

## The Mimetic “Spirit of Denial”: Buck Mulligan and the Cultural Limits of Mockery

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“The *menace* of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.”  
Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

“We mistake words and the acclamation of words for power.”  
V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men*

The epigraphs which preface this essay are representative of two prevailing attitudes concerning colonial mimicry but may also serve as descriptions of recent postcolonial perspectives on *Ulysses*. On the one hand are critics who posit an apolitical, high modernist Joyce who is fully aware of the futility of Irish resistance to English colonial rule and directs his attention and energies to universal or esthetic rather than provincial political or nationalist concerns. This Joyce has been eagerly assimilated into the English canon and celebrated as the modern British novelist par excellence. This Joyce would agree with Naipaul’s Ralph Singh that art and politics are two very distinct realms incapable of mutual influence or effective interrelation; hence, Joyce’s representation of the more ridiculous manifestations of nationalist sentiment among the citizenry of Dublin. On the other hand are the growing number of critics (certainly by now the majority) who view Joyce as a literary / political subversionist of the highest order and who are trying more or less successfully to annex the Canonical Joyce to establish the Colonial / Postcolonial (or as a recent collection of essays has it, the “Semicolonial”) Joyce. I will negotiate between these mutually exclusive extremes in an attempt to reread *Ulysses* as a complex working out of Joyce’s own nationalist position, in which he tests the possibilities and limitations of a variety of nationalistic responses

and strategies of resistance. Among the most central of these, and the one I wish to treat here, is mimicry, a strategy that Joyce develops, before ultimately abandoning, in the complex character of Buck Mulligan.

Malachi “Buck” Mulligan has historically (and not incorrectly) been read as a means for Joyce to revenge the slights given him by Oliver St. John Gogarty, with whom Joyce lived for a time in the Martello tower of “Telemachus.” In fact, the “authoritative” portrait painted by Ellmann is one of a bitterly vindictive, almost Mephistophelian Joyce crouching in dark corners, notepad in hand, to record the imminent betrayals, however paltry, of his friends: “He waited in trepidation for Cosgrave, Gogarty, and others to betray him as he imagined Byrne had done, and so earn their places in the circles of his hell” (*JJII* 149). While this characterization of Joyce may or may not in fact be accurate, it ultimately proves problematic because it imposes a prescriptive (biographical) interpretation of Buck Mulligan that I contend is inconsistent with the character as we find him in the text. Granted, the criticism of recent years has tended to be more generous to the “usurper” of “Telemachus,” positioning him in complementary opposition to Stephen, alongside (if much lower in stature than) Bloom; but Mulligan cannot so easily be dismissed as mere foil for Stephen or voodoo doll for Joyce. I contend that Mulligan, like Stephen, Bloom, Molly, and other characters in the novel, represents a single thread in the insuperable tapestry of colonial discourse—not to be summarily judged and discarded, but rather to be read as one (dys)functioning part of colonialism’s ambivalent and paradoxical cultural machinery. Though Stephen is quick to dismiss Mulligan, the reader must be wary of falling into the narrative trap of over-sympathizing with the hero. In fact, Joyce overtly complicates this type of sympathetic reading by making Mulligan, savior of the drowning, the literal “hero” of the opening chapter.

Even those critics who opt for the subversionist Joyce often concur with Stephen in branding Mulligan a “gay betrayer.” He is routinely read as a ribald and joking Judas, happily cavorting with the oppressor and laughing in his shackles. Ellmann characterizes him in purely negative terms as a “spirit of denial” who, like Goethe’s Mephistopheles, exists primarily to deny “all that the other leading characters affirm” (*JJII* 265). Moreover, Mulligan is read as lacking both the nationalist and artistic integrity of Stephen. Unlike Stephen, Mulligan is more than willing to dissimulate (to do the “Yeats touch”) in order to gain acceptance into the upper stratum of Dublin literary society. He receives an invitation to George Moore’s party for the literary elite while Stephen does not, and it is clear that Stephen is both puzzled by and resentful of the recognition paid to Mulligan as a writer and all-purpose Dublin personality. Mulligan’s

venal pragmatism is placed in diametric opposition to Stephen's unwavering esthetic integrity, yet the effect of this juxtaposition is finally ironic in that the reader perceives the callow ridiculousness and ultimate futility of Stephen's esthetic rebellion. Stephen needs Mulligan, or more accurately, Stephen cannot mature as an artist until he has assimilated those qualities of Mulligan which the mature Joyce himself possessed. Indeed, Robert Bell asserts that *Ulysses* traces a movement away from Stephen—who, according to Joyce, “has a shape that can't be changed”—toward the “Mercurial Malachi.”<sup>1</sup> Bell writes that

the relationship between Joyce and Buck is much closer than Joyce acknowledged or readers have recognized. Buck's spirit has surprising affinities with Joyce's humor, satire, and playfulness; as the novel progresses, Joyce, persisting in his folly, appears increasingly Buck-like, so much so that Buck himself eventually becomes dispensable.<sup>2</sup>

