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Beyond hearing: Focalising through the Senses in Joyce's 'Sirens'

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Introduction

The 'Sirens' episode in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1919) has repeatedly been noted as one of the most drastic shifts in Joyce's stylistic technique by critics. Yet, it is continually viewed through a singular lens that insists upon proving or disproving Joyce's 'fugue per canonem' technique, through an analysis on its musical or aural associations. This assertation is informed by Joyce's own discussion of the episode, where he defends his choice of style to Harriet Shaw Weaver as 'comprising all eight parts of a fugue per canonem: and I did not know in what other way to describe the seductions of music beyond which Ulysses travels.'[1] While music is undeniably an important aspect of Joyce's work, there is a critical tendency to overstate its significance. I want to offer a new reading to the traditional rendering of the episode by exploring the alternatives: sight and the seen when it comes to the barmaids, and the absence of one or other of those senses when it comes to the deaf Pat and the blind stripling. In doing so, I propose their overlooked contribution to the narrative's construction, through their differing effects on the reader's sensory experience.

Sight and the Seen: The Visual Allure of the Barmaids

Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* describes the Sirens as 'sea nymphs who charmed much with their melodious voice, that all forgot their employments to listen with more attention, and at last died for want of food.'[2] In Joyce's 'Sirens', however, the charm of the sea nymphs is not through 'their melodious voice', but through their power over the eyes of their customers.[3] The barmaids figuring the 'Sirens' in this episode, Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy, are first introduced through the colour of their hair; 'bronze' and 'gold' respectively.[4] From the first line, 'bronze by gold', Joyce sets up a structural thematization of their role as visual sirens who captivate through their appearance (U11.245). However, their monikers of metal appear only

[1] James Joyce, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber, 1992), p.129.
[2] John Lemprière, *Lemprière's Classical Dictionary* (Pennsylvania: Towar & Hogan, 1832), p.369.
[3] Ibid.
[4] James Joyce, *Ulysses*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.245. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text by page number.

when they are sexually interested in someone, or interacting with a worthy patron, to cast a spell over their victims. In this way, the barmaids have power over the way that they are perceived, able to actively select their audience. Whilst Declan Kiberd observes that 'they are employed not to sell their actual bodies but the image of them', the way they promote this image is overlooked.[5] The exchange of looks between the 'eyes' of the barmaids and their customers becomes vital to the advertisement and commercial transaction of their image. Hardly a customer however, Lenehan's 'small eyes ahunger' tell us something about his inability to afford this image; his vision is physically limited (as suggested by the adjective 'small') despite being 'ahunger' – which can be interpreted as his sexual appetite (U11.255). As the more precious metal, 'gold', Miss Kennedy's complete disregard for him confirms this; 'Miss gaze of Kennedy, heard not seen, read on', placing her in a position of power over his 'eyes' by attracting them but choosing not to meet them (U11.245, 251). Note how she is 'Miss […] Kennedy' not 'Girlgold', to further convey her disinterest in him (U11.251). Instead, her attention is directed at her book: 'Girlgold she read and did not glance', suggesting her peaked interest elsewhere (U11.251). Here, Joyce marks the polyvalency of perspective in this episode by reiterating the previous sentence to suggest she is purposefully not advertising her 'gold' image to him (U11.245). Moreover, by personifying her 'gaze', he bestows it with agency of its own to contribute to the power imbalance between them, underscoring Lenehan's inability to establish patronage in her domain (U11.245).

Additionally, the fact that she is 'heard not seen' places inherent emphasis on the barmaid's visual allure over their auditory stimulation: 'No glance of Kennedy rewarding him yet made overtures' (U11.251). Here, the Siren's song 'made overtures' is used to further spurn Lenehan's attempts at her attention (U11.251). Joyce juxtaposes the brevity of a 'glance' with the complexity of constructing an orchestral piece, to underscore her disinterest, privileging a 'glance' over her supposed song (U11.251). Furthermore, as Jon D. Green notes,

[5] Declan Kiberd, 'Singing', in *Ulysses and Us: the art of everyday living* (London: Faber, 2009), p.171.

the names of the barmaids 'allude to the major and minor keys in music respectively.'[6] Thus, Joyce's choice to use their 'bronze' and 'gold' monikers when they are actively seducing the men in the bar emphasises their visual appeal, overshadowing their auditory resonance (U11.245).

