THE “CYCLOPS” AND “NESTOR” EPISODES IN JAMES JOYCE’S *ULYSSES*: A PORTRAIT OF EUROPEAN SOCIETY IN 1904

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THE “CYCLOPS” AND “NESTOR” EPISODES IN JAMES JOYCE’S ULYSSES: A PORTRAIT OF EUROPEAN SOCIETY IN 1904

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ABSTRACT

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The “Cyclops” and “Nestor” episodes in James Joyce’s novel Ulysses are filled with allusions to the First World War. Written shortly after the war ended in 1918, Joyce’s satiric portrait of Irish society serves as a microcosm of the entire western world before the outbreak of war in 1914. The references to nationalism, militarism, and racism foreshadow how historians would interpret the period. The chapter is a conflict between the irrational forces of society (the citizen) and the rational (Bloom). The debate between the rationale and irrational is an ongoing theme in Ulysses that first appears in „Nestor” in the discussion between Stephen Dedalus and Mr. Deasley. My thesis will go deeper into the text and make connections between the historical allusions in the chapter and later scholarship on the time period. My primary argument is that “Cyclops” is a remarkably accurate window into Europe before the First World War.
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CHAPTER I

ULYSSES AND THE ORIGINS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

While *Ulysses* is a novel and not a work of history, it is a novel that plays with ideas about history. When Stephen Dedalus makes the statement, “History is a nightmare from which I’m trying to awake,”¹ Joyce is invoking history as a central theme. By setting the novel in the year 1904 (the year Joyce was 22), the novel puts the years right after the war into perspective. A reading of *Ulysses* is an education on the history of the European West itself, albeit, one with a sceptical and irreverent tone. The references in the novel to Homer, the Bible, and Shakespeare are legion. Although *Ulysses* is immersed in Irish history as is *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, in it Joyce broadened his canvas to the entire cultural and intellectual history of the West. The novel was written while Joyce lived in Trieste, Italy and Zurich, Switzerland - - both multi-cultural centers of Europe at the frontiers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Joyce wrote *Ulysses* during the First World War and, although he was removed from all the carnage, one cannot ignore the war’s influence on it. In the “Cyclops” and “Nestor” episodes of *Ulysses*, Joyce’s haunting portrait of European society in 1904, with its frequent allusions to anti-Semitism, nationalism, and militarism, is an accurate observation of European society before the start of World War I.

In 1914, Joyce began writing *Ulysses* during his time in Trieste. When the war began, Joyce and his family fled to Zurich and settled there for the war’s duration. The writing of *Ulysses* went through three distinct stages. Joyce’s biographer Richard Ellmann tells us that he first conceived the idea of a modern day Homeric epic in 1907 and planned to include it in *Dubliners*. Realizing that the project was too big for a short story, he put it on hold for several years. The first stage of writing *Ulysses* was the first nine episodes that used interior dialogue as their primary style. In the second stage, episodes 10-14, Joyce moved away from interior monologues to more complicated styles of narration. In the final stage, “Circe” to “Penelope,” Joyce moved the novel in an even more experimental direction. During this final stage, Joyce also made significant revisions of all the earlier episodes to add coherence to the plot. He officially finished the novel on January 31, 1922, two days before his fortieth birthday.

The influence of past events is present on nearly every page in *Ulysses*. Joyce, an avid reader of history, brought that knowledge into all his novels. And yet there is room for a critical approach that analyzes *Ulysses* from the perspective of the time it was written. For example, Robert Spoo’s scholarship on Joyce is from an historian’s perspective. Spoo argues that Joyce’s work attacked the idea of historiography -- the part of history that deals with interpretation, or complex theories of how history works. Spoo pointed out that an important influence on Joyce was Friedrich Nietzsche’s work *The Use and Abuse of History* which critiques the need of historians and cultures to construct misleading narratives about the past. Nietzsche argues that this only distorts the present and locks people in a certain kind of mindset. For example, nationalism sways people

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into believing a myth about their past.\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Ulysses}, however, is an “anti-history,” since it questions whether history moves in a predetermined pattern. This thesis will apply that idea to “Cyclops” and “Nestor.”

Spoo writes of Joyce from the perspective of European intellectual history and views \textit{Ulysses} as part of that tradition.\textsuperscript{5} It is notable that most modernists, such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, took a skeptical approach to traditional narratives of history and played with ideas of history in their work.\textsuperscript{6} Joyce’s work is certainly influenced by the intellectual climate around him. Likewise, scholarship on the First World War has mirrored some of the depictions of nationalism in \textit{Ulysses}. The cliché that history is “an argument without end” is true since historians are always arguing about causes and building grand theories to support their own theories. In \textit{Ulysses}, however, Joyce presents an imaginative portrait grounded in reality.

Two things happen in \textit{Ulysses} in regards to the past: Joyce is in a dialogue on the nature of history, and this dialogue should be viewed in the context of the First World War. Fairhall’s study of the war’s influence on \textit{Ulysses} applies many of the arguments made in Paul Fussell’s classic study, \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory}. For example, in the “Circe” episode, Fairhall writes that “phantasmagoria”\textsuperscript{7} evokes the chaos of trench warfare with its jerky, disjointed narrative. The focus of this thesis is on “Nestor” and “Cyclops” chapters in terms of how they examine history, specifically the origins of the First World War.

The First World War altered our perceptions of time. Fussel writes of the pre-war

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Ibid}, 14-37.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Ibid}, 8.
\textsuperscript{7} James Fairhall, \textit{James Joyce and the Question of History} (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 212.
world as a “static” one where values were entrenched, technology was benevolent, and things basically made sense. Old ideas of honor went by the wayside.\textsuperscript{8} The fact that \textit{Ulysses} takes place on one day is an important artistic statement in itself. At that time, and even today, it is an innovative way to approach history. It is like looking at time through a microscope rather than a telescope. Bloom and Stephen are models for a new type of hero who uses irony, intelligence, and moral courage as weapons to survive in the unpredictable modern world of that time.

