

## **‘The portals of discovery’: Popular Literature, Parallax, and the Culture of Reading in Joyce’s *Ulysses***

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**Abstract:** While *Ulysses* is an incontestable juggernaut of modernist literature, critical analysis of the text has too often been contained by impenetrable academic discourse, dismissing Joyce’s fundamental desire that the text be widely accessible. Indeed, the exclusive imprisonment of the text clashes profoundly with the novel’s prevailing argument for the vitality of the pedestrian struggles of the everyman. Leopold Bloom, a poorly educated but intellectually curious member of Dublin’s middle-class bourgeois, demonstrates the perils of navigating mass-produced channels of information and the consequent liability of misinterpretation. The novel is foremost a text concerned with text, and Joyce examines the effects of mass-produced popular literature on collective subjectivity and the cultivation of individual identity in Bloom and others like Stephen Dedalus and Gerty MacDowell. By introducing the astronomical concept of parallax, Joyce considers the complications that arise from the frequently distorted intake of information, particularly in Bloom’s struggle to assert himself. Ultimately, *Ulysses* considers intellectual populism, the culture of reading, and the imperial agenda at work in the dissemination of information through colonized Ireland.

**Keywords:** popular literature, reading, parallax, Joyce, *Ulysses*