Eating, reading, cooking, writing… Foods fit for gods, heroes, and anti-heroes in Homer and Joyce

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Expanded from my talk at the Conference on Food and Culture in Translation (FaCT), Bertinoro, May 2014, this essay discusses food ways in literature as grammar. In "Toward a Theory of Gastronomology," *The Joyce of Cooking* (1986), I propose categories for textual analysis: writing and cooking analogous to reading and eating; sacrificial rites as grammar; food references as symbols and signs. The vibrations of *natural* organizations of *hues* of refracted sunlight, of musical *tones*, of *natural* relations of *tastes* suggest grammatical comparison among *natural* systems. Food ways also achieve *unnatura*l or unmotivated abstracted cultural uses as sign systems (rather than motivated symbols); I reference Saussure (linguistics) and Roland Barthes (food). Sacrifices by the kingly class in bronze age Greece (in Sophocles' *Antigone* and Homer's epic *Odyssey*) contrast to Joyce's mock epic inhabited by banal lives in a debased Dublin dominated by England. The gods have descended through the age of heroes to inhabit the age of man in keeping with Vico's model; communal sacrifices by heroes to gods devolved to intimate but just as honorable quasi-sacrificial food ways between men, between husband and wife

> Everywhere there is a grammatical mysticism. Grammar. It is not only the human being that speaks—the universe also speaks—everything speaks unending languages.
>
> Novalis

1.1. Toward a Theory of Gastronomology

Yes, and as Joyce has Leopold Bloom observe, “Everything speaks in its own way.” But are all modes of communication, while *necessarily* grammars, different from the organizing principle of verbal languages, in the sense of syntactical statements containing a subject and predicate, thereby indicating logical relationships between things and properties or actions or consequences, as was proposed in the 1960s by Noam Chomsky regarding his theory of innate grammar (in *Cartesian Linguistics* and in *Language and Mind)* – his “notion of a competence which precedes performance”? (Hawkes 1977: 89) Syntactical languages are linear, yet there are other modes of communication.

Although we may, with Mr. Bloom, transliterate the increasing insistence of his cat’s “Mkgnao!” (Joyce 1986: 45, l. 16) “Mrkgnao” (l. 24) and “Mrkrgnao” (l. 32), the first apparently understood as *“Goodmorningiwantsomebreakfast”* or “scratch my head,” or just *“Milk!!”* nevertheless this interpretation of the Pussens’ vocative *noise* is an approximation, a supposition, or a *code* that Mr. Bloom responds to, determined by context and habit, and not translation from a linear language of signs. We may infer that this “conversation” between Mr. Bloom and the Pussens occurs down in the kitchen of Number 7 Eccles Street every morning. He interprets the cat’s one reiterated “word” – the additional r’s of which act as intensifiers – into an implicit English linear “sentence” with a subject and predicate: Cat demands food; cat gives thanks for milk; cat responds to affectionate insult, “I never saw such a stupid pussens as the pussens” (l. 31). Bloom gives his language to the cat’s noise: “Prr. Scratch my head. Prr.” (ll. 19-20). Some of this “dialogue” takes place in Bloom’s mind, some is meant to be heard by the cat. All of course is meant for *our* eyes and ears.

The July 2015 edition of *New York Magazine* (at NYMag.com) comments on this very aspect of interspecies communication. To paraphrase: cat purr for several reasons. They want the owner to stick around for care as well as cuddles; rubbing

against a leg or table leg is a signal confirming being united; the meow sound has been adopted and developed by domestic cats in order to communicate with specific humans, as cats do not meow to one another; there is no universal cat language, and we humans learn exactly what our specific cats uniquely say to us. So although all cats perform certain gestural signals, such as stiff-legged walking with tail held high, rubbing and purring, each one is a unique message whose end result is usually food.

Can there be *translation* – across cultures, across time, across linguistic and literary conventions – without grammatical language? Grammar is universal as an organizing principle in all spoken languages. What about *Natural systems*, e.g., the "eternal" mathematical behaviors of patterns in nature. Fractals appear not only in crystals and in mathematical formulae (e.g., the Fibonacci series, pi) producing self-replicating figures in such natural phenomena as the skin of pineapples and florets of romanescu.

In the refraction of white light into hues, in the natural prisms of water droplets in rainbows as in "controlled" experiments using glass prisms, likewise there seems to be a natural grammar.

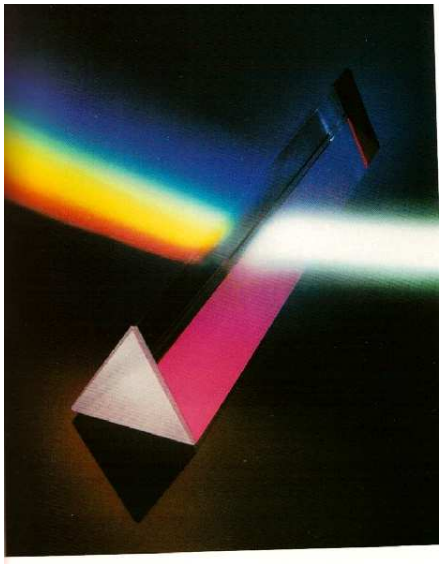


Fig. 1. Photo credit: Kodak

I am thinking of the immutable order of hues in the rainbow and the results of experiments in perception of color relations by the Arab mathematician Ibn al Haytham known as Alhazan (d.1006), whose direct observations and inferences (in *On Direct Vision*, in 2 Vols. translated into Latin from Arabic belatedly in the European middle ages) prefigured those by the Isaac Newton (described in *Opticks*, 1704) and by Wolfgang von Goethe (in *Die Farbenlehrer,* 1810), both of whom used the triangular prism, but in different ways. Nevertheless, the *order* or syntax of the rainbow hues remains constant due to the precise angles of refraction of each hue, even though observers "saw" different hues at different times in history; Aristotle claimed the rainbow contained only three. Newton deliberately added Indigo to make seven.

The natural harmonic relations of tones in musical tunings, such as in ancient Greek musical modals: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Myxolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian—each of which was utilized to evoke a specific mood in the listener. Similarly, today major and minor tunings in the "tempered" scales of the modern keyboard evoke positive and negative feelings. And in the material world, fractals that occur in nature—the curves of the chambered nautilus shell, fiddlehead ferns unfurling (they are an edible spring delicacy in Maine), the swirls of the milky way echoed in the spirals carved on Neolithic standing stones and in passage graves in Brittany, the Boinne Valley of Ireland, and on bronze age western European Celtic armor and jewelry—all seem to exemplify what Ferdinand de Saussure called *motivated* means of communication, in that their forms *are* their meanings. Even when the meanings have been lost, it is clear that over great spans of time, and through changes of cultures, certain forms have been consistently repeated to convey meanings and enforce beliefs. Owen Jones' cross-cultural study, *Grammar of Ornament* (1856), shows the use of specific motifs in cultural expression, such as the lotus in ancient Egyptian ornamental art adopted by Art Deco architectural details in the early 20th century. The non-linguistic "meaning" or association evoked in modern design is association with an ancient nobility and aesthetic pleasure in stylized natural form.