Joyce approaches history in his work like an intellectual rebel questioning the wisdom of his elders. For example, this is seen in the underlying tension between Mulligan and Stephen. One is Anglo-Irish and the other is Irish-Catholic. On another level, there is the more significant relationship between the individual and history. Joyce wrote at a time when most historians assumed that time moved forward in a logical or even a pre-ordained pattern, or in the words of Mr. Deasy, “towards the manifestation of God.”\textsuperscript{9} The narrative of \textit{Ulysses} questions the logic behind such philosophies of history. Furthermore, the shattering effects of the First World War shook the foundations of the idea that history is a narrative of progress towards some grand finish. Indeed, the war illustrated how history could take shocking, unpredictable turns. History, in Stephen’s words, delivered a “back kick.”\textsuperscript{10}

The tone of the first two episodes is set by Stephen’s moodiness and melancholy about his existence. In “Telemachus,” Stephen engages in a battle of wits with Malachi “Buck” Mulligan, his intellectual rival throughout the day. The name “Malachi” is a possible reference to the Old Testament prophet who promised to bring an end to the

\footnotesize{8 Paul Fussell, \textit{The Great War and Modern Memory} (London: OUP, 1975), 8-11.}  
\footnotesize{9 Joyce, \textit{Ulysses}, 34.}  
\footnotesize{10 \textit{Ibid}, 34.}
world. The image of the “cracked looking glass” is also telling. If one looks to history as a means to make sense of the past, a cracked mirror is a reminder of the distortions and limitations of human perception. To extend the metaphor further, one can view the First World War as cracking the mirror of history, muddling the past, present, and future. All the confidence and certainty of the Nineteenth Century ended on the Western Front.

It is significant that Joyce makes history a primary theme in the first episode, “Telemachus.” L.H. Platt argues that the personal conflict between Stephen Dedalus and Mulligan is the old historical battle between the Irish Catholics and Anglo-Irish Catholics. Platt writes that the episode “seems generally designed around the historiographical, its characters, however individualized, [are] representative of broad socio-cultural forces.” It is possible to take Platt’s argument further to say that Joyce explores social and cultural tensions throughout *Ulysses*. Furthermore, the social and cultural tensions set the tone for the importance of history in the novel. In the exchanges between Mulligan and Stephen, they play out a very old conflict over Irish identity. Mulligan’s efforts to make Stephen feel inferior is everywhere in the language and imagery in the episode. Although this conflict is of a distinctly Irish character, cultural conflicts of different sorts remain a theme in *Ulysses*.

The need to escape the past and the burden of history is also everywhere in *Ulysses*. Joyce wrote the novel in the context of the First World War, but also in opposition to the Victorian idea of history. The 18th century Enlightenment theorized that history could be explained through reason, and that an individual was a product of his or

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13 Platt, “History and Culture in „Telemachus,“” 81.
her society. This idea prevailed into the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and according to historian Stephen Kern, “Comte, Hegel, Darwin, Spencer, and Marx shared the idea that philosophies, nations, social systems, or living forms become what they are as a result of progressive transformations in time.”\textsuperscript{14} The key point to be noted here is that for Joyce history does unfold like a perfect pattern. In “Cyclops” Joyce shows how history can take sudden and irrational turns.

Oddly enough, it was during the war that Joyce reached the height of his creative powers. Richard Ellmann also documents that Joyce’s years in Zurich were among the happiest and most productive of his lifetime. The safe environment of neutral Switzerland gave Joyce a unique perspective of what was happening to the world.\textsuperscript{15} By removing himself from the war he gained a unique perspective that allowed him to push the limits of language and literature. Joyce’s re-creation of the old world before the war allowed for a new understanding of what was lost, but also how little had changed about the human condition.\textsuperscript{16}

The influence of the First World War upon the writing of \textit{Ulysses} cannot be overstated. It is the crisis that shaped the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Joyce wanted the novel to transcend his time and, in that sense, the novel succeeded, but it can also serve as a means of understanding why European society destroyed itself. As the First World War dragged on for four years and the casualties continued to increase, everyone wondered why the war had started and tried to understand its origins. Most historians agree that the relatively stable international system that preceded the war inexplicably fell apart, largely

\textsuperscript{15} Ellmann, \textit{Joyce}, 389-406.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid}, 398.
due to the incompetence of the politicians. But many historians look beyond blaming one country in particular and looked to the faulty international alliance system itself as a cause. In addition, the excesses of nationalism, militarism, and imperialism as long-term causes as well. These approaches to history are like a double-edged sword: long-term explanations have their own place, but sometimes events happen without logic. All these arguments have their validity from different perspectives and *Ulysses* adds an overarching perspective on all these deeper cultural causes.

Even before the war ended, people looked for causes to account for all the bloodshed; of course, few believed in August 1914 that the war would last four years. While the alliance system had its flaws, there were deeper cultural causes of the First World War. British historians long blamed Germany’s ambitions for world power as the main cause. By the 1960s, even German historians, in the shadow of guilt over the holocaust and the Second World War blamed their own country. Since then, as more archives have become available historians have gone away from blaming one country and taken a more international perspective that implicates the whole international system of changing alliances and military posturing.

Historians generally agree that extreme nationalism in the decades before the First World War had created a powder keg, Ireland being an example. Joyce came of age in a time of cultural confusion and political tragedy for the Irish. During the 19th century,

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21 Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, xxxix.
Ireland endured a difficult struggle to win Home Rule from the British government. The nation also underwent a cultural renaissance led by William Butler Yeats. Similar trends were happening all over Europe, and there was a need for cultures to rediscover their mythical past or a lost Utopia. But the new mania for national pride tended to destabilize culture rather than solidify it. Joyce’s own ambivalent stance towards nationalism for example is apparent in Ulysses, especially in the “Cyclops” episode. Historians can shed light on causes, but the novel, that is, literature, can offer new perspectives and offer unique insights that go beyond historical facts.

Joyce came of age in the early 20th century, a time when many “isms” were part of the international discourse. All had their fanatics. Although often considered apolitical, he was well read on most intellectual currents of the early twentieth century. His youth in Ireland exposed him to nationalism, but during his years in Rome and Trieste his views changed to a more ambivalent stance. Up until 1907, Joyce was sympathetic to Socialism and showed a genuine concern for the working classes, but he also read many anarchist writers. In a letter to his brother Stanislaus he expressed his disillusionment with politics: “The interest I take in socialism and the rest has left me . . . I have no wish to codify myself as anarchist or socialist, or reactionary.” Joyce had sympathy for the working classes, but no patience for the internal disputes of radicals which he found distasteful.

Joyce’s work also showed an affinity with anarchist ideas championed by his literary hero Leo Tolstoy. These ideas were not of the variety that favored a violent overthrow of the government but were about a society where everyone was left free to

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23 Spoo, Language of History, 16.
pursue their happiness without state interference. The struggles of Stephen to liberate himself from the confinements of family, church, and Ireland are just one example; it is the narrative of Portrait. The point is that all these ideas, anarchism among them, were incorporated into Ulysses.\textsuperscript{25}

Pacifism is another central idea in Joyce and it is at the forefront of Ulysses. Ellmann identifies Ulysses as a pacifist version of the warrior epic. He found an essay that Joyce wrote at age 16 that condemned violence, an expression of his lifelong abhorrence of violence.\textsuperscript{26} Leopold Bloom, the everyman hero of the novel, uses his mind instead of his physical prowess to best his rivals. It is no coincidence then, and an irony, that Joyce wrote a pacifist epic while the youth of Europe were killing each other in droves, in a culture that valued the warrior ethos, as exemplified in the war propaganda imagery.\textsuperscript{27} Revolutionaries also favored violence to further their ends, such as Lenin and Trotsky and unfortunately that view held sway for most of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Through his art, we can maintain that Joyce used literature to offer alternatives to violence.

