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The Maternal Body of James Joyce's Ulysses: The Subversive Molly Bloom

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*THE MATERNAL BODY OF
JAMES JOYCE'S ULYSSES:
The Subversive Molly Bloom*

By Arthur Jacqueline Moore
Submitted for Honors in Independent Study
Spring 2019

I hereby reaffirm the Lawrence University Honor Code.

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Introduction

*“I defied nothing at all. I ignored the law because I didn’t know it existed.
It didn’t occur to me that anyone would want to curb my inspiration.”*

— Margaret Anderson

In 1920 a copy of *The Little Review* issue containing the “Nausicaa” episode of *Ulysses* ended up in the hands of the daughter of a New York attorney. This attorney brought the issue to the attention of John S. Sumner, who at the time was secretary of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. *The Little Review* publishers Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap were arrested. The resulting trial ruled “Nausicaa” obscene and charged Anderson and Heap for the crime. As a result they were fined and forced to discontinue publishing *Ulysses*. Losing the trial completely discouraged Anderson, the literary magazine’s founder, who gave control of the magazine to Heap. Afterward, *The Little Review*’s motto, “Making No Compromise with the Public Taste,” was removed from printing.

The trial focused on the moral character of *Ulysses*, but was perhaps also a politically motivated censoring of the “lesbian radicals” Anderson and Heap. Along with these two, the publishing history of the majority of Joyce’s works introduces a host of radical women, among them Harriet Weaver and Dora Marsden of *The Egoist*, formerly *The New Freewoman*; and Adrienne Monnier and Sylvia Beach who owned neighboring, but non-competing book shops in France. Rebecca West described the goals for the content of *The New Freewoman* as “the revolt of women, philosophic anarchism, and a general whip-round for ideas that would reform

simultaneously life and art.” Both Monnier and Beach would be involved in the early French translation and publication of *Ulysses*, particularly Beach, who was the only person to agree to publish the novel in English after its American censorship. She herself notes in an interview, “It was always women who were publishing Joyce.” *Ulysses*, and Joyce’s writing in general, have always kept good company with the avant-garde and radicals, people searching for the new in art, and bold, intellectual women in particular. Bonnie Kime Scott, in her book *Joyce and Feminism*, summarizes this relationship: “From the start, Joyce offered something different in his art that appealed to the perspectives of intelligent women, striving for directed, conscious lives. They, in turn, saw that his difference might be conveyed to literary tradition, making it increasingly theirs” (115).

As we approach the 100th anniversary of *Ulysses*’ publishing, it’s worthwhile to wonder what difference this novel may have “conveyed to literary tradition” for the benefit of literary women. While Molly Bloom and her monologue in “Penelope” have always occupied a place of critical anxiety since *Ulysses* was first published as a whole, she offers a place to begin understanding the benefit this novel provides to literary women. Scott speaks positively about the possibility contained within Molly’s monologue:

Although Molly Bloom is not a common individual woman, a feminist woman, or a goddess, she serves all three. Although it is still an overconcentrated, male-projected entity, Joyce’s female voice has changed literature and aroused criticism. Perhaps it may still serve a return to woman’s self-ordered place in literature and life. (183)

In a response to the psychoanalytic tradition which characterized the symbolic value of women as a lack or negation, Hélène Cixous also sees Molly as a change to tradition, “The feminine (as

the poets suspected) affirms: ‘...And yes,’ says Molly, carrying *Ulysses* off beyond any book and toward the new writing; ‘I said yes, I will Yes’ (884). This new writing is women’s writing.

While this paper is not solely focused on Molly Bloom, she is certainly an essential part of any comprehensive feminist interpretation of *Ulysses*. This feminist interpretation is worth its time as an attempt to understand the relevance of Joyce and this novel today, while academia is experiencing a welcome pressure to move away from the study of ‘old white men’ in favor of a diversity of subjects for study. The value of *Ulysses* in this context is in Molly, “Joyce’s female voice,” who pushes us into the new writing. As Heather Callow explains,

This does not make him a feminist writer, but it does make him a possible ally in the feminist aim of reevaluating a literary canon in which authoritative patriarchal voices prevail. His interest in alterity causes him to work, through the violation of reader expectations, toward the subversion of received ideas – among them the privileged status of authoritative male discourse. (161)

The effect of a female subversion of authoritative male discourse is not solely limited to Molly, however, and Molly is not the only aspect of *Ulysses* occupying a space of ‘other.’

