Musical scholars continue to seek out additional song references, operatic motifs, and musical parallels to the structure of individual episodes and scenes from Joyce’s great Bloomusalem in song. Just when we think we’ve located them all, more come along, with new methods of interpretation, new applications of fugal structure, new references to popular songs long forgotten. But while the identification of songs and motifs is important, it does not tell the whole story of Joyce’s genius in interweaving music into the text of his fabulous voyage.

I would like to consider in this paper two examples of ways Joyce used music differently from any other writer before or since, ways which, unless the reader were a professional singer familiar with the history of music theory, would normally escape comment or seem to be of little special significance.

I deliberately chose the first example from the "Sirens" episode, and the second from "Circe." "Sirens" is transitional from the earlier, realistic section of the novel to the book’s latter half, with its concentration on language and linguistic variation. "Circe," while squarely in the second category, is largely recapitulatory, seeking new ways to represent motifs already established in the novel. It draws much of its material from earlier episodes, but transforms and transmutes earlier situations and language, combining seemingly disparate characters and events into interchangeable, if amorphous, new entities.

For the first example, try to put yourself into the position of aging singers, whose professional performances have largely evolved into amusements for drinking buddies—singers who no longer practice continually in preparation for concerts, operas, or oratorios, but who maintain a repertoire of old favorites, accompanying themselves on the piano when there is no professional accompanist handy, and in
the process generally seeking to entertain rather than impress their friends. On occasion they may be capable of the glories their voices could once command, but they don’t want to take too many risks to prove that they can still do it. Mix into your scenario an old musical purist like Father Cowley, who knows how the music should be performed and what the singers were once capable of vocally accomplishing. The result is so realistic it hurts.

Simon Dedalus, Ben Dollard, and Father Cowley are performing on a stage in the back of the Ormond bar while Bloom sits eating liver and bacon in an adjoining room.

Over their voices Dollard bassooned attack, booming over bombarding chords:

—*When love absorbs my ardent soul*...

Roll of Bensoulbenjamin rolled to the quivery loveshivery roof-panes.

—War! War! cried Father Cowley. You’re the warrior.

—So I am, Ben Warrior laughed....

—Sure, you’d burst the tympanum of her ear, man, Mr Dedalus said through the smoke aroma, with an organ like yours.

In bearded abundant laughter Dollard shook upon the keyboard. He would.

—Not to mention another membrane, Father Cowley added.

Half time, Ben. *Amoroso ma non troppo.* Let me there. (*U 270*)

In reading the passage one might think that Dollard merely belts out every song that he sings, but we are to learn later that is certainly not the case in his rendition of the “Croppy Boy,” when his tender and modulated tones nearly provoke his audience to tears. What Joyce does not say is that the song Ben is singing is a duet for tenor and bass. The tenor line, “*When love absorbs my ardent soul,*” is a fourth higher than its counterpart melody, “*When War absorbs my ardent soul,*” sung by the bass. Father Cowley, correcting Ben, cries “War! War! You’re the Warrior.” But that still doesn’t explain why Dollard was singing so loudly. Joyce, an experienced singer, knew that when basses are called upon to sing in their top register, in this case up to a high G, they often are able to sing the higher notes only by increasing their volume. Cowley, who has been dying to play, takes Ben’s seat at the piano, either to transpose the key downward so that Ben can sing the lover-tenor part in a normal voice, or to continue the accompaniment as Dollard starts to sing the bass part. But a transposition of key, if Dollard were singing the bass solo line, would take him down to a low E. We don’t know whether Dollard
in fact switched to the bass line, because the words "when (love or war) absorbs" are replaced by an ellipsis in the text. But the supposition is that he was singing the warrior's (bass) part because the music stopped so abruptly, presumably at the place where the bass and the tenor join and the bass is forced to sing harmony to the tenor melody line. Had Ben been singing the tenor line he could have finished the song.

Bloom, who is sitting in the next room, can tell by the touch on the keys that Cowley is playing and is surprised by the abrupt cessation of the music. Ben, corrected by Cowley, is forced to give up both piano stool and musical choice to his ungrateful but accurate accompanist, as Cowley resumes playing another unnamed song, and presumably asks Simon Dedalus, a tenor, for a rendition of "M'appari." It is only natural that Ben Dollard, the bass, whose belongings in tight trousers underscore his manliness, should be a little chagrined at having to yield the stage to his tenor counterpart, Simon. While Joyce doesn't explicitly say this, Dollard's growl, "Go on blast you. Get it out in bits," assumes what Joyce as a singer and performer well knew, the perennial sensitivity and even occasional jealousy among singers who on the surface seem the closest of friends. Simon, however, is not the professional musician that Dollard is, despite a tenor voice which we will learn is capable of genuine brilliance. Cowley, the musician, wants to hear "M'appari" in Italian, but Simon will sing it in English. Cowley momentarily abandons the piano stool to sing a brief version of "M'appari" to a girl painted on a seascape which hangs behind the stage. Then Simon, a bit reluctantly and apologetically, looks to Dollard, who has been offended and slightly miffed, for approbation, and when Dollard's mood changes Simon sits down at the piano.

—Go on, Simon.
—Ah, sure my dancing days are done, Ben... Well...

Mr. Dedalus laid his pipe to rest beside the tuningfork and, sitting, touched the obedient keys. (U 271)

It is a Joycean irony that while Dedalus earlier sounded the tuningfork to check the piano's pitch, he now sits down to play the song, not in F major, the original key, but transposed, probably down to D. In other words, he does not have the requisite confidence that he will be able to hit the high B flat called for at the end of the song, and so wants to transpose the song downward a minor third. He has evidently been taking it easy on himself for a number of
years, because he seems to remember how to play the song only in the lower key, and when Cowley, who has already ruined Dollard's performance, insists that Simon put the song back in the original, Simon has forgotten how to play it.

No, Simon, Father Cowley turned. Play it in the original.
One flat.
The keys, obedient, rose higher, told, faltered, confessed, confused. (U 271-72)

The confession of the errant keys is that Simon would have been happy to settle for less than a brilliant performance in the habitually lower key of recent past performances, but that the old musical pedant and perfectionist, Father Cowley, will not let him get away with it. “Here, Simon. I’ll accompany you, he said. Get up” (U 272). And so, a magnificent performance of “M’appari,” an aria that relates Lionel’s plight over his lost love to Bloom’s four o’clock cuckoldry predicament, is rendered by Simon. It is “Heard from a person wouldn’t expect it in the least” (U 274), who at the end of the song becomes Siopold, a combination of Simon, Lionel and Leopold. Thus does Joyce take trivial realistic musical details and weave them into a delicate but exceptionally realistic drama of musical performance and musical sensibilities.

The second example, like “Circe” itself, is both transformative and recapitulatory, as well as considerably more complicated. Instead of simple song references, Joyce uses harmonics, Greek modes, and musicology as well as direct references to several musical works to develop what is perhaps the primary motif of the entire novel: the transformation process, with its attendant variations on language, characters, and themes.

When Bloom, still in front of Bella Cohen’s, hears Stephen playing Benedetto Marcello’s psalms on the piano inside, he makes the same shrewd sort of guess he did when he identified Father Cowley by his touch earlier in the Ormand. “A man’s touch. Sad music. Church music. Perhaps here” (475). Zoe, who greets him on the street, is identified as Jewish by singing “I am black yet comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem” from “The Song of Songs.” Her suspect Semitic origins are not so much at issue here as the ancient Jewish chant. Marcello (1686-1739) set the psalms to melodies patterned after ancient Hebrew musical settings for the poetry, acting on the assumption that these compositions were closest to the tonal patterns of the Greeks.
This brings us around to harmonics and Greek modes based on the mathematical relations of string vibrations, or nodes. It is pointless to recapitulate here Edmund Epstein’s brilliant explication of Stephen’s speech about the hyperphrygian and mixolydian modes (*UJQ* 6, 1968, 83–86) except to say that Marcello transformed the Greeks’ musical worship of Demeter and Ceres, through an emulation of Jewish religious music, into Roman Catholic ecclesiasticism. This is what Stephen means when he refers to “texts so divergent as priests haihooping round David’s that is Circe’s or what am I saying Ceres’ altar and David’s tip from the stable to his chief bassoonist about his almightiness” (504).

As Tindall has pointed out so many years ago (*James Joyce*, pp. 31–32), we are led to the observation that all religions, characters, and situations converge. “Jewgreek is greekjew. Extremes meet” (504). As Epstein points out, Stephen’s subsequent observations on musical intervals and the relation of dominant to tonic in terms of their reconciliation in the octave form a harmonic analogy to the diverse religious music sources of Marcello’s composition, and set the stage for the commonality between Stephen and Bloom. When Stephen turns and sees Bloom, whom we have earlier in *Cyclops* seen as a Christ figure, Bloom’s entrance is associated with the Antichrist; and his fundamental unity with Stephen, whose Christlike and Satanic credentials have already been verified, is established. Epstein and I have long shared Tindall’s theory of the commonality of characters in *Ulysses*.

There is still another melody to be played at the transformative concert, however. It concerns the idea of the messianic-prophetic figure who will lead the Irish people out of their bondage. Stephen has seen himself in that light ever since the concluding passages of *Portrait*, and Bloom has been cast into the role of prophet-messiah repeatedly in earlier episodes. In *Circe*, however, hints become concrete images, as Bloom’s messianic turn comes. The conversation between Bloom and Zoe on Bella’s doorstep, in which Semitism has played a considerable role, gives way to Bloom’s utopian visions of himself as politician-soldier-statesman-savior of Ireland, who promises “the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia of the future” (484). Just as Stephen later tries to apply musical composition to the problem of interchangeable identities, an appropriate musical accompaniment is heard blending harmonics with a song about transformation. The speeches about harmonics which follow act as a unifying
agent for both Marcello’s blend of religions and the interchangeability of Bloom and Stephen as messiah figures:

STEPHEN
Here’s another for you. *(He frowns.)* The reason is because the fundamental and the dominant are separated by the greatest possible interval which...

THE CAP
Which? Finish. You can’t.

STEPHEN
*(With an effort)* Interval which. Is the greatest possible ellipse. Consistent with. The ultimate return. The octave. Which.

THE CAP
Which?
*(Outside the gramophone begins to blare* The Holy City.)*

(504)

Thus to harmonic transformations Joyce adds the transformational message of the song popularly known as “Jerusalem” because of the name reiterated so often in the chorus. Bloom’s “new Bloomusalem” is a Joycean distortion of the refrain of the song, which only now appears. We have not heard the last strains of this particular melody, and neither has Stephen, who, caught up in delineating the very thesis of interchangeability or consubstantiality or transformation, calls the musical theme which embodies his concept a “‘noise in the street’”:

STEPHEN
*(Abruptly.)* What went forth to the ends of the world to traverse not itself. God, the sun, Shakespeare, a commercial traveller, having itself traversed in reality itself, becomes that self. Wait a moment. Wait a second. Damn that fellow’s noise in the street. Self which it itself was ineluctably preconditioned to become. *Ecco!*

Bloom enters to the triumphal strains of the refrain of “The Holy City.”

THE GRAMOPHONE
Jerusalem!
Open your gates and sing
Hosanna. *(507)*

The meaning of the song’s text was long since discussed in my musical allusions book. For our purposes here, however, it should be noted that the song is about a twofold transformation of the city as it transpires in the dream of the singer. In the first dream vision
the city is alive with the voices of children and antiphonal angels singing "Jerusalem," etc. The scene shifts and the voices are quieted in the darkened city under the shadow of a cross. The third stanza envisions a regenerated egalitarian Jerusalem where all might enter, the prototype of Bloom's new Bloomusalem.

If Stephen fails to grasp the significance of the music with its transformational utopia, Joyce is not about to let the reader do the same thing. The next voice we hear is that of (Ben Bloom) Elijah, identified at the conclusion of the "Cyclops" episode, and transformed during the course of his "Circe" speech into A. J. Christ Dowie, whose ringing message concluded the "Oxen of the Sun" chapter. Ben Bloom Elijah A. J. Christ Dowie's inspirational message is that the entire company are consubstantial or interchangeable with the Son of God himself:

ELIJAH

. . . Just one word more. Are you a god or a doggone clod? If the second advent came to Coney Island are we ready? Florry Christ, Stephen Christ, Zoe Christ, Bloom Christ, Kitty Christ, Lynch Christ, it's up to you to sense that cosmic force. Have we cold feet about the cosmos? No. Be on the side of the angels. Be a prism. You have that something within, the higher self. You can rub shoulders with a Jesus, a Gautama, an Ingersol. Are you all in this vibration? (508)

Dowie does not let us forget that the entire metamorphosis is essentially musical in nature:

It vibrates. I know and I am some vibrator. Joking apart and getting down to bedrock, A. J. Christ Dowie and the harmonial philosophy, have you got that? . . . Now then our glory song. All join heartily in the singing. Encore! (He sings.) Jeru . . .

THE GRAMOPHONE

(Drowning his voice.) Whorusalaminyourhighhhohhh . . .

(508)

If the characters are interchangeable with God, they also inhabit the bodies and abodes of whores. The first last and the last first, according to the classless society of the new Jerusalem.

One final word. If Dowie's pronouncement is definitive here, it is no wonder that Joyce uses him to conclude the coda to Oxen. The narrative parodies are fairly chronological throughout the episode, but when we come to the concluding pages, most often described by critics as a modern polyglot, it is Dowie who restores understand-
ability to the conclusion in the verbiage of an evangelical cough mixture salesman. Now we know that the elixir is the harmonial philosophy; and it’s got a punch in it for you, my friend. Just you try it on!

WORKS CITED