

CHAPTER SEVEN

An Irish Bull in an English
Chinashop: 'Oxen of the Sun'*Let All Malthusiasts Go Hang*¹

Commentators on 'Oxen' have tended to see it as partly the work of an 'advocate of fertility'.² Of course, not all critics have taken the 'advocacy' seriously.³ But few have doubted that it is central to the chapter. Yet this central place raises another question, which is why Joyce bothered with the theme at all. Richard Brown has argued that Joyce ironizes the fertility theme in the interest of expressing a different and more progressive conception of sexuality. But the problem still remains as to why the expression requires so oddly indirect a vehicle. Why should Joyce's great modernist achievement include a chapter that celebrates procreation, whether seriously, ironically, or mock-heroically? The theme seems faintly stuffy and banal, anachronistic, even unmodern; all the more so, given the modern turn in Europe to the regulation of fertility by birth control. Economists call this the 'fertility transition'. In the opening decades of the century, it was steadily transforming the population debate, and its effects were being felt in Ireland.⁴

¹ For a more developed version of some of the argument in the first two sections of this chapter, see my "'Let All Malthusiasts Go Hang': Joyce's 'Oxen of the Sun' and the Economists', *Literature and History*, 10/2 (autumn 2001), 62–78.

² Robert Janusko, *The Sources and Structures of James Joyce's 'Oxen'* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 55.

³ See esp. Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 70, 77; Mark Osteen, *The Economy of 'Ulysses': Making Both Ends Meet* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 247–8; and Robert Spoo, *James Joyce and the Language of History: Dedalus's Nightmare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 145–6.

⁴ On the 'fertility transition' with reference to Ireland, see Cormac Ó Gráda and Niall Duffy, *Fertility Control Early in Marriage in Ireland c.1900: Some Local Contrasts* (Dublin: University College, 1983), e.g. 1–7; and Ó Gráda, *Ireland Before and After the Famine:*

In a ground-breaking study, Mary Lowe-Evans has indicated the importance of a historical approach to Joyce's treatment of the fertility theme. In an Irish context, the theme takes a specific form. Here as in so many other respects, again, 'particularism' is crucial: the Ireland Joyce grew up in turns out to constitute 'a special case' of a given issue.⁵ The history and politics of a colonial culture are what make it 'special', in a way that Lowe-Evans cannot quite see. She has drawn attention to the importance of Malthus for 'Oxen',⁶ and Malthus is indeed important. More precisely, the discourses of nineteenth-century English political economy—in particular, classical economy, and notably the Malthusians—provide a strikingly significant context for Joyce's chapter. That the chapter refers to economic discourses on fertility and population increase might itself seem surprising. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, they were being steadily replaced by psychological and sociological discourses.⁷ The important point, however, is that, for the economists, Ireland was a key instance.⁸ Joyce described the chapter's first passage of connected prose as 'Sallustian-Tacitean'.⁹ Sallustian-Tacitean or not, however, one principal point of reference for it is nineteenth-century economic discourse. The vocabulary of one or more of the economists—'continuance' (14. 15), 'bounty' (14. 21), 'increase' (14. 21), 'abundance' (14. 30), 'prudence' (14. 56), and, above all, 'subsistence' (14. 49)—is evident throughout the passage. The same is true of habits of style attributable to one economist or another.¹⁰ Style and ideology were often not separable. The passage

Explorations in Economic History 1800–1925 (2nd edn., Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 197–202.

⁵ The assimilation of such cases to their modern European or English versions repeatedly appears to be problematic. A good example of an awareness of this question is Mark Finnane's *Insanity and the Insane in Post-Famine Ireland* (London: Croom Helm, 1981). Finnane asserts the need for a recognition of the specificity of the discursive construction of insanity in post-Famine Ireland as opposed to elsewhere (particularly England and Scotland).

⁶ Lowe-Evans, *Crimes against Fecundity: Joyce and Population Control* (Syracuse, Kan.: Syracuse University Press, 1989), *passim*. Osteen has also given a brief but interesting account of the relevance of Malthus to 'Oxen', pointing out, e.g., that the notesheets show Joyce to have been familiar with Malthus and concerned with his thought as he composed the chapter. See *Economy of 'Ulysses'*, 237–9.

⁷ See D. E. C. Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 12.

⁸ See *ibid.* 60–1.

⁹ In his oft-cited letter to Frank Budgen of 20 Mar. 1920. See *Letters*, i. 139.

¹⁰ Some of the more cumbersome sentences and recherché Latinisms in the passage, e.g., read like a parody of the Thomas Newenham whom Malthus took to task. See

begins with the adverb 'universally'. This probably constitutes an ironic homage to Malthus himself: it is common in his *Essay on Population*, and he liked beginning sentences with it.¹¹ The connection between the passage and the economists' discourses is not simply localized. Rather, the opening of 'Oxen' advertises its relationship to a set of historically specific English (and sometimes Anglo-Irish) discourses that were, politically, highly charged, above all, in an Irish context. 'Oxen' sporadically alludes to these discourses elsewhere, if usually not at length. They serve as a base from which much of the rest of the chapter can be more clearly understood.

The exact impact of the discourses of political economy is still debated. But they were immensely important in nineteenth-century British thought and culture.¹² Political economy had a particular character and set of functions and meanings relative to Ireland. The 'Malthusian spectre' hangs heavily over 'popular perceptions of Irish history'.¹³ In the 1780s, the population of Ireland began rapidly to increase. The increase continued until the Famine and finally amounted to four million.¹⁴ It was chiefly associated with Catholic Ireland.¹⁵ From the seventeenth century, English and Anglo-Irish observers had been noting that the Irish Catholics appeared to have 'a general Custom (which has been of vast Service to repair the great Losses in this Island by War &c.) of marrying very early, and consequently breeding fast'.¹⁶ The growth in population from the 1780s,

Thomas Newenham, *A Statistical Inquiry into the Progress and Magnitude of the Population of Ireland* (London: C. & R. Baldwin, 1805). Compare e.g. 1 and 103-4 with *Ulysses*, 14, 7-70. On occasions, the vocabularies are also strikingly close.

¹¹ T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1890), *passim*.

¹² Indeed, Boylan and Foley have recently suggested that political economy has claims to being 'the master public discourse of nineteenth-century Britain'. See Thomas A. Boylan and Timothy P. Foley, 'A Nation Perishing of Political Economy?', in Chris Morash and Richard Hayes (eds.), *Fearful Realities: New Perspectives on the Famine* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 138-50, at 138.

¹³ L. A. Clarkson, 'Famine and Irish History', in E. Margaret Crawford (ed.), *Famine: The Irish Experience 900-1900: Subsistence Crises and Famines in Ireland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989), 220-36, at 220.

¹⁴ Recent work, however, has in fact shown that 'Irish birth rates were dropping in the twenty years before the famine'. Mary Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dublin: Dundalgan Press, 1986), 34.

¹⁵ It was also sharply in excess of the comparable increase in England. See K. H. Connell, *The Population of Ireland 1750-1845* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 1.

¹⁶ Samuel Madden, *Reflections and Resolutions Proper for the Gentlemen of Ireland* (Dublin: G. Ewing, 1738), 98.

however, coincided with increasing English attention to the 'Irish problem'. The combination of these factors attracted the attention of the economists.¹⁷ From Malthus onwards, classical economics identified the growth in the Irish population as the fundamental cause of Irish poverty.¹⁸ In Ireland, the economists asserted, population increase had far outpaced the growth of capital. Thus the average wage had fallen to the level of minimum subsistence. Combined with the absence of any work other than agricultural, the fall had created intense competition for land and resources. For many economists, a fundamental condition of Irish economic development was therefore an alteration of the arithmetical ratio of population to capital, 'either through an increase in capital, a reduction in population, or a combination of the two'.¹⁹ As Lowe-Evans has emphasized, in practice, the economists' case tended to lead to arguments for emigration.²⁰ Bolstered by economic thought, assisted emigration became one of the three major planks in British government policy regarding poverty and the 'surplus population' in Ireland.²¹ The case for emigration was endorsed with dismayed ardour by Anglo-Irish enthusiasts for political economy, like Richard Whately, as also by many Irish landlords.²² As matters turned out, Ireland was ultimately to witness an unparalleled and unplanned reduction of population. This was the result of a combination of famine, wholesale emigration, and the practice of Malthusian 'moral restraint' to 'a degree far exceeding Malthus's most optimistic expectations'.²³

¹⁷ Malthus himself toured Ireland in 1817, and other economists had more direct connections with the country: Ricardo e.g. served as MP for Portarlington.

¹⁸ Jacob Viner, Foreword, in R. D. Collison Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. v-viii, at pp. vi-vii. The classical school was virtually unanimous in this view of Ireland until the later writings of John Stuart Mill.

¹⁹ Boylan and Foley, 'Nation Perishing', 141. To liberals and humanitarians, at least, this looked like a promulgation of 'the revolting doctrine' that the Irish poor 'should be left to starve, lest they should propagate their numbers too rapidly' (Collison Black, *Economic Thought*, 96).

²⁰ Ricardo did not agree with this particular case, however, and nor, initially, did Malthus, though he was later converted to it. See *ibid.* 203.

²¹ Daly, *Famine in Ireland*, 43.

²² See Collison Black, *Economic Thought*, 213. Whately was a sufficiently ardent supporter of political economy to found a chair in it at Trinity College in 1832. Trinity College was crucial to the promotion of political economy in Ireland. Along with Whately himself, some of the former holders of the chair even defended Malthusian principles during the Famine (Boylan and Foley, 'Nation Perishing', 138-40).

²³ Viner, Foreword, p. vii. For evidence of the voluntary practice of 'restraint', see Ó Gráda, *Ireland Before and After the Famine*, 180-206, esp. 193.

Malthusian theory was often seized on 'by a privileged class who, having been stripped bare of rational justifications by the philosophers of the eighteenth century, saw in it an almost miraculous restoration of their position'.²⁴ This was notably the case in Ireland, where the proposals of the economists appeared to coincide with the interests of the landlords and conservative ideological positions.²⁵ But there was another aspect to the covert politics of discussions of Irish population levels. Malthus did not say much about Ireland in the *Essay on Population*. But in two essays for the *Edinburgh Review*, he expressed an alarm at Irish fertility rates which was clearly political. Following Newenham, he emphasized the fact that any growth in the Irish population meant an increase in Catholic relative to Protestant numbers. Since Irish Catholics were much more fertile than Protestants, so too the 'physical force' of the former was 'rapidly increasing'. This would logically mean a growing threat to the Union and an increasing chance of insurrection. 'The increasing strength of Ireland', he wrote, in a phrase significant for 'Oxen', 'is the increasing weakness of England'.²⁶ Other economists were particularly concerned about this, particularly Anglo-Irish ones.²⁷ In Malthusian terms, the growth of the Catholic population spelt the possible triumph of barbarism. To deploy a key term in the economists' arsenal, civilized man was *prudent*. He knew how to control himself and the size of his family. Barbarians multiplied heedlessly.