The book was, after all, banned from publication until 1933. While *The Little Review*’s serialized publishing of *Ulysses* was stopped after the trial in 1921, it was not the novel’s first brush with censorship. Three other issues of the magazine, from 1919 and 1920, were either confiscated or refused by the US Post Office. And, the version of *Ulysses* Anderson and Heap were publishing was one that was being edited by Ezra Pound, the novel’s first censor, to better ensure that the publication of the novel would not have been halted by obscenity law. Rachel Potter describes how *Ulysses*, “by the legal standards of the time, was profoundly obscene. Not

only did it include an encyclopaedic collection of obscene and blasphemous words, including “f*ck”, “c*nt”, “gleet”, and “figged fist”, it also depicted its central protagonist ... masturbating while listening to a Catholic choir and gazing at a 17-year-old Irish virgin” (72). It is not that Joyce wanted to write a pornographic novel, of course, nor that he was simply a vulgar writer, but that he was attempting to write a realistic day in Dublin, male Dublin, and the full scope of the humanity living within it.

The interest of this paper, then, is an interest in the alterity of the bodies of *Ulysses*. While once these bodies challenged the common discourse because they were ruled obscene, the bodies of the text continue to challenge both critics and a male literary tradition. There is, obviously, Molly Bloom, who has been debated as either real or symbolic, “earth goddess” or “thirty-shilling whore,” and who remains a contentious figure. However, as Joyce said about *Ulysses*, “my book is the epic of the human body. ... In my book the body lives in and moves through space and is the home of a full human personality. The words I write are adapted to express first one of its functions then another” (Plock 184). *Ulysses* itself can be read as a body, and a body that is an ‘other’ to literary convention.

On all levels except, perhaps, express authorial intent, *Ulysses* is and revolves around the subversive, maternal body. A maternal body because its body is outside of a distinctly masculine literary tradition, and because it hopes to challenge that tradition. In saying that *Ulysses* is about Molly Bloom, I do not simply mean that she is an important character, nor do I mean to conflate Molly’s body with that of the body of *Ulysses*. Rather, my claim is that this novel, through its structure, alterity, and subversion, itself takes on a maternal textual body. And Molly, the subversive and embodied mother that she is, may be the final voice of this text in a way that Joyce himself is not.

This paper is motivated by three guiding questions. They are: How are bodies constructed in literature? How does a feminist perspective inform the construction of literary bodies? If there is a uniquely maternal body, how does it exist in this text? The paper is also organized into three chapters: Characters, narrator(s), and text; each addresses these questions in a different way. These questions will be answered in each section by considering how these bodies may be constructed differently (i.e. how is the body of a character constructed? How does an author prevent a narrator from becoming embodied?), the relationship of gender to these constructions, and what creates the maternal body on these different levels. The guiding force through these chapters is uncovering the maternal body in each, and how the maternal body moves through the text as a whole.

One

The Embodiment of the Maternal Character

“I got very sick of Dublin its a horrible place its quite true what you said I would soon get tired of it.”

— Nora Barnacle, letter to Joyce

Characters are the most obviously embodied things in a novel, simply because of the resemblance between a literary character and a human being which the modern novel attempts to achieve. It is not, however, immediately clear how a character acquires a body and how a reader comes to know about a character’s body. Arguably, Joyce is attempting to write the closest possible account of the human mind (this attempt was the initial development of stream of consciousness in literature). He is also committed to a belief that there cannot be a full mind and body separation, so that to write a psychologically real character one cannot ignore the body. Joyce writes frankly about snot and shit and sex in order to develop the bodily humanity of his characters.

Joyce primarily allows characters to grow their bodies in relation to each other through curiosity, which leads to development of an ‘epistemology of the body.’ Adding a feminist critical lens, it is clear that gender gaps in bodily knowledge lead to both areas of special interest for characters and attempts to cover these gaps in knowledge. While Joyce is exposing places where fiction is filling gaps of knowledge, characters have the opportunity to either resist or support those fictions. To the effect of either hoping to achieve greater security within a

patriarchal order, or of finding other ways of being. Since *Ulysses* overall is a novel which wants to disrupt convention, it is the moments of resistance or the exposure of the knowledge which is obscured by these fictions that are most significant.

