

SEPPE NOBELS

Seaweed from the Royal Canal / Taco style / Tartar of Belgian white-blue beef /
Belgian pickles mayonnaise / Crumble of algae

Carrot croquette balls / Ginger / Coriander / Soy dip

Ceviche of Irish by-catch / Red onion / Clover sorrel / Chili / Sesame /
Cream of beetroot and Antwerp goat cheese

MENU

Broccoli / Hazelnut / Vinaigrette of Ghent mustard and basil / Chili / Mustard leaves /
Mustard blossoms / Lemon zest / Garlic chips / Crispy sweet potato



Hay-smoked *C'est le pigeon Joseph*
or
Flemish-style asparagus with turnips and roof garden herbs

in the middle of the table, for sharing

Risotto of De Koninck beer / Lime zest /
Curls of spring peas and Dubliner cheese

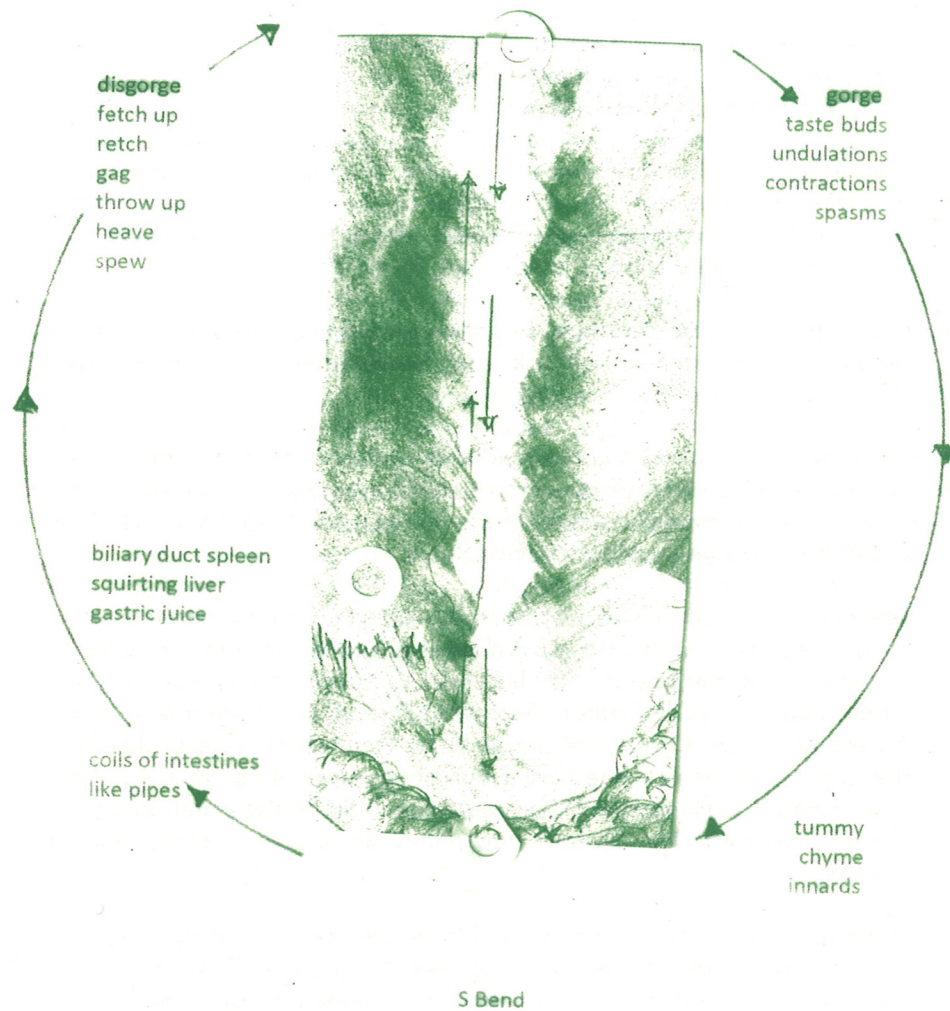
The dead, black grilled pointed white cabbage / Cream of knob celery and squid ink /
Roasted almond flakes

