

Same People, Different Places. Foucault's Heterotopia and the Nation in Joyce's *Ulysses*

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When John Wyse Nolan asks Leopold Bloom whether he knows the meaning of the word “nation” in the “Cyclops” chapter of *Ulysses*, the response he receives is somewhat contradictory. “A nation is the same people living in the same place,” says Bloom. “Or also living in different places” (12.1422-28). With this self-negating pronouncement, he inadvertently draws attention to the socially constructed nature of the concepts of nationhood and nationality, and in particular, the perceived relationship between a country and its territory. Once this equation has been simplified, and the terms “the same place” and “different places” have cancelled each other out, all that remains is the definition of the nation as “the same people,” a phrase which seems inadequate to describe the population of 1904 Dublin, as represented by Joyce¹. Bloom’s reasoning is not difficult to follow. As a Jew, he is himself a member of a diasporic race, while shortly before this exchange the Fenian Citizen has invoked the support of “our greater Ireland beyond the sea” (12.1364-65). However, in its explicit juxtaposition of contradictory meanings the absurdity of such a non-referential description is laid bare. How do we define shared nationality if not through a common geographical location? In this essay, I want to suggest that Joyce interrogates the notion of a unified Irish community by performing a similar negation of space through his employment of a number of sites that Michel Foucault, in his lecture “Of Other Spaces”, describes as heterotopias, those real places that are somehow outside of all space, and which constitute a “simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the

space in which we live” (24). The cemetery, the library, the boat, the museum, the bath house, the maternity hospital, the brothel, the mirror, and the colony, all feature in both Foucault’s lecture and Joyce’s novel, but the definition could easily be extended to include the tavern, and even the house at 7 Eccles Street. Enda Duffy has previously suggested that the mythical quality of these sites contributes to the “derealization” (37) of Dublin in *Ulysses*, compelling the reader to conceive of a national identity that is not contingent upon a shared geographical space. I want to expand upon this argument by also taking into account Foucault’s earlier definition of the heterotopia, in which he describes it as an entirely unthinkable space, representable only in language. In the preface to *The Order of Things*, he discusses *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, a Chinese encyclopaedia fabricated by Jorge Luis Borges, in which animals are classified in the following way:

(a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies. (Foucault xvi)

Where could these categories ever be juxtaposed, asks Foucault, “except in the non-place of language?” (xviii) In this encyclopaedia, he points out, “things are ‘laid’, ‘placed’, ‘arranged’ in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all” (xix). Obviously, there exists a significant contradiction between these two definitions of the same term; one describes a form of real, albeit mythical place, while the other defines a wholly unreal and impossible space. In *Ulysses* however, we find a concurrence of the two meanings, in the numerous “other spaces” in which Joyce chooses to set many of the episodes of his novel, and the impossible textual configurations of chapters such as “Cyclops” and “Circe”. Here I want to explore this concurrence in the hope that it will elucidate the difficult inconsistency in Foucault’s concept, and to subsequently examine the ways in which Joyce’s use and representation of these “other spaces” illuminates his opinion of the Irish nation, and the idea of nationhood in general. After all, to what extent can we talk of “the same people” if they share no common ground?

In an essay written in 1976, Edward Mendelson describes *Ulysses* as an instance of a genre that he coins “encyclopaedic narrative.” Such texts, he says, “occupy a special and definable place in their national cultures” (1267), and “attempt to render the full range of knowledge and beliefs of a national culture, while identifying the ideological perspectives from which that culture shapes and interprets its knowledge” (1269). In *Ulysses* however, instead of striving for a semblance of totality, Joyce demonstrates the futility of attempting to represent an entire nation. Rather than belonging with Dante’s *Commedia* and Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, Joyce’s novel more closely resembles those books which Mendelson describes as “mock-encyclopaedias,” such as Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, which, “like the “Tristra-Paedia” it contains, collapses under the weight of data too numerous and disparate for its organizing structures to bear” (1268). Indeed, if *Ulysses* is “a kind of encyclopaedia” (*Letters* 271), as Joyce insists that it is, then surely it is one that is analogous to *The Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*, “in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry, of the *heteroclitite*” (Foucault xix). It is tempting to identify a correspondence between Borges’s juxtaposition of different orders and Joyce’s collation of different styles. Indeed, Brian McHale, who has written extensively on the role of heterotopian spaces in fiction, suggests that *Ulysses*, in its latter half, dissolves “into a plurality of incommensurable worlds.” In contrast to the “parallax of subjectivities” that we see in the first half of the novel, epitomised by the simultaneous perception of the same cloud by Stephen and Bloom from their respective locations, and which, McHale argues, “helps to confer stability and solidity on the world outside of consciousness” (51), in the later chapters Joyce employs a “parallax of discourses,” or a “parallax of worlds.” “In effect,” he concludes, “to juxtapose two or more free-standing discourses is to juxtapose different worlds, different reality templates” (54). But the use of the word parallax here seems self-defeating, implying in its very definition the existence of a reality to be perceived from different positions. Hugh Kenner too describes “a parallax of styles” (106), but for him this notion does not equate to a plurality of worlds. Indeed, he reminds his readers that “[p]arallax modifies...events not at all; [it] modifies only the way different people perceive them” (151).

This is not to argue that *Ulysses* does not, in essence, preclude its own integrated reality, but to suggest that we are looking in the wrong

place for the evidence that this is the case. Rather than in the gaps between Joyce's different styles, the juxtaposition of a "large number of possible orders," as Foucault writes of Borges's encyclopaedia, it is in their existence "without law or geometry," that the impossibility is contained. Therefore, any assertion that *Ulysses* comprises a multitude of incompatible worlds needs to take into account the way that the novel describes impossible and incomprehensible configurations of space.

This relationship between geometry and taxonomy is most effectively demonstrated in "Ithaca". As Bloom fantasises about his dream home in this chapter, he imagines a "fumed oak sectional bookcase containing the Encyclopaedia Britannica and New Century Dictionary" (17.1522-24). In this, the most unashamedly encyclopaedic chapter of his novel, Joyce includes the former volume as a reminder of the imperially sanctioned nature of the official knowledge which he threatens to displace with his own encyclopaedia of the Irish nation. However, the chapter's encyclopaedic status also makes it a privileged site for the subversion of such a notion. In other chapters contradictions and errors can be attributed to Joyce's free indirect style, and thus to the erroneous thought processes of his characters, or the gaps between their interior monologues and the authorial voice. In contrast, here they are contained solely within the voice of the distant, albeit unreliable, third-person narrator. Of the subjects discussed in this chapter, geometry is the most susceptible to a subversion of this scientific meta-language, as Joyce uses geometrical terms to delineate the very setting of the chapter, and subsequently to undermine the very possibility of its occurrence. From the very first question-and-answer, Joyce presents us with seemingly contradictory ideas about spatial organisation:

What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning?
Starting united both at normal walking pace from Beresford Place they followed in the order named Lower and Middle Gardiner streets and Mountjoy square...Approaching, disparate, at relaxed walking pace they crossed both the circus before George's church diametrically, the chord in any circle being less than the arc which it subtends. (17.1-10)

The question insists that Stephen and Bloom take parallel courses, yet the response suggests otherwise. Although they begin united, as they approach Eccles Street they are disparate. As Joan Parisi Wilcox has pointed out, the reference here is to Euclid's parallel postulate, which essentially states that two parallel lines will never intersect no matter how far

they are extended. As she explains, this postulate holds an uneasy position in Euclid's propositions, as it cannot be logically deduced from the other axioms of his geometry, and thus provided a starting-point for the non-Euclidean geometries that emerged in the nineteenth-century². "The tension Joyce creates," writes Wilcox, "by abutting two seemingly contradictory concepts (parallel lines and intersecting lines) is precisely the tension that faced mathematicians as they strove to prove the consistency of Euclid's axiomatic system of geometry" (645). Later in the same chapter, Joyce describes a set of railway tracks as "parallel lines meeting at infinity" (17.2086). If we take this phrase as an axiom of Joyce's own non-Euclidean geometry, then this chapter, in which Stephen and Bloom can be simultaneously parallel, united, and disparate, is representative of infinity, a placeless void in which parallel lines meet. For all its attempts to present a precise and clear tabulation of knowledge, "Ithaca" becomes distracted by those concepts which cannot be contained in space, such as infinity. Hence, the impossible description of a list of Molly's potential or hypothetical lovers as "a series originating in and repeated to infinity" (17.2130-31). Indeed, this sense of placelessness is further implied by the unanswered nature of the chapter's final question: "Where?" (17.2331)

As Joyce's most extensive engagement with Irish nationalism, and the site of much spatial irregularity, "Cyclops" constitutes the best place to interrogate the political implications of such abstraction, and to examine the way in which *Ulysses* subverts Mendelson's notion of a national encyclopaedic form. In this episode, the anonymous first-person narration is intermittently interrupted by highly-stylised insertions that purport to catalogue the history, mythology, and geography of Ireland, but which frequently expand into impossible textual configurations which defy the naturalistic dimensions of their settings. As Andrew Gibson has shown, this "gigantism," as Joyce refers to it in the Gilbert schema, is directly borrowed from the historiography and poetry of the Anglo-Irish Literary Revival, and in particular Standish O'Grady. "The very title of the chapter and its 'technic'," writes Gibson, "refer us to O'Grady. Like 'gigantic', 'Cyclopean' was among his favourite adjectives" (114-15).

In one of the earliest insertions, Joyce describes the area surrounding Barney Kiernan's pub by parodying the medieval poem "Aelfrid's Itinerary", which as Emer Nolan explains, "lists the delights and plenty of the four provinces of Ireland and was known to Joyce in a nineteenth-century version by James Clarence Mangan" (109), an important precursor to

the Revival³. Thus, Joyce describes a mythical pastoral scene, reminiscent of those popular with the revivalists, in which he lists the fauna and flora to be found in the region. He describes the trees, including “the wafty sycamore, the Lebanonian cedar, the exalted planetree, the eugenic eucalyptus and other ornaments of the arboreal world” (12.76-78), and lists the produce brought to market from all over the country: “Thither the extremely large wains bring foison of the fields, flaskets of cauliflowers, floats of spinach, pineapple chunks, Rangoon beans, strikes of tomatoes, drums of figs, drills of Swedes...and tallies of iridescent kale, York and Savoy” (12.91-94). By including species that are categorically not native to Ireland, Joyce anticipates the exclusive and narrow-minded definition of the nation to be espoused by the Citizen later in the chapter, and undermines it in advance. One might even suggest that he posits a progressive idea of nationality, more in keeping with Bloom’s contradictory definition, which allows for dialogue and exchange between “the same place” and “different places.” However, any notion of the Irish nation as a site of harmonious diversity is undermined by Joyce’s assertion that the landscape contains immeasurable quantities of certain creatures. He describes “the fishful streams where sport the gunnard, the plaice, the roach, the halibut...and other denizens of the aqueous kingdom too numerous to be enumerated” (12.71-74), a paradox that, if taken literally, essentially equates to infinity. Similarly, he later remarks upon the “herds innumerable of bellwethers and flushed ewes and shearling rams and lambs” (12.102-03), and many other species of livestock besides. Like the category “(j) innumerable” in Borges’s encyclopaedia, the open-endedness of these lists precludes the existence of the items they catalogue in the finite limits of space.

There follows a description of the Citizen, Bloom’s principal antagonist in this episode, in which he is depicted as possessing mythical proportions, in the image of the Celtic legendary heroes celebrated by the Irish Literary Revival, such as Finn MacCool. For the most part the terms used to describe him are relative, such as “broadshouldered”, “deepchested”, “widemouthed”, “largenosed”, and “longheaded” (12.152-54), but when Joyce does use anything resembling quantitative measurements, it is clear that they are altogether incompatible with the dimensions of Barney Kiernan’s Pub⁴. “From shoulder to shoulder he measured several ells” (12.155), writes Joyce, with an ell being a medieval measurement approximating the length of a man’s arm. He goes on to explain that the Citizen’s nostrils were “of such capaciousness that within their cavernous obscuri-

ty the fieldlark might easily have lodged her nest,” and that his eyes “were of the dimensions of a goodsized cauliflower” (12.160-63). But again, the truly unbelievable factor of his appearance is manifested not in size, but in the violation of spatial logic. From the Citizen’s girdle, Joyce explains, there “hung a row of seastones...and on these were graven with rude yet striking art the tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity” (12.173-76). Joyce proceeds to list ninety names, some of whom genuinely are mythical Irish heroes, such as Cuchulain, Conn of the Hundred Battles, and Niall of the Nine Hostages; but the list also includes historical, fictional, and fabricated figures, including Dante Alighieri, Julius Caesar, Adam and Eve, Thomas Cook, Christopher Columbus, Benjamin Franklin, Napoleon Bonaparte, Muhammad, Jack the Giantkiller, Captain Nemo, Patrick W. Shakespeare, and Brian Confucius. In addition, there are titles of novels, operas, plays, songs, and poems, such as *The Last of the Mohicans*, “The Man that Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo”, “Savourneen Deelish”, *Arrah na Pogue* and *The Rose of Castile*, as well as Dublin places disguised as people: Dolly Mount, Sidney Parade, and Ben Howth (12.176-99). As in Borges’s encyclopaedia, the impossibility does not lie in the strange mixture of the real and the fictional, or the vast quantity of terms, but rather the juxtaposition of people with places and works of fiction. How could these things ever be represented as images side-by-side on the stones hanging from the Citizen’s girdle?

The significance of space to the nationalist conception of Ireland is further demonstrated by Joyce’s description of Joe Hynes’s handkerchief, which inexplicably swells into the “muchtreasured and intricately embroidered ancient Irish facecloth” (12.1438-39), supposedly depicting beauty-spots from around Ireland. As Eric Bulson has argued, in Barney Kiernan’s Pub, “an expansive geographical lexicon is the surest way of demonstrating one’s patriotism” (82). This romantic nationalist conception of geography, he adds, is a way for the narrator and the Citizen “to perform their Irishness” (83); however, in the representation of this facecloth such a performance is undermined. Although it does portray “ancient duns and raths and cromlechs and grianauins and seats of learning and maledictive stones”, as well as mountains, lakes, towers and follies, the facecloth also shows a pub, the Guinness brewery, a jail, a workhouse, and a place called Fingal’s Cave, which is in Scotland, not Ireland (12.1447-61). But again, it is the way in which it exceeds the limits of spatial logic, with its depiction of “the three birthplaces of the first Duke of

Wellington,” and of “Kilballymacshonakill,” which Gifford and Seidman inform us is not a place but a name (363), that it becomes impossible. Marjorie Howes reads this passage as an illustration of Joyce’s assertion in “Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages” that “our civilization is a vast fabric, in which the most diverse elements are mingled” (Howes 59). However, as in the other lists, Joyce effaces the common ground on which such mingling could occur, and thus seems to question the possibility of a unified nation in which the ancient and the modern, the national and the international, and the same and the different can co-exist.

This suggestion that Joyce performs a Borgesian violation of encyclopaedic space seems to contradict the consensus that *Ulysses* presents a precise topographic study of Dublin. Given Joyce’s famous desire “to give a picture of Dublin so complete that if the city one day suddenly disappeared from the earth it could be reconstructed out of my book” (Budgen 69), one is inclined to suggest that the many chapters and spaces of the novel find their common locus in the well-defined geography of the city. Certainly, those episodes which take the Dublin streets as their principal setting are characterised by a cartographic accuracy. Frank Budgen famously described how Joyce composed “Wandering Rocks” “with a map of Dublin before him on which were traced in red ink the paths of the Earl of Dudley and Father Conmee” (124-25). But as has been shown, other chapters defy the dimensions of their naturalistic settings, and frequently their existence in space at all. Here I want to argue that this tension can be resolved by the number of Foucault’s heterotopian spaces in which Joyce chooses to set the chapters of his novel. “Places of this kind are outside of all places,” writes Foucault, “even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (24). Similarly, while we might be able to locate the cemetery, the maternity hospital, and the library on a map of Dublin, in their inner constitutions these places efface themselves, opening up a space in which Joyce can create impossible textual worlds, and thus contest the notion of a unified and coherent nation.

Throughout *Ulysses*, the reader sees evidence of what Foucault, in “Of Other Spaces”, calls the principles of his “heterotology,” the characteristics which mark these sites out as different from the space surrounding them. In the most literal sense, that these spaces exist separately from the principal urban landscape is attested to by the thresholds that Joyce’s characters have to cross to enter or exit them. “Heterotopias,” says Foucault in “Of Other Spaces”, “always presuppose a system of opening

and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” (26). In “Hades”, for example, the cemetery gates help to emphasise the unreality of the space they enclose. “The gates glimmered in front,” writes Joyce as Bloom and the other mourners turn to leave the cemetery. “Back to the world again” (6.995). As in Joyce’s Homeric model, the “Hades” of *Ulysses* is cast as an extraterritorial space. In “Scylla and Charybdis”, Stephen passes through a series of thresholds on his way out of the library, positioning the scene of the discussion that makes up the majority of the chapter at several removes from reality. First, he and Mulligan exit “out of the vaulted cell into a shattering daylight of no thought...[t]he constant readers’ room” (9.1111-15). Then they pass through the turnstile, out of the readers’ room, down the stairs, through the “pillared Moorish hall,” (9.1168) and finally out of the door, where Bloom passes between them, and onto the portico. In “Cyclops”, Bloom’s entrance to Barney Kiernan’s is barred by the growling Garryowen, in “Oxen of the Sun” he has to be granted access to the maternity hospital by the nurse: “That man her will wotting worthful went in Horne’s house” (14.85), and when he arrives at “[t]he Mabbot street entrance of nighttown” (15.1) he is asked for a password by a “sinister figure” (15.212). Finally, at the beginning of “Ithaca”, the keyless Bloom is forced to climb over the railings and enter his home through the scullery. In a striking actualisation of the nationalist rhetoric espoused by the Old Gummy Granny in “Circe” – “Strangers in my house, bad manners to them!” (15.4586) – Bloom, the Irish-Hungarian Jew, becomes a stranger in his own house. Once he has gained entry, it is as if he is seeing the interior for the first time, as evidenced by his detached observation of the uncanny objects around him: the saucepan and the kettle on the range (17.157-59), the betting tickets on the dresser (17.319-21), and “the incongruity of an apple incuneated in a tumbler and of an umbrella inclined in a closetool” (17.1411-13).

Hence we come to understand why the house, Bachelard’s privileged locus of psychic interiority, is in this chapter marked by an exteriority of language manifested most explicitly in the episode’s impossible geometry, which precludes the possibility of a unified subjectivity underpinning it. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard describes the house as “a privileged entity for a phenomenological study of the intimate values of inside space” (3), and as “one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (6). Thus, “Penelope” springs from Molly’s deep interiority, with the domestic setting helping to constitute

this tissue of memory, thought, and imagination. In contrast, Bloom is denied this kind of interiority. In "Of Other Spaces", Foucault posits his own conception of space in opposition to that of Bachelard. "Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well," he says. "Yet these analyses, while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like to speak now of external space" (23). Bloom's experience of the house, as described in "Ithaca", falls into the latter category; for him it is an alien place from which he is barred, and is thus characterised by a language from which his subjectivity is excluded.

Foucault asserts that "there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias" (24). In contrast to the specificities of Joyce's Dublin streets, the fact that these sites are a constant of every society contributes to the sense that they are outside of space, since they could, in essence, be anywhere. Although Foucault insists that, "heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found" (24), there are some which are inevitably more consistent than others. Of these, the cemetery and the maternity hospital feature prominently in *Ulysses*, and constitute what Foucault calls crisis heterotopias, those places populated by people in a state of biological turmoil. By dint of the universality of birth and death, these primitive creations persist into the modern day, and are present, in one form or another, in every society. Bloom even connects these two spaces in his mind, when, in "Lestrygonians", he thinks of the respective fates of Paddy Dignam and Mina Purefoy. "One born every second somewhere," thinks Bloom. "Other dying every second" (8.480-81). Similarly, in "Hades", he thinks "[f]unerals all over the world everywhere every minute. Shovelling them under by the cartload doublequick. Thousands every hour" (6.514-15). As the portals to a collective underworld, cemeteries resist the kind of emplacement that characterises Joyce's representation of the Dublin cityscape, and reflect a universality that transcends national boundaries.

Two further principles of Foucault's heterotopology contribute to the extraterritorial, and indeed extratemporal, character of such sites. First there is his suggestion that the "heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time"

(26). Again, one might cite the primitive status of the lying-in hospital here. As an idea that has been present in all societies, in one form or another, for centuries, it is something of an ahistorical place, a fact that allows Joyce to unfurl his chronological survey of English language and literature. More explicitly, Foucault describes the library and the museum as “heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time”, examples of “a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages” (26). One thinks in particular, of Stephen’s contemplation in “Scylla and Charybdis” of the “[c]offined thoughts around me” (9.352), a phrase which also links the library to the cemetery. “Here he ponders things that were not,” thinks Stephen in reference to the librarian, “what Caesar would have lived to do had he believed the soothsayer: what might have been: possibilities of the possible as possible: things not known: what name Achilles bore when he lived among women” (9.348-51). The library is not only outside of time, but also outside of history; it is a repository of the infinite possibilities ousted by time that Stephen thinks of in “Nestor”, and is thus a space in which Stephen can temporarily awake from the nightmare of history, and the stock-phrases of sectarian rhetoric espoused by both Mr Deasy and the Citizen of which it is composed. “Composition of place” (9.163), thinks Stephen in this episode, invoking the founder of the Jesuits Ignatius Loyola to assist him in his portrayal of Shakespeare’s life. “Local colour. Work in all you know. Make them accomplices” (9.158), he thinks. Yet in this chapter, the librarian’s office remains largely unrepresented. Besides the door, the floor, and the “greencapped desk lamp” (9.29), there is actually very little “local colour” in “Scylla and Charybdis” until, as we have seen, Stephen makes his way out of the library. The majority of the chapter is given over to Stephen’s lecture and the ensuing discussion.

Incidentally, although they are not mentioned in Foucault’s lecture, I think one could say the same of the newspaper office in “Aeolus”, and Barney Kiernan’s Pub in “Cyclops”, as the settings disappear behind their respective discursive atmospheres. The rhetoric of journalese is present in both, directly from the mouths of those present in the former, while in the latter it is found in the newspapers that the drinkers read from, and mixed together with the nationalist propaganda they spout, creating the overblown and self-negating textual impossibilities of that chapter.

Finally, there is Foucault’s assertion that heterotopias are “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible” (25). To illustrate this point he describes the

garden, which in its traditional Persian form comprised four sections said to represent the four parts of the world. “The garden is the smallest parcel of the world,” says Foucault, “and then it is the totality of the world” (26), a description that is reminiscent of the pastoral market scene at the beginning of “Cyclops”, as produce from all over Ireland, and beyond, is said to be brought together on the same site. However, perhaps the most overt articulation of this principle is to be found in “Circe”, in which Joyce presents a constant parade of different settings, and which subsequently constitutes the most effective demonstration of the concurrence of Foucault’s two different definitions of the heterotopia, and the most potent contestation of the notion of a unified Irish nation.

The heterotopian quality of nighttown is doubled by Joyce’s choice to represent this episode in dramatic form. Both brothel and theatre feature in Foucault’s lecture “Of Other Spaces”, and the shared features of these sites, with respect to Joyce’s novel, have not gone unnoticed. In his study of the relationship between the form and setting of “Circe”, Austin Briggs points out the inherently theatrical nature of sexuality, as represented in *Ulysses*. He thinks, for example, of Bloom’s interior monologue in “Nausicaa”, where Gerty’s display is thought of in theatrical terms: “See her as she is spoil all. Must have the stage setting, the rouge, costume, position, music” (353). As Briggs explains, “in a sense, nothing on the stage, as in the brothel, can be taken as real: it is ‘all an act’.” (57) But L.H. Platt hints at another connection between the brothel and the theatre in “Circe” in his essay on the relationship between this chapter and the Irish Literary Theatre. As Platt points out, Joyce’s ostensible play borrows many of the frequently used motifs of the Irish Literary Theatre, such as “[h]allucinations, dreams, masking, [and] fantasy” (34). Therefore, it seems appropriate to consider this episode within the context of the revival and its objectives. As Platt explains, the proponents of revivalism “purported to be in the process of somehow dramatizing a national collective unconscious” (39), an aim that frequently manifested itself in representations of space, as we have already seen in reference to “Cyclops”. Yet Joyce evidently disagrees with the idea that such idyllic pastoral scenes are representative of the Irish character. As Platt writes,

the opening of *Ulysses* 15 uses landscape just as Yeats used it, as a natural symbol for the collective unconscious, but with the vital distinction that Joyce’s landscape is an urban red-light district as opposed to an Irish wilderness, and that the psy-

chological states it evokes are concerned with shame, guilt and survivalism, as opposed to Yeats's romance of dispossession. (40)

The implication seems to be that the brothel, "*ce bordel où tenons nostre état*" (15.3536), as Stephen says, offers a far more accurate representation of the national Irish psyche than the romanticised rural scenes with which the revivalists were so infatuated. In "Of Other Spaces", Foucault describes the brothel as a "space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory" (27). The apparent actualisation of the figments of Bloom's and Stephen's inner lives in "Circe", and the episode's recycling of material from throughout the novel, similarly demonstrate the staged nature of their daily existences. In the divergence between their interior monologues and the words they actually speak, the reader perceives the performative nature of "real life"; it is only in nighttown that their true characters are externalised. However, as the episode progresses, we come to realise that no such unified national spirit is formed. Platt explains that "according to the Anglo-Irish directors of Ireland's cultural rebirth, the success of revivalism was crucially dependent on the creation of a theatrical space in which the ceremony of Irish nationhood could be performed" (34). I want to argue that in "Circe" Joyce undermines this objective by using the heterotopian quality of this theatrical space to demonstrate the absence of a cohesive sense of nationality.

The dramatic form of "Circe" works in two opposing ways, and thus creates a spatial duality. On the one hand it reinforces the space of the episode by creating an implied stage-setting on which the action is said to take place. The stage directions constitute a kind of meta-language, purporting to provide the reader with a concrete external reality, something that is largely absent from all the other chapters, with the possible exception of "Ithaca". However, as in "Ithaca", their status as meta-language also makes them a privileged locus for subversion, giving Joyce the chance to undermine dramatic convention and fabricate an impossible space. The stage directions, by their very definition, and their typographical opposition to the dialogue of the episode, ostensibly exist outside the invisible inverted commas that surround much of the novel, and thus cannot be easily attributed to the characters' respective interiorities. Martin Puchner has argued that they reflect "[t]he rise in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of immensely detailed and at times excessively long stage direc-

tions” (84), and a move away from an understanding of stage directions as “the most direct attempt of the dramatic text to “dictate” theatrical performance” (85). Nevertheless, the impossibilities and incongruities contained within them still strike the reader as inexplicable by dint of the fact that, according to convention, they are supposed to describe action and movement within the clearly demarcated space of the theatre.

On the other hand, the implied theatrical setting serves to naturalise the seemingly impossible Circean transformations which the characters and setting undergo. As Foucault says in “Of Other Spaces”, “the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another” (25). Thus, we are not surprised by Bloom’s endless costume changes that see him wearing “*youth’s smart blue Oxford suit with white vestslips*” (15.269), “*court dress*” (15.1007), “*a yellow habit with embroidery of painted flames and high pointed hat*” (15.1927-28), “*babylinen and pelisse*” (15.2005), a “*nondescript juvenile grey and black striped suit, too small for him*” (15.3316-17), and “*a flunkey’s plum plush coat and kneebreeches, buff stockings and powdered wig*” (15.3760-61) among many other outfits. Nor are we particularly surprised when the scenery inflates, as in “Cyclops”, to dimensions that are incompatible with the naturalistic setting of nighttown. Most notable is the erection of the new Bloomusalem, “*a colossal edifice, with crystal roof, built in the shape of a huge pork kidney, containing forty thousand rooms*” (15.1548-49). Similarly, the bizarre actions described by some of the stage directions are made possible by the dramatic framework, such as this one in which Bloom seems to perform a series of impossible feats:

Bloom walks on a net, covers his left eye with his left ear, passes through several walls, climbs Nelson’s Pillar, hangs from the top ledge by his eyelids, eats twelve dozen oysters (shells included), heals several sufferers from king’s evil, contracts his face so as to resemble many historical personages...turns each foot simultaneously in different directions, bids the tide turn back, eclipses the sun by extending his little finger. (15.1841-51)

Such exploits appear beyond the limits of representation, but the added layer of illusion that the dramatic form bestows on “Circe” strips this sequence of events of its air of impossibility. After all, is it not possible to stage the appearance of a man hanging from a monument by his eyelids? Or the illusion of a man covering his left eye with his left ear? Indeed, although Joyce exaggerates for comic effect, pushing the form to its limits,

such metamorphoses, as Platt points out, find precedent in the Irish Literary Theatre. “If Joyce’s play was technically impossible,” he says, “revivalist theatre was at least notorious for its technical demands” (35). As an example, he cites the famous transformation that lies at the heart of the Irish Literary Revival, that of Cathleen ni Houlihan (who appears in “Circe” as OLD GUMMY GRANNY) from old woman to young girl, rejuvenated by Michael Gillane’s commitment to the revolutionary cause.

“Circe” thus presents us with two simultaneous spaces: on the one hand, the real setting of nighttown and Bella Cohen’s brothel, in which the stage directions act as a meta-language which describes a concrete, albeit sometimes improbable, reality, and on the other, the illusory stage setting, upon which almost anything is possible. The theatre-brothel is, in Foucault’s words, “a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live” (24). And although the theatrical quality of the brothel, as described by Briggs, means it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between these two levels of representation, on other occasions the stage-world does exceed the limits of reality. As in Borges’s encyclopaedia, it is the way in which the different elements juxtaposed seemingly preclude the possibility of their simultaneous presence on a common locus that “Circe” most explicitly stages impossibility. And in this instance, the incommensurable elements juxtaposed are the *dramatis personae* of the chapter.

Despite this theatrical blurring of reality and illusion, there are certain assumptions that it seems safe to make when classifying the capitalised speakers into groups according to the different levels of reality that they represent. First there are those characters who we infer to be actually present in nighttown, including STEPHEN, LYNCH, BLOOM, FLORRY, KITTY, ZOE, PRIVATE COMPTON, and PRIVATE CARR. Then there are those that appear in other episodes, but whose appearance in the red light district strikes the reader as incongruous, such as GERTY, MOLLY, ALF BERGAN, and MRS BREEN. Less debatable is the inclusion of a number of characters who the text informs us are deceased, and thus presumably the products of Stephen’s and Bloom’s imaginations, such as PADDY DIGNAM, VIRAG, RUDOLPH, ELLEN BLOOM, RUDY, and May Dedalus, Stephen’s mother, who is designated as THE MOTHER. The same applies to historical literary figures such as SHAKE-SPEARE, and LORD TENNYSON. Implausibly large groups are given collective voices, for example THE CHAPEL OF FREEMAN TYPESETTERS, THE MOB, THE IRISH EVICTED TENANTS, THE DAUGH-

TERS OF ERIN, THE CIRCUMCISED, THE ORANGE LODGES, THE GREEN LODGES, THE VOICE OF ALL THE DAMNED, THE VOICE OF ALL THE BLESSED, and most inclusively, ALL. In a chapter that has no apparent limits, this last term could effectively signify the entire world. There are also animals (THE MOTH, THE NANNYGOAT, THE RETRIEVER, THE HORSE), mythological figures (THE NYMPH, THE HOBGOBLIN), inanimate objects (THE SOAP, LYNCH'S CAP, THE BUTTON, THE DOORHANDLE, THE FAN), and even places (SLEEPY HOLLOW). There are disembodied voices (THE CALLS, THE ANSWERS, VOICES, DISTANT VOICES, BOYLAN'S VOICE, MARION'S VOICE), and detached body parts (VIRAG'S HEAD). But the most obvious way in which Joyce transgresses the possibility of real space in "Circe" is in his decision to confer speaking roles upon abstract concepts, actions, and ideas such as THE END OF THE WORLD, THE HALCYON DAYS, THE KISSES, THE HUE AND CRY, THE SINS OF THE PAST, HOURS, and THE ECHO. In the stage directions Joyce makes some of these concepts incarnate; for instance, THE END OF THE WORLD becomes a two-headed octopus (15.2177), while THE HALCYON DAYS are represented by a group of high school boys (15.3325). But although these ideas could feasibly be represented on stage by actors, a device not uncommon in the theatre, in what reality could they co-exist with people (real, fictional, or historical), animals, actions, places, and disembodied voices? "Circe" thus constitutes a textual heterotopia in its juxtaposition of incompatible categories; like Borges's encyclopaedia, the heterotopian stage acts as a non-place in which completely incompatible elements can exist side-by-side.

It is perhaps not surprising therefore, when the chapter climaxes with a vast chasm opening up beneath the action. Triggered by Stephen's smashing of the chandelier in Bella Cohen's brothel, a great apocalyptic scene is set in motion. First, the stage directions regurgitate Stephen's thoughts from "Nestor": "*Time's livid final flame leaps and, in the following darkness, ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry*" (15.4244-45). A skirmish between Stephen and Private Carr follows, in which the former shows equal disdain for the representatives of his and his opponent's nations: Cathleen ni Houlihan, in the guise of the Old Gummy Granny, and Edward VII, respectively. If this scene purports to stage a collective national unconscious, as Platt contends, then the implications of the void that subsequently erupts seem apparent. The nation, like the

church, is founded, as Stephen thinks in “Scylla and Charybdis”, “upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood” (9.842).

Any commentary on *Ulysses* has to contend with the tension that exists between Joyce’s self-declared cartographic aesthetic, and the linguistic experimentation that saw his work championed by the proponents of French post-structuralism, who held it up as the epitome of a kind of writing without any grounding in reality⁵. Foucault’s concept of the heterotopia proves a useful tool in helping us to bridge this gap between the novel’s geographical particularism on the one hand, and its flight from reality on the other. As places which are outside of space, sites which can be located on a map, but which undermine their own reality through their inner constitutions, they allow Joyce to unfold a form of placeless language within a conceivably naturalistic framework. In so doing, he manages to present the political discourses at play in 1904 Dublin, giving voice to their respective advocates, but simultaneously manages to undermine the ground which they are contesting. By creating such impossible textual spaces, Joyce’s language precludes its own status as discourse, as such constructions could never be contained within a single subjectivity; therefore, he resists the essentialising discourses of nationalism, colonialism, and of any other political force. Instead he posits a notion of the nation that is contained within the incompatibility of these different voices. Homi K. Bhabha has emphasised the importance of heterogeneity and incommensurability in the narration of the nation⁶. It is from the “incommensurability in the midst of the everyday”, writes Bhabha, “that the nation speaks its disjunctive narrative” (311). As Foucault’s writings on the heterotopia make clear, space is a privileged locus for the representation of incommensurability, as only in space, or rather the violation of traditional understandings of space, can true incompatibility be manifested. Indeed, Bhabha’s description of “incommensurability in the midst of the everyday” resonates with Foucault’s definition of the heterotopia as an everyday place which has the capacity to juxtapose entirely different spaces in an inconceivable manner, and thus constitute the “disjunctive narrative” of the textual heterotopia, that type of fictional space representable only in language. As crucibles of incommensurability, these sites thus become the “different places” from which Joyce attempts to capture the diversity and heterogeneity of the Irish nation in language.



- 1 Here I am not treating Dublin as a synecdoche of the entire Irish nation, but rather employing the logic that if a city is divided, then the nation of which it is a part must too be divided.
- 2 For a discussion of ‘Ithaca’ in relation to non-Euclidean geometries and mathematical contradictions see also Patrick McCarthy’s essay ‘Joyce’s Unreliable Catechist: Mathematics and the Narration of ‘Ithaca’.
- 3 Joyce’s familiarity with Mangan is attested to by an essay, titled ‘James Clarence Mangan’, which he wrote while at university, and which is published in *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (73-83).
- 4 Gibson explains that the double-epithets used to describe the Citizen here have long been recognised as a parody of a mock-bardic device used by the proponents of the Anglo-Irish Literary Revival (115).
- 5 See the collection *Post-Structuralist Joyce: Essay From the French* edited by Derek Attridge and Daniel Ferrer, and Colin MacCabe’s *James Joyce and the Revolution of the Word*.
- 6 Vincent Cheng has previously drawn on Bhabha’s definition of the nation in his *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (246-48).



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