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UNDERWATER UNDERSTANDING

Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf and *Ulysses* by James Joyce are arguably the two most important works of Modernist literature. Both feature an important aspect that attest their validity and significance in the medium, one that takes the mantra of its era and attempts to illustrate it through covert symbolism. This aspect, that is found from the way the narratives are written to the topics of the stories themselves, is water. The fluid diction and oceanic lexicon of these two novels come in answer to the personal struggles of the characters, but hint even deeper at the troubles of the authors. It's only fitting that within these novels is the idea of water being so subliminally important to each and every human being. That it takes up nearly 65% of the human body is of only surface importance. These novels take the idea of water and apply them to that of mental illness. It isn't rare to find that those with manic depression, anxiety, or personality disorder experience a feeling of drowning. While these authors have penned encyclopedic levels of watery references, they too struggled with mental illness, and it seems the best way to illustrate their struggles was with this tactic. With these two novels nearly reaching their centennial mark, it's even more important to focus and explain the necessity the authors felt to keep the motif of water, as its insight still ripples today.

These seminal works of modernist writing cover the topic of water particularly because of the way this time period reimagined the way society thought about nearly everything. Rather than stick to structures and forms that have been around for decades, modernist literature sought to break away from this mold, to disintegrate the foundation and start anew. In the introduction

by Maureen Howard, the monument of *Mrs. Dalloway*'s importance to modernism is spoken of, "If ever there was a work conceived in response to the state of the novel, a consciously "modern" novel, it is Mrs. Dalloway" (Woolf. viii). Rather than acquiesce to a society being defined by war-time, authors like Woolf sought to push the way people thought about themselves. Where novels and poems in the late 19th century were aimed to describe life in a gritty and realistic fashion with movements like Symbolism or Naturalism, Modernism sought to describe that which was indescribable. The process by which these authors attained this feat was destructive, in that they would effectively rid their work of any form that history has traditionalized. Rather than stick with free verse or even imagism, these authors introduced a type of narrative that accompanies a serendipitous pun. The stream of consciousness style that these two authors worked with explains the inner workings of one's mind in a way that couldn't be achieved through any other form of writing; structure had to be dissolved. With that comes new ways of understanding a moment. By being able to work with this open playground these authors are able to illustrate unspoken emotion through a revolutionary style.

Vid Simoniti describes the importance of this stylistic decision in the essay, "Virginia Woolf, Literary Style, and Aesthetic Education." Simoniti writes, "This constitutes the artistic style of the work and is a way for an artist to express some meaning in addition to what is being represented." (Simoniti. 3) Rather than changing the way people read and write for the sake of being innovative, these authors attempt to connect to the reader on a level that every human being can understand. The drive to represent human nature is what forces this style to be as relatable as it is. The effect that this type of style has on the reader is precisely what Woolf is aiming to do. In an essay written by Woolf called "David Copperfield" Woolf describes the value

that the changing of styles has on the reader and the effect that it produces. “This is the power which cannot fade or fail in its effect...to produce, apparently without thought or effort...The (style) make(s) creators of us and not merely readers and spectators.” (Woolf.1) By being able to connect to the reader through this fluid style, Woolf and similar authors are able to bring a new life to the reader. Instead of tacitly giving a story, these creators have brought a new world with lives that are not so dissimilar from our own. The language of these novels evoke a natural instinct of connection, as the characters speak of anything and everything that comes to their mind, the reader is naturally enticed as the thoughts are familiarly human. This focus on the mundane, or the specific is particularly exciting when looking at how it can be a tool to connect to those that feel alienated. An aspect of Woolf and Joyce’s writing is that of connecting and describing things that might seem incorrect and playing with the idea of correctness itself. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Ulysses* have both been banned in numerous countries for this lack of restriction.

Connecting to those that need the most connection is precisely what is at work with these novels, those with mental illness can oftentimes be seen as incorrect or flawed. Simoniti continues the discussion of stylistic representation and its importance in the intentions of Woolf. “The achievement of Woolf’s own modernist innovations in style can be appraised along these lines: it represents a way of making sense of others that privileges aspects of human nature previously overlooked.” (Simoniti. 10) The focus on individual moments and precise details of a person’s life brings with it a new psychological feature, something that previously was handed to people. In lines of description without any real commentary, the reader is forced to make up their own mind of what they are witnessing. While there can be an inclination headed by the narrative, its entirety is derived by the reader, this is what makes these modernist novels playful. At the

same time, it brings a new set of rules to how we deal with the things we see and read. This is the perfect stage for subverting the stigmas of mental illness. But in true modernist fashion, the push to change a way of thinking comes through the symbol of water, more than anything. Yet, as critical as water is to these authors, the mentions of it in the texts are as wavy as the tide on a full moon. What water might mean to one character, could mean something completely different for another, however the importance isn't always in its meaning, it's in the aesthetic representation of water itself. The value that it holds with these characters and the way in which they think about it represents the mental climate of them and, in more clarity, their creators.

