Chapter 2

Leopold Bloom: The Polyphonic Hero

Joyce's early obsession with novelistic heroes is indicated by the titles of his books *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses*, all of which seem to experiment on the idea of a novelistic hero. However, at some point in his literary career, Joyce gets fed up with the Stephen of his earlier novels and rejects him, for he thinks Stephen "has a shape that can't be changed" (Budgen 107). When Joyce states that "Stephen is a self portrait, and therefore one-sided," whereas Bloom "is seen from all angles, as no self-portrait can be seen" (Budgen 60), he is apparently making known the quest that he is embarked on, that is, for "a hero who would be occupied primarily with the task of becoming conscious, the sort of hero whose life would be concentrated on the pure function of gaining consciousness of himself and the world" (PDP 50). In *Ulysses*, when Stephen himself says, "I'm not a hero, however" (4), one ought to think that Joyce was definitely casting away Stephen whose
monologic contours are thoroughly defined in preference for a Bloom whose boundaries are not defined for the reader.

Joyce chooses Bloom as his hero because of his open-ended nature. In his interview with Frank Budgen, Joyce says:

Bloom is the all round man. Bloom is son, father, husband, lover, friend, worker and citizen. He is at home and in exile. One morning he leaves his home and after a time he returns. True, he is absent from home only about seventeen hours, but one day or many: it is of no consequence. If a thousand years may be as a day, why not a day as a thousand years? (Budgen 65)

Joyce models his hero, Leopold Bloom, on Ulysses and assigns to Bloom various roles similar to that of Ulysses. Thus, Bloom becomes a multi-faceted personality like Ulysses who is capable of reacting on all these levels. When we hear that one must "dress the character" (17, 41, 230) in different places in Ulysses, we should suppose that the author was perhaps envisioning an ideal of a polyphonic hero whom the author together with the reader has to dress up instead of the reader meeting an already dressed up monologic hero. Ulysses thus becomes a novel that typifies the Bakhtinian notion of a polyphonic hero. According to Daniel R.
Schwarz, *Ulysses* "is an effort to redefine the concepts of a hero," and Bloom is a hero in whose character "the traditional notions of heroism are obsolete" (1).

This study makes an analysis of Bloom taking into account those aspects of his character where he departs from his counterparts in monologic literature. Since the polyphonic hero is not created out of "features of the hero himself or of his everyday surroundings—but rather the significance of these features for the hero himself, for his self-consciousness" (*PDP* 48), it is better to see the working of Bloom's consciousness under unique situations. One can see this play of consciousness in Bloom right from the beginning of the novel. Even though the hero appears late in the text and takes occasional breaks from the novel, his importance is nonetheless never lessened. However, everything is seen from the level of his consciousness only. In doing this Joyce, like "Dostoevsky carried out, as it were, a small-scale Copernican revolution when he took what had been a firm and finalizing authorial definition and turned it in to an aspect of the hero's self-definition" (*PDP* 49).

As is peculiar to the polyphonic style of Joyce, the "hero" of *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom himself reveals to the reader right at the beginning of the novel that the action takes place on Sixteenth June. Bloom is seen reading a letter from his daughter, Milly that he received just now. She is working as
an assistant to a photographer in Mullingar. She has turned fifteen the previous day and is thanking Bloom for his birthday gift to her. Bloom’s musings over her letter goes like this: “Fifteen yesterday. Curious, fifteen of the month too. Her first birthday away from home” (64). Again, one is not left to assume which month this is. Bloom thinks of his wife’s fast approaching birthday for which he plans to give her a gift: “Must go back for that lotion. For her birthday perhaps. Junejulyaugseptember eighth. Nearly three months off” (160).

Joyce answers the doubts of the reader about the identity of Bloom in the form of an advertisement that might be put up in case of Bloom were to be found missing. The advertisement runs roughly like this:

£ 5 reward, lost, stolen or strayed from residence 7 Eccles street, missing gent about 40, answering to the name of Bloom Leopold (Poldy), height 5 ft., 91/2 inches, full build, olive complexion, may have since grown a beard, when last seen was wearing a black suit. Above sum will be paid for information leading to discovery. (679)

This is the shocking and novel way in which an anti-canonical hero like Bloom is revealed to the reader. Joyce gives some more details about the physical self of Bloom. Bloom’s weight was eleven stones and four
pounds in avoirdupois measure when weighed on the last feast of Ascension on the twelfth day of May (621). His collar size was 17 and waistcoat 5 buttons. Stephen feels the “sinewless and wobbly” body of Bloom (614). Bloom is a “full figure” in comparison to Stephen who is a “lean figure”. Bloom’s hands had “the surety of the sense of touch” and his hands were “firm full masculine feminine” and “passive active” (627). Bloom had abnormally developed abdominal muscles and so was good at movement on the parallel bars. Bloom’s physical strength was now failing. Earlier he used to keep himself fit by practising the exercises described in Eugene Sandow’s Physical Strength and How to Obtain It. But even now Bloom’s movements are very nimble. On whether Bloom is handsome or not, Molly gives her reply to the reader. According to her, Bloom is very handsome and resembles Lord Byron. In fact he is too beautiful for men. He had a splendid set of teeth, which made Molly “hungry to look at them”. Bloom had a fine complexion and he used to show it off wearing a zingari coloured muffler.

Joyce’s periphrastic way of indicating his hero’s age is another unique feature of his polyphonic writing. Bloom will be 70 in 1936 and he is 16 years senior to Stephen (632). Since the novel takes place on 16th June 1904, one can assume that Bloom is now 38 years old. Bloom himself feels that he is now too old and the possibility of his becoming the father of
a boy child is very remote. Molly has only some vague notions about Bloom’s age. She knows Bloom is “getting on to forty” (691). But Joyce who does not mention his hero’s date of birth cares to give the dates of birth of Molly and Milly.

Joyce’s method of registering even the minutest and the most trivial details of his hero is particularly noteworthy. We can see Bloom selecting a black overcoat for that day’s funeral in front of the reader. “Be a warm day I fancy. Specially in these black clothes feel it more” (55). He has even missed a back button of his trousers that day. He is wearing a pair of socks darned by Mrs. Fleming. He goes to the lavatory, breaks wind, urinates and defecates in front of the reader. One even gets a glimpse of his pale body reclined in a trough of water when he takes bath. His belly is very smooth and its colour is whitey yellow with slack folds on them. Bloom combs his hair back. The texture of his hair is that of fine straw. His cheeks are soft with downy hair on them. He even masturbates and has sexual gratification with his wife in front of the reader. The reader also sees several hurts on Bloom’s body like scrapes by pins, a cicatrice formed by a previous beesting, and pain in the toe. The cicatrice was in the left infracostal region below the diaphragm on Bloom’s body. The beesting was inflicted precisely two weeks and three days previously on 23rd May 1904 (663). The reader gets not only a glimpse of the hero’s external self but also a
glimpse of his inner as well as his intimate self when he dresses and undresses in front of the reader and thinks in front of the reader.

The reader comes to know more and more about the hero through the information he gets from his wife and his friends and acquaintances. Joyce also highlights the places like the bedroom, the kitchen and the privy of Bloom's residence. Joyce must have deliberately highlighted the places like the kitchen, the bedroom and the toilet in Bloom's house, for these are the places in a house where most of the activities take place. He also gives the contents of Bloom's drawers, the books in his library, his expenditure for the day as well as the list of visitors to his house and so on.

Perhaps these intimate details can reveal more of a person than can any other bigger or superficial description. In not forgetting to mention even the most casual details of his hero's self, the author gives the reader a more comprehensive picture of the hero than can be given by any description of the monologic sort. But James H. Maddox, Jr. considers it "a paradox of Ulysses that although no character has ever been subjected to such intense scrutiny as Mr. Bloom, neither has any character ever so triumphantly escaped final definition" (11). This "final definition" is what a polyphonic hero evades. But whether too many details clutter the image of Bloom is a moot question. As Goldberg suggests, we have to doubt that
“the mass of information we are given ‘about’ him may occasionally obscure our understanding of him” (261).

There are certain features like the date of birth, job, ancestry, residence etc. that would have finalized any monologic hero. These are all external features that remain constant for any person. These are factors that can be objectively commented upon. But these aspects are not defined for a polyphonic hero. This is what Bakhtin writes about the relevance of these features for the polyphonic hero:

All the stable and objective qualities of a hero—his social position, the degree to which he is sociologically or characterologically typical, his habitus, his spiritual profile and even his very physical appearance—that is, everything that usually serves an author in creating a fixed and stable image of the hero, “who he is,” becomes in Dostoevsky [polyphonic novel] the object of the hero’s own introspection, the subject of his self-consciousness; and the subject of the author’s visualization and representation turns out to be in fact a function of this self-consciousness. (PDP 48)

What Bakhtin says of the Dostoevskian hero is true of all polyphonic heroes and of Leopold Bloom in particular. A monologic hero always has
an aristocratic ancestry to boast of. Here Bloom has only a mixed ancestry. He is the son of Rudolph Virag and Ellen Higgins. His father later changed his name to Rudolph Bloom by a deed poll. His maternal grand parents had also changed their surnames. His father originally from Austria, had shifted residences to various places and had finally settled down in Dublin. Even Bloom’s identity is confused with that of Bloom the dentist.

Bloom’s father whom he loved very much committed suicide by consuming monkshod (aconite). Suicide is considered anathema by the Roman Catholics. It is the “greatest disgrace to have in the family,” according to Jack Power (93). Bloom, though now a Catholic, holds a view contrary to this, and even thinks suicide was perhaps the best for his papa. It is not customary to depict death in polyphonic novels for the polyphonic heroes are all self-conscious heroes and consciousness is life itself. Therefore to die means to inflict death on the consciousness of the heroes. Polyphonic heroes are full of consciousness about others also and they interact dialogically with others to form themselves. Thus the existence of the hero lies in his dialogic communication with himself and also with others and everything ceases with his death, i.e., with the death of dialogue. Further, writers like Dostoevsky are not interested in portraying biographically complete units of human beings experiencing birth, life and death. Instead, their heroes are ever vibrant with self-consciousness. If at all
they portray death, they depict only suicide for this intentional death finalizes a man from within. But it is natural for monologic writers like Tolstoy to “kill” their characters. They might even enter the self of a dying person and might describe the events that take place after his death. Bakhtin thinks that to portray such death from the inside of a dead person is “to move from one consciousness to another, as if one were merely going from one room to another,” forgetting “the absolute threshold that exists between them” (qtd. in Clark and Holquist 247). The polyphonic writer shows a great “interest in suicides as conscious deaths—links in the chain of consciousness in which a man finalizes himself from within” (ibid). This is perhaps the reason for allowing the aged father of a fully self-conscious hero like Bloom to commit suicide instead of letting him have a natural death. Bloom does not give any conclusive answers about this aspect also that might prove contrary to his polyphonic nature. Martin Cunningham makes the correct judgement of the situation when he says, “It is not for us to judge” (93). Judgements and finalizing verdicts are far away from the essence of polyphony.

Bloom is perhaps the most “irreligious” hero without any particular religion. Bloom’s father was born a Jew but he later got converted to the Irish Protestant stock. Accordingly, Bloom’s religion also happened to be this but with an eye on marriage to Molly he embraced the Catholic faith.
He is now only a Protestant in Catholic faith and is more of a Jew at heart. Everyone is still confused about the religious belief of Bloom. Ned Lambert at one point shouts in doubt "Is he a Jew or a gentile or a holy Roman or a swaddler or what the hell is he?" (323). Bloom is quite aware of the fact that he belongs to a race that is "hated and persecuted" even now (318). Still he likes to remain in this faith. Bloom does not mind what others think of him or about his position as a Jew in Ireland. He equates himself with Mendelssohn, Karl Marx, Mercadante, Spinoza, and Jesus Christ who were all Jews (327).

Bloom is not a practising Christian. Molly is even afraid that Bloom might tease her if he came to know of her going to church, for Bloom hates the idea of going to church even after becoming a Catholic. Now Bloom is more of a person "in the craft" (freemason) (169). This practice of Bloom is against the beliefs of the Catholic faith that he has embraced. Bloom’s faith is as simple as Molly’s and his little faith in Christian religion is based on Molly’s scanty knowledge about it. Molly has taught him an easy parody of INRI on the cross as "Iron Nails Ran In" and IHS as "I Have Sinned" or "I Have Suffered" (78). Bloom does not find the practices of the Christian church any better than the dogmas of the faith he left behind. He is amused by the ceremonies practised at the Church and at the cemetery. The Church, for him is only a nice "discreet place to be next some girl" (77). Christians
are the "corpse chewers" who swallow the Sacrament like "lollipop." For Bloom, the holy water sprinkled on the dead is only for "Shaking sleep out of it" (100). Bloom knows that the cemetery is not a place to lilt but he does it inspite of himself. Bloom does not attach much importance to the Christian belief in resurrection. For him, "Once you are dead you are dead" (102). He wonders why the Sacred Heart of Jesus is suffering so much "infliction" on him unnecessarily! (109). People seem to take an instinctive dislike for Bloom even though he is a harmless person.

As befits the nature of an "all round person," Bloom is not a person of a single profession (225). Bloom is known by several people to do various jobs. His present position is that of an advertisement canvasser for the Freeman, though he is known to have been engaged in several other occupations earlier. Molly herself comments on the various situations shifted by Bloom. He was in Thoms, then in Helys, then in Mr. Cuffes and finally in Drimmies. She also talks of an instance when Bloom was to have been put in prison on account of some problem with the sale of lottery tickets. No doubt, Bloom had tried his hands at several jobs. He was at one time the outdoor hawker of imitation jewellery. Then he was a dun for the recovery of bad and doubtful debts. Then he was a poor rate and deputy cess collector. He occasionally peddled lottery tickets and some times traded in cast off clothes. Bloom’s acquaintances too know him as
associated with various professions. John Henry Menton knows Bloom as a person working in the stationery line. Davy Byrne thinks that Bloom is an insurance man. Ned Lambert’s knowledge of Bloom is as a person working in Wisdom Hely’s as a traveller for blotting paper. But now, he knows that Bloom is working as a canvasser for advertisements. Nosey Flynn thinks that Bloom is not a successful advertisement canvasser. But how far Bloom is successful even in his present profession as an advertisement canvasser one doesn’t know. The reader is able to see the advertisement canvasser for the Freeman at work and judge it for himself/herself.

Bloom seems to know all the practical matters related to advertisement business. He knows he shouldn’t teach the editor “his own business” and that he shouldn’t antagonise him by asking him the pronunciation of words like “voglio,” which he perhaps may or may not know (116). Bloom has to seek the help of Joe Hynes to whom he has lent three bobs to refer his name to the editor for Joe knew the editor very well and Bloom knew that “for an advertisement you must have repetition. That’s the whole secret” (310). For this he had to stop pestering Hynes about his own money until at least the next month. He even takes pains to go to the National library to get a back issue of the Kilkenny People to refer to a previous advertisement. Bloom is seen making good calculation about the money he might get on advertisements:
Keyes: two months if I get Nannetti to. That’ll be two pounds ten, about two pounds eight. Three Hynes owes me. Two eleven. Presscott’s ad. Two fifteen. Five guineas about. On the pig’s back. (172)

But Bloom does not succeed in his business and his endless calculations do not take him anywhere. However hard Bloom struggles to get the advertisement renewed for three months, he doesn’t get the expected result. Instead, he only manages to get a two months renewal from Alexander Keys. All his plans of buying gifts for Molly with the remuneration he fetches on the advertisement shatters. Thus any illusion built up by the reader regarding his hero’s success as a businessman collapses. And one cannot find in Bloom a very successful businessman as almost all the people of his race are. As Nosey Flynn says Bloom “doesn’t buy cream on the ads he picks up” but “can make only a bacon of that” (169).

It is clear that Bloom has had long association with the advertisement field. Bloom plans to set up an advertisement poster that caused the passerby to stand and gaze at its novelty. Bloom’s idea is to set up a poster having only the span of casual vision and congruous with the velocity of modern life. Bloom’s business eye knows it is no use trying to canvass people like Larry O’ Rourke for a business advertisement, for he is a “Cute
old codger” (56). He had also lent his wisdom as an advertisement canvasser to Wisdom Hely, the paper merchant. He had earlier suggested to Hely to make a trick that might boost his sales. He had asked him to put up a transparent show cart with two smart girls inside it writing something. Bloom’s firm belief was that people would only be curious to know what these girls were doing inside the cart. But Hely, one should suppose has not given any ear to Bloom’s idea as the reader watches Hely’s advertisement moving forward with a row of people wearing white caps bearing scarlet letters—HELY’S. No one is sure of the feasibility of Bloom’s ideas.

The place of residence of a polyphonic hero is always obscure. Joyce also does not give a specific home and a family to Bloom. Even after sixteen years of married life Bloom has not been able to put up a house. He keeps changing his apartments and Molly speaks of the mess involved in this business. They have shifted residences from Raymond Terrace, Ontario Terrace, Lombard Street, Holles Street and City Arms Hotel. He is now staying in Eccles Street. Bloom only thinks and dreams of his dream house that he might build or purchase in future. Again one is not sure whether his dream will materialise or not.

In order to destroy any sort of predictability regarding the character of Bloom, the author gives not only the opinion of Bloom on himself but
also the opinions of other people about him. This is how Joyce presents Bloom in *Ulysses*:

> We see him as he appears to himself and as he exists in the minds of his wife, his friends and his fellow citizens. By the end of the day we know more about him than we know about any other character in fiction. [...] Bloom stands in the open and we can walk around him. (Budgen 66)

To start with the comments of others on Bloom, perhaps the best person to turn to is Bloom’s wife, Molly. Molly’s musings reveal a lot about Bloom. Though Molly’s comments about Bloom come towards the end of the book, her remarks are more revealing than any other comments on Bloom. But Molly is unaware of many secrets of Bloom that he deliberately keeps away from her, such as the Martha encounter, the Gerty episode and the brawl at the Barney Kiernan’s. Molly says Bloom has a feeling that nothing can happen without his knowledge. But actually Bloom is in the dark about the secret of his wife receiving kisses from Bartell D’Arcy at the choir stairs. Molly tells the reader that Bloom is polite to old women and to waiters and beggars and that he is not arrogant. He is also fond of pretending ill, and loves to be pampered. These observations of Molly may be correct but the reader gets no positive evidence for them from Bloom. Perhaps one gets direct evidences from Bloom only for his
sexual encounters and his polite nature. Again for Molly, Bloom was a good sexual partner who could make her happy. But Molly calls Bloom a "born liar" and a "pigheaded" fellow who "gets in the way" of other people. She has lots of things to speak of Bloom's oddities and comments that "there isn't in all creation another man with the habit he has" (721). When Molly says this she is literally correct for Bloom alone can have his habits.

The reader can also notice others making stray comments on Bloom. The librarian Mr. Lyster of the National library ushers Bloom in as a "gentleman." Bloom, as one reads in the book, does not do anything to undo this gentlemanly nature of his. In the same library Mulligan warns Stephen about Bloom, saying that he is a "wandering jew" and that his intentions are not good. According to him, Bloom came there to lust after Stephen. Actually, Bloom came to this place and to collect a back issue of the Kilkenny People carrying an advertisement.

At the maternity Hospital "[S]ir Leopold was the goodliest guest that ever sat in scholars' hall and that was the meekest man and the kindest that ever laid husbandly hand under her and that was the very truest knight of the world one that ever did minion service to lady gentle pledged him courtly in the cup" (370-71). Bloom has come here to visit Mina Purefoy who has been lying in hard labour for the past three days.
Bloom is the "prudent member" who gives Joe Hynes the wheeze (285). But Joe Hynes complains that Bloom is a "bloody dark horse himself" to have backed a dark horse, Throwaway (321). What actually happened was that Bloom gave Bantom Lyons a piece of paper that he was going to throw away. It so happened that the Ascot Gold Cup was on that day and many people including Boylan backed the horse named Sceptre against Throwaway. In the end Throwaway won the race. Bloom perhaps must have known about the bet and must have given the cue accordingly. Another allegation against Bloom concerns his supposed association with the Seinn Fein. Molly is also almost sure that Bloom will soon be sacked from the Freeman on account of "Sinner Fein or the freemason" activities (722). Bloom is the "bloody freemason" according to the citizen (288). Bloom's association with the freemasons is true, for he himself acknowledges this fact. Lenehan accuses Bloom of arranging loans for Mrs. Dignam, and of defrauding widows and orphans. Actually Bloom has the good intention of getting the insurance amount of Mrs. Dignam settled. The citizen calls Bloom, "a wolf in sheep's clothing." He also calls him "Ahasuerus," the one cursed by God (324). Bloom who preaches universal love is simply reduced to a "nice pattern of a Romeo and Juliet" (319). But even here Bloom is teased for his harmless religion whereas the violent citizen is greatly approved by others. Whatever be his religion or ethics or nationality, nobody wants him in Ireland. John Wyse Nolan cannot stand
the sight of Bloom and calls him an “odious pest,” “a bloody mouseabout” that Ireland should get rid of immediately. The narrator and the citizen tease Bloom saying that the “Jewies” have a “sort of queer odour coming off them for dogs” (292). But these are comments perhaps made to irritate and provoke Bloom. He is considered a “stranger” in the company at the Barney Kiernan’s. When the citizen shouts that they want no more strangers in their house, the dig was obviously intended at Bloom.

Ned Lambert accuses Bloom of being a persecuted Jew from Hungary who drew up all the plans according to the Hungarian system. He also sees in Bloom a doting father who goes to buy baby food several weeks before his child is born. This is true, for the reader sees in Bloom an affectionate father and Bloom is very sad that his son is dead. But Bloom had a special attachment to his son who died eleven days after his birth. Bloom dotes on him a great deal. He is constantly haunted by the feeling that he has no son to inherit him. He is the only son of a father and his only son has died. It is his desire for a son to inherit him that makes him pine for his dead son. He has sad memories of his dead son, Rudy. He envies Simon Dedalus who is “[full of his son” (86). Perhaps Bloom’s Jewish faith comes to the fore in this trait, for it is the dream of every Jew to be the father of a son who could be the coming Messiah, and with the death of
Rudy, Bloom's Messianic dreams are crushed. Both Molly and Bloom got
alienated from each other only after his death.

But Bloom's position as a father is very strange. He is more motherly
to his children than his wife. He is the father of two children but now is
practically not a father. Bloom is a doting father and at the beginning of the
novel itself one can see Bloom receiving a letter from his daughter who is
working as a photo girl in Mullingar. Milly communicates to her father
much more than to her mother. Bloom recollects the day of his daughter's
birth when he rushed to the midwife. It is her father that Milly wakes up,
and not her mother, when her growing pains come at night. Bloom knows
that both his wife and daughter are alike in their habits but still he loves his
daughter very much for "she is a dear girl" to him inspite of all that she
does (86). He thinks it is better for her to be where she is, for at home her
mother is being unfaithful to her father and he does not want her to know it.
One does not also know whether he secretly fears the possibility the mother
and the daughter ganging up against him when she comes home.

Unlike the widely popular monologic heroes this polyphonic hero
does not have the acceptance of many people. Bloom, though the hero of
this book, is much less popular than his wife who rarely appears in the book
except in the musings of Bloom and other characters. The reader often
hears everyone enquiring Bloom after his wife. At one instance, Bloom is
introduced merely as the husband of the famous soprano, Mrs Marion Tweedy. When Ned Lambert asks John Henry Menton on the identity of Bloom, his reply is quite revealing: “Madam Marion Tweedy that was, is, I mean, the soprano. She’s his wife” (102). John Henry Menton calls him a “coon” whom Molly was foolish enough to have married. But Molly’s choice of Bloom was a free one, for she chose Bloom from a string of her lovers for reasons known only to herself. Bloom himself recollects an instance when he asked Molly why she chose him even though she had chances of marrying a lord or a gentleman with a private yacht. Molly’s answer to the question was, he was “so foreign from others” (362). This “foreign” nature is perhaps because of the polyphonic treatment of the hero.

Joe Hynes, to whom Bloom lends money, does not even know his Christian name. He asks Bloom for his Christian name. In contrast when M’Coy’s name is asked by Bloom to be put in the mourners’ list, Hynes does not have to ask what his Christian name is. Hynes simply jots down M’Coy’s name. Bloom who takes active interest in going for Dignam’s funeral and who participates in it from the beginning to the end and who takes active interest in arranging loans for Dignam’s widow does not appear in the mourners’ list. His name appears in a distorted form as Boom in the list. In contrast, M’Coy who does not attend the funeral and whose name is
added to the mourners' list only out of courtesy by Bloom appears prominently in the mourners' list.

   To Davy Byrne, Bloom is a “Decent quiet man.” Nosey Flynn thinks that “God Almighty couldn’t make him drink” and that he slips off when the fun gets too hot (169). This may be true, for one can see Bloom remaining sober even after taking heavy drinks unlike Stephen who loses his head after a few peps. But however hard Bloom tries to patronize Stephen he cannot do it. Stephen only feels the strangeness of Bloom’s flesh.

   According to Lenehan Bloom is a “cultured allround man” with a “touch of the artist” about him (225). Bloom in fact is an admirer of beauty. He has a fancy for curves. For him all “curves are beauty” (168). He is a great admirer of beautifully dressed women with proportionate hips and bosom and loves to see statue-like figures of ladies on the streets. Buck Mulligan teases Bloom saying that Bloom’s eyes were watching the “mesial groove” of Aphrodite (192).

   Bloom is slighted as a man at the Barney Kiernan’s inn. The citizen doubts whether Bloom can be called a man and thinks that he is one of the “mixed midlings” lying up in the hotel Pisser “once a month with headache like a tootty with her courses” (323). Bloom is a “half and half” or a
"pishogue" according to the citizen. This is a totally different dimension of a character. Here the character cannot be defined either as a male or as a female. This is another aspect of a hero not very common in literature.

Bloom, though a man, has many qualities of a woman. Thus in his nature and presentation Bloom is totally different from other heroes. Bloom is seen cooking breakfast, bathing Milly, looking after Stephen, giving him food and even washing Molly’s undergarments. Even though he does all these “womanly” works, he is seen doing them with a certain amount of clumsiness characteristic of men in doing such jobs. He slightly scalds the teapot and burns the kidney while cooking. He used to milk Molly into the teacup. He has the habit of carrying his wife’s photo in the pocket.

Bloom shows a fetish for women’s undergarments. He often thinks of Molly’s warm stays. He even plans to gift Molly with violet petticoats for her birthday. He is fond of watching petticoats and stockings in shop windows. Bloom curses the tram for obstructing his view of a lady’s stockings in the Grosvenor street and is excited at the sight of Gerty’s undergarments. Molly speaks of an instance when she had to give a piece of her doll’s underwear to satisfy Bloom’s mania for these items. Bloom used to ask Molly to lift her skirt on the road. This may seem a sort of perversion, but it is characteristic of his nature. He sometimes likes to wear
women's clothes. He has tried Molly's clothes "only once, a small prank, in Holles street" (502). Thus he acts as a transvestite at least for sometime.

Bloom is called "Poldy" by his wife— a name very feminine in nature whereas the name of his wife, Marion, is very epicene in nature. The "Circe" episode describes Bloom as "a finished example of the new womanly man" (465) who bears eight children. At his house the "missus is master" (495). Bloom has studied many feminine matters from Molly and even understands a woman whose periods are coming on her. Molly herself asserts that Bloom knew a woman very well and she says that that was the reason "why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is" (731). Elaborating the dual nature of Bloom's personality, Marilyn French observes:

Bloom is the new hero, repudiating old 'masculine' standards, like those found in Cyclops, and adopting the 'feminine' ones of compassion and nutritiveness, found in medieval Christian litreature. Despite his repudiation of violence, Bloom knows how to be both active and passive, contains within himself both yin and yang. (225)

Thus as Richard Pearce aptly points out: "[m]any voices contribute to the telling of his [Bloom's] story; indeed, each chapter brings in a new
voice, which may augment, counterpoint, undermine, or usurp the authorial storytelling voice" (60). But whatever may be the comments of others about the hero, one can see that "the hero always seeks to destroy that frame work of other people's words about him that might finalise and deaden him" (PDP 59). The various opinions and attitudes about Bloom by other people may or may not be correct. Ultimately only what Bloom reveals about himself can be taken to be true of him. For the "truth about a man in the mouth of others, not directed to him dialogically and therefore a secondhand truth, becomes a lie degrading and deadening him, if it touches upon his 'holy of holies,' that is, 'the man in man'" (ibid 59). By "man in man" Bakhtin means the capacity of a person to reveal himself—the revelation that only he can do. Only a dialogic penetration of the inner personality will reveal the real man. This second personality can be seen only through a display of his consciousness. There is no purpose in others trying to understand and make finalizing statements on this second personality that might deaden the polyphonic quality of the hero. Bakhtin puts all the components pertaining to the inner self into the consciousness of the hero, for he himself is the most suitable person for commenting about himself.

Joyce depicts a fully "rounded" character in this novel. By a "rounded" character Joyce only means that he is interested in a figure that is
"the home of a full human personality" (Budgen 21). Joyce was thus coming very close to the idea of the "personality" or "the man in man" of the Dostoevskian (polyphonic) characters, which can be reached only from a "new and integral authorial position" (PDP 58). Joyce also sees to it that others don’t pry in to Bloom’s secrets and make any finalizing judgements about his “living soul,” or “personality” (Budgen 275).

The reader does not know how far Bloom is competent to clarify the doubts of his wife. Bloom envies Stephen’s education. But Molly seeks refuge in Bloom even after knowing that “he’s not that stuck up university student sort” to get her doubts cleared, and Bloom is only happy to help her (725). The first instance of this is seen when Molly asks Bloom the meaning of the word “metempsychosis” that she came across in the pornographic book she was reading. She does not even know the correct pronunciation of the word nor does she bother to pronounce it correctly. It is Molly’s nature to interpret phonetically or by false analogy unusual polysyllables of foreign origin and she simply asks Bloom what the word “met-him-pike-hoses” means.

Bloom could easily explain the Greek word “metempsychosis” as “transmigration of souls” or “reincarnation” (62). Still Molly does not understand it and Bloom has to make it simpler for her:
-Metempsychosis, he said, is what the ancient Greeks called it. They used to believe you could be changed in to an animal or a tree, for instance. What they called nymphs, for example.

(63)

The reason for associating the word “metempsychosis” with nymphs is because there is a picture of the “Bath of the Nymph” over their bed. This is a clever method used by Bloom to teach the complicated word to Molly. But one should think that all Bloom’s efforts to teach Molly have turned futile, for Molly, “followed not all, a part of the whole, gave attention with interest, comprehended with surprise, with care repeated, with greater difficulty remembered, forget with ease, with misgiving remembered, rerepeated with error” (639). Bloom knows this nature of Molly very well and wonders whether she pronounces the word “voglio” correctly at least now, for he had corrected it to her several times.

The reader is surprised when Bloom, who could teach Molly the meanings and pronunciation of difficult words, is incapable of saying or thinking certain thoughts correctly. It is said that he has a scientific bent of mind and he is seen talking of various things related to his scientific interests. But his scientific notions do not hit the proper mark. While talking of inventions to Stephen, Bloom once says that it was Edison who invented the telescope. Later he corrects himself saying what he meant was
not Edison, but Galileo. Bloom always dreams of a hall or a place where inventors can come in and invent things freely. He seems to be very interested in scientific phenomena and is often seen dwelling on matters pertaining to sunspots, clouds and mirages. But in spite of all this, the reader is surprised that Bloom often commits glaring mistakes relating to science. Bloom’s knowledge about the laws of reflection and refraction is rather vague. He cannot say for sure, for example, whether black conducts, reflects, or refracts heat.

Again, Bloom’s notions about authors and their works are very queer. “Elegy written in a Country Churchyard” simply becomes “Eulogy written in a Country Churchyard” and that becomes a poem written by Wordsworth or Thomas Campbell. He seems to be very forgetful of dates as well. He is not particularly bothered about whether it is the “Ides of March” or the “Ides of June.” Bloom does not know what “teco” means. He thinks the word means “tonight.” The word “teco” actually means “with you.” At the cemetery Bloom misquotes the phrase “De mortuis nil nisi bonum” as “De mortuis nil nisi prius” (105). The former phrase means “of the dead speak nothing but good” whereas the latter means “of the dead speak nothing unless before.” Bloom could only with difficulty remember the name of the “priestylooking chap.” He could only remember his name as Pendennis, and later as Penrose (173).
These are only a few examples of misquotes and mistakes that Bloom makes. Throughout the novel one can see Bloom making certain grave errors or “near-misses” that the critics of Joyce describe as instances of “bloomism.” “A bloomism is an uneasy but scrupulous recollection of a factual near-miss” (Ellmann, *Ulysses* 36). This again is surprising, for Bloom whose erudition in correcting his wife has been in display is seen committing grave mistakes himself. Whether it is Bloom’s way of making fun of the pedantry of scholars or whether it is the result of his scanty education or whether it is due to his agitated mind on this particular day, this aspect is in keeping with the inconclusive nature of Bloom as a character.

Being an uneducated person, Bloom has only simple definitions to give for complicated terms and ideas. And his observations will not be “brilliant but singular, organic, Bloomesque” (Budgen 107). “A nation” for Bloom is the “same people living in the same place” (317) and “love” is “the opposite of hatred” (319). To Stephen’s stupid question as to why the people in the hotel put the chairs upside down at night, Bloom can only tell him that it is for cleaning the floor in the morning. Bloom quickly understands why the citizen is much annoyed with his repartee, for Bloom knew that what riled a person “was a bite from a sheep” (612). Bloom has also ample knowledge about the fair sex. This he got partly out of his
association with Molly and partly from his own observations. He knew that women always liked to snatch away a married man from his wife and that women were always very careful for they never sat on a bench marked “wet paint.” His observation was that they had “[e]yes all over them” and that they were as “[s]harp as needles” (355). Bloom makes a very funny but a typical “cat’s eye” observation regarding his height. He imagines that he appears the height of a tower to the cat:

Mr Bloom watched curiously, kindly, the lithe black form. Clean to see: the gloss of her sleek hide, the white button under the butt of her tail, the green flashing eyes. He bent down to her, his hands on his knees.

- Milk for the pussens, he said.

-Mrkgnao! the cat cried.

They call them stupid. They understand what we say better than we understand them. She understands all she wants to. Vindictive too. Wonder what I look like to her. Height of a tower? No, she can jump me. (53)

Fritz Seinn sees the “No” of Bloom as setting “him off from his monocular fellow citizens” and that he “can sense his wrongness, recognize
his own limitations or the illusions he sometimes gives into” (MacCabe 7).

Fritz Seinn’s observation points to the polyphonic nature of Bloom.

Bloom is quite superstitious and shows an unnatural fear for the number thirteen. For him it is “Death’s number” (106). He jumps out of the mourners’ crowd at Dignam’s funeral only to escape being number thirteen and he inwardly calms himself saying that the “man in macintosh” is number thirteen. While walking along the road Bloom avoids the loose cellar flap of number seventy-five. Bloom jumps to the right of Stephen without being impolite at all, for he has a preference for the right side of his companion.

Bloom’s general policy is that a “soft answer turns away wrath” (597). But Bloom had to pick up a quarrel with the citizen on the issue of his own Jewish trait. He resented “violence or intolerance in any shape or form” (598). He was always very gentle in his behaviour and perhaps this is the only incident in the whole novel where Bloom acts contrary to his usual nature. Bloom always hated bad company and also people who teased womenfolk. He believed in the equality of all people beyond any consideration of caste, creed, language or nation. But it is puzzling that Bloom who preaches universal brotherhood and love shows inexplicable hatred towards Costello.
But the word of Mr Costello was an unwelcome language for him for he nauseated the wretch that seemed to him a cropeared creature of a misshapen gibbosity born out of wedlock and thrust like a crookback teethed and feet first into the world, which the dint of the surgeon’s pliers in his skill lent indeed a colour to, so as it put him in thought of that missing link of creation’s chain desiderated by the late ingenious Mr Darwin. (388)

Bloom’s little acts of charity are peculiar to him alone. What makes Bloom a hero even in these trivial matters is his unique approach to each of these situations. Bloom can easily understand the ways of the cat that comes inside the kitchen and is very kind to her. Bloom helps the blind stripling to cross the road and is very sympathetic towards Mrs. Breen. He helps Mrs. Riordan sit on her wheelchair and lends his one legged binocular to her. He is fond of humouring old women and is very considerate to the sleeping horse. This ability of Bloom to remain unique in each situation in life is what makes him different from other heroes. Joyce thinks that “[c]haracter, in short, lay not in the doing or not doing of a grand action, but in the peculiar and personal manner of performing a simple one” (Budgen 75). Joyce was perhaps thinking of the peculiar manner in which a polyphonic hero might act in each situation in his life. Trivial matters like
how a person eats and what he eats can reveal more about a character than any other matter. One should assume one is what one eats. Joyce, accordingly places Bloom in front of food and allows him to choose the food of his liking. The author at first gives a sketchy outline of Bloom’s preferences in dishes:

Mr. Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crust crumbs, fried hencods’ roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidney which gave to his palate a fine tang of finally scented urine. (53)

Bloom who is introduced as having a preference for mutton kidney is seen choosing pork kidney. Bloom has his own reasoning for making this choice. Even though a Jew, Bloom does not keep “kosher” and makes the ultimate choice on pork kidney from Dlugacz’s:

Ham and eggs, no. No good eggs with this drouth. Want pure fresh water. Thursday: not a good day either for a mutton kidney at Buckley’s. Fried with butter, a shake of pepper. Better a pork kidney at Dlugacz’s. (54)

The author allows ample freedom to the hero to choose the food of his taste and this in a way is against the food chosen by the author for his
hero. The author does not keep the plate in front of the hero and ask him to eat what is kept on the table. This is not expected of a polyphonic hero. Joyce always believed that

human character was best displayed [...] in the commonest acts of life. How a man ties his shoelaces or how he eats his egg will give a better clue to his differentiation than how he goes forth to war [...] for a man goes forth to a war so seldom that he has no scope for individuality in the doing of it.

(Budgen 75)

The “individuality” of the character that Joyce speaks of is perhaps the “self-consciousness,” which Bakhtin describes as a special attribute of polyphonic heroes. Joyce disliked the conventionality of the heroes represented in novels. Joyce believed that on occasions like the war, everyone has to do what others do. Everyone has to wear the same uniform or else he will have to stand apart in the crowd. On the other hand, in private and individual actions one has scope to show individuality. For “[c]utting bread displays character better than cutting throats. Neither homicide nor suicide can be characteristic as the sit of a hat” (ibid). Thus Bakhtin’s notion of Dostoevsky’s polyphonic heroes seems to correctly fit in with Joyce’s notion of heroes.
In the course of his wanderings, Bloom becomes very hungry. At around noon, he decides to go to the Burton restaurant. He is disgusted at the sight of voracious eaters there. There are many people eating there but Bloom’s eating style is different from theirs and he cannot even for an instant stand the sight of men who feed like animals “[p]erched on high stools by the bar, hats shoved back, at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling, wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches.” Bloom hates to see “a man spitting, back on his plate,” who has no teeth to “chewchewchew” it. Finally Bloom comes to his own conclusion that a “hungry man is an angry man” who works “tooth and jaw” to devour food (161).

Even though Bloom tries to reason out why people swallow food angrily, he cannot tolerate the mingled stink of men, sweat, beer, cigarette and piss. That is why he finally quits this place. He “[c]ouldn’t eat a morsel here” with a “[f]ellow sharpening his knife and fork, to eat all before him” and an “old chap picking his tootles” and another fellow licking off the stewgravy from his plate (ibid). Bloom teases the people there saying they were perhaps born with silver knife in their mouths.

Bloom is very hungry and he decides to take something at Davy Byrne’s. Here also, the author gives much freedom to the hero to choose his own food. One watches Bloom choosing food. “What will I take now? […]"
Let me see. I'll take a glass of burgundy and ... let me see'' (163). Bloom is a "stickler for solid food" and for him regular meals, are the "sine qua non" for any kind of proper work, mental or manual (590). Stephen on the contrary does not attach any importance to solid food. He likes to take only liquids. Bloom is greatly surprised to hear that Stephen ate his last food about two days ago. One can see Bloom practising what he preaches.

Even at the time of his wife's adultery Bloom composes himself with drinks at the Ormond bar. Bloom acts quite contrary to how other husbands might in such a situation. He does not starve nor does he rush after Boylan at this time even though he meets his rival on the way to his wife. He sits at the bar thinking that it is not yet four, the stipulated hour of adultery. For him eating alone can keep his head clear during such times of conflict:

Eat first, I want. Not yet. At four, she said. Time ever passing.
On. For Raoul. Eat. If I net five guineas with those ads. The violet silk petticoats. Not yet. The sweets of sin. (250)

Bloom is happy to eat here. He has a preference for liver and kidney and he chooses liver for eating. He feels quite comfortable with this environment:
But Bloom who rejected “ham and eggs” and who showed a preference for pork kidney for his own private reasons and who cooked breakfast for his wife this morning is seen demanding eggs from her for his next day’s breakfast. Thus throughout the novel we can see Joyce moving with his hero and registering even the “minutest movements” of him in order not to give any finalizing definition of him. He is “literally fettered to his hero; he cannot back off from him sufficiently to give a summarizing and integrated image of his deeds and actions. Such a generalizing image would already lie outside the hero’s own field of vision, and on the whole such images presume some stable position on the outside. The narrator does not have access to such a position, he has none of the perspective necessary for an artistically finalizing summation of the hero’s image or of his acts as a whole” (PDP 225).

On this day Bloom also forgets to do certain things which may appear silly in the eyes of the reader but is of great importance to Bloom himself. He forgets to take the latchkey and as well as to buy the face lotion. Neither Stephen who sees Bloom fumbling for the latchkey nor Molly who complains that she hasn’t got her face lotion inspite of her repeated requests, do not know how often Bloom had reminded himself not to forget these items. The reader might wonder how Bloom, who thinks of Molly so often in the text, could have forgotten these things. It is possible
that this is Bloom’s way of reacting to the happenings of this day. Bloom alone knows the reasons for his forgetting these two things. Earlier during the day, while preparing to go out, Bloom had reminded himself to take the latchkey. He left it in the trousers he left off the previous day. He did not want to disturb his wife’s sleep by taking the trousers from the creaky wardrobe in their bedroom. He had also left the recipe for Molly’s face lotion in this trouser pocket. Bloom left the lotion he purchased from the Sweeny’s at his shop itself for he had several things to do that day and he didn’t want to carry the lotion bottle like an old hag.

Bloom shows all the weaknesses of an average male towards other women. Even at this age Bloom falls a prey to feminine charms and is the cynosure of attraction for many a woman, young and old alike. At the beginning of the “Odyssey” episode one can see Bloom hurriedly following the neighbourhood servant girl after buying pork kidney. He writes a letter secretly to an unseen acquaintance of his. He is much delighted to see a lady alight a car in the Grosvenor street. The barmaids at the Ormond bar simply vie with each other for his attention. They are attracted by his masculinity. Even the young teenager Gerty feels a certain warmth and protection in him. Bloom even masturbates in front of her and feels much relieved after it: “Lord! Did me good all the same. Off colour after Kiernan’s, Dignam’s. For this relief much thanks” was his reaction to this
incident (355). It is also a coincidence that the time Bloom masturbates is also the time of Molly’s adultery. Though Bloom says that he is only disturbed by the brawl at the Kiernan’s and also by the funeral of Dignam the effect of Molly’s adultery on his well being cannot be overlooked. Molly remembers many occasions when she had to send off her maids on account of Bloom. There is no way of knowing whether Molly has gone astray because of this character of Bloom or whether Bloom has gone astray because of Molly’s character. Bloom himself talks of his affairs with other women. He confesses that he once had had an encounter with a girl in Meath street:

Whew! Girl in Meath street that night. All the dirty things I made her say all wrong of course. My arks she called it. It’s so hard to find one who. Aho! If you don’t answer when they solicit must be horrible for them till they harden. And kissed my hand when I gave her the extra two shillings. Parrots. Press the button and the bird will squeak. Wish she hadn’t called me sir. O, her mouth in the dark! And you a married man with a single girl! That’s what they enjoy. Taking a man from another woman. Or even hear of it. Different with me. Glad to get away from other chap’s wife. (353-54)
Once he had also talked to Mrs. Clinch thinking that she was a whore. Another old flame of Bloom is Mrs Breen. Even though Bloom is devoted to his wife to the point of uxoriousness, he is seen entertaining these clandestine relationships with other women. Bloom knows that husbands ought not to get involved in extramarital affairs. But he does it inspite of this knowledge.

Bloom's peculiar habits do not end here. Bloom is a little more strange in his behaviour today and this can be interpreted as part of his reaction to his wife's adultery. Bloom being cuckolded is the main incident in the whole novel, where he has to muster enough courage to face the situation, where he can act independently and be his own self, and where he can be different in the handling of this unique situation. It is in the peculiar way in which Bloom manages this situation that he deserves to be called a polyphonic hero. Bloom does not take revenge on his wife or her lover for what has happened in their house today. He does not even have plans to seek a divorce from his wife or sue Boylan for this outrage done to him. Bloom could have immediately picked up a quarrel with his rival or his adulterous wife. He undergoes a multiplicity of antagonistic sentiments like envy, jealousy and abnegation before finally attaining equanimity. Inspite of seeing the letter Molly received this morning and knowing it for certain that Boylan will come home, the hero ventures out and this surprises the
reader for the hero could at any rate have devised some means to stay at home or at least reach home before the stipulated hour of his wife’s meeting with her paramour. Bloom’s knowledge about the arrival of his wife’s lover does not in any way hinder him from going out of his house. Molly too acts boldly in entertaining Boylan at their household. She does not at all fear Bloom’s sudden return to their house even when she knows the fact that Bloom has got a hint about Boylan’s appointment with her. Stephen, even though he comes to Bloom’s house as his guest, does not consider it his obligation to humour his guest. All these characters are quite independent and one can see all of them acting with great freedom. None of the characters interfere in each other’s matters. This is the basic trait of a polyphonic novel. Bloom alone feels and understands the agony he is suffering from his wife’s behaviour. Others do not and cannot understand Bloom’s situation and hence they are incompetent to comment on these. Only what Bloom speaks about his strange behaviour can be taken as true, for he alone is living the situation. Joyce puts all these thoughts away from the minds of other characters and allows only Bloom himself to comment on these. Joyce deliberately creates a situation where his hero can meet and interact freely with other characters and other consciousnesses.

The interaction of other consciousnesses is a crucial factor for polyphony in fiction. This means that various characters in the novel
possessing different consciousnesses do not stand apart from each other. Instead each of these unrelated consciousnesses is allowed to come and interact with the other and thus contribute to the all-pervasive polyphony of the text. The author brings the truth of one character into the field of vision of another character and thus the two get a chance to agree or disagree or even argue with each other and also with the author resulting in a true polyphony or dialogue in the text. All the discussions that take place in the text on various issues will be somehow related to the main issue in question and hence will be of importance to the protagonists. These various secondary dialogues stem from the dialogic nerve centre, i.e. the focal point of all dialogues. None of these discussions will converge at a point. These will remain as isolated opinions of different people sometimes merging with other’s voices, sometimes clashing with other’s voices. There are numerous such related events in the text and in fact the whole text is based on the interrelatedness of various consciousnesses.

The main characters in the novel are Bloom, Molly, Stephen and Boylan. Numerous other minor characters also appear in the novel but not all of them are suitable for a dialogic presentation and hence do not require the relatedness of consciousnesses. In selecting Bloom who is very unique in every aspect as the hero, Joyce has to actively involve himself in the act of literary creation. However, “nothing incorporated into the content—
people, ideas, things—remains external to [...] [the character’s] consciousness; everything is projected against him and dialogically reflected in him” (PDP 75). The author does not retain the knowledge he has obtained about the arrival of Boylan for himself. Instead he projects it into the field of vision of the hero who reacts to this situation in his own way. This is because in a polyphonic novel the field of view of the author intersects and collides dialogically with the “characters’ fields of vision and attitudes,” and the author encounters “resistance from the hero’s potential word, a word that might illuminate the same object differently, in its own way—that is, from the vantage point of its own truth” (ibid 71). The reader also gets enough opportunity to watch and listen to Bloom’s reactions to this incident through the numerous dialogic interactions with other characters. It is for this that the author brings about a meeting of different consciousnesses.

Boylan is known not only to the author, Molly and Bloom, but to several other characters. The author deliberately makes Boylan a figure known to all other people only in order to elicit the opinions of others in this case and to create a dialogue in the narrative. Many people meet Boylan during this day and each of them have a different opinion about him. Boylan is seen drinking sloe gin at the Ormond bar. Boylan is “the essence of vulgarity,” according to Miss Kennedy (256). Molly gets the
smell of this drink when he comes to her. Boylan is a famous music
conductor and even Milly talks of him. She mentions in her letter to Bloom
a young student named Bannon who sings Boylan’s song about seaside
girls. Stephen is not much bothered as to who Boylan is. Corley introduces
Boylan to him as a “bill sticker” (575). At the Barney Kiernan’s inn, the
citizen addresses Boylan as the “traitor’s son” who won money on betting
(305). Bloom sees nothing special in Boylan whereas everyone in the
funeral cab greets him.

Usually the author of a monologic text possesses an “excess surplus
of vision” over his characters that enables him to see things that his
characters do not see. In dialogic novels the author does not have this
“surplus” of vision. Here the author possesses only that “indispensable
minimum of pragmatic, purely information-bearing ‘surplus’ necessary to
carry forward the story” (PDP 73). It is this lack of a “surplus” vision that
allows the meeting of consciousnesses in a polyphonic novel.

But there are times when the author seems to forget his position and
slip into the category of monologic writers by maintaining an “excess
surplus of vision.” During these times the reader is left to assume certain
things that might have happened in the novel, which the author must have
left out by oversight or by conscious design. For example, in Ulysses
Boylan does not make a direct encounter with Bloom nor does Stephen
meet Molly or Boylan. Joyce does keep a "surplus of vision" regarding these characters.

There is not only an external interrelatedness but also an internal unfinishedness in a polyphonic novel. Joyce wrote the novel in eighteen episodes. Each episode is named after one part of the foetus and the whole embryo is formed only in eighteen chapters of the book. Also Joyce has in mind a particular colour, an organ and a scheme for each chapter of his book, though he does not mention them in the titles of each chapter. On the whole, though the chapters do not show any external connection, they show an internal interconnectedness. Thus on the choice of theme, structure and character the reader can see in Ulysses a sort of unfinalizability associated with polyphonic novels; the "inconclusiveness is something from which we can never escape, because it is built into the story" (Attridge 6).

According to Bakhtin the hero's "unresolved" psychological state is an important feature of the Dostoevskian (polyphonic) hero. Dostoevsky does not allow his highly self-conscious heroes to arrive at a sudden conclusion or insight. Dostoevsky on the other hand always "represents a person on the threshold of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, at an unfinalizable—and unpredeterminable—turning point for his soul" (PDP 61). In Bloom's story, the "crisis" of his soul or the main issue that haunts the reader as well as the hero throughout the novel is the supposed adultery
of Bloom’s wife. It is this “crisis” that keeps Bloom “internally unfinalized” (PDP 73). For Bloom, the imminent adultery of his wife is an incident which he must have feared and anticipated. He is sure that this incident will take place for certain here or anywhere, now or at any other time: “Will happen, yes. Prevent. Useless: can’t move” (65). It is because of his own unique way of facing this situation that Bloom deserves all the merit to be called a hero, even though he becomes a cuckold in the process. The whole novel seems to hinge on Bloom’s reactions to this major event of the day. Even though there is no explicit reference to regarding the adultery committed by Molly, the reader cannot set aside the possibility of such a betrayal by her because, whether real or imagined, this incident is constantly there in the consciousness of Bloom. The words “wife’s admirers” instead of “wife’s advisers” that slip out of his tongue are a pointer to this.

Even in this crisis, one can see that Bloom’s moral codes are different from those of other people. What may appear “right” in the eyes of others may be “wrong” in Bloom’s eyes and vice versa. Bloom does not try to justify his sexual wanderings in the light of Molly’s adultery. Nowhere in the novel does Bloom show any hatred for his wife for her actions. Nor does he plan to take any dire step against his wife or her lover. He thinks that her wanton behaviour is partly due to her passionate Moorish
nature and partly due to his own fault. Even with all the knowledge one has gained about the Molly-Bloom relationship, one cannot say for certain what the real attitude of each for the other is.

Even though Bloom is aware of the seductive powers of his wife and Molly is conscious of her capacity to attract Bloom, it is queer that they have remained sexually estranged for the past 10 years, 5 months and 8 days. Bloom always longs to be near Molly's "bedwarmed flesh" and Molly craves for an embrace from Bloom and longs to be in his arms at least ten times a day to feel younger. Yet both are seen acting contrary to their desires. Inspite of the sexual estrangement, there seems to be some kind of an understanding between them. This again surprises the reader, for after what the reader has seen and heard about the day's events, the reader expects no communication between the two. Bloom definitely knows that what his wife is doing today is improper, which he does not want his daughter to know of. He thinks it is better "where she is down there: away. Occupy her. Wanted a dog to pass the time. Might take a trip down there" (65). Bloom seems to hold a very balanced opinion on men and women. He knows it is hurting for both husband and wife for one of them to go astray. Even in the state of being the husband of an unfaithful woman, Bloom feels sad for the wife of Jack Power, who is said to have been keeping a consort. He seems to hate the adultery of married people, though he is in such a
plight himself. He takes care to keep himself away from intimate extramarital relationships and his relationship with other women goes no farther than kissing or writing a letter or masturbation.

Again why Bloom leaves Molly alone with Boylan for the tour even after knowing of their relationship and their behaviour on the sixteenth June is something for which no one can provide any answer. Perhaps only Bloom can give a convincing explanation for this. For Bloom, one’s wife is the most intimate person, but he who thinks so is seen hiding certain secrets from her like his encounter with Gerty and Martha and the incident at the bar. In all these instances Bloom acts in a manner totally different from that of any other conventional hero.

Inspite all the mishappenings of the day and his not trying to prevent it in any way, Bloom goes out and delays his own return as far as possible and comes home only very late after midnight. Whether it is out of his fatalistic attitude or out of his Jewish masochism or whether it is due to his homosexual desire to share his wife with all “strong-membered males” or whether it is due to an inherent perversion of his nature, Bloom’s act is unique in this situation. One may even feel that Bloom is pimping after his wife in allowing her all sexual freedom. In showing the voluptuous photograph of his wife to Stephen and in inviting him to his house, in buying pornographic books to her, in not bothering about Lenehan’s
overtures to her, in planning to send his wife to brothels at least to entertain her, in asking her to pose nude for photographs, in covertly permitting Boylan to share the bed with his wife if he pays her well and in thinking and doing all that is shocking to “normal” human values, Bloom is being more than a procurer for his wife, even though everything is done by him in a desperate attempt to save Molly.

If up to 4 O’ clock, the stipulated time of adultery, it is a matter of evading Boylan by Bloom, after 4 O’ clock it is a matter of coming to terms with the whole situation. However hard Bloom tries to reach home late to avoid confrontation with Molly, he only goes to their bedroom to answer the numerous queries of his wife about his wanderings that day. But Bloom does not ask anything to Molly about her activities during that day. Instead he goes and lies near Molly in a very awkward foetal posture. The story of Ulysses thus begins in the house of the Blooms and ends there itself. No one knows what exactly happens there in the absence of Bloom and the only evidence one has is from Molly’s soliloquy. The reader is not in a position to explain what happened in Ulysses, for one does not see any particular turn of events or change of places in the whole text. One finally gets the impression that nothing has happened in the text. Molly is also seen in the same place where one met her in the morning.
The final surprise for the reader as well as for Molly comes with Bloom demanding eggs for breakfast and Molly saying a vague “yes” towards the end of the book. The reader cannot say for certain whether Bloom has asked for breakfast from his wife as a sort of assertion of his virility. However, Molly admits that he asked for a “couple of eggs,” and this is the only proof for Bloom demanding two eggs for his next day’s breakfast. The uncertainty comes from the fact that Bloom’s talk in the previous section ended with his falling to sleep with the story of Sindbad the sailor. The reader’s relief does not come even in the form of an affirmation given by Molly’s final “yes” or even in the form of Bloom’s demanding breakfast from Molly. The ambiguous “yes” of Molly in a sense complicates the reading about the ending of the story. This is the peculiarity of a polyphonic novel. As Suzette Henke observes, the author “defeats our expectations of a traditional denouement: the knot is wound up, but never unraveled” (ibid 207).

When Bloom comes home later than usual on this peculiar day of his life and enters the bed and kisses the back of Molly and demands breakfast from her for the next day and when Molly gives her assent with a “yes,” it is better to leave the characters and the novel where they are. This is because trying to give an interpretation would be trying to “monologize” it, for these “events do not seem to belong to any cause and effect—they
simply happen, arbitrarily, randomly or spontaneously, and are invested with meaning by the reactions of those who are involved as actors or as spectators” (Lodge, After Bakhtin 63).

The different characteristics of Bloom as a person are analysed here only in order to show how he deviates from the normal, conventional standards of a literary hero and thereby to assess the position of Ulysses as a polyphonic novel. Even though, Bloom is only “an ineffectual son and a failure in his attempt to be a father to Stephen-Telemachus” and is kept “at a distance by Molly-Calypso” (Steinberg 217-18) he remains unique with his inconclusive nature. The final word in the novel is not given by Bloom. Goldman sees Joyce’s technique of allowing Molly the last word in the text as a ploy “to protect Joyce from appearing to put a definitive stamp upon the portrait of Bloom” (The Joyce Paradox 110). Bloom’s peculiar position as a Jew in Ireland without a son to inherit him, as a catholic convert who practises no religion, who is at the same time a person in the “craft,” an uxorious husband who is cuckolded by his wife, a person of no particular identity, position, or nationality, a dark horse himself who is the target of many a joke, who is in his nature part feminine and part masculine, who has shocking perversities—these peculiarities of the hero require special treatment in his portrayal. Surely these are not the characteristics of a conventional literary hero. Though Bloom in the course of this novel or at
the end of this novel does not turn out to be one who "can rub shoulders
with a Jesus, a Gautama, an Ingersoll" (478), he becomes more important
than any of them through a remarkable display of his self-consciousness.

It is true that Joyce and Bakhtin differed in their admiration for
authors Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Joyce does not consider Dostoevsky a
great writer, whereas for Bakhtin, Dostoevsky is one of the greatest writers.
If the former favours Tolstoy, the latter does not have any preference for
Tolstoy. However, both of them differ in their choice for different reasons.
If Joyce dislikes Dostoevsky for the portrayal of "unreal" situations
(Budgen 184), Bakhtin likes Dostoevsky for his stylistic innovation in the
dialogic realm. That is, Joyce had certain notions about his characters,
which were definitely in agreement with the monologic form of writing,
though his novels were predominantly dialogic. However, if Bakhtin thinks
Dostoevsky's characters to be embodiments of self-consciousness, the hero
of *Ulysses* is also in no way away from the ideal of self-consciousness.

At the end of *Ulysses* we see that "nothing conclusive has yet taken
place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has
not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the
future and will always be in the future" *(PDP* 166). Thus the Protean nature
of *Ulysses* defies all established notions of a novel and all criticism to stand
as a "novel to end all novels" *(Levin* 207). Jeri Johnson in his introduction
to *Ulysses* says that this book could appear as a novel or a drama or a music book or even a catechism book, depending upon the page one opened (Johnson xiii). This itself shows its inconclusive and unfinalisable nature. Joyce does not monologise the narrative of his much-debated novel by giving it a generic name. Instead, according to Johnson, Joyce calls *Ulysses* by various names like “epic,” “encyclopaedia,” “maledettisimo romanzaccione” (damnedest monstrously big novel) in his letter of 21 Sept. 1920 to Carlo Linati (ibid). He calls *Ulysses* simply a “book,” which means he leaves open the polyphonic prospect of *Ulysses* and does not try to monologize it. *Ulysses* thus transgresses the limits of a novel in being too many texts at the same time. “The text is never closed and the ‘ideal reader’ will be one who accedes to the play of this incompletion, placed in a ‘situation of writing,’ reading no longer to master the text but now to become its actor” (Attridge and Ferrer 32).
Notes

1 INRI and IHS mean "Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum" (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews) and "Iesus Hominum Salvator" (Jesus the Saviour of Man) respectively.