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THE FEAST OF LANGUAGES: A PERSPECTIVAL READING OF JAMES JOYCE'S  
*ULYSSES*

by

EDWARD ELLIS

Under the Direction of Marilyn Richtarik, PhD

ABSTRACT

Criticism of James Joyce's *Ulysses* has often centered on the novel's unconventional narrative structure. Most critics recognize a consistent style in the first six episodes of the novel, but, beginning with the seventh episode, "Aeolus," the narration changes rapidly and dramatically. This proliferation of voices has led many critics to suggest that the novel represents a break from the traditional view of literature as imitating nature. To the contrary, I argue that *Ulysses* should be read as a work of representational fiction modeled in large part on the multiperspectival nonfiction of Daniel Defoe, especially his extended journalistic work *The Storm* (1704). From his reading of Defoe, Joyce realized that a complex subject is best captured through the use of diverse, often contrasting, perspectives, genres, and styles. Consequently, while resembling a postmodern work, *Ulysses* remains in the mimetic tradition, though Joyce's multiperspectival approach pushes this tradition to its limit.

INDEX WORDS: James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Perspectivism, Parallax, Daniel Defoe, *The Storm*

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*ULYSSES*

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EDWARD ELLIS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts  
in the College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University  
2021

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Edward Prioleau Ellis  
2021

THE FEAST OF LANGUAGES: A PERSPECTIVAL READING OF JAMES JOYCE'S

*ULYSSES*

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to James Daniel “Jamie” Ellington.

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## INTRODUCTION

Much of the criticism surrounding James Joyce's *Ulysses* centers on the novel's unconventional narrative structure. Most critics recognize a consistent style in the first six episodes of the novel, but, beginning with the seventh episode, "Aeolus," the narration changes rapidly and dramatically.<sup>1</sup> This proliferation of voices has led many critics to suggest that the novel represents a break from the traditional view of literature as imitating nature. To the contrary, I will argue that *Ulysses* should be read as a work of representational fiction modeled, in large part, on the multi-perspectival nonfiction of Daniel Defoe, especially his extended journalistic work *The Storm* (1704).<sup>2</sup> As increasing stylistic shifts indicate, Joyce abandoned the notion of a single representative language and, by implication, the idea of omniscient aesthetic perspective. All the same, he did not abandon the traditional goal of representation. From his reading of Defoe, Joyce realized that a complex subject is best captured through the use of diverse, often contrasting, perspectives, genres, and styles. Consequently, despite resembling a postmodernist work, *Ulysses* remains squarely within the mimetic tradition, though Joyce's multi-perspectival approach pushes this tradition to its very limits.

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<sup>1</sup> Most critics agree that there is greater consistency in the initial episodes, but equally maintain that "the initial style is by no means utterly consistent" (Trotter 104). John Somer, for example, describes a shifting "fusion" of narrative voices (71), while Michael Groden prefers to speak of "variations on a basic style" (15). David Hayman even claims to detect "snatches of the later styles in the early passages" (84).

<sup>2</sup> *The Storm* chronicles The Great Storm of 1703, a devastating extratropical cyclone that swept through England on the 26th of November causing widespread destruction and loss of life.

The narrative structure I attribute to *Ulysses* is best described as a form of perspectivism.<sup>3</sup> Perspectivism maintains that the act of understanding and describing the world is always discriminatory. That is, individuals always attend to those aspects of the world that seem important to them, while ignoring those that seem unimportant. Thus, human understanding is always circumscribed by a particular viewpoint and hence incomplete. Given these limitations, no single description, however artfully crafted and comprehensive, can be considered definitive. Every individual account leaves out something that might be thought significant by others.

Because perspective is necessarily limited, no single narrative style, not even the carefully blended style of the initial six episodes of *Ulysses*, could adequately chronicle even the most ordinary day in Dublin. Any successful representation of such a complex subject would have to incorporate a multitude of Dublin voices, each with its own particular cares, concerns, and prejudices of thought and speech. In short, a realistic representation of a diverse and contradictory metropolis would have to embody equally diverse and even contradictory narrative voices.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce uses the notion of astronomical parallax as a metaphor for recognizing truth among alternative perspectives. In astronomy, “parallax” describes the difference in apparent movement of a celestial body when it is observed from different positions: for example, the drift of constellations as viewed throughout the year. The phenomenon of parallax implies that every observational vantage point entails distortions, though these distortions can be greatly minimized when observations are compared. In fact, it is by carefully comparing parallax that astronomers are able to fix the position of stars with relative accuracy.

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<sup>3</sup> Though he never uses the phrase, “perspectivism” is most often associated with the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who repeatedly rails against the notion of a perspectiveless perspective.

Though this approach to representation is unorthodox, *Ulysses* is mimetic in so far as it strives to imitate the world, and there is clear precedent for this sort of mimesis in nonfiction writing.<sup>4</sup> One of the best examples is a work well known to Joyce, which he praised for verisimilitude: Daniel Defoe's *The Storm* (Joyce, *Defoe* 16). This work, arguably the first extended piece of journalism, carefully preserves individual accounts of The Great Storm of 1703 in order to faithfully record the tempest for posterity. Like Joyce, Defoe saw the chronicler's task as mimetic but maintained that a collection of individual accounts, each in its own style, is better able to capture the subject than any account crafted by the author, no matter how superior stylistically.

In my first chapter, I will examine Joyce's critical writing, especially the 1903-1904 notebooks in which he sketches his general approach to aesthetics. Because his theory was never fully developed, I supplement these remarks with an examination of relevant passages in his early fiction as well as in the writings of those who principally influenced his thinking, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. My aim in the first chapter is to show that, broadly speaking, Joyce maintained a representational view of aesthetics, though this position raises questions about the proliferation of voices in *Ulysses*, which seems incompatible with such a position.

In the second chapter, I analyze references to astronomical parallax in *Ulysses* as the key to understanding how a mimetic view of art can be seen as compatible with the narrative structure of *Ulysses*. I contextualize these references with passages from their source, Robert Stawell Ball's popular scientific treatise *The Story of the Heavens* (1885). This chapter

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis, I use the word "mimesis" in its most basic sense to mean imitating or copying from nature, leaving open questions about which aspects of nature—appearances, for example, or some underlying reality—should be imitated or copied.

demonstrates that parallax serves as a metaphorical model for rethinking aesthetic representation altogether and that this model offers a way of understanding the diverse voices that predominate in the later sections of *Ulysses* as alternative perspectives required to establish truth.

In my third chapter, I will discuss Daniel Defoe's pioneering journalistic work *The Storm*, with special focus on the lengthy preface in which he defends his atypical methodology. I will also describe the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the work's composition, as well as Joyce's critical appraisal of its success. I argue that *The Storm* serves as an unrecognized precedent for the perspectival representation found in *Ulysses*. Thus, critical assertions that the novel is intended to demonstrate the success of one representational style or the failure of all such styles are without warrant.

My argument that *Ulysses* should be read as a work of representational fiction based in part upon Defoe's nonfiction runs counter to prevailing critical approaches, which view the novel as a radical break from the mimetic tradition. In *Book as World*, one of the first extended discussions of style in *Ulysses*, Marilyn French describes Joyce as a "malicious ringmaster" who "highhandedly" rearranges "recognizable" language in such a way that it literally makes "no sense." His intention, she suggests, is to demonstrate the inescapable "arbitrariness" of all language and thus thrust before the reader the "void" which lies at the "core" of all signification (128). Following in a similar vein, later critics, such as Karen Lawrence, have maintained that Joyce increasingly came to doubt language's ability to "capture reality" and that the stylistic "parody" evident in the latter sections of *Ulysses* is intended to "undermine the notion of style as an absolute manner of seeing things" (33).

Though my primary aim is to argue that *Ulysses* should be read as a work of representational fiction inspired by Defoe, I will briefly suggest how this approach has

advantages over prevailing views. First, the novel may be seen as continuous with Joyce's earlier criticism and fiction. As expected, given the view of art expressed in the 1903/4 notebooks, Joyce's intentions in *Ulysses* are mimetic, although, as in his earlier novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, he strives for verisimilitude by increasingly incorporating multiple voices. This transition to a perspectival form of mimesis also highlights the impact of historical events, including the rise of mass marketing and nationalist propaganda that exploited more traditional forms of representation. Writing at the close of the First World War, Joyce appears determined not to perpetuate the tradition of totalizing narratives that had helped to give birth to many modern horrors. Finally, a perspectival reading of *Ulysses* suggests a way of relating the novel's unusual narrative structure to its story. Like the novel before it, *Ulysses* chronicles the artist's maturation and is, to an extent, autobiographical. As the novel unfolds, there is a transition in both narrative structure and action from the monocular perspective of the aspiring writer, Stephen, to the binocular vision of Bloom, who, as Timothy Brennan suggests, serves as Joyce's "aesthetic spokesman" in *Ulysses* (147). In this transition, the reader comes to realize that Bloom's perspectival empathy is exactly what is needed both to create art and to escape the monopolistic narratives that trap so many Dubliners in a hopeless cycle of stagnation and decay.

## CHAPTER ONE

Man is differentiated from other animals because he is the most imitative, he learns his first lessons through imitation, and we observe that all men take pleasure in imitation.

--Aristotle, *Poetics* (Preface)

### Joyce's Mirror

Perhaps the oldest and most enduring theory of aesthetics asserts that works of art express truth by imitating some aspect of the world. Erich Auerbach persuasively argues that, though commitment to the truth wavers, the attempt to hold up a mirror to the world can be traced from the earliest Biblical literature to the work of twentieth-century novelists such as Marcel Proust, Knut Hamsun, and Virginia Woolf. Because of their explicit rejection of conventional narrative styles, however, many of these writers have been incorrectly interpreted as standing in opposition to mimesis. James Joyce, in particular, is thought of as being hostile to the mimetic tradition because of the increasingly iconoclastic style of his later novels.

Despite this break with tradition, Joyce's only systematic statement of aesthetics is, nevertheless, surprisingly conservative in nature. In short, he argues that beauty derives from the appreciation of natural forms that have been skillfully recreated by an artist. Though the details of such apprehension remain obscure, there can be no doubt that, at least for the young Joyce, mirroring lies at the heart of the aesthetic enterprise. In light of his later, more experimental novels, Joyce's early defense of mimesis appears puzzling, almost unbelievable. Assuming that his fiction is to some extent influenced by his theory of art, there appear to be two alternatives. As many suppose, Joyce might have gradually rejected the tradition he defended in his youth.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> By far the majority of contemporary critics fall into this category. Prominent examples include Brook Thomas, who writes of language's failure to "refer to a world beyond itself" (3); John Paul Riquelme, who speaks of

Alternately, the sort of mimetic theory Joyce sketched as a young man may be much more sophisticated than has been supposed. In fact, it may counterintuitively suggest that certain truths can be expressed only by a carefully distorted image of the world.

### Beauty as Apprehension

In a 1903 letter to his mother, Joyce wrote that he planned to complete a fully developed aesthetic theory by the time he turned thirty (*Letters II*, 38). At the time, he was only twenty-one. Though Joyce had already written criticism, he had not yet written anything that could be considered systematic aesthetics. His thoughts on the subject seem to have derived principally from the writing of two philosophers, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, which he had studied in the course of his Catholic education. Combining their thoughts with his own, however, presented a difficult, perhaps overly ambitious, challenge for the young Joyce.

Joyce first began to gather his thoughts on aesthetics in a notebook during his second stay in Paris.<sup>6</sup> The notebook, transcribed by H. S. Gorman while researching his 1949 biography of Joyce, consists of a series of connected observations about aesthetics followed by the author's name and date. The final entry consists of a sequence of questions and answers reminiscent of the catechistic style of Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*. The early entries are mainly concerned with distinctions among literary genres, while the latter are primarily concerned with the nature of art. Less than a year later, Joyce returned to aesthetics in a second, more systematic series of observations written while he was teaching in Pola, Austria. Unlike the Paris reflections, which

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writing's inability to "stand for the unwritten" and "nonverbal" (xv); and Wolfgang Iser, who states simply that *Ulysses* "puts an end to representation" (10).

<sup>6</sup> The 1903/1904 notebooks are published as "Aesthetics" in Mason and Ellmann's collection *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, 141-48.

seem to borrow heavily from Aristotle's *Poetics*, the Pola entries almost invariably begin with quotations from Aquinas, which are then explicated in some detail. Though these quotations are clearly taken from Aquinas, no specific citations are noted, and there is considerable disagreement about Joyce's sources.<sup>7</sup> Though certain phrases appear throughout Aquinas's writing, most of Joyce's quotations appear to be taken from the *Summa Theologica*.

Joyce introduces the more systematic theory sketched in the Pola notebook with Aquinas's assertion that goods are things toward which the appetites tend, followed by Aristotle's similar claim that goods are things considered desirable ("Aesthetics" 146). As Fran O'Rourke points out, the first quotation appears to come from Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, question sixteen, article one, while the second is taken from the opening of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and frequently paraphrased in the *Summa Theologica* (99, 100). Assuming that appetites and desires are considered to be roughly synonymous, the second definition does little to supplement the first.