An inscription on the idea of modernism, one that might not even be explicitly intimated, is that of questioning the term normal. Woolf was looked at under a microscope that looked to only fill cracks, not understand them or where their origins lay. The way mental illness was perceived during her time is a vital part in how adamant the message of understanding is in her work. She has characters who are so starkly different, yet all encompass a singular feeling and one metaphor shows the message clearly; everyone is different but everyone is here. To understand would be to relay the idea of seeking to see **how** people work rather than **why** they don't. Just because someone sees a bird flying over head and has a meltdown doesn't mean they're broken, it means they have something in them that might need to be worked with. The idea of having to fix one's self because they don't align with the rest, is directly against the modernist mantra. Making something new is exactly what these authors intended by showing the different ways in which people can handle living in the world. For each experience is separated and inundated with happenings that are unique to the individual. However, rather than isolate, the idea of connection lies, intricately, in recognition of another's difference. Instead of fixing the

cracks, one must see them for what they are and find a way to use them to one's advantage.

Woolf and Joyce both found a way to make things work, they looked at the mental illnesses that haunted them and put them on a paper. While it might not have solved anything, the success is found in the achievement their coping mechanisms are deluged in.

As important as these works can be in deciphering a connection between mental illness and water, the authors that created these works bring new life to the magnitude of its strength. To understand the meaning of water in these two novels, one must first understand what it meant to the authors. The importance of water in *Ulysses* would be nothing if Joyce hadn't lived through similar events as one of the main characters, Stephen Dedalus. The almost autobiographical account of Stephen's past and the regret he feels for not having knelt for his mother and pray while she was on her deathbed is precisely what Joyce went through. It's important, then, to note that water plays such a significant role in Stephen's life, as his actions can be seen as a reflection of what Joyce's own subconscious went through. It's a way for both Stephen and Joyce to work through this grief, to see that there is a cloud above their heads but learn how to understand it through different modes of realization and growth, all the same though there is water. It's a necessary function for them both, and one that comes up more vividly when dealing with mental illness. Joyce's daughter, Lucia, is an integral facet to the way the modernist author dealt with illness and treated it. In 1934, Carl Jung spoke to Joyce about his daughter and relayed valuable information that connects very starkly to the idea of water and mental illness. When Joyce asked Jung if he noticed that "my daughter seems to be submerged in the same waters as me?" Jung responds, "yes, but where you swim, she drowns." (Faena) A factor that weighed heavily on Joyce and one that isn't scant in *Ulysses* in terms of feeling drowned or overwhelmed with the

world. Despite this conversation taking place 12 years after *Ulysses* was published, the incredible part is that this connection of water and mental illness has stayed that long in Joyce's life. Yet, it's vital to note that Jung doesn't keep Joyce out of the waters, as everyone might be in some sort of water of their own.

Woolf is, unfortunately, not a stranger to these waves of emotional detriment. Familiar with frequent bouts of mental breakdowns, Woolf saw as much as one could in dealing with these harrowing emotions until she committed suicide by filling her pockets with stones and walking out into the River Ouse. It can be seen then that Woolf and Lucia could have some things in common, that Lucia was diagnosed and prodded by many and seen to be "drowning" and Woolf had similar events happen throughout her life. Both having to deal with mental illness in such a way, yet having the ideas of water revolving around their lives in such an effective manner says something important. It says that there are universal connections and correlations that one has to another even in situations as harrowing as the ones these two have had. Woolf stresses this idea as much as possible, for throughout both of their lives these women were not taken seriously and were often subject to the critique and diagnosis of individuals that didn't really care what they had to say. In the essay "'Suicidal Mania' and Flawed Psychobiography: Two Discussions of Virginia Woolf" by Martin Ferguson Smith, Smith discusses the problems that Woolf faced, like losing agency over her life and how that affected her.

"Not only did getting married involve surrendering her independence, but her wish to have children was to be thwarted: the decision about that was made prior to the wedding by Leonard and the "experts" whom he consulted, on the ground that her mental instability made her unsuited for motherhood." (Smith. 3)

Smith goes on to note how this would bother Woolf, or really anybody, and how heavily that weighed on her through the entirety of her life in a time when she needed to be listened to rather than being told what she can and cannot do. Especially considering that motherhood was something Woolf looked forward to, this decision made her seem even more out of control. This problem is heavily displayed in *Mrs. Dalloway* as one of the characters, Septimus Smith, is subject to the cruel diagnosis of individuals that don't have his best interest at heart.

