

## Doubling the *Nacheinander*: Giving Life to James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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Literature does not represent, echo, define, excuse, search for, or explain reality—for James Joyce's epic *Ulysses*, literature *is* reality. The author referenced tram times, directories, maps of Dublin, and even researched the speed of the River Liffey's current to make his novel a completely accurate extension of reality. While walking at Sandymount, Stephen Dedalus contemplates Man's two modes of experience: the *Nebeneinander* and the *Nacheinander*: the static spatial and the fluid temporal. He muses on our natural sensory preference for the visible. However, when he closes his eyes to experiment with his other senses, he finds himself "getting on nicely in the dark" (Joyce 3.15). As literature inhabits real life, Joyce's *Ulysses* simply cannot be confined to black letters on a white page. Paradoxically, as a temporal art form, his prose is confined to the subordinate *Nacheinander* mode of our perception. To prevent his work from being "drowned out" by other senses, and to present his audience with the same wonder and freshness of perception that Stephen experiences while walking with eyes closed, he effectively doubles the *Nacheinander* by complementing the prose with music. The musicality of the book as a whole, and especially the "Sirens" chapter, in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, aids in lifting the art off the pages, gifts his novel with the dignity of being interpreted with multiple senses, and demands the respect and attention usually reserved for the "ineluctable modality of the visible."

The sight-sound dynamic is one that Joyce investigates extensively during his quest of melding prose and music. Interestingly, while literature is an expression of the temporal, it is simultaneously grounded in the visual representation of the page. Simply, we need our eyes to read. Thus, we can understand literature as a *Nacheinander* form strained or filtered through the *Nebeneinander*, and the supplemental musicality as an effort to restore some of the richness that was lost because of this dilution. Instead of merely reading the lines by skimming our eyes over them, we are alerted to the sounds of Joyce's prose. Crisp consonants give an edge of dimension, while smooth sibilants bestow a passage with texture. These grant physicality to the otherwise two-dimensional narration. O'Callaghan discusses the phenomenon of "see-hearing," and the idea that sight and sound as senses cannot exist completely independently, as it is necessary both to close our eyes *to* hear, as well as *use* our eyes to hear literature. She also suggests that the presence of a blind man and a deaf man in the episode, "[highlight] the opposite ends of the visual-aural spectrum," which "underlines the ability of all of the other characters to 'see-hear'" (139). Joyce often delineates between the two senses throughout: "Miss gaze of Kennedy, heard, not seen, read on" (11.240). The fact that the blind man is the tuner of the piano is also telling. Stripped of his sense of sight, he has a more organic sense of hearing than the other characters, which qualifies him to possess and wield the "pure" tones of the tuning fork. The tension between sight and sound is clear; Joyce attempts to navigate the murky areas between vision and hearing, reading and listening to music, the *Nebeneinander* and the *Nacheinander*.

"Sirens" is clearly an attempt by Joyce to fuse music and prose. Jack Weaver names the two media as "sister arts" (24). Not simply a layering of music on top of language, nor either an attempt at a transformation of music into language, (or language into music), "Sirens" is an effort to have one inhabit the other, while simultaneously having each stand separately. Daniel Albright notes, "it has always been difficult to tell exactly where one ends and the other begins: both of these artistic media consist of sound that varies over time, though in one case the sounds are called notes and in the other case phonemes" (qtd. in O'Callaghan 138). We must then look at Joyce's medium, words, and trace how he has them occupy an auditory space. As O'Callaghan points out, "language is considered to be referential; each unit represents something or some idea. Music, on the other hand, is self-reflexive; it does not mean something in the same sense" (138).

To combat this possible “distraction of significance,” Joyce first presents us with sixty-odd lines, generally believed to be a sort of overture. The words and phrases are disjointed, utterly devoid of context, and therefore completely stripped of nearly all meaning. We can experience the words as simply sounds, though an appreciation of their connotations contributes to the impression of the overture as inhabiting a minor key. Joyce even introduces a phenomenon of visually reducing his words to sounds: “impertinent insolence” becomes “imperthnthn thnthnthn” (11.100), metempsychosis becomes “met him pike hoses” (11.1062), and Bloom himself becomes all kinds of variations on “Bloowho,” “Bloohimwhom,” and simply “Bloo” throughout the chapter. By bringing out the auditory qualities of his writing, Joyce forces his audience to reevaluate his work—it is not just seen but heard as well. His novel is then one sense closer to our perception of the book itself in our hands.