The best case of a subversive body in this novel is the maternal body, a body which is subversive through its alterity: the maternal experience is completely unintelligible to a male-centric worldview and threatens the security of that worldview. To understand the maternal body's position among the cast of *Ulysses* we have to understand what it is that is different about maternal body. To do this requires first looking at how other bodies exist in the novel. To begin, this chapter will sketch an understanding of how characters come to construct each other's bodies, with how much accuracy, and where they are leaning on fictions in that constructive process. Then, a feminist interrogation of these fictions reveals how gender gaps in knowledge are responsible for the fictions, and why they are then threatened by feminine and maternal knowledge. The salient maternal body in *Ulysses* is the character of Molly Bloom. So, lastly, an examination of her body through which Joyce undermines the authority of male Dublin and gives credibility back to women's knowledge, before Molly's deeply embodied soliloquy.

To Construct a Body within an Understanding of Male Dublin

Characters' bodies are constructed through external relations, which are filtered through male Dublin. With very few exceptions, bodies are constructed through curiosity between characters. There is rarely a moment where a character is introspecting on their own body. Rather they are constantly watching and wondering about each other. An effect of this is that characters are occasionally wrong or just making guesses about each other. The way characters

see each other, the perspectives they adopt, tend to be influenced by the values of their setting, which in this case is male dominated Dublin.

Character's bodies are constructed through curiosity, implying that they are constructed relationally. One example is of Bloom interacting with his cat and thinking about her whiskers: "Wonder is it true if you clip them they can't mouse after. Why? They shine in the dark, perhaps, the tips. Or kind of feelers in the dark, perhaps" (54). The takeaway from this kind of curiosity is that there is no feedback to it, to confirm or deny his assumptions. Bloom is just wondering and making guesses about the animal in front of him. There is no introspection also, not from the cat in this instance, but also not from other characters later.

Since characters are constructed relationally and these relations are all external perspectives, there is an epistemological limit to them. Sometime characters are wrong about each other. Bloom also remarks of his cat, "They call them stupid. They understand what we say better than we understand them. She understands all she wants to" (53). Bloom deciding the cat can understand all she wants is just another assumption of course, but this introduces the problem of the lack of communication between characters as they construct each other's bodies. Who knows how much the cat really understands, but unable to advocate for herself, the cat is stupid. In general characters tend not to share their perceptions with each other directly. The thoughts they have of other bodies they keep private in their thoughts, so that other characters are not validating or contradicting their hypotheses. There is a lot of possibility for error, then, in the ways characters understand each other. And since the readers do not have privileged access to characters' thoughts of themselves in a way that is not mediated, the readers can also have mistaken conceptions of characters' bodies. This cat is really just a toy example, but it is a moment indicative of the ways characters interact with each other even more significantly. The

effect of this curiosity and lack of communication are assumptions of apparently unknown accuracy, left for both the character and the reader to understand.¹

My primary example for the ways characters construct each other's bodies comes from the "Nausicaa" chapter. Unlike the simple cat example, examining "Nausicaa" allows for the additional understanding of how cultural values influence the construction of characters' bodies. These values are informed by the setting of male Dublin, meaning they are predictably biased. In this chapter, Bloom stands at a distance from a trio of young women and watches them. One of these women, Gerty MacDowell, notices his interest and begins showing off her body to him. This interaction makes "Nausicaa" a good case for exploring the ways curiosity and sexuality operate together in characters creating an understanding of each other's bodies. The voyeur and exhibitionist interaction Bloom and Gerty share is based on a kind of revealing information, particularly bodily information, and the type of curiosity and arousal it incites for them both. However, they do not really gain knowledge of each other. While they both maintain a realistic understanding of the nature of their interaction, they both bring fantasies into it as well. These fantasies have some similarities, but do not function in quite the same way.

As the fireworks show begins, so does Gerty's, in a passage which contains almost everything interesting about her perspective in this chapter:

At last they were left alone without the other to pry and pass remarks and she knew he could be trusted to the death, steadfast, a sterling man, a man of inflexible honour to his fingertips. His hands and face were working and a tremour went over her. [...] she knew

¹ Heather Callow gives a full treatment of how the critical understanding of Bloom's character has been shaped by erroneous assumptions made about him by other characters in her essay "Joyce's Female Voices."

about the passion of men like that, hotblooded, because Bertha Supple told her once in dead secret [...] she said he used to do something not very nice that you could imagine sometimes in bed. But this was altogether different from a thing like that because there was all the difference because she could almost feel him draw her face to his and the first quick hot touch of his handsome lips. (349)