The first page of *Mrs. Dalloway* contains 3 references to water. "Morning--fresh as if issued to children on a beach...What a plunge!...like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave." (Woolf. 3) Though none of these references might indicate a specific emotion or hint at a larger metaphor, ultimately the presence of water runs throughout the novel as to point to a larger notion. The universality of its value can be decided by the reader, but the fact that it's there and stays there throughout the novel must lead to the direction of a connection to the characters. Again, as a modernist novel, breaking the mold and arguing against the structures of society is at the heart of this water business. The intention of using water to connect every character in the novel is seen to be a way of breaking the stigma of mental illness. The two main characters *Mrs. Dalloway* and Septimus Smith, are glazed with watery diction for the entirety of this story in times of emotional distress or complication. Mrs. Dalloway is known as a somewhat shallow character, someone who revolves her life around the things she owns and can show, her status is important to her. These parties she throws, like the one she prepares to throw on the day the novel takes place, are a way for her to distract herself from the distressing mundanity of everyday life. Whether this is anxiety, depression, or personality disorder is up to the reader to look into, however it's the choice of words Woolf uses to describe the way that Mrs. Dalloway

feels in certain moments that can help describe some of what she is going through. An important point to remember is that Woolf and authors of modernist periods focused so much on the tiny details in their work that these choices and any other choice for that matter cannot be seen as a coincidence, that Woolf has written on the subject of water and depression, the feeling of drowning, previously is not a coincidence, these are acts of description and are to be looked at microscopically.

“She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day.

(Woolf. 12) Moments like these are too often for Mrs. Dalloway, as she goes about her day there are often moments of reminiscence that end in her being taken away to a part of her mind that she often attempts to ignore. However, this water diction isn’t only linked to Mrs. Dalloway, it consumes Septimus's wife as well, Lucrezia. After watching Septimus zone out in the middle of a town square she walks away by a fountain and cries thinking, “I am alone; I am alone!”

(Woolf. 24) This moment is telling for how broad Woolf is attempting to reach this idea of feeling lost or unheard and the depression that comes with it. While the two main characters seem to be the ones with the most important or outstanding mental illnesses, this moment shows that Woolf recognizes that every individual has problems that they deal with themselves, and this idea of drowning is not foreign to those who might not have a mental illness, or something that seems like that. Similar to moments of her own life, Septimus is treated by people around him with seeming indifference to his own wellbeing or wishes. In an essay called “I meant nothing by The Lighthouse” : Virginia Woolf’s Poetics of Negation, Roberta Rubenstein describes how Woolf’s specific choice of diction points to emotional illnesses that the characters harbor. “His

doctor dismisses his acute mental distress as "nerve symptoms," insisting that there is "nothing whatever the matter with him"... his reiterated harsh self-judgment that he "[feels] nothing" directly influences his decision to end his life." (Rubenstein. 1) Septimus often goes back to the idea of feeling as if he is nothing, that there is nothing there for him to find in the world to grasp onto. His form of mental illness is often attributed to and described as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), yet throughout the novel he isn't heard well enough to be diagnosed or treated with anything that could effectively help him in whatever way he needs. In this Woolf is putting a bit of her own situation into her novels, and as this happens similarly with Joyce and Stephen, it's not far-fetched to think that every character has something to do with what these authors are trying to relay to the world in their messages. By treating these different characters in such a different way there is a commentary being built on top of it all, that there are people like this all around us, and even inside of us. Woolf might feel the same need for distraction that Mrs. Dalloway needs to feel with her parties, or even the neglect of being seen as someone capable of helping or wanting to feel important and loved like Lucrezia does. These moments are translated to the reader as a point to change one's perspective on the stigma of mental illness. Everything flows back into this one pool that Woolf and Joyce are actively drying to drown, the pool of stigma.

One of the most important themes or moments in Mrs. Dalloway comes in the form of Septimus imagining himself, on occasion throughout the novel, of being a drowned sailor. It seems that Septimus might be the closest link to something Woolf is trying to describe about her own problems in the world, since the two seem to have the closest relationship, so it's important to focus on why this type of image is laden on Septimus' psyche. During a not-so-rare moment

of serious contemplation from Septimus, he begins to think of the ending of his marriage with Rezia, and leads into concerning himself with the universal truths of the world. This ends up with him seeing a dog turn into a man, then thinks the flesh of his skin is melting. Finally, he sees “himself remained high on this rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought. I went under the sea.” (Woolf. 68-69) Johanna X. K. Garvey explains in the essay, “Difference and Continuity: The Voices of Mrs. Dalloway,” the importance of this moment where she writes, “In the vision of himself as already drowned, Septimus foresees his eventual relinquishing of life. He has given up already. That Septimus is occasionally aware of his own madness does not prevent his ultimate enactment of his vision.” (Garvey. 11) Through this watery image of the drowned sailor Septimus is able to recognize the foreign visions that he has and knows that they are somewhat off, even when thinking of his wife he knows that he is the reason for her troubles. But, like mental illness, recognition is not exactly the solution. There could be a problem and finding out what that problem is, is a good step, but without the proper amount of support from people and being seen as an outsider doesn’t help the least. Woolf faced this first-hand when she dealt with her own relationship and its troubles. Rubenstein clarifies this connection between Septimus and Woolf by laying out the diaries of Woolf and her troubles with depression,