Antwerp cannelloni with Zürich inspiration / Sauerkraut / Sorrel /
Black Spanish radish / Elixir d'Anvers / Crumble of carrots and nuts / Sriracha



Limburger pear cooked in beetroot juice / Raw rhubarb /
Soy milk ice cream / Lime / Nuts and chia seeds

Puke Gob Gobble
Eject Eat



Peristalsis: Leo Bloom imagines an X Ray (Röntgen) of the transmigration cycle of eat-excrete, puke-eat
Ulysses p 147, 1030-49

'Weggebobbles to Virginatarian': the alimentary passage through the vegan and beyond in James Joyce's foodscape*

001

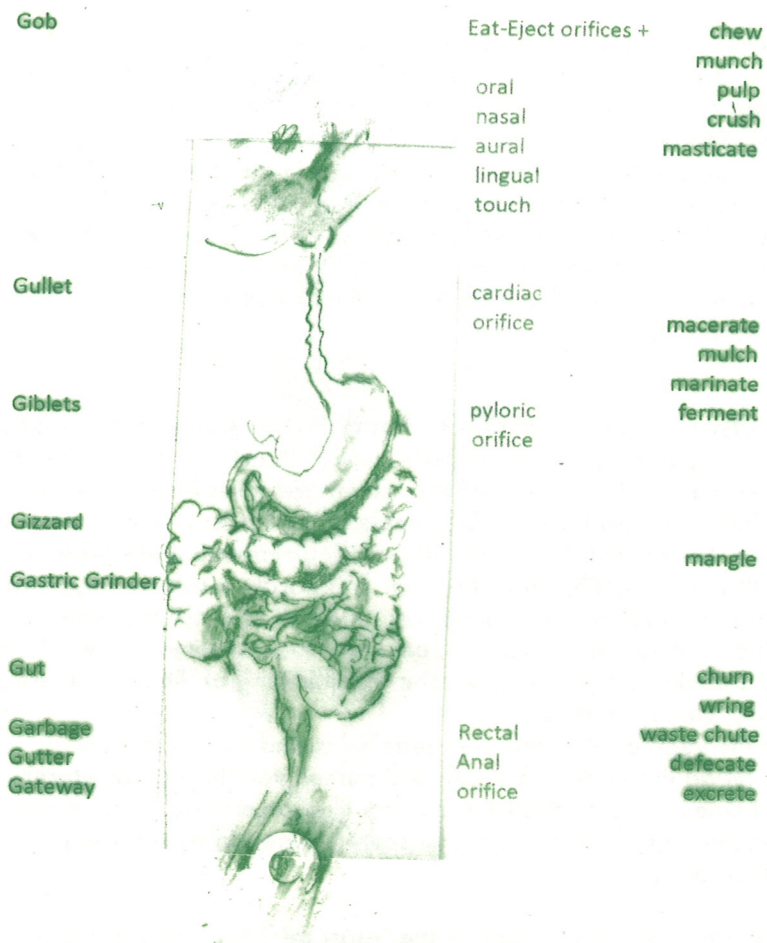
What's the James Joyce menu like? Whether 'à la carte or set-meal'—in *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake* and related scribbledelhobbles— it boils down to two options: veg or non. Here 'veg' stands for both vegetarian (VLML) and vegan (VGML). This does not overlook the choice of 'pick & mix with side dishes' that cuts across the veg/non-veg divide. But in the tug o' war between them the pull is towards one or the other pole. Are we bogged down in this 'dual organisation of thought'? Poring over the *Ulysses* foodscape (Chapter 8: Lestrygonians) it is possible to get some sense of quite another drift. We are not so much marooned in a binary bottleneck as we have an inkling of how to go beyond it.

002

'Platter of Pulses' versus 'Roast Beef + mash and Corned + cabbage'
In the rub-up of veg/non-veg modes of eat-think-live that Joyce sounds out, the former captures the air of wholesome food, clean, monastic living (*Ulysses* p.143, 879) 'Platter' rather tarts up the humble fare of pulses—lentils, peas and beans at a push. The serving utensil sounds more substantial, more grand than it is. Little more than a common, everyday item, it is hardly a salver. Veggie fads, high-minded notions, pretensions are mocked, the butt of a ribbing. But this is not anti-veg titter: it is rather an amused, quizzical look at some of their 'holier than thou' shibboleths and propensities, the attitudinizing of 'literary ethereal people. Dreamy, cloudy, symbolic'.
'Coming from the vegetarian. Only weggebobbles and fruit. Don't eat a beefsteak. If you do the eyes of that cow will pursue you through all eternity' p.136, 533-40 Does this not sound surprisingly like some of our present day admonitory animal rights voices, also, like scaremongering by the veggie (VLML & VGML) lobby?

At the opposite pole, Joyce's portrait of the 'roast beef & corned' brigade—the non-veg contingent— does not by any means let them off the hook. Throughout his writing, cattle farming and the dairy industry are seen as firmly plugged into the colonial economy. The suffering and slaughter of animals mirror the shipping off and export of Irish labour through the years of the immigrations. They share a common story of the wake. The feeding frenzy of birds, of humans, of non-veggies and meat eaters in restaurants, cafes, bars are pictured as 'animalistic'—echoing the culinary tastes and diet of their mythic forbears—the 'cannibalistic' Lestrygonians.

'Pain to the animal too. Pluck and draw fowl. Wretched brutes there at the cattlemarket waiting for the poleaxe to split their skulls open. Moo. Poor trembling calves.' p.140, 722-30



Peristalsis: Leo bloom imagines an X Ray (Rontgen) 'the poor buffer would have to stand all the time with his insides entrails on show'
Ulysses p 147, 1049-50

003

Relish and Disgust

The 'dual organization of thought' in Chapter 8 centres on the 'eat-puke-excrete' cycle. This is about the 'gustatory system' that kicks off as the digestive process cranks up. The tasteful stands at the opposite end to the distasteful, the disgusting.

Relish —bottle of sauce, dollop of chutney, aroma of condiments, spice.

p.128, 194 It signals no less the ability to discern the flavoursome and tasty—salivating, taking a whiff, acts of savouring, of rolling the tongue over the palette, roof of mouth and dentals to mull its qualities.

Disgust —elements of the eat-puke-excrete cycle that switch on the responses of recoil and revulsion, of gagging. As he enters Burton's, Leo Bloom is almost bowled over by the stink of food, the sight of diner's cheek by jowl.

"See the animals feed

Men, men, men.

Perched on high stools by the bar...swilling, wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches...

New set of microbes.

A man with an infant's saucestained napkin tucked round him shoveled gurgling soup down his gullet. A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: gums: noteeth to chewchewchew"

"Smells of men. Spaton sawdust, sweetish warmish cigarettesmoke, reek of plug, spilt beer, men's beery piss, the stale of ferment"

"His gorge rose" p.139, 672

004

'Bare clean Closestool' —episodes of disgust

a. Bloom gags as he enters Burton's 'sees the animals feed'.

b. In a plumber's window, he sees a closestool —early version of the toilet bowl, a commode. This serves as the leitmotif of the digestive-excretory process, the eat-puke-eat spin around.

c. Bloom sees a dog puke and then eat its puke.

Joyce quips that this reverses the order of the menu: now it is the dessert first followed by the main meal and then the starter.

This inverse order of eating is perhaps more vividly expressed in flipping over the temporal order of a Swedish menu.

Starter
Main course
Dessert or afters

Förrätt
huvudrätt
efterrätt

before eat
main eat
after eat

d. Nosey Flynn's drippy nose at Davy Byrne's bar. Dewdrop on his nose tip dangling tantalizingly over his food.

'...putting his hand in his pocket to scratch his groin' p.141 "Nosey Flynn snuffled and scratched. Flea having a good square meal" p.142

e. 'Lestrygonians opens and closes with reference to the excretory orifice: the monarch: Sitting on his throne sucking his jujubes white' (p.124, 5) an absurd scene of a parasitical figure 'on the throne'—in everyday parlance on the loo.

The chapter closes with Bloom trying to ascertain whether the anal orifice was actually carved on statues of the goddesses near the Museum. p.150, 1160-90

These forays into the 'disgusting' and scabrous highlight a series of factors normally 'politely' sidestepped or dropped from 'elevated' accounts of the ingest-eject-excrete dynamics of the digestive cycle. p.144-45 and 150

005

The above entries lead us deeper into Joyce's reflections of food, how the eat-puke-excrete cycle embodies the life cycle in more cosmic scale—its capacity for recycle and reincarnate. Before that, I should note in passing two of his food references that act as vehicles for political commentary—metaphors in the story of Ireland's struggle for independence from colonial rule.

a. Mulligatawny Soup (from the Tamil meaning fiery, pepper water) 'Pungent mockturtle oxtail mulligatawny'. p.130, 271

The Chapter is sprinkled with names of a range of types of soup, stew, broth, stirabout and skilly and the like. Against the backdrop of the Great Hunger in Ireland, the starving were often offered a soup on condition they converted to the Protestant faith. Soup flags up a tool for religious manipulation, for gerrymandering, for maintaining colonial control. p.148, 1072

b. A Brexiteer note?

Joyce's self-exile is described in terms of a food metaphor:

"He ran away with himself and became a farsoonerite, saying he would far sooner muddle through the hash of lentils in Europe than meddle with Irrland's split little pea" (FW p.171, 4-6)

The mush and mix of the EU versus political partition and separation stirs up thoughts on the current malaise of the Brexit vote.

006

Queering the pitch with '**Mity Cheese**'

The Relish-Disgust conceptual couple intersect, mix and muddle:

"Relish of disgust pungent mustard, the feety savour of green cheese" p.142, 819

"Cheese digest all but itself. Mity Cheese" p.141, 755

The pun on mity/mighty cheese and the mites that work it spotlights a force for dissolving, blending, fermenting, brewing up something different afresh. Cheese is celebrated as a meld and mould, regenerating process—an activity of mites, microbes, bacteria, nano-critters, of all micro-creatural life.

"Karma they call that transmigration for sins you did in past life the reincarnation met him pike hoses" p.149, 1149

The veg/non-veg divide caves in and shifts towards a position more akin to non-binarism. We have a spectrum of stance that stretches, to put it in the jargon of the day, from a cis-omnivorous stance through restricted carnivorous tastes to vegetarian options (VLML) and vegan preferences (VGML) towards trans-vegan prospects.

Does this undercut the moral high ground of the advanced vegan (VGML)?

For in everyday consumption VGML does not take into account the microbes and mites it devours? Some degree of awareness and concern for micro-life that are largely not visible to the naked eye does come into the ambit of Jaina ethics sprung from its view of the material world based on ancient 'atomism'—a concern for micro-creatural life that humans destroy as a matter of course in eating and feeding.

Do these queries move us on from some of the stereotypes of the squeamish 'weggebobbles' towards a virginatarian outlook?

007

The Goddesses' Orifice?

Mulling the digestive process, Bloom is led to ponder whether the excretory orifice is represented in classical sculpture. He sets about looking for the unmentionable and unspeakable orifice—the bumhole—of the sculptural ensemble of Goddesses at the Museum.

"And we stuff food in one hole and out behind: food, chyle, blood, dung, earth, food: have to feed it like stoking an engine" p.145, 930

We look askance at these 'Alimentary elementaries' that speak the interconnected and unceasing transmogrifying force of all life forms.

Sarat Maharaj, London 10.06.2018

* Prelim entries for: 'Weggebobbles to Virginatarian': the alimentary passage through the vegan and beyond in James Joyce's foodscape (2018)

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SO PRETTY PRATTLY POLLYLOGUE

part of The Art of James Joyce international symposium

curator **Nico Dockx** (Larry O'Rourke)*

menu (15-06-2018) **Seppe Nobels**

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*all names in between brackets are characters from James Joyce's Ulysses book

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