Thus Mulligan derives a threefold pleasure: of a joke, an attack on Stephen, and the exhibition of sexual desire. Mulligan, without knowing it, has used the opportunity to make the joke to relieve himself at the same time of the urge to insult Stephen. No wonder that, as he himself puts it, he is "all of a wibbly wobbly" (14.815).

In the confusion that prevails at the drunken gloomy end of the episode, Mulligan makes the mocking threat that "Aunty mine´s writing Pa Kinch. Baddybad Stephen lead astray goodygood Malachi" (14.1487). If this threat is carried out there is the remote possibility that it will cross with Simon Dedalus´, for he too intends to make it his business to "write a letter one of those days to his mother or his aunt or whatever she is that will open her eye as wide as a gate" (6.66). Their relationship, then, is under attack, and perhaps this parental opposition has played a part in keeping it alive. `Scylla and Charybdis´ demonstrates what killed it.

### iv. The "gay betrayer" (1.405)

*Was Du verlachst wirst Du noch dienen* (9.491)[76]

> My brother was always of opinion that a dramatist could understand only one or two of life's tragedies, and that he always presented different aspects of the few he understood. One of the tragedies that obsessed my brother's imagination, beginning from the time he first understood the Mass as drama, was the tragedy of dedication and betrayal.[77]

As with his villanelle in *Portrait,* Stephen's slightly unsteady performance in the National library after three whiskies (9.533) divides critics. Harry Levin speaks of Stephen's "obsession" and shares Haines' bemusement at what may be an *idee fixe.* David Hayman presents a Stephen "beyond hope," and to him `Scylla and Charybdis' suggests that "each of his acts is an act of desperation designed to convince him of his own failure and leading towards the violence or suicide hinted at in Proteus and Wandering Rocks."[78] William Schutte's study of Joyce and Shakespeare untangles Stephen's manipulation of his materials and argues that the scene illustrates the hopelessness of the situation into which Stephen has got himself. Robert Martin Adams, on the other hand, emphasises the brilliance of Stephen's mind, shining by contrast with the fuzzy, irrelevant or trite contributions made by the others present: "[T]he use of the

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[76] I have not discovered a source for this phrase: Weldon Thornton, *Allusions* in Ulysses (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1968), ignores it, while Don Gifford and Seidman (195: 11-12), say only that it is a "German proverb."

[77] Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper*, ed. Richard Ellmann (1958, rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 173.

[78] Levin, pp. 105, 103; Hayman, *Mechanics of Meaning*, p. 24.

scholarly materials in this section," he proposes, "is made to serve the general end of marshaling the reader's unqualified support for Stephen."[79] Marilyn French has also declared herself for Stephen.[80] I shall concentrate, however, not on Stephen but on Mulligan's intrusion, which is in part a Charybdis of materialism against the Scylla of AE's spiritualism, but more importantly a parody, based on privileged information, of Stephen's theory-parable. It anticipates the scene we have just examined in the `Oxen' episode in which there is another comic parody and burlesque, a cruel betrayal of Stephen's enthusiasms. Mulligan's performance in the library is indeed materialistic and brutal, appearing in stark contrast against AE's platonism: but his argument is with Stephen, not Russell. While the Buck is not present during Stephen's exposition, it is clear from the substance of Mulligan's performance itself that Stephen is the butt - witness, for example, his ambivalent aside, "The disguise, I fear, is thin" (9.1178). This conclusion is substantiated by "a retrospective arrangement" (6.150 *et al*) in `Tele-machus' where there are indications that Mulligan has heard it all before:

> --No, no, Buck Mulligan shouted in pain. I'm not equal to Thomas Aquinas and the fiftyfive reasons he has made to prop it up. (1.546)

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[79] Schutte, "The Ordeal of Stephen Dedalus," in *Joyce and Shakespeare*; Robert Martin Adams, *Surface and Symbol* (New York: Galaxy, 1967), pp. 126-30.

[80] French, *The Book as World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976), p. 112.

- Not that he allows Stephen's familiarity with his own piece, the "ballad of joking Jesus" (he's heard it all before, "Three times a day, after meals," 1.610), to stand in the way of an encore. His parody of the "theory" reveals that he has grasped its essentials firmly enough to mock it:

> It's quite simple. He proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father. (1.555)

The contrast between Mulligan's successful and well received comic performance and Stephen's less flamboyant but more deeply rooted "*Hamlet* theory" encapsulates all that dooms their relationship. Further, Mulligan betrays his hatred of Stephen.

We are meant to smell betrayal early on, for Stephen has on his mind from almost the beginning of the episode the telegraph he had sent to Mulligan -

> Mulligan has my telegram.
> Folly. Persist. (9.41)[81]

- associating him with another erstwhile companion of his "soul's youth," Cranly (9.978). Then, preceded by references to him in the conversation and in Stephen's thoughts, Mulligan's entry and his "Amen!" coincide with a highpoint in Stephen's exposition, a climactic phrase pregnant with Stephen's preoccupations: "him who is the substance of his shadow, the son consubstantial with the father" (9.480). This compacts Stephen's concerns with Catholicism, with heredity, with the problem of personal identity and the possibility of altering it, his biographical Shakespearean parable of artistic creativity and its allegory of sex, and

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[81] See Gabler's textual note (394.15-17) on 9.41-2.

the notion of ghosts as a mental shorthand for his guilt at his mother's death and his own behaviour. Mulligan's protean Amen comes from too fundamentally conventional a character to be the voice of a blasphemer: nobody is shocked. By it, however, he betrays himself, for he means to mock; but his ridicule, which apes conventional piety, has become tainted by it and leaves it intact: he is the mocker mocked.[82] Stephen's mental register of Mulligan's arrival, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" (9.483), by contrast indicates quite clearly that the relationship that exists beneath them is by now only superficial cameraderie. The Buck is acting up again, and is repeatedly described in terms appropriate to the court jester: "blithe in motley" he is a "lubber jester," "Puck Mulligan," a "happy patch," and he whispers with "clown's awe" (9.486,1110,1125 and 1142,1177 and 1209). Stephen's hostility toward him has swelled considerably since his early morning mood, and it hardly helps that Mulligan is immediately the focal point of the distractions and digressions that detract from Stephen's monologue. As a

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[82] He is one of a "Brood of mockers: Photius, pseudo Malachi, Johann Most" (9.492). This impressive list does not stand inspection, according to Robert Martin Adams, who objects that: "These three names are so ill-sorted, so diverse in their connotations or lack of connotation, and so obscurely connected (if they are connected at all) that their juxtaposition as `mockers' seems altogether perverse." *Surface and Symbol* (1962. Rpt. New York: Galaxy, 1967), p. 138. But Photius, already mentioned in *Ulysses* (1.656) is appropriate as a type of Mulligan because of his status as "one of the worst *enemies* the Church of Christ ever had" (emphasis mine: *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, quoted by Thornton, 21.7/22.8); and pseudo- Malachi economically conflates *Malachi* Mulligan and the notion of falseness. Johann Most, a German anarchist (Thornton, 197.28/195.13), I admit, is a puzzle, unless we accept Schutte's rather general explanation (Schutte, p. 74 and n.4); or are we to see Mulligan's middle name *St John* (14.1213)?

competitor for the attentions of those present, and one who comes off considerably the better, Mulligan is inevitably an enemy. No matter that his is a disruptive presence, nor that his production is a derivative one, a parody of Stephen's: on points, Mulligan is clear winner.

Stephen's resentment of Mulligan, rooted in envy, is manifested in a truncated phrase of Blake as sexual jealousy: "You would give your five wits for youth's proud livery he pranks in. Lineaments of gratified desire" (9.537).[83] Stephen, even if he is too proud to employ the same means, begrudges the attention his companion receives. What is striking however is the honesty of his admission and his ability to identify the constituent elements of his complex dislike of Mulligan. In contrast Mulligan is more conscious of the elements in Stephen's antipathy than of his own reasons for disliking Stephen.

As Stephen brings the conversation ever closer towards the subject of brotherly betrayal, he thinks once more of those three, brother and friends, who had betrayed him:

> Where is your brother? Apothecaries' hall. My whetstone. Him, then Cranly, Mulligan: now these. Speech, speech. But act. Act speech. They mock to try you. Act. Be acted on. (9.977)

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[83] As Thornton (199.6/196.31) explains, this quotes "The Question Answer'd," from the *Note-Book*. In *The Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 180, 184.

The compressed thought implies that the whetstone to his knifeblade "Kinch" is inevitably to become a traitor - just as Esau, the father´s favourite, with whom Stephen associates himself (9.981), is betrayed by Jacob, their mother´s preferred son. (In `Oxen´ the "prenatal repugnance of uterine brothers," 14.956, is discussed; and Stephen, seeing perhaps a parallel between himself and Mulligan, responds curtly to the dilemma put to him concerning the sundering of Siamese twins, 14.1005.) Stephen identifies also with Shakespeare, who had always with him "the theme of the false or the usurping or the adulterous brother" (9.997). Perhaps, like his Shakespeare, Stephen is surrounded by traitors and usurpers because he needs to provide himself with experience, the base material of art: "His unremitting intellect," he says of Shakespeare - in a phrase equally befitting his own restless mind - "His unremitting intellect is the hornmad Iago ceaselessly willing that the moor in him shall suffer" (9.1023). Like Maeterlink´s Socrates and Judas (9.1042) Stephen goes out to meet himself. Mulligan, of course, seizes only upon the sexual element in the equation, to the exclusion of the point Stephen is making. As if to illustrate, Stephen ends on a flourish that seems intended to offer Mulligan the final piece in his jigsaw:

> glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself.
> --*Eureka!* Buck Mulligan cried. *Eureka!* (9.1052)

Like Cyril Graham in Wilde´s *Portrait of Mr. W.H.*, Stephen´s interest, his "theory" expounded, fades: he knows, like patient Christ, of the trial ("They mock to try you," 9.978)

he is about to suffer from Mulligan's "honeying malice" (9.1087). At Mulligan's pleasure Stephen is led unprotesting away, thinking to himself: "Walk like Haines now" (9.1114). He sees, or thinks he sees, E(mma) C(lery 9.1123), the cause of Cranly's estrangement from Stephen at the end of *Portrait*, and again the cockcrow of betrayal is sounded. Stephen's lack of resistance parallels the serene compliance of Socrates, Christ and Wilde (he is "Tame essence of Wilde," 9.532) - all subjects of the preceding discussion. As Mulligan parodies Yeats' "I hardly hear the curlew cry," Stephen thinks grimly, "Jest on. Know thyself" (9.1153)[84] and refuses the final temptation offered him, to "do the Yeats touch" (9.1160).

At the foot of the stairs Stephen's vision of the artist as one who fuses experience and mind in a union that contains but transcends both is mocked in the play that Mulligan, not content to be actor-director, has "conceived" (9.1167): art as mental masturbation, for all it is worth.

*Everyman His Own Wife*
*or*
*A Honeymoon in the Hand* (9.1171)

is simply a "cruelfiction" (*FW*.192.19) of Stephen's thoughts - parody as torture. Even Mulligan acknowledges that the disguise may be thin (9.1178). The *dramatis personae* - for, like Joyce's first attempt at *Ulysses*, Mulligan's play gets no forrader than the title[85] - is a poor thing, containing

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[84] Thornton (216.14/213.27) suggests that Stephen's "Jest on" alludes to Blake's "Mock On" (Keynes, p. 418). Perhaps the change from mock to jest is meant to underline Mulligan's role as jester?

[85] Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 6 February 1907. *Letters* II:209.

little from experience and nothing from the imagination, for even in persecution he is not serious enough to carry through to a conclusion, but his own. Yet there is enough of it for Stephen to know what Mulligan means, and for Mulligan to know that he knows. The final sundering between them comes in the person of Bloom, an unwitting Ulysses escaping through the clashing rocks: "Part. The moment is now" (9.1199). Stephen feels himself, like Ulysses, safe at last, beyond Mulligan's reach. Having known the worst, he is free. "Offend me still," he challenges mentally: "Speak on" (9.1217). We are not shown their parting now, nor in the evening, for they have already chosen and taken their separate paths.

As if to demonstrate that separation, Mulligan and Stephen go their very different ways in `Wandering Rocks,' Stephen to meet Almidano Artifoni and his sister Dilly, and Mulligan to meet Haines at the D. B. C. (10.1042-1099). But despite the brevity and apparent triviality of events, this latter scene plays an important part in the portrait of Mulligan, for this is the only occasion in *Ulysses* when he appears unaccompanied by Stephen. (The scene's importance is implied in the reemergence of Mulligan's steaming scone in `Circe': 10.1087; see 15.4168.) This is significant, because frequently in this book the distinction between narrator and narrated, observer and observed, is allowed to slip, so that narratorial comment becomes a level to be negotiated with care, rather than an opaque signifier carrying us through to an unproblematic signified. In `Telemachus,' `Oxen' and

`Scylla and Charybdis´ Stephen´s presence can be suspected of interfering with narratorial objectivity in the portrait of Mulligan: `Wandering Rocks´ is not open to that objection. In Stephen´s absence, how does Mulligan behave?

The same. He is playing a role again, now the mocking but willing guide to the suave, unwitting rapacious colonial tourist Haines: Ireland, driven by poverty and acquiescing through absence of pride, is prostitute to Haines´ client and Mulligan´s pimp. As the scene commences, he points out the brother of Charles Stewart Parnell as another of Dublin´s sights - a chessplaying statue, perhaps. Haines opens his "newbought book" (10.1060, Hyde´s *Lovesongs of Connaught* - see 9.94,514 - another souvenir) and expresses regret at missing a Dublin treat, "Dedalus on Hamlet" (10.1059). Then abruptly the narrative switches:

> --I´m sorry, [Haines] said. Shakespeare is the happy huntinggground of all minds that have lost their balance.
>
> The onelegged sailor growled at the area of 14 Nelson street:
>
> --*England expects.....*
>
> Buck Mulligan´s primrose waistcoat shook gaily to his laughter.
>
> --You should see him, he said, when his body loses its balance. (10.1061)

The one-legged sailor challenges the English notion of "balance," approved explicitly by Haines and tacitly by Mulligan.

Buck Mulligan´s diagnosis of Stephen´s *idee fixe* (lack of balance) foreshadows his comic diagnosis of Bloom in `Circe´ (15.1774), superiority asserted in both instances by the distortion of accurate observation. Here the morning´s conversation between himself and Stephen is resurrected. After it, Stephen had been so preoccupied that even the

insensitive Haines had noticed that "there was something on his mind" (10.1097). According to Mulligan, Stephen's "tragedy," his inability to be a poet, is the fault of the Jesuits, who inculcated in him an overdeveloped sense of hell. There is enough in this caricature to confirm what we already know, that Mulligan has a ringside seat at Stephen's agony and is not above parodying it for the entertainment of companions. Freud, discussing society's tendency to become less overtly hostile and to ritualise its hostility, notes that

> Since we have been obliged to renounce the expression of hostility by deeds - held back by the passionless third person, in whose interest it is that personal security shall be preserved - we have...developed a new technique of invective, which aims at enlisting this third person against our enemy. By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable, or comic, we achieve in a roundabout way the enjoyment of overcoming him - to which this third person, who has made no efforts, bears witness by his laughter. (p. 147)

Mulligan, a gentleman, uses civilized weapons: to evict Stephen he doesn't steal the key, but merely asks for it, offering the preservation of his shirt as excuse (1.721); to defeat him, he merely ridicules.

Haines, however, who never refers to Stephen Dedalus by first name, seizes only upon the apparent lack in the ancient Irish myth of a sense of hell, thereby reducing the level of conversation to a messy *melange* of obscure academic namedropping and laughably crude comparative anthropology. (*Melange* might stand for Haines's thinking, as well as symbolising the method of the episode - and perhaps even the book, as at one point "Irish stew" stands in some sense for

*Finnegans Wake* in that book: *FW.* 190.9.) A knowledge of Irish Catholicism would have acquainted him with the prominence in its theological schema of eternal punishment.

Finally, even in taking tea Haines, the successor to those who creamed off Ireland's wealth, comically reveals his attitude to her:

> --This is real Irish cream I take it, he said with forebearance. I don't want to be imposed on. (10.1093)[86]

At the chapter's conclusion the two men gaze, one gaily and one gravely, upon the viceregal equipage (10.1223), the point ironically underlined that the difference between them is of appearance only: underneath, the two are one.

## v. Dressing the character (1.516)

When Mulligan's "plump body" plunges into the water in `Telemachus,' he replaces a priest who has just emerged and is observed acting with a modesty alien to Mulligan: Stephen sees "[t]he priest's grey nimbus in a niche where he dressed discreetly" (1.739). But this association of Mulligan with the church is no passing thought, nor merely one reference among several to George Moore's novel *The Lake*, which features a Catholic priest, Fr. Gogarty - the name stolen from Gogarty, whose mother was displeased - who strips off for a swim at the end to reveal "buttocks hard as a faun's"

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[86] Earlier he "surveys" the tower (1.541), which is to examine as a property - a judgment of price rather than value.

When Trench, Joyce's model for Haines, left the tower he took Gogarty's "sacred, chryselephantine shaving-brush" and left his own: evidently a tourist with an eye for the future relic of *Ulysses*! (Gogarty, *Many Lines to thee*, p. 47).

(before heading off, oddly enough, for Joyce-town).[87] In *Ulysses* the Buck is frequently associated with the trappings of christianity. He begins a mock mass (1.5), blesses the land and Stephen (1.10), says grace (1.335), feeds him and Haines, heals (as a doctor), performs a "miracle" (1.453), promises to cast out an unclean spirit (Haines, 1.176) and is stripped of his garments (1.510). When we first see him he frequently invokes the name of God (1.51,77,116,150,157, 193,287,346) and is dressed in a yellow dressing gown that resembles a priest´s robes (1.2); his face recalls a prelate and is sullen as a dean´s (1.32, 9.485); in `Scylla and Charybdis´ he enters with an "Amen!" (9.482) and wears a Panama (9.489) like a priest. In `Circe´ he meets Stephen´s afflicted mother (parodying one of the stations of the cross, 15.4170)[88] and concelebrates a Black Mass (15.4690). The association of Mulligan and the Roman Catholic church is Joyce´s way of damning both, for although Mulligan is a noisy and frequent blasphemer he continues to bow down, and shows no awareness of the incongruity of his position. Stephen at least is greatly troubled by his apost-asy, and cannot utter the mockery that comes so easily to Mulligan. Yet Stephen is a true Lucifer who will never bow to Rome - nor to Ireland, England or family. Mulligan is blasphemous in word, Stephen in thought and deed. (Thus Mulligan tells Stephen/Satan that he has put his "hoof" in it, 1.496.) This simple and consistent association of Mulligan and Church,

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[87] Moore, *The Lake*, p. 200. See Albert Solomon, "A Moore in *Ulysses*," *JJQ* 10 (1973), pp. 215-227, for the Moore - Gogarty - Joyce relationship of the period.

[88] See the early vestige of *Ulysses* quoted above.

however, is part of a larger pattern developing around the Buck's extraordinary absent character.

"Do I contradict myself?" Mulligan asks in `Telemachus', airily quoting Whitman, and answers: "Very well, I contradict myself." And the line in *Song of Myself* which succeeds it is: "(I am large, I contain multitudes.)"[89] Consistency is not one of his characteristics, and if he plays a priestly role for a while, opening the book with a theatrical parody of the mass, then it is to be expected that he should soon after assume another quite different mask also: and so he does. The part of priest was inspired by props and costume, and his quotation from Whitman by the clash of colours he wants to wear. With no substance, Mulligan's behaviour is determined entirely by masks, roles, costumes, props. Michael Groden remarks that the narrator of `Telemachus' "seems to assume that visual surface constitutes the entire reality, as if Mulligan's words and tone had no underlying motives," and in this he is surely correct; he is mistaken, however, in attributing this to the narrator's "lack of insight."[90] With Mulligan, the lack of stability is the point: visual surface *does* constitute reality. The example of Mulligan, James Maddox says, "calls into question the very conception of a self." "Mulligan is so intriguing," he observes, "because he is *nothing but* opposite poses."[91] Laying aside for the moment the problems

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89 "Song of Myself" (section 51), lines 1324-6, p. 88. The early fragment of *Ulysses* quoted above has Mulligan referring to Whitman.

90 Groden, p. 31.

91 James H. Maddox, *Joyce's* Ulysses *and the Assault*

of treating fictional characters as persons, it is only necessary to quote Locke's well known definition of the person to see how far short of it Mulligan falls:

> For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that that makes everyone to be what he calls *self*, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things: in this alone consists *personal identity*, i.e. the sameness of a rational being. And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that *person*: it is the same *self* now it was then, and it is by the same *self* with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.[92]

In this sense it is Mulligan rather than Stephen who is "an impossible person" (1.222).

Now, not content to be on the side of God, he is also Satan (from Hebrew: plotter, from *satan* to plot against) to Stephen's Christ: he knows the temptations to which Stephen is likeliest to respond and exploits them, and the temptation of Jesus provides thematic parallels for the opening passage of *Ulysses*.[93] Mulligan summons Kinch to the top of the tower as Satan sets Jesus on the highest point of the Temple (Matt. 4:5); he claims that Stephen could have "knelt down, damn it" (1.91) at his dying mother's bedside, as the Devil tempts Christ to "throw yourself down" (Matt. 4:6). These parallels are not consistently drawn - Christ

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*upon Character* (Hassocks, Essex: The Harvester Press, 1978), pp. 24, 29.

[92] John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Book 2: chapter 27, section 9; ed. John W. Yolton, Everyman's Library (London: Dent, 1961), vol. I, p. 281.

