

The Word Made Flesh: Molly Bloom's Political Body

by Anne Dennon

Submitted to the School of Writing, Literature, and Film
of Oregon State University

Dr. Neil Davison, Thesis Advisor

June 9, 2014

Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent Weib. Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht. [*Woman. I am the flesh that always affirms.*]
Joyce, letter to Frank Budgen, 16 August 1921

The century since James Joyce published *Ulysses* has been an era of incredible social reconfiguration, particularly for women's roles and rights, which Joyce foreshadowed in his major works. The developments and divisions of feminist theory ultimately return to Joyce as an author who attempted an early example of what might be called a "female language," an alternative mode of expression later recognized by Hélène Cixous and other French feminists. Two oppositional points of view essential to feminist theory, one rejecting and the other embracing gender difference, are similarly essential to the split within feminist Joycean criticism. Given *Ulysses*' eventual status within this critical conversation, it is fitting that no character looms as largely from the text in this regard as Molly Bloom. Through Molly, Joyce offers a foundational example of Cixous' *écriture féminine*, a female writing that undermines the dominion of masculine literature and masculine forms of knowledge. The critical tradition that has amassed around *Ulysses* continues to wrestle with the overflowing, encyclopedically referential work, and a particularly virulent subset of Joycean conversation centers around Molly's emancipated yet confined, overflowing yet sedate representation of a female consciousness. *Ulysses* acts as a bridge between Joyce's early phallogocentric writing and his later fluid and experimental style. The text's prophetic stance between literary and social eras echoes its transitory position within Joyce's oeuvre. The tension between *Ulysses*' dual bastions of influence—masculine and feminine, inherited and experimental, Christian and Judaic—is rooted in the connection between femininity and otherness that classicists note in its Homeric original.¹

¹ Cf. the work of Samuel Butler and later essays by Charles Rowan Bye and Benjamin Farrington.

While the hyper-modernism of Joycean narrative rejects the 19th century Realist novel, and thereby the entire androcentric evolution of written text (inasmuch as the novel represents its evolved and final form,) it simultaneously reawakens one of the most essential plots of the Western canon by using Homer as its model. The dynamic harmony found within Joyce's blending of the ancient with the modern speaks to his ability to locate humanity's most constant truths. Though the relation between Molly and Penelope is not central to a discussion of Joyce's female language per se, the gender dualism of Homer's the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the tropes of feminine writing that appear in the latter, provide a point of entry. Homer's epic poems have long been considered representative of the male and the female: the *Iliad* represents the warring aggression of masculinity, while the *Odyssey* indicates the passive energy of the female whose endurance flows homeward (Farrington 44, Ruyer 101). Joyce redeploys this Homeric journey in the overflowing, polysemous language of *Ulysses*. Like Homer's Penelope, Molly is often seen as a creative force and a keen percipient, one that remains in the interior, feminine realm during the course of the narrative. And yet unlike the faithful Penelope, Molly is demarcated by an independent sexuality and economic life. In this way Joyce's female language encodes an expansion beyond Western patriarchal confinements by giving voice to women's silenced experiences. The *Odyssey*'s circular journey is representative of the human lifecycle, and this accordance of literature with the motions of human life is characteristic of Joyce's attempt to uncover a powerful ancient psychology behind our lived narratives, specifically by accessing a female language outside of a Western phallogocentric formula, which he perhaps helped to make obsolete.

The cyclical, nonlinear nature of *Ulysses* recalls the perceived gendered division between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Distinctions between the style and foci of the two epics that have often

led to the *Odyssey* being understood as the less substantial and less sublime. Its comparative superficiality or even “charm” suggested femininity to many early academics. Richard Bentley went so far as to postulate that a woman must have written the *Odyssey*, a position later taken up by Samuel Butler.² Barbara Clayton reexamines the critical tradition of assigning a subordinate female position to the *Odyssey* and suggests that the mutable feminine qualities of the *Odyssey* counter fixed phallogentric discourse. Penelope’s creation, both woven and narrated, “participates in a network of ambiguities that undermine stable and fixed meanings” (Clayton 39). The bulk of Joyce’s *Ulysses* cannot be similarly pitted against Molly’s “Penelope” episode because the transient nature of Joycean language is overarchingly feminine. Molly is thus not distinguished from Stephen and Bloom by her polymorphous signifying; all three explore meaning through language-play, but while the male voices engage with scientific and scholarly thought outside of themselves, Molly’s explorations are self-sufficient in that she contains (almost physically) all her reference points. In this way, her feminine difference is indeed different from even the most feminized male characters in the novel.

Molly’s self-knowing expresses itself in the examinations and reworkings that characterize Penelope’s weaving in the *Odyssey*. The similarities between their activities underline the etymology of Penelope’s task: *textere* “to weave” gives us the modern “text,” an atemporal and layered experience. Penelope’s weaving and Molly’s signifying are feminine in their cyclical nature and in that neither pursue masculine completion. The process of Penelope’s creation is not linear (she weaves, unweaves, reweaves) and the practice of weaving takes precedence over accomplishing the ultimate product of her work, a burial shroud for her father-in-law. The finished piece is of slight importance in comparison to what its drawn-out creation

² Samuel Butler suggests that “when any one writes with the frankness and spontaneity which are such an irresistible charm in the ‘Odyssey,’ it is not only not difficult but exceedingly easy... [to arrive at] the supposition that the writer was a woman” (Butler n.p.).

signifies. Penelope's work defines her version of the story. While Odysseus is away, Penelope examines her experiences of waiting and isolation through repetitive creation. Molly's weaving and reweaving is conversely interiorized. The blending of sensation and memory that overflows in her episode is itself an overflow from the Homeric, authorized novel: *Ulysses* as an adaptation of the *Odyssey* should end with "Ithaca." Molly's conclusion outstrips Homer and points ahead towards the fluid prose of Joyce's final and most experimental work, *Finnegan's Wake*; the death of one text is revealed to be the birth of another. Sheldon Brivic proposes that Penelope performs a parallel act, "her weaving at once buries the old (Ulysses' father) and inaugurates the new, and this double action is the key to the tradition of the earth goddess-creatrix of death and rebirth" (Brivic *Veil* 138).

