

The Not-So-Ugly Duckling of the Joyce Oeuvre

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Chamber Music may well be the ugly duckling of the Joyce oeuvre. Few pay detailed attention to it, and many see it simply as the butt of Joyce's joking in "Sirens" or, as Ellmann records, the "missal-like" object of sentimental reverence.¹ Yet looking back from the vantage point of 1922 to survey and chart *Ulysses'* earliest forebears, one's sight alights on this melodic anomaly. An atavistic curiosity standing apart in design, technique, and theme from the often underplayed, at times exuberant prose of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait*, the suite of lyrics embodies Joyce's early ambitions as a writer of verse. Perhaps a not-so-ugly duckling after all, the suite subtly announces the acoustic exuberance of *Ulysses* and foregrounds formally two linguistic procedures proper to interior monologue.

The lyrics of *Chamber Music* tell a loosely woven tale portraying, as Fagnoli and Gillespie aptly summarize, "the sentiments and moods of a youthful poet who experiences the excitement of an idealized love that ends in failure."² In configuration anticipating the "spirit of Ibsen" later to move through the Stephen of *A Portrait* "like a keen wind" (P 5.81-82), the suite's recurring motif of the wind mirrors and reveals the discernible narrative telling. The preludial III, "At that hour when all things have repose," bears the awakening of desire, borne through the air by "the night wind and the sighs/Of harps playing unto Love."³ Along the suite's ascending movement toward amorous union, evocation of "the gay winds" that "stay to woo" (PE 10.5) in VII and of the "Winds of May, that dance on the sea" (PE 12.1) at the outset of IX give way to the nuptial "Wind of spices whose song is ever/Epithalamium" (PE 16.3-4) in XIII.⁴ As if to confirm the popular wisdom in the saying *the winds may change*, however, in the suite's descent they do. Intimated by initial refuge—"Where no rude wind might visit me" (PE 9.3)—in poem VI, "I would in that sweet bosom be," the rendering of wind as hostile to love signals its idealized impossibility. "The odorous winds are weaving/A music of sighs" (PE 17.5-6), the second stanza of XIV opens, after which, in the motif's transformation, the *music* turns to outright hostility in XXIV—"Desolate winds assail with cries/The shadowy garden where love is" (PE 32.7-8)—and to indifferently *whistling* wind enveloping the poet's *loneliness* in the second stanza of XXXIII:

And all around our loneliness
The wind is whistling merrily.
The leaves—they do not sigh at all
When the year takes them in the fall. (PE 36.9-12)

If a tailpiece to the suite's close and not included in Joyce's 1905 arrangement,⁵

poem XXXV, "All day I hear the noise of waters," leaves the speaker's *loneliness*, likened to the sorrow of hearing *the winds cry* and enveloped by *grey winds, the cold winds*, patent:

All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan
Sad as the seabird is when going
Forth alone
He hears the winds cry to the waters'
Monotone.

The grey winds, the cold winds are blowing
Where I go.
I hear the noise of many waters
Far below.
All day, all night, I hear them flowing
To and fro.⁶ (PE 38.1-12)

In its narrative portrayal of *idealized love that ends in failure*, *Chamber Music* leaves in its wake numerous hollow-sounding chords; there is much that is swiftly undercut in the unfolding of the suite. Evidencing the Proustian belief that, as Ellmann phrases it, "the only true paradise is one that we have lost,"⁷ *Chamber Music* reaches from the young Joyce's Dublin to Elizabethan England for its rhythms and diction.⁸ Concerning the former, Ellmann specifically identifies poem IV, "When the shy star goes forth in heaven," as based on the lyrics of Ben Jonson (*JJII* 121). The poem's largely iambic tetrameters, clearly audible in the couplet "His song is softer than the dew/And he is come to visit you" (PE 7.5-6), stand grouped into two sestet rhyming *ababcc*; widespread in the suite, isometric tetrameter sestets appear as well in poems XI, XII, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXV (with the differing rhyme scheme *aabbcc*), XXVI, XXVII, and XXXIII, while in the abovequoted poem XXXV, heterometric sestets channel the expression of solitary hearing.

Metrical and stanzaic matters, however, only begin to explain "the ceremonious accents of *Chamber Music*" (*JJII* 156), whose Elizabethan tone owes more to diction than to form. To adduce the diction one might cite the "sweet bosom" in VI, the "dainty hand" in VII, the verb "woo" in VII, XI (appearing twice), XVIII, and XXII (appearing twice), the conceit "sweet sunlight/With mien so virginal" in VIII, the interjection "Welladay! Welladay!" in IX, the opening imperative "Bid adieu, adieu, adieu" and imperfect mosaic rhyming of "snood" and "maidenhood" in XI, the metaphor "My dove, my beautiful one,/Arise, arise!" in XIV, the appellatives "dearest" in XXII, "Dear lady" in XXVI, "Gentle lady" in XXVIII, "dear love" in XXIX, and "my beloved" in XXXII, the abundant archaic pronouns *thee, thy, thou, and thine*,⁹ the nouns "plenilune" in XII and "vales" in XXV, the inflected verbs "doth" in XI, "admonisheth" in XV, "hath" in XXI and XXVI, and "leanest" in XXVI, the archaic contraction "'Tis" in IV and verbal constructions "goes forth" in IV, "I would we lay" in XX, and "is fain" in XXII, and the contorted syntax wrought to rhyme of "Where the great pine forest/Enaisled is!" and "Thy kiss descending/Sweeter were" in XX. Adding an unequivocal Elizabethan allusion to the lengthy litany above, poem XXXIV, "Sleep now, O sleep now," fleetingly quotes *Macbeth*. Stanza two of the poem,

