



BEARTOOTH LAKE

MEGAN SIEGFRIED

I left home to go fishing
beneath a butte in Yellowstone.

The water was calm and blue
and green too because the sky
and the grass were fighting
for a place in the reflection.

I'd cast out and turn to watch
the flowers dance along
the hillside while my spinner
raced back to the rod.

A quick tug pulled my eye
from butterfly covered grasses
back to the water, stirred up
by the trout at the end of my line.

The glassy surface shattered
when I pulled my orange-throated
friend out into the air. We kept
the introductions brief so he
could go back to breathing easy.

On the other side of the lake,
a dark shadow stood on hind legs
to congratulate me. We held
still, watching the ripples fade.

After a moment, she dropped
down to meet her cubs. Jumping,
they pleaded for her attention,
but she still looked to me. It was
a respectful warning. Go home.

I watched the wildflowers flutter
on the long walk back to the car,
and every time I blinked, I felt sorry.
I didn't belong by the lake,
but home now felt so far away.

26 March 2021

Finding Truth with Eyes Closed: Perspective in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

James Joyce was a complicated man. His writing has proven to be as complicated as the man himself, and *Ulysses* is a prime example. Joyce littered this novel with calculated symbolism, hidden meaning, and authorial intent, but his most significant message might be the theme of blindness that recurs throughout the work. In *Ulysses*, being blind hides the truth. Make no mistake, Joyce did not believe that visual impairment was the issue, despite his own challenges with sight in reality. Instead, his progression of the theme of blindness illustrates to the reader that the Irish people of this time were blind to their own self-serving tendencies. Blindness is equated with an incomplete perspective, which, according to Joyce, can be avoided by observing more than what clearly presents itself to you, by reading beyond the obvious. *Ulysses* is Joyce's impressive attempt at opening the eyes of the Irish to their faults, the most significant as perceived by Joyce being the self-serving perspective.

Unlike the average oblivious citizen, both of the protagonists in *Ulysses* tend to view the world through multiple perspectives because they are Joyce's examples of better men. The first time this becomes apparent is in the Proteus episode, when Stephen considers the life of the blind in comparison to those that can see. As he walks along the mudflats, pondering life, Stephen begins to consider how the experience would be altered if he did not have use of his eyes. He thinks to himself, "My ash sword hangs at my side. Tap with it: they do... Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?" (Joyce 31). Stephen closes his eyes as he walks to gain a new, more experiential understanding of the physical perspective of blindness. Denying himself his sight makes him question where he is; is this his usual path on Sandymount strand, or is he about to topple off a cliff and enter eternity? When Stephen temporarily changes his physical

reality by closing his eyes, he is able to gain insight into the life of a person with a visual impairment. At this time, Stephen also thinks to himself, “shut your eyes and see” (Joyce 31). This is an important realization for the character: different people experience the world in different ways. Joyce is arguing that the only way to understand the world is by exploring all available perspectives, something he believes the Irish of his time rarely do.

Joyce emphasizes the worth of differing perspectives while emphasizing the literal image of blindness. One way in particular is the clear parallel that is drawn between Stephen and the character described as the blind stripling. Siân White, an English professor with a specialization in Irish literature, points out that both characters are described as young men, both appear to be lost to some extent at different points in the novel, both carry a cane, and both “work at day jobs that are service-oriented manifestations of their true artistic talents” (510). White explains the connection between the two to be Joyce’s new exemplar of masculinity in the youth of Dublin (520). The connection between the pair is definitely meant to be an example, but one of proper perspective more so than of new masculinity. As White points out, both men reject many of the norms of masculinity present in the culture of the time, but this is due in large part to their more encompassing perspectives. The reader is especially drawn to Stephen for his mind; he is seen as intelligent and underappreciated, and he is respected for his thoughtful perspectives on the world. The reader also recognizes the resemblance between Stephen’s underappreciated potential and the general passing over of the blind man’s potential, who is known to be a talented piano player. Both men are outsiders. Stephen is separated due to introverted tendencies, whereas the blind man is pushed to the outside by the citizenship’s perception of his disability. Once their similarities become obvious, the reader discovers they have an interest in the blind man despite his seemingly meager role as a character. The reader, who Joyce hopes to be his Irish

countrymen, realizes that they were blind to the stripling's potential until his similarities to Stephen became more evident. His perspective is different from others (as Stephen's tends to be), but it still reveals valuable truth about the world of Joyce's creation.