Indeed, the sound most closely associated with their seduction; Miss Douce's garter 'smack', is far from melodious, indicating their sensory allure lies elsewhere (U11.256). Pulled from behind the bar, Joyce places a limitation on the reader's perception of the object by detailing its sound and release: 'Smack. She let free sudden in rebound', before revealing it is 'her elastic garter' to emphasise the obscured eyeline of the men (U11.256). Thus, the sound of the 'smack' is only used to signal the presence of the 'elastic garter', which is what tantalises the men most. Importantly, Miss Douce's power over the men is marked by their view of her: 'Two kindling faces watched her bend' (U11.255). Joyce indicates their arousal through the adjective 'kindling', which evokes the feel of an ignited fire, suggesting their growing intensity of desire. This warmth is later associated with the feel of her 'warmhosed thigh' to demonstrate the real focus of her performance (U11.256). Instead of a disembodied voice luring the men to their doom, Joyce associates the 'smack' closely with the body of Miss Douce to emphasise the tangible and corporeal aspects of her seduction. He uses onomatopoeia to attach the sound of her garter to the feel of her skin: 'smackwarm against her smackable a woman's warmhosed thigh.' (U11.256). Here, the compounding of 'smack' and 'warm' gestures towards Joyce's initial purpose in the episode: to present the power of music to touch. However, the final image is of her 'warmhosed thigh', with 'warm' usurping the use of 'smack' in Joyce's succession of compound words, to mark the impossibility of doing that (U11.256). This illustrates the impossibility of the men reaching across the bar to feel her thigh; they can only 'watch her bend', demonstrating the limitations placed on their sensory experience of her

[6] Jon D. Green, 'The Sounds of Silence in "Sirens": Joyce's Verbal Music of the Mind', in *James Joyce Quarterly* (University of Tulsa, 2002), p.492.

performance (U11.255). Therefore, by focusing on senses other than hearing, Miss Douce's control over the men's experience and perception of her is revealed.

Whilst Scott J. Ordway asserts that 'the introduction of other formal possibilities [to the reading of the 'Sirens' episode] seems necessary', he discounts the role of the barmaids, on account of Bloom's disinterest in them, as providing 'more background noise and distraction than they do a crucial component of the formal structure.'[7] However, by approaching the narrative in a different way, through senses other than hearing, side-lined figures like the barmaids, Pat and the blind stripling emerge as prominent players in the construction of the episode. Miss Douce's control over the narrative is revealed on closer inspection of how she chooses her audience. Like Miss Kennedy with Lenehan, Miss Douce withholds her 'bronze' identity when serving Mr Dedalus, signalling her lack of sexual attraction to him, but still serves him with 'grace of alacrity' as he is a paying customer (U11.250). This interaction is later paralleled when she serves Boylan, who activates her 'bronze' image, animating even the 'mirror gilt of Cantrell and Conchrane's' into elevating her image 'bronze with sunnier bronze' (U11.250, 256). However, whilst she serves Mr Dedalus 'with grace' and 'alacrity', which indicates her smooth and brisk pace, when serving Boylan, the description is interrupted and extended by the intrusion of her thoughts: 'Shebronze dealing from her jar thick and syrupy liquor for his lips, looked as it flowed (flower in his coat: who gave him?), and syruped with her voice', suggesting that she is not wholly in control, or is distracted in some way (U11.254). This is reflected in the length of the descriptions as well, marked by the peak of a 'skirt' in each instance at demonstrably different intervals of time (U11.250, 256). Thus, in the same way that Miss Douce keeps the men in suspense over the release of her garter, Joyce builds up suspense for the readers by extending the lead-up to the reveal of 'a peak of skirt above her knee' with the interjection of her thoughts. When compared to the brisk interaction with Mr Dedalus, and the easily accessed pleasure he derives from his own pipe (hidden in 'the skirt

[7] Scott J. Ordway, 'A Dominant Boylan: Music, Meaning and the Sonata Form in the "Sirens" Episode of "Ulysses"', in *James Joyce Quarterly* (University of Tulsa, 2007), p.95.

of his coat'), Miss Douce's control over her customers' experience is revealed to be the same as her control over the narrative (U11.250).