Within both Molly and Penelope's atemporal, woven narratives, self-references point to their creative construction. This is at odds with Joyce's declaration in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* that "the artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (Joyce *Portrait* 191-2). Revealing the work's constructed status furthermore undermines the homogeneity of the text and its authorial voice. Joyce's early masculine work is dependent, unlike *Ulysses*, on subscription to this androcentric and omniscient power, as evidenced by Stephen's exigencies for the artist. In direct parallel, the *Odyssey* is as a whole distinguished from the *Iliad* by its reflexivity and self-awareness. A characteristic of female writing, both posited and decried by feminist theorists, is reflexive construction. In "Penelope," for example, Molly cheekily breaks into metafiction as she lies overheated in bed and declares that she does not "like books with a Molly in them" and then later exclaims "O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh" (Joyce *Ulysses* 622, 633). The layered realities formed by reflexivity reiterate the web-like

process of female narration. In other words, the simultaneous reality of the writer, the character, and the reader created by reflexive construction redistribute authorial power. Female narratives are in process, never completed, closed, or fixed. The political possibilities of this reworking of literature allows marginalized female voices to express themselves outside of an exclusionary male language that has rendered women, in the terminology of Cixous, unrepresentable.

Despite Molly's potential in the above manner, feminist critique often finds Molly's characterization to be guilty of inculcating an opposite but not improved femininity, and resists her depiction as earth goddess, "Gea-Tellus, fulfilled, recumbent, big with seed" (Joyce 606).³ Molly's body is literally "the land of promise...of adipose anterior and posterior female hemispheres, redolent of milk and honey and of excretory sanguine and seminal warmth" (Joyce 604). Nevertheless, the immediacy and authority of Molly's physicality remain an anecdote to the de-sexing of women by Western Christian morality. Molly's sensuality is a sovereign force that rescinds the hegemonic decree for women to be virginal, motherly, and sexually powerless. Julia Kristeva argued that the decline of Christianity in the 20th century left a vacuum of female ideals when the sexless, deathless Virgin could no longer fund women's self-image. In "Stabat Mater," Kristeva attempts to recast maternity as a power that predates paternal power, and in so doing employs a pointedly different, female writing style. Kristeva posits that "Christianity is doubtless the most refined symbolic construct" centered on the maternal, "let us call 'maternal' the ambivalent principle that... stems from an identity catastrophe that causes the Name to tipple over into the unnameable that one imagines as femininity, non-language or the body" (Kristeva 161-2). Kristeva's dense social analysis is interwoven with poetry on her personal experience of childbearing. Kristeva's writing employs both traditionally feminine and traditionally masculine

³ Feminist critics, including Elisabeth Sheffield, Vicki Mahaffey, and Kathleen McCormick, who fault Joyce's female characters as being reducible to whore and Madonna, find Molly's characterization as earth goddess to be dangerously essentializing.

writing styles, thereby refusing to give weight to gendered hierarchy. The physical page is split between the dual powers of thought and emotion that phallogentric scholarship forbids. Molly's standing is similarly informed by her masculine/feminine duality, and here again Joyce previews the struggles of the coming era as he discards the flimsy construction of a dependent Virgin Mary for the powerfully sexual and autonomous Molly.

Bonnie Kime Scott in a different approach sees Joyce's female characters as the culmination of certain influential cultural forces, including his Irish Catholic landscape, the women of Joyce's personal life, and as his exposure to Judaism. These points of inspiration dynamically interact with Joyce's abiding interest in pagan heritage. Scott suggests that "if, like Joyce, we delve into prehistory, we find women of heightened stature and power" that directly refute patriarchal control. While the imposed femininity of Christian societies drain women of sexual sovereignty, "Joyce's Irish context included strong female prehistory and myth" (Scott 9-10). One such goddess declares to her husband, "I never had one man without another waiting in his shadow" (Scott 11). Molly's sexual agency is correspondingly encoded in her sexual freedom: the transcendental act that evidences Molly's divergence from subjugated femininity is her adultery. She repeatedly entertains thoughts of potential mates, and her independence from men is proven by their interchangeability. "I thought well as well him as another," Molly recalls of her engagement to Bloom (Joyce 643-4). Her enfranchised femininity, liberated from the need for male authorization and thereby male language, powers Molly's female language. The sexual basis of her language is highly correlated to French feminist psycholinguistic arguments that argue for a language derived from the female body. The background of archetypal power that informs Molly's character centers on the rejection or reclamation of various female figures. Molly's strength and sexual agency work against an enfeebled Christian femininity (à la

Kristeva) by redeploing the political power of pagan goddess figures. Her diplomatic, Penelopean passivity finds middle ground between action and allowance. Jean Kimball suggests that the universality of Joyce's characters align with Carl Jung's vision of archetypes "produced spontaneously by the artist, as a kind of collective remedy for the psychic imbalance of an era." Molly in particular "may be seen as confirming Jung's theory of the archetype as a remedy" (Kimball 123-4).

Joyce's representation of female consciousness also reverses, as did later French feminist critics, the espousal of masculine values in the vein of Simone de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir concludes that women, by patriarchal decree, are limited to the body and then ultimately made to feel ashamed of the female body's functions. Her proposal that women must take on assertive masculine qualities problematically accepts the phallogocentric notion that only one way of life is authentic, and all else is Other (Weil 155-6). Molly's connection with her body is directly responsible for her self-empowerment, as evidenced by her sexual agency and comprehension of life and death, and this physicality allows free communication between the inner and outer realms of experience. Molly's physical sensibility does not deny her a developed capacity for reflection and deep thought; rather the two modes are in constant and easy dialogue. For every other character, similar means of sensing and confirming self are obstructed—their dependency on fixed masculine narratives irreparably separate them from ever changing, ever dual reality. Stephen experimentally shuts himself off from sensory experience as he walks blindly along the strand in "Proteus" and contemplates how the world exists independently of him (Joyce 31). Stephen's division of himself from the world reflects his inability to grasp the dynamic interconnections of life, including the relations between the senses as well as between thought and emotion. Bloom is conversely overwhelmed by sensory input, which distracts and again

divides him from full engagement with the present moment. “His eyelids sank quietly often as he walked in happy warmth” through Dublin while he daydreams of the Far East (Joyce 47). The distancing mechanisms of Stephen and Bloom’s mentalities reveal by contrast the strength of Molly’s active engagement with thought, emotion, and ongoing reality. Their masculine methods of perceiving and interacting with the world are partial in comparison to the encircling and appropriately fluctuating modality of Molly’s perceptions.

Masculine language represents an ubiquitous gendered bias in society as an extension of Jacques Lacan’s name of the father.⁴ The father imposes law, which separates the child from the mother’s body and therefore from sincere interaction with corporeal reality (Lacan *Psychoses* 96). The symbolic language that replaces reality becomes a method of masculine control, fundamentally oppositional to female experience. The unique capacity of women to experience the world with full communication between thought and emotion leads to Cixous’ appeal for women to write their distinct em-bodied experience. Cixous’ call to write from the female body pushes against the constraints of a language that has campaigned for their exclusion (Cixous 875). The female censorship implicit in masculine language denies women’s voices and inner lives, insofar as inner experiences are expressible only through language. Cixous proposes a future in which women cooperatively validate one another’s subaltern female voices through a female language based on divergence. Cixous points towards this feminine language in “The Laugh of the Medusa” in which she writes,

I wished that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires...

Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst—burst with forms much more

⁴ Lacan’s concept of the *nom du père*, drawn from Freud’s mythical father, posits that the law-making and prohibitive role of the father separates the child from intimate identification with the mother and thereby inaugurates the child into the wider symbolic realm.

beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune” (Cixous 877).

Cixous’ writing style, in addition to her theory, departs from the traditional masculine style of academia. The poetry of her prose denies androcentric scholarship that accepts only its own closed and fixed form of language. In line with Cixous’ argument, Luce Irigaray suggests that female language must be multitudinous and fluctuating, and thereby divergent from masculine language, because that is the nature of female orgasm (Irigaray 210-11). Cixous’ comparison of the real value of a female creation to the contrived value of masculine invention indeed can be seen as an echo of Molly’s dismissal of Stephen and Bloom’s intellectualism. Stephen’s need to dominate ideas through analytic scrutiny, and Bloom’s impulse to find mercantile opportunity in every situation, diminish their engagement with reality as they constantly filter experience through a predetermining lens. “All kinds of places are good for ads,” Bloom asserts as he considers the obituary page (Joyce 126-7). Stephen for his part diminishes the mystic hold language has over him by encapsulating Shakespeare’s enigma in a complex but ultimately trivializing theory. Bloom and Stephen’s tendency to rationally summarize experiences push towards a singular male understanding of the world, a climactic arrival oppositional to Molly’s continuation. Her unending sentences, switching and stitching back together, reject the privileging of completion over process. As Molly notes, “I wouldnt give a snap of my two fingers for all their learning why don’t they go and create something” (Joyce 643). In the end Joyce appears to follow Molly’s advice as *Ulysses* exhibits, side by side with a dense intellectuality, the overabundant experiences and incessant creations that Cixous praises and Molly demands. I believe this gender balance is the most important factor of Joycean language, particularly as it is demonstrated by Molly’s rich voice.

Lacan, as an inheritor of Freud’s psychoanalytic legacy (which includes Joyce,) is largely applied today in conjunction with his terminology. *Jouissance*, for example, the drive for

pleasure greater than that afforded by Freud's avoidance of pain principle, is never translated from the French in English texts. This suggests that, though the signifier can never attain the signified, *jouissance* approaches nearer, and translation is accordingly bypassed. *Jouissance*, French for 'orgasm,' specifically female, is a nonsingular pleasure outside of fixed language, a problematic limit of masculine language that Irigaray later explored. Lacan's various portmanteaus multiply meaning and advance towards a definition more specific, not because the word becomes clearer through amalgamation but for the opposite reason: its enlarged, doubled meaning gives in essence both the latitude and longitude of the signified. Readers become acquainted with Lacan's mental landscape because he speaks to his audience in the invented and sensory language with which he speaks to himself—with which one speaks to oneself. His arguments develop from certain ingeniously invented signifiers, pregnant with latent truth. In Lacan's seminars he remarks that Joyce's language is "perfected" because it "knows how to play... because the signifiers fit together, combine, and concertina... something is produced by way of meaning" (Lacan 36-7). A Lacanian lens is often employed to examine the psychosexual nature of Joyce's works, but it is significant that the power Lacan locates lies in Joyce's slip and slide of signifiers. Cixous develops and in part refutes Lacan's ideas on symbolic language, insofar as they propagate the same phallogocentric discourse that he identifies. In concert, Lacan and Cixous demonstrate the political significance of a female language, not only towards authentication of women's experiences, but towards an expansion of language to include all social Others.

Molly begins and ends *Ulysses*, but each action takes place beyond the script of the masculine-powered page. Her beginning is after the beginning: she first appears in the fourth episode in which she sleeps late and both husband and lover are drawn to her as to an epicenter

or temple (Bloom compliantly brings her breakfast and Blazes Boylan sends a love letter.) Her ending is after the ending, speaking at last in the epilogue that extends past the Homeric homage. Molly encompasses the hectic actions of the day and the smallest of her words are imbued with the power to initiate and to conclude. At the start of “Calypso,” Bloom “on quietly creaky boots he went up the staircase to the hall, paused by the bedroom door... You don’t want anything for breakfast? A sleepy soft grunt answered: –Mn” (Joyce 46). Bloom’s reverence for his wife builds an expectation of Molly that is confounded by her mumbled “no.” In “Penelope” however Molly fondly muses about Bloom’s attentiveness, thinking, “I love to hear him falling up the stairs of a morning” (Joyce 628). “Yes,” the powerful word of “Penelope” that builds and climaxes at various peaks throughout the episode, provides the affirmative counterpart to her initial and negative utterance. At the close of “Ithaca” Bloom and Stephen return to Molly’s female and interior domain, which Molly has never left, “Womb? Weary? He rests. He has travelled” (Joyce *Ulysses* 606). “Theyre all mad to get in there where they come out of,” Molly placidly remarks, leading Brivic to postulate that “she recognizes herself as alpha and omega, the origin and goal of all desire” (Joyce 626, Brivic *Veil* 135).

In “Penelope,” the lively personality of Molly’s rolling thoughts is not just rhythmically but visually demarcated, by the use of numerical digits, odd contractions, and vowel sounds. Upon hearing a steam engine in the night Molly transliterates “frseeeeeeeffronnnng train somewhere whistling the strength those engines have in them like big giants and the water rolling all over and out of them all sides like the end of Loves old sweeetsonnnng” (Joyce 621). An exterior song, the train whistling in the distance, finishes with an interior one, Molly’s personal ballad, and the elongated consonants frame Molly’s simile between the images. Molly’s connotations and connections leap without foregrounding or explanation. This can be seen in two

lights—as a representation of Joyce’s belief in women’s illogicality (see opening quotation,) or, preferably, his belief in women’s ability to perceive an underlying and unauthorized subjective truth. Molly’s visual and thereby tangible alterations to language encourage the reader to similarly subvert dependence on codes of authority. Molly’s humorous objection to “those awful names with bottom in them” does not wait for justification (Joyce 626). Her stolid assurance in the accuracy of her own interpretations and understandings of the world require no external support. Her certainty and decisiveness stands in opposition to the careful, circular considerations of Bloom and Stephen that repeatedly render them unable to act. While Stephen wanders the strand in “Proteus” his thoughts are bound by shame and self-doubt that prevent advancement and reflect his directionless walk. “Who watches me here?” he anxiously wonders, “Who ever anywhere will read these written words? Signs on a white field” (Joyce 40). Stephen’s self-consciousness prevents action. Bloom too arrests his thoughts for fear of their outcome. When it occurs to him that Boylan, his wife’s love interest, might have syphilis he frantically postpones the thought process, “If he....? O! Eh? No..... No. No, no. I don’t believe it” (Joyce 126). The difference in gendered mental processes and behaviors are encoded foremost in Molly’s female language. Yet in equal and reverse steps, critics such as Elizabeth Sheffield see Joyce’s characterization as the creation of a new but nevertheless male-authorized woman.