²⁴ Harold A. Boner, *Hungry Generations: The Nineteenth-Century Case against Malthusianism* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1955), p. vi. To see Malthus simply as 'the arch-apologist of the ruling classes', however, is far too reductive. Eversley makes this point convincingly. See *Social Theories of Fertility*, 256. In England, the political economists were often regarded as the champions of the urban middle class, as radicals.

²⁵ See Collison Black, *Economic Thought*, 243.

²⁶ 'Newenham and Others on the State of Ireland', *Edinburgh Review* (July 1808), repr. in *Occasional Papers on Ireland, Population and Political Economy*, ed. and introd. Bernard Semmel (New York: Franklin, 1963), 33–52, at 47. For the argument as a whole, see 40–7. It is important not to demonize Malthus himself relative to Ireland. Although a clergyman of the Established Church and opposed to the relief of the Irish tenantry from exorbitant rents, he recognized that political oppression was the original source of the predicament he described, supported Catholic emancipation, argued that landlords should be taxed rather than tenants, and wanted to see an end to restrictive legislation subordinating Irish commercial enterprise to England. Malthus matters less, here, than the discourse of Malthusianism.

²⁷ Population increase was also a political issue in 19th-cent. Ireland, and was feared by the landlords, because the Poor Laws had made them responsible for half the rate. See Isaac Butt, *Land Tenure in Ireland: A Plea for the Celtic Race* (Dublin: John Falconer, 1866), 33.

Eminent figures were fiercely critical of Malthus and the Malthusians: Coleridge, Byron, Cobbett, Godwin, Dickens. In an Irish context, there were also more humanitarian and unorthodox economists, both English and Anglo-Irish, who took 'a rejection of the Malthusian doctrine as their starting-point'.²⁸ But the critics frequently gave with one hand only to take away again with the other. For in dealing with Ireland, the economists tended automatically to assume the importance of a closer assimilation of the less to the more developed economy.²⁹ Carlyle and Mill's critiques of the Malthusian case on Ireland, for example, are made problematic if not vitiated by their unquestioning acceptance of the need to maintain the Union.³⁰ Yet the authority of Malthusianism might seem to have been in retreat long before 1904, let alone the time at which 'Oxen' was written.³¹ Authority is one thing, currency another. Malthusian strains remain perceptible in Mill, Carlyle, Arnold, Spencer, Wells. Darwin described his thought as 'the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms'.³² Vulgarizations of Malthus were common currency, and clung on well into the early twentieth century. Lowe-Evans points out that the Malthusian League was not disbanded until 1927.³³ Most importantly, the mid- and late nineteenth-century status of Malthusianism in England was by no means the same as its standing in Ireland, where the political stakes were higher or more dramatic. *The Character and Logical Method of Political Economy*, by John Elliot Cairnes, one of the string of professors of political economy at Trinity, was in many ways ultra-Malthusian, and appeared as late as 1857.³⁴ It is sobering

²⁸ The list would include such figures as James Warren Doyle, J. B. Bryan, Michael Thomas Sadler, and G. Poulett Scrope. See Collison Black, *Economic Thought*, 94–6.

²⁹ See *ibid.* 240.

³⁰ Both Carlyle and Mill accepted the arguments for emigration. In some ways, however, Mill was a fine critic of Malthus. See Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility*, 156–8.

³¹ Boner, e.g., has suggested that the cultural power and discursive prestige of Malthusian economics were under pressure in England from the mid-19th cent. on and decisively in retreat by 1860 (*Hungry Generations*, 128).

³² Darwin's enthusiasm for Malthus continued into the 1870s. See Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), in *The Works of Charles Darwin*, ed. Paul H. Barrett and R. B. Freeman, xv (London: William Pickering, 1988), 47. The sentence remains in the 1876 edn. See *On the Origin of Species* (1876), in *Works*, xvi (London: William Pickering, 1988), 53. See also *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex, Part One*, with essay by T. H. Huxley, in *Works*, xxi (London: William Pickering, 1989), 48–51; and Lowe-Evans, *Crimes against Fecundity*, 27.

³³ *Crimes against Fecundity*, 25.

³⁴ John Stuart Mill supplies clear evidence of how strong the Malthusian view of Ireland still was in the late 1860s. See 'England and Ireland' (1869), in *Collected Works*, vi.

to note that, in 1867, Isaac Butt was attacking a viceroy for publicly declaring—after the Famine and decades of accelerating emigration—that the Irish population was 'somewhat in excess' of what 'the rules of economic principles allow'.³⁵ It is more sobering to note that—according to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, at least—in 1892, the very politician who spoke of killing Home Rule with kindness, Gerald Balfour, on the basis of Darwin's 'law' of the survival of the fittest, declared that 'they [the Irish] ought to have been exterminated long ago . . . but it is too late now'.³⁶

Remember, Erin, Thy Generations

There were Irish discourses, however, that ran counter to the political economists. The poetic affirmation of fertility had been traditional in Irish culture. For Yeats and others, the theme had its origins in fertility rituals.³⁷ But it is its political inflection that is most important: as Murray Pittock has demonstrated, from at least the seventeenth century onwards, the fertility theme was never simply literal. It also had an allegorical significance relative to the fortunes of the nation, national prosperity, and national renewal. The theme of Ireland as devastated land awaiting its redeemer was widespread in Irish Jacobite poetry and the eighteenth-century *aisling*. The redeemer was conceived of as a fertility god, a means to regeneration.³⁸

Essays on England, Ireland and the Empire, ed. John M. Robson, introd. Joseph Hamburger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 502–32, at 528.

³⁵ Butt, *The Irish People and the Irish Land* (Dublin: John Falconer, 1867), 141. The viceroy in question was the Marquis of Abercorn. In Collison Black's words, there can be no doubt that the Malthusian attitude to Ireland 'played a significant part in forming the social philosophy, and so the social policy [in Ireland], of the whole period from 1817 to 1870 and beyond' (*Economic Thought*, 94).

³⁶ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *My Diaries* (London: Martin Secker, 1919), 69–70; quoted in Andrew Gailey, *Ireland and the Death of Kindness: The Experience of Constructive Unionism 1890–1905*, Studies in Irish History (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), 30.

³⁷ See Yeats, e.g., on the relation between the pagan ritual tradition in Ireland and *The Midnight Court*. Yeats, Preface, in Brian Merriman, *The Midnight Court and the Adventures of a Luckless Father*, trans. Percy Arland Ussher (London: Cape, 1926), 5–12, 8. Future refs. are to this edn.

³⁸ With James II e.g. in Irish Jacobite poetry, 'the Stuart cause and its leader are typically seen in terms of fertility and renewal, the good king bringing light and life to a starving land'. Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 45. The redeemer figure was sometimes pluralized as the (returning) 'wild geese'. For examples, see Patrick Mac Gearóit, 'The

So, too, the loss of children was directly linked to 'the ruin of dark slaughters' visited on Ireland by the invader.³⁹ The fertility theme wound its way into the political *aisling* of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ It thus became an item in an armoury of nationalist tropes.⁴¹ Perhaps the most significant instance of the tradition is Brian Merriman's *The Midnight Court*, the eighteenth-century poem that Standish Hayes O'Grady referred to as 'the best poem written in Gaelic'.⁴² Speakers in *The Midnight Court* exhort their fellows to 'unite' in 'love'. The Irish race is 'apace decreasing' because 'lads and lasses have left off breeding'.⁴³ Here, again, as Yeats said and as Joyce surely knew, the theme had a political meaning:⁴⁴ '[Merriman] wrote at a moment of national discouragement, the penal laws were still in force though weakening, the old order was a vivid memory but with the failure of the last Jacobite rising hope of its return had vanished, and no new political dream had come.'⁴⁵ The argument for procreation is thus equally a political argument for the social and cultural renewal of Ireland. Ireland is oppressed and sunk in poverty and misery, its wealth 'destroyed', its land 'purloined' and left 'untilled' and 'unsown'.⁴⁶ More fertility will 'restore to Erin the spirit of old | And rear a race of heroic mould'.⁴⁷ The lament for 'the dearth and decrease of our nation' and 'our sickly and sad generation'⁴⁸ seemed readily open to

Spirit of Song', in George Sigerson, *Bards of the Gael and Gall: Examples of the Poetic Literature of Errin* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1897), 253–5.

³⁹ The phrase is from Féilim MacCarthy, 'The Caoine of the Children', in Sigerson, *Bards of the Gael and Gall*, 313–19, at 318.

⁴⁰ In the 19th-cent. *aisling*, however, figures like O'Connell replace that of the returning king (Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics*, 190).

⁴¹ Pittock draws attention to the close connection between the theme and the characterization of Ireland as Cathleen ni Houlihan in the nationalist literature of the late 19th and early 20th cents. (*ibid.* 189).

⁴² Quoted in Yeats, Preface, 12. The view of Merriman's poem as representative both of a tradition and a culture can be found in Daniel Corkery. See *The Hidden Ireland* (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1926), 233, 249.

⁴³ *Midnight Court*, 118–19.

⁴⁴ The poem was in English trans. as early as 1880, with a verse trans. appearing in 1897 and a German prose trans. by L. C. Stern in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* in 1905. Joyce could have come across an account of the poem in Hyde's *A Literary History of Ireland* (1899). See also Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 249–50. But *The Midnight Court* was 'a famous—even an infamous poem'. See David Marcus, Preface, in Brian Merriman, *The Midnight Court*, trans. D. Marcus (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1953), unpaginated. Gogarty was aware of the poem in the opening years of the century, and expected others to be so, too. See Oliver St John Gogarty, *Tumbling in the Hay* (London: Constable & Co., 1939), 282.

⁴⁵ Preface, 9.