In contrast to Miss Kennedy's interaction with Lenehan, Miss Douce's heightened interest in Boylan is matched by his ability to pay for her attention. Unlike Lenehan, Boylan's vision of Miss Douce's performance is not limited: he is all eyes. Joyce's use of repetition imitates how he drinks in her image: 'Boylan, eyed, eyed', suggesting he cannot look away (U11.256). Through his presentation of the barmaids, Joyce engages with Laura Mulvey's theory of the 'male gaze' in cinema, which posits that the act of looking is often gendered, with men being the active viewers and women being the passive objects of their gaze.[8] Whilst the barmaids perform according to this perspective, as objects of desire, Joyce's portrayal of them actively selecting their audience suggests a reversal of this gaze. Miss Douce's choice to perform for Boylan is underscored by her position as an active viewer: 'Sparkling bronze eyed azure eyed Blazure's skyblue bow and eyes', revealing her sexual attraction to him (U11.255). Here, Joyce's use of chiasmus imitates the exchange of glances between them, with an emphasis on her vision, as mirrored by the reversal of focus on his 'azure' eyes and 'skyblue' bow, to emphasise the potency of her attraction (U11.255).

Moreover, whilst Miss Douce's 'bronze' identity is empowered by her performance, the conflation of Boylan's name with his eye colour – 'Blazure' – indicates a loss of power over his choice as a viewer (U11.255). The coinage of this new nickname, in place of his more prominent and aural leitmotif 'Jingle', further reverses the power dynamics of Mulvey's 'male gaze' by marking him as stepping into her domain (U11. 253). This is confirmed by the way 'his spellbound eyes' follow her 'gliding head', indicating his passive and mesmerised state (U11.256). His 'spellbound eyes' are further placed in contrast to her 'wilful eyes', which denote a more intentional focus, highlighting her control over him (U11.256).

[8] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Great Taylor and Francis, 2016), p.19.

However, even in scenarios where the barmaids have some agency over the way they are perceived, they are still constrained by the realities of their role at the bar. The imposition of Miss Douce's real name onto her 'bronze' identity foreshadows the gradual slip of her visual allure: 'Bronzedouce […] sought Blazes Boylan's flower and eyes' (U11.255). This is a reversal of the exchange between Lenehan and Miss Kennedy, where Miss Douce does the seeking, suggesting a shift in the power dynamics between Siren and customer. Joyce also reinstates 'Blazes Boylan' his true name, highlighting how her spell over him is temporary (U11.255). Indeed, it is only when her seduction of Boylan fails, that she too becomes 'Miss Douce' again (U11.257). The sobering reality of his departure is further marked by her 'brave eyes, unregarded', which emphasise how her 'bronze' identity has failed to keep his attention (U11.257).

Without an audience to witness her performance, her relationship to the interior space also shifts. The sun no longer shines favourably on her, as being 'smitten by sunlight' becomes '(the smiting light)' and she slips back under the 'depth of shadow' (U11.257). The light imagery, which previously symbolised her strong attraction to Boylan by invigorating her 'shining bronze' appearance, now maps her sudden realisation and striking disappointment of his departure (U11.255). As mentioned previously, Joyce's use of parenthesis to indicate the intrusion of her thoughts onto the narrative: 'She drew down pensive (why did he go so quick when I?) about her bronze' signals her loss of control, as the sentence is fragmented, and she is visually separated from her 'bronze' identity (U11.257). The drawing of the blinds further demonstrates how the barmaids become visually shrouded as the light is physically drawn from them: 'They pined in depth of ocean shadow, gold by the beerpull, bronze by the maraschino, thoughtful all two. Mina Kennedy, 4 Lismore terrace, Drumcondra with Idolores, a queen, Dolores, silent.' (U11.516-18). Andrew Warren notes that 'the intrusion of the quotidian "beerpull," "maraschino," and "4 Lismore terrace" draw us back to the realities of the