Fig. 2. Owen Jones, Grammar of Ornament

We have the Romans to thank for destroying the Druids in Britain and Gaul (and in Ireland, the Roman educated Patrick). "Pagan" cultural knowledge was handed down orally over rigorous twenty-year apprenticeships and mastery of recitation and prophetic poetry was central to Druidic power. The written "*un*motivated" Latin sign system of the conqueror replaced the unwritten "magical" lore and powers that utilized "motivated" symbols such as the spiral, the chevron, cup marks, and concentric circles. *Natural* patterns, motivated systems existed before and in contrast to our *Unnatural systems*: human languages, sign systems.

How do we accommodate cultural food-ways into this dichotomy?

That human language is a *system of unmotivated or arbitrary signs* is the first tenet of Ferdinand de Saussure's *General Course in Linguistics* (Culler 1976: 19-23) and is the primary assumption of translators generally. The examining professor in modern languages at New York University half-jestingly warned "there is no such thing as translation" when we sat down to translate French, then German, then Italian required for the Ph.D. in Comparative Literature. As we know, there is no absolute one-to-one correlation of terms between one system of arbitrary signs and another. Sometimes, only a French word will suffice (what word is more nuanced than

nuance?), or only the German (*kindergarten* is nearly universal as is *gesundheit* in response to a sneeze), or how about Italian (*mangia, mangia*!; or *ciao* or *bo…!)* all of which have invaded English *langue*, as has English *(lo shopping*; *le weekend*) affected European *parole.*

Roland Barthes provides a chart using categories of four systems: *Garments, Food, Furniture,* and *Architecture* in relation to their respective Syntagma: the category *Food system* includes meanings of food choices while the *food syntagm* is the real sequence of dishes during a meal, or the menu. (Barthes 2000: 63)

1.2.

The Two Axes: Syntagm and System. The horizontal = syntax; the word order from left to right = the grammatical form; the vertical = elements of the unmotivated system of signs in the form of nouns, verbs, and various modifiers. With regard to food usage, Barthes applies a Jakobsonian distinction derived from this Vertical/Horizontal axes (metaphor and metonymy).

> As for collections of objects (clothes, food) they enjoy the status of systems only in so far as they pass through the relay of language, which extracts their signifiers (in the form of nomenclature) and names their signifieds (in the forms of usages or reasons); we are…much more than in former times, and despite the spread of pictorial illustration, a civilization of the written word. … though working at the outset on non-linguistic substances, semiology is required…to find language (in the ordinary sense of the term) in its path…a second-order language, with its unities no longer monemes or phonemes, but larger fragments

of discourse referring to objects or episodes whose meaning

underlies language, but can never exist independently

of it. (Barthes 2000:10-11)

Meaning that underlies language but cannot be spoken can, however be shown: the lotus as metonym for the ancient Egyptian powers as well as metaphor for inebriation: e.g., the Lotus eaters in the *Odyssey* and as parodied in *Ulysses*.

Without a system of *un*motivated arbitrary Signs, as opposed to symbols or signals, there is no "language" proper, but rather *codes* such as in a one-to-one analogy: A=B. Sound of cat = demand for food. But fully-fledged language is sophisticated in using analogy in the form of rhetorical tropes, mainly Metaphor (defining the abstract in terms of the concrete or material) and Metonymy (defining the whole in terms of the part). Take the analogical and prescriptive advertisement that Leopold Bloom is reading in the obituary section of his paper:

What is home without

Plumtree's Potted Meat?

Incomplete.

With it an abode of bliss.

(Joyce 1986: 61, ll. 144-148)

The implication is that this product represents – nay promises – an intangible underlying meaning, a desirable state; and bliss in *Bloom's* home, on this particular day, is under threat. Such figures of speech, if not subversive of an implicit grammatical order, "play" on the order; they rely on our perhaps underlying sense of grammar (*pace* Chomsky) in the way that a skilled jazz musician will rely on his listeners to appreciate his "play" upon and around a well known melody. As we soon see, the advertisement for potted meat takes on an ironic aura for Bloom when juxtaposed in the newspaper over poor Paddy Dignam's obituary, and "potted meat" becomes a "tasteless" metaphor for his dead friend. The eye of the professional

advertising solicitor notices the incongruity that is quickly "translated" in Bloom's sympathetic mind. And this brand of potted meat will represent the adulterous carnal relations that will have taken place in his home, recooked in his kitchen and abandoned as crumbs at the scene of the "crime," in his marital bed. Using another figure of speech to collapse grammar, the advertisement that Bloom puts together in the Aeolus episode for House of Keyes uses visual symbols (crossed keys) to augment the verbal message, a "play" on the unmotivated sign with the motivated symbol.

Then there is direct material transmission of meaning, as when Molly's seedcake, warmly chewed, is transferred from her mouth to Bloom's, "that day I got him to propose to me," as she will recall. This is an event that each remembers in separate moments on this day, and each will savour the memory of the seedcake, transferred mouth to mouth, as well as its underlying unspoken meaning.

1.3.

How, then to define a language of food ways, food usage, food-as-communication so that we can really discuss Food *as* Translation/Food *in* Translation, rather than in transliteration, transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or some other parallelism? I was tempted to refer to Levi-Strauss' project, which I mention in "Toward a Theory of Gastronomology," the final *jocoserious* essay of my book, *The Joyce of Cooking*. (Armstrong 1986: 229ff.)

If we accept that verbal languages are systems of *unnatural* relations, between the signs and their referents, they perhaps cannot be made analogous to the *natural* semiotic systems of Color (visual perception), of Music (auditory perception), and of Taste (gustatory perceptions). Apprehensions of scent/taste may be "phantasms in the brain," as Newton said of color being a phantom of the mind rather than a property in and of material things. That is, as color does not inhere *in* objects that seem to be colored but, instead, various wavelengths of refracted from light, reflected from a surface, act upon the chemical rhodopsin in the physical eye which

tells the brain to “see” a color while the other refracted wavelengths are absorbed into the surface; thus the thing is seen *as* having a particular color. Actually, Newton, assisted in his perception by an assistant with better eye sight) claimed there are six hues in the spectrum, as he refracted a ray of sun light through his triangular prism; the seventh, indigo, he then added in order to set up a parallel to the seven notes of the tempered musical scale (A – G). Thus, both the musical scale of modern western composition and the seven hues (ROYGBIV) have become an Unnatural system derived from a Natural one. And we now perceive Indigo. (Syntonic Optometry treats patients through the eye with colored light and considers Indigo to be a distinct hue. It seems that the introduction of new words or linguistic terms brings about new perceptions! Or are there already an infinite number of micro-hues existing between the seven hues for which we as yet have no names, akin to the microtones diagrammed and expressed in the compositions of Harry Partch, who invented musical instruments that could “voice” his tones that exist between the seven notes?)

