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**Questions Suspended and Vital:
Criticism and Joyce's Catechism in "Ithaca"**

No constant reader of *Ulysses* passes casually over "Ithaca," as the bibliography amply reveals. The distinctive style of the chapter aside, it is the arrival home after the wandering. By Joyce's own testimony the final section of the plot,¹ "Ithaca" was the last section worked on, "Penelope" having been finished before it. As such, this chapter confronts us with the two major questions of the Homeric parallel: (1) does Bloom-Odysseus enter into a significant Father/Son relationship with Stephen-Telemachus; and (2) does Bloom-Odysseus reclaim his bed and domain, of which he has lost practical control during his wanderings? The two points are crucial to a significant continuation of myth in Joyce's work, and it is not surprising that earlier critics fluttered around them obsessively. However, they should be considered within the framework of a third question that is equally crucial to Joyce's novel—that is, the appropriateness of the form used for this chapter, and particularly the appropriateness of it for these two questions.

The question of the Bloom/Stephen relationship as climaxing in "Ithaca" has been controversial since Joyce's novel first appeared; his cooperation with Stuart Gilbert in establishing parallels, along with his letters to Frank Budgen and others, served only to validate the question rather than to answer it. Gilbert, himself, writing over a half century ago, concluded that for Stephen "Even the meeting with Bloom is, for him, no release from his hopeless quest . . . Stephen's attitude is really one of despair; he has not lost a father, like Telemachus, but he can never find one."² Critics since have agreed, agreed in part, or firmly disagreed in almost equal numbers; the question seems as open today as when the book was written. Open, but not necessarily active; in fact, in recent criticism the question seems almost to have been suspended, laid aside, in what appears to be critical impatience with explicit narrative meaning in *Ulysses*.

Paul Schiffer, for example, writing recently on "Fictional Closure and the End of Ulysses," suggests that a specific fictional result is a matter of no great importance. While Bloom and Stephen "may not be interested in creating a lasting relationship with each other yet," he says, "the meaningfulness of their encounter has been so well established prior to Ithaca that the reader is able to regard the actualities of their relationship with a wise eye."³ "The wise eye" is an obvious out, suggesting an attitude rather than a conclusive thought. He goes on to make an extended case for the structure of the novel as conveying no definite point but, rather, an over-all condition of being as meaning. Admittedly, it is an interesting and persuasive argument, and Schiffer draws from Joyce himself as well as from contemporary academic thinking in seeing the validity of the literary work as occurring when it is fulfilled in its nature, that is, possessing a completed wholeness or integrity as the achieved condition of art. As for action and inter-relationship:

... the meaning of *Ulysses* is not immediately apparent on the simple narrative level: the reader is left without a definite narrative resolution and the "plot" such as it is, is only one aspect of a very complex presentation.⁴

Schiffer sees *Ulysses* itself as a work the perception of which is "epiphanic," although to make this central, he has to take the traditional aesthetic of Joyce and switch the development of it to place "awareness" at the end: "awareness, that is, not only of the wider dimensions of the narrative but of the guiding sensibility of the novel." (288) (Awareness, of course, is not a self-justifying end, as is Joyce's "claritas" or *radiance*.)

There is certainly some truth in all of this; but like most such tangled truth, it is mischievous. The dismissal or relegation of narrative meaning to a secondary role is often a dismissal of meaning as such, for finally the parts are not synonymous with the whole. While the processes of life, the "becoming," may suggest the moment-by-moment value that life ought to cherish, art is not the same as life. It is artificial in that it is a much more directed structure than natural life; its elements are revelatory of technique more than integrity. Paradoxically but inevitably, our loss of interest in a specific meaning results in a loitering among the parts, a fascination with pieces that become illusory miniatures of meaning themselves; we become lotus-eaters rather than epic voyagers. What, as critics, we frequently have in such a case is a de-stabilization of form, a dissolution of the text as a meaningful whole in the interest of retrieving it as a multiform essence,

as, somehow, a qualitative whole. It is a bad choice and scarcely a necessary one.

Not surprisingly, Joyce has been particularly subject to the dissolution of the text as a narrative whole by critics. Anyone who has attended a Joyce symposium in recent years is certainly aware of the independent growth of the separate cells of his work; there is an almost carcinogenic nature to the way in which images, phrases, even sounds have established an autonomous validity in our attention. Given the richness of Joyce's technical conception, it is futile to oppose such intellectual expeditions. However, it is vital to remember that consolidation is periodically necessary towards a larger end, that with whatever changes of understanding have occurred, we must return to narrative structure and meaning for reassessment. For Joyce or any other artist, the dissolution of the narrative text is effective only for limited periods and towards limited ends; if there is any value to the analysis of the parts, that value must regularly be subsumed within the larger whole. Whatever fascination lies in the discovery and manipulation of Joycean verbal echoes and words that are "self-righting" (to borrow a particularly ingenious term recently coined and defined by Fritz Senn⁵), the fiction of *Ulysses* means story, and the parts invariably are valid by their relationship to that story. Of course, in art, an answer, even a persuasive answer, is not final. The skeptical mind thus may confuse meaning and answer, and take any number of short ways out. Yet, the narrative whole represents an element of cogency that partial concerns always lack. And even Schiffer points out that "Ithaca" remains, as it was in the beginning, "the climactic moment in the narrative."

