Joyce's Jewish Stew: The Alimentary Lists in Ulysses

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In their pun-filled article, “Towards an Interpretation of Ulysses: Metonymy and Gastronomy: A Bloom with a Stew,” an equally whimsical pair of critics (who prefer to remain pseudonymous) assert that “the key to the work lies in gastronomy,” that “Joyce’s overriding concern was to abolish the dietary laws of the tribes of Israel,” and conclude that “the book is in fact a stew! . . . Ulysses is a recipe for bouillabaisse” (Longa and Brevis 5-6). Like “Longa” and “Brevis” interpretation, James Joyce’s tone is often satiric, and this is especially to be seen in his handling of Leopold Bloom’s ambivalent orality as a defining aspect of his Jewishness.

While orality is an anti-Semitic assumption, the source of Bloom’s oral nature is to be found in his Irish Catholic creator. This can be seen, for example, in Joyce’s letter to his brother Stanislaus, penned shortly after running off with Nora Barnacle in 1904, where we see in Joyce’s attention to mealtimes the need to present his illicit sexual relationship in terms of domestic routine:

We get out of bed at nine and Nora makes chocolate. At midday we have lunch which we (or rather she) buys, cooks (soup, meat, potatoes and something else). . . . At four o’clock we have chocolate and at eight o’clock dinner which Nora cooks. (Ellmann, Letters II 73)

Two years later, his recollection of culinary details is more precise, rather obsessively so, as he describes to Stanislaus “the full and exact details of what we ate” one day:

10.30 a.m. Ham, bread and butter, coffee
1.30 p.m. Soup, roast lamb and potatoes, bread and wine
4.— p.m. Beef-stew, bread and wine
6.— p.m. Roast veal, bread and grapes and vermouth
9.30 p.m. Veal cutlets, bread, salad, grapes and wine. (Ellmann, Letters II 172)

Twenty years later, in a letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce enumerates the advantages to the Euston Hotel’s everything but “English breakfast”: “Danish bacon, Irish eggs, American sugar, French milk, Canadian marmalade, Scotch porridge, New Zealand butter, Dutch toast” (Gilbert 239).

The above indicates the common practice of ordering food items in the form of lists, catalogs, or inventories, a practice rooted perhaps in the origins of writing itself—the hieroglyphic inventories of food stores in ancient Egypt and Sumeria. Familiar examples of this practice include grocery lists, calorie charts, recipes,
dietary regimens, feeding schedules, and menus. Joyce was well aware of this more ordinary quality of his mind, which manifested itself in list-making. In a letter to Frank Budgen, he wrote: “I have a grocer’s assistant’s mind” (Ellmann, *Letters* III 304). And in *Mulligan Stew* (1979), a contemporary American novel which pays undisguised tribute to Joyce, particularly in respect to his list-making, Gilbert Sorrentino creates a mock masque with a lengthy list of characters, including “James Joyce, a grocer’s assistant,” whose lines reflect the stocked shelves that fix the boundaries of his world (Sorrentino, *Mulligan Stew* 178). Even a cartoon in *The New Yorker* magazine, “James Joyce’s Refrigerator,” pokes fun at this humble aspect of his genius by presenting a “To Do” list that, in typical Joycean fashion, juxtaposes the mundane—“Call Bank,” “Dry Cleaner,” “Call Mom”—with the transcendent—“Forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (Jacobson 100).

Such listing carried over from Joyce’s life to his literature as can be seen in the plethora of lists involving food in *Ulysses*. The sheer abundance of references to food inspired Catherine Ryan’s playful compilation of “B 100m’s thoughts and observations, actual foods, and language—metaphor, allusion, word play—all of which represent the visual, physical, psychological, and imaginative repast that was Bloom’s on June 16, 1904” (Ryan 378). Ryan presents her lists under menu headings, beginning with Appetizers (e.g., Oyster Eyes Staring) and progressing through Entrees, Combination Platters, Cheapest Lunch in Town, Delicacies (or Specialty Foods), Seasonal Beverages, and ending, as every special meal should, with Desserts, ranging from the ordinary Pudding, Caramel, and Custard to the rather more extraordinary Powdered Bosom Pearls, Gumjelly Lips, and Fat Nipples Upright. And in *The Joyce of Cooking*, Alison Armstrong has given traditional turn-of-the-century Irish recipes titles and epigraphs inspired by Joyce’s writings, especially *Ulysses*. Among the more fanciful inclusions are recipes for I Beg Your Parsnips, Do Ptake Some Ptarmigan, Poached Eyes on Ghost, Turko the Terrible Turkish Delight Sherbet, and Buck Mulligatawny Soup.

Not all of *Ulysses*’ lists pertain to food, and there are other characters who are seen eating (notably Buck Mulligan), but it is Leopold Bloom who forms the chewy, jewy center of Joyce’s unconfection-al narrative, and the alimentary lists have particular relevance to him and his problematic Jewish identity. The relevance of the food lists in connection with Bloom is evidenced by his being introduced to the reader via a list of his favorite foods:

Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustcrumbs, fried hencod’s roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine. (55)

The importance of this list is stressed by its recapitulation in “Sirens”: “As said before he ate with relish the inner organs, nutty gizzards, fried cods’ roes . . . ” (269) and the multitude of related references throughout *Ulysses* (e.g., “Steak, kidney, liver, mashed at meat fit for princes sat princes Bloom and Goulding” [272]).
Though rather short and seemingly limited in focus, the list that introduces Bloom in “Calypso” actually demonstrates the delicate balance of tendencies toward confinement and freedom evident in Joycean lists. On the one hand, the lists possess the finite all-inclusiveness which provides what Hugh Kenner calls “the double pleasure of knowing what should be present, and knowing that all of it is present” (Kenner 55). On the other hand, Sorrentino finds in Joyce’s lists “a kind of absolute fictional infinity” since “anything can be added to it, the original can be tampered with, varied, corrupted, repeated in new contexts, etc.” (Sorrentino, “Fictional Infinites” 146, 149).

The list of Bloom’s food preferences functions in both of these ways. A sense of finite all-inclusiveness comes about as a result of Joyce’s careful selection and ordering of words. For instance, the juxtaposition of “soup” and “nutty” brings to mind the expression “from soup to nuts,” the alpha and omega points of a complete dinner. The mention of urine at the end further suggests the entire digestive process, from consumption to elimination, later echoed in a list in “Lestrygonians”: “And we stuffing food in one hole and out behind: food, chyle, blood, dung, earth, food” (176). This list also marks the first appearance of the word “organ,” and the emphasis on organ meats also makes this list a kind of microcosm of the entire book, since each of its episodes from “Calypso” on to the end is associated with a bodily organ, all of which add up to a complete being, both male (Genitals in “Lotus Eaters”) and female (Womb in “Oxen of the Sun”). This list also expands its range beyond animal matter to the human body through the connections between animal meat and human flesh illustrated repeatedly throughout the work, e.g., the juxtaposition of what Mrs. Purefoy should be fed (“beefsteaks, red, raw, bleeding”) and the catalog of her defective body parts (“enlarged glands ... bunions ... floating kidney, Derbyshire neck, warts ... gallstones, cold feet, varicose veins”) in “Oxen of the Sun” (423-24). The infinitely open-ended aspect of the list results from the impression it gives of being a random series of possibilities remembered at the moment, a series which appears to allow for the inclusion of anything or everything else Bloom might possibly eat with relish.

Bloom’s gustatory delight in inner organs is one of the many ways that Joyce emphasizes his Hellenic side. The fact that he eats with relish is a violation of the dietary laws of the Hebrews, which the rabbis developed during the sensuous Hellenistic period as a curb to animal appetites; as such, eating was to be regarded as a sacred rite among the Jews. Bloom’s particular taste for the inner organs of beasts further identifies his eating practices as Hellenic, since it was the Greeks (including Odysseus) who ate the inner organs of a sacrificial animal while the rest of the body burned on the altar.

In giving his Hebraic hero Hellenic appetites, Joyce invokes Matthew Arnold’s famous binary opposition set forth in his Culture and Anarchy (1869). This work had particular import for British Jews, as Bryan Cheyette persuasively demonstrates in Constructions of “The Jew” in English Literature and Society, whose assimilation into early Victorian English society was vigorously denounced by “Arnold’s father, who considered Jews to be fundamentally incom-
compatible with the ‘teutonic’ element in ‘our English race’” (Cheyette 16). The younger Arnold’s liberal concept of “a much broader national ‘culture’ which could include even the racial ‘other’” was exemplified for him by cultural Jews (actors, artists, intellectuals) whose Hebraic anarchy had been penetrated with the sweetness and light of Hellenic culture (Cheyette 18). Yet, here again, Joyce is invoking Arnold’s civilizing synthesis in parodic fashion, presenting the reader with “an indeterminate ‘Jewgreek’—Leopold Bloom, a modern-day Odysseus—who cannot be ‘known,’ unproblematically, by any received set of criteria. . . . Bloom’s ambivalent ‘racial difference’ is thus utilized by Joyce as a means of subverting the cultural certainties surrounding Jewish assimilation or national and Catholic religious superiority” (Cheyette 206-07).

While Hellenism and Hebraism seem to be the most pronounced ingredients of Joyce’s recipe for Bloom, his fondness for flesh also suggests his nominal Christianity, specifically as regards Lenten eating practices. “Carne,” the Italian root of “carnival,” means meat or flesh. The Oxford English Dictionary gives its earliest meaning as “the putting away or removal of flesh (as food), the name being originally proper to the eve of Ash Wednesday” (125). The perception of Ulysses as a carnivalesque novel has been inspired by the Russian Formalist critic Mikhail Bakhtin, who saw in the carnival of Medieval and Renaissance Europe a temporary suspension of everyday rules and roles “among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, profession, and age” as well as a grotesque emphasis on the body and all of its functions, such as eating, drinking, defecating, and copulating (Bakhtin 10). Carnival festivities took place in the public sphere of the marketplace, where “a special form of free and familiar contact reigned” in contrast to the orthodox activities which transpired within the Church (Bakhtin 10). For Bakhtin, the essence of this free and familiar contact is laughter, which he views as “a material bodily principle,” noting that during the carnival period, “[p]ermission to laugh was granted simultaneously with the permission to eat meat and to resume sexual intercourse” (Bakhtin 78-79). Moreover, “[e]ating and drinking were also the main features of the commemoration of the dead. . . . The marketplace feast opposed the protective, timeless stability, the unchanging established order and ideology, and stressed the element of change and renewal” (Bakhtin 80-81). More recently, Bakhtin’s socialist, utopian view of carnival has been challenged by critics such as Michael Andre Bernstein, who sees abjection and ressentiment as characteristic of the carnival fool, and Charlotte Miller Simon has invoked carnival as a negative metaphor in order to describe “the strange world of anti-Semitism. . . . a world turned upside down, in which the oppressor masquerades as the oppressed, and the victim is given the guise of villain by societies that wish to rationalize their own cruelties” (Simon 15).

Bloom’s day is carnivalesque in all these respects, beginning with the festive dimension provided by Paddy Dignam’s funeral. Bloom puts away Molly’s flesh when he leaves the house, yet he also enjoys the solace of the flesh through eating, defecating, bathing, masturbating, and, at long last, joining Molly in bed. His inverted sleeping position at day’s end may be seen to symbolize rebirth as well.
as the many reversals of the day, particularly the topsy-turvy carnival atmosphere of Nighttown, where Bloom temporarily switches gender and experiences the inverted power relations that this entails. Another reversal of power relations takes place within the Bloom household the following morning when it appears as if he has uncharacteristically asked Molly "to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs" (738). He has spent the day circulating in public, engaging in "special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free," which leads to his being "reborn for new, purely human relations," such as those enacted with Stephen and Molly (Bakhtin 10). Unfortunately, these frank and free marketplace exchanges also subject Bloom to subtle and overt expressions of anti-Semitism, and his abjection and ressentiment are not only a condition of his cuckoldry but, more fundamentally, of his hybrid religious and national identities: Bloom is "a fellow that’s neither fish nor flesh" (Ulysses 321).

"Cyclops," the episode most rich in lists, is also the most rife with anti-Semitic discourse. The Citizen dishes out serving after serving of unpalatable prejudicial remarks, which Bloom passively attempts to swallow. He is finally fed up, however, and spews out indignantly: "Christ was a Jew like me," to which the Citizen responds by throwing a biscuit box at him (342). This episode is echoed in "Circe," where again Bloom is uncharacteristically aggressive ("Shoot him") and is also pelted by food items: "loaves and fishes ... free cowbones for soup ... butter scotch, pineapple rock ... porringers of toad in the hole ... dairyfed pork sausages ... penny dinner counters" and a book titled "50 Meals for 7/6" (485). As he makes his getaway from the whorehouse, he is "pelted with ... cabbagestumps, biscuitboxes, eggs, potatoes, dead codfish" (586).

As can be seen from these incidents, Bloom’s oral violence is repaid with physical violence in the form of food items, which serve as metaphorical representations of his oral aggressiveness. Indeed, orality may be regarded as the common denominator among lists, food, and Jews. List-making is one of the ways that Joyce parodies the Iliad and the Odyssey, where the catalogs of ships and games serve as reminders that Homer’s epics were originally recited. The supposed violence of Jewish orality belongs to another oral tradition—that of folk beliefs concerning Jews—and it is expressed in Ulysses when Mr. Deasy says to Stephen: "England is in the hands of the jews. In all the highest places: her finance, her press. And they are the signs of a nation’s decay. Wherever they gather they eat up the nation’s vital strength" (33). The use of the word “vital” is vitally significant, since “vitals” is another word for the body’s inner organs, those very things which Bloom the "jew, jew, jew" most likes to "Chewchewchew" (Ulysses 342, 169). Oddly enough, Ezra Pound’s notoriously anti-Semitic radio broadcasts of WWII use strikingly similar language: Pound referred to Jews as “Chews” “gnawing into the body of Western culture,” “eating away at the life inside the nation,” “the rote eating in since Cromwell,” and “the kikes [who] have sucked out your [England’s] vitals” (quoted in Casillo 57, 273). Pound was hardly “making it new,” but neither was Joyce. Both writers were recirculating an anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jew as a voracious parasite that predates them.
by many centuries, but whereas Pound’s broadcasts are to be seen as reinforce­ments of this negative image of the Jew, Joyce’s reflection of the language of anti-Semitism is more accurately interpreted as a satirical parody of the prevail­ing attitude towards Jews in Joyce’s Ireland. This is the case made by Stanley Sultan, who informs us in “Ulysses and the Question of Anti-Semitism” that

[a]s a result of immigration, the Jewish population of Ireland increased more than tenfold in the 30 years before . . . the day Ulysses takes place. And from early that year until shortly before Joyce emigrated to the continent in the autumn, Ireland experienced a dramatic outbreak of anti-Semitism, including an organized boycott of Jewish businesses in Limerick . . . Edward Raphael Lipsett, a journalist who was a contemporary Dublin Jew, wrote, “You cannot get one native to remember that a Jew may be a Irishman . . . the position of Jews in Ireland is peculiarly peculiar.” (Sultan 26)

Joyce, unlike so many of his contemporaries, spoke out against Fascism and anti-Semitism, and as early as 1938 he helped Jews escape from Austria and Germany. Furthermore, in his Joyce and the Jews: Culture and Texts, Ira Nadel makes an interesting case for Joyce’s identification with Jews. Nadel rightly insists on seeing Joyce’s 1904 departure from Ireland as an exodus rather than an exile because of its voluntary nature. Like the Jews, who have a history of wandering in search of religious freedom, Joyce wandered from his native Dublin to Trieste, Rome, Zurich, and Paris in search of the freedom necessary for him to develop as an artist. The artist, like the Jew, is a marginal and often reviled figure in society, as Edmund J abes has observed: “the difficulty of being Jewish . . . is the same as the difficulty of writing . . . it was in declaring myself a writer that I first felt Jewish” (quoted in Nadel 7). Above all, for Joyce, as for the Jews, “his only homeland could be a text” (Nadel 3). The freedom from institutionalized religion that Joyce admired in Jews is a reflection of the type of Jews with whom he was in contact. The ambivalence of European Jewish identity greatly influenced Joyce’s conception of Jewishness, and his acquaintance with “Jews who did not act like Jews” undoubtedly influenced his puzzling portrait of Bloom (Nadel 140).

What Sultan finds especially ironic in Joyce’s portrayal of Bloom is that he “is not enough a Jew for the rabbis . . . [but] simultaneously more than enough a Jew for the anti-Semites Bloom lives and works among” (Sultan 28). Bloom’s syncretic, if not synthetic, Judaism has weathered an Anglicized surname, intermarriage, and both Protestant and Catholic conversions; thus, he embodies what Nadel calls “the binary opposition that characterizes the Jew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”—the assimilation and acculturation which promote social acceptance versus the social isolation and preservation of tradition which fosters hatred both from outside and within the Jewish commu­nity.

Food is especially important with respect to this binary opposition, since by the latter half of the nineteenth century, Jewish dietary laws, like circumcision, were valued as a kind of fence which separated Jews from assimilation into surrounding cultures, a way of curtailing social and cultural intercourse with non-Jews. Eating prescribed foods is also a way of marking certain Jewish festivals, particularly the exodus from Egypt that Jews celebrate at Passover, a
holiday alluded to numerous times in *Ulysses*. The importance of the dietary laws is reinforced when Bloom muses to himself, “whitehatted chef like a rabbi” in “Lestrygonians,” since familiarity with the dietary laws is an essential part of the orthodox rabbi’s store of specialized knowledge, and much of his time is occupied with rendering ritual decisions on what is kosher (allowed) for the households under his religious supervision (*Ulysses* 175). Bloom is no rabbi, of course, and displays only cursory familiarity with the dietary laws (“Kosher. No meat and milk together”), and the reader repeatedly bears witness to his flagrant violations of kosher practice (171). In “Circe,” Bello’s threat to eat Bloom, whom she likens to a “sucking pig,” is fit punishment for someone so fond of pork, and the distribution by his bodyguard of “dairyfed pork sausages” in the same episode is emblematic of Bloom’s violation of the two major prohibitions of kosher law—the eating of pork and the mixing of meat and milk (533, 485).

Bloom’s carnivorousness also suggests cannibalism, another traditional anti-Semitic prejudice, which predates Christianity but was accommodated by Medieval Christians in relation to their belief that Jews are “Christ killers.” Since the Middle Ages, a folk fantasy has persisted among Christians that Jews ritually murder Christian children and use their blood for Passover food and drink. Though not the first such incident, the accusation which had the most dramatic consequences involved the death of an English boy named Hugh in 1255, resulting in the banishment of all Jews from England from 1290 until 1656. Little Hugh’s supposed ritual murder at the hands of Jews was commemorated in the folk song quoted in “Ithaca,” and Bloom displays his awareness of the ritual-murder myth in “Hades”: “Same idea those jews they said killed the christian boy” (108), although Joyce himself probably had in mind the infamous Mendel Beilis trial of 1913 in which a Russian Jew was accused of ritually murdering a twelve-year-old Christian boy.

This prejudice is ironic in light of the Christian ritual of communion, during which, according to the doctrine of transubstantiation, Christians consume the body and blood of Christ, a Jew. Observing the communion ceremony, Bloom reflects: “Corpus. Body. Corpse . . . eating bits of a corpse why the cannibals cotton to it” (80). References to corpses and cannibalism occur throughout the text and relate to a number of its important motifs which are brought together in the inventory of Bloom’s kitchen shelves in “Ithaca.” Lindsey Tucker helpfully catalogs the significance of this list in relation to the events of the day; for example, Plumtree’s potted meat has “a number of associative meanings, mostly having to do with fertility, potency, cannibalism, sacrifice, and death”; “the pear, cream, onions” (one Spanish), are associated with Molly; and the half-disrobed port and soured adulterated milk are rather overt references to what Molly and Blazes did together in bed besides eat (Tucker 134).

The connection between sexual and culinary consumption is longstanding in western culture, and the many instances throughout *Ulysses* where food and a woman’s body merge in a single image is evidence of another kind of cannibalism. Yet here, too, Joyce’s desire to reinforce Bloom’s Jewish background may be influencing his associative process. For example, the catalog in “Ithaca”
pertinent to “the plump mellow yellow smell of melons” of Molly’s “adipose posterior female hemispheres, redolent of milk and honey,” is redolent as well of earlier lists in “Calypso” having to do with Jerusalem as the promised land: “Orange groves and immense melon fields north of Jaffa . . . olives, oranges, almonds or citrons” (Ulysses 734, 60). Here, too, his mind wanders back and forth between images of fruit and Molly’s “ample bedwarmed flesh”: “Molly in Citron’s basketchair. Nice to hold, cool waxen fruit, hold in the hand, lift it to the nostrils and smell the perfume. Like that, heavy, sweet, wild perfume” (61, 60).

Finally, Bloom’s association with food and lists symbolically reinforces his earthy materiality in contrast to Stephen’s spirituality. What comes to mind in this regard is the most grocer’s assistant-like list in Ulysses, the day’s budget that appears in “Ithaca.” It is noteworthy that fully half of Bloom’s expenditures for the day are for items of food: 1 Pork kidney, 2 Banbury cakes, 1 Lunch, 1 Dinner and gratification, 1 Pig’s Foot, 1 Sheep’s Trotter, 1 Cake Fry’s plain chocolate, 1 Square soda bread, 1 Coffee and bun. While this episode has long been understood by critics as Stephen’s finding a father in Bloom, it may also be read as Stephen’s finding a Jewish mother. Bloom’s persistent and insistent attempts to force food on Stephen are typical of that staple of Jewish humor, the stereotypical Jewish mother, for whom cooking and feeding are expressions of her anxious love for her brood. In “Male Maternity in Ulysses,” Jeanne Perreault argues persuasively that Bloom “undergoes the female experience of pregnancy and childbirth, mystically bearing Stephen to an emotional and spiritual rebirth” (Perreault 304). I would further qualify her assertion of Bloom’s maternity by emphasizing Bloom’s Jewishness. As Sander Gilman documents in his fascinating study, Freud, Race, and Gender, “[t]he analogy of the body and mind of the [male] Jew to the body and mind of the woman was a natural one for the turn of the century,” in part because “the clitoris was seen as a ‘truncated penis,’” analogous to the “circumcised (‘truncated’) penis of the Jewish male” (Gilman 39-40). Because “mother associations for [Stephen] are not of nourishment but of degradation,” Bloom’s connection with food ironically proves to be of great importance as an indication of the more nurturing image of maternity he may provide (Perreault 306). Bloom’s maternity is particularly evident in the egg and milk imagery of the last entry of this catalog of relevant quotations:

You ought to eat. (560)
You ought to sample something in the shape of solid food, say a roll of some description. (622)
... take a piece of that bun. (634)
Still, it’s solid food . . . I’m a stickler for solid food . . . You ought to eat more solid food. (635)
But something substantial he certainly ought to eat, were it only an eggflip made on unadulterated maternal nutriment or . . . the homely Humpty Dumpty boiled. (656)

Stephen’s refusal of the bland and bloodless nourishment that Bloom proffers may be understood as a terrified rejection of Bloom as the corpse-chewing incarnation of his devouring, vampirous mother. “Chewer of corpses!” Stephen says in response to his dead mother’s apparition in “Telemachus,” and when she reappears in “Circe” he names her “The corpsechewer” (10, 581). While critical consensus interprets this first passage as an epithet directed towards Death or
God, Tucker interprets the lines that follow: “No, Mother. Let me be and let me live” (10) as an indication that Stephen associates his mother with the devouring process (Tucker 30). This association is even more pronounced in the “Circe” episode, where the trinity of the Mother’s hand, God’s hand, and “A green crab with malignant red eyes” is made One (582). Stephen fears consumption at Bloom’s urging because he associates him with the devouring mother who would make meat of him. In the same vein, Michael Seidel claims in “Ulysses’ Black Panther Vampire” that Stephen refuses Bloom’s hospitality because he sees in him a vampire who will suck out his vitality. In “Circe,” according to Perreault, Stephen “shatter[s] the grip his dead mother has on him, killing her metaphorically as he shatters the lamp” (314). Whether or not Stephen has resolved his ambivalence towards maternity quite so neatly, one may surmise that he will find in Bloom, as evidenced by his accepting cocoa (mother’s milk), a mother figure with whom he can experience the nurture that nature did not provide.

Joyce was delighted to learn that the Triestine mispronunciation of his name, “Yoyce,” means “eggs” in Czech (Ellmann, James Joyce 185). He put his dislike of literary talk to Beckett, thus: “If only they’d talk about turnips” (Ellmann, James Joyce 702). And, like Sorrentino, he saw his novel as a kind of stew, writing to Pound that “the ingredients will not fuse until they have reached a certain temperature” (Ellmann, James Joyce 416). Like his contemporaries, the Futurists, who published La Cucina Futurista, a revolutionary cookbook, in 1932, Joyce saw in food the raw material for art. It is somewhat ironic that Joyce used food assimilation as his method of transcending the limitations of familial, national, and religious identity in his art, since eating, which Margaret Atwood calls “our earliest metaphor,” precedes our consciousness of these distinctions (Atwood 53). Listing food can then be seen, like myth, as a way to shape and control the raw materials of artistic creation, reflecting the Shem and Shaun-like opposite twin desires for anarchy and order evident in Joyce’s life and art.

Works Cited