“Woolf elaborated on the sense of horror, the wish for death, and the rhythm of waves rising and crashing that characterized her agonizing experience of depression: “I begin to march blindly forward... I say it doesn’t matter. Nothing matters. I become rigid & straight, & sleep again, & half wake & feel the waves beginning . . .” (Diary 3 110).” (Rubenstein. 3)

For Woolf to feel such a similar feeling as Septimus, and ending his storyline the way it does, it shows how clearly someone can think while being so far underwater. Rubenstein continues to talk of the way Woolf uses language and struggles with these waves of depression. Despite struggling with this problem on and off, Woolf always seems to find some sort of solace, something comforting about knowing where you stand in your own head, even if it isn't straight. This idea is similar to those found in Septimus and how he can see clearly his own demise or fatality, but continues to see it and lives with knowing that it's there, similarly, Woolf knows that there is an end whenever she wants there to be, but she continues for as long as possible. She knows to exist however she is, whether that be at the bottom of a well or on the sand of a beach, it's how she functions.

This plays to the idea of what it means to be healthy, and what it might mean for some. While some might see Woolf's coping mechanism of writing silently and isolated as unhealthy, it might be the best and only way for her to deal with the world around her. This notion seeps its way into that of perspective as well, to look at something differently, another modernist technique, helps aid the drowning of the stigma pool for mental illnesses. Woolf cleverly uses all of these aspects and applies them to Septimus, Mrs. Dalloway and all the characters of her novel. The single binding factor is still water and its mentions are scattered across Woolf's journals and diary entries, it's an incredibly important feature of the world to her and those that see it's value. Further, the connections of water bring to it the idea of a universality among humans, that we all have struggles to go through and are not alone in our hope for help. To illustrate the significance of these watery references, one mustn't look further than the comparison to Septimus's unfortunate suicide to that of Woolf's own. Throughout the novel Septimus and his wife walk

along bodies of water like the Serpentine in Hyde Park and the Embankment above the Thames function, these two locations bring Septimus into a sort of haze. As he passes over, his mind races to nothing but the existential crises that he's been dealing with and the PTSD that he lives with haunts him to the point that he considers suicide. "Suddenly he said, 'Now we shall kill ourselves,' when they were standing by the river, and he looked at it with a look which she had seen in his eyes when a train went by, or an omnibus-a look as if something fascinated him." (Woolf. 96) Just as he strolls along these thoughts seem to infiltrate his mind, without a warning he is flooded with this overwhelming feeling. He isn't connected to the world and feels that he cannot function properly like Rezia would want him to. She feels the distress as well, and it makes her weep, she feels the same way that Septimus does in some sense. She cannot stand staying in London, and feels as isolated as ever dealing with Septimus and trying to get him help that doesn't seem to work or that she even believes in. Even in the eyes of Septimus he can see that her wellbeing is at stake and that she isn't able to take care of both of them. "She looked pale, mysterious, like a lily, drowned, under-water." (MD 134) He can't even see her anymore, she's gone and isn't present to him. The fact that even Septimus can see the troubles she's going through but cannot help only increases this idea of alienation and the drowning nature of mental illness. Septimus with his PTSD and suicidal thoughts, and Rezia with her depression and alienation. These two are together but aren't necessarily connected, Rezia wants Septimus to be healthy and happy but can't provide that for him, and her longing for her family across the pond in Italy only adds another layer to her troubles. But these aren't the only two that deal with water and their mental climates, Woolf is sure to blanket every character with some sort of imagery of water, to include everything.

These watery images are surrounding all of these characters in specific times of trouble. Their place in the world is what makes them question their reality, they have nobody who is understanding what is going on with them and actively searching for an answer is creating this problem for them. Woolf uses the river and all of the images of water to say something about this state of mind that everyone inevitably has at one point in their life. Her goal seems to be that connection is everything, that although one might feel alone and not have a grip on reality, there are others just like you. Though that might not make things feel any better, it's the goal of modernists to connect the world, to help everyone see themselves as unique being who matters and is important. That these characters are so starkly different adds to that layer of connection. Even Clarissa connects to Septimus in a subtle way, yet identifies their differences as well. While Septimus finds nothing redeeming about life while walking near the Serpentine, Clarissa's thoughts are clear as day, "She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away." (Woolf. 184) As the Bradshaw's were talking of Septimus's death during the dinner party, Clarissa can't stand the thought. The talk of death at her party upsets her but it gets her thinking about death. And, in a moment of connection, she sees a possible reason for death and understands what Septimus wanted most of all; communication. "Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre... There was an embrace in death." (Woolf. 184) This understanding shows how connected two completely different people can be. How these thoughts are running through everyone's head all the time. Irina-Ana explains how this common dislike for the city is bringing these characters together in her journal, *Modernist and Postmodernist Representations of the World in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway and in Graham Swift's The Light of Day*, "However, "connectedness" is