Arguments over the war’s origins go in several directions. Most histories about the modern period begin with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, when European statesman set up the “Concert of Europe.” The system of interlocking alliances was designed to prevent another Napoleon from disrupting the balance of power in Europe. For the rest of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Europe managed to avoid another general war, but hardly without some regional conflicts such as the Crimean War (1853-56) and the Franco-Prussian War (1871). The unification of Germany in 1871 disrupted the balance of power even more and led to a naval arms race with the British. The system of interlocking alliances

\textsuperscript{25} Dominic Manganiello, Joyce’s Politics (London: Routledge, 1980), 95.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ellmann, Joyce, 66-68.  
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 360-361.
between the central powers Germany and Austria-Hungary and the Entente between Russia and France came apart in the August 1914 crisis directly caused by the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The assassination led to war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary, forcing Germany and Russia into the conflict, and eventually France and Great Britain.  

Historians also trace the origins of nationalism to the European Enlightenment, specifically to Jean Jacque Rousseau. Historian Lloyd Kramer cites Hans Kohn”s *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* as a crucial work, identifying the Enlightenment”s emphasis on individualism as the crucial step towards nationalism. Intellectuals began to imagine what society would look like without a monarchy. Rousseau envisioned the nation as a unifying force based on the idea of protecting individual freedoms. This idea sparked the French Revolution. The core belief of nationalism is that a group of people who share a common language, ethnicity, culture, and history is what composes a nation. In “Cyclops,” when Leopold Bloom is asked what a nation means, he answers “a nation is the same people living in the same place.” While this sentiment was consistent with Rousseau”s view of a nation as all people united by certain ideals instead of a common language or ethnicity, it no longer held sway in a world filled with tension between nations. 

*Ulysses* is also a study of middle-class life at the start of the 20th century and nationalism is a part of that. The rise of nationalism was in many ways a middle-class

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30 Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, Book III, Chapter 1, “What, then, is the government? An intermediary body established between the subjects and the sovereign for their mutual communication, a body charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of freedom, both civil and political.”
31 Joyce, *Ulysses*, 331.
phenomenon, since the middle-class was not part of the working classes who were united over their identity as factory workers, but instead were united over a shared set of cultural values. The world that Bloom encounters at Barney Kiernan’s is an example of the ugliest form of nationalism with its combination of cultural pride and resentment. Much went into this portrait of nationalism: competition among the European nations for the world’s economy in the form of imperialism, glorification of the military as essential to what made a nation great, and the use of history to inflame old resentments. For example, France’s defeat and loss of Alsace-Lorain in the Franco-Prussian War to Germany became an unbearable national disgrace.\(^\text{32}\) War was viewed as the ultimate test of a nation’s livelihood, and losing a war implied cultural death.

*Ulysses* never directly addresses the war as such since it takes place before the outbreak. It does, however, present an extremely detailed view of the society that went to war. The “Cyclops” episode is the best example of that society because it is a panorama of Ireland at the time. There is no major character dominating the episode; instead Joyce presents the reader with a cacophony of loud boisterous Irishmen. It is a sardonic portrayal of a society with all its paranoia and foibles. “Cyclops” gives the reader an idea of a society that is heading towards conflict – not only in Ireland but in all of Europe. The dominant masculine atmosphere only reinforces the irrational nature of the setting.

All throughout the novel Joyce plays with ideas on the passage of time. In “Nestor” the reader is given a satire of the British/Victorian idea of history through the character of Mr. Deasy. The year 1904 has significance here, since it marked the apogee

\(^{32}\) Barbara Tuchmann, *The Guns of August* (New York: Ballantine, 1962), 29. In Tuchman’s study of the 1914 crisis she devoted an entire chapter the French resentment of Germany after the Franco-Prussian War, “The memory of Sedan remained, a stationary dark shadow on the French consciousness. For more than forty years the thought of “Again” was the single most fundamental factor in French policy” 29.
of Britain”s economic, cultural, and military influence throughout the world.

“Telemachus” and “Nestor” present a historical conflict between Stephen and Mulligan and between Stephen and Mr. Deasy, but “Cyclops” takes a more complicated approach, an all-encompassing one not about the history of ideas, but in the realm of social history. All of the historical issues troubling Ireland and Europe are commented upon, and by doing that, the episode reveals the shaky foundations of the modern world. “Cyclops” is history through a convex mirror, a close up view grounded in reality, but also distorted.

By focusing on the everyday details of life, Joyce is not writing a grand narrative of history, but a portrait of a society. Fritz Senn argues that Joyce, by choosing to focus on popular culture only made his portrait of the time period more authentic.33 Taking the argument a step further again, in “Cyclops” the reader gets an almost cinematic depiction as in a *cinema verite* documentary, from a camera wandering around capturing random moments. The rhetorical excesses, another often pointed out theme in the episode, divert the reader from the narrative, but also act as a sort of running commentary. It is a mix of random and clashing voices, noises and encounters. It is almost a full portrait of a society with an amazing variety of description. All the tensions plaguing Europe are there – national rivalry, anti-Semitism, and pacifism. The text moves like a camera scanning back and forth showing us a view of human reality that Joyce wants us to see.

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The “Cyclops” chapter of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is a harsh depiction of Irish society at the beginning of the 20th century. “Cyclops,” which appears in the middle of the novel, is connected to all the others, but especially to “Nestor.” Both episodes are preoccupied with history and making sense of the past and with Joyce’s own time period, especially the first decades of the 20th century. References to the First World War occur frequently in “Nestor” and in “Cyclops,” indicating that Joyce is at least writing partially in response to the First World War. Robert Spoo’s study of “Nestor” directly ties it to the First World War.34 “Cyclops,” on the other hand, is illustrative of the entire mindset that led to the Great War. Joyce uses Barney Kiernan’s tavern as a portrait of a civilization on the brink of conflict. Leopold Bloom stands as the sole voice of humanistic values in the tavern, just as Stephen does in his conversation with Mr. Deasy. In “Cyclops,” Joyce creates a panorama of a certain element in Irish culture trapped by a distorted view of history.

