

JAMES JOYCE WAS BORN on February 2, 1882, in Dublin, Ireland, into a Catholic middle-class family that would soon become poverty-stricken. Joyce went to Jesuit schools, followed by University College, Dublin, where he began publishing essays. After graduating in 1902, Joyce went to Paris with the intention of attending medical school. Soon afterward, however, he abandoned medical studies and devoted all of his time to writing poetry, stories, and theories of aesthetics. Joyce returned to Dublin the following year when his mother died. He stayed in Dublin for another year, during which time he met his future wife, Nora Barnacle. At this time, Joyce also began work on an autobiographical novel called *Stephen Hero*. Joyce eventually gave up on *Stephen Hero*, but reworked much of the material into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which features the same autobiographical protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, and tells the story of Joyce's youth up to his 1902 departure for Paris.

Nora and Joyce left Dublin again in 1904, this time for good. They spent most of the next eleven years living in Rome and Trieste, Italy, where Joyce taught English and he and Nora had two children, Giorgio and Lucia. In 1907 Joyce's first book of poems, *Chamber Music*, was published in London. He published his book of short stories, *Dubliners*, in 1914, the same year he published *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in serial instalments in the London journal *The Egoist*.

Joyce began writing *Ulysses* in 1914, and when World War I broke out he moved his family to Zurich, Switzerland, where he continued work on the novel. In Zurich, Joyce's fortunes finally improved as his talent attracted several wealthy patrons, including Harriet Shaw Weaver. *Portrait* was published in book form in 1916, and Joyce's play, *Exiles*, in 1918. Also in 1918, the first episodes of *Ulysses* were published in serial form in *The Little Review*. In 1919, the Joyces moved to Paris, where *Ulysses* was published in book form in 1922. In 1923, with his eyesight quickly diminishing, Joyce began working on what became *Finnegans Wake*, published in 1939. Joyce died in 1941.

Joyce first conceived of *Ulysses* as a short story to be included in *Dubliners*, but decided instead to publish it as a long novel, situated as a sort of sequel to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. *Ulysses* picks up Stephen Dedalus's life more than a year after where *Portrait* leaves off. The novel introduces two new main characters, Leopold and Molly Bloom, and takes place on a single day, June 16, 1904, in Dublin.

Ulysses strives to achieve a kind of realism unlike that of any novel before it by rendering the thoughts and actions of its main characters— both trivial and significant—in a scattered and fragmented form similar to the way thoughts, perceptions, and memories actually appear in our minds. In *Dubliners*, Joyce had tried to give his stories a heightened sense of realism by incorporating real people and places into them, and he pursues the same strategy on a massive scale in *Ulysses*. At the same time that *Ulysses* presents itself as a realistic novel, it also works on a mythic level, by way of a series of parallels with Homer's *Odyssey*. Stephen, Bloom, and Molly correspond respectively to Telemachus, Ulysses, and Penelope, and each of the eighteen episodes of the novel corresponds to an adventure from the *Odyssey*.

Ulysses has become particularly famous for Joyce's stylistic innovations. In *Portrait*, Joyce first attempted the technique of interior monologue, or stream-of-consciousness. He also experimented with shifting style—the narrative voice of *Portrait* changes stylistically as Stephen matures. In *Ulysses*, Joyce uses interior monologue extensively, and instead of employing one narrative voice, Joyce radically shifts narrative style with each new episode of the novel.

Joyce's early work reveals the stylistic influence of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Joyce began reading Ibsen as a young man; his first publication was an article about a play of Ibsen's, which earned him a letter of appreciation from Ibsen himself. Ibsen's plays provided

the young Joyce with a model of the realistic depiction of individuals stifled by conventional moral values. Joyce imitated Ibsen's naturalistic brand of realism in *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and especially in his play *Exiles*. *Ulysses* maintains Joyce's concern with realism but also introduces stylistic innovations similar to those of his Modernist contemporaries. *Ulysses's* multivoiced narration, textual self-consciousness, mythic framework, and thematic focus on life in a modern metropolis situate it close to other main texts of the Modernist movement, such as T. S. Eliot's mythic poem *The Waste Land* (also published in 1922) or Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).