The first interesting thing about Gerty's character is that despite her ostensibly naïve fantasies and desires, she is not actually ignorant of the world. She is aware of how Bloom is reacting to her in this moment, and she has prior knowledge to compare it to. However, she cannot name this knowledge. In her thoughts she remains euphemistic with phrases like "something not very nice" and even then, it still must be a "dead secret." Gerty uses euphemisms like this frequently throughout, showing both that she has an understanding of sexual matters, and yet a strong sense of propriety that disallows her from fully acknowledging those things. There are also several references to her knowledge of these matters or to the talk between her and her friends as secrets, and this kind of privacy is typically afforded to women's thoughts or knowledge throughout the novel as a whole. Gerty is self-censoring, imposing her own kind of epistemological limits on herself, so that while she has some knowledge and is possibly capable of some understanding, she cannot describe it. It can only be known through euphemism and implication. Naturally, this effects the accuracy of her knowledge of Bloom.

The epistemological limit is met with fictions to fill gaps. Gerty does not push the limits on herself in order to get a more accurate picture of Bloom, but leans on euphemisms and romantic fantasies to cover and fill in the gaps in her knowledge. Her imagined character of Bloom is in fact shocking in contrast to her being absolutely aware of what he is doing. It's incredible that she so easily believes he can "trusted to the death," and earlier imagines an idyllic

and childlike fantasy of marriage to him. The string of repeating “because” that this quotation ends with are followed by two more similar uses of “besides” before the end of the paragraph, as though she recognizes the impropriety of both their actions and is attempting to give herself justification for engaging in this display. This justification hinges on the fantasy idealized husband she imagines Bloom to be, and the love she imagines already exists or can exist between them, no matter how unlikely that may be.

Much like how Bloom could only wonder how his cat works, Gerty and Bloom only wonder about each other because they cannot communicate. Gerty and Bloom are both self-censoring but in different ways. While Gerty uses euphemisms, Bloom cuts himself off. When the chapter is focused on Gerty there are moments where she is embarrassed by the language of the people she is with, and many references to the things she would say but holds back. With Bloom there is significantly less restricted access to his thoughts, however many of the sentences of this half of the chapter are clipped short and leave something unsaid, as though Bloom is also self-censoring. There is a language gap between Bloom’s desire for dirty talk and the euphemistic or controlled language of the women he’s interacted with. Throughout Bloom’s narration in this chapter he recalls fragments of the letter he received in the morning, and the kind of delight he takes in hearing “dirty things,” but also the disappointment that the letter from Martha never became as explicit as he desired. And yet, at the end of the chapter he considers leaving a message in the sand for Gerty and cannot even complete his sentence “I. AM. A.” before he erases it and gives up (364). Like the torn up letter from the morning, the erased message in the sand is evidence that Bloom is unable to continue a possible sexual encounter. Bloom does not censor himself the way Gerty does, but instead cuts himself off from continued communication. Since there is no completed communication, and it may not be possible for there

to be full communication between these two, assumptions and fantasies are all they have to understand each other.

In this scene Bloom's complicated mixture of both curiosity and sexual desire color the way he interprets Gerty's body, and, therefore, the way we understand Gerty's body. If Gerty's thoughts are a mix of knowledge and fantasy, combined with a simultaneous desire for her tall dark stranger and anger towards other men she has encountered, Bloom's mind also moves through desire, curiosity, and resentment towards women. Bloom's voyeuristic pleasure and fantasy, however, does not fulfill the same goal as Gerty's fantasy. She reconstructs the world hopefully and idealistically, imagining a way she can be fulfilled and happy within the constraints of womanhood.² Bloom also has a tension between fantasy and reality in this moment. After the erotic encounter with Gerty, she leaves the beach and he discovers her lame leg. While the earlier reveals of her body had been highly arousing for Bloom, this elicits a different reaction: "Jilted beauty. A defect is ten times worse in a woman. But makes them polite. Glad I didn't know it when she was on show. Hot little devil all the same" (351). There is a comparison that could be made between the disappointment Bloom experiences in this moment and the probable disappointment Gerty would have experienced if she discovered Bloom's character was not all that she imagined it to be.

