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THE JOYS OF EXILE

Edited by
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SILENCE AND CUNNING: THE IRISH EXILE'S POSTCREATIVE IMMORTALITY IN "OXEN OF THE SUN"

Motto: "I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defense the only arms I allow myself to use – silence, exile, and cunning."

(*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *ultima verba*)

Given the interchangeability of the mode of life/art asserted in the motto (above) signalled by the word 'or', one can begin by asserting that, while Joyce made free with the conventions of the novel in *Ulysses*, the book remains, nevertheless, faithful to the correspondence between art and life through a contract of immortality of sorts. This is our focus in this paper. It is worth noting, firstly, that Joyce's characters are compelling because they maintain an experiential contact with a whole (fictional) world that remains the standard for the novelistic cognition which confronts the reader. In "Oxen of the Sun", postcreation is the name given by the creator (Stephen Dedalus) to his defensive silence and cunning, connected, on the one hand, to the real world in which Joyce was an exile, and, on the other hand, to the fictional substance of the novel. Here, the postcreation is surrounded by silence since it only appears once in the text of *Ulysses* (*U* 14.292-4); it is also cunning because it is named long after having been practiced first (in the

Shakespearean fabrication of “Scylla and Charybdis”), and before it is put to work a second time (in the fables of Anglo-Irish history that tell a different, local, story than the English pastiches, in the stylistic torrent for which “Oxen of the Sun” is renowned – more recently commendable as a post-colonial creation). Both in the fabrication and in the fables, postcreation instils fresh life in the ghosts of the past – and somehow enriches (or subverts) the much more famous gallery of English pastiches. Also, just as with the prefix “post-“ when added to so many other notions, periods and cultural trends today, postcreation is a late comer, an appendage, with respect to creation, yet it retains various essential links with the root; moreover, it is as faithful to creation as to enable the prototype it supplements to be always recognized by readers. Regarding the connection of postcreation with the third member of the triad in the motto, with exile – as a personal experience and strategic response to it –postcreation might well behave just like an exiled prototype allowed to resurface after a period of temporary suspension (equivalent to death) and able to take on a second life (equivalent to immortality, hence the idea of immortality in association with postcreation). Understood in its own terms, postcreation in *Ulysses* acts as a silent and cunning master trope gathering to it, *ex post facto*, several of the exiled artist’s literary achievements: they all stand out through the very precise observance of contours and details of whatever creation – fictional or actual – the post-creation attaches itself to.

To construct an argument along these lines, I will follow John Gordon’s article, “Obeying the Boss in ‘Oxen of the Sun’” (Gordon 1991), stressing the cohesive power of words directly connected to the world of the fictional characters in *Ulysses*, rather than as brilliant, floating signifiers wonderfully put into circulation by Joyce. The working hypothesis here is that the cunning words can be even subtler (onto)logically, morally, and aesthetically than mere stylistic agents of Joyce’s liberated textuality can be. Determined to go hand in hand with the cunning of the *Ulysses* text, it is possible to interrogate the silence surrounding words and larger chunks of discourse, while assuming that

Ulysses "is representational throughout" (Gordon 1991: 234) – with due respect to the school that gives precedence to style, considering it as "either independent or determinative of action" (a school presented in Gordon's first note to the aforementioned article, complete with the names of reputable critics and secondary texts alongside many others: Hugh Kenner's *The Stoic Comedians: Flaubert, Joyce, and Beckett* (1962), David Hayman's *"Ulysses": The Mechanics of Meaning* (1970), Wolfgang Iser's *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose from Bunyan to Beckett* (1974) and John Paul Riquelme's *Teller and Tale in Joyce's Fictions: Oscillating Perspectives* (1983)).

Our intention is to show how three statements and their words can be read as prompts that follow the development of Stephen's artistic genius to maturity – after his decisive encounter with Leopold Bloom (whose progress and growing sense of responsibility are, in turn, carefully charted for the benefit of readers who wish to trust "the naturalistic base" (Gordon 1991: 233) of Joyce's creation and go along with the idea "that 'Oxen of the Sun' is consistently endogenous – that is, that changes at the level of events determine stylistic variants", Gordon 1991: 234).

On the one hand, after focusing on the characters' affinities and experiences which make up the novelistic *bona fide* plot of *Ulysses,* we follow a pattern of mutual responses that the intricate discourse keeps returning to, silently, from unexpected angles and in apparent disorder, i.e., cunningly. Quite inconspicuously, Stephen becomes a fully-fledged artist by the end of Bloomsday – and postcreation is the word he leaves behind in "Oxen of the Sun" to announce what is assumed as the idea of perfect artistic achievement: the capacity to bring everything created not to a common denominator but, as will be seen from the ensuing analysis, to the equivalent of the highest common factor of several fictional discourse fractions.