found together with isolation, the “ambivalence towards the city” being “rooted in the ambivalence of modern identity”. A fragmentation of identity is an effect of “the city’s rapid modernization”.” (Swift. 4) It’s with these moments of connection that ultimately bring the ideas being shown through the novel to the foreground. The Modernist ideas are rampant in the various comparisons that one could make of all these characters and the topics that weigh heaviest on their minds. Clarissa and Septimus never meet in the novel, she only hears about him, yet they both have this connection with each other that shows just how much our lives touch other people that we have no idea about. The way the language is used in this sense paints a reality around the characters. That we are looking through their eyes means their world is what we see, it’s the entirety of the novel, but the important distinction is that it is not just one eye. Despite looking through multiple lenses, there is still the overarching themes that are paramount in these people’s lives, another idea that Swift mentions, “language not only describes certain experiences of reality, it also shapes it, it creates a certain perception of the world.” (Swift. 2) These two novels play with this idea of perception in the form they present, with that is a new way of thinking about how we see our own lives, something these two obviously wanted to be expounded during their time, for they helmed modernism. It’s a way for them to relay the idea of seeing everyone as one’s own, that we are all sitting on the same boat on the same ocean, so one cannot steer alone, everyone’s eyes matter.

Joyce posits these same ideals in *Ulysses*, but through a different concern other than depression and anxiety. These moments of unnoticed interactions go on throughout *Ulysses* and their importance relates similarly to the themes of water that Mrs. Dalloway controlled. While the connections and allusions to watery imagery are similar to that of Woolf’s work, the ideas

behind them are shifted a bit. Rather than thinking of mental illness and depression when watery images or anything have to do with water is brought up, Joyce seems to be hinting at another type of mental hurdle that people have to get over; grief. The study on grief that encompasses the two main characters; Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, shows the incredible emotional and mental toll that it takes to get over something in the past. The mentions of water here are meant to paint the idea that there are levels to grief, similar to the way that Jung described Lucia drowning and Joyce swimming, it can be seen that Bloom is swimming while Stephen is drowning. Through the way they both view water and the way it interacts with their day, one can discern the complicated nature of this imagery in the novel and grab from it a new look on the novel and the characters themselves.

An important moment of connection, something similar to that of Woolf's ideas, comes when Stephen first has a cloud go over his head. "A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, shadowing the bay in deeper green. It lay behind him, a bowl of bitter waters." (*Ulysses*. 8) the imagery that is being used here is important, for Buck Mulligan's shaving bowl is the bitter waters, but it's interesting to question why these waters might be bitter. The quote continues on to describe Stephen's mother, "Her door was open: she wanted to hear my music. Silent with awe and pity I went to her bedside. She was crying in her wretched bed. For those words, Stephen: love's bitter mystery." (*Ulysses*. 8) As these thoughts come flooding in right in the beginning of the day shows how recurring and important they are to Stephen. Thinking of his mother and what happened with her troubles Stephen throughout the day, heavily. Especially when he's around water is when these ideas are creeping up on him, with this instance it comes in the form of a cloud. This moment coincides with Bloom's moment of seeing a cloud over his head, yet his

reception of it is a little different. Both are seeing the same cloud at the same time, with this there's a connection made and an interpretation that can be made. Bloom is in the middle of a day dream, or fantasy, and the cloud interrupts him, "A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly. Grey. Far." (Ulysses. 50) It seems then that Bloom doesn't have any reaction to the cloud other than its existence being recognizable. While Stephen is pushed into an emotional matter he doesn't necessarily want to deal with, Bloom continues thinking of perfume and Molly. In the book "Odyssey of the Psyche: Jungian Patterns in Joyce's Ulysses" by Jean Kimball, Kimball expresses the importance of this moment. "When Bloom sees the same cloud at the same time, his amplifying response provides the essential clue for Stephen's release from the entangling relationship with his mother." (Kimball. 102) Kimball goes on to explain that while this is an important discovery for the reader, it's one that comes to fruition with time, as Stephen and Bloom have not met yet. Their paths of understanding their grief have not yet converged and until they do, these images of water and the fear that Stephen has will continue to play a role in the way he deals with things.

Literal connection through these moments of water are not the only way Stephen and Bloom are intertwined, Joyce connects the two in multiple ways to hint that they are one in the same. The effect of this is a ripple or similar to that of the connections between Clarissa and Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the essay, "Symbol and Context in *Ulysses*: Joyce's "Bowl of Bitter Waters" and Passover by Daniel Mark Fogel, ideas of religion and the bowl of bitters are expressed and illustrated to show the further connection between the two characters. The feeling of isolation is what is focused on in this section. That Stephen and Bloom are both separated from the homes they live in is an aspect of anxiety or isolation that is brought about.

