

**JAMES JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*: THE EPHEMERALITY OF STYLE IN
"OXEN OF THE SUN"**

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ABSTRACT

James Joyce's *Ulysses*: The Ephemerality of Style in "Oxen of the Sun"

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In the "Oxen of the Sun" episode, Joyce's manuscripts reveal a systematic appropriation from canonical texts to produce a profile of style as gestation. Focusing on his adaptations from Sir Thomas Malory in the construction of Mina Purefoy's labor narrative, I will argue that Joyce presents style as a method of social construction. Previous scholarship has focused on systematically categorizing Joyce's citational phrases, particularly of note being Robert Janusko's excellent *The Sources and Structures of 'Oxen of the Sun,'* in which he argues that the Malory parody in the chapter contains, through "the power of the word," the essence of *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Thus, Janusko refers to style as essential and concrete, where the physical word (containing both diction and grammatical structure) serve to present societal consciousness. However, Joyce's conglomeration of literary styles, I will argue, serves to demonstrate the ephemerality of style, where the literary form and the written word are nothing more than garments that enclose, and often restrict, the essence of consciousness, i.e. belief and thought. For example, when the Malory parody describes medical instruments in terms of the fantastical and imaginary (dragons and dwarves and the like), Joyce shows the extent to which we exchange the garments of earlier texts with our own, appropriating not just the language but the ideas and thoughts, reconfiguring them to fit our own social contexts. This new historical approach,

drawing on the recent NLI collection, as well as selections from the Buffalo Collection, the Rosenbach Manuscript, the British Notesheets, and the Joyce Collection at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin, is imperative to an understanding of Joyce's reception of these older texts and his play with the ephemerality of style.

DEDICATION

To my mother, Cristi Harrelson Rodenberg, without whom I would not be the man I am today. Her continued support and guidance, full of love and wisdom, has always made me feel blessed beyond measure.

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INTRODUCTION

10 p.m., June 16, 1904: this is the setting for episode 11 of *Ulysses*, “Oxen of the Sun,” in which Leopold Bloom, the Ulysses character of Joyce’s novel, enters the National Maternity hospital on Holles Street where “A.Horne is lord” (*U* 315.74) to inquire about an old friend of his, Mina Purefoy, who has been in labor for three days. Upon entering the hospital, Bloom is invited to join the gathered party in drinking and witty, though often derogatory, conversation. In telling the narrative of Mina Purefoy and Bloom’s climactic meeting with Stephen Dedalus, the Telemachus of *Ulysses*, Joyce systematically appropriates phrases from canonical texts, such as the works of Sir John Mandeville and John Dryden, amongst others, to produce a profile of style as the stages of the human embryo, or gestation. Essentially, the episode tells the history of English literature through the evolution of prose style as the gestation of both Joyce’s own book and the artistic creative process itself. For Joyce, everything is seen as a cycle of life and death, crucifixion and resurrection, the fall of one thing being the beginning of another, similar to the rebirth of the Phoenix from its own ashes. Thus, each new rebirth, each new cycle, contains elements of the previous and builds upon it. In the same way, the events and themes of the previous episodes of the novel find their way into this chapter, in addition to the repetition of base elements of the Anglo-Saxon style throughout as an imitation of the pounding of hoofs (essentially an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, repeated for the whole sentence).

Beginning with crude Latin translations in the typical Ciceronian fashion and ending with the complete disintegration of literary form into something resembling drunkenness, Joyce presents style as a method of social construction. This is particularly apparent in the Malory

parody. Previous scholarship has focused on systematically categorizing Joyce's citational phrases, particularly of note being Robert Janusko's excellent *The Sources and Structures of 'Oxen of the Sun,'* in which he argues that the Malory parody in the chapter contains, through "the power of the word," the essence of *Le Morte d'Arthur* (Janusko 62). Janusko refers to the Malory parody as containing both a large appropriation of phrases from Malory, in conjunction with themes and events that correspond to the stories in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. For example, he cites phrases taken from the Balin-Balan conflict, the theme of which centers on "the struggle of two male antagonists" (Janusko 62), which indeed mirrors the contrasting of Bloom and Lenehan in the novel, the former being the "meekest man and the kindest" (*U* 318.183) and the latter "a passing good man of his lustiness" (*U* 318.181-2). Thus, Janusko refers to style as essential and concrete, where the physical word (containing both diction and grammatical structure) serves to present societal consciousness. However, Joyce's conglomeration of literary styles serves to demonstrate instead the ephemerality of style, where the literary form and the written word are nothing more than garments that enclose, and often restrict, the essence of consciousness, i.e. belief and thought. Ephemerality, for my research, will be defined in the sense of intangibility, in which it is elusive and difficult to pin down, much like trying to catch a wisp of cloud or bottle the wind. In arguing for the ephemerality of style, which I believe is what Joyce is exposing as a way for himself to break free from literary and linguistic norms and conventions, my research adds to the understanding of source appropriation while disagreeing slightly with Janusko's work.

In "Oxen of the Sun," Joyce's use of the various literary styles seems to obscure the events of the narrative by bouncing continuously from one fictional world to the next, never staying long enough in one for us to reorient ourselves and understand what exactly is going on.

But the events of the narrative continue to unfold (though indeed, little happens) and, though they may be viewed differently, “the characters and events remain consistent and continuous with the events and figures” that have been presented in the previous chapters of the novel (Norris 96). Bloom and Stephen continue to exist “with the illusion of being outside language” (Sicari 131). The various lenses through which we view the characters, however, “[admit] no one definitive reading” of them; they are instead multifaceted, continuing to develop with each new literary form (Lawrence 128). The reader becomes as much a character of the novel as Bloom and Stephen, having to constantly interpret and slightly reinvent the characters with each new literary form. As Joyce famously points out at the end of “Ithaca,” the characters of the novel are nothing more than words on a page. The narrator provides the context and the garment of style with which the narrative events are enclosed, but it is the reader who provides consciousness and life to the characters. To disagree with Janusko, there is no essence to the physical, written word.

My research adopts a genetic approach. Luca Crispi defines genetic criticism as a literary method which “document[s] the gradual, complex, and sometimes elusive processes by which the writer wove the narratological patterns that serve to construct the characters in the work” (Crispi 97). Essentially, genetic criticism allows for unique analysis of the composition process, witnessed in drafts, typescripts, and marginal revision, in which composition is understood as part of the interpretive process. Genetic readers can delve into the construction process of the text and characters, and this gives a unique insight into the textual process, and in so doing provides an authorial framework with which to view the text, in much the same way that readers seek historical, cultural, and biographical information to help frame their own interpretations of *Ulysses*. This is particularly important when addressing Joyce’s own self-conscious reflections

on style and literary composition in “Oxen of the Sun.” The genetic method is warranted as, in tracing the text’s evolutionary process backward, it parallels the evolutionary process of style that Joyce puts forth.