On the other hand, what carries weight in the present argument is the fact that the standard for assessing Stephen's maturity as an artist is partially extrinsic to the text of *Ulysses,* since we consider that, before "Oxen of the Sun" and "Circe", Stephen was still the kind of young man whose portrait as an artist fitted the description of Joyce's

Bildungsroman[1]; meanwhile, after the fourteenth and fifteenth episodes of *Ulysses*, with the novelistic and intertextual deep design and lines of convergence of the whole emerging from the background, the artist actually becomes free: he leaves behind what the first two sentences of the 'Circe' statement below presuppose, and he implements the presupposition of its final two sentences, which come from "Oxen of the Sun".

(1) "Let my country die for me. Up to the present it has done so. I don't want it to die. Damn death. Long live life!" (*U* 15.4473-4).

(2) "Mark me now. In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation. *Omnis caro ad te veniet* "(*U* 14. 292-4).

(3) "I, Bous Stephanoumenos, bullockbefriending bard, am lord and giver of their life*"* (*U* 14.1115; "their" refers to "the poor ghosts of the past" in "Who supposes that if the poor ghosts of the past are call[ed] into life across the waters of Lethe" by the

[1] The coincidence, in detail, between the opening scene of *Ulysses* in the Martello Tower, documented, according to the James Joyce Museum English leaflet of summer 2018, by "memories left by Gogarty and some of his visitors, [together with] Gogarty's rent documents", and in accordance with the presentation of the real life sequence of events (and scenes) in Joyce's life already known to readers (from his incipient self-portrait in *Stephen Hero* and from the passages he read to May Joyce during her sickness) justifies the reference to defence, in the words in the *motto*, regarding his defence and the only weapons at his disposal). In addition, the tourist aforementioned leaflet specifies that Trench (Haines):

> "had a nightmare about a black panther … reached for his gun, fired a few shots into the fireplace … Gogarty then took the gun, called out 'Leave him to me!' and shot down the saucepans from their shelf over Joyce's bed. Joyce took the hint and left the tower immediately, never to return. A month later he eloped to Europe with Nora Barnacle, to begin a life of self-imposed exile."

The same source includes the clarification that "Joyce was then 22 and beginning his career as a writer. He was busy on a poem called 'The Holy Office'", also explaining that it was "a broadside which attacked all his literary contemporaries in Dublin and proclaimed his own disdainful independence". The mention of the broadside is evocative and explanatory of Lenehan's disdainful reference to "a capful of light odes" as Joyce-Stephen's only known creations up to that point.

> artistic ego, "they will troop to [his] call" to receive new names? (adaptation of *U* 14. 1113-5, the "chastened style of Landor [in *Imaginary Conversations*]" Gilbert 1963: 265).

It should be noted that the words of the first statement are plain and linked to exilic itinerancy, namely to "the perpetual movement between the unresolved homeland and the broader world" (Pearson 2015: 145); they preserve both exilic bile (in the first two sentences) and exultation over its defeat (in the latter half); the last two sentences voice the sense of liberation from exilic spleen, frustration and dejection, and from any ambivalent feelings which pester the exile, posited more dramatically between *l'elan vital* and the deadly temptation to nihilism. As a whole, "our" first statement encompasses the experiential reality of Joyce's own life: the life of an expatriate who managed to transform exilic sufferance, very much akin to death, into a zestful affirmation of life via exceptional literary prowess and stylistic exuberance. And, we would like to add, wisdom. Fictionally managed, this ambivalent statement which covers an exilic complex transcended becomes what Suzette Henke termed, in *Joyce's* Moraculous Sindbook*: A Study of Ulysses,* "Stephen's gospel to Private Carr in terms of political philosophy" (Henke 1978: 201). Looking beyond this statement's obvious political content, Stephen's gospel points to the promise contained in the Gospels (etymologically, God's own spelt word(s), the archaic evangel) – a promise of life defeating death.

The words in the latter two statements stand out with their recondite meanings: the postcreation is a *hapax legomenon* with a strange grammatical presentation, an uncountable abstract noun preceded by the definite article "the", which singularizes an enigmatically expressed experience; and, again, this statement puts together life's beginning and its passing, while asserting the power of "the word that shall not pass away"; in the third statement, *Bous Stephanoumenos* is an eerie Greek name whose meaning becomes possibly less enigmatic in association with "bullockbefriending bard", a transparent diminutive appellation of the artist as leader of the novel's young men, which "Oxen of the Sun" brings into the limelight. The artist's confidence as "lord and giver of

life to the poor ghosts of the past", is marked, however, by a similar discrepancy between the pretentious Greek name and the light liquidity and friendly packing for Stephen's declared bardic role. One senses here, just as in the other statements, a rift announcing clear-cut polarities – to be decoded in connection to the way the artist is positioned in the world.

Our account might begin with Stephen's "Bous Stephanoumenos/bullock befriending bard" statement, the third one and the sequel to it. In context, it represents the prelude to the artist's debacle – which we consider decisive for the later developments of the book; they will represent an improvement upon the past in the experiential story of the actual creator, Joyce, as a fictional character. Stephen's otherwise reassuringly clear speech about the artist's self-asserted power to give life, and plentiful life at that, to the ghosts of the past is spontaneously and savagely cut short by the harsh words of a would-be friend, Vincent Lenehan. In the latter's otherwise mellifluous speech, the young artist's attention is drawn to the paucity of his achievements when measured with his high aspirations. Lenehan calls Stephen's attention to the fact that he had not "fathered forth" more than "a capful of light odes" for the time being. Then the chastising friend immediately changes tack, encouragingly jumping to the mother and the artist's relationship with her and predicting, through a random and predictable nuclear family association, from the fathering role of the aspiring artist, to the mother: "[Stephen, Lenehan says] would not leave his mother an orphan" – since, after all, he might still create more than the negligible work produced up to that point. As the quotation below will show, the gratuitous and stereotypical association of the artist's creation with the father and, subsequently, with the mother, is turned from a faded metaphor into a poisoned arrow-head. It hits Stephen to "the pith and marrow of his attribute" (as Hamlet puts it before his encounter with the ghost); and it makes Vincent Lenehan's trifling reference to Stephen's mother resemble Buck's callous "*O, it's only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead*." in *U* 1.199). This indicates the depth of the incompatibility between Stephen's "attribute" and other characters' blindness to it – plus their rather ambivalent wish to concede that he might create some

outstanding piece of writing in future, entitling him to win and wear the laurel crown and become “Stephaneforos”:

> All [who wish you well] desire to see you bring forth the work you meditate [and] to acclaim you Stephaneforos. I heartily wish you may not fail them. O no, Vincent Lenehan said, laying a hand on the shoulder near him. Have no fear. He could not leave his mother an orphan. The young man's face grew dark. All could see how hard it was for him to be reminded of his promise and of his recent loss. He would have withdrawn from the feast had not the noise of voices allayed the smart. (*U* 14. 1120-26)

The rift created in the scene that follows Stephen’s third statement conveys to the reader, we believe, an invitation to connect the third with the second statement, and interpret the latter as containing the guidelines needed for understanding, above the heads of the Bloomsday characters, how it is possible for all fictional flesh to be gathered to a single point (*Omnis caro ad te veniet*): either it creates the prerequisite for the characters and the fictional story to be placed on a higher level, say a promontory, which gives one a broader view, or, perhaps, one which can give a reader the chance to discover the highest common factor in the creation in *Ulysses*. One such factor is to be found in the discrepancy between the socializing discourse characteristic of people like Lenehan and Buck Mulligan, on the one hand, and the uses of language in the postcreation on the other. Though the discourse of differentiation is at work everywhere in the novel (as a greatest common factor of sorts), in “Oxen of the Sun” it is part of the allegorical underpinning of the episode, which makes more conspicuous the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the irresponsible sons, bullocks befriended by Stephen, and, on the other hand, the depth of the vibrant sensibility and poetic singularity underpinning Stephen’s artistic discourse (as can be seen in the density of unfamiliar words in Stephen’s second statement, “ Bous Stephanoumenos”, “bullockbefriending bard”, “the postcreation”). Stephen’s discourse is a discourse of faith efficiently hidden behind the cunning mask of irony. This is why the postcreation appears

in Stephen's pompous statement, which is further downgraded as it is framed in a mock Last Supper scene delivered by him as a Joking Jesus (see *U* 14.276-312). The postcreation is, however, *the* word which conveys, in the achieved fictional text of *Ulysses*, Stephen's artistic faith declared in principle in the *motto* of our article – and enacted in the 1922 book, as will be seen. In the context of the fourteenth episode, the nonce word needs to be liberated (excised?) from its husk, to be both de-framed (liberated from the ironic frame) and de-frocked of its strictly theological content (indicated by the beginning and the end of the statement's two liturgical formulations: the "Mark me now" at the beginning, and the Latinate "*Omnis caro ad te veniet*" at the end). There are, in fact, several layers of cunning to be stripped before getting to the silent, i.e., contemplative, core of the statement.

In addition to its "Mark me now" inception, the whole paragraph, which contains statements where Stephen ventriloquizes Christ directly addressing his disciples in the New Testament, also has another series of sermonic overtones. They relate, this time, to the underlying gender war staged by the fourteenth episode with its majority of macho voices resounding in the lobby of the maternity hospital with the screams of the woman in birth throes above – who is not given the word, but is reduced to "a cry on high", which only "Sir Leopold heard … and he wondered what cry that it was, whether of child or woman" (*U* 14. 170 and 170-1). In context, the postcreation statement vocally sanctions *male* aesthetic endeavouring to match the metaphysically sanctioned leading role given to *women* in childbirth, which crowns procreation and is the guarantee of inexhaustible natural vitality – in the flesh. To this is added the cunning last sermonic sentence in Catholic Latin, which states that all flesh, the fruit of parturition, shall eventually be gathered … Where? Read literally, i.e., understood in the absence of all cunning, it might be a stereotypical repetition of ritual or theological statements: all perishing flesh shall be retrieved by/saved due to the divine element; but if it is taken with a grain of … cunning salt, it silently asserts that all flesh shall be gathered in the *aesthetic* word that shall not pass away – while all flesh does pass away; in despite of death, life can triumph, "Let my country die for me. So far is has done so. Damn

death. Long live life!" What it takes for the aesthetic word inoculated to take wing is a transfer of faith – from writer to reader, from the mature writer's faith, which does not write the Latin "*te*" in lower case only to make bold with Christian reverence and the capital pronominal paradigm; the transfer invites the reader's recognition that the new book called *Ulysses* can gather everything that is glamorous into one, knitting together, in the same fabric, regular human responsibilities generated by faith (faith knitted from responsibilities only painfully discovered on the steep path of personal experience), with stylistic outreaches never heard before. There is more silence and cunning on the humble, humiliating path of experience, the path of the exile who eats the bitter bread of home sickness, "far from the land" – when this phrase is read … in a masculine, not at all sentimental, sense (as in Thomas Moore's Sarah Curran threnody). One can perceive or intuit the same cry of triumph voiced, at last, over the rift that is as deadly as "the country from whose bourne no traveller returns"; but the artist in exile, with the only defence of silence and cunning, can utter this kind of cry.

It is worth following the birth and perfection of Bloom's full sense of human responsibility as shown by John Gordon's article on the whole text of *Ulysses* to convince readers that the fourteenth episode is one where male egoism and deeply hurt egotism (related to the Blooms' marital problems) can be channelled more felicitously in the act of negotiating between various sexual themes (the same tackled by the young banterers and the fertility rites enacted in counterpoint by the woman upstairs). While Bloom is meditating in the maternity hospital and reminiscing about a period when he and his wife dwelt so close to Holles Street that they were exposed daily to other families' happiness while taking home their babies from the maternity hospital, Bloom's consciousness is moved to connect the fragments of his life and its reflective flow: "from their window the Blooms could see the hospital (18.703-705), could see the couples leaving, about once a day (77-78), with their newborns, implicitly reproaching them. Some such juxtaposition is what Holles Street represents for Bloom" (Gordon 1991: 243). A few lines later, we read that:

> [t]he voices which rebuke Bloom's sexual deviance and harp on his sonlessness express private demons aroused through associations connected with the chapter's place and time. On the other hand, a maternity hospital where after long labor a healthy son is born is not a bad place to confront those demons. Especially significant is the fact of his father's age. In contemplating another son Bloom has wondered if, at thirty-eight, he might be too old (11.1067). But Theodore Purefoy is in his fifties, a fact not lost on someone born to a father also in his fifties. So there's hope yet. (Gordon 1991: 243-4)

He evokes and judges things, investing them with the weight of his past but directs them to a point in future, with thoughts that empower him to accept life over death so as to defeat the brooding over it – just as in Stephen's first statement, where life is chosen over death that is damned and dismissed by an exclamation (which leaves one free to celebrate life). Consequently, the artist's liberating exclamation, we can say, corresponds to Bloom's acceptance, as Gordon demonstrates, that life must go on – rather than being abandoned to sterility and slow desiccation (or, ultimately death). While reminiscing in "Oxen of the Sun" (where we read that "On her [Nurse Callan's] stow [the maternity] he [Bloom] ere was living with dear wife and lovesome daughter that then over land and seafloor nine years had long outwandered" *U* 14.86-8), the novel's Ulysses, still bound for *Ithaca* at this time, decides that, after all, it is possible for him and Molly ultimately to resume their carnal intercourse in future, trying to beget another son some time thereafter. Accepting the future as an opening, while straining one's will is what is needed, for a start, to make a decisive change. Bloom's thoughts rally him to the "*Omnis caro ad te veniet"* injunction in Stephen's second statement: he accepts the necessity of everything bending to the will (rather than the figuratively used "way"!) of all flesh: committed to living (in the flesh) (this also being the significance of "Obeying the Boss" in the title of John Gordon's article). Leopold Bloom's leap of faith

involves him discarding the alternative to sterility (his constant[2] masturbation, incurred in order to compensate for the missing sexual congress with Molly).

This will make room for the book *Ulysses* equipping Bloom, as will appear increasingly clearly from now on in the book's later chapters (albeit only rather fleetingly), with a substitute-son. In fact the Blooms will both welcome Stephen at 7 Eccles Street, as we read in *Ithaca*, each being in a position to fulfil the deepest momentary desire couched in their souls: Bloom has a more conscious fathering-befriending eagerness, while Molly typically has a combination of a mothering and whoring instinctuality.

But one precondition for the continuation of the substitute-son scenario featuring Leopold Bloom and Stephen together after "Oxen of the Sun" in the final episodes of *Ulysses* is that the son, Stephen, must be changed – and changed utterly too – and that he must cross the same border between life and death. For Stephen, it is important to assume that crossing the bar of death puts him in a position to choose artistic immortality, devote himself to it and deploy it: he must make ready for his task, which, according to our *motto*, was to "express [himself] in some mode of life or art as freely as [he] could".

This essential move, however, is to be deduced from the text – which remains steeped in mysterious, cunning silence. Yet one can tell that after the oblique, random pronouncement about the postcreation, the first step to liberate Stephen on his path was his separation from the bantering gang of sons-bullocks; they had surrounded the son like a cloud of witnesses with empty ringing vociferous blaspheming of all hues – until his drastic change of heart. It is to be noted that while being witnesses in the public discourse order, the banterers, most importantly, remain perfect strangers to Stephen's art. What makes this separation decisive, and clear to readers, is something else that we think is cunningly suggested behind the useful indicator of the Homeric title given

[2] For example, before *Nausicaa*, at the end of "Lotus Eaters", masturbation is ironically contemplated in the tepid bath when Bloom is looking at "the limp father of thousands" (*U* 5.571).

to the fourteenth episode, “Oxen of the Sun”. The reader is able to take in the artist’s essential distancing from the Irish typical banterers surrounding him if s/he accepts the existence of a paronomastic, cunning variant designation, “Oxen of the Son”, that is emblematic for this chapter. The fourteenth episode is, in fact, connected to the paronym “son” in several ways’. Firstly, one can speak of this as an “oxen of the son’s/sons’” chapter as there are so many perfectly irresponsible and offensive sons’ voices to be heard in the foreground, while Mina Purefoy is nearly dying in childbirth (and while, as John Gordon showed in the earlier long quotation from “Obeying the Boss in ‘Oxen of the Sun’”, Leopold Bloom is secretly joining in the episode’s fertility rites – which are painfully fulfilled/enacted, rather than being celebrated, upstairs in the maternity hospital). Secondly, the young voices blasphemously resounding in the lobby are the voices of bullocks present, inscribed in the posterity of the bulls of Ireland, bulls of old (whose colonial history they are unforgettably sending up in a collective Irish fable): through historical fable they allegorically confront the bulls of old as a/the bellicose filial generation. Because they toy with stereotypes however, the bullocks both are, and are not, in revolt against the generation of the parents, in so far as they share in the callousness and offensiveness of public discourse makers – who happen to have been historical enemies of Ireland – and were still that in the present Bloomsday, as the episode ends up teaching its readers. But, before the full lesson is over, Stephen remains for a while, until the time of “our” third statement, the son in the singular, written in lower case, the ring-leader of the gang in the Church and State history fable *with bulls*, staged by the nationalist chorus of buoyant young voices.

The present banterers’ discourse attaches itself to a number of real periods in Irish history making them unforgettable through narrative fabrication. The Norman and the Catholic diocesan colonization, the Tudor expeditions and Anglican Reformation, the Jamesian plantations and the Flight of the Earls (in this order, rather than viceversa!), the large-scale emigration which depleted the nation: all are worked into an unforgettable allegorical story, because the story, or fable, follows the prescriptive details in Stephen’s utterance about the

postcreation. It can grant immortality to nationalist teachings in symbolic death: the death of the colonized country – the oldest (white) colony of Old England, and of Europe. Inborn nationalist bitterness and the artistic transcendence of exilic sentiments that become a source of long living life coexist in the fable. The origin of the island's colonial past of Church and State – Gordon (1991: 238) refers to it as the Anglo-Irish satire, saying that "the disabused company launches a satire on Anglo-Irish history" – is circumscribed by punning on the papal bull Laudabiliter, issued in 1155 by the only ever English pope, Adrian (Nicholas Breakspear before his ordination). The fable postcreatively conflates the (Catholic) Church bull with the State bull. The former sends the first bull, the (feudal) Lord Harry (Henry Plantagenet), to Ireland, which opens the way to the second Lord Harry (Henry VIII). While the first bull's admirable achievement is to have come over from England to "shit on shamrock" (*U* 14.585-6), the later bull's conversion to Protestantism is the climax of the fable; and its sequel is the transformation of the Irish land into a plantation. The colonizer's Reformation is grotesquely presented from the point of view of the colonized when the second Lord Harry

> got into an old smock and skirt that had belonged to his grandmother and bought a grammar of the bulls' language to study but he could never learn a word of it except the first personal pronoun which he copied out big and got off by heart and if ever he went out for a walk he filled his pockets with chalk to write it upon what took his fancy, the side of a rock or a teahouse table or a bale of cotton or a corkfloat. (*U* 14.632-8).

The colonial appropriation of whatever took the fancy of the second historical bull, "the side of a rock or a teahouse table, or a bale of cotton or a corkfloat", is the final goal of the satirical show put up quite truthfully not by one but several of the young men gathered in the lobby of the maternity hospital. As silent subtlety and cunning goes, it is important to notice, on the other side of the nationalist/Anglo-Irish edge of Irish hyphenated identity, that the oxen of the son (the chorus of

voices directed by Stephen) also represent the nationalist fate of the heroic Irishmen in the *Táin bó Cuúailnge*. On the other hand, and, again, significantly, Stephen also refers to them, and in words that trigger the satire, as "bulls in an English chinashop" (*U* 14. 581) and they take on all the John Bull and Irish bull associations only too familiar to racist Anglo-Irishmen.

The coda of the whole historic show (which lasts from *U* 14.582 to *U* 14.650) returns the discourse about the past to its originating "son" – in the singular, and written in lower case – to Stephen, and it shifts the Flight of the Earls episode to *after* the Jamesian Plantation:

> and the end was that the men of the island seeing no help was toward, as the ungrate women were all of one mind, made a wherry raft, loaded themselves and their bundles of chattels on shipboard, set all masts erect, manned the yards, sprang their luff, heaved to, spread three sheets in the wind, put her head between wind and water, weighed anchor, ported her helm, ran up the jolly Roger, gave three times three, let the bul1gine run, pushed off in their bum boat and put to sea to recover the main of America. (*U* 14.638-646)

Following his arrival on site, Buck Mulligan – this episode's realest buck! – takes the lead with a fable to cover *the future* of the island. In a Swiftian pastiche of *A Modest Proposal*, where the children of Ireland are not to be cooked up as dainties, but the women are summoned for procreation in a "fertilizing farm", Buck Mulligan advances a typically liberal Anglo-Irish project for a future of bliss: he proposes to repopulate Britain's sister island that has been depleted by incessant waves of emigration. As postcolonial theory would put things today, Buck devoutly *mimics* in rural Ireland a British project of forced liberal urbanization[3]. Mulligan summons to his fertilizing farm on Lambay

[3] One example of this is documented by George Bernard Shaw's play *John Bull's Other Island*, commissioned for the Abbey Theatre in 1904, but not produced there. It addresses the same future as Joyce's *Ulysses*, being set in the year 1904 in an imaginary

Island all the women of Ireland, irrespective of their marital or social status. The farm would be manned by Mulligan, the macho man par excellence, with a "set of pasteboard cards" bearing the inscription of "Le Fécondateur" (*U* 14. 778), declaring his readiness at all times to replenish the population of a country that has been emptied since time immemorial by emigration as well as by "copulation without population" (*U* 14. 1422).

Representing Buck Mulligan and Stephen-the-bullock as the fourteenth episode's two formidable sons and champions of discourse confronts the reader with the same edge of hyphenated Irish identity. While Stephen is the minor bullock and bard (by the old Celtic "lore and order" of Ireland and the *Táin*), and is benevolently befriending others, Buck is presented as the insolently patronizing (Anglo-Irish/West Briton) boss of the show. For this reason, Mulligan's fabrications are stereotypical tongue-in-cheek, an Anglo-Irishman's tall tale, "a mocking tale or a gibe/To please a companion/Around the fire at the club" (in the emblematic characterization from the first stanza of Yeats's "Easter 1916"). Meanwhile, Stephen is the real artist whose fabrications *can transform* the leading ironist son into a capital (and capital letter) Son. And he will undergo this transformation in stages – which take(s) longer than the "yodel" at the end of "our" first statement that transcribes Stephen's successful liberation. Stephen assumes a joyful Joking Jesus tone throughout the paragraph where he begins to talk about the postcreation, beginning with the words "About that present time *young* Stephen filled all cups that stood empty" (my emphasis), "praying for the intentions of the sovereign pontiff" and giving "them for a pledge the vicar of Christ which also as he said is vicar of Bray", then urging them to partake "of this mazer and quaff ye this mead which

Roscullen that is not like the island townland in Ireland but a hinterland: the ideal venue for a developer's urbanization project, like that proposed by Tom Broadbent, prospective MP for Roscullen in the Union parliament. This project is similar to one advocated at the time by Ebenezer Howard to create garden cities, like Letchworth, for example, on the main island (this being, probably, the historical reality sent up with similar precision by George Bernard Shaw in his 1904 play – by a postcreation of sorts!)

is not indeed parcel of my body but my soul's bodiment" and in this way leading them astray at the same time since they are further directed by the words "Leave ye fraction of bread to them that live by bread alone" (*U* 14.277-84). But, as already seen, several styles and rounds of discourse later, during the exchange with Lenehan following "our" third statement (from *U* 14.1112 – 1125), Stephen becomes a more genuinely sad victim of his own would-be young friends' betrayal. As another capital letter Son, he is put in a similar position to Jesus at all times during the consummation of His earthly mission[4]. This is the third meaning that underpins "our" paronomastic transcript of the prototypical Homeric title of the fourteenth episode, and it marks Stephen's entry into the artistic order, where creators can also be spelt with a capital letter because they work and toy with uniqueness: that of their own making[5].

Judging things in this light, it can be noted that at the end of the day the fourteenth episode casts an exile's shadow on the homeland youths and local rivalries, making the oxen in the title not just pointers to the classical Odyssean allegory of desecration; indeed, they designate a class of Irishmen. Yet, in an instance of "the postcreation" prompted by linking "our" second to the first statement, it can be asserted that the exiled Son (the auctorial Joyce-Stephen), when spelt with a capital letter during a God-flirting speech, has created a moment when that particular class of Irishmen gathered in the lobby of the Holles Street Maternity Hospital have enjoyed a taste of collective freedom. Prodded by Stephen, the Irish sons can be said to have managed to defeat with their savagely inventive cunning the hated English ruler whose language has clung so efficiently to them (as to make them, as the quote will show, "Irish by name and irish by nature"), even while they wheel about in a triumphantly nationalistic tableau vivant:

[4] Even if this were not enough, the capitalization of the Son, a legitimate rendering of the title of the fourteenth episode, is also suggested intertextually, through the sacramental presuppositions that underpin the Homeric twelfth canto.

[5] Is such prospective complete freedom in the way of life or art not in the spirit of the opening of our *motto*?

> Come, come, says Mr Vincent, plain dealing. He'll find himself on the horns of a dilemma if he meddles with a bull that's Irish, says he. Irish by name and irish by nature, says Mr Stephen, and he sent the ale purling about, an Irish bull in an English chinashop. (*U* 14.578-81)

The clear division of the bullocks from their befriending bard represents the fictionally unwarranted end to the oxen of the son's symposium in the lobby of the Holles Street maternity hospital. In the real world, Stephen's fictional desire "to withdraw from the feast" ("The young man's face grew dark. All could see how hard it was for him to be reminded of his promise and of his recent loss. He would have withdrawn from the feast", *U* 14.1124-6) corresponds to Joyce's preparing to leave the Martello Tower for good – exactly as the 2018 English tourist leaflet for the James Joyce Museum states in our first footnote.

Readers of *Ulysses* are free to foreground the glamorous but irresponsible volubility of the social discourse of the sons or bullocks and their "liberated/liberating textuality"; or they can side with the discourse of faith momentarily deployed by Stephen, with his more responsible/exilic interventions. In the latter case, it is worth focusing, in the postcreation statement, at the end, on a point of convergence where philological, ethical, ontological and theological meanings align – precisely as prescribed by the words "*Omnis caro ad te veniet*" which close Stephen's dictum. Because, philologically, postcreation is a word that attaches itself to (natural) creation, whose human, all too human, beginning is in procreation. The postcreation functions as a continuation of "omnipollent nature's incorrupted benefaction" (as was exhorted, though of course parodically, too, at the beginning of the fourteenth episode's imperative public discourse) and it can be pursued with "solicitude for that proliferent continuance [of the nation]" (U 14.17-18 and 16-17). As such, the asserted postcreation is an echo of the incipient acts of an over-vocally public, ethical injunctions to beget children for the proliferation of the nation, encouraged rather chaotically in the first continuous prose paragraph of the fourteenth episode. In turn, though in a hushed way, the postcreation piously declares that creation, that

fertility, is good. Ontologically, the postcreation is a way of transcending the way of all flesh, with its inherent trait of passing away. But if the theological template is imported, demonstratively, by the artist, with an aesthetic intention, then postcreation asserts the immortality of art by a comparison with nature. It towers over natural and exilic mortality.

Further textual arguments can be adduced to support the idea of an underlying discourse of aesthetic faith, a discourse which is cunning and whose main protagonist/agent in Joyce's book is a silent Stephen, a fit companion for Bloom, the other outwardly and largely silent male, who keeps the middle of the book going with the power of the words in his mind.

In its entirety, "Oxen of the Sun/Son" is the chapter which cunningly confronts the reader with copious artistic expertise. This expertise is manifest not only in the blatant history of English modern prose through pastiche, but also implicit in the artistic prowess required for re-writing the Anglo-Irish church and state history in the fable with bulls; and it shows greater artistic expertise than that of merely composing some light odes. After being given its rightful name, "the postcreation", a reader is also able to recognize Stephen's Shakespearean expertise in "Scylla and Charybdis" for what it is; there he is toying with Shakespeare with such precise knowledge of the Bard's texts and of his commentators' ones to date, that his unchecked inventiveness corresponds, just as in the fable with the bulls or in the English pastiches, to precision along the whole extent of his fabrication – one which, for this reason, "gives delight and hurts not". And John Eglinton's question to Stephen, "Do you believe in your own theory?" (*U* 9.1065-66) is a discourse of faith question, cunningly answered by the artist only in the negative, and flippantly albeit promptly. It crowns that brilliant fabrication as a b(l)uffer put in place by the Shakespearean (post)creator.

