

# Ulysses

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Revised Edition

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## CHAPTER 3 Uses of Homer

At this point exposition must acknowledge certain difficulties, epitomised by the fact that for nearly fifty years *The Search for a Father* has been a recurrent phrase in *Ulysses* criticism. Sponsored by Stuart Gilbert, loosely grounded in an ironic phrase of Buck Mulligan's,<sup>1</sup> it draws apparent sanction from the Homeric parallel to which the title of *Ulysses* points. For Stephen is Telemachus, and does not Telemachus seek his father Ulysses? 'Like Stephen,' Gilbert wrote in 1930, '... Telemachus sets out from Ithaca to Pylos in quest of his father.'<sup>2</sup> Gilbert's unstated premise is that Homer tells us what Stephen is doing: a natural error of emphasis at a time when finding any way to grasp the book at all was a reader's major problem. But here as often - as, obviously, with Penelope's fidelity - the parallel is a dangerous guide to what is actually happening. We need to observe what the characters are up to before we can ask what to make of the Homeric presence.

Finding out what the characters are up to - in most novels a routine tracing of the narrative - can be unexpectedly difficult in *Ulysses*. For one thing, characters are out of sight for long periods, during which they are spending their time in ways Joyce was quite clear about. Had he written the Shakespeare plays he would have known how many children Lady Macbeth had, and their ages, and what course of study Hamlet pursued at Wittenberg. When he expects us to fill gaps he leaves clues that are barely sufficient; thus when we re-encounter Stephen (14.192) after nearly seven hours his drunken state and the amount of money we can deduce he has spent (by subtracting what he now displays - 14.286 - from what he was paid - 2.222, point to a way of filling up that time that is later confirmed by a list of pubs (15.2518) and by his still later statement that he didn't dine at all (16.1572).

For another thing, what happens in plain sight is sometimes so sparsely narrated we must piece its epiphenomena together, and is sometimes almost concealed by linguistic energies that are affirming motifs of their own. It is easy to make large mistakes, and not surprising that a bold man like Harry Blamires<sup>3</sup> has made some little ones, incident to his useful effort to supply a 260-page narrative paraphrase of the entire book. 'There's eleven of them' (14.1562) we read amid a confusion of revellers leaving a pub, and Mr Blamires, noting 'the true apostolic

number', wonders where an eleventh man came from.<sup>4</sup> But 'eleven' refers to the strokes of the closing-time clock. 'Time all. There's eleven of them. Get ye gone. Forward, woozy wobblers! Night. Night.'

And, finally, Joyce has not the melodramatist's trust in motivation, which more often than we may have been aware has served the novelist as a narrative lubricant. Popular novels – easy to write and read – are peopled with beings who each want one clear thing, and so plotted as to entangle these lines of desire. The thief wants to save his skin, the sleuth wants to catch the thief, the lady wants her jewels returned, the hero wants to impress the lady: at any juncture in however complex a weaving of these threads we need only glimpse one of these characters looking left and right in the street to divine what is happening, and narration can be episodic without confusing us. *Ulysses* contains one character, Blazes Boylan, who wants one clear thing, to bed Molly Bloom. He will succeed because he is a cardboard seducer, modelled on the swashing adulterers in the novels with which Molly occupies her time. He can even place a red carnation between his teeth (10.334) and keep it there while he saunters down Grafton Street (10.1150). So when we encounter the following scene –

The blond girl in Thornton's bedded the wicker basket with rustling fibre. Blazes Boylan handed her the bottle swathed in pink tissue paper and a small jar.

– Put these in first, will you? he said.

– Yes, sir, the blond girl said. And the fruit on top. (10.299)

– we are not bewildered for a moment: he is buying Molly an offering. Subsequently, at another reading, we may enjoy penetrating the spare 'Thornton's', expandable with the aid of *Thom's Official Directory* (1904) into 'J. Thornton, 63 Grafton St., fruiterer & florist to H.M. the King, H.E. the Lord Lieutenant, and H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, K.G., etc.', and conclude (with Professor Hart, who turned up this information<sup>5</sup>) that Boylan is treating Molly to the best. But we needn't, to follow the story.