Richard Kain, some six or seven years ago, surveyed the various critical responses to the Stephen/Bloom relationship as a Telemachus/Odysseus meeting, concluding that while there has been extensive discussion, the significance remains ambiguous—an attitude that he himself subscribed to in his own last paragraph.⁶ The earliest view—that of Gilbert, Budgen, Harry Levin and Hugh Kenner—emphasizes the "tragic abyss" between Stephen and Bloom; labeling it "The Isolation Theory," Kain details the differences between Stephen and Bloom that seem to be too great to allow for any real understanding to occur. On the other hand, William York Tindall, described as "the most eloquent and persistent advocate" of the view that "the meeting is a fulfillment of Stephen's 'unconscious quest' " to discover mankind, developed a complex and plausible argument to support his belief. While gaining some adherents, Tindall provoked negative reaction in such readers as S. L. Goldberg and Darcy O'Brien,⁷ whose counter-arguments, however, are apt to be more in the way of personal skepti-

cism of Tindall's interpretations than refutations from the text. A case in point is the micturation ritual shared by Stephen and Bloom, which Tindall sees as highly significant, while O'Brien scoffs that "The two characters here acknowledge nothing more than the fullness of their bladders"8 Refreshing common sense, perhaps, but it begs the question of formal relationships that exist in any part of a work of art, if not in life. Kain's own choice of a middle ground is justified on what he, curiously, calls the possibility that "Joyce, like the author of *Hamlet*, achieved an artistically viable ambiguity, consciously or not, and that both works derive an ever constant imaginative energy from this inherent tension" (p. 151). While any sensitive reader is sympathetic to the necessary nature of ambiguity in literature, Kain somewhat misconceives its nature, in this case. *Ambiguity* does not really mean the indefiniteness of plot action, which he is very close to suggesting as true of the Bloom/Stephen relationship; it is tied, rather, to the moral and personal determinants of what generally is a clearly seen series of actions and relationships; it is what gives those actions continuing life. (While it is true, for instance, that Hamlet has an ambiguous feeling towards Gertrude, it is not indefinite in its composition and in its development.) However, Kain is quite right in pointing out Joyce's own coyness when it came to confirming specific parallels; that Joyce was conscious of challenging the reader is confirmed by multiple references in the letters and elsewhere.

In summary, Kain identifies the following theories regarding a father/son resolution, "those of Isolation, of Creativity, of Deliberate Ambiguity, the *Concept* that Ulysses is about the writing of *Ulysses*, and the Classical Temper Theory," in which we have neither a rejection of life, nor a confirmation of it, but "an aesthetic *stasis* of understanding" (p. 155). To that he adds a "drama of alternatives," in the criticism of Arnold Goldman and Edmund Epstein, and concludes with what are basically biographical approaches in the writings of William Empson and John Gross.

What the Kain survey shows more than anything else is the immense amount of clutter and over-lap, as well as the basically useless task in the body of Joycean criticism of trying to categorize anything more than simple oppositions.

The crux of most interpretive problems is finding the right question to address to yourself with respect to the text, just as for the writer, the task is to find the right question to ask of undifferentiated life. Morton Levitt, in his "A Hero for Our Time: Leopold Bloom and the Myth of Ulysses" is skeptical in general terms about any very close analogy between the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses*, seeing the attempt to draw specific parallels as largely useless. "Of all the critical clichés inspired by

Ulysses, none is more persistent that the belief that this is a novel whose characters and events are derived from a unique amalgam of myths and that its central myth is provided by the *Odyssey* of Homer." Having leveled that ground, Levitt then goes on to ask why Stephen benefits from an Odyssean father/son association at all.⁹ "Does it help for example . . . even to view Stephen as Telemachus? For what does it really tell us about Stephen to identify him with the Ithacan Prince?" The answer to this question is impossible, of course, so long as he insists on confining it to a literal level.

His skepticism, in fact, points to what is probably the fundamental problem in the whole controversy about the Stephen-Bloom/Odysseus-Telemachus parallel: In *Ulysses*, there is no feasible literal father-son relationship possible. If there were, it would be, in any event, nothing but narrative, for in fact what Stephen the artist seeks to become heir to is not Denmark, not even Ithaca, but life itself, and specifically life as it is made emotionally vibrant and vital, that is *life as art*. If an Odysseus-Telemachus rapport is reached between the two, it will be because such a birthright is secured, because through Bloom Stephen in some way achieves his legitimacy as artist. In fact, if one conceives of the Odysseus/Telemachus parallel as necessarily literal, that is that Joyce had to have a specific recognition and acceptance of father and son roles in his narrative, a question is raised as to whether the original epic has in itself the continuing vitality of myth. But it is not in the literal incident that mythic correspondences live, needless to say.