Joyce’s treatment of the aural dimension of the chapter is not merely restricted to the level of incomprehensible noise. He also works with the musicality of phrasing. Joyce plays with alliteration and assonance: “sparkling bronze azure eyed Blazure’s skyblue bow and eyes” (11.394), as well as homophones: “She rose and closed her reading, rose of Castile: fretted, forlorn, dreamily rose” (11.331-32). The duplicity of sound reminds readers that words have an aural quality in addition to their visible representations. He also interrupts his own rhythm with lines that echo the effect of syncopation: “Shrill, with deep laughter, after, gold after bronze, they urged each each to peal after peal, ringing in changes, bronzegold, goldbronze, shrilldeep, to laughter after laughter” (11.174-76). Joyce also employs a literary equivalent of staccato: “Listen. Bloom listened....And by the door deaf Pat, bald Pat, tipped Pat, listened” (11.1028-29), and inversion: “Miss Kennedy sauntered sadly from bright light, twining a loose hair behind an ear. Sauntering sadly, gold no more, she twisted twined a hair. Sadly she twined in sauntering gold hair behind a curving ear” (11.81-83).

The overture in “Sirens” is used to compensate for one of the major discrepancies between music and literature: “While both arts work in a temporal manner...music is capable of holding multiple ideas at once, it can achieve simultaneity...” (O’Callaghan 138). Joyce uses the overture to present us certain words and phrases, which then appear again in the actual narration of the chapter itself. These echoes grant us a sense of multiplicity, as each phrase is in the chapter once isolated from meaning, and at least once more entrenched in a context. A tension is created by the double existence of words as sounds, and the same words as meaning. The idea of polyphony is directly alluded to in Bloom’s description of Richie whistling: “His breath, birdsweet...fluted with plaintive woe. Is lost. Rich sound. Two notes in one there” (Joyce 11.631-33). Joyce also treats the idea of distance as a kind of simultaneity, describing “steel from anear, hoofs ring from afar, and heard steelhoofs ringhoof ringsteel” (11.112-13). By combining sounds from “anear” and “afar” into singular words, a contrast and balance is created.

Though the auditory mechanics of music are well-employed in *Ulysses*, Joyce does not limit himself to this relationship. O’Callaghan argues, “...he was engaging not merely with those aspects of music that might be closest to literature (lyrics, phrasing, rhythm), and which have long been considered shared elements of the two art forms, but rather the more elusive and perhaps intrinsic elements of music (performance, interpretation, meaning or the lack thereof) which he felt could be injected into, and drawn from, prose writing” (135). *Ulysses* is riddled with extensive piano playing, song singing, and reminiscing on performances past. The end of the overture in “Sirens” is marked with an emphatic “Done. / Begin!” (11.62-63). Likewise, the close of the chapter itself is denoted by a “*Done*” which possesses all the finality of a conductor’s last bow. Clearly, we are meant to perceive this self-aware episode as a performance of its own. Daniel Barenboim explains the relationship between music and performance: “...nobody is going to convince me that these black spots on white paper are [Beethoven’s] Fifth Symphony. The

Fifth Symphony comes into being when an orchestra, somewhere in the world, decides to play it” (qtd. in O’Callaghan 241). As a manifestation of literature and music at once, we are to infer then that ‘Sirens’ doesn’t fully exist until it is read aloud. Michael Staneir agrees, asserting, “From the cacophony of noise that opens “Sirens”—bewildering, disorienting, alluring, sirens voices indeed—the reader should realize that this chapter is one to be read with eyes closed” (326). The text of the chapter is only the notation; it is not the thing itself. The performance of “Sirens” gives rise to a transcendence of the page that mimics the moment when audible notes are reproduced from a score of music.