“Both the artist and the Jew are exiles, because both are in Ireland yet not fully of it, because both are alienated from the dominant secular and sacred powers, and because both affirm themselves by saying “Non serviam.” (Fogel. 719)

The fact that they are both on an island is obvious and convenient to the metaphor of feeling isolated and its connection to water. That they are both on a boat alone, seems to be the idea that Joyce is going for when he explains their feelings of isolation. However, the connection and imagery of water is not only in the geographical location they inhabit, but the first moments we see the two as well. As Fogel comments, the “bowl of bitter waters” that Stephen focuses on right after a cloud passes over his head can be seen as a reference to religious ideologies and Buck Mulligan’s ideas that Stephen disagrees with. Stephen’s mother and her concern of his religious affiliation has much to do with this moment as well, in such a tiny frame comes so many concerns to Stephen. At the same time, on the other side is Bloom and his wavering dedication to the country he stands in. Both characters then feel this sense of alienation and are stood alone until they meet, until both have boarded one single ship and can recognize each other’s place in the world and find a way to help or teach each other, to learn rather from each other’s experiences. That is the ultimate ending, one where both are capable of accepting each other as having lead a life thus far of confusion and a feeling of alienation but can find some of themselves in another person.

It’s important to highlight these ideas of isolation and exile from Ireland because Joyce had similar feelings toward the country. After leaving in 1912, he never set foot in it again. This contentious relationship with the nation is reflective of the ways that Stephen and Bloom look at the country as well. Bloom wishes to live in a utopia where people are kind and nobody worries

about anything, Stephen disagrees with the religious overtakings that Ireland has subjected him to in his childhood. Joyce's characters reflect his own antagonism against the nation's doings, with them he is alone similar to Stephen and Bloom. By disagreeing with the very country he was born in, so vehemently, shows a break from the norm. He couldn't stay there because of the lack of creativity as well. Joyce wasn't given the opportunity to allow *Ulysses* publication in Ireland for it was banned, having a country condemn the proliferation of a work like this surely doesn't bode well in the mind of an already opposing author like Joyce. However, he finds connections in other ways, by finding Nora, his wife, in Dublin and setting the date that *Ulysses* revolves around being the date they met, it's clear that these connections are important to him, even if they're in Ireland.

The strength of those connections is nothing if not remarkable in their intimacy to the grief these two have. That these two people who vary in so much are finding a way throughout their day to connect or help, would at the very end reach a moment of satisfaction because of their own alienation is hopeful. Joyce illuminates the ideas of grief through these connections. Bloom's character is older than Stephen, thus his time of dwelling has moved to a time of understanding and reacting with tenderness to situations that most would find irritating or infuriating. In the Tavern episode, when everyone seems to be ganging up on Bloom and his patience is tried, as he's been incredibly kind thus far, we see Bloom speak out. "Love, says Bloom. I mean the opposite of hatred." (Joyce. 273) by reacting to everyone in this wonderful way, we see the level that Bloom has attained, in relation to grief and his understanding of the world. While Stephen broods around touting Shakespeare theories, Bloom sits silently and reacts calmly to those who try to test him. Bloom's response is indicative of the path he's led with

grief. At first glance this might not seem related to water, but it's telling to see how differently the two main characters approach water and what they feel about it. Joyce makes their reactions inherently different in a way to suggest that one is swimming (Bloom) and the other is drowning (Stephen). It can be said that Stephen is drowning, partly because of his fear of water, and the ways in which he can't control the past and what he did with his mother. Stephen fears he could not have saved his mother, "I could not save her. Waters: bitter death: lost" (Joyce. 57) he fears a lack of control, this grief stems from that idea. The idea of control is debilitating Stephen, even when he faces his sister, he fears he cannot help her when she brings him the French book she buys with her few pences, "She is drowning...Save her... She will drown me with her, eyes and hair... Salt green death" (Joyce. 200) He cannot help her, he fears that she will go down with him, that he needs to help himself before he can help someone else. Recognizing this is important, however it brings about an distance that Stephen can't have, everyone in his life needs something from him, or doesn't understand him. Even the people that aren't close him criticize his actions. It's important that Bloom is there to reciprocate his own interpretations and views of water to Stephen at a time when he is lowest. Bloom is there to show that there is a way to control these feelings, that there will be a moment in his life when he can look back on the things that keep him from gasping for air, and realize they aren't holding him down but are simply underwater, they are the past.

Bloom's grief and trials are mostly found in the form of his late son Rudy. Both Stephen and Bloom have lost someone, and with that clearly there is a void that needs to be filled. Stephen fills it with frustration and fear of not controlling when and how he reacts when he remembers the moment with his mother, Bloom fills it with wonder and love. This notion is

illustrated very evidently in the way that Bloom thinks about water. When thinking of an advertisement, Bloom considers the property of water, “How can you own water really? It’s always flowing in a stream, never the same, which in the stream of life we trace. Because life is a stream.” (Joyce. 126) Allowing himself to understand the freeing nature of water, rather than dwelling on its constrictive property, namely drowning (like Stephen does), we can see how he’s moved away from the grief that consumes Stephen. He’s worked with it and learned to make it something new, to grow from it. We find this in the way he deals with seeing Rudy when he does. In *Oxen of the Sun* we see Bloom recount the moment that Molly had Rudy and how he passes eleven days after. But despite grieving over this moment, we see something different,

“sir Leopold that had of his body no manchild for an heir looked upon him his friend’s son and was shut up in sorrow for his forepassed happiness and as sad as he was that him failed a son of such gentle courage so grieved he also in no less measure for young Stephen for that he lived riotously with those wastrels and murdered his good with whores.” (Joyce. 320)

In this, Bloom shifts his own problems and realizes that there are people around him that also have things going on. He is effectively living out the mantra that Woolf and Joyce are trying to impart on their readers, that nobody is here alone, that your own problems are important but understanding someone else is ultimately what it means to be human. To connect with one another is how we recognize ourselves and our place in this world. For Bloom, his place is that of someone who teaches and takes care, this is especially evident when Stephen is scared of the thunder later in the episode. After hearing the thunder and having a shake in his heart, Bloom sees this and goes to him, “Master Bloom, at the braggart’s side, spoke to him calming words to slumber his great fear.” (Joyce. 323) By showing this magnificent display of comfort, Bloom

proves his equanimity; a facet that is paramount in the idea of growing away from grief. In a time like the thunder, Stephen isn't able to keep his composure, he is visibly upset and can't come to terms with what is happening, this is similar to other situations in which he lacks control. Meanwhile, Bloom is able to understand that this is inevitable, that these things will happen and there is no controlling the world and its happenings.

This notion of perception and growing is most evident and explicitly shown when one looks to Circe. When Stephen is seeing the vision of his mother her image is strikingly different from what Bloom sees when he runs into a vision of Rudy. After Simon asks Stephen to think of his mother's people, Stephen's mother pops up, "emaciated, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank." (Joyce. 473) She attempts to talk to Stephen through a toothless mouth as she stares at him through "bluecircled hollow eyesockets." At the site of this Stephen is horrified, white with fear he can't seem to grasp what exactly he's seeing. He gets so worked up that he smashes the chandelier and rips his coat, all while Bloom stands idly by and watches with nothing to do. After the incident Bloom helps Stephen get himself together and walks him home. But not before getting a visit from his late son. In contrast to the way that Stephen finds his mother in his vision, Joyce shows us how Bloom has aged and grown from the death of his son by illustrating a different type of vision. "He has a delicate mauve face. On his suit he has diamond and ruby buttons. In his free left hand he holds a slim ivory cane with a violet bowknot. A white lambkin peeps out of his waistcoat pocket." (Joyce. 497) Rather than being seen in tattered clothing and no teeth, Joyce shows us that Bloom allows Rudy to age with him, he never let him go, rather he allowed that grief to turn into a fond memory of what could've been. A

wish, simply. Bloom doesn't want his son to be gone forever, merely he wants his memory to stay alive, therefore showing Rudy like this indicates he has grown, and Bloom hasn't let the tragedy weigh him down, for then Rudy would still be eleven days old, not wearing a suit staring back at his father. This gap of grief is shown through these two instances, how Stephen can't get over his mother, but Bloom has learned to grow and understand the chaos that the world brings, and accept it all for what it is.

The biggest, literal, example of this mega understanding of the world that Bloom comes with is found in Ithica, when the narration questions, "What in water did Bloom, waterlover, drawer of water, watercarrier, returning to the range admire?" following is a 50+ line of nearly every aspect of water imaginable. From "its luteofulvous bed" to "its alluvial deposits" Bloom explains the grand nature of water and how it permeates throughout our entire lives and has been conquering parts of the world and shifting things for centuries, before any human could consider it to be incredible. It's unabashed yet healing nature is what Bloom looks to, he sees the reflection of its happenings are similar to that of the world and humans alike. How people are simply floating along one drop with the next, not exactly doing anything but just trying to stay above, to stay afloat. This understanding of the universality of water and its connection to human beings and their nature, allows Bloom to live a life that is of peace and love. Nothing immobile is capable of staying alive for too long, one must bend and allow a sort of contour to the world around them, despite Rudy dying at such a young age, Bloom learned to adapt and really see what type of life can be lead even though it wasn't what he intended. His relationship with Molly, however contentious and complicated it is, he still has that flow of love, there's something

there that will never be sunk, yet it rides its waves like anyone else's. If it stays afloat, he is happy, content.

