

A Liturgical Pattern in Ulysses

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Although there is no room to doubt the reality of the *represented* action scenes, the *interpretations* of the governess are open to question throughout. They are presented clearly as the governess' subjective interpretations of what have been given as objective facts. When the governess acts as interpreter rather than reporter the reader is able to challenge her. From this arises the sense of *mystification*.

Let us extract from the structure pattern outlined above to see more clearly how this representation-interpretation dichotomy works, how the governess uses reported facts to reach subjective conclusions:

<i>Representation</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. Letter from school	1. Miles is perhaps bad
2. Man on tower	2. There is a stranger about
3. Man at window	3. He had come for someone
4. Man is Quint, who is dead	4. He had come for Miles
5. Woman on lake	5. Miss Jessel had come for Flora, who communicates with her
6. There had been a liason between Quint and Miles	6. Miles is bad, perhaps communicates with Quint
7. Miles outside	7. Miles communicates with Quint

At this point the governess' awareness of the situation is full. From here on the story becomes a succession of "proofs"; for, says the governess, "It was not yet definitely proved." (244) This point, incidentally, is the exact middle of the story.

The structure pattern outlined above keeps the predatory creatures real, as we read of them; but their motives and even their reality are "challengeable," as the governess interprets them. This picture of the structure of *The Turn of the Screw* allows us to feel the effect of the entire story—not just the one-half which the Freudians see, or the other half which the anti-Freudians see. It helps us to discover how James keeps up a feeling of horror, by forcing us to accept the ghosts; and how he keeps up a feeling of mystification, by forcing us to doubt the ghosts. It is the closest thing I know to having your cake and eating it too.

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Instead of trying to fix upon the precise point at which James Joyce abandoned his church, critics would, perhaps, find it a more

engaging and, certainly as far as reader-interpretation is concerned, a more practical study to determine the extent to which the author made artistic use of the intellectual and psychological outlook of the Roman Catholic Church, its ritual, and rich pattern of symbols. A promising field of investigation manifests itself in Joyce's literary use of Catholic liturgy.

A somewhat concealed liturgical pattern can be found in the "fourth month" of the "Oxen of the Sun" episode in *Ulysses*. While the newborn son of Mr. Purefoy, poor man's Fisher-king, is bringing life-giving rain to the parched wasteland of Dublin and to the maternity ward's attendants and guests, drowned in drink, Stephen, for the entertainment of all, develops the betrayal-crucifixion theme with which the *Portrait of the Artist* concluded,¹ here in a liturgical and ritualistic pattern of recall and reminiscence, before a Viconian clap of thunder momentarily returns him to the god-fearing stage of theocracy.²

Midway in Stephen's "chanson" stands a word which provides an invaluable clue to the interpretation of the tone and construction of the entire section. That word is "tenebrosity." The passage can be shown to be clearly fashioned after and inspired by the *Tenebrae* service of Roman Catholic liturgy for the three days preceding Easter. This fact, as far as I have been able to investigate, has not been exploited by any of the critics or annotators of *Ulysses*.

We know that Joyce was particularly fond, presumably on purely aesthetic grounds, of the Holy Week liturgy. In his biography, Stanislaus Joyce informs us that, though "habitually a very late riser," his brother Jim, "wherever he was, alone in Paris or married in Trieste, . . . never failed to get up at about five in all weathers to go to the early morning mass on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. . . . He understood it as the drama of a man who has a perilous mission to fulfill, which he must fulfill even though he knows beforehand that those nearest to his heart will betray him."³ From Gorman we learn that it was after attending such a service at the

¹ The messianic symbolism of chapter V of the *Portrait* is carefully worked out in a provocative article by C. G. Anderson called "Sacrificial Butter" in *Accent*, XII (Winter, 1952), 3-13.

² James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, 1935), pp. 386 ("Young Stephen said. . .")-388 (" . . . in anger awful the hammer-hurler.")

³ Stanislaus Joyce, *My Brother's Keeper* (New York, 1958), p. 105.

cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris on Good Friday, 1903, that Joyce received word of his mother's fatal illness.⁴ In the New Directions edition of *Stephen Hero* we have a photographic reproduction of notes on the *Tenebrae* in Joyce's hand, which bear a relation to the passage under analysis.⁵ We also know of an early poetic endeavor, later destroyed by the author, which bore the title "*Tenebrae*."⁶

Stuart Gilbert points up the stylistic affinity of the passage to the *Improperia* of Good Friday,⁷ but does not note the striking relationships of thought, spirit, and rubric which even a superficial comparison of the passage and the *Tenebrae* ritual yields.

The ritual itself is unassuming in its sheer simplicity. It is nothing more than the antiphonal recitation of Matins and Lauds for the day, before a triangular candelabrum on which fifteen lighted candles are arranged. On the altar behind it stand six lighted candles. After each psalm, one of the fifteen candles is extinguished.⁸ When all the psalms and *lectiones* have been completed, a single candle—that at the vertex of the triangle—remains lighted. During the recitation of the canticle *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*, the six candles on the altar are extinguished, together with any of the church lights which may have been on during the service. At the completion of the canticle, the single lighted candle is removed and carried behind the altar, symbolizing the death and burial of Christ.⁹ The *Miserere* (psalm 50) is then chanted, the final word of which is, significantly, *vitulos* ("oxen"). A moment of silence follows a brief oration. Suddenly, the clerics slam shut their manuals or strike them audibly, according to the rubrics which call for "*fragor et strepitus aliquantum*." The lighted candle is carried from its place behind

⁴ Herbert Gorman, *James Joyce* (New York, 1948), pp. 106-108.

⁵ James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (New Directions, New York, 1955), opposite p. 93: "*Tenebrae*—The silences recall the silence of Jesus before his accusers. The acrostic of Jeremiah: Aleph, Beth, Ghimel, Daleth. Origin of *Tenebrae*: the gradual extinguishing of the lights."

⁶ Stanislaus Joyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143, 160.

⁷ Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study* (New York, 1957), pp. 301-302.

⁸ "In fine cujuslibet Psalmi ad Matutinum et ad Laudes exstinguitur una ex quindecim candelis candelabri triangularis positi ante altare." *Breviarum Romanum (Pars Verna)* 25th ed. (Tours, 1947), p. 533.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 549: "Interim dum dicitur Canticum Benedictus exstinctis omnibus prius candelis in candelabro triangulari, praeter unam, quae posita est in summitate candelabri, exstinguuntur paulatim sex candelae positaе a principio supra altare, ita ut in ultimo versu exstinguatur ultima candela: similiter exstinguuntur lampades et luminaria per ecclesiam."

the altar and returned to its original position. All rise and retire in silence.¹⁰

The effect of such a ritual, occurring as it does for only three days, once a year, evokes an emotional response which the more colorful but custom-dulled symbolism of the mass cannot produce. The psalms chanted during the gradual darkening are those of the friendless outcast, the suffering scapegoat, surrounded by enemies, abandoned even, apparently, by his God, while the *lectiones*, antiphons, and *orationes* harp variations on the theme of Christ's abandonment, betrayal, death, and entombment—a situation analogous to Stephen's, himself more explicitly conscious of it in chapter v of the *Portrait*.

The passage in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode is itself a gradual darkening, and takes place, as we know, on a Thursday night. The first of the three *Tenebrae* services is the office for Maundy Thursday. In contrast to what precedes and follows, the style of this section is for the most part characterized by the antithesis and parallelism of Hebrew poetry. It moves slowly from the subject of life and gaiety ("life ran very high in those days"), sexual pleasure ("doxy," "delights amorous," "French letters"), and friendship ("Greater love etc.," "Bring a stranger within thy tower," "*Orate fratres*") through abandonment and estrangement ("Remember Erin," "thou didst spurn me," "thou hast left me alone"), betrayal ("thou hast suckled me with a bitter milk," "with a kiss of ashes hast thou kissed my mouth"), sin ("thou hast sinned against the light," "to commit fornication," "thou hast done this abomination"), to solitude ("thou hast left me alone"), darkness ("my moon and my sun thou hast quenched," "tenebrosity of the interior . . . hath not been illumined," "darkness," "adiaphane," "nights"), obscurity ("occulted," "no man knows," "in the like way is all hidden," "remoteness," "whatness"), punishment and suffering ("hell's gates," "atrocities," "plague," "blister," "Tophet"), death and burial ("postmortemity," "dwindle, die," "cavity of a mountain, an occulted sepulchre," "tumulus").

Punch Costello recites an "oration" immediately followed by the *fragor et strepitus*—"a black crack of noise in the street here, alack, bawled back"—corresponding both to the noise raised by the clerics

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 551: "Ad Laudes tamen, finita Oratione, fit fragor et strepitus aliquantulum: mox profertur candela accensa de sub altari, et omnes surgunt, et cum silentio discedunt."

at the close of *Tenebrae*, and to the disturbance in nature which it symbolizes.

The passage sometimes elicits themes and emotions directly redolent of the psalms and readings recited during *Tenebrae*, sometimes merely echoes their language and structure:

Bring a stranger within thy tower. . . . Quoniam alieni insurrexerunt adversum me, et fortes quaesierunt animam meam.

Thou . . . broughtest in a stranger to my gates to commit fornication in my sight. Hereditas nostra versa est ad alienos: domus nostrae ad extraneos.

Thou didst spurn me for a merchant of jalaps and didst deny me to the Roman and the Indian of dark speech. Peccatum peccavit Jerusalem, propterea instabilis facta est.

Remember Erin. . . . Ecce nationem filiorum tuorum reprovavi.

Return, return Clan Milly: forget me not, O Milesian. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Thou . . . hast made me, thy lord, to be the slave of servants. Servi dominati sunt nostri: non fuit qui redimeret de manu eorum.

My moon and my sun thou hast quenched forever. Et permanebit cum sole et ante lunam in generatione et generationem.

And thou hast left me alone for ever in the dark ways of my bitterness: and with a kiss of ashes hast thou kissed my mouth. Plorans ploravit in nocte, et lacrimae ejus in maxillis ejus: non est qui consoletur eam ex omnibus caris ejus: omnes amici ejus spreverunt eam, et facti sunt ei inimici.

Extraneus factus sum fratribus meis, et peregrinus filiis matris meae.

Ille ut agnus innocens non negavit Judae osculum.

. . . dark ways of my bitterness. . . . Me minavit, et adduxit in tenebras, et non in lucem.

Tenebrosity of the interior.

In tenebrosis collocavit me, quasi
mortuos sempiternos.

Posuerunt me in lacu inferiori: in
tenebrosis, et in umbra mortis.

A black crack of noise in the street
here, alack, bawled, back. Loud on
left Thor thundered: in anger awful
the hammer-hurler.

De caelo auditum fecisti iudicium:
terra tremuit et quievit.

Etenim sagittae tuae transeunt: vox
tonitru tui in rota.

Throughout both the *Tenebrae* ritual and the passage in question we find contrasts between night and day, light and darkness, life and death, birth and burial, youth and old age, natives and aliens, friends and enemies.

Finally, it is worth noting that in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode, to which the present passage has special reference (as Mr. A. M. Klein has admirably shown¹¹), the Gregorian musical notation for the first line of the *Gloria* occurs, followed by a description of the attendant ritual for Holy Saturday: the lifted hands of the celebrant, the stripping of the veils from the statues, the adornment of the hitherto bare altar with flowers, the extended ringing of the bells, silenced since Maundy Thursday:¹²

Glo-o-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o. He lifts hands. Veils fall. O, flowers! Bells with bells with bells acquiring.

Though this ritual is not part of the *Tenebrae* service, it is, in a very real sense, its culmination—the climax toward which the entire Holy Week liturgy progresses.

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Burrus, Caseous, and Nicholas of Cusa

It is pleasant to recall that Johannes Krebs of Cues was a ferryman; for his son, Nicolaus Cusanus, or Nicholas of Cusa as he is mistakenly called, spent his own adult life trying to bring people together. There is perhaps no better illustration of Nicholas' philosophical principles

¹¹ A. M. Klein, "Oxen of the Sun," *Here and Now*, I (January, 1949), 28-48.

¹² James Joyce, *Ulysses*, p. 195.