As the novel opens, we find that Stephen is brooding over an injury he has suffered at the hands of Mulligan. The young esthete has taken offense at Mulligan's referring to his mother as “beastly dead.” Mulligan counters Stephen's accusation that he is cruel by simultaneously placing death in its proper biological context and bringing the same charge of cruelty against Stephen:

—And what is death, he asked, your mother's or yours or my own? You saw only your mother die. I see them pop off every day in the Mater and Richmond and cut up into tripes in the dissectingroom. It's a beastly thing and nothing else. It simply doesn't matter. You wouldn't kneel down to pray for your mother on her deathbed when she asked you. (*U* 1.204-08)

For the practical Mulligan, death is a natural function of the body, a Rabelaisian philosophy of the corporeal which will be reiterated by Bloom in “Hades”:

Do they know what they cart out here every day? Must be twenty or thirty funerals every day. . . . Funerals all over the world everywhere every minute. Shovelling them under by the cartload doublequick. Thousands every hour. Too many in the world. (*U* 6.512-16)

Bloom further echoes Mulligan's materialist sentiments when he

speculates complacently that the body is for maggots and rats simply "ordinary meat" (i.e., regenerative matter). Stephen's artistic constitution is not ready for such somatic, matter-of-fact conceptualizations of the human, and his naive romanticism is a difficult one with which to sympathize. Mulligan's (and later Bloom's) response to death seems more consonant with that of the mature Joyce. Ralph Rader posits a series of parallels further establishing a Mulligan / Bloom corespondence: both are called Stephen's "fidus Achates"; Bloom is a "cultured allroundman," while Mulligan is a "versatile allroundman"; as Bloom (like Cranly, with whom Mulligan is associated in "Telemachus") links arms with Stephen in "Eumaeus," he suggests that the artist part ways with Mulligan.<sup>3</sup> Rader even proposes that Mulligan's "long slow whistle of call," a frequent target of critical speculation, is answered in "Eumaeus" by Bloom's whistling for a cab.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, as the above digression bears out, Mulligan is not portrayed as entirely unsympathetic. He exhibits many characteristics of Bloom as well as Joyce himself and is therefore a more carefully nuanced (and important) figure than much criticism of the past has allowed. If we cannot either condemn or dismiss Mulligan out of hand as Stephen asks us, how are we to interpret his role in the novel? Again, I suggest that we read Mulligan (and indeed all the major characters) as both formed by and formulating colonial discourse, a discourse that Joyce could not, even in the act of critiquing, transcend.

First, however, we must locate Mulligan in the larger context of colonial discourse. This is no easy task, for Mulligan, chameleon-like, vacillates between identifying with the Irish and identifying with the English. Though he freely spouts quotations from Irish writers and folk songs and first introduces the topic of Irish art, he is also an official Oxford man, quoting equally as readily Swinburne and Lord Nelson. Though he frequents Dublin literary circles, he also acts as host and native informant to the Englishman Haines, thus contributing directly to the colonial project of mythologizing (and objectifying) the Irish. For Stephen, these are intolerable transgressions against Ireland, but are they equally intolerable for Joyce, or should they be interpreted as such by the reader? It is precisely Mulligan's in-betweenness, his hybridity, that makes him a difficult character to read or categorize. Mulligan is the colonial mimic man, outwardly adopting the manners of Empire while concomitantly undermining colonial authority through mimicry, irony, and (often comic) repetition, devices which, though markedly different from Stephen's silence, exile, and cunning, can be powerfully subversive in their own right.

As Homi Bhabha writes, “In this comic turn from the high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> Colonial mimicry is, in Leela Gandhi’s phrasing, an “*inappropriate appropriation*” of the normalizing gaze of post-Enlightenment European culture.<sup>6</sup> In one sense, then, mimicry represents the pathetic inability of the colonial subject to “correctly” or effectively inhabit the role of colonizer, a condition that Bhabha terms “almost the same, but not quite.” Thus, Ralph Singh will never cease to be a ridiculous figure “sunk,” as Naipaul writes, “in the taint of fantasy.”

The mimic man eschews the overt nationalist ideologies which cluster themselves in opposition to Empire and is thus often regarded with contempt or branded a traitor to the indigenous cause. Yet, according to Bhabha, mimicry may also be interpreted as one of the most potent and complex strategies of colonial subversion available to the colonized subject. Through a thorough appropriation of the assumptions and practices inherent to colonial discourse, mimicry disassembles and rearticulates this discourse “syntagmatically with a range of different knowledges and positionalities that both estrange its ‘identity’ and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power.”<sup>7</sup> I contend that in the character of Buck Mulligan—who again, as Bell claims, may serve as a metonym of sorts for the overall *character* of the novel—one finds this mimetic strategy of subversion most fully articulated.

The most obvious place to begin such an analysis is with Mulligan’s penchant for quotation, the most direct and obvious form of mimicry. While Stephen’s quotations are often straightforward borrowings or applications, Mulligan interjects a degree of irreverent wit that alters the meaning or effect of the quotation (often radically) from its original context. His invocation of Wilde, for instance, (“The rage of Caliban at not seeing his face in a mirror”) is far more spirited and original than Stephen’s morose answer, also an invocation of Wilde: “It is a symbol of Irish art. The cracked lookingglass of a servant” (*U* 1.143-44, 148). Mulligan’s quotations are always laced with exuberant irony. His bellowing of “On Coronation Day” with an exaggerated Cockney accent is obviously meant to imply complicity with Stephen at the expense of Haines, though the joke is not so overt that Haines would catch onto it.

Likewise, Mulligan’s tale of Mrs. Cahill and old mother Grogan mocks simultaneously the Irish peasantry and the English fascination with and reification of them: “—That’s folk, he said very earnestly, for your book, Haines. Five lines of text and ten pages of notes about the folk and

fishgods of Dundrum. Printed by the weird sisters in the year of the big wind" (*U* 1.365-68). Mulligan is mocking (without obvious or purposed resentment) the English practice of "writing" their colonial subjects. The "ten pages of notes" are English commentary or explication (i.e., the imposition or creation of identity and meaning) of the five lines of (ab)original Irish *text*. The implication is that the Irish cannot be understood or even be said to have valid identity in the English estimation without some interceding explication / translation. Similarly, Mulligan's mockery of the milkwoman is also a mockery of the English Celtophile (like Haines) who would attempt to create a generic identity for her: "—The islanders, Mulligan said to Haines casually, speak frequently of the collector of prepuces" (*U* 1.393-94). In excluding himself from the company of the "islanders," Mulligan adopts, and consequently lampoons, the persona of someone quite similar to Haines.

Stephen resents both the deference the milkwoman pays Mulligan and the fact that he is lightly mocking her in words that she does not understand. Given our limited vantage point in Stephen's consciousness, we may fail to appreciate that Mulligan's primary purpose is to mock the English rather than the old woman, who is used as little more than a rhetorical diversion. For example, Mulligan's discussion about the Gaelic language is clearly intended to expose Haines as a dilettante who advocates a token form of quaint or nostalgic Irish nationalism incommensurate to the reality of the present Irish situation. By demonstrating that the Irish woman is not the "silk of the kine," as Haines (and to some degree Stephen) would make her (she does not even speak "her own" language), Mulligan subtly effaces traditional and prescriptive English notions of Irishness. The Swinburne with which Mulligan serenades the old woman on her way out and the allusion to Lord Nelson just after her departure signal that he is merely playing the part of the Englishman, engaging in a bit of inappropriate appropriation, as it were. Stephen, lost in his own esthetic and solipsistic musings, misses the essentially subversive nature of Mulligan's joke, and thus, so does the reader. In other words, as the librarian of "Scylla and Charibdis" tells us, "The mocker is never taken seriously when he is most serious" (*U* 9.542-43).

It is also important to note that the sources for Mulligan's quotations change in direct accordance with the company he keeps. For example, while speaking alone with Stephen in the tower, Mulligan quotes or alludes almost exclusively to Yeats and Wilde; downstairs, in the presence of Haines, his sources gravitate toward the English (Swinburne and Nelson); confronting Stephen about the telegram in "Scylla and Charibdis," he

quotes Synge; still later, alone with Haines in “Wandering Rocks,” Swinburne again becomes Mulligan’s chief source of reference. By skillfully altering or rotating the texts he appropriates (as part of his characteristic speech and wit) to suit the ideological presuppositions of his audience or interlocutors, Mulligan deploys mimicry as a kind of socio-cultural camouflage. Bhabha writes:

As Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat . . . comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no ‘itself.’<sup>8</sup>

Hence, one effect of Mulligan’s quotations (as forms of mimicry) is the obscurity (even eradication) of the essentialized or authentic Irish identities promoted by both the English and the majority of Irish nationalists. The existence of the mimic man, who is neither one nor the other, problematizes any such claims for natural or racial essentialism.

In “Oxen of the Sun,” Mulligan (mis)appropriates the language and idiom of another imperial power, that of Cicero and Rome, in the form of an *invented* quotation:

*Talis ac tanta depravatio hujus seculis, O quirites, ut matres familiarum nostrae lascivas cujuslibet semiviri libici titillationes testibus ponderosis atque excelsis erectionibus centurionum Romanorum magnopere antepununt* [Of such a kind and so great is the depravity of our generation, O citizens, that our matrons much prefer the lascivious titillations of Gallic half-men to the weighty testicles and extraordinary erections of the Roman centurion]. (*U* 14.707-10)

Clearly, the Gauls who have stolen the Roman women in Mulligan’s scenario parallel the Irish, the Romans the English, a point to which I shall return. By depicting the Gauls as *half-men*, as per Roman Imperial practice, Mulligan plays upon a similar trope of nineteenth-century English colonial practice, that of either feminizing or bestializing the colonized. In *Apes and Angels*, C.P. Curtis describes how the English used selective interpretations of Darwin in conjunction with the phrenological charts of Pieter Camper to create a simian lineage for the Irish which was promoted in virtually all political caricatures and propaganda of the

nineteenth century. The reference to a *half-man* would thus have more immediate and incendiary connotations for Mulligan’s audience than for the twenty-first century reader.

Moreover, Mulligan’s lasciviously subversive sentiments are rendered in the ancient and revered language of the conqueror and even attributed to a non-existent *text of authority*: “Mr. Mulligan however made court to the scholarly by an apt quotation from the classics, which, as it dwelt upon his memory, seemed to him a sound and tasteful support of his contention” (*U* 14.404-7). Mulligan has, by this point, so successfully appropriated the language and patterns of authority (Latin representing both secular and religious) that it is nearly impossible for the lay-person to determine that his quotation is an invented one. Here he reaches the height of colonial mimicry, articulating difference and even subversion that is so carefully cloaked in the ideology and language of the oppressor that it becomes almost undetectable in its ambivalent and stealthy insurrection.

In his seminal essay “Adulteration and Nation,” David Lloyd traces the history of modern Irish nationalism within the developmental context of the nineteenth-century Irish ballad. According to Lloyd, the nineteenth-century Irish ballad may be divided into three general classifications: Gaelic or peasant songs; street ballads; and literary or Anglo-Irish ballads. Lloyd focuses upon the two former, arguing that it is “the problematic status of the first two that most acutely confronts the cultural nationalist.”<sup>9</sup> While the Gaelic songs are often comprised of fragments of older ballads and random pieces of Irish history—in other words, they are nostalgic appeals to an authentic Irishness—the street ballads are more heavily and self-consciously influenced by English cultural and hegemonic presence, many of them being little more than direct appropriations or adaptations of traditional English songs, “enforcing frequently a distortion of standard English pronunciation or syntax to fit Gaelic musical and speech rhythms.”<sup>10</sup> The street ballads do not make naive appeals to an authentic national identity but rather to one which is always aware of and partially defined by proximity to the other; therefore, it is in the street ballad that colonial mimicry and cultural hybridity are most clearly evinced:

Precisely because of the heterogeneity of the ballads . . . it would be impossible to establish a ‘typical character’ for the street ballads or to fix their tone. In ‘The Kerry Recruit,’ for example, it becomes exceedingly difficult to specify the object of mockery, the country goshoon or the sergeant, peasant ignorance or British institutions.<sup>11</sup>



In “Telemachus,” as we have already seen, Mulligan’s particular brand of mockery is of just this indeterminate (hybrid) nature. One cannot easily discern whether he is making fun of the milkwoman for her ignorance or the British ruling practices (personified by Haines) which inscribe and make requisite that ignorance. It is fitting, therefore, that Mulligan, as colonial mimic, should also take on the role of street balladeer.

A performer who is always onstage (Bakhtin might say that he is perpetually in a play without footlights), Mulligan frequently bursts into fits of song throughout *Ulysses*. In fact, his voice is often described by the narrative as “singing,” even in those instances where he is merely speaking or calling out, for instance: “—Kinch ahoy! Buck Mulligan’s voice sang from within the tower. It came up nearer the staircase, calling again” (*U* 1.280-82); and the voice, “sweettoned and sustained,” that accosts Stephen from the sea at the close of “Telemachus” we assume to be the protean Mulligan’s (*U* 1.741). His entrance in “Scylla and Charibdis” as “a ribald face . . . blithe in motley” (*U* 9.485-86) is marked not only with song (“Gloria in Excelsis Deo”) but also with a fragment of the song’s actual sheet music. In “Scylla and Charibdis” he is found “iambing,” “trolling,” and “trilling” bits of Yeats and Robert Burns, and in almost all his appearances in the novel, Mulligan is singing snatches of poetry or “chanting” fragmented or altered quotations from various sources.

The first original Mulligan piece with which we are confronted in *Ulysses*—at once establishing him as balladeer—is “The Ballad of Joking Jesus” in “Telemachus.” The piece is a near verbatim reproduction (the first of several such interpolations) of bawdy original verse by Oliver Gogarty himself, much of which he sent Joyce over the awkward years of their friendship. In addition to the obvious irreverence directed toward at least one of Stephen’s two espoused masters, “The Ballad of Joking Jesus” reiterates the themes of transubstantiation and the essence / existence dichotomy (first introduced in the mock mass ceremony) which permeate the novel. Mulligan, again prefiguring Bloom, emphasizes the comical *physicality* of Christ as juxtaposed with his ethereal divinity. The farcical, light-hearted tone of both the song and its singer distracts from its subversive, borderline heretical nature, as Haines attests: “—We oughtn’t to laugh, I suppose. He’s rather blasphemous. I’m not a believer myself, that is to say. Still his gaiety takes the harm out of it somehow, doesn’t it?” (*U* 1.605-08). That gaiety, what Bhabha calls *the comic turn* from the colonial imaginary, is precisely what masks the invective inherent in colonial mimicry and renders it (like the medieval carnival) an almost sanctioned form of subversion.

The various epithets given (in many cases, self-applied) to Mulligan

serve to fragment his identity in interesting ways. Robert Bell suggests that by taking on the name of Mercury (the Greek counterpart to “Malachi,” or “my messenger”), Mulligan invokes Carl Jung’s archetypal trickster figure. According to Jung, the requisite characteristics of a trickster figure include a proclivity for sinister pranks and general mischief as well as the ability to shape-shift or assume multiple identities, which Mulligan certainly does, as “Scylla and Charibdis” bears out. Moreover, the trickster figure often occupies or defines a liminal or interstitial space. Joseph Campbell often told the story of Eshu, a trickster figure in African lore, who, wearing a four-colored hat denoting the four world directions, walks down the road between fields igniting arguments among neighbors over what color hat the strange man was wearing. While the neighbor on the right sees a man in a red hat, the one on the left sees a green hat, or someone approaching from the front perceives a different color than one approaching from the rear.<sup>12</sup> The trickster thus inhabits the space where imaginative or generic borders are no longer sufficient. He introduces paradox and complication into binary systems, i.e., he wears all four hats simultaneously. The trickster is, for instance, often half human and half animal or both human and divine. His nature is one of essential and indeterminate hybridity, a fundamental *betweenness*. This description of the trickster certainly fits both colonial mimicry in general and Buck Mulligan in particular, who, as Bell notes, “has no identity, only a series of masks.”<sup>13</sup> Mulligan, quoting Whitman, describes himself in similarly paradoxical terms: “Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself” (*U* 1.517-18). Mulligan’s *place*, that of the mimic man and the trickster, lies in the indefinable midpoint betwixt binarial extremes: England and Ireland, reverence and apostasy, life and death, and so on. The *third space* which Mulligan both creates and inhabits engenders the potential, and indeed the necessity, of alternate forms of knowledge, problematized formulations of identity, and new locations of power.

Much postcolonial thought and criticism of the past two decades, drawing on Foucault, has been preoccupied with spatial formulations of central and peripheral power relationships within the colonial situation. The role of the colonial mimic man in this context is to at once observe and disavow difference, thus complicating the center / periphery binary. Bhabha writes:

Mimicry is thus the sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or

recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic functions of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.<sup>14</sup>

By misappropriating colonial authority, mimicry returns the colonizing gaze and establishes a new seat of authority or signification. For Mulligan, this new location of power is symbolized by the Martello tower.

The tower, originally constructed by the British in anticipation of an attack by Napoleonic forces, has become in *Ulysses* not merely the residence of Irish tenants (not a point to be passed over lightly) but also the new *center* from which the colonized resists colonial fixation and returns the normalizing gaze of the colonizer: "Billy Pitt had them built, Buck Mulligan said, when the French were on the sea. But ours is the *omphalos*" (*U* 1.543-44). The Greek *omphalos* was, of course, the oracle at Delphi, considered by adherents to be the center (or navel) of the world. By jokingly (mis)appropriating this myth for modern Ireland, Mulligan decenters the colonizing subject and establishes, conceptually, a new center of signification, one in which the colonized subject assumes the position of authority (the center of the world) and the British master is displaced to the periphery. The tower is thus imaginatively transformed into the central observatory of Bentham's panopticon.

Mulligan's second mention of the *omphalos* is also not without interesting political implications. In "Oxen of the Sun" Mulligan commands the stage for the last time. Upon his entry, he immediately distributes a set of pasteboard cards which read: "*Mr Malachi Mulligan. Fertilizer and Incubator. Lambay Island*" (*U* 14.660). Mulligan's mock scheme is to assist those couples who are struggling with infertility by offering his "services" free of charge. The proposed center of operations for this enterprise is Lambay Island, at the time held by a Tory named Lord Talbot de Malahide. As the narrative tells us,

He proposed to set up there a national fertilising farm to be named *Omphalos* with an obelisk hewn and erected after the fashion of Egypt and to offer his dutiful yeoman services for the fecundation of any female of what grade of life soever who should there direct to him with the desire of fulfilling the functions of her natural. (*U* 14.684-88)

A persistent trope of colonial discourse, as I have already mentioned, is the feminization of the colonized by the masculinized Empire. In Mulligan's scheme, Ireland appropriates the English imperial phallus, the "erected"

obelisk, and becomes the new center for the reassertion of Irish virility. For this site of the de-feminization and imaginative de-colonization of Ireland Mulligan again invokes the *omphalos*, appropriating both English masculinity and centrality, coolly answering the gaze of the objectifying eye of Empire. In so doing, Mulligan is in keeping with one of the major artistic and socio-political movements of his day, the negation of the feminized ideal Ireland. In limning the particulars of his proposal, Mulligan invokes the historical / national / cultural parallels which are embedded in the novel—Egypt / Rome / England and Israel / Greece / Ireland—and appropriates (and abrogates) the authority of all three imperial powers simultaneously: the Egyptian through seizure of the obelisk, the Roman in the invented quotation he offers in defense of his plan (discussed earlier), and the English by way of analogous association with the two former.

It is, however, at this point in Mulligan’s appropriation of English colonial ideology that the limitations of mimicry as a form of resistance (and Mulligan as agent of that resistance) reveal themselves. Joseph Valente describes the normative idea of colonial Irish manhood prevalent in the nineteenth century as ensnared in a double-bind that is merely reinforced by all efforts to escape or transcend it:

For the Irish subaltern, observance of the manly norms of self-regulation amounted to an acquiescence in the womanly norm of submissiveness to others, evincing to all appearances the core properties of the feminist stereotype—passivity, pliancy, a willingness to yield—that British opinion regularly invoked as proof of the essentially Celtic desire to be ruled.<sup>15</sup>

Hypermasculine resistance to this feminine inscription of the Irish (Valente cites violent nationalist movements like the Fenians and the Sinn Fein) resulted in their summary dehumanization (simianization) by the colonizers, the only escape from which was a return to acquiescence or passive diplomacy, and thus implied femininity. In this scenario, mimicry offers little opposition and may in fact exacerbate the crisis of national gender:

One of the crueller effects of the Union, with its forced conversion of the Irish from colonial to metrocolonial subjects, was the way in which it facilitated their internalization of these strictures, in this disabling configuration, so that the Irish trauma of manhood would be reproduced, at least fractionally, in every attempt to overcome it.<sup>16</sup>

Mulligan's assimilation and mimetic repetition of Victorian / Edwardian standards of manhood, evinced in his hypermasculine reclaiming of the phallus, reveal, finally, the limitations of mimetic resistance to colonial hegemony. All efforts to transcend the structures and institutions of colonial power are ultimately entirely informed and imagined within those structures and institutions, preventing the possibility for any effective ideological movement beyond them. In proposing to inseminate the world's women and erect a pagan phallus, Mulligan rejects (too vehemently) the feminine stereotype only to inadvertently embrace the simian stereotype by failing to comply with the more genteel standards of nineteenth-century manhood. Reacting against the institution of the colonial stereotype through mimetic appropriation, Mulligan positions himself more securely within the hegemonic discourse that he is trying to escape. Though offering a way out of this particular binarial double-bind through his transformation into the "new womanly man," Leopold Bloom falls prey to other complexities of colonial discourse, such as Orientalism.

Thus, the self-differential impetus inherent in colonial mimicry cannot, in the end, surmount the double-bind of colonial strategies of engenderment and identification. So while the novel may indeed gravitate toward Mulligan, as Bell argues, it does not find in him an unproblematic (or even successful) expression of colonial resistance. The "witty mode of fusion" that Bell ascribes to both Joyce and Mulligan<sup>17</sup> leads at best to an ambivalent expression of national identity, one informed to such a degree by assimilation and appropriation that it cannot transcend the values and ideologies against which it is poised.

Joyce, then, occupies a position between those of the epigraphs which begin this essay: one that views mimicry as a sly and effective tool of subversion and one that rejects mimicry as a useless appropriation of words. Like Mulligan, Joyce wields mimicry as an effective weapon of sorts. T.S. Eliot claims that with *Ulysses* Joyce destroys the English novel. And indeed, if the English novel is read as producing and being produced by nineteenth-century colonial discourse, as Edward Said claims in *Culture and Imperialism*, Joyce's act of literary destruction is an unquestionably efficacious form of literary as well as political insurrection. Yet he seems also to realize, unlike Mulligan, that mimicry, as "an acclamation of words," can only go so far in establishing identity through covert modes of differentiation. He understands, along with Frantz Fanon, that "[t]he efforts of the native to rehabilitate himself and to escape from the claws of colonialism are logically inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism."<sup>18</sup> Joyce's method of misappropriation and

witty pastiche cannot therefore be read as a fully realized scheme of mimetic subversion. Rather, through an exhaustive, encyclopedic appropriation and consequent destruction of English literary technique(s), Joyce obfuscates simplistic, essentialist notions of race, gender, and nationality and inaugurates a revolution of ambivalence—rather than one of assertive nationalist ideology—that is self-conscious of its inability to transcend the delimitations of colonial discourse. Despite, then, the Mulligan-like characteristics of *Ulysses*, Joyce foresees the traps and aporias that Mulligan, by nature, cannot. It is this ironic self-awareness and acknowledgment of the limitations of its own technique (as well as those of de-colonization in general) that establishes *Ulysses* as a unique and important voice in Irish postcolonial and novelistic discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bell, “Mercurial Malachi and Jocoserious Joyce,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 48 (1989) 365.

<sup>2</sup> Bell 364.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Rader, “Mulligan and Molly: The Beginning and the End,” in *Joyce in the Hibernian Metropolis*, eds. Morris Beja and David Norris (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996) 275.

<sup>4</sup> Rader 276.

<sup>5</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 85.

<sup>6</sup> Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia UP, 1998) 150.

<sup>7</sup> Bhabha 120.

<sup>8</sup> Bhabha 90.

<sup>9</sup> David Lloyd, “Adulteration and the Nation,” *Anomalous States* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 91.

<sup>10</sup> Lloyd 94.

<sup>11</sup> Lloyd 95.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (New York: MJF, 1949) 45.

<sup>13</sup> Bell 371.

<sup>14</sup> Bhabha 86.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Valente, “‘Neither Fish Nor Flesh’; or How ‘Cyclops’ Stages the Double-Bind of Irish Manhood,” in *Semicolonial Joyce*, eds. Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) 103.

<sup>16</sup> Valente 106.

<sup>17</sup> Bell 371.

<sup>18</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove P, 1963) 212.