Likewise a number of minor characters are governed whenever we chance to encounter them by desire for more drink, or for a good tip on the horse-race, or both. They vary the narrative surface and present no problem.

But, in the absence of an overarching quest after woman, drink or money, a character glimpsed in a vignette may puzzle us. Thus Corny Kelleher, whom we first encounter as an undertaker (6.92), is next displayed for half a page (10.206) in the doorway of his establishment doing nothing of import. Constable 57C pauses to pass the time of day and then imparts cryptic words: 'I seen that particular party last

evening.' The vignette ends here and we are left quite blank unless we recall a rumour about Kelleher, 'police tout' (5.14), further encoded (8.441) as 'Corny Kelleher he has Harvey Duff in his eye'. (Harvey Duff was the police informer in *The Shaughram*, a play less well known now than it was to Joyce's generation.) Once these details are correlated, Corny's intimacy with a policeman is comprehensible. More important, we can understand why several hundred pages later (15.4811) officers on the night beat greet him by name and disappear when he gives them the hint.

And so an auctorial purpose emerges. Joyce needed a way to get rid of these officers so Stephen would not be arrested for drunken assault and could be taken in charge instead by Bloom. But typically, at this moment of Kelleher's maximum usefulness to the plot, none of the careful groundwork is recalled and nothing overt reminds us of the man's leverage. We must simply watch how everyone behaves and draw on copious memory.

The 'motivated' characters in *Ulysses* – the Boylans, Bob Dorans, Lenehans, not to mention the insanely patriotic 'Citizen' – are apt to be figures of fun; 'motive', for Joyce, is comedy's simplification. The more we know of anyone the harder it is to say what he is about, he is about so many things, and the harder also to specify why he does any of them. This fact has two important consequences. Even with considerable narrative assistance the first-time reader is often unsure what exactly Leopold Bloom is doing, and the expositor finds exact summarising statements surprisingly difficult to frame.

Consider the transaction with Bloom's letter. Early in the book's fifth episode Mr Bloom furtively slips a card from the lining of his hat, feigns an elaborate carelessness, enters Westland Row post office, presents the card and receives an envelope addressed 'Henry Flower, Esq.' (5.25, 5.62). So he is receiving letters under a pseudonym. None of this is at all difficult to follow, though the narrative phrases are embedded in sharply noted revery and some five hundred words of Joyce's must be traversed with more attention than a chapter of Ian Fleming's.

What follows is characteristic. Bloom regains the street, opening the envelope without removing it from his pocket. The next words are: 'McCoy. Get rid of him quickly. Take me out of my way. Hate company when you.' Whereupon the letter drops wholly out of the text (out of Bloom's mind?), and if this is our first experience of *Ulysses* we may be forgiven if we have quite forgotten it by the time it is spread out before us nearly six pages later (5.241). Some small talk with McCoy has intervened, and some strolling, and gazing at hoardings, and a memory of how moved his father was by a performance of *Leah*; also ruminations on horses and on cabmen. . . . Is it correct to say that he is all the while in search of a secluded place to read? If he is, then why

is so evident a purpose, which would have lent narrative urgency to all those distractions, allowed to drop out of mind?

There are several answers. Looking closely, we can perceive Bloom's overriding anxiety, that no one who knows him shall see him doing anything in the least unusual: hence the attention he bestows on doing perfectly ordinary things. Thus, when he wonders if McCoy may be following him, 'Mr Bloom stood at the corner, his eyes wandering over the multicoloured hoardings. Cantrell and Cochrane's Ginger Ale (Aromatic). Clery's Summer Sale. No, he's going on straight' (5.192).

Drawing back a little, we next reflect that Bloom is putting in time before a funeral, more than an hour in which he will also order some prescription lotion, buy soap, have a bath, and get out to Sandymount. Collecting his *poste restante* letter is one of the hour's minor objectives, not to be invested with narrative tension. (The correspondence with Martha — on the whole a tepid amusement — at no time bulks large in his scheme of things.)