⁴⁶ Merriman, *Midnight Court*, 18.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 42.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 40.

appropriation by a post-Famine and indeed a post-Parnellite Ireland. Joyce was surely conscious of this in invoking the tradition in 'Oxen'.

Alongside this tradition, from the Famine onwards, there was a strain of Irish resistance to Malthusianism and its Anglo-Irish proponents.⁴⁹ The 1840s saw the emergence of what its authors themselves refer to as an Irish political economy. It picked its quarrel principally with the English economists. In a famine-stricken or post-Famine Ireland, the central issue was a population decline presented as so drastic as to spell the end of a people. Isaac Butt, for instance, explicitly defied the Malthusians, asserting the political urgency of the issue of the continued existence in its own land of a seemingly threatened race.⁵⁰ At the extreme end of the spectrum, John Mitchel stridently denounced both the British government and the landlords as aiming to 'extirpate the Irish nation'.⁵¹ For Mitchel, that project was inseparable from the perverted economics practised by 'English professors of political economy'.⁵² For Lalor, too, post-Malthusian political economy was 'quackery' (CW, 152). Lalor, Mitchel, other Young Irelanders, and Butt all argue for the priority of political over economic conditions. Ireland's problems—they assert—have primarily been caused by the colonial power and the landlord class.⁵³ The Famine increased Irish hostility to England. Mitchel, Lalor, and Butt held England and Anglo-Ireland responsible for the Irish plight and were impatient with the arithmetical ratios of the Malthusians. Lalor in particular came close to producing an argument for the repopulation of Ireland. For economic reinvigoration to take place, he suggested, 'the powers of vitality but require to be set in movement, and the contrivances of nature left free to act' (CW, 21). Beneath the Victorian reticence, this is evidently enough an anti-Malthusian argument, and forms part of a discourse which 'Oxen' in some sense sustains.

⁴⁹ For opposition to Anglo-Irish economy, see Lalor's view of Whately's arguments as 'poison', e.g. James Fintan Lalor, *Collected Writings* (Poole, Washington DC: Woodstock Books, 1997), 153.

⁵⁰ *Irish People*, 137–46, and *Land Tenure*, 64–6, 73, 101.

⁵¹ *The History of Ireland from the Treaty of Limerick to the Present Time* (New York: D. and J. Sadlier & Co., 1868), 599. For his argument as a whole, see *ibid.* 544–5, 597–9.

⁵² Mitchel, Preface, *Irish Political Economy, by Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, and George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (Dublin: William Holden, 1847), pp. iii–vi, at p. iv.

⁵³ On Lalor's conception of social as opposed to political economy, see David N. Buckley, *James Fintan Lalor: Radical* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1990), 63–4. John Smurthwaite reminds me that the young Bloom was an adherent of Mitchel and Lalor. See *Ulysses*, 17. 1647–8.

Ireland had to wait until the 1880s, however, for a cogently argued and amply elaborated opposition to English political economy. The key figure was not Irish but American, the popular economist Henry George. George was a progressive and in some ways socialistic thinker who was also a fierce opponent of Malthus and Malthusianism, which he saw as still enjoying 'general acceptance'.⁵⁴ He 'electrified' Ireland when he arrived there in the early 1880s, soon after the publication of his best-known book, *Progress and Poverty* (1879).⁵⁵ George's Irish reception was partly connected with his view of Malthus. He argued that Malthus had furnished a philosophy 'by which Dives as he feasts can shut out the image of Lazarus who faints with hunger at his door'.⁵⁶ His success was also due to his vigorous denunciations of British rule in Ireland ('the most damnable government that exists today outside Russia').⁵⁷ He was scathing about 'the wrong-headedness of Englishmen who attributed mischief in Ireland to some inherent racial or national characteristics'.⁵⁸ But what most gripped Ireland was the determination with which George insistently linked the population issue to the question of landlordism. In Ireland, George wrote, 'the bounty which the Creator intended for all' had become 'the exclusive property of some'.⁵⁹ This fundamental injustice was the source of Irish poverty and misery. By 'property', George meant land. Insofar as property was a question of land—and only to that extent—a redistribution of wealth was essential. The simplicity of this (expressly anti-Marxist) position brought a curt dismissal from Marx himself ('Theoretically the man is utterly backward').⁶⁰ But it also made George hugely popular in Ireland, where the argument was exactly right for the mood of the times.⁶¹ George was especially influential on his friend and ally Michael Davitt. The

⁵⁴ See *Progress and Poverty* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1880), 81. Boner has argued that, in fact, George held 'a singularly exaggerated notion of the prevalence of Malthusian views' (*Hungry Generations*, 188).

⁵⁵ The word is Bernard Semmel's. See his introd. to Malthus, *Occasional Papers on Ireland*, 4–29, at 19. The word 'electrifying' can be found in other accounts of George and his work.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Charles Albro Barker, *Henry George* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 347.

⁵⁹ *The Irish Land Question* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1881), 62.

⁶⁰ Letter to Friedrich A. Sorge, 30 June 1881; quoted in Barker, *Henry George*, 356.

⁶¹ As Steven B. Cord puts it, 'the headline-making "land for the people" agitation that had just begun in Ireland . . . served to make *Progress and Poverty* appear very timely indeed'. Cord, *Henry George: Dreamer or Realist?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965), 34.

influence is perceptible in Davitt's *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (1904), a book Joyce had in Trieste. It includes an account of George's arrest and 'trial' at Athenry which appears to take it for granted that any reader will know who George is.⁶² Irish nationalist discourse sustained and extended George's anti-Malthusian position. It was significant for Davitt, for the Irish land agitation in the 1890s, and for Griffith. So, too, was George's insistence on a bountiful nature whose operations have been impeded by the injustice of colonial social structures.

There are several key emphases in the fledgling discourse of Irish political economy. It considers the Irish economic situation politically. The classical English economists commonly did not. It understands that situation—if often crudely—in terms of power, class, distribution of wealth, and colonial occupation. Most importantly for 'Oxen', it refuses to accept the Malthusian analysis of the Irish predicament, in which overpopulation becomes the most important determining factor. It suggests, instead, that an Ireland free to arrange its own affairs might be empowered to feed its own. Above all, it edges towards an argument for replenishing a decimated people. That it does so hesitantly and ambivalently is hardly surprising, given both the traumatics of reproduction that followed the Famine and the simultaneous dominance of a peculiarly puritan form of Victorian Catholicism. It nonetheless constitutes a tradition. This tradition gains an additional momentum from its conflation with an older one which presented fertility and an abundant population as a trope for Irish political power, self-confidence, and independence. Together, they are crucial to understanding 'Oxen'.

Joyce's treatment of the population and fertility themes clearly connects up with the tradition of Irish political economy. This is particularly clear early in the chapter, in the argument that

by no exterior splendour is the prosperity of a nation more efficaciously asserted than by the measure of how far forward may have progressed the tribute of its solicitude for that proliferent continuance which of evils the original if it be absent when fortunately present constitutes the certain sign of omnipollent nature's incorrupted benefaction. (14. 13–17)

The equation of populousness with 'prosperity' directly addresses the question of the state of the Irish nation and is blatantly opposed

⁶² See *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London and New York: Harper & Bros., 1904), 421–6. The inverted commas are Davitt's, but seem appropriate.

to the Malthusians. But equally, in the chapter as a whole, the recurrence of the word 'bounty' and the references to nature's (beneficent) 'ends' (14. 228), nature's 'benefaction' (14. 17), and 'the bounty of the Supreme Being' (14. 879) all recall the founding premiss of George's anti-Malthusianism.

The traditional emphasis is chiefly present at the start of the chapter. It serves as a containing structure for much of what follows. The chapter touches, for example, on the stark historical context which the subject of population was bound to summon up: on Ireland as a country of 'lean kine' (14. 1476) with but a 'fraction of bread' for 'them that live by bread alone' (14. 283–4). So, too, it alludes to many of the supplementary issues that both the English and the Irish political economists discussed: Irish dietary habits (14. 281–5); infant mortality (14. 1239 ff.); poor sanitary conditions (14. 1242–50); infanticide (14. 962, 1261); 'neglect, private or official' (14. 1259–60); and medical provision. It also contains a number of casual little side-swipes at some of the Malthusians' emphases: their concern with voluntary sexual restraint (14. 669–70); their frequent racism (14. 671, 1250); the connection between the discourse of political economy and the doctrine of natural selection (14. 1277–85). Joyce also refers to some of the contexts that the Irish writers thought were so important, particularly through Stephen: colonial injustice (14. 624–5); English checks on the development of Irish agriculture (14. 609–18); emigration as the result of colonial rule (14. 639–46).

Yet such touches are usually small. The connections are often indirect, and the tone is light. 'Oxen' does not systematically 'parody' the discourses of English political economy. Joyce establishes a comic and ironic but vigorous insistence opposed to those discourses. He then reworks and redistributes a scattering of items associated with them. Yet again, he both admits the power of a set of historical circumstances and, at the same time, relativizes and displaces it. For the discourse on fertility in 'Oxen' is to some extent hopeful and future-oriented. Joyce connects it to the prospects of the nation, to the theme of 'a land flowing with milk and money' (14. 377). The chapter proposes an increase in population as part of a drive away from the trauma of the Famine and its aftermath. This drive will take Ireland towards modern independence and modern political and cultural health. 'Oxen' clearly emerges out of the Irish tradition of political economy. It places the population issue in an Irish political

context and produces an anti-Malthusian discourse. But at the same time, it also supplements or radically extends the Irish tradition, most obviously in its playfulness. It separates itself off, not just from the Malthusians but from Lalor's sullen wrath, Mitchel's screams of rage, Davitt's stern anger, a tradition characterized, above all, by its obsession with a history of wrongs. It does this most effectively by laughter. Joyce recognizes 'the piteous vesture of the past' (14. 1354), but refuses to be clothed in it. He is concerned with a release from 'congenital defunctive music' (14. 1428). 'Oxen' precisely contains Stephen's bitter, melancholic mode of thought. The chapter designates its will to modern independence in its very insouciance. Its breezy cockiness or cavalier offhandedness is very important. So is its ease with itself, its capacity for making fun of itself. In Joyce's hands, an Irish discourse becomes so self-confident that it can afford not to take itself very seriously at all.