I began this project with the assumption that the Rosenbach Manuscript was the foundational MS for the later publication of *Ulysses* in *The Little Review* and, subsequently, later typescripts and galley proofs, before the publication of the 1922 edition. Thus, I began navigating and analyzing the online archives of the National Library of Ireland, the final page proofs for the 1922 edition at the University of Texas at Austin, early drafts and manuscripts from the University of Buffalo (ed. Phillip Herring), and the British notesheets for “Oxen of the Sun” (ed. Phillip Herring). Each change that I found from *The Little Review* to the final page proofs to the 1922 text, I compared against the Rosenbach MS as a way to document the changes during the composition process. In this way I had hoped to use genetic criticism to see Joyce’s authorial approach to the use of the Malory parody and the Middle English prose style as described in George Saintsbury’s *A History of English Prose Rhythm*, and further shed light on his reasoning for constructing the chapter in this way, i.e. the ephemerality of style.

Yet, towards the end of the project, I came across a section in the facsimile reproduction of the Rosenbach Manuscript, meant to be part of an introduction to the manuscript in general as it describes the episode as operating on three levels: style, gestation (embryologically), and the recapitulation of previous episodes (which Joyce uses the image of the ebb and flow of the tide, as well as musical composition, to describe). This bibliographic preface described the Rosenbach MS as containing only part of the revision process that Joyce made to the “Oxen of the Sun” episode before the final page proofs. Essentially, the MS seems to have broken the composition process up into multiple sections: the early and later drafts, the Rosenbach, the typescript, and at

least three or four drafts of page proofs before publication. After discovering this so late in my research and analysis, I began to do a bit more digging on the existing drafts and the compositional history for *Ulysses*, specifically for “Oxen of the Sun,” and discovered that the early and later drafts of the episode lay in the archives at the University of Buffalo in New York, while the galley proofs (also known as “placards” in French) as well as the early page proofs were at Harvard University, all of which I had no immediate access to.

My analysis of the composition process of “Oxen” was now at a standstill, and the previous research that I had done was, of course, seemed to be founded on the wrong manuscript, or at least my research was only partially complete. However, though the Rosenbach indeed only tells a portion of the story of composition, it can nevertheless serve as a later starting point to note the minute changes between it and *The Little Review*, as well as the 1922 text. Many scholars, unfortunately, only see the Rosenbach as a “fair copy” when in actuality a watchful eye reveals “the multitude of erasures, second thoughts, additions, and differences between it and the first printed versions” (*Rosenbach Facsimile* 1: 32). In fact, “Oxen of the Sun” only seems to have few revisions in the Rosenbach because, as it was quite technical experimental, it “had to be fully elaborated and tightly composed at the outset” (*Rosenbach Facsimile* 1: 4). Thus, Joyce composed “Oxen” in quite a number of drafts, both preceding and following this manuscript. Though my research does not include these drafts and proofs that occur before and after the Rosenbach, the overarching changes from it to the 1922 text can still be documented and, thus, the conclusions that I have set forth in this essay still hold to be valid. Further research will need to be done to document the compositional history from the early drafts of “Oxen” through the galley proofs and page proofs to the 1922 text and the 1932 Odyssey Press edition (the final

edition with Joyce's own revisions) in order to garner more evidence and further delve into the mind of the author.

CHAPTER I

JOYCE AND LANGUAGE: THE EPHEMERALITY OF STYLE

When the chapter begins narrating in the voice of Middle English prose (the Mandeville and Malory parodies), it is evident that there is a marked contrast from the preceding literary form. Even if it cannot be pinned down to an exact date, the form allows itself to be placed within a rough time period of history (approximately 1100-1540, when English begins to be standardized with the advent of the printing press and particularly the influential Caxton house, which originally published Malory). Because of this (and despite the fact that Joyce cavalierly uses them as a way “to forget...where [their] origins lay,” intentionally trying to remove them from their histories [Baron 54]), it follows that these literary forms are reflective of their respective historical contexts. How? The ephemeral quality inherent in style removes it from its grammatical structure and the physical text, placing it in an abstract historical sense. We can see a person’s education, their beliefs, their background, their history, all from the style of the writing. Thus, there seems to be two major defining characteristics of any literary style: grammatical structure and diction. As both of these are inextricably linked to our associations of a particular time period, we are able to place each literary form within its historical context. Literary forms are portals to past societies, reflective of their historical contexts, able to inform our own conceptions of the societies that they are describing, which we then use to construct our own version of the historical narrative as we perceive it to be.

First to address the defining characteristics of literary forms previously specified, diction and grammatical structure. It seems necessary to expose them through the analysis and subsequent comparison of two literary styles found in the chapter, both of which occur in the

section of Middle English, Middle English here being the period of the English language c.1150-1470. The first is the parody of the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, c.1336-71 (U.316-317.111-166), followed by the second Middle English prose style of Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, c.1469-1470 (U 317-318.167-186).¹ Almost immediately, this literary form is identified as antiquated via words such as "fared" (112), "thereto" (115), and "nigh" (118). Indeed, the grammatical structure of the sentences sounds almost as strange to the ears as the words; no one would dare say "was come" given the current established rules of grammar (111). The Middle English literary style operates within the contemporary society's unwritten rules of grammar, which for Joyce is the constricting garment which encloses societal consciousness. Even from the outset, we see this literary form as something different from our own and, whether consciously or not, place it within its respective English tradition in contrast to ours, which further illuminates the evolution of the literary form from the Middle Ages to the present time.