The year is 1904, a full decade before the outbreak of the First World War that

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engulfed Europe. War, however, is a recurring motif in the episode; for example, the men in the bar blame rising prices on the Russo-Japanese War, which they view as Russia’s bid to dominate the world.³⁵ The tavern is in many ways a microcosm of Europe before the anxious years of the war. Moreover, the charged language of “Cyclops” adds magnificently to the tension-filled confrontation between Bloom and the citizen. Joyce specifically uses primitive language that brings the jungle to mind in his description of the citizen:

The figure seated on a large boulder at the foot of a round tower was that of a broad shouldered deepchested strong limbed frank eyed red-haired freely feckled shaggy bearded wide mouthed large nosed long headed deep voiced bare necked barwnyhanded hairy legged ruddy faced sinewy armed hero.³⁶

This description is akin to that of a beast one might find in mythology. Even the Citizen’s dog has monstrous qualities. Joyce uses language that implies barbarianism, as the citizen disciplines the dog by a “by tranquilizing blows of a mighty cudgel rudely fashioned out of Paleolithic stone.”³⁷ The language makes it clear that Bloom is not among friends, which is given further significance with recurring displays of anti-Semitism, ultra-nationalism, and rampant patriotism. The excessively hyperbolic language of the chapter adds some uneasy humor, but it also suggests that society is on the verge of a crisis of self-destruction.

Death also looms over Barney Kiernan’s in another foreshadowing of the First World War. When the conversation turns to the death of Dignam, Alf acts hysterical

³⁵ Joyce, *Ulysses*, 295. Inside Barney Kiernan’s the patrons are discussing the markets going up, which blames “the Russians wish to tyrannise.” The Russo-Japanese war started on February 8, 1904 after decades of tension between both nations over control of the Pacific.


upon hearing that Dignam is dead, because he saw him earlier that day. Joyce follows this mention of spiritualism by parodying the widespread belief in the paranormal that was predominant at that time in history. On one level, Joyce mocks the attempts of scientists to prove that life went on after death. The language in this section, such as “communication was effected” and “it was ascertained,” mimics reports published by the Society for Psychical Research in London, founded in 1882 to investigate the paranormal. 38 Nevertheless, spiritualism had some respectability in the early 20th century and was taken seriously by intellectuals like William James and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. But the cultural phenomenon of spiritualism took on a more macabre quality after the First World War, when many in their grief tried to contact their loved ones through séances. Spiritualism may have assuaged their grief, but it also serves as another example of the rise in irrational behavior as a direct result of the war.

The ghost of history also haunts the tavern. In a sense, the patrons, except Bloom, are all trapped in a web of history. Images of a spider web sometimes appear when Joyce is writing about history as, for example, during the Christmas dinner in the first chapter of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, when after the argument over Parnell, “Mr. Casey struggled up from his chair and bent across the table towards her [Dante], scraping the air from before his eyes with one hand as though he were tearing aside a cobweb [italics mine]. 39 The spider imagery is used again in “Cyclops” as the men are recounting all the misfortunes in Irish history, and Joyce writes of “Bloom letting on to be awfully deeply interested in nothing, a spider’s web [italics mine] in the corner behind the barrel, and the citizen scowling after him and the old dog at his feet looking up to know who to

38 Don Gifford, Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce’s Ulysses (Berkeley: CUP, 1974), 329.
Is Bloom looking at the web as a metaphor for the trap of history? Perhaps, but it is definitely reminiscent of the view of history as a nightmare stated by Stephen in “Nestor.”

If “Nestor” is a direct reaction to the war, “Cyclops” is a musing into its origins. Written in 1919, shortly after the conflict ended, Joyce was clearly thinking about its underlying causes. Now, nearly 100 years since the outbreak of the Great War, Joyce’s satires of nationalism and racism in the episode continue to resonate. After the war ended, it was common to assign blame to one country for causing the war. Historians continue to debate the war’s origins and question and if one country is to blame for the August 1914 crisis ending with most European nations suddenly at war. Joyce is not assessing blame to any one country; he is, however, presenting mentalities that played in part in starting the First World War.

Nationalism tended to feed upon unresolved issues of history. A sense of injustice sometimes justified and sometimes not increased xenophobia and racism among the Irish. As the citizen goes on a rant against the English, Bloom adds the Christ-like admonition, “Some people can see the mote in others’ eyes, but they can’t see the beam in their own.” Ignoring that statement as a weak and unmanly world view, the citizen goes on to list all the injustices done to the Irish throughout history:

Raimeis [according to Don Gifford this means “nonsense”]
There’s no one as blind as the fellow that won’t see, if you know what that means. Where are our missing twenty millions of Irish that should be here today instead of four, our lost tribes? And our potteries and textiles, the finest in

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40 Joyce, Ulysses, 324.  
41 Niall Ferguson, The Pity of War, xxxix. At the Versailles Conference in 1919, Germany was forced to sign a “guilt clause” that implicated them for triggering the First World War. Ferguson’s revisionist history places much of the blame on Great Britain and their unrealistic fears of German domination of Europe.  
42 Joyce, Ulysses, 326.
the whole world! And our wool that was sold in Rome in the time of Juvenal

This display of excessive patriotism as a reaction to historical injustice is often a trigger for wars in the 20th century, surely a foreshadowing of fascism. It also captures the mood of anger and resentment that poisoned international relations leading up to the Second World War.

Instead of looking to realistic solutions to problems facing Ireland and the rest of Europe, the citizen, like many frustrated middle-class men, looked to myths of past glory to avoid looking for practical, even liberal, solutions to the ills facing society: “And with the help of the holy mother of God we will again, says the citizen, clapping his thigh. Our harbors that are empty will be full again.” This fantastical view of history fueled the rage of a middle-class who felt trapped by its own history. By creating an over-romanticized view of the past and popularizing it among the middle-classes, nations willingly marched off to war and turned away from the voices of reason like Bloom’s.

In the midst of the ever-growing tension between European nations was a corresponding increase in anti-Semitism throughout the western world at the beginning of the 20th century. Incidents of it occur frequently in Ulysses. In 1904, anti-Semitism for the most part stemmed mostly from economic rather than racial reasons. The growing prominence of Jews in European finance, most notably the Rothschild banking dynasty, triggered a negative backlash among Europe’s predominately Christian population. In

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43 Ibid, 326.
44 Joyce, Ulysses, 327-328. The “Citizen” then goes to fantasize about Ireland recovering its past glory, invoking economic and military power. This rhetoric matched that of the most ardent nationalists in all nations.
Ulysses, the reader first gets an example of this in “Nestor.” While Joyce had no way of knowing that prejudice towards Jews would eventually lead to the Holocaust, “Nestor” does suggest his own awareness of anti-Semitism and portrays it as a troubling cultural trend that contributed to Europe’s implosion into two major conflicts.