A Parcel of Brats of Boys

At this point, it is important to consider the young men in 'Oxen'. For their significance in the context of Irish history and contemporary Irish culture is a good deal more complex than has commonly been recognized. Furthermore, it cuts directly across the fertility theme. The group at the centre of the chapter is largely composed of students, particularly medical students, and is largely Catholic Irish, though it includes outsiders. Their animated, inventive, and often witty if increasingly drunken exchanges are of course refracted through the styles. But the exchanges nonetheless constitute the chapter's verbal and substantial 'ground'. Unsurprisingly, the young men are not much interested in having children. Their talk is boisterously sexual and more concerned with contraception and birth control. Any 'affirmation of fertility' they offer is satirical, burlesque, or disingenuous, as in the case of Buck Mulligan's proposal for a 'national fertilising farm' (14. 651-712).

The students should be placed in relation to the cultural history of Irish medicine, not least because a sense of the larger outlines of that history clearly underlies the chapter. There had of course been an indigenous tradition of Irish medicine. ('Among the Celts', as 'Oxen' puts it, 'the art of medicine' was 'highly honoured', 14. 34-5.) Physicians were one of the professional learned orders distinctive within

the kin-based society of Gaelic Ireland.⁶³ Brehon law defined the place, rank, responsibilities, rules of practice, and even fees of the medical practitioner in Gaelic society.⁶⁴ Medical practice was a family affair and involved a hereditary appointment: hence Joyce's mention of 'the O'Shiels, the O'Hickeys, the O'Lees' (14. 37).⁶⁵ It was a learned tradition.⁶⁶ Each medical family had its book, in which its medical knowledge was transmitted from one generation to another: that is why Joyce refers to the practitioners having 'sedulously set down the divers methods by which the sick and the relapsed found again health' (14. 37-8).⁶⁷ The Gaelic medical tradition fused classical medicine with a learned tradition that ran from Aristotle to the Islamic medico-philosophers, notably Avicenna and Averroes (cf. 14. 246-7). Even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Gaelic physicians were 'staunch Arabians'.⁶⁸ By then, however, they represented what Bannerman calls 'the conservative wing of the European medical spectrum'.⁶⁹ The reasons for their decline were political and cultural: Anglicization, the growth of colleges and universities as established medical training grounds, the end of patronage for the old schools of physick. Though Joyce's treatment of the tradition is unarguably light in tone, he surely knew of its fate. The career of Owen O'Shiel is symptomatic. The distinction of the O'Shiels is referred to in the *Annals of the Four Masters*.⁷⁰ But their lands were confiscated during the Elizabethan wars, and they were forced to move. In the early seventeenth century, Owen O'Shiel served as a 'wild goose' with the Spanish army. Returning to Ireland in 1620, he found himself excluded 'by the political bias of his times' from 'the

⁶³ See John Bannerman, *The Beaton: A Medical Kindred in the Classical Gaelic Tradition* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986), 1.

⁶⁴ These definitions held good in medieval Ireland. See J. B. Lyons, *Brief Lives of Irish Doctors* (Dublin: Blackwater, 1978), 11-12.

⁶⁵ On the families in question, see *ibid.* 12, 28, 35. ⁶⁶ See *ibid.* 12.

⁶⁷ The O'Shiels' book and what appears to have been the O'Lees' book are preserved in the Royal Irish Academy. For an account of the O'Lees' book, see Roderic O'Flaherty, *A Chorographical Description of West or H'lar Connacht*, with notes and illustrations by James Hardiman (Dublin: Irish Archaeological Society, 1846), 71, Hardiman's note.

⁶⁸ H. O'Grady, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 1 (1926), 175; quoted in Bannerman, *Beaton*, 91.

⁶⁹ *Beaton*, 91. See also *ibid.* 89-97. On 'the demise of the classical tradition', see *ibid.* 120-33.

⁷⁰ Murtough O'Shiel, e.g., is referred to in the *Annals of the Four Masters* as 'the best physician of his years in the neighbourhood'. See *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters, from the Earliest Period to the Year 1616*, ed. and trans. John O'Donovan (7 vols., Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1848), v. 1509.

patronage of the English notabilities'. In 1642, he joined the forces of the confederate Catholics, and fell in battle in 1650.⁷¹

Joyce was clearly unsentimental about this tradition. 'Oxen' does not even directly lay the blame for its decline at the door of the colonizer. The chapter rather points to an 'inveterate' (i.e. shameless, irreverent) Irish habit that 'gradually traduced the honourable by ancestors transmitted customs' (14. 25-6). But it also recalls how important the physicians were in times of widespread distress: of plague, fever epidemics, and, above all, famine (14. 35-40). The 'leper-yards' Joyce refers to are presumably the celebrated Leper Hospitals of Armagh, 'supposed to antedate by several centuries all similar foundations in Europe'.⁷² Above all, the references to the 'trembling withering' and 'flux' (14. 39-40) and to relapsing (14. 38) are to medical features of famine fever.⁷³ Owen O'Shiel died four years before the foundation of the Fraternity of Physicians in Dublin, a development which spelt the end of the tradition he represented and the emergence of 'a new type of Irish doctor'.⁷⁴ The new type was Anglo-Irish. From the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century, the medical profession and medical institutions in Ireland were heavily and usually exclusively Protestant-dominated. During the nineteenth century, however, there was a slow but steady erosion of this dominance. The repeal of 'some of the more repressive anti-Catholic legislation . . . opened up new opportunities' in medicine for Catholics such as the redoubtable Dominic Corrigan.⁷⁵ Similarly, the

⁷¹ Lyons, *Brief Lives*, 28.

⁷² They are now known never to have existed. See Sir William McArthur, 'Famine Fevers in England and Ireland', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd ser. 9 (1944), 66-71, at 70. There was a mistake in a translation from Gaelic to Latin.

⁷³ For details of famine fever and the debate around it, see Laurence M. Geary, 'The Late Disastrous Epidemic': Medical Relief and the Great Famine', in Morash and Hayes (eds.), *Fearful Realities*, 49-59. See also McArthur, 'Famine Fevers', 67. 'Trembling withering' alludes to the combination of feverish shivering and what Corrigan called 'emaciation, from the increased activity of secretion and excretion' that was brought on by famine fever. See D. J. Corrigan, *Lectures on the Nature and Treatment of Fever* (Dublin: J. Fanning and Co., 1853), 45. 'Bloody flux' was also associated with famine fever. See Connell, *Population of Ireland*, 144. Connell says that the typical famine fever was accompanied by 'trembling' and 'relapses were frequent' (ibid. 228-9). In Joyce's Ireland, famine was by no means a feature of an increasingly remote past. There were incidences in the west of Ireland in the 1890s, the last and most notorious being in 1897-8. See T. P. O'Neill, 'The Food Crisis of the 1890s', in Crawford (ed.), *Famine*, 176-97, at 177. On the almost complete collapse of Ireland's medical resources during the Great Famine—to which Joyce may also be ironically referring—see Geary, 'Late Disastrous Epidemic', esp. 52-8.

⁷⁴ Lyons, *Brief Lives*, 12.

⁷⁵ Davis Coakley, *The Irish School of Medicine* (Dublin: Town House, 1988), 57.

rise of a Catholic bourgeoisie had as one of its consequences the establishment of Catholic hospitals, like St Vincent's and the Mater Misericordiae, in complement to the well-established Protestant hospitals that largely dated back to the eighteenth century.⁷⁶ From the 1880s in particular, Catholics from schools like Clongowes were busily invading the Protestant professional strongholds like medicine as never before.⁷⁷ Joyce himself considered a medical career. All the same, before the twentieth century, Corrigan cuts a most unusual figure.⁷⁸ To the end of the nineteenth century, medicine was intimately associated with Protestant political and cultural power. As late as the 1890s, the Irish Unionist Alliance could boast that 'out of all the eminent medical men in the Irish capital there is only one who has ever shown the slightest leaning towards Home Rule'.⁷⁹ Yet at hospitals like the Rotunda, for instance, 'compared with the urban population as a whole, Roman Catholics were overrepresented among patients'.⁸⁰

The National Maternity Hospital (where 'Oxen' takes place) was thus a particularly important institution. Its very name is significant. It opened in 1894. According to Farmar, its founding members were determined to create a Catholic maternity facility under Catholic management for a largely Catholic population. This distinguished it from the comparable, Protestant-run hospitals already existing, the Rotunda and the Coombe. The intention was to have it cater specifically to the needs of poor and under-privileged Catholic mothers.⁸¹ Thus when one of the narrative voices in 'Oxen' declares that 'In Horne's house rest should reign' (14. 332-3), the observation should not be heard as a neutral generality. One of the principal points of policy in the National Maternity Hospital, as is clear from its being a *lying-in* charity, was that it was supposed to give tenement mothers the rest that middle-class mothers could get at home.⁸²

⁷⁶ Ruth Barrington, *Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970* (Dublin: Croom Helm Press, 1987), 15.

⁷⁷ See Tony Farmar, *Holles Street 1894-1994: The National Maternity Hospital—A Centenary History* (Dublin: A. & A. Farmar, 1994), 38.

⁷⁸ A quick scan through Coakley's *Irish Masters of Medicine* makes this very clear. Cf. Mary Daly, *Dublin, the Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History 1860-1914* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1984), 127.

⁷⁹ *Publications of the Irish Unionist Alliance*, 1 (1891), 247.

⁸⁰ W. Peter Ward, *Birth Weight and Economic Growth: Women's Living Standards in the Industrializing West* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 73.

⁸¹ See Farmar, *Holles Street*, 7-9. ⁸² See *ibid.* 8.