These epistemological limits exist not only because of a lack of communication, but also because of an inability to relate to another's experiences. In the following pages Bloom's desire

² Jen Shelton's article, "Bad Girls: Gerty, Cissy, and the Erotics of Unruly Speech" explains this behavior of Gerty's as transgressive, even as she seems to happily conform to her gender expectations. Since Gerty does have knowledge of the reality of the way men behave, because of her history with her father and from the stories she knows, she chooses to be the ideal woman in the hopes of resisting the dangers of the less than ideal man.

for viewing beautiful women is in tension with his non-sexual curiosity about women's bodies, where he wonders about how menstruation works and where perfume sticks to the body. First, there is the kind of curiosity he has about it as a phenomena. Overall, as a symbolic moment of sexual maturity or coming of age, menstruation seems to be a fraught one, which makes Bloom's various reactions to it somewhat more intriguing. He wonders about how exactly it works when he relates it to the cycles of the moon and is unsure of why all women aren't in sync then, and wonders "how many women in Dublin have it today?" (351). These questions are legitimate in their curiosity and desire to simply know about the experiences of other people, as well to understand a bodily function he does not experience. The lack of an emotional response from Bloom and the quantitative nature of the questions express Bloom's scientific personality, as well as his real distance from understanding the topic in the way it appears to be understood by the women around him. The closest emotional reaction he does have is pity toward his daughter Milly. Bloom remembers the moment where Milly first gets her period: "Frightened she was when her nature came on her first. Poor child! Strange moment for the mother too. Brings back her girlhood" (362). It is clear from the way it describes this moment as Milly's nature coming onto her that this is viewed as a kind of coming of age experience.

Along with his mere curiosity about menstruation though, Bloom is not capable of fully understanding this experience. He is limited by both his cultural background assumptions that bias his opinion of the topic and his biology which prevents him from having the experience himself. The result is two fictions filling in for reality: the first is the cultural misconception, and the second is his attempt to understand menstruation through a kind of appropriation. In the first half of the chapter Gerty shies away from adult eroticism with her combination of euphemistic references and the childlike nature of her fantasies. She is also anxious throughout of possibly

getting her period in this moment where is trying to put her body on display. Since Bloom thinks it gives women a “dark devilish appearance” (352), it seems she’s right to be anxious about this possibility. It very well could have ruined the eroticism of their encounter. This is the effect of the background cultural assumptions at work in Bloom. Surprisingly, despite his negative opinion, Bloom also attempts to relate to the experience of menstruation. After thinking a woman is “near her monthlies,” Bloom also thinks, “I have such a bad headache today” (351). Or, after considering Molly’s experience with her period Bloom thinks, “Feel it myself too” (352). These moments are sincere attempts to understand or relate his experiences to those of menstruating women, or to imagine that he is in a similar condition to them, in a kind of hope to have knowledge about those experiences. Bloom attempts to understand menstruation by appropriating the experience to his own body as an act of imagination, similar to the general kinds of fiction that try to bridge epistemological gaps.

A necessary step in eventually understanding how the ‘maternal body’ fits into this picture is understanding the particular value placed on paternity. It is apparently a value central to male Dublin. The “Nausicaa” example shows how characters construct each other’s bodies in the novel, and how cultural values affect this process. To add some nuance to male Dublin as the background setting that influences the ways characters interpret each other’s bodies, this next example looks at how paternity is privileged in constructing characters’ bodies.

There appears to be a strong patrilineal influence on the Dedalus family. At the start of “Lestrygonians”, Bloom sees Dilly, one of Stephen’s sisters, and thinks: “Dedalus’ daughter there still outside Dillon’s auctionrooms. ... Knew her eyes at once from the father” (145). In “Wandering Rocks,” Simon Dedalus approaches Dilly outside the auction house:

Stand up straight for the love of the Lord Jesus, Mr Dedalus said. Are you trying to imitate your uncle John the cornetplayer, head upon shoulders? Melancholy god! Dilly shrugged her shoulders. Mr Dedalus placed her hands on them and held them back. Stand up straight, girl, he said. You'll get curvature of the spine. Do you know what you look like? (228)

Later, Stephen encounters his sister on the street. When he sees her he immediately notices, "Dilly's high shoulders and shabby dress" (233). Both aspects of her appearance imply the influence of her father. Her "high shoulders" reflecting his attempts to correct her posture and her "shabby dress" the financial position of their family as Simon Dedalus's status has declined. Stephen continues to notice family resemblances between himself and Dilly, "My eyes they say she has. Do others see me so? Quick, far and daring. Shadow of my mind" (233). Again, eyes stand out as the common feature of the Dedalus family. Eyes which Bloom's recognition would imply are inherited from their father.