Though never working in collaboration, Joyce maintained correspondences with other Modernist writers, including Samuel Beckett, and Ezra Pound, who helped find him a patron and an income. Joyce's final work, *Finnegans Wake*, is often seen as bridging the gap between Modernism and postmodernism. A novel only in the loosest sense, *Finnegans Wake* looks forward to postmodern texts in its playful celebration (rather than lamentation) of the fragmentation of experience and the decentred nature of identity, as well as its attention to the non-transparent qualities of language.

Like Eliot and many other Modernist writers, Joyce wrote in self-imposed exile in cosmopolitan Europe. In spite of this fact, all of his work is strongly tied to Irish political and cultural history, and *Ulysses* must also be seen in an Irish context. Joyce's novel was written during the years of the Irish bid for independence from Britain. After a bloody civil war, the Irish Free State was officially formed—during the same year that *Ulysses* was published. Even in 1904, Ireland had experienced the failure of several home rule bills that would have granted the island a measure of political independence within Great Britain. The failure of these bills is linked to the downfall of the Irish member of Parliament, Charles Stewart Parnell, who was once referred to as "Ireland's Uncrowned King," and was publicly persecuted by the Irish church and people in 1889 for conducting a long-term affair with a married woman, Kitty O'Shea. Joyce saw this persecution as an hypocritical betrayal by the Irish that ruined Ireland's chances for a peaceful independence.

Accordingly, *Ulysses* depicts the Irish citizens of 1904, especially Stephen Dedalus, as involved in tangled conceptions of their own Irishness, and complex relationships with various authorities and institutions specific to their time and place: the British empire, Irish nationalism, the Roman Catholic church, and the Irish Literary Revival.

Plot Overview

STEPHEN DEDALUS SPENDS the early morning hours of June 16, 1904, remaining aloof from his mocking friend, Buck Mulligan, and Buck's English acquaintance, Haines. As Stephen leaves for work, Buck orders him to leave the house key and meet them at the pub at 12:30. Stephen resents Buck.

Around 10:00 A.M., Stephen teaches a history lesson to his class at Garrett Deasy's boys' school. After class, Stephen meets with Deasy to receive his wages. The narrow-minded and prejudiced Deasy lectures Stephen on life. Stephen agrees to take Deasy's editorial letter about cattle disease to acquaintances at the newspaper.

Stephen spends the remainder of his morning walking alone on Sandymount Strand, thinking critically about his younger self and about perception. He composes a poem in his head and writes it down on a scrap torn from Deasy's letter.

At 8:00 A.M. the same morning, Leopold Bloom fixes breakfast and brings his wife her mail and breakfast in bed. One of her letters is from Molly's concert tour manager, Blazes Boylan

(Bloom suspects he is also Molly's lover)—Boylan will visit at 4:00 this afternoon. Bloom returns downstairs, reads a letter from their daughter, Milly, then goes to the outhouse.

At 10:00 A.M., Bloom picks up an amorous letter from the post office—he is corresponding with a woman named Martha Clifford under the pseudonym Henry Flower. He reads the tepid letter, ducks briefly into a church, then orders Molly's lotion from the pharmacist. He runs into Bantam Lyons, who mistakenly gets the impression that Bloom is giving him a tip on the horse Throwaway in the afternoon's Gold Cup race.

Around 11:00 A.M., Bloom rides with Simon Dedalus (Stephen's father), Martin Cunningham, and Jack Power to the funeral of Paddy Dignam. The men treat Bloom as somewhat of an outsider. At the funeral, Bloom thinks about the deaths of his son and his father.

At noon, we find Bloom at the offices of the *Freeman* newspaper, negotiating an advertisement for Keyes, a liquor merchant. Several idle men, including editor Myles Crawford, are hanging around in the office, discussing political speeches. Bloom leaves to secure the ad. Stephen arrives at the newspaper with Deasy's letter. Stephen and the other men leave for the pub just as Bloom is returning. Bloom's ad negotiation is rejected by Crawford on his way out.

At 1:00 P.M., Bloom runs into Josie Breen, an old flame, and they discuss Mina Purefoy, who is in labour at the maternity hospital. Bloom stops in Burton's restaurant, but he decides to move on to Davy Byrne's for a light lunch. Bloom reminisces about an intimate afternoon with Molly on Howth. Bloom leaves and is walking toward the National Library when he spots Boylan on the street and ducks into the National Museum.