Scholars have generally interpreted “Cyclops” as Joyce’s commentary on Irish politics and culture after the fall of Parnell. On the surface, this is true, but I will argue that Joyce goes well beyond the machinations of Irish politics to satirizing certain aspects of Irish history. Since all of the issues facing Ireland, in regard to nationalism, were happening in Europe it is logical to interpret the episode as a portrait of nationalism in general. In fact, in the Gifford annotations on “Cyclops” there are numerous references to Irish history and European history. While there is a tendency to classify the troubles of Ireland as unique, the challenges facing the Irish people were happening to peoples all over Europe in their own nationalist struggles. These struggles for independence did display the foibles of nationalism that came in the form of racism, anti-Semitism and imperialism that were not just affecting Europe, but the entire world.

Joyce came of age in the shadow of Parnell and the dashed hopes of Home Rule, yet another ongoing theme in Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. For Joyce, the problems of Ireland were too much for him, bringing with them all the baggage of family misfortune, an overbearing Catholic Church, and the weight of history. Instead Joyce famously used “exile, silence, and cunning,” to deal with his homeland.

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46 Joyce, Ulysses, 33. Mr. Deasy explains to Stephen, “England is in the hands of the Jews. In all the highest places: her finance, her press. And they are the signs of a nation’s decay. Wherever they gather they eat up the nation’s vital strength. I have seen it coming these years. As sure as we are standing the Jew merchants are already at their work of destruction. Old England is dying.”

47 Frederick C. Stern. “Pyrrhus, Fenians, and Bloom” James Joyce Quarterly 5.3 (1968),211-228.

48 Manganiello, Joyce’s Politics, 160.
He read even more extensively in history and philosophy, and expanding his knowledge of politics gave him a broader perspective. This is evident in “Cyclops.”

Like his alter-ego, Bloom, Joyce was a citizen of Europe. Therefore, “Cyclops” is a portrait of Ireland, but from the perspective of an international writer that happened to be Irish. The episode serves a great purpose in highlighting the underlying anxieties of Europe before the First World War.

Joyce’s relationship to nationalism has received much scrutiny from scholars who have for the most part argued that Joyce opposed the idea, but also showed a slight sympathy towards it, evidenced by his lifelong admiration of Parnell. The core belief of nationalism, which is to instill a pride in one’s own culture, is positive, but when the idea is taken to the extreme it can lead to ignorance and prejudice. The “Citizen” is the epitome of this. The “Citizen,” based upon the founder of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Michael Cusack, who Joyce knew personally and disliked. To Joyce, it was people like Cusack who represented the ugliest form of nationalism because they appealed to the basest instincts of people. The “Citizen” is one-eyed, like the Cyclops, and is only able to see things from a strictly Irish perspective. This extreme form of nationalism, that at is root was racist and xenophobic, fueled the Fascist movements in the 1920s and 1930s. “Cyclops” is an Irish version of nationalism, but compares to other forms of extreme nationalism in Europe.

Bloom’s humanism makes him the most heroic character in “Cyclops.” He is the voice of reason in a maelstrom of nationalism, racism, and patriotism. By adopting the

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51 Stern, “Fenians and Bloom,” 222-223.
guise of Christ and the prophet Elijah, Bloom is a fictional model for pacifist leaders like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, both of whom lived for a peaceful resistance to historical injustice in response to the madness of the 20th century. When Bloom states that “Persecution, all the history of the world is full of it. Perpetuating national hatred among nations,” it is an accurate statement of his time in history. What makes the statement even more noteworthy is that Bloom has absolutely no influence among the men in the tavern. After he leaves they question his manhood and make snide anti-Semitic remarks; to them, Bloom is a joke. Later, the citizen even indulges himself in a fantasy of murdering Bloom: “It’d be an act of God to take hold of a fellow the like that and throw him in the bloody sea. Justifiable homicide, so it would.” On the surface this is a darkly comic passage that highlights the citizen’s anger at Bloom’s refusal to buy drinks for the rest of the patrons, but in the context of the present argument it points to the movement of nationalism from one of celebrating the state as a defender of individual freedoms as in Rousseau’s original idea to one that used national pride to belittle other cultures. Bloom in “Cyclops” occupies the role of an archetypal outsider and serves as defender of the humanistic roots of the Enlightenment that celebrated individual freedom.

The atmosphere at Barney Kiernan’s is volatile; making it appear that war is the logical consequence of their attitudes on international relations. National rivalries were hitting a fever pitch with the naval arms race between Germany and Great Britain, and the rise of the United States, Germany, and Japan as world powers was upsetting the international balance of power. Allusions to the national rivalries arise in “Cyclops” with the bar patron’s suspicion of the 1904 Entente Cordiale between Great Britain and France.

52 Joyce, Ulysses, 331.
53 Ibid, 338.
to oppose Germany:

The French! Says the citizen. Set of dancing masters! Do you know what it is? They were never worth a roasted fart to Ireland. Aren”t they trying make an Entente cordiale now at Tay Pay”s dinner party with perfidious Albion? Firebrands of Europe they always were.  

It was England”s Entente with France that drew them into the war, which subsequently weakened the British Empire. These nationalist rivalries that Joyce is writing about in “Cyclops” in retrospect only go further to reveal the mentalities that led to the slaughters at the Somme and Verdun. Barney Kiernan”s tavern is a stage pitting the voice of reason against voices of unreason. Nevertheless, the “Citizen” is not necessarily a one-dimensional character. All the claims made by the “Citizen” against the British Empire are based on historical fact in his referencing of the 1846 Irish famine, landlord corruption, and several other injustices. Every nationalist movement has its own narrative and a mythology, which can block out parts of history that may be unfavorable to the cause. The citizen”s own narrative espoused in the episode fosters all the negatives of nationalism that supports violence, racism, and militarism. Such a perspective was not uncommon at the time since many nationalist leaders used these types of appeals. We are aware that the oppressed often wish to become the oppressor. This entire mentality is on display in “Cyclops.” Such thinking created the climate that led to the First World War and a countless number of subsequent crises and conflict in the 20th century.

