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The Letter of the Law: Joyce, Martyrdom, and Wildean Litigation

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In James Joyce's *Ulysses*, both the 'Cyclops' episode and the parodic legal proceedings of 'Circe' treat sexual deviance as anti-Irish—a feminised foreign invader threatening the heterosexist, hypermasculine Irish Nationalism espoused by the Citizen. Oscar Wilde is a subtextual figure in both the court of public opinion that convenes at Kiernan's Pub and Leopold Bloom's sexual harassment trial, hovering on the periphery of the collective consciousness that characterises both episodes. Due to his engagement with various legal cases and sex scandals (including Wilde's but also Roger Casement, Myles Joyce, and Charles Stewart Parnell), Joyce's novel may act as an archive of a historical moment of change—a queer slippage between 1904 and 1922. The contrast between men like the Citizen, whose insularity perpetuates and eroticises Irish martyrdom, and men like Bloom, whose Otherness makes him a target of homophobia and racial bigotry, demonstrates the shifting cultural values of turn-of-the-century Ireland and looks outward toward its contemporary readers with a sly wink.

> The things people say of a man do not alter a man. He is what he is. Public opinion is of no value whatsoever. Even if people employ actual violence, they are not to be violent in turn. That would be to fall to the same low level. After all, even in prison, a man can be quite free. His soul can be free. His personality can be untroubled. He can be at peace. [...] A man cannot always be estimated by what he does. He may keep the law, and yet be worthless. He may break the law, and yet be fine. He may be bad, without ever doing anything bad. He may commit a sin against society, and yet realise through that sin his true perfection.
>
> Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (2012/1891: 35)

Introduction

Joyce studies is replete with scholarship about the ghost of Charles Stewart Parnell haunting James Joyce's *oeuvre* from its somewhat mythical beginnings, a childhood poem titled 'Et Tu Healy'. However, Joyce's formative years overlap with a turbulent period in the history of Irish sexuality characterised not only by the Parnell–O'Shea affair but also—and most importantly, for the purposes of this paper—Oscar Wilde's libel suit and subsequent prosecution for gross indecency in 1895. Although scholarship throughout the 1990s read homosexuality as a source of fear and fascination in Joyce's work, the use of Wilde's trials as a source for *Ulysses* continues to be underexamined in the literature. Richard Brown once claimed that 'the Wilde trial appears hardly at all' in *Ulysses* (1985: 81), an assertion I hope to counter by looking at how Wilde's litigation is vital context for the legal discourses of the 'Cyclops' and 'Circe' episodes.

As Margot Backus presciently reveals in the present collection, Joyce's relationship to Wilde *vis-à-vis* the 'intense affect that profoundly reshaped' the British public consciousness surrounding queerness 'formed the basis for both empathetic identification and fearful aversion' toward his fellow-exile (2024: 5, 19). In *Ulysses*, Joyce appears to go out of his way to upset the bourgeois proprieties that ruined Wilde by depicting scatological and erotic bodily drives as mundane aspects of everyday life. The theoretical framework provided by Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics* can help to illuminate the stakes of this dual-pronged affective identification with queerness:

> Affective life slops over onto work and political life; people have [...] eroticism, if not sex, outside of the couple form. [...] [T]he spillage of eroticism into everyday social life seems transgressive in a way that provokes normal aversion, a hygienic recoil even as contemporary consumer and media cultures increasingly trope toiletward, splatting the matter of intimate life at the highest levels of national culture (2005: 201).

Ulysses is, in many respects, a text which 'tropes toiletward', revealing in intimate detail the 'private' lives of its subjects. Warner traces the origin of shame and aversion to the childhood 'initiation into the prevailing meaning of public and private, [...] when he or she locates his or her "privates" or is trained to visit the "privy"' (2005: 23). Neither 'privates' nor the 'privy' are off limits for Joyce; he reimagines these socially repressed subjects as sites of queer possibility, where bodily intimacy exposes sexual stigma as a locus of both social rupture and identification with the Other. Consistent with the queer theoretical tradition which informs his work, Warner argues that 'any attempt to transform gender or sexuality is a public questioning of private life, and thus the critical study of gender and sexuality entails a problem of public and private in its own practice' (2005: 31). From this perspective, *Ulysses* can be read as a text which captures a moment of the queer past, cataloguing the interplay between sexual and national anxieties in turn-of-the-century Ireland by parodying the recent (relative to 1904) public spectacle of the Wilde trials.

Adrian Hardiman has noted that over thirty obscure legal cases appear in *Ulysses*, operating like 'time capsules [...] preserving the texture of a time that is gone, that of Joyce's youth' (2017: 35). The novel is indebted to the Belle Époque as its social and cultural context; in particular, Joyce's reproduction of turn-of-the-century cultural values is tied to the shift in perception caused by the Wilde trials. Michael Foldy writes that the 'public expression' of homophobia in the British Empire was 'relatively restrained [...] prior to the Wilde trials', but as a result of their unprecedented publicity, 'the heterosexist structures of repression and mechanisms of restraint [were] drawn tighter in British society' (1997: 68, 70). Joyce's parody of the Wilde trials in 'Circe' both mocks the English judiciary and exposes the true threat of legally sanctioned violence: the continuation of a system which punishes the Other for its existence. Just as a highly publicised series of legal battles brought Oscar Wilde's private life into the public sphere, so too is Leopold Bloom's dirty laundry aired in court. Unlike 'Cyclops', in which accusations of sexual impropriety are made at a pub (notably, short for 'public house') and lead to public scrutiny of Bloom's nationalism in an anti-Semitic conflation of Jewishness and sexual deviancy, 'Circe' blurs the boundaries between public and private in a collective phantasmagoria through which Joyce implicates different Irish 'publics' in the perpetuation of sexual, judicial, and colonial violence.

Ireland at the Bar (or, Behind the Courthouse)

Wilde's persecution is one of several miscarriages of justice against Irishmen by the British that Joyce uses to reveal the cycle of legally-sanctioned violence in turn-of-the-century Britain. In both 'Ireland at the Bar' (1907) and 'The Poet of Salomé' (1909),

Joyce decries the treatment of Irish plaintiffs at the hands of the British Court and the court of public opinion. The first essay describes the 'sensational' 1882 trial after which Myles Joyce was hanged for murder, although 'public opinion considered him innocent then, and he is now thought of as a martyr' (*OCPW* 145). The 'poor old man', described as being 'bewildered by the legal ceremonies' because he spoke no English, explicitly becomes 'a symbol of the Irish nation at the bar of public opinion', unable to communicate with either the colonial power judging him or the English journalists that Joyce alleges act as judge, jury, and translator (*OCPW* 145–46).

'Ireland at the Bar' was first published in Italian, a language in which Joyce was an 'ungrammatical and clumsy' writer, according to Conor Deane (2008: xxxiii). Translated into English several times with varying levels of faithfulness,[1] the essay contains both language issues and a number of significant factual errors. Kevin Barry asserts that Joyce knew of the case 'inaccurately and by hearsay' (*OCPW* 326n2) to explain its transmission errors, such as the age of Myles Joyce, who was only in his forties. However, one might argue instead that Joyce 'translated' the events of the trial for an Italian audience, deliberately choosing to inaccurately portray Myles Joyce as elderly and enfeebled to emphasise his tragicomic symbolism. Margaret Kelleher, for example, writes that Joyce's 'amplifications of, and changes to, historical events' demonstrate what she calls his 'authorial interest in the power of a false mediator who wrongfully translates, who actively edits, and who fatally filters information' (2021: 424–5). She argues that Myles Joyce's interpreter—who translates 'intricate explanations, gesticulating, […] [and] protesting' from Irish into the dry English 'He says no, your worship' (*OCPW* 145)—is a 'fabrication' that 'partake[s] of a long tradition of Irish courtroom humour': the staging of a 'reassuring comedy […] of judicial censorship' (2021: 425).[2] Myles Joyce's sadistically botched execution and the essay's grisly closing

[1] In this collection, Conor Deane's translations in *Occasional, Critical, and Political Writing* (ed. Kevin Barry, 2008) has been the standard text for Joyce's Italian writings, but for many years, the primary reference was *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (eds. Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann, 1959). Margaret Kelleher identifies a number of errors with Mason and Ellmann's translation, including the 'Americanese' of phrases like 'prime suspect', 'jammed full', and 'executioner', as opposed to Deane's 'suspected by the police', 'packed with people', and 'hangman' (2021: 435n22). An earlier translation of 'L'Irlanda alla sbarra' published in the *James Joyce Archive* with unclear provenance, sometimes attributed to Stanislaus Joyce, was chosen by H.W. Gabler as 'superior to the […] mid-century American English of the *Critical Writings*' (*JJA* 1:xxviii), but each English variant introduces its own idiosyncrasies and errors to Joyce's work—including whether or not to translate Joyce's errors.

[2] Luke Gibbons reads this moment in the original Italian as the 'only vestige of Myles Joyce's voice retained in the act of translation' (2015: 80), signalled in Joyce's use of English words in quotation marks in the original essay: '*—Afferma di no*, "your worship" […] *—Dice di no*, "yo[u]r worship"' (*OCPW* 217). For Joyce's Italian audience, these foreign words would act as a reminder of the blurred boundaries between 'translation' and 'interpretation'. For Gibbons, these words belong to Myles Joyce; Kelleher, conversely, reads them as the intrusion of the interpreter, parodying a 'comic staple of peasant speech in Irish fiction' to demonstrate 'thinly disguised contempt' (2021: 427).

image of disembowelled livestock are used to convey how the Irish are scapegoated by the British judicial system and press 'to quieten public anger' (*OCPW* 147). Two years later, Joyce continued in this vein when declared that Oscar Wilde was 'undoubtedly a scapegoat', his only crime having been to cause 'a scandal in England' (*OCPW* 150). Joyce draws on this 1909 essay as a source for the trial scene in 'Circe', quoting himself nearly verbatim when projecting Wildean particulars onto Bloom and the novel's other iterations of the social outcast.

Barney Kiernan's pub, located around 'the back of the courthouse' (*U* 12.64–5), is the court of public opinion in *Ulysses*. Throughout the 'Cyclops' episode, a mythologised ancient Irish culture is 'translated' into a sensationalised print culture that mirrors the loss of meaning in Myles Joyce's testimony. At first described as 'an elder of noble gait and countenance, bearing the sacred scrolls of law and with him his lady wife a dame of peerless lineage' (*U* 12.246–7), Denis Breen is subsequently 'translated' into a stage-Irish spectacle by the unnamed narrator:

> And begob what was it only that bloody old pantaloon Denis Breen in his bathslippers with two bloody big books tucked under his oxter and the wife hotfoot after him, unfortunate wretched woman, trotting like a poodle. I thought Alf would split.
>
> — Look at him, says he. Breen. He's traipsing all round Dublin with a postcard someone sent him with u. p.: up on it to take a li...
>
> And he doubled up.
>
> — Take a what? says I.
>
> — Libel action, says he, for ten thousand pounds.
>
> — O hell! says I. (*U* 12.252–62)

Breen is here linked to the tradition of Irishmen being humiliated in the twin courts of law and public opinion, mocked by peers who would 'give anything to hear him before a judge and jury' (*U* 12.1036–7). Solicitor J.J. O'Molloy clarifies for the other men that 'the truth of a libel is no defence to an indictment for publishing it in the eyes of the law' and, for legal purposes, 'a postcard is publication' (*U* 12.1048–9, 1071), accurate legal statements that connect Breen's case to Oscar Wilde's. Although Breen's libel action is somewhat ridiculous—the insult in question reading ambiguously 'U. p: up', rather than the postcard characterising Wilde as a 'posing somdomite [*sic*]'—it nevertheless opens him up to scrutiny of his sexuality *vis-à-vis* Wilde; similar accusations are made against Bloom.

At the pub, Bloom is ostracised based on inaccurate evidence and hearsay. The charge: he has failed to buy a round of drinks despite winning on a longshot horse.

Accused of cheapness and subsequently of 'jerrymandering, pack[ing] juries and swindling taxes off of the government and appointing consuls all over the world to [...] [sell] Irish industries' (*U* 12.1575–7), Bloom is imagined as part of a thriving underground Jewish community, despite being strikingly isolated by his Jewishness. The imagined snub makes Bloom's private life fair game in the court of public opinion. Bloom's gender, sexuality, religion, and race become all mixed up in the echo chamber of nationalist heterosexism that characterises the public house's gossip:

> — O, by God, says Ned, you should have seen Bloom before that son of his that died was born. I met him one day in the south city markets buying a tin of Neave's food six weeks before the wife was delivered. [...]
>
> — Do you call that a man? says the citizen.
>
> — I wonder did he ever put it out of sight, says Joe.
>
> — Well, there were two children born anyhow, says Jack Power.
>
> — And who does he suspect? says the citizen.
>
> Gob, there's many a true word spoken in jest. One of those mixed middlings he is. Lying up in the hotel [...] once a month with headache like a totty with her courses. [...] It'd be an act of God to take a hold of a fellow the like of that and throw him in the bloody sea. Justifiable homicide, so it would. (*U* 12.1650–62)

Cloaking contempt in legal language like 'justifiable homicide', the unnamed narrator and the Citizen turn gossip into violence and unwittingly partake in the pseudoscientific justification of anti-Semitism that would become justification for future Nazi atrocities. When Bloom claims to be 'part of a race [...] that is hated and persecuted' (*U* 12.1467), Wyse asserts that the Jews should 'stand up to it then with force like men' (12.1475) in a tone-deaf denial of injustice. The narrator's subsequent mockery of Bloom, calling him 'limp as a wet rag' and imagining him as a '[m]ark for a softnosed bullet' (*U* 12.1476–80), uses phallic symbolism to belittle him as impotent to resist persecution, and thus un-Irish and un-manly.

By racially Othering Bloom, the 'perverted jew' (*U* 12.1635), alongside the above emphasis on his alleged femininity/sterility, Kiernan's patrons dramatise the cultural anxieties quickly gaining traction in the turn-of-the-century zeitgeist thanks to texts like Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (1903). Once translated into English in 1906, Weininger's anti-Semitic archetypes quickly attracted a cult-like following associated with the eugenics movement and were widely accepted well into the period that Joyce was drafting *Ulysses* (see Steinberg, 1999: 636–8). Joyce capitalised on the popularity of these pseudoscientific categories by registering their ideological bigotries—mainly, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and misogyny—in the discourse

at the bar and, later, with more fidelity in the legal proceedings of 'Circe'.[3] The myth of the menstruating Jewish man and a key phrase describing Bloom, 'womanly man' (*U* 15.1799), were taken verbatim from Weininger's *Sex & Character* (1906). However, the conflation of sexual deviance (especially 'inversion', a term encompassing both homosexual desire and transgender identities) and race had already been popularised in the Victorian period. For example, Max Nordau, whose book *Degeneration* was the text *en vogue* in 1895, diagnosed Oscar Wilde with a 'pathological aberration of racial instinct' and a 'hysterical craving to be noticed' (Nordau, 1895: 317; 'hysteria' being an exclusively female malady). In the context of the onslaught of pseudoscientific sexology and racial theory entering the public consciousness at the time, it is no wonder that the Citizen conflates ethnic Otherness with sexual indeterminacy. He echoes the model of deviance popularised by Nordau when he calls Breen 'half and half' (*U* 12.1052), 'neither fish nor flesh' (12.1055), and therefore 'a pishogue, if you know what that is' (12.1058). The homophobic insinuation is mitigated by the Citizen's incorrect word 'pishogue', meaning a magic spell, rather than 'pithogue', a homosexual (not unlike the Marquess of Queensbury's 'somdomite' misspelling; see Abu, 2024: 11–12). By using the incorrect Irish word while criticising others for their foreignness, the Citizen reveals the Irish nationalist movement's intolerance to be ignorance on both a personal and national scale.

Barney Kiernan's patrons represent the 'old guard' of Ireland conservatism—those whose intolerant views are rooted in Catholicism, nationalism, and heterosexist masculinity, egged on by the aggressively insular Citizen. Strongly opposed to British and European influence, the Citizen's characterisation of the French as 'dancing masters […] never worth a roasted fart to Ireland' (*U* 12.1385–6) and Great Britain as 'perfidious Albion' (12.1387–8) opens the floodgates; Hynes proceeds to call Queen Victoria 'the flatulent old bitch that's dead' (12.1392) and the unnamed narrator adds that she was 'blind drunk in her royal palace every night of God, old Vic' (12.1394–5). Patrick McDevitt argues that this kind of mockery creates a distinction between the 'manly Irish and effeminate British' in order to reassure the men 'that political and

[3] Whether or not Joyce himself 'believed' Weininger's theories is a point of contention; many Joyceans were embarrassed by the connection when Ellmann traced Bloom's 'womanliness' to Weininger (*JJ* 477–78). Marilyn Reizbaum has attempted to rescue Bloom from Weininger's self-loathing anti-Semitism by arguing that Joyce allowed *Sex & Character* to 'supervise his portrait of Bloom not to sustain Weininger's argument, but to expose it' (1982: 232), and Robert Byrnes similarly argues that Joyce 'tropes naturalism by taking the tragic premises of determinism and degeneration, in a Nietzschean reversal of polarity, treating [Weininger's theories] as comic,' thus freeing Joyce from the some of the more damning charges against him (1990: 305, 322). However, Steinberg disputes this reading, noting that Weininger's work was accepted as scientific fact in the lead up to WWII, significantly after the publication of *Ulysses* (1999: 636–8), and so it is not possible to definitively 'reclaim' Joyce's use of Weininger as satirical.

economic subjugation [does] not mean a loss of sexual power' (1997: 274). Britishness became associated with 'dandyism and other womanly affectations' amongst the Gaelic League (McDevitt, 1997: 273), an attitude which the Citizen encourages when he conflates Bloom's status as an outsider in Ireland with impotence and inversion. These men are a 'public' (see Warner, 2005: 68) and their collective opinion one of many iterations of 'the public opinion' in the novel; they (and thus 'the' public) are obsessed not only with violence and scandal, but with sex, and, specifically, with the erect penis as a representation of male identity. Hynes's question regarding where Bloom might or might not have 'put it' is one of many instances where 'homosociality is clearly marked by phallocentrism' (Lapointe, 2008: 183) at the pub. The men's discussion continually connects litigation, nationhood, and colonialism to the Irish martyr's penis in a homoerotic commodification of violence.

Arousing Suspicions: Phallocentric Counterpublics

The patrons are quick to martyrise Irish victims of imperialism from distant and recent history including 'the men of sixtyseven [...] [and] ninetyeight', Joe Brady, and 'all the fellows that were hanged, drawn and transported for the cause' (*U* 12.481–3). However, two names are conspicuously absent from the narrator's list of 'Irish heroes' (*U* 12.176): Oscar Wilde and Roger Casement, linked by shared Irish martyrdom and sexual scandal. Casement, executed for treason as an organiser of the 1916 rebellion, is elsewhere identified by the Citizen as 'an Irishman' (*U* 12.1545), which, Patrick Mullen has argued, 'is circumstantially problematic and begins to suggest the inscription of a post-1916 understanding of Casement' (2012: 99). Joyce exploits, for a post-Rising audience, 'the full resonance' of Casement, including his 'internationalism, humanitarianism, Irish nationalism, and homoeroticism' (Mullen, 2012: 97)—that is, his association with revolution, execution by hanging, and homosexual scandal—to stage a critique of an Irish nationalism that excludes the (homo)sexual Other from its archive of heroes.

Notably, Joyce himself fails to mention Casement in 'Ireland, Island of the Saints and Sages', a 1907 lecture which in many ways prefigures the 'Cyclops' episode, despite claiming that 'what England did in Ireland over the centuries is no different from what the Belgians are doing today in the Congo Free State' (*OCPW* 119). This reference is later repurposed for the 'Cyclops' episode, when the men read an article in the *United Irishman* about a Zulu chief visiting England:

> —Is that by Griffith? says John Wyse.
> —No, says the citizen. It's not signed Shanganagh. It's only initialled: P.
> —And a very good initial too, says Joe.

—That's how it's worked, says the citizen. Trade follows the flag.

—Well, says J. J., if they're any worse than those Belgians in the Congo Free State they must be bad. Did you read that report by a man what's this his name is?

—Casement, says the citizen. He's an Irishman.

—Yes, that's the man, says J. J. Raping the women and girls and flogging the natives on the belly to squeeze all the red rubber they can out of them. (*U* 12.1538–47)

Although Joyce certainly read Casement's Congo report (he owned a copy in Trieste), Casement's exclusion from the lecture could indicate that his Irishness was not on Joyce's radar in 1907—and indeed, while the Congo report was well-known in 1904, Casement was not known for being *Irish* until 1916 (see Mullen, 2012: 99–100). Like Wilde, Casement's homosexual infamy often eclipses his Irishness—he, too, was forsaken by the Irish public after his 1916 trial, an event 'inseparable from the homophobic scandal surrounding it' (Mullen, 2012: 100). Michael Steinman has argued that 'Casement's value as a political leader became as irrelevant as Parnell's specific political strategies or Wilde's poetry: what was important was the tableau of the lone hero attacked by the mob' (1983:163) in the wake of their respective scandals.

Thus, while Joyce certainly conjures Casement as another example of the public scandal, to what end has been contentious in previous criticism. For example, Enda Duffy writes that while Casement's diaries are 'trite and mundane', their distribution and reception 'expose[d] the split between the native and colonist versions of the insurgent subject' (1994: 103). For Duffy, Joyce's use of Casement presents a 'sanitised' figure that leaves out Casement's 'Irish insurgency, his execution, and his diaries' (1994: 101). I disagree. Hynes' assertion that 'P' is 'a very good initial' (*U* 12.1540) is almost certainly an allusion to Parnell,[4] whose fall from public favour, like Wilde's and Casement's, was the result of sex scandal. The shadow of Parnell over Casement here draws a parallel to the Pigott letters, forged to implicate Parnell in the Phoenix Park murders. In 'Cyclops', the spread of rumors serves as a means to try a man in the court of public opinion by smearing his name in the press, just as Casement's diaries, themselves potentially forged evidence of homosexual liaisons, were used by the

[4] As I mentioned previously, Charles Stewart Parnell is a recurring figure in Joyce's work whose importance extends beyond the infamous 'Christmas dinner' scene in *A Portrait of the Artist*. This moment in 'Cyclops' harkens back to Hynes's visit to 'the chief's grave' in 'Hades' (*U* 6.919). At the gravesite, Hynes protests Mr Power's misplaced resurrection of Christlike Parnell ('Some say he is not in that grave at all. That the coffin was filled with stones. That he will come again', *U* 6.923–4) by praying to the fallen leader as a mortal man: 'Parnell will never come again, [Hynes] said. He's there, all that was moral of him. Peace be to his ashes' (*U* 6.926–7). Hynes is not the only character preoccupied with thoughts of Parnell on June 16; for example, Mr Deasy's assertion that '[a] woman too brought Parnell low' (*U* 2.394) in 'Nestor' is the crux of sin throughout the novel. In context, the scandal of the Parnell–O'Shea affair evoked by Hynes's identification of with 'very good initial' bridges the political/public and sexual/private spheres at odds in 'Cyclops'.

British to curb public sympathy for him during his trial in 1916 and prevent him from becoming a martyr in Ireland like Parnell.

The publication of Casement's diaries amounted to a violent expulsion from the closet orchestrated by the British as a method of turning public opinion against him. Joyce exploits the blurriness between the 'two' Casements (of 1904 and 1916) in order to enjoy the resonances of both. Casement is simultaneously the author of an influential report on the Congo, an Irish insurgent, a victim of British oppression, a hanged martyr, and a publicly shamed homosexual. The events that identify Casement as Irish coincide with the public exposure of his homosexuality; to acknowledge Casement's Irishness is thus also to register his queerness. Rather than erase Casement's complexity as a subaltern figure, as Duffy suggests, I propose that Joyce manipulates the 'open secret' of Casement's homosexuality by having the Citizen identify him as Irish. While Joyce and his countrymen would not have identified Casement as Irish in 1904, readers from the 1920s onward would recognise the subtextual significance of his inclusion in a chapter fraught with the executions of Irishmen at the hands of the British.

Katherine Ebury has recently connected Irish modernist 'martyrology' to an 'eroticized hero worship of condemned men' like Casement and Roger Emmet (2022: 130). Certainly, colonial violence and sex become inseparable as the penis of the hanged man becomes an object of fascination for Kiernan's patrons. Joe Brady's hanging in particular becomes an 'erotic scene commanded by sacral nationalism for ideological reinscriptions of Irish victimhood' (Lapointe, 2008: 191), martyrising his post-mortem erection, which points accusatorily at his oppressors:

> —There's one thing it hasn't a deterrent effect on, says Alf.
>
> —What's that? says Joe.
>
> —The poor bugger's tool that's being hanged, says Alf.
>
> —That so? says Joe.
>
> —God's truth, says Alf. I heard that from the head warder that was in Kilmainham when they hanged Joe Brady, the invincible. He told me when they cut him down after the drop it was standing up in their faces like a poker.
>
> —Ruling passion strong in death, says Joe, as someone said. (*U* 12.455–63)

Brady's execution here foregrounds the 'poor bugger's tool' as a symbol of Irish resistance. The 'tool' is the object of both a dirty joke and a serious discussion of colonial violence, but the hanged 'bugger' (note that this homophobic slur refers to sodomy) fails to unite the patrons and instead creates more dissonance, particularly between Bloom and the Citizen, over the symbolism of the hanged man's erection:

> —That can be explained by science, says Bloom. It's only a natural phenomenon, don't you see, because on account of the …
> […] And the citizen and Bloom having an argument about the point, […] Roger Emmet and die for your country, the Tommy Moore touch about Sara Curran and she's far from the land. (*U* 12.464–5, 499–501)

Ebury reads this final argument as counterpoint to Bloom's scientific exegesis and the uneasy erotic fascination of the other men; in order to direct the eroticism toward a heterosexual target, 'if Sarah Curran had not existed, Irish culture would have to invent her' (2022: 132). Without a Cathleen ni Houlihan figure through whom a heterosexist nationalist fantasy can be routed, Casement's sexuality creates a problem for the heterosexual masculine narrative of Irish resistance that seems to hang over the 'Cyclops' episode.

It has been suggested that one of many 'shadow texts' of this scene is Casement's 'speech from the dock' (e.g. Mullen, 2012: 97, 109–14; Ebury, 2022: 131–2).[5] This is nowhere more apparent than in Bloom's declaration that 'love' is 'the opposite of hatred' (*U* 12.1485). Casement's solution to colonial violence is 'love':

> Loyalty is a sentiment, not a law. It rests on love, not on restraint. The government of Ireland by England rests on restraint, and not on law; and since it demands no love, it can evoke no loyalty. […] If loyalty be something less than love and more than law, then we have had enough of such loyalty for Ireland or Irishmen. If we are to be indicted as criminals, to be shot as murderers, to be imprisoned as convicts because our offence is that we love Ireland more than we value our lives, then I know not what virtue resides in any offer of self-government held out to brave men on such terms. Self-government is our right, a thing born in us at birth; a thing no more to be doled out to us or withheld from us by another people than the right to life itself—than the right to feel the sun or smell the flowers, or to love our kind (Casement, 1917: 198, 204).

Casement's speech and Bloom's pronouncement that 'love' is the opposite of 'Force, hatred, history, all that' (*U* 12.1481) exhibit a shared 'queerly inflected love' that Mullen argues 'subverts and redirects the proper love of family, country, and God that had

[5] Joyce's notes for 'Cyclops' include 'speech from the dock' ('Cyclops' 4:114; Herring, 1972: 97), and while this may refer to any of several famous speeches 'from the dock', including Roger Emmet's, it is not difficult to argue that Casement's, with its focus on love, law, religion, Irish patriotism, and British persecution, could be what Joyce had in mind. Ebury notes that Casement modeled some of his speech on Emmet's, including at least one direct quotation, which makes for slipperiness here (2022: 131).

so repressively asserted itself in bourgeois culturalist strains of Irish nationalism' (Mullen, 2012: 97). In the shadow of Wilde and Casement, Bloom's suggestion becomes perverted by the recalcitrant patrons; Wyse's Biblical reminder 'Love your neighour' (*U* 12.1490) is transformed by the Citizen into an anti-Semitic and homophobic insult: 'Beggar my neighbour is his motto' (12.1491).[6] Bloom's attempt to explain the power of love is thus made impotent through circuitous logic and anti-Semitism via the Citizen's homoerotic devotion to Irish martyrs 'that were hanged [...] for the cause' (*U* 12.482–3). However, Michael Patrick Lapointe has noted that 'the text posits these Irish martyrs are not virile at all' but rather 'paternally and politically sterile victims' (2008: 189) of colonialism. The Citizen's bullying is at least in part a kind of anxious affirmation of his own heterosexual masculine virility.

Bloom's scientific explanation of post-mortem erections is interrupted by one of the episode's longer interludes, a mock-epic execution attended by all manner of foreign dignitaries and high society elites. The hero of this tale, an unnamed 'hero martyr', is given last rites 'in a most christian spirit' while 'ladies [wave] their handkerchiefs in excitement' and a children's choir sings 'a high double F recalling those piercingly lovely notes with which the eunuch Catalani beglamoured our greatgreatgrandmothers' (*U* 12.598–610). The epic climaxes with the hero's 'blushing bride elect' throwing herself onto 'the muscular bosom of him who was about to be launched into eternity for her sake' (*U* 12.637–39), thus creating a most tragic, heterosexual, nationalist tableau. The 'ruling passion' of the erection is here safely directed toward a woman, mirroring the tragedy of Emmet and Curran. However, the scene internally undermines itself. The hero's display of piousness is followed by a detailed account of the 'various finely tempered disembowelling appliances' (*U* 12.619) and the slaughter of sheep, the Christian symbol of innocence: 'the grim figure of the executioner [...] tested the edge of his horrible weapon by [...] decapitat[ing] in rapid succession a flock of sheep' (12.615–16). The hero's sweetheart, after kissing him passionately and promising to 'cherish his memory' and 'never forget her hero boy' (*U* 12.643–4), takes up with another before the execution has even occurred:

> A most romantic incident occurred when a handsome young Oxford graduate, noted for his chivalry towards the fair sex, stepped forward and, presenting his visiting card, bankbook and genealogical tree, solicited the hand of the hapless young lady, requesting her to name the day, and was accepted on the spot. Every lady in the

[6] In the children's game 'beggar-my-neighbour', players extract payment (cards) from each other until one's hand is depleted. Mullen notes that the homophone to 'bugger', thus the Citizen's insult 'carries the full charge of homophobic and racist meanings' (2012: 110) by insinuating Bloom is a 'bugger' and a 'beggar', the stereotypical greedy Jew.

> audience was presented with a tasteful souvenir of the occasion in the shape of a skull and crossbones brooch, a timely and generous act which evoked a fresh outburst of emotion: and when the gallant young Oxonian (the bearer, by the way, of one of the most timehonoured names in Albion's history) placed on the finger of his blushing *fiancée* an expensive engagement ring with emeralds set in the form of a fourleaved shamrock the excitement knew no bounds. (*U* 12.659–69)

The explicit Englishness of the replacement suitor, in addition to the commodification of Irish symbols, aligns with the Citizen's cynical blaming of female sexuality for colonialism: 'The adulteress and her paramour brought the Saxon robbers here' (*U* 12.1157–58). Rather than, as the Citizen hopes, demonstrating the virility of Irish heroes, the death penalty interrupts the cycle which reproduces patriarchal heterosexuality—Catholic marriage leading to children—by castrating the Irish (note the 'eunuchs' singing), thus cutting branches off the 'genealogical tree' of the country's best and bravest.

This scene is later recapitulated into a carnivalesque display of queer excess in 'Circe' when the Croppy Boy, the titular character of a ballad set during the 1798 Irish Rebellion, is brought to the gallows. Rather than the promise of a heterosexual marriage, this execution via hanging ends with the boy's '*violent erection*' sending '*gouts of sperm spouting through his deathclothes onto the cobblestones*' after which several ladies '*rush forward with their handkerchiefs to sop it up*' (*U* 15.4548–52) as souvenirs. Rumbold, a hangman applicant first mocked in 'Cyclops' then translated into the colonial authority of the sheep-killing butcher, subsequently auctions off the 'rope which hanged the awful rebel' for 'ten shillings' (*U* 15.4554–5) in continued hyperbolic commodified violence. The dream (re)mixes colonial authority and deviant, uncontrolled sexuality in the Dublin's red-light district, the culmination of a day's reflection on the 'nightmare' of Irish history from which Stephen Dedalus, Joyce's avatar, has been 'trying to awake' (*U* 2.377).

Stephen has been preoccupied with ideas of justice, scapegoating, and Irish persecution since the beginning of the novel; in 'Proteus', he recalls how in Paris he

> used to carry punched tickets to prove an alibi if they arrested [him] for murder somewhere. Justice. On the night of the seventeenth of February 1904 the prisoner was seen by two witnesses. Other fellow did it: other me. (*U* 3.179–82)

Stephen's fear of persecution, which recalls the circumstances of Myles Joyce's conviction, becomes reality during his confrontation with Private Carr. After Stephen unpatriotically asserts that King Edward 'wants [his] money and [his] life' (*U* 15.4568–

9), Carr threatens to 'wring the neck of any bugger says a word against [his] fucking king' and starts '*tugging at his belt*' (15.4597–9), which Lapointe has noted 'inadvertently projects a sexualised image of undressing amid the irony of his crude diction' (2008: 194). The reappearance of the homophobic slur 'bugger', directed at Stephen, causes further slippage between violence and eroticism. Carr's assault of Stephen is thus both 'coded as queer' and 'mark[s] the climactic clash between Ireland and England' (Lapointe, 2008: 196). Perhaps, as Dale Barleben has already speculated, 'Joyce felt that, on some small scale, he was correcting the wrongs of British Imperial power, so brutally suffered by those like Wilde only 23 years earlier' (2015: 346) by exposing the cycle of national violence in which he, Stephen, and Bloom—like Wilde, Casement, and Myles Joyce—have found themselves caught.

Let us briefly return to the case of Myles Joyce: Joyce recorded a rumour that 'even the hangman could not make himself understood by the victim and angrily kicked at the unhappy man in the head to force him into the noose' (*OCPW* 145). At first, there may appear to be no link between this brutality and Rumbold, the Croppy Boy's executioner. In 'Cyclops', Rumbold appears as a foppish figure of colonial decorum:

> Quietly, unassumingly Rumbold stepped on to the scaffold in faultless morning dress and wearing his favourite flower, the *Gladiolus Cruentus*. He announced his presence by that gentle Rumboldian cough which so many have tried (unsuccessfully) to imitate—short, painstaking yet withal so characteristic of the man. (*U* 12.592–6)

However, like Breen's 'noble gait and countenance' (*U* 12.246), this is a (mis)translation of a rural brute into a flower-wearing, well-dressed dandy bearing startling similarity to portraits of Oscar Wilde—who, like the rebel suitor, was once a 'gallant young Oxonian' with a list of names and 'high-sounding titles' that 'symbolizes him' (*OCPW* 148). In truth, Rumbold has far more in common with the illiterate Myles Joyce; his application letter is a 'dirty scrawl' (*U* 12.434) that contains numerous errors ('*i hanged*', 12.420; '*fowl murder*', 12.421; '*my terms is five ginnees*', 12.429–30). Rumbold describes several executions he has performed, including having '*a special nack of putting the noose*' (*U* 12.427), for which the Citizen calls him as 'a barbarous bloody barbarian' (12.432).[7] The Citizen's revulsion, like his love of men who 'die for [their] country' (*U* 12.500), adds to the absurdity of his threat to crucify Bloom: 'I'll brain that bloody jewman for

[7] The alliteration echoes the '*Black Beast Burned*' headline later in the episode (*U* 12.1324). The tabloid's description of a black man in Omaha killed by hanging, burning, and firing squad (the unnamed narrator adds that 'they ought to drown him in the sea after and electrocute and crucify him to make sure of their job', *U* 12.1326–8) is, to quote Margot Backus, a 'violent show of excess that parallels the hyperbolic damage done to Ireland' (Backus, 2008: 135). Just as the British press crucified Wilde and Casement, so too does the catchy title turn state-sanctioned violence into public spectacle.

using the holy name. By Jesus, I'll crucify him' (12.1811–2). The irony of taking Christ's name while condemning a man to crucifixion for the same offense is lost on the Citizen, as is that of threatening the Other with capital punishment just as the English did the Irish.

In an episode highly concerned with the spectacle of violence, the Citizen's threat ties together the cultural stigma of Otherness and the state apparatus which actively produces that stigma. Despite the subjugation of the Irish through state-sanctioned violence, the position of executioner on behalf of the British is a job for which impoverished Irishmen eagerly vie, according to Alf's application letters. Alf asserts that 'they would hang their own fathers for five quid down and travelling expenses' (*U* 12.441–2) and that 'they chop up the rope after and sell the bits for a few bob a skull' (12.445). Rumbold's application is read out at the bar, despite the Citizen '[making] a grab at the letter' (*U* 12.426) to stop them as they laugh at the brutality and mock Rumbold's low status. This moment echoes Bloom's earlier fear that he would have his private 'letters read out' followed by 'laughter in court' (*U* 11.1079–80), and Joyce recalls Wilde's case in nearly identical terms: 'Wilde's letters to his friends were read out before the court and their author was denounced as a degenerate' (*OCPW* 150).

Private Letters, Public Shaming

The nightmarish courtroom scene in 'Circe' during which Leopold Bloom is put on trial for 'breach of promise', plagiarism, sexual harassment, and sodomy echoes both the Wilde trials and the language Joyce uses to describe them in his 1909 essay. Like in Wilde's libel trial, Bloom's reputation is called into question and his letters used against him. Bloom—as his alter-ego, 'Henry Flower, esq.'—has been having an epistolary affair with Martha Clifford that mirrors Wilde's clandestine love letters to his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, through the flower imagery, unequal class/power relations, and ambiguous gender identification. Bloom worries in 'Sirens' that his 'letters [would be] read out for breach of promise' (*U* 11.1078–9); in 'Circe', Clifford appears as a plaintiff in his trial to claim that he has committed a 'breach of promise' (*U* 15.765) on the witness stand, having been led to believe she was to be paid, since she was recruited as his typist: "Wanted, smart lady typist to aid gentleman in literary work" (*U* 8.326–7). Despite being, at the very least, guilty of false advertising, Bloom's defence is that he is 'being made a scapegoat' (*U* 15.776). In 1909, Joyce claimed that 'whether innocent or guilty of the charges brought against him, [Wilde] was undoubtedly a scapegoat' (*OCPW* 150).

At Bloom's request, Clifford's letter is sexually suggestive, circuitously offering sexual favours in the phrases 'I do wish I could do something for you' (*U* 5.247) and

'O how I long to meet you' (5.253), alongside dirty talk consisting of calling Bloom a 'naughty boy' and threats to 'punish' him (5.252). Bloom is excited by her dirty talk, which he calls 'doing the indignant' for 'a girl of good family' (*U* 5.269). Bloom then makes Clifford's letter somehow dirtier by censoring it with 'flower language':

> Angry tulips with you darling manflower punish your cactus if you don't please poor forgetmenot how I long violets to dear roses when we soon anemone meet all naughty nightstalk wife Martha's perfume. (*U* 5.264–6)

Bloom changes the meaning of Clifford's statements by censoring words. The quoted passage may be meant as the 'poison bouquet to strike him down' (*U* 5.262), that is to say, that he believes consummating this affair will be his downfall, or as an attempt at the 'language of flowers' (*U* 5.261) that Bloom does not seem to fully grasp. Hsin-yu Hung points to 'punish your cactus' as a manifestation of the castration anxiety imbued in 'Bloom's sadistic [sexual] fantasies' (2008: 351), insomuch that flowers typically represent female genitalia, but it is Bloom's 'manflower' is being threatened. This is further evinced by Bloom's description of his penis in the bath as 'a languid floating flower' (*U* 5.572). The supposed 'indecency' of Wilde's letters was defended on the grounds of their 'aesthetic value' as 'prose poems' (Foldy, 1997: 13; Anon, 1906: 102). Bloom makes the same claim, having 'written a really beautiful letter, a poem in itself' (*U* 15.1801–2) that, like Wilde's, uses flower metaphors to obscure deviant sexuality. Bloom's naughty version of Clifford's letter mirrors the flower-abundant content of Wilde's letters that, as Joyce wrote in the 'Salomé' essay, 'were read out before the court' and 'denounced as [...] degenerate' (*OCPW* 150). Joyce quotes letters from Wilde to Douglas ('Time [...] is jealous of your lilies and roses'; 'I love to see you wandering through violet-filled valleys') as evidence that Wilde was 'far from being a monster of perversion' (*OCPW* 150). Another way in which Bloom is marked as a Wilde analogue is the queer slippage when he '*produces from his heartpocket a crumpled yellow flower*' for the police, which he claims was 'given [to him] by a *man* I don't know *his* name' (*U* 15.738–9, emphasis added). This misgendering of Clifford, whose letter had a 'yellow flower' affixed to it (*U* 5.239) once again implicates Bloom in queerly inflected eroticism.

Bloom's trial in 'Circe', like Wilde's trials, can be broken down into two principal parts: the literary and the excremental. In Wilde's case, the 'literary' portion of his trials consisted primarily of Edward Carson's cross-examination, wherein Wilde was asked to assess the moral value of several texts, including two poems by Lord Alfred Douglas, personal letters from Wilde to Douglas, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

These proceedings claimed the lion's share of the public's attention because of their entertainment value, provocativeness, and appeal to popular culture; at the time, two of Wilde's plays were running in London, and *Dorian Gray* was enjoying commercial success. Like Wilde, Bloom is charged with crimes 'in which violations of private, sexual, and public artistic decorum converge' (Backus, 2008: 107). The supposed immorality of Wilde's public works—and particularly the overt homosexuality present in his private letters to his lover—was defended for their literary/artistic value. Such a defence is unavailable to Bloom, whose exaggerated claim that he 'follow[s] a literary occupation, author-journalist [...] connected with the British and Irish press' (*U* 15.801–4), is promptly discredited: '*Freeman's Urinal* and *Weekly Arsewipe* here. [...] Who writes? Is it Bloom?' (15.812–3). The toilet humour here simultaneously recalls Bloom's visit to the outhouse in 'Calypso', situates the courtroom in the domain of men's public toilets (a space associated, in Joyce's day, with homosexuality), and calls Bloom on his 'bullshit' claim of being an 'author-journalist'.

As a result, Bloom is accused by Phillip Beaufoy of being 'a plagiarist' (*U* 15.822) who 'cribbed some of [his] bestselling copy' (15.824). Wilde was also frequently the victim of accusations of plagiarism (see Ellmann, 1988: 435) for which he was always acquitted, owing to his entertaining methods of self-defence. Bloom, in contrast, answers the accusation with '*hangdog meekness*' (*U* 15.829), all but admitting to a crime of which he is innocent. 'Circe' twists the events of the morning from 'Calypso', when Bloom read Beaufoy's story, briefly 'envied' its author, thought about how he might like to 'invent a story', and finally 'tore away half the prize story sharply and wiped himself with it' (*U* 4.516–37). When Beaufoy reveals the 'damning evidence of [his] work disfigured with the hallmark of the beast' (*U* 15.843–4), artistic/public and bodily/private indiscretions are conflated. Earlier, after being called 'shitbreeches' by a passing motorist, Bloom was embarrassed to admit that a '[t]rue word [may be] spoken in jest. That awful cramp in Lad lane. Something poisonous I ate. [...] Mark of the beast' (*U* 15.195, 207–9). Although on trial for plagiarism and, later, sexual assault, the evidence in Bloom's case frequently returns to the outhouse, making the most 'private' of affairs public. When a 'Nymph' confronts Bloom later in the episode by asking, 'What have I not seen in that chamber?' (*U* 15.3284), his apologetic explanation for the 'soiled personal linen' (15.3287) once more reinforces this connection, a fantastical merging of sexual and excremental crimes with literary/epistolary indecency.

The 'crime' of which Bloom is guilty thus contains a parodic reversal of the 'fecal stains on the [...] sheets' that turned the tide against Wilde in his criminal trial (Ellmann, 1988: 477). While Joyce was writing 'Circe' in Paris, Sylvia Beach sold him a copy of *The Trial of Oscar Wilde* (Anon, 1906), 'a collection of shorthand reports' sensationalised to

the point of being downright pornographic (Lernout, 2020: 122, 136). The book includes frank and scandalous details, such as the testimony of a chambermaid, who

> complained to the management of the state in which she found the bed-linen and the utensils of the room. [...] The bed-linen was stained. The colour was brown. The towels were similarly discoloured. One of the pillows was marked with face-powder. There was excrement in one of the utensils in the bedroom. Wilde had handed her half a sovereign (Anon, 1906: 88).

A previous witness similarly testified that she, a housekeeper, had seen 'the state of the sheets of the bed in which Atkins slept after Wilde's first visit', and that they were 'stained in a peculiar way' (Anon, 1906: 39). An exegesis, perhaps added by the anonymous author, adds that 'the sodomistic act has much the same effect as an enema inserted up the rectum' (Anon, 1906: 40) in order to clarify the evidence's relevance. Under cross-examination, Wilde of course denied the veracity of these testimonies:

> [Wilde]— "Their evidence is quite untrue."
> Sir Frank— "You deny that the bed-linen was marked in the way described?"
> [Wilde]— "I do not examine bed-linen when I arise. I am not a housemaid."
> Sir Frank— "Were the stains there, Sir?"
> [Wilde]— "If they were there, they were not caused in the way the Prosecution most filthily suggests." (Anon, 1906: 102)

The excremental portion of Bloom's trial in 'Circe' pointedly evokes the sensational public reveal of this 'Savoy Hotel evidence', which was one of the deciding factors in Wilde's criminal conviction for 'gross indecency', as well as gesturing toward the way in which Wilde's writings themselves were 'transformed into "shit-marked sheets" when they were used against him in court' (Backus, 2008: 106). Though the sheets of Beaufoy's story, *Dorian Gray*, Bosie's letters, and Wilde's bed otherwise have little else in common, each is dragged up to the bar as excrement-smeared evidence of private indiscretions for the public to evaluate.

Like Wilde, the outcome of Bloom's trial largely rests on the testimony of a maid: Mary Driscoll, the Blooms' former domestic. Driscoll alleges that Bloom 'surprised [her] in the rere of the premises' (*U* 15.885), held her so tightly that she was 'discoloured in four places' (15.887), and 'interfered twict with [her] clothing' (15.887–8). Although there is ongoing debate in the scholarly community about what, if anything, 'really' occurred between them, Kimberly J. Devlin and others have persuasively read this testimony as describing an attempted sexual assault 'suggestive of anal rape' (Devlin,

2002: 142). Bloom's anal fixation is routed through Driscoll's double-entendre and the ensuing focus on the same 'innocent' explanation offered by Wilde's solicitor for the Savoy Hotel evidence (Anon, 1906: 78), namely, an explosive bowel movement:

> *The crossexamination proceeds* re *Bloom and the bucket. A large bucket. Bloom himself. Bowel trouble. In Beaver street. Gripe, yes. Quite bad. A plasterer's bucket. By walking stifflegged. Suffered* untold *misery. Deadly agony. About noon. Love or burgundy. Yes, some spinach. Crucial moment. He did not look in the bucket. Nobody. Rather a mess. Not completely. A* Titbits *back number*. (*U* 15.929–37)

The correlation between Bloom's diarrhoea and Driscoll's accusation would be completely unintelligible without the Wilde connection. Other parallels abound; for example, O'Molloy from the 'Cyclops' episode, acting as Bloom's solicitor, alleges that the 'misdemeanour [against Driscoll] was due to a momentary aberration of heredity' (*U* 15.944–5), which echoes Joyce's claim that 'heredity and the epileptic cast of [Wilde's] nervous system' (*OCPW* 150) were to blame for Wilde's sexual proclivities. Bloom's defence that he 'treated [Driscoll] white' by giving her 'mementos, smart emerald garters far above [her] station' (*U* 15.876–7) further demonstrates the true crime in his actions, a crime of which Wilde was also guilty: crossing class boundaries.

Bloom takes pleasure in transgressing boundaries, be they sexual or social, such as by soliciting Driscoll and Clifford. Due to her low social status as a member of 'the unfortunate class' (*U* 15.864), Driscoll is forced to defend herself as being 'not a bad one' and bearing 'a respectable character' (15.866) before offering testimony. Throughout Wilde's trial, witnesses claiming they allowed Wilde to sodomise them in exchange for gifts are presented as being 'ill-bred youths' of 'questionable moral character' (Anon, 1906: 13). *The Wilde Century*, which traces the development of gay stereotypes post-Wilde, notes that 'the Wildean stereotype [...] installed economic exploitation as a linchpin of queer relationships' (Sinfield, 1994: 149). Edward Shelley became the prosecution's key witness on this account; only he among the witnesses could claim, as Driscoll does, to be of 'respectable character' (*U* 15.866). Shelley claimed that Wilde 'never practiced any actual improprieties upon [him]' because he 'would never allow anything of the kind' (Anon, 1906: 45), which spoke to his decency much in the same way that Driscoll's testimony, 'He made a certain suggestion but I thought more of myself as poor as I am' (*U* 15.873), affirms her position as a victim of Bloom's social and sexual transgression. The 'mementos [...] far above [her] station' (15.876–7) Bloom admits to giving Driscoll similarly echo Wilde's habit of providing his lovers with hush money and luxurious gifts:

> Mr. Gill— "You made handsome presents to these young fellows?"
> [Wilde]— "Pardon me, I differ. I gave two or three of them a cigarette-case. Boys of that class smoke a good deal of cigarettes. I have a weakness for presenting my [acquaintances] with cigarette-cases."
> Mr. Gill— "Rather an expensive habit if indulged in indiscriminately."
> [Wilde]— "Less extravagant than giving jewelled-garters to ladies." (Anon, 1906: 63)

Bloom's gift of 'smart emerald garters' (*U* 15.877) takes the place of Wilde's signature cigarette-cases while again referencing the transcript ('jewelled-garters'). The crossing of class boundaries through bribery, in both Wilde and Bloom's cases, is equated to the transgression of sexual boundaries.

Bloom's trial in 'Circe' follows the same pattern as Wilde's in that, after the initial accusations of literary immorality, several witnesses come forward to accuse him of sexual crimes, of which Driscoll is only the first. The additional wronged parties are three upper-class ladies, Mrs Bellington, Mrs Yelverton Barry, and The Honourable Mrs Mervyn Talboys. They accuse Bloom of various degrees of sexual harassment, from leering, sexual comments about their bodies, and mailed pornography, to invitations to 'defile the marriage bed' (*U* 15.1055). These events, which precipitate a chorus of 'me too' (*U* 15.1075), are likely fictitious and conjured to satiate his flagellation kink, but each accusation of impropriety is framed as a violation of class boundaries. Mrs Yelverton Barry says that he admired 'her peerless globes' from 'the gods' (*U* 15.1019)—that is, he ogled her breasts from the cheap seats while she 'sat in a box of the *Theatre Royal*' (15.1019–20)—and accuses him of making 'improper overtures' for her 'to misconduct [her]self' (15.1021). Mrs Bellingham alleges that Bloom did the same to her, adding that he urged her to 'defile the marriage bed [and] commit adultery' (*U* 15.1055). To the Honourable Mrs Mervyn Talboys, Bloom allegedly sent 'an obscene photograph [...] [of his wife] practicing illicit intercourse with a muscular torero' (*U* 15.1065–9) after which

> He urged [Talboys] to do likewise, to misbehave, to sin with officers of the garrison. He implored [her] to soil his letter in an unspeakable manner, to chastise him as he richly deserves, to bestride and ride him, to give him a most vicious horsewhipping. (*U* 15.1069–73)

Bloom's fantasy crime, trial, and punishment demonstrate 'transgressive pleasure in violating the sexual norm [that] is supplemented by an aggressive pleasure at overstepping class boundaries' (Valente, 2004: 227). His enjoyment of his fantasised 'punishment' is perfectly captured when he gleefully '*offers the other cheek*' (*U* 15.1109)

to Mrs Talboys' whip. Bloom elevates his spanking to an exchange of social currency by describing the result as 'a warm tingling glow without effusion' made by '*refined* birching to stimulate the circulation' (*U* 15.1095–6, emphasis added). Bloom's focus on the refinement of the object of flagellation elevates his kink to a high-class pastime. Moreover, Bloom's erotic trajectory from targeting lower-class women (Clifford and Driscoll) to high-society ladies mirrors Wilde's in an important respect. Wilde's downfall was a direct consequence of his affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. Wilde could have continued his affairs with men of the lower class perhaps indefinitely, but by embarrassing the Marquess of Queensbury by consorting with his son, he provoked a public scandal. The trial scene in 'Circe' is thus a parody that exposes Bloom's 'perversions' in a carnivalesque courtroom in order to mock the judicial system which ruined Wilde. Just as Wilde's bedsheets were brought into the public sphere for scrutiny, so too is Bloom's dirty laundry publicly aired when he is accused of queer-coded sexual misconduct that transgresses class boundaries.

Conclusion: Bugger Courage

Written from the perspective of someone living during and after the monumental political, social, and economic changes post-WWI, the 'Cyclops' episode bitterly recalls the past and future state-sanctioned violence against the Irish. While there are few direct allusions to the 1916 Easter Rising, it nevertheless looms over the episode for any discerning reader. The air of lynching, uprisings, martyrdom, and sex scandal brushes up against Joyce's subtle invocation of Roger Casement, one of the few leaders of the Rising who was hanged. While the Citizen *might* have known Casement as 'an Irishman' (*U* 12.1545), it is more likely that the reader is expected to identify his Irishness in retrospect—alongside overtones of the homophobia, sexual scandal, and sensationalised journalism that ruined Oscar Wilde. In 'The Critic as Artist', Wilde wrote that 'England has done one thing; it has invented and established Public Opinion, which is an attempt to organise the ignorance of the community, and to elevate it to the dignity of a physical force' (Wilde, 1913: 205–6). In *Ulysses*, Joyce creates a public—the men at Barney Kiernan's—that embodies Ireland's 'old guard' as a physical force that expels Bloom, and cleverly situates this public in a pub located behind the courthouse, just beyond the official reaches of the law. Although the Citizen and his followers are not depicted in a flattering light, rather than outright denouncing this counterpublic, Joyce situates them firmly in the past; they are the public opinion of 1904, but their way of seeing the world is rightfully coming to an end.

In 'Circe', newspapers appear 'containing the new addresses of all the cuckolds in Dublin' (*U* 15.1126–7), publishing details about the private lives of men like Bloom. Wilde had a few choice words about such publications:

> The harm is done by the serious, thoughtful, earnest journalists, who solemnly, as they are doing at present, will drag before the eyes of the public some incident in the private life of a great statesman [...] and invite the public to discuss the incident, to exercise authority in the matter, to give their views, and not merely to give their views, but to carry them into action, to dictate to the man upon all other points, to dictate to his party, to dictate to his country; in fact, to make themselves ridiculous, offensive, and harmful. The private lives of men and women should not be told to the public. The public have nothing to do with them at all. [We should] not allow the details of the trials that take place in the divorce courts to be published for the amusement or criticism of the public (2012/1891: 48).

Wilde wrote *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* four years before he, like Bloom, would become the victim of this exact violation. This irony likely made the text even more attractive to Joyce, whose opinion of Wilde changed dramatically as he grew to understand the potentially devastating cost of publishing obscenity, as Margot Backus has discussed (2024: passim). While as a young man, Joyce admonished Wilde for not having 'the courage to develop the allusions' in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and therefore not living up to 'the capital which Wilde's prosecuting counsel made out of certain parts of it' (*LII* 150), just three years later, he treated Wilde more kindly in the 'Salomé' essay: 'Each man writes his own sin into *Dorian Gray* [...] What Dorian Gray's sin was no one says and no one knows. He who discovers it has committed it' (*OCPW* 151). When Joyce goes on to 'touch upon the vital centre of Wilde's art: sin' (*OCPW* 151), his sympathy for his fellow exile as a 'scapegoat' (*OCPW* 150) of British authorities is one to which he returns in his use of the Wilde trials as a structure and paratext for Bloom's trial.

Not all of Joyce's contemporaries would warm to these views during Joyce's lifetime, of course. Of particular note is the case of John Quinn, the lawyer and patron of Joyce whose rampant and ferocious homophobia ultimately cost Joyce the opportunity to publish *Ulysses* in the United States for decades. Quinn defended 'the strong hard filth of a man like Joyce' by comparing it to 'the devotion to art of a soft flabby man like Wilde' when *The Little Review* was charged with obscenity for serialising *Ulysses*, but in so doing made scapegoats of the magazine's publishers, whom he castigated, and irrationally so, for being lesbians: 'I have no interest at all in defending people who intentionally and stupidly and brazenly and Sapphoistically and pederastically and urinally and menstrually violate the law', he wrote to Ezra Pound.[8] In the same letter, Quinn purported that

[8] Unpublished letter from John Quinn to Ezra Pound during *The Little Review* trial, 16 October 1920, Charles Deering McCormick Library; see Jodie Medd, 2012: 140–144. I have published a longer discussion about Quinn's letters for a lay audience for the LGBTQ blog *Prism & Pen*, 'Bugger Courage: How One Man's Homophobia Almost Killed *Ulysses*', 4 May 2025.

> All pederasts want to go into court. Bringing libel suits is one of the stigmata of buggery. The bugger and the Lesbian constantly think in terms of suits and defenses. The sort of perverted courage of the bugger and the Lesbian is not true courage. It's bugger courage and Lesbian courage (1920: np).

Such was not Joyce's view of either homosexuality nor litigation. While writing 'Cyclops' in 1919, Joyce's brought a libel suit against Henry Carr, an actor whom he had hired to perform as Algernon Moncrieff in a Swiss production of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. The production was a success; on opening night, Joyce reportedly called out to the audience, 'Hurrah for Ireland! Poor Wilde was Irish and so am I!' (*JJ* 426). Carr claimed he had been underpaid and tricked into paying expenses for the show, namely, a pair of new trousers he had bought for his costume (*JJ* 426). Joyce sued him for money owed for the sale of tickets, winning 124 francs in his first lawsuit, which emboldened him to pursue a second for libel over a public insult (*JJ* 427–8, 445).[9] Joyce's libel suit, like Wilde's, was unwise; Joyce was ordered to pay Carr's legal expenses of 59 francs and damages of 129 francs (*JJ* 452). A caricature of Carr appears as the drunken soldier who assaults Stephen in 'Circe', but the injustice Joyce felt he had suffered in court can also be seen in the 'public' dismissal of Breen's lawsuit by the Citizen and company, and of course in Joyce's condemnation of the 'howl of puritanical joy' (*OCPW* 149) that accompanied Wilde's downfall.

Joyce's change in perspective about Wilde enters *Ulysses* through a kind of double-vison. His retrospective avatar Stephen, who is associated with Wildean aestheticism, is the perfect embodiment of this. His homosexual panic over potential overtures from Mulligan[10] is comically neurotic, but nevertheless demonstrates the 'moral panic' that gripped the nation after the Wilde trials. The public consciousness of Dublin in 1904 is catalogued through Stephen and Bloom's interactions with the mechanisms of parochialism, demonstrating just how embedded heteronormativity is 'in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; education; plus the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture' (Warner, 2005: 194). The Citizen's intense heterosexist nationalism would already seem quaint to readers by the 1920s; it is *his* time, not Breen's, that is 'U. p: up' (*U* 12.258). The tides were changing—a change set in motion by the Wilde trials in 1895 was already being felt in 1904, and certainly

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[9] Richard Ellmann reports that Carr shouted at Joyce something to the effect of 'You're a cad! You've cheated me and pocketed the proceeds. You're a swindler. […] Next time I catch you outside I'll wring your neck!' (*JJ* 427).

[10] See Kevin Dettmar, 'Vacation, Vocation, Perversion: Stephen Dedalus and Homosexual Panic' (2001), Frances Devlin-Glass, 'Writing in the Slipstream of the Wildean Trauma: Joyce, Buck Mulligan and Homophobia Reconsidered' (2005), and Chris Wells and Tim Ziaukas 'Wilde about *Ulysses*: Deleuzian Assemblages and The Importance of Being Oscar' (2024) in the present collection for analyses of Stephen's homosexual panic and Mulligan's Wildean resemblance.

by 1922. *Ulysses* acts as an archive of these queer moments by encapsulating both the values of turn-of-the-century Ireland and the rapid changes to those values which were only just beginning to reach the novel's characters. Michael Foldy argues that Wilde, though not blind to the symbolism his fall from grace took on in the public imagination, 'never really believed in his heart of hearts that what he had done was wrong' after his conviction (Foldy, 1997: 95). Bloom similarly maintains that he is 'wrongfully accused' and 'guiltless as the unsunned snow' (*U* 15.1762–9) when he is put on trial in 'Circe'. Bloom, like Wilde, may have 'commit[ted] a sin against society', but over the course of Joyce's novel 'realise[s] through that sin his true perfection' (Wilde, 2012/1891: 35)—that he 'has written a really beautiful letter, a poem in itself' (*U* 15.1801–2).

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Competing Interests

The author is also an editor for this Special Collection and has been kept entirely separate from the peer review process for their article.

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