At 2:00 P.M., Stephen is informally presenting his "Hamlet theory" in the National Library to the poet A.E. and the librarians John Eglinton, Best, and Lyster. A.E. is dismissive of Stephen's theory and leaves. Buck enters and jokingly scolds Stephen for failing to meet him and Haines at the pub. On the way out, Buck and Stephen pass Bloom, who has come to obtain a copy of Keyes' ad.

At 4:00 P.M., Simon Dedalus, Ben Dollard, Lenehan, and Blazes Boylan converge at the Ormond Hotel bar. Bloom notices Boylan's car outside and decides to watch him. Boylan soon leaves for his appointment with Molly, and Bloom sits morosely in the Ormond restaurant—he is briefly mollified by Dedalus's and Dollard's singing. Bloom writes back to Martha, then leaves to post the letter.

At 5:00 P.M., Bloom arrives at Barney Kiernan's pub to meet Martin Cunningham about the Dignam family finances, but Cunningham has not yet arrived. The citizen, a belligerent Irish nationalist, becomes increasingly drunk and begins attacking Bloom's Jewishness. Bloom stands up to the citizen, speaking in favour of peace and love over xenophobic violence. Bloom and the citizen have an altercation on the street before Cunningham's carriage carries Bloom away.

Bloom relaxes on Sandymount Strand around sunset, after his visit to Mrs. Dignam's house nearby. A young woman, Gerty MacDowell, notices Bloom watching her from across the beach. Gerty subtly reveals more and more of her legs while Bloom surreptitiously masturbates. Gerty leaves, and Bloom dozes.

At 10:00 P.M., Bloom wanders to the maternity hospital to check on Mina Purefoy. Also at the hospital are Stephen and several of his medical student friends, drinking and talking boisterously about subjects related to birth. Bloom agrees to join them, though he privately disapproves of their revelry in light of Mrs. Purefoy's struggles upstairs. Buck arrives, and the men proceed to Burke's pub. At closing time, Stephen convinces his friend Lynch to go to the brothel section of town and Bloom follows, feeling protective.

Bloom finally locates Stephen and Lynch at Bella Cohen’s brothel. Stephen is drunk and imagines that he sees the ghost of his mother—full of rage, he shatters a lamp with his walking stick. Bloom runs after Stephen and finds him in an argument with a British soldier who knocks him out.

Bloom revives Stephen and takes him for coffee at a cabman’s shelter to sober up. Bloom invites Stephen back to his house.

Well after midnight, Stephen and Bloom arrive back at Bloom’s house. They drink cocoa and talk about their respective backgrounds. Bloom asks Stephen to stay the night. Stephen politely refuses. Bloom sees him out and comes back in to find evidence of Boylan’s visit. Still, Bloom is at peace with the world and he climbs into bed, tells Molly of his day and requests breakfast in bed.

After Bloom falls asleep, Molly remains awake, surprised by Bloom’s request for breakfast in bed. Her mind wanders to her childhood in Gibraltar, her afternoon of sex with Boylan, her singing career, Stephen Dedalus. Her thoughts of Bloom vary wildly over the course of the monologue, but it ends with a reminiscence of their intimate moment at Howth and a positive affirmation.

Key Facts

FULL TITLE · *Ulysses*

AUTHOR · James Joyce

TYPE OF WORK · Novel

GENRE · Modernist novel; comic novel; quest novel

LANGUAGE · English

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN · Trieste, Italy; Zurich, Switzerland; Paris; 1914–1921

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION · Individual episodes were published serially starting in 1918; as a novel, it was first published in 1922

PUBLISHER · First serially in *The Little Review*; as a novel by Shakespeare & Company

NARRATOR · Episodes One, Two, Four–Twelve, Sixteen, and Seventeen feature anonymous narrators. Episode Three features Stephen’s thoughts. Episode Thirteen features an amalgamation of anonymous narrator, Gerty MacDowell, and Bloom. Episode Fourteen features a variety of narrators, meant to be representative of the prose styles of historical English authors. Episode Fifteen has no narrator. Molly Bloom is the first-person narrator of Episode Eighteen.

POINT OF VIEW · Episodes One, Two, Four–Eleven, Sixteen, and Seventeen are told from the third-person viewpoint. Episode Three features interior monologue. Episode Twelve is told from the first-person. Episode Thirteen is told from the third and first person. Episode Fourteen is told variously in the third-person and first-person. Episode Fifteen is in play-script form. Episode Eighteen features an interior monologue.