54 Ibid, 330.
55 Ibid, 329.
CHAPTER III

“NESTOR,” “CYCLOPS,” AND JOYCE’S PORTRAIT OF HISTORY IN ULYSSES

The influence of history is a crucial theme in Ulysses. This is particularly evident in “Cyclops” and “Nestor,” because both explore themes of a historical nature such as economics and politics. In “Nestor” the exchange between Mr. Deasy and Stephen on economics reveals prevailing anti-Semitism in Europe. In “Cyclops,” Bloom stands as the voice of reason and common sense amidst an assorted group of angry nationalists that worship militaristic virtues. The idealistic debates in “Nestor” and “Cyclops” skillfully presents opposing mindsets before the World War I in terms of anti-Semitism, nationalism, and militarism.

Some earlier scholarship on Ulysses has explored the novel’s connections to the First World War, especially in “Nestor.”56 “Nestor” was written in late 1917, when the war was still in progress. Although Joyce lived in neutral Switzerland for most of the conflict, he was personally affected by it as his brother Stanislaus spent the war in an Austro-Hungarian prison camp. Joyce’s biographer Richard Ellmann discovered a moving letter Joyce wrote to the widow of his school friend Thomas Kettle who was killed in action on the Western front.57 Furthermore, Joyce was clearly interested in how

57 Ellmann, Joyce, 399-400.
the then current intellectuals were reacting to the war and what it meant for the future of Europe.58

In “Nestor,” Stephen is teaching a history class and mentions the Greek general Pyrrhus who made the famous remark after a battle, “Another victory like that and we are done for.”59 This statement could be applied to nearly all the battles on Western front where armies suffered awful casualties with little gain; for example, the British army suffered over 60,000 casualties on first day of the Battle of the Somme. Indeed, when the boys play a field hockey game after class Robert Spoo points out that the text is full of warfare imagery, as in, “Jousts. Timed shocked rebounds, shock by shock. Jousts, slush and uproar of battles, the frozen deathspew of the slain, a shout of spear spikes baited with men”s bloodied guts.”60 The fact that most of Stephen”s students had a good chance of going to war in 1914 adds further poignancy to Stephen”s haunting vision of history.61 Stephen”s exchange with Mr. Deasy only heightens his grim view of the past: “history is to blame: on me and on my words, unhating.”62 Joyce saw the First World War as pointless slaughter; when asked how long the eternal flame would burn at Arc de Triomphe, Joyce replied, “Until the unknown soldier gets up in disgust and blows it out.”63

Later in “Nestor,” Stephen converses with the schoolmaster Mr. Deasy about the

58 Manganiello, Politics of Joyce, 152-153. Spoo, “Presence of the Great War,” 140. Manganiello notes that Joyce surely read Bertrand Russell”s writings on the war that chastised intellectuals who refused to speak out against the dangers of nationalism and instead stayed loyal to their home nations during the war.
59 Joyce, Ulysses, 24.
60 Ibid, 32.
61 Robert Graves, Goodbye to all That: An Autobiography (New York: Anchor, 1928,1957), 29. Robert Graves”s autobiography provides a highly sardonic account of boarding school life in early 20th Century England, but also writes the shocking effect of World War I on him and his classmates, “At least one in three of my generation at school died . . .The average life expectancy of an infantry subaltern on the Western front was, at some stages of the war, only about three months.”
62 Joyce, Ulysses, 30.
63 Fairhall, Question of History, 162.
history of Ireland. Deasy is the personification of the Victorian values held by political leaders and generals that led young men to their deaths in the First World War. Before the war the public still had a highly romantic view of war. This is evident in Winston Churchill’s autobiography, *My Early Life: A Roving Commission* when he wrote dazzling passages about the last cavalry charge at the Battle of Omdurman as examples of the Victorian view of war.64 Mr. Deasy’s admiration of the British because they “paid their way”65 was a conventional view of the British. Deasy’s retort to Stephen’s statement about history being a nightmare is simply that, “All history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God,”66 which undoubtedly is a comic commentary on the 19th Century view of history that saw it as a natural progression where each epoch is an improvement over the preceding one - “all moving towards the manifestation of God.”

On the one hand, “Nestor” and “Cyclops” exemplify the narrow views of Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen.” On the other, they are about Stephen and Bloom’s more humane world views. Mr. Deasy’s anti-Semitic statements call to mind those of the “Citizen” who dominates the “Cyclops” episode. There is, for example, the obvious connection between their shared anti-Semitism. Such anti-Semitism likely stemmed from a serious misunderstanding of economics and a belief in false rumors of Jewish cabals taking over the banking system. The economic success of Jews throughout Europe in the late 19th century resulted in a growing prejudice against them. This prejudice manifested itself with conspiracy theories about Jews in finance, most blatantly in the forged text *The

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64 Winston Churchill, *A Roving Commission: My Early Life* (New York: Scribner, 1930)“Nothing like the Battle of Omdurman will ever seen again. Everything was visible to the naked eye. The armies marched and maundered on the crisp surface of the desert plain which the Nile wandered in broad reaches, now steel, now brass”, 171.
66 *Ibid*, 34.
Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The book featured a series of detailed conspiracy theories about Jewish plans to run the world economy.67 This view is reflected in Deasy’s statement: “As sure as we are standing here the Jew merchants are already at their work of destruction. Old England is dying.”68 Stephen reacts with sarcasm as his weapon: “A merchant, is one who buys cheap and sells dear, jew or gentile, is he not?”69 Then Deasy takes refuge in the Christian origins of anti-Semitism: “They sinned against the light, Mr. Deasy said gravely. And you can see the darkness in their eyes. And that is why they are wanderers on the earth to this day.”70 On the other hand, Bloom displays his tolerance when confronted with the narrow-minded views espoused at the tavern in “Cyclops,” for example when he denounces hatred and upholds a life of love as the “opposite of hatred.”71 An example of Stephen’s humanity behind his detached demeanor is also evident when he helps the young boy who is struggling with his math problem. Stephen and Bloom, in contrast to Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen’s,” extreme views reveals their tolerant world views.

Joyce’s concern with anti-Semitism was highly influenced by the Dreyfuss affair in France.72 The Dreyfuss case tore apart French society and involved the alleged espionage of Jewish officer. It exposed some deep fissures in French society, regarding the clash between modernity and tradition. As Ellmann pointed out, Joyce did not see himself as a civil rights activist for the rights of minorities, but did see the Jews as a unique culture that he admired. Their isolation from the mainstream of European culture

67 Ferguson, War of the World, 63,69.
68 Joyce, Ulysses, 33.
69 Ibid, 34.
70 Ibid, 34.
71 Ibid, 333.
72 Ellmann, Joyce, 373
had forged close families. Joyce saw this as a great strength of Jewish culture. Fairhall makes note that the Jewish example went against the “imagined communities” aspect of nationalism, meaning that a shared community is a utopia and anyone outside of it is demonized. “Cyclops” is the best example of how one, Bloom, is outside of an imagined community.  