Even here, in the Middle English prose passage that briefly precedes the *Travels* passage, the literary form affects the way the characters are viewed. Middle English prose carries with it associations of knights, jousts, and the like; in reading Bloom and the nurse through this style, we as readers subconsciously begin to read Bloom as a chivalrous knight and slightly reinvent the character in our own minds. The *Travels* passage goes on to give the title of "traveller" to Bloom, this time attributing to his character ideas of a wayfaring stranger, both harkening back to his role as an outsider Jew as he has been previously defined in addition to giving him an aura of grandeur and idealism. This is the traveler with no home but is shrouded in an air of mystery and mysticism. We are essentially recreating the fictional world of the characters using the associations we make with the particular literary forms, and then imposing this world back onto

¹ Hereafter quotation from the chapter will be referred to only in line numbers unless otherwise specified; all references to the text of *Ulysses* will be from the 1986 Gabler edition.

the characters (who ultimately live in the present rather than the fictional past of the form). Thus, Bloom becomes “traveller Leopold” (126), the hospital becomes a castle “of the birchwood of Finlandy” (141-2), and the fictional world of the novel is transported to a past time that evokes notions of grandeur, harkening back to ideas of King Arthur and other tales of the great deeds of medieval knights, where fantastical things were believed in. Indeed, the *Travels* passage makes many references to “dwarfmen” (142) and “dragon[s]” (130), complete with “magic” (147) and “a warlock” (147). Joyce seems to be playing with Vico’s theory of the human tendency to view history as narrative, which has been written extensively about in the book *Vico and Joyce* (edited by Donald Philip Verene), where, though we are recreating a fictional world rather than a historical reality, the reader operates as an active participant in the reconstruction process and thus participate in historical meaning-making.

History is subjective in that, though there are certainly base facts, it is impossible to completely disassociate bias from narrative – history is made by the victors, so to speak, and the very act of writing down history itself is an interpretation of it. This in turn often creates the popular perception, as is the case with the Malory parody, that these literary histories, these “myths,” as Vico defines them,² constitute a completely factual society, and so we project these narratives onto history. Rather, as Joyce’s use of various literary styles exposes, they serve to show basic human experience in their conceptual understanding of themselves and how they relate to the world around them. Thus, the narrative myth of the tale of Balin and Balan in *Le Morte d’Arthur* can be interpreted as, in the base elements of human experience, a conflict between two male antagonists. Experience remains relatively the same in its most basic

² “Myth,” as Vico defines it, is essentially primitive man’s way of expressing, through poetic metaphor, the world around him. The evolution of language in this way mirrors his triadic cyclical history, where first man is spiritual/religious and grounded in mythology, then scientific and empirical, and finally abstract and theoretical, all of which Joyce mirrors in portraying the evolution of literary history.

elements, though they may be cast in different language and understood or interpreted and expressed in different ways. The task of the historian, then, is “to save the logos of ancient myth and make it significant for the modern mind” (Mali 35). In psychoanalytic terms, there is an essence of the human experience that lies at the foundation of myth. History, then, is not merely base facts as many Enlightenment *philosophes*, such as Pierre Bayle might say; it is instead “the daily bread of existence,” the subjective human experience in the everyday (*Portrait* 195).

“...myth is in itself a lie or a false story – insofar as it *represents* untruthfully natural and historical realities – Vico nonetheless argued that it is a true story, insofar as it *expresses* truthfully archaic and profound realities concerning the needs and aims of man” (Mali 38). Thus it is possible to “discover historical truth in the mythical layers themselves, not outside or beyond them” (Mali 40). Style becomes, once again, a portal with which to see societal consciousness. We see this concept of being able to view other societies in all of the literary forms that Joyce employs, though it seems to be more pronounced in the Elizabethan prose section (pages 320-21). Here we again see out of date words such as “ye” (282) and “thou” (329), and everything seems to be described in idealistic terms. Money becomes “glistening coins of tribute” (285-6) and Bloom gains the title “sir Leopold” (330). Thus we have both indications of time and genre, though a genre of idealism rather than, perhaps, one founded in reality. In addition, the passage makes many references to God and quotes many Latin phrases, suggesting that the historical context of the literary form is focused on religious adherence and a return to the classical tradition (hence, the Elizabethan prose style of the English Renaissance).³ Further, we see that the religious sect of Elizabethan society cherished the idea of a woman’s meekness and

³ This passage could possibly be a reference to the prevalence in this period of literature from the church transcribed by monks, as secular narrative wasn’t really seen until much later (Joyce is telling the history of English literature, after all).

innocence, evidenced by the nurse's transformation into "an ancient and a sad matron...and christian walking" (322). Thus, literary forms being portals to society, we can read the ideas presented in the literary form and see the beliefs and thought processes of the literate segment of that society; essentially, we are "confronting the cognitive and moral systems of bygone worlds" (Norris 97).

What Saintsbury points out in his analysis of English prose, and what Joyce plays with in "Oxen," is the idea that literary styles are grounded in their historical contexts. When we read a parody in the style of Malory, or Dickens, or any number of authors, we subconsciously, and often unintentionally, as active participants in the meaning making of the text, bring in our individual historical and cultural associations with the text. A parody of Malory that deals with "a passing good man of his lustiness" (181-2) brings with it associations of gallant knights and fair damsels in distress, and uses "lustiness" in the 15th century sense of "pleasure" and "delight" ("lust," *Oxford English Dictionary*). Yet, within a century after Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, "lust" takes on connotations associated with the Christian tradition of sin. Lust, though still meaning pleasure and delight in a sense, is used in different contexts and means different things as the culture progresses from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The disparate irony of this is something Joyce plays with in the character of Buck Mulligan later in the chapter, but in the Malory parody it serves as a way to show stylistically the beliefs and thoughts of the period.

It is imperative to note that it is impossible to gain a perfect conceptual understanding of any society other than our own, especially in the simple fact that the literature and culture that is left behind generally only reflects one sliver of society; indeed, as the Middle English prose passage shows, the conceptual understanding that this archaic society may have of the world around them is unable to accurately explain any future events or a future world (which to the

novel is the present) and the objects that inhabit it. While the characters may be drinking ale, to keep with the Middle English style, Joyce has to alter the facts of the narrative to fit the period of narration. Thus, any alcohol mentioned becomes “mead” (163), the unknown medical instruments can only be explained by attributing their creation to spirits and magic (141-148), and a tin of sardines becomes a “vat of silver...the which lay strange fishes withouten heads” (149-151). The archaic society attempts to explain the “fictional facts” of the present society “in an Anglo-Saxon idiom and...conceptual systems that its language accommodates,” but ultimately fails to do so accurately and instead ends up constructing its own version of the society’s reality in an oppositional relationship to its own (Norris 101). Therefore, though we are able to place the literary form in a particular time period and society, we are simultaneously casting our own construction of what that past society must have been like. Narrating the events of the present in the language constraints of the past alters the narrative content. This is similar to Stephen’s concept of the “ineluctable modality of the visible” (*U.3.1*), where “the self imposes the meaning it may otherwise think it discovers” (Doody 204). It is impossible to recreate another world, another society; we recognize them as being different from our own, and are made aware of what is distinctly of our own time through the de-familiarization of familiar objects. Literature (and art in general) is but a shadow of reality, a single person’s view of the world around them and their relation to it. The literary forms that Joyce employs show “a definitive interest in the experience of the individual in a particular time and place,” but this is often biased as it often represents only a sliver of societal belief and thought (Doody 200).