TONE · The narratives of Episodes One through Eight have a straightforward tone. Episodes Nine through Eleven have a self-conscious, playful tone. Episode Twelve has a hyperbolic, belligerent tone. Episode Thirteen has a sentimental tone. Episode Fourteen has an extreme variety of tones, including pious, sensational, and satiric. Episode Fifteen has no narrator and therefore no dominant narrative tone. Episode Sixteen has a tired tone. Episode Seventeen has a scientific tone.

TENSE · Present

SETTING (TIME) · 8:00 A.M., June 16, 1904–approximately 3 A.M., June 17, 1904

SETTING (PLACE) · Dublin, Ireland, and its surrounding suburbs

PROTAGONIST · Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom

MAJOR CONFLICT · Molly Bloom's infidelity with Blazes Boylan; Stephen Dedalus's search for a symbolic father; Leopold Bloom's desire for a son (his only son died eleven years ago several days after his birth)

RISING ACTION · Bloom leaves his house for the day, sees Blazes Boylan on the street several times, and becomes anxious about Blazes and Molly's four o'clock rendezvous. Bloom is convinced they are going to have sex. Stephen and Bloom go about their day. They pass by each other several times and coincidentally meet at Holles St. Maternity Hospital.

CLIMAX · The first climax could be when Bloom looks after Stephen during Stephen's argument with Private Carr (at the end of Episode Fifteen). The second climax is Bloom's return home to his bedroom to discover evidence of Molly's infidelity and to mentally overcome the threat of Blazes Boylan (Episode Seventeen).

FALLING ACTION · Bloom and Stephen rest at a cabman's shelter (Episode Sixteen), then return to the Bloom residence and have cocoa and talk (Episode Seventeen). Bloom tells Molly about his day and asks her to serve him breakfast in bed (Episode Seventeen). Molly lies awake considering the events of the day and a happy memory from her and Bloom's past.

THEMES · The quest for paternity; the remorse of conscience; compassion as heroic; parallax or the necessity of multiple perspectives

MOTIFS · Lightness and darkness; the home usurped; the East

SYMBOLS · Plumtree's Potted Meat; the Gold Cup horserace; Stephen's Latin Quarter hat; Bloom's potato talisman

FORESHADOWING · Stephen's and Bloom's compatible dreams set in an Eastern marketplace street

Character List

Leopold Bloom - A thirty-eight-year-old advertising canvasser in Dublin. Bloom was raised in Dublin by his Hungarian Jewish father, Rudolph, and his Irish Catholic mother, Ellen. He enjoys reading and thinking about science and inventions and explaining his knowledge to others. Bloom is compassionate and curious and loves music. He is preoccupied by his estrangement from his wife, Molly.

Leopold Bloom functions as a sort of Everyman—a bourgeois Odysseus for the twentieth century. At the same time, the novel's depiction of his personality is one of the most detailed in all literature. Bloom's status as an outsider, combined with his own ability to envision an inclusive state, make him a figure who both suffers from and exposes the insularity of Ireland and Irishness in 1904. Yet the social exclusion of Bloom is not simply one-sided. Bloom is clear-sighted and mostly unsentimental when it comes to his male peers. He does not like to drink often or to gossip, and though he is always friendly, he is not sorry to be excluded from their circles.

When Bloom first appears in Episode Four of *Ulysses*, his character is noteworthy for its differences from Stephen's character, on which the first three episodes focus. Stephen's cerebrality makes Bloom's comfort with the physical world seem more remarkable. This ease accords with his practical mind and scientific curiosity. Whereas Stephen, in Episode Three, shuts himself off from the material world to ponder the workings of his own perception, Bloom appears in the beginning of Episode Four bending down to his cat, wondering how *her* senses work. Bloom's comfort with the physical also manifests itself in his sexuality, a dimension mostly absent from Stephen's character. We get ample evidence of Bloom's sexuality—from his penchant for voyeurism and female underclothing to his masturbation and erotic correspondence—while Stephen seems inexperienced and celibate.