A notable contrast between the Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen” is their attitudes towards the British Empire. Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen” are not one-dimensional characters, rather they both have points of view grounded in the reality of the time period of the novel. Mr. Deasy sees the British Empire as a force for good in the world. Ellmann notes that Joyce probably based Deasy on his own headmaster at the Clifton School, Francis Irwin, a “pro-British, “Ulster Scot.” For Deasy, the British Empire represented strength, good judgment, and one “moving history towards the manifestation of God.” Don Gifford’s annotations suggest that this idea is best espoused in the poetry of Tennyson. Mr. Deasy was not alone in his views, for a good portion of the world in 1904 looked to the British Empire as a beacon of keeping the world at peace. Britain’s navy still ruled the seas and its economic power remained unchallenged. The world seemed relatively stable. However, Joyce, by presenting a critical view of the British Empire through Stephen and a favorable view of the English from Mr. Deasy, allowed for a dual perspective that adds to the complexity of the chapter, and by extension, the novel. Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen” are also caricatures of certain attitudes that were common in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Joyce reveals their character

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75 Gifford, *Ulysses Annotated*, 39. Gifford gives particular attention to the line in Tennyson’s poem which reads, “one far off divine event/To which the whole creation moves.”
through their interactions with his two protagonists, Stephen and Bloom. Joyce saw the connection, or is at least suggesting a connection, between Christianity and imperialism. Deasy”s Christianity is evident in his office, with all the Christian symbols that Stephen observes. For example, the twelve spoons are a traditional Baptism gift that symbolizes the twelve apostles. Stephen”s interior monologue in “Nestor” recites the traditional Christian hymn *Gloria Patri*, one that enhances the theme in the chapter of history as progress: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.” But behind the façade of Deasy”s Christianity is an underlying hypocrisy in his anti-Semitism. Even his fatherly advice to Stephen hints at the cruel side of Empire: “we are a generous people, but we must be just.” It is a narrow view held by those in the establishment who could use such rationalizations to cover up cruelty. The “might makes right” sentiment here calls attention to the arrogance of Empire that can led to acts of outrageous injustice. The concentration camps during the Boer War, which officials in the British government defended, are merely one example. And the harsh reprisal to the Easter 1916 rebellion, as memorialized by Yeats in his poem “Easter 1916“ that honored the leaders of the failed rebellion, is another.

The mindsets of Deasy and the “Citizen” are comical because they are hyperbolic and grounded in reality. The “Citizen,” is a caricature of a mindset most closely tied to

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76 Ibid, 34.
77 Ibid, 34.
79 Robert Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (New York: Ballantine, 1991), 307-308. During the Boer War (1899-1902) the world saw one of the first instances of concentration camps being used as a means of waging war against a civilian population. The British Army in South Africa fought against guerillas by forcing women and children into camps and burning farms that gave shelter to the enemy. British Foreign Minister’s Joseph Chamberlain’s defense of the camps caused a firestorm throughout Europe and hurt the Empire’s reputation.
nationalism. He is a man full of rage. Some of the anger is justified due to the history of injustices toward the Irish, but is it not just an excuse for him to exercise his own cruel nature? Of course, Joyce uses the “Citizen” more than Mr. Deasy for comic effect, but both provide satire on a grand scale in the tradition of Swift and Wilde. Other characters in the episode, such as Alf and Bob Doran, who mindlessly follow the Citizen”s views on everything, exemplify the mob mentality that nationalism encouraged. In fact, no event proved this more than the August 1914 crisis when the working classes marched off to war, thus dealing a harsh blow to the socialists movement in Europe who hoped class loyalty would trump national loyalty in case of a war.\footnote{Barbara Tuchman, \textit{The Proud Tower: A Portrait of the World Before the War, 1890-1914} (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 458-462. Tuchmann points out that in 1914 the Socialist movement in Europe was at the height of its power in terms of membership. Jean Jaures, a French Socialist leader, tried to organize a working class movement against the war during the crisis, but was assassinated on August 1, 1914. By then the enthusiasm for war had muted the socialists as loyalty to country won out, best summed by Kaiser Wilhelm II”s quote, Henceforth I know no parties, only Germans.}.

The characterization of Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen” also suggest certain mentalities that looked absurd and frightening after First World War, but, which, unfortunately continued to persist. Whether this was Joyce”s exact intention is unclear of course, but it is accurate when it comes to coming to an understanding of the cultural milieu of 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Europe. The “Nestor” and “Cyclops” episodes illustrate how ideas of nationalism expressed themselves among the establishment and the working classes. Historians still ask what the soldiers were fighting for. For their country? For the idea of their nation? Nationalism, at its root, is about competing narratives about the history of a nation. Who are the heroes? Who are the villains? For example, the “Citizen” relates that anything that was great in history is traced back to Ireland. Such a ridiculous idealization of one”s culture includes all the mythical or mystical origins that went along
with nationalism. It is the belief in some great and glorious past that outsiders stole and that the current generation must restore to the future. All the references to an illusory past are directly linked to military glory, thus igniting militarism, a societal cult around the military ethos. But as European nations learned during the World War I, those old virtues of military glory stood little chance against modern weaponry such as the machine gun and chemical gas.

After the First World War ended, nationalism took on an even more sinister form with the rise of Fascism in Europe. It began in Italy with the rise of Mussolini in 1923 and later in Germany with the rise of Hitler. It is easy to imagine the “Citizen” endorsing the Fascists who championed a fanatical allegiance to the state, one not unlike a religion. But, excessive nationalism proved an unsettling force in Europe both before and after the First World War. It made marching off to war seem like a privilege, the ultimate expression of devotion to the nation, as in Jacque-Louis David’s immoral painting *The Oath of the Horatii*. Militarism took on an even more ominous form under Fascist regimes that championed military glory and conquest. Mussolini promised a new Roman Empire and Hitler a “thousand year” Reich. One way to look at the portrait of nationalism presented in “Cyclops” is as a foreshadowing of fascism. All the essential elements are there: xenophobic impulses, anti-Semitism, and an emphasis on physical aggression over moral integrity.\(^\text{81}\)

In the pub, Bloom is the clear outsider and not just because he is Jewish. The other Irishmen in Barney Kiernan’s are offended when Bloom refuses to buy drinks. And he is also there for reasons of business to gain a commission over the estate of Dignam. The others also question his place as a man when Blazes Boylan is mentioned and his

\(^{81}\) Ecksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 318-320.
association with Molly Bloom, raising further questions about the Blooms’ own marriage. His father’s suicide is also raised, a taboo in the staunch Catholic environment. Bloom’s feminine rhetoric about love and peace only offer him as a figure for more ridicule in the hyper-masculine, hyper-Irish atmosphere of the pub.

“Nestor” is also important in Stephen’s character development in the novel. In “Telemachus” he is still engaging in philosophical debates with his cronies, but in a somewhat more detached and wearisome fashion than in Portrait. In “Nestor” the reader first sees Stephen in a position of responsibility. Despite his poverty, which Mr. Deasy mocks, Stephen still has an inner will and dignity. In fact, the following episode, “Proteus,” is often interpreted as Stephen’s battle with his own will to overcome his own pain.82 Although he is an ineffective teacher, at least in his own mind, he still has his intellectual confidence, evident in his tour de force on Shakespeare at the library in “Sylla and Charybdis.” This is an interesting counterpoint to Bloom’s very emotional response in “Cyclops.” By taking Mr. Deasy’s editorial to the newspaper Stephen will first cross paths with Bloom and both then begin their parallel courses throughout the day.

The “Circe” episode draws comparisons to the First World War as well. The episode blends aspects of personal and national history and the two merge into surrealistic imagery. Spoo interprets “Circe” as the point when Stephen must reckon with his own past and the ghost of his mother; history here becomes a “ghost story.”83 Fairhall interprets the episode as a response to the First World War, specifically about how it changed gender roles and ideas of masculinity. The close male camaraderie in the

83 Spoo, Language of History, 137.
trenches took on homoerotic overtones and this is reflected in “Circe.”

It is important to point out that the episodes in *Ulysses* do not exist in isolation from each other. All are connected.

“Nestor” and “Cyclops” are the two overtly historical and political episodes in *Ulysses* and the focus of this argument. Almost all the other episodes use history as a theme or a sub-theme, as in “Proteus” and “Circe.” As an aspiring artist and a history teacher Stephen has a unique perspective on Ireland, for example as in “Aeolus” where he is encouraged to write the national epic. His artistic nature allows him to use history for his own purposes to aid his own understanding of the world. Bloom, in contrast, is an autodidact, with a more scientific mind, as illustrated in all the episodes, especially in “Ithaca.” When confronted with the intolerance at Barney Kiernan’s, he uses common sense with a bit of humanism. When Bloom states that “Persecution, says he, all the history of the world is full of it. Perpetuating hatred among nations.” he is commenting on the desire to right historical injustice through violence as exemplified by the nationalistic “Citizen.” Bloom’s solution is not violence, which he declares with passion: “But its no use, says he. Force, hatred, history, all that. That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that which is really life.” His solution is love. Perhaps Stephen would mock such a simple solution to historical injustice as too simple, but he would surely side with Bloom over the “Citizen.” Stephen tries to detach himself from history, while Bloom looks for a

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84 Fairhall, *Question of History*, 192. Fairhall argues that the blurring of gender lines in “Circe” mirrors that which went on in the trenches. Much of this draws from Fussell’s chapter “Soldier Boys” in *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Fussell devoted special attention to the homoerotic poetry in Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen.


humanistic solution. Neither perspective is wrong, but they are two divergent ways of seeing the world. Their voices are in a unified tension.

Historical themes are paramount in Ulysses. *Ulysses* is also instructive in providing a portrait of a society about to enter into the First World War. The novel is undoubtedly a way of understanding the world that went to war from the perspective of a writer writing after the consequences of the war. No one historian or novelist could possibly develop one complete theory about the origins of the First World War that would achieve a consensus, but *Ulysses* adds a remarkable perspective. By writing a novel that is operating on a staggering number of levels Joyce leaves much to ponder. In terms of 20th century history, it reveals competing mindsets that existed before the war, but also after. It turns a mirror on society and offers a much needed perspective; it contextualizes history. *Ulysses* is a remarkable text in the ways it plays with ideas of history, that offer no answers, only insight.
CONCLUSION

*Ulysses* is a remarkable example of a massive amount of research that is combined with creativity on a level rarely seen in English literature. The work of Weldon Thorton and Don Gifford attests to the massive amount of knowledge that Joyce put into his work. In terms of the time of which it was written, *Ulysses* adds a unique perspective. It is a perspective that continues to resonate into the early 21st century. Joyce wrote *Ulysses* when Europe was in throes of the First World War, which forever altered the landscape of Europe in terms of politics, culture, and ideas. The First World War stands as a dividing line in history and *Ulysses* serves as a masterful portrait of the meaning of that dividing line. Some of the issues Joyce touches upon in the novel such as anti-Semitism, nationalism, and militarism provide insight on the world that went to war in 1914, are also supported by historical critiques that came after.

Many literary scholars and historians have “historicized” *Ulysses*, meaning that they have placed the novel within the context of the time it was written, but it is also useful and necessary to see *Ulysses* as a perspective on what was really happening beneath the surface of things. As pointed out, Joyce’s own views on Ireland, Europe, and the intellectual climate are there in the text, but what’s also there are insights about the world that went to war in 1914, about the consequences of that war, and a foreshadowing of what was to come.
To further advance this point, my argument has explored the exposition of the mentalities of nationalism, anti-Semitism, and militarism that are believed, historically, to have contributed to the First World War. There is much happening in the novel on an explicit and implicit level. An example of this complexity is in the characters of Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen.” On the surface they share many characteristics: intolerance, illusions of grandeur, and a frightening self-assurance about their narrow perspectives. To take this character analysis further, they are symbolic of some of the most corrosive ideologies of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century such as anti-Semitism, nationalism, and militarism. As I have argued, historians now identify those issues as direct causes of many of the atrocities that occurred during the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century. Therefore, there is an implicit meaning behind the bombast of Mr. Deasy and the “Citizen.” They are caricatures based on mentalities that are grounded in reality, ones that led nations to war and to commit genocides.

Dual perspectives are everywhere in \textit{Ulysses}, and they are eventually filtered through Stephen and Bloom. There is universality to the characters of Stephen and Bloom that Joyce uses to great effect. Stephen and Bloom, one a young aspiring artist, the other a middle-aged man with an astounding intellectual curiosity, add human voices amidst all of the novel’s changes in narration, voice, and style. They are not “heroes” in the traditional sense whatsoever, but useful models on how to perceive the world, namely, with humor, compassion, and tolerance.

\textit{Ulysses} is an astounding portrait of a particular place, at a particular time in history. The issues that it raises, in terms of history and politics (and there is so much more of course) are still relevant. It displays Joyce’s uncanny understanding of the world
around him and his own astounding imagination in telling about it. The novel not only
educates the reader about history, but also offers keen insights on modernity and
humanity.
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