bar, pull us away from the fantasy's ideals.'[9] It could be argued, however, that the 'fantasy's silent ideals', characterised by the 'ocean shadow' and 'their reef of counter' are the intruders since they only appear when the barmaids are faced with the sobering realities (U11.516, 248). Like in the portrayal of Miss Douce's disappointment, Miss Kennedy's confrontation with the reality of her 'beau' escaping from her eyesight with another woman, leads her to take shelter in 'their reef of counter' and retreat 'from bright light'; indicating that she's been bested (U11.248). Thus, the remains of their 'fantasy's ideals', which manifest in the way their setting is transformed, stand in stark contrast to their real role at the bar, to serve and maintain customers. This shift serves as a sad reminder that they are alone and have no-one to reflect their fantasies back onto them.

The Removal of Senses: Deaf Pat and the Blind Stripling

In their seduction of the men, the barmaids are supported by the presence of the 'bothered Pat', and the absence of the 'unseeing stripling' (U11.252, 278). Although they are introduced together within the episode, and often placed in sequence of each other within the narrative, their function within the episode contrasts completely. Pat's role as 'the waiter of Ormond' necessitates his constant view and interaction with the barmaids to relay the order of customers: 'Tink to her pity cried the diner's bell […] Lager for diner. Lager without alacrity she served.' (U11.252). Whereas, the stripling, who is the blind piano tuner, does not need to interact with anything other than his instruments, which are his cane and his tuning fork: 'He saw not bronze. He saw not gold.' (U11.278). However, they are united in their respective impairments, filling in for each other whilst presenting a unique perspective through which we can view the narrative.

Notably, Pat's name is a palindrome for the sound of the stripling's cane; 'tap', signalling their opposing function. As Daniel R. Schwarz asserts, 'in terms of the reader's Odyssey, 'Sirens' is really the first chapter in which we become conscious of the narrative

[9] Andrew Warren, 'How to Listen to "Sirens": Narrative Distraction at the Ormond Hotel', in *James Joyce Quarterly* (University of Tulsa, 2013), p.667.

presence as a strong persona who is arranging his materials for the purposes that go beyond the requirements of presenting the lives of his characters or the cityscape of Dublin.'[10] Thus, Joyce's juxtaposition of the blind tuner, who can be heard 'tapping' as he returns to Ormond, and the deaf waiter 'Pat', emphasises the difference in the way the narrative is rendered to open our eyes to perspectives typically placed on the margins (U11.277, 252).

Kiberd argues that 'there is a touch of male hysteria all throughout the episode, to be found in the way in which Bloom shortens words and phrases, like a man in shock'; however, this view overlooks the prominent role of characters such as the deaf Pat or the blind stripling, who have a similar effect on the style of the narrative.[11] For example, when Pat goes to serve 'two diners' drinks', he only catches bits of the conversation between Ben Dollard and Father Cowley: 'He saved the situa. Tight trou. Brilliant ide' (U11.257). Here, it could be argued that words are shortened in imitation of Pat's experience of the narrative, to signal his deafness. However, upon our first reading of the episode, this truncation of words could be attributed to Father Cowley's embarrassment, which is illustrated through the way he 'blushed to his brilliant purply lobes' (U11.257). Yet, the narrative focalisation of the scene is clearly in Pat's point of view, as the visual image of Father Cowley fills in for his absent sense of hearing, and Cowley cannot see his own 'brilliant purply lobes' (U11.257). Even when the narrative is presented as being from Bloom's point of view, the only phrases shortened are ones that Pat could conceivably hear; like Bloom's order – 'Bloom ate liv as said before' – or Richie's statement that the hotel bar is the 'Best value in Dub' (U11.260). The shortened words mimic how someone with a hearing impairment might perceive spoken language – fragmented and incomplete. This highlights how reader's engagement with the text mirrors Pat's sensory experience of the world, as we must also re-construct the narrative according to the way information is made available to us. Moreover, due to his role as a waiter, Pat is constantly going 'to and fro', which adds another layer of meaning to the way conversation is cut off