As Josef Albers has pointed out in *Interaction of Color* (Albers 1971: 1-3*)*, there is no absolute agreement on color perception among viewers of a single hue. There have been many attempts in history to correlate music and color, including color organs invented in 18th – 20th centuries, yet despite the observations of Albers, Itten, Klee, Kandinsky, Scriabin, and other modernist painters and musicians, no consensus has been reached.

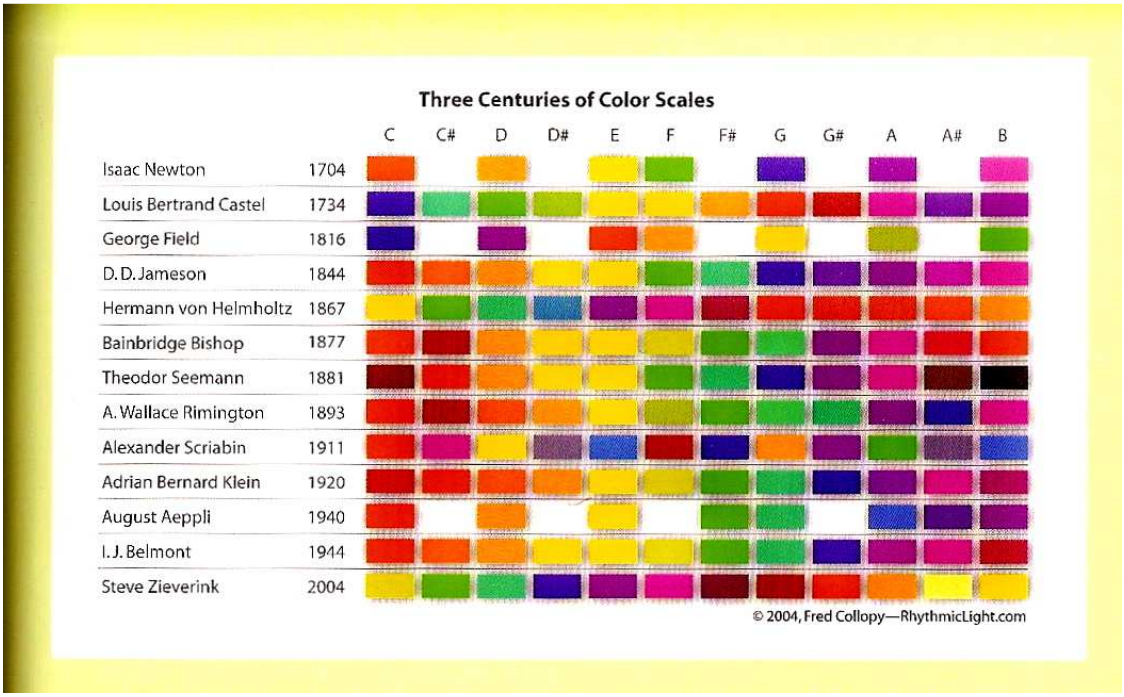


Fig. 3. The problem of consensus.

Mr. Bloom wonders whether the blind stripling piano tuner imagines or senses colors; he surreptitiously inserts his fingers beneath his shirt and pinches the flesh of his belly to feel its color, but the experiment is useless (as are all of Bloom's scientific enquiries). He knows from previous looking that his skin is yellowish white. Isaac Newton, a much more successful scientist, stated that the perception of color is a "phantasm in the brain," that colors do not inhere in physical things, they are reflected from them. In fact, we cannot perceive light directly, but only as reflected from a material surface. This is a natural law. We perceivers then attribute meaning to the colors themselves or the ways they interact.

Likewise, although taste/smell may materially originate *in* food and drink because particles trigger "volatiles" that send information into the sinuses and then to the brain, no meaning is *inherent* in foods until their sensory qualities are embedded in an underlying meaningful system of conventions that give significance to shared social behavior. Many foods are acquired tastes. Apparently, children are not born to like dandelion greens, spinach, pickles, spiced meats…they learn over time to appreciate them. Perhaps it is a matter of the needs of the young body; growing

children need more carbohydrates than old people, and hence children like sweets and soft creamy foods, whereas old people will drink stout and whiskey and eat sauerkraut and gorgonzola cheese with pleasure. Therefore, cultural tastes may also be modified by physiological needs. As this shows, the appeal of fermented foods is not only the result of culturally developed methods for preserving excess food since ancient times but is also healthful, now recognized as a Probiotic diet. Few children will eat plain yoghurt unless it is sweetened with fruit or sauerkraut unless on a hot dog.

One of cultural result of the importation of sugarcane into various countries and the overabundance of maize or corn, a growing issue since the 1800s, is that many people seem never to outgrow the childhood craving for sweets; we now find ourselves immersed in a sea of high fructose corn syrup, white sugar sneaked into prepared foods, and concentrated simple carbs are wreaking havoc as they replace natural foods and food preparation. But that is for another study…how food ways become lethal.

Colors interact with one another and are not immutable or stable, as Joseph Albers famously taught (at the Bauhaus, at Black Mountain College, at Yale); likewise, tastes are not stable experiences and traditionally achieve meaning in units, *in relation* to other tastes: e.g., mint or rosemary or garlic with roast lamb; hotdogs with ketchup; fish and chips with malt vinegar; bread and chocolate (only in France?); “marge and potatoes, potatoes and marge,” corned beef and cabbage; gin and tonic. And these meaningful units of combination change from one culture to another. Let’s give a glancing acknowledgement to Levi-Strauss’ armchair anthropological categories, the *raw* and the *cooked*, in order to pursue our own distinctions. Literally raw, as in uncooked, also has another meaning — that of being unprepared, outside culture, natural or “motivated”. And the literally cooked likewise also can mean acculturated, made digestible both literally through heat, fermentation or smoking, and symbolically or “unmotivated”. When Bloom enters Davy Byrnes’ for lunch in the Lestrygonians episode he has previously been repulsed by sloppy eaters consuming cheap stew served up to greedy men using spoons chained to the communal table. After suitable delays, Bloom’s choice will be to recover his equanimity in Davy

Byrne's quiet "moral" pub with nice clean bread, Gorgonzola cheese, sharp mustard, a glass of Burgundy. The bread dough was fermented by yeast, the cheese is certainly well fermented and 'mity' or self-consumed with living bacteria, the mustard is prepared in vinegar which is fermented, and the warming Burgundy is of course fermented from grapes. This little lunch is symbolically "cooked." It is a civilized repast.