Joyce was evidently precisely conscious of the political significance of the Hospital. He is even slyly ironical about one or two aspects of its policy and work. The presence of the Scotsman Crothers among the students may well be significant. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, the Rotunda maternity hospital had always specified Protestant staff and management. So, too, the founders of the National Maternity Hospital declared that 'the management of the hospital be exclusively Catholic'. The masters, doctors, resident pupils, nurses, and all intern servants and assistants were Catholic, the only exception being students.⁸³ In a piece of historical realism that is also a gesture of resistance to sectarianism, Joyce emphasizes the mixed character of his group, and adds Bloom and Lenehan, for good measure. Similarly, one of the points about working at the Holles Street hospital was that, whilst the institution catered to the poor, the doctors were picking up 'a breadth of experience and prestige that could easily be transmuted into considerable fees in private practice'.⁸⁴ In one respect, the hospital aimed to close a gap between classes. In others, it repeated and perpetuated such gaps. It maintained the condescension of charitable patronage, for example, which had been so very largely the principle of medicine in Ireland from the eighteenth century onwards. When Joyce refers to 'A. Horne' as 'lord' of the hospital (14. 74), he does so with a wicked sense of fact. Horne was upper middle class, enjoyed the lifestyle of the most eminent Protestant doctors, including a big house in Merrion Square, and would arrive at the hospital in top hat, frock coat, and a long black overcoat with astrakhan collar.⁸⁵ For all the charitable exertions of the hospital, the future for the tenement mothers was commonly grim. Thus a harsh irony lies just beneath Joyce's Carlyle-narrator's obtuse and callous celebration of Mrs Purefoy as 'a hoary pandemonium of ills, enlarged glands, mumps, quins, bunions, hayfever, bedsores, ringworm, floating kidney, Derbyshire neck, warts, bilious attacks, gallstones, cold feet, varicose veins' (14. 1424-7). In his famous account of the chapter to Frank Budgen, Joyce recounted his engagements with the cultural wealth of the English and Anglo-Irish literary tradition. He ended with a stark, single-sentence paragraph: 'How's that for high?' (*Letters*, i. 139). He meant 'high' partly in the sense of 'high class', and the tone, again, is heavily ironical.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 11, 24.⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 8.⁸⁵ See *ibid.* 6, 10, 18.

Medically, at the start of the twentieth century, Ireland stood on the very threshold of modernity. The years 1903-11 saw an intense scrutiny of medical facilities, particularly of medical relief for the poor.⁸⁶ In 1904, the British Medical Association examined medical conditions in Ireland and made proposals for the reorganization of the Poor Law medical service into a State one. This initiated a process that culminated in Lloyd George's Health Insurance Bill of 1913. The Bill spelt the beginning of major reform of the Poor Law in Ireland. The emphasis shifted towards providing medical services to all who needed them, in other words, towards a modern health service. Here, yet again, the Local Government (Ireland) Act of 1898 is significant. For one of its consequences was the transfer of power within the medical administration of Ireland from a Protestant elite to 'the [very largely Catholic] democracy'. In the words of the distinguished, English medical observer whom I have just cited: 'It was practically a social revolution in Ireland. . . . a democracy not well trained in medical, sanitary or other administration—and certainly without any practical experience—came at once to the throne'.⁸⁷ Subtract the Englishman's misgivings, and this registers an important new franchise within a modern political and cultural dispensation. The medical students in 'Oxen' represent a new, trained, and educated generation of young Catholics who can expect to be prominent in their profession. Furthermore, they are rising to prominence in a sphere in which political and managerial power is passing into Catholic hands.

That the young men are disrespectful, have no manners, are raucously ill-behaved, is therefore a large part of the point. They are part of an emergent political culture. But at the same time, as far as the Dublin medical establishment is concerned, they are also Irish 'aborigines', to recall Mahaffy's phrase, jumped-up versions of 'the corner-boys who spit in the Liffey'.⁸⁸ Mahaffy's patrician attitudes were traditional amongst the Dublin medical elite. Dr William Collum, for example, the master of the Rotunda from 1766 to 1773, opposed the spread of medical education on the grounds that it would 'afford instruction to a parcel of Brats of Boys, the

⁸⁶ See Barrington, *Health*, 24-38.⁸⁷ G.J.H. Ewart, *British Medical Journal: A Report on the Poor-Law Medical System of Ireland* (London: British Medical Association, 1904), 52.⁸⁸ Gerald Griffin, *The Wild Geese: Pen Portraits of Famous Irish Exiles* (1938); quoted in Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (rev. edn.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 58.

Apprentices of Surgeons and Apothecaries'.⁸⁹ This had been very much the tone adopted by the newly emergent, Protestant medical establishment as it closed down the older medical tradition, seeking 'to prevent illiterate persons from practising physic'.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the boisterous irreverence so evident in 'Oxen' was a historically specific phenomenon. For 'young [medical] aspirants' at this time, 'the interests of personal advancement, religion and nationalism were mixed in a heady brew that led to frequent clashes with the establishment'.⁹¹

Thus the fact that the students are there at all represents a triumph over the exclusivity traditional within Irish medicine. At the same time, it centres the chapter around an attitude of more or less flagrant political and cultural dissidence. The 'mettlesome youth' (14. 871) of the students represents the power of the new and looks to the future. As such, it directly conflicts with the historical discourses in the chapter. Stephen articulates the contrast between two historical worlds, if—ironically—in a language that seems to belong to the older one. His theme is the watershed that is so important for 'Oxen' itself:

Look forth now, my people, upon the land of behest, even from Horeb and from Nebo and from Pisgah and from the Horns of Hatten unto a land flowing with milk and money. But thou hast suckled me with a bitter milk: my moon and my sun thou hast quenched for ever. (14. 375–8)

As opposed to what Stephen calls the 'days of old' (14. 367), of which he still feels himself to be a prisoner, the 'land of behest' is clearly new, modern, and democratic. The young men represent a modern principle of lively difference and dispute, a democratic 'strife of tongues' within which 'discursiveness' seems 'the only bond of union' (14. 952–4). Joyce's choice of that last word, in a context where democracy and difference are at issue, is deliberate and not without irony. But the students' modernity is most evident in the various discussions of modern medical issues: 'the gravest problems of obstetrics and forensic medicine' (14. 977–8); Caesarian section

⁸⁹ Quoted in Robert F. Harrison, 'Medical Education at the Rotunda Hospital 1745–1995', in Alan Browne (ed.), *Masters, Midwives and Ladies-in-Waiting* (Dublin: A. & A. Farman, 1995), 66–76, at 67.

⁹⁰ The phrase is from a request to London for parliamentary assistance made by the Dublin College of Physicians in 1725. See Gerard O'Brien, 'Scotland, Ireland and the Antithesis of Enlightenment', in S. J. Connolly et al. (eds.), *Conflict, Identity and Economic Development: Ireland and Scotland 1600–1939* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1995), 125–34, at 133.

⁹¹ Farman, *Holles Street*, 38.

(14. 956–7); artificial insemination (14. 969–70); the relationship between sanitary and working conditions and health (14. 1243, 1258); improvements in antenatal care (14. 1251–6). The concern about the relative rights of mother and child to life (14. 202–63) was both contemporary and local. The agenda had been set by no less a person than Horne himself.⁹² Intermittently, as at 14. 1250, such issues are cast as national issues.

The students' concern with modern developments in medicine is clearly related to their modern, scientific, secular view of the world. 'Believe-on-Me' is 'nought else but notion'. The young men can 'conceive no thought of it' (14. 459–60). Their scepticism and materialism separates them off from almost all the other characters in *Ulysses*. It is also evident in their frank, straightforward attitudes to sex and their casual way of discussing it (as in the case of Mulligan's proposal, 14. 651–712). Their concern with contraception is likewise modern. As I said earlier, Ireland at the turn of the century was witnessing the 'slow beginnings' of the 'fertility transition'. In urban, middle-class Ireland, at least, family planning was becoming more common, and not just among Protestants.⁹³ The modern solution to 'the spectre of over-population' was contraception.⁹⁴ Humanist and feminist critics have sometimes felt uncomfortable at the frivolous tone in which the students talk about sex. But Joyce was registering the laughter of minds freeing themselves from historical bondage. After the Famine, one of the principal manifestations of such bondage was a traumatic melancholy regarding sexual activity.

It is here that these modern young men seem most clearly to collide with the politics of the 'affirmation of fertility'. Commentators on 'Oxen' have often felt notably superior to Stephen and his friends.⁹⁵ But there is no indication in the text that Joyce either sits in judgement on his students or expects his readers to. The 'mature' discourse on fertility is not clearly elevated above the more 'adolescent'

⁹² See *ibid.* 28–30. In a paper given to the Obstetrics Section of the Royal Academy of Medicine in Ireland in 1902, Horne emerged as a modern advocate of the Caesarian section.

⁹³ See Ó Grada and Duffy, *Fertility Control*, 1–7; *idem.*, 'The Fertility Transition in Ireland and Scotland c.1880–1930', in Connolly et al. (eds.), *Conflict*, 89–102; and Ó Grada, *Ireland Before and After the Famine*, 195.

⁹⁴ Eversley, *Social Theories*, 11.
⁹⁵ See e.g. Stanley Sultan, *The Argument of 'Ulysses'* (Columbus, Oh.: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 286–7; Richard Ellmann, 'Ulysses' on the Liffey (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 133–40; and David Hayman, 'Ulysses': *The Mechanics of Meaning* (new edn., rev. and expanded, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 30, 74.

emphasis on sex and contraception. But then what are we to make of the fact that two themes apparently so contradictory are both present in the chapter? If Joyce's young, Catholic Irishmen are modern and democratic in spirit, this is partly reflected in their 'inverecundity', their frank and carefree disparagement of solemn authority. Their targets are largely connected with Church, State, and the more privileged classes. One obvious example would be the clever, satirical, joint account of Irish colonial history (14. 580-650). Some of the narrators reproach the young men as 'votaries of levity' (14. 900-1) or members of 'a generation of unfledged profligates' (14. 932-3). But the prim and pompous voices in question are English and Anglo-Irish, and Joyce is clearly underscoring a conflict of cultures.

It is thus no accident that the young men in 'Oxen' are carousing together at the same time that a (presumably largely Anglo-Irish and more sober) group of young revivalists is congregating at George Moore's (14. 779-80; cf. 9. 273-4). Nor is it an accident that Stephen has ended up with the group in Holles Street (or that Mulligan shuttles from one to the other). Stephen was snubbed by the revivalists. But the students recognize him as *their* 'bard', if teasingly and light-heartedly ('All desire to see you bring forth the work you meditate. . . I heartily wish you may not fail them', 14. 1120-2). In Joyce's terms, it is the young men at Holles Street rather than those at Moore's who represent new, modern forces and new possibilities in Irish culture. Joyce knew very well that the Ireland represented by the traditions of Gaelic medicine was properly dead. He also knew that the traditional Anglo-Irish domination of the medical profession was under siege. Thus if 'Oxen' expands the traditional Irish fertility trope and the discourses of an Irish political economy, it combines that practice with an emphasis that runs radically counter to both. A fertile Ireland was both a literal desideratum and a metaphor for political renewal. Joyce presents us with a group of young men who do indeed belong to a more hopeful future imaginable in terms of national regeneration. But they themselves are wholly unserious about fertility both literal and metaphorical. They are nationalists without being either grandiose or solemn in their nationalism. Here as elsewhere in *Ulysses*, Joyce suggests that Irish traditions be enlarged to include their self-betrays, their will to self-sabotage. He interrogates any inclination to reverence. 'Oxen' maintains a degree of respect for certain Irish traditions. But it is also 'inverecund', and willing to 'traduce' them (14. 25). It even suggests that the usable tradition is that of irreverence.