After defining a good generally as the object of desire, Joyce then defines an aesthetic good specifically as the object of a distinct aesthetic desire, which is spiritual and hence constant in nature. Moreover, he adds, this desire aims at grasping relations between diverse sensations. Joyce refers to the process of perceiving sensible order as "apprehension," and this process, he asserts, is intrinsically satisfying (147). That is, we find pleasure in discovering connections

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<sup>7</sup> Given that Joyce was clearly familiar with Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles*, many critics, such as Ellsworth Mason and Richard Ellmann (*Critical Writings* 146) and Jacques Aubert (101), assert that the opening epigraph is taken from the third chapter of this work. Fran O'Rourke, in contrast, argues persuasively that the passage was introduced to Joyce conversationally by his professor of Italian at University College Dublin, Father Artifoni, and is taken from the *Summa Theologica* (5).



between sensations, and this pleasure is presumably the satisfaction we feel when we appreciate beauty.

Joyce writes that apprehension is made up of two distinct activities, which he describes as “cognition or simple perception” and “recognition.” Joyce adds that both activities are pleasant and hence anything subject to them, even an object commonly considered hideous, is somewhat pleasant and thus beautiful (147). Though anything subject to apprehension is pleasant and thus beautiful, Joyce notes that we conventionally refer to objects that give the greatest amount of satisfaction as “beautiful” and those that give the least as “ugly” (148). While Joyce offers no examples, it seems reasonably clear that he assumes conventional assessments of beauty to be roughly accurate. Thus, for instance, the apprehension of a masterwork is more pleasant than a child’s drawing, and hence the masterwork is more beautiful. The reader is, however, left wondering what makes the apprehension of certain objects more satisfying than others. Presumably, grasping the sensible relations in a masterpiece offers more satisfaction than understanding those in a simple drawing. Though this much seems plain, it is not clear why the sensations related in a masterwork give so much more pleasure than those in a drawing. Is it a matter of the quality of relations or their quantity, or some combination of the two? Perhaps the simple relations of a drawing do not satisfy as much as the complex relations of a painting. Perhaps there are simply fewer relations overall in a drawing than in a painting and hence less pleasure in their apprehension.

Such questions may at first appear unimportant given that everyone recognizes a masterwork to be aesthetically superior to a simple drawing, but they become crucial when comparing works of approximately equal status. Judging between a masterpiece and a rough drawing seems straightforward, but how are we to judge between the works of two masters?

Joyce suggests that our conventional assessments are largely correct, but what happens when there is a real disagreement? Here, it seems, we must better understand what makes the perception of sensible relations more or less satisfying. Joyce, unfortunately, says little about what makes apprehension intrinsically pleasing, and, more problematically, he fails to describe clearly the individual stages of apprehension or, more broadly, apprehension itself. The scholastic terminology Joyce employs is far from self-explanatory, and the absence of explication makes it difficult to articulate, much less evaluate, his theory. The term “apprehension” is, nevertheless, found in the *Summa Theologica* and, given that this is most likely Joyce’s source, it helps to examine in some detail how the term is ordinarily understood by Aquinas.

#### Aquinas on Apprehension

Aquinas frequently uses the Latin term *apprehensio*, translated as “apprehension,” to describe perception, the process by which we understand sensory experience.<sup>8</sup> The term, which literally means “to seize,” suggests that for Aquinas the act of interpreting sense experience is similar to physical grasping. When persons perceive something, they metaphorically seize it with the mind. The implication is that when we distinguish objects we forcefully take possession of them. But how, one is left asking, do we forcefully take hold of the world around us with the mind?

Aquinas, like Aristotle, took a middle path between empiricists, who believe that knowledge derives entirely from the senses, and rationalists, who maintain that knowledge

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<sup>8</sup> Though the term *apprehensio* can be found throughout Aquinas’s writing, it is interesting to note that he uses the term to describe the perception of both actual and imaginary objects. See, for example, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. I, Art. 11.

comes wholly from the mind. For Aquinas, our knowledge of the world requires both the senses and intellect, body and mind. Our understanding of the world, he argues, begins with sensations, but the mind, referred to by Aquinas as the “agent intellect,” abstracts from these sensations a substantial form or *quidditas*. In short, the senses provide material that the agent intellect recognizes as having an essence or *quidditas*.<sup>9</sup> Perception thus involves not just sensing an object but grasping its nature. Most often, presumably, this process is almost instantaneous. That is, we perceive something immediately as some particular thing: a house, tree, or dog, for example. Of course, our initial perception may turn out to be mistaken. I may, for instance, mistake a stranger for a friend. In most cases, however, we experience the world around us as broken down into familiar objects. When we recognize these things and know how to interact with them, we, in a sense, grasp or “seize” them cognitively.

For Aquinas, seizing something intellectually in this manner does not yet involve a judgment that could be considered true or false. I may, for example, perceive a close friend, but until I have made a statement about my perception (for example, “So-and-so is standing in front of me”) there is, strictly speaking, no assertion that could be assigned a truth value. Once I make an assertion about my perception, however, this perceptual judgment can be assessed as true or false. Thus, apprehension alone, or “simple perception,” unlike a judgment about apprehension, has no truth value.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> For a concise description of Aquinas’s “middle path” as well as the function of the agent intellect, see *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 84, Art. 6, 392-95.

<sup>10</sup> Aquinas makes this point in many places. See, for instance, *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 16, Art. 2, 171-72.

Joyce’s description of the initial phase of apprehension as “simple” perception initially suggests that he means something like an unarticulated perception.<sup>11</sup> His description of the second phase as “recognition,” however, implies the pairing of sensations and ideas. The initial phase, cognition, thus seems to refer to a preliminary sensory stage despite the fact that the term “cognition” implies a sort of knowledge. Perhaps sensation involves a basic knowledge required for recognition.

Associating apprehension with *apprehensio* in this way suggests why the perception of some objects may be more satisfying than others. The Latin term *quidditas* means literally the “whatness” of a thing—that is, the fundamental feature or set of features that make a thing the sort of thing it is rather than something else. In short, it is a defining characteristic or set of characteristics. The term is traditionally understood in contrast to the term “accident,” which refers to the inessential characteristics of things. Thus an object could alter its accidental qualities and remain the same thing, but if it were to alter its *quidditas* it would become something else.<sup>12</sup>

Though we mostly perceive the world around us immediately and unproblematically, this is not always the case, especially when it comes to complex human actions, which are often open to varying interpretations. Are a certain person’s actions moral? Quite frequently there is no clear answer and equally compelling arguments can be made on either side. In these complicated

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<sup>11</sup> The scholastic phrase “simple perception” is traditionally used to refer to a perception that has not yet been articulated and, hence, has no truth value. See, for example, Charles Coppens’s *A Brief Text-Book of Logic and Mental Philosophy*, Ch. 1, Art. 1.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of *quidditas* and roughly synonymous terms like “essence” and “form,” see Aquinas’s *On Being and Essence*, Ch. 1.

situations we might say that the particular circumstances (or, to use Aquinas's terminology, incidental "accidents") make it difficult to perceive clearly the exact moral nature of the action.

Building upon the ideas expressed in the Pola notebook, it seems reasonable to suppose that, just as perception of the world around us gives satisfaction, our inability to perceive the world conversely evokes frustration. Such frustration is, however, at times alleviated by more perceptive individuals who are able deftly to separate incidental from essential features, thus enabling us to see clearly the true nature of the world around us. Perhaps great artists play a similar role for us by creating works of art that strip away distracting incidental material so that we have the satisfaction of grasping complex universal truths often concealed by accidental features. Perhaps the revelation of such complex truths is not only uniquely difficult, but also joyous. If so, the most satisfying art would be that which offers exceptionally profound and far-reaching insight.

Such a position bears a striking similarity to that of Aquinas's philosophical mentor, Aristotle, who counsels aspiring poets to tackle the most difficult subject, complex human action, and to structure their depictions carefully so that they clearly reveal the true nature of the action portrayed.<sup>13</sup> Aristotle even goes so far as to offer practical advice, primarily about plot structuring, intended to help poets minimize incidental features so that the true nature of the action depicted, its *quidditas*, can be plainly revealed to the audience in a powerful cathartic moment.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Aristotle writes that, though there are many imitative arts, poetry focuses upon the imitation of human "actions" and tragedy, in particular, examines a "noble and complete action, having the proper magnitude" (*Poetics* 61, 63).

<sup>14</sup> The "soul of tragedy," according to Aristotle, is the plot, and the bulk of his discussion is focused on the successful "arrangement of incidents" (64-69). The "goal" of this arrangement, he writes, is to make clear the

### Stephens's Aesthetic Theory

Though the aesthetic theory sketched in the Pola notebook, when interpreted in the light of Aquinas's *apprehensio*, suggests a consistent and perhaps persuasive system, Joyce complicates matters in the final notebook entry, which gives the appearance of having been almost an afterthought. Entitled simply "The Act of Apprehension," the entry begins by acknowledging that, while apprehension was described as consisting of two intrinsically satisfying phases, "apprehension," in its "most complete" instance, "involves" a third hitherto unmentioned phase described simply as the "activity of satisfaction" (148). Moreover, the satisfaction associated with this third phase, rather than that associated with the first two phases, as he had earlier claimed, "chiefly" accounts for the use of aesthetic terms such as "beautiful" and "ugly" (148).

The addition of this third phase of apprehension is problematic for a number of reasons. First, Joyce had described satisfaction as a quality of cognition, recognition, and, consequently, apprehension as a whole. In the final entry, the term "satisfaction" is used to refer not simply to the quality of an action but, oddly, a distinct activity in itself. Though it seems perfectly natural to speak of an activity as more or less satisfying, it is difficult to make sense of satisfaction as an activity in its own right. Furthermore, even if it were possible to conceive of satisfaction as a distinct activity, this notion raises paradoxical questions such as whether the activity of satisfaction could ever be unsatisfying. At first glance, Joyce's final entry does little to clarify his theory. In fact, it throws his aesthetics into greater confusion, if not contradiction. To make any

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"universal." That is, "what sort of man turns out to say or do what sort of thing according to probability or necessity" (*Poetics* 65).

sense of Joyce's theory of art the three phases of apprehension need to be more clearly articulated, as does the relation of these phases to overall aesthetic satisfaction.

Though Joyce does not develop his aesthetics further in the Pola notebook, he describes a strikingly similar theory twelve years later in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Towards the close of the novel, Stephen presents his developing ideas about aesthetics to a fellow university student, Lynch (179-89). This theory, which Stephen humorously refers to as "applied Aquinas," not only closely parallels the one articulated earlier but also takes phrasing verbatim from the notebooks (184). One important addition, however, comes as Stephen describes the three phases of apprehension, which are now referred to with Latin terms: *integritas* (translated by Stephen as "wholeness"), *consonantia* or "harmony," and *claritas* or "radiance" (186).

Though Joyce nowhere indicates that Stephen's aesthetic theory is primarily based upon his own ideas, given the unmistakable similarities it is almost impossible not to associate the three phases Stephen describes with those more briefly sketched in the Pola notebook. Moreover, the additional clarification that Stephen offers helps to resolve the problems raised by Joyce's theory.

Stephen begins with *integritas* or wholeness, in which the apprehended object is separated from its background. Stephen describes the activity of distinguishing an object from its context as drawing a "bounding line" around the object in order to demarcate it from everything else (186). Sounds, he adds, are chiefly separated from a temporal background while images are separated from a spatial background. As a result of *integritas*, the object comes to be seen as a separate entity or, as Stephen expresses it, "one thing," and the intellect advances to an analysis of its features (187).

The second phase, *consonantia* or harmony, involves analyzing the structure of an object that has been distinguished from its surroundings. Stephen depicts the process of analyzing an object as being “led by its formal lines” from “point to point” so that the way in which the parts relate to the whole becomes clear. In this process, an object, seen as irregular, discordant, and diverse, gradually comes to be understood as rhythmic, “harmonious,” and whole (187). When the object is recognized as an integrated unity, the intellect then associates the object analyzed with the concept of some familiar thing.

The final phase of apprehension, *claritas* or radiance, Stephen confesses, gave him the most difficulty because of Aquinas’s “vague” language. After trying to conceive *claritas* as a sort of “symbolism or idealism,” Stephen states that he came to understand it as indicating what the scholastics referred to as the “*quidditas*, the *whatness* of a thing” (187). Once an object has been singled out from its environment and understood as a unified whole, the mind connects it with the nature or essence that defines it. When associated with a substantial form, a perceived object becomes a familiar known thing. Stephen describes the mind as being “arrested” by *quidditas* in the same way physiologists halt an animal’s heartbeat with the insertion of a needle (187-88). The suggestion here seems to be that the mind naturally moves from one thought to another in a peripatetic manner, but this natural movement comes to an abrupt stop when an essence is perceived that holds the mind’s focus. An object’s essence exerts a hold on the mind when its wholeness or harmony fascinates the mind. This arrest, or “stasis,” Stephen describes as “silent,” suggesting that the mind is enraptured and mute (187).

#### The Final Stage of Ecstatic Stasis

The three stages of apprehension described by Stephen seem to articulate more thoroughly the stages sketched in the Pola notebook. Each state is differentiated and, most



important, the mysterious third phase, which was described merely as satisfaction, is more fully explained as the perceptual phase in which the mind becomes momentarily transfixed by the contemplation of a particular *quidditas*. While such contemplation retains an element of mystery, Joyce's larger point, that aesthetic experience strangely prevents us from seeking anything beyond the experience itself, seems intuitively sound. In fact, beauty's hold upon us is at times so powerful that we feel ourselves incapacitated, momentarily unable to redirect our attention, move, or, in extreme cases, speak. At these moments, the object of our perception has a sort of magic hold upon us. We often describe this unusual state by saying we are enchanted, transfixed, spellbound, even dumbstruck.

While many writers look to nature for examples of such ecstasy, Joyce focuses instead on stasis achieved through artifice. In the Paris notebook, he writes that natural objects, however intrinsically pleasing and hence beautiful, cannot be considered art. Art, he states, is the "human disposition of sensible or intelligible matter for an aesthetic end" ("Aesthetics" 145). Thus, a work of art must be deliberately created by persons for the express purpose of bringing about a moment of ecstatic satisfaction. We may find beauty in nature, but art is located exclusively in the human world. Taking the term "disposition" to mean something roughly like an orderly arrangement or design, Joyce makes it clear that art is a deliberate human creation. In this respect, anything occurring naturally or created by humans as a part of a natural process cannot be considered art. Joyce underscores this point in the Paris notebook by stating that excrement, children, and lice cannot be considered art (146). Presumably, lice cannot be considered art because they are not produced by humans, while excrement and children are rejected because they result from natural rather than artificial human processes. Because of their intended purpose, objects created for non-aesthetic ends similarly cannot be considered art. Joyce

emphasizes this point by considering the pleasing image of a cow accidentally created by a man hacking at wood. Though the object may have certain aesthetic qualities, it cannot be considered art, he writes, because the man did not intend to create an aesthetic object or indeed any recognizable object (146). In a similar vein, beautiful houses, clothing, and furniture, though clearly the result of artificial processes, cannot be considered art unless created with an aesthetic end in mind (146).

For Joyce then, art intentionally seeks to recreate by artificial means the ecstatic stasis that is often experienced in our perception of the natural world. Because such satisfaction derives from the perception of substantial forms in nature, artists skillfully copy natural subjects more or less faithfully to deliberately reproduce, oftentimes even enhance, our perceptual pleasure. Though the perception of such subjects is pleasing as a whole, it is the enraptured contemplation of their *quidditas* that offers us the greatest satisfaction and chiefly accounts for their aesthetic quality.

#### Pragmatic Mimesis

Given that art seeks to recreate by artificial means the ecstatic stasis often experienced in nature, the extent that art involves mimesis becomes clear. Unlike Plato, who held that objects were mere copies of universal forms, the scholastic tradition that Joyce defends maintains that objects actually embody substantial form or *quidditas*. Thus, unlike Plato's craftsmen who could only copy the copy of a form, craftsmen as well as poets could, on Joyce's view, instantiate actual essences by producing particular things that have an embodied form. Artists could even surpass nature, in this respect, by thoughtfully creating uniquely revelatory instances of *quidditas*.

Although any instance of a thing embodies a unique form, certain things, especially complex human actions, are, as stated, often difficult to grasp. The causes as well as the consequences of such actions may, for example, be so enormous that they exceed our understanding. Artists are, however, remarkably skilled at arranging their material so as to minimize obscuring accidents. Consequently, they are able to produce remarkably clear renderings of difficult subjects. In brief, artists are able to thoughtfully craft instances of their subjects that allow the *quidditas* to shine forth. On this view, art is not necessarily mimetic. Artists do not seek to copy essences, as Plato suggested, they instantiate essences. Because, however, copying a particular subject is the most expedient way to instantiate that subject's *quidditas*, artists often resort to copying merely as a practical matter. Thus, art frequently uses mimesis in order to achieve its end. Because artists do not need to be faithful to any particular subject in order to instantiate its universal essence, however, they are entirely free to strip away as much intruding detail as possible so as to produce a perfectly illustrative example.

The clearest practical expression of this position is Aristotle's *Poetics*, in which he states that in order to present complex human actions effectively poets may borrow from actual events but must carefully reshape these events so that the *quidditas* is revealed more clearly and powerfully than it is in nature. Thus, the playwright is advised to borrow from actual historical events only as an expedient way of crafting an especially illustrative instance of human action. In short, the artist's task is to exceed, through a combination of knowledge and skill, the revelatory power of nature.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, artists, unlike historians, are required not only to make careful observations of nature, but to reflect on these observations so that the "universal" nature of what is perceived comes to be fully understood. Only after artists have separated the accidental from

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<sup>15</sup> See Aristotle's description of the poet in contrast to the historian (65-66).

the essential can they carefully craft the perfect illustration of the subject, purified of distorting features. Artists must be skilled observers of the natural world, but, more significantly, they must come to know their subject with great intimacy so that they can reveal it clearly to their audience. In this respect, Aristotle writes, poetry is more “philosophical and significant” than other forms of imitation (65).

Once the subject is fully known, there remains only the practical difficulty of determining how it can be best instantiated. On Aristotle’s view, such matter-of-fact decisions are principally questions of technique.<sup>16</sup> What, for example, is the best arrangement of incidents? What kind of character would be appropriate to the subject? What sort of dialogue would fit the occasion? Which words and phrases would be interesting but universally understandable? In making such decisions, artists, while borrowing from actual events, need not be slavishly faithful to their inspiration. In fact, if the subject is complex, artists should not merely copy nature because the results of doing so would almost inevitably be unclear and hence unsatisfying. Rather, artists should take liberties with their material so that they can enable the essence or *quidditas* to appear with remarkable clarity. As Aristotle writes, poets should “not seek to cling exclusively to the stories that have been handed down,” for the poet’s task is to describe things “as they might possibly occur,” not “as they actually happened” (66, 65). With this creative license, the poet’s work may look, at times, like a direct attack on mimesis.

At what point does art inspired by life become so significantly altered that it can no longer be considered mimetic in any real sense? Might an artist even reject representation in order to better instantiate some concept? Joyce’s aesthetic writing, like that of his mentors, seems

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<sup>16</sup> By far, the bulk of Aristotle’s *Poetics* is concerned with technique, principally plot development.

to leave open just this possibility and, in doing so, pave the way for a strikingly iconoclastic work such as *Ulysses*. To capture Dublin at the beginning of a new century, a writer could simply record the events of a particular day, but such a record might prove misleading. Accidental details might obscure the day's larger significance or, worse yet, suggest some falsehood. To ensure that the *quidditas* shines forth, Aristotle urges artists to take liberties with their material, primarily stripping away extraneous and confusing details, but such a "perfect" representation presents its own, less obvious dangers. Every object, no matter how well crafted, is an amalgam of essence and accident. Even a perfect representation is open to misunderstanding, perhaps more so given the absence of obvious irrelevancies. If even a work of impeccable craftsmanship can be deceptive, is it possible to reveal essence in representation without the danger of misinterpretation? This is the driving question that sets the stage for the cacophony of voices that crowd *Ulysses*.

## CHAPTER TWO

To speak as Plato about the spirit and the good is, however, to make truth stand on its head and deny the perspectival, the fundamental condition of life itself.

--Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* [*Beyond Good and Evil*] (Preface)

### The Challenge of Relativity

During a leisurely stroll down Westmoreland Street, Leopold Bloom is confronted by the unsettling notion of relativity. As he approaches the southern end of the O'Connell Bridge, he looks up at the Ballast Office and sees that the time ball has been lowered indicating that "Dunsink time" is now past one in the afternoon (126). The Ballast Office, owned and occupied by the Dublin Port authorities, was a well-known landmark because of the prominent clock positioned just above the main entrance. The clock, long considered to be the most accurate in Dublin, was connected to the Dunsink Observatory four miles north of the city center by means of telegraph cable and displayed the exact solar time as established at Dunsink. A time ball was later added to the building and lowered each afternoon at exactly one (Scott 9). Though the lowered time ball appears to announce the arrival of afternoon with incontestable authority, Bloom returns to the question of time after a series of related speculations. The first-story clock, not the time ball, is connected to the Dunsink Observatory, he recalls. The time ball is instead connected to the observatory in Greenwich, London, which is located three hundred miles southeast. Thus, he concludes, the Ballast Office simultaneously indicates two slightly different times, Dunsink and Greenwich, as the precise time in Dublin. To complicate matters, since both observatories are located at a distance from the Ballast Office, neither indicates the exact solar time at this location (137). Strangely, Bloom's attempts to fix the time with scientific accuracy have only underscored its relative nature.

## Realism and its Critics

Though strains of relativism can be traced back to ancient times, the concept of relativity began to capture the popular imagination during the latter part of the nineteenth century as increasing contact with non-Western people cast doubt on the customs, morals, and religious assumptions that had long been considered the bedrock of Western civilization (Gowans). In the early twentieth century, “radical thought” emerging from the natural sciences called into question the absolute nature of the physical world; even space and time were conceived as relative.<sup>17</sup> As never before, the idea of an unchanging truth, a metaphorical North Star, seemed to be under attack.

In literature, the challenge of relativism presented itself as a thorough critique of realism. The term “realism,” in its most general sense, refers to a style of art that attempts to faithfully represent what is thought to be “real” (Morris 4). What is considered real, however, turns out to be a complicated issue. Often, the world considered independent of any individual or social bias is thought to be “real.” In short, it is existence objectively conceived. Taken in this sense, realism can be viewed as an extension of Enlightenment thought. It assumes optimistically that the human mind is capable of representing the world as it is in itself in much the same way that a mirror is capable of faithfully reflecting its surroundings (Morris 5).

Though novelists such as Honoré de Balzac anticipated realism, the controversial work of mid-nineteenth century painters, particularly Gustave Courbet, brought public attention to the stylistic conventions that later characterized the work of British realists such as Thomas Hardy, Anthony Trollope, and George Eliot (Morris 63). Courbet, however, never explicitly formulated

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed analysis of the growing relativity movement in natural science, which culminates in the work of Albert Einstein, see Christopher Herbert’s *Victorian Relativity*.

his realist technique. In fact, he considered his work to demonstrate a sort of cultivated artlessness that eschewed constraining formal conventions and dogmatic principles. Courbet steadfastly maintained that he was able to perfectly mirror the world because he contributed nothing to it from his imagination. When asked to paint an angel, Courbet famously replied, “I’ve never seen an angel. Show me an angel, and I’ll paint one” (Gardner 349). Despite the professed artlessness of his work, Courbet’s admirers were able not only to identify a replicable technique in his painting, but to codify his technique in a number of broadly applicable conventions. For example, Courbet and his contemporaries tended to depict subjects commonly considered ordinary, trivial, and even vulgar, often in explicitly contemporary settings (Gardener 349). Their compositions were frequently informal and often appeared spontaneous, as though the subject was captured unawares (“Gustave”). Finally, these artists, perhaps influenced by empiricism, attempted to record ordinary experience with a seriousness previously reserved for religious or historical painting (Gardener 349).

As the winning formula of realism was slavishly imitated, the style ironically came to appear labored, conventional, contrived, and even patently false. By the end of the nineteenth century, the “avant-garde” began to accuse realists of the sort of blindness that realists had themselves earlier associated with the status quo. These critics suggested that contemporary artists should strive to create a new art that was more faithful to lived experience. Such art, they proposed, should be based, not on formal conventions, but on an honest effort to directly capture the buzzing, booming, and unruly reality that constitutes modern life (Morris 14).

This criticism is nowhere better expressed than in Virginia Woolf’s essay “Modern Fiction” (1921), in which she describes the previous generation of writers as being blinded by their own artistic preconceptions. While contemporary writers tirelessly labor to foster a



“likeness to life,” the very thing they are after has “moved off, or on and refuses to be contained in such ill-fitting vestments” (160). Conformity to established literary convention, she argues, has taken the form of a blind idolatry, and the methodology of realist fiction now serves as a “powerful and unscrupulous tyrant” preventing writers from addressing anything but the most insignificant aspects of life (160).

Modernist critics such as Woolf make it clear that the conventions of realism are to be rejected, not because they are intended to convey what is considered “real,” but because they paradoxically achieve the opposite, concealment. In place of such conventions, Woolf recommends exactly what realist painters like Courbet had urged a half-century earlier, the wholehearted embrace of lived experience. If writers are to capture “life or spirit,” they must address a much broader range of experience, including the “trivial, fantastic,” and “evanescent” (160). In her plea for greater verisimilitude, Woolf even goes so far as to suggest that writers should confront difficult topics, including the “dark places of psychology” (162).

What modernists like Woolf saw as artificial about the realist movement was its insistence upon an authoritative narrative that conforms to the conventions of traditional literary genres. For the most part, realist novels are presented from a single objective viewpoint. As such, the narrative is free of the prejudices that directly or indirectly distort the individual perspectives of actual persons. Such narrative authority reassures the reader that the events described took place in the exact way they have been depicted. There may be lingering doubts about the larger implications of a particular story but not about the story itself.

Given that even the most admirable narrators are, to some extent, plagued by bias, however, it becomes obvious that the completely authoritative narrator of realist fiction is itself an imaginative fiction. In fact, the very term “perspective,” borrowed from the language of

vision, implies not simply limitations of sight, but, more important, the emotional and cognitive restrictions that obscure our understanding. In this regard, the authoritative perspective of realist fiction is actually a perspectiveless perspective: a view of events that is so absolutely expansive and complete that it cannot be considered a “view” in any conventional sense. If the perspectiveless perspective of realist fiction is not that of any actual or imagined person, how is it to be conceived? The only plausible answer is that it is the viewpoint of an all-knowing and completely neutral observer. As such, the omniscient third-person standpoint of realist fiction is a God-like perspective. Trying to convey God’s point of view is, however, a very difficult task, as modernist critics were quick to point out. Being human, the writer of realist fiction can convey the infinite only by means of the finite and so must pass off distortion as clarity. The realist can succeed only by tricking the reader into accepting personal prejudice as unquestioned truth. As the critics of Woolf’s generation began to ask more probing questions about contemporary fiction, the illusion of the perspectiveless perspective was forcefully brought to light. Was it possible that the events, which are so neatly laid out by the narrator like “a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged,” did not occur just as they were described? Might the same events be described differently by other characters, perhaps even by the principal characters after time has passed (160)?

If feigning an objective perspective only serves to conceal error, how can contemporary writers capture life as it is lived? Recognizing the contradictions involved in a perspectiveless perspective, the critics of realism suggested that writers should abandon their God-like vantage point and attempt instead to record faithfully the “myriad impressions” that ceaselessly bombard the mind, despite the “aberrations” and “complexity” these impressions might “display” (160). To faithfully portray such a multiplicity, novelistic conventions that had once seemed inviolable,

such as narrative focalization, reliability, and, most important, distance, must be sacrificed so that experience could speak for itself. As Woolf warns, such writing might be judged “difficult,” even “unpleasant” (161). Once we dispense with the conventions of objective narration, there is no longer any metanarrative to guide our interpretation. Differences of emphasis, even outright contradictions, make judging among alternative narratives difficult and, without an omniscient guide, there seems no obvious way of resolving these problems. The reader has seemingly been cast adrift in a sea of competing descriptions, and, thus, the relativity that pervades so much of modern life comes inextricably to haunt modern storytelling. In the absence of any fixed point of reference, all hope of finding truth in literature seems hopelessly lost.

#### Parallax and Relativity

As Bloom strolls down Grafton Street, still struggling with the problem of relativity, he considers a related term, parallax, which he dimly perceives as a solution to the problems posed by relativity. If he could only grasp the notion of parallax, he might understand how truth can be wrested from error. For a moment, Bloom considers visiting Professor Joly at the Dunsink observatory and asking for an explanation. He even considers “jollyng up” the professor with flattering comments about his family. Predicting that the professor, insulted by his blunt questions, would quickly show him the door, Bloom hopelessly abandons the idea altogether (137).

Though often associated with astronomy, parallax is generally defined as the difference in the apparent position of an object when viewed from alternate lines of sight. Despite the foreboding sound of this definition, the term, which comes from the ancient Greek word for vary or change, merely calls attention to the patently obvious fact that things appear differently when seen from different perspectives. Taken at face value, the notion of parallax seems only to

underscore the inescapable relativity of existence. The way things appear depends entirely on the vantage point of the viewer. Surprisingly, however, parallax enables us to arrive at objective knowledge.

The most familiar example of how parallax is used to establish objective truth is depth perception. When viewed alternately with each eye, the same object appears to alter position somewhat because it is seen from slightly different angles. When we compare this difference or parallax, however, we are able to establish the location of the things we see. Nearby objects appear significantly different to each eye because the distance between eyes is considerable compared to the proximity of the object. Conversely, distant objects appear much alike because the distance between eyes is comparatively negligible. Though the perception of depth is largely unconscious, the early Greeks discovered how to use the same basic principles to calculate the distance of remote objects. By carefully measuring the angle to an object from two points along a known baseline, the distance to that object from each point could be conceived as the side of a giant triangle and calculated using the law of sine. This process, known as triangulation, can be used to calculate the height of large objects as well as the distance of far-away objects. As the process was refined over time it became essential to navigation, surveying, and cartography. Recently the same process has been used to determine the exact distance of astronomical objects such as nearby stars.

Struggling to grasp the notion of parallax, Bloom's thoughts turn to Robert Stawell Ball, former director of the Dunsink Observatory, and his popular astronomy treatise *The Story of the Heavens* (126). In this work, Ball describes how astronomers use measurements of parallax, much like engineers, to calculate the distance of remote celestial objects. Imagine, he writes, a distant planet like Venus as a strip of paper attached to a glass window through which it is

possible to see objects at a good distance. Viewed alternately with each eye, the strip's position in contrast to the background will appear to vary more when it is near and less when it is distant. The same "principle" used to establish the distance of the paper strip, Ball writes, "when applied on a gigantic scale," is used by astronomers to determine the position of heavenly bodies. For example, if we imagine the planet Venus as the strip of paper and the sun as the background seen through a window, we can assess the distance of Venus by comparing the difference between its positions relative to the sun as viewed from observatories located in alternate terrestrial hemispheres. In fact, when this difference is carefully observed and compared, it is possible to calculate the distance of Venus as well as other objects in our solar system with astonishing precision (151-53).

Applying Professor Ball's lesson about astronomical parallax to the challenges of modern literature, one might say that the principles used to calculate the distance of celestial objects could similarly be used to establish narrative truth. For the modern critic of realism, every narrative is open to genuine doubt. Thus, when there is only a single narrative, it is difficult to say which aspects of the story are true. Aside from internal inconsistencies and contradictions of established fact, there is nothing to which a story can be compared and evaluated. All that can be known for certain is that every narrative by its very nature is limited and hence, to a certain extent, erroneous. This is the problem readers have always faced when confronted with an unreliable narrator. What part of what the narrator says, if any, is true? When there is only one voice, it is impossible to say with any assurance, just as it is difficult to accurately judge the distance of an object with only one eye.

But when there is an alternative perspective it becomes possible to discern areas of truth. Places where there is agreement can be considered more reliable. Areas of disagreement, on the

other hand, indicate where an account becomes problematic. Weighing narratives against one another in this manner thus endows the careful reader with a sort of binocular vision. Given that every perspective contains distortions of fact, comparing alternate narratives will never lead to absolute certainty, but it will indicate generally what is more or less probably true. The assessment of plausibility and, hence, probable truth is improved as more perspectives are compared and more agreement established. Thus, just as spatial distortions, when compared, enable us to determine distance, narrative distortions, when contrasted, enable us to establish truth. In short, a single perspective is always distorted and hence unreliable, but multiple perspectives, despite individual distortions, enable the reader to ascertain places of agreement and disagreement and, hence, probable truth.

At this point, one might suggest that by comparing perspectives it would be possible to arrive at a truth that could then be communicated in the form of a reliable objective narrative. This is much like the strategy Aristotle recommends in *Poetics* and the sort of project proposed by the realists. That is, artists should examine the subject to be portrayed, separate accident from essence, and then create the best possible illustration of the subject's essence. The goal should be an especially clear example in which accidental features have been kept to an absolute minimum so that the essence of the subject shines forth much more clearly than in nature. As critics point out, however, the problem with this sort of mimesis is that every work of art is an amalgamation of matter and form, and hence a mixture of accident and essence. There is the ever-present danger that an audience will mistake merely contingent properties for necessary ones. Or, to say the same thing in the language of the realists, there is the unavoidable possibility that distortions, which are an inevitable part of the realist's purported God-like stance, will be taken as infallible

truth. Such misimpressions, which are, for example, often deliberately encouraged in commercial advertising, may well have disastrous consequences when used as a guide for moral action.

Instead of trying to minimize narrative distortions or falsely to present a distorted narrative as undistorted, writers could take inspiration from the application of parallax and offer their readers a sort of binocular vision. That is, writers could present their subject from multiple standpoints so that these perspectives could be compared and truth ascertained. This is the sort of approach suggested by repeated references to parallax in *Ulysses*, and it goes a long way toward explaining the profusion of perspectives that the novel embraces. The events of 16 June 1904 are not singularly conveyed but emerge from the various voices directly and indirectly involved.

#### The Binocular Perspective of *Ulysses*

Given that the events of *Ulysses* could be told in innumerable ways, establishing a sort of binocular vision in the novel is much more complex than simple triangulation. To create a form of literary parallax, Joyce juxtaposes alternate narrators as well as distinct literary genres and styles, at times in rapid succession. In addition to the initial narrative style, which has been roughly described as free indirect discourse, the novel includes multiple first-person narrators, including Stephen, Bloom, and Molly, who are clearly identified with characters in the novel.<sup>18</sup> Other narrators, such as the speaker in “Cyclops,” are not associated with any known character though they often give the impression of representing persons involved in the dramatic action. Most episodes maintain the same narrator throughout, but some episodes, such as “Nausicaa,” have more than one narrator. In addition to alternative narrators, Joyce contrasts various literary

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<sup>18</sup> Though approximating free indirect discourse, the initial style is perhaps more precisely described as a “blend” of interior monologue, free indirect discourse, and omniscient presentation (Thornton, *Voices 2*).

genres. Just as it is often difficult to identify Joyce's narrators, however, it is similarly hard to identify the target of his parodies. In his discussion of voices in *Ulysses*, Weldon Thornton suggests that "Nausicaa" parodies romance novelettes; "Eumaeus," expository prose; "Aeolus," journalese; "Ithaca," scientific writing; "Sirens," musical prose; "Cyclops," first-person narration and satire; "Scylla and Charybdis," drama; and, finally, "Penelope," internal monologue (102, 106, 109, 113, 117, 123-124, 129, 131). Though these associations are fairly typical, other critics have proposed alternative as well as additional targets of parody.<sup>19</sup> Alongside various literary genres, Joyce mimics the literary styles associated with historical periods and well-known authors. The most dramatic example is, without doubt, "The Oxen of the Sun," which describes the events surrounding Mina Purefoy's labor and delivery in styles associated with familiar literary periods and major literary figures. The episode begins with a Latinate call to the Holles Street maternity hospital followed by a prayer for the arrival of Mrs. Purefoy's child in language borrowed from the Rosary (Cowan). Often imitating specific authors, the episode follows the meandering course of the English language from Anglo-Saxon verse through to an incoherent rendition of contemporary American slang.<sup>20</sup>

Though the profusion of narrators, genres, and styles may, at times, seem disorienting, each voice brings to the forefront distinct elements that are neglected, sometimes eclipsed, by other narratives. Even voices characterized by prejudice and hate have their place in the larger portrait, calling attention to unpleasant, often overlooked realities alongside blatant falsehoods. The individual perspectives expressed by these voices make it clear that form is inseparable from

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<sup>19</sup> For a detailed discussion of the alternatives, see Thornton, *Voices*, 101-33.

<sup>20</sup> Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman identify many of the stylistic shifts in their chapter on "The Oxen of the Sun" in *Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses* (407-49).



content. Each character, genre, and style seems uniquely capable of revealing significant truths about the world but only by simultaneously concealing other equally valuable insights. Given the wealth of voices that dovetail, overlap, and echo one another, any attempt to neatly catalogue the perspectives sounded in *Ulysses* seems impossible and even ultimately undesirable. Certain voices clearly stand out, such as those of Stephen and Bloom, but they are counterbalanced by other voices—for example, Buck Mulligan’s—so that no single speaker carries complete narrative authority. Just as our perception of distance is largely intuitive, Joyce’s assumption seems to be that the recognition of truth may occur without the conscious analysis and comparison of alternative narratives. In this regard, discerning narrative truth seems more akin to depth perception than triangulation. It is immediate and intuitive, though a deliberate weighing of narratives is required in certain instances. Especially problematic passages, for example, may demand more painstaking efforts, refined techniques of analysis.

The absence of any definitive narrative voice seems to put *Ulysses* at odds with the realists and, more broadly, the tradition of art as mirroring, but this is not the only (or even the most plausible) way of understanding the novel. Joyce’s writing on aesthetics, which borrows heavily from Aristotle, places him clearly within the mimetic tradition at the beginning of his career. Considering the turbulent events of the early twentieth century, especially the First World War, an event that began just as Joyce was starting *Ulysses*, it is not unreasonable to assume that the author abandoned a tradition widely seen as given birth to this horrific conflict. Apart from stylistic changes, however, there is no indication that Joyce rejected his earlier views on aesthetics. Rather than rejecting mimesis altogether, Joyce may have conceived of his novel as revising the tradition to avoid what had become its all-too-apparent dangers. Perhaps it is not mimesis that stirs nations to war but rather traditional methods of mirroring.

## The Dangers of Monocular Narratives

Despite antecedents dating back to ancient times, political propaganda is widely considered to be a modern phenomenon largely dependent upon systems of mass communication developed in the late nineteenth century (Messinger 1-2). By the advent of the First World War, propaganda techniques and even theories of their effective use had been established and shown to be highly effective.<sup>21</sup> At the outset of the war, the principal nations involved launched unprecedented campaigns to bolster support for their respective causes. To a great extent these movements were built upon nineteenth-century ideologies of imperialism that had been promoted largely by private sector interests (Messinger 13-14). However, unlike previous attempts to influence public opinion, these new campaigns made coordinated use of new forms of popular media, including posters, leaflets, pamphlets, newsreels, and radio broadcasts, as well as both popular and scholarly books and articles. For the first time, it appeared that the arts, taken broadly, were able to determine the fortunes of nations and, consequently, the course of history.

Even with considerable competition, the British propaganda campaign quickly outpaced its rivals with regard to the quality of material, and its influence was felt both at home and abroad (Johnson). On the heels of declaring war, the British government sought to coordinate efforts by establishing a bureau of propaganda and naming the well-connected journalist Charles Masterman as its head. Versed in the effective use of media, Masterman immediately set out to

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<sup>21</sup> Most of the techniques associated with the propaganda campaigns of the early twentieth century, such as the use of handbills, posters, and newspaper advertisements, were developed by marketers in the latter part of the nineteenth century. As the effectiveness of these techniques became undeniable, the manipulation of public opinion gained increasing scholarly attention. See, for example, Gustave Le Bon's *The Crowd* (1897), J. A. Hobson's *The Psychology of Jingoism* (1901), and Graham Wallas's *Human Nature and Politics* (1908).

solicit contributions from persons considered at the time to be the most prominent writers in Britain.<sup>22</sup> Their mission was to generate support for the war, primarily among Allied and neutral nations (Messinger 34). Many of the writers solicited, such as Thomas Hardy, were associated with the realist movement and some, such as H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy, were explicitly singled out by Virginia Woolf in her criticism of contemporary literature (158). Notably absent were members of the Bloomsbury Circle like Woolf herself (Messinger 34). By any standard, the bureau's output was astonishing. In its first year of operation alone, the bureau reported producing over two and a half million written documents, many of which were further reprinted by unaffiliated organizations (Messinger 40). The overall effectiveness of British propaganda made the power of artists, especially writers, to influence human fate undeniably clear. Artists, who had once been viewed by many as the wellspring of culture, or even its salvation, were now seen as helping to foment unimaginable carnage on a global scale. Their power derived from their ability to present a single perspective in a manner that appeared free of distortion and, thus, make questionable assertions appear to be indisputable fact. The more convincingly writers feigned omniscience, the more effectively they manipulated their audience. The dangers of the Aristotelian tradition were now all too horrifyingly apparent.

Having lived through the unparalleled horrors of the First World War, Joyce would have been all too familiar with the notion of a totalizing narrative and the violence such narratives encourage. In *Ulysses*, such a monocular narrative and its perils are best represented by the character referred to only as "the Citizen" from the Cyclops episode. An ardent Irish nationalist, the Citizen is utterly incapable of seeing the world from an alternative perspective or even

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<sup>22</sup> Aside from being well versed in politics and journalism, Masterman wrote on the manipulation of public opinion.

See Chapter Four of his *The Condition of England*.

entertaining issues unrelated to his principal concern, the Irish cause. His concern for Ireland expresses itself chiefly in a blinding hatred of the English, a topic to which he returns repeatedly, almost obsessively. Unwilling even to consider what constitutes an Englishman, the Citizen lumps persons of foreign origin and Irishmen of foreign ancestry, such as Bloom, together with the traitorous English.

The danger associated with the Citizen's totalizing perspective is suggested throughout the episode by repeated references to grotesque acts of violence, often motivated by intolerance and bigotry. During the episode, the denizens of Barney Kiernan's pub discuss a number of topics, including a hangman's letters, a boxing match, a Southern lynching, Congolese atrocities, naval punishments, and anti-Semitism, all while Bob Doran, a drunk, repeatedly tries to provoke a fight (146-50, 261-62, 269, 274, 269-70, 273, 246-48). As if to underscore these suggestions, the episode ends as the Citizen unleashes his menacing dog, Garryowen, on Bloom and throws an empty biscuit tin at him while angrily shouting anti-Semitic epithets (282).

Though it may seem deeply unfair to lay blame for the violence of the early twentieth century on Aristotle and his followers, it is undeniable that those directly or indirectly identified with this tradition played a large part in spreading an ideology of hate across the globe. As Aristotle asserted, matter and form, accident and essence, are inextricably linked.<sup>23</sup> For this reason, there is always the possibility that an artist's purportedly ideal representation may intentionally or unintentionally mislead. Given this danger, many twentieth-century artists, such as the German expressionists, explicitly rejected mimesis following the war in a conscious effort

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<sup>23</sup> Aristotle makes this point in numerous places, for example in the *Metaphysics* where he argues that, although predication necessarily involves an essence, if we were to strip away accidental qualities nothing would remain (*Metaphysics*, Book 7, Part 3).

to avoid what they perceived as the “trap of naturalism” (Willette). Rather than discarding mimesis entirely, however, Joyce might have realized that the threat of representation lies only in presenting partial narratives as though they were complete. The truth can be revealed through mimesis but only when multiple perspectives are provided. Art, Aristotle claims, is concerned with the universal. Thus, it is of special importance in revealing the universal nature of complex moral actions that are often hard to discern in practice (*Poetics* 65). In *Ulysses*, Joyce, too, seems to be interested in revealing complex moral truths, specifically about the role of the artist and, more generally, the hero in the modern world. Such truths, however, cannot be expressed by means of a supposedly flawless ideal without the possibility of misunderstanding or outright manipulation. The unavoidable distortions of each individual representation must be tempered by those of alternative representations. The powerful propaganda campaigns that gave birth to global conflict illustrate what can occur when such narratives are not balanced.

With obvious references to seminal works of Western literature, such as the *Odyssey* and *Hamlet*, *Ulysses* stridently asserts its place within the tradition of mimesis, but, at the same time, the iconoclastic proliferation of voices announces that, in significant ways, the novel departs from this same tradition. As hard as one tries, Joyce’s novel stubbornly refuses to be reduced to a final authoritative narrative. Even the perspectives of the novel’s protagonists, though at times sympathetic and persuasive, are repeatedly undercut by alternate voices that are, to varying degrees, antagonistic, considerate, disinterested, or simply concerned about altogether other matters. By stubbornly refusing any definitive final word, Joyce ensures that his text will not be eclipsed by simple interpretations that overlook actual hesitations, ambiguities, disagreements, and outright contradictions. The novel’s events take place in Dublin, but, simultaneously, they echo events in the ancient world and elsewhere in the modern world, and, at the same time, none

of these places precisely. The novel's protagonists are portrayed as artists, heroes, saviors, but they are also arguably presented as the opposite. The point is not to conflate real differences but to show that, in reality, nothing is as one-dimensional as it is often portrayed. Only from a certain light does Dublin, a relative backwater compared to other European cities, appear as the center of Western Civilization. And only in an even more peculiar light do two public fools seem to be inspiring epic heroes.

### CHAPTER THREE

... nothing is more common than to have two Men tell the same story quite differing from one another, yet both of them eye-witnesses to the Fact related.

-- Daniel Defoe (Preface to *The Storm*)

#### Reimagining Narrative

*Ulysses* is a novel overflowing with voices. The notion of astronomical parallax, which recurs throughout the text, hints at how these voices are to be understood. The suggestion is that, while individual narrative perspectives are unavoidably distorted, clarity can be achieved by comparing viewpoints. Though the comparison of perspectives has proven useful in science and engineering, at the time Joyce wrote *Ulysses* there were few parallels in literature. The closest analogue would be epistolary works, which date back at least as far the novel, arguably earlier. Such works incorporate documents, usually letters, often written by two or more characters, and frequently establish distinct perspectives on the same events. In fact, the appeal of the epistolary novel lies largely in the contrasting emotional outlooks. Despite similarities to *Ulysses*, there is, however, an important difference. Contrasting perspectives in epistolary novels enliven narrative, but there is no indication that the same story could not be told using some other narrative form. In *Ulysses*, by contrast, the perspectival form of the novel seems inextricably connected to its subject matter. Telling the story from a single standpoint, Joyce suggests, would be to engender misunderstanding and violence.

At first glance, the idea that truth can be grasped only by comparing alternate, at times conflicting, perspectives seems counterintuitive. Works of fiction are, generally, narrated from a single, consistent perspective intended to offer an altogether reliable description of events. Works of nonfiction, by contrast, routinely offer multiple, often contrasting, perspectives in the

form of primary sources, materials that have not been condensed, interpreted, or evaluated (“Primary”). Familiar examples include excerpts from a speech, eyewitness accounts, and expert testimony. Primary sources are considered essential because there is suspicion that secondary texts, works that build upon primary sources, unintentionally make misleading suggestions. In developing secondary narratives, writers working with primary texts cannot help but add information. Personal biases, professional assumptions, individual affections, even subtle differences in an author’s tone, can lead to significant misunderstanding. To forestall such misinterpretation, primary sources are routinely incorporated within or presented alongside secondary material.

The first extended work of journalism, Daniel Defoe’s *The Storm*, is an early and influential example of the use of primary sources (Miller). To chronicle the tempest of 1703, Defoe solicited eyewitness accounts of the storm and its aftermath, which he published alongside his own observations. Though Defoe could have synthesized these accounts in a stylistically superior secondary narrative, he states in the preface that the dangers of speaking for others are too great. A “prodigious looseness of pen” led writers of the past to mix “history and fable” so that today “nothing” is known about antiquity that can be “depended upon” with certainty (5). Fearing that he too might unconsciously blend fact and fantasy, Defoe decided to allow his witnesses to testify directly about the storm despite regrettable lapses of “style” (8). In this sense, *The Storm*, which was read and greatly admired by Joyce, appears to be a very early forerunner of the perspectival approach that Joyce develops in *Ulysses*.

#### The Great Storm of 1703

Though the British notoriously complain about the weather, the climate in the British Isles, especially the southern part of England, is exceptionally mild. Situated at roughly the same



latitude as Moscow, the Gulf Stream bathes the British Isles in warm water from the Gulf of Mexico that moderates the temperature. Because of their proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, the British Isles often experience higher than normal winds, but such winds are seldom experienced inland. Severe windstorms, on the other hand, are quite rare (“UK Climate”). Because of cool ocean temperatures, Britain does not experience tropical cyclones, though occasionally the remnants of hurricanes formed in the tropics have been known to blow through the British Isles. These extra-tropical cyclones, as they are called, can cause widespread destruction and, in some instances, the loss of life, but they are a relatively rare occurrence (Burton).

Given the mild climate, Londoners had no reason to suspect anything out of the ordinary when wind speeds increased rapidly on the afternoon of November 24, 1703. Though winds had blown “exceeding hard” for much of the month, Defoe writes, the day was considered “fair” for that time of year (26). Even when rainsqualls began to blow early in the evening, there was still no reason to expect anything more than the sort of wet weather typical of the season.

Customarily, autumn is a period of unsettled weather in the British Isles and mild rains, even brisk gales, are common (Dutton). The Grote Mandrenke, meaning “great drowning of men,” which swept across the British Isles in 1362, had faded from public memory, and there had been relatively few other windstorms of great magnitude that might hint at the possibility of extreme weather (Moss). Over the next couple of days, however, the winds steadily increased, causing widespread damage. Tiles were blown off rooftops, chimneys were blown down, trees were uprooted, and “several ships were lost” (26). Daniel Defoe, who at the time lived in a “well built brick house” on the outskirts of London, reported having “narrowly escap’d the mischief of a part of a house” that collapsed on the first night of winds (30, 26).

Just as the winds might have been expected to subside, Defoe and others throughout the British Isles witnessed a strange and deeply ominous sign. Around ten o'clock on Friday evening, a startlingly low reading was observed on the barometer, a reading so low, in fact, that Defoe noted that the mercury appeared "lower than ever I had observ'd it on any occasion whatsoever." The reading was so seemingly anomalous that Defoe even began to suspect that his barometer had been "handled and disturbed by the children" (26). The winds remained constant over the next couple of hours, but at midnight the dreadful tempest predicted by the barometer made its presence known. In a matter of hours, the winds grew to such a pitch that "few people" with any "sense of danger," Defoe recounts, could have been so "hardy" as to remain asleep. At every moment, people expected their homes to collapse, burying them alive. Though remaining inside seemed certain death, Defoe writes, few dared to go outside because "the bricks, tiles, and stones from the tops of the houses flew with such force and so thick in the streets that no one thought it fit to venture out" (30). In the early morning hours, the winds reached the height of their ferocity and everyone feared that, at last, the end had finally arrived. Only a few hours later, however, the winds abruptly abated without explanation. The storm had miraculously ended.

Upon venturing outside after the bulk of the storm had passed, witnesses described the damage as utterly incredible. Most regrettable of all, Defoe writes, were injuries, often fatal, caused by falling debris, especially crumbling chimneystacks. In addition to his own description of a collapsing chimney, which "gave" his home "such a shock" that he believed it to be giving way, Defoe collected testimony from many who witnessed the injury, even death, of persons crushed by chimney stacks (30). Aside from serious injuries caused by debris, Defoe describes almost inconceivable physical devastation, including innumerable buildings, walls, fences, and

steeple flattened by hurricane force winds. The number of uprooted trees was so enormous that Defoe, traveling in the country only a short time later, gave up trying to estimate it (55-56).

Though the storm's devastation on land was terrible, its effects at sea were considerably worse. At the outset of the storm, both inbound and outbound vessels from many nations were forced to the British coast and took refuge alongside ships already crowded into ports and rivers. Even in such safe harbors, however, ships were torn from their anchors by storm winds and either sunk or blown out to sea, never to be heard from again. Compared to roughly over a hundred persons killed on land, it has been estimated that many thousands lost their lives at sea. Historians generally reckon the actual number to be around eight thousand ("The Great Storm"). Most telling is Defoe's emotional description of over seven hundred wrecked ships piled together pell-mell along a stretch of the River Thames commonly referred to as the London Pool (33-34).

#### Defoe's Inspiration for *The Storm*

While an undeniable tragedy, The Great Storm proved to be a saving opportunity for Defoe. He had two weeks earlier been released from Newgate Prison, where he was incarcerated for seditious libel. Having published around forty pamphlets before running afoul of the authorities, Defoe was a well-known pamphleteer. The bulk of his writing consisted of polemical essays defending Dissenters and their allies. His best-known pamphlet, *A True-Born Englishman* (1701), defended King William, who had usurped the throne from his father-in-law, James II. Being of Dutch descent and, in a sense, a foreign invader, William was unable to gain popular acceptance. Coming to William's defense, Defoe persuasively argued that the notion of a pure-blooded Englishman was nonsense and that William should not be rejected because of national origin.

Though *A True-Born Englishman* was generally well received, Defoe's subsequent essays were more partisan in tone. As a result, he made a number of enemies who patiently awaited the chance to get even (Backscheider 81-83). This moment arrived in 1702, when Queen Anne assumed the throne and directed public animosity towards Dissenters, like Defoe, who had been protected by her predecessor. Seeking to temper public hostility, Defoe published *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters* (1702), which parodied a fanatical clergyman hostile to Dissenters.

Unlike his earlier parodies, however, *The Shortest-Way* was taken seriously by many who praised the fictional clergyman's frank suggestion that Dissenters must be dealt with harshly. When it eventually became known that the pamphlet's actual author was Daniel Defoe, a Dissenter and notorious pamphleteer, the writer's enemies made sure that he was quickly charged with libel and imprisoned (Backscheider 98-100). On the advice of his lawyer, Defoe pled guilty and, along with three days in the pillory, was sentenced to Newgate Prison until the Queen was satisfied that he no longer constituted a threat to the public order. Realizing that Defoe would make a powerful ally if turned to their side, Defoe's enemies kept him in prison until his spirits began to wane and, just as all hope seemed to vanish, released him on the assurance that he remain the Queen's loyal servant in the future (Hamblyn xxi-xxii). With this promise, Defoe foreswore the sort of political pamphleteering for which he was best known, though he proudly arranged for publication of two collections of earlier pamphlets along with other miscellaneous writings. While the conditions of his release may have led Defoe to expect a position as apologist for his political adversaries, no such offers arose in the weeks following his release (Backscheider 139).

Not only did Defoe's writing career appear to be at an end, but he had also lost his only reliable source of income, a brick and tile factory. As a child, Defoe had intended to become a minister but ultimately chose to pursue business like his father and quickly established himself as a seller of hosiery. This vocation gradually led to a series of increasingly outlandish ventures that were seldom profitable. In fact, Defoe's growing debt and consequent desperation appear to have urged him to increasingly preposterous schemes, such as raising civet cats and recovering sunken treasure (Backscheider 56-57). Unlike most of his ventures, surprisingly, a masonry factory founded by Defoe on a piece of property in Essex became a reliable and much-needed source of income. A series of poor decisions made by Defoe's employees while he was incarcerated, though, led to the factory's failure shortly before his release. Its bankruptcy was particularly distressing, for it meant Defoe would be unable to obtain credit for any future business ventures. When Defoe returned home in early November, it appeared that his business career, much like his career as a pamphleteer, had come to an abrupt and irremediable end.

The hurricane, however, offered new possibilities. Through he had pledged not to continue his polemical writing in a way that might harm the state, Defoe was free to write about subjects that had no political implication, and the storm presented a potentially profitable apolitical topic. Immediately seizing an opportunity to reverse his fortune, Defoe placed ads a few days after the storm in both the *London Gazette* and *London Courant* requesting first-hand accounts from reliable gentlemen (Hamblyn xxiii). His plan was to publish the correspondence in a profitable book. This approach had been attempted before with considerable success. The Anglican clergyman William Turner had placed similar advertisements in the *London Gazette* soliciting personal accounts of remarkable providences. The testimony received, alongside similar accounts drawn from published sources, was compiled in *A Compleat History of the Most*

*Remarkable Providences*. Defoe, who contributed to Turner's collection, adopted the character of Turner's ad in his own, and it is plausible to assume that works such as Turner's directly inspired *The Storm*. Both works freely incorporate material from published sources as well as solicited correspondence, and both use this material as an earnest plea for spiritual repentance (Backscheider 142-43). There are, however, subtle but important differences between the collections that result equally from the particular subject of each work and its stated purpose.

During the eighteenth century, like today, there was great popular interest in unusual phenomena, and periodicals such as John Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*, which addressed quasi-philosophical questions submitted by readers concerning strange occurrences including spiritual judgments, deliverances, and apparitions, were wildly successful (Backscheider 142). In order to capitalize on this interest, Turner, with the backing of Dunston, began compiling reports of remarkable events for *A Compleat History*. The accounts, amassed from a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary, were divided into three sections (spiritual, natural, and artistic wonders) and reprinted, often verbatim, along with the names and titles of witnesses. Though the unusual nature of the phenomena described in the collection guaranteed popular interest, the collection was advertised as a "useful" resource for clergymen (Backscheider 142-43). Defoe's interest in "extraordinary Deliverances," as well as his extended discussions of their theological implications, suggests that he hoped to attract the same audience as Turner (Defoe 156). As indicated by the wording of his advertisement, Defoe, nevertheless, conceived of his collection primarily as historical rather than inspirational. The purpose of the proposed collection, Defoe writes, is to "preserve the remembrance of the late dreadful tempest" for posterity (Backscheider 142). In keeping with this stated aim, Defoe repeatedly refers to himself in the text's preface as a "historian" and disparages the fanciful work of ancient historians in contrast with his own (4, 6,

55). Defoe's historical rather than religious emphasis gives *The Storm* a very different character from *A Compleat History* because Defoe understands his principal task as chronicling an important event rather than inspiring faith.

In addition to divergent aims, the subject matter of each work gives rise to further important differences. Turner's *A Compleat History* collects individual accounts of different phenomena. These phenomena, which are grouped together in categories such as good or bad apparitions, are each seldom witnessed by more than one person and, hence, are not open to contradiction. *The Storm*, on the other hand, collects individual accounts of the same phenomenon experienced at different times and places, raising questions of perspective that Turner's work does not. A critic might challenge the veracity of one of Turner's contributors but could not offer an alternative first-hand description of the same occurrence. Each contributor to *The Storm*, on the other hand, offers a supplemental account of the same event and, while these accounts are seldom contradictory, none can be considered definitive. It is the perspectival nature of *The Storm* that makes the work so distinctive. The great windstorm of 1703, was experienced by thousands of persons, each of whom was touched by the storm in some singular manner. Each Briton would, no doubt, describe the storm in slightly different terms, bringing to the fore those aspects of the event that stood out most in his or her memory at the time of recounting. Though it is tempting to look for the single most complete account of the storm, the sheer size of the hurricane makes it clear that no individual account can encompass the storm in its entirety, and, hence, the subject of Defoe's collection brings directly before the reader the notion of the limits of description. *The Storm* makes clear that there are some things that grossly exceed narrative.

Defoe's Cacophonous Collection

*The Storm* opens with a scholarly discussion of winds and the origin of storms like the Great Storm of 1703. Following a general description of the cyclone based largely on his personal experience, Defoe devotes himself in the bulk of the work to chronicling the effects of the storm on land and sea. Being an “Eye-witness and sharer” of the storm’s effects in London, Defoe feels competent to describe the devastated city himself without citing additional “Testimony.” To “furnish the Reader” with an “authentick” description of the storm’s effects outside London, however, Defoe feels obliged to supplement his own description of events with first-hand accounts of those directly affected (64). As Defoe’s description of the storm’s devastation moves further from his direct experience, he comes increasingly to rely upon letters from contributors, which are organized by their descriptive content. Typically, Defoe introduces each section and letter, stating the author’s name, title, and location. His introductions often include a few words briefly summarizing a letter’s content. At times, Defoe feels compelled to comment upon an author’s style, or lack thereof, and vouch for his or her truthfulness; he notes correspondences between letters as well as published accounts. Only in the subsection describing damage to the Royal Navy does Defoe merely summarize accounts taken from published sources instead of quoting from letters. The assumption is that he did not receive firsthand testimony from persons in the navy and thus was forced to rely on public accounts (Defoe 148-49).

Defoe assures his readers of the reliability of his eyewitnesses’ accounts, stating that they are taken from “gentlemen” of noted “piety and reputation.” These “gentlemen” submitted descriptions solely for the sake of posterity “without any private interest or advantage.” They have no “manner of motive” to “strain a tale beyond its real extent” (64). In the event that the disinterested nature of his witnesses is not itself sufficient to convince his readers, Defoe adds that each contributor gave permission to have his name and title printed alongside his



submission. Surely, Defoe urges, “without motion, hope, reward, or any other reason,” no one would acknowledge publicly passing an untruth on to posterity. With such assurances, Defoe asserts, the reader can unhesitatingly rely upon the truthfulness of his eyewitnesses (64-65).

Having addressed the reader’s skepticism, Defoe explains that most letters are printed in full, although certain letters, which are “not concise enough to be printed as they are,” have been “digested into a relation only.” In such cases, Defoe assures the reader, the editors have “kept close to the facts of the matter” (65). The term Defoe uses here, “digest,” suggests a simple abridgment, but it remains unclear how this abbreviation has been achieved. Has Defoe merely excised chunks of text, leaving the printed passages intact, or has he edited, perhaps even rewritten, the printed sections? Furthermore, it is unclear which letters have been digested. The reader’s impression is that Defoe has omitted only sections he did not consider relevant to the topic at hand and that only a few of the letters have been significantly altered. As such, the reprinted accounts appear as verbatim transcriptions of whole letters or, at times, the majority of longer letters.

For all Defoe’s warnings about lapses of style, the letters quoted are, for the most part, remarkably similar in wording and tone. Despite regular variation of salutation, the contents of each letter cataloguing the storm’s effects are strangely alike. Given that the letters were sent, purportedly, by persons from different regions, classes, and professions, the monotony of the letters is surprising. This similarity of style, among other factors, has led critics to suggest that Defoe authored, or at least heavily edited, many of the letters himself. Richard Hamblyn, for example, argues in his introduction to *The Storm* that there is good reason to doubt the authenticity of the letters. Defoe, Hamblyn writes, only once explicitly claims to reproduce a letter “verbatim” and then only when additional justification is demanded to explain the letter’s

“strange” and, by extension, unbelievable contents, a description of a small tornado that preceded the hurricane (xxviii).

Defoe explicitly claims that the letter Hamblyn cites and the prior letter were reproduced exactly, and, given that these letters are the first two in the collection, readers would naturally assume that, in the absence of further comment, the subsequent letters are also faithfully copied (65). While Defoe does not use the term “verbatim” repeatedly, he uses similar words (such as “authentick”) that function much the same way. Hamblyn notes a letter from a sailor aboard a foundering ship that, he argues, indicates Defoe’s role in fabricating the letters. In addition to the repetition of dramatic phrases such as “all sunk and drowned,” there is the problem of explaining how a letter was delivered from a sailor aboard a sinking ship (xxix). Recognizing this problem, Defoe includes a postscript explaining that the letter was transferred to another ship while the tempest raged (132). Though the story of the letter’s miraculous transfer is not entirely convincing, the extraordinary circumstances surrounding the transfer do not necessarily indicate that the letter is a forgery, much less that all the printed letters were actually penned by Defoe.

#### *The Storm as Inspiration for Ulysses*

James Joyce was “a great admirer of Defoe.” He owned a multivolume set of Defoe’s writings and reportedly read “every line,” a boast he could make about only three other authors: Ben Jonson, Gustave Flaubert, and Henrik Ibsen (Budgen 186). In a 1912 lecture on Defoe at the Università Popolare Triestina, Joyce explains his admiration, arguing that “the true English soul began to reveal itself in literature” only with the arrival of Defoe (6). Though preceded by Chaucer, Milton, and Shakespeare, Defoe was the first Englishman to write “without imitating or adapting foreign works.” Defoe “infused into the creatures of his pen a truly national spirit” that had never been given voice before. Most important, Joyce writes, Defoe “devised for himself an

artistic form” which was “without precedent.” In this respect, Defoe should be considered the “father of the English novel” (7). This lecture was part of a series on realism and idealism in British literature that Joyce gave shortly before he began *Ulysses*. The first section, on realism, is devoted entirely to Defoe.

Joyce begins his lecture by acknowledging Defoe’s failings, including his lack of “love plot, psychological analysis, and the studied balance of characters and tendencies.” Despite these faults, Joyce writes, it is possible to glimpse in Defoe’s work the “modern realistic novel.” As a prime example of Defoe’s realism, Joyce cites *The Storm*. The narrative, he states, begins to emerge only after the introductory chapters. Like “a great snake,” it proceeds “to crawl slowly through a tangle of letters and reports,” which “follow one another interminably” (15). Joyce humorously captures the repetitive contents of these documents, which meticulously detail the number of trees uprooted, spires downed, fences toppled, and so forth. The contents, he confesses, prove “phenomenally boring,” but, he continues, “in the end the object of the chronicler is achieved.” “By dint of repetitions, contradictions, details, figures, noises,” Joyce concludes, “the storm has become alive, the ruin is visible” (16).

Much of what Joyce says about *The Storm* could equally be said about *Ulysses*. Through the gradual accumulation of information, Joyce achieves a startlingly vivid portrait of Dublin and its denizens, and there is good reason to assume that Defoe’s work was a major stylistic influence. First, the focus of both works is deliberately narrowed so that events can be described in full. Most works of comparative length span an extended period of time and, for this reason, numerous events are depicted. *The Storm*, by contrast, focuses almost exclusively on the climax of the Great Storm, which occurred on the evening of November twenty-sixth. It was during this twelve-hour period that the brunt of the cyclone passed over the southern part of Britain,

inflicting the largest portion of the devastation. Defoe begins with his personal account of that dreadful night and then explores, by means of solicited letters, others' experiences of that same, relatively brief period of time. Unlike Defoe's storm, the events described in *Ulysses* are by no means extraordinary, but they transpire in a similarly short span of time, from approximately eight in the morning on June 16, 1904, to some time after four the following morning. In contrast to *The Storm*, which is organized principally by location, the events recounted in *Ulysses* are described chronologically although, in episode four, the morning's events, originally described from Stephen's perspective, are retold from Bloom's point of view.

Though never stated explicitly, the limited focus of each work appears motivated by a desire to portray events as accurately and fully as possible. This exhaustive depiction is achieved by incorporating copious factual information, which often seems unnecessary, even, at times, painfully gratuitous. In "Imagining Memory," Diana Pérez García argues that Defoe was interested not merely in "constructing stories that resembled real life" but also in documenting "objective truth" (82). For this reason, she associates Defoe with the early empiricist tradition, proudly "reacting against previous 'romantic' ideological representations" without a healthy skepticism about limitations of the "new methodologies" (82). Defoe's empiricism, she argues, explains the "immense body of factual detail, the long and exhaustive enumerations that distinguish his writings" (81). Such details are intended as empirical facts, open to verification by the reader. The profusion of such details, García argues, has often been dismissed merely as a stylistic blunder, which makes "the experience of reading Defoe much like reading evidence in a court of law" (Watt 34). García focuses on the use of inventorying, giving a detailed, itemized list, report, or record of things in one's possession, which can be found throughout Defoe's writing but is most evident, she argues, in *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), a work, much

like *The Storm*, that is “swamped by fact and ciphers, researched by its author with painstaking dedication in the attempt at distilling his narrative out of hard facts” (81-82).

Joyce, García points out, gathered facts with similar dedication in order to present an accurate portrayal of Dublin in *Ulysses* (86). Frank Budgen, a close friend of Joyce’s, observed that the author’s vivid description of Dublin emerges from painstaking research that was conducted while Joyce was living on the Continent. Joyce even confided to Budgen that “if the Dublin were to disappear from the earth,” he hoped “it could be recreated from the description in his book” (69). To achieve such a complete portrayal, Joyce proceeded meticulously, “like a ship’s officer taking the sun, reading the log, and calculating the current drift and leeway” (Budgen 123). Following Defoe, Joyce explicitly incorporates these details into his text so that his readers, if they are so inclined, can cross-check his facts against other sources. Such scrupulous attention to detail taxes Joyce’s readers with “a responsibility that would have been felt as quite inappropriate by the canonical realist writer” (85), García writes. It is partly for this reason that early critics such as D. H. Lawrence objected to what they perceived as the “journalistic” quality of *Ulysses*, the feeling that “even the smallest detail” was “deserving of posterity” (1075). Certainly, choosing which facts to include, which facts to emphasize, would have placed less responsibility on Joyce’s readers, resulting in a smoother narrative, but doing so would have projected the author onto the subject and, as Defoe expresses it, permitted “Romance” to “Trespass upon Fact” (6).

In addition to extensive factual detail, the representation of events in both books is made more complete by the use of multiple perspectives. The juxtaposition of narrative correspondents in *The Storm* allows the reader to see the Great Storm unfold from alternative, often greatly diverse, standpoints. The “collector” functions somewhat like an authoritative narrator,

introducing and passing judgment on individual letters, but each of Defoe's correspondents describes the storm from his own perspective, purportedly in his own words. Though, as Defoe himself points out, most of his correspondents are "gentlemen" of noted "piety and reputation," there are letters from persons of varied background: scholars, clergymen, tradesmen, and sailors. Much of what these correspondents emphasize becomes repetitive, but each correspondent brings to the fore what he feels to be most relevant. Although there is not the stylistic diversity one might expect, the eyewitness testimony "heightens the sense of immediacy and crisis which so characterizes the atmosphere of the book" (Hamblyn xxviii). The reader relives the dreadful tempest with each eyewitness account.

The voice of the "collector," which often sets the context for supplemental voices in *The Storm*, is nowhere to be found in *Ulysses*, and the reader is left to drift among a chorus of narrators, who, though at times identifiable, are never explicitly identified. Certain voices stand out among this collection, such as those of Stephen, Bloom, and Molly, but other voices, like the unnamed narrator of the "Cyclops" episode, cannot be identified with any known character. Focal changes often occur at the beginning of episodes, but the narrative voice may alter at any point without explicit warning, as in "Nausicaa." Elements in the text, such as headlines in "Aeolus" and signs in "The Lotus Eaters," appear to offer something like ancillary narration commenting on the dramatic action from yet another perspective. The narrative voice mostly stays in proximity to the main characters, but it may capriciously assume the perspective of anyone connected to the story.

As in *The Storm*, overlapping voices give *Ulysses* a palpable sense of immediacy but also, more important, make it abundantly clear that events are much more complicated than they appear from any single perspective. Bloom's relationship with his wife is an obvious example. In

“Marion of the Bountiful Bosoms,” Heather Cook Callow points out that “Joyce has structured the narrative in such a way that the voices of male Dublin (including Bloom’s) weigh heavily in our initial assessment of Molly, and their testimony comes down forcefully, in the first seven eighths of the novel, in favor of her beauty, sensuality, and immorality” (465). The most pronounced voice in this chorus is, of course, Bloom’s. From his perspective, Molly is the embodiment of insatiable female desire. By contrast, he presents himself as the tragically forsaken husband. As the reader begins to hear from other characters, however, especially Molly in the final episode, it becomes apparent that, while Molly is adulterous, Bloom’s perception of her is clouded by his own fantasies, fantasies which stem from his own lascivious nature. Molly’s meeting with Boylan, the reader discovers, was to a great extent orchestrated by Bloom, who, in addition to multiple sexual fetishes, has been involved in extramarital romances. Molly’s tryst is, by contrast, her first. Her thoughts further reveal that “she has been lonely most of her life,” and, following the death of her son, Rudy, she has remained chaste at her husband’s insistence (471, 473). A lack of affection thus moves Molly to adultery, and yet, despite the success of her meeting with Boylan, Molly’s thoughts repeatedly return to her husband. In the final episode, Molly is revealed as “a person whose loneliness, loss, and wistful optimism is every bit as moving as that of her generally sympathetically received husband” (466). Is Molly an adulteress or a long-suffering wife? Is Bloom a henpecked husband or a lecher? The complex portrait developed in the novel affirms all these interpretations while revealing their clear limits. As more and more voices are sounded, the Blooms’ complex marriage, like Defoe’s storm, comes to be seen as rife with paradoxical intricacies that defy conventional stereotypes. Would it be possible to fully capture the Blooms’ marriage in an objective description? Such a treatment would have to include a description of the marriage from the perspective of each spouse as well

as of outsiders. Furthermore, such a description would have to incorporate the particular language of each individual to accurately capture the exact nuances of their individual interpretation. In short, a balanced account would look very much like the perspectival description Joyce offers.

#### Defoe's Argument for the Peculiarity of Style

While the parallels between *The Storm* and *Ulysses* may be largely accidental, there is reason to suspect that they result from a similar recognition that traditional narrative is inescapably manipulative and fraught with danger. Both authors forge a new narrative style, one that avoids the exploitive potential inherent in traditional storytelling. Prior to *The Storm*, Defoe was known almost exclusively for his polemical pamphlets, which made effective use of rhetorical techniques such as satire. *The Storm*, however, is altogether unlike Defoe's political writing. The persuasive strategies Defoe had used so successfully in the past are absent, replaced by detailed charts, inventories, and, most peculiarly for the time, eyewitness testimony. This stylistic shift suggests a shift in intention. No longer was Defoe interested in swaying his audience. In *The Storm*, his principal intention seems to be accurately chronicling the Great Storm, and, to achieve this aim, he conspicuously abandons the stylistic devices that made him famous. In the preface, he indicates that his duty to get at the truth has led him to abandon his exclusive hold on the narration of events.

Because of the work's novelty, Defoe takes great pains in the lengthy preface to explain his reasons for writing about The Great Storm and including multiple eyewitness accounts. Both the book's subject matter and its style derive from what Defoe considers an important religious duty: telling the truth. Defoe, like many at the time, saw the storm as an act of "divine vengeance," so every Christian witness should relay "God's judgment" without error (64). Given



Defoe's background as a shady businessman who was known to deceive not only his friends and relations but also his own mother-in-law, it is at first difficult to accept Defoe's emphasis on the importance of truth-telling at face value (Backscheider 56-57). It is, however, reasonable to suppose that Defoe made a distinction between stretching the truth in his business dealings and outright lying in published writing. His having been imprisoned and indirectly bankrupted for libelous assertions might have helped to highlight this important distinction in his mind.

Defoe begins with a comparison that illustrates the responsibility of authorship. A preacher, Defoe writes, has a great responsibility to speak the truth, for if he fails to do so he misleads not a single person but an entire congregation. The author of a published work, by comparison, speaks not merely to an initial group of readers but, because a published text may last into the distant future, to an almost infinite number of potential readers. An author who fails to speak the truth misleads an unfathomable multitude, committing an incalculable sin (3). The moral weight of deception is multiplied by the number of persons deceived, so the greater the number of persons misled, the greater the sin. This suggestion may explain Defoe's apparently inconsistent stance on the value of truth-telling. The harm that results from lying is not limited merely to those who are addressed by the speaker, Defoe writes, but extends to everyone they unintentionally deceive as a consequence of the initial falsehood. An author's lies are repeated by his readers, thus "our children tell lies after us, and their children after them," and so on, "to the end of the world" (3). A writer may "impose" a deception "upon the world" and thus "abuse mankind" in its entirety (64). As if that were not enough to convince the reader that Defoe has given "serious consideration" to what an author "owes to truth," he notes that writers such as himself who attempt to go beyond merely describing what happened to recommend some course of action run the risk of further compounding their sin (5). They may be guilty of lying and then

using this falsehood as the basis for moral condemnation, thus incurring the added sin of hypocrisy.

Defoe adds that, though writers are typically guilty of no more than stretching the truth to make a story more engaging, such seemingly insignificant “white” lies can do great harm. “Impudence,” “ribaldry,” “fondness of telling a strange story,” and “empty flourishes” led “historians of remoter ages” to embellish and overemphasize accounts of actual events (5-6). Fact has been confounded with fantasy to such an extent that ancient history has become mere “romance.” So much uncertainty surrounds ancient history that it is impossible to know for certain anything about “the things and actions of remoter ages of the world” (5). In Defoe’s view, seemingly inconsequential white lies have unintentionally thrown an opaque veil over human history. In true Enlightenment spirit, Defoe, by contrast, pledges to reestablish history on a firm factual basis. Instead of describing the tempest entirely in his words he has chosen the “unusual method” of supplementing his account with “letters from the country in their own stile” despite the literary “meanness” of certain letters. Given an author’s responsibility to avoid deception, Defoe explains that his method springs from a desire “to keep close to the truth.” To stay close to the facts, Defoe discloses his “relation” to the “authorities” cited and reprints their accounts without substantial alteration (8). By allowing his correspondents to speak for themselves, Defoe, in effect, minimizes his responsibility for the veracity of their claims. In short, if his witnesses tell lies, he can exonerate himself legally and morally on the grounds that they are the deceivers, not him. Defoe merely recounts without alteration what has been reported by others.

At first glance, Defoe’s moralistic “apology” for the unusual structure of *The Storm* may seem worlds apart from Joyce’s concerns in *Ulysses*, but it is an appreciation of the moral risks associated with authorship that unites Defoe and Joyce and explains the unusual narrative

structure of their works. Despite their own great literary abilities, both authors fear that speaking for others would almost certainly distort the truth. Given that both men were such capable stylists, the danger of twisting the truth was even more pressing. Defoe and Joyce would be especially tempted to use their talent to tell a more appealing story. Even an earnest commitment to the truth could not ensure against some unconscious alteration of detail that might ultimately prove to be momentous. The temptations before an author, especially a very gifted author, are considerable, and, for this reason, alternative voices are brought forward to deliberately eclipse that of the author. In *The Storm*, Defoe ultimately feels the need to retain some control over the narrative by playing the role of the collector. Joyce, by contrast, seems to feel that even this minimal role is too great a risk and he appears to relinquish control of the narrative altogether. Both authors remain at work in the background managing the voices at the fore, and this role too entails risk, but these risks are necessary to achieve some narrative coherence. In this respect, both Defoe and Joyce work at the limits of meaningful narrative.

## CONCLUSION

In his lecture on realism delivered just a few years before beginning *Ulysses*, Joyce focuses almost entirely on Daniel Defoe. The “star of poetry,” he writes, is conspicuously absent from Defoe’s writing, but, because of this absence, Defoe achieves “an admirably lucid, wholly unaffected style” (18). The lack of a musical element, he adds, is what distinguishes Defoe’s realism from that of naturalists such as Leo Tolstoy and Gerhart Hauptmann, which is animated by “the emotional revolt of modern man against human or superhuman iniquity” (17). In the works of these authors, there is a “studied ardor of indignation and protest” that is not found in Defoe, a writer who “defies and transcends the magical beguilement of music” (23, 22). In this respect, Joyce suggests, it is possible to glimpse in Defoe’s work “the soul of the modern realist novel” (15).

The unaffected style so much admired by Joyce is the result of Defoe’s early journalistic aspirations. In his extended nonfiction works, Defoe considered himself a chronicler rather than a poet and was more concerned with truth than beauty. He took pains to record current events with exactitude and developed a number of recognizable techniques that eventually found their way into his fiction, such as his unadorned style, use of colloquial phrases, and notoriously exhaustive inventories. Defoe’s famous characters, such as Moll Flanders and Roxana, have an unmistakable tabloid quality. Their vices as well as their virtues are unflinchingly paraded before the reader without recourse to censorship or romanticism.

The techniques associated with Defoe’s nonfiction, which reappear in his fiction, seem to have influenced Joyce, especially his *Ulysses*. We see the same use of colloquial language, factual detail, and thorough catalogues, and persons and places are described without censorship or sentimentality. Moreover, in *Ulysses*, as in *The Storm*, the events of a relatively short period,

less than twenty-four hours, are recounted in exhaustive detail from alternative perspectives, and there is great effort to insure that the style and precise wording of individual accounts are faithfully preserved despite failings. Going further than Defoe, Joyce permits not only those directly involved in the story to speak but even persons at some distance from the action. Unlike in *The Storm*, no authoritative voice appears to contextualize and evaluate competing accounts.

For both writers, this “matter-of-fact” realism appears motivated by a concern to prevent misunderstanding (“Defoe” 12). The fear is that, by singling out certain facts or prioritizing particular voices, something vital may be irretrievably lost and readers led astray. For this reason, narrative constraints are relaxed, and every fact and viewpoint, no matter how seemingly insignificant, may be faithfully chronicled for posterity, leaving the reader to judge this motley jumble for him or herself. Working through this rich tangle of details and reports places great strain on the reader, but only by carefully sifting through the assemblage can the reader ascertain the truth. Joyce’s metaphor for this careful weighing of evidence is an astronomer carefully establishing the distance of celestial objects by comparing distortions of parallax.

Despite formal similarities, however, there appears an important difference between *The Storm* and *Ulysses*. Both works aspire to capture their subject as accurately as possible through a surplus of information, but, in *The Storm*, Defoe delivers a clear message to his readers and a call to action. Everyone who witnessed The Great Storm of 1703, he suggests, saw it as divine punishment and a call to Britain for spiritual repentance. *Ulysses*, by contrast, reveals a multi-perspectival account of Dublin, which seems to preclude conviction and action, especially some larger agenda for Ireland. Viewed in this light, the novel appears to serve only a negative role, disrupting the seductive narratives offered by those with their own agenda for Ireland, such as the British government, the Catholic Church, and Irish nationalists.

Though it is easy to see *Ulysses* as merely disruptive, such readings overlook the relevance of the novel's narrative structure to its story and, as a consequence, miss the work's larger significance and appeal. In this thesis, I have argued that Joyce abandoned the notion of a single representative language in *Ulysses* but maintained the mimetic conception of art outlined in his early writing. Instead of crafting a single narrative, however, he chose instead to juxtapose supplemental viewpoints, genres, and styles, much in the manner of Defoe's *The Storm*. This approach to the novel highlights the consistency between Joyce's critical writing and his fiction. More important, it ties together *Ulysses*'s unusual narrative structure and its story insofar as the novel's perspectivism closely parallels Leopold Bloom's empathy.

Opening with Stephen Dedalus, *Ulysses* appears initially as the continuation of *A Portrait of the Artist*, and the similarity of narrative style suggests that there has been little development in the interim between novels. Stephen continues to struggle to free himself from forces of stagnation and discover his own voice as an artist. The narrative, approximating free indirect discourse, echoes Stephen's thoughts as well as those who press him with their own agenda for his future. A profound change, nevertheless, occurs once Stephen and Bloom cross paths for the first time in "Aeolus." Here alternative perspectives, voices, and styles become increasingly pronounced in the narrative, closely mirroring Bloom's empathetic embrace of multiple viewpoints. The transition of protagonists is matched here by a change of style and mindset.

Noting Bloom's unusually sympathetic disposition, critics suggest that he serves as a contrast to the myopic perspective of other characters. Whenever possible, Bloom attempts to imaginatively see the world as others see it. Bloom endeavors to understand what it would be like to be blind as he helps a sightless boy cross the street (148-49). He attempts to interpret his cat's meows in "Calypso" and speculates that, to his cat, he must appear to be the "Height of a tower"

(45). He sympathizes with Mina Purefoy's labor and delivery pains in "Lestrygonians" and gelded workhorses in "The Lotus-Eaters" (134, 63). He commiserates with fish, which must, it seems to him, suffer seasickness, and imagines the thrill pigeons experience as they soar high above the Irish house of parliament and drop their load (310, 133).<sup>24</sup>

Bloom's broad-mindedness makes him a very likeable protagonist, and, as Timothy Brennan points out, this sympathy is exactly what Stephen, the artist, needs despite all his talent and promise. "Compassion," Brennan writes, "is just what the over-literary Stephen lacks and perhaps this is why his eloquence has been pissed away in oratory ... and his writing replaced by occasional scribbling" (148). Though Stephen may represent the young Joyce, Brennan proposes that "Bloom, not Stephen, is Joyce's aesthetic spokesman in *Ulysses*" (147). If Stephen is in need of Bloom's empathetic vision to create a work that captures the world around him, then the transition from Stephen to Bloom illustrates the artist's journey to inspiration and greater maturity.

On this view, Bloom embodies the ideal of sympathetic understanding toward which the artist aspires in representation. Bloom recognizes that his own standpoint is limited and thus attempts to see the world compassionately from the vantage points of those he encounters. Even when his attempts at understanding overreach, as with his cat, he remains aware that every living being has a perspective, often very different from his own. By imaginatively embodying these diverse standpoints, he comes to see his surroundings and himself much more clearly than other

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<sup>24</sup> There are, of course, many other instances of Bloom's sympathy but these six examples have been discussed in criticism. White considers the blind stripling, Rando examines Bloom's cat, and Brennan notes Bloom's sympathy for Mina Purefoy and the gelded workhorses. Finally, Weinstein mentions Bloom's speculations about fish and pigeons in his chapter on *Ulysses*.

characters do. Unfortunately, he lacks the technical skills required to express this understanding in an artistic medium. In this sense, Bloom illustrates artistic inspiration rather than technique.

Though Bloom's creative insights appear wasted due to his lack of technical ability, the novel suggests that he may ultimately serve to inspire the struggling writer, Stephen, who conversely wields great technical skill but lacks empathetic understanding. If Stephen could adopt Bloom's perspectival polyglotism, he, unlike Bloom, would have the technical skills needed to render a realistic portrait of his Dublin surroundings. Moreover, he might be able to portray himself as a protagonist in such a way that his own struggle to find his literary voice is clearly revealed. Bloom and Stephen, therefore, represent different sides of the creative process, inspiration and execution, which must be unified to create a fully realized and successful work of art.

Viewed in this light, *Ulysses*, like the novel that precedes it, is in large part about the development of the artist. To represent the world around him truthfully, Stephen must acquire Bloom's sympathetic disposition. In other words, his technical ability must be matched with equally sharp insight. By directly incorporating a diversity of representative Dublin voices, the latter sections of the novel demonstrate what such a perspectival representation looks like. Instead of combining distinct voices in a single narrative, each voice individually contributes to the representation. The aim is not to demonstrate the relativity of language but to render the novel's subject or, better, overlapping subjects with unprecedented and uncompromising verisimilitude.

Not only does the narrative diversity in the latter portions of the novel illustrate the perspectivism required to faithfully represent the artist and the artist's surroundings, but the novel's shifting voices mirror the growth of the artist from the narrow perspective of the initial



episodes to the richer, more complex composites of the later episodes. The transition from single to multiple perspectives occurs in “Aeolus,” the point in the novel where the central protagonists, Stephen and Bloom, accidentally cross paths at the *Freeman* offices and, by implication, where artistic technique comes to be paired with commensurate inspiration. This crossing represents the transition from youth to maturity, dependence to independence, and stagnation to liberation.

What is the relevance of Joyce’s binocular vision to the average reader who, like Bloom, lacks the technical skill to create art? There seems good reason to view Bloom as Joyce’s literary representative, but he is more than a symbol of mature artistic understanding. The binocular perspective that endows Bloom with aesthetic insight differentiates him from other Dubliners who seem to be hopelessly mired in their own, or others’, monopolizing narratives. Unlike those he encounters during his day’s sojourn, Bloom readily tries out different points of view, and thus he never appears in danger of being imprisoned within his own narrow imagination or anyone else’s. In this respect, whether or not we aspire to artistry on a grand scale, we should aspire to navigate the world as artfully as the nimble Bloom.

Dublin as portrayed in *Ulysses*, as well as in Joyce’s earlier works, is characterized by patterns of stagnation, backwardness, and corruption. Even Stephen, at the outset of *Ulysses*, appears to be in a rut and in danger of squandering his talents. Joyce’s characters are trapped in this cycle because they are unable to throw off narratives of themselves and their surroundings that have been thrust upon them, often by the people and institutions that they most trust. In this sense, they dwell within prisons of their own imagination, unable even to conceive how their world might look differently. It is the ability to make an empathetic leap of the imagination that sets Bloom apart from everyone else. Even when his empathetic efforts fall far short, Bloom remains cognizant that he and his surroundings can be seen differently.

All this is not to say that Bloom's binocular vision is relativistic or, much less, nihilistic. Far from seeing every perspective as equal, Bloom tries out different points of view in order to ascertain the truth, and, in this sense, he operates, though he does not fully realize it, by something like astronomical parallax. That is, just as we gain a sense of distance through comparison of alternate perspectives, Bloom gets a sense of truth by evaluating different points of view. This parallactic vision offers Bloom a more accurate sense of himself and his surrounding than those around him, and it enables him to live in Dublin while avoiding the powerfully seductive tropes that engender the pervasive cycle of pessimism, indolence, and decay. For all his obvious foolishness, Bloom, in many respects, appears much wiser than his Dublin counterparts.

Those who ascribe to *Ulysses* an overall mood of lighthearted playfulness are of course thinking primarily of those episodes that involve Bloom, but this distinct mood captures not cynicism about the possibilities of language, but Bloom's attitude toward life, which is strikingly at odds with the prevailing mindset. Unlike other Dubliners, Bloom feels free to playfully try on different perspectives until he finds one that allows him to see the world aright. For this reason, Bloom sees opportunities where others see only misfortune and, consequently, he remains optimistic while those around him sink deeper into hopelessness. The contrast is most pronounced in "Cyclops," when Bloom directly confronts the narrow-minded and violent "citizen."

Is Bloom's compassion, we might ask, a trait that can be recommended? Aren't people like Bloom simply born with empathy? Bloom's compassion, *Ulysses* suggests, is not as natural as it first appears. Repeatedly, we see Bloom working hard to see the world from an alternate point of view, and his musings show those who wish to imitate him how they too can share his

binocular vision. Bloom begins by recognizing that others have a different perspective, and then he proceeds to imagine, largely through analogy, what it must be like to see the world differently. To an extent, this imaginative exercise is purely cognitive, but seeing the world from a different perspective often gives rise to associated emotions. Far from being natural, Bloom's empathy appears as a cultivated trait that can be imitated.

Why should we aspire to Bloom's empathy? When we consider alternative ways of understanding the world, we begin to appreciate that our purview is limited and that we have blindneses we fail to recognize. This realization loosens the grip of our own particular perspective and, at the same time, drives us to search out additional perspectives to supplement our own. In this respect, *Ulysses*, like *The Storm*, is more than a chronicle of events. It is an exhortation to the reader to embrace a different, and saving, way of seeing. The restless and cacophonous voices of *Ulysses* lift the reader out of stagnation like a rising tide and introduce a chorus of new possibilities. Though it is tempting to cling to one voice, the novel suggests that, like Bloom, we should allow ourselves to be carried by the chorus. Far from being relativistic, even nihilistic, the novel is just the opposite. The voices of *Ulysses* urge us to exceed our imagination and the self-imposed limits of our world in the search for truth.

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