Methods of such preparation, of course, have unique social meanings: e.g., roasting, smoking, pickling, fermenting, steaming, air-drying, and boiling. Some require the use of utensils and containers, such as a cauldron and a ladle, and are therefore culturally evolved and retain most of the food's nutrition. Roasting, more than the other techniques and perhaps the most primal method, allows for the loss of moisture and nutritious fat.

"A cuisine is structured by its menu of possibilities and subsequently by a specific paradigm of dishes." (Rohdie 1982: 31-33) Due to the reliance on soy and rice products in Japan, we can dine on an entire meal of tofu with soy sauce over rice moistened by rice wine vinegar and washed down by rice wine/sake; in Greece the reliance on olives and grapes likewise creates multiple dishes that make up much of a meal: (grape) vine leaves in olive oil with olive tapenade on bread made with olive oil and fresh grapes drunk with fermented grapes/wine. But also a given cuisine, such as north European is structured by rules for the preparation and taste combinations of individual dishes, e.g., the plain/savory relation of roast meat to sauces: piquant Worchestershire sauce or horseradish sauce for beef, sweet lingonberry jelly for venison or bison, vinegary mint sauce for lamb; orange or gooseberry sauce for duck; prunes for rabbit; applesauce for goose. (I do not know what the Australians serve with ostrich or kangaroo meat!)

The wet/dry relation such as of sauce to pasta is essential in Italian cooking. The whole/mutilated is another (that is, whole joints or fish in contrast to ground or chopped meats such as hamburger, meatloaf, Swedish meat balls, Baltimore crab cakes….). The hot/mild dichotomy is yet another (as with a dollop of cool sour cream on a bowl of spicy gazpacho or chili). Roasting may be thought more "natural"

because meat is in direct contact with fire while more advanced cultural methods set a distance between food and fire. Dripping fat means that roasting creates a loss, while boiling preserves all and provides a thrifty (if less tasty) meal.

1.4.

Since *words on the page* are "unmotivated" – that is, their forms do not show information about their referents, as is the case with early pictograms and symbols – can they be made to set up a parallel to food on the plate?

Attempts at Parallelism

If EATING is to READING as COOKING is to WRITING as TASTING is to LISTENING, can food items and words, food-ways and languages, be forced into parallelism, or does each come with intrinsic structures that precludes a "universal grammar of everything"?

Attempts at Substitution

SEMIOLOGY	GASTRONOMOLOGY
Monemes & Phonemes	Gustemes (scents & flavors)
Morphemes	Gastremes (ingestion)
Lexemes/words	Ingredients/foods

Spices and condiments then may serve as dialects, regional accents, or idiolects: e.g., Mr. Bloom ate "with *relish*" (in both senses of the term). His favorite foods, "inner organs of beasts and fowl" is his food vocabulary while "relish" is his enthusiasm if not literally a jar of condiments, a thus mode of consuming what would have been considered a portion of the gods' food in an ancient Greek sacrifice.

As Benjamin Franklin so aptly observed: "Hunger is the Best Pickle." With regard to literal relishes, Americans favour *ketchup (*derived from cats' sup in Colonial kitchens) on "french fries" (for a while after September 11, 2001 they were renamed

"freedom fries" by some patriotic Americans whose feelings were offended by lack of French sympathy), while Germans relish *mayonnaise* on their strips of fried potatoes, and the French seem to prefer steak sauce on *pommes frites*, while the English splash malt vinegar on their "chips." These variations may be interpreted as Dialects, food-ways shared by a cultural group or nation, "people living in the same place" as Bloom put it, based on an identical ingredient, potatoes, prepared by cooking in oil but presented in unique ways. There are variants (accents, even idiolects, regarding size, type of fat or oil used for frying, whether with skins on or peeled, size of strips) wherein lie the cultural issues of translation. To compare the exquisite "fries" from my favorite Belgian New York restaurant—long and slender strips of potato with the skins on, soaked in milk and delicately and quickly sautéed in duck fat—to Texas Fries, large chunks of peeled potatoes frozen in bulk, shipped across state lines, partially thawed and deep fried in Genetically Modified soybean oil precludes further description of obvious cultural contrasts.

Attempts at Analogy

There are said to be five distinct categories of flavour: SWEET, SOUR, SALTY, BITTER, SAVOURY (or UMAMI, a.k.a. MSG a.k.a. monosodium glutamate sold under the trade name *Á*ccent) and each is distinctly perceived at specific locations on the tongue and pallet. Chewing releases "volatiles" that send tastes up into the ortho-nasal cavities to become smells. Flavours are the result as a "phantasm" in the brain. Thus, there does seem to be a basis for a *natural grammar* of food perception akin to the natural grammar of hues and musical tones. And foods naturally offer variants in textures (e.g., woody root vegetables tend to be high in carbohydrates) and colors (e.g., **R**ed tomato, **O**range carrots, **Y**ellow squash, **G**reen Salad, **B**lue potatoes, **I**ndigo mussels, **V**ery purple aubergine), all of which indicate food value (such as vitamins) and trigger physical responses of salivation, production of necessary stomach acids, feelings of hunger preparatory to ingestion, mastication, and digestion…what Marinetti knew well and experimented with.

But can there be a "grammar" of non-linguistic, non-unmotivated, literal symbols? As there seems to be a *Natural grammar* of Color Perception and Musical tones, so

there may also be one of Taste? Do food-ways and language systems offer a clear parallelism in both Natural and Unnatural systems? Each has its intrinsic structure; Saussure and Levi-Strauss and Barthes applied semiotics as a study of structural relations: food-ways, too, are structures of communication and values expressed by people within the traditions of their cultural contexts.

1.5.

Sam Rohdi, writing of Marinetti's *La Cucina Futurista*, which begins with the story of concocting a large marzipan woman in "A Meal that Prevents a Suicide," observed that Marinetti disrupted the syntax of cooking but also its phonemes, the most basic system of its articulation, e.g., the pineapple/ sardine/ tunafish/ walnut combination of his sophisticated and highly *Un*natural and therefore "Cooked" *(pace* Levi-Strauss) concoction, "Stomach Awake" which is not only *not* a typical Italian breakfast but is an *impermissible* Italian taste combination. It is a violation of a taboo, the juxtaposition of fruit/fish.