To Flout and Witwanton

In fact, 'Oxen' is an outsize Irish bull. More particularly, however, it is 'an Irish bull in an English chinashop' (14. 581). It is far less concerned to traduce Irish than English traditions. In effect, Joyce 'writes back' at the stranger and his culture. 'Writing back' is the most conspicuous practice in the chapter. It is also the dominant one, subsuming and focusing the practices that I have described so far. Joyce 'writes back' in different modes. Some passages in 'Oxen' read like parodies of the records of meetings of the Anglo-Irish-dominated Obstetrical Society of Dublin.⁹⁶ The chapter contains jokes at the expense of particular Anglo-Irish medical figures, notably Purefoy. Joyce gave the name of a well-known and distinguished Anglo-Irish Dublin gynaecologist, ex-master of the Rotunda and posh friend of Gogarty's father, to a prolific but doddering head of a large and impoverished family who goes 'dapping' for fish 'off Bullock harbour' (14. 519-20) and is urged to suckle himself at his wife's breasts (14. 1433-4).⁹⁷ 'Oxen' also satirizes the magnanimous, philanthropic discourses about the health of the poor on which Arthur Griffith was pouring nationalist scorn during the first decade of the century.⁹⁸ It equally mocks the speciousness, pomposity, and evasiveness of mid- and late nineteenth-century discourses on the Famine. These often drew a veil of language over appalling facts, and figures like Corrigan complained bitterly about them (14. 33-49).⁹⁹

Joyce also 'writes back' at the discourses of English political economy. Take two literary examples, his reworkings of Carlyle and Arnold. For Joyce, one of the chief points of transmission of English economic doctrine was undoubtedly the 'soft Malthusianism' in *Culture and Anarchy*, a book he owned. Arnold puts forward a Malthusian argument against liberals and free-traders who have suggested that an increase in population is a sign of social and economic

⁹⁶ Cf. e.g. the Dublin sections of *Obstetrical Journal*, vols. 7 and 8 (Apr. 1879-Dec. 1880).

⁹⁷ On Richard Dancer Purefoy, see Peter Costello, 'James Joyce, *Ulysses* and the National Maternity Hospital', in Farman, *Holles Street*, 208-16, at 213. On the relationship between Purefoy and the Gogartys, see J. B. Lyons, *James Joyce and Medicine* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1973), 52.

⁹⁸ Griffith satirized the campaign against tuberculosis mounted by do-gooders like the Countess of Aberdeen, e.g. See Daly, *Dublin*, 267.

⁹⁹ See D. J. Corrigan, *On Famine and Fever as Cause and Effect in Ireland* (Dublin: J. Fannin & Co., 1846), 23-5.

health: 'the enlarged conception of what is included in subsistence does not operate to prevent the bringing into the world of numbers of people who but just attain to the barest necessities of life or who even fail to attain them'.¹⁰⁰ Joyce parodies this passage in his evocation of an Irish tradition according to which care was provided not solely 'for the copiously opulent' mother 'but also for her who not being sufficiently moneyed scarcely and often not even scarcely could subsist' (14. 47-9). In general, 'Oxen's' emphases are strikingly anti-Arnoldian. Arnold argues that the 'increase of population . . . must not be mechanically pursued' like a 'fetish'.¹⁰¹ 'Oxen' playfully pursues it as such. Arnold asserts that a growing population is no 'absolute proof of national prosperity'.¹⁰² Joyce reverses the argument. Arnold suggests that one 'ought not to call the State well-managed and prosperous merely because its manufactures and its citizens multiply'.¹⁰³ 'Oxen' proposes something close to the opposite view.

Most importantly, however, Joyce turns Arnold's own language against him. As repeatedly elsewhere, he revels in twisting an English discourse to his own ends. In effect, he injects it with an auto-destructive principle. His treatment of Carlyle is another example of this. Carlyle was genuinely and bleakly horrified at what he saw of the Famine. But his attitudes to Irish Catholics were not uplifting. He loathed O'Connell, saw Catholicism as 'a religion of sloth and mediaeval corruption, and the Irish [as] a race of inferior Celts'.¹⁰⁴ Carlyle's views on Ireland were always staunchly Unionist, and his solution for the Famine was emigration. By contrast, Joyce's 'Carlyle' is a rumbustious figure who cheerily dismisses 'Malthusians' (14. 1415) and argues that one should drink one's 'udderful' of 'Mother's milk' (14. 1433). The 'Carlyle parody' (14. 1407-39) is both remote in tone from the oracular *gravitas* so common in the work of the Victorian sage, and produces an argument directly opposed to his.

But the discourses most at issue in 'Oxen' are those implicated in the chapter's styles. Scholars and critics have long been aware of two principal sources for them, William Peacock's anthology *English*

¹⁰⁰ Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 125.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* 131. ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ See Fred Kaplan, *Thomas Carlyle: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 339, 343.

Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin and George Saintsbury's *A History of English Prose Rhythm*.¹⁰⁵ Janusko added Annie Barnett and Lucy Dale's *An Anthology of English Prose* and A. F. Murison's *Selections from the Best English Authors*.¹⁰⁶ H. A. Treble's *English Prose* and John Dover Wilson's *Life in Shakespeare's England: A Book of Elizabethan Prose* should also be included.¹⁰⁷ However largely Joyce borrows from original texts, the anthologies are the mainstay of the chapter. But do the styles really engage with the history per se of English literature or English prose, as has often been supposed, in the past?¹⁰⁸ Joyce's main concerns are surely more precisely focused. The tradition of English literature is less important for understanding 'Oxen' than a knowledge of the politics of the anthology itself in the period 1880-1920. Indeed, 'Oxen' is itself constructed like an anthology, though an anthology that turns out to be an anti-anthology, after all.

As I said in my introduction, in the period 1880-1920, English academics, critics, novelists and poets, men and women of letters, publishers, even politicians and parliamentarians¹⁰⁹ engaged in a range of activities intended to foster and promote the national literary culture. The market was flooded with series and cheap editions of classics and English literature handbooks: primers, anthologies, histories, textbooks, guides. Some individuals, like Saintsbury and Treble, virtually became solo industries. Publishers like Macmillan

¹⁰⁵ W. Peacock (ed.), *English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin* (London: Grant Richards, 1903; 4th imp., London: Oxford University Press, 1912). The two editions have the same pagination. George Saintsbury, *A History of English Prose Rhythm* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1912). Strictly speaking, Saintsbury's book is less an anthology than a primer.

¹⁰⁶ Annie Barnett and Lucy Dale (eds.), *An Anthology of English Prose (1332 to 1740)*, pref. by Andrew Lang (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912); and A. F. Murison (ed.), *Selections from the Best English Authors (Beowulf to the Present Time)* (London: W. & R. Chambers, 1907). See Robert Janusko, 'Another Anthology for "Oxen": Barnett and Dale', *James Joyce Quarterly*, 27/2 (Winter 1990), 257-81; and 'Yet Another Anthology for "Oxen": Murison's Selections', *Joyce Studies Annual*, 1 (1990), 117-31.

¹⁰⁷ H. A. Treble (ed.), *English Prose: Narrative, Descriptive and Dramatic* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917); and J. Dover Wilson, *Life in Shakespeare's England: A Book of Elizabethan Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911). Joyce bought Treble's book in 1919, not long before starting 'Oxen'. Dover Wilson's book contains a glossary which Joyce used for both 'Scylla and Charybdis' and 'Oxen'.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Spoo's is the most convincing of such arguments: 'Oxen' qualifies and ironizes 'the voices of the fathers, subtly eroding the historicoliterary progression'. See *James Joyce*, 148.

¹⁰⁹ I am thinking, e.g., of the extent to which men like Acland, Asquith, and Balfour shared the presidency of the English Association with men and women of letters.

and Oxford University Press grew keenly aware of the imperial market, and many of their books—including anthologies—went rapidly into colonial circulation, not least, in Ireland.¹¹⁰ If the colonies were a key market for the anthology, schools were another. The publications of the English Association between 1907 and 1922 that are specifically concerned with schools, libraries, and the teaching of English frequently recommend anthologies and primers.¹¹¹ Saintsbury and Peacock were among the most familiar names.¹¹² Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson suggest that anthologies served as 'the barometers of the contemporary taste and judgement which worked to forge the English literary tradition'.¹¹³ But Quantrill goes further, arguing that the anthology was 'one of the principal instruments' by which national identity was increasingly invested in the literary tradition.¹¹⁴ In an age that sees a rapid extension of the educational franchise and a rapidly expanding mass readership, the anthology became a crucial point of transmission of the national literary tradition to a newly literate public. Indeed, it was doubly useful in promoting national unity, since it both presented a seemingly homogeneous tradition and was aimed at readers of diverse backgrounds and beliefs. Palgrave himself had been animated by the desire to produce a 'true national Anthology'.¹¹⁵ Indeed, this kind of project seemed to have the sanction of no less a figure than Arnold himself.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ On the relevant development in policy at Macmillan's and Oxford University Press, see Esther Quantrill, 'Anthological Politics: Poetry and British Culture 1860–1914' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1995), 215. My discussion of anthologies is indebted to this singularly brilliant piece of work.

¹¹¹ The use of anthologies in schools was in fact a much-debated issue, but the very heat of the debates is an indication of how important they had become. See *ibid.* 39. See also J.H. Fowler, 'De Quincey as Literary Critic', *English Association Pamphlet*, 52 (July 1922), 3.

¹¹² Other names and titles familiar to Joyce scholars also recur in the publications of the English Association: Saintsbury, Lee, Dowden, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, and Butcher and Lang, who were seen as furnishing the British schoolboy with his authorized version of Homer.

¹¹³ 'A Literature for England', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 116–63, at 120–1.

¹¹⁴ 'Anthological Politics', p. xviii. Quantrill actually specifies the poetry anthology, but her argument holds good for other kinds of anthology and their cultural function.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, p. ix. Interestingly, Palgrave initially developed his project in reaction to an anthology compiled by an Irish poet, William Allingham's *Nightingale Valley* (1859).

¹¹⁶ Quantrill points out that Arnold's important and influential 'The Study of Poetry' was initially published as the introductory essay to Humphry Ward's hugely successful anthology *The English Poets* (1880). See *ibid.*

Prose anthologies were as much in demand as anthologies of poetry. But prose *fiction* was not particularly important. This is clear from 'Oxen' itself. Chris Baldick argues that 'generic inclusiveness' was 'by far the most important feature' of the canon in the period before 1918.¹¹⁷ Both anthologies and literature syllabuses included 'historical', 'imaginative', 'descriptive', and 'biographical' along with fictional prose. Non-fictional prose was a clearer and more efficient if less subtle vehicle for the transmission of ideology. The ideological formation of English cultural nationalism was pervasively evident in the anthologies Joyce used, if with marked variations and in more or less compact or diffuse form. Joyce could hardly have opened John Dover Wilson's *Life in Shakespeare's England*, for example, with its opening section on 'England and the English' and its section on 'Colonization', its selections with titles like 'Hakluyt Extols England's Greatness at Sea', without directly and immediately confronting the formation in question. The same is true of Barnett and Dale's anthology, which includes Froissart's account of the Black Prince taking Limoges; Raleigh on the exploration, conquest, and defence of Guiana; and, most importantly, Spenser's attack on the Irish bards and recommendations for the government of Ireland. But the most blatantly ideological of the prose anthologies Joyce owned was actually Peacock's, the one to which he most frequently resorted. Peacock selected Malory's Arthur defying Rience, king of Ireland, and declaring his determination to humble him. He selected Raleigh's chillingly patriotic account of Sir Richard Grenville's last fight on the *Revenge*. He chose Hakluyt's account of Martin Frobisher's second voyage to America, in which Frobisher and his men scare the wits out of the Orkney islanders, sail on to do battle with American natives, discover riches in the American mountains, and take 'possession' of the country in the name of God and Queen.¹¹⁸ He chose Burke on 'the Nature of England's hold of Her Colonies' as 'promoting the wealth, the number, the happiness of the human race'.¹¹⁹ He included Kingsley's young boy listening to tales of colonial adventure ('as the Spaniards are the masters of the Indians, we're the masters of the Spaniards').¹²⁰ Again and again, Peacock's selections turn out to be nationalistic, militaristic, enthusiastically

¹¹⁷ *Criticism and Literary Theory: 1890 to the Present* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 57.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* 236.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 368.

¹¹⁹ Peacock (ed.), *English Prose*, 48.

royalist, class-based, and anti-democratic. Above all, they are patently selections from the literature of a great imperial nation, the major moments of whose literary history Peacock conceives of as expressions of imperial power.

It is inconceivable that Joyce should not have recognized this aspect of Peacock's anthology. On occasions, he even reworks Peacock's material in a manner that suggests that he was well aware of its implications. He transplants phrases, for example, from Raleigh's account of the embattled *Revenge* to an apparently Swiftian and therefore strictly inappropriate passage in 'Oxen'.¹²¹ In the passage in question (14. 639–46), Stephen presents an imaginative version of Irishmen emigrating to America, not only as a result of English intervention in Ireland, but in the same historical period as Grenville's last stand. In small part, then, Joyce's treatment of the anthologies involved a practice of recontextualization. But this is a complex matter: the anthologies Joyce used were not always politically close to one another. Set Murison alongside Peacock and it is clear enough that the professor from University College, London is a considerably more liberal anthologist than the civil servant from the Home Office. Murison chooses an extract from More's *Utopia* on the Utopians' contempt for gold. He also selects one from Bishop Latimer's *First Sermon before Edward VI* to which he gives the title 'Better Days for the Humbler Classes'. It suggests that the rich have too much property. There was a 'soft' as there was a 'hard' anthological politics during the period.¹²²

But it is doubtful whether Joyce was much interested in such distinctions.¹²³ What he surely understood was the cultural politics represented by the contemporary prose anthology as genre. This is the crucial defining context for the styles in 'Oxen', and Joyce responds to it with a number of different literary (and political) strategies. On the one hand, there is straightforward mockery, as, for example, in the Macaulay 'parody' (14. 1198–1222). Its point of reference is a

¹²¹ See Janusko, *Sources and Structures*, 110.

¹²² In this respect, Joyce had two interesting books on his shelves: Edgar R. Jones, *Selected English Speeches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913) and Sidney Lee, *Great Englishmen of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1907). Both attempt to balance a liberal agenda with the familiar nationalistic one.

¹²³ He told Jacques Mercanton, however, that the Newman 'parody' was distinct from the others. See Jacques Mercanton, 'The Hours of James Joyce', in Willard Potts (ed.), *Portraits of the Artist in Exile: Recollections of James Joyce by Europeans* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1979), 206–52, at 217.

passage from Macaulay's essay *Warren Hastings*. The essay, and indeed the passage in question, was a *locus classicus* for late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthologists. As so often with the anthologies, this was a question of content as well as style. The whole point about Hastings's trial was the occasion. Joyce probably found the passage in Saintsbury, together with Saintsbury's analysis of it. He may well have noticed it in Treble's anthology, which provides a longer excerpt, and consulted his copy of Macaulay's *Critical and Historical Essays*, which contained the essay in full.¹²⁴ At any rate, there are elements in Joyce's 'parody' that can only be fully explained if we assume that he read beyond the point at which Saintsbury stops. Both Saintsbury and Treble begin with Macaulay's evocation of 'the great hall of William Rufus' in which the trial took place.¹²⁵ The passage then moves on to an account of those who attended the trial, followed—in Treble—by an account of Hastings himself and his advocates and accusers. The passage is an act of homage to a glorious ruling class: royalty, the aristocracy, the judiciary, military leaders, 'great dignitaries', the members of Macaulay's 'brilliant society' in all its splendour.¹²⁶ But those who pay the Empire tribute or acknowledge its sway are almost as important:

There were gathered together, from all parts of a great, free, enlightened, and prosperous empire, grace and female loveliness, wit and learning, the representatives of every science and every art. . . . There the Ambassadors of great Kings and Commonwealths gazed with admiration on a spectacle which no other country in the world could present.¹²⁷

In fact, the passage as a whole is a classic hymn of praise to the pillars of the English imperium as it moves towards the zenith of its power. Furthermore, it is an account of a great empire affirming its probity and the morality of the imperial project not only in trying one of its most distinguished servants for corruption, but in transforming the occasion into a peculiarly solemn and awesome ritual. Hugh Kenner suggested that, stylistically, the 'parody' was actually constructed on quite unMacaulayesque principles.¹²⁸ But this is not what matters

¹²⁴ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1874), 602–67. Michael Gillespie suggests that Treble's anthology is 'a strong candidate for the origin of the Macaulay parody'. See *Inverted Volumes Improperly Arranged: James Joyce and his Trieste Library* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 85–6.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* 367–8.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 368.

¹²⁸ Treble (ed.), *English Prose*, 367.

¹²⁹ *Joyce's Voices* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978), 106–8.

most. Joyce retains enough of the structure and style of the relevant passage to indicate the exact provenance of his 'parody'. He mimics Macaulay's introduction to the debate, his evocation of the solemn grandeur of the scene, and his account of those who are to speak:

The debate which ensued was in its scope and progress an epitome of the course of life. Neither place nor council was lacking in dignity. The debaters were the keenest in the land, the theme they were engaged on the loftiest and most vital. The high hall of Horne's house had never beheld an assembly so representative and so varied nor had the old rafters of that establishment ever listened to a language so encyclopaedic. A gallant scene in truth it made. Crotthers was there . . . (14. 1198-1204)

It is the one *occasion* that is a parody of the other. The spirit of the 'impudent mocks' indulged in by Joyce's 'young sparks' (14. 846-8) is reproduced and extended in the passage, in that they themselves are made to function as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Macaulay's array of English grandees.

But Kenner is also right. As far as *style* is concerned, Joyce's passage hardly seems to qualify as 'parody' at all. It seems wilfully to eschew the possibility of expert parody offered, not least, by Saintsbury's detailed attention to the mechanisms of Macaulay's prose. Something else is going on here, apart from mockery. The more relevant term is arguably treachery. What Joyce does, in effect, is to establish his passage in a relationship of correspondence to (and therefore dependence on) the English writer, and then work his way towards a freedom from it. He refuses the subservience of parody, its residual structure of fidelity to the master text: fidelity, in this instance, to Macaulay's grandiose rhetoric and his stately periods. Yet the tie of the betrayer to the object of his betrayal remains. The movement towards freedom is uncompleted. This, in miniature, is Joyce's response to those of his nationalist contemporaries who argued for a radical separation of Irish from English culture. The radical break from established forms risks a replication of their cardinal features in the very posture of diametric opposition. This is the case throughout the chapter. Joyce is less concerned with parody or pastiche than with a strategy of adulteration.

David Lloyd has written brilliantly of the importance of the concept of adulteration to an understanding of Joyce. In Lloyd's terms, nationalism is intent on a singular, unitary, national identity. It wishes to transcend antagonisms, contradictions, social differences,

cultural hybridity. By contrast, *Ulysses* insists on them. It is the citizen who wants purity. 'Cyclops' dramatizes the reality of adulteration as the condition of colonial Ireland at every level.¹²⁹ But Lloyd neglects the Joyce who understands the citizen but seeks to move beyond the limits of his political imagination. Joyce's conviction of the 'ignobility' of the forces against which he is ranged is incalculably more intense than his creature's.¹³⁰ Where the citizen wants to insist on cleansing Irish culture of the effects of adulteration, Joyce sees such a project as unambitious. He seeks actively to reverse the colonial vector of cultural power, to put the process of adulteration into reverse. In other words, he is intent on cultural retribution, on style as revenge. But he also practises retribution with a nonchalant ease and gaiety which establishes itself in contradistinction to the citizen's posture of ferocious antagonism. For Joyce, that posture is finally too cowed. The monument is firmly 'lodged' in place (2. 50). It is not simply to be blown up or done away with. The revenge of the disempowered is defacement, a graffiti-work which, if carried out with sufficient ardour and determination, develops a different, rival splendour of its own.