[10] Daniel R. Schwarz, 'The Adventure of Reading: The Styles of the Odyssey and the Odyssey of Styles', in *Reading Joyce's Ulysses* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p.164.
[11] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, p.175.

(U11.260). Thus, the way the narrative mimics Pats limited hearing underscores how the environment and sensory limitations of characters affect the narrative structure.

Moreover, Pat's repeated presence on the peripheries of the bar, 'near the door', 'in the doorway', 'by the door', indicates how sound too is placed on the peripheries of the narrative at the start of the episode (U11.255, 257, 262). As Susan Mooney points out 'our perception of sound depends on positions and barriers, walls and doors, empty spaces and vibrating instruments, discord and simultaneity. The relay and echo of sound depends on space across which sound waves flow and ebb.'[12] Until Bloom signals him to 'set ajar the door of the bar', our perception of sound is relayed through Pat, only catching snippets of the songs coming from the other room (U11.262). The implication of a closed door could represent our own deafness to the narrative song, suggesting that the full narrative can only be accessed when the door is opened by those who can hear it fully – characters within the narrative like Bloom or the barmaids. Indeed, the first instance of song being heard, coming 'from within', is relayed to us through Pat's proximity to the bar as 'he went and whispered, bald and bothered, with Miss Douce' (U11.253). The fragmented nature of the song's lyrics, exemplified by Joyce's use of ellipsis: 'The bright stars fade…' and '…the morn is breaking', highlights how sound is only allowed to pervade the narrative in a manner that mirrors Pat's own limited perception (U11.253). The meaning of the lyrics could also be interpreted as the fading attraction of the barmaids, who were 'the bright stars', signalling a turn in the narrative focus to the attraction of music coming from next door (U11.253). This conveys his mediatory role in relaying the sounds coming from the other side to the reader.

By presenting Pat and the stripling in sequence of each other, Joyce is emphasising the effect their missing senses have on the narrative as the perception of other characters begins to share in their experience of the world. Before the stripling's arrival, sound is filled in through the other senses as Joyce portrays Miss Douce's attentiveness through her 'listening

[12] Susan Mooney, 'Bronze by Gold by Bloom: Echo, the Invocatory Drive, and the 'Aurteur' in 'Sirens'', in *Bronze by Gold: The Music of Joyce*, ed. Sebastian D.G. Knowles (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p.299.

lips and eyes' or Mr Dedalus' look through his 'faraway mourning mountain eye' (U11.252). Here, Joyce echoes Percy French's (1854-1920) song 'The Mountains of Mourne' through Mr Dedalus' 'faraway mourning mountain eye' to demonstrate how he is impervious to the barmaid's seduction, as the choice of song suggests he is taken by his girl back home (U11.252). Importantly, he uses a song to illustrate this challenge to their role and authority, highlighting the tension between their visual temptation and the emotional truths of the men's music. This threatens to expose the false sounds which the barmaids attempt to pass off as music, such as the 'smack' of Miss Douce's 'garter' or their 'shrilldeep' laughter (U11.256, 249). Like Miss Douce's 'smack', the effect of the music on its listeners is described through tactile imagery: 'touching their still ears with words' (U11.262). However, its effect is more pronounced on the narrative, taking up more space and effecting more people. As Naomi Schor observes, 'for the deaf, seeing is hearing, just as for the blind, touching is seeing […] In the realm of deficient senses, the crossing of sensory border is an effect not of plenitude, but of lack: absent one sense, another comes to substitute for it, to supplement its absence rather than add to its presence.'[13] As such, the effect of the music to touch is associated with the missing sense of the stripling and the view of Miss Douce's 'listening lips and eyes' with the present effect of Pat, the deaf waiter (U11.252). In this way, Pat's proximity to the barmaids supports their attempts to seduce the men by subduing the sound of real music coming in from next door. Whereas the blind stripling's impending arrival counteracts their superficial song by filling in for Pat's missing sense to expose the true effect of the music.