Other disparities between the two men further define Bloom's character: where Stephen is depressive and somewhat dramatic, Bloom is mature and even-headed. Bloom possesses the ability to cheer himself up and to pragmatically refuse to think about depressing topics. Yet Bloom and Stephen are similar, too. They are both unrealized artists. We might say that Bloom's conception of art is bourgeois, in the sense that he considers art as a way to effect people's actions and feelings in an immediate way. From his desire to create a newer, better advertisement, to his love poem to Molly, to his reading of Shakespeare for its moral value, Bloom's version of art does not stray far from real-life situations. Bloom's sense of culture and his aspiration to be "cultured" also seem to bring him close to Stephen. The two men share a love for music, and Stephen's companionship is attractive to Bloom, who would love to be an expert, rather than a dabbler, in various subjects.

Two emotional crises plague Bloom's otherwise cheerful demeanour throughout *Ulysses*—the breakdown of his male family line and the infidelity of his wife, Molly. The untimely deaths of both Bloom's father (by suicide) and only son, Rudy (days after his birth), lead Bloom to feel cosmically lonely and powerless. Bloom is allowed a brief respite from these emotions during his union with Stephen in the latter part of the novel. We slowly realize over the course of *Ulysses* that the first crisis of family line is related to the second crisis of marital infidelity: the Blooms' intimacy and attempts at procreation have broken down since the death of their only son eleven years ago. Bloom's reaction to Molly's decision to look elsewhere (to Blazes Boylan) for sex is complex. Bloom enjoys the fact that other men appreciate his wife, and he is generally a passive, accepting person. Bloom is clear-sighted enough to realize, though, that Blazes Boylan is a paltry replacement for himself, and he ultimately cheers himself by recontextualizing the problem. Boylan is only one of many, and it is on Molly that Bloom should concentrate his own energies.

In fact, it is this ability to shift perspective by sympathizing with another viewpoint that renders Bloom heroic. His compassion is evident throughout—he is charitable to animals and people in need, his sympathies extend even to a woman in labour. Bloom's masculinity is frequently called into question by other characters; hence, the second irony of *Ulysses* is that Bloom as Everyman is also somewhat feminine. And it is precisely his fluid, androgynous capacity to empathize with people and things of all types—and to be both a symbolic father and a mother to Stephen—that makes him the hero of the novel.

Marion (Molly) Bloom - Leopold Bloom's wife. Molly Bloom is thirty-three years old, plump with dark colouring, good-looking, and flirtatious. She is not well-educated, but she is nevertheless clever and opinionated. She is a professional singer, raised by her Irish father, Major Brian Tweedy, in Gibraltar. Molly is impatient with Bloom, especially about his refusal to be intimate with her since the death of their son, Rudy, eleven years ago.

For most of the novel we only see Molly Bloom through other people's eyes, so it may be tempting to dismiss her as a self-centred, unfaithful woman. The way we decide to view her will require us to re-evaluate the understanding we have thus far formed of Leopold Bloom. If we focus on the "vulgarity" and physicality of her monologue, our built-up sympathies with Bloom as the well-meaning husband of a loose woman are ratified. But a more nuanced understanding of her involves seeing her as an outgoing woman who takes a certain pride in her husband, but who has been feeling a lack of demonstrative love. This idea yields a re-evaluation of Bloom as being unfaithful in his own ways and complicit in the temporary breakdown of their marriage.

Like Bloom, Molly is a Dublin outsider. She was raised in the military atmosphere of Gibraltar by her father, Major Brian Tweedy. Molly never knew her mother, who was possibly Jewish,

or just Jewish-looking. Bloom associates Molly with the "hot-blooded" Mediterranean regions, and, to a lesser degree, the exoticism of the East. Yet Molly considers her own childhood to have been normal, outside the dramatic entrances and exits of young, good-looking soldiers going off to war. Molly seems to organize her life around men and to have very few female friends. She enjoys being looked at and gains self-esteem from the admiration of men. Molly is extremely self-aware and perceptive—she knows without looking when she is being looked at. A man's admiration of her does not cloud her own negative judgments about him. She is frank about topics that other people are likely to sentimentalize—intimacy, mourning, and motherhood, for example. She is also frank about the extent to which living involves adaptations of different roles. Her sense of this truth—which is perhaps related to her own career as a stage singer—aligns her with Stephen, who is also conscious of his outward existence in terms of a series of roles. Molly and Stephen both share a capacity for storytelling, scene-setting, and mimicry. Molly's storytelling and frankness about role-playing evinces her sense of humour, and it also mediates our sense of her as a hypocritical character. Finally, it is this pragmatic and fluid adoption of roles that enables Molly to reconnect with Bloom through vivid recollections, and, indeed, re-enactments, of the past, as in her final memory of the Howth scene at the end of *Ulysses*.