portraying “the winter” as “crying ‘Sleep no more’” (PE 37.8), borrows its direct speech from Shakespeare’s shortest tragedy.¹⁰ Like a prosodic cup composed of two stressed syllables separated by an unstressed one, the imperative’s rhythmic contour—*Sleep no more*—announces the end of the suite and anticipates echoing, in the tailpiece immediately to follow, the rhymed even lines of poem XXXV, “All day I hear the noise of waters”: *Making moan, Forth alone, Monotone, Where I go, Far below, To and fro*.

In its bloody depiction of intelligence, eloquence, and strength brought to foul ruin, *Macbeth* is an oddly echoing text to quote at the close of the suite. Yet in its swift undercutting of idealized love, *Chamber Music* introduces what will later become Joyce’s consistent, emphatic undermining of all absolute idealizations, particularly those portraying humankind in too beautified or perfumed terms. “What other hero in the novel has,” Ellmann asks, “like Stephen Dedalus, lice? Yet the lice are Baudelairian lice, clinging to the soul’s as well as the body’s integument. What other hero defecates or masturbates like Bloom before our eyes?” (JIII 6). Joyce’s renunciation of idealized absolutes owes to the straddling of polar opposites, to the refused sundering of having to choose between antipodes. “Joyce,” Ellmann concludes, “lived between the antipodes and above them: his brutes show a marvelous capacity for brooding, his pure minds find bodies remorselessly stuck to them” (JIII 5).

Chamber Music, in addition to introducing Joyce’s undercutting of idealization and use of allusions that, as regards *Ulysses*, require thick tomes to trace, announces the phonemic and prosodic exuberance of prose to follow. The suite’s very title, if—like the published ordering of the lyrics—more Stanislaus Joyce’s choosing than of James’s coining,¹¹ invokes explicit attention to sound, while inviting as well Bloom’s punning irony in “Sirens”:

O, look we are so! Chamber music. Could make a kind of pun on that. It is a kind of music I often thought when she. Acoustics that is. Tinkling. Empty vessels make most noise. Because the acoustics, the resonance changes according as the weight of the water is equal to the law of falling water. (U 11.979-83)

Bloom’s singular *Acoustics* reveal Joyce deftly yoking the antipodes in playful confusion of chamber pots and *Chamber music*, the exclamative recognition—*O, look we are so!*—fusing who and what we are: soul *and* flesh, the mind aloft in elevated harmonies, the body busy with its *Tinkling*.

In its title and initial unfolding, *Chamber Music* posits unashamedly the first of these antipodes, as “Strings in the earth and air,” the opening preludial lyric, announces:

Strings in the earth and air
 Make music sweet;
 Strings by the river where
 The willows meet.

There’s music along the river
 For Love wanders there,
 Pale flowers on his mantle
 Dark leaves on his hair.

All softly playing,
With head to the music bent,
And fingers straying
Upon an instrument. (PE 4.1-12)

This lyric's signalling *There's music along the river*, together with its rhyme-strengthened *playing* and *instrument* and iterative emphasis on *Strings* and *music*, denote a first, self-evident facet to Joyce's acoustics in the suite: language is charged with the task of conjuring heard harmonies, both instrumental and vocal.¹² The *Strings* and *instrument* above, for example, give way to "the sweet harps" (PE 6.7) in poem III, whose playing enacts the Elizabethan belief in a music of heavenly movement echoing harmony on earth. As the lyric speaker's desire in III awakes at dawn, the now "invisible harps" (PE 6.11) of the third quintain similarly sound *in the earth and air*; objects of imperative urging, they are bid play on "Soft sweet music in the air above/And in the earth below" (PE 6.14-15).¹³

Least revealing of the acoustic facets discerned and later mocked in poem XXVII as sound "Our piping poets solemnise" (PE 30.10), the evocation of heard harmonies gives way to two verse-specific structures guiding its expression: rhythm and meter, on the one hand, and rhyme and stanza, on the other. These formal concerns evidence unequivocally the young Joyce's acute consciousness of language as, in the hands of the artist, an inherently sonic phenomenon. The acuteness, moreover, is heightened by complexity. If finely attuned to the phonic properties of rhymed strophic verse, *Chamber Music* varies greatly in its handling of them.

By way of rhythm and meter, the suite, refusing to establish a single paradigm, instead demonstrates several prosodic tendencies. Iambic tetrameters are prevalent, as manifest in discussion above of IV, "When the shy star goes forth in heaven," and in seventeen other lyrics, among them poem XII, which opens: "What counsel has the hooded moon/Put in thy heart, my shyly sweet" (PE 15.1-2).¹⁴ In poem II, iambic tetrameters and trimeters alternate, as the lyric's opening lines reveal: "The twilight turns from amethyst/To deep and deeper blue" (PE 5.1-2). This pattern alternating four to three iambs reappears in poem VII—"My love is in a light attire/Among the appletrees" (PE 10.1-2)—and less regularly in poem VIII. In swifter reductions of prosodic feet, poem XVII alternates iambic tetrameter and dimeter in one of the volume's few examples of impeccable rhythmic consistency:

Because your voice was at my side
I gave him pain,
Because within my hand I had
Your hand again.