Valuable truth is revealed through the consideration of many perspectives, and Bloom's imaginative consideration of the blind man's life is another example of that fact. In the Lestrygonians episode, Bloom ends up at an intersection with the blind man and decides to help him across the street. As he does so, he begins to wonder how different this man's view of Dublin is from his own. Bloom thinks, "Queer idea of Dublin he must have, tapping his way round by the stones" (Joyce 149). This is the second instance in which one of the heroes has begun to explore new perspectives due to the presence of blindness. Unlike Stephen, Bloom gains perspective by simply imagining the sensory differences that exist between the blind and those able to see rather than physically testing the differences by closing his eyes. Bloom thinks, "Sense of smell must be stronger too... Tastes? They say you can't taste wine with your eyes shut" (Joyce 149). For Bloom, his interest is peaked by the realization that a blind man's life is diminished in some ways yet enhanced in others due to his sensory command. He is able to acknowledge that the difference inherent in a blind man's perspective does not make it less true to the world than his own. With this scene, Joyce is making a serious declaration that truth is seen through many eyes. All of those self-important, bull-headed characters seem ridiculous due to their inability to see through the eyes of others and produce a well-rounded perspective.

Not everyone would agree, however, that Joyce is arguing that only a well-rounded perspective reveals truth. For example, Dr. Marchbanks, an English professor at California Polytechnic State University, believes that Joyce is actually critiquing Bloom's perspective for holding ableist and eugenic views (55). Marchbanks admits that Bloom is a beloved character of

many who have undertaken the reading of *Ulysses*, largely due to his kind-hearted and sympathetic actions. He also notes that there are those who find that Bloom is open to differing perspectives (54). However, Marchbanks points out that Bloom tends to have “conflicting inclinations” that vary from empathy to “disdain and disgust” (54). He assesses that Joyce is condemning everyone as bigots by giving even his hero those qualities beneath the surface of his character (55). The reader cannot deny that Bloom is flawed after witnessing his thankfulness for having not known about Gerty’s limp until after he masturbated to her image or when he judges the prostitutes on their weight and clarity of skin. What must be remembered is that Joyce is not insinuating that Bloom is perfect, which is why the reader appreciates the humor in the comparisons between Bloom and Christ. Bloom is used as a human example. He is someone who has flaws, but he is also someone that attempts to view the world without prejudice. He does not always succeed, but he is certainly not as blinded from the truth of his person as the rest of the Dubliners, and the reader redeems him for it. For that reason alone, Bloom cannot be viewed as dismally as Marchbanks argues.

As the protagonists consider the blind perspective, they search outside of their own realities so that the reader has an example of how to form conclusions intelligently. When the blind stripling himself considers the blind perspective, he emphasizes how differently each person views the world. In the Wandering Rocks episode, the blind piano tuner that Bloom had helped earlier is walking down the street with his support cane. At the same time, Cashel Boyle O’Connor Fitzmaurice Tisdall Farrell’s coattail swipes the cane as he zigzags past the blind man. In response, the blind man yells at Farrell, “God’s curse on you... You’re blinder nor I am, you bitch’s bastard!” (Joyce 206). By claiming that Farrell is in some way more blind than himself, the piano tuner asserts that his own perspective is superior. He may be blind, but he is not

ignorant of his surroundings. Although Farrell is known to be a character suffering from mental instability, he is used in this instance to represent anyone oblivious of the different people and differing viewpoints surrounding them. Anyone who is ignorant enough to refuse to look outside of themselves before they speak or act is someone who is truly blind. For Joyce, that is the epitome of the Irish people.

Joyce provides a taste of his thoughts on the Irish citizenship's inability to see with the example of the piano tuner, but the full brunt of his opinion is divulged within the Cyclops episode. Blindness surrounds the entirety of this chapter, and it is especially evident during the altercation between Bloom and the citizen. Bloom says, "Some people... can see the mote in others' eyes but they can't see the beam in their own" (267). To which the citizen responds, "Raimeis [nonsense]... There's no-one as blind as the fellow that won't see, if you know what that means" (Joyce 267). The citizen literally repeats back to Bloom in simple terms exactly what Bloom told him through biblical parable. It is easy to see the humor here, since the citizen so obviously proves Bloom's point by ignorantly repeating the same thing that was just told to him. Joyce calls this character the citizen for a reason. He is the citizen of Ireland; he represents the Irish blindness that Joyce cannot stand. This association is furthered when the citizen, in his monstrous glory, throws a tin can after Bloom as he makes his escape from the unruly man's presence. The scene mirrors the moment of misadventure in the *Odyssey* when the blinded cyclops throws a rock at Odysseus' escaping ship. The novel's criticism on Ireland's blindness to its own flaws comes to a climax when Joyce's mascot of the country, the citizen, is turned into a literal, blinded monster bent on destroying the figurative hero.

Not only is Joyce clearly showing his Irish readers how blind they can be to their own faults, he is also showing them the fault inherent in overconfident nationalism, and he continues

to use the citizen as his example. Although nothing is wrong with having pride in one's country, issues arise when it is taken to the extreme. In his article, "'Brutish empire,' Irishness, and 'the new Bloomusalem in the Nova Hibernia' in James Joyce's *Ulysses*," Arun Pokhrel wastes no time in pointing out the "nationalist excesses" that the citizen puts forth through his "boasts of the purity and superiority of Irish race and culture" (7). As earlier noted, the citizen's ridiculous actions throughout the chapter make the way he turns a blind eye on any fault of Ireland blatant. Again, the citizen's obvious representation of a typical Irishman makes it a simple task for the reader to stop and think about their own errors of judgement, possibly brought on by narcissism. Joyce is forcing his audience's eyes to be opened to self-serving causes that create imperfections in the country. Bloom is once again offered as a realistic (humanly flawed) example because of his openness and tolerance of others' opinions until he is so taken aback by the citizen's lack thereof that he, with eyes opened by perspective, is forced to stand up for himself. (Joyce 280).

Bloom is portrayed as a flawed protagonist, and Ireland is portrayed as a flawed country with imperfections stemming from a variety of events. In addition to problems the country created for itself (like the Parnell scandal), the colonial rule of Britain also detrimentally affected Irish life. Joyce was known to be an anti-colonial nationalist writer, as noted by Pokhrel in his article (8). However, Pokhrel goes on to argue, with support from other scholars, that due to the distance that Joyce kept between himself and nationalist politics *Ulysses* should not be read purely from this perspective (Pokhrel 8). Of course *Ulysses* should be read from multiple perspectives, that is the only way to find the truth according to Joyce's themes, but the importance of Ireland's suffering at the hands of colonization should not be overlooked. It was wounded by the callous influence that England cast over it. Pokhrel points out at the start of his essay that Stephen refers to England as a "brutish empire" when speaking to British soldiers in

the Circe episode (7). Joyce and Stephen are so closely intertwined that it is difficult to believe these comments are purely coming from character perspective. The constant repetition of anti-British remarks from the more respectable characters of the novel helps to convince the reader of its truth. It seems that Joyce wants to pry open the eyes of his readers so that they are forced to witness the harm that Britain has inflicted upon Ireland, harm that might have been avoided if Britain adopted a more inclusive and empathetic perspective.

Ireland was the driving force behind all of James Joyce's work. His dissatisfaction with the average citizen's tendency to blame their problems on others as opposed to seeing the problems within themselves drove most of his criticism throughout *Ulysses*. He portrayed Irish citizens as blind to their own faults because of their tendency to hold self-serving and one-sided perspectives over well-rounded understanding, possibly as a result of the example of perspective set by the ruling British, and he emphasized this idea by developing the literal theme of blindness within the novel. Joyce expressed his critiques and even attempted to offer some redemption for the fault he found by putting forth the examples of both Bloom and Stephen, who surpass the average citizen. Through their consideration of many and differing perspectives, they understand more about the truth of their world. *Ulysses* was Joyce's attempt to help Ireland open its eyes, reevaluate its values, and redeem itself as a country. The success of his endeavor is as complicated as the man, but it is undeniable that he made clear the understanding that true blindness is ignorance.

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Edward Kraus Narrative:

A German immigrant at the age of three, Edward Kraus didn't choose to come to Erie. However, he did choose to stay, building up the community through his business endeavors in the process, the benefits of which can still be seen today. In 1870, Kraus opened a restaurant, but he was dreaming bigger by 1886. He built the Kraus Department Store, a 5 & 10 cent store that has been a family-run operation for over 100 years. The Kraus Department store helped to generate a boom in economic development on Parade Street. Other stores began opening around the property, and a small-scale shopping center developed. By the end of his life, Kraus, originally a stranger to the Erie community, became one of its most prominent and successful businessmen.

Ellen Curry Narrative:

Ellen Curry recognized and understood inequality when she saw it. She lived through it. For nearly 30 years Curry served as a member of the Erie Housing Authority working to improve access to educational opportunities for those living in public housing. During this time, she implemented programs like Head Start, built up youth centers, and developed adult education programs. In 1996 she established the Curry Foundation, which has awarded over \$433,000 to students ranging from elementary to college age. The Curry Foundation has also awarded Louis J. Tullio Scholarships to public housing students planning to attend college. Her work has provided 250+ deserving students with the opportunity to pursue their academic potential. When Ellen Curry passed away, she left a portion of her estate to the foundation in an effort to continue her mission into the future. Her name continues to inspire goodwill and generosity throughout the community.

Jessie Pope Narrative:

Jessie Pope fought against discrimination to make Erie a better place to live for everyone. She and her husband opened the Pope Hotel to create a new establishment that celebrated African American culture and music through entertainment. The Pope Hotel hosted both Black and White audiences, encouraging togetherness in a community that had been littered with segregation. Jessie Pope ran the hotel on her own after her husband's death and realized that she had a knack for community building. When her hotel first opened, there were only about 300 Black citizens in Erie, but those numbers were growing steadily. Jessie Pope wanted to continue contributing to the diversification of the city, so she co-founded the Erie chapter of the NAACP. In all of her endeavors, Pope fought for equality in the hopes of creating a better, more inclusive city.

Donald Crenshaw Narrative:

Donald Crenshaw's workday includes building quality homes for the economically distressed working class and those who have been pushed to the margins. He's turned his passion for helping others into a successful business that promotes healthy living in his community. Crenshaw's affordable housing developments have greatly improved the lives of countless Erie dwellers. As a child, he watched his father struggle and fight to build up his disposal business. This experience inspired him to find a need and fill it with a business of his own. Every single day, Donald Crenshaw actively affects positive change in his community and, like his father, inspires young Black men to chase success for themselves. He hopes that others use his opportunities to achieve things they never thought possible and that they find ways to share their achievements with the community.

Bobby J. Sulecki Narrative:

Bobby J. Sulecki cares about heritage and history which is why he has worked so hard to preserve the identity and contributions of the Polish community. Sulecki was born and raised in Erie, PA. As a child, he became fascinated by his Polish ancestry. Cerebral Palsy has limited Sulecki's mobility, but this allowed for him to spend more time in the presence of family, exposing him to his living heritage. Sulecki's great grandmother taught him some Polish language, his grandparents introduced him to the Polish presence in his faith community, and his parents continue to support his passion for history by assisting with the research. Sulecki has tirelessly gathered and archived examples of Erie's Polish history, and he has created websites dedicated to preserving these contributions. If not for him, much of his family's history and the cultural history of the Erie community would be forgotten.

Stephanie Ciner Narrative:

Stephanie Ciner's job is to teach Erie the community building power of food. Ciner came to Erie by chance after accepting a teaching position with AmeriCorps Vista, but her work here is always mindful and done with purpose. An artist by trade, Ciner expresses herself through her relationship with gardening and agriculture. Her passion for food sent her on a yearlong bicycle trip across the country where she searched for communities living purposefully and in harmony with their people and environment. Ciner was inspired, so she has developed a business to implement that mindfulness into the Erie community. Wild Field Urban Farm is a small patch of land obtained from the local government that Ciner has cultivated into a living resource. There she grows food and the business to provide for the neighborhood in a sustainable way. Her hope is to show the Erie people the value of the world around them and the value within themselves.

Ruby Jenkins-Husband Narrative:

Ruby Jenkins-Husband recognized Erie as a community in need of inspiration. As a child, she was inspired by the work ethic of her family. Community involvement was regarded as both an expectation and a privilege. When she attended college, she put these ideals into action by starting a lifelong journey of advocacy for those affected by Sickle Cell Anemia. This work taught Jenkins-Husband to keep an eye out for communities in need. When she moved to Erie, Parade Street was in distress. As the first African American woman elected to Erie City Council, Jenkins-Husband got involved. She tore down, revitalized, and built new buildings. There was still room for change, so she brought Walmart to the East Side of Erie, providing jobs and economic development. Ruby Jenkins-Husband used her position to make a positive difference in the community, and she continues to be an inspiration for advancement in the area today.

Steven R. Simmelkjaer Narrative:

Steven R. Simmelkjaer learned at a young age that people are not defined by their experiences and change is always possible. As a child, he was exposed to violence, poverty, drug abuse, and addiction, eventually falling victim to these surroundings. Simmelkjaer sought treatment and reset the path he would follow through life. He became a prolific advocate and educator, and in 1972, he came to Erie to offer treatment services to community members affected by drug addiction. Simmelkjaer later returned to Erie for good, rising to the position of director for various Erie drug and alcohol organizations. His focus is always on providing opportunities and offering encouragement, believing firmly that addicted persons must recognize their own self-worth to affect change in their lives. Now 70, Simmelkjaer still helps the Erie community. He

has plans to reform local neighborhood watch and mentorships programs, and most importantly, he has faith that his work makes a difference.