The importance of paternal relationships is one of the most standard readings of *Ulysses*. The effect of bodily construction are not limited to character's understandings of each other, but influence our understanding of the characters as well. Standard interpretations of this novel focus on the possibly paternal relationship between Stephen and Bloom, as though a solution to Stephen's biological fate is to replace Simon with Bloom.³ Stephen and Bloom are sort of mirror

³ In the same way there is a kind of reach critics occasionally make to say that Bloom asking his wife to bring him breakfast in bed is his reasserting his properly dominant role as husband by following the *Odyssey* parallel, there is a presumption that Stephen, as Telemachus, accepts being Bloom's son. If Bloom did confront Boylan, if Stephen did stay the night at Bloom's house, then perhaps they would settle comfortably into their Homeric roles, and by doing so, they would find a more secure place within male Dublin. They do not.

cases to one another. For Stephen, it is the child's anxiety of attempting to escape his biological fate and patrilineal connections. For Bloom, it is the mirror anxiety of a man who has no father and no son. His greatest desire is to have a proper male heir, and to connect himself to a patrilineal heritage. Either way, the paternal relationship that would exist between them is wrapped up in male Dublin.

A Feminist Critical Interrogation of the Vital Fiction of Paternity

These epistemological gap filling fictions are also filtered through the values of male Dublin, and paternity is one of the most vital fictions to the stability of male Dublin. Stephen describes how paternity is a fiction in his small rant on the subject in "Scylla and Charybdis:"

Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood, *Amor matris*, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction.

Who is the father of any son that any son should love him or he any son? (199)

This passage proposes the epistemological problem that is fatherhood, and the effects of that problem. The epistemological problem is that a father can never have absolute certainty about whether his children are actually his, and similarly children can't be certain of their connection to their father. Stephen's expression, "paternity may be a legal fiction" summarizes the solution to the uncertainty of paternity. In place of being able to locate knowledge in the world to make the

problem of paternity certain, a fiction which could affirm the role of fathers is created. The legal status of families prioritizes male lineage and the expectations of monogamy provide some hope for men to know their children, particularly their sons who will continue to carry their name.

Paternity is a vital fiction, because it relieves an anxiety which could threaten stability of the system of male authority. The importance given to the legal constructs which affirm paternity are a major part of Bloom's anxiety over the course of the novel. He lacks any of the security that his marriage should, in theory, be providing him. When he thinks of his dead father and son, he is not just grieving so many years past their respective tragedies, but he is deeply concerned about feeling divorced from his lineage. He not only has the slight suspicion that may occur in a marriage that his wife is not faithful, he has certain knowledge of this. This knowledge can only cause his own paternity to become even more uncertain, and as he no longer has sex with his wife by the time of the novel's events, any possible future children in his marriage would not be his own. His surviving child, Milly, apparently bears an incredibly close resemblance to her mother, even her name is nearly identical. So Bloom cannot find security in knowing his daughter at least shares a family resemblance with him.

Maternity is the threatening thing which is the source of that paternal anxiety. In contrast to Bloom's sympathetic if still reductive perspective on birth are the attitudes of the other men he is with. They spend most of the chapter making crude jokes about women's reproductive functions. For example, when Dixon asks Mulligan:

whether his incipient ventripotence, upon which he rallied him, betokened an ovoblastic gestation in the prostatic utricle or male womb or was due as with the noted physician, Mr Austin Meldon, to a wolf in the stomach. For answer Mr Mulligan, [...]: There's a belly that never bore a bastard. (385)

Despite apparently approaching pregnancy from a different attitude than Bloom, this moment brings their contrasting perspectives closer together. The joking appropriation of wombs and pregnancy to male anatomy reflects a similar kind of appropriation Bloom performs in “Nausicaa” toward menstruation and later in “Circe” when he desires to be a mother and give birth. The comment “there’s a belly that never bore a bastard,” is also motivated by this paternal anxiety, since it implies the first thing to be addressed in matters of birth is the legitimacy of the father.

The problem of paternal anxiety is connected to the inability for a patriarchal or male-centric worldview to fully understand birth, as something completely foreign to male experience. That fatherhood is “unknown to man” is because a father doesn’t have the experience of birth which would undeniably connect him to his children. Legal reproductive control of women by men for the sake of assuaging paternal anxiety comes at a cost to women’s knowledge. In order for paternity to be made explicit, maternity becomes implicit. Something which is exclusive from male experience, birth, becomes something unknowable because to know it requires access to and legitimacy of women’s knowledge. And the presence of that knowledge threatens the vital paternal fiction.

Birth, which distinguishes maternity from paternity, is an unintelligible act to male Dublin and treated as basically irrelevant. However, Joyce only gives it this treatment with irony. These questions are being raised with the backdrop of a maternity hospital. This serves as a reminder of the undeniability of motherhood, and the somewhat less essential role fathers play in birth and the creation of their children, as they sit near these women uselessly. It also raises the degree to which the ability of Bloom to have a paternal relationship to Stephen is being considered through a male-centric perspective, despite the clearly not male-centric existence of

children. This relates to the idea that from a male perspective or within a male-centric world, birth is an essentially unintelligible act. Since birth itself cannot be understood from this perspective, and is not a part of the masculine world, then birth itself becomes unnecessary to establishing the parental relationship between these two men.

Bloom is confronted by the power of motherhood and is anxious about the role of fathers. In contrast to the uncertainty of paternity, there is an undeniability to a mother's relationship to her child. There is not a similar critical notion that Stephen has a need for a replacement maternal figure after he's literally lost his mother, even though there is a general consensus that he needs Bloom despite still having a living father. The idea that motherhood is simply a less mutable role than fatherhood answers this question nicely. Stephen can't replace his mother so easily because mothers exist with an undeniable relationship to their children. The more uncertain relationship of the father to child makes it possible for a child to claim a new father or for a father to claim a new child. In this way, fatherhood has a simultaneously weaker position than motherhood because it carries this ambiguity to it, but also a more powerful position because its mutability allows it to serve different purposes. Bloom is eligible as a father for Stephen in a way that he would not be eligible as a mother even if he were a woman, and this could allow both of them to fulfill their needs concerning lineage and progeny. The narrator of this chapter addresses the reader directly "Now he himself is paternal and these might be his sons. Who can say? The wise father knows his own child" and reminds us that Bloom has no son (393). This asks the question of what is needed to have the father and son relationship feel valid. If it needs to be that there is enough ambiguity in the possibility of parentage for a person to potentially be biologically related to another, or if instead it only requires both people involved to be willing to accept someone who they may not have a biological connection to fill these roles in each other's lives.

Earlier in the novel Stephen also reflects on motherhood and the strongest case for it being not only undeniable, but having a more powerful relationship than paternal. In “Proteus” Stephen sees a midwife walking somewhere and he thinks to himself:

One of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life. Creation from nothing. What has she in the bag? A misbirth with a trailing navelcord, hushed in ruddy wool. The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh. That is why mystic monks. Will you be as gods? Gaze in your omphalos. Hello. Kinch here. Put me on to Edenville. Aleph, alpha: nought, nought, one. (38)

The idea of paternity as inherently uncertain compared to the absolute certainty of maternity is a compelling theme of Bloom’s anxieties as a father. Interestingly, Stephen tracks valid paternity the same way that Bloom does, by comparing the features of the father and son, without doing the same for his mother, who is instead remembered only as the ghost who haunts his dreams. Stephen also acknowledges the significance of the maternal relationship in his thought about how all of humanity is linked through umbilical cords, a literal physical tie to their mothers. It is not just that it is more certain who the mother of a child is than the father, but also that that maternal relationship links people throughout all of history. Enough that Stephen is able to imagine calling Eve herself as though he’s on the phone simply by ‘gazing into his navel.’

Constructing the Maternal Body in Mary Dedalus and Molly Bloom

Initially, *Ulysses* presents mothers as unreal but symbolically important. The concept of the mother is introduced in the very first scene, in a conversation between Stephen and Buck Mulligan. Mulligan describes the sea as “a great sweet mother” (5). Stephen responds to this

comment with a bit of narrated thought, remembering his own mother as a ghost: “Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes” (5).⁴ This is a memory of a nightmarish representation of his mother, which coupled with his guilt and doubt toward his actions at the time of her death, causes her memory to be “reproachful.” The narration continues:

Across the threadbare cuffedge he saw the sea hailed as a great sweet mother by the wellfed voice beside him. The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver by fits of loud groaning vomiting. (5 - 6)

The contrast of “threadbare cuffedge” and “wellfed voice” indicate a kind of resentment Stephen has possibly towards the degree his family was able to nurture and care for him. Mulligan can express the sentiment of a “great sweet mother” because of his relatively privileged status, while Stephen has a more complex relationship to his mother. As a result, this narration slips briefly into Stephen’s voice. Stephen thoroughly deromanticizes Mulligan’s notion of the sea as mother and returns to a more literal image with his memory of the bowl of bile by his mother’s deathbed. This removes the sentimentality from the picture, but keeps the association between the sea with mothers. The conversation between Stephen and Mulligan continues as they descend into the tower and they continue speaking about Stephen’s mother. He remembers the way she

⁴ Deidre Lynch describes an interesting way that ghosts reflect on character: “The ghost is a figure [authors] can use to link their animating power to the miracle of resurrection. But this figure also gauges the character’s ontological deficit, how its not dying (its ‘endlessness’) goes together with its never living, not *really*” (222). In this way, Mary Dedalus’ maternal body being ghostly adds another level of ambivalence.

would ask him to sing for her, her secrets, and the way she took care of her children. He eventually returns to the thought of her as a ghost, “Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down” (10). She is no longer simply reproachful, Stephen conjures her agony, torture, and horror. She is now striking him down with her eyes alone. After this he recalls the prayer that was said at her death, which is repeated again at the end of this chapter and in three others.

In summary, the value of mothers is symbolic, but these symbolic conceptions are ambivalent. The initial image *Ulysses* gives us of the mother is of a great and sweet ocean and also a tortured ghost. Stephen’s mother overtakes the image of the mother as life-giving ocean, instead she is haunting and vengeful, tortured and in agony. The mythical, romanticized mother which Mulligan presents first is replaced through Stephen’s move from his figurative language to the greater force of his literal memories. Leaving the readers with this realer image of a mother, and yet, still an incorporeal and distant perspective of one, colored by guilt and grief.

The theme of mothers are quite important continues to be developed in the first three chapters of the novel, where it is made more complicated and sympathetic. In “Nestor,” a much kinder perspective is shared as Stephen regards a somewhat pathetic student in his class. Thinking of the probable fact that the only person to love this student was his mother, Stephen thinks, “but for her the race of the world would have trampled him under foot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own. Was that then real? The only true thing in life?” (28). These thoughts lead him to remember his own mother again, recalling the same “wetted ashes.” However, instead of the reproachful or striking ghostly

mother, he thinks about how she also saved him from being trampled like a snail, and thinks about how she “had gone, scarcely having been. A poor soul gone to heaven” (28). This is a significantly more sympathetic perspective on his mother, and is probably a result of his not being in the same offended mood he was with Mulligan. The pity Stephen extends to his student creates this more sympathetic memory of his mother.

Alterity is important to creating the effect of subversion, and maternity, being unintelligible to and threatening to paternity, are marginalized experiences. This is why the maternal body is subversive. The way they are excluded from the dominant narrative explains why conceptions of mothers, while important, are also deeply ambivalent. The case example of the subversive mother in *Ulysses* is Molly Bloom. One important note to make about Molly, she is immediately exceptional, because she does introspect on her own body quite a bit. While she is thinking about other’s bodies as well, we get a sense of herself without it being mediated through a voyeur. She resists masculine values throughout her narration through subtle effects like this introspection on herself, that reflect a self-knowledge and women’s knowledge that are otherwise diminished in the novel. Of course, because this is authored by Joyce, it’s difficult to say Molly’s resistance is a complete success, but it is a definite attempt.

First, Molly subverts the typical values of male Dublin (e.g. conceptions of women’s sexuality.) Obviously, Molly is subverting some of the conventions of marriage and male authority through the fact that she is cheating on her husband without much shame. In general, she resists typical masculine values. Much of Molly’s thought is inspired by the presence of her husband in bed next to her and the thoughts she has about her relationship to him, or else from remembering her activities with Boylan earlier in the day. As a result her thoughts, while they do extend to other topics, radiate out from the ideas she has about relationships, sexuality, and

bodies. These topics dominate the chapter. Her thoughts about relationships generally and women within them provide Joyce a place to reflect on the male-dominated Dublin he has just finished describing. One striking part of her thoughts is the way she reflects on male and female bodies. Throughout the chapter she repeatedly expresses a kind of attraction to herself and other female bodies and a revulