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edited by

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CONTENTS

Franca Ruggieri <i>Foreword</i>	p. 11
--	-------

JOYCE AND/IN ITALY

Andrea Binelli <i>Isotopy as a Critical and Translational Paradigm in the 'Italian' Ulysses</i>	15
--	----

Francesca Caraceni <i>A study of Anthony Burgess's Italian version of Finnegans Wake's incipit</i>	29
---	----

Gabriele Frasca <i>Gadda a reader of Joyce? / Gadda lettore di Joyce?</i>	39
--	----

Francesco Marroni <i>Horcynus Orca and Ulysses: Stefano D'arrigo's Dialogic Vortex</i>	49
---	----

Franco Marucci <i>Translator de Angelis and critic Pagnini on how to render a passage in Ulysses</i>	67
---	----

JOYCEAN GLEANINGS

Jacques Aubert <i>Lacan and the Joyce-effect</i>	79
---	----

Geert Lernout
*In the Track of the Sun and Joyce's use of sources
in Ulysses: a case-study*..... 89

Fritz Senn
Ulyssean Historionics in Everyday Life..... 100

BOOK REVIEWS

Maria Domenica Mangialavori, *La memoria intermittente
e la musica lontana. Joyce. Woolf, Berio.*
Luca Aversano 123

James Joyce, *Ulisse. Trans. Gianni Celati*
Elisabetta D'Erme 127

Franca Ruggieri, *James Joyce, la vita, le lettere*
John McCourt..... 135

Maria Cristina Cavecchi, *Cerchi e cicli. Sulle forme della memoria in Ulisse;*
Roberto Baronti Marchiò, *A Thought-Tormented Music. Browning and Joyce;*
Maria Grazia Tonetto, *The Beauty of Mortal Conditions*
Enrico Terrinoni..... 139

ULYSSEAN HISTRIONICS IN EVERYDAY LIFE¹

Many readers may have been impressed by the verbal adroitness of characters in *Ulysses*, by their tendency to turn every statement into a brilliant event whether the result is successful or looks forced. At times showy eloquence appears more important than what is being conveyed. Conversation in *Ulysses* at any rate is bristling with well-turned phrases that draw attention to themselves *as* salient formulations. The manner of saying something tends to occlude what is being said, the emphasis moves from What to How—this in keeping with the evolution of the later episodes.

A suitable though rare term for the astute handling of words serves the present purposes. In antiquity “*logodaedalia*” meant the skill in adorning a speech, but in modern rare usage the term also describes an excessive nicety in words or an affectation in selective expression. Both uses, achievement or failure, will merge in the subsequent remarks. Since “*logodaedalia*” or Greek “*logodaidalia*” splits into “word” (“*logos*”) and “cunning” (“*daidalos*”), the term seems appropriate for a writer of supreme verbal skill whose early alter ego was named after the artificer Daedalus and who prominently uses “cunning” as one of his “arms” in defence (P247).

It is no coincidence that the flamboyant mannerism is conspicuously flaunted in the rhetorical and wind-inflated “Aeolus” episode with its high level of studied eloquence. One character in particular, Lenehan, would never be caught saying anything in a straightforward way. Avoiding the obvious is his trademark and he is constantly aiming at verbal brilliance. Simple laughter is transposed to a sonant “O my rib risible”; a “brick” that killed the ancient King Pyrrhus is “received in the latter half of the matinée”. Lenehan glibly interjects foreign language phrases (“the *anno Domini*”, “*Entrez, mes enfants*”) or their jocular semblance: “*Thanky vous*”, “*Muchibus*

¹ The essay is an adaptation of a talk given at the Trieste James Joyce Summer School, June 2013.

thankibus" (U7.448, 374, 422, 507, 468, 780). At the most elementary he simply inverts letters ("Clamn dever", 7.695) or syllables ("I hear feet-stoops", 7.393). He elaborately presents a forced pun as a riddle: "—Silence! What opera resembles a railway line? Reflect, ponder, excogitate, reply", and provides both answer and explanation: "—*The Rose of Castile*. See the wheeze? Rows of cast steel. Gee!" (7.588). He uses "wheeze" in the sense of "joke", probably not aware that the witticism is in fact wheezy, devoid of Aeolian animation. It so happens that in *Dubliners* Lenehan was characterized by "little jets of wheezy laughter" (D49) as though in anticipation of his further expansion. Feeble as the play of words may be, on its own level it overlays modern reality ("rows of cast steel") with a work of art, an opera, in a book that deals with mundane affairs like traffic or newspapers but whose title recalls an ancient epic.

Whatever Lenehan's (and others') motives are, the verbal embellishments provide some sparkle, even glamour, to the drab lives that are otherwise devoid of it, their illusions call up a more glittering life than the actual one. Verbal vivacity counteracts pervasive dire circumstances.

Inflated oral wit with a decorative effect is on a par with stylistic embroideries in print as they are held up to ridicule when Dan Dawson's speech is read out from the newspaper and submitted to scathing comment:

—Or again, note the meanderings of some purling rill as it babbles on its way, tho' quarrelling with the stony obstacles, to the tumbling waters of Neptune's blue domain, 'mid mossy banks, fanned by gentlest zephyrs, played on by the glorious sunlight or 'neath the shadows cast o'er its pensive bosom by the overarching leafage of the giants of the forest. (7.243)

This aspires to poetic heights by means of classical set pieces like "zephyrs", "meanderings", or "Neptune's blue domain" for the sea (which is anything but blue and has already more aptly been depicted as "snotgreen"). But then we are in a novel or epic called "Ulysses" named after a hero whose divine enemy was Neptune (or Poseidon to Odysseus). The parody shows what a novel called "Ulysses" *could* have been like. Salient phrases like the "pensive bosom" will be echoed later. It is a short step from "overarching" to "overarsing leafage" (7.253), from the attempted sublime to the bathetically ridiculous. Note also in passing that the whole episode is meandering in its babbling way and full of digressive stony obstacles, and so, in extension, is all of *Ulysses*.

"Puck Mulligan" (9.1142)

What Lenehan is in relation to Bloom Buck Mulligan is even more poignantly in relation to Stephen Dedalus, right from the start in the opening chapters and elsewhere. Both jesters are combined in one of the Cyclopean interpolations:

Considerable amusement was caused 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)

Ironically these vocally prominent figures are named with all vocals suppressed. Their aim indeed is amusement and mirth. The ballad they perform is about a convict Larry who is being "stretched" in the sense of "hanged", but "stretched" might well apply to an often visibly strained endeavour by which the mirth is being provoked.

Logodaedalia is inaugurated by an effervescent Buck Mulligan whose almost every utterance is elevated to an ornate phrase. His opening exclamation is in unexpected Church Latin: "*Introibo ad altare Dei*", an obvious displacement from where such words must be spoken, with a blasphemous effect early readers were hardly prepared for. He soon pursues in a similar vein: "—For this, O dearly beloved, is the genuine Christine: body and soul and blood and ouns ..." (1.21). Every item is transposed, there is no congregation to address, whatever "Christine" stands for, it is certainly not "genuine". Imaginary phantoms have taken over and, incidentally, taken us somewhere else.

Buck Mulligan would never stoop to a commonplace like "Give me your handkerchief"; even such a simple demand has to be fancified: "Lend us a loan of your noserag to wipe my razor" (1.69), where "lend us a loan" has an Irish lilt and happens to be a "*figura etymologica*" (the use of words of the same derivation). Such surfeit extravagance for a trivial matter also makes it memorable. Mulligan, an excessive quoter, is exceedingly quotable.

Versatile Mulligan's logodaedalian spectrum is wide and varied, mainly religious as when his dishing out of three eggs is accompanied by a sacerdotal "*In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti*" (1.351). He is equally adept at a coronation song with a Cockney accent: "*O, won't we have a merry time ...*" (1.299). In these two instances his targets are the Church and the State, Stephen's "two masters", "the holy Roman catholic and apostolic church" and the "imperial British state" (1.643). Readers are also taken elsewhere,

away from the location of the otherwise predominant realism, which Mulligan can also take in his mercurial stride. In a female role he assumes “an old woman’s wheedling voice”:

—*When I makes tea I makes tea*, as old mother Grogan said. *And when I makes water I makes water*. . . .

—*So I do, Ms Cahill*, says she. *Begob, ma’am*, says Mrs Cahill, *God send you don’t make them in the same pot* (1.359).

Almost everything can trigger a joke or a parody. Leaving the tower becomes a momentous act; it is evidence of how Buck Mulligan’s facile wit is in collusion with an author’s latent purposes:

Resigned he passed out with grave words and gait, saying, wellnigh with sorrow:
—And going forth he met Butterly. (1.527)

The formality of the diction indicates another item of facetious ceremony in which contemporary readers of Joyce would have recognized the Biblical matrix, the passage where Peter, having betrayed Jesus Christ three times, becomes aware of his deception: “And going forth, he wept bitterly” (Mat. 26:75). The minimal phonetic change is substantial, what looked like the name of a person (when no person is within sight) turns out to be an adverb twisted and personified; an unspecified “he” becomes the disciple who was to succeed Jesus Christ and founded the Church. As a joke, most likely not an original one, it falls signally flat and has all the air of Mulligan’s stock-in-trade repertoire, but its reverberations reach beyond the perpetrator. The episode in the Gospels also contained a remark made to Peter: “For even thy speech doth discover thee” (Mat. 26:73, “betrays”). In *Ulysses* discoveries are made by attention to speech and its inflections. But in a larger context it was Peter the disciple who—on the basis of his name (“That thou art Peter, and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build my church”)—was elected: “And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 16:18). This adds ecclesiastical resonances to the question of who should have the key to the tower in his possession: “Did you bring the key?” Buck Mulligan asks right afterwards, and he later on usurps it (1.722) and renders Stephen keyless for the rest of the day. In the Gospel Peter is chosen by way of a play on his name, and Joyce has followed suit through Mulligan’s otherwise pointless witticism.

In their performances neither Lenehan nor Mulligan are dependent entirely on words; these are generally accompanied by conspicuous bodily

gestures. Logodaedalia is intricately mixed with theatrical comportment; appropriately the top of the Martello tower supplies a round stage. Mulligan's initial silent behaviour is odd and erratic:

Then, catching sight² of Stephen Dedalus, he bent towards him and made rapid crosses in the air, gurgling in his throat and shaking his head. (1.11)

Such antics are in need of explications that are not supplied by the text; in this case the most likely account is that the Buck playacts a sort of exorcism at the sight of a devil—a matter of interpretation. Stephen Dedalus, who turns up at this moment, in *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* after all has given up his faith in the wake of “*non serviam*: I will not serve” (P117, 239). As in Mulligan's verbal behaviour, the act is in grotesque excess of its occasion.

Mulligan's range is considerable, his performances can be priestly, military, or affected stage Irishness. Or else they are in tune with his nickname “Buck” and its animal overtones: the full name, “two dactyls”, is “tripping and sunny like the buck himself” (1.42); at one moment “he capered before them” (1.600; to caper is to behave like a buck goat, Lat. *caper*). The animal in the name can become a copulative verb: “Readheaded women buck like goats” (1.704). In a comic fashion elsewhere he “sigh[s] tragically”, as though to underline his theatrical mannerisms (1.502; etymologically a tragedy, *tragoidia*, is the song (*oidia*) of buck-goats (“*tragos*”).

His histrionic nature is expressed by all the prominent adverbs in the “Telemachus” episode, most of them suggest a temporary role. Among them a few (“Solemnly”, “gravely”, “kindly”, “impatiently”, “vigorously”, “tragically”) will be echoed in the consistently theatrical episode “Circe” with its often elaborate stage directions. Out of them all, two complementary adverbs reoccur almost like minor motifs,

*gaily*³: “The mockery of it, he said gaily” (1.34); “Primrosevested he greeted gaily with his doffed Panama as with a bauble” (9.489); “Buck Mulligan's primrose waistcoat shook gaily to his laughter” (10.1065);

² Even “catching sight of” has a theatrical ring.

³ The corresponding noun gaiety (“blinking with mad gaiety”; “Still his gaiety takes the harm out of it”, 1.581, 606) may be associated with the Gaiety Theatre, often in Bloom's memory: “Michael Gunn, lessee of the Gaiety Theatre, 46, 47, 48, 49 South King street” (17.420).

gravely: [Buck Mulligan] “blessed gravely thrice the tower, the surrounding land and the awaking mountains” (1.10), “... looked gravely at his watcher” (1.30); “He stood up, gravely ungirdled and disrobed himself of his own, ... and then gravely said, honeying malice” (9.1087).

Often they are paired:

“From the window of the D.B.C. Buck Mulligan gaily, and Haines gravely gazed down at the viceregal equipage” (10.1224)

PHILIP DRUNK

(gravely) *Qui vous a mis dans cette fichue position, Philippe?*

PHILIP SOBER

(gaily) *C'est le pigeon, Philippe.* (15.2582)

Even Bloom is affected:

BLOOM: Dash it all. It's a way we gallants have in the navy. Uniform that does it. (*he turns gravely to the first watch*) Still, of course, you do get your Waterloo sometimes. Drop in some evening and have a glass of old Burgundy. (*to the second watch gaily*) I'll introduce you, inspector. (15.743)

Seen in the light of Ulyssean histrionics, “gravely” might stand for the Tragic Muse, Melpomene, and “gaily” for Thalia, the Comic one. The *Odyssey* begins with an appeal to the Muse, Buck Mulligan in turn seems to play one, ever intent on amusement: “Amused Buck Mulligan mused in pleasant murmur with himself” (9.1119). In many ways, Oliver St. John Gogarty, the real life prototype for Buck Mulligan, proved to be a Muse for Joyce who drew so much from his exuberant wit and humour and his versatility, possibly against his will: Gogarty was, as Odysseus is, “*polytropos*” (Od. 1:1, versatile, resourceful, all-round) and an arch-imitator and, incidentally, a wielder of rhetorical tropes.

He excels in theatricality on the slightest provocation. When Stephen Dedalus in the library wants to refer to Saint Thomas, Mulligan interrupts with a groan: “—*Ora pro nobis*” and drops into a routine of keening in what is now termed Hiberno-English: “—*Pogue mahone! Acushla machree!* It's destroyed we are from this day! It's destroyed we are surely” (9.772). In the liter-

ary episode, Scylla and Charybdis, even his name matches his flexibility; he becomes “Monk Mulligan”, in tune with his momentary ecclesiastical part, he also transmutes easily into “Sunmulligan”, “Cuck Mulligan”, “Puck Mulligan” or “*Ballocky Mulligan*” according to context or script (9.773, 1025, 1125, 1141, 1176).

One of his chosen targets is Synge, the emerging playwright (Shakespeare becomes the “chap that writes like Synge”, 9.510). Mulligan is able to slip into almost any role, as when he proclaims “in a querulous brogue”:

—It’s what I’m telling you, mister honey, it’s queer and sick we were, Haines and myself, the time himself brought it in. ‘Twas murmur we did for a gallus potion would rouse a friar, I’m thinking, and he limp with leching. And we one hour and two hours and three hours in Connery’s sitting civil waiting for pints apiece. ... (9.556)

The same skill surfaces among the multiple period refractions in “Oxen of the Sun”, where the unheard words of Hibernophile Haines are transformed into a caricature of Synge’s mannerisms:

This is the appearance is on me. Tare and ages, what way would I be resting at all, he muttered thickly, and I tramping Dublin this while back with my share of songs and himself after me the like of a soulth or a bullawurrus? (14.1010)

A “jester at the court of his master”, as Stephen sees him (2.44), he can suavely “do the Yeats touch” when he claims that, instead of giving his benefactress, Lady Gregory, a bad review, Stephen Dedalus should have written: “The most beautiful book that has come out of our country in my time. One thinks of Homer” (chanted theatrically “with waving graceful arms”, 9.1161). By devious ways, in a meta-narcissistic turn, the imagined verdict of a fictional character, based on a real one, puts words into Yeats’s mouth that now prominently apply to the book in which all of this occurs.

It is no surprise that Mulligan, Muse, actor, jester, fool, imitator also conceives of a play at a moment of mock inspiration: “The Lord has spoken to Malachi” (9.1058). The result is a sketch of “a *national immorality in three orgasms*”, entitled “*Everyman His Own Wife or A Honeymoon in the Hand*” by “*Ballocky Mulligan*” with an obscene cast (9.1171). Like Shakespeare he is a real life character, an actor, and a playwright *in nuce*.

Adaptable like Odysseus, in the Maternity Hospital he assumes a motherly role: he “smote himself bravely below the diaphragm, exclaim-

ing with an admirable droll mimic of Mother Grogan (the most excellent creature of her sex though 'tis pity she's a trollop: There's a belly that never bore a bastard" (14.731). In the Library as well as the Maternity episode human procreation is aligned with literary conception. In sweeping generalisation *Ulysses* might also be characterized by Mulliganesque traits as they are increasing and finally they suffuse the extravagant later parodic episodes.

"Midsummer Madness" (15.1768)

No detailed demonstration is needed to show that in "Circe" all histrionic elements combine to a protracted climax in which most of the characters and even objects or abstractions take a theatrical part in a drama that exceeds the possibilities of a stage. Joyce is out-Shakespear Shakespeare by having more variety and an even wider cast. The episode is furthermore a rearrangement or permutation of preceding themes and topics. The stagey adverbs of "Telemachus" are magnified into elaborate stage directions that on occasions get completely out of control or spill over into the narrative.

Among the extended cast of "Circe" Buck Mulligan is just one actor among many, but at least initially, behind the scenes, he dominates ceremonious actions as he did in the first chapter. When Stephen is entering Nighttown he does not hold a shaving bowl aloft, but "*flourishing the ashplant, chants with joy the introit for paschal time*". In his turn he chooses ecclesiastical Latin: "*Vidi aquam egredientem de templo a latere dextro. Alleluia*", to be followed by "*Et omnes ad quos pervenit aqua ista*" (15.73, 84)—not necessarily normal procedure for young men entering a brothel district. The "*introit*" echoes Mulligan's initial "*Introibo*". The Mass, at any rate, in the view of believers, is a momentous drama behind the visible acts. In multiple ways the last episode of Book II echoes the beginning of Book I⁴.

A few moments later Stephen answers Lynch's question "Where are we going", with "... to *la belle dame sans merci*, Georgina Johnson, *ad deam qui laetificat iuventutem meam*" (15.120). Conscious of it or not, he continues the opening as it is celebrated by Mulligan's "*Introibo ad altare Dei*" (1.5), which in the Mass is instantly completed by: "*Ad Deum qui laetificat iu-*

⁴ Note that Mulligan's "long slow whistle of call" which is then answered by mysterious "two strong shrill whistles" (1.24—6) are echoed in "Whistles call and answers" right at the beginning of "Circe" at the end of the first stage direction (15.9).

ventutem meam”. Two minimal changes, spelling “*Deum*” in lower case and making it female (“*deam*”), converts God into a human female, in keeping with the prevailing metamorphoses throughout the episode. So it is now a prostitute for whom Stephen is looking in vain, Georgina Johnson, who “gladdens [his] youth”. In fact “Circe” is comprised of perversions, this both in the narrower psychopathological sense as well as in a general, mechanical one: a turning inside out, upside down.

This process reaches an extreme, lowest, point towards the end where, instead of the Mass intimated in the first chapter, a blasphemous Black Mass is celebrated where everything is turned into its opposite. Buck Mulligan fuses with Father O’Flynn from a jocular song, as

(... Father Malachi O’Flynn in a lace petticoat and reversed chasuble, his two left feet back to the front, celebrates camp mass. The Reverend Mr Hugh C Haines Love M. A. in a plain cassock and mortarboard, his head and collar back to the front, holds over the celebrant’s head an open umbrella). (15.4693)

The composite priest is paired with “the Reverend Mr Hugh C. Haines Love M. A.”—which combines the Rev. Hugh C. Love, the clerical historian and landlord from Episode Ten, with Haines from whose name the French “*haine*”, hatred, may be extracted—, so that Bloom’s earlier scrambled definition of Love as “the opposite of hatred” (12.1485) also reverberates.

FATHER MALACHI O’FLYNN then inverts the opening words in yet another direction: “*Introibo ad altare diaboli*”. THE REVEREND MR HAINES LOVE then antiphones: “To the devil which hath made glad my young days” (15.4688). The book of many turns becomes the book of many perversions, they infect the letters of the wording itself. THE VOICE OF ALL THE DAMNED chant, inverting the alphabetical order in accordance with Semitic usages:

Htengier Tnetopinmo Dog Drol eht rof, Aiulella!

The ADONAI then call:

Dooooooooooooog!

till THE VOICE OF ALL THE BLESSED set things back in their order:

Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!
From on high the voice of ADONAI calls
Goooooooooooood! (15.4707)

It plays into Joyce's hands that "God" ("Goooooooooooood") inverts into an elongated "Dooooooooooooog" (but of course only in English so that translations lose some of the effortless and potent blasphemy) since the Homeric sorceress Kirke turned men, and, here it seems, now also divinities, into animals. Of course such an inversion⁵, which reflects the different orientations of the Semitic and the Roman alphabet, only works on the literal and certainly not on the phonetic, spoken, level.

Stephen's entry into Nighttown was also accompanied by a magnificent gesture, "*He flourishes his ashplant, shivering the lamp image, shattering light over the world*"—in anticipation of his final smashing "*of the chandelier*", inducing "*Time's livid final flame*" and "*ruin of all space*" (15.4243). This is followed by an erudite pronouncement:

So that gesture, not music, odour, would be a universal language, the gift of tongues rendering visible not the lay sense but the first entelechy, the structural rhythm. (15.105)

and a few paces later an elaborately detailed gesture:

(Stephen thrusts the ashplant on him and slowly holds out his hands, his head going back till both hands are a span from his breast, down turned, in planes intersecting, the fingers about to part, the left being higher). (15.124)

The almost geometrical precision is untypical of Circean stage directions but reminiscent of the impassive diction of "Ithaca".

True to its theatrical nature, "Circe" is full of non-verbal gestures that easily escalate to unrealistic extravagances. Towards the end however, the noisy, dramatic and inconsequential events gradually calm down until finally the stage is left to the unconscious Stephen, solicitous Bloom, and Cornelius Kelleher and a jarvey, the physical world reasserts itself and fewer, but more real, words are spoken. Even those fade away and one

⁵ Even stage direction follow suit; they are habitually in italics but words that would normally be in italics revert back to Roman type, as in "*the introit for paschal time*" (15.74). This of course is normal practice, but it seems appropriate.

scene has recourse to mere gestures and mute dumb show communication, “pantomimic merriment”:

With thumb and palm Corny Kelleher reassures that the two bobbies will allow the sleep to continue for what else is to be done. With a slow nod Bloom conveys his gratitude as that is exactly what Stephen needs. (15.4913)

The parody of a pantomime exaggerates the semantic reach of gestures. Beyond a general sense conveyed, it would take an immensely refined gestural code, or an advanced course in sign language, to transmit the niceties involved—with a nod or, even more with “thumb and palm”! What, for example, is “exactly” in “slow nod”?

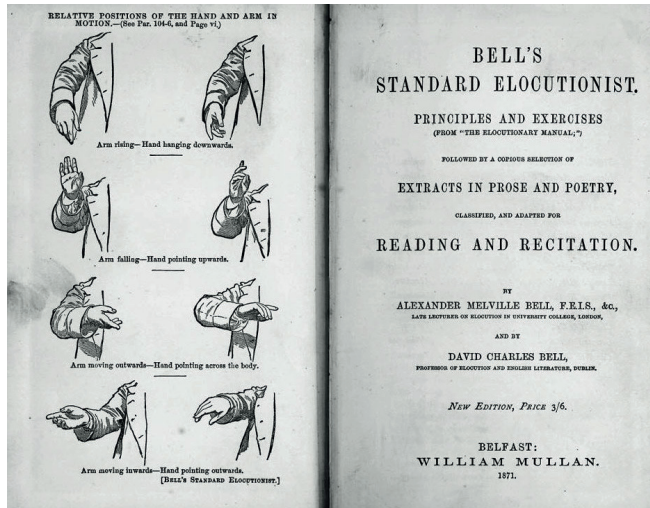
As though to counteract the caricatured mute communication, the rest of the stage direction has Kelleher’s favourite lilt (“Corny Kelleher... Singing with his eyes shut... With my tooralroom, tooralroom, tooralroom, tooralroom”, 5.12) spectrally infiltrate the wording:

The car jingles tooraloom round the corner of the tooraloom lane. Corny Kelleher again reassuralooms with his hand. Bloom with his hand assuralooms Corny Kelleher that he is reassuraloomtay. The tinkling hoofs and jingling harness grow fainter with their tooralooloo looloo lay. (15.4916)

While sound is removed in the first part it obtrusively re-enters to distort the wording in a last flourish of fantasized stage directions.

Elocutionary Arms

Rhetorics are paired with gestures, and naturally they abound in “Aeolus” as they underline and reinforce the speech acts, as when “the editor ... suddenly *stretched forth an arm amply*” (7.431). “—You can do it, Myles Crawford repeated, *clenching his hand in emphasis*” (7.627); “*His slim hand with a wave graced echo and fall*” (7.773); “... Myles Crawford said, *throwing out an arm for emphasis*” (7.981, the oratorical gestures are marked by italics). Professor McHugh at one point “extended *elocutionary arms*”, anticlimactically, “from frayed stained shirtcuffs” (7.487). Elocution, the art and skill of expressive speech and articulation, was taught at schools, and one standard work, *Bell’s Elocutionist*, was in wide circulation. It contained detailed instructions of what to do with arms and hands:



The manual also contains numerous exercises for recitation, mainly popular poems: One called “Nature’s Gentlemen” is actually quoted, or echoed in the episode: “They were nature’s gentlemen, J.J. O’Molloy murmured” (7.499)

The co-author, Alexander Melville Bell, an authority on phonetics and defective speech, was the father of Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone. It is apt that some of the elocutionary actions in the chapter take place while a telephone conversation is in progress. One implicit irony is that gestures cannot be passed on by sound transmission (a fact that in due course might even reach arm waving users of mobile phones).

Statues, incidentally, whether “*horned and terrible*”, “stonehorned” (Moses, 7.768, 854) or “onehanded” (Nelson, 7.1018), in “Aeolus” (Senn, 1993) and elsewhere (“the stern stone hand of Grattan, bidding halt”, 10.352) are usually shown in heroic postures, with arms theatrically stretched out.

As Good As Any Play

In “Cyclops” the last glimpse of Bloom—who is neither a great orator nor an accomplished actor—is “old sheepface ... gesticulating” on the castle car (12.1907), no doubt in a more blundering than dignified way. “Cyclops” too is an episode full of exaggerated dramatics.

Its unnamed narrator is eloquent on his own charming vulgar level and ready with punchy hyperboles, but mainly in his thoughts. Most of the men gathering in the public house aim to give their saying an expressive twist, and Lenehan's adds his usual quota of attempted jocularities. Bloom once more is the odd one out, not witty, not a gifted speaker, but something of a nuisance with a habit to contribute tedious facts and the use of the occasional inappropriate term ("phenomenon", 12,465). He has little entertainment value, all of this on top of his not partaking in the treating habit.

As soon as Barney Kiernan's pub is entered the Citizen in residence stages a ritual, a ceremony that could easily be lost sight of in a dialogue that must have the semblance of ordinary talk. Hugh B. Staples long ago noticed that the journalist Joe Hynes, in the know, and the Citizen engage in the formulaic words and gestures by which the Ribbonmen, members of a secret rebel society, were able to identify their fellow conspirators (1966, 95-6):

—*Stand and deliver*, says he.

—That's all right, citizen, says Joe. Friends here.

—Pass, friends, says he.

Then *he rubs his hand in his eye* and says he:

—*What's your opinion of the times?*

Doing the rapparee and Rory of the hill. But, begob, Joe was equal to the occasion.

—*I think the markets are on a rise*, says he, *sliding his hand down his fork*. So begob the citizen *claps his paw on his knee* and he says:

—*Foreign wars is the cause of it*.

And says Joe, *sticking his thumb in his pocket*:

—*It's the Russians wish to tyrannise*. (12.129, the revelatory items are emphasized for clarity).

It is no wonder that the impatient and thirsty narrator tries to interrupt: "Arrah, give over your bloody coddling, Joe, says I. I've a thirst on me I wouldn't sell for half a crown" (12.141)

The performance is indeed an act of "coddling" or play-acting which, naturally, does not detract from historical reverberations. Further coddling is to follow: "Are you coddling, says I"; "Poor old sir Frederick, says Alf, you can cod him up to the two eyes" (12.307, 1096).⁶

⁶ In "Circe" a "Writing on the wall: proclaims "Bloom is a cod" (15.1871).

In the same vein, the phrase “doing the ...”, for an imitation or pretence is frequent: “Doing the rapparee and the Rory of the hill”; “And Bob Doran starts doing the weeps”; “So of course Bob Doran starts doing the bloody fool with him” (12.488); “and Bloom trying to get the soft side of her doing the mollycoddle playing bézique (12.506); “So J. J. puts in a word, doing the toff about one story was good till you heard another” (12.1341. 395, 506, 1192).

An alternative phrasing is “letting on” for the opposite of a histrionic display, the attempt to feign unconcern or ignorance. This happens to Bloom when the topic of Blazes Boylan crops up:

—He [Boylan] knows which side his bread is buttered, says Alf. I hear he’s running a concert tour now up in the north.

—He is, says Joe. Isn’t he?

—Who? says Bloom. Ah, yes. That’s quite true. Yes, a kind of summer tour, you see. Just a holiday.

—Mrs B. is the bright particular star, isn’t she? says Joe.

—My wife? says Bloom. She’s singing, yes. I think it will be a success too. He’s an excellent man to organise. Excellent. (12.988)

Quite transparently Bloom pretends ignorance of the unsettling topic at hand. This is the Bloom who is elsewhere described as “letting on to be awfully deeply interested in nothing” (12.1160). “Cyclops” is full of “letting on”:

“letting on to answer, like a duet in the opera”; “—*Na bacleis*, says the citizen, letting on to be modest”; “And he starts taking off the old recorder letting on to cry”; “I was just looking around to see who the happy thought would strike when he damned but in he comes again letting on to be in a hell of a hurry”; “pisser Burke was telling me card party and letting on the child was sick”; “... and him being in the middle of them letting on to be all at sea and up with them on the bloody jaunting car” (12.705, 884, 1103, 1160, 1566, 1754, 1769).

More specific codding takes place when courtroom scenes are enacted for jocular diversion. Alf Bergan, the likely perpetrator of the “U.P.:up” postcard hoax, is submitted to a cross examination:

—Was it you did it, Alf? says Joe. The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you Jimmy Johnson.

—Me? says Alf. Don't cast your nasturtiums on my character.
—Whatever statement you make, says Joe, will be taken down in evidence against you. (12.1038, "nasturtiums" for "aspersions" is a commonplace example of trite logodaedalia).

The frequent ordering of drinks in the chapter appears to follow a tacit rule never to call a drink by its proper name but, avoiding the obvious, to use paraphrases.

—Give it a name, citizen, says Joe.
—Wine of the country, says he.
—What's yours? says Joe.
—Ditto MacAnaspey, says I.
—Three pints, Terry, says Joe. And how's the old heart, citizen? says he. (12.142)
—Hear, hear to that, says John Wyse. What will you have?
—An imperial yeomanry, says Lenehan, to celebrate the occasion.
—Half one, Terry, says John Wyse, and a hands up. Terry! Are you asleep?
—Yes, sir, says Terry. Small whisky and bottle of Allsop. Right, sir. (12.1318)

The non-naming looks like an internal code, known to the regulars but cryptic for outsiders. For clarity (and not to misunderstand an order), instant translations are offered. An "imperial yeomanry" is "Half one" or, more specifically, a small whisky. A "handsup" is translated phonetically, it sounds like (a bottle of) Allsop beer, and pictorially as it describes the label on the bottle which showed the Red Hand of Ulster. Historical rumblings can be heard behind the surface playfulness.

The perhaps most dramatic episode, "Cyclops", is situated near the Dublin court houses. Cases are discussed; the lawyer J.J. O'Molloy who offers unwanted legal opinions, and a courtroom scene with Sir Frederic Falkiner as judge ("you can cod him up to the two eyes", see above) is mockingly re-enacted:

And he starts taking off the old recorder letting on to cry:
—A most scandalous thing! This poor hardworking man! How many children? Ten, did you say?
—Yes, your worship. And my wife has the typhoid.
—And the wife with typhoid fever! Scandalous! Leave the court immediately, sir. No, sir, I'll make no order for payment. How dare you, sir, come up before

me and ask me to make an order! A poor hardworking industrious man! I dismiss the case. (12. 1103)

Some of the episode's characteristic interpolations could be described as extensions of the pervasive theatrical tendencies. The passing mention of a ghost for example conjures up an elaborate séance where defunct Dignam gives a report of the divide beyond in a lengthy paragraph (12.326-73). A session in the parliament of Westminster is given in facetious exaggeration (12.860-79). A wish for the re-afforestation of Ireland results in a formal Tree Wedding (12.1266-95).

A merely habitual toast ("Well, says Martin, rapping for his glass. God bless all here is my prayer") is taken at face value and instantly elevated into a ceremonial Benediction of the small public house in Little Britain Street with the full force of the Church attending, religious orders and saints—all in all some 852 words, ending in ponderous Latin (12.1676-1750). Not only are a bunch of saints with their paraphernalia summoned, but all the pub's momentary patrons are blessed in increasing specification: "... S. Martin of Todi and S. Martin of Tours and S. Alfred and S. Joseph and S. Denis and S. Cornelius and S. Leopold and S. Bernard and S. Terence and S. Edward", down to "S. Owen Caniculus" (12.1694). The Benediction even extends to the techniques of naming or misnaming and the prevalent logodaedalian devices: "... and S. Anonymous and S. Eponymous and S. Pseudonymous and S. Homonymous and S. Paronymous and S. Synonymous" (12.169). Naming and misnaming itself are being sanctified.

The narrator comments that the action going on is "as good as any bloody play in the Queen's royal theatre" (12.1843). The realistic part of the "Cyclops" chapter would probably be the easiest one to transfer onto a stage.

Drama in Nostos

With "Circe" the momentous histrionics have come to an end. The Nostos episodes take different slants. There is no room or occasion for acting in Molly Bloom's monologue as there is no audience for appreciation. But Molly internally rehearses postures and techniques for her stage appearance to come:

... weeping tone once in the dear deead days beyondre call close my eyes
breath my lips forward kiss sad look eyes open piano ere oer the world the
mists began I hate that istsbeg comes loves sweet sooooooong I'll let that
out full when I get in front of the footlights again ... (), ... comes looooves old
deep down chin back not too much make it double ... (18.876)

Similarly she imagines a dramatic scene for the next morning:

... I know what Ill do Ill go about rather gay not too much singing a bit now
and then mi fa pieta Masetto then Ill start dressing myself to go out presto non
son piu forte Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful
out of that to make his micky stand for him Ill let him know if thats what he
wanted ... (18.1506)

In “Eumaeus” an Odyssean home-coming sailor with a flair for pithy
expressions holds centre stage. He entertains the company in the cabmen’s
shelter with melodramatic incidents, one of them he claims to have wit-
nessed in Trieste:

—And I seen a man killed in Trieste by an Italian chap. Knife in his back.
Knife like that.

Whilst speaking he produced a dangerous looking claspknife quite in keeping
with his character and held it in the striking position.

—In a knockingshop it was count of a tryon between two smugglers. Fellow
hid behind a door, come up behind him. Like that. Prepare to meet your God,
says he. Chuk! It went into his back up to the butt.

His heavy glance drowsily roaming about kind of defied their further questions
even should they by any chance want to. (16.576)

He also vividly re-enacts a shooting trick in a circus act attributed to one
Simon Dedalus that is unlikely to have taken place as reported (16.389-405).
Even the sailor’s skin seems to provide a kind of stage when it prominently
exhibits a “figure sixteen and a young man’s sideface looking frowningly
rather”. The tattooed face proves pliable in the subsequent demonstration:

There he is cursing the mate. And there he is now, he added, the same
fellow, pulling the skin with his fingers, some special knack evidently, and he
laughing at a yarn. ... And in point of fact the young man named Antonio’s
livid face did actually look like forced smiling and the curious effect excited

the unreserved admiration of everybody including Skin-the-Goat, who this time stretched⁷ over. (16.673)

The formerly frowning and “cursing” expression turns into a “laughing” or “forced smiling” one—as though in faint reflection of the Tragic and the Comic Muse (echoing “gravely” and “gaily” above)—they now find an undignified habitat on a mariner’s chest.

In the prolific and often wayward metaphors that “Eumaeus” flaunts a histrionic effort seems to have gone astray. A Bloomian streak can be discovered in the style which clearly aims “to contribute the humorous element” in the wake of Buck Mulligan (16.280). While Mulligan in one of his early impersonations “at once put on a blithe broadly smiling face” (1.579) the manner of “Eumaeus” can easily concoct an analogous figurative phrase of grotesque effect: “... evidently there was nothing for it but put a good face on the matter and foot it which they accordingly did” (16.1757). Such jarring collocations are on a par with “other high personages simply following in the footsteps of the head of the state” (16.1200). Bloom’s praise of Mozart’s *Gloria* almost asks to be put on a stage: “... being, to his mind, the acme of first class music as such, literally knocking everything else into a cocked hat” (16.1757); cocked hats generally appear on stages; an assurance like “literally” would mean that it actually could be done. Surrealist pictures may emerge when another hybrid metaphor unfolds: “Not, he parenthesised, that for the sake of filthy lucre he need necessarily embrace the lyric platform as a walk of life for any lengthy space of time” (16.1842). Platforms can serve as a stage.

In pointed contrast “Ithaca” attempts to be devoid of jocular levities, figurative digressions or erratic idioms, its factual diction precludes histrionic excesses. Even so an “attendant ceremony” is staged with Old Testament echoes in the “exodus from the house of bondage to the wilderness of inhabitation”:

Lighted Candle in Stick borne by
BLOOM
Diaconal Hat on Ashplant borne by
STEPHEN (17.1023)

⁷ It looks like a Joycean touch that the exhibited transformation of a skin drawing is observed also by the historical character named Skin-the-Goat who, we read, “this time stretched over”, where “stretched” obviously radiates back to the act related.

Again the ecclesiastical opening of *Ulysses* is called up, in each case with a formal intonation. A circle is closed. Mulligan had “intoned” Church Latin and Stephen’s exit, “With what intonation *secreto* of what commemorative psalm⁸?, is answered by “*The 113th, modus peregrinus: In exitu Israël de Egypto: domus Jacob de populo barbaro*” (17.1029)

The spurious geometrical precision of Stephen’s leavetaking,

Standing perpendicular at the same door and on different sides of its base, the lines of their valedictory arms, meeting at any point and forming any angle less than the sum of two right angles (17.1221)

contains “valedictory arms” that have an odd theatrical ring about them, not unlike the editor’s “elucutionary arms” in “Aeolus” (7.487).

Bloom wisely refrained from contributing a song for a Christmas pantomime in the Gaiety theatre, which was possibly never more than a transient thought. But Stephen invents a scene which looks like a long stage direction reduced to bare bones without any decor:

What suggested scene was then constructed by Stephen?

Solitary hotel in mountain pass. Autumn. Twilight. Fire lit. In dark corner young man seated. Young woman enters. Restless. Solitary. She sits. She goes to window. She stands. She sits. Twilight. She thinks. On solitary hotel paper she writes. She thinks. She writes. She sighs. Wheels and hoofs. She hurries out. He comes from his dark corner. He seizes solitary paper. He holds it towards fire. Twilight. He reads. Solitary.

What?

In sloping, upright and backhands: Queen’s Hotel, Queen’s Hotel, Queen’s Hotel. Queen’s Ho... (17.621)

Bloom, along with most readers, is struck by the coincidence of the hotel’s name with that which his father owned and where he committed suicide. Yet what exactly is Stephen doing? Stage directions are essentially written, they may become the setting of a scene, but they are not heard. Would Stephen actually speak or mumble them for Bloom’s benefit? It then would amount to Stephen’s longest, and plainest utterance in the whole

⁸ “*Introibo a altate Dei*” derives from Psalm 42:4.

chapter, even less ornate than the story he makes up in “Aeolus” (7.920-51, 1002-28, later to be entitled “The Parable of the Plums”).

The focus so far has been on showy histrionics as they tend to embroider an ordinary day in Dublin with otherwise little occasion for jubilation. Acting can also become a real life strategy in awkward situations, as when Bloom is feigning ignorance in “Cyclops”. When Blazes Boylan is seen from the funeral carriage, Bloom intensely “reviewed” his nails in a manifest show to cover his nervousness (6.200).

The dialogue with his wife, “Mrs Marion Bloom”, in “Calypso” is fraught with submerged tension: Homeric Kalypso is the goddess of hiding (*kalyptein*). As he returns to the bedroom with the breakfast an innocent conversation is staged:

A strip of torn envelope peeped from under the dimpled pillow. In the act of going he stayed to straighten the bedspread.

—Who was the letter from? he asked.

Bold hand. Marion.

—O, Boylan, she said. He’s bringing the programme.

—What are you singing?

—*La ci darem* with J.C. Doyle, she said, and *Love’s Old Sweet Song*. (U4.308)

Bloom of course already knows who sent the letter, it notably discomposed him when he entered the house (4.243). But conversation has to be made and so he asks his question in feigned ignorance, which of course Molly sees through: she knows that he knows in a collusion of pretence. She answers with a casually dismissive “O, Boylan” and states the purpose of her manager’s visit. Bloom then enquires about the programme that is to be rehearsed in the afternoon; it is hard to believe that the couple did not discuss such an important affair before. A tacit agreement seems to prevail that discomforting subjects are to be avoided. In this light it is conceivable that Molly asks her husband about the difficult word “Metempsychosis” not out of philological curiosity, but to divert the conversation from an embarrassing subject.

Bloom, once he delivered the tea and the tablet near Molly’s bed, could have retired without further talk. But as in the first encounter in the bedroom (4.255) he delays when he sees the semi-hidden envelope and finds a

reason to stay. “In the act of going he stayed to straighten the bedspread” is somewhat clumsy phrasing. With hindsight we can make out that Bloom’s remaining to talk is in fact an *act* of going, something staged to prepare for the dialogue that consists in communication and evasion.

Acts at times are close to acting. Buck Mulligan set the pace with his versatile playing of roles. As has been sketched out in increasing progression: “Speech, speech. But act. Act speech. They mock to try you. Act. Be acted on” (9.778). Speaking, acting and playacting are intricately interwoven.

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