Taking a still longer view, we remember how this hour is placed in the day. In a state of near-nescience, Bloom is wandering almost at random, thinking of everything but the main thing he found out an hour before, that Boylan will cuckold him this afternoon. This he must not dwell on. Much of his aimlessness in the vicinity of Westland Row is referable to an interaction between the need not to think of Boylan and the desire not to be noticed himself, neither of which can be articulated intelligibly.

And we may withdraw to a farther remove, where the episode's Homeric parallel, Lotos-Eaters, appears to take charge of much of its random detail: the warmth, the directionless walk,<sup>6</sup> the gelded horses munching in their nosebags, the communicants in the church Bloom passes through, the chemist's chloroform and poppysyrup, the lemony smell of the soap, the anticipated warm bath. At this remove questions of purpose fade away, and we contemplate a pure array of narcotic elements, the narrative structure nearly unnoticeable, deeds and doers turned into a drift of symbols.

This is decorous when the Homeric theme is narcosis, but is apt to occur whatever the Homeric theme, and years of concentration on the large-scale patterns, commencing with Gilbert's Homeric emphasis of 1930, have fostered an expositor's *Ulysses* in which characters sleepwalk through a grand design laid down by the Ionian Homeridae, and very little happens save the display of eighteen successive *tableaux vivants*.

Such a design has the advantage of being easy to diagram. Joyce himself while the book was in progress would invariably describe it to strangers in Homeric terms. 'I am now writing a book based on the wanderings of *Ulysses*,' he told Frank Budgen at their second meeting (summer 1918). 'The *Odyssey*, that is to say, serves me as a ground

plan. Only my time is recent time and all my hero's wanderings take no more than eighteen hours.<sup>7</sup> It is hard to think of three sentences better contrived to turn an unwritten book into something that could be talked about. Later, if you were a critic struggling simultaneously with the queer book and with the need to describe it for readers who had not seen it, you would find the parallel more manageable than the text. Joyce, who knew the value of informed articles, prepared his famous *schemata* for just such contingencies. One went to Carlo Linati in late 1920 to help him write an article. A year later Valery Larbaud received a somewhat different one to help him prepare a lecture. It was emphasised that they were not to be shown around. In the *Ulysses* manuscripts Homeric indications were confined to the title. The eighteen chapter-headings — catch-words to identify the dominant correspondence of the moment — turn up only in letters, *schemata* and reports of Joyce's conversation. The book readers were to see would hint at a hidden plan only on its title-page: a neat instance of Joyce's trust in synecdoche.

Restored to currency by Gilbert in 1930, the episode-titles have since become so familiar we sometimes forget they are not part of the text. Their usefulness points up one of the salient peculiarities of *Ulysses*: the identity each of its eighteen episodes assumes, by contrast with the relatively anonymous chapters of normal novels. 'Episode', a word Joyce used consistently, suggests something more bounded than a chapter, and one episode apiece was assigned to eighteen critics for a volume to commemorate the book's fiftieth anniversary. One critic per episode would seem a bizarre subdivision of attention for normal fictions but it is right for *Ulysses* and would have seemed right to Joyce, who wrote to Linati: 'Each adventure is so to say one person although it is composed of persons — as Aquinas relates of the angelic hosts.'<sup>8</sup>

The episodes' differences from one another are deeply rooted in Joyce's stubborn conception and plainly manifested in the verbal textures: scan a few lines, and you know where you are in the book. 'Each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the structural scheme of the whole) should not only condition but create its own technique.'

As the word 'adventure' indicates, his first thoughts about the book were rooted in his adolescent reading of Charles Lamb's *The Story of Ulysses*, where the heading of the first chapter reads:

The Cicons. — The Fruit of the Lotos-Tree. — Polyphemous and the Cyclops. — The Kingdom of the Winds, and God Aeolus's Fatal Present. — The Laestrygonian Man-eaters.

