

Chapter 15: Circe

The action: Enter the whirlwind! At the end of "Oxen," we find the medicals and Stephen and Bloom boozing at a pub outside the Holles St. Hospital, probably taking absinthe, reputed to be a hallucinogenic. When the pub closed (at 11pm), the men walked to Westland Row Station, where something happened (we're not sure what), but Stephen and Buck part for good, with Mulligan heading back to Sandycove, and Stephen (accompanied by Lynch) heading to the "red light" district, what Joyce called "Nighttown." (YouTube "Dubliners" and "Monto" for a sense of that part of town.) Bloom tags behind to keep an eye on Stephen, and they end up in Bella Cohen's brothel. The whole thing is a dreamscape, with characters appearing and disappearing on stage as they are directed by the subconsciouses of our protagonists.



Circe in *The Odyssey* is a witch who changes the Greek mariners into swine. Odysseus gets the upperhand, and ultimately wins the day. In our novel, the theme of transformation dominates the chapter, as the psyches of Stephen and Bloom transmogrify their images.

Draft History

This episode contains the kernal of the whole novel: the episode with the soldiers at the end actually happened to the young James Joyce in Stephens Green, and he was lifted up and dusted off by a purported Jew, a man named Hunter, who was an acquaintance of his father. Originally, this vignette was to be a short story in *Dubliners*, but obviously the idea grew.

So stick through the long chapter to the very end: some pretty important action takes place in the final pages--from Stephen's swinging of his ashplant to Bloom's vision of a ghost to the confrontation with the soldiers and its aftermath.

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