While the ceaseless flow of Molly’s words provides a soothing conclusion, the conspicuous stumbling blocks presented by Molly’s linguistic divergence also place a divide between the reader and the experience of reading. On this point Sheffield contends that “despite the additional layers of flesh and complexity, Molly... serves as a trope for artistic creation and the space of writing” (Sheffield 80). Unlike Scott who sees Molly as a woman imbued with reality in addition to mythic stature, Sheffield insists the very methods Joyce employs to

intensify Molly's mental landscape serve to diminish it. Sheffield finds that the traits of femininity that have established Joyce as a proto-practitioner of *écriture féminine* are in fact a superficial costume donned by Joyce, the wearing of which explores but nevertheless strengthens gendered hierarchy. In preceding episodes Bloom and Stephen's lively stream-of-consciousness pulls the reader into their inner lives, and yet in "Penelope," where inner monologue has seemingly crested into complete and faithful representation of thought, its grammatical divergences prompt us to reexamine, to take notice of its formulation alongside its truth.

The impediments to reading presented by Molly's corrupt orthography and grammar challenge the reader, but this does not necessarily prevent the authentic experience with interiority that Joyce seeks to create. The conscientious removal of punctuation and the injection of "O"s and "onomatopoeic imitation[s]" position the reader in the mind of Molly, unstructured by rules. Sheffield suggests that the omissions and additions reveal the author at his creative task, and highlight that Molly Bloom is a masculine-crafted artifice (Sheffield 80). A vibrant and ever-consuming, ever-creating goddess figure certainly, but perhaps not an accurate representation of womanhood in the way Joyce intended. This is woman in fiction, as Virginia Woolf pointed out (Woolf 43).⁵ It is evident that the transition from masculine intellectuality to Molly's intimately female *dénouement* exposes Joyce's strong assumptions about female inner reality. Perhaps there are two possible readings of Joyce's portrayal of femininity: as male inability to perceive the equally real and engaged female inner life, or conversely as the achievement of female authenticity through innovative style. Joyce's grammatical experimentation encodes female divergence, and the dissonance in reader experience that Sheffield takes to task is an outcome similar to that of the self-referentiality indicative of the *Odyssey*, "Penelope," and female writing

⁵ Woolf, coincidentally, hated *Ulysses*, though Suzette Henke suggests that "she had always regarded [Joyce] as a kind of artistic 'double,' a male ally in the modernist battle for psychological realism" (Henke 41).

in general. I believe that Joyce's *écriture féminine* pointedly works to undermine the authority of homogenous, masculine language, even by undermining his own authority.

Letters exchanged between Joyce and his lifelong partner Nora Barnacle demonstrate that the sexually assured, self-possessed, and pragmatic figure of Molly, along with her style of expression, is not so much invented as transcribed. Nora's authenticating presence within the text saves Molly from the falsification of the male gaze.⁶ Following a note Nora inserted in a letter to his older brother Stanislaus in 1906 Joyce comments,

You will see from this interpolated letter the gigantic strides which Nora has made towards culture and anticipation... She also asked me some time ago 'Is Jesus and God the same?' and asked me to teach her geography! Do you notice how women when they write disregard stops and capital letters?" (*Letters* 171, Joyce to Stanislaus Joyce, 9 Oct. 1906)

Joyce's captivation with the inexplicability of Nora's actions and mental processes leads him to emulate her, and in "Penelope" Joyce works to master Nora's intriguingly female voice. Even as Molly's characterization draws from Joyce's life, the probability remains that Joyce's perception of Nora, and thus his formulation of Molly, is based on a fundamental distortion. Richard Pearce is specifically concerned with Joyce's presentation of women through the male gaze and conjectures that "our pleasure in looking depends on our distance from the spectacle."

Fascination is contingent on denied participation.⁷ In this manner, perhaps Nora held Joyce's fascination because he was unable to access the source of her spirit or disturb the depths of her inner truth. She remained, in essence, a spectacle to which he was irremediably distanced.

⁶ The concept of gaze is another Lacanian term later employed by feminist theory. The general anxiety of being watched contributes to a child's realization of its external appearance, and the feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey refines the concept as the male gaze through which women experience constant and objectifying surveillance.

⁷ Pearce takes pains to distinguish himself from those men whose "gaze" crafts a hollow feminine ideal. Nonetheless Pearce suggests Molly's authority is found in those feminine traits that have been cast off as weak and limiting, which should perhaps be reconsidered. Only in his notes does he point to an alternate understanding of traditionally female traits given by cultural feminism which "celebrates, appropriates, and transvalues the devalued values of women's culture, so that passivity becomes a form of peacefulness, subjectivity and narcissism become ways of being in touch with oneself, and sentimentality becomes caring and nurturing" (Pearce 58).

“Desire is aroused by what we do not possess, or what is Other,” and Molly may be understood as Joyce’s attempt to acquire the enigmatic female power of Nora by replication (Pearce 41). Like Nora, Molly is a refreshing, reinvigorating life source, from which Joyce could perennially drink. And like Nora, Molly represents the final subject that Joyce was unable to master, unlike every other voice of Western writing, from Anglo-Saxon poetry through modern slang, all of which he dexterously recreates in the episode “Oxen of the Sun.”

The sexual history of Joyce’s female characters indeed often directly derive from Nora’s own. Nora’s teenage boyfriends inform Michael Furey, Gretta Conroy’s tragically deceased young beau in “The Dead,” and Brenda Maddox identifies Mulvey, Molly’s first sexual partner, as Nora’s first love Willie Mulvagh (Maddox 21). In letters Joyce admits his unreasonable jealousy for the past and Molly’s indiscretions appear to be voyeuristic catharsis on his part, in which he plays out the cuckoldry he fears (*Letters* 163, Joyce to Nora Barnacle, 21 Aug. 1909). “What was his name Jack Joe Harry Mulvey was it yes,” Molly deliberates, exposing Joyce’s aggrandizement of Nora’s sexual past (Joyce 626). The secret life of Nora, in both its sexual and cerebral forms, stimulates Joyce’s literary exploration of women, and appears to be based largely on anxiety. Joyce continues to fear the power of women, both as the faultless Virgin Mother that one must not disappoint or soil, and as a bastion of sexual power that constantly threatens to destroy masculine authority. Joyce’s attempt to resolve his anxiety over the unknowable female underlines his universalizing from Nora to archetypal goddess. According to Scott, Joyce attempted to “generalize” from both Nora and Molly “to all womankind” (Scott 66).

Joyce’s status as an innovator of style and profound substance should therefore be shared with Nora, both as her husband’s muse and as a striking historical figure in her own right. Joyce’s fanatic concern for locating the language nearest to truth leads him to confront the limits

of symbols, as reality has no written language for those reasons outlined by Ferdinand Saussure. According to Saussure, the arbitrariness of the signifier is such that every time a name or symbol is assigned, it separates the message from its meaning, which is an unspeakable truth. Language, the only vehicle for communication between individuals, obscures and falsifies the truth it seeks to portray. Joyce's fascination with the truthfulness of Nora's female language led him to emulate her style of self-expression. Molly and Nora's genius lies in their ability, through the strength of their engagement with life-experience, to regain through unique language the truth obscured by generalized and formulated language. The vibrancy and pragmatism of their written/spoken word ignores imposed and patriarchal "correct" language. Molly's chanting syntax and corrupted grammar allow the reader to approach closer to a quotidian truth that is wholly inaccessible through linguistically correct, and therefore more symbolic, channels.

Repetition of "he" and "his" to stand for any and all men of Molly's acquaintance, from nonspecific Gibraltar officers to the most central men of her life, suggests that she positions herself counter to the otherness of "he" and counter too, perhaps, to the masculine language in which she must imperfectly encode her thoughts and feelings. Molly's fantasy of being Stephen's mistress "when he becomes famous" abruptly switches to worry for Bloom, "O but what am I going to do about him though" which slides into meditation on Boylan, "no that's no way for him has he no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing" (Joyce 638). In the space of three lines Molly references Stephen, Bloom, and Boylan with little distinction and less transition. Her deviation from grammatical norms evidences her disobedience of masculine authority, and moreover underscores her lack of concern with her own deviations. Recalling the insult of Bloom's infatuation with a past maid, Molly reflects,

I woman is not enough for them it was all his fault of course ruining servants then proposing that she could eat at our table on Christmas day if you please O no thank you not in my house stealing my potatoes and

the oysters 2/6 per doz (Joyce 609).

Molly is not purposefully renegotiating gender authority through language; in fact an innate belief in her own powers precludes defensiveness or any impulse to respond to masculine domination. Her bold statement of “I” woman appears on the page almost as an “I”, the most powerfully intimate first-person voice. The memory of oyster prices is sensory, a visual recollection of a grocer’s sign. Molly’s voice is not only keenly perceptive and reality-affirming in its own right (in her own write) but is backed by Joyce’s confidence in Molly’s ability to resolve his opus; in classic rhetoric one saves the best argument for last. Molly offers a reality that refuses to be contained and solidified: her lush, overflowing style absolves the chaos of all that has come before this point in the text.

“Yes because he never did a thing like that before,” she meanderingly commences in “Penelope,” “as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness” (Joyce 608). Her ponderous tone invites the reader to reflect with her on the course of this very long day. A change has occurred within Bloom that she immediately identifies by their reversal of breakfast roles. We never hear Bloom’s request for breakfast, only Molly’s response. This significant exchange, lost in the hard masculine rationality of “Ithaca,” is the first fact given by Molly’s alternate truth. The language of “Penelope” contrasts with the whole of the foregoing text, but is specifically juxtaposed with the preceding “Ithaca” episode, the Homeric authorized conclusion whose scientific question-and-answer format skewers traditionally masculine ways of understanding. The opening question of “Ithaca,” “What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning?” establishes the restricted nature of its explorations of Bloom and Stephen’s relationship and its confinement to a dry masculine propriety, “Of what did the duumvirate deliberate during their itinerary?” (Joyce 544) The drive of the two characters to locate within

one another a spiritual father and a spiritual son is never voiced because patriarchal language, which is scientific in its most extreme form, inhibits expressions of emotion and the body.

The underlying truth known to all (much like the unspoken “word known to all men” in *Ulysses*, which is love) can only be defined in a social context through signifiers. The signified truth is thereby distanced even as it is accessed. The female language of Nora and Molly undermines the male authority of the signifier, thereby decreasing the distance between signifier and signified. Benoît Tadié contends that “in the end the truth is on Molly’s side: Joyce’s experiments with the language of fiction lay bare the fictions underlying contemporary representations of truth” (Tadié 43). Molly’s feminine language is not restricted by its gendered ken. To the contrary, Molly alone grasps the reality that Bloom and Stephen obscure from themselves. As in the opening sentence of “Penelope” quoted above, we never hear Bloom’s request for breakfast in his own words. His preoccupation with hypothetical situations detracts from his lived experience, which results in his depreciating the meaning of the request that Molly by contrast clearly perceives. The cacophony of both Stephen and Bloom’s argumentative thoughts, which have crested to chaos at several points during the narrative, are soothed and dismissed by Molly’s calm decisiveness, and we learn more factuality from Molly in the space of forty pages than we do in the preceding six hundred masculine authorized pages. Bloom’s propensity to dwell in a fictive understanding of the world is particularly notable in his relations with women. Bloom entertains romantic daydreams in which he imagines the objects of his lustful attention share his scopophilic pleasure, but Molly cuts through the fantasies of Bloom’s wandering eye by pointing out their falsity, as illustrated by the flirtatious maid’s padded bottom (Joyce 609). The juxtaposition of “Penelope” with the impotent logic of “Ithaca” underlines the subversive superiority of Molly’s Penelopean word and “in this Molly connects yet again with

Penelope, unraveling at night the rational representations conceived in the daylight of scientific reasoning” (Tadié 43). Nocturnal thoughts unravel in the domestic, female dominated space, the space abandoned by men. Molly reclaims the night as the last wakeful mind, after Stephen has departed and Bloom has drifted to sleep, and the night becomes thus identified with her alternate voice, contrasted with the male voice of day. Molly reprises the rejected half of the gender binary, the feminine and nocturnal, which informs the *Wake* as the succeeding cycle of Joyce’s work.

The contrasting, dual endings of *Ulysses*—the conclusion given by “Ithaca” which parallels the *Odyssey*, and the succeeding “Penelope” that marks the actual, unsanctioned finish—bring together Joyce’s disparate writing methods in their extreme forms. Early naturalism and later psychological experimentalism bookend his life’s work and inform this transition from hyper-logical masculinity to intensely procreative femininity. Vicki Mahaffey points out that *Ulysses* “is authorized by the two apparently incompatible points of view represented in the extreme by *Dubliners* and *Finnegans Wake*” (2). Brivic similarly notes that during the course of his work Joyce moves away from harsh naturalism and his early dedication to reality and the superficial compulsions of society. Joyce is ultimately moved towards an attempt to form out of the universal mythic fund a sense of the eternal symbols that recurrently inform unconscious understanding of daily experience. In this manner, *Ulysses* in general and “Penelope” in particular is “a step towards the pure language of the *Wake*” (Brivic *Veil* 135). Mahaffey adds, “the sensual and sensory logic of Molly’s subconscious is the logic that expands into *Finnegan’s Wake*, Joyce’s most sustained attempt to exhume the buried life of language” (Mahaffey 10). The linear, death-driven plots of the *Dubliners* stories find deliverance through final resolution and clarity. This trend continues through *Portrait*, but *Ulysses* marks Joyce’s

transition from masculine conclusion to female continuation.

Joyce purposefully deepens the divide between masculine and feminine language and their ways of understanding at the close of the text. He demonstrates how the familiarity of masculine language with its formulaic, linear pathways problematically limits true expression. Feminine language conversely makes experiences new, reawakening literature through language play, providing access to the reality that fully symbolic language denies. Molly's sensory descriptions of Gibraltar are intensely informed by their almost fevered incompleteness. She recalls "the old windows of the posadas 2 glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and the wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea" (Joyce 643). Vicki Mahaffey reads Joyce's language-play as drawing back the curtain to a deeply shared, socio-historical unconscious. She further suggests that Molly taps into a deep hidden knowledge of reality that, far from being erudite and accessible only through study, presents itself to an intuitive pragmatism that does not second-guess initial perceptions.

Molly's mental world is unconsciously structured by the interconnective 'logic' of puns; she understands, in an intuitive rather than self-conscious way, that puns are not always as isolated and accidental as we tend to assume, but combine to form implied narratives, networks of underground, illegitimate 'meaning' (Mahaffey 10).

Molly's faith in the accuracy of her impressions is powerfully illustrated in the way her thoughts unravel without the self-surveillance that endlessly cripples both Bloom and Stephen.

For Bloom, Stephen, and Gerty MacDowell, the fantasizing young consumer of women's magazines in "Nausicaa," regulating thought in order to comply with exterior and artificial authority distances the individual from inner reality. The resulting separation between the real and ideal self is problematic because it denies the possibility of allowing authentic

communication between inner and outer worlds. Whereas every other character of *Ulysses* whose mind we enter is constrained by their accountability to an ideal, Molly freely lives at the matrix of inner and outer self. The lack of dissonance between Molly's real and ideal selves enables her to live in full acceptance of the moment, and in this way Molly's superior grasp of reality both eclipses and encompasses the multitude of fabricated masculine realities. In the first interaction between Molly and Bloom she inquires after a complex Greek word in one of her smutty novels. Bloom carries his astonishment with her question with him throughout the day. "The way they spring those questions on you" he later marvels (Joyce 131). At the time, Bloom's response and the *mise-en-scène* of the moment reveal stereotypes of the female mind that Joyce at once reiterates and revalues.

The sluggish cream wound curdling spirals through her tea. Better remind her of the word: metempsychosis. An example would be better... Metempsychosis, he said, is what the ancient Greeks called it. They used to believe you be changed into an animal or a tree, for instance. What they called nymphs, for example. Her spoon ceased to stir up the sugar. She gazed strait before her, inhaling through her arched nostrils. There's a smell of burn, she said. Did you leave anything on the fire? (Joyce 53)

Bloom's observation of the slow movement of the cream suggests that he imagines Molly's thoughts to be similarly sluggish and milky, the obstinate milky ink into which Joyce dips his pen.⁸ The imposition of education into her natural substance curdles because it refuses to mix. Bloom assumes he must pedestrianize his knowledge and attempts to cut his didacticism into bite-sized pieces by offering examples. Molly, however, steps over his condescension, as her sentience already perceives the real issue at hand—the danger of starting a kitchen fire. "He never can explain a thing simply the way a body can understand then he goes and burns the bottom of out of the pan," she later reflects, revealing the divergence between Bloom's erudite

⁸ Cixous' *écriture féminine* is often termed "white ink" based on her argument about women's relationship with original elements. She advances that "there is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink" (Cixous 881).

references and her own corporeal knowledge (Joyce 620). The elegance of Molly's sensual wisdom, a talent Joyce believes Molly shares with all women, denies Mary Colum's condemnation of her as a "female gorilla" (Maddox 206). Molly's physical and emotional understanding of the world retrieves its dynamic truths.

Gerty MacDowell is an invaluable comparison with Molly as Gerty's Victorian idealism, based on morals, non-corporeality, and consumerism, serves as a foil for Molly's "sane, full, amoral, fertilisable" womanhood (Ellmann 285). Gerty "relentlessly censures her thoughts and perceptions, vigilantly replacing them with sentimental pictures" (Mahaffey 149). She constructs a fanciful ideal whose existence depends on its isolation from reality, and whose sexual gratification can therefore only be masturbatory. "But who was Gerty?" the text appropriately asks, as Gerty's feeble self-concept is merely a laundry list of fashionable female qualities, largely symbols of upward mobility as inculcated by the *Lady's Home Journal* (Joyce 285). Her appearance, morality, and narrative are directly informed by such women's publications, whose unifying motive is the attainment of a "dreamhusband" (Joyce 293). "Widow Welch's female pills," "eyebrowline," and pithy words of pious wisdom—"Inclination prompted her to speak out: dignity told her to be silent"—inform Gerty's construction (Joyce 286). Gerty is thus an invention of phallogentric culture, as it speaks through media and market.

Countering Gerty's hollow characterization, Molly is replete with revolutionary political significance, rich interiority, and contradiction. Despite her status as Gea-Tellus, she is a careless mother and an unfaithful wife. Despite her seemingly visceral and reactionary nature, Molly reveals a foundation of premeditated purpose. Her diplomacy expresses itself in the obscuring and magnifying of truth, a practice she often dismisses as being enacted simply "for fun" (Joyce 625). Molly's adroit intuition is thereby never intellectualized, which would distance and weaken

her innate physical knowledge. Molly considers intuitive strength preferable to externalized masculine ways of knowing, and explicitly keeps her knowledge from men. “I didnt want to let him know more than was good for him,” she remarks of Bloom (Joyce 612). Joyce in this way attempts to logicize the Otherness of female behavior as a means to deceive men or compete with one another. Molly’s internalization of the threat women mutually pose to one another in patriarchal society is expressed in her impression of the household cat as being “as bad as a woman” in the way she rubs against Bloom (Joyce 628). “We are a dreadful lot of bitches,” Molly resignedly states (Joyce 640). Despite the competition for masculine attention that impedes women’s solidarity, Molly expresses her faith in women’s shared sensibilities and pragmatism. “I dont care what anybody says itd be much better for the world to be governed by the women,” Molly asserts, “yes because a woman whatever she does she knows where to stop” (Joyce 640). The positive female traits that Molly celebrates arise from the specifically female connection with cyclical creations of life and death.