If, on the other hand, one is willing to conceive of the original *Odyssey* as having in itself the potentiality of extended myth, then its parts in Joyce's hands become *potential* symbols. The father/son relationship, then, may tell us something about the son as *artist*; that is, that the neophyte artist has a Telemachian character. If he is himself the passive child of the life-experience, subordinate and dependent upon an antecedent whose active life provides the stuff of his art, he must first acquire that birthright, before he may go forth to live himself.

The problem for the Stephen of *Portrait* is that he goes forth to life without the instinctive acceptance of life yet developed in him. He is a theoretical artist, which is to say that he has no object other than himself. (In fact, Levitt, though he fails to see a resolution between Bloom and Stephen, does go on to correlate specific myth more closely than his initial rejection of it would seem to promise.) The justification for the *schema* in *Ulysses*, including the primary one of the *Odyssey* parallels, is, as Richard Kain in another essay points out, that of *correspondences*, which Joyce *did* carefully develop, even to the point of elaborating them in his revisions.¹⁰

Perhaps the surest view of the resolution, or union, between Bloom and Stephen made by a recent critic is that of Walton Litz, who follows Tindall in his accumulating of evidence to tie them together, with the urinating in the garden as a mutual epiphany which in the story follows the Joycean projection of the two of them as stargazers.¹¹ The relationship to a Dante-Virgil correspondence is made, also, as they come, according to the quoted psalm, "out of the house of bondage" into the garden. When they part, Bloom returns to the coldness of his own isolation; Stephen, having "gratefully" declined the offer of a bed for the night, goes off, presumably to write the novel we are almost finished reading.

This point is perhaps as good a one as any to approach the Stephen/Bloom relationship anew. If Waltz and Tindall are right in the Dante parallels, Stephen and Bloom emerge into the Garden as Dante and Virgil emerge from Hell, seeing once again the stars, as they go towards Purgatory. Certain other things follow. Clearly, Bloom here is the guide, the Virgil figure, who leads Dante through the universe, through its ways of error towards redemption. It is, remember, at this point that the light in Molly's bedroom is seen by Bloom who calls Stephen's attention to it, an inspirational moment which is immediately preceded by the romantic correlation of the *moon* with *woman*; and it is immediately after followed by the communion of micturation.

In this passage there is a correlation between life and art that seems too pregnant to be ignored. That is, as the *living* creature, man bound up with the real and immediate, Bloom is a creative force in his basic nature. It is Bloom, not Stephen, who creates the reality of the day; it is Bloom who is in relation to Gaia/Tellus, who must deal with feelings rather than concepts. As a virtually emotionally comatose man, Stephen is close to despair, the sin against the Holy Ghost. As a theoretician, he has distanced even himself from his own existence, making paradox as an intellectual quality (not an instinctive one) the ruling condition of his life. Stephen sees logical relationships everywhere; he sees life nowhere in any very personal sense. Bloom, supposedly the scientific thinker of the two, is a day-dreamer, a man in love, a romancer, an enthusiast. Stephen, in contrast, is involuted and exhausted. Growth and critical change, however symbolic, must flow from one to the other.

One recurrent problem is our tendency to regard Stephen here as the hero. The word "hero" itself is apt to be a vague reference indiscriminately drawn from tragedy, melodrama, and the novel equally, and applied to any leading figure within such forms without distinction. A compound character made up of Odysseus, Hamlet, and the Scarlet Pimpernel is a monster, indeed; and while any human being might be

hero's return to a faithless following. Bloom also in his thoughts links Kitty O'Shea and Molly Bloom as half-Spanish, suggesting a further parallel since a third adultery is to be projected half-consciously between Molly and Stephen. The fusion here of *Stephen/Parnell/Leopold Bloom* suggests a compound character who is both cuckold and cuckolder; betrayed and betrayer (p. 636), linking together the historical and fictional themes of the story. Stephen is a projection of Bloom, just as, in the art, Bloom will be a projection of Stephen; here, they meet in Parnell.

When they prepare to leave the Shelter, we are told that, while they didn't see eye to eye on everything, "a certain analogy there somehow was, as if both their minds were . . . in one train of thought." They leave with Bloom literally supporting Stephen; the older man excited by the thought of himself stimulated and living anew through Stephen's intelligence. It is as though he instinctively sees himself brought to life by the passive intellect of the artist. He anticipates the success of Stephen, although at the literal level he sees himself in a personal relationship to the young man, whose artistry seems automatic: "he would have heaps of time to practice literature in his spare time." It is through Molly that the relationship will be cemented.

While Bloom and Stephen merge, they also necessarily stand apart. One of the earlier sections of "Ithaca" that has attracted critics is what has variously been called the water-hymn, the water ode, or simply the water passage. Sometimes dismissed as a flight of authorial garrulosity, it has at other times been seen as a superb prose poem.¹² It begins with the question "What in water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier returning to the range admire?" The answer, stripped of the poetic examples, is comprehensive:

Its universality, its democratic equality and constancy; its vastness, its unplumbed profundity, restlessness, independence, variability, quiescence in calm, hydrokinetic turgidity, its subsidence, its sterility, significance, its preponderance, its indisputable hegemony, multiseular stability, its capacity to dissolve and hold in solution, its slow erosions, its imperturbability, its gradation, ramifications, violence, its vast circumterrestrial ahorizontal curve, its secrecy, latent humidity, simplicity its healing virtues, its buoyancy, its persevering penetrativeness, cleansing, quenching, nourishing, its infallibility as paradigm and paragon, its metamorphoses, strength, variety of forms, solidity, utility, noxiousness.¹³

This is Bloom's dimension, not Stephen's, of course. Moreover, I would propose that in a significant sense Bloom himself is here defined through water, just as his story in Joyce's novel is summarized in the list of attributes.

Of all human figures of myth, none is more identified with the sea than is Odysseus himself. Within the narrative, Odysseus, beached finally at Ithaca, is water-borne and water-reborn; he is metamorphosized from the dead to become "the paradigm and paragon" of his own wanderings, which simultaneously partake of the nature of the sea and animate it through the myth that the culture finds its own roots in. It is undeniable that Bloom himself, within the framework of Joyce's catechism, is the occasion at this point for this long apostrophe to water, which is, in fact, the sea. The last element referred to is the only negative one. "Noxiousness": what is the possible association? Odysseus, we are told, in ancient Greek meant "he who brings trouble to others," that is, "he who is causer of pain."¹⁴ As the outcast, both darling and scapegoat of the Gods, the Jew, in fact, of his own history, Odysseus is the strategist or clever fellow who is both hateful and beloved. As Bloom, he is the outcast from his own house, whose symbolic return comes about when he has killed the storm in his own breast and achieved a harmony with the trinity that all life revolves around.

The apostrophe to water, or the sea, is, to be sure, a cleverly inserted anatomy of Odysseus/Bloom that parallels the earth goddess tribute to Molly/Penelope in the final section of the book. It represents, again, a convergence and a distinction between the figures of Bloom and Stephen. Bloom, we are told, does not urge Stephen to wash his hands, recognizing that "Genius is incompatible with aquacity." At this point, certainly, Stephen is not the object of art, that is, he is not Odysseus. Even if he is reflective of him in the cunning intrinsic to Art, it is only the Odysseus in Homer, whom Stephen is about to become. Genius, incompatible with aquacity, seeks itself to become invisible; Odysseus or Everyman/Noman disguises himself but nowhere near so effectively as Homer does. However this is only so that in the end he will be fully visible, as accomplished art. The artist disappears—as Stephen does at the end of Ithaca—as the life of the art becomes fully realized. In fact, of course, *Ulysses* the novel *is* written; it is Stephen/Joyce that disappears into the art. This, it seems, is the answer to those who see Stephen going off at the end unreconciled, to a life of agonizing in some invisible world beyond the novel. There is no such life, in fact. Stephen, like Bloom, at the end of the novel can only arise the next day to begin again in the Martello tower his cold rejection of Mulligan; Bloom can only arise to fix Molly's breakfast and go off once more to Paddy Dignam's funeral. The book comes back to life, its own life, each time it is opened.

Aside from such obvious points of resolution between Bloom and Stephen as the shared cocoa with the equality of cups, the links of the

two as members of persecuted tribes of ancient custom, the confusion of names, the ceremonial micturation preceded by the lines: "Silent, each contemplating the other in both mirrors of the reciprocal flesh of theirhisnothisfellowfaces," and the virtual offer of Molly/Milly to Stephen as Bloom's extended self, there is another point of resolution that should be noted.

Both Richard Ellmann and Walton Litz, among others, have commented on the holy family image suggested by Bloom, Stephen, and Molly, with some reference to it as a trinity.¹⁵ But "the holy family" is not a true trinity. A true trinity is wholly theomorphic, various incarnations of the god, and there is some argument for regarding the three in such a way. Such a trinity provides, also, a link between my first and second questions; that is, does Bloom achieve a father/son relationship with Stephen, and does he reclaim his wife and domain? A positive answer is suggested in both cases through a trinity made up of Bloom the Father, Stephen the Son, and Molly the Holy Spirit. In such a case, Bloom is the Creator of life activity; Stephen is the Redeemer through his art; Molly is the spirit or grace of the living earth, the sensual reality towards which all life gropes for rest, affirmation, replenishment. Such a union is far more incarnation than the "terrestrial paradise" of Ellmann's holy family/trinity, but in no way a dehumanization of the narrative as experience.¹⁶

Just as the chief critical objection to a successful relationship between Stephen and Bloom has centered on the younger man's declining to stay overnight with the father-figure, when in fact he no longer needs to, the chief critical reaction against a successful return for Bloom has been the tendency of some critics to see him as a nasty little man who has abandoned his wife and now is engaged in perverted practices such as masturbation and psychological adultery. Shari Benstock has answered such critics quite effectively in her essay "The Evasion Principle: A Search for Survivors in *Ulysses*,"¹⁷ in which she defines Bloom's heroism in the special sense that it exists, pointing out Bloom's normalcy and psychological health rather than guilt. If, in fact, Bloom is Odysseus, the survivor, he is the archetypal strategist; it is thus that he survives; as Shari Benstock points out, he gives away little in the way of his secret life. Rather than, as critics such as Sultan, Glasheen, and Shechner have proposed, a guilty Bloom, we have an exiled one, who in his own way exhibits silence (willed), exile (non-willed), and cunning (instinctive) quite as much or more than Stephen does.

While Molly complains, in the Penelope episode, about Bloom, she also speaks protectively and fondly of him long before the final affirmation; Bloom himself is forever speaking proudly of her, and despite

his masturbation earlier, is aroused to, first, "approximate erection," and then, "proximate erection" as he joins her in bed and kisses her on the buttocks. It is, in truth, the elements of Bloom's positive nature—what Shari Benstock calls his "actual heroism," his concern for others, his compassion, his steadfast pursuit of psychological stability, his consistent humanitarianism¹⁸—that Molly loves in the long run. Those critics who have seen Bloom as unworthy of Molly because he does *not* blow her brains out, who view him as a nasty fellow because he accepts the adultery, tend to overlook the last pages of *Ithaca*, in which Bloom sadly accepts the fact that Molly herself accepted the adultery:

Why more abnegation than jealousy, less envy than equanimity?

From outrage (matrimony) to outrage (adultery) there arose nought but outrage (copulation), yet the matrimonial violator [Molly] of the matrimonially violated [Bloom] had not been outraged by the adulterous violator [Boylan] of the adulterously violated [Molly].

And when, in the next question, there is asked what retribution? Bloom's answer shows that he does not simply accept it, although he eschews violence. He fantasizes about loss-of-affection legal proceedings, with the alienation and humiliation possibly applicable to either Molly or himself or both. Yet, his understanding is such that he sees the adultery as an instance of human nature, recognizes that from the point of view of the universe—"the apathy of the stars"—it makes little final difference; and he goes to her in the bed as "the childman weary."

Bloom's brooding ends with this question: "In what final satisfaction did these antagonistic sentiments and reflections reduced to their simplest forms, converge?" The answer is a paean to physical womanhood.

Satisfaction at the ubiquity in eastern and western terrestrial hemispheres, in all habitable lands and islands or unexplored (the land of the midnight sun, the islands of the blessed, the isles of Greece, the land of promise), of adipose posterior female hemispheres, redolent of milk and honey and of excretory sanguine and seminal warmth, reminiscent of secular families of curves of amplitude, insusceptible of moods of impression or of contrarities of expression, expressive of mute, immutable mature animality. (p. 719)

Sinbad the sailor perceives paradise. Molly is the riches of the East, the archetype of sensual fulfillment. Bloom is, then, reconciled to Molly; at the end of *Penelope*, she will be reconciled to him.

Such literal sequence notwithstanding, reconciliation is also tied up with the symbolic nature of the relationship. Fritz Senn, in his recent "Scareotypes on Some Trenchant Renditions in *Ulysses*"¹⁹ reminds us

that "for ages the standard definition of epiphany (*epiphainomai*)" has been "effulgence" or a "shining forth." He does not see such a radiance in *Ulysses*, finding instead of translucency, something which is "opaque." He is speaking of "Aeolus" at the time, and it is, of course, unlikely that we would find either radiance or the Muse in that episode. In "Ithaca," on the other hand, all of the questions that we have accumulated in the earlier part of the novel may be answered on some such ground.

Joyce, it will be remembered, said that in "Ithaca," his own favorite chapter, the reader would know all. He did not, however, say that Bloom would consciously know all. Molly is a muse only as her image filters through the life experience of *Everyman/Noman*, but epiphany, an effulgence, or "shining through," comes to Bloom as he looks up at the window, as he later wanders the stars, as he retreats to her and on into the world of dreams where we last see him. Even the Creator, the father of life responses, needs his sanctification, his inspiring force, in order to carry life forward. As Walton Litz puts it, "Molly has merged into her archetype Gaia/Tellus, while Leopold Bloom has become the archetype of all human possibility, the 'man-child in the womb'." ²⁰ He is more than that, of course, he is the star-wanderer, carried westward forever by the wheeling progress of the universe. Sinbad the Sailor, "a square round the bed," in Joyce's own phrase, has found the quadrature of the circle that Bloom has so long pondered.

By far the most definite and the same time the least provable of our questions is the third one: Is the structural form of "Ithaca" appropriate and effective? It is an episode that has been criticized, or at best viewed with reluctant respect, by most Joyce scholars; from such early figures as Frank Budgen down through C. H. Peake, its coldness and objectivity have been cited. As Bernard Benstock points out in "Date-line *Ithaca*: The News from Eccles Street," "every commentator finds it necessary to define the Ithacan format uniquely, indulging in colorful tag-phrases."²¹ He is right; the technique used for the episode has provoked personal reactions far more often than it has been analysed. Benstock himself gives us a careful analysis of the physical structure of the catechism, pointing out that the question/answer form actually "provides an unusual degree of diversity."

The source of the catechistic style used in "Ithaca" has been a matter of debate as to whether it derives from the Catholic catechism or, as Walton Litz takes pains to establish, from R. Mangnall's *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions*, a venerable textbook still in use in the schools during Joyce's boyhood. The discussion is not a profitable one, since both derive from the same concept. The more significant point is that any formal catechism is a training device; that is, it is not

based on a true question-analysis approach, an inquiry, but on a rote formulation. As such, it is, whether school catechism or not, a performance, a point which Joyce appreciated and made skillful use of. The question-answer format is a way of directing thought, without being responsible for continued movement in the same direction. On the other hand, it allows the person directing the questions to comb methodically through a subject or cover a general area without becoming entangled in personality, in emotions, in consequences, or in justification. There is a sense of inevitability and objectivity about it that suspends contradiction. In the case of "Ithaca," it is the story itself that is put on the witness stand and made to divulge its basic character.

It is in some ways easy to see why Joyce was fond of the chapter, for it permits the author considerable freedom of approach and at the same time allows him to talk about anything he chooses, without accounting for its presence within a character or having to develop a circumstance in a narrative pattern. As we have noted, Joyce in writing to Frank Budgen spoke of

All events . . . resolved into their cosmic, physical, psychical etc. equivalents . . . so that not only will the reader know everything and know it in the baldest, coldest way, but Bloom and Stephen thereby become heavenly bodies, wanderers like the stars at which we gaze.²²

If everything in the book was to be *re-solved* here, it should be the "baldest, coldest" explanation of whatever takes place in *Ulysses*, and in some ways it is. Yet, as we have seen, a catechism is itself a device, not a direct account, which means that it allows concealment and complication, perhaps to a more considerable extent than normal narrative.

Question and answer, however deceptively, imply opposition, and as Bernard Benstock observes, many critics tend to view the chapter as reflecting the tension between the Scientific and the Artistic temperaments. Yet, little if any of "Ithaca" is from Stephen's point of view; even in the inferred way that Bernard Benstock attributes sources of the knowledge in his tables for the chapter, Stephen is virtually a spectator.²³ Rather than a contrast between the scientific and the artistic temperaments, we have a scrambling of the characters, a certain doubt about the distinctions, so that they change back and forth. On measure, however, Stephen, the brahmin artist, is clearly the cold, precise, defining mind much of the time; Bloom is undeniably more often than not the romantic dreamer, the lyric imagination. Rather than a dialectic, in fact, the question/answer pattern of the catechism is, as the root of the word tells us, something that resounds, *re-sounds*, or impresses itself; in such an instructional formula, one has

a ritual confirmation rather than a confrontation. The catechism is directed towards social or communal definitions rather than solitary or personal ones; it *places* the individual within a framework. It is not an abandoning of literary style at all, but a deliberate stripping and formalizing of it. What is apparently lost, verbally, is suggestiveness, but that is only in its simple linguistic character. Suggestiveness remains as a literary characteristic within the structured form and grouping of the parts of the chapter itself. As Karen R. Lawrence phrased it, "In the 309 questions and answers in the chapter, the book seems to interrogate itself, implicitly promising to disclose all the facts of the plot."²⁴ Self-interrogation is scarcely a difficult concept for experimental form. Critics will be critics, however, and as Bernard Benstock has observed, contemporary critics have devoted much time and print to speculation on the role of a narrator, assumed, concealed or otherwise identified as voice or speaker, to account for the questions in the first place. Whether the thoughts that are relative to Bloom could possibly be thought by Bloom has concerned many commentators, without, obviously, any possible resolution.

Mathew Hodgart says "the questioner is man the scientist, the answerer is the universe itself, which will usually give correct replies if asked the right questions by experimenters."²⁵ This, it seems obvious, puts intolerable stress on the questions of "Ithaca," suggesting that they are far more important in themselves than they are. Rather, it is the answers that we properly focus upon. As in the Catholic catechism, they are made to be recited; they are statements of recognition, and sometimes praise, of the enduring order of things. As a drilling into consciousness, the catechism treats Bloom/Stephen, and the reader as well, as initiates. They are being told what it all amounts to. Or rather we and perhaps Stephen are being told; Bloom is living it in the flesh, the most thorough form of learning, even if not the most articulate.

In fact, we do not need a narrator when the form is that of a vatic voice. If, as Joyce suggests, the narrative itself stops and instructs us, it uses questions of its own but does not recognize or respect any of ours. So far as that goes, the form or technique used here is more precise and every bit as available on its own terms by the reader as is that, say, of "Aeolus." Benstock, himself, traces all of the information in the chapter and classifies it according to what he sees as identifiable "repositories of information," five basic sources that account for the total without reference to any single narrator or voice. The chief of them is Bloom. Yet, even in cases where they are related to recognizable earlier forms such as interior monologues, what we have is not Bloom's thought or Stephen's thought. Rather, we have the attenuation or

distancing of such thoughts by the author to place Bloom and Stephen with respect to each other and to all else.

Karen Lawrence accounts for "the narrative imagination" in "Ithaca" by what she calls a "lateral imagination," one in which "facts are strung together without any sense of priority among them." While her surface analysis is a good one, she seems caught in it: "We strain for signs of human characters and we are told of physical objects, we try to understand the relationship among characters and encounter mathematical tangents and algebraic equations."²⁶ It seems that a little old-fashioned close reading could save her much frustration, for what she calls the "lateral imagination" is in fact generally progressive and increasingly meaningful. She does recognize one technical but significant point when she says that "in 'Ithaca', it is as if the story were displaced onto objects, as if the mechanism of avoidance characterized the text." However, that this technique is germane to what is going on, that is, to the distancing and simultaneous placing of the characters and story in a fixed order in the universe, seems less obvious to her. Joyce is not, as Lawrence says, abandoning "the arsenal of literature's weapons," he is adding to it. Neither, I think, does the style serve to establish Bloom's loneliness, as she believes, other than in the one sequence immediately following Stephen's departure, where any stylistic device might communicate the same thing. Rather, much of the time Bloom is at his most energetic and hopeful in this chapter. In fact, the stark style communicates every specific thing unequivocally, Bloom's lurching towards a new attitude as well as his pondering the prospect of a present action.

What, uniquely, does the technique used in "Ithaca" communicate? There is, here, a great catalogue of "things," objects, which Lawrence and others have found chaotic, arbitrary, and confusing. Yet, Joyce always relates them to the characters and their situation, and the effect is two-fold. It places the characters in their circumstances and, like a zoom lens pulling back, makes them one object among many in a larger frame of reality. This is true all the way from their own casual history (the souvenir knick-knacks which Bloom bought a dozen years ago) up to the rocks and seas of the earth and the star clusters of the universe. Joyce, in effect, is reconstituting the world, fusing the characters *back into it*, after defining them through plot. They are first individuals, then myth, then part of a palpable cosmos. In a sense, "Ithaca" serves as an unplotting of individual experience before we step out of the novel.

It has already been noted that Bloom is the romantic idealist, the occasion for the novel. At a fairly obvious point, he diffuses, spreads out as a social identity that is comprehensive, as Everyman, Noman,

Odysseus, Sinbad the Sailor and his countless alliterative brothers down to Darkinbad the Brightdayler. He voyages through the city, he travels the earth, he wanders through the stars, instinctively trying to place himself, as Stephen Dedalus did in his childhood Class of Elements. In that, Bloom is not unique; he has, in fact, no special character, one might even say no psychology. Yet, he creates the world by his wandering, thus creating the reality of life. On the other hand, he is himself justified by the son, he who is heir to the father, who legitimizes him in turn, and for whom he serves as envoy to other courts. If Stephen is the Son/Redeemer as Artist, then the fusion of the Life Spirit to the Universe in that chapter in which it occurs, that is "Ithaca," happens to Bloom but is properly told by Stephen.

I have said that Stephen not only disappears at the end to write *Ulysses* but, paradoxically, he does not have to write it since it has just been written. We have here a paradox of organic conception; the artist in learning his role accomplishes his art, but so cannot know it until he has done it. Potentially, at the end of "Ithaca" Stephen is refined out of existence, made one with his art. At the same time, this explains why he does not stay to spend the night with Bloom, since that would move him out of his symbolic role as artist. Still a further point, however, and a major one, is that, if the story has just been written, it must finally be achieved in the character or style of Stephen, the artist. As we have already noted, Stephen, in fact, is the conceptual theorist, the coldly precise analogist. In this sense, then, the catechism fits perfectly as the crowning stylistic technique, towards which the artist has worked in his long day's journey to his art.

At the end of "Ithaca," therefore, both Bloom and Stephen alike are fused to their hisnothisfellowfeatured destinies, Stephen vanishing, Bloom sleeping through space with Gaia/Tellus completing his circle. "Where?" The final dot, at the center of the universe, where Dante found God. The one that Joyce wanted as the last character in "Ithaca," but which the printer subsequently omitted.

NOTES

1. *Letters I*, p. 72, quoted by A. Walton Litz, "Ithaca," in *James Joyce's Ulysses*, eds. Clive Hart and David Hayman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 386.
2. Stuart Gilbert, *Joyce's Ulysses*, Vintage Edition (N.Y.: Knopf, 1952), p. 64.
3. Paul S. Schiffer, "Homing, Upstream: Fictional Closure and the End of *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* (1979), 16:283-98.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
5. Fritz Senn, "Ulysses and the Self-Righting Word." A paper given at the International Joyce Symposium American College in Paris, December 4-5, 1981. Here, as elsewhere in his

recent criticism, Senn is concerned with internal rhythms and patterns. In this paper he points out that in *Ulysses* there is a pattern consisting of significant words occurring at the end of certain actions or descriptions which introduce question or uncertainty to our reading, but are then followed, in a new sequence, by associated words that "right" or restore balance to the preceding action.

6. Richard M. Kain "The Significance of Stephen's Meeting with Bloom: A Survey of Interpretations," *Ulysses: Fifty Years*, ed. Thomas Staley (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1974), pp. 147 ff. Subsequent references in text.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Morton Levitt, "A Hero for Our Time: Leopold Bloom and the Myth of Ulysses," in *Ulysses: Fifty Years*, p. 135.
10. Richard M. Kain, "The Cosmic View of Ulysses," in *Ulysses: Cinquante Ans Après*, ed. Louis Bonnerot (Paris: Didier, 1974), p. 281.
11. A. Walton Litz, "Ithaca," pp. 400-401.
12. See Norman Weinstein, "The 'Ithaca' Chapter of *Ulysses*: Notes on Science, Number and Poetic Structure," *Southern Review* (Adelaide, Australia, 1979), 12:3-22.
13. James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin Edition (Harmondsworth: Bodley Head, Ltd., 1960), pp. 592-93. All future references in the text are to this edition. Litz, *op cit.*, discusses the evolution of the water hymn but concludes only that it represents "the universal virtues of water" (p. 389).
14. See G. E. Dimock, Jr. "The Name of Odysseus," *The Hudson Review* IX, No. 1 (Spring, 1956), 52-70.
15. Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 149f. Bloom's double baptism (as Catholic and Protestant) and his literal and symbolic Jewish identity make all things possible and a surprising number appropriate. (On the source of Joyce's acquaintance with the Jewish tradition, see Daniel Mark Fogel, "James Joyce, the Jews, and *Ulysses*," *James Joyce Quarterly* (1979), 16:498-501.)
16. Ellmann (*Ulysses on the Liffey*) sees Bloom and Stephen as a union "not atomic but Adamic fusion: together they must form between them the New Adam and convey intimations of a terrestrial paradise" (p. 150). Molly, he notes, is a necessary third. A characteristic rejection on literalist grounds is that of Robert Storey:
 But if the three characters are a human "improvement" upon the holy family, they can be so only in rhetorical terms. It is hard to imagine how characters so essentially opposed in their relations to the world—Stephen "inward bound," in Ellmann's words, Bloom "outward"—can ever enjoy a single identity in any real sense. One suspects that the "terrestrial paradise" of which Ellmann speaks is simply a poetic fiction.
 "The Argument of Ulysses, Reconsidered," *Modern Languages Quarterly* (1979), 40:183. Storey takes certain points similar to my own to different conclusions, and ends with a compulsion-ridden Joyce as his subject.
17. Shari Benstock, "The Evasion Principle: A Search for Survivors in *Ulysses*," *Modern Fiction Studies* (1979), 24:159-179.
18. *Ibid.*, 173.
19. Fritz Senn, "Scareotypes on some Trenchant Renditions in *Ulysses*," *Modern British Literature* (1980), 5:27.
20. A. Walton Litz, "Ithaca," 403.
21. Bernard Benstock, "Dateline *Ithaca*: The News from Eccles Street," *Modern British Literature* (1980), 5:30.
22. James Joyce, *Letters*, ed. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Viking Press, 1957), pp. 159-160. The letter to Budgeon goes on to confirm the Bloom/Molly parallel benison. "The last word (human all-too-human) is left to Penelope. This is the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity," said Joyce.
23. Benstock, "Dateline *Ithaca*," pp. 39-40.
24. Karen R. Lawrence, "Style and Narrative in the 'Ithaca' Chapter of *Ulysses*," *English Literary History* (1980) 47:559.
25. Quoted by Benstock, "Dateline *Ithaca*," p. 31.
26. Lawrence, "Style and Narrative," 560.