> Cooking is a structure of signs from which not only food, or images of
> Women … or place, or nausea may be produced, but *meanings:*
> pastasciutta of 'Italian-ness', the soufflé of a 'bourgeois-ness',
> venison of a 'noble-ness'…. *La Cucina Futurista* less establishes
> food than it establishes *signs*, meanings rather than menus; eating
> becomes a form of thinking from which to construct ideas, art…
> quite literally a language that signifies…the possibility of another
> cuisine, a 'truly human cuisine', not based on tradition, on copies,
> but on *invention, innovation,* the recombination (endless, infinite)
> of what the removal of pasta has liberated. Hence a cooking, like

> Futurist art, not made by the past, or by 'history'. (Rohdie 1982: 30)

Pasta was thus associated by Marinetti with meanings such as: sloth, pacifism, boredom, tedium, naturalism, dullness, the inability to make war, the incapacity to make love; he replaces these negative associations with a thoroughly invented arbitrariness — in the sense that Saussure uses the term *arbitrary* to define the relationship of meaning to unmotivated linguistic sign systems. Futurist food preparation was designed to break old more natural values and cultural food habits, to perhaps forge a new food grammar.

> *La Cucina Futurista* is perhaps the first and only cookbook in the sense that it offers an understanding of cuisine not as an indeterminate list of recipes, lore, and tradition but as *a structure not natural* … but artificial. The ideal cookbook would be … of structures which order the cuisine from which that, created by transformation of rules, is formed and could be re-formed, a cookbook not of direction and names but rules of play of *difference,* of [re]combination, the very reverse of things *as* they [habitually] are. Futurism is by nomination a deferral … a declaration of urgency to abolish what is, … to establish what is not yet (a future consummation); it is a rhetoric to call to the Other … whose only term is to be not-the-One … a language of tantrum discomfited at the impossibility of possessing what it wants. (Rohdie 1982: 31-33)

2.1. Sacrifice and sustenance

> "If only we could live on good food like that… we wouldn't have the country full of rotten teeth and rotten guts," medical student Buck Mulligan says of the fresh milk brought by the old milk woman during breakfast in the Martello tower in *Ulysses.* (Joyce 1986: 12)

Modernist and humanist that he was, James Joyce mimicked the language of moral and economic paralysis in the *Dubliners* stories to hold up the "cracked looking glass of a servant." His "paralyzed" Dubliners' food habits were as limited as their purses, moral courage, and imaginations. Only when we get to "The Dead," the final story, added late, do we find generous hostesses, the Misses Morkan, who, although not well off, insist on good quality in their food and tea. *Ulysses* opens with a hearty fried breakfast of bacon, eggs, fried bread, butter, honey, and milky tea served up by the irreverent medical student Malachi, and a morose Stephen Dedalus fills his cup with more milk than tea, brooding on the fresh milk having come from a milking yard filled with slimy green stinking muck from the cattle. Ambiguity about food, strong in Stephen for whom this breakfast may be his only solid meal that day, will conclude June 16th as it began, with a parody of the Catholic Mass; Molly Bloom's cream and Epps' "mass product" cocoa will be prepared for him by his temporary surrogate father, a secular Jew who had begun his own day by preparing a modest breakfast on the humpy tray for his wife who is lying in bed. He is nurturing, he serves food and drink with consideration. His kindliness is generally unrewarded, yet that is his nature. When he explains metempsychosis, the transmigration of soul, the idea the one is reborn into a new life endlessly, his wife shows little interest except in the present. Yet there is something of the philosopher in Bloom that seems timeless.

We all know that Greek gods and goddesses were immortal because of what they ate and drank. In order to maintain their immortality, they–like Jehovah and his angels in the first book of the Old Testament–jealously guarded their food, whether Ambrosia and Nectar served on golden tea trollies made by Hephaestus on Mount

Olympus, or fruit picked from the *second* forbidden tree, the Tree of Life, in the Garden of Eden:

> Then the Lord God said, 'Behold, the man has become
>
> like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, *lest he*
>
> *put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life,*
>
> *and eat, and live forever'—therefore the Lord God*
>
> *sent him forth out of Eden…."* (Genesis 3:22)

Ancient heroic quests took place in a natural world invested with divine forces – gods, nymphs, supernatural monsters – many as personifications of natural phenomena: Aeolus (Winds), Poseidon (Sea)…or traits (Athena as Wisdom). Everything was full of gods. And, as Homer shows us, ritual eating, hospitality, and sacrifice were essential to bronze age civilized man, unlike the Cyclopes who had no laws, no manners, and were cannibals, living on sheep cheese and the odd visiting Greek soldier.

In Sophocles' *Antigone,* Tiresias still lived (although in Homer, he has gone to Hades); we get his account of a sacrifice, meant to see into the future, that results in a negative message, one that sends him to warn Creon that he has got things backwards.

> You will learn
>
> When you listen to the warnings of my craft.
>
> as I sat on the ancient seat of augury,
>
> in the sanctuary where every bird I know
>
> will hover at my hands—suddenly I heard it,
>
> a strange voice in the wingbeats, unintelligible,
>
> barbaric…

I was afraid,

I turned quickly, tested the burnt-sacrifice,

ignited the altar at all points—but no fire,

the god in the fire never blazed.

Not for those offerings…over the embers

slid a heavy ooze from the long thighbones,

smoking, sputtering out, and the bladder

puffed and burst—spraying gall into the air—

and the fat wrapping the bones slithered off

and left them glistening white. No fire!

The rites failed that might have blazed the future

with a sign. (Sophocles 1982: 111)

The prophet describes the thighs wrapped in fat as usual; but the meat was foul and stinking, the gods would not come to consume their portion, the entrails could not be tasted or read, indicating disaster: Creon has entombed Antigone who should be above ground while he has refused proper burial to her brother Polynices. Creon's anagnoresis or moment of recognition and acceptance of this ironic reversal or peripetaia that brings about utter tragedy, for he perversely goes to bury Polynices first, and by the time he arrives at Antigone's cave she has sacrificed herself, as does his son and as will his wife. And we can read Polynices and Antigone metaphorically, as improper sacrifices, not only because they died of injustice, but because they were the products of incest and therefore their deaths were necessary to bring a final end to the curse on the house of Cadmus. It was a tribal matter.

In classical buildings, there is an architectural *grammar* of blood sacrifice that preserves in marble and limestone to the present day in our neo-classical buildings such examples as the "*glyph,*" something carved or chopped off, a triglyph, a "thrice-

cloven," thighbone wrapped in a thick layer of fat, then roasted in the altar's flames. Three or more *guttae* beneath a tri-glyph are stylized drops of blood and fat draining from the thighbones, the sacred fluids that were carefully drained into the altar. (Hersey 1998: 31). The god consumes the ritually slaughtered parts *as flame*, leaving the remainder to be ritually doled out to appropriate persons including the priests, then feasted upon by those making the sacrifice, thus partaking *with* the god. But if the sacrifice *to* the god is the god's property, serious trouble inevitably follows. The ritual to conjure up the dead in Book Eleven of Homer's *Odyssey* is interesting as a set of instructions:

> …We beached our craft and, herding out the sheep, we picked our way
>
> by Ocean's banks until we gained the place
>
> that Circe made our goal.
>
> Here at the spot
>
> Perimedes and Eurylochus held the victims fast
>
> and I, drawing my sharp sword from beside my hip,
>
> dug a trench of about a forearm's depth and length
>
> and around it poured libations out to all the dead,
>
> First with milk and honey, and then with mellow wine,
>
> then water third and last, and sprinkled glistening barley
>
> over it all,…. I took the victims; over the trench
>
> I cut their throats
>
> and the dark blood flowed in—
>
> and up out of Erebus they came,
>
> flocking toward me now, the ghosts of the dead….
>
> unearthly cries—blanching terror gripped me!

