

Symphony or Cacophony? **How creation hears itself in James Joyce's** *Ulysses*.

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M.M. Bakhtin asserts that the music of a novel depends upon multiple voices. “The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” with “...different linguistic levels” (261). James Joyce’s *Ulysses* captures this idea in powerful and varied ways that nearly replicate the sound of daily life if one was to hear the inner monologues of passers by, the sounds of machines in onomatopoeic dialogue and the discordant discourses of Dubliners aligned in proper time and space. Bakhtin further writes

The living utterances having taken meaning and shape at a particular historic moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio- ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become and active participant in social dialogue (276).

Throughout James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, one finds that the sound of conversation, not just the spoken conversation of the human characters, but the sound of all of life in June 16, 1904 Dublin is heard and in some sense repeated and reverberated in the onomatopoeia of the epic novel. “Although this kind of experiment (Aural technique) is not entirely original, it has seldom if ever been carried out on so extensive a scale” (Steinberg, 141). Vincent Sherry furthers this idea by calling Joyce’s *Ulysses* and other works “searching experiments with human psychology and linguistics” (103).

Joyce’s *Ulysses* is often cited as the greatest literary accomplishment of the 20th century. The story of everyman Leopold Bloom and aspiring writer Stephen Dedalus is a good one; but the challenge that Joyce throws at the novel and its conventions – linguistic, syntactic, stylistically – is what connotes his work as one of best of the century. The epic frame of this one day tale – June 16, 1904 - derived from Homer’s *Odyssey*, along with the varied styles and techniques chosen for each chapter and within each chapter has spawned academic theses since before the novel’s publication in 1922 and will continue to inspire academics for some time to come. The novel has been likened to the human body and given color

schemes. It is essentially a familiar and unfamiliar modernist puzzle. This is Joyce's ode to Dublin, a city that he grew up in but left, never to return. He desired to create a true replication of the city: through its alleys and districts, alle houses and butchers, its various classes of people. *Ulysses* is June 16, 1904 come alive on the page, engaging the senses of sound and sight, piquing the reader's own senses of taste and touch and smell through the varied voices of the novel's narration. It can be said that Stephen and Bloom represent Joyce's own duplicitous nature: a driven young intellectual and literati, and a caring, devoted father and husband.

The current Guinness brewery tour begins with a display that is a rewind and replayed conversation, of very genuine sounding Irish folks having a raucous conversation, with laughter and exclamations and subtly intoned choice words. It was charming and to the observer passing by, somewhat unintelligible; but one may imagine to the Irish, something quite intelligible, with a let's keep it to ourselves and not allow ourselves to be understood motive. Keep our conversation for us. Let the others marvel at our communication and handsome accent. Audition captures the listener's mind. Language is not just the relation of ideas through words, but the actual sounds of those words. But is language a purely human phenomenon?

This example of the Guinness brewery exhibit proves that the spoken English of the Irish is a sound dependent, lyrical language; one with ebbs and intonations that need to be heard in order to be appreciated: a seemingly cacophonous sound that when listened to again begins to develop into a symphonic performance of language, tone, and rhythm. The word play that is evident in this taped conversation is woven throughout the interactions of Joyce's characters despite the one hundred year difference and the manner in which these remnants of Irish dialect were captured. The word play of Joyce's novel is much more evident and entertaining when it is audible. *Ulysses* is engrossing when read aloud; even if one only moves his or her mouth along with the words for the feel of the linguistic playing and jousting that bounces throughout *Ulysses*, the essence of the novel's linguistic experiment is more greatly experienced and appreciated. It is a novel that should be spoken, just as language is more colorful when heard and not merely read. The puns live larger when they are auditory; the few instances of written wordplay play even better when verbalized by both the speaking character, and the reader, of *Ulysses*. Anthony Burgess writes

Ulysses which is a conspectus of so many things, may be taken as implying the whole spectrum of Dublin speech, and it would be amusing to sketch out a cline, with the speech of drabs and jarveys near the bottom and that characters like JJ O'Molloy and Professor MacHugh somewhere at the top. As it is, for the most part, far more enlightening to hear *Ulysses* read aloud...than to peruse it silently

(“The Dublin Sound,” 49).

The following selections from the text of *Ulysses* will show their resonance throughout characters’ understandings of life and situations, internally and externally as a result of a symphony of seeming noise. As one thinks and feels, the language and sounds of life that bound to our ears at each living moment shape and reshape our thoughts, feelings and emotions as we come to, (or at least try to come to), an understanding of what it is to be a human character in this play of life and its jokes, questing to further understand all that ebbs and flows around us. The sound of life is its own patois. Out of the clattering cacophony, a symphonic symbiosis of language develops. Joyce creates a cacophonous symphony throughout *Ulysses*; ever the composer, he heard music in all sound and language.