Stephen Dedalus - An aspiring poet in his early twenties. Stephen is intelligent and extremely well-read, and he likes music. He seems to exist more for himself, in a cerebral way, than as a member of a community or even the group of medical students that he associates with. Stephen was extremely religious as a child, but now he struggles with issues of faith and doubt in the wake of his mother's death, which occurred less than a year ago.

The character of Stephen Dedalus is a harshly drawn version of Joyce himself at age twenty-two. Stephen first appeared as the main character of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which followed his development from early childhood to his proud and ambitious days before leaving Dublin for Paris and the realization of his artistic capabilities. When we meet Stephen again at the beginning of *Ulysses*, it is over two years after the end of *Portrait*. Stephen has been back in Dublin for over a year, having returned to sit at his mother's deathbed. Stephen's artistic talent is still unrealized—he is currently a reluctant teacher of history at a boy's school. He is disappointed and moody and is still dressed in mourning over the death of his mother almost a year ago. At the beginning of *Ulysses*, Stephen is a self-conscious young man whose identity is still in formation. Stephen's aloofness and his attempts to understand himself through fictional characters such as Hamlet dramatize his struggle to solidify this identity.

Stephen is depicted as above most of the action of the novel. He exists mainly within his own world of ideas—his actions in the world tend to pointedly distance himself from others and from the world itself. His freeness with money is less a demonstration of his generosity than of his lack of material concerns. His unwashed state similarly reflects his removal from the material world. His cryptic stories and riddles cut others off rather than include them. He stubbornly holds grudges, and our admiration of his noble struggle for independence is tempered by our knowledge of the impoverished siblings he has left behind. If Stephen himself is an unsympathetic character, however, the issues central to his identity struggle are easier for us to sympathize with. From his contemplation of the eye's perception of the outside world to his teaching of a history lesson to his meditations on *amor matris* or "mother love," Stephen's mental meanderings centre on the problem of whether, and how, to be an active or passive being within the world.

Stephen's struggles tend to centre around his parents. His mother, who seems to blame Stephen for refusing to pray at her deathbed, represents not only a mother's love but also the

church and Ireland. Stephen is haunted by his mother's memory and ghost in the same ways that he is haunted by memories of his early piety. Though Stephen's father is still alive and well, we see Stephen attempting to ignore or deny him throughout all of *Ulysses*. Stephen's struggle with his father seems to be about Stephen's need to have a space in which to create a space untainted by Simon Dedalus's overly critical judgments. Stephen's struggle to define his identity without the constraint or aid imposed by his father bleeds into larger conflicts—Stephen's struggle with the authority of God, the authority of the British empire, even with the authority of the mocker or joker.

After the first three episodes, Stephen's appearances in *Ulysses* are limited. However, these limited appearances—in Episodes Nine, Fourteen, and Fifteen—demonstrate that Stephen's attempted repudiation of authority and obligations has precipitated what seems to him to be the abandonment of all those close to him. At the end of Episode Fifteen, Stephen lies nearly unconscious on the ground, feeling as though he has been "betrayed" by everyone. Never before has Stephen seemed so much in need of a parent, and it is Bloom—not wholly father nor mother—who cares for him.

Though Stephen plays a part in the final episodes of *Ulysses*, we see less and less of his thoughts as the novel progresses (and, perhaps not coincidentally, Stephen becomes drunker and drunker). Instead, the circumstances of the novel and the apparent choices that Stephen makes take over our sense of his character. By the novel's end, we see that Stephen recognizes a break with Buck Mulligan, will quit his job at Deasy's school, and has accepted, if only temporarily, Bloom's hospitality. In Bloom's kitchen, Stephen puts something in his mouth besides alcohol for the first time since Episode One, and has a conversation with Bloom, as opposed to performing as he did earlier in the day. We are thus encouraged to understand that, in the calm of the late-night hours, Stephen has recognized the power of a reciprocal relationship to provide sustenance.