As the young stripling gets closer to the Ormond hotel, the text calls attention to the eye of the reader by emphasising his blindness. When he reaches Daly's window, the narrative re-creates the scene upon which Bloom first 'eyed on the door a poster, a mermaid smoking mid nice waves' (U11.253). However, the 'stripling, blind' cannot see the poster (U11.277). This is emphasised by repetition on the word 'mermaid' which underscores the disparity between what is present and what is perceptible, demonstrating the limitations placed on the

[13] Naomi Schor, 'Blindness as Metaphor', in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 11.2* (1999), p.100.

stripling's experience of the narrative (U11.277). Since, although the stripling cannot see the 'mermaid' on the poster, it dominates the reader's view on the page (U11.277). This forces readers to become aware of their role in re-enacting and re-creating such scenes, borrowing from Bloom's view of the poster earlier in the episode to fill in their experience of the narrative. By recalling Bloom's earlier perception of the poster, readers are prompted to visualise and complete the scene in their own minds, thus participating in the narrative construction.

The stripling's blindness is further emphasised by Joyce's use of narrative interjection to insist: '(but he couldn't see)' or '(blind couldn't)' (U11.277). Previously, this use of parenthetical interjection acted as a magnifying glass into what had caught the eye of characters. For example, when Miss Kennedy or Miss Douce both notice Boylan's '(flower, wonder who gave?)', it exposed their momentary loss of control over the narrative by allowing readers to glimpse behind the curtain of their performance and become privy to their inner thoughts (U11.255). Here, however, the parenthetical interjections are used to emphasise the stripling's blindness, as '(he couldn't see)' the poster, showing his imperviousness to such narrative distraction (U11.277). Thus, instead of exposing the stripling's inner thoughts, the interjection exposes the reader's eye by pointing out our dependence on characters' ability to see.

However, although the stripling is shut out from the barmaids' visual realm, he is not placed on the same plane as the other men. First introduced to the episode through his role as the tuner, he is recognised by Miss Douce as an 'exquisite player' (U11.252). This compliment suggests some semblance between them, as the barmaids are constantly referred to as being 'in exquisite contrast' to those around them – particularly the deaf Pat (U11.248). However, whilst the presence of 'bald' (Pat) by 'sister gold' (Miss Kennedy) provides an 'inexquisite contrast, constrast inexquisite nonexquisite', heightening the barmaid's perceived beauty, the tuner's playing threatens their dominant position within the narrative by being of the same standard (U11.257). Their 'exquisite contrast: bronzelid, minagold' becomes confused as their initially distinct names ('bronze' and 'Lydia', 'Mina' and 'gold') are blended,

overriding their control over the way they are typically presented within the narrative, as one or the other (U11.257).

In this way, he figures Orpheus – who is not present in the *Odyssey* at all but is mentioned in the Linati schema by Joyce.[14] This intrusion of characters that do not belong to the *Odyssey* reflects the destabilising effect of the blind stripling on the narrative. His ability to affect and blur the barmaids' personas without even being present further highlights his strong influence on the narrative. By providing more beautiful music than their charms, and by also being impervious to their visual allure due to his blindness, the stripling re-constructs the narrative style – bringing sound back into focus.

However, as Nadia Zimmerman points out, 'the tuner is not present, but his tools, actions, and tuning fork are.'[15] This suggests that the narrative is strongly affected by his previous actions. Similarly, he is introduced by recalling his appearance in the preceding chapter, where he curses a Dubliner for not seeing him: 'You're blinder nor I am, you bitch's bastard!' (U10.240). This reinforces the idea of his intrusion onto the narrative, as he transgresses from one episode into the next. In this episode, he demands to be seen by the insistent tapping of his cane, which interferes with the narrative flow to punctuate the thoughts of characters. Each 'tap' is preceded by the narrative's insistence on the importance of listening; it demands us 'to hear' (U11.269). However, instead of simply disturbing the flow whenever the characters are at their lowest, the 'taps' seem to bring on their suffering, directing characters to feel their emotions and readers to hear them: 'Thrill now. Pity they feel.' (U11.274). From the first 'tap', the sound of the stripling's cane becomes the organising principle through which we experience the music of the episode, directing the emotion of the characters and attention of the readers.

[14] Joyce, *Selected Letters*, pp.146-7.
[15] Nadia Zimmerman, 'Musical Form as Narrator: The Fugue of the Sirens in James Joyce's Ulysses', in *Journal of Modern Literature* (Indiana University Press, 2002), p.117.

Moreover, without having tuned the piano before the episode has started, the 'seductions of music' Joyce aimed to represent would not be apparent to customers and readers alike, as the piano would not be in use.[16] Thus, if music is the episode's narrator, as Zimmerman argues, the stripling is the narrative's composer.[17] The 'tap' of his cane acts as the episode's metronome, signalling the rhythm and pace of the unfolding story (U11.269). This auditory cue punctuates the scenes, providing a structural backbone to the narrative flow and emphasising the temporal progression within the episode. Thus, from his initial introduction as the piano tuner, Joyce sets him up as the person responsible for the music – pulling the strings before the episode has even started.

Conclusion

Overall, the bar of the Ormond hotel thrives on the 'exquisite contrast' provided by its staff: the charm and beauty of the barmaids, the music provided by the blind tuner, and the attentive service of Pat the waiter (U11.248). This underscores a broader point about their role in establishing the atmosphere of the episode, contributing to the feel of the narrative in different but equally important ways. In the same way that Miss Douce and Miss Kennedy exert narrative control by choosing when to share and when to disclose aspects of their identity, the deaf waiter and blind tuner – whose identities are already decided for them – expose the limitations placed on the reader's perception of the narrative. By pointing out the ways in which readers must re-enact or re-construct their experience of the narrative – such as the deaf waiter catching only fragments of conversation or the blind tuner contributing to the feel of the music without being present - Joyce emphasises how sidelined characters contribute to the episode's construction.

Whilst Frank Budgen reminds us of the Gilbert and Linati schemas by asserting that the ear is an organ of balance; the role of the barmaids, deaf waiter, and blind tuner is doing the opposite by disrupting and destabilising the dominant sensory experience within the

[16] Joyce, *Selected Letters*, p.129.
[17] Zimmerman, Ibid.

narrative – that of hearing.[18] Given that Joyce's book was 'among other things […] the epic of the human body', it seems counterproductive to view each episode through the limitation of just one aspect of the body, as he himself asserts that 'it's all one'.[19] Thus, by excluding the function of other body parts and, by extension other sensory experiences, the experiences of sidelined characters which Joyce prized are neglected.

When considering the position of 'Sirens' within *Ulysses* as a whole, it succeeds 'Wandering Rocks', which worked to destabilise the central perspectives of Stephen and Bloom within the novel by introducing different voices as well as diverse bodies into the novel's experience. As Vike Martine Plock states, 'for Joyce, the unruly, unclassifiable bodies of the disabled, the disenfranchised, the eccentric, and the unconventional were imbued with much more significance.'[20] Thus, by choosing to highlight characters like the deaf waiter, the blind tuner, and the visually alluring barmaids in 'Sirens', Joyce continues this process of decentralisation. These characters, with their unique sensory experience disrupt the notion of a stable, central perspective, whilst also providing a new way to read the novel – in a more holistic and inclusive way.

[18] Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p.142.
[19] Ibid., p.21.
[20] Vike Martine Plock, 'Bodies' in *The Cambridge Companion to Ulysses*, ed. Sean Latham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.197.

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