Language and/ or Sound: Communication on Infinite Levels

Vincent Sherry expounds on the place of language and its sound in Joyce’s work. He presents the idea of a “labyrinth of linguistics, where a word finds its meaning” (95). I would propose further that the sound of a word and the sounds surrounding that word, in many instances throughout *Ulysses*, create more of a chain of linguistic reactions. Conversation is the advancement of a statement by follow up questions and tangential points. But the sound that surrounds such conversation has an obvious, and not so obvious, effect as well. One must raise one’s voice if the setting is noisy; one also incorporates the sound of all that is around him or her as phrases are formed and enunciated: the rhythms of language are not solely created, as they are also reactions and responses to the auditory and visual stimuli that are present. Sherry continues by stating that “Stephen has reconceived the verbal subject as a gathering of linguistic energies” (96), and that “Stephen and Bloom’s linguistic deliberations conspire to suggest that words afford a constant opportunity for the Freudian slip” (97). But words alone do not allow for the Freudian slip; such slips are encouraged and generated by the auditory stimuli that present themselves in jingling jaunty cars, crackling shells and the word play of Stephen and Bloom, as well as the word play of fellow Dubliners. “Sound alike formations... [and] rhyming words release anxiety” (Sherry, 97). These instances are acknowledgements, albeit indirect and softened, of all that cannot be spoken bluntly, but the minimal verbalizing that we observe acts as a welcome *confession*. As we travel through the minds of Stephen and Bloom, as well as the minds of countless other Dubliners, we realize that unspoken, possibly incomplete incorporations of thoughts of the deepest nature, drive the present actions and speeches we see undertaken throughout Bloom’s Day.

However, speech and verbalization are not limited to the human speaker alone. All of creation is teeming with *deliberate* sound – sound that wants to be

acknowledged, and for the better part of the day is rightfully so acknowledged. It furthers the plot, adds to the development of character, and fully actualizes the multi-dimensional universe and microcosm that Dublin is. *Ulysses* is a painting of sight and sound, the conscious and subconscious, in addition to the Dubliners who unknowingly channel the day's linguistic energies.

The effect of language, sound, and their complementing metamorphosis on June 16, 1904 will be explicitly illustrated, as far as language itself can allow. *Ulysses*, like most modern and postmodern literature, is a novel that makes assertions and through the text proves those assertions. It is a novel that challenged and changed language by recording it in a way that was as seamless as the mind's absorption and reproduction of it.

The Text of *Ulysses*: Wordplay on a Higher Level and How It Forces the Novel Forward

The following word/ phrase serves as a prime example how Joyce's written language conspires to be much more. " '(W)avyavyeavyheavyeavyevy' is an auditory as well as visual analogue to hair being described...In recording 'simultaneously what a man says, sees, thinks,' Joyce gave us more than strings of words spoken either aloud or as internal soliloquy." The reader is left to process Joyce's "simulations of perceptions" (Steinberg, 140). Perceptions of Joyce's simulations are required on the reader/ listener's behalf in order to fully absorb the cacophonous sound replicated in Joyce's transcript of Dublin on June 16, 1904.

Leopold Bloom, the doting and servile husband and father, begins his day by feeding the cat as he prepares his own breakfast.

"The cat walked stiffly around a leg of the table with tail on high.

- Mkgnao!

- O there you are, Mr Bloom, said, turning from the fire.

The cat mewed in answer... They understand what we say better than we understand them. She understands all she wants to" (45).

It is here (with the homonym of hear?) that we see (or when read aloud, should we hear?) the beginning of Joyce's attempt to capture the sound of life and the constant communication on every level. All sounds are unfiltered; our ears are always "on." Unlike sight that can be shut off with the eyes closed, or taste, where the tongue can do without food in the mouth, auditory stimuli are always being absorbed and processed. We often relegate what is heard to the background, and only *conscientiously* "hear" it when it is familiar or of use. And as Bloom is digesting his thoughts on what it is about cats and their nature that makes them as

they are, the cat, almost knowing that it has lost Bloom, the consummate thinker, to his thoughts and is beginning to run away with them, says “loudly”: “Mrkrgrnao!” (45). The cat has called Bloom back to attention.

As Stephen Dedalus walks along the strand with thoughts streaming through his mind, waves crash about him. His boots “crush crackling wrack” as he walks pondering the “ineluctable modality of the audible” (3). Ineluctable modality defines Joyce’s linguistic worldview in that change is unavoidable; Stephen vocalizes this thought in both the auditory and visual realm. Sherry makes extensive comments on this phenomenon: first and foremost, this shows Stephen’s “verbal sensibility” (89). As the reader comes to know Stephen, one can acknowledge Joyce’s own presence; and as one compares Stephen’s thoughts on language and writing with Joyce’s actual writing, a mirror image becomes clear. In the opening pages of his book, Sherry states that the narrator of *Ulysses* “enjoys a linguistic sympathy with Stephen and Bloom” (3). Stephen, throughout *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, wonders about the language of everything; everything, in some sense, *speaks*. And if it does not speak, it writes: the “heavy sands are the language of the tide” (37). But we must focus on the ineluctable modality that hangs in Stephen’s mind. What is unavoidably changing – visually, and more importantly, orally – seems to consume the processes of Stephen’s linguistically attuned mind. Language is forever changing. Its rhythms connect in previously unachieved and yet to be connected ways. And Joyce makes this changing of language, and all that language can *and cannot* describe, a central idea in *Ulysses*.