However, this is the popular culture of that society. The literary form is just a shadow of the reality it reflects but it does indeed reflect some portion of that reality, and each of the various forms “contain their own system of values” that relate to it (Lawrence 136). The form is

embedded in that reality (its historical context), but that reality ultimately invented and gave birth to it. Essentially, society creates the literary form as a persona, a reflection, of the image it is trying to convey. It defines itself, its characteristics and its image, and the dominant literary form of the society conveys this identity in its grammatical structures, word choice, and the ideas it presents (a portal to society but one that society intentionally creates, though it is not necessarily an active creation), where the literary form works within the framework of the societal identity.

To relate this to current times and perhaps provide an example a little closer to home, consider the way today's popular culture both reflects and creates our own society. Music associated with youth culture, partying, sex, rebellious acts, etc. seems to be the dominant form of entertainment today (at least in the music scene) and additionally seems to be reflective of youth society as a whole. We could then say that the youth culture has created this music to be reflective of their beliefs and values and thought processes in much the same way literary forms reflect their historical societies. Indeed, when positioning oneself away from and in opposition to the music and current youth culture, it is easy to assume that the things that the songs describe are defining characteristics of that culture across the board, that that is its essence and identity. That being said, looking closely at youth culture also makes it clear that this is not the only portrayal of youth, though it is the dominant and popular one. Yet, this music also continues to create and reinforce the image of youth culture that it describes, essentially mass marketing it to the rest of society. In much the same way, past societies create their images, seen through the dominant literary form of the time, and are simultaneously reinforced by those literary forms to solidify the identity, through the active participation of the reader as historian. However, this identity is ultimately left in the hands of those who stumble their way across this popular culture

(which is what is left behind when the society dissolves), who then impose their own constructions and concepts onto the identity of that society. As Kelly Mays states in her article, “the future alone ultimately possesses the power to determine the shape” and, ultimately, the identity of the past (446). These literary styles, too, are only reflective of a sliver of the societies that they mirror; incidentally, Joyce seems to be just as interested in what styles *exclude* as what they include and embody.

If we take the notion of society creating its own image through its popular culture at the time, it follows that this image is biased, and subsequently so is our construction of it. The literary forms that past societies leave behind combine with our own inferences and constructions to often create a romantic and idealized version of that society, one in which nostalgia for “days gone by” reign as we immerse ourselves in an obsession with regaining the past. We like to think, “How great the world must have seemed then! How marvelous!”, much more so than the world we live in now (H. G. Wells, qtd. in Mays 449). This is not the case as this idea is founded upon self-perceptions and self-constructions of the ideal reality that we desire. There is “an ambivalence in the relation between the word and the world,” a division “between what is written and what is written about” (McGee 112; Coyle 87); indeed, there is a tendency on “the egotism of the writer” to “[produce] distortions and romance” that skew this “written about” (Doody 198). But underneath the mask of the literary form and the self-created fictional world lies a real narrative, one removed from romantic ideals and boiled down to plain facts.

Our perception of the events of the narrative even changes by viewing them through various literary forms. Looking at the Middle English prose passage, the narrative events of the novel are Bloom speaking with the nurse and then entering the hospital upon the prompting of

Dr. Dixon, a young medical student, to “make merry” (132) with them until Mrs. Purefoy has given birth. The perception of the events changes, however, with the new literary form in that Bloom entering the hospital is now perceived as a socially perilous journey, one with mocking medical students and an ominous air that speaks of “the dark night of the soul by which spiritual pilgrims are tested” (and quite right for this is the first meeting between Bloom and Stephen, which the whole novel seems to have been leading up to) (Gordon 243, “Obeying the Boss”). Additionally, “traveller” Leopold is finally able to rest, “being sore of limb after many marches” (139), changing the previous walking events of the narrative into a long quest of considerable length and grandeur. We see this crop up again in the most striking example in the chapter, where the event of the narrative is nothing more than a peal of thunder, though it can be read and interpreted in different ways depending on which literary form is imposed on it. Reflective of the historical context of 16th-17th century Latin prose translations, Stephen attributes the clap of thunder to Thor (or the possibility of the Christian God as the subsequent Bunyan passage makes clear) who “in anger awful” (409) hurled his hammer. Bloom at the end of the section, however, tries to console Stephen by attributing the thunder to nothing more than “the discharge of fluid from the thunderhead, look you, having taken place, and all of the order of a natural phenomenon” (426-28). Interestingly, Bloom’s explanation consists of a mashup of scientism in modern English and a small snippet of Elizabethan language. In this gesture to the past, Joyce continues with the theory of rebirth in showing both the movement of the literary form in a more scientific direction as literary history enters the beginnings of the Enlightenment, and the conflict of the Enlightenment between traditional, religious thought with the scientific rationale and methodic doubt of Descartes and Bayle. Language, here, tells historical narrative.

This scientific rationality is characteristic of Bloom (as we have seen in other sections in the novel), though this is also reminiscent of the literary form of English naturalist and anatomist Thomas Huxley, whose form appears to profess the argument that everything can be explained through reasoning, science, and observation, which are the only real and dependable things. As Lawrence states, “the style of the man is the style of the language,” and in this way, we see that the relationship of the self to the world around him evolves with the literary forms, which also serves to alter our perception of the events (128). Here, truth is relative and shifts with time as history progresses, and Joyce seems to “recognize both the great variety of human experience and the possible multiplicity within each individual self” (Doody 214). Joyce’s interest in what styles exclude is quite apparent here, as he contrasts this section with both the realism of Charles Dickens and the aestheticism of Walter Pater. Style operates here on a constricting level, where some ideas are unable to be presented in certain styles as compared to others. For example, “A shaven space of lawn one soft May evening” (1362) from the Walter Pater section would never appear in Dickens’s hard realism. Thus, styles once again become enclosing garments that, though they frame what ideas and language can be presented, do contain and present societal consciousness as being outside of literary style.