I ordered the men at once to flay the sheep

that lay before us, killed by my ruthless blade

and burn them both, and then say prayers to the gods

….But I, the sharp sword drawn from beside my hip,

… never let the ghosts

of the shambling, shiftless dead come near that blood

till I had questioned Tiresias myself.

At last he came, the Shade of the famous Theban prophet

…and hailed me. …. 'Stand back from the trench—put up your sharp sword

so I can drink the blood and tell you all the truth.' (Homer 2006: 250-252)

We hear echoes of Bloom's musing, "Hot fresh blood they prescribe for decline Blood always needed…lick it up smoking hot… famished ghosts." (*U.* ll. 729-30, 140)

Tiresias' warning of the fate that awaits Odysseus' men if they eat the sacred flocks and herds of Helios on the isle of Thrinacia echoes, nearly word for word, the curse of Polyphemus, the blinded Cyclops, and of the witch Circe, who has also warned, "Harm them, in any way, and I can see it now…." And, in Book 12, she repeats the prophecies of both. (Homer 2006: 140-153). Alas, given the nature of his men – once sackers of Troy, having survived being turned into swine by Circe and a number of other upsetting experiences, now are weary of subsisting on fish and fowl within sight of fat cattle–they will be ruled by their lust for meat as the only proper food for heroes; this food-lust will cause them to commit a most hypocritical sacrificial rite, yet one conducted in accordance with proper customary detail. The thigh bones are hacked into three and wrapped in layers of fat, roasted along with the inner organs, on the altar fire to be consumed as smoke by the god, in this case the Sun God, Helios, owner of these special cattle and flocks that never reproduce, but seem to be immortal like the god. The travesty of sacrifice in the Oxen of the Sun episode is that the followers of Odysseus slaughter and ritually sacrifice the Sun God's own cattle

to him *in order* that the men can feast on the rest. The motive is suspect as is the breaking of the taboo. They will all be destroyed for this shortsightedness, this hypocrisy. They were forewarned and yet they could not forego roasted meat. And eating of the immortal cattle ironically causes their demise rather than conferring immortality.

But Greek sacrificial practices were not acceptable to all contemporary cultures.

***

> …By showing their repugnance at using a knife, spit, or kettle
>
> belonging to a Greek *because he makes sacrifices and*
>
> *eats* according to different rules, Egyptians, as described
>
> by Herodotus, reveal…an image of themselves in which
>
> their sacrificial practice…is circumscribed by its alimentary function…
>
> Here we find the first characteristic that justifies the central place
>
> of the blood sacrifice in Greek social and religious thought:
>
> *the absolute coincidence of meat-eating and sacrificial practice.*
>
> *All consumable meat comes from ritually slaughtered animals*
>
> *[as is true of Hebrew practice],* and *the butcher who sheds the*
>
> *animals' blood bears the same functional name as the sacrificer*
>
> *posted next to the bloody altar.* (Detienne 1989: 3)

Blood sacrifice was reputedly encouraged to replace cannibalism; animals are first sacrificed as substitutes for human sacrifice…the king, the Dionysian human victim eventually was replaced by Jesus, the Agnus Dei, the final blood sacrifice of Christianity.

Hungry Bloom thinks of white missionaries, though "too salty," being eaten by cannibals "with lemon and rice." (*U.*, l. 175, 140) And, whether he knew it or not,

Bloom would be interested to know that Israelite ritual practices concerning the sacrificial burning of thighs and tails with inner organs as the god's portion resembles the Greek, but, as Gunnar Ekroth has discovered,

> a close inspection indicates that there are important
>
> differences, The thigh, according to the Old Testament,
>
> may be singled out and burnt, but *with* the meat….The tail
>
> of the victim at Israelite sacrifices was cut off and burnt
>
> on the altar with the fat (suet), the kidneys and…liver….
>
> Moreover, Leviticus specifies that…at the Israelite sacrifices
>
> the tail is always burnt together with the kidneys,...and liver….
>
> (Ekroth 2009: 147)

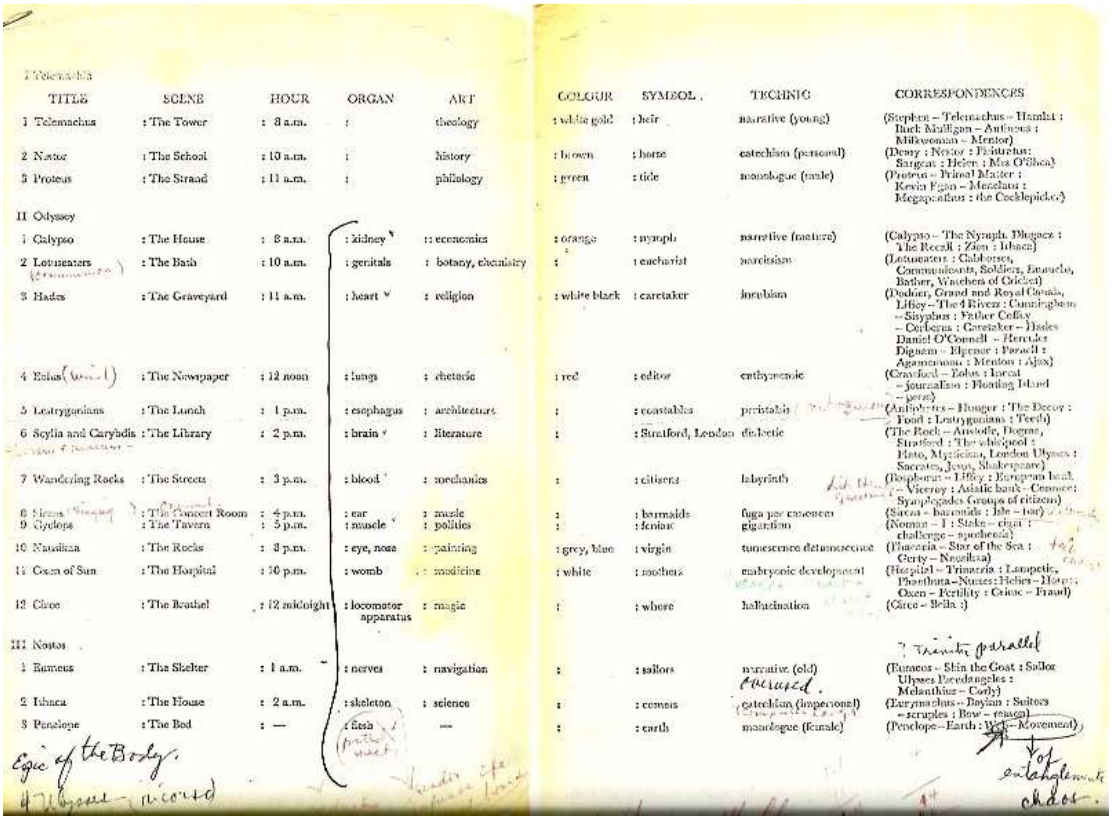
2.2. Trans-lation, Trans-substantiation and the Literal Imagination

Odyssean sacrifice seems not to have meant the same as eating *of* the god, epitomized in the Christian communion, during which Jesus, as Agnus Dei, becomes the god that is symbolically eaten as the *ultimate* blood sacrifice. It seems that God forces mankind to slay in a sacrificial ritual his own son, a blood sacrifice to end all blood sacrifices. In the Roman Catholic mass, eating the sacrificed god has been reduced from god *as* flesh/blood to god *as* bread and wine, and then re-elevated from a symbolic action to a literal one. The old debate between Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation — the former a deeply felt spiritual/material belief that sanctified wine and bread literally *become translated* into the blood and body of Christ *in* the body of the communicant – is far different from the *symbolic* act of Protestantism where communion is taken in the spirit of remembrance, which was the original instruction. At the Last Supper, Jesus' words, paraphrased here, were: "Take, drink, this is my blood that I shed for thee… Take, eat…this is my body…*do this in remembrance* of me…." When did the Church in Rome declare that the

eucharist is *literally* transformed in the communicant into sacred blood and flesh of the sacrificed god-as-man? There are echoes here of the Druidic “pagan” practices in Ireland, the British Isles and Scandinavia where ritual sacrifices were made of god-kings, thrice-killed (beaten, strangled, drowned in a sacred bog or pond). Many bodies dredged from the bogs attest to it. In addition to the well-known “bog people” discovered in Denmark by P.V. Glob in the 1960s, recent finds include the iron age Old Croghan Man found in a peat bog being drained at an ancient townland boundary atop an even older Tuatha boundary in Ireland; the remains are in the National Museum, Dublin. (Kelly 2006)

2.3.

In contrast to the Vichian eras, the age of Gods and age of Heroes, the Modern age of Man necessitates heroic quests that are subjective. Carl Jung observed that, in the modern age our odysseys now take us to delve within the psyche; the gods have become diseases, and we make discoveries in our heroic quests by way of the analyst’s couch or in the artist’s studio or by daydreaming and visions – or in the kitchen concocting meals.



TITLE	SCENE	HOUR	ORGAN	ART	COLOUR	SYMBOL	TECHNIC	CORRESPONDENCES
I Telemachia								
1 Telemachus	: The Tower	: 8 a.m.	:	theology	: white gold	: heir	narrative (young)	(Stephen – Telemachus – Hamlet : Buck Mulligan – Antinous : Milkwoman – Mentor)
2 Nestor	: The School	: 10 a.m.	:	history	: brown	: horse	catechism (personal)	(Deasy : Nestor : Philistus: Sargent : Helen : Mrs O'Shea)
3 Proteus	: The Strand	: 11 a.m.	:	philology	: green	: tide	monologue (male)	(Proteus – Primal Matter : Kevin Egan – Menelaus : Megapenthus : the Cocklepicker)
II Odyssey								
1 Calypso	: The House	: 8 a.m.	: kidney	: economics	: orange	: nymph	narrative (mature)	(Calypso – The Nymph. Phoenix : The Recall : Zion : Ithaca)
2 Lotuseaters	: The Bath	: 10 a.m.	: genitals	: botany, chemistry	:	: eucharist	narcissism	(Lotuseaters : Clubbosses, Commandants, Soldiers, Eunuchs, Barbers, Watchers of Cricket)
3 Hades	: The Graveyard	: 11 a.m.	: heart	: religion	: white black	: caretaker	incubism	(Dedalus, Grand and Royal Canals, Liffey – The 4 Rivers : Cunningham – Sisyphus : Father Coffey – Cerberus : Caretaker – Hades Daniel O'Connell – Herodes Dignam – Elpenor : Parnell : Agamemnon : Menton : Ajax)
4 Aeolus	: The Newspaper	: 12 noon	: lungs	: rhetoric	: red	: editor	enthymemic	(Crawford – Eolus : Local – journalism : Floating Island – press)
5 Lestrygonians	: The Lunch	: 1 p.m.	: esophagus	: architecture	:	: constables	peristalsis	(Antiphates – Hunger : The Decoy : Food : Lestrygonians : Teeth)
6 Scylla and Carybdis	: The Library	: 2 p.m.	: brain	: literature	:	: Stratford, London	dialectic	(The Rock – Aristotle, Dogma, Stratford : The whirlpool : Plato, Mysticism, London Ulysses : Socrates, Jesus, Shakespeare)
7 Wandering Rocks	: The Streets	: 3 p.m.	: blood	: mechanics	:	: citizens	labyrinth	(Peripetus – Liffey : Peripetus heat. – Viceroy : Asiatic bank – Commerce: Symplegades Groups of citizens)
8 Sirens	: The Concert Room	: 4 p.m.	: ear	: music	:	: barmaids	fuga per canonem	(Sirens – barmaids : Jahe – tar)
9 Cyclops	: The Tavern	: 5 p.m.	: muscle	: politics	:	: feniens	gigantism	(Noman – I : Stoke – cigar : chalberge – apotheosis)
10 Nausikaa	: The Rocks	: 8 p.m.	: eye, nose	: painting	: grey, blue	: virgin	tumescence detumescence	(Phoenicia – Star of the Sea : Cerity – Nausikaa)
11 Oxen of Sun	: The Hospital	: 10 p.m.	: womb	: medicine	: white	: mothers	embryonic development	(Hospital – Trinacria : Lampetie, Phaethusa – Nuzzes : Helies – Horses: Oxen – Fertility : Crime – Fraud)
12 Circe	: The Brothel	: 12 midnight	: locomotor apparatus	: magic	:	: whore	hallucination	(Circe – Bella :)
III Nostos								
1 Eumeus	: The Shelter	: 1 a.m.	: nerves	: navigation	:	: sailors	narrative (old)	(Eumeus – Shin the Goat : Sailor Ulysses Precedangeles : Melanthius – Corly)
2 Ithaca	: The House	: 2 a.m.	: skeleton	: science	:	: cosmos	catechism (impersonal)	(Larymachus – Baylan : Suitors – scruples : Bow – reason)
3 Penelope	: The Bed	: —	: flesh	: —	:	: earth	monologue (female)	(Penelope – Earth : Web – Movement)

Fig. 4.

Joyce's "Linati Schema," as we see above, includes a list of organs for most of his episodes. Although Joyce's *Ulysses* is *not* a perfect parallel to Homer's *Odyssey*, we can see relevant contrasts of the two types of journey, of external action and of internal thought and emotion. Athena herself observed that Odysseus was unique in his time in that, although he was a man of action, he used his mind. Joyce shows that Bloom is unique in his milieu in that he *tries* to use his mind, and his actions are nurturing.

Everyone, hero or anti-hero, must eat and drink. It is his food habits that are of interest in each journey. As the 18th century French food writer J-A. Brillat-Savarin wrote, "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are." Or, as Molly Bloom puts it in her infamous soliloquy, "Know me come eat with me." Food ways are intimate indicators of who a person is, his or her personal tastes and habits (idiolect), his or her local cultural habits (accent) broader cultural habits (dialect) and national habits

(language); or to simplify these categories, the national food-ways are the equivalent of what Saussure would call *Langue*, and the prior list of categories of individual and local cultural behaviors are *le Parole.*

In the Cyclops episode at Barney Kiernan's pub, Joyce presents the parody of an Homeric "monster," the eye-patch wearing Citizen (with his "vicious" or "lovely," depending on the point of view, dog Garryowen who eats the bar biscuits). The one-eyed misanthrope verbally threatens Mr. Bloom and metaphorically attempts to eat him alive. But noble "nobody" Bloom, akin to Odysseus, uses his wits and escapes. We then discover in the Nausicaa episode that the Citizen's niece Gerty MacDowell is a debased type of the Homeric princess Nausicaa who guides the exhausted Odysseus to her father's palace and salvation. But Gerty "didn't like the eating part…" and wanted food to be something "poetical" like roses for violets; she is possibly anorectic in contrast to vegetarian Lizzy Twigg whose sagging stockings are "so tasteless" as she walks, "beef to the heels" with the poet AE [George Russell] in the Lestrygonians episode walking to the vegetarian restaurant, at which point Bloom associates "Weggebobbles and Fruit" with poets: "Dreamy, cloudy, symbolistic. Esthetes they are. I wouldn't be surprised it if was that kind of food you see produces the like waves of the brain the poetical. For example, one of those policemen sweating Irish stew into their shirts you couldn't squeeze a line of poetry out of him" *(U.*, 136) he recalls having just seen,

> A squad of constables…marching in Indian file. Goose
>
> step. Foodheated faces….After their feed with a good load
>
> of fat soup under their belts….A squad of others….Bound
>
> for their troughs…. Prepare to receive soup."
>
> And after meditating on the them of You are What You Eat, he
>
> Concludes, "…one of those policemen sweating Irish stew into
>
> their shirts; you couldn't squeeze a line of poetry out of him." (U.,133)

Homer's Oxen of the Sun episode is the pivotal point of Odysseus' journey home, after which, as predicted, he will lose all men and ships due to *his* failure to follow the prophetic advice of Tiresias and keep a close eye on his meat-hungry men. This irony is echoed by Bloom's day—his pivotal point may be seen in the Ormond Hotel dining room where, at the dreaded foreseen hour of four o'clock when the suitor/impresario Blazes will enter 7 Eccles Street to commence an affair with Mrs. Bloom, Mr. Bloom is drinking a cider and eating a late lunch, sitting apart, humbly eating his god's portion of liver fried in crustcrumbs in the while in the nearby bar the barmaids, "bronze by gold," flirt, and the singing of his fellow males is accompanied by Simon Dedalus at the piano recently tuned by the blind stripling. Later, in the Nighttown episode, Bloom will "sacrifice" to the polymorphous dog/god, a late snack of crubeen and sheep's trotter. (This echoes dropping the bloody paper his kidney was wrapped in for the cat that morning.) He is reprimanded by the ghostly voice of his dead father for wasting money on food he doesn't eat but gives away. To the wrong god?

If we read Joyce's *Ulysses* is a parody of the Homeric epic, we see a reversal of ancient food uses; foods and feasts once elevated by ritual hospitality and sharing with the gods are reduced to ordinary humble fare, lonely meals, and bungled food preparation in the case of the burnt kidney which, being burnt, would be appropriate in Homer's day. True, Molly doesn't like her plate full, but she clearly has a hearty appetite (she swells up after cabbage). She and Bloom are well nourished yet do not eat expensive cuts of beef or lamb or pork roasts; rather they live on rabbit pie, inner organs, potted meat, tea and buttered toast, potato cakes, eggs, cabbage, stout, cheese sandwiches, "them oysters" and the like. She recalls being "up to her elbows" in flour, making the potato cakes. Her suitor Blazes on the other hand, rather than depleting the larder as Penelope's many suitors did, sends ahead a basket filled with the erotic fruit ("shamefaced peaches" and the like) along with a jar of Plumtree's Potted Meat.

As the stature of the Heroic and Supernatural of previous eras is debunked or at least brought down into the age of the ordinary man and woman in Joyce's *fin de siècle* Dublin, democratically reduced by parody to Bloom as the modern Odysseus,

the man in the street whose “epic” journey is reduced from ten years to one day, with divine powers reduced by Stephen Dedalus’ demotion of God to “a Noise in the street,” so is the food they consume debased. Nectar of the gods is replaced by blood red burgundy and then cider for Bloom with pints of lager and stout for Simon Dedalus and the other men in the pubs. Molly’s “nectar” that keeps her a plump diva is “her cream”, though she makes a little vow to “knock off the stout at dinner.” Ambrosia of the gods has become Plumtree’s Potted Meat. The “abode of bliss” is neither a Mount Olympus nor an Ithacan palace inhabited by a faithful wife, but merely a rented house, No. 7 Eccles Street, that will contain the mythic Roc’s Auk’s Egg in which the wandering anti-hero Sinbad Bloom rests amongst the crumbs of the Plumtree’s potted meat (evidence of “bliss,” though not his, in his abode) consumed that afternoon by his unfaithful but deserving queen and her blazing paramour, the fire of whose ungodly lust has consumed the sacrifice, Molly, her willing flesh, along with the ambrosia of their picnic between the sheets. Luscious pears. Potted meat, recooked. And the sacrifice is accepted by Bloom who kisses the melons of her rump. Will she rise up early, singing, and go to the market to savor all the colorful vegetables and fruits and flowers? Will he be given breakfast in bed for a change? Replete for the moment, anticipating his two eggs in the morning, he may fly in his dreams to fruitful fields and orchards of the exotic East, of Zion. This night he may reign supreme, if only on his side of the bed.

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