Lamb's highly readable retelling for children disregards Homer's folding-back of time-schemes, embedding of narratives within narratives, son

seeking father, father seeking home, gods deliberating, interfering. In Lamb's version there is no son seeking a father at all. Nor are any scenes set anywhere but on earth. Lamb's concentration is wholly on Ulysses, his ordering of the incidents is chronological, and his unit of attention is the adventure.

Encountered by Joyce at twelve, this version so impressed itself on his exceptional memory that he seems to have read versions of the Greek text as though they were expansions and rearrangements of Lamb. When he planned *Ulysses* the 'adventure' was his unit, and the core of the book consists of twelve episodes in chronological order, each based on one adventure, each independently elaborated and bounded.

An episode of *Ulysses* is a space-time block of words, approximately one hour long on its time axis, and extended in Dublin space as little as a few yards ('Penelope') or up to four miles ('Hades'). It normally lingers some time in one or more enclosures - Davy Byrne's pub, an office in the National Library - and normally ends with a principal character moving on to some other place. (But the three main structural divisions all end with a *stasis*: Stephen looking back at a ship - 3.503 - Bloom standing over Stephen - 15.4955 - Molly drifting off to sleep - 18.1609. Thus the first episode of all, called 'Telemachus', opens in sunlight atop the Martello tower, shifts to a dim tower room, then conducts us down the sunlit path to the Forty-Foot Hole where Mulligan swims; as it ends we are following Stephen away.

The shifts are kaleidoscopic, and readers acquire the illusion of having travelled all over Dublin City. In fact Stephen and Bloom between them cover, by tram, by coach and on foot, nearly thirty miles in the course of Bloomsday. Like Homer, Joyce keeps his protagonists moving.

Several episodes - 'Lestrygonians', 'Cyclops', 'Eumaeus' - have a kind of sonata structure: movement along streets, an indoor lingerings, street movement again. In only two ('Proteus', 'Nausicaa') are we never indoors at all; in only one ('Penelope') never outdoors. Yet protagonists' minds are seldom constrained for long and, though Molly Bloom in the last moments of 'Penelope' lies abed near day-break, we are transported on the final page to a high outdoor sunlit place which is somehow both Gibraltar and Ben Howth, with spread out below us the kingdoms of the earth: Spain, Ireland, distant Dublin, the Irish Sea, the Mediterranean and the open Atlantic into which Dante imagined Ulysses himself to have sailed away that last time.

Blocking out movements and places, blocking out episodes, these seem to have been for Joyce concurrent processes. In the eighteen episodes of his final scheme<sup>9</sup> the Homeric titles point less to analogy of incident or character than to analogy of situation: the journey to the land of the dead, a funeral; Circe's bestial metamorphoses, delirium in a whorehouse. Then sequences had to be juggled for plausibility; since

## I TELEMACHIA

Name	Locale	Time*	Main Protagonists
1 Telemachus	The tower, Sandycove	8.00- 8.45 a.m.	Stephen, Mulligan, Haines
2 Nestor	The school, Dalkey	9.45-10.30 a.m.	Stephen, Mr Deasy
3 Proteus	Sandymount strand	11.00-11.45 a.m.	Stephen

## II ODYSSEY

4 Calypso	Chez Bloom	8.00- 8.45 a.m.	Bloom, Molly
5 Lotus-eaters	Westland Row	9.45-10.30 a.m.	Bloom
6 Hades	Cortege, Cemetery	11.00-12 noon	Bloom, mourners
7 Aeolus	Newspaper office	12.00- 1.00 p.m.	Stephen, Bloom, talkers
8 Lestrygonians	Streets, Davy Byrne's	1.00- 2.00 p.m.	Bloom
9 Scylla and Charybdis	Library	1.45- 3.00 p.m.	Stephen, librarians, Mulligan
10 Wandering Rocks	Streets	2.55- 4.00 p.m.	Everybody
11 Sirens	Ormond Bar	3.38- 4.30 p.m.	Bloom, Si Dedalus, drinkers
12 Cyclops	Barney Kiernan's pub	4.45- 5.45 p.m.	Bloom, drinkers, 'The Citizen'
13 Nausicaa	Sandymount strand	8.00- 9.00 p.m.	Gerty MacDowell, Bloom
14 Oxen of the Sun	Hospital, pub	10.00-11.00 p.m.	Bloom, Stephen, medicals
15 Circe	Brothel	11.15-12.40 p.m.	Bloom, Stephen, whores <i>et al.</i>

## III NOSTOS

16 Eumaeus	Shelter	12.40- 1.00 a.m.	Bloom, Stephen
17 Ithaca	Chez Bloom	1.00- 1.45 a.m.	Bloom, Stephen, Molly
18 Penelope	Bedroom	1.45- 2.20 a.m.	Molly

\*In Joyce's *schemata* idealised times allot each episode a round hour. This table uses the more exact times derived by Clive Hart from internal indications (*Topographical Guide*, 23-5). I end 'Ithaca' and start 'Penelope' a little earlier than he does, to give Molly some time before 2 a.m. is heard chiming (18.1232). In general Joyce packs the hours full, and Bloom has a long, fast-paced exhausting day.

funerals are morning affairs in Catholic Dublin, 'Hades' comes before 'Circe', though it was Homer's Circe who directed Odysseus to Hades.

Pondering his central analogies, Joyce devised lesser correspondences which seem to have had feuristic uses. Sometimes they helped him choose among a hundred ways of specifying some detail. Sometimes they fenced with system the mere accidents of experience: drawing continually on events from his own life but aware that what had merely happened could have happened a thousand ways, he liked interlocking reasons for the version he chose. Where on the map of Dublin to assign an address for the dead man, Paddy Dignam? Unlike many minor characters, the fictional Paddy needs an address for the funeral cortège to start from, and it needs to be near the shore so Bloom can have his glimpse (6.39) of Stephen heading from tram to strand. Now, Stephen is thereabouts because, no longer resident in the tower, he has been half-thinking of going to his mother's people, the Gouldings. Their prototypes, the Murrays, with whom Joyce stayed after *he* was evicted from the tower in September 1904, lived in Fairview near the north shore of the Liffey, and Fairview would have made a plausible address for Dignam. It's attractive to guess that Joyce pondered it; Stephen could have walked near the beach he walked on in the *Portrait*, and Bloom, when his second trip to the Dignams' brought him to the same beach, could have gazed on Gerty MacDowell ('Nausicaa') where Stephen gazed on the bird-girl.

But the four rivers of Homer's underworld entailed bringing Dignam's cortège successively across the Dodder, the Grand Canal, the Liffey, the Royal Canal; so Dignam's home had to be placed east of the Dodder, near the city's southern shore, where *Thom's* yielded a vacant house at 9 Newbridge Avenue, Sandymount (16.1249). So Joyce was spared empty compliance with what had merely happened.

This determination of a site for 'Proteus', 'Nausicaa' and the start of 'Hades' gave Stephen a shorter tram-ride from Dalkey at the cost of an unduly long funeral route for Bloom. The author had to trot Corny's horses very briskly indeed to haul dead Paddy clear across the city from Sandymount northward to Glasnevin in the time available. ('We are going the pace, I think, Martin Cunningham said. God grant he doesn't upset us on the road, Mr Power said': 6.367.)

'They are not to be thought away,' Stephen muses (2.49) of events that are done with, and readers of the achieved *Ulysses* can hardly imagine any of its major aspects being otherwise, so many details support them. Once 'Nausicaa' had been located on Sandymount strand, Joyce had Star of the Sea Church nearby for religiose counterpoint, and the Mirus Bazaar fireworks at Ballsbridge for *obligato* to Bloom's erotic provocation, and could have the cortège of 'Hades' cut north-west across the city to reverse the viceregal cavalcade's gesture in 'Wandering

Rocks', south-east across the city. This is to say that once he had made a decision he was resourceful in squeezing everything possible from it; but other values could have been squeezed from other decisions, and there was a time when none of these matters had been determined, node after node still suspended amid multiple possibilities, each freighted with implications and accidental benefits.