Grief is not the only thing that *Ulysses* is worried about when it comes to watery language, the ideas of modernism echo in many ways by this imagery. From the specific diction used by Stephen, one can find a distinct intention for using words and playing with them in the way he does. Sidney Feshbach explains this idea in the article, "Stephen's Wavespeech," where Feshbach speaks on the language used by Stephen as he thinks of the water and imitates the sounds of the waves. When Stephen thinks about the waters, "Listen: a fourworded wavespeech: seesoo, hrss, rsseeiss, oos. Vehement breath of waters amid seasnakes rearing horses, rocks. In cups of rocks it slops: flop, slop, slap: bounded in barrels. And, spent, its speech ceases, (Ulysses. 450) these words might not mean anything together, but when looked at through other means one finds that they hint toward a specific idea of perception. Feshbach says, "he is not miming the sounds given in raw sensation, but, rather, he constructs his perception of a small piece of existence by using some of what he knows of language." (Feshbach. 1-2) This idea of constructing something out of language is in the same vein of modernists ideas of making things new. To look at the waves in this fashion is to think of the world through literature and its measures. That Stephen is looking at the world through this manner hints at something interesting in his psyche. It's not necessarily a beautiful image, that Stephen portrays of the waves, and that's primarily because he is afraid of the water, yet he attempts to understand it through language, meaning his worldview is that of a scholar or one of high intellect. Feshbach mentions the importance of these words by leaving with, "There is a nexus worthy of further explication and extension: river, sea, waves, isolation, loneliness, fusion with literature...In any

case, Stephen's sounds are more than mere mimetic ones." (Feshbach. 2) In this it's safe to say that these words that the characters are using aren't merely for fun, they don't use them to dilly dally about and confuse anyone, they are meant to be looked into, especially if they have to do with water.

With Bloom and Stephen being on such stark sides of grief, it's interesting that Joyce would choose these characters that see each other for small but important times of their day to helm the ideas of modernism. However, the clarity lies in a moment of worry from Bloom. As Bloom is walking along thinking about placing ads in various places, and if he could put STD ads everywhere, he thinks of Blazes Boylan. With this gives him the fear that Boylan would give one to Molly, as he is aware of their affair. "No, no. Mr. Bloom moved forward, raising his troubled eyes. Dunsink time. Fascinating little book that is of sir Robert Ball's. Parallax. I never exactly understood." (Joyce. 126) From then we find that Bloom is mistaken about other things, yet his intrigue never wavers. He could be wrong but he accepts it and tries to find a solution. Parallax, in this is used as a way of having the reader learn with Bloom. To see the world through his eyes is a way that parallax is used in discovering parallax. **How can mirrors be real if our eyes aren't real????** Seeing things through these two characters eyes who are learning things themselves is a way in which the reader can understand what they want, as it's not already answered for them. Patrick McCarthy explains this idea further in his novel, "Ulysses, Portals of Discovery" where he writes,

"we see Dublin through Bloom's eyes and Stephen's (and eventually through Molly's as well), and while each viewpoint is limited, the juxtaposition of various perspectives hints at the larger, fully human, viewpoint toward which *Ulysses* reaches." (McCarthy. 5)

Examining the idea of parallax by showing these narratives how they are, and allowing them to naturally find one another unpacks the modernist ideas of understanding that is being illustrated throughout the novel. Further, looking to the last episode of *Ulysses*, Molly's perspective curtails these ideas with a final, entirely affirmative, "Yes." Seeing the world through her eyes last plays a trick on the reader. While Bloom and nearly all of Dublin know of her affair, the readers are given a tint on her persona. The unethical act she commits is seen from one perspective, Bloom. Yet, by allowing her to finish the novel and have the last word, we humanize her, there's an understanding built from seeing her perspective. *Ulysses* ends with a river of an episode, one that has few stops and flows until the end, where everything begins an affirmation, a memory, and an understanding; Molly's love for Bloom.

Despite the hardships that these two authors lived through, they were able to create something that still resonates today. The modernist outlook shines brightly in the eyes of those who wish to seek anew, which really should be everyone. The ideas of water reflect the connection that every individual has with each other, the one integral intimation that is attempted to be instilled is that; connection. That the human race can be considered this one big body of water. It's incredible to see that these two authors have expressed their own hardships in this way, as it's still something people deal with today. Through decades of turbulence, they've found an expression that can be found in every river, every ocean, every life that is allowed to read it. With the cloud of modernism hanging above, all bases are covered, every word is intimately tied to the next and every body is connected. Despite Woolf succumbing to the harsh nature of her mental illness, she achieved something extraordinary. She discovered a bridge that all can cross and feel differently about, that one person is and should feel one way is a false truth that she was

unfortunately blanketed with. The so-called problems that she was facing were not being recognized in the way they should have been. She was pushed away and seen as defective, but in that was uncovered a light of connection. Had she been given the proper attention, her work wouldn't have been as revelatory for so many, as morbid as that idea might be. Had Joyce's daughter not been given the proper treatment from all those around her, he wouldn't be able to live a life of understanding and expression, though that was later in his life. Had he knelt for his mother, Stephen would've done the same, the two would be fixed, or so it would seem. In this, the idea of mental illness is troubled as would modernists have it. To be fixed is to be normal, a word devoid of understanding. To realize that there are no right answers, that a man of genius makes no mistakes; his errors are volitional are are the portals of discovery, is to know that there is no normal. Normal would mean to see no letters or images in a sky full of clouds. All of the words that consume these two novels drain into a single idea; connection. And what better a metaphor, than something that makes up 65% of everybody reading them. I suppose, then, that it isn't of surface importance.

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