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"BLOOM OF FLOWERVILLE": AN AGRI-NATIONAL CONSUMER

Could Bloom of 7 Eccles street foresee Bloom of Flowerville? *Ulysses* 17.1581

The chapter of "Ithaca" is an episode of homecoming, of receding into domesticity but also of science and information, and of "(impersonal) catechism". It is, in terms of pages, the second longest one in Ulysses, second only to "Circe". Vincent Cheng describes it as "an episode that refuses to 'imagine' false identities, revealing instead a plethora of specific facts and objective details which are thus cleared of the suspicion that they might be either slanted by an individual stream of consciousness (in subjective indirect monologue), or exaggerated through stylistic parody or fantasy". Hence, receding from the world of movements and languages, "Ithaca" brings us toward (or back to) the world of a solitary man and a solitary voice. It is the episode of scientific descriptive language: the narrative voice, or whoever puts the questions and answers, is detached and impersonal.

However, to be "impersonal" is not necessarily to be objective, while the catechizing process can be more information-bombarding than question-clarifying. In his discussions on the question of history, James Fairhall brings in the fallacy of history as reality and introduces cross-questioning as an academic practice of history. He quotes from the English philosopher-historian Robin Collingwood: "The questions we ask about the past are determined by our own particular present, and the resulting answers – while never yielding full, absolute knowledge – can illustrate the past in terms of

¹ Don Gifford with Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 566.

² Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 241.

the present and vice versa"³. In Collingwood's view, history is constantly under the reconstructing process through questioning and answering, and by "cross questioning", certain unconsciously withheld information can be extracted. "Ithaca", with its question-and-answer – and sometimes even cross-questioning – format, is in this sense a rearrangement of the fragments throughout the day of June 16, 1904, and beyond. It is the rearrangements – like Bloom's rearrangements of his pockets and receipts – of the significant (and insignificant) incidents and thoughts of the day, of impersonal knowledge and meticulous descriptions, of thoughts on race, religions, and ideologies. The question-and-answer format is meant to disentangle the chaotic narratives of previous episodes and pull together a microcosmic narrative fabric of history.

Whereas Q&A and cross-examination practices help historians procure relevant information to mend historical gaps, the bombarding information drawn from the Q&As in "Ithaca" can be loquacious and overwhelming. Questions are usually given lengthy answers consisting of detailed, sometimes verbose, lists. Narrative flow from question to question remains so fluent and spontaneous that no intervention can possibly be made. Truth is, reader responses have never been expected by the Q&A format. Declan Kiberd tells us that "both the catechism and the science textbook had the same disadvantage: they ask a question not out of genuine uncertainty but only because the answer was already known"4. This, as Kiberd claims, is a form of "interrogation"⁵, in which "the answers are already known and the 'right' answer must be given, even if that is not what the interrogated person believes"⁶. Readers are subsequently made "mute" by the overwhelming blocks and terse interrogation, since they are not offered a chance to halt or think or question. Accordingly, "Ithaca" is an episode of a single narrator, yet he is a dogmatic one; it is a chapter of uncovering information in order to access truth, yet it is also "a savage commentary on the overload of information in our modern world, information which oppresses more often than it illuminates"7.

³ James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4.

⁴ Declan Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us: the Art of Everyday Living* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 248.

⁵ Ibid., 248.

⁶ Ibid., 248-9.

⁷ Ibid., 255.

Much of the overloading information presented in "Ithaca" has to do with Bloom's (as well as Joyce's) attentive attitude toward advertisements and commodity culture, which, in Fairhall's words, represent "capitalism - the advance guard of the global capitalist economy now reshaping not only Irish lives but everyone's life"8. Critics have pointed out how Bloom's material desire for commodities forges his fantasy for "a thatched bungalowshaped 2 storey dwellinghouse of southerly aspect, surmounted by vane and lightning conductor, [...] halldoor, olive green, with smart carriage finish and neat doorbrasses, stucco front with gilt tracery at eaves and gable, rising, if possible, upon a gentle eminence with agreeable prospect from balcony with stone pillar parapet over unoccupied and unoccupyable pastures and standing in 5 or 6 acres of its own ground [...]"9, and so on. Bloom's dream of a comfortable country life in an agreeable house is a reflection of his domestic desire. Fairhall describes the language here as that "of desire and imagined identity that characterizes the advertising copy and the articles of magazines devoted to elegant living"10. It is worth noting that Bloom chooses "Not to inherit [...] gravelkind of borough English, or possess [...] an extensive demesne of sufficient number of acres, [...] nor [...] a terracehouse or semidetached villa, [...] but to purchase by private treaty in fee [...]"11 a suburban house. In this sense, he is not only dreaming of an ideal property as an object to possess, but also proclaiming his ability to engage in a consumer culture.

Jennifer Wicke writes accordingly: "Every object is also a relation, implies a work of consumption, a transforming recontextualization of the sort that goes on even with the more mundane goods of actual purchase: in Bloom Cottage, Saint Leopold's, Flowerville, [...], a whole range of philosophical and leisure activities are also suddenly possible". By this she refers to the following series of questions and answers, ones that further detail Bloom's architectural plans and mechanical appliances, "Bloom of Flowerville", as well as the lists of "intellectual pursuits" and "lighter

⁸ James Fairhall, "Northsiders", in *Joyce: Feminism / Post / Colonialism*, ed. Ellen Carol Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 47.

⁹ James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1993), 17.1504-11.
¹⁰ James Fairhall, "Northsiders", in *Joyce: Feminism / Post / Colonialism*, ed. Ellen Carol Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 48.

¹¹ U 17.1499-1504.

¹² Jennifer Wicke, "Joyce and Consumer Culture", in *The Cambridge Companion to James Joyce*, ed. Derek Attridge, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 251.

recreations"¹³. Ellen Carol Jones further extends Wicke's point about consumption, reminding us that it is a "lifestyle" rather than material commodities themselves, that Bloom constructs in his ever-expanding Flower-ville fantasy¹⁴. Such a lifestyle, in the following Q&As, would make him "a gentleman of field produce and live stock", and obtain "ascending powers of hierarchical order, that of gardener, groundsman, cultivator, breeder, and at the zenith of his career, resident magistrate or justice of the peace with a family crest and coat of arms and appropriate classical motto [...], duly recorded in the court directory [...], and mentioned in court and fashionable intelligence"¹⁵.

In the previous question that leads to a meticulous description of Bloom's ideal property, the narrator asks: "In what ultimate ambition had all concurrent and consecutive ambitions now coalesced?" Raised right after Bloom inhales and satisfies himself with the odour of his own toenail, the question is unlikely to be connected to the previous passage. Immediately after the question is a gigantic catalogue of detailed descriptions of the features of Flowerville, which is then followed by questions that appear like a series of interrogating questions on the topic of Flowerville and "Bloom of Flowerville". As these interconnected questions continue, the narrative proceeds to answer with different aspects of life that define Bloom's aspiring "lifestyle": housing, properties, possessions, names of residence, personal image, recreation, occupation, political and social status, governmental career, and so on. All elements combined, we may say that this is Bloom's dream of a successful self in a successful lifestyle; and I venture to suggest that, these questions and answers to respective aspects of Bloom's ideal life together "coalesce" to demonstrate Bloom's "ultimate ambition" of a lifestyle that celebrates commodity culture, embraces nature and agriculture, ascends in social status, and carries out political reforms for the nation.

When Bloom's prospective social status is envisioned in "Ithaca," it is envisioned as an ascending one in the hierarchical order, from "gardener, groundsman, cultivator, breeder, and at the zenith of his career," to "resi-

¹³ U 17.1581, 1588, 1592.

¹⁴ Ellen Carol Jones, "Commodious Recirculation: Commodity and Dream in Joyce's Ulysses", *Joyce and Advertising*, special issue of *James Joyce Quarterly* 30.4-31.1 (Summer/Fall 1993), 745.

¹⁵ U 17.1603, 1608-14.

¹⁶ U 17.1497-8.

dent magistrate or justice of the peace"¹⁷. As his social status ascends and his political "capacity" increases, Bloom outlines for himself a political "course of action"¹⁸, which is:

A course that lay between undue clemency and excessive rigour: the dispensation in a heterogeneous society of arbitrary classes, incessantly rearranged in terms of greater and lesser social inequality, of unbiassed homogeneous indisputable justice, tempered with mitigants of the widest possible latitude but extractable to the uttermost farthing with confiscation of estate, real and personal, to the crown. Loyal to the highest constituted power in the land, actuated by an innate love of rectitude, his aim would be the strict maintenance of public order, [...] the upholding of the letter of the law [...] against all traversers in covin and trespassers acting in contravention of bylaws and regulations, [...] all orotund instigators of international persecution, all perpetuators of international animosities, all mental molestors of domestic conviviality, all recalcitrant violators of domestic connubiality.¹⁹

The passage is Bloom's tactful political statement on social equality, as well as an encapsulation of his views on the redistribution of property. He advocates land reform, speaks for Home Rule, and assents to enforcement of violent control when necessary. These claims, however, have been similarly voiced in "Circe," when Bloom declares his political ideals for his illusory regime of "new Bloomusalem":

BLOOM

I stand for the reform of municipal morals and the plain ten commandments. New worlds for old. Union of all, jew, moslem and gentile. Three acres and a cow for all children of nature. Saloon motor hearses. Compulsory manual labour for all. All parks open to the public day and night. Electric dishscrubbers. Tuberculosis, lunacy, war and mendicancy must now cease. General amnesty, weekly carnival with masked license, bonuses for all, esperano the universal language with universal brotherhood. No more patriotism of barspongers and dropsical impostors. Free money, free rent, free love and a free lay church in a free lay state.²⁰

¹⁷ U 17.1608-10.

¹⁸ U 17.1616.

¹⁹ U 17.1617-33.

²⁰ U 15.1684-93.

Whereas Bloom's political statement in "Ithaca" is announced in a cool tone and understated language, "Circe"'s phantasmagorical setting gives more rhetorical freedom to his speech on politics. Such freedom not only grants him independence of speech, but also allows him to "play out in unrestricted imagination his ultimate utopian fantasies as an Irish Messiah and reformer"21. However, the surrealism of this ambitious speech may not be as ridiculous as it seems: in fact, as Gifford reminds us, "Three acres and a cow" was a phrase that became "the rallying cry for Irish land reform after its use by Jesse Collings [...], a member of the Parliament, [...] in a successful effort to force a measure of land reform on Lord Salisbury's conservative and reluctant government in 1886"22. That is to say, here Bloom is advocating "an equitable land reform program that redistributes Irish territory to the Irish"23. In Bloom's proposed policies in "Ithaca," he also calls for the "dispensation [...], incessantly rearranged in terms of [...] social inequality, of unbiassed [...] justice, tempered with mitigants of the widest possible latitude but extractable to the uttermost farthing with confiscation of estate, real and personal, to the crown"24. In its circuitous language, the passage thus champions land reform in Ireland.

It is not coincidental that both passages about Bloom's prospective political policies involve land reform. In fact, as Joseph Lee signals: "Post-Famine Ireland had a land question. It had no peasant question" The Irish land question is based upon years of the country's economic reliance on agriculture and crop exports, and such reliance turned thorny when the country was struck with the Great Famine and successive agricultural depressions. The problematics of the Irish landlord-tenant system lie in unaffordably high rent (especially during depression years), strict Land Acts, and the tension between Irish tenants and British absentee landlords. On the other hand, the already questionable landlord-tenant system in Ireland became more problematic during the depressions, especially the depression of 1879-82, when the unadjusted rent exceeded tenants' ability to submit

²¹ Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 219.

²² Don Gifford with Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 479.

²³ Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 221.

²⁴ U 17.1618-22.

²⁵ Joseph Lee, *Ireland: 1912-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 72.

payments during those difficult years.²⁶ Michael Turner comments on the way agricultural economic history influenced the political history of Ireland: "Crucially, it was the depression of 1979-82 and the associated Land War which exposed the tensions at the opposite poles of the social and economic ladder, and finally led to concerted political moves towards Irish home rule: it heralded the most long-lasting change of them all, the successful move towards Irish independence"²⁷. The land problem in Ireland, therefore, is not only part of the national paralysis that leads to political reforms; it is among the foundations of the national economy, and it lies at the heart of Irish nationalism and the independence movement.

Joyce sets *Ulysses* in the year 1904, only a year after Wyndham's Land Act of 1903. This time frame, I would argue, has a significance not only in terms of the rising political tension as a result of the Home Rule Act and the Phoenix Park Murders in 1882, but also in relation to the Land League, nationalism and, in the following few years, the increased levels of property ownership. The shocking incident of the Phoenix Park Murders, as a turning point in Irish-British political relationship, was ignited as a result of the Kilmainham Treaty, signed between Gladstone and Parnell, which was an extension of the 1881 Second Land Bill. Evidently, the Irish land problem appears to be the driving force that propels the development of Irish nationalism and independence in the country.

In "Ithaca", right after Bloom's political "course of action" and the claim of his own "innate love of rectitude" the narrator requests a proof that "he had loved rectitude from his early youth" Then comes a brief account of his religious and political development since youth; among the fragmental anecdotes, it is narrated how "In 1885 he had publicly expressed his adherence to the collective and national economic programmes advocated by James Fintan Lalor, John Fisher Murray, John Mitchel, J. F. X. O'Brien and others, the agrarian policy of Michael Davitt, the constitutional agita-

²⁶ For more details on the economic history of the Irish land problem, see Michael Turner, *After the Famine: Irish agriculture, 1850-191*; F.S.L. Lyons' *Ireland Since the Famine,* on the other hand, offers a more comprehensive study of the economical political background of the Irish land problem.

²⁷ Michael Turner, *After the Famine: Irish Agriculture, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 216.

²⁸ U 17, 1616.

²⁹ U 17. 1623.

³⁰ U 17. 1634.

tion of Charles Stewardt Parnell [...], the programme of peace, retrenchment and reform of William Ewart Gladstone [...]"31. Whereas Bloom's favour of Gladstone's "peace, retrenchment and reform" programme corresponds to his own proclaimed policy of "measure of reform or retrenchment [...]"32, some of the political figures he claims to support closely relate to the Land League. James Fintan Lalor, for one thing, is an Irish writer who "vigorously advocated republicanism and a radical program of land nationalization"33. The initiating organizer of the Land League, Michael Davitt, on the other hand, had a "program of land reform [which] advocated the use of public funds to achieve peasant ownership of the land"34. It is interesting that Bloom does not simply agree with Davitt's land policies: in "Eumaeus", as "backtothelander"35 he pushes it furthers "by advocating an agrarian socialism in which all men would contribute by sharing agrarian labor"36. Such advocacy, familiar as it sounds, corresponds to his political statement of land distribution and shared labour, announced once in "Circe", and later paraphrased, in "Ithaca".

Despite Joyce's (and Bloom's) attentiveness to the Land League and land reforms, and despite the fundamental influence of land on Irish nationalism, Irish ruralism remains outside the major narrative frame in *Ulysses*. James Fairhall observes that, "since the closest model for Joyce's collection was George Moore's *Untilled Field* (1903), set largely in rural Ireland"³⁷, there must be an intentional omission of the countryside. Fairhall further argues that, "[Joyce's] uneasy relationship with Ireland, especially rural Ireland, is [...] presaged by his first publication, which in the context of the Homestead (the "pigs' paper" [*U* 9.321]) enters into uneasy dialogue with a world of cream separators and butterflies among thistles which 'Stephen Daedalus' clearly has judged and found wanting"³⁸. However, if Stephen

³¹ *U* 17. 1645-51.

³² U 17. 1625.

³³ Don Gifford with Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 592, my italics.

³⁴ Ibid., 558.

³⁵ U 16, 1593.

³⁶ Don Gifford with Robert J. Seidman, *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 558.

³⁷ James Fairhall, *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 74.

³⁸ Ibid., 74.

Daedalus indeed finds the journal wanting, how would Leopold Bloom, a man of science, politics and advertisement, find the Irish Homestead?

Founded by Horace Plunkett in 1894, *The Irish Homestead* was the journal of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS). F.S.L Lyons indicates that "It was essential to Plunkett's concept of co-operation that while the IAOS should be propagandist in the agricultural sense, it should be politically neutral"³⁹; consequently, the journal had been issued as a neutral medium of information. Around 1904, "at a time of significant land transfer from large landowners to tenant farmers, the IAOS played a vital role in educating the new incumbents in modern farming methods", while "[w]eek-in week-out, the Irish Homestead urged a program of social reform that constantly pitted a desirable middle-class propriety against the uncouthness of certain traditional practices"⁴⁰.

Considering the educational aim of the journal to "educate farmers in modern agricultural practices and to encourage them to benefit from economies of scale by forming cooperative societies and credit unions" ⁴¹, *The Irish Homestead* is indeed a journal more for Bloom than for Stephen. In an article entitled "The Irish Cottage", published in *The Irish Homestead* on April 29, 1899, AE writes: "There is no more ideal life than the farmers, no life which contains more elements of joy, mystery, and beauty" ⁴². He claims that compared to the "insectiferous fakir and his kind" who "scorn the earth under their feet", the man is superior who "takes his patch of soil and labours on it until his world becomes as beautiful as other's dreams" ⁴³. Bloom of Flowerville shows up in Bloom's meticulous matter-of-fact dream

In loose allwool garments with Harris tweed cap, price 8/6, and useful golden boots with elastic gussets and wateringcan, planting aligned young firtrees, syringing, pruning, staking, sowing hayseed, trundling a weedladen wheelbarrow without excessive fatigue at sunset amid the scent of newmown hay, ameliorating the soil, multiplying wisdom, achieving longevity.⁴⁴

³⁹ F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London: Fontana Press, 1985), 210.

⁴⁰ P. J. Mathews, "A.E.I.O.U.': Joyce and the Irish Homestead," in *Joyce on The Threshold*, ed. Anne Fogarty and Timothy Martin (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 161.
⁴¹ Ibid., 153.

⁴² G. W. Russell (A.E.), Selections from the Contributions to "The Irish Homestead", Vol. 1 (Gerrards Cross, Smythe, 1978), 50.

⁴³ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁴ U 17.1582-1587.

In this view, Bloom is a demonstrative figure of the "lifestyle" that mirrors not only his own ambition, but the ideal of the middle-class farmer, an image *The Irish Homestead* hoped to propagandize. He is at once a consumer and a commodity, a farmer and a nationalist, a man of politics and of social propriety. And when *The Irish Homestead* posits their mission as follows: "There is absolutely no reason why our cottages, inside and outside, should not be homes in which self-respecting men and women could physically live"⁴⁵, Bloom seems to aspire to the same "ultimate ambition"⁴⁶.

Emer Nolan tells us in her preface to *James Joyce and Nationalism* that: "Nationalism seeks to create a sense of traditional community within contemporary mass culture: modernist writing exploits the relentless energy of commercial civilization"⁴⁷. If the well-off farmer figure, who is devoted to commodity culture and promoted by *The Irish Homestead*, corresponds to the sense of community building Nolan mentions, then the aspiring farmer "Bloom of Flowerville" may be deemed as the potential agri-national figure *The Irish Homestead* had been so eager to create. However, considering Bloom's Jewish background and the antagonism of contemporary anti-Semitic voices, a totalizing conclusion that reads Bloom as a representational national image is problematic. As Terry Eagleton tells us, Joyce tends to "[pose] the problem of totalization, rather than providing us with any very adequate solution"⁴⁸. In this way, Joyce makes it clear that "Bloom of 7 Eccles street" cannot possibly become a farmer of the nation; only by becoming the imaginary "Bloom of Flowerville" can he attain such an ambition.

⁴⁵ The Irish Homestead, May 18, 1895, qtd. by P. J. Mathews, "A.E.I.O.U.': Joyce and the Irish Homestead", in *Joyce on the Threshold*, ed. Anne Fogarty and Timothy Martin (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 161.

⁴⁶ U 17.1497.

⁴⁷ Emer Nolan, James Joyce and Nationalism (London: Routledge, 1995), xii.

⁴⁸ Terry Eagleton, et al., *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 36.

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