The (inter- and intra-) textual precision that contains the postcreation in its cocoon is the notable precondition for recognizing what is visible in such episodes that surpasses the limits of the fictional Bloomsday; it points to the presence, in the wings, of a silent cunning artist directing Bloomsday. And it is important to recognize this

capacity in the fictional artist, Stephen. Inscribed in his emblematic name "Dedalus", it predestines him to become this artist after going beyond the pale of cheap, predictable national stereotypes, defecting from the camp of compulsive irony that keeps the young men of "Oxen of the Sun" stuck in Ireland together. After Vincent Lenehan's chastising rebuke, Stephen steps off the pedestal and relinquishes his bullock-befriending bard leadership of the irreverent chorus with their anti-Anglo-Irish and other blasphemies (especially giving offence to women and fertility by their sterile variations on erotic and birth control or abortionist themes). Reduced to silence, the former exuberant Christianizing ringleader Stephen becomes the artificer Dedalus *because he is free to engage with the more responsible Bloom*. The latter has played his silent, more mature part throughout the boisterous boyish banter of the medical students' and their friend Stephen's show. In "Obeying the Boss in 'Oxen of the Sun'", John Gordon follows the meanderings of Bloom's silent inner voice/his conscience in great detail, recorded in stages and in parallel with the strident boastful young voices. Silence is a device that privileges the two protagonists of *Ulysses* over other characters because it gives the reader access now to Bloom's mind, now to Stephen's, while the forestage is taken by some spectacular or stereotypical sonorous dialogue (as happened in the Martello Tower scene between Buck Mulligan and Stephen, introducing the latter as a round and the former as a stock character). The same device underpins Bloom's silences and self-communing as the counterpoint of the anecdotal material provided by his domestic dialogue with Molly or his Dublin flâneur's encounters in "Lotus Eaters" or "Lestrygonians". In Stephen's parting with the gang that he thought he would befriend at the end of "Oxen of the Sun", the silence which envelops him is fructified. And the same happens in Bloom's case because he is inwardly led to a change of heart, as pointed out by John Gordon. And because in the fourteenth episode the decisive element is a deeper and more pregnant/fertile/life-laden silence, "Oxen of the Sun" is essential in demonstrating why this episode knits together a responsible, immortal plot in *Ulysses* through the postcreation.

This plot development, which takes the two protagonists together towards the (temporary, very temporary!) fulfilment of their filiation in accordance with the Homeric theme, rests on a foregrounding, if we follow John Gordon's observations about Bloom in the "Newman" paragraph, as identified by Stuart Gilbert (Gilbert 1963: 265-6; *U* 14.1344-55). This analogy allows us to see that there are affinities between the two protagonists. Both are liable to find in "a stray sound or sight", particular "'chance word[s]' [that] can call forth … evil memories'" (Gordon 1991: 234), Bloom and Stephen respond by significantly modifying their consciousness, with a "growing ability to discriminate the outside world" (Gordon 1991: 235). If the "Newman" [paragraph] … expresses Stephen's reaction to the memory of his mother, which was awakened by Lenehan's "chance word," "mother" (Gordon 1991: 242), and is why he changes gear completely, the second "Carlylean [paragraph] is [for Bloom] the celebration of high purpose, of the Purefoys' victory over "sterile cohabitation," which registers Bloom's resolution to try for another son" (Gordon 1991: 243). Either way, fertility ends up being asserted: in aesthetic terms for Stephen and in nature's own way for Bloom. What opens the creative path to the artist is Lenehan's reminder "of his promise and of his recent loss" (*U* 14.1124-5) (Stephen's promising Parisian career cut in twain by the telegram that his mother is dying and her subsequent death, which caused the fictional – just like the real – artist, to return home without having made his mark in the world). He can then proceed as prescribed when interpreting the vision or dream just recorded by Leopold Bloom's conscience ("Not to insult over him will the vision come as over one that lies under her wrath, not for vengeance to cut him off from the living but shrouded in the piteous vesture of the past, silent, remote, reproachful", *U* 14.1349-55). The affinities between Bloom and Stephen as the novel's sufferers make the former's reactions compatible with the latter. The vision can become significant for Stephen's frustrated artistic conscience, too, in that it extends the pacifying, soothing power of the vision "shrouded in the piteous vesture of the past" to the last words of Stephen's third statement "if I call them into life across the waters of Lethe will not the poor ghosts [of the past] troop to my call?" (*U* 14.1114-5).

Moving one step further, the "Pater" paragraph that follows "Newman" represents a new instance of the postcreation implemented in textual action. A self-reflexive merger is created in this paragraph between the subject positions of several later "Oxen of the Sun" paragraphs. The "Pater" paragraph is entirely and explicitly dedicated to Dublin's sublime "stranger", Leopold Bloom:

> The stranger still regarded on the face before him a slow recession of that false calm there, imposed, as it seemed, by habit or some studied trick, upon words so embittered as to accuse in their speaker an unhealthiness, a flair, for the cruder things of life. (*U* 14.1356-9)

But, by a merger of subject positions, on an extrinsic level of our interpretation, Bloom becomes a projection of Dublin's sublime exile: Joyce himself. In the self-reflexive space populated with sufferers, for whose judicious recognition the reader is responsible, Leopold Bloom's merging with Stephen is the last piece in the jigsaw of the postcreation on its way to adding artistic immortality to "the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to".

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