There is no word nor any sign
Can make amend—
He is a stranger to me now
Who was my friend. (PE 20.1-8)

Near the suite's close, two verses in poem XXXII—"The leaves lie thick upon the way/Of memories" (PE 35.3-4)—briefly recover the swift iambic reduction.

Other recurring rhythmic sequences clearly attracting Joyce's ear bear descending feet that rise at line-end, as evinced by the opening and close of poem IX. The lyric begins with three trochees yielding to a counterpointed iamb—"Winds of May, that dance on the sea" (PE 12.1)—and ends with the dactylic distribution of equidistant stresses: "Love is unhappy when love is away!" (PE 12.9).¹⁵ A related trochaic falling to rising at line-end underlies the respective first verses of XI ("Bid adieu, adieu, adieu" [PE 14.1]), of XIX ("Be not sad because all men" [PE 22.1]), of XXVIII ("Gentle lady, do not sing" [PE 31.1]), of XXXII ("Rain has fallen all the day" [PE 33.1]), and of XXXIII ("Now, O now, in this brown land" [PE 36.1]). Indeed, the equidistant accentual pattern so satisfies that it inhabits at once the opening lines of XXV—"Lightly come or lightly go/Though thy heart presage thee woe" (PE 28.1-2)—and the lyric's entire second sestet:

Lightly, lightly—ever so:
 Clouds that wrap the vales below
 At the hour of evenstar
 Lowliest attendants are:
 Love and laughter songconfessed
 When the heart is heaviest. (PE 28.7-12)

In brisker shifts, the fall to rise is evident as well in the abovequoted prelude I, "Strings in the earth and air," whose opening quatrain's odd trimeter lines move from initial trochee to subsequent iambs. Taken together, these multiple, differing instances of Joyce's rhythmic and metrical agility suggest the ear-at-work of a poet drawn to the patterns of prosodic regularity yet often more fascinated by the striking variations to be played upon them.

Varied in rhythm and meter, *Chamber Music* is no less so in rhyme, the sound equivalence whose scheme governs the suite's stanza shapes. Variety inheres first in the taxonomy of rhyme types, spanning the prototypal masculine and feminine rhyming of *sweet/meet* and *playing/straying* in poem I, occasional identical rhyme (in VI, VIII, XVI, XVIII, XIX, XXVIII), the archaic rhymes *love/move* in X and XVIII, *wed/prisoned* in XX, and *were/unaware* in XXVII, dubious or near rhyme (*well/conjurable* in XXVI), and playful if imperfect mosaic rhyming throughout the volume, exemplified by such delightful unions as *list/amethyst* in II, *cherubim/him* in XI, *kin/capuchin* and *mist/sentimentalist* in XII, *hence/negligence* in XXIV, *read/Holinshed* in XXVI, and *be/falsity* in XXVII. The pleasing phonological identity in metrically parallel units intensifies as word boundaries vary, lexical categories shift, and meanings vastly differ.

As regards rhyme scheme and stanza shape, the formal heterogeneity of *Chamber Music* redoubles its complexity, for no less than five stanza types appear, all but one of which evidencing genus-species variations within its type. Quatrains are most prevalent, stanzaically accounting for just over half of *Chamber Music's* 36 lyrics. Of the 19 poems in question, 11 hold cross rhyme, seven bear only even rhyming lines, and one resists classification.¹⁶ With regard to stanza metricity, seven of the 19 lyrics are isometric; their incidence grows as the suite advances.¹⁷ Heterometric quatrains, in turn, demonstrate the drawing in of rhythmic flow detailed above in discussion of II, "The twilight turns to amethyst," and XVII, "Because your voice was at my side."

Of the 17 remaining lyrics, two bear quintains, a form for which, by way of

periodic limerick-writing, Joyce felt a lifelong attachment.¹⁸ The heterometric three quintains of poem III rhyme differently than do the two isometric ones in poem VI; neither poem adopts the limerick's rhyme scheme. Sestets, guiding the expression of 11 lyrics, tend to rhyme *ababcc*, with two exceptions, differing in scheme themselves;¹⁹ concerning metricity, three of these 11 lyrics demonstrate a heterometric drawing in of flow, yet each does so uniquely.²⁰ Rounding off the volume's formal complexity, differently organized octaves account for the channelling of poems X, XIII, and XVI,²¹ while the suite's *hapax legomenon*—a nine-line stanza fusing three isometric couplets and a concluding heterometric tercet—informs poem IX.²²

The dizzying classification above of *Chamber Music's* verse procedures ought to yield at least one clarifying conclusion: the young Joyce, in light of his prosodic and formal dexterity, was keenly attentive to the acoustic properties and possibilities of language. If, as Ellmann records, J. M. Synge in a 1902 Paris encounter “found Joyce obsessed by rules” (JIII 125), likely the case given the willingness with which Joyce pointed out the grammatical errors of his compatriots,²³ the obsession prevented neither the construction of highly complex verse nor the breaking of rules when doing so offered a sought aesthetic effect.

Minute examination of *Chamber Music*, in addition, casts revealing light on Joyce's subsequent prose, particularly, in the limited scope of this essay, on *Ulysses*. Procedural reciprocity links the two texts, for just as *Chamber Music* exhibits narrative movement, so *Ulysses* engages in the suite's acute acoustics. How, if not the terms of acoustic exuberance, could one interpret the resonant concision of “The heaventree of stars hung with humid nightblue fruit” (U 17.1039)? Alluding to Dante's *Inferno*,²⁴ the phrasing stands as a sole line in “Ithaca,” bears alliterative glottal fricatives (*heaventree . . . hung . . . humid*), assonant long vowels (*humid nightblue fruit*), and links rhythmically three initial iambs—*The heaventree of stars*—to the equidistant accentual pattern—*hung with humid nightblue fruit*—identified above in the respective first verses of XI (“Bid adieu, adieu, adieu”), of XIX (“Be not sad because all men”), of XXVIII (“Gentle lady, do not sing”), of XXXII (“Rain has fallen all the day”), of XXXIII (“Now, O now, in this brown land”), and of XXV (“Lightly come or lightly go”). Or, moving from part III to part I of *Ulysses*, the percussive stress cluster “Blue dusk, nightfall, deep blue night” (U 3.273-74) in “Proteus” and “such passing triumphs,” as Kenner puts it, “of narrative economy as the emergence of the elderly swimmer”²⁵ in “Telemachus”? The pertinent passage

An elderly man shot up near the spur of rock a blowing red face. He scrambled up by the stones, water glistening on his pate and on its garland of grey hair, water rilling over his chest and paunch and spilling jets out of his black sagging loincloth. (U 1.687)

leads Kenner to exclaim: “. . . how exact that twinned *rilling* and *spilling*!”²⁶ To the rhyming of these coordinate participles one adds the rising binary and ternary rhythms mirroring rising movement in *An elderly man shot up near the spur of rock* and *He scrambled up by the stones*, rhythms offset by the falling ones as *water glistening* and *water rilling . . . and spilling* streams down his body. Or, led by the wind motif in *Chamber Music* to “Aeolus” in part II of *Ulysses*, the iterative “Fat folds of neck, fat, neck, fat, neck” (U 7.48), “Thump. Thump.

Thump" (*U* 7.101), and "Clank it. Clank it" (*U* 7.136)? The same episode's sixfold, medial vowel-lacking, monosyllabic, morphologically varied *Sllt*, moreover, takes the phonemic cake:

Sllt. The nethermost deck of the first machine jogged forward its flyboard with sllt the first batch of quirefolded papers. Sllt. Almost human the way it sllt to call attention. Doing its level best to speak. That door too sllt creaking, asking to be shut. Everything speaks in its own way. Sllt. (*U* 7.174-77)

In view of such passages, professor MacHugh's admonition in "Aeolus" — "We mustn't be led away by words, by sounds of words" (*U* 7.484-85)—sounds wholly ludicrous, just as any brief citing of *Ulysses'* acoustic exuberance seems scarcely to touch the surface of the text's patent and omnipresent sonic orchestration.

Apart from *Ulysses'* ubiquitous writing of sound, *Chamber Music* foregrounds as well two linguistic procedures proper to interior monologue and visible in its first sustained instance in "Telemachus":

Stephen bent forward and peered at the mirror held out to him, cleft by a crooked crack. Hair on end. As he and others see me. Who chose this face for me? This dogsbody to rid of vermin. It asks me too. (*U* 1.136-37)

Of the two prefiguring procedures, one has to do with pronouns: the identically Stephen-signalling first-person *me* displaces the prior third-person *him*. The second has to do with the temporal value of verbs: *bent* and *peered* give way to *see*, *chose*, and *asks*. As Houston succinctly observes and the instance above reveals, the

basic characterization of a narrative sentence in *Ulysses* is that it uses the third person and past tense and that it follows the common subject, verb, and object pattern of written English. (This is in obvious contrast to inner monologue, which is composed of present tense sentences where the primary point of reference is the first person, although other persons—and tenses—may occur.)²⁷

Both pronominally and temporally, *Chamber Music* anticipates these distinguishing attributes of interior monologue in *Ulysses*.

As the early precursor to the *I*'s of *Ulysses*, the lyric *I* in *Chamber Music*, peeking through or popping up in each of the thirty-six poems, most often announces its wooing presence to the "Gentle lady" (*PE* 31.1) of its desire. No less than twenty-one lyrics bear the imagined direct address of the cooing *I* to its demure *you*,²⁸ a pronominal pattern first established in IV, "When the shy star goes forth in heaven," whose concluding couplet reads: "Know you by this, the lover's chant, / 'Tis I that am your visitant" (*PE* 7.11-12). Yet the *I* in the suite, sensing perhaps the need for a wider audience, speaks as well to other *you*'s. Multiplying its interlocutors, the *I* engages in apostrophic address to *invisible harps* in III ("Play on, invisible harps, unto Love/Whose way in heaven is aglow" [*PE* 6.11-12]), to the *Winds of May* in IX ("Saw you my true love anywhere?" [*PE* 12.6]), and in further imperative urging, to the *Wind of spices* in XIII:

Go seek her out all courteously
And say I come,

Wind of spices whose song is ever
Epithalamium. (PE 16.1-4)

A fourth apostrophe in XXXIV—"Sleep now, O sleep now,/O you unquiet heart!" (PE 37.1-2)—sees the lyric *I* address itself in a sort of self-speech voiced often elsewhere in the suite. The speaker in III twice asks, in evident self-address, "O lonely watcher of the skies,/Do you hear the night wind and the sighs. . . ?" (PE 6.2-3). Poem VI witnesses the self-announcing of desire ("I would in that sweet bosom be" [PE 9.1]), while VII, "My love is in a light attire," engages in a reverie of present assertion, the reverie repeated concerning the past in XXXI, "O, it was out by Donnycarney." Indeed, the self-address acquires such pronominally multiple proportions that it infuses several occurrences of *He* and *his*,²⁹ as in the couplet-concluding first sestet of IV—"His song is softer than the dew/And he is come to visit you" (PE 7.5-6)³⁰—and particularly in XXI, the opening preludial song in Joyce's 1905 manuscript:

He who hath glory lost nor hath
Found any soul to fellow his,
Among his foes in scorn and wrath
Holding to ancient nobleness,
That high unconsortable one—
His love is his companion.³¹ (PE 24.1-6)

The *He* above alludes unmistakably to the *I* soon to surface four lyrics later in the 1905 sequence and to portray after the loss of friendship in XVII, XVIII, and XIX. That the brief poem, as Fagnoli and Gillespie record,³² was originally entitled "To Nora," together with such Joyce-identifying depiction as "That high unconsortable one," suggests the deeply autobiographical nature of the suite, evidence of which Ellmann details in *James Joyce*.³³

If conforming pronominally to Houston's description of interior monologue as *composed of present tense sentences where the primary point of reference is the first person, although other persons—and tenses—may occur*, the suite conforms temporally as well. Although demonstrating pliability, the lyrics as a whole tend to the present. Its opening verses quoted above in discussion of heterometric reductions, poem II reveals the suite's temporal tendency while also engaging in similarly invisible narrative telling. The poem's five principal and two subordinate verbs—*turns, fills, plays, bends, inclines, wander, list, and turns*—do not stray from the present simple:

The twilight turns from amethyst
To deep and deeper blue,
The lamp fills with a pale green glow
The trees of the avenue.

The old piano plays an air,
Sedate and slow and gay;
She bends upon the yellow keys,
Her head inclines this way.

Shy thoughts and grave wide eyes and hands
That wander as they list—

The twilight turns to darker blue
With lights of amethyst. (PE 5.1-12)

Combining invisibly narrative telling with the subsequent visibility of a lyric I, the two octaves of poem X envelop verbs that likewise inhabit an eddying present. Its octaves the primary stanza of Occitan troubadours, the poem, before concluding with the present-enhancing, if practically inconceivable, *I come*, portrays a garishly dressed singer who mimics troubadour minstrelsy:

Bright cap and streamers,
He sings in the hollow:
Come follow, come follow,
All you that love.
Leave dreams to the dreamers
That will not after,
That song and laughter
Do nothing move.

With ribbons streaming
He sings the bolder;
In troop at his shoulder
The wild bees hum.
And the time of dreaming
Dreams is over—
As lover to lover,
Sweetheart, I come. (PE 13.1-16)

In identical verbal uniformity, nine other lyrics in the suite impeccably remain in the present, among them the previously cited I, "Strings in the earth and air," III, "At that hour when all things have repose," IV, "When the shy star goes forth in heaven," VII, "My love is in a light attire," XXV, "Lightly come or lightly go," and XXXV, "All day I hear the noise of waters," this last lyric iteratively insisting on a present *hearing*, as conjugated verbs—*hear, is, hears, cry, are blowing, go, hear, hear*—lexically demonstrate.³⁴ The often more fascinating hybrid verbal combinations within single lyrics, what is more, reveal a similar gravitation toward the *here* and *now*, "index words," Vendler observes, governing "the lyric moment."³⁵ Several poems begin in the past and end in the present, as is the case with the proverb-like IX, "Winds of May, that dance on the sea," and XXI, "He who hath glory lost," which conclude with the respective maxims *Love is unhappy when love is away!* and *His love is his companion*.³⁶ Far less solemnly, poem V portrays the speaker's enviable decision to leave *the gloom* of past studying so as to engage in present courting:

I have left my book:
I have left my room:
For I heard you singing
Through the gloom,

Singing and singing
A merry air.
Lean out of the window,
Goldenhair. (PE 8.9-16)

In hybrid poems blending present and past, the temporal progression, as in the quatrains above, need not be from *then* to *now*; the two sestets of XXVI, “Thou leanest to the shell of night,” each move inversely, the second sestet concluding: “And all for some strange name he read/In Purchas or in Holinshed” (PE 29.11-12). Yet lyric’s gravitation toward the present is evidenced by the *here* and *now* consequences of past activity, verbally manifest in the temporal reach of the present perfect, instances of which appear in XII (“What counsel has the hooded moon/Put in thy heart, my shyly sweet” [PE 15.1-2]), in XXIV (“For I have heard of witchery/Under a pretty air” [PE 27.11-12]), in XXVI (“In that soft choiring of delight/What sound hath made thy heart to fear?” [PE 29.3-4]), and in the *piping poets*—contradicting knowledge of XXVII:

Nor have I known a love whose praise
 Our piping poets solemnise,
 Neither a love where may not be
 Ever so little falsity. (PE 30.9-12)

Such temporal play in *Chamber Music* seems to confirm, at least in part, Stephen Dedalus’s sweeping affirmation in *A Portrait*: “The past is consumed in the present and the present is living only because it brings forth the future” (P 5.2718-20). As if to embody further the young poet’s trumpeted claim, itself brought to life in the enduring present of his villanelle,³⁷ *Chamber Music* combines, in the quite limited extension of individual lyrics, past, present, and future, as in the sole octave of XVI:

O cool is the valley now
 And there, love, will we go
 For many a choir is singing now
 Where Love did sometime go.
 And hear you not the thrushes calling,
 Calling us away?
 O cool and pleasant is the valley
 And there, love, will we stay. (PE 19.1-8)

Similar confluence in single lyrics of—as Yeats wrote at the close of “Sailing to Byzantium”—“what is past, or passing, or to come”³⁸ grows in prominence as the suite draws to an end, specifically in XXX, “Love came to us in time gone by,” in XXXII, “Rain has fallen all the day,” and XXXIII, “Now, O now, in this brown land.”

Mention of Yeats brings to mind the title poem to “The Wild Swans at Coole.” If, in conclusion, a mere duckling alongside “those brilliant creatures”³⁹ *Dubliners*, *A Portrait*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*, *Chamber Music* bears its plumes with the certainty that it announces the “bell-beat of their wings.”⁴⁰ Dwarfed by successive, imposing immensities, the suite gives first voice to Joyce and prefigures specifically the acoustic exuberance and interior monologue of *Ulysses*.⁴¹ For these reasons and on its own merits, the suite of lyrics might be seen as the not-so-ugly duckling of the Joyce oeuvre.

Notes

1. "Joyce's flat on the Via Donato Bramante" in Trieste, Ellmann writes, prominently displayed a *vellum-covered, missal-like volume* of the suite: "On a reading desk, ecclesiastical in style, lay throned the vellum-covered, missal-like volume of *Chamber Music* which Joyce had copied on parchment pages and sent to Nora from Dublin" (JJI 381).

2. A. Nicholas Fagnoli and Michael P. Gillespie, *James Joyce: A-Z* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 32.

3. James Joyce, *Poems and Exiles*, ed. J. C. C. Mays (London: Penguin, 1992) 6.3-5; henceforth parenthetically cited in the text as *PE* plus page and line reference. As Fagnoli and Gillespie point out, the "image of dawn succeeding the night" in this preludial lyric "intensifies the emergence of love and an awakening anticipation in the speaker" (33).

4. The mention of *epithalamium* here recalls Ellmann's use of the classificatory term in describing the date on which *Ulysses* takes place: "Joyce had fixed upon June 16, 1904, as the date of *Ulysses* because it was the anniversary of his first walk with Nora Barnacle. He was able to obtain, perhaps on his last visit to Dublin, copies of the newspapers of that day. In his book, Bloom's fondest memory is of a moment of affection plighted among the rhododendrons on Howth, and so is Mrs. Bloom's; it is with her recollection of it that the book ends. In this sense *Ulysses* is an *epithalamium*; *love is its cause of motion*" (JJI 378-79, emphasis added). This description accords, in addition, with the extraordinary synthesis of insight that is Ellmann's preface to the Gabler edition of *Ulysses*, where the scholar, writing of "the question that Stephen puts to his mother" in "Circe," concludes: "Most readers have supposed that the word known to all men" must be love, though one critic maintains that it is death, and another that it is synteresis; the latter sounds like the one word unknown to all men"; see Richard Ellmann, Preface, *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, ed. Hans Walter Gabler (New York: Vintage, 1986) xii.

5. Fagnoli and Gillespie detail the readerly complications surrounding the suite's two arrangements and the addition of poems XXXV and XXXVI in 1906. The scholars argue that Joyce's 1905 manuscript sequence is preferable, given that "its ordering helps us to understand Joyce's original thematic intent." Through multiple rereadings, I have benefited from the greater thematic clarity of the 1905 sequence. Stanislaus Joyce's 1906 sequence, however, to which Joyce assented, is the standard published version examined here (32-37).

6. Joyce composed poem XXXV during his first stay in Paris in December, 1902. Ellmann's *James Joyce* details the poem's composition and includes as well a reproduction of the photo-postcard Joyce sent to John F. Byrne, the likely model for Cranly in *A Portrait*. The postcard, on which Joyce wrote poem XXXV in careful, clear, handsome script, portrays the poet "photographed wearing a heavy, ill-fitting coat and a long-suffering look" (JJI 115 and illustration VII).

7. In *Ulysses on the Liffey*, Ellmann addresses Molly's verbal return at the close of "Penelope" to "a time which is beyond present time and a place beyond present place," the return owing to "an imaginative recreation, like *le temps retrouvé* of Proust. Like Adam and Eve's, it is a paradise lost, for as Proust says the only true paradise is one that we have lost"; see Richard Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1972) 172.

8. In his introduction to *Poems and Exiles*, J. C. C. Mays affirms that "*Chamber Music* moves to Elizabethan rhythms, and is not unaffected by Joyce's reading of Yeats, Verlaine and others." Concerning the Elizabethans, Mays cites the specific influence of Jonson and Robert Herrick. Joyce's reading of Yeats is heard in poem VIII, "Who goes amid the green wood," too close to the lyric title "Who Goes with Fergus?" to be missed. With regard to the French Symbolists, Joyce, Ellmann records, was clearly drawn to them, having memorized and translated, for example, Verlaine's "Les sanglots longs": "Like everyone else in 1900, Joyce was eager to find a style, and turned for this, perhaps in part as a result of Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, published the

year before, to the French. He practiced translating Verlaine, who had died in 1896, and committed to memory a group of Verlaine's lyrics. . . ." Joyce's fine translation of Verlaine's lyric appears in Ellmann's *James Joyce* (JJI 76) and in *Poems and Exiles* (xxii and 69-70).

9. The abundance of archaic pronouns is documented as follows: *thee* appears in XI (twice), XII, and XXV, *thy* in XI (twice), XII, XX (twice), XXV (thrice), XXVI, and XXVII (thrice), *thou* in XI (twice), XXVI (twice), and XXVII, *thine* in XXVI.

10. Just after murdering Duncan, Macbeth narrates his killing of the King and attendants to Lady Macbeth. Announcing the first of his hallucinations, this one auditory, Macbeth confusedly recalls: "Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep,' the innocent sleep, Sleep than knits up the ravel'd sleeve of care, The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath, Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, Chief nourisher in life's feast. . . ." See William Shakespeare, *Macbeth, The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 3rd ed. (Glenview: Scott, 1980) 2.2.33-38.

11. As publication of *Chamber Music* drew near, a decision had to be made concerning the volume's title. Ellmann, having previously noted Joyce's acceptance of "the title of *Chamber Music* which Stanislaus had suggested," writes in this regard: "Stanislaus wished to revert to the original title, *Chamber Music*, but Joyce argued that it was 'too complacent.' 'I should prefer a title which to a certain extent repudiated the book, without altogether disparaging it.' But he allowed Stanislaus to have his way, and only commented in the same tone, on October 18, 'A page of "A Little Cloud" gives me more pleasure than all my verses'" (JJI 154 and 232).

12. The *heard harmonies* of *Chamber Music* have themselves been frequently brought to music, as Fagnoli and Gillespie detail (31-32 and 246). The scholars note G. Molyneux Palmer's initial setting of several lyrics to music in 1907 and in an appendix list all composers who have made similar and greater efforts.

13. Offsetting these ethereal *harps*, the subsequent sounding of wind instruments holds clear tones of irony. "The bugles of the cherubim" (PE 14.8) in XI, "Bid adieu, adieu, adieu," for example, trumpet to introduce the poet's lusty bid for seduction. Complementing, on the other hand, the *harps* vocally, *choirs* and *choiring* appear in poem XV as "The wise choirs of faery/Begin (innumerable!) to be heard" (PE 18.1-12), in poem XVI as "many a choir is singing now/Where Love did sometime go" (PE 19.3-4), and in XXVI as "that soft choiring of delight" (PE 29.3).

14. The sixteen remaining poems demonstrating prevalent iambic tetrameters include II, III, VI, VII, VIII, XI, XV, XXII, XXIII, XXVI, XXVII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXIII and XXXV.

15. As Mays aptly summarizes, the "record of his [Joyce's] comments on the poems [in *Chamber Music*] . . . traces a change from commitment to disgust. . ." (xxvi). Yet the verse highlighted here—*Love is unhappy when love is away!*—was sufficiently meaningful to Joyce as to be inscribed on a necklace and given to Nora after the writer's fit of jealousy while visiting Ireland in 1909. Ellmann details the gift and its giving, as well as a second, hand-written one, the abovementioned "manuscript of *Chamber Music*, copied out in India ink on specially cut sheets of parchments, with her and his initials entwined on the cover." These acts suggest that the poems, despite their too sweet excesses, continued to appeal to the remorseful "sweet sentimentalist" (PE 15.12) in Joyce (JJI 300 and 305).

16. Quatrains with alternate rhyme compose I, VII, VIII, XV, XIX, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, XXXIV, and XXXVI. Quatrains with even-rhyming lines appear in II, V, XVII, XVIII, XX, XXIV, and XXXI. The quatrains resisting classification are in XIV.

17. Isometric quatrains appear in XV, XX, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, and XXXIV. Their heterometric confreres surge and recede in I, II, V, VII, VIII, XIV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XXIV, XXXII, and XXXVI.

18. Two limericks, written almost twenty years apart, reveal the callow mischievousness that so delighted Joyce. The first, spawned by the admission of women

to University College, is quoted in a footnote to Ellmann's biography: "There was a kind priest called Delany/Who said to the girls, 'Nota Bene,'/Twould tempt the Archbishop/The way that you switch up/Your skirts when the weather is rainy'" (JJI 88). The second bears the title "Solomon" and reads: "There's a hairyfaced Moslem named Simon/Whose tones are not those of a shy man/When with cast iron lungs/He howls twentyfive tongues—/But he's not at all easy to rhyme on" (PE 99-100).

19. Those lyrics bearing sestets rhyming *ababcc* include poems IV, XI, XII, XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXVI, XXVII, and XXXIII. Poem XXV rhymes in three couplets (*aabbcc*), while poem XXXV's two sestets rhyme in ways that unite the differing stanzas: *abcbab/cdadcd*.

20. Isometric sestets appear in poems IV, XI, XII, XXI, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, and XXXIII, while their heterometric equivalents enliven poems XXII, XXIII, and XXXV.

21. The octaves of poem X rhyme *abbcaddc*, those of XII rhyme sporadically, and those of XVI hold the alternate rhyme scheme *ababcdcd*. Regarding metricity, all octaves are markedly heterometric.

22. Joyce's complex handling of rhythm, meter, rhyme, and stanza led the writer's contemporaries to highlight his technical skill. Ellmann records George Russell's praise for "verses perfect in their technique and sometimes beautiful in quality," Yeats's identifying a "technique in verse . . . much better than the technique of any young Dublin man I have met during my time," and Arthur Symons enthusiasm for *Chamber Music* as "a book of verse which is of the most genuine lyric quality of any new work I have read for many years" (JJI 100, 104, and 232).

23. In a footnote to Joyce's review "Mr. Arnold Graves' New Work," Mason and Ellmann affirm that Joyce "annoyed John Synge in Paris in 1902 by showing him the solecisms he had turned up in the works of Yeats and other contemporaries." This vainglorious detecting of others' unwitting errors finds its way into "The Holy Office," whose opening verses—audaciously rhyming *brothel* and *Aristotle*—include mention of "the poets' grammar book": "Myself unto my myself will give/This name, Katharsis-Purgative./I, who dishevelled ways forsook/To hold the poets' grammar book,/Bringing to tavern and to brothel/The mind of witty Aristotle,/Lest bards in the attempt should err/Must here be my interpreter:/Wherefore receive now from my lip/Peripatetic scholarship"; see James Joyce, *The Critical Writings*, eds. Ellworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1959) 127 and 149-50.

24. Gifford records the phrasing's debt to the close of Dante's *Inferno*; see Don Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, 2nd. ed. (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 581.

25. Hugh Kenner, *Joyce's Voices* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978) 72-73.

26. Kenner 73.

27. John Porter Houston, *Joyce and Prose* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 1989) 32.

28. The 21 poems identified include IV, V, X, XI, XII, XIV, XVI, XVII, XIX, XX, XXII, XXIII, XXIV, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXII, and XXXIII.

29. The third-person singular pronouns in *Chamber Music* most often correspond to the personification of "Love" (PE 6.4), as evidenced by poems III, XI, XII, XIII, and XXX. One exception is poem XVII, quoted in full above in discussion of the suite's heterometric quatrains. The third-person pronouns there referred to a betraying friend, as the closing verses affirm: "He is a stranger to me now/Who was my friend" (PE 20.7-8). A troubadour singer in X, the likely self-referential reader of Holinshed in XXVI, and the seabird in XXXV complete the pronouns' referential pointing.

30. Stanzaically parallel, this couplet in the third-person prefigures the concluding, above-quoted "Know you by this, the lover's chant,/Tis I that am your visitant."

31. The unmistakably defiant tone here softens considerably in XVIII, where the betrayal of presumed friends causes outright sorrow: "O sweetheart, hear you/Your lover's tale;/A man shall have sorrow/When friends him fail./For he shall know then/Friends be untrue/And a little ashes/Their words come to" (PE 21.1-8).

32. Fargnoli and Gillespie 33.

33. Ellmann cites a letter Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus just before the publication of *Chamber Music*. The letter reads in part: "I don't like the book but wish it

were published and be damned to it. However, it is a young man's book. I felt like that . . . I will keep a copy myself and (so far as I can remember) at the top of each page I will put an address, or a street so that when I open the book I can revisit the places where I wrote the different songs." After citing the letter, Ellmann wittily observes, as if to evince mention above of "That high unconsortable one": "The realization that *Chamber Music* was a part of him softened his tone towards it a little. The book's final justification was as a memorial of his youth, just as he could sometimes charitably excuse the existence of Dublin because it was there he had lived" (JJI 232).

34. Poems not previously cited and uniformly in the present include VIII, XIX, and XV.

35. Helen Vendler, *Soul Says* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1995) 5.

36. Poem XII, "What counsel has the hooded moon," similarly begins in the past and ends in the present. Poem XVII's conclusion—"He is a stranger to me now/Who was my friend" (PE 20.7-8)—leaves the principal *is* and subordinate *was* juxtaposed by the *now* at line-end.

37. Of the 14 finite verbs in Stephen's villanelle, 8 are in the present simple, 4 engage in imperative urging, and 2 are in the present perfect.

38. William Butler Yeats, *Selected Poems and Two Plays*, ed. M. L. Rosenthal (New York: Macmillan, 1962) 96.

39. Yeats 51.

40. Yeats 51.

41. The writer's aesthetic dismissal of *Chamber Music* is widely known and documented above, yet in a 1907 letter to Stanislaus, Joyce views his lyric beginnings in a far different light. Amid despair for life in Rome and for the perceived possibility of *mental extinction*, Joyce wrote: "I have come to the conclusion that it is about time I made up my mind whether I am to become a writer or a patient Cousins. I foresee that I shall have to do other work as well but to continue as I am at present would mean my mental extinction. It is months since I have written a line and even reading tires me." This is the sort of moment crucial to the life of an artist. Several sentences later, Joyce, seeing the way out of his artistic impasse, continued: "Yet I have certain ideas I would like to give form to: not as a doctrine but as *the continuation of the expression of myself which I now see I began in Chamber Music*. These ideas or instincts or intuitions or impulses may be purely personal" (JJI 240, emphasis added).