Likewise, by obscuring meaning, Joyce opens his work to endless possibilities of interpretation, which is the other defining quality of music. One can argue that music not heard is not music at all. Songs require engagement, and by employing ambiguity, Joyce recruits his readers to interpret for themselves his self-proclaimed “many enigmas and puzzles” (qtd. in “Criticism”). Joyce also explores the idea of interpretation of music explicitly in the “Ithaca” episode, when Bloom and Stephen hear the church bells ringing down the street:

What echoes of that sound were by both and each heard?

By Stephen:

*Liliata rutilantium. Turma circumdet.*

*Iubilantium te virginum. Chorus excipiat.*

By Bloom:

*Heigho, heigho,*

*Heigho, heigho.* (17.1228-

34)

Both men hear the same peal of bells, yet each assign a completely different meaning and connotation to them. Stephen’s conception of the bells is influenced by his own Catholic upbringing, while Bloom refrains from appointing any extra religious significance to their music and thinks only of their practical employment of announcing the time. “Thus by drawing on two of the key elements of the musical art form, interpretation and performance, Joyce can evoke qualities of simultaneity, multiplicity, and audience interaction normally considered to be beyond the scope of the prose literary form” (O’Callaghan 135).

There exists also, the suggestion that the entire novel is itself modeled on song. Many critics, including Ezra Pound, consider *Ulysses* to follow the form of a “frustrated sonata,” with the “Penelope” episode serving as a coda (Weaver 49). The two major musical developments are then, of course, Bloom’s worries about his wife, and Stephen’s search for a paternal figure. Throughout the novel, the two men echo the same thematic concerns about fatherhood and the usurpation of male rights (Weaver 50). In the “Circe” episode, Stephen explores a more fundamental aspect of music: the dynamics of acoustics, and the phenomenon of intervals. Specifically, he is concerned with the relationship between the tonic and dominant pitches of a key. He drunkenly explains to Lynch’s cap, “The reason is because the fundamental and the dominant are separated by the greatest possible interval which...Interval which. Is the greatest possible ellipse. Consistent with. The ultimate return. The octave” (Joyce 15.2103-2108). Weaver explains, “Stephen [visualizes the notes] as two sounds that pass each other in nontouching

ellipses...” (84). Bowen theorizes that Stephen’s epiphany concerning the nature of the perfect fifth interval is also a “discovery about consubstantiality” of Stephen and Bloom (83). The two different notes will never overlap, and yet will always remain within the same octave. In the same way, Stephen and Bloom will always be complements, (Stephen as a man searching for a father, and Bloom a man searching for a son), but never a true biological match.

Joyce also employs the songs referenced in the work itself as mini-movements serving the role of Wagnerian leitmotifs. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a leitmotif as a musical “theme associated throughout the work with a particular person, situation, or sentiment.” Bowen asserts, “Once certain works such as *‘Lá ci darem,’* “Love’s Old Sweet Song,” and *‘M’appari’* have been established as being representative of Molly and Blazes’s affair, recurrences of the songs serve to remind us that the subject is never far from Bloom’s thought of the central action of the book” (10). The songs serve as a kind of “symbolic or thematic intensifier” (O’Callaghan 135). As songs often occur in the background of character’s thoughts, a multiplicity can be created by the employment of Wagnerian technique. Whatever is being thought by the narrator takes place simultaneously with the music behind him. At the very same moment, Simon Dedalus performs “*M’appari*” from *Martha*, Bloom writes a letter to Martha, and Molly consummates her affair with Blazes Boylan.

James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a revolutionary work of art in that it is self-aware and self-mediating. Realizing the human tendency to subsist mainly on our sense of sight, Joyce strives to present us with alternate methods of experience. Rather than offer us another “moment frozen in time” that the *Nebeneinander* art forms consist of, he gifts us with something much more dynamic, nuanced, and sophisticated. His novel as a work of development and fleeting temporality provide us a newness of perception, reinvigorate our experience of reality. Like the optical illusion of the infinite painting within its own painting within its own painting, part of the art of *Ulysses* is Joyce’s own attempts to draw our attention to his art. As literature is essentially within the art form of the *Nacheinander*, Joyce must buttress it against the more accessible visual arts by instilling it with a musicality along with its prose. The two, at once separate and simultaneous, are employed to help the novel transcend the pages and to help place it within the reality of our own physical world.

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