Here the lesser Homeric correspondences will have banished indecision, furnishing reasons for things to be so and not otherwise. With Homer's aid events were branded, fettered, 'lodged in the room of the infinite possibilities they have ousted' (2.50) — a phrase on time and history Joyce wrote early, not long after making a great many such decisions.

Sometimes we can see correspondences help him invent bits of business. A final snub for Bloom, who is snubbed so often in 'Hades'? The example of Ajax, who had lost a judgement to Ulysses and whose ghost stalked away from the hero without a word, apparently prompted the idea of letting Bloom be snubbed by someone he had once bested. So John Henry Menton was invented, and the bowling game Bloom won all those years ago by a fluke, and Menton's stiff discourtesy today when Bloom has pointed out the dinge in his hat; also the two women in Homer's account will have prompted 'Molly and Floey Dillon, linked under the lilactree, laughing' (6.1013). It stands on its own, a plausible little incident, and 'Menton: Ajax' in the table of correspondences tells us nothing save how it was probably arrived at. Not liking to have even trivia hang from just one cord, Joyce also invented (for 'Eumaeus') a parallel incident in which Bloom returned the great Parnell's hat and was thanked (16.1514).

Minor correspondences abound, most of them mocking mirrors. Odysseus kissed the soil of Ithaca; Bloom kisses Molly's rere. Melanthius' vitals were fed raw to dogs; Corley is offered a chance at a job teaching Deasy's schoolboys. And where Nestor tames horses Deasy runs a school, which in making the boys colts as well as curs would seem inconsistent were it not amply plain that Joyce rearranged his analogies *ad lib*.

In passing, as it were, from one playlet to another characters can change Homeric roles. Molly Bloom plays Calypso, also Penelope. As Calypso she is hidden beneath the bedclothes (*kaliuptein*, 'to cover up') and has for visible surrogate 'The Bath of the Nymph over the bed. Given away with the Easter number of *Photo Bits*: splendid master-piece in art colours. . . . Not unlike her with her hair down: slimmer' (4.369). When the Calypso's Isle of Episode 4 becomes the Ithaca of Episodes 17-18, Molly will be Penelope and the Nymph will pertain to the Cave of the Sea-Nymphs where Homer's Odysseus had done sacrifice a thousand times: sacrifices given Joycean infection in 'Circe', where she puts in a speaking appearance to hint at spilled seed:

## THE NYMPH:

(covers her face with her hands) What have I not seen in that chamber? What must my eyes look down on? (15.3284)

This reapportioning of roles not only looks forward to *Finnegans Wake*, but also points up a premise of *Ulysses* itself, that a relatively limited number of structures defines the acts and relationships of people. In one of the Homeric structures usurping suitors are despoiling the substance of Ithaca and laying siege to Queen Penelope's affections, so Telemachus sets off in quest of his father. In *Ulysses* Mulligan plays the usurper in Stephen's intellectual kingdom, Boylan the usurper in Bloom's marital bed. One Ithacan situation has become two Dublin ones with no personnel in common, nothing at all in common except a structure, and when Stephen/Telemachus sets out for the day it is not to seek a father but to drink like the father whose destiny he fears he will never escape. As for Bloom/Odysseus, he is not so much striving to get home as finding many reasons not to go home just yet, there being no indication when the adulterer is likely to have left. These reversals of a prototype's intention appear to concern Joyce less than the wide applicability of a prototypical pattern.

Not only are patterns repopulated in *Ulysses*; a keen eye for pattern can conflate many books. Usurpers, an absent hero, a young man in trouble: that describes *Hamlet*, too, and Stephen's discussion of the play ('Scylla and Charybdis') in equating a ghost by death with a ghost by absence (9.174) in effect equates the *Hamlet* pattern with the *Odyssey* pattern, though Stephen has no idea he is in a book called *Ulysses*, nor that he is helping its readers perceive his 'Hamlet hat' (3.390) and Hamlet-like suit of solemn black as appropriate costume for this book's Telemachus. An avenger come back 'from the dead' to rout adulterous usurpation, that is the role not only of Ulysses but of the Stone Guest in *Don Giovanni*, and when Bloom hums 'in solemn echo' the Stone Guest's recitative (8.1040) he is trying on unbeknownst the role of avenging Ulysses.

*Autre temps, autre mœurs*; Ulysses in 1904 does not rout spoilers, slaughter suitors, hang collaborationist maids. Nevertheless, the Homeric parallel is neither a reproach to his ineffectuality nor a pasticheur's exercise. If it does not magnify Bloom, as Yeats's perception of a haranguing Helen ('Was there another Troy for her to burn?')<sup>10</sup> enlarges Maud Gonne, still it lends him the enhancement of an emphasised contour. In repeating the deeds of Ulysses, Bloom's most ordinary deeds acquire definition, distinguished from countless similar Dublin deeds. When we listen in to the musings of Tom Kernan the tea salesman, we hear two pages of interior monologue (10.718-798) similar to that of Bloom the ad canvasser, but something still is lacking, several things:

for one, the defining contour of Ulysses steering past Lestrygonian perils. Kernan is just Kernan.

And as surely as Yeats thought Maud Gonne was Helen reborn we are to think that Bloom is no imitation Ulysses but Ulysses reborn. Bloom is Ulysses again. Maud could be Helen thanks to metempsychosis, a doctrine sufficiently current then in Dublin for Bloom to have an explanation ready (4.341), though the easier word 'parallax' defeats him (8.110).

- Some people believe, he said, that we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before. They call it reincarnation. That we all lived before on the earth thousands of years ago or some other planet. They say we have forgotten it. Some say they remember their past lives. (4.362)

That speech - the book's first internal clue to the meaning of its own title - doesn't ask us to accept the doctrine (which Bloom himself, in quest of an example, proceeds to muddle with 'metamorphosis'), and the doctrine won't explain Bloom unless we think it as real as we think Bloom. By adducing it Joyce gained not a rationale but (1) a hard word for Bloom to explain to Molly, (2) a chance to state early in his book the theme of previous lives, (3) a dig at the Yeatsians, whose ability to perceive Helen in a hortatory beauty didn't entail the eyes to see Ulysses in an unnoticeable commercial traveller, despite Plato's prompting in that prime metempsychotic text, the myth of Er (*Republic*, X). Fancy Yeats noticing Bloom! Yeats's and not his, Joyce implies, is the merely literary exercise.

No, Bloom and Ulysses are not identical in order that metempsychosis may be validated. They are identical in not existing save as manifestations of human creative power, products of an artistic process that is like a natural process, and that intuitively in many times comparable situations, whether in the mind of Homer of Chios or in the mind of James Augustine Joyce. Both, far from the scenes of their stories, created their heroes and re-created an epic geography, Joyce with the aid of *Thom's Official Directory*, and Homer, as Joyce read in Victor Berard, with the aid of Phoenician voyagers' *periploi*. Both were guided by the circumstances they knew (warfare, seafaring, marvels; commerce, perambulation, novelties). Both were compelled by immutable human givens: that men are born of women, espouse women, beget children, rear them, lose them; that the dead - parents, children, spouses - are buried and mourned; that fortune takes men afield; that women grow lonely; that predators gather, that distraction may turn to desire; that sons may join with fathers, or decline to join them; that outrage may bring revenge, or abstinence from revenge; that there is a home, and

that it is good to be there. If *Ulysses* resembles the *Odyssey*, that is at bottom no mystery. Joyce early perceived, in Chapter II of the *Portrait*, that even *The Count of Monte Cristo* resembled the *Odyssey*. How much more was a work not entitled to be Odyssean on which a fabulous artificer expended seven patient years?