Much of Joyce's practice in 'Oxen' is actually an 'Irishisation' of things English, to adopt Hyde's term, the invasion of the invader's preserve.¹³¹ This is a predictable effect of the relationship between English styles and Irish subject matter. The styles are repeatedly adulterated and distorted by Irish voices, Hiberno-English, Irish wit: Lenehan's quip about Mrs Purefoy 'expecting each moment to be her next', for example, serves as a conspicuous interruption of the Malory parody (14. 178). But English literature is also betrayed in its historical dimension: anachronism is one of Joyce's principal strategies. J. S. Atherton rightly pointed to a deliberate 'confusion of [historical] margins' in the episode.¹³² Material from some of Joyce's sources constantly appears in his imitations of others. He copied the

¹²⁹ Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), *passim*, esp. 105-7.

¹³⁰ For Joyce on Ireland's 'belief in the incurable ignobility of the forces that have overcome her', see CW, 105.

¹³¹ For Hyde's concept of 'Irishisation', see 'The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland', in Sir Charles Gavan Duffy et al., *The Revival of Irish Literature* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1894), 115-61, at 135.

¹³² 'The Oxen of the Sun', in Clive Hart and David Hayman (eds.), *James Joyce's 'Ulysses': Critical Essays* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 323-39, at 323.

word 'relentment' out of Browne's *Hydrotaphia* into his notesheets, for instance.¹³³ But he used it in what is commonly referred to as the Gibbon parody (14. 968). Sterne's phrase 'a cap-full of wind' is apparently the source of Joyce's phrase 'a capful of light odes',¹³⁴ but occurs in his Landor passage (14. 1119). Burton's phrase 'a proper man of person' leaves its traces on the 'parody' of Steele and Addison (14. 713-14).¹³⁵ Any idea that 'Oxen' is seriously concerned with the 'organic' development of English literature and its resemblance to the development of the embryo in the womb collapses, here.¹³⁶ The chapter works as a sly corruption of the tradition as promoted by the anthology and its supposed historical shape.

Stylistically, 'Oxen' is also a gleeful celebration of ersatz. If Joyce appears to have captured the flavour of the prose of a given writer or period, that flavour is likely to turn out to be partly bogus. Joyce copied the phrase 'a world of' from Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*.¹³⁷ But his use of it actually makes it sound considerably more recherché than it does in the original (14. 756). The phrase 'approved with' in the 'parody' of the Elizabethan Chronicles sounds right. Elizabethan meanings of the verb included 'confirm', and it could be followed by the preposition 'with' if used in that sense. But even with that sense in mind, the phrase doesn't really fit into its context (14. 360). Both these details have the air of adroit but finally unconvincing fakes. An allusion to a regiment known as the Fencibles might seem plausible enough in the Steele-and-Addison passage (14. 655). But the *OED* gives the date of the first reference to that regiment as 1795. Some of Joyce's apparently archaic turns of phrase are invented. Others are adulterations of the original. In the Defoe 'parody', Joyce uses the phrase 'what belonged of women'. But the phrase he actually copied down from Defoe was 'what belonged to a woman', which sounds altogether more ordinary (14. 534).¹³⁸

Everywhere, the rule appears to be contamination: contamination, that is, of the ostensibly homogeneous with what does not belong to it, or what Karen Lawrence calls the 'strange mélange'.¹³⁹ This is the case with the many lapses into modern idiom. In Sterne's

¹³³ See Janusko, *Sources and Structures*, 133.

¹³⁵ See *ibid.* 112.

¹³⁶ For a detailed account of criticism that has taken the concept of 'the embryological framework' seriously, see *ibid.* 39-54.

¹³⁸ See *ibid.* 138.

¹³⁹ *The Odyssey of Styles in 'Ulysses'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 130.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.* 144.

¹³⁷ See *ibid.* 140.

Sentimental Journey, Yorick tells of an occasion when he 'popp'd upon Smelfungus'.¹⁴⁰ Joyce's echo—'out popped a locket'—sounds much more commonplace (14. 754). Some of the parodies are infected with the deliberate clumsiness that finds its apotheosis in 'Eumaeus'. The pretence to imitation may also yield to Joyceanisms. 'Twikindled', for example—as in 'twikindled and monstrous births' (14. 974)—may be a Joycean coinage, deriving from the word 'twikin', a variant form of the dialectal 'twokin', meaning two apples growing on the one stem.¹⁴¹ Joyce sometimes mixes material from his sources with phrases from other parts of *Ulysses*. Boylan's 'seaside girls' refrain, for instance, crops up comically in the De Quincey parody, as Stuart Gilbert first noted (14. 1107).¹⁴² So, too, Bloom's familiar preoccupation with metempsychosis surfaces hilariously in a sentence whose cadences are Johnsonian (14. 897).

Contamination in 'Oxen' is partly—and quite blatantly—contamination with the opposite. Joyce laces Junius's style, for example, with something like the style Junius most abhorred. Junius prided himself on having the style of 'a plain unlettered man'. It was free, he said, of the 'mazes of metaphorical confusion' to be found in the prose of his antagonist Sir William Draper.¹⁴³ But Joyce's parody of Junius itself lapses into something rather like 'metaphorical confusion', and Joyce actually transferred bits of Draper's letters to Junius into his Junius parody.¹⁴⁴ The Swift of *Polite Conversation* reviles abbreviations and compressions, giving 'incog.' for 'incognito' as one of his examples.¹⁴⁵ Joyce works 'Incog!' into *Ulysses* (15. 4308) and scatters similar compressions about in 'Oxen', mocking Swift's conservatism in matters of language, his distaste for improprieties and barbarisms. So, too, in his essay *On Conversation*, Cowper reprehends the use of oaths like 'Gad's bud'.¹⁴⁶ Lynch employs that very oath (14. 808). In the same vein, when Joyce includes the word 'ascendancy' in his 'parody' partly of Burke (14. 861), he spells it with a second *a*. Burke himself always preferred an *e*, as Joyce would have known from the *OED*.

¹⁴⁰ See Janusko, *Sources and Structures*, 141.

¹⁴¹ Fritz Senn objects that the word simply combines 'twi' and 'kindle'. In my reading, the word carries more suggestion of babies physically joined.

¹⁴² *James Joyce's 'Ulysses': A Study* (London: Faber & Faber, 1930), 300.

¹⁴³ Letter to Sir William Draper, Knight of the Bath, 3 Mar. 1769; Junius, *Letters*, ed. John Cannon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 51. Cf. Janusko, *Sources and Structures*, 148-9.

¹⁴⁴ See Janusko, *Sources and Structures*, 148-9.

¹⁴⁵ See *Polite Conversation*, introd. with notes and commentary by Eric Partridge (London: Andre Deutsch, 1963), 33.

¹⁴⁶ Peacock (ed.), *English Prose*, 241.

This kind of waywardness is more than mere perversity: it is an expression of deep recalcitrance, of a refusal to be *governed*. Recontextualization, mockery, treachery, adulteration, anachronism, ersatz, graffiti-work: these are some of the terms that are surely most relevant to what Joyce is doing in 'Oxen'. How aware he was of such practices is less important than the ferocious intentness that produces so many of them and so casually, some of them as incidental spin-offs, like the lapse into modern cockney at the end of a passage whose chief source is usually deemed to be Goldsmith (14. 840-4). Brian Doyle writes, again, of the widespread English fear of national 'degeneration' during the period,¹⁴⁷ Baldick of the fear of 'foreign contamination' of the national literature.¹⁴⁸ 'Oxen' is itself an exercise in 'foreign contamination'. Contamination becomes an active cultural practice, part of a cultural politics. This is not to suggest that the chapter is necessarily engaged in an active denigration of English literature. Rather, in the period that, more than any other, sees the production of the imperial English monument, 'Oxen' is committed to what I have called a practice of defacement. Yet if Joyce produces an anti-anthology, he knows that it can never altogether escape the form of the monument that is its determining condition. The logic of 'Oxen' is paradoxical, and its necessary resolution is partly laughter. Here again it functions as an Irish bull in an English chinashop. Joyce thrusts the bull back into English literature: in the reference, for example, in the Dickens 'parody', to Mrs Purefoy as the 'brave woman' who had 'manfully helped' (14. 1312-13). As a comically inconsistent proposition, the bull is a strategy for managing contradiction. We'll return to it with 'Eumaeus'. 'Oxen' is a tissue of contradictions: between history and modernity, the fertility trope and 'inverecundity', a seemingly ineradicable, dominant culture and the imperative of resistance. Critics have often described the chapter as unified, as though everything in it could in principle be fitted together. In fact, it is an extraordinary and outlandish hybrid. As such, it not only exposes colonial history and culture as themselves productive of monstrous incongruities, but also negotiates those incongruities, in a manner that Joyce intended to be exemplary.

¹⁴⁷ *English and Englishness* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 17.

¹⁴⁸ *Criticism and Literary Theory*, 59.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Strangers in My House, Bad Manners to Them!: 'Circe'¹

Ce bordel où tenons nostre état

Like 'Wandering Rocks', but unlike all the other later chapters in *Ulysses*, 'Circe' does not chiefly rework English (or Anglo-Irish) discourses that are traceable to printed texts. Fragments of a variety of the kind of discourses I've described appear in the chapter. But it is not primarily a treatment of them. For 'Circe' is a chapter of voices. In 'Circe', people speak, and the effects of colonial power are heard in what they say, and how they say it. If the chapter cannot principally be read off against a set of discourses, it nonetheless exposes the pervasiveness and complexity of the effects of colonization as much as any other chapter in *Ulysses*. It tells us a lot more than we have so far learnt about how the British have left their mark. 'Circe' turns Dublin—and the account of Dublin that has preceded it—inside out. In doing so, it insistently reveals the 'stranger' in places where we had not previously noticed him. To a large extent, this is the result of the chapter's 'hallucinatory' form, which licenses more immediate representations of the stranger's presence than might otherwise be feasible. Rumbold can actually appear (15. 1177-83). Bloom can feature as a schoolboy or in a (partly English) coronation ceremony. J. J. O'Molloy can be heard sounding oddly English in his barrister's harangue (15. 938-55).

In 'Circe', then, specific discourses are less important than a sense of the extent of the English presence in Dublin and its culture; in effect, of the colonization of the Dublin unconscious, a theme which

¹ For an extended version of this chapter, see my 'Strangers in my House, Bad Manners to Them!': England in "Circe", in Gibson (ed.), *Reading Joyce's 'Circe'* (European Joyce Studies, 3; Amsterdam and Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 1993), 179-221.