“*Ulysses* is, like *Paradise Lost*, an auditory work, and the sounds carry the sense” (Burgess, *Re Joyce*, 177). In Episode three, “Proteus,” as Stephen ponders the ineluctable modality of the visual and the auditory, the ocean speaks to Stephen, or maybe Stephen hears the ocean speak. “Listen: a fourworded wavespeech:seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, oos...In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap...And, spent, its speech ceases” (41). Can it be stated that the ocean is contributing to the ever going dialogue of life? Could one extend that this is more than onomatopoeia – that the ocean is a contributing member of the cacophonous symphony that is *Ulysses*? The ocean’s waves are a speaking character.

But it is not just nature and man that speak; in the burgeoning machination and industrialization of the early 20th century, the noise of the mechanical world was asserting itself in the chorus of everyday discourse. The “Aeolus” episode, with its newspaper-like format, has the events of the chapter taking place in the “windy” newsroom of a Dublin paper. Sections of the episode are formatted as such that they imitate the layout of a newspaper. Under the headline “Orthographical,” we read:

Sllt. The nethermost deck of the first machine jogged forward its flyboard with sllt the first batch of quirefolded papers. Sllt. *Almost human* the way it sllt to call attention. Doing its level best to *speak*. The door too sllt creaking, *asking* to be shut. Everything speaks in its own way. Sllt (100) [Italics mine].

Machines are alive and speak. Every noise can be purported to be a form of communication. Language is not just limited to what a human person says; it can be ascribed to any form of patterned sound that emanates from anything. Language is not for people alone anymore; the printing machine here is communicating with anyone or anything that can listen. The door is “asking to be shut” by drawing attention to itself. Creation is alive, and it doesn’t require a heartbeat, merely a patterned form of sound. The onomatopoeia of “sllt” and “creaking” is more than just a noise put in orthographical form; it is Joyce’s attempt to give speech to all of creation – to create a symphony of intermingling and complementing sounds that meld to form a soundtrack to life, further adding to the evolution of dialogue and language. In addition to the printing presses, the “telephone whirred” (105); the mechanical world speaks!

Professor MacHugh, under the title “The Grandeur That Was Rome,” states “We mustn’t be led away by words, by sound of words. We think of Rome, imperial, imperious, imperative” (108). This statement serves as both a warning to the reader/ listener, and further as a joke from Joyce. MacHugh himself is ignoring his own advice as he ends with “imperial, imperious, imperative.” Joyce uses this type of word play throughout the day of this novel. It is the tool of a skilled and manipulative orator, a powerful tool that can stir crowds to a frenzy, such that the listener(s) could, and in the orator’s mindful intentions, hopefully do, get led or carried away.

A few lines later, Lenehan, playfully or mistakenly, states “Our old ancient ancestor’s, as we read in the first chapter of Guinness’s...” (108). A play on *Genesis*, Guinness serves as a subconscious slip, or that of a purposefully misspoken proper name to show Ireland’s pride in its main export and vital social lubricant.

Lenehan, seemingly the wordsmith-clown, proposes the riddle asking, “What opera is like a railwayline?” His answer: “The Rose of Castille,” or as he explains, “Rows of Cast Steel.” Clever word play, both written and oral, but further proof that the sound of the day transposes itself to the ear as well, or maybe even better, than to the page. The people at the Guinness exhibit seem to be on the right track when making the oral tradition of wordplay an integral part of the exhibit’s opening. This example lends itself to Samuel Beckett’s assertion that *Ulysses*’ “adequate comprehension depends as much on its visibility as its audibility” (15). Both of Lenehan’s wordplays, in addition to his playful

misstatement of “feetstoops” (106), exhibit the “comic possibility in and through language” (Sherry, 98). Beckett states that the writing of *Ulysses* “is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*” (14).

“This is how the poets write, the similar sounds. But then Shakespeare has no rhymes: blank verse. The flow of language it is” (125). Bloom’s thoughts as he wanders along in the opening of “Lestrygonians” further the discussion on language and its sounds. As he thinks of his wife Molly, he recalls her misstatements concerning “base barreltone voice,” about which he editorializes: “Only big words for ordinary things on account of the sound” (126). The obvious homophones and the very different meanings of the two similar sounding words (bass and baritone) allow for Bloom to make conclusions about human patterns in the use and misuse of language.

Further along in the chapter, Bloom thinks of the “Useless words” (134). Events and their opposites occur day after day, (trains and boats coming and going, in and out), toward almost no culminating point. The futility of words leaves him disheartened. But the power that lies beneath these words, despite the futility of action that they describe, require the reader, and Bloom, to acknowledge that there is still no better way to communicate – a rather frustrating thought, but one to which the reader subscribes as the reader is reading the novel in this format.

As Bloom enters the lunching hour at the Burton, the sound of eating, *devouring*, becomes the dominant form of communication, and Joyce uses extensive descriptive language to make the scene come alive: “gurgling soup down his gullet” (138); “Gristle: gums: no teeth to chewchewchewit” (138); “Gulp, Grub. Gulp. Gobstuff” (139). And this sounding of ravaging lunchers, moves Bloom’s thoughts to the butchery, where he imagines the wretched cows waiting to be slaughtered, sliced, and bought. And when they have been made into tonight’s dinner, the meat when slapped down goes “Plup” (140). Vivid and enthralling description, but the addition of auditory detail greatly enhances what Bloom has encountered – a language of its own, thriving on its own sound. The auditory nature of the world is a necessary oar in the stream of consciousness.

The narrator of the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode emulates the words and sounds of characters into his or her own narrative of the events. This creates a unique effect where the point of view parrots, or even mocks, the characters. “Piper! Mr Best piped” (157); “Here he ponders... possibilities of the possible as possible” (159); the Quaker librarian states “All sides of life should be represented.”/ He smiled on all sides equally” (162-163); Mr Best speaks on “Hughes and hews and hues...” (163); following the poem featuring the dilemma of beds, we read “It is clear that there were two beds, a best and a secondbest, Mr Secondbest Best said finely” (167); and as Stephen finishes his rendition of the Ten

Commandments, finishing with the warning against coveting another man's *jackass*, we read:

“-Or his *jennyass*, Buck Mulligan *antiphoned*.

“-*Gentle Will* is being roughly handled, *gentle Mr Best* said *gently*.

“-Which *will*? gagged sweetly Buck Mulligan. We are getting mixed.

“-The *will* to live, John Eglinton philosophised, for poor Ann, *Will's* widow is the *will* to die” (169).

[Italics mine]

These examples make the auditory nature of these exchanges into physical, on-the-page details as well, as they are tied into the narrator's cues as to how we should understand the characters to be speaking their lines – further ineluctable modality of the written and spoken word.

The onomatopoeic words of whirr, throb, and hum of “Wandering Rocks” further serve to inject life and sound and language to dynamos, making Stephen stuck “[b]etween two roaring worlds where they swirl” (199). The worlds of human and machine are in competition with each other; Stephen is the 20th century man caught between what was (the world of man) and what will be (the world of man and machine). Stephen has been “urged on” by these dynamos, impelled to make himself move just a bit faster, just a bit more like a machine. The sound of a machine making a man act according to the rhythms of a machine – the irony of a man made machine controlling man – such futuristic and fatalistic insight from the early 1900's, shows the conversational intercourse among all aspects of creation. Sound exists as a dominating physical force, the ears opening man to auditory subjugation. Man moves in time to machinated music.

The oral cue seamlessly pries into the unconscious, all-absorbing, mental landscape of Joyce's Dublin characters. In the “Sirens” episode, when Bloom hears the jingling of the jaunty car outside, his mind is pointed towards the soon to be (re-)consummated affair between Marion and Blazes Boylan. This jingling not only affects Bloom, but the rest of the narrative in this chapter echoes the sounds of the outside's jingling, whether we are in Bloom's mind thinking about Molly and Blazes' jingling bed, or observing the whole scene in third person without a specific thought provocation conjured by sound. This jingling, as well as the tuning of the bar's piano and the singing that accompanies it, moves the narrative to make the connection between language and song. “There's music everywhere” (231). The onomatopoeia of a creaking door, the jingling of a jaunty car, and the creaking of shoes on the floor sing of life's movement. They are speaking, adding to the symphony if not cacophony of all that is life. Quotations throughout the chapter sharpen the point of language and its universal application to all that exists in the realm of sound. “Words? Music? No: it's what's behind” (226). “It's on

account of the sounds it is” (228). The sound of all that is, is only sound – but what one associates with a sound or various sounds, and various orderings of sounds, shapes how life evolves or even possibly *devolves*.

All of the sound around one rarely ceases; rather, we become adept at *tuning* it out. Only when we conscientiously open our ears to acknowledge, and our minds to describe, all that sounds off as we march through each day, do we really see the layers of rich complexity – the beautiful and base – that exist in this orchestra pit of life. When Bloom thinks of Chamber Music and realizes that a urinary pun could be made of this term when “chamber” is defined as to its type, the sound of urination adds to the sound waves of existence: “Diddleiddle addleaddle ooddleoodle. Hissss” (232). Immediately after this thought, there is a knock on the door, and when read aloud, this paragraph stands as a shining example of what sound can become when it is written and acknowledged in the way that it exists, which we so rarely describe. “One rapped on a door, one tapped with a knock, did he knock Paul de Kock with loud proud knocker with a cock carracarracarra cock. Cockcock” (232). It is rhythmic and flowing, with rhyme and unique sound: we see here the percussion to the preceding instrumentation of urination. The onomatopoeia is explicit and direct; but it is the sound of life (and one worried about extramarital intercourse) put to paper. The energy of the socio-linguistic dialogue shaping the world is ever present.

But all of this “sounding off” is lost on Pat, the hard of hearing waiter. “Pat, waiter, waited, waiting to hear, for he was hard of hear by the door” (225). As a table server, he brings food and beverage after pausing to hear patrons’ requests: this flow of actions is relayed in the homophonic “wait” and its varied definitions. Joyce’s efforts to bring audition to the page, and the word play of wait with its varied shades of meaning dependant upon suffix, engage the reader visually and aurally. It is comically sad how deaf Pat is found in the most auditory of chapters. The Sirens’ bar is overloaded with auditory sensory cues: pianos being tuned, old songs being sung, crackling cigarettes as they burn, the ever jingling outside scene. Can we view Pat the waiter as Joyce’s proof as to how much of life we would miss if we were to tune out the auditory sensations? Is Pat the waiter proof of what we should be listening to as Pat cannot? The episode fittingly ends with Bloom’s loudly passed gas: “Pprpffrrppffff.” (239). As Beckett states, “[W]ords are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer’s ink. They are alive” (15). This eleventh episode of *Ulysses*, “Sirens,” serves as a fine example of when cacophony and discord align to produce a symphony arrangement.

As Bloom continues through his day, Fritz Senn proposes that the within the “Cyclops” episode, speech and silence are the main topics – what is strategic to reveal and what to hold back (486). “Ulysses is about heterophony; minds move in different orbits; its salient episodic idiosyncrasies are its stylistic manifestations;

there is a perceptual as well as psychological parallax” (487). The metamorphosis of words, their spacing and emphasis in oral nature, augment one’s perceived meaning of such a phrase. The sound in the ear appears differently when put on the page, what Senn refers to as “sleight of lexis” (496). Misidentification, misinterpretation, and social conflict are at the heart of Odysseus’s encounter with Polyphemus; the spoken and written alteration of lexical phrases purposefully and comically indulges miscommunication. The “Cyclops” episode of Homer’s *Odyssey* (Book IX, Penguin Classics) superbly fits with Joyce and other modernists like Picasso, who were fond of creating and exploiting puns, as well as visual and auditory word play (Rocco, 399-400). *Ulysses* itself, through the nature in which Joyce has shaped the narrative, allows for puns and easily misinterpreted phrases that urge the reader to draw his or her own meaning.

The “Cyclops” episode exhibits nationalistic tones as the question of language morphs from an implied theme to an overt theme that is discussed in detail by the Citizen, a prejudiced, hard-drinking pub-goer who dominates the conversation of this twelfth episode. Among the portions of discussion defining what a nation is, we read that a nation consists of a people who speak their own language (255). The Irish of course had a distinct dilemma with the imperialistic English and the imposition of their language throughout colonized Ireland. However, Irish English evolved, in the same vein that any subculture¹ develops a slang of its own to differentiate and separate itself from the group in power. (One can hear examples throughout the novel, most especially in discussions held in the pub.) This leads to a question regarding language and ownership of such: Can language be one’s own as it evolves and is invariably influenced so that it is never what it was when it was first possessed? Can language be possessed? Or is it a living, fluctuating organism?

If we were to hear the opening example of the Guinness exhibit featuring Irish dialect and storytelling, one can notice certain patterns which appear characteristic of Irish dialogue: long winded, run-on sentences with a rhythmic ebb and flow among all participants in the conversation. The language is boisterous, but dry, full of allusions and personality. This can be true of any language; the Irish society is a linguistically based society. And Joyce, maturing in this setting, was indelibly formed by it – something we can see when examining the burgeoning thoughts of Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait*. Sherry further observes that in “Araby” from Joyce’s *Dubliners*, the protagonist-speaker situates his language

¹ I am viewing subcultures as arising from a lack of power, in terms of power or population figures, or a disagreement/ disenfranchisement with the dominant culture. Subcultures often differentiate themselves from the ruling culture, exhibiting a pride and identity that comes in forming a resistant, unique language with deliberately different sounds and meanings. In thinking of American subcultures such as skateboarding and rap music, these are initially frowned upon by mainstream culture, but some of their phrases and mannerisms filter into the dominant, mainstream culture’s linguistic understanding.

in relation to the *oral culture* (italics mine) of Dublin, which he typifies in images of the marketplace or bazaar. “Here is the medley of demotic voices, background sounds of history and variegated social class, from which the novelist (in Bakhtin’s construction) draws his stuff” (18-19). M.M. Bakhtin writes in his essay “Discourse in the Novel” that “Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning” (259). He continues that “[S]tylistics... ignores the social life of discourse outside the artist’s study, discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, of social groups, generations and epochs” (259).

Joyce’s work, *Ulysses* in particular, is the product of a highly oral culture and tradition, one that permeated the streets of Dublin and the minds of all who walked those streets, no matter their social class or level of education. Qualities of speech, such as nasality and accent, are evident identifying features of a speaker’s native influences. And Joyce democratically includes all speakers he imagined to be present in the June 16, 1904 Dublin landscape. He uses the English of the poor, the working class, the middle class, artists, imperialists, nationalists, prostitutes and immigrants. Joyce’s language, in Sherry’s words, sprung from and further created “social institutions and verbal constitutions” (77). His “ear was tuned in a vocal culture as complex and rich as the Irish society of his formative years” (Sherry, 3).

As the Citizen unleashes his diatribe against all that is not Irish, he proclaims: “To hell with the bloody brutal Sassenachs [the Anglo-Saxons] and their *patois*” (266). In the Citizen’s mind an outsider language is *noise* to be damned – it is a conglomeration of diction and surrounding influences, with little of its own merit. It should not be paid attention to nor even allowed. It is a scourge on the public ear and the populace’s linguistic evolution; though the Citizen would surely propose this phenomenon as devolution. But it is still a sound that shapes the day. The civilization of the Sassenachs is mentioned and immediately it is declared “syphillisation” (266).

Previous to this paragraph of the Citizen’s diatribe, Bloom is on the defensive against the Citizen’s barbs. We read: “Bloom lets on he heard nothing” (265). But he has heard everything; one can pretend not to hear, but ultimately is still hearing – the sound or thought that is heard still influences the person, discourse, and shape of the future. Speech and noise are filtered, to be dealt with immediately, later, or never. And while we, like the Citizen, often dismiss surrounding auditory sensations as noise when they are inconvenient or undesirable, if we listen closer, we may hear the audition of life aligned into a symphony; cacophony is only the interpretation of the untrained ear. We can choose not to acknowledge the sound around us, but in choosing to disregard that

“noise,” our conscious effort to mute it gives credence to its existence; and we may be foolishly tuning out what is truly symphonic, but beyond our normal range of hearing or interpreting. I believe that this was one of Joyce’s deliberate placements of concordant and discordant sounds juxtaposed in human speech, natural surroundings and mechanical chatter congeal to create a symphonic novel enraptured with the auditory nature of language and its rhythms, both auditory and syntactic.

However, the secret to affect that Bloom ponders through this chapter and the next, is that “you must have repetition” (265). Bloom, the advertising solicitor for a Dublin daily newspaper, declares this as he examines what makes a solid, effective advertisement. Greater examples of repetition are heard in Episode Thirteen’s Catholic Mass. The repetition of a Catholic Mass is calming and influential. “Could hear them all at it. Pray for us. And pray for us. And pray for us. Good idea the repetition. Same thing with ads. Buy from us. And buy from us” (309). The Church, and any business, has their specific lifestyle or product to sell and know that anyone who hears a message over and over is bound to remember it and be affected by it. Faith and any public proclamation exist on some level as a form of advertisement. Just as a newsboy will call the headlines of the newspaper he is hawking so that passers by will gain interest and buy a copy, a public display of faith by means of an outdoor mass is hardly intended only for the participants. The sound of worship floats through the air making it public domain – and exhibiting the Catholic faith’s saturation of Ireland; Catholicism and Guinness both being highly touted, significant exports. But in *Ulysses*, the repeating ideas of language and phrases and common thoughts floating through public knowledge and discourse, move the reader to acknowledge the challenge that Joyce throws down at the feet of literature by making *everything* language and dialogue.

It is in the episode of “Cyclops” that we read “There’s no one as blind as the fellow who won’t see” (267). If we shift the image to “deaf” and “hear,” the language of the novel further evolves. One hears what one is expecting to hear – our expectations act as auditory filters. Hearing is not selective, but one can make it so. We acknowledge what we want to acknowledge – it is a human defense mechanism so that we are not overwhelmed with information. One cannot “stop hearing” with the intention of resuming this capacity at a later time. Words and sounds continue to beat against our ears drums, even though we may not be listening to what our eardrums are receiving. We know this because our brain continues to process these sounds until our consciousness is pricked to attention because of a familiar or interesting, verbal cue – something that our mind knows we must acknowledge or give attention.

“And then there came out upon the air the sound of voices and the pealing anthem of the organ” (290). Sound descends on the scene like a winged angel, like a character walking onstage. It interrupts the previous paragraph and changes the mood of the scene. The presence of this sound awakens Bloom and Gerty to the men’s temperance retreat: the Mass’s sound is not a sound affecting only itself. “[T]he fragrant incense was wafted and with it the fragrant names of her who was conceived without stain or original sin...” (292). The names of the Virgin Mary are not only heard and processed by the Mass’s attendees and participants, but by Bloom and Gerty as well. Bloom thinks of the Virgin and Gerty nearly simultaneously; Gerty’s foot even swings in time to the far off music of the Mass. Juxtaposing the sound of something sacred with the action of something so sordid (Bloom’s fixation and masturbation as a result of Gerty’s flirtation) makes the effect of the unfitting sounds and actions sadly comical. The chapter ends as Bloom’s thoughts are interrupted by a Cuckoo clock’s hourly chime, frustrating but nearly unavoidable – cacophonous sound signaling the end of one more section of Joyce’s symphony.

As “Oxen of the Sun” marches through the history of the English language, the reader is exposed to the various incarnations and evolutions of English writing. The most interesting twist comes near the end when Joyce dives into what we can term “American Southern Negro” (of the early 1900’s at the latest). This is a “language” that is written exactly as its sounds, as it is in imitation of the true spoken voice of this culture. This gives it a unique *feel* – not just in what is said, but how it is said and inflected. The language of Mark Twain’s runaway slaves and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Toms and Richard Wright’s downtrodden men and women, this is a unique dialect, on paper and to the ear, unto itself. Language has evolved so that it is written as it sounds.

With bells and soap and dogs and horses becoming speaking characters as one reads the “Circe” episode, the earlier proposition in the novel that everything speaks in its own language is reconfirmed. Hugh Kenner writes “What ‘Circe’ shows us is what we could see and hear were everything pertinent to the goings-on translated into terms of the seeing and the hearing” (“Circe,” 345). The dream like nature of this chapter, with its absinthe-tinged visions, changes the boundaries of perception. Life is twisted; communication, (if it ever has been), is now far from straightforward and even. Language swirls and the reader is left trying to contain it in a knowable diction. If we place the English language in new forms, we are left with a new language that is strange and outside of the normal means of comprehension. In the play that “Circe” is, the reader further experiences the evolution of language, in that it is democratized and given to all creatures of the universe, enabling any character on the page to contribute to discourse and engage in dialogue.

The “Ithaca” episode begins to turn down the volume of the day, giving dialogue and voice solely back to the novel’s foci, Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. The presence of noise ceases to be as noticeable as the reader leaves the busy-ness of Dublin’s day and evening, but the language regarding auditory sensation is till very present. This is a point noted by Bloom himself as he is nudged to think about shaving as he hears the whistle of his tea kettle cry beckon. He thinks that this boiling water could also be used to aid him as he shaves. “What advantages attended shaving by night?” (551). The night would allow a shave free of any disturbing noise and a chance for “quiet reflections upon the course of the day” (551). “Why did the absence of light disturb him less than the presence of noise?” (551). Noise made Bloom jump, but with a sure hand and little chance for distracting sound, his shave could be more comfortable and soothing. After a day in which one has been bombarded with all that creates and thrives on sound this observation in the catechism illustrates how the ever present sound of Dublin has penetrated and deeply affected his being.

As Bloom works through the catechistic questions of Episode Seventeen, we read “Alone, what did Bloom hear? The double reverberation of retreating feet on the heavenborn earth...”(578). Stephen Dedalus has left him to go off on his own and Bloom is left again with his own thoughts. But as the two men were parting, the bells of St George’s Church chimed, causing Bloom and Stephen to recall distinctly separate thoughts. The echoes of the sound of these bells cause Stephen to recall the Latin of his mother’s last rites, while Bloom simply hears “Heigho, heigho,/Heigho, heigho” (578). The sound of the inanimate bells bring pain to Stephen and childish song to Bloom. The effect of sound and noise, as language, varies upon the listener. We do not affect sound as much as sound affects us. The human ear and mind are shaped and pulled by the auditory realm’s artisan-like hands. We are at the mercy of symphonic cacophony.

Bloom’s afore mentioned boiling water is used to make hot cocoa for Stephen and Bloom to share. It is a shared drink that has been given Eucharistic levels – it is a bread breaking of sorts highly charged with Catholic mysticism, the father and the son communing –, a symbolically tinged moment to which the novel has been building. But as Bloom and Stephen share this final drink of the day, we must note the absolute quiet of the scene, the sanctuary that each has achieved by arriving at 7 Eccles Street. The world, with its noises and distractions, blowhards and strange women is not to be found. Bloom and Stephen are alone, with nary an intrusion. A Chinese saying comes to mind: “Drink tea and forget the noises of the world.” And while Bloom and Stephen may be drinking hot cocoa, and the world is still reverberating in their ears, for the moment and the rest of the night, the world and its litany of noises, symphonic or cacophonous, exist only in memory. Quiet and peace have been temporarily achieved. Bloom proceeds to bed.

And so, Molly's soliloquy, silent except in her head, begins. And it too is greatly shaped by sound- of passing trains and church bells and the bed specifically. The train draws her from her train of thought with its "frseeeeeeeefronnnng" (621, 627), and "sweeeee theres that train faraway" (628). Sound frequency and correspondences abound in the inner monologue of Molly, as well as those of Bloom and Stephen. The rhythms and rhythmic patterns give the reader an understanding of how Joyce's creations digest their existence in an auditory sense (Steinberg, 140). Molly also recalls the bed's jingling during her afternoon rendezvous with Boylan. It made her greatly self conscious, afraid that their act could be heard: "this damned old bed too jingling like the dickens I suppose they could hear us away over the other side of the park..."(633). And it was "heard" by Bloom across town, before the act had even begun. The sound through time is an Einsteinian bending of space and time (various studies have commented on the presence and re-evaluation of physics concerning Joyce's work); Peter DeVoogd has referred to "Joycean Sonicities." The symphony's circularity of sound is complete before it has begun; the anticipation of its sound waves registers before they are created.

Linguistic Implications of *Ulysses*

If anything can be overtly stated concerning Joyce's linguistic propositions put forth in *Ulysses*, it is that the socio-linguistic waves of sound, through the energy of words, pulse throughout and move along every person encountered in June 16, 1904. Anthony Burgess writes:

But of course the seeds of this mad variety are already present in the real speech of Dublin, with its ability to encompass obscenity, seedy scraps of half-remembered learning, malapropism, the grandiloquent structures of oratory, euphony and balance for their own sake regardless of meaning...the book encompasses its entire orchestral spectrum
("The Dublin Sound," 52).

Sound, and language specifically, create and shape the environment in which we exist, for better or for worse. It can be a symphony or cacophony – it only matters on how you filter it. Should we relegate foreign sounds to a classification as noise? Or do we select to process only convenient and useful sounds? Sound, and the absence of it, aurally registers. Language is a "sensory medium of its own... The ear is the intellectual soft spot in the body politic. The weak point through which Joyce seeks to manipulate his listener-reader" (Sherry, 109).

As one reads a novel, as one hears a song repeated, as one is bombarded by the noise of advertisements and jet planes, ringing cell phones, the wind, and the

hum of fluorescent lights, we are invariably influenced, and our minds infinitely challenged by the swirling noise of modern existence. We are unwilling subjects to all that creaks and squeaks, booms and crashes, clangs and chinks, as we walk through our own Bloomsday. We absorb this constant whirl of sound waves; our conscious and subconscious mind directs how we process such auditory shapes.

As one often answers a question with a slight rephrasing of the questioner's words, the characters in *Ulysses* often respond and answer to the prompts of life around them – the ringing of a bell, the barking of a dog, the clanging of a machine. They answer the white noise of life that engulfs each person's mind. "Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue" (Bakhtin, 280). These prompts may not be consciously and purposely addressed, but each character acknowledges how life noisily proceeds forward. Joyce captures this in the spoken phrases and internal monologues of his characters. Our minds and thoughts are continually shaped and transformed by more than we acknowledge. To be cognizant of being conscious can be wearing on one's own mind; in *Ulysses*, we see the obvious reactions and processing of all that dances around us, that we often do not give a conscious second thought. We are products of our surroundings but it is in our nature to respond, consciously or unconsciously, to the various stimuli that bombards our mental landscape.

While this essay has been focusing of the evolution of language, it is with irony that we must note that the word order of Joyce's text has become an issue among the various editions of *Ulysses*. John Noel Turner notes that Joyce's "intentional obscurities" have been blurred by those mistakenly committed by typists and faulty typesetters who created their own lexical ordering mistakes. Joyce's instructions in proofs were misunderstood and misinterpreted, leaving the rest of us to sort out what Joyce was proclaiming about how we hear, speak, use, and process language and its rhythms. Although Beckett was commenting on Joyce's own use of onomatopoeia and lexical evolution, we can see the "vicious circle of humanity is achieved" (19) through Joyce's processing of language and now, the processing of Joyce's language.

The world and its goings on shape us and our words in ways that we are not fully aware; Joyce proves in these selected passages from *Ulysses* just how influential "noise" can be in nudging our minds and mouths towards our next discourse – contributing to life's narrative, no matter who is listening, or even if they are aware that they are listening. Speech and thoughts are paced with internal and external rhythms, consciously and unconsciously. In this symphony, speaking and the onomatopoeia of the day carry the tune – even if the lyrics to the song are intentionally or mistakenly misspoken. *Ulysses* demonstrates the "endless verbal

germination, maturation, putrefaction, (and) the cyclic dynamism if the intermediate” (Beckett, 16). James Joyce’s *Ulysses* shows apparent auditory discord and cacophony in seamless alignment forming a symphonic sound.

Aristotle, in his treatise *On Sense and the Sensible*, explores the importance and processes of sounds in relationship to existence. He was the first to classify the five senses; Joyce continues this dialogue and exploration of the auditory experience: in hearing, and the conscious and unconscious processing what we hear. Sound permeates the novel. It dominates thoughts and associations. It greatly influences the flow of the day. And some sounds – both those heard correctly and misheard, purposefully skewed or ignorantly skewed – have the proverbial affect of the Brazilian butterfly creating a Texas tornado by the movement of its wings.

While *Ulysses* is brimming with an overload of sensory stimuli, the auditory realm exists as a parallel for all that seems to have been misaligned as mere distraction. The universe *is* aligned and all things fit in their place to serve all other links in that chain. Sound is continuously bounding into all functioning ears, perpetually resounding in our minds and future speeches – we are products of, and links in, the onomatopoeic, rhythmic, seemingly discordant symphony of life.

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