So the large pattern. As for the lesser correspondences, many of them are trivial. Some, if we chance to know them, lend definition, some contrast. Joyce listed many, did not list many, and some that we see he may not have thought of at all. Their dubious immanence adds fun to our endless exploration of his book. Ulysses returned to Ithaca had still his strength, Bloom at age 38 has fallen from his; but when the unremarkable drooping trajectory of Bloom's urination in 'Ithaca' reminds of the implacable catechist how when a schoolboy he 'had been capable of attaining the point of greatest altitude against the whole concurrent strength of the institution, 210 scholars' (17.1195), it would be a pity not to let that heroic arc remind us of Odysseus' power manifested in his great bow.

#### NOTES

- 1 'O, shade of Kinch the elder! Japhet in search of a father' (1.561). This jest pertains to Haines's misunderstanding of the pronouns in an earlier remark of Mulligan's about Stephen's theory of *Hamlet*. *Japhet in Search of a Father* was an 1835 novel by Frederick Marryat. Though the allusion seems reconditie now, we are to imagine that this was a boy's book for Mulligan. Many Marryat titles abounded in cheap reprint as late as the 1930s.
- 2 Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's 'Ulysses'* (New York, 1931), 87.
- 3 Harry Blamires, *The Bloomsday Book* (London, 1966).
- 4 *ibid.*, 165.
- 5 Hart and Knuth, 70.
- 6 Hart and Knuth (25-6) show that traced on the map Bloom's meanderings in this episode delineate two large question marks.
- 7 Budgen, 15.
- 8 *Letters*, I, 147.
- 9 We are naively surprised to learn that so firm a book was ever subject to uncertainty. But in mid-1915 (*Selected Letters*, 209) he envisaged 22 episodes, grouped 4-15-3; in May 1918 (*Letters*, I, 113) he told Harriet Weaver there would be 17, grouped 3-11-3; by 1920 (*Letters*, I, 145) he had settled on the present 3-12-3 grouping. So one episode was not even envisaged until after May 1918. Michael Groden, '*Ulysses* in Progress' (Princeton, NJ, 1977), 33, is surely correct in surmising that this was 'Wandering Rocks', which not only marks a pause in the action but corresponds to no adventure of Ulysses. It was drafted in the spring of 1919.
- 10 W. B. Yeats, 'No Second Troy', *Collected Poems* (London, 1952), 101.

#### CHAPTER 4

## Immediate Experience

Some things were clear to Joyce extremely early. At 22 he wrote to his brother 'Damned stupid', after reading 'The Wild Goose' in George Moore's *Untilled Field*. 'A lady who has been living for three years on the line between Bray and Dublin is told by her husband that there is a meeting in Dublin at which he must be present. She looks up the table to see the hours of the trains. This on [the Dublin, Wicklow & Wexford Railway] where the trains go regularly; this after three years. Isn't it rather stupid of Moore.'<sup>1</sup>

Moore, who didn't live on the DW & WR, would have had to look up that train, but he should have reflected that his character wouldn't have. *The writer should be alert to what his characters would know.*

There is a corollary, less obvious. Characters in fiction are frequently made to stir up knowledge they'd have left tranquil, or exchange remarks they'd not have uttered, for the sake of imparting some fact to the reader. By Joyce's principle this is disallowed. It warps the characters. Indeed, with exceptions to be carefully deliberated, *the reader should not be told what no one present would think worth an act of attention.*

So 'descriptive' details will not define a neutral 'setting': they will alert us to what someone present did, noticed, thought important. From *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*:

In a few moments he was barefoot, his stockings folded in his pockets and his canvas shoes dangling by their knotted laces over his shoulders: and, picking a pointed saltrean stick out of the jetsam among the rocks, he clambered down the slope of the breakwater. (170)

Where his stockings are, where his shoes are and how they are secured, these are matters to which Stephen has just been paying attention so they come to our attention likewise. We are not told the colour of his trousers because, within the scope of the present narrative, that detail hasn't mattered, to him. (But in *Ulysses* it does matter, and when Stephen rejects Mulligan's offer of grey trousers (1.120) it is because he is choosing to wear only black, in mourning and also in emulation of mourning Hamlet.)

From *Ulysses*, Bloom's first morning walk: