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Significant Affinities between James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

This Honor's thesis entitled

"Significant Affinities between James Joyce's *Ulysses* and
Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March*"

written by

Jeff Smithpeters

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for completion of the

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meets the criteria for acceptance

and has been approved by the undersigned readers

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Introduction

There is a story of a monk who is, against all odds, propositioned by a comely woman who has somehow gotten into the monastery. "No," he tells her. "I have taken a vow of chastity." With that, the woman leaves. There is no argument, no weeping, no shouting. It is that simple.

The next morning, at the communal breakfast table, the monk speaks to a grizzled, elderly monk sitting beside him. "Did you know a woman offered herself to me yesterday right here in the monastery? Can you imagine that?"

The long-lived monk turns to him and says, "What did you say to her?"

The younger monk answers eagerly, "I sent her away." There is a note of pride in his voice.

"Yes," the elder replies, "But I see you've still got her with you."

In the same way James Joyce is still with Saul Bellow. As will be shown, in some interviews Bellow actually criticizes Joyce, but remains heavily influenced by him nonetheless, almost as a point of departure. *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom's study of the stances artists take toward their precursors might have found in Bellow a prime example, had Bloom's book also dwelt for a time in the realm of prose.

The *clinamen* is what Bloom calls the artistic swerve from an influential elder writer which he says is necessary for every new artist to establish himself. This introductory section seeks to define that *clinamen*.

Bellow's remarks in the 1964 *Paris Review* interviews about

James Joyce and the tradition Bellow believes Joyce and T.S. Eliot spawned are, to say the least, interesting from the standpoint of Harold Bloom's writings:

INTERVIEWER: It's been said that contemporary fiction sees man as a victim. You gave this title to one of your early novels, yet there seems to be very strong opposition in your fiction to seeing man as simply determined or futile. Do you see any truth to this claim about contemporary fiction?

BELLOW: Oh, I think that realistic literature from the first has been a victim literature. Pit any ordinary individual--and realistic literature concerns itself with ordinary individuals--against the external world, and the external world will conquer him, of course. Everything about man's place in nature, about that the hero of the realistic novel should not be a hero but a sufferer who is eventually overcome. So I was doing nothing very original by writing another realistic novel about a common man and calling it *The Victim*. I suppose I was discovering independently the essence of much of modern realism. In my innocence, I put my finger on it. Serious realism also contrasts the common man with aristocratic greatness. He is overborne by fate, just as the great are in Shakespeare or Sophocles. But this contrast, inherent in literary tradition, always damages him. In the end the force of tradition carries realism into parody, satire, mock-epic--Leopold Bloom. (Plimpton 187)

While not quite disparaging Joyce (as he does later), Bellow is stating that he believes he was once similar to him in a regrettable way. *Dangling Man* and *The Victim* were the works he produced when he treated his "hero" in the way of other realists. For Bellow, Joyce is such a realist. Here we have what Harold Bloom calls a "misreading," a misinterpretation of the precursor's work and a manifestation of the younger artist's anxiety to create original works despite the strength of the precursor's influence. Notice that Bellow interprets Leopold Bloom to be just such a hero as a realist would create, and *Ulysses* itself as a bitter novel. This is not quite the interpretation other critics of Joyce have

made.

When asked whether he had given up depicting such "realistic" characters as Leopold Bloom in favor of the Augie Marches, characters who supposedly have "greater comic elements," Bellow says, "Yes, because I got very tired of the solemnity of complaint, altogether impatient with complaint. Obligated to choose between complaint and comedy, I choose comedy, as more energetic, wiser and manlier. This is only one reason why I dislike my earlier novels." (Plimpton 187-188)

The interviewer pursues Bellow's apparently narrow scope of choice, asking if he is indeed limited to choosing between comedy and complaint. Bellow responded:

I'm not inclined to predict what will happen. I may feel drawn to comedy again. I may not. But modern literature was dominated by a tone of elegy from the twenties to the fifties, the atmosphere of Eliot in "The Waste Land" and that of Joyce in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Sensibility absorbed this sadness, this view of the artist as the only contemporary link with an age of gold, forced to watch the sewage flowing in the Thames, every aspect of modern civilization doing violence to his (artist-patrician) feelings. This went much farther than it should have been allowed to go. It descended to absurdities, of which I think we have had enough. (Plimpton 188)

Bellow repudiates the apocalyptic mood that he believes "sensibility absorbed" as the literature of alienation. In no way does Bellow openly state a will to abandon Joyce and Eliot themselves as influences, just the cultural reaction to their work. But Bellow singles out for strong criticism one aspect of Joyce's *Ulysses*:

BELLOW: The modern masterpiece of confusion is Joyce's *Ulysses*. There the mind is unable to resist experience.

Experience in all its diversity, its pleasure and horror, passes through Bloom's head like an ocean through a sponge. The sponge can't resist; it has to accept whatever the waters bring. It also notes every microorganism that passes through it. This is what I mean. How much of this must the spirit suffer, in what detail is it obliged to receive this ocean with its human plankton? Sometimes it looks as if the power of the mind has been nullified by the volume of experiences. But of course this is assuming the degree of passivity that Joyce assumes in *Ulysses*. Stronger, more purposeful minds can demand disintegration under the particulars. A Faustian artist is unwilling to surrender to the mass of particulars. (Plimpton 191)

With this answer Bellow seems to say that he will never indulge in the sorts of unedited detail in Joyce's *Ulysses*. In such passages Bellow declares that it seems "the power of the mind has been nullified." His comment, one may be sure, was news to the editors of the following passage in *Augie*:

Considering how much world there was to catch up with--Asurbanipal, Euclid, Alaric, Metternich, Madison, Blackhawk--if you didn't devote your whole life to it, how were you ever going to do it? And the students were children of immigrants from all parts coming up from Hell's Kitchen, Little Sicily, the Black Belt, the mass of Polonia, the Jewish streets of Humboldt Park, put through the coarse sifters of curriculum, and also bringing wisdom of their own. They filled the factory-length corridors and giant classrooms with every human character and germ, to undergo consolidation and become, the idea was, American. In the mixture there was beauty--a good proportion--and pimple-insolence, and parricide forces, Danish stability, Dago inspiration, catarrh-hampered mathematical genius; there were waxed-eared shovelers' children, sex-promising businessmen's daughters--an immense sampling of a tremendous host, the multitudes of holy writ, begotten by West-moving, factory-shoved parents. Or me, the by-blow of a traveling man. (Bellow 139)

It is evident in such passages that Bellow by no means shuns the influence of Joyce entirely. But he is unique among major American authors in that he is strongly critical of Joyce. The

closest Bellow comes, according to printed record, to an acknowledgement of esteem for Joyce is in a 1972 *Publisher's Weekly* write-up about a lecture he gave on the occasion of Doubleday Books' 75th anniversary: "The audience, including such notables as former U.S. Chief Justice Earl Warren and author Herman Wouk, listened closely for an hour to talk larded with literary allusions and a deep analysis of James Joyce before adjourning to sip champagne as the guests of Doubleday President John T. Sargeant." (Wagner 26)

Another mention of Joyce comes in an interview he gave to D.J.R. Bruckner for an article coinciding with the 1984 release of Bellow's volume of short stories, *Him With His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories*. "My life would be terribly abstract if I didn't have my students to talk with about what I am reading. That is what I teach, what I am reading anyway; that has always been my arrangement with the Committee. I am teaching Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* now: the term before that it was Henry James's *American Scene*, and before that, Joyce's *Ulysses*." (Bruckner 54) It is evident from this that Bellow must hold Joyce in some kind of esteem.

The mention of Joyce in Bellow's Nobel Prize Lecture is open to interpretation. It is impossible to conclude, based on these words, or on the wider context of the speech, whether Bellow is complimenting Joyce or not:

But I am drawing attention to the fact that there is in the intellectual community a sizable inventory of attitudes that have become respectable--notions about society, human nature, class, politics, sex, about mind, about the physical universe, the evolution of life. Few writers, even among the best, have taken the trouble to reexamine these attitudes or orthodoxies. Such attitudes only glow more powerfully in

Joyce or D.H. Lawrence than in the books of lesser men; they are everywhere and no one challenges them seriously. (Nobel Lecture, 323-324)

Bellow seems here to desire that authors challenge the "inventory of attitudes." What does Bellow mean when he says those values "glow more powerfully" in the works of Joyce and Lawrence? Does he mean they are more readily apparent? Bellow's couching that unilluminating, but positive-seeming verb-phrase between the qualifications "only" and "of lesser men" renders any compliment back-handed at best.

Then there is this outtake from the *Paris Review* interview: "I have a special interest in Joyce; I have a special interest in Lawrence." (Plimpton 181) Unfortunately, Bellow never elaborates. It is interesting that Bellow couples Joyce and Lawrence in that statement made twelve years before the Nobel Prize Lecture.

If this is the closest instance of Bellow's paying Joyce a compliment, it can be concluded that Bellow is unaware of how much Joyce influenced him. Bellow is, after all, not above naming his precursors. He is fond of Theodore Dreiser and finds in him "depths of feeling that we normally associate with Balzac or Shakespeare." (Plimpton 180) Bellow likes Hemingway's "manner as an artist, his lifestyle," but thinks Fitzgerald is the better artist. (181) All these elders surface in his writing in one guise or another.

All the same, there is no denying that Bellow's career parallels Joyce's to an eerie extent. In early reviews it was even pointed out that *Augie* occupies the chronological position in Bellow's career that *Ulysses* does in Joyce's.

Bellow's first two novels, *Dangling Man* (1944) and *The Victim*

(1947) were tighter and closer to the Flaubertian ideal of form than *Augie*. Over the earlier books Bellow exerted a firmer authorial control than he did over *Augie*, which is essentially a bundle of escapades unified by little other than the developing sensibility of the narrator and the reappearance of several characters. In an introduction to John Berryman's novel, *Recovery*, Bellow, in thinking back to the early 1950s, the time when he and Berryman at last began to come into their own as artists, calls *Augie*, "naive, undisciplined, unpruned," and explained that Berryman had liked "the exuberance of its language and its devotion to the Chicago streets," which was not to be seen in Bellow's early, "small and correct books." (Berryman, ix)

And in Bellow's polished (He demanded that he be given a typed transcript which he could edit and amend as he liked.) interview for *Paris Review* Bellow talked about his early books' inferiority:

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned before the interview that you would prefer not to talk about your early novels, that you feel you are a different person now from what you were then. I wonder if this is all you want to say or if you can say something about how you have changed.

BELLOW: I think that when I wrote those early books I was timid. I still felt the incredible effrontery of announcing myself to the world (in part I mean the WASP world) as a writer and an artist. I had to touch a great many bases, demonstrate my abilities, pay my respects to formal requirements. In short, I was afraid to let myself go. (Plimpton 182)

But Bellow admitted that simply letting go was not all that had been missing in his writing so far. He later confesses a belief that he "took off too many" restraints "and went too far."

Bellow explained that he found the standard he had followed

in his first books repressive, "because of the circumstances of my life and because of my upbringing in Chicago as the son of many, few immigrants. I could not, with such an instrument as I developed in the first two books, express a variety of things I knew intimately." (Bellow 183)

In this same way, during the writing of *Ulysses*, Joyce threw off the restraints. But in Ellmann's biography of him there is no mention of Joyce being conscious that the form of, say, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* had been chafing him. With Joyce it seems that he was relatively comfortable with each form he chose for his books. It just so happens that his themes demanded changes in form. Unfortunately, in the 1920s there was no such thing as the *Paris Review* interview.

Joyce's Influence on American Novelists

James Joyce's hefty and multifarious novel, *Ulysses*, published in 1922, gave rise to what could be called a genre in American fiction. Indeed, Holman's *Handbook to Literature's* definition of the word would not prevent us from dubbing the slew of American novels written after 1922 and resembling *Ulysses* examples of a Ulyssean genre: "Today critics frequently regard genre distinctions as useful descriptive devices but rather made arbitrary ones." (Holman 239)

Since *Ulysses'* publication, it could be said that nearly every American novelist has at some point in his career produced a large novel that in many ways resembles it. But writing a large novel has always been a sign of artistic legitimacy and maturation. It is as if the production of such a work lends

credibility to an author, inducts him into a distinguished company. As few composers have neglected to write a symphony, few authors have neglected to stake a *Ulyssean* claim.

And, as all symphonists after Beethoven owe a debt to his symphonies and cannot fail to acknowledge that through their work, whether they do so in interviews or not, so any author owes at least as much to Joyce and makes that debt easily apparent to any reader, or creditor, as it were.

Joyce changed the novel form, which in the 1920s was very little changed in form and subject matter from a novel of the 1820s. Certainly authors developed. Dickens did come to construct more elaborate plots, depict wider ranges of character as his career progressed; but his prose, though it grew infinitely richer, never adjusted the models that came before him.

Dostoyevsky did delve further into his characters' psyches than any novelist ever had, anticipating Pavlov and Freud, but his narrative stance was always constant, unlike Joyce's, which veered from stream-of-consciousness to a question and answer session within the confines of one book. Dostoyevsky seldom deviated from his chronologically and stylistically orthodox narrative forms. No one before Joyce risked confusing the reader on such a grand scale. To continue the musical analogy, no one before Joyce made such liberal use of discords.

When one listens to one of Schubert's late symphonies, say the "Unfinished," one who knows classical music is struck not only by the resemblance in form to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but also by the resemblance in mannerism (which could also account for those compositions being so often packaged together on the same

compact disc or cassette). The first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished," written in 1822, follows a rather charged-up interchange among the strings, timpani and trombones with a softer passage written for the woodwinds, much like the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Schubert not only acknowledged Beethoven's free use of heavy discords, but also adopted a very Beethovenian quirk of orchestration: beginning with a bang and following with a soft, tranquil melody.

In this same way, novelists subsequent to Joyce have taken on his mannerisms along with his forms. That is why the modern instances in Updike's *The Centaur* correspond to incidents of the Chiron myth. That is why Robert Jordan in Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is given long paragraphs of interior monologue. That is why so many characters in modern American novels are, like Stephen Dedalus, prone to leave their native land. That's why there are so many older and usually male mentor characters in American fiction.

The list of Ulysean mannerisms that turn up in American fiction after 1922 is an unavoidable by-product of American writers' formal indebtedness to Joyce's *Ulysses*. A son sometimes imitates the outer quirks of his father, though the idea of growing up is that the son should acquire his father's spiritual sense.

The Structure of *Ulysses*

Ulysses can be read on many different symbolic and thematic levels. In order to show that Saul Bellow appropriated many of these levels into his own work, we must first consider them

individually. The bulk of this section is indebted to Tindall's observations in *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce*, although it should be pointed out that the findings reported here are not all original to him, nor are they to me, but to the enormous crowd of critics that has been working with *Ulysses* for 72 years.

The Literal Level

Ulysses realistically and unashamedly depicts in all nuances the daily routine of three citizens of Dublin, Ireland, on June 16, 1904.

The first of these that we meet is Stephen Dedalus, the 22-year-old aspiring poet whose childhood and adolescence Joyce detailed in his earlier novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In the first section of *Ulysses*, composed of the first three chapters, we see his expulsion from his lodgings at Martello Tower by an overbearing lout named Buck Mulligan. We watch Dedalus teach a class of grammar schoolers. Then we listen in for an extended time on his very abstract and erudite thoughts as he walks down the Sandymount strand composing a poem to himself.

In the long middle section, composed of 12 chapters, we follow Leopold Bloom on his odyssey about Dublin:

- He eats a meaty breakfast and, in turn, brings breakfast to his wife.
- He goes to a bathhouse, gets a letter from a female amatory pen pal.
- He attends an acquaintance's funeral.
- He takes on his occupational duties as advertising canvasser, at which he proves inept but persistent.

- He passes between Dedalus and Mulligan as they are all emerging at the same time from the National Library.

- He goes to a pub and there looks for Martin Cunningham and gets into a verbal spat with an anti-Semite.

- He fantasizes about a young girl he sees while strolling along Sandymount beach.

- He goes to a maternity hospital to pay his regards to a family friend who is giving birth.

- He follows a group of drunk revelers, which includes Stephen, to a bordello where Stephen breaks a chandelier with his walking stick.

- Bloom faces down the brothel owner in order to get Stephen off the hook legally.

- Lastly, he rescues Stephen and squires him off, preventing an altercation with the police.

All the while, Bloom cannot help thinking about his wife's intention to commit adultery that afternoon at 4 p.m. with a fellow he keeps encountering about town.

The third and concluding section begins in a cabman's shelter at 1:00 a.m. as Bloom and Dedalus recover their equilibrium over coffee and rolls. They then adjourn to Bloom's house where the two talk awhile longer. Stephen turns down Bloom's offer to put him up for the night and leaves, certain that he must depart from Ireland. Bloom then joins his wife in bed. At that point begins Molly Bloom's famous stream-of-consciousness chapter, recounting incidents in the history of her marriage as well as in the history of her adulterous affairs. At the end, she recalls Bloom's proposal of marriage and the account, as well as the novel, ends

with her reply, "...and yes I said yes I will. Yes." (Joyce 644)

The Greek Mythological Level

Joyce used the form and the events of Homer's epic, *The Odyssey*, on which to frame the less-than-epic doings of his three characters in turn-of-the-century Dublin.

Like *The Odyssey*, *Ulysses* has three sections. In *The Odyssey*, the first section describes Telemachus' plight and endeavor to search for his father, the famed warrior Odysseus. The second section, much longer, records Odysseus' arduous journey home to Ithaca from the Trojan War. The third section winds things down with Odysseus' return, his slaying of the suitors who had been pilfering Odysseus' household and his reunion with his wife Penelope.

To this broad structure, *Ulysses* corresponds if we cast Stephen Dedalus, ejected from his lodgings by the obnoxious Buck Mulligan, as Telemachus. Furthermore, we can cast Bloom, wandering Dublin, encountering adventures, thinking of home, as Odysseus. Bloom's wife Molly must necessarily correspond to Penelope. The irony of Molly's promiscuity when compared to Penelope's chasteness is telling and has been interpreted in a number of ways.

In the first section of *Ulysses*, for example, Stephen is roughly in the same situation as Telemachus. In this same way, Bloom finds himself confronted with problems that are modern versions of Odysseus'. The third section of *Ulysses* matches the third section of the *Odyssey* in that Bloom returns home too.

In addition, each chapter in *Ulysses* corresponds in sometimes

broad, sometimes obvious, ways to chapters of the *Odyssey*. Critics have given each of Joyce's chapters a name, like "Circe" or "Aeolus" based on the parallels of certain Dubliners to characters in Homer. Joyce himself called these chapters by such names in his letters. Although he did not include them in the novel itself, they have acquired authority as if he had.

Significantly, Tindall cautions us not to assume that Leopold Bloom is Odysseus, though there are characteristic similarities. "Joyce is not retelling Homer's myth, but using it for a story of his own." (129) Tindall says Joyce uses the *Odyssey* as a simile. One cannot argue with this as, of course, there are traits peculiar to Odysseus and likewise traits peculiar to Bloom that would be either superfluous or naive in another time or locale. But it should be noted that the simile is mightily extended and there is no end of parallels between the epic and the novel.

We should consider that Joyce played with mythical simile in *A Portrait*, as well. Stephen Dedalus was, as his name suggests, an artificer, and many were the parallels in that book to the story of Icarus, the son who flew too close to the sun with wings engineered of wax and feathers by Daedalus, the handy father. Stephen, in fact, ends up playing both parts. As an author, he is both craftsman and aspiring flyer.

His last name suggests him as the artist and aesthete that he indeed turns out to be in *Ulysses*. But he is also the son, who tries to touch the sun and plummets into the ocean. Stephen certainly pays dearly for the way of life he has chosen, but it is not without its rewards: he gets to "fly" in the imaginative sense while others remain earthbound.

The Stylistic Level

Joyce employed radically different writing styles with every chapter in order to adhere to a general theme explored in that chapter. The first chapter, for example, is "Narrative (young)," according to Stuart Gilbert's famous chart. Written quite conventionally, it features only two extended stream-of-consciousness rambles. The next chapter "Catechism (personal)" is named so because the chapter depicts Dedalus quizzing his pupils and is told from his point of view.

Other Levels

Here is a by-no-means-exhaustive list of other levels on which *Ulysses* can and has been read. They are not explained in the detail that the others are because these do not turn up in *The Adventures of Augie March*:

- Autobiography. Critics universally agree that *Ulysses* is a sequel to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which was a heavily autobiographical novel and that Stephen Dedalus is the young James Joyce. Some critics have said that Leopold Bloom is representative of the middle-aged James Joyce.

- Body parts. According to Stuart Gilbert, each chapter drops references to one or two bodily organs. Richard Ellmann's biography tells us that Joyce did this because of a conviction that the mind and body are inextricably tied together.

- The Hamlet and Shakespeare motif crops up in the first chapter with Buck Mulligan's declaration that Dedalus "proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father." (Joyce 15) It

reaches its fullest exploration in the "Scylla and Charybdis" section. Dedalus' theory is that Shakespeare wrote himself into *Hamlet* in the form of the ghost of Hamlet's father.

- Dante, Napoleon, the Virgin Mary, Elijah (in the person of Bloom), Moses (also incarnated in Bloom) and Don Giovanni are mentioned often and are used as either precedents or merely as significant resemblances.

- Each of the eighteen chapters deals with a specific realm of study. Chapter One, for example, has been deemed by general consent the theology chapter. In it Mulligan performs a parody of the Ordinary of the Mass. Chapter Two, which shows Stephen teaching a classical history lesson, is allotted to pedagogy.

- The theme of oppressed Ireland is especially present in the Stephen Dedalus chapters, since he is obsessed with it and seems to see symbols everywhere that point up Ireland's dominance by the British, and consequent lack of its own national, spiritual and artistic identity.

The Adventures of Augie March

First off, this novel is of a size with *Ulysses*, having some 600 pages in its paperback incarnation. Its ambition is not on a par with Joyce's novel, however. Being an episodic treatment of one Chicago Jew's life from childhood to his late 20s, it does not allow for the meticulous reproduction of human thought that *Ulysses* makes its business. It does, however, treat many large themes, though it actually avoids in a nearly unforgivable way, that of anti-Semitism with a simple denial:

And while we're on that side I'll mention the Poles--we

were just a handful of Jews among them in the neighborhood--and the swollen, bleeding hearts on every kitchen wall, the pictures of saints, baskets of death flowers tied at the door, communions, Easters and Christmases. And sometimes we were chased, stoned and beaten up for Christ-killers, all of us, even Georgie, articulated, whether we like it or not, to this mysterious trade. But I never had any special grief from it, or brooded, being by and large too larky and boisterous to take it to heart, and looked at it as needing no more special explanation than the stone-and-bat wars of the street gangs...It wasn't in my nature to fatigue myself with worry over being born to this occult work...(Bellow 11)

Other characters who are religious are only described briefly as going to church, living in their moral systems, etc. It never comes up again. Einhorn, Augie's early benefactor, goes through the motions (114). Anna Coblin, the cousin of Augie's mother, in whose household Augie lives during his adolescence, is religious in the superstitious way which makes her fervor prone to Augie's dismissal from any serious consideration. None of the many characters in the novel are orthodox Jews, nor is much thought given to anti-Semitism.

The focus of Augie is on the title character at all times and the narrative never diverts toward another as *Ulysses* does.

Though, as will be noted, there are many allusions to Greek mythology here, the large framework of the story is not based on a particular Greek myth, or any other myth for that matter. There is a touch of *Don Quixote* in the sprawling plot. I see a broad resemblance to the Ulysses myth in Augie's constant adaptability to his circumstances and need to return home after the Mexican adventure. But Augie does not have Odysseus' cunning.

The book occupies a place in Bellow's catalog which I have shown to be comparable to that of *Ulysses* in Joyce's. But after Bellow wrote *Augie*, the parallel ended. Bellow followed *Augie*,

not with a rather elusive work for the critics of his age and all after to chase, but a work of streamlined concentration, *Seize the Day*, a short novel about a beleaguered soul, Tommy Wilhelm, with no choices in life. The book was perceived as a step backward from the free and boisterous style and structure of *Augie*. In fact, Bellow has not written a novel since *Augie* that has been so effusive and liberally structured. Bellow has even declared in interviews that *Augie* was a little too unrestrained. "When I began to write *Augie March*, I took off many of these restraints. I think I took off too many, and went too far, but I was feeling the excitement of discovery." (Plimpton 182)

Allusion to Greek Myth

Like *Ulysses*, *The Adventures of Augie March* is highly allusive, most of all to Greek mythology.

Augie says early on that his mother is "like those women whom Zeus got the better of in animal form and who next had to take cover from his furious wife." (9) At the Coblins' house, Augie reads of "how the fair Briseis was dragged around from tent to tent and Achilles racked up his spear and hung away his mail (27)." Augie pictures his and his brother's job in the basement of Woolworth's as "being the Atlases of it." (Bellow 34) Mentions of ancient Greek characters, settings and situations abound:

But anyway I preferred to be in the shop--in that Elysian Fields' drift flowers piled around the loam boxes of the back room... (53)

...I'd ask myself, "What would Caesar suffer in this case? What would Machiavelli advise or Ulysses do?" (65)

"...A kid like you, for instance, strong as a bronco and rosy as an apple. An Alcibiades beloved-of-man, by

Jesus..." (82)

Thirty crowded miles on oil-spotted road, where the furnace, gas, and machine volcanoes cooked the Empedocles fundamentals into pig iron, girders, and rails, ... (99)

I understood this, as we were covering the same field of difficulty and struggle in front of the identical troy. (166)

Being necessary, yes. That would be fine and wonderful; but being Phoebus' boy? I couldn't even dream of it. I never tried to exceed my constitution. (227)

But when he'd warm and get his comfort back, he'd start to make bullish approaches to women and girls, his eyes big and red, and as if someone had bent over to choose a plumb from her lunch bag was making the offer of a Pasiphae. (258)

In one early section Augie seems to justify his frequently thinking in terms of myth and historic events:

From taking my punishments very hard, consulting Mama as to how to be forgiven and asking her to approach the old lady for me, and shedding tears when I was pardoned, I got to the stage of feeling more resistant, through worldly comparisons that made me see my crimes more tolerantly. That isn't to say that I stopped connecting her with the highest and the best--taking her at her own word--with the courts of Europe, the Congress of Vienna, the splendor of the family, and all kinds of profound and cultured things as hinted in her conduct and advertised in her speech--she'd call up connotations of the utmost importance, the imperial brown of the Kaisers and rotogravures of capitals, the gloominess of deepest thought. (32)

The "old lady" referred to here is Grandma Lausch, who, in the fatherless household in which Augie grew up, instilled discipline into him and his brother Simon with moral harangues. But in the above cited case, her nagging has little effect. Augie now knows how to pretend innocence. But Grandma Lausch's mention of historic figures becomes a mannerism Augie himself adopts.

In Chapter Five, after hearing out Einhorn's comparison of

himself with Socrates, Augie muses, "If you want to pick your own ideal creature in the mirror coastal air and sharp leaves of ancient perfections and be at home where a great mankind was at home, I've never seen any reason why not." "We had a title just as good as the chain-mail English kings had to Brutus." (83)

Augie also alludes regularly to historic figures as diverse as Napoleon, Croesus, Euclid and Lord Nelson. The novel is a name-dropper's delight.

Bellow's allusions to Greek mythology are clearly intended to elevate his situations to the level of the epic, but Joyce's are not so easy to categorize. As we have already established, Bellow's view of Joyce's Bloom is as a parodic character, not a noble hero. Obviously, in *Augie March*, Bellow intends the opposite with his characters. By comparing them to Greek heroes, he seeks to ennoble them.

Bellow has Augie allude to history out of a need to validate his doings, to cast the light of antiquity on them and thereby show these doings to be timeless and comparable to the exploits of the ancient Greeks. Whereas Joyce is supposedly using mythology to debase the modern era, Bellow uses it to bolster the post-modern one. Using the same tools, Bellow seeks to attain an opposite goal.

The Wandering Hero

Augie March is another wanderer, like Odysseus, like Bloom. As a young boy of twelve, Augie leaves home for an extended period, "farmed out in the summer by the old woman to get a taste of life and the rudiments of earning." (14)

It is the beginning of a long world jaunt that will take him to New York, Texarkana, Mexico City and, finally, Paris, where he is living when the book ends.

The Seasoned Hero

In the first paragraph of Bellow's novel, we know what kind of intellect we're dealing with:

I am an American, Chicago-born--Chicago, that somber city--and go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way: first to knock, first admitted; sometimes an innocent knock, sometimes a not so innocent. But a man's character is his fate, says Heraclitus, and in the end there isn't any way to disguise the nature of the knocks by acoustical work on the door or gloving the knuckles. (1)

With the exception of the references to Chicago and the American syntax, this self-assured, seasoned testimony could be straight from the mouth of Leopold Bloom, who is ever citing authorities and is ever formulating cogent analyses of life-workings.

Augie knows how to placate Grandma Lausch, he knows how to keep his patron Einhorn from finding out about his brushes with the law. With few exceptions, Augie can manage himself in any situation. He is the consummate social politician, but his free-ranging will doesn't let him establish himself in one place.

His cunning is not on a par with that of Odysseus, but it is quite formidable. Although Augie never thinks of ingenuous ways to escape sticky situations, he is always able to escape them with little injury to himself or others.

Appreciation for Conversation

Augie, like Bloom, has a great capacity to listen to the discourse of others and indeed feels more comfortable listening than talking. ("I was a listener by upbringing." [Bellow 78]) The list of monologues in *The Adventures of Augie March* is long and varied:

- Grandma Lausch: Chapters 1 and 4
- Simon March: Chapters 6 and 11
- William Einhorn: Chapters 5 and 7
- Dingbat Einhorn: Chapters 6 and 7
- Clem Tambow: Chapters 7, 21 and 22
- Mrs. Renling: Chapter 8
- Thea Finchel: Chapter 8
- Manny Padilla: Chapter 10
- Mimi Villars: Chapter 11
- Kayo Obermarck: Chapters 12 and 22
- Mintouchian: Chapter 24
- Ship Crew: Chapter 25
- Bateshaw: Chapter 25
- Robey: Chapter 21

Only during the Thea Finchel/Caligula chapters do the lectures cease for an extended time. This suggests that this is Augie's one chance to dispense with the listening and get on with the acting. Like "Circe," it is the turning point of the novel. Significantly, in Bellow's book we are also invited to compare men to beasts at the most climactic moment.

Like the eagle he and Thea have been working hard to educate, Augie fails to draw upon his considerable resources. He simply

takes off into the night.

Episodic

The Adventures of Augie March, like *Ulysses*, is written quite episodically. Indeed if we look on the copyright page of *Augie March*, we find that six chapters were printed separately in magazines. Nearly any chapter of *Augie* stands up as a self-contained short story. One can actually title them based on the characters and incidents introduced in each:

- Chapter One: Grandma Lausch
- Chapter Two: The Coblins (Bellow chose this himself when this chapter was published)
- Chapter Three: Jobs
- Chapter Four: Crimes
- Chapter Five: Einhorn (Bellow)
- Chapter Six: Einhorn's Family
- Chapter Seven: Loss of Innocence
- Chapter Eight: Mrs. Renling
- Chapter Nine: Smuggling Immigrants
- Chapter Ten: Simon's Fall
- Chapter Eleven: Simon's Marriage
- Chapter Twelve: The Courtship of Lucy Magnus
- Chapter Thirteen: Representing the Union
- Chapter Fourteen: Thea Finchel's Return
- Chapter Fifteen: The Eagle
- Chapter Sixteen: Mexico
- Chapter Seventeen: Augie's Recovery
- Chapter Eighteen: Stella
- Chapter Nineteen: Breakup with Stella
- Chapter Twenty: The Trotskyites
- Chapter Twenty-One: Reunion with Family
- Chapter Twenty-Two: Simon's Affair
- Chapter Twenty-Three: Augie Joins the Army
- Chapter Twenty-Four: Mintouchian
- Chapter Twenty-Five: Augie's Marriage
- Chapter Twenty-Six: Tour of Europe

As has already been noted, the chapters of *Ulysses* are always given titles based on their correspondence to Homer's epic. They are considered episodes of the events of one day. That each

chapter is written in a different style, mentions different realms of study and different bodily organs, one can definitely determine that they are self-contained units in their own right.

Sense of Wonder

Augie March shares with Leopold Bloom and Odysseus a curiosity that propels each into extraordinary and epic situations.

A combination of curiosity and concern makes Bloom follow Daedalus and rescue him from the fiasco in the brothel. We can also attribute to Bloom's Odyssean thirst for adventure the permeation of his early morning thoughts with far vistas:

Somewhere in the east: early morning: set off at dawn. Travel round in front of the sun, steal a day's march on him. Keep it up for ever, never grow a day older technically. Walk along a strand, strange land, come to a city gate, sentry there, old ranker too, old Tweedy's big moustaches, leaning on a long kind of spear. Wander through awned streets. Turbaned faces going by. dark caves of carpet shops, big men, Turko the terrible, seated crosslegged, smoking a corked pipe. Cries of sellers in the streets. Drink water scented with fennel, sherbet. Dander along all day. Might meet a robber or two. Well, meet him. Getting on to wisdom. The shadows of the mosques among the pillars: priest with a scroll rolled up. A shiver of the trees, signal the evening wind. I pass on. Fading gold sky. A mother watches me from her door way. She calls her children home in their dark language.

Probably not a bit like it really. Kind of stuff you read: in the track of the sun.(47)

Needless to say, Bloom has quite a vivid fantasy life. In the text there is no mention of any trip he took to Turkey.

Augie's urge to globe-trot is hinged to a consciousness that he is better than those who immediately surround him. Chapter

Three begins, "Even at that time I couldn't imagine I would marry into the Coblin family. And when Anna snatched Howard's saxophone, my thought was, 'Go on, take it. What do I want it for! I'll do better than that.' My mind was already dwelling on a good enough fate." (30)

When World War Two breaks out, Augie March can hardly contain himself. Though recovering from a hernia operation, he is champing at the bit to join the armed services. Turned down for health reasons by the army and navy, Augie joins the merchant marine. As he regains his strength, he tires of Chicago: "I was committed and couldn't stay." (523)

Adoption

Augie, like Stephen, keeps getting adopted by those who seek to educate and protect him. Stephen's first benefactor in Ulysses is Buck Mulligan, a rowdy blasphemer with whom Stephen boards in Martello Tower. Mulligan from the outset assumes an authoritarian stance in relation to Stephen, and indicts him for not praying before his mother's deathbed, all the while treating Stephen with disdain and using him for his various sordid purposes.

The first chapter features Stephen's attempt to communicate to Mulligan his unhappiness with the new roommate, Haines. With his vocal nightmares of black panthers, Haines kept Stephen up most of the night. "If he stays on here I am off," Stephen warns.

But Mulligan ignores him and chides him for not praying at his mother's deathbed. "There is something sinister in you," Mulligan says. (Joyce 5) At last, Mulligan ceases his tirade on what Stephen should do with his life, how he should dress, what

schemes are possible if Stephen would only agree with Mulligan more: "God, Kinch, if you and I could only work together we might do something for the island. Hellenise it." (Joyce 6) He agrees to speak to Haines about his sleeping habits. But he finds that the difficult roommate is not the real cause of Stephen's distress. Stephen recounts an incident that occurred in Mulligan's home shortly after Mrs. Dedalus' death:

--You were making tea, Stephen said, and went across the landing to get more hot water. Your mother and some visitor came out of the drawingroom. She asked you who was in your room.

--Yes? Buck Mulligan said. What did I say? I forget.

--You said, Stephen answered, *O, it's only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead.* (Joyce 7)

To this Mulligan fails to react the way Stephen would prefer. While he does say he "didn't mean to offend the memory of your mother," he disregards the thought of the offense taken by Stephen: "Look at the sea. What does it care about offenses? Chuck Loyola, Kinch, and come on down."

This is the kind of relationship that crops up repeatedly in *The Adventures of Augie March*. Augie finds himself adopted again and again by powerful personalities with large plans his participation is necessary in. And like Mulligan most of Augie's benefactors patronize him and denigrate him from above.

In each chapter there is a character who befriends and/or seduces Augie with ultimately nefarious intentions in mind. These intentions only come to light at the end of chapters when Augie finds himself abandoned or on an escape plan.

Augie's first Buck Mulligan is Grandma Lausch, who performs her beneficial services on the entire March family, raising the

train an eagle. There is Clem Tambow, who gets Augie to help him smuggle immigrants from Canada, William Einhorn, Mintouchian, Robey. The list is long. All these people need an Augie March in order for their own selfish plans to go forward.

Augie is so pliable because his self is as yet undetermined. The same goes for Stephen Dedalus. One of the major themes of each is the determination of selfhood and the emergence of personal authority. To use a writing metaphor, the two heroes of these novels actually become editors of their own experiences. Each learns how to say no.

The Symbolism of Names

Augie March's first name is derived from *augur*, the name for any Roman priest who foretold the future by watching the flight of birds. This points to Augie's episode with the inept eagle, Caligula who, need we point out, has the same name as a Roman emperor.

While Augie does not quite foretell the future as a result of his adventure and identification with the bird, he does come away with an awareness of why he has the sort of past he has and why he is in his present condition. Like the bird, he has been painstakingly prepared for life by older and more worldly spirits, yet he is still meandering, following life wherever it leads him rather than taking charge and finding his own way.

Stephen Dedalus' name comes, of course, from Greek mythology. It too signifies an eventual epiphany. Stephen's conversion from aspiring priest to aspiring artist in Chapter Four of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* involves a vision of Icarus in

train an eagle. There is Clem Tambow, who gets Augie to help him smuggle immigrants from Canada, William Einhorn, Mintouchian, Robey. The list is long. All these people need an Augie March in order for their own selfish plans to go forward.

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flight. Daedalus, as has been discussed previously, was the artificer of the wings he and Icarus used to escape the island of their captivity.

Thus Augie March's name is the same sort of flag Stephen Dedalus' is. They are both allusions to antiquity that point to an experience of self-recognition. The names are not just family monikers; they are manifestations of the characters' spirits.

Conclusion

Based on the resemblances I have found and made note of in this paper, it can be concluded that Saul Bellow owes much more to Joyce than he admits.

I myself admit that any of my resemblances may be vulnerable to attacks on the basis that many novels before the publication of *Ulysses* contained these attributes. But I would respond that no one of these traits was so endemic to the American novel before 1922. For example, the use of names with mythological meaning was not nearly so widespread until Joyce's book came out, though I do concede one might find similar names in earlier American fiction.

One might ask why this study is of any value? What does it prove if Bellow does seem a little like Joyce? For my own part, such a study is a value because it proves that originality, and Bellow is definitely one of our most original writers, does not preclude being influenced. I share with Harold Bloom the belief that originality is actually a function of a given author's relationship with an earlier writer. What I mean to prove in this thesis, besides Bellow's indebtedness to Joyce, is the fact that all artists are dependent for their creative existences on what

has come before them, even James Joyce.

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