Procreation, a distinctly female prerogative, obsesses both Stephen and Bloom. “I have an unborn child in my brain” Stephen laments during his literary discussions (Joyce 171). Bloom too identifies a sense of thwarted paternity; in the Turkish bath he regards himself as “the limp father of thousands” (Joyce 71). Their searches for validation through creation or procreation, through artistic success or the acquisition of a son, are frustrated by their inability to escape from impotent thoughts to tangible acts. Bloom’s extra-marital behaviors, in contrast to Molly’s, are restricted to meaningless symbols—the coyly suggestive letters he exchanges as Henry Flower. Like Gerty, his correspondent Martha Clifford is entrenched in the untouchable symbolism of masculine language, and extends the delay of signifiers through euphemism. “I called naughty boy because I do not like that other world,” she meaningful miswrites (Joyce 63). Yet Martha

also resists the bonds of the symbolic and asks if they can meet in person. Her desire to regain obscured reality speaks in her demand, “Please tell me what is the *real* meaning of that word?” (emphasis added, Joyce 63) Bloom never wishes to meet Martha and remove the divide between words and worlds. Despite his femininity Bloom is bound by masculine symbolic language and is confined to the realm of the fictive and unattainable. Molly’s identification with the world of action, body, and sensation underscores her paradoxical active passivity, and enables her flirtation with Boylan to leave imagination. It is this balance of femininity and masculinity in Molly that provides the “clou” to Joyce’s work (Ellmann 285). Molly’s correction of Stephen and Bloom’s detachment or distance from reality is illustrated by the manner in which “Ithaca,” a dry land, is planted over by the verdant natural landscape of “Penelope” that ends in water and flowers: “theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea and the waves rushing then the beautiful country” (Joyce 642).

Mahaffey however suggests that Molly is fundamentally unbalanced, and merely provides the foil to Stephen’s rampant intellectualism. “Stephen ‘knows’ the world in an abstract sense, Molly knows it in the carnal one; and Bloom knows, or comes to intuit, the interdependence of both perspectives” (Mahaffey 9). Mahaffey finds that Bloom, rather than Molly, offers the third option between gendered extremes. Bloom takes the middle path between atemporal, intangible intellectualism and the corporeal reality of the moment. However, Molly and Bloom as a unit appear to represent the full range of human characteristics that have been traditionally divided between genders. In his critical writings, Joyce paraphrases Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s philosophy that “every power in nature must evolve an opposite in order to realise itself [*sic*]” (Peake 363). Completion through duality is a theme of the gendered language in *Ulysses* that centers on Molly’s masculinity and Bloom’s femininity.

Within their marriage, Bloom's femininity complements Molly's masculinity, evident in her assertive sexual drive and her masculine push for orgasmic completion. Molly's embodiment of masculine sexuality leads her to imagine that she "wouldnt mind being a man and get up on a lovely woman" (Joyce 633). Bloom fetishizes the maleness of her sexual power in his hallucinatory reveries of the brothel madam Bella/Bello Cohen. In the same phantasmagorical "Circe" episode, Bloom is addressed as "the new womanly man" (Joyce 432). Certain feminist critics have also pointed out the maleness of Molly's claim to have been "coming for about 5 minutes" during her tryst with Boylan (Joyce 621). In bed Bloom and Molly even form an uncomfortable yin-yang, a sleeping arrangement drawn from Joyce and Nora's personal practice. The yin-yang, a Taoist concept, symbolizes the interdependence of contradictory forces. Both extremes are necessary to form the whole, and in the greatest of each extreme, a portion of its opposite appears. Though Bloom and Molly confound social expectations of gender, their marriage as a whole still brings together the necessary elements of opposition and interconnection. Molly is not a great goddess or mother figure if we subscribe to traditional readings of the terms. She is simply too masculine, both in her aggression and her self-centeredness. Ultimately she knows she will not leave Bloom for Boylan because Boylan's forcefulness is not only generally distasteful but is particularly incompatible with her character. Molly admits, "I didnt like his slapping me behind going away so familiarly in the hall though I laughed Im not a horse or an ass am I" (Joyce 610). She permits Boylan's aggression because she understands that, despite passing thoughts of becoming Mrs. Boylan, their relationship is limited (Joyce 627). The virile traits that she values in Boylan and misses in Bloom are the traits of her own half of the yin yang and her own half of the bed. The sexual power that informs Molly's language provides the foundation of Joyce's *écriture féminine*, the language of the female body,

which he identifies and transcribes.

Molly's pragmatism and strength are evidenced in her independence from the roles of wife and mother. When she encounters thoughts of Rudy, their infant son who died ten years previous, she is able to suppress the encroaching sadness, "O Im not going to think myself into the glooms about that any more" (Joyce 640). Bloom, by contrast, is frequently overwhelmed by similar thoughts. On the way to the Dignam's funeral Bloom muses, "If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house. Walking beside Molly in an Eton Suit. My son. Me in his eyes" (Joyce 73). Molly's autonomy from motherhood contradicts with Bloom's deep need to self-identify through fatherhood. By way of their opposition, Molly and Bloom represent the mixture of female and male that resides within everyone. Molly as a masculine woman contradicts and completes Bloom as a feminine man. It is a new era and the divided gendered norms of centuries previous, Joyce appears to predict, must fall away. The androgyny of Bloom's characterization explicitly emerges in "Ithaca" with "his firm full masculine feminine passive active hand" (Joyce 551). Bloom's conscientiousness renders him effeminate and Molly wishes "hed even smoke a pipe like father to get the smell of a man" (Joyce 619). Though many, including Molly, become aggravated by Bloom's femininity, Molly ultimately appreciates his sensitivity and understanding, "I like that in him polite to old women like that and waiters and beggars" (Joyce 608). Of their early courtship Molly recalls, "I saw he understood or felt what a woman is" (Joyce 643).

Bloom's Jewishness, passivity, sensitivity, and status as cuckold unite to cast him as effeminate. The constant censure Bloom endures from his Christian companions fuels a steadily strained relationship between himself and his home country that peaks during a nationalistic frenzy in the pub. When the Citizen of "Cyclops" demands to know Bloom's origin, he

bewilderedly replies, “Ireland. I was born here. Ireland” (Joyce 272). Whatever allegiance Bloom’s ethnic Jewishness might represent, his cultural ties are largely similar to all the men of his acquaintance. His religious ambivalence is echoed by his passive nature, which rejects thoughtless violence. Bloom’s passivity is not necessarily tied to his Jewishness, but the nationalist agitators of the pub, and the anti-Semitic sentiments of Europe at the time, yoke together every artifact of his person that does not amalgamate to the masculine norm. His failure to coalesce with masculine expectations troubles his friends, with whom he is an eternal outsider.

In *Portrait*, Stephen too suffers from his peers’ perception of him as effeminate. His introverted and creative personality, influenced by early experiences of shame, isolates him within the intense homosocial world of Clongowes. Denial and marginalization of female characteristics is a constant exercise in an all-male social context. Stephen’s classmates identify his creativity and passivity as feminine, and he reacts against the threat of subjugation by seeking to prove his capacity for action and aggression. He perceives the demands of his environment as voices, with one “urging him to be strong and manly and healthy” and another to “be true to his country” and yet another to “raise up his father’s fallen state... to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame” (Joyce *Portrait* 85). Stephen soon grows disdainful of the performance of masculinity, and yields to his natural state of duality: the complementing energies of active and passive. Joyce’s autobiographical characterization of Stephen is also a characterization of the archetypal Artist, who must necessarily stand outside of society in order to bear witness. The Otherness that Stephen (as Joyce) experiences throughout his life is a central tool of his craft. Stephen’s exceptionality is forged on alternate methods of success, which utilize rather than reject the feminine abilities to intuit and create. The harassment Stephen receives from his most aggressively masculine classmates results from their reading his Otherness as a threat to

patriarchal power. After an English master claims to have found heresy in one of Stephen's essays Stephen senses amongst his peers "a vague general malignant joy" that their suspicions regarding his subversive nature have been legitimized (Joyce *Portrait* 81).

Fear and suspicion of social Others contribute to their silenced position within phallogocentric discourse. Feminist criticism often posits that *écriture féminine* detrimentally reinforces the gendered binary under the guise of celebration and subversion, but their rejection of alternate language neglects its potential to reinvigorate literature. Joyce takes up the cause of social Others throughout *Ulysses*, primarily by way of women and the Jewry. Brivic interprets Joyce's displacement and delay through language, as well as his "attempts to see from the points of view of women at the ends of his works," as his pursuit of the Other, and his willingness to put himself in a position of Otherness (Brivic *Veil* 23). Joyce's selection of a Jewish man as protagonist, his rendition of *écriture féminine*, as well as his enduring exploration of the Artist, demonstrates his abiding interest in giving voice to the Other. The feminist critics who claim Molly's uniquely female view to be a caricature of the limited female ken take up de Beauvoir's tendency to recapitulate androcentric values. The demand for homogenization inherent in their dismissal of female language not only insists women align themselves to the phallogocentric norm, but that all marginalized voices accept the language of the dominant.

Fertile critical possibilities reside within Molly, offering comparative readings with Homer's Penelope, the Virgin Mary, and the lame feminine ideals of Gerty MacDowell. Molly's flexible symbolism emphasizes the universal aspect of her character, but Molly is also an individual, wonderfully created, which is the only act Molly herself respects. Molly's failure to be female perfection, the divine womb, the earth mother, is her success as a character. The intensity of her sexual appetite, her indifference, and her indolence all complicate the power of

her enigmatic pull, and salvage her from being simply a reiteration of an archetype. However Molly's overarching qualities are positive; her sensuality, vivaciousness, intuitive strength, and comprehension of life and death all shatter attempts to place the female half of the binary on a subjugated plane. The vigor of Molly's personality lies in the balance of gendered energy, which presents challenging, conflicting, but ultimately nourishing ideas about masculinity and femininity. Her female fluidity is revealed to be female strength: the ability to overcome the death of her child. Her female passivity is revealed to be female action: the ability to do rather than delay. Ultimately, female writing, whose subtlety and indirection draw from the nonlinearity of nature, rejuvenates literature by reconnecting it a reality otherwise lost.

Works Cited

- Brivic, Sheldon R. *Joyce Between Freud and Jung*. Port Washington, NY: National University Publications, 1980. Print.
- . *The Veil of Signs*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 1991. Print.
- Butler, Samuel. *The Authoress of the Odyssey*. n.p. n.d. Wikisource. Web. 19 Apr 2014.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 875-93. Web. 24 Apr. 2014.
- Farrington, Benjamin. *Samuel Butler and the Odyssey*. Folcroft Press, 1974. Print.
- Henke, Suzette. "Virginia Woolf Reads James Joyce: The Ulysses Notebook." James Joyce: The Centennial Symposium. Ed. Morris Beja et al. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, 1986. Web. 11 April 2014.
- Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which is Not One*. 1977. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985. Print.
- Joyce, James. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. 1964. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006. Print.
- . *Ulysses*. 26th ed. New York: Random House, 1986. Print.
- Kimball, Jean. *Odyssey of the Psyche: Jungian Patterns in Joyce's Ulysses*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997. Print.
- Kime Scott, Bonnie. *Joyce and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. Print.
- Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Psychoses: 1955-1956*. 1975. Trans. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998. Print
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and*

- Knowledge, 1972-1973*. 1975. Trans. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998. Print
- Mahaffey, Vicki. *Reauthorizing Joyce*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Print.
- Peake, Charles. *James Joyce, the Citizen and the Artist*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977. Web. 5 May 2014.
- Pearce, Richard. "How Does Molly Bloom Look Through the Male Gaze?" *Molly Blooms*. Ed. Richard Pearce. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. Print.
- Ruyer, Raymond. *Homère au féminin*. Paris: Copernic, 1977. Print.
- Sailer, Susan Shaw. "Women in Rooms, Women in History." *Pedagogy, Praxis, Ulysses*. Ed. Robert Newman. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996. 97-120. Print.
- Selected Letters of James Joyce*. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: The Viking Press, 1966. Print.
- Sheffield, Elisabeth. *Joyce's Abandoned Female Costumes, Gratefully Received*. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1998. Print.
- Tadié, Benoît. "'Cypherjugglers going the highroads': Joyce and Contemporary Linguistic Theories." *James Joyce and The Difference of Language*. Ed. Laurent Milesi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 43-57. Print.
- Weil, Kari. "French feminism's *écriture féminine*." *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*. Ed. Ellen Rooney. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 153-71. Print.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. New York: Martino Fine Books, 2012. Print.