When viewing the literary forms as an evolutionary process, it seems that there is a universal that transcends these forms where style is ephemeral (and, as an extension, that transcends history itself). By Joyce imposing an archaic language and different literary forms on present events, he “[makes] past and present co-exist, turning the ‘here and now’ into an ‘Echoland!’ (*FW*. 13.05) of other lives and other texts”, which relates to his idea that “any act of union...the joining of two opposites to create a single new being, is a metaphor for the soul’s attempt at reintegration” (Baron 61; Gordon 159, “Multiple Journeys”). In this way, Joyce shows

that there is a soul that transcends all historical time periods, having a beginning (in the crude Latin translations at the beginning of the chapter) but not really a definite end; it simply takes different forms and different identities. Essentially, society does the same as it continuously reinvents itself, putting up new masks in the form of literary writing styles, but it remains the same world, the same themes, the same spirit. As Gordon states, “The literary history reflects the historical changes in man’s image” (“Multiple Journeys,” 160).

We see this throughout “Oxen of the Sun” as Joyce uses the same characters but viewed in and through different historical contexts. He even discusses some of the same themes in different literary forms, particularly that of lust. These themes are disguised under different forms that create different ideas about them as they operate within the new fictional world that they are described in, being “subjected to arrays of verbal and ideological disguises” (Norris 108). For example, Buck Mulligan’s satire on “devot[ing] himself to the noblest task for which [his] bodily organism has been framed” (i.e. sex, which relates to man’s lust for woman [663-4]) uses such sophisticated vocabulary and logic that it paints this moral issue in a positive light. Elsewhere, the concept of man’s lust is simply glossed over as if it either wasn’t important or is an overall good characteristic to have (“he was a passing good man of his lustiness” [181-82]). “Perspectives of different literary worlds bring oblique insights,” different worlds with different morality codes and levels of social acceptance of certain things, including lust (Norris 100). In seeing the same theme crop up under different names and guises it is clear that, though there is a surface culture that the literary form reinforces, there is some deeper essence that is transcendent. It doesn’t matter what historical time period is being portrayed, the same themes and issues are considered and dealt with. In this sense, “lust” will mean something different to Malory than it does to Dickens because of cultural and historical transformations in belief and thought. Thus

style, I think, can now be broken down into *three* components: diction, grammatical structure, and the ephemerally present *voice*, the latter of which is essentially found and developed within a personal linguistic metastructure.

To illustrate this concept of voice, which is a key component to the ephemeral nature of style, we must first establish the relatively incidental nature of the physical, written word, as the latter is simply a symbol, black lines on a page, that represent the associative idea, which is the true object. The word becomes flesh when it is imbued with meaning – though it only comes into existence in the artist’s imagination (“the virgin womb of the imagination” [*Portrait* 191]) as a way to fit an existing idea or thought. The physical word, written language, dresses thought, but in doing so creates a restricting linguistic metastructure. As mentioned above, Robert Janusko argues that the style of Malory that Joyce uses, the source texts and narratives that he takes his phrases from, essentially fit the narrative events, but do so in such a way as to idealize and romanticize it, as well as imbue the narrative with a depth of meaning and association that it would otherwise not have. “To some extent it may be said that this paragraph, through the power of the Word...” (Janusko 62). If it is the power of the physical, written word that gives meaning and life, this is only because the ideas and thoughts behind it give it this power. In relating to cultural and historical transformations in belief and thought, the physical word may indicate direction and give context for meaning-making, but then again, it is not the written word but the ideas behind it that do so. Words are created to fit existing schema, and words are associated with ideas (and vice versa), but they are menial in that their associative meanings change as society changes and as the self’s relation to society and the world around it changes. Their meanings are in a state of constant flux from person to person. Whoever came up with the word for *cat* could just as easily have called it a *cow* or a *cot*.

Indeed, Stephen Dedalus, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, remarks on this very thing, this constant flux of meaning from person to person:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master* on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (*Portrait* 166)

Thus, in “Oxen of the Sun,” Joyce attempts to do the same, to create his own history and tradition through the mastery of language (make the words his own), yet still sees that, through associative memory, style through appropriated phrases are still ground in historical contexts. He tries to escape the “nightmare of history” and tradition by exposing style as social construction, being both ephemeral and constricting in its adherence to linguistic conventions. Appropriating styles still forces Joyce to operate within tradition and literary history. “...syntax becomes ‘tyrannical, forcing us to think along its lines, and every individual word is haunted by associations that the user cannot escape’” (Manganiello 202). According to Vico, there is a mental language universal to humankind that is outside the bounds of written words and linguistic conventions (Mali 40), and through applying psychoanalysis to *The Odyssey*, Joyce portrays this language as the spirit of human experience and suggests a societal consciousness that transcends culture, history, and written language.

Now that the physical word has been established as simply a symbol that gives linguistic meaning to its associated idea, let us turn to the second part of Janusko’s sentence: “...this paragraph, through the power of the Word, contains the essence of *Le Morte d’Arthur*” (Janusko 62). How is style ephemeral, and how does voice contribute to it? To begin, everyone has their own personal style of writing, influenced both by current linguistic conventions as well as through the incorporation of various styles through reading (this expands the linguistic metastructure by incorporating more combinations of words and phrases, new ways to describe

things, etc.). It follows that, in addition to a personal writing style, each genre has a certain style as well, and depending on which genre one is trying to emulate, a different style and “spirit” will shine through. This is why Saintsbury points out that style is impossible to imitate, though one may, of course, get close and have a similar style (though often because they are operating under similar linguistic conventions, e.g. Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*). However, an author can still write a text “in the spirit of Malory” (Saintsbury 110). What do we mean when we say that something is written “in the spirit of...”? We mean that the author has somehow imitated, to an extent, the voice of the author of the source text. The imitation of the voice of another can be done by imitating either: the description of themes (for example, Dickens describes things using very melancholic and harsh realistic words, so an author imitating him would do the same); or by imitating the style of the source-text author, and in so doing one is mimicking both diction and sentence/grammatical structure. When we imitate an author’s voice, what we are really doing is attempting to adopt their personal linguistic metastructure. Style, then, becomes ephemeral in that it is impossible to completely and accurately do so.

These metastructures, these linguistic conventions, are both personal and cultural as they are created through cultural linguistic conventions in addition to being influenced by personal experiences, which in turn inform our belief and thought processes that then make an appearance in writing. When we imitate an author’s voice, we are trying to operate within their linguistic metastructures, trying to adopt their outlooks, their views, their associative diction and grammar; and, of course, this is impossible to do so completely. It is possible, however, to assimilate partial metastructures of another in the sense that I can try to think as they, and thus write as they, but my voice continues to poke through because the two metastructures are at war with one

another (the same occurs in those who are fluent in multiple languages, where each battles the others for dominance, but one's first language as the personal voice will almost always speak the loudest). In the same way, Joyce as narrator continues to poke through his parody of styles. Interestingly enough, he becomes more accurate in his adopting of styles as he inches closer to his own contemporary time. It is possible that this is because the linguistic metastructure is much closer to his own, and is therefore easier to adopt without too much conflict. Therefore, grammar and linguistic conventions are restricting, and thus style can be restricting, but style remains ephemeral in that it is both difficult to identify and characterize. "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation" (292-4). In this quotation by Stephen Daedalus, the development of voice and the imbuing of the physical word with the spirit of its maker are likened to gestation and the growing of the artist. There is a spirit, an ephemeral and disembodied voice, behind the written word that makes style ephemeral.

Style is influenced by many factors: the historical period, linguistic patterns (which are primarily related to culture), and literary history (including the subject matter the author deals with, influenced in turn by the progression of society, though always containing some base elements of previous societies). It is interesting to note that style as a noun was just coming into use around the time of Malory, which of course was near the time of the first major printing house, that of William Caxton (c. 1470). Style must become a noun as a way to characterize texts, either in genre or time period or other, as the number of literary works and books grew exponentially. And of course, style (from the Old French *stile* or *estile*) is closely related to writing. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, style meant, in the early 14th century, "a writing instrument, pen...a piece of written discourse, a narrative, treatise; or a "characteristic

rhetorical mode of an author, manner or mode of expression.” The first definition was in use, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, at least a century before Malory, but the second came into use mere decades before the Gutenberg press, c. 1440.

This experiment in taking various literary forms and imposing them onto future events seems to be Joyce’s way of trying to work within the confines of literary structures and the English language itself, ultimately exposing its restrictiveness and inability to transcend history itself. The forms are too connected to their historical contexts and the associations we have formed with them. We do it subconsciously and, as Joyce shows, we are unable to break from it even when these forms are removed from their times and Joyce purposefully attempts to distance the reader from history. Yet, Karen Lawrence in her book *The Odyssey of Style* effectively refutes the idea that we can “[evaluate] the styles strictly according to the historical periods” that produce them (139). And, as many Joyce scholars have pointed out, the various styles break with their historic forms in certain instances; for example, the Elizabethan prose passage cites phrases from both William Blake and W. B. Yeats. However, we can still place the literary form within a historical period because of its overall use of diction and syntax. Does this mean that we should not be able to view some aspects of society through these “portals of discovery,” to borrow a phrase from Joyce? Certainly not. Joyce’s combination of phrases in different time periods while still retaining an overall Elizabethan literary form serves to prove his idea of a collective consciousness, one that extends through all periods of history. It is the archeological layering of language that constitutes a temporal layering of experience, where “a univocal authority is less valuable and true than the experience of multiplicity” (Doody 209). It is not multiple periods of history that have a definite beginning and a definite end; rather, it is a continuous evolutionary process, a changing of the relation of the self to the world around him, always taking what has

come before it (what it learns of and sees in past societies) and building upon it. It is the transcendent spirit of society that, as stated before, continuously reinvents itself.

The evolution of literary forms is intended to mirror the life cycle, from the forgings of the literary form (life) to the complete disintegration of this at the end with the conglomeration of 20th century dialects and slang that resembles the characters' drunkenness (death). All we are left with in the latter are phrases and choppy pieces of dialogue, jumbled together in a barely coherent narrative. This drunkenness and complete throwing off of literary forms is his attempt to escape traditions and structure that would essentially force him to operate within its confines, making meaning and language for him. Gordon points out that "the last paragraphs (1440-1591) are in the language of release, in words about as free as possible from linguistic structures" ("Obeying the Boss," 243). As Joyce states in one of his letters, "I'd like a language which is above all languages, a language to which all will do service. I cannot express myself in English without enclosing myself in a tradition" (qtd. in Zweig 275). He seems to understand the concept of a metastructure where combinations of words come together to create a literary form (writing style) based on preconceived notions and unspoken rules (again, society imposes this as the literary form that is reflective of that same society). Patrick McGee writes, "An author cannot dominate a language, or its effects, through his will to power or the authority of a personal style" (113). Thus, Joyce sets out to destroy the literary form completely, beginning first with the drunkenness ("content without form" [McGee 114]) at the end of "Oxen of the Sun" and eventually culminating in *Finnegans Wake*, where he creates his meaning-making machine. Ultimately, this machine has no literary form, does not operate within a specific language structure, and essentially supersedes both. Writing within the English tradition is confining because it *has* tradition, and any writing that Joyce would do in that vein would automatically

become part of that tradition somewhere in the evolutionary timeline of the English literary form. *Wake*, however, is able to transcend history by refusing to be ground in any historical context, much like *Ulysses* refuses to be bound to any one particular literary movement or period. Joyce never desired for his novel to be pinned down as such, and he “never outlined a literary genealogy within which his own works might be situated” (Richardson 1035).

CHAPTER II

THE EPHEMERALITY OF STYLE: A GENETIC APPROACH

In pursuing my research, I have followed the appropriated phrases in the Middle English section of “Oxen” from their place in Joyce’s notebooks and early drafts (the British notesheets, the Buffalo Collection, the Harry Ransom Center Collection at the University of Texas at Austin, and the National Library of Ireland’s online archive), to the Rosenbach Manuscript, to its serial publication in *The Little Review*, to the 1922 text edition, and finally to the 1986 Gabler edition. Analysis of these early drafts and notebooks shows his extensive interest in the reader’s reception of these canonical texts (reception in the sense that Joyce was aware of the interpretive process of the reader in constructing historical narrative through literature and wanted to disrupt this), with constant revision and reworking that continued even after the first printed edition of *Ulysses* was made available in 1922. It is interesting that, though Joyce does rework his narrative by telling the events in various literary styles, the narrator of the novel is still present, though perhaps lurking in the subconscious of this episode. As he appropriates and incorporates these literary phrases from various anthologies of English prose (most notably George Saintsbury’s *A History of English Prose Rhythm* and William Peacock’s *English Prose from Mandeville to Ruskin*), Joyce disjoints them with his own narrational style. For example, in the Malory parody “all they had black hoods” is transformed into “All they bachelors then asked” in *U* 319.252 (Janusko 95). “All they” is reminiscent of Malory, and can be found in a number of places in *Le Morte d’Arthur*: “So by ordinance of the three kings that were sent home unto Benwick, *all they* would depart for dread of King Claudas” (Malory bk. 1, ch. 17; emphasis mine); and again, it is found in the original source text for the appropriated phrase, “And when they were at the

waterside even fast by the bank hove a little barge and many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen and *all they had black hoods* and all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur” (Malory bk. 21, ch. 5; emphasis mine).

Yet, the rest of the phrase is strangely not, and indeed Joyce seems to use just enough of the canonical texts themselves to create his garment of Malory and Middle English prose, yet juxtaposes it with his own phrasing as a way to disassociate the style from the historical context that it is grounded in. One of the ways in which this works is through Saintsbury’s concept of rhythm in prose, which is mostly just the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables as well as the number of each per line, and diction, both of which have great effects on grammatical structure. Joyce retains this rhythm enough to place the style in opposition to our own, yet exposes style as a garment for enclosing transcendent societal consciousness. The events of the narrative continue in its linear form and the characters remain the same, though our perceptions of them as characters may change with each new literary style.

On page 23 of Notebook VIII.A.5 of the Buffalo Collection (*Buffalo Collection 25*), a notebook which contains early notes for the novel, a word that Joyce has written down, “anabolic,” sheds light on the way this idea operates within his mind. Merriam-Webster defines anabolic as “the synthesis of complex molecules in living organisms from simpler ones with the storage of energy”; essentially, it is constructive metabolism. When applying this definition to the written word, the definition can read as so: “the synthesis of complex molecules in living organisms (i.e. the Living Word imbued with societal consciousness; molecules of grammar, rhythm, etc.) from simpler ones (the evolution of grammatical structure from simple to complex sentences, from simple to complex rhythmic prose) with the storage of energy”; constructive metabolism then leads to the eventual disintegration and loss of energy that accompanies the fall

of civilization and the disintegration of prose at the end of “Oxen,” only to be reborn and resurrected into the stream of consciousness and Joyce’s meaning-making machine of *Finnegans Wake* (linking style to the life cycle). “The daily bread of existence” becomes the transcendental life force that drives and reinvents us (*Portrait* 195).

Most of the changes from the first edition of *Ulysses* to subsequent editions, either as changes made by the author himself or errors made by the printers, deal with the combining or non-combining of two words to make what Lewis Carrols termed a “portmanteau” in his *Through the Looking Glass*. A portmanteau is simply the combining of two words to create an entirely new word that has a different definition, but in using familiar words the new object is placed in context and defined in reference to currently existing schema in the reader’s mind. In the Malory parody, much of these words come from Joyce himself (at least, Janusko and others, leading experts in the sources of phrase of ‘Oxen of the Sun,’ have not found the words in existing texts), and so they must have authorial intent as to their meaning and use within the narrative context. One of the most common words in this parody is “learningknight,” first used in *U* 317.125. In the 1922 edition, the word is left as two separate words, “learning” and “knight,” though the Gabler edition of 1986, which claims to found itself on authorial intent by modeling its text on both early drafts and the 1922 edition, combines them.⁴ The reason for this change in the Gabler edition can be found by referencing the Rosenbach manuscript (hereafter RS), considered the fair copy for the text of *Ulysses* (though it does contain editing notes by Joyce in preparation for the first page proofs). In the RS, “learningknight” is combined, as is “olivepress” which is found in *U* 317.154. In creating these portmanteaus, Joyce changes adjectives into

⁴ The fact that the original 1922 text keeps the two words separate can be explained, I think, by the simple reason that there are no French equivalents for these words as they appear in Joyce’s manuscripts. This goes for other combined words such as “olivepress” and “wheatkidneys.”

nouns and creates a grammatical link with his contemporary audiences. In addition, on form with the portmanteau is the Irish compound word. In English, we have compounds like footpath, but in Irish they occur much more frequently. According to *A Grammar of the Irish Language* by John O'Donovan, "in all compound words the second part is qualified, or defined by the first, and not the first by the second...the first term defines or particularizes all the parts following it" (336).

If learningknight is left as learning knight, the implication is that the knight, even a young knight in training, is learning, but the emphasis continues to be on the knight himself. This is same in Irish as it is in English, where the adjective describes the noun but the emphasis remains on the noun. In combining the words as Joyce does, the emphasis is on the adjective of learning which describes the knight in question, which is here Dr. Dixon, a young medical student. The implications of this combination are that Dr. Dixon, as a student of learning, as a kind of scholar, is a learningknight, creating a connection between 1904 Dublin and mid-15th century England, while also suggesting the societal comparison between scholars and knights, where scholars are the new knights of the day. Indeed, Joyce makes this connection clearer in another sections of the text, where the phrase he appropriates exchanges the word "soldier" for "scholar" to further fit the narrative context. "Noble every soldier in it" becomes "noble every student there" (1395). Another word that is combined in the 1922 text though is left as two separate words in the Gabler edition and the RS is "in to," first appearing in *U* 316.111. Interestingly enough, Joyce's non-combining of these two words is not reminiscent of Malory, but from the verse *Morte* written at least half a century before. Taken from a quoted passage in Saintsbury in which King Arthur is talking to Bedivere about being taken to Avalon to heal of his dying wounds, the verse *Morte* is compared against the prose *Morte* of Malory. The verse speaks of King Arthur going "in to the

vale of Avelovne” while the prose speaks of him going “*into* the vale of Avilion” (Saintsbury 87, emphasis mine). In doing so, Joyce continues to disassociate the style from a particular author or time period (indeed, though Malory’s voice is the pre-eminent in this parody, voice of others of his contemporaries such as Sir Thomas More and John Wycliffe make for a disjuncted grammatical structure).

The disjunction of styles in the Malory parody, created by both narratorial input and the combination of other contemporary voices and stylistic choices, is the dominant tool that Joyce uses to expose the ephemerality of style, style as social construction. As mentioned above, Robert Janusko proposes that style is concrete and the words themselves create the beliefs and thoughts of societal consciousness. I do agree with Janusko that societal thought and belief is restricted by linguistics; however, for Joyce, words are also simply garments that enclose, and thus style can be both constricting and ephemeral. Saintsbury terms the essence of society its “spirit” when speaking of the literature of the subsequent Elizabethan society. Something written in the spirit of Malory is much different than a complete imitation and copying of Malory; it speaks of something beyond the physical words on a page and is something that Joyce plays with heavily. Indeed, even for Vico, “languages...are the vehicle by which the spirit of a nation is transfused into the soul of the person who learns them” (qtd. Manganiello 198). Each new literary style serves to introduce new words, new rhythm of sentence structure, new form, that contain a different subject matter and affect the way we view the characters of the novel. Joyce’s primary example in the Malory parody lies in his fantastical description of medical instruments, the “frightful swords and knives that are made in a cavern by swinking demons,” “vessels wrought by magic of Mahound” by “a warlock” (143-144; 146-147). The culture and society of the late Middle Ages does not have the vocabulary to support writing about content matter such

as advances hospital medical instruments, nor does it have the form or vocabulary to speak about things naturalistically and scientifically as later parodies of English naturalist Thomas Henry Huxley and English essayist and historian Thomas Babington Macaulay. Style as a social construct imbues the late Middle Ages with fantastical imagery, portraying a culture which is grounded in superstition and the supernatural. Was this much believed in during this historical period? Were knights truly as gallant as all that, where everything is a romance and knights were all gallant and heroic? No, I do not think they were, in much the same way as we view the sophistication and pretentiousness of the Victorian writing style as indicative of a pure and innocent society, when in reality the Victorians were quite obsessed with sex and thinking about sex and the like.

There are quite a number of instances I can cite with regards to changes made between the Rosenbach fair copy and the final galley proofs before they were typeset, most having to do with vocabulary substitution to keep with the vernacular of the late Middle Ages. For example, “chrism” is substituted for “oil” (131; *Rosenbach* 2: P369-370) and “fair” is substituted as a synonym for “young” (120).⁵ The words that Joyce makes use of, such as “yclept” (125), “environing” (140), and “nighed” (124) are, according to the *OED*, still in use at the time of the writing of *Ulysses*, though certainly they were on the decline. Many of these words, indeed, had also been introduced centuries before Malory, though the closest spelling to the present form of these words is in Malory, as before his writings much of the spelling was retained from the Old English.

⁵ As a short note, the various words and phrases that are appropriated from Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur* are in the modern spelling for the simple reason that these were the versions of the texts that Joyce had access to in Saintsbury and Peacock (the latter two authors must appeal to the masses, after all).

Even the inclusion of whole phrases such as “the magic of Mahound” (147), a late addition in the editing process as it is included in the galley proofs and the 1922 printed text but not the Rosenbach fair copy, was done to keep with the conceptual understanding and vernacular of the late Middle Ages. Though this phrase does not appear in Malory, it is found in many fairly contemporary texts, such as Langland’s *Piers Plowman* (“Were moltoun led in his maw and *Mahoun* amyddes!”), c. 1400, and William Dunbar’s *Poems* (“That lang befoir in hell wes cryid/In presens of *Mahoun*”), c. 1513 (all quotations are from the Oxford English Dictionary entry for “Mahound”; emphases mine). Joyce’s spelling for “Mahound,” however, did not come into existence until about a century after Malory, where the *OED* marks the first use of it in Nathaniel Baxter’s 1578 English translation of Jean Calvin’s sermon *Lecture upon Jonah*: “In the pestilent pollicies of that *Mahound* Matchiavile” (emphasis mine). Mahound was a late medieval variant for Muhammad (or the Devil in general) who was seen as a god worshipped by pagans or otherwise a demon who inspired the false religion of Islam. In associating the medieval Christian view of Muhammad with the medical instruments, Joyce adds a certain level of “evil superstition” to the culture of Malory, in which anything that cannot be immediately understood and easily known is considered taboo, evil and of demons.

One of the more interesting changes made from the Rosenbach to the 1922 text, even occurring in *The Little Review*, is the change from “traveller Leopold” to “childe Leopold” (160), which, in the late Middle Ages and Elizabethan parodies, becomes “sir Leopold” (169-170). When likening this manuscript change to Joyce’s embryonic and gestation level of allegory in the episode, where “Bloom is the spermatazoan, the hospital the womb, the nurse the ovum, [and] Stephen the embryo” (Joyce letter to Budgen, qtd. in *British Notesheets* 31), the progression of Bloom from traveller to childe to sir becomes the sperm travelling to the ovum,

meeting and joining the ovum to become the embryo in the womb (Bloom as the spermatoan is let into the hospital/womb by the nurse/ovum), and then continuing to mature as the embryo grows.

CONCLUSION

All in all, Joyce is appropriating phrases and vocabulary from literature of the late Middle Ages (namely that of Chaucer, Wycliffe, Mandeville, and Malory) to show that style is a method for social construction, though he does so in a way that exposes its ephemerality through a disjointed narrative. He essentially provides a way for the reader to “gain a critical distance from the established, albeit much-biased, accounts of the past,” and in so doing exposes the failure of the past to accurately narrate the events of the present (Mali 43). The style is choppy, the phrasing in many respects out of place, yet it serves its purpose in showing the failure of the English language to contain certain subject matter. However, this is certainly not meant to be an attack on the language itself, but rather a pointing out of the fact that there is an indeed an inherent failure of structured language when it comes to proper historical and cultural reconstruction and meaning making. Genetic criticism of the Malory parody serves to portray the author’s own reception of the literature in his attempt to mimic this social construction (ironically enough as a way to construct his own society and narrative), as well as to provide a precursor to his later “meaning-making” machine *Finnegans Wake*, a text which is purposefully not grounded in structured language or a historical context, but instead functions as a timeless, universal text in which the principal maker of meaning is the reader.

Essentially, the physical, written word does not contain essence or thought or belief, nor does style, though style can affect how a text is read simply because of the diction and the preconceived notions and ideas we as readers bring to the text. It is humorous that Joyce would choose a hospital for a setting and gestation as his allegory in order to chart the evolution of British prose rhythm and style, as he makes many remarks throughout his notesheets about

“pregnant words” and “pregnant remark” (notesheet 3, *British Notesheets* 173). And indeed, the example of compound words in English and Irish are pregnant as well, being two in one body. These pregnant words take on different meanings and connotations across cultural and historical boundaries, and so do not contain meaning in themselves. As Saintsbury posits ideas for the creation of the English language and the development of different types of prose, he notes the changing linguistic metastructure as more words are added, some are subtracted, and others continue to transform meaning. For example, “lust,” as stated above, means something different for Malory than it did for Dickens. And even words that have great ideas associated with them, such as “honor” meant something for the knights of the Middle Ages than it does for American soldiers today. Words are created as society progresses simply because the language must expand to accompany the need for naming things. For this same reason, the Malory parody uses language and ideas of the time to describe advanced medical instruments and glassblowing (“vessels that are wrought by magic of Mahound out of seasand and the air by a warlock with his breath” [146-47]). With every new idea, with every new invention, a word must accompany it, and by naming it, at least in that particular history or culture, a word is imbued with meaning simply by association. They do not contain meaning in and of themselves, and even if they did this meaning would be in constant flux. The physical word is attached to an idea, but the idea is not attached to the word. It is ephemeral and is something Joyce seeks to release from what he sees as the restriction of the physical word through structure.

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