[93] Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13. See Harry Blamires, *The Bloomsday Book* (London: Methuen, 1966), pp.7-8.

had not eaten for forty days, but Mulligan is as hungry for breakfast as is Stephen - but the disturbance of chronology and detail should not be surprising, considering the changes Joyce wrought upon the Homeric and Shakespearean parallels. They are, however, appropriate to the way in which Stephen thinks of Mulligan and contributes to the way we are to regard him. Joyce here, as with those echoes, is more concerned to evoke emotional parallels than merely find appropriate similarities. So Mulligan´s laying of Stephen´s "snotrag" on the table is, in this scenario, a subtle device to make Stephen bow down. Stephen, however, is proof to the temptation:

> My handkerchief. He threw it. I remember. Did I not take it up?
> His hand groped vainly in his pockets. No, I didn´t. Better buy one. (1.498)

- A forgotten intention which helps the connection between him and Bloom, who forgets Molly´s lotion (13.1044) and his key (17.78). Mulligan oversees the "surrounding country and the awaking mountains" and urges Stephen to "Come and look" at the sea (1.10,80) as Satan takes Jesus "to a very high mountain" and shows him "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8). And as Mulligan, urging Stephen to "Give up the moody brooding" (1.235), disappears below, so, "When the Devil finished tempting Jesus in every way," Luke´s account concludes: "he left him for a while" (4:13).

He toys, then, with a priestly role, a vocation Stephen had taken seriously; and then with that of Lucifer, a part more properly Stephen´s, who is not playing. Now, at breakfast, Mulligan is court jester Buck: and, as the focus of attention, the maker of food and of jests, he is also

director of the performance and of the audience. The audience or king is Haines who will pay handsomely for a good jest, and whose contributions are merely prompts for Mulligan, adding nothing: "By Jove, it is tea" (1.359). His ineffectual laughing reply to Stephen´s barbed question is typically vacuous:

> --Would I make money by it? Stephen asked.
> Haines laughed and, as he took his soft grey hat from the holdfast of the hammock, said:
> --I don´t know, I´m sure. (1.490)

The performance, then, is ostensibly for the benefit of Haines - "Tell that to the oxy chap downstairs and touch him for a guinea," Mulligan had tempted Stephen (1.154) - but who is secretly despised: "Why don´t you play them as I do?" (1.506). This remark reveals what motivates Buck, and what Stephen dislikes and distrusts in him. Earlier I argued that when Stephen´s response to Mulligan´s awkward apology was to shift the attention to himself - "Of the offence to me" (1.220) - he was objecting to Mulligan´s tendency to assume and assign roles. In the light of what happens afterwards in the tower his resentment becomes rather more understandable. (This retroactive enlightenment - what the book itself is seven times pleased to call a "retrospective arrangement"[94] - is typical of *Ulysses*: is there any reader who, on first

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[94] 6.150, 10.783, 11.798, 14.1044, 15.443, 16.1401 and 17.1907.

looking into Joyce´s *Ulysses*, imagines "Plasto´s high grade ha," 4.70, to be anything other than an irritating misprint? Or who could begin on first encounter to guess at the meaning, three lines later, of "Potato I have"?)

The constituents of Mulligan´s comic routine - his volume, blasphemy, obscenity, brusqueness - could all be said to be forms of violence of one kind or another. An important element is his *incompletions*, of which he produces three at breakfast with sexual references:

> --I´m melting, he said, as the candle remarked when .... But hush! Not a word more on that subject! (1.333)

> And when I makes water I make water [...] *God send you don´t make them in the one pot.* (1. 357-362)

> *--For old Mary Ann,*
> *She doesn´t care a damn.*
> *But, hising up her petticoats ....* (1.382)

The candle joke leads up to, but does not make, the allusion to female masturbation, while "mother Grogan's tea and water pot" and the unfinished rendition of "Mary Ann" both concern micturation, the latter a whore pissing in public "like a man."[95] Typically, however, all three are allusions or gestures rather than outright obscenities. They add to our sense of Mulligan as someone who wants the applause without having to produce the goods: he is, in Stephen's telegram, "*The sentimentalist* [...] *who would enjoy without incurring the immense debtorship for a thing done*" (9.550). This gesturing, as Emerson puts it in an essay on the comic in general, is "a non-performance of what is pretended to be performed, at the same time that one is giving loud pledges of performance."[96] Thus when he says grace in a typically abbreviated form (1.335) we are to understand that, while he may be a mocker and a blasphemer, he will never, like Stephen, be a rebel or a heretic. His sign of the cross with the fried eggs (1.351) suggests blasphemy without stating it, just as his quotation from the mass (1.5) implies an attitude toward religion but does not insist upon it. By not pursuing these gestures Mulligan is remaining a fool: "If the fool would persist in his folly," says Blake, in an aphorism Stephen echoes, "he would become wise." (See "Folly. Persist." 9.42. "Folly," as Blake next proclaims, "is the cloke of knavery." So much for dressing the character.)[97] Mulligan's white teeth contrast with Stephen's

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[95] A Dubliner's inside knowledge: John Garvin, *James Joyce's Disunited Kingdom: and the Irish Dimension* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1976), p. 114.

[96] Emerson, "The Comic," *Letters and Social Aims* (1876), quoted in Greig, pp. 260.

[97] William Blake, "Proverbs of Hell," in *Works*, p. 151. Stephen's version is missed by Thornton.

rotten ones: at least something is happening *inside* Stephen, even if it is only that he is rotting. Mulligan´s face is a mask - as the curious phrasing of "Buck Mulligan´s face smiled with delight" (1.377) suggests - while Stephen, by contrast, peers into the proffered mirror, wondering "Who chose this face for me?" (1.136). Mulligan, who chooses his own faces, presents a variety of masks; but, like Oscar Wilde to whom he refers in the scene just mentioned (1.143), we never catch a glimpse of the face beneath, if there is one.

Mulligan patronises Stephen: he chooses the play and assigns the parts, naturally taking the lead himself and casting Stephen variously as junior court jester, country cousin and protege, exhibiting him for Haines´ entertainment. He patronises him too by offering his castoff trousers, reminding him at once of their relative positions and of Stephen´s debts to him. He orders "Kinch" around the tower: "Kinch!" (=open the door); "Kinch, wake up. Bread, butter, honey" (=fetch them); "Kinch, get the jug" (1.325, 334,388). Admitted, this is all part of Mulligan´s energetic and lively manner, and Haines comes in for a little of the same treatment ("Pour out the tea there," 1.347;352). But in these trivial ways Mulligan´s later treatment of "Kinch," is already foreshadowed, and in them is contained, in essense, the grotesque parody of a parody that Mulligan eventually is to become in `Circe.´

The major characters in *Ulysses* - Stephen and Bloom - are characterised by a marked difference between their outer and inner lives, between appearance and thought. There is no doubting the distinction in the book along Cartesian lines between body and mind, inner and outer. In his letters too Joyce occasionally alludes to his aloofness as a mask or defence of inner feelings. Indeed it might be said that in *Ulysses* a character's worth declines in inverse proportion to extent of the harmony between what is thought and what is uttered. Buck Mulligan, "inconsequent" in his own word, and in this very similar to Blazes Boylan, lacks this inner life, and instead adopts a succession of masks chosen in advance to suit the occasion and the audience. Of the dozens of readings I have seen, none rehabilitates him or proposes that the common conception of him, which after all depends to a large extent on the highly coloured testimony of Stephen, and to a lesser extent on Bloom, might be radically unsound. Some strange things have been seen in *Ulysses*, but Mulligan the misunderstood hero is not one of them. Indeed the *in*authenticity of Mulligan - if we may be allowed the anachronism - constitutes one of the few major points on which there is general agreement. As I have argued in the previous chapter, *Ulysses* is over-determined, too full of meaning to be reducible to any single meaning; and in such a context, Mulligan's meaninglessness, his refusal to be responsible, sticks out like a sore thumb.

Yet even in Mulligan there is a difference between what he thinks and what he says. The break between Stephen and Mulligan, more inevitable as the day has gone on, is muffled by the gloom of `Oxen´ in which it occurs, but as we have seen Mulligan´s feelings are hinted at in `Oxen,´ and in `Circe´ they burst out. What Freud would call the "determinants" of Mulligan´s jesting - that is, the factors of aggression and hostility towards Stephen that give his jokes their force and particular form - are laid out in Mulligan´s appearance at the moment Stephen´s dead mother rises to confront him and in the Black Mass Mulligan celebrates. The truth of his relationship with Stephen has lain like a coiled spring behind their encounters during the day, waiting only for night and the abandonment of inhibitions to set it free: that time comes in `Circe.´ Jokes can disguise hostility, and neither Joyce nor his reader need turn to Freud to discover this. What Freud´s study of jokes contributes is an understanding of how Mulligan´s jokes hide his true feelings even from himself, how they help him to release those feelings, and how they are determined - in the sense of generated - by his own internal conflict.

## CHAPTER FIVE:

## LEOPOLD HERO, A BITE FROM A SHEEP (16.1639)

*LB everytime he gets up dashed down again*[1]

### i. Leopold Hero

That a comic figure such as Leopold Bloom should bear the burden of a book like *Ulysses* commands attention, because of the disparity between an expectation of heroics and myth prompted by the book's title, and what we find in it. Some of the contradictions in Bloom, it is true, and to a certain extent therefore in the structure of *Ulysses*, can be traced back to Joyce's reading of Homer. This in turn is of course determined by the interests Joyce brought to his selective reading. The exile - home tension, for example, is clearly taken over from the *Odyssey* and grafted onto Joyce's own feelings about Ireland. Joyce emphasised to Budgen the reluctance of Odysseus to join the war and his singleminded

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[1] An early note for *Ulysses*: *Ulysses* Notebook V.A.2 (Buffalo), p. 3, "Penelope"; *Archive*, 12:99; see *Joyce's Notes and Early Drafts for* Ulysses, ed. Phillip Herring (Charlottesville, Virginia: Univ. of Virginia, 1977), line 49, p. 63. (Line struck out in green.) The implication, I would guess, is that every time he gets dashed down he gets back up, which is what heroes and clowns do. This chapter investigates this resilience as a heroic, and the next as a comic, mode.

determination to return home after it: "There is nothing worse," says Odysseus, "than wandering..."[2] Later writers, however, were less interested in the Homeric homeward urge than in the wanderings themselves. When domesticity was important to society, it was considered a praiseworthy subject; when the greater world was being explored and charted, however, the explorations of Ulysses were more seductive than his eventual destination. In Dante (who did not know Homer) and Tennyson, Ulysses' urge is outward bound towards the exotic and abnormal. Joyce, who of course wished his Ulysses to contain the qualities of everybody else's, turns this apparent difficulty to advantage in two ways. By concentrating the centrifugal in Stephen/Telemachus he ties in the notion of exile, making the *Odyssey* as he said the sequel to the *Portrait*. This allows him to locate the centripetal in Bloom. Secondly, Joyce introduces an overlap by making the pull of Bloom's home life *too* strong, permitting the depiction of a Penelope who is at the centre of the web of his life. This legitimises the mental wandering of Bloom, as well as his foot-slogging around Dublin. The thirst for new experiences so keen in Dante's Ulysses is shared, in different circumstances, by Bloom. Telemachus' attachment to his mother, on the other hand, is neatly metamorphosed into Stephen's guilt. Thus the centrifugal and centripetal drives, united in Ulysses, serve subtly to unite Stephen and Bloom.

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2 *Odyssey*, XV.343-5.

But the central contradiction in Bloom is his comic heroism, and it is essential to understand the relationship of the two components of that term. The comic heroism of Leopold Bloom is neither the low (comic) apeing the high (heroism) in mock heroic, nor heroism dragged down to comic bathos. As Bloom's good and bad qualities intersect so heroism and comedy interpenetrate. His homeliness and venial vices and the mythic elements with which his petty adventures are embued correspond to these two poles of comedy and heroism. Jane Austen demands of her readers that we take silly Emma as heroine; Joyce insists equally on man and myth and challenges us to find some way in which seriousness and comedy do not simply cancel each other out. The conjunction is "jocoserious" (17.369), neither one nor the other, but more than both. Bloom unites comedy and heroism of a peculiarly modern kind, and combines the quotidian and the timeless, the ephemeral and the mythical.

In his comic aspect he embodies two different but complementary aspects of human flesh: physicality and mechanical behaviour, the worlds of Mikhail Bakhtin's Rabelais and Chaplin's clown. These elements of comedy, which I consider in the next chapter, unite with heroism in Bloom, and his abiding popularity with many who read *Ulysses*, if not always with those who write about it, and rarely with his neighbours who appear in it, stems from the fertile combination in him of these attributes: Leopold Bloom the "comic/hero." But before we can discuss the *comic* we must clear the ground around it and define and defend the second

half of the equation: *heroism.* The reader's response to Bloom is not free from value judgments, views on what is or is not fit for a man to do or to suffer, and opinions about heroism and the literary propriety of presenting a human being performing private functions. This makes for considerable untidiness and uncertainty, for these subjects of disagreement are rarely even mentioned, and we all tend to assume that no-one could be so blinkered/slovenly as to think less/more liberally than ourselves about these matters. It is not even easy, for example, to say whether Bloom is a good husband and worker: it depends on one's definition of `good.' Without profit or honour in his own land he cannot be reckoned a conspicuous success, but he has, at least, won and kept Molly (to date), raised a child, kept himself out of the pubs and retained a love of humanity, something few of his fellow-citizens could claim. Above all he has survived, like Odysseus, and come home. The odds are admittedly not as great as those faced by the favourite of Athene, but Bloom's resources are proportionately less. Besides, he doesn't have Athene's help.

This diminishment of scale explains some, but only some, of the comedy of *Ulysses.* The fearsome Cyclops becomes a dropsical denizen of the pubs, barely able to waddle and "blinded by the sun" as the Cyclops had been blinded by Odysseus. The princess Nausicaa is present in the form of romantic fiction addict, and the winds of Aeolus as the gas of oratory. The reduced scale makes "mountains [of] molehills" and storms in teacups, and although we laugh we can

appreciate - perhaps for the first time - the human aspect of Odysseus´ adventures.[3] No-one has burnt out the single eye of a legendary monster, but most of us know what it is to encounter someone something like the citizen; few ever find themselves naked in the presence of a princess on the lookout for a husband, but most of us flirt; and though few of us have any experience of windbags, we all listen to politicians. Bloom´s world is too small, and the slights he suffers too slight, to make him tragic: he is too much like the rest of us, and we can make no sense of him in the terms of tragedy. Instead, because so little is at stake, we laugh. Where success and failure mean so little, feelings of terror and pity are not stirred. Our sympathy is claimed, but not as observers of a mighty and terrifying cataclysm, the defeat of a Macbeth or an Othello, but as a local shower. The death of a Paddy Dignam is attended not by the storm said to have raged at the funeral of Mozart, but by a gentle drizzle.[4]

There are two meanings to the word hero: he-man and human. The first is heroism as a true, timeless standard of bravery and nobility, strength and general perfection. According to this definition, Ulysses is a hero: Bloom not. *Ulysses* depicts a fallen, inferior world (Eliot´s) with

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[3] "mountains & molehills" - a note for `Cyclops,´ struck out in blue: *Archive*, vol. 12, p. 13; see Herring, *Notesheets*, "`Cyclops´ 9," line 3, p. 118.

[4] The romantic idea of the storm that raged as Mozart was buried was disproved by Nicholas Slonimsky, "The Weather at Mozart´s Funeral," *Musical Quarterly*, 46:I (January, 1960), 12-21, who wrote to the Vienna Weather Observatory for the weather report. Of course, this pathetic fallacy is itself illuminating. Besides, Beethoven´s funeral, Slonimsky tells us, *was* accompanied by a violent thunderstorm (p. 21).

Bloom the miserable and pathetic protagonist of a mock-heroic (Kenner, Thompson, Noon). Darcy O´Brien in particular claims explicitly that Joyce´s idealized conception of heroic Ulysses proves that *Ulysses* is mock-heroic. In this chapter I argue that Joyce´s is the other meaning of heroism, concrete rather than abstract, and that the heroism of Ulysses is not the mindless, fearless, insensate heroism of Ajax, but a human and less godlike quality. Bloom is such, a hero for our times: which is to say, a comic hero. O´Brien claims external evidence for his reading of Bloom. I shall examine first the internal, and then the external, evidence against it.

Leopold Paula Bloom:[5] poet, philosopher, part-time timid philanderer; philanthropist and cuckold, hero and villain; father, son and husband; wanderer, foreigner and stay-at-home; scientist and artist; and the object of disdain, derision, affection and admiration. Ever capable of surprising and more than the sum of his parts, he is consistent in action and thought - which is to say, they are never predictable, except for being unpredictable. He is, as Lenehan knows, difficult to categorise: "He´s a cultured allroundman, Bloom is, he said seriously. He´s not one of your common or garden ... you know ... There´s a touch of the artist about old Bloom." (10.581)[6] This tribute is a

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[5] The birth certificate can be found in the 2nd drawer, 17.1855. Joyce was baptised James Augusta Joyce - *JJ.*21.

[6] Jacques Mercanton remarked on Bloom´s artistic nature, and Joyce replied: "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." Mercanton, "Hours of Joyce, *Part I*," p. 702.

typically hedged Joycean affirmation, shielded from sentiment by banal incoherence but given weight by context. Unable to express what seems to him unusual in Bloom, and obliged to concede it nonetheless immediately after telling a tale - "a damn good one about comets' tails," in fact (10.530) - Lenehan struggles to define Bloom. He adopts horticultural terms appropriate for "Bloom," but the important word is "allroundman," for it is the polytropic quality of completeness that, as we shall see, Joyce claimed as the distinguishing characteristic of his favourite hero, and in *Ulysses* it is Bloom's allroundedness in both mind and body that sets him apart from his fellow-Dubliners. For these reasons he is difficult to *de*fine or *de*scribe; but certain of his characteristics stand out. In the pages that follow we shall examine some of them, and then consider why we term his character comic.

He is, for one thing, apparently quite incapable of sustained logical analysis, argument or precise thought. If we wish, we may attribute this to the mediocre education of someone who left (Erasmus Smith) High School at sixteen (17.1194),[7] as by contrast Joyce thought his Jesuit upbringing had taught him "to arrange things in such a way that they become easy to survey and to judge."[8] But it is more useful to remember that, according to the conventions of *Ulysses*, we are reading his very innermost thoughts as they occur to him, and note how this imprecision is linked

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[7] Where, as Hugh Kenner remarked, he missed meeting W. B. Yeats by only one year.

[8] *JJ.*27.

to his eccentric curiosity, wide-ranging interests and refusal or inability to remain within constricting intellectual bounds. These are qualities which remain with him all day, and indeed reach their highest point in `Eumaeus´ and `Ithaca.´ After the slings and arrows of outrageous `Circe,´ *these* are the characteristics Bloom is left exhibiting. Stephen is an expert, and therefore a specialist; Bloom is a polymath, and therefore Ulyssean, although it is fair to acknowledge that Bloom impresses more by his range than by his depth.

W. B. Stanford in his study of Ulysses through the ages suggests that Odysseus´ trip to the island of the Cyclops is undertaken "almost as if, in modern terms, he wanted to do some anthropological research," and this spirit is even better illustrated by the Sirens adventure. What the two Sirens sing, and what he must at all costs hear, is often misremembered as an amorous enchantment, but it is rather a news and forecasting service:[9]

> We know whate´er the Kings of mighty name
> Atchiev´d at *Ilion* in the field of fame;
> Whate´er beneath the sun´s bright journey lies.
> O stay, and learn new wisdom from the wise![10]

Odysseus is thus the only Greek hero to exhibit the intellectual inquisitiveness for which his race was famed.[11] Bloom too, within his limited horizons, has a passion for

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[9] We know there are two and only two, because they are a Greek dual number: hence the misses Kennedy and Douce.

[10] *Odyssey* XII.228-31. Pope´s version; in *The Odyssey, Books I-XII*, vol IX of *The Poems of Pope*, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 443.

[11] W[illiam] B[edell] Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), p. 76.

fact: all this long and hot day, a man in a black suit wandering the streets is trying to recall a formula: "Black conducts, reflects, (refracts is it?), the heat," and never does get the correct answer (4.79; 11.446, 15.401). It is perhaps typical of Bloom, and certainly atypical of what his fellow Dubliners expect of a Jew, that he thinks in terms of giving on (conducting) or giving back (reflecting) rather than taking (absorbing): thus, his thought in a roundabout way reflects well on him. He appears parodically as the "distinguished scientist Herr Professor Luitpold Blumenduft" (12.468 - when he produces three split infinitives in a single indigestible sentence of one hundred and twenty words and three commas: the illiteracy of the numerate), and indeed has the scientist's insistence on sticking to the facts, combined with a scientific refusal to accept the evidence of his own ears (12.852): in `Oxen of the Sun' he is "Mr Cautious Calmer" (14.469). Other formulae tease him and evade his fumbling grasp:

> Couldn't sink if you tried: so thick with salt. Because the weight of the water, no, the weight of the body in the water is equal to the weight of the what?. Or is it the volume is equal to the weight? It's a law something like that. (5.39)
>
> Empty vessels make most noise. Because the acoustics, the resonance changes according as the weight of the water is equal to the law of falling water. (11.981)

He notices the priest's garments and the "Letters on his back":

> I.N.R.I.? No, I.H.S. Molly told me one time I asked her. I have sinned: or no: I have suffered, it is. And the other one? Iron nails ran in. (5.372)

We might be blinded by Bloom's ignorance to the fact that he has noticed, and has asked. The accuracy of Joyce's aim is astonishing: eighty years after Bloom mistook a Latinised Greek abbreviation of the name of Jesus for an English acrostic, the following letter from Mr. V. Cassidy of Malahide Rd, Dublin appeared in an English newspaper:

> Can you solve this problem? A friend insists that the letters I.H.S. on a gravestone mean "I Have Suffered." I say they are of Latin origin.[12]

But this comical vagueness - Bloom's, I mean - is part of his earnest desire to engage experience, to touch, taste, see, smell and hear the world. "Must be the focus where the rays cross," he considers (8.566): in a sense this is himself, the point at which different qualities converge without losing their individual identities. Stephen's mental severity, erudition and bookishness, by contrast, are symptoms of his withdrawal from sensory experience.