The Quest for Paternity

At its most basic level, *Ulysses* is a book about Stephen's search for a symbolic father and Bloom's search for a son. In this respect, the plot of *Ulysses* parallels Telemachus's search for Odysseus, and vice versa, in *The Odyssey*. Bloom's search for a son stems at least in part from his need to reinforce his identity and heritage through progeny. Stephen already has a biological father, Simon Dedalus, but considers him a father only in "flesh." Stephen feels that his own ability to mature and become a father himself (of art or children) is restricted by Simon's criticism and lack of understanding. Thus Stephen's search involves finding a symbolic father who will, in turn, allow Stephen himself to be a father. Both men, in truth, are searching for paternity as a way to reinforce their own identities.

Stephen is more conscious of his quest for paternity than Bloom, and he mentally recurs to several important motifs with which to understand paternity. Stephen's thinking about the Holy Trinity involves, on the one hand, Church doctrines that uphold the unity of the Father and the Son and, on the other hand, the writings of heretics that challenge this doctrine by arguing that God created the rest of the Trinity, concluding that each subsequent creation is inherently different. Stephen's second motif involves his Hamlet theory, which seeks to prove that Shakespeare represented himself through the ghost-father in *Hamlet*, but also—through his translation of his life into art—became the father of his own father, of his life, and "of all his race." The Holy Trinity and Hamlet motifs reinforce our sense of Stephen's and Bloom's parallel quests for paternity. These quests seem to end in Bloom's kitchen, with Bloom recognizing "the future" in Stephen and Stephen recognizing "the past" in Bloom. Though united as father and son in this moment, the men will soon part ways, and their paternity

quests will undoubtedly continue, for *Ulysses* demonstrates that the quest for paternity is a search for a lasting manifestation of self.

The Remorse of Conscience

The phrase *agenbite of inwit*, a religious term meaning “remorse of conscience,” comes to Stephen’s mind again and again in *Ulysses*. Stephen associates the phrase with his guilt over his mother’s death—he suspects that he may have killed her by refusing to kneel and pray at her sickbed when she asked. The theme of remorse runs through *Ulysses* to address the feelings associated with modern breaks with family and tradition. Bloom, too, has guilty feelings about his father because he no longer observes certain traditions his father observed, such as keeping kosher. Though remorse of conscience can have a repressive, paralyzing effect, as in Stephen’s case, it is also vaguely positive. A self-conscious awareness of the past, even the sins of the past, helps constitute an individual as an ethical being in the present.

Compassion as Heroic

In nearly all senses, the notion of Leopold Bloom as an epic hero is laughable—his job, talents, family relations, public relations, and private actions all suggest his utter ordinariness. It is only Bloom’s extraordinary capacity for sympathy and compassion that allows him an unironic heroism in the course of the novel. Bloom’s fluid ability to empathize with such a wide variety of beings—cats, birds, dogs, dead men, vicious men, blind men, old ladies, a woman in labour, the poor, and so on—is the modern-day equivalent to Odysseus’s capacity to adapt to a wide variety of challenges. Bloom’s compassion often dictates the course of his day and the novel, as when he stops at the river Liffey to feed the gulls or at the hospital to check on Mrs. Purefoy. There is a network of symbols in *Ulysses* that present Bloom as Ireland’s saviour, and his message is, at a basic level, to “love.” He is juxtaposed with Stephen, who would also be Ireland’s saviour but is lacking in compassion. Bloom returns home, faces evidence of his cuckold status, and slays his competition—not with arrows, but with a refocused perspective that is available only through his fluid capacity for empathy.

Parallax, or the Need for Multiple Perspectives

Parallax is an astronomical term that Bloom encounters in his reading and that arises repeatedly through the course of the novel. It refers to the difference of position of one object when seen from two different vantage points. These differing viewpoints can be collated to better approximate the position of the object. As a novel, *Ulysses* uses a similar tactic. Three main characters—Stephen, Bloom, and Molly—and a subset of narrative techniques that affect our perception of events and characters combine to demonstrate the fallibility of one single perspective. Our understanding of particular characters and events must be continually revised as we consider further perspectives. The most obvious example is Molly’s past love life. Though we can construct a judgment of Molly as a loose woman from the testimonies of various characters in the novel, this judgment must be revised with the integration of Molly’s own final testimony.

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