



## Sirens

Mandi Fink  
Michael Gregoris  
Jeremy Greenway  
Stephanie Horak

## Musicality of Ulysses

- *Ulysses* "alludes to a variation of music: Irish ballads, Elizabethan airs, minstrel songs, music-hall numbers, bawdy catches, nursery rhymes, Gregorian chant, Renaissance and Classical Masses, semi-classical melodies and scenes from operetta and opera. Undoubtedly, music is employed to systematically expose the roles in the hegemonic arena of Irish culture; not accidentally, it is often, if not always, coupled with sexuality" (Nestrovski 7)



## M'appari (Martha, Martha, O Return Love!)

When first I saw that form endearing,  
Sorrow from me seem'd to depart:  
Each graceful look, each word so cheering,  
Charm'd my eye and won my heart.

Full of hope, and all delighted,  
None could feel more blest than I;  
All on earth I then could wish for,  
Was near her to live and die:  
But alas! 'twas idle dreaming,  
And the dream too soon hath flown;  
Not one ray of hope is gleaming;  
I am lost, yes I am lost, for she is gone.

When first I saw that form endearing,  
Sorrow from me seem'd to depart:  
Each graceful look, each word so cheering,  
Charm'd my eye and won my heart.

Martha, Martha, I am sighing,  
I am weeping still for thee:  
Come thou lost one, come though dear one,  
Thou alone can'st comfort me:  
*Ah! Martha return! Come to me.*

## Leading Themes and Refrains

- "rose of Castile" (8)
- "rose" to Bloom writing a Flower-Clifford letter
- "Trilling, trilling: Idolores" (9)
- "Jingle jingle" and "Jaunted jingling" (15)
- "Begin!" (63) "Done." (1294)



## Sirens

### The Musical Form

## The Fugue

- A style of composition, rather than a fixed structure
- Fixed number of parts – *voices*
- Main theme – *the subject* (one voice)
- Followed by an *answer* (another voice)
  - The first voice continues with a *countersubject*
- Yet another voice “answers”
  - The first two voices move through a series of countersubjects until all the voices have “answered” once
- When the last voice repeats the subject, the Exposition is over
  - Yes, that’s just the Exposition
    - The speed at which this occurs is relatively fast

## *Fugua per canonem*

- Joyce: “They are all the eight regular parts of a *fuga per canonem*: and I did not know in what other way to describe the seductions of music beyond which Ulysses travels.”  
(1919 letter to Harriet Weaver)
- *Fuga per canonem*: 16<sup>th</sup> century term for a fugue **by means** of a canon

### An Example...

#### Fugue No. 1 in C Major, BWV 846

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)  
BWV 846, BWV 846

Public Domain

## Ok...so what's a canon?

- Melodic lines placed polyphonically
- Single voice starts (Subject); second voice joins harmonically; other voices enter gradually
  - Not all voices have to repeat the subject
    - Some voices provide *counterpoint*
- A (somewhat cliché) example...🔊

## Putting Them Together

- Lawrence Levin (1965):
  - In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, "*fuga* meant essentially a canon"
- Nadya Zimmerman (2002):
  - Joyce's use of *fuga per canonem* is not a 16<sup>th</sup>-century description, but a 20<sup>th</sup>-century blend of the fugue and the canon
- The key here is **simultaneity**
  - How can we "read" simultaneous voices when, at any given time, we can only read a single line of narrative?

## The Voices

The Sirens (Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy)

Bloom

Pat the waiter

Simon Dedalus

Boylan

Lenehan

The blind piano tuner

Ben Dollard

SIRENS	Subject 1.64-65	Countersubject 1.66-84	Counterpoint 1.90-92 (approx)
BLOOM		Answer 1.85-88	Countersubject 1.102

## Vertical Moments in Time

Voice	1	2	3	4
Sirens			CP 312	
Bloom			S 295-303	CS 305, 307, 309-11
Pat	CP 286-288			
Simon		A 291-294		
Boylan	CP 290			A 304
Lenehan	CP 289			
Piano Tuner	S 285	CS 313-316		

Note: Ben Dollard does not appear in lines 285-316, so there are only seven voices in this chart

Voice	1	2	3	4
Sirens			CP 312	
Bloom			S 295-303	CS 305, 307, 309-11
Pat	CP 286-288			
Simon		A 291-294		
Boylan	CP 290			A 304
Lenehan	CP 289			
Piano Tuner	S 285	CS 313-316		

**Moment #1**  
 (S) Piano Tuner: "God's curse on bitch's bastard" **engages with Sirens**  
 (CP) Pat: "Tink to her ply cried a diner's bell..." **engages with Lenehan**  
 (CP) Boylan: "Boylan with impatience..." **engages with Boylan**  
 (CP) Lenehan: "With patience Lenehan waited"

**Moment #2**  
 (A) Simon/Piano: "He pressed...hammerfall in action" **answers Piano Tuner**  
 (CS) Piano Tuner: "That was a tuningfork...he now struck..." **engages with Simon**  
*NB: the piano tuner is absent from the scene but his items remain*

**Moment #3**  
 (S) Bloom: "Two sheets cream vellum paper..." **engages with Bloom**  
 (CP) Sirens: "In drowsy silence gold bent on her page"

**Moment #4**  
 (A) Boylan: "Jingling on supple rubbers it jaunted..." **answers Bloom**  
 (CS) Bloom: "Follow. Risk it. Go quick. Near now. Out." **engages with Boylan**

## A Quick Note on Narrative Counterpoint

### Bloom

- "Bloowho" (86)
- "Greaseabloom" (185)
- "Religion pays" (187)

### The Sirens

- "Who? Where?" (71)
- "Married to Bloom, to greaseabloom" (180)
- "O saints above!" (181)

## But Does it Work?

"Because there is no accepted formula for translating a musical form into written language, each scholar will have his or her own standards by which to judge whether the musical form in 'Sirens' is a successful translation. And because, on the surface, it appears a nearly impossible feat to translate one art form into another, most scholars have deemed Joyce's attempt a formal failure."

(Zimmerman 109)

*In your opinion, despite the "impossible" odds, is Joyce at least partially successful?*

# SEX

## Discussion

- 1) How do you feel? Is this book pornographic or obscene?
- 2) Did you see any lesbianism in the work? At a different moment than discussed?
- 3) We have laid (pun definitely intended) the groundwork for seeing sex in the work, does anyone have any profound sexual moments from a different part of the chapter that stood out to them? Why?
- 4) What is Bloom's sexuality?
- 5) Finally, now that you have seen the episode from this point of view, do you still agree with your decision earlier about its obscene status?

## Works Cited

- Levin, Lawrence. "The Sirens Episode as Music: Joyce's Experiment in Prose Polyphony." *James Joyce Quarterly* 3 (1965): 12-24.
- Stanier, Michael. "'The Void Awaits Surely All Them That Leave the Wind' : 'Penelope' and 'Sirens' in Ulysses." *Twentieth Century Literature* 41.3 (1995): 319-331.
- Zimmerman, Nadya. "Musical Form as Narrator: The Fugue of the Sirens in Joyce's Ulysses." *Journal of Modern Literature* 26.1 (2002): 108-118.