Bloom's quirky inventions are further manifestations of his observant and imaginative mind:

> A pointsman's back straightened itself upright suddenly against a tramway standard by Mr Bloom's window. Couldn't they invent something automatic so that the wheel itself much handier? Well but that fellow would lose his job then? Well but then another fellow would get a job making the new invention? (6.175)

This brief comic odyssey of thought is typical, indeed almost paradigmatic, of his dialectical mental process, which we can represent schematically:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Observation (pointsman): | experience: | real (present) |
| Invention (automatic system): | intellect: | ideal (utopia) |
| Implications (job losses): | imagination: | real + ideal |

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12 London *Daily Mirror* 17 May 1984, p. 17.

His inventions are responses to the world, and the implications of this congress of experience and intellect are further fed into the equation to produce a combined real/ideal. What is further typical of the example offered here is that it stems from Bloom´s incessant empathy. He is constantly imagining the emotions and perceptions of those whom he encounters. When he thinks of his appearance to the cat, and then corrects it: "Height of a tower? No, she can jump me" (4.29); and thinks of the cat as vindictive and cruel, but then, the mouse seems to enjoy it (4.28), Bloom, the "allroundman" (10.581) is exhibiting his remarkable ability to see from the point of view of another being without that preventing him from seeing both sides of the argument. His compassion for animals, for example, does not blind him to their faults:

> Wait. Those poor birds. [...] Aware of their greed and cunning he shook the powdery crumb from his hands. [...] Lot of thanks I get. Not even a caw. (8.73-84)

"Good poor brutes they look," he thinks of the horses: "Still their neigh can be very irritating" (5.219). His sympathy extends to the "drifting cabbies" also (5.223), and then his mind goes back to cats (5.233). His impressive gift of compassion and empathy is well illustrated in his treatment of the blind stripling. "Better not do the condescending," (8.1092) he reminds himself, and then tries to imagine what it is to be blind (8.1096-1145). And when his first instinct is uncharitable - "Face like dip. Damn her." - he is usually willing to think again: "O, well, she has to live like the rest" (11.1259). Despised and rejected himself

he has a special feeling for others - be they the blind, prostitutes, or dumb animals - who share his plight. As Molly puts it, "hed go into mourning for the cat" (18.1310). He thinks of the waiter, even: "Not make him walk twice. His corns" (11.445: as Molly admits, "still I like that in him polite to old women like that and waiters and beggars too hes not proud out of nothing," 18.16. The first charge Bloom faces in Circe is "Prevention of cruelty to animals," 15.697). Still, it doesn´t please everyone, and Bloom certainly gets under some people´s skin in the other meaning of the phrase - notably Thersites, of course: "Gob, he´d have a soft hand under a hen" (12.845). Compassion is spurned in this manly company as weak and womanly (12.1103-10), and the citizen blames the adultress: love is the cause of man´s downfall. "Some people," says Bloom, unwittingly uniting the New Testament and the *Odyssey* - it´s all Greek to him: "Some people [...] can see the mote in others´ eyes but they can´t see the beam in their own" (12.1237). Thersites is like a mangle, squeezing out the worst in everyone, even himself (12.1325). He identifies Bloom´s venial failings, and does much better (worse) on the citizen (12.1311); but the fact that even Thersites can do so poorly on Bloom is a better testimonial than the praise of a friend.

Bloom, unlike Thersites and his beery misogynist cronies, is considerate towards femininity - feline and human - and the references in `Oxen of the Sun´ to "womanly bloom" (14.676) and "the first bloom of her new motherhood" (14.1317) are intimations of this; in `Circe´ he thinks to

himself: "Bit light in the head. Monthly or effect of the other" (14.209). This is perhaps taking empathy as far as it can go, unless we include his *couvade*-come-true in `Circe´ (15.1810. Nonetheless, "Poldy has more spunk in him" than Boylan, Molly observes - 18.168). He can interpret the cat´s "Mkgnao" and Molly´s "Mn." He has the gift of tongues rather than the gift of the gab.[13] His last thought of the first episode in which he appears is for someone else: "Poor Dignam!" (4.551).

Another manifestation of this ability to see from other people´s points of view is his tendency to imitate them. Molly says he imitates her whistling (18.1204), and "hes always imitating everybody" (18.1204). He imitates "old Tweedy": "Yes, sir. At Plevna that was. I rose from the ranks, sir, and I´m proud of it." (4.63), and the girl from next door he sees at the butcher´s: "How did she walk with her sausages. Like that something" (5.47). And his father, of course:

> Nathan´s voice! His son´s voice! I hear the voice of Nathan who left his father to die of grief and misery in my arms, who left the house of his father and left the God of his father.
>
> Every word is so deep, Leopold. (5.203)

(Further imitations: 8.659,692; 11.648.) In `Circe´ he "contracts his face so as to resemble many historical personages" (15.1844); and Bella asks, "Who are. Incog!" (15.4308: the answer, or one answer, is Ulysses). This

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13 See Fritz Senn, "Bloom among the Orators," in *Joyce´s Dislocutions*.

comical ability to imitate is directly inspired by his Odyssean lineage. As Robert Torrance observes, "disguise is not extrinsic to Odysseus´ character, but inseparable from it:

> Recognition does not annul disguise, since to recognise Odysseus is to know him not only as father, master, avenger, husband, or son, but above all as the man of multiple roles that he has been from the first and cannot cease to be without ceasing to be himself....[14]

(Hence too his fibs in bed - cf *Odyssey* XIII.291-97.) Connected with this is his awareness of what is going on behind his back: "Walk after him now make him awkward like those newsboys me today" (14.1056), and `Oxen of the Sun´ tells how he "had been conscious of some impudent mocks" (14.846). This notion of seeing ourselves from different points of view - "See ourselves as others see us" (8.662, 13.1058) - is implied too in his sound advice: "Ought to go home and laugh at themselves" (13.1217).

His imagination and curiosity know no bounds, as in this comic picture of death:

> It´s the moment you feel. Must be damned unpleasant. Can´t believe it at first. Mistake must be: someone else. Try the house opposite. Wait, I wanted to. I haven´t yet.
> (6.843)

He is also chock-full of questions: "Wonder what I look like to her" (4.28) is typical of him, and Bloom´s wondering makes a good substitute for Odysseus´ wandering: "Wonder is it true if you clip them they can´t mouse after. Why?" (4.40); "Why are their tongues so rough?" (4.47); "Wonder what he does" (4.149); "Wonder is poor Citron still in Saint

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[14] Torrance, p. 32.

Kevin´s parade" (4.205) - all told, the word Wonder and cognates appears over a hundred times.[15] "Wonder what her father gave for it" (4.61) - this last combining curiosity and calculation of cost. In fact his commercial inclinations often influence the track of his thoughts, but generally this is an ad-man´s habit rather than the greed his neighbours expect him, as a Jew, to exhibit. Thus he decides that the position of the pub is "n[o] g[ood]" (4.108, see 6.429), prompting the recollection of a pet Bloom project, the construction of a tramline from the cattlemarket along the North Circular Road to the quays. There is no profit in this for him, and little prospect of its fruition, but his inventive imagination has been stirred. He wonders too how the curates (bartenders) could possibly save enough to become landlords themselves, as they do (4.126). Failing to calculate the answer to the problem of how much of a cut they get, he is "displeased" (4.142). Unable to resist print in Dluglacz´s, at once and typically he begins sorting out the pros and cons of the Agendath Netaim scheme. "Was he insured?" he asks Kernan of Paddy Dignam (6.535): evidence of a vulgar preoccupation with money? Perhaps, but Bloom´s comical economics is more likely concern expressed in a useful and positive manner. Consolation like Bob Doran´s is all very well:

> asking Bloom to tell Mrs Dignam he was sorry for her trouble and he was very sorry about the funeral and to tell her that he said and everyone who knew him said that there was never a truer, a finer than poor little Willy that´s dead to tell her. (12.780)

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15 Sentences beginning "Wonder" occur 41 times, of which 36 are Bloom´s. From the invaluable *Handlist.*

- or would be if he could get the deceased's name right - but it won't pay the widow's bills. Bloom expends considerable time and effort during the day to do something for Dignam's family, incidentally and inevitably being misinterpreted along the way and getting into trouble. Ironically he is accused of "Defrauding widows and orphans" by Lenehan (12.1622) at the very moment when he, and he alone of Dignam's erstwhile companions, is helping them. (Joyce omits Bloom's works of charity, thus making it easier for us to think less of Bloom than he deserves. How different the character of Bloom would appear if the time spent helping Dignam's family were recorded in *Ulysses*.)[16]

To take one final cluster of Bloom's thoughts: his weakness, mild masochism and lack of assertiveness have soured his marriage and make him unpopular except as the butt of aggressive jokes. But, like his mental account of the day's expenditure (17.1455), even these debits are matched by credits, for Bloom as I have suggested possesses tolerance, good humour, generosity - all qualities those who sneer at him lack. Be it in his response to Myles Crawford's coarse brush off -

> --He can kiss my royal Irish arse, Myles Crawford cried loudly over his shoulder. Any time he likes, tell him.
>
> While Mr Bloom stood weighing the point and about to smile he strode on jerkily.
>
> (7.991)

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[16] Kenner speculates that Bloom never thinks of this event because he suspects that he has been chosen as a Jew (*Joyce's Voices*, pp. 117-18). - Like Stephen, he resists stereotyping.

- or in his comical excuses in `Circe´ to explain his undressing -

> *(trembling, beginning to obey)* The weather has been so warm (15.1121)[17]

- one way or another Bloom obeys Christ´s instruction to turn the other cheek. Unless one continually bears in mind the ambivalence of Bloom´s qualities - the mildness vitiated by passivity, the weakness made noble by generosity in judgment - and remembers that, like H.C.E. he is "human, erring, condonable" (*FW*.58.19), one inevitably falls either to banal praise or harsh blame. Rather than trying to suppress his contradictory qualities, flatten them out or emphasise one aspect at the expense of the others, we must recognise his awkwardness.

The snub he suffers from John Henry Menton is a good example of the difficulty of disentangling Bloom´s motives and moral worth and the dangers of attempting to do so in too schematic a fashion:

> Got a dinge in the side of his hat. Carriage probably.
> --Excuse me, sir, Mr Bloom said beside them.
> They stopped.
> --Your hat is a little crushed, Mr Bloom said pointing.
> John Henry Menton stared at him for an instant without moving.
> --There, Martin Cunningham helped, pointing also.
> John Henry Menton took off his hat, bulged out the dinge and smoothed the nap with care on his coatsleeve. He clapped the hat on his head again.
> --It´s all right now, Martin Cunningham said.
> John Henry Menton jerked his head down in acknowledgement.
> --Thank you, he said shortly. (6.1015)

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17 See Eliot Gose, *The Transformation Process in Joyce´s* Ulysses (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 138.

(That was the same response as Parnell's, when Bloom rescued his hat: 16.1336.[18] It ain't what you say, it's the way that you say it.)

Darcy O'Brien finds this sycophantic and repulsive: "If a helpless little dog is kicked, one pities it; but if a man makes of himself a helpless little dog and gets kicked, one can only scorn him."[19] Well, maybe. One might justly criticise Bloom's typical lack of shrewd calculation, an insensitivity to the likely outcome of his advance, and perhaps relate the incident to his ill-timed pursuit of Myles Crawford in `Aeolus' and nearly disastrous return to Barney Kiernan's in `Cyclops.' This latter is like Odysseus' similarly narrow escape, just as the John Henry Menton episode recalls the snub of Odysseus by Ajax in Hades.[20] Bloom may be guilty of ingenuousness, but he cannot in fairness be accused of sycophancy. If anyone must be blamed, it is John Henry Menton. "Repelled...sychophancy... helpless little dog...gets kicked...scorn...": for at least one reader there is not enough distance between this and the advice offered by John Wyse Nolan in `Cyclops': "Stand up to it then with force like men" (12.1475). Rather, Bloom acts well, if not too wisely, in making the polite approach

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18 Joyce's absolute economy with words makes every word of this long quotation necessary: it cannot be cut.
In a draft of `Cyclops,' Joyce had the hat motif recurring: "What was it but Cusack had stuck two of the bloody betting tickets in the front of Bloom's topper". *Ulysses* Item V.A.8 (Buffalo), p. 15r. *Archive* 13:113 (first five words not visible in *Archive* reproduction); see Herring, *Joyce's Notes and Early Drafts*, p. 163.

19 O'Brien, *Conscience of Joyce*, pp. 123.

20 *Odyssey*, XI; Gilbert, p. 152.

notwithstanding the threat of an insult, which he hardly desires, but which he will not allow to prevent him from his small act. The resentful John Henry Menton, however, whose formality extends even to his name (note how three paragraphs begin with it in its full pompous glory), can no more forgive than forget a trivial humiliation suffered at the innocent hand of Bloom years before: "I fell foul of him one evening, I remember, at bowls" (6.701). But the lack of balance is his own (the movement of this sentence imitates the biased path of a bowl across a green): and O´Brien´s. Bloom´s seven last words are not pettily vindictive. He is in no position to return Menton´s (as we may call him) slight, even if he should want to. Instead, he consoles himself with the thought that Cunningham will put right the rebuff. "Never mind," he thinks: life must go on. Still, there is a bright side: "Be sorry after perhaps when it dawns on him. Get the pull over him that way" (7.1031). Bloom desires not superiority, merely equality. That his metaphor should allude to the underlying cause of Menton´s coolness (`Get the pull´: bias/bowls/`fell foul´) and thus neatly round off the incident and restore a balance, in more than one sense, makes a fittingly smiling conclusion.

This incident closes `Hades,´ the first of a number of episodes in which Bloom suffers humiliations and persecutions which are at the same time *real* and *comic*. It is worthwhile examining his response to some of these, for they reveal the other side of Bloom, the mean and calculating side of him. Moments of tragic intensity, common in books, are rare in life. The normal pattern of our lives is one of

tiny dramas, and heroism in such limiting circumstances is both more difficult and more likely to go unrecognised. Bloom is not invariably the sympathetic, charitable man I have so far represented, yet his wrongdoing and his right-doing turn out to be unexpectedly related.

At the graveside, Hynes doesn't know jewish Bloom's "christian" name, although he knows McCoy's, and at the mention of McCoy's name it occurs to Bloom that McCoy has used him. Because of a previous misdeed - "Levanted with the cash of a few ads" - he couldn't put in an appearance: "That was why he wanted me to" (6.887). Now, as we have seen him console himself over the slight he suffers from Menton, and as he later says to himself of Mrs Breen, "May as well get her sympathy" (8.218), we see Bloom, the man on the make: "Leave him under an obligation: costs nothing" (6.890). Such a twist in Bloom's character, however, serves contradictory purposes. On the one hand it prevents the picture from becoming a cloying one, for he is as subject as the rest of us to petty feelings, and it reveals him as a man neither good nor bad, but like most of us somewhere in between. On the other hand, his little attempts to "get one over" on his fellow man have a comical way of backfiring. Of what possible use can it be to gain the upper hand over someone like M`Coy, a complete no-hoper, or Menton, whose absurd "Hate at first sight" (6.1012) can only be fuelled by his awareness of it? How can we but admire a man whose goodness is so powerful that it frustrates his attempts to do wrong? "The good that I would, I do not," St Paul ruefully admits, "and the evil which I would not, that I do" (Romans 7:9).

Bloom's problem is the opposite. Indeed, it might even be said that his pettiness *raises* him in our estimation. Goodness of the Griselde, Fanny Price, Esther Summerson variety cannot much impress us. for since they invariably do good and suffer evil, it is difficult for us to believe that they are tempted. The gospels emphasise the temptations of Christ so that we know he was capable of sin. Bloom's consideration is shown to be an earned grace, for he is not always like that and is quite as capable of behaving selfishly. When he does, however, the bias - what Menton dislikes him for - in his character tends to make good where he aims to do bad.

Another example is his freemasonry which, it seems, is such an open secret in Dublin (8.955-68, 12.300) that according to Molly even the Jesuits know about it (18.381). Yet he himself is unable to identify with any certainty a fellow freemason: Kernan has "Secret eyes, secretsearching. Mason, I think: not sure" (6.661), and when the moment comes that his freemasonry might actually be of use to him, in 'Circe,' it is of no avail (15.758). Molly even foresees a time when it will get him the sack: "well have him coming home with the sack soon out of the Freeman too like the rest," she thinks, "on account of those Sinner Fein or the Freemasons" (18.1227). Bloom wants influence, inclusion and secret communication: what he gets is no influence, exclusion and an open secret. (Dublin, apparently, is a good place for secrets, but not for keeping them: Corny Kelleher's is well known, too: 8.441.) It seems that Bloom is simply unable to scheme effectively.

## ii. The Black Sheep and Laughing Hyenas

Now, having developed what seems characteristic of Bloom, we must ask what can be comical about all these aspects of him. The best explanation is Henri Bergson's *Laughter*. Bergson is quite specific about the ways in which the unsociable man is comic, and it is as well to consider this side of Bloom's character now, even if we must partially anticipate a later discussion. Furthermore, although Bergson is concerned with clumsiness and automatic, thoughtless behaviour - and particularly absentmindedness - which are laughable because they are, in a famous phrase, "the mechanical encrusted on the living," there are two ways in which Bergson's study can be applied to Bloom. In a chapter devoted to farce in *Ulysses* I shall consider Bloom's clumsiness and automatism, while here I concentrate upon the social laughter generated by him.

Life, says Bergson, should be ever new and surprising, and automatism and clumsiness suggest that the person guilty of them is unresponsive. A man behaving in such a way gives the impression of being a mere machine, in fact, when he ought to be alive. "Society," he says, will be

> suspicious of all *inelasticity* of character, of mind and even of body, because it is the possible sign of a slumbering activity as well as an activity with separatist tendencies, that inclines to swerve from the common centre round which society gravitates: in short, because it is the sign of an eccentricity. (p. 72)

Bloom is indeed clumsy and often behaves automatically, and so fits Bergson's criteria of the comic: he is comical when he scurries downstairs to rescue his burning kidney, or when he has to climb into his own house, or when, his mind on other things, he makes the "freudful mistake" (*FW*.579.20) of speaking of his wife's "admirers" (12.667). The comedy of physical repetition and knockabout, however, is only one side of Bergson's argument. As the title of his study indicates, he considers the comic mainly in dramatic terms - one reason why his study fits farce so well - and the comedy of slapstick is an almost exclusively performative mode. The clown's successful ability to transform flesh into machine is comic because he is the victim who is hit but never seriously hurt, struck but never damaged. Bloom's lack of responsiveness, his absentmindedness and his clumsiness remind us of the attention necessary to live, and of the effort that is required to keep one's mind on what one is doing.[21] It is cathartic to see him make the sort of mistakes and errors we ourselves make, or nearly make, so often: Freud proposes we find it amusing when someone expends too much physical effort (clumsiness) or too little mental effort (stupidity).[22]

Above all, then, Bergson's study emphasises the social purpose of laughter: Alceste is "unsociable, and *on that very account* ludicrous." Society responds to eccentricity

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21 Freud, *Jokes*, pp. 249-56.

22 See Christian Metz, "Instant Self-Contradiction," in *On Signs*, ed. Marshall Blonsky (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp. 259-66. He draws attention to a class of mental wit missed by Freud, and examines it at the intersection of sociological, linguistic and psychoanalytical methods.

and unsociability with laughter, to restore the outsider to the social unit: It is the faults of others, he agrees, "that make us laugh, provided that we add that they make us laugh by reason of their *unsociability* rather than of their *immorality*" (p. 150, italics added). This fits Bloom's case. A jew, he is an outsider, his exclusion compounded by little eccentricities coupled with an irritating tendency to be a know-all ("of course he pretended to understand it all probably he told him he was out of Trinity college" 18.1330). Bloom refuses Dublin male values of companionship in drink and in the buying of drinks. His very existence is a threat, however impotent, for he shows that it is possible to live outside these limits. As Molly says, they enjoy

> making fun of him then behind his back I know well when he goes on with his idiotics because he has sense enough not to squander every penny piece he earns down their gullets and looks after his wife and family (18.1278)

But the laughter which Molly refers to and to which Bloom is subjected in `Cyclops' is not merely malicious, but the aggressive noise of a threatened group. "Laughter," says Bergson:

> is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed. By laughter, society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it. It would fail in its object if it bore the stamp of sympathy or kindness. (p. 187)

Bloom's role in *Ulysses*, however, suggests that in fact society needs its outsider to provide identity and belonging. The mocked alien serves this function: "When in doubt persecute Bloom," as J.J. O'Molloy puts it before the "laughing hyenas" (15.975,969). What would the city do with-

out him? If he did not exist it would be necessary for the citizen to invent him, as of course to a certain extent he does, falsely attributing to him faults of greed and statelessness. Bergson's observation - that laughter is a social act committed at the expense of the erring individual - does not lead smoothly to the melioristic conclusion that society thereby attempts to restore the individual to the fold. Dressed in black, "our hero" (16.1643) riles the citizen - here, in his own selective recall:

> At the same time he inwardly chuckled over his gentle repartee to the blood and ouns champion about his god being a jew. People could put up with being bitten by a wolf but what properly riled them was a bite from a sheep. (16.1638)

Society needs its black sheep, and Bloom is the obvious candidate.

Whatever the reasons, Bloom is never allowed to forget for long that he is the outsider, for he is humiliated and persecuted in petty ways all day. This pettiness is important, for Bloom's role is not, like a tragic hero, as exemplar of the heights or depths of human experience, but rather as comic *l'homme moyenne sensuel.* The humiliations cluster around the `Hades' episode, and culminate in Menton's rebuff, discussed above, all against the background of Bloom's presence at Dignam's funeral, one of the few to remember the dead man at all and perhaps the only person outside the immediate family who feels any emotion for him. But they begin with Simon Dedalus' barely noticeable impatience and insensitivity to a tiny act of courtesy

(6.5). Then the sighting of Boylan causes a shock of shamed embarrassment in Bloom: he suspects that they suspect that he knows that they know, but no-one is saying:

> Mr Bloom reviewed the nails of his left hand, then those of his right hand. The nails, yes. (6.200)

This parallels Stephen:

> Touch lightly with two index fingers. Aristotle´s experiment. (9.296)

It also, perhaps, parallels the crucifixion. Mr Power´s barbed remark - "--And *madame* [...] Last but not least" (6.224), while "Only politeness perhaps" (6.244) - is worse for being not quite certainly a taunt. He is considered fair game, as cuckolds always have been. Even the rain spits on his hat (6.129). Such are things that later he expects the pigeons to aim at him also. His paranoia in `Circe´ is not so wide of the mark, if today is anything to go by. Here Dedalus´ coarse execrations against Reuben J. spill over onto Bloom, also "of the tribe of Reuben" (6.251). His response, a small act of cowardice and an untypically uncharitable gesture, is to introduce the story of Reuben J. and the boatman (6.264). Justice is done, however, and he loses the story to a better teller.

The tale, one of the few structured jokes in *Ulysses*, is like the others a story featuring characters known to those present, and illustrating their known manner of behaviour. (In this instance, as the B.B.C. discovered to its cost, Joyce took his characters from life.)[23] It works on an overturned expectation: Dedalus exclaims "in fright" (6.281)

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[23] *JJ.* 38-9n.

when the key event is introduced, but the son escapes death and the return to normality is signalled by the characteristic meanness of the boy's father. With the status quo restored Dedalus is at liberty to resume his usual dry demeanour: "One and eightpence too much" (6.291). This too is a further overturned expectation: two and sixpence is a ridiculously poor tip for saving a man's life, and thus, in the joke's terms, typical of a Jew. Simon Dedalus, however, values the life of this man, because he is a Jew, at considerably less. (One and eightpence is twenty pence: "Throwaway" wins at 20/1. The real subject of the joke - antisemitism - may be rather closer to Bloom than he would care to believe. His uncharacteristic action in raising the story has rebounded upon him again.)

It is clear that in this cramped environment Bloom, with no opportunity to hide, just cannot keep out of trouble, and shortly after he is "at it again" (13.746):

> --He had a sudden death, poor fellow, [Mr Power] said.
> --The best death, Mr Bloom said.
> Their wideopen eyes looked at him.
> --No suffering, he said. A moment and all is over. Like dying in sleep.
> No-one spoke. (6.311)

Even this medium-sized gaffe - he has forgotten, if he ever knew, about the importance of the Roman Catholic sacrament of the last rites - rebounds. It leads on to Mr Power's harsh outburst against suicide and further wounds, this time certainly unintentional, to Bloom, whose father, as Martin Cunningham knows, committed suicide:

> --But the worst of all, Mr Power said, is the man who takes his own life.
> Martin Cunningham drew out his watch briskly, coughed and put it back.

> --The greatest disgrace to have in the family, Mr Power added.
> --Temporary insanity, of course, Martin Cunningham said decisively. We must take a charitable view of it.
> --They say the man who does it is a coward, Mr Dedalus said.
> --It is not for us to judge, Martin Cunningham said.
> Mr Bloom, about to speak, closed his lips again. (6.335)

Comic, then, yes: but in what sense can we call Bloom a hero? Are we, Humpty-Dumpty -like, positing a definition quite at variance with the term's accepted usage? How can be Bloom be compared with Odysseus, if not to his utter humiliation? We must define terms. Hero - and that means Ulyssean hero in this context - has two connotations, and which we choose has large implications, influencing our response not only to Bloom but to *Ulysses* as a whole. Heroism in its first meaning is conceived of as a true and timeless standard of male excellence, with an emphasis on bravery, strength and nobility. It follows, as the citizen on the heels of Bloom, that Ulysses is such a hero, and that Bloom is not. *Ulysses* depicts a sadly fallen world, with Bloom the miserable protagonist of a mock-epic which is a satire on the debased and exhausted crust of modern existence. In Eliot's words, the "mythical method" of *Ulysses* is "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[24] This is the standard view of heroism. But there is another. Heroism is

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[24] T. S. Eliot, "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth," *The Dial*, 75 (November 1923), 480-83; rpt. in *Deming*, p. 270.

neither timeless nor absolute. The heroism of Ulysses is not the mindless, fearless (and therefore unpraiseworthy) insensate heroics of an Ajax, Achilles, Hector, Diomedes and later Aeneas, but a human and familiar quality. Through the ages Ulysses has been praised and, to a remarkable degree as we shall shortly see, dispraised: but he has not for long been forgotten. He continues to exert his influence, as 1922's book of the season proves, because he is the complete hero - family man as well as wanderer - and a hero whose adventures fascinate because, as Charles Lamb puts it, he experiences the range of "internal temptations" as well as "external force."[25]

We may contrast Odysseus here with Achilles, who chooses death, the conventional heroic way and the way of sorrow but also the way that eliminates chance, compromise and failure: in a society that relies on its warriors to protect its way of life, death *is* life. Odysseus, however, chooses life, a choice that is harder for it must constantly be remade. Furthermore, he is the family man *par excellence* and the decision between heroic death and life at what cost must be paid is not for him a straightforward individual decision, but one on which depend the fates of a father, a wife and a son. The harsh words of Achilles are the luxury of those who can afford to speak straight: "The man who hides his thoughts in his heart and speaks a different word is as hateful to me as the gates of hell!" (*Iliad* 9.309)[26] The two

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[25] Preface, *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1897-8. Text of 2nd ed., 1819), rpt. in *Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, vol. III (London: Methuen, 1912), p. 240.

[26] This paragraph owes much to Torrance's chapter on

interpretations - hero as ideal and as real - are opposite ends of the definition of hero to be found in the dictionary: demi-god, halfway between god and man. Which is Joyce´s opinion of Ulysses?

It has been argued - by Eliot, for example - that Joyce thought of Bloom as a mock Ulysses. "The romantic archetypes of Hamlet and Ulysses," Northrop Frye believes, "are like remote stars in a literary heaven looking down quizzically on the shabby creatures of Dublin obediently intertwining themselves in the patterns set by their influences."[27] Darcy O´Brien argues that if we are to understand Bloom we must first see Ulysses as Joyce did. In other words, if Joyce´s Ulysses is a godlike hero of more than human courage and cunning, then Bloom, who is so mediocre, is a mock-heroic comic figure. If however Joyce´s Ulysses is not an idealized figure, then we are free to question the "poor Bloom" thesis. O´Brien, who presents the clearest reading of *Ulysses* as mock-heroic by contrast with the idealized world of Homer, proposes that the *Odyssey* provides an objective standard for judging the world of *Ulysses.* Joyce´s "stringent morality" was to be tempered by laughter.[28] But that morality, he goes on, is not abandoned, merely displaced to the *Odyssey*, which provides a means of judging Bloom and his world. If, however, we are to claim Homer as such a standard, it is necessary to ascertain Joyce´s own opinion of Ulysses (and thereby of heroism in general, we

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Odysseus, "Beggar Man, King."

[27] Frye, p. 314.

[28] O´Brien, pp. 95-6: subsequent references in parenthesis.

may add). The crux here is O´Brien´s statement that "Ulysses was a hero to James Joyce - and much the same kind of hero as he was to Homer" (p. 102).

Hugh Kenner, in *Dublin´s Joyce*, writes of the comedy of the *Odyssey* and proposes that Joyce may be closer to his source than is generally recognised.[29] O´Brien objects to this:

> Mr. Kenner does not suggest how Joyce expected his readers to obtain comparable "Homeric insight" when nearly all of them undoubtedly think of Ulysses as a crafty, resourceful, brave hero, and think of Penelope as synonymous with marital fidelity. (p. 99)

O´Brien is inconsistent here, for on the previous page he has just proposed that we must discover *Joyce´s* attitude to the *Odyssey*. His bland assertion that Ulysses the trickster is a "minority view, so far as I have been able to determine" (p. 101) is similarly irrelevant, for Joyce is quite capable of asking his reader to share a minority view with him. However, it will be useful to ask just how sure the bravery of Ulysses and the fidelity of Penelope really are, for it is upon these certainties that O´Brien´s case rests.

W. B. Stanford presents overwhelming evidence that over the centuries this "man of many turns" has been the subject of some very disrespectful speculation indeed, and the butt of numerous jokes.[30] Neither has Penelope escaped the

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[29] *Dublin´s Joyce*, pp. 190-93.

[30] Stanford, fully indexed. For supporting evidence against O´Brien see Walter Morris Hart, "High Comedy in the *Odyssey*," *University of California Publications in Classical Philology*, 12 (1943), pp. 263-278, which argues that the *Odyssey* is "rich in comedy; its comic scenes are developed by Homer with especial and loving celebration" (p. 263), and

wagging tongue of facetious scholarship. There are, in fact, "remarkable differences of opinion of the moral worth of Ulysses. No other classical hero has been the subject of so much moralistic controversy" (p. 5). Most significant, naturally, of his qualities for later adaptations of his myth is his legendary - notorious might be a better word - adaptability (pp. 6-7). The tell-tale scar incident, which Auerbach turns to such good account, reveals that his maternal grandfather is Autolycus, the most accomplished liar and thief of his day (p. 11). Pope gets around the problem of ancestry from Autolycus not by denying, but by altering him:

> *Autolycus* the bold: (a mighty name
> For spotless faith, and deeds of martial fame)...[31]

- ! Indeed, this ancestry is so damaging that in the conventionally heroic world of the *Iliad* it is deliberately avoided. Some of Autolycus´ blood runs in Odysseus´ veins, and Stanford´s lame defence hardly absolves him:

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E. D. Phillips, "The Comic Odysseus," *Greece and Rome*, 2nd series, 6 (1959), pp. 58-67, which proposes that Odysseus´

> cleverness and cunning, his odd adventures, his familiarity with all kinds of people, his ready tongue and many disguises, and the strain of rascality in him which from time to time delights Athena in the *Odyssey*, all contribute to make him by far the most suitable for comedy of the great heroes of epic legend (p. 66).

Samuel Butler´s homely version of the *Odyssey* and his *The Humour of Homer* play down the heroic: so too does Robert Graves (extract rpt. in Steiner and Fagles, eds., *Homer: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 148-51). See also Kenner, qtd. above. Torrance has an appendix citing classical interpretations of the *Odyssey* as comedy. Nonetheless, O´Brien is correct in asserting that this is a minority view.

31 Pope, *Odyssey* XIX.466-7, pp. 218-19.

> Given the many denunciations of Ulysses as a nefarious liar in the later tradition it must be emphasised that nowhere in the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* does he tell one of these unforgivable lies against a friend or a colleague. His Homeric falsehoods and deceptions are all of the less harmful kinds.... (p. 22)

The fraudulent lottery said to have been organised by Bloom (12.776, 18.1224) suggests this Autolycan ancestry.

A chapter devoted to Odysseus "The Untypical Hero" notes his short legs and long torso (*Iliad* III.190ff), and an unusually frank and realistic attitude to food - Stanford cites nine unflattering references in the *Odyssey* - and points out that for this he was accused of greed and gluttony by "Attic comedians, fourth-century philosophers, Alexandrian critics [and] late classical chroniclers" (p. 69). Thus when King Alcinous of the Phaeacians wonders whether his guest might be a god Odysseus dispels such thoughts with a robust and very human answer:

> But let me eat my dinner, despite my anguish.
> Nothing's more doglike than a snarling belly
> that never lets its presence be forgotten,
> even when one is weary and grieved at heart,
> like me, but always bids us eat and drink,
> obliterates the memory of sorrow,
> and clamors to be filled. (*Ody.* vii.208-221)

Odysseus was also accused in the later tradition of cowardice (pp. 72-4) - mostly for his initial reluctance to join up (pp. 82-4), which Homer only very casually mentions (*Odyssey* 24.118-19) - and of an inclination to tearfulness (pp. 121-22). Odysseus has a body which has the same needs as the rest of us. When he covers his nakedness before Nausicaa or abases himself to flee the Cyclops, when he complains of his hunger or assumes the status of a beggar,

we are keenly aware of him as a physical being rather than as a godlike hero. Henri Bergson's remark on what the tragic poet must avoid makes the same point:

> This is just why the tragic poet is so careful to avoid anything calculated to attract attention to the material side of his heroes. No sooner does anxiety about the body manifest itself than the intrusion of a comic element is to be feared. On this account, the hero in a tragedy does not eat or drink or warm himself.[32]

Freud too notices this type of the comic, as for example when,

> in the middle of an activity which makes demands on a person's mental powers, he is suddenly interrupted by a pain or an excretory need. The contrast which, through empathy, offers us the comic difference is that between the high degree of interest taken by him *before* the interruption and the minimal one that he has left over for his mental activity when the interruption has occurred.[33]

Stanford goes on to chart in detail his decline and fall in later tradition. Something about the character of Odysseus invited adverse comment.

So much for the heroic character of Odysseus. Now we must try to recover Joyce's opinion, for according to O'Brien:

> Before...Joyce's idea of Ulysses is ascertained, no one can be sure whether Leopold Bloom is being mocked or flattered when Joyce compares him to his mythical counterpart. (pp. 99-100)

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[32] Sypher, p. 94.

[33] *Jokes*, p. 257.

Joyce's Ulysses originated in boyhood acquaintance with Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses* (1819).[34] From biographical sources and comments in letters, O'Brien attempts to demonstrate that Joyce kept ever afterwards this idealized figure of the Trojan veteran. It follows that

> Considered in terms of Joyce's idealization of Ulysses, as discussed above, the Homeric parallel supplies the reader with an objective authorial position. The parallel acts as Joyce's technique of judgment, establishing an ideal action in contrast to the facts of Bloom's existence. (p. 113)

The evidence, however, does not bear out this interpretation.

"Why was I always returning to the theme?" mused Joyce in 1917. Carl Jung proposed that "Ulysses stands to the man Joyce as Faust to Goethe, or as Zarathustra to Nietzsche."[35] Stanford shows the hold Ulysses takes on those who rise to the challenge of creating him anew, but none ever felt so close an empathy as did Joyce. July 1917, Pfauen Cafe, Zurich: Joyce stresses to Georges Borach, who fortunately kept a journal, the "human" qualities of Ulysses.[36] The *Odyssey* theme is "more human" than any other; it has the "most beautiful, the most human traits"; it is the "most human [subject] in literature." Since the age of twelve, when he had been attracted by the "mysticism" of Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses*, the story has stayed with him. Joyce

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34 *JJ.* 46.

35 *"Ulysses*: A Monologue," *Nimbus* 2:1 (June-August 1953), p. 18.

36 *JJ.* 416-17: the remainder of this paragraph depends on this source.

wrote at school of Ulysses as "My Favourite Hero" - *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* both refer to an essay of the same title.[37] A story entitled "Ulysses" occurred to Joyce in 1906 and is mentioned again the following year - in which Oliver Duane Odysseus Gogarty was christened[38] - but it "never got any forrader than the title."[39] "When I was writing *Dubliners*," Joyce recalls, "I intended at first to choose the title of *Ulysses in Dublin*, but gave up the idea." In Rome, furthermore, "when I had finished about half the *Portrait*, I realized that the Odyssey had to be the sequel, and I began to write *Ulysses*."

Connections between Joyce and Ulysses are implied here: but in what interests him about the *Odyssey* they are present in abundance. An exile, he admires "the motif of wandering," and is himself like Ulysses a family man, a son, a father and a husband; a man whose anonymity, concealing his importance, is temporary only. He was "sowing" (writing *Ulysses*), like Ulysses, when war broke out; he too had offspring to worry for. Joyce generally ignored the world's affairs as at this time it still did his, but he knew this was no heroic conflict; so Ulysses perceives that the Trojan war was "only a pretext for the Greek merchants, who were seeking new markets." He admires the cunning of the man in overcoming superior odds, and his love of music - "the motif

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[37] Herbert Gorman, *James Joyce: A Definitive Biography* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1941), p. 45; in *Ulysses* 17.644; in *FW*.306.21.

[38] O'Connor, p. 126.

[39] Letter to Stanislaus Joyce, 6 Feb 1907, *Letters* 2:209.

of the artist, who will lay down his life rather than renounce his interest." He emphasises the maturity of Ulysses (as he is soon to misrepresent himself to Marthe Fleishmann as "*vieux*" and feeling even older. He also tells her, Shakespeare and Dante in mind, that he is thirty-five.)[40] In fact, so full of promise is the subject that Joyce is "almost afraid to touch such a theme; it´s overwhelming." That almost!

A year later, 1918, Joyce returns to the Ulysses theme, challenging Frank Budgen to "name any all-round character presented by any writer," and rejecting Christ for his bachelorhood: "Surely living with a woman is one of the most difficult things a man has to do, and he never did it." Faust he dismisses as ageless and never alone - "We see a lot of him, that´s all" - and Hamlet as a son only. Ulysses, however, is son, father, companion in arms, king.[41] The Greek´s experiences are framed in the terms of contemporary military service: the "recruiting sergeant," Ulysses the "conscient-ious objector" and inventor of the tank ("Woodenbox or iron box - it doesn´t matter"). He is "kindly," no god, but a man with "all the defects of the ordinary man" and "*gutmutig.*" Bloom is the same: "If he does something mean or ignoble, he knows it and says, `I have been a perfect pig.´"

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[40] Letter to Martha Fleischmann [? early December 1918], *Letters* 2:432.

[41] Budgen, pp. 15-18.

Three years on, in 1921 as *Ulysses* nears completion, Joyce writes:

> There is a further opinion that I am a crafty simulating and dissimulating Ulysses-like type, a `jejune jesuit´, selfish and cynical. There is some truth in this, I suppose: but it is by no means all of me (nor was it of Ulysses)....[42]

Joyce´s defence is not that Ulysses was a hero and therefore above that sort of thing: he merely denies that it is the whole truth.

A relevant minor theme in *Ulysses* is its mocking laughter at the conventional notion of male heroism - though, as always, mockery in *Ulysses* is tinged with affection, just as its admiration and affection is never without a certain mockery. This implied challenge to male standard heroism is present, however, not as a mock heroic, so that we see only the pettiness of what passes for modern heroic acts: rather, the very concept of *machismo* is challenged. Those whom the book and its protagonists recognise as heroes are made ridiculous; and, in addition, there is the dismissive laughter of women at men when they, the men, are at their most pompous. So Blazes Boylan the conquering hero (11.340), bounder, billsticker, bester and boaster (17.2145); Tom Rochford the "hero" (10.492); the ex-shotput champion citizen (12.881); and Mulligan, who saved men from drowning (1.62) - are the book´s representatives of manly bravery: yet they are at the far end of the book´s sympathies. Even James Stephens, whom the citizen got away in a genuine martial exploit (12.881), made his escape, we learn, "Got up

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[42] Letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, 24 June 1921, *Letters* 1:166.

as a young bride" (3.242) - a ruse more Ulyssean than Achillean.[43] Then, several times, we witness women's laughter at men: Molly and Floey Dillon at James Henry Menton - evidently a bad loser - when Bloom beats him at bowls (6.1013); miss Douce at men, the "frightful idiots" (11.72,79); both Douce and Kennedy at the memory of "that old fogey in Boyd's" (11.126-182: the book's most remarkable laughter); Molly, hysterically, at Ben Dollard in his "Trousers tight as a drum" (11.555: a treasured memory, 18.1285); and the two "shawls" at Bob Doran, "killed with the laughing" at his drunken swaggering (12.808). "Birds of a feather," we learn, "laugh together" (14.904), and women in *Ulysses* are given plenty of amusement by their menfolk. The "gallant pictured hero" (11.1274) gets as his applause Bloom's "Pprrpffrrppffff" (11.1293).

Somewhere in between, the "man in the gap" perhaps (14.895,16.71), is Bloom, "unconquered hero" (11.342). We can fairly confidently rule out such approbations as "My hero god!" (15.1744), made in the heat of the moment, as excessive, but what about the quieter, almost casual reference to him as hero in `Eumaeus': "I propose, our hero eventually suggested [...]" (16.1643)? He seems little cut out for the traditional hero, yet it is he who, almost in spite of himself, stands up to the citizen. In a way.

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[43] See Thornton, 43.25/44.23; and Joyce, *Critical Writings*, p. 189.

Bloom, like Odysseus, is a Parthian rather than a Pyrrhus: his courage originates in Homeric characterisation.[44] Like Stephen, like Joyce, his is moral rather than physical bravery, and as his creator said of himself, he is "morally intrepid...and abjectly cowardly in the physical sense."[45] But it is natural to be afraid, and his pusillanimity endows his stand against the citizen with a perversely heroic cast. "People could put up with being bitten by a wolf," Bloom perceptively remarks: "but what properly riled them was a bite from a sheep" (16.1638). His boldness is untypical, just as Odysseus' boastful and reckless taunting of the blinded Cyclops is so untypical that it is frequently attributed to pre-Homeric sources.[46] Commentators on Homer found comic a hero generally ruled by discretion, and as Odysseus' human qualities complicate his heroism so Bloom's heroism, revealed in comedy, enhances his humanity. Odysseus is the most human of the Greek heroes, Bloom's modest heroism similarly troubles those who do not expect comedy and seriousness to be seen in each other's company.

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[44] I have been aided in this account of Bloom as modern hero by Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 81-90; Torrance on Bloom, pp. 240-54; and an article I recommend highly, Daniel Schenker's misleadingly entitled "Stalking the Invisible Hero: Ibsen, Joyce, Kierkegaard, and the Failure of Modern Irony," *English Literary History* 51 (1984), 153-83.

[45] Letter to Stanislaus, 18 [September] 1905, *Letters* 2:108.

[46] e.g. Stanford p. 77.

If his boldness in the barney at Barney's is uncharacteristic, his subsequent elaboration of it is not (e.g. 16.1637). This reminds us that we do not ourselves witness Odysseus' adventure: we hear his version of it at the court of the Phaeacians, and it is tempting to speculate that the boastfulness exhibited in the Parthian shot that so nearly cost Odysseus his life may be exhibited also in his report of it. Bloom is another Odysseus in etymology also. I have already mentioned Joyce's fanciful derivation of Odysseus from *outis* and *zeus*, but the *Odyssey* itself apparently glosses the hero's name as "many enemies have found me odious" (Od. 19.393).[47] Bloom would understand, as he would the twelve Greek versions of the word Odysseus: his own name is garbled, comically frustrating his youthful ambition to squint at verses in print signed with "The name of yours truly, L. Bloom" (17.401). Odysseus - *polutropos*, man of many turns[48] - is the ideal model for a comic and heroic figure, as the irreverent tradition demonstrates. Tensions in him - centrifugality and centripedality, comedy and heroism, humanity and godhood, strength and wile, fidelity and adventurousness, boastfulness and discretion - make him suited to Joyce's needs for a comic character we can admire

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47 Stanford, pp. 11-12, and George E. Dimock, Jnr, "The Name of Odysseus," *The Hudson Review* 9 (1956), pp. 52-70, rpt. in Steiner and Fagles, eds., pp. 106-21.

48 POLYTROPOS occurs only twice in the Odyssey - at 1.1 and 10.330 - and nowhere else in the Homeric corpus except in the "Hymn to Hermes" where, significantly, it designates the crafty god of thieves who marked the day of his birth by inventing the lyre and filching the kine of Apollo. See *Hesiod, the Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, trans. H. G. Evelyn-White, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ Press, 1936), p. 364.

and a hero we can laugh at. To search for resolution of these opposites in Bloom is to miss the point. As Stanford says of Bloom's earlier incarnation: "His psychological tensions never reach a breaking point. They serve rather to give him his dynamic force" (p. 78).

Odysseus is an untypical hero, and as he in Joyce's fanciful etymology fuses both god and no-one, so too does Bloom.[49] O'Brien's argument, which I have taken as representative of the reading of *Ulysses* as mock-heroic, pivots upon the assumption that Joyce shared O'Brien's view of Homer. If we allow the evidence to shape the conclusion and not the other way about, it is clear that this position is untenable. Bloom's are not the heroic virtues of physical strength and bravery, but the argument of *Ulysses* is everywhere against simple solutions to complex problems. The carnage at the conclusion of the *Odyssey* - which disgusted Joyce as it has disgusted many others, seeming to him "unUlyssean" and causing him a considerable technical problem - demonstrates that Ulysses can wield the sword.[50] Far from encapsulating all the qualities of the Greek war hero, however, he has often been thought to lack in very virtues no hero can be seen without. Worse, he is not merely cunning but duplicitous. Yet the unheroic qualities that in previous centuries had given rise to embarrassment, speculation and even merriment have made him the model for the nearest that our own century can lay claim to as a hero.

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49 Aldous Huxley reports Joyce claiming that Odysseus combined *Outis* and *Zeus*: *JJ.*361.

50 Budgen, p. 262.

We no longer have faith in dying gloriously, the traditional end for the tragic hero (but not Ulysses). The First World War, during which Joyce was creating a modern - and therefore comic - hero, killed off that ideal. Surviving, struggling through, merits our respect. As Mulligan challenges and thereby validates Stephen, so Bloom challenges and validates the character of Odysseus. Odysseus adds to our perception of Bloom, and Bloom Odysseus: comedy and heroism, united in a comic heroism, are more capable of exploring the full range of human experience together than they are individually.

## CHAPTER SIX:

## FARCE IN `CYCLOPS´AND `CIRCE´

### i: *the slump in the human solid*[1]

> [I]n their purely bodily aspect, which is not clearly distinct from the cosmic, the upper part is the face or the head and the lower part is the genital organs, the belly and the buttocks....Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving.[2]

In *Ulysses* birth and sex - life - unite, while death divides. This chapter discusses farce, the comic mode which brings together these ends of the spectrum. Bloom (who had a

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1 Samuel Beckett, "The Essential and the Incidental" (a review of Sean O´Casey´s *Windfalls*), *Bookman* vol. 86 (December 1934), Christmas Supplement p. 111.

2 Bakhtin, p. 21: subsequent references in parenthesis.

potential future career as "Charles Wyndham, high comedian" 17.793, and in `Ithaca´ is reduced to an "eccentric public laughingstock" 17.1942) embodies mechanical behaviour and physicality: two different but complementary aspects of human flesh. The first image of man embraced by the century and relevant to Joyce´s jew, which I approach by a brief discussion of Bergson´s *Laughter*, is of the comic victim who is a passive and suffering helpless unit, a cog in the world- or social-machine: in Chaplin´s *Modern Times* (1936), literally so.[3] The comedy of this image, the little man knocked about and thrown down by forces outside his control, is its saving grace, a way of overcoming human fear that there might be more to it than we care to believe.[4] We laugh not because Chaplin falls, but because he rises and thereby achieves a minor victory. His survival, and the happy ending snatched against overwhelming odds, enables us to confront and for the moment overcome our fears. But comedy also imposes limits. The trite conclusion is as arbitrarily imposed as the restoration of fortune improbably tacked onto the story of Job, but a happy ending is humanity´s way of coping: the alternative is despair. Comedy enables human

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[3] Rpt. in *Laughter*, ed. Sypher. Mary Parr, *James Joyce: The Poetry of Conscience* (Milwaukee: Inland Press, 1961) attempts at great length to persuade that Leopold Bloom is based very closely on Charlie Chaplin. She fails.

With Bloom as victim compare *FW.*42.17-47.33, where HCE is expelled. As Adaline Glasheen, *Third Census of* Finnegans Wake (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977), p. xxxii, points out, "the rann, the rann, the king of all ranns" (*FW.* 44.16-17 *et al*) refers to the song sung after the Hunting of the Wren.

[4] See David Krause, "The Principle of Comic Disintegration," *JJQ*, Sean O´Casey issue, 8:1 (Fall 1970), 3-12.

kind to overcome what it cannot stand very much of. Since Freud taught us how much remains beyond our awareness, let alone our control, mastery of the body seems more elusive, harder to achieve and maintain. Machines have given us a new metaphor for the body as automaton and for society as a unit in which each of its members is merely an expendable part. The other image of man with which this chapter is concerned is approached through Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World.* As repression became considered undesirable under the influence of the new psychology, so in carnival - the ritual release of socially disruptive behaviour - comic theory found the source of comic laughter. The pressures of everyday living imposed by social constraint and responsibility cannot be sustained indefinitely, and the holiday, which turns accepted standards upside down, provides a vital escape valve.[5] Bakhtin's is a special version of this idea, involving a conception of the social body essential to an understanding of the human body and its functions in Rabelaisian comedy. This provides a fertile method for discussing the physicality of Bloom, often

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[5] Bakhtin thinks of true carnival as revolutionary, but the evidence from anthropology suggests that it reinforces rather than challenges the status quo: see e.g. Max Gluckman, "Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa," in his *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956). For a critique of Bakhtin's ideas of revolutionary carnival, see Umberto Eco, "The Frames of Comic Freedom," in *Carnival!* ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, Approaches to Semiotics 64 (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), pp. 1-9. The absence of Joyce and *Ulysses* from Bakhtin's discussion is explained by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist as a result of the First Writers' Congress in 1934 and the disfavour with which Joyce was subsequently regarded: *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), p. 317.

noticed but rarely subjected to real critical insight.[6] The comedy of the carnival allows one to turn the tables and to reassert one's individuality, albeit temporarily, and the anarchy we relish in Laurel and Hardy and Marx Brothers movies is a vicarious pleasure in the thwarting or destruction of the social machine, the individual regaining control of destiny. These two strands of experience are present in *Ulysses* - as they are in comedy - united in farce. Consequently, although Bergson and Bakhtin are considered separately, their concerns converge in *Ulysses* and therefore in this chapter.

Halfway through `Lotus Eaters' Bloom is denied the sight of the woman getting up into the carriage by the passing tramcar, and the conversation with M'Coy to which he halfheartedly attends gains comically from our knowledge of the superimposed context:

> --Yes, yes, Mr Bloom said after a dull sigh.
> Another gone.
> --One of the best, M'Coy said. (5.136)[7]

Underlying this comic cross-purposes, however, is the melancholy reflection that chances go by and cannot be seized,

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[6] Parrinder, pp. 6-13, 177-79, 187, 190-197, is one who considers similar aspects of Joyce's work - but he does so under the notion of the grotesque (as does Gose, chs. 6 and 10). This chapter is therefore complementary to their work. See too Vivian Mercier, "Macabre and Grotesque Humour in the Irish Tradition," in his *The Irish Comic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), which generally finds Joyce *of* rather than *in* the Irish tradition. A section on the Irish Wake (pp. 49-53) examines the association in Irish thought between sex and death.

[7] See David Daiches, "Misunderstanding as Humour: An Aspect of the English Comic Tradition," rpt. in his *More Literary Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), pp. 19-41.

death claims all: "Always happening like that," Bloom observes (5.133). The letter Bloom receives from Martha, weakly erotic as it is, at least attempts communication, connection - "Dear Henry, when will we meet?" (5.249) - and the episode ends with Bloom forseeing his body "naked, in a womb of warmth" and his own "limp father of thousands" (5. 567, 571).[8] Sex connects.

Death divides. Bloom's exclusion - man as an island - is foregrounded first in the next episode, which concerns the burial of Patrick Dignam. In the presence of death Simon Dedalus, who does not see his son, who is in turn alone, looks older and weary, his jokes "getting a bit damp" (6. 57). Bloom is reminded of his own dead son. Between Mr Power and the woman he keeps "there is no carnal" (6.246). Martin Cunningham's wife is a drunkard, "pawning the furniture on him every Saturday almost. Leading him the life of the damned" (6.350). The price of a life is a florin, and even that is considered "One and eightpence too much" (6.291). Poor little Paddy would not begrudge his mourners a laugh, told many a good one himself, but is remembered only for being "As decent a little man as ever wore a hat" (6.297, 303). Four days dead he has faded into a hazy memory: Odysseus, putting his arms around his mother, clasps only air. Death severs connections, blood is of no account. In the midst of this bleak finality, however, life struggles to

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[8] Later, the prostitute Zoe remarks that the priest who visited her could not "get a connection" (15.2561). Compare Stephen's "*omphalos*": "Hello! Kinch here. Put me on to Edenville. Aleph, alpha: nought, nought, one" (3.39). The theme of New Comedy, Northrop Frye argues, is social integration of the hero, and therefore connection/sex. (*Anatomy*, pp. 44-45, 163.)

reassert itself and be born again. The signs come ambiguously at first - the suicide found clutching at rushes (6.348), Cunningham's sympathy for Bloom's embarrassment (6.339), the young student "gone over to the lying-in hospital.... From one extreme to the other" (6.381). Death does not surrender without a struggle, of course, as the Dignam procession passes the site of the Childs murder (6.469), and the other funeral's central figure "Got here before us, dead as he is" (6.510). Slowly, however, life and laughter, not the parasitic and exhausting laughter of exclusion that we saw earlier but the laughter of shared humanity, begin to stir: "How life begins" (6.81). Sheep, driven towards death, are still alive and running (6.387); Paddy Dignam bursts from his coffin, even if only in Bloom's imagination (6.421), and the child's funeral disappears (6.506). In the midst of teeming life there are "Funerals all over the world everywhere every minute," but despite "Shovelling them under by the cartload doublequick. Thousands every hour" there are still "Too many in the world" (6.514). Death and life are working flat out, and life is gaining the upper hand: Dignam himself has done more than his share, leaving five children. But the widow "Has the laugh at him now" (6.543), for secretly, surviving our contemp-oraries gives us more life. In the end, "One must go first: alone, under the ground" (6.554). Sex connects, death divides. Father Coffey - his proximity to death discovered in his name - is (literally, according to Simon Dedalus,

6.597) bursting with life, and Bloom himself is cheered by death: "The ree the ra the ree the ra the roo. Lord, I mustn´t lilt here" (6.640). Somehow, from death comes life.

But how can life reassert itself in death, how in the midst of death are we in life (6.759)? Certainly not by Mr Kernan´s platitudinous "*I am the resurrection and the life*" (6.670), the technical difficulties of which Bloom perceives at once in vivid terms: "Then every fellow mousing around for his liver and his lights and the rest of his traps" (6.679). In essence the Christian consolation of "That last day idea" (6.677), so vague and therefore apparently opposed to Mulligan´s brutal "beastly" death, is, like it, another means of evading the truth. We are not, as Mulligan would have us believe, beasts, for we mourn our dead, as Stephen does bitterly. Bloom muses: "First thing strikes anybody. Bury the dead" (6.810). Neither, on the other hand, are we spirits resting peacefully without corruption for the last trump, nor is memory a way in which life can fend off death. The memory of Dignam is fading already: as his coffin is lowered Bloom knows that he will "Begin to be forgotten. Out of sight, out of mind" (6.872). The most widowed of all widows, Victoria, in the end put a few violets in her hair and turned her attention from the shadow-consort to her son´s substance (6.550). Stephen´s obsessive guilt about his mother´s death would seem to contradict this fading awareness of the dead, but he cannot preserve her, and in `Circe´ she appears not as a perfectly preserved ghost, as Fr Flynn was "such a beautiful corpse" (*D.*14), but as a putrified cadaver (15.4157). Parnell´s memory, Ivy Day, is fading and

the Chief will not, as legend insists, return (6.855). Flowers, which wither, are to Bloom a more "poetical" tribute than garlands of unexpressive bronzefoil (6.946). Bloom's invention of a graveside gramophone to preserve the memory of the dead could only ever be a stopgap: "Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseeagain hellohello amawf krpthsth" (6.965).

Perhaps John O'Connell, whose living is death, and who by his name seems to resurrect one of Glasnevin's most celebrated residents, has a better idea of how to overwhelm death with life, for his joke of Terence Mulcahy from the Coombe is intended to "cheer a fellow up... It's pure goodheartedness" (6.737). In his own vague way Bloom considers this matter in more detail shortly afterwards: "You must laugh sometimes so better do it that way. Gravediggers in *Hamlet.* Shows the profound knowledge of the human heart" (6.791). If the process of life is to begin we must ignore death for a moment: "Want to keep her mind off it to conceive at all" (6.753), and O'Connell's eight children testify to his ability to do so. "In the midst of death," muses Bloom, successfully inverting received wisdom, "we are in life. Both ends meet" (6.759). Death feeds on life - Stephen's ghastly vision of a babe-devouring God and the blood drunk by the "Famished ghosts" (14.1285, 8.730) in Homer's Hades - but life, too, feeds on death: "You might pick up a young widow here" (6.757), thinks Bloom, converting this comforting doctrine of life in the midst of death into vivid and comically practical images: "Well preserved fat corpse, gentlemen, epicure, invaluable for fruit garden." "The

Botanic Gardens are just over there. It´s the blood sinking in the earth gives new life" (6.770). The danger of such an attractively economical arrangement is that we forget how it operates, for it is only at the lowest level that life goes on: "Of course the cells or whatever they are go on living. Changing about. Live for ever practically" (6.780). To the bodies of human beings, however, decomposition is a "Dreadful" thing, and Bloom does not try to evade it (6.777). But death - "Death´s number" - demonstrates its fertile powers by producing as if from nowhere the man in the macintosh: "Where the deuce did he pop out of?" (6.826). It occurs to Bloom to wonder about Dignam: "And if he was alive all the time?" (6.865).

The question is not as daft as it seems, for Paddy Dignam shares with Tim Finnegan an awkward reluctance to accept the inevitable. He dignifies - nominally at least - every episode from `Calypso´ (excepting only `Scylla and Charybdis´) onwards, up to and including `Penelope,´ and he proves quite unexpectedly difficult to bury. In *Ulysses*, it seems, you can´t keep even a nonentity down. The first quiet intimation of Paddy´s tenacity is when M´Coy relates to a distracted Bloom that he couldn´t believe the news when he heard it: "I was with him," he recalls, "no later than Friday last or Thursday was it in the Arch" (5.127). Second, and rather more shocking, is Dignam´s "resurrection" in `Hades´: "Bom! Upset. A coffin bumped out on to the road. Burst open. Paddy Dignam shot out and rolling over stiff in the dust in a brown habit too large for him" (6.421). It is only Bloom´s imagination, of course, but a nasty moment

nonetheless. Then, in mid-afternoon (preceding a discussion of capital punishment and the erection of the "poor bugger´s tool that´s being hanged," 12.457) comes news of a sighting:

> --Paddy Dignam dead! says Alf.
> --Ay, says Joe.
> --Sure I´m after seeing him not five minutes ago, says Alf, as plain as a pikestaff. (12.321)

Still, dead or not, they "took the liberty of burying him this morning anyhow" (12.332). A more gruesome instance of the sheer vitality of flesh comes in the Nameless One´s ferocious mental assault on the "*Black Beast Burned in Omaha, Ga,*" who requires hanging, burning, drowning, electrocution *and* crucifixion "to make sure of their job" (12.1324). So it is not surprising that Dignam should return yet again in `Circe´ (15.1209).

Life in *Ulysses*, then, is a strong, stubborn and tenacious force, and if Mina Purefoy´s difficulty in giving birth to Mortimer Edward (14.1334) indicates that life needs a big push to get it going, Dignam´s restless corpse implies that, once in motion, it takes a great deal to stop it. Sex is powerful: Bloom remembers it "breaking out" in Milly even as a child (4.295), and though her mother says she would "rather die 20 times over than marry another of their sex" (18.231), the sexual instinct in Molly, as in Bloom, shows no signs of abating. There has remained, it is true, "a period of 10 years, 5 months and 18 days during which carnal intercourse ha[s] been incomplete, without ejaculation of semen within the natural female organ" (17.2282), but sexual contact of other forms has taken place, as it will tonight, and Molly has now been driven, rather reluctantly one feels

(18.1516), and with Bloom somewhat ambiguously looking on, to seek extra-marital satisfaction. Stephen's image is crude and even brutal, but it sums up the potency of sex and life in this teeming book:

> once a woman has let the cat into the bag (an esthete's allusion, presumably, to one of the most complicated and marvellous of all nature's processes - the act of sexual congress) she must let it out again or give it life, as he phrased it, to save her own. (14.1304)

From the womb to the tomb every bodily function, all rutting and rotting flesh is here: excretion (Bloom, `Telemachus'), micturition (The Nameless One, `Cyclops'; Murphy, `Eumaeus'; Bloom and Stephen, `Ithaca'; Molly, `Penelope'),[9] masturbation (Stephen, `Proteus';[10] Bloom, `Nausicaa'), parturition (Myna Purefoy, `Oxen of the Sun'), sweating (Bloom, `Lestrygonians'), dressing (Mulligan, `Telemachus'), falling asleep (Bloom, `Ithaca') eating (passim.), drinking (passim.), nosepicking (Stephen, `Proteus'),[11] smelling (passim.), toenail picking and smelling (Bloom, `Ithaca'), shaving (Mulligan, `Telemachus'), spitting (the citizen, `Cyclops'; Murphy, `Eumaeus'), scratching (Bloom, `Ithaca'),

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[9] For the association in Joyce's mind between urine and creativity see: W. Y. Tindall, *James Joyce: His Way of Interpreting the Modern World*, Twentieth Century Library (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 118; Tindall, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), pp. 137, 147, 152-3 *et passim*; Clive Hart *Structure and Motif*, pp. 206-08; A. Walton Litz, "Ithaca," in Hart and Hayman, p. 401; and Fr. Robert Boyle, "Penelope," also in Hart and Hayman, pp. 426-27.

[10] According to David Hayman, Stephen masturbates rather than urinates on the beach: "Stephen on the Rocks," *JJQ* 15 (1977), 5-17.

[11] According to Parrinder, p. 9, Stephen is the "first fictional hero" to perform this action.

fighting (Sergeant Carr, `Circe´), farting (Bloom, `Lestrygonians´), belching (cabmen, `Proteus,´ professor MacHugh, `Aeolus,´ The Navvy, Privates Carr and Compton, and Bello, `Circe´) dying (Paddy Dignam), menstruation (Gerty, `Nausicaa´; Molly, `Penelope´).[12] The words flesh and cognates occur more than fifty times in *Ulysses*.[13]

## ii: *A farce we know´s beneath the critick´s care*[14]

I began this chapter with Mikhail Bakhtin´s remarks concerning degradation and the lower part of the body. These observations come in a study of laughter and the comic in Rabelais, but I want to apply them to *Ulysses*, or rather to the particular comic aspect of the book I have been drawing out in the first pages of this chapter. Human physicality is so pervasive in *Ulysses*, and so near its comic sources, that it seems permissible to introduce that despised and neglected comic form, farce, as a guiding influence. In line with my practice throughout this thesis, however, I shall commence with some theoretical observations on farce before advancing to the three purposes of it in the book which I intend to explore.

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[12] Perhaps Joyce wrote out a similar list: among the notesheets for `Circe,´ for example, is the crossed out line "[...] urine, spittle, saliva, sweat." *Archive* 12:58; see Herring, *Notesheets*, line 28, p. 343. According to Herring´s chronology (see p. 526), this note would have been made in about mid 1920 - i.e. about the time Joyce´s letter and schema were sent to Linati.

[13] 52, to be precise: thank you, *Handlist*.

[14] Prologue, *The Whim* (1734). Qtd. in Leo Hughes, *A Century of English Farce* (London: Oxford University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1956), p. 278n.

In common with other species of the comic, there are difficulties about farce. It is easier to identify than define: I note, for example, a study of some four hundred and fifty pages confidently entitled *The Comprehensive and Definitive Account of Farce: One of the World's Funniest Art Forms*, which progresses only fourteen pages before its author admits: "I haven't come across a plausible definition, and I won't attempt one."[15] The problem would seem to be the distinction between it and the genres that surround, and at various points very closely resemble, it: burlesque, knockabout, black comedy, grotesquery, music-hall and pantomime. Fortunately that problem, although pressing, need not concern us here, for by "farce" we can mean in this context those elements in *Ulysses* that approximate to dictionary definitions of farce and similar genres, reservations notwithstanding. Barbara Freeman has done the necessary census:

> A survey of definitions of farce in dictionaries, encyclopedias, and literary and theatrical glossaries...provides us with three basic stuctural elements to which [laughter in farce] may be attributed: an absurd situation, normally unacceptable libidinal action, and flat, surrealistic characters.[16]

Our aim in identifying those elements in the book is not merely to label them, but to understand what they do, and we do not therefore need absolute precision, a concept in any

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[15] Albert Bermel (New York: Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, 1982).

[16] Barbara Freedman, "Errors in Comedy: A Psychoanalytic Theory of Farce," in *Shakespearean Comedy*, ed. Maurice Charney (New York: New York Literary Forum 5-6, 1980), p. 235.

case problematic in discussions of comedy. On the other hand it would be foolish to ignore the attempts that have been made to describe the techniques characteristic of farce. Leo Hughes supplies one list:

> concealment, with all the possibilities of disguise and posture; repetition, which may be exploited to whatever limits the circumstances warrant; perhaps most significant, violent physical action, tumbling, beating, noise.

To supplement Hughes' list we can use Jessica Milner Davis' attempt at definition of the joking characteristic of farce:

> Firstly, it invites laughter by the violation of social taboos whether those of adult propriety, or those of hierarchy...The aggression is both sufficiently precise to be psychologically valid and yet sufficiently delimited to qualify as play. Secondly, these jokes... [tend] rather to an indulgent, perhaps an ironic acceptance of the human condition. Thirdly, the participants in the joking are not usually self-aware characters who reflect upon their mischief and its consequences. They are type-characters whose automatism is obvious and whose playful plight demands little sympathy.... Essentially, the comic spirit of farce is one which delights in taboo-violation, but which avoids implied moral comment or social criticism, and which tends to debar empathy for its victims.[17]

Finally, we return to Barbara Freedman, who makes a similar point in her psychoanalytical theory of farce:

> farce is a type of comedy deriving laughter chiefly from the release and gratification of aggressive impulses, accomplished by a denial of the cause (through absurd situations) and the effect (through a surrealistic medium) of aggressive action upon an object, and functioning through the plot in a disguised punitive fashion which is directly related to the characters' disguised libidinal release.[18]

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[17] Jessica Milner Davis, *Farce*, Critical Idiom Series (London: Methuen, 1978), pp. 85-6.

[18] Freedman, p. 238.

In short: concealment, repetititon, violence, the violation of taboos, psychologically precise joking, an acceptance of the human condition and automatism - these are the qualities of farce we shall be exploring in *Ulysses*. A strong Irish connection is Sean O'Casey, and in particular the elements in his work noticed by Samuel Beckett in a review of *Windfalls* (1934), a connection which I hope justifies the length of this quotation:

> Mr. O'Casey is a master of knockabout in this very serious and honourable sense - that he discerns the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities, and activates it to their explosion. This is the energy of his theatre, the triumph of the principle of knockabout in situation, in all its elements and on all its planes, from the furniture to the higher centres. If "Juno and the Paycock," as seems likely, is his best work so far, it is because it communicates most fully this dramatic dehiscence, mind and world come asunder in irreparable dissociation - "chassis" (the credit of having readapted Aguecheek and Belch in Joxer and the Captain being incidental to the larger credit of having dramatised the slump in the human solid). This [is the] impulse of material to escape and be consummate in its own knockabout...[19]

A second, more pressing problem is that as we struggle to isolate the comic moments of *Ulysses* - for, looking again, we find that we are told too much simply to laugh and forget - so it is difficult to consider farcical moments out of context. As Eric Bentley has pointed out, the success or failure of a joke and indeed of any comic moment depends as much as its timing (context) as its elements (content).[20]

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[19] "The Essential and the Incidental," p. 111. The review in total is only about 500 words.

[20] Bentley, *Life of the Drama*, p. 324-5.

Ripeness is all. It will be enough for the purposes of identification if we can point to elements of farce (or something approximating it) where they contribute to *Ulysses.*

There remains, however, one further problem, one which we have encountered everywhere in the discussion of comedy. As might be expected of a genre named with a term borrowed ultimately from the kitchen and come relatively late into dramatic language, farce has been despised.[21] Since attention turned to the ritual and social importance of comedy, however, it has enjoyed a successful run, as it were. Even so, Corrigan prefaces his collection of comic criticism with a note of "despair" that the section on farce should yield such "slim pickings." Farce, he observes, has been "woefully neglected by modern critics."[22] Prejudice can be seen to linger too in a strong preference for abstract theory and the study of ancient or mediaeval rather than modern practice. Joyce's insistence on the inclusion of farce and other equally disesteemed comic modes - parody, catalogue, catechism, grotesquerie - strikes modern readers less than it did his contemporaries, partly no doubt because of his own success at using these forms seriously. Nonetheless, one of the meanings of "farce" is still derogatory, and in Joyce's time its theatrical definition in the *OED* (1901) depended upon the low evaluation of comedy in general as

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[21] "Farce" is old English, meaning to stuff: *Finnegans Wake* makes use of the residual ambiguity of the term: "a whale's egg farced with pemmican" (*FW.*120.11); more explicitly: "forced to farce!" (*FW.*374.11).

[22] Corrigan, p. ix.

art: "A dramatic work (usually short) which has for its sole object to excite laughter." When the exciting of laughter is not considered important in itself, a form (usually short) which does nothing else will not be considered important, and farce merits a mere nineteen lines in the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica* (11th ed., 1910-11), less than half the length of the entry which follows it, Fareham (pop. 8000). Perhaps farce was considered to be in terminal decline - but then, like the novel, it usually has been. It does not pretend to serious literary merit, and for this reason has generally been ignored until examples of it are sufficiently cold and stiff to enable discussion to take place - and, although death is very much involved, the mortuary is the place least suited to the vulgar and manically alive world of farce. Maurice Charney could just as well have been speaking of Joyce, or in general terms when he observed that "the exclusively literary interpretation of Beckett tends to emphasize his symbolism and his `philosophy´ at the expense of his comic genius."[23]

As we have seen, comedy has not infrequently been despised by critics and artists alike. How much worse then must farce appear, a genre of the comic commonly defined negatively in terms of its inferiority to comedy. "Comedy presents us with the imperfections of human nature: Farce entertains us with what is monstrous and chimerical," wrote

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[23] Maurice Charney, *Comedy High and Low* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 112. See his discussion of farce, pp. 97-115 (and particularly tragic farce, pp. 105-15.)

Dryden, and Rymer, in a remark not meant kindly, called *Othello* "bloody farce."[24] Thomas Wilkes, in 1759, is more specific:

> [Farce] delights with oddity, and unexpected turns: it has in one thing indeed the same effect as Comedy, viz. it produces laughter; but it is not a laughter founded upon reason, excited by the check given to folly, the reproof to ignorance, or the lash to corruption.[25]

Reasons are easily found for the cloud of disapproval which hangs over farce in respectable critical circles down to our own day.[26] Recent peremptory dismissals of the genre such as Richard Taylor's begin to look highly suspect:

> Farce as a sub-genre of comedy does exist on its own and was very popular in Victorian time as well as in the early twentieth century, but it involves broad or low humour as an end in itself and lacks a significant theme. It is not much admired at the present time.[27]

But in general farce is now accepted as important and possessing a long and distinguished history. Indeed Charney, who has written extensively on comedy, goes as far as to consider it "the purest and most absolute form of comedy," and Kerr calls it "the fundamental comic form."[28] Perhaps,

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[24] John Dryden, Preface to *An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer, a Comedy* (1668), in *Works*, ed. Sir Walter Scott (Edinburgh: 1883), III.241. Rymer, qtd. in Hughes, *Century of Farce*, p. 13n.

[25] Thomas Wilkes, *General View of the Stage* (1759), qtd. in Hughes *Century of Farce*, p. 17.

[26] See Leo Hughes, "Attitudes of Some Restoration Dramatists toward Farce," *Philological Quarterly*, XIX (1940), pp. 268-87.

[27] Richard Taylor, *Understanding the Elements of Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 116.

[28] Charney, *Comedy High and Low*, p. xi. Kerr, p. 309.

as Davis hints, it even shares the same origins as dramatic comedy itself, having the same "combination of elements, festive and aggressive [which] has been shown to characterize the fertility rituals which lie at the root of dramatic comedy."[29]

One purpose of farce and pantomime in `Circe´ - besides the obvious one of contributing to the episode´s form[30] - is to lighten the unbearably burdensome. Bloom´s mother appears in pantomime dame´s stringed mobcap and widow Twankey´s costume (15.283), and his own meteoric Messianic career begins with an echo from another pantomime, Dick Whittington: "Turn again, Leopold! Lord mayor of Dublin!" (15.1364).[31] "Stage Irishman!" Paddy Leonard accuses, but The Veiled Sibyl defends him as "the funniest man on earth" (15.1729, 15.1737). "All the people cast soft pantomime

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[29] Davis pp. 26-7. Hughes, *Century of Farce*, is essential reading.

[30] David Hayman, "Forms of Folly in Joyce: A Study of Clowning in *Ulysses*," *Journal of English Literary History* 34 (1967), p. 283: "In order to keep from losing all sense of form he drew heavily on the traditional means of presenting chaos: pantomime, feast of fools, mock tribunal, saturnalia, minstrel show, harliquinade, etc." See also his "sequel," "Farcical Themes and Forms in *Finnegans Wake*," *JJQ* 11 (1974), 323-42.

[31] For Joyce´s interest, as child and as adult, see J. S. Atherton, "*Finnegans Wake*: `The Gist of the Pantomime,´" *Accent* 15 (1955), 14-26. "Allusions to pantomime," he notes, "began to be inserted about 1925, and it was probably about that time that he decided he was writing a sort of pantomime himself" (p. 16): Joyce saw pantomimes at the Gaiety Theatre, South King St., Dublin (p. 18). See also David Hayman, "Circe," in Hart and Hayman, pp. 271-74.

stones" (15.1902),[32] and after his incineration he becomes a very parody of the stage Irishman (Boucicault and Synge's, mostly):

> *(in caubeen with clay pipe stuck in the band, dusty brogues, an emigrant's red handkerchief bundle in his hand, leading a black bogoak pig by a sugaun, with a smile in his eye)* (15.1960).

Messianic Bloom "performs juggler's tricks, draws red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet silk handkerchiefs from his mouth" (15.1603), walks on a net and hangs from the top ledge of Nelson's Pillar by his eyelids (15.1841). (The original meaning of pantomime - *panto-mimus*, the imitator of all - partially explains Bloom's versatility.) But these pantomime echoes are part of his hidden life only, and in his waking hours Bloom is claimed as the clown's father, but isn't (17.975-85), and once tried to write a topical song for a pantomime *Sinbad the Sailor*, but, for half a dozen reasons, couldn't (17.417-445). The pantomime and farcical elements of `Circe' cluster around Bloom rather than Stephen, whose `Circe' is a much darker hell; for while Bloom's world must also be "soakoonaloosed" (see *FW*.522.34) it is Stephen's bitter nightmares that terrify. Daytime logic may be abandoned in Nighttown, but Stephen's quotation of Maeterlinck in `Scylla and Charybdis' holds: "*If Socrates leave his house today he will find the sage seated on his doorstep. If Judas go forth tonight it is to*

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[32] For a superb description of the violence of the English pantomime in the 1840s, see Charles Baudelaire, "On the Essence of Laughter and, in general, on the Comic in the Plastic Arts," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, ed. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), pp. 159-62.

*Judas his steps will tend*" (9.1042). Bloom, older, wiser, confronted with the darkness of his soul, is not overcome as Stephen is. Farce is the mode, then, paradoxically because of the seriousness of the content: we are shielded from the full force of the blast by an emphasis on the ludicrousness of the images. This difference between Bloom and Stephen´s `Circe´ is evident in Mulligan´s role. Diagnosing Bloom he finds a ridiculous medley of symptoms - "He is prematurely bald from selfabuse, perversely idealistic in consequence, a reformed rake, and has metal teeth" (15.1780) - but the comedy remains firmly rooted in the fertile symbolic soil of Bloom´s masturbation and idealism. When Mulligan appears to Stephen, however, he introduces Stephen´s mother and accuses him of her death (15.4157-4171). This too is drawn from the psyche, but Stephen´s is morbid. It is not Mulligan who changes but his audience, and while to Bloom he is just a young medic, to Stephen he is a usurper associated with the Agenbite of Inwit.

Paradoxically, however, while one purpose of farce in `Circe´ is to alleviate the gloom with slapstick, and while it is more Bloom´s arguably healthier phantasies than Stephen´s morbid nightmares that generate it, farce, by its avoidance of intellectual content, its slapstick, its brutal humour and its dependence on coincidence rather than constructed plot, is a harsh and disturbing presence. We are to think not of Feydeau or Ben Travers but of Eliot´s description of Marlowe which appeared the year after the end of the Great War:

> If one takes *The Jew of Malta* not as a tragedy, or as a "tragedy of blood," but as a farce, the concluding act becomes intelligible....I say farce, but with the enfeebled humour of our times the word is a misnomer; it is the farce of the old English humour, the terribly serious, even savage comic humour, the humour which spent its last breath in the decadent genius of Dickens.[33]

The cruelty of farce has appalled both those who believe in the essential goodness of humanity and those who believe that if we are to progress mankind must learn from his art and not feed his baser instincts there. George Bernard Shaw is an eloquent critic of farce as cruel laughter. "To laugh without sympathy," he says, "is a ruinous abuse of a noble function; and degradation of any race may be measured by the degree of their addiction to it." He speaks too of "the deliberate indulgence of that horrible, derisive joy in humiliation and suffering which is the beastliest element in human nature."[34] Shaw's objection falls into two related but distinct parts. He objects to malicious laughter firstly for the same reason most of us object to it at one time or another: it shows us in an uncomplimentary light. The cruelty of farce is indeed worth examining, for Shaw misunderstands it. It is true that we hate to think that we are made happy at the misery of others. A letter in *Chamber's Journal* in the 1860s - and it could have come from almost any period - urges Clown to be "brutally, increasingly, perpetually cruel." "Never mind hurting the supers," the

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[33] T. S. Eliot, "Some Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe," *Art and Letters* II.4 (Autumn 1919), 194-9; rpt. as "Christopher Marlowe," in *Selected Essays* (3rd ed. London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 123.

[34] G. B. Shaw, *Our Theatre in the Nineties*, vol. II, vol. 24 of *Complete Works* (London: Constable, 1931), p. 124.

correspondent callously continues: "supers have no more right to feel pain than eels have."[35] The true father of clowns, Joe Grimaldi, was so exhausted by the life that his last performance - at the age of forty - took place from a chair placed centrestage. As a child, he recalls in his autobiography, he had had a savage beating from his father, so that his thick make-up became streaked with tears:

> He was `called´ almost immediately afterwards, and the father, being in a violent rage, had not noticed the circumstance until the little object came on the stage, when a general roar of laughter directed his attention to his grotesque countenance. Becoming more violent than before, he fell upon him at once, and beat him severely, and the child roared vociferously. This was all taken by the audience as a most capital joke; shouts of laughter and peals of applause shook the house...

This pitiful story seems to bear out Shaw´s objections to the cruelty of low comedy, but in our haste to be ashamed we should not forget *why* the audience laughed so loud that night:

> the newspapers next morning declared, that it was perfectly wonderful to see a mere child perform so naturally, and highly creditable to his father´s talents as a teacher![36]

Cruel, yes: but they mistook reality for art, and what they applauded was, so they thought, a semblance of cruelty. We must remember Aristotle´s distinction between satire (comedy directed at individuals) and the comic proper (laughter at the generalised minor faults of mankind), and recognise the

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[35] Gerald Frow, *Oh, Yes It Is! A History of Pantomime* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1985), p. 84.

[36] *Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi*, ed. "Boz" (pseud. Charles Dickens), in two vols. (Philadelphia: 1838), p. 31. For the cruelty of pantomime, see Frow, pp. 84-7.

difference between cackling with glee at the humiliation of a neighbour, colleague or stranger and laughter at the theatre when the vicar is revealed as no better than his flock. Shaw fails or refuses to see the difference between individual and general targets, pretence and reality, individual and social response. Bergson's study of laughter, for example, to which we shall shortly be turning, concentrates on society's laughter at, say, the absentminded professor boiling his watch and timing it by an egg: but when he is on the stage our laughter is invited and sanctioned by the knowledge that he uses props and is paid. Cruel comedy, it is true, emphasises and ridicules physical peculiarities - warts, stutter, colour, size - and treats its victim as an object devoid of feeling or thought. Bergson describes it as thinking that someone might be a machine rather than a person. The farce in *Ulysses* does this, too, and Bloom is the victim at the end of `Cyclops,' and throughout `Circe' - in the brush with the motorman, for example, in his comic trial and martyrdom, his cuckolding, and as effeminate man in the protracted humiliation at the hands of Bella/Bello (15.184, 15.676-1956, 15.3726-3816, 15.2742-3481), a woman mannish grown. But farce, being a comic mode, depends on the survival and recovery of its victim, for if our fears are to be confronted and overcome our representatives must not be the losers. Arnold Kaplan puts this very well, I think, when he says that the crucial moment in comedy occurs when the clown gets up from his fall,[37] and Bergson observes of the clown that he draws attention to the "jumping up again, the

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[37] Kaplan, p. 89.

*rebound*..."[38] Accordingly Bloom is rewarded with the vision of Gerty, and comes unscathed through `Circe´: the spring of the body. The physical is, after all, not the whole man.

Shaw´s second criticism of farce also works on the objection to its cruelty, but deduces from this that its laughter is *therefore degrading.* Underlying this argument is the assumption that art can and ought to improve as it delights: the view of Sidney and (if not the practice) of Ben Jonson - *utile dulci.* But as Joyce refuses to accept no-go areas for art, he refuses to accept that examination of any aspect of the human psyche can degrade in itself. Far from being beastly, laughter - even the laughter of superiority - is, as Aristotle remarked, one of the few purely human characteristics: "Of all living creatures only man is endowed with laughter."[39]

A third purpose served in `Circe´ by farce, in its appeal to what Shaw calls the "deliberate indulgence of that horrible, derisive joy in humiliation and suffering which is the beastliest element in human nature," is as a bucket lowered into the well of the un- or subconscious. In pantomime - farce for the family - sexual roles are swapped, mothers-in-law, as in jokes, are fat and fascist, beautiful girls cruelly orphaned or fostered, dreams magically come true. In Punch and Judy - which, like pantomime, has a common origin with farce[40] - the baby is eaten by a

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[38] *Laughter*, p. 98.

[39] *Parts of Animals*, Bk. 3, Ch. 10, 673a5: in *Works*, p. 1049.

[40] Welsford, p. 300-03.

crocodile and Punch kills his wife, beats the policeman and judge, and is hanged. Communication is accompanied by the rhythmical beating of a skull with a stick. Authority is overcome, to desire is sufficient motive to justify taking. Yet we can have these indulgent forays without guilt, for in the end Punch is punished and we can applaud. In mediaeval farce the husband is a cuckold and the priest the wife´s lover; latterly, middle-aged men are dragged to bed by teenage nymphomaniacs. All our deep fears are confronted, our wishes catered for. If farce indulges our secret wishes, it also indulges our desire to take revenge on those wishes by punishing those who harbour them:

> The secret of the strange enjoyment of farce may be that although we enjoy fulfilling forbidden wishes, we enjoy punishing them just as much, if not more, particularly when we can do so in a plot which is apparently devoid of logic, meaning, and harm.[41]

Farcical *Ulysses*, then, exploring Bloom - representative of humanity - inside and out, delves beneath the surface of language and conscious thought, the civilized social self, and plumbs the depths. - Expressions such as above and beneath are inevitable, since the genitalia is nearer the ground than is the head: in the quotation at the head of this chapter, Mikhail Bakhtin insists on the significance of the body in this regard. - Bloom yearns to father a son who will live (6.82), is vaguely aware of a repulsed fascination with the possibility of his wife´s infidelity, and is unusually aware of his own feminine aspect. In the anarchic nighttime world of `Circe,´ expressed in farce, least plot-

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[41] Freedman, p. 237.

organised form of the drama, he bears eight male yellow and white children, his antlered head becomes somewhere for Boylan to hang his hat, and he becomes "she," the whoremaster's slave (15.1821, 15.3763, 15.2830-2851). In farce the formula protects and encapsulates human hopes, fears, aggression and in following a tradition or observing a form we can remain unaware for most of the time to what extent these elements correspond to our own hidden life. Eric Bentley understands this dark side of comedy:

> shielded by delicious darkness and seated in warm security, we enjoy the privilege of being totally passive while on stage our most treasured unmentionable wishes are fulfilled before our eyes by the most violently active human beings that ever sprang from the human imagination.[42]

"[I]n farce, as in dreams, one is permitted the outrage," he says, "but is spared the consequences."[43] In the night world of `Circe´ the comfortable division between the controlled and the uncontrolled, the social and the private, and differences of gender and role, all dissolve.

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[42] *Life of the Drama*, p. 229.

[43] Bentley, *Let's Get a Divorce*, p. xiii.

## iii. `Circe´ and `Cyclops´

Farce plays a major role on two occasions in *Ulysses*: `Cyclops´ and `Circe.´ In both episodes Bloom is depicted, untypically, from the exterior. This permits his humiliation to be comic rather than pathetic, and his hurried retreat from Kiernan´s pursued by the apoplectic citizen to be farcical rather than frightening. In `Circe´ this withdrawal of Bloom from the range of our empathy is taken further, so that it becomes problematic to speak of him as a character at all. It would be more appropriate to call him an object. The body as an object is the essence of farce.

The two episodes under consideration here, then, are `Cyclops´ and `Circe.´ But `Circe,´ at thirty three lines short of five thousand and three pages short of a hundred and fifty in the Gabler reading text of *Ulysses*, is by far and away the longest episode, being more than twice as long as its nearest rival, `Ithaca.´ Detailed examination of the whole chapter would be impossible here and, accordingly, employing an arbitrary division, I concentrate on the first major section of the chapter, which ends with Bloom´s initial conversation with Zoe Higgins: 15.1-1279. More than mere expediency dictates this choice, however, for this "first act" is related particularly closely to `Cyclops,´ and thus provides a suitable companion piece. Elements from other episodes are involved, of course, for Bloom´s humiliations and secrets have been in his mind throughout

the day, but `Cyclops´ focuses his exclusion, and this section of `Circe´ analyses it by blowing up the main points and suppressing the rest.

The numerous parallels exist, like the Odyssean ones, on both local and structural levels. Local: both episodes begin with a dialogue between the cynic (The Nameless One, Stephen) and a sceptic (Joe, Lynch). Alf Bergan is accused of having sent the Breen postcard U.P.up (12.1038); Bloom of sending obscene mail (15.1064). Bob Doran fondles the dog in both episodes (12.489; 15.692). `Cyclops´ has the hangman´s letters, the digression on hanging and Frederick Falconer´s leniency (12.415, 12.450, 12.1094); `Circe,´ conflating these - perhap, as `Ithaca´ has it, "In accordance with the law of the conservation of energy" (17.842) - has Bloom condemned by a severe Recorder to death by hanging (15.1167). The Nameless One contributes crude allusions to rumours of Bloom´s cuckoldry (12.1658) and in `Circe´ repeats his allegations for the benefit of the jury (12.1144). In a manifestly Bloomian motif in `Cyclops´ the suitably named Mrs Tupper misconducts herself with officer Taylor and is discovered too late by her husband (12.1168); in `Circe´ Bloom is accused of being a cuckold and urging women to commit adultery. Discussion in `Cyclops´ centres on the question of what and who Bloom is (12.1631) and the possibility of a connection with Bloom, dentist, is raised (12.1638); in `Circe´ Bloom assumes a bewilderment of disguises (=identities), among them "Dr Bloom, Leopold, dental surgeon" (15.721). In `Cyclops´ his claims to Irish nationality are mocked (12.1419); in `Circe´ Philip Beaufoy

plays the English gentleman inconvenienced by this upstart (15.819). In `Cyclops´ Lenehan announces the result of the Ascot Gold Cup (12.1219); in `Circe´ we have the story of the day at the races which Bloom tells Mrs Breen (15.539). And so on. More significant than these numerous local parallels between the two episodes, however, are those on a higher, structural level. As in `Cyclops´ Bloom unites Catholic and Protestant (Crofter/Crofton, 12.1634) in common contempt for him, so in `Circe´ he unites classes high (Beaufoy, the society ladies) and low (Mary Driscoll) in condemnation of his "crimes." In `Cyclops´ he is condemned in his absence on a never very clear charge, for he is apparently guilty first of winning money on the horses, and then of not buying his round: yet on his return he is not given the opportunity to do so. This is more than matched in `Circe´ by the succession of charges he faces: arrested for "Prevention of cruelty to animals" (15.697), Bloom is then hauled before the court to face the accusations of Beaufoy, of the various respected society women, and then of mere scullery maid Mary Driscoll.

The distancing of Bloom at the conclusion to `Cyclops,´ as I have said, prevents us from becoming involved, and the comic and trivial elements in the situation are insisted upon, at the expense of the tragic and pathetic, by Thersites, who reduces history to a circus: "Jesus, there´s always some bloody clown or other kicking up a bloody murder about bloody nothing" (12.1793). The episode, he says, is "as good as any bloody play in the Queen´s royal theatre"

(12.1845). Bloom's eccentric choice of representative jews - "Mendelssohn was a jew and Karl Marx and Mercadante and Spinoza. And the Saviour was a jew and his father was a jew. Your God." (12.1804) - and the Citizen's blasphemous outrage at Bloom's "blasphemy" further lower the tone: "By Jesus, says he, I'll brain that bloody jewman for using the holy name. By Jesus, I'll crucify him so I will" (12.1811).

Tensions have bubbled in the episode for some time before they erupt suddenly into open view. Bloom, of course, as an outsider who contradicts everything the others stand for, is the catalyst. He doesn't drink excessively, doesn't make vain patriotic gestures, wants to discuss things, not pronounce on them, and naively assumes that everyone else like him is open to changes of mind. His immediate fault, however, is to see - and worse to say - that national feeling, attractive enough at home, conflicts abroad with the national feeling of others: given his own identity as the son of an immigrant Jew, this is naive indeed. It is on this question of nationality that he is challenged, then urged to stand up to injustice. But to do so, Bloom perceives, is only to add another twist to the cycle, which must be broken if it is not to be repeated endlessly: only when there's some bloody clown or other who *refrains* from kicking up a bloody murder about bloody nothing can the cycle of provocation and retaliation be broken. This far-sightedness ("the prudent member," he is called: *prudens*, Latin, farsighted. 12.211,217,437)[44] contrasts with the

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[44] The word is applied to him at 6.667, 16.1644, 16.1648 and 17.2118, and used by him at 16.1349. Calling him "member" in `Cyclops' also relates him, via member as penis,

myopia of the drinkers - exacerbated by drink, as the citizen´s poor aim shows - and typified in their smallminded rejection of the unfamiliar and their embrace of anything that confirms their vitrifed world: they can only see what they recognise. Thus the guess about Bloom´s mission starts off a rank outsider but quickly becomes established fact:

> --Is it that whiteeyed kaffir? says the citizen, that never backed a horse in anger in his life?
> --That´s where he´s gone, says Lenehan. I met Bantam Lyons going to back that horse only I put him off it and he told me Bloom gave him the tip. Bet you what you like he has a hundred shillings to five on. (12.1552)[45]

Bloom is jewish, and is therefore greedy: such prejudices have a way of discovering evidence. The mock-heroic digressions operate in a similar way. They are usually discussed as parodies, and of course they are; but their significance is larger than such a classification implies. In `Cyclops,´ as in *Ulysses* as a whole, there is a tendency in language towards atrophism and repetition of the same relationships, and the digressions manifest the willful waywardness of the nationalist discourse which attempts to subsume everything by interpreting it in its own limited "heroic" language. So the one-eyed nationalist view, incarnated not only in the citizen but in these elaborations that partly recall the manner of old Irish tales, is so eager to see things in its own terms that it seizes any opportunity or ambiguity to set

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to Odysseus and his pointed stake; not one of the book´s cleverer parallels, since Bloom conquers, if he conquers, by *refraining*, from violence and (sexual) aggression.

[45] "gave him the tip": see previous footnote.

off again in its own comfortable, because predictable, track: it will learn nothing new because it refuses to recognise anything new except in terms of the familiar.

The hunch concerning Bloom's financial arrangements, which becomes a bet which becomes a certainty leads to the farcical chase that heralds the beginning of the end of the episode, with Cunningham's "Bye bye all" (12.1677) and the tumbling race for the car. The "double focus" cinematic effect of the alternating versions of events, slow motion shots intercut with speeded up sequences, both prolongs the time things take and emphasises the speed at which they occur. (Is it no more than coincidence that *Ulysses* was written during the age of great farce in the silent and often speeded up motion picture, which Eric Bentley dates from about 1912 to about 1927?)[46] Indeed so simple are the events that they constitute at the end little more than a sudden and brief flurry of action, a movement typical of farce, which tends toward basic plot (and which may well elaborate or repeat it), and which sometimes depends quite blatantly upon expulsion to end a scene. Sophisticated farce (not quite the contradiction it seems) frequently makes use of intercut passages operating at speed, thereby insisting upon the physical inevitability of the action. *Ulysses* goes one better than this and intercuts a scene with itself.

As the chapter progresses causes and effects become grotesquely unequal, though never quite illogical. When in

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[46] *Life of the Drama*, p. 253. Kerr observes that early silent film "found comedy in a tumble and a bump, in the subjection of a body to the ghastly embarrassment of being a body, nothing more." p. 150; see pp. 149-52.

the silent film a boy is told not to lean against a wall, the implication being that it will not fall down without him, it does indeed collapse when he obeys; and when Laurel and Hardy can't find the last piece of a jigsaw everyone from taxi-driver to policeman becomes embroiled and the sequence ends with the demolition of the house. (The Marx Brothers make a great deal of the difference between causes and effects.) In stage farces momentary difficulties - the arrival at the same time of both wife and mistress (but rarely husband and lover: it's a male fear/phantasy) - lead to protracted and increasingly desperate attempts to resolve a worsening situation. So here a major earthquake is caused by the tossing of an empty biscuit-tin:

> The catastrophe was terrific and instantaneous in its effect. The observatory of Dunsink registered in all eleven shocks, all of the fifth grade of Mercalli's scale, and there is no record of a similar seismic disturbance in our island since the earthquake of 1534, the year of the rebellion of Silken Thomas. (12.1858)

The effect is comical because it is grotesquely out of proportion to the cause: yet however attenuated, the thread is never broken. (This highlights the difficulties of attempting an explication of the comic. The principle - here, that a disjunction between cause and effect is comical - is trivial, and everything depends on the skill with which the timing is executed.) A similar disproportion is evident in the conclusion of the episode. Bloom unintentionally and perhaps masochistically manoeuvres himself into a position where he cannot avoid confrontation and then incautiously and even foolishly returns. His parthian shots do not dignify his exit, but there remains some element of bravery

about his defiance, even if it is thrust upon him. This minor act of heroism, all the more engaging for its meagreness, is blown out of proportion in the ascension that concludes Bloom's departure. His withdrawal is portrayed not as tactical but as a retirement to victory. Then, at the very end, this puffed-up idealised picture is punctured, dragged back to earth by a reference to the commonplace. The everyday gets the last word.

But this is not mock-heroic. *Ulysses* draws on Ulysses, but also adds something to him in presenting him close-to with a body that makes the same demands and suffers from the same humiliating restrictions as ours. This Ulysses has no head start, no special protection, no unique qualities, and ultimately, no *deus ex machina* on hand to whisk him away from any dangers he cannot handle. We have a parody of the hero's apotheosis at the end of the episode, but it is dragged rudely back by its tail. If Bloom is to make it he must do so alone. Mock-heroic is merely tragedy inverted or rendered local rather than universal. the comedy of *Ulysses*, however, is to see the inadequacy of tragedy to express the range of human experience. In the eye of the cynical Nameless One Bloom is merely stubborn, while from the romantic view of the historical journalistic chronicle he is a hero. Later, as anyone would, Bloom retells the story and emphasises the heroic:

> --He took umbrage at something or other, that muchinjured but on the whole eventempered person declared, I let slip. He called me a jew and in a heated fashion offensively. So I without deviating from plain facts in the least told him his God, I mean Christ, was a jew too and all his family like me though in

> reality I´m not. That was one for him. A soft answer turns away wrath. He hadn´t a word to say for himself as everyone saw. Am I not right? (16.1081)

The frenzied chase and clownish violence that ends the episode, suggesting the rough and tumble of the Marx Brothers, Charlie Chaplin or the Keystone Cops, is pure farce, but because it is shortlived its effect is not difficult to unravel. `Circe´ is, and it is necessary to re-enlist the aid of Bergson and Bakhtin.

### iv. Bergson´s *Laughter*

Bergson´s study, often rejected for excluding almost all comedy other than farce, proves for that reason to be of use here. The limited range of examples - with Moliere and Labiche by far the most frequent - and the narrowness of attention is evident in the conclusion to his opening observations:

> The comic will come into being, it appears, whenever a group of men concentrate their attention on one of their number, imposing silence on their emotions and calling into play nothing but their intelligence.[47]

This necessarily limits discussion to comedy that pokes *at* some object, and excludes, for example, comical incongruity or the expenditure of psychic energy as causes of laughter, except in so far as incongruity may be located in a person´s behaviour or appearance, and the expenditure of psychic energy may be the result of a response to authority. One of his first examples of the comic - a man running in the

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[47] Sypher, p. 65: subsequent references in parenthesis.

street stumbles and falls; passers-by burst out laughing (p. 66) - is typical, and although Bergson goes on to treat much subtler instances his central thesis remains throughout that we laugh at "something mechanical encrusted on the living" (p. 84). The body is laughable "in exact proportion as that body reminds us of a mere machine" (p. 79). This provides a framework for a consideration of the devices and meaning of farce. We cannot see into the mind of another person, but must judge their mental elasticity from the responsiveness of their body to an everchanging environment. If this person proves unresponsive and predetermined in his or her actions, then we laugh, because society does not want its individual components to "give way to the easy automatism of acquired habits." Because it cannot interfere in a material way, however, not being threatened in a material way, society takes action against this eccentricity in the same form this eccentricity takes (pp. 71-2). "Inelasticity of character," as Bergson calls it, is a gesture, and society therefore responds with a gesture of disapproval: laughter. "By the fear which it inspires, [laughter] restrains eccentricity..." (p. 73). This illusion of inanimation, of seeming for a moment to resemble or behave like a machine, is comic, because a really living life should never repeat itself:

> A continual change of aspect, the irreversibility of the order of phenomena, the perfect individuality of a perfectly self-contained series: such, then, are the outward characteristics...which distinguish the living from the merely mechanical. (p. 118)

Accordingly, "[w]herever there is repetition or complete similarity, we always suspect some mechanism at work behind the living" (p. 82).

It is in farce, and in Bloom's comical appearance in 'Circe' and elsewhere, that this eccentricity, this tension and inelasticity, are most evident.[48] When, for instance, he avoids the sand-strewer with a "trickleap" or responds to the apparition of Molly with an automatic but clumsy flinch:

A VOICE
*(sharply)* Poldy!

BLOOM
Who? *(he ducks and wards off a blow clumsily)*
At your service. (15.293)

he is abandoning the illusion of free will and betrays himself as an automaton, and what is worse as a clumsy one. He expends more energy than we imagine we should in such a situation, and this Freud claims as comic.[49] His cowed response is comic inversion: the harassed husband is the favourite subject of comedy and particularly of farce. Males laugh in uneasy recognition of their fear and at their own (imagined) superiority to Bloom. Females laugh either because they recognise the little boy in the man, or perhaps

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[48] The connection between the farceur and the clown is closest at this point, for the clown abandons almost altogether the attention that the rest of us - even characters in a farce - must pay to thoughts of plot, motive and consequence, in favour of complete subjugation to inelasticity of body. Bergson's "inelasticity" is more lack of control and decorum of movements than of fluency: a supple, double-jointed clown is no less inelastic and tense than a stiff-legged one. Bergson has two observations of clowns (pp. 98-9): the first pair became funnier as they built up the illusion of being bundles or large rubber balls, and the second gradually convinced the audience that they were becoming solid wooden dummies.

[49] *Jokes*, p. 249.

because they are taught to find funny what men find funny.[50] The war between the sexes is the longest running unresolved conflict of all, and therefore provides prime material for comedy, which emphasises divisions and prejudices, whether to confront or relieve them. Bloom´s childishly graceless attempt to avoid a blow typifies his passive nature: he can at best only resist, not prevent, trouble. Molly, by contrast, is a (literally) strikingly physical figment of his imagination. The slapstick of `Circe´ is nonetheless not quite that of early silent films ("roll away the reel world, the reel world, the reel world!" *FW*.64.25) for the violence actually smarts and brings tears to the eyes, even if it is soon forgotten, succeeded by a quite different moment. The womanliness of Bloom and the manliness of Molly prepare us for the more blatant gender-bending to come. But the importance of the moment, as it is of the whole episode, is the pyschological accuracy of events, however fantastic and farcical is their expression. Molly´s assault on Bloom extends what we know of their conjugal relationship - there is no suggestion elsewhere in the book that she has committed acts of violence - but the power struggle is precisely illustrated: Molly literally has the `upper hand.´ What she says reveals that she knows what he is up to, down to the pig´s crubeen and sheep´s trotter and the tame adventure with Gerty: "Has poor little hubby cold feet waiting so long?" (15.307) In `Nausicaa´ he had thrown away

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[50] Bentley´s analysis of farce in *Life of the Drama* [pp. xx] and in his introduction to *Let´s Get a Divorce*, for example, doesn´t explain why women laugh at farce, nor does he seem to notice that women are not accommodated by his explanation.

a stick that stood in the mud, having written the enigmatically incomplete "I AM A" (13.1258-1270), and therefore now we have Molly's: "O Poldy, Poldy, you are a poor old stick in the mud!"(15.329). She somehow gets to know his goings on, and so in `Circe,' with its own ruthless logic, she is all-knowing.

More importantly, however, Bergson sets out the relationship between the laughing observer and the comical observed, between the reader and Bloom in `Circe,' and provides an explanation of some features of the episode's structure and unusual form. Bella and her threat are different from the citizen and his, for in `Circe' events do not have lasting physical consequences, and the ludicrousness of Bloom's position, together with the implication that his own desires are being gratified, frees the reader from the obligation to sympathy. Although it is the same Bloom, with the same recognisable matrix of memories, hopes and fears, he has been drawn away and is seen with a measure of indifference. Once it becomes clear that he comes to no lasting harm it is possible to relax into a certain *enjoyment* of his humiliation. The empathy for him, until now so strongly felt, is not easily prised away, and the episode therefore begins with a device that helps to achieve this shedding of sympathy:

> *Round Rabaiotti's halted ice gondola stunted men and women squabble. They grab wafers between which are wedged lumps of coral and copper snow. Sucking, they scatter slowly, children.* (15.4)

In this description of nighttown appearances define essence. Once momentum in this direction away from identities and towards appearances has been established the text begins, slowly at first but then more insistently, to twist, stretch and generally distort Bloom: the text tortures him.

That the disintegration of the characters as *Ulysses* advances is a critical commonplace, but the social force motivating these tortures of Bloom has not I think been noticed. Bloom´s suppression of fears and desires has enabled him to operate in society, but the force that has been required is equivalent to the force those feelings exert, and now they come to the surface with a great rush. Furthermore when he is hauled before a court to face charges they remain unspecified and subject to change without notice, for they are in fact expressions of the way people feel about him as an outsider. Thus some events in `Circe´ come from the release of internal forces, while others are the expressions of a society disturbed by his failure to conform. His embarrassment about the bucket incident plainly combines his own feelings with the way he imagines other people reacted, and this, together with our own reconstruction of one half of the crossexamination, makes for a bathetically humorous moment:

> *(The crossexamination proceeds* re *Bloom and the bucket. A large bucket. Bloom himself. Bowel trouble. In Beaver street. Gripe, yes. Quite bad. A plasterer´s bucket. By walking stifflegged.*[...]*)* (15.929)

Unlike his isolation in the carriage on the way to the funeral or Menton´s rebuff, Bloom´s humiliations here arouse no sympathy. He abandons his social inhibitions, but the

reader is freed too, freed to laugh at Bloom's inadequacies and humiliations. There has been up to this point a common bond between the reader and Bloom, for we have been accustomed to the illusion of thinking his thoughts, and if there is laughter it is generally of the reserved kind that we find in ourselves when we make trivial mistakes. Now, however, with daytime inhibitions shed and with access to Bloom's unconscious, the reader is given licence. Moral judgment is no longer appropriate, for although Bloom continues to be subjected to racial and social prejudice, he is a figure in a farcical drama rather than a man whose world the reader has shared. Philip Beaufoy and Myles Crawford in `Circe' are no more attractive characters than any of the other males of Dublin who oppress Bloom, but the reader remains indifferent to their moral worth. Walpole's observation that this world is "a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel," has some validity in the structure of *Ulysses.*[51] Bloom is a comic character, and has been so from the start; but previously he has been comic in one way to his fellow Dubliners and in quite another to the reader located outside the text and outside the social context that gives rise to that laughter. The Dublin men portrayed in *Ulysses* exhaust their response to him in their contemptuous laughter, but while the reader finds him comic, Bloom is also seen from different angles. When we laugh *at* someone we blind ourselves, however momentarily, to any other qualities but the comic that that person may possess. Chaplin's humiliation is thus doubly pathetic and somewhat

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[51] Walpole, p. 387.

discomforting, for we are made aware of what is beneath that ridiculous and comical appearance. Now, however, in `Circe´ our inside knowledge of Bloom is denied. In `Oxen´ phylogeny recapitulated ontogeny: in `Circe´ appearance is identity. Instead of the unified, stable and in general terms predictable Mr Bloom, who can usually be relied upon, for intance, to see the best in others sooner or later, operating in the differentiated, stable and in most cases predictable world (in that similar causes are observed to have similar effects, and Bloom will always draw the short straw), there is now a Bloom who is king, martyr, woman, cuckold, victim, tyrant, saviour, fool, one after the other in an environment where apparently trivial causes have extraordinary effects.

## v. Bakhtin´s Carnival

Bergson explains the attitude of the observer of farce, but we turn to Bakhtin, and later to Freud, for consideration of the laughter of farce. Mikhail Bakhtin´s *Rabelais and His World* gives an account of the significance of sex and the grotesque in comedy, and in farce these elements can still be found in their most concentrated form. In the middle ages, according to Bakhtin, the carnival was a

> temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions.[52]

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[52] Bakhtin, p. 10: subsequent references in parenthesis. Parrinder´s first chapter, "Introduction: Joyce and the grotesque," discusses Bakhtin and the notion of the carnival and is well worth seeing, but he is severely con-

In the carnival we find "the peculiar logic of the `inside out´ (*a l´envers*)." This carnival had its own festive laughter, "not an individual reaction to some isolated `comic´ event," but universal in scope, directed both outwards and inwards, and ambivalent in that it is at once "gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives" (pp. 11-12). There is a world of difference between this universal ambivalent laughter and modern parody - which merely destroys and does not renew - and satire; for the modern satirist "whose laughter is negative places himself above the subject of his mockery, [and] is opposed to it" (p. 12). From the carnival Rabelais takes the concept of "grotesque realism," a vision of the material bodily principle as common rather than individual:

> The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity. (pp. 19-20)[53]

"[A]ll that is sacred and exalted," he says, "is rethought on the level of the material bodily stratum,"

> or else combined and mixed with its images. We spoke of the grotesque swing, which brings together heaven and earth. But the accent is placed not on the upward movement, but on the descent. (pp. 370-71)[54]

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strained by space.

[53] For his special use of the term degradation see the quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

[54] Freud describes this as the technique of comic analogies: "They juxtapose something of a high category, something abstract, in [his] instances, `respectability´ and `patience,´ with something of a very concrete and even low kind, `breeches.´" *Jokes*, p. 126.

The importance of Bakhtin's study of the medieval carnival is twofold. Firstly we consider his description of grotesque realism, which originates in the medieval conception of the bodily material as contained in the people and not in the body of the individual - an expression of what might be called the holistic worldview of the middle ages, preceding the Cartesian revolution in the concept of the individual. In the carnival and in Rabelais, who took over the concept, "all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable" (p. 19). This view of the body has parallels, of course, in *Ulysses*, which in a letter of 1920 Joyce famously describes as, among other things, "the cycle of the human body." He goes on:

> My intention is...to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even to create its own technique. Each adventure is so to speak one person although it is composed of persons - as Aquinas relates of the heavenly hosts.

His schema for the book which accompanies this letter contains "*Schlagworte*" for each episode, with organs for each chapter.[55] In *Finnegans Wake* this method is taken even further.

There is a more immediately relevant connection, however, with modern farce, for in farce we have the modern form - greatly attenuated, no doubt - of this ancient social

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[55] Letter to Carlo Linati, 21 September 1920, *Letters* I: 146-7 and *Selected Letters*, p. 270-71. For the Linati schema see Richard Ellmann, Ulysses *on the Liffey*, appendix 2nd ed., corrected (London: Faber and Faber, 1984). See also Budgen, p. 21; and Phillip F. Herring, "Experimentation with a Landscape: Pornotopography in *Ulysses* - the Phallocy of Imitative Form," *Modern Fiction Studies* 20 (1974), 371-78.

corpus. In farce we have the representation of human fears and desires portrayed on the stage, and in the persons represented there we have both an unusual degree of empathy and distance: empathy, in that they act out for us our desires and fears, distance in that we are thereby detached from our own secrets. These secrets are of sex and violence. Two things distinguish this particular mixture, as they do `Circe,´ from pornography. Laughter is one of them, for it is the motive of all this, the laughter that enables us to confront and so defeat these dark secrets. The second is the dissociation between cause and effect. In farce violence is brutal but painless, extravagant and out of all proportion to its effects. So too sex is present in farce not to excite lust but laughter: taboos are suspended, not subverted, and the end of the farce, signalled not by erotic exhaustion but by a restoration of the status quo, signifies an end to the illusion of licence. During this brief interlude anything goes, as it did in the medieval carnival.[56]

Sex and violence in `Circe´ are neither pornographical nor obscene, whatever Arnold Bennett and the *Sporting Times* might have thought. They provide rather at one level a metaphor for Bloom´s humiliations and at another an opportunity for the safe exploration of its taboos and its

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[56] The convention is that there are none, but even in the mediaeval carnival murder was taking licence too far. Modern conventions in farce allow us to overlook bizarre coincidences and bad dialogue, and this works only as long as the actors do not acknowledge them: if the participants can ignore them, so can we. They remind us that farce is not a naturalistic mode.

For the survival of the licence ritual in this century, see Gluckman, pp. 109-36. This is ritual as relief, "statements of rebellion, never of revolution" (p. 122).

influence in notions of identity, authority and society. The dramatic conventions framing the action emphasise the differences between `Circe´ and what precedes and succeeds it and make it easier for the reader to accept the departure from the world of the earlier episodes. In any case the changes of narrative technique, which in `Wandering Rocks´ and `Oxen of the Sun´ particularly cannot be ignored, condition the reader to accept `Circe´ and the episodes which succeed it. Laughter here in `Circe,´ as in farce and in Bakhtin´s portrayal of the medieval carnival, expresses the lack of authority, the abandonment of social convention and the separation of cause and effect. Carnival allowed people to flout authority without suffering the usual consequences of insubordination; farce permits the saying of the unsayable, the performance of the normally forbidden, even at second hand; and `Circe´ too allows thoughts, wishes, desires and fears to flood over the barriers imposed by "reality," convention and the accepted version of truth. On the principle of psychoanalysis, when *anything* can be said, the forbidden - like murder - will out.

There are differences, of course. In `Circe´ Bloom is both audience and cast, for the farce that he witnesses and in which he participates is uniquely fitted to him as a direct and perfect projection of his individual psyche, rather than the more general approximation with which readers, audiences, and partakers of carnival must make do. On the other hand Bloom as audience and cast is observed by an audience, in the person of the reader, which intrudes in a way we need never endure when, in the comfortable

anonymity of the dark, we watch a farce. A more crucial difference is that Bloom is clearly not the body of people of the medieval carnival. Yet it is legitimate to draw wider conclusions than Bakhtin intended. Laughter is socially conditioned, he argues, and the laughter of the sixteenth century cannot exist in the bourgeois world of the twentieth. Yet *Ulysses*, which gazes more fixedly on the bourgeois world than any fictional work before, and probably since, seems to have recaptured this carnival laughter. For `Circe´ lifts the aggression and malice out of laughter by completely disintegrating personality and identity as understood by Cartesian man, and therefore in some admittedly artificial but nonetheless effective way restores the medieval sense of the material bodily principle. With no Cartesian "Mr Bloom," by which we might designate the homely man whose mind we share, and instead in `Circe´ only the dramatic fictional figure "Bloom," who lacks a self and therefore identity, and in the confusion of the memories of Bloom and Stephen, we find further evidence of the collapse of discrete individuals identified by their continuous bodily presence and unique memories. If memory and phantasy merge - if, as Strindberg observes of *A Dream Play*, "characters split, double, rebouble, evaporate, condense, scatter, and converge" - what meaning can be left to identity?[57]

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[57] August Strindberg, "An Explanatory Note," to *A Dream Play* (1901) in A Dream Play *and Four Chamber Plays*, trans. Walter Johnson (Seattle: Univ of Washington Press, 1973), p. 19.

In `Cyclops,´ Bloom was at the head of a chase; in `Oxen of the Sun´ Stephen led the outflinging from the Maternity Hospital to Burke´s in a scramble that recalls the Nonne Prestes Tale. Drink was instrumental in both. Now, with the "great light...Ghaghahest" (15.24), with drink taken and "Brainfogfag" (15.210) all round, the censor´s head nods and the thoughts and desires that have been more or less under control take over. In these final dozen pages, I look at a few of the scenes of this first act of `Circe.´ The mode of presentation is dramatic; that is, we see Bloom, Stephen and the whores from outside, and from a distance. Yet, paradoxically, we have access to their emotions in a way that even the *parole interieur* is unable to achieve, for that device by convention usually conveys only what the subject perceives. Now the physical appearance of things *becomes* those things. The unpleasant resemblance of children to dwarfs and gnomes is made manifest in grotesque description: they *are* dwarfs and gnomes. The malice, present but submerged, of Mulligan´s "Murder you!" becomes Bloom´s cheerful relief and the hope that the glow leaping in the south is Boylan´s:

> Ah, the brigade, of course. South side anyhow. Big blaze. Might be his house. Beggar´s bush. We´re safe. (*he hums cheerfully*) London´s burning, London´s burning! On fire, on fire! (15.170)

When we see a catastrophe we are guiltily pleased that there but for the luck of the devil go we. In comedy - jokes, farce - we are allowed relief in laughter at the misfortunes of others, often of people like us. We embody our fears. In `Circe´ these shaming thoughts are exposed, and the comedy

that usually enables the exploration of this side of our psyche is here made the means to transcend logical and apparently solid distinctions between categories and levels of reality. Barbara Freedman's psychoanalytic explanation is a vital clue:

> What is of chief importance in understanding farce, then, is the recognition that the plot's aggression is punitive, and meaningfully so - a recognition in turn dependent upon the reconstruction of the characters' disguised, denied transgressions.[58]

So Bloom's understandable paranoia - he fears that everyone is against him: nearly everyone is - materialises:

> THE FIGURE
> *(impassive, raises a signal arm)* Password. *Sraid Mabbot.*
>
> BLOOM
> Haha. *Merci.* Esperanto. *Slan leath. (He mutters)* Gaelic league spy, sent by that fireeater.
>
> *(He steps forward. A sackshouldered ragman bars his path. He steps left, ragsackman left.)* (417)

To Bloom Gaelic is foreign, so he hurriedly strings together what he can to blend in with the scenery. This desire to become like those he encounters - a characteristic displayed by him, though with little success, throughout the day - is a primary motif of the episode as it is of farce, where identity is as easily assumed and discarded as the uniform of the job and people are easily fooled into thinking that a man holding a branch is a tree. This convenient and comic convention allows for comic reversals, as in *Simpleton the Smith* where the wife's lovers posing as a pair of bellows recall equally unlikely disguises in other farces: instead

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[58] Freedman, pp. 237-8; pp. 235-38 are particularly relevant.

they are caught out by the husband who sees through the disguise but pretends that they *are* bellows.[59] The disguises of farce are eminently suitable for Bloom, who only wants a quiet life and will do anything to avoid trouble. (His idealism recalls Don Quixote - and that was how he appeared in `Cyclops´ - but as a realist he is Sancho Panza, which is how `Circe´ presents him. Sancho Panza, like Bloom, became a ruler in an unlikely twist of plot, and he too had something of a rough time of it.) In `Circe´ every thought and emotion is embodied: that is to say portrayed theatrically. His mother, for example, appears in outrageous "pantomime dame" costume:

> ELLEN BLOOM
> *(in pantomime dame´s stringed mobcap, widow Twankey´s crinoline and bustle, blouse with muttonleg sleeves buttoned behind, grey mittens and cameo brooch [...])* (15.282)

But the exaggeration epitomises at the same time as it parodies the causing of worry and, when found, exasperated relief. Maudlin bathetic sentimentality can be comic and yet move us, and it is more convenient than honest to pretend otherwise: "From the sublime to the ridiculous" - and back - "is but a step" (15.2401). Fritz Senn was talking about `Nausicaa,´ but the point is capable of more general application:

> That Joyce (like the best of us) was attracted to *kitch*, in music, in painting, and in literature is fairly obvious but less relevant than the skill with which he knew how to work on our susceptibilities, seducing us and at the same time allowing us to laugh about the tricks that are being used. Our laughter sometimes becomes a bit ostentatious and the cliches in which *we* give voice to

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[59] Hughes, pp. 21-3.

> distaste for the literary cliche testify to the intricacies of structure and tone, and, finally, to the complexity of response that is closely tied up with human motivation - difficult to trace and even more elusive of evaluation.[60]

The weepy is despised not solely for its aesthetic inadequacy, but also because it exploits and exposes our emotions in a particularly ruthless and efficient way. In this it resembles farce, which makes the comic exploration of taboos and fears its central and indeed its only concern.

Bloom's flirtation with Mrs Breen is prompted by the sequence of associations which lead from the bawd's invitation to Gerty and Martha and thence to memories of past sexual encounters. His hastily constructed assemblage of distancing, lies, evasions and excuses comically draws together inventiveness, feelings of guilt and instincts of self-preservation. Simultaneously the mutually exclusive devices, by their sheer variety, discredit themselves and each other. Freud notices this principle operating in both jokes and dreams, suggesting that it is a common device in the unconscious:

> In dreams, in which the modes of thought of the unconscious are actually manifest, there is accordingly no such thing as an `either-or,' only a simultaneous juxtaposition....[61]

Bloom, delighted, takes advantage of the sexual aura of the place and the incongruously flirtatious Mrs Breen and memories of *temps perdu* - the dear dead days not beyond

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60 "Nausicaa," in Hart and Hayman, pp. 310-11.

61 *Jokes*, p. 267.

recall - revive their own nominally secret language (teapot = hot). The memory fades like a dream, however, at the point of most interest:

> and you asked me if I ever heard or read or knew or came across ....
>
> MRS BREEN
>
> *(eagerly)* Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.
> *(She fades from his side.*[...]*)* (15.573)

References to Marcus Tertius *Moses* the tea merchant indicate the subject. It is a question, we later discover, which Bloom has pondered for thirty years: "Where was Moses when the candle went out?" We are not kept waiting quite as long to find out that the answer is: in the dark (17.2067-70). Flirtation and playfulness is not the exclusive province of Mr Leopold Bloom, but a property constantly exhibited by the text, even in this, the dark night of the book's soul.

`Circe,' despite appearances, is very carefully framed to introduce us to its world, and the stripping away of the book's established conventions - those of the novel, in fact - has been a continuing process. Its first scenes, although disruptive of daytime logic, are simple and discrete, and it is only after a series of these that now, from a similar scene, a greatly protracted drama with a large cast erupts (15.674-1276). As earlier in the day when his efforts on behalf of Paddy Dignam's widow and children are misread, so Bloom's kindness to a dumb animal (which in due course *becomes* Paddy Dignam, dead and therefore dumb) is inverted to become a charge of "Prevention of cruelty to animals" (15.697). He is challenged: "Bloom. Of Bloom. For Bloom. Bloom." (15.677: nominative and vocative cases are the same

as accusative, or accusatory: he is spoken to only when he is being given a talking to.) His witnesses (dogs, gulls) are dumb and cannot defend him, so he must therefore resort to Ulyssean cunning and disguise. Once again, however, his various alibis and excuses contradict each other and come out comically: he could be "Dr Bloom, Leopold, dental surgeon," cousin of von Bloom Pasha, Henry Flower, the *holder of* the flower, a discovered lover, a mason, the holder of the mangled password "Shitbroleeth," son of a J.P., old soldier, author-journalist: but his mistake is to try to be all things to all men (15.720-805). What is required of Bloom the exile is more silence and less cunning. As a Jewish advertisement canvasser in Dublin, a well-known freemason and busybody married to a desirable or once-desired woman, his chances of general acceptance would seem to be slight. Instead of limiting himself, however, he has sought universal approval and consequently has achieved near universal contempt. Like Ulysses he won't volunteer for a fight and will always try to avoid one where possible. As a result he may lack outright enemies but, like Ulysses, he also lacks friends. He is not against anyone, so no-one is for him. Nobody loves somebody who tries so hard to be loved. So Bloom finds himself charged - though the charge is never specified - in a court that takes as its motto Christ's words on adultery. The vagueness of the accusation and the mysterious authority and regalia of the court play off each other to induce the rising panic of a nightmare. The comic horror of such a predicament is peculiarly suited to twentieth-century man's sense of himself. Abandoned by

God and robbed of the integrity of the personality, modern man images himself as the subject of outside forces. He is no longer in control and yet is held responsible for whatever actions those forces may lead him to: Oedipus, now the representative of Freudian man, is guilty of the commission of a crime he did not know he was committing, and which he was led to commit by forces outside his conscious control. Yet the Cartesian model insists that he still be held responsible. Beaufoy's accusations of bad art, ungentlemanly conduct and incomplete education are trivial by comparison, and in Mary Driscoll's tenuous testimony Bloom appears to have come off worse ("I had more respect for the scouringbrush, so I had" 15.892).

His defence, one of the comic highlights of *Ulysses*, founders on its own inventiveness:

> *He was down and out but, though branded as a black sheep, if he might say so, he meant to reform, to retrieve the memory of the past in a purely sisterly way and to return to nature as a purely domestic animal. A sevenmonths' child, he had been carefully brought up and nurtured by an aged bedridden parent. There might have been lapses of an erring father but he wanted to turn over a new leaf and now, when at long last in sight of the whipping post [...] or anon all with fervour reciting the family rosary round the crackling Yulelog while in the boreens and green lanes the colleens with their swains strolled what times the strains of the organ-toned melodeon Brittanniametalbound with four acting stops and twelvefold bellows, a sacrifice, greatest bargain ever ....* (15.900)

The comic principle on which this speech operates, often used in the catalogues of *Ulysses*, is explored by Bergson under the image of the snow-ball (pp. 112-114). He remarks how comical is the effect of accumulation, either as "illustrations of a great cause resulting in a small

effect," or of "a great effect springing from a small cause." In both cases comedy comes as a result of "a particular mechanical arrangement which it reveals to us, as through a glass, at the back of the series of effects and causes" (p. 116). In this instance, however, it might be truer to say that the mechanism that betrays itself in Bloom's ramblings is his unconscious. Freud analyses the comedy of the incoherent defence, finding it an example of "the purely comic effect of giving free play to the unconscious mode of thought."[62] The cancelling-out of illogical sequences of thought, he says, so that the single best argument remains, is typical of the conscious mind: in dreams, however, and the unconscious generally, there is "no such thing as an `either - or,' only a simultaneous juxtaposition." Neither Bergson nor Freud's accounts, however, it appears to me, explain at all satisfactorily the comic in Bloom's defence. In Bloom the recidivist's favourite lines are assembled and pasted together with no regard for the overall effect, cliche piled on cliche, denial on denial, until the statement collapses under the weight of its protestations of innocence. The *idees recues* come in various contradictory kinds: repentance (an admission of guilt but a willingness to try to do better); nature (admission of guilt, blame laid on inheritance of vice); nurture (admission of guilt, blame laid on circumstance); and, finally and fatally, a misguided attempt at oratory that begins well wide of the mark and soon spirals off altogether in appalled and fascinated contemplation of its

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62 *Jokes*, p. 266.

own inability to stick to the point. Since any straw is worth clutching at, the speech, by now acquiring a life and inertia all its own and quite independent of the hapless automaton Bloom, spews out spools of sickly Dickensian sentimentality without discrimination and increasingly without any prospect of a lucid conclusion. Finally it slips off the rails of grammatical construction completely and, to alter the metaphor, blunders somehow into the groove of a record that catalogues item after item and, as sound is lost, ceases to have any relevance to the courtscene whatsoever.

The "*Renewed laughter*" in court (15.923), Hobbes´ "superiority," is not, however, like the reader´s, the appreciation of the absurdities of his speech (Kant´s "incongruity") but the echo of Bloom´s humiliation. He suffers for his human frailties (the demands of bowel and sexual desire). We hear only his half of the cross-examination, but we can supply the answers: "Quite bad. A plasterer´s bucket. By walking stifflegged." (15.931. The technique has appeared before, in the fragments of Deasy´s letter: 2.324.) Bloom´s way is not to resist but to offer mitigating circumstances, and O´Molloy´s forensic performance again repeats the confusions evident in his client´s self-defence between excuse and denial, nature and nurture. Bloom appears in the costume and attitude of "oriental obeisance" but his pathetic performance is not appreciated. O´Molloy returns to the defence with a wide-ranging collection of cliches held together only by a determination to use anything that may help.

As things begin to go Bloom's way and he cites references and drops names - "Sir Bob, I said....." (15.1012) - the charge, never specified, moves about a few degrees to point at his improper alleged advances to several women of superior position (and in Bloom's case the phrase is well chosen) who instance various occasions of his self-abasement and humiliations. Bloom's masochistic side is thrilled: "I love the danger," he cringes, at once begging mercy and offering the other cheek (15.1086). We cannot take the threat seriously because of the exaggeration, and because he appears to want it. He claims entirely innocuous motives: beginning to undo his trousers - an offering of the other cheeks - he excuses himself with reference to how warm the weather has been (15.1121).[63] Finally, as this first act of `Circe' draws to a close, he is exposed as cuckold and sentence of death is passed. Sentenced to death by hanging and denied by his acquaintances, Bloom watches comfortable thrills become something worse than he can manage: the phantasy tails away, however, and "*All recedes*" (15.1266).

In this chapter I have been drawing together two strands - Bloom as comic passive victim, and Bloom as the human body, with all its frailties and failings - and considering them as manifestations of the farce of *Ulysses*. I have shown

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[63] Gose, p. 138, has a passage on the psychological shorthand involved in Bloom's response to this request for him to remove his trousers (15.1118). Mark Shechner, *Joyce in Nighttown: A Psychoanalytic Inquiry into* Ulysses (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974), says that "the comedy [in `Circe'] will be most hilarious when the fantasy is most revealing..." p. 150. However, since he is also convinced that Gerty MacDowell is a prostitute (p. 166), I do not feel obliged to trust him.

how `Cyclops´ and `Circe´ share a number of structural and thematic similarities, and how `Circe´ subjects Bloom to the inner temptations and humiliations which he experienced as external forces in `Cyclops.´ In this, Bloom faces the same energies as had been ranged against Ulysses in the version that first introduced Joyce to his "Favourite Hero."[64] The "agents" of the *Odyssey*, Charles Lamb wrote, are "things which denote external force or internal temptations, the twofold danger which a wise fortitude must expect to encounter in its course through this world."[65] In surviving, Bloom demonstrates just this wise fortitude.

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64 Gorman, p. 45.

65 Lamb, p. 240.

# CONCLUSION

*turning over the various contents*
*it contained rapidly he.* (17.1423)

As Bloom sits watching Stephen in the kitchen of 7 Eccles street, erroneously supposing him to be lost in thought, he reflects on the pleasures to be had from literature of instruction rather than amusement. He recalls indeed having used Shakespeare as a *sortes bibliae* to resolve difficult questions. But:

> 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 answer not bearing in all points. (17.388)

There is a warning implicit in this against taking *Ulysses* as literature of instruction rather than of amusement, for its answers refuse to "bear in all points." But there is a warning too against expecting classifications such as "comic" or "serious" to work altogether convincingly on this book.

*Ulysses* ends, as it progresses, ambiguously. We never learn what becomes of Stephen, Bloom or Molly, or of the relationships between them. Molly has been adulterous today, but as the day and the book ends she seems to turn back to Poldy with some measure of renewed affection. We are back

where we started, and such an ending, while it avoids the glibness of "they lived happily ever after," suggests the movement of a comic plot. The has been comedy all day, though whether this is quite "*Everybody's Book of Jokes* (1000 pages and a laugh in every one)" (17.442) is not certain. In this study I have concentrated on certain aspects only of that comedy. These have been Joycean comedy as a means of preserving an ironic attitude towards his material; Mulligan's laughter and the laughter of male Dublin, considered against Bloom's gentle and generous humour; Bloom as comic hero; and Bloom as farcical victim. There are other elements on which I have barely touched: Joyce's ambivalent attitude towards what he parodies; his use of structured jokes, comic catalogues, digressions and catechism, and his exceptionally fine ear for Dublin dialogue (go there and you will still hear them talk like that). Ezra Pound said that Joyce considered *Ulysses* to be "a rich mine of COMEDY," but in this study, far from exhausting that mine I have been able only to open up a few of its richer seams. If there is to be further study of *Ulysses* - and that seems highly likely - it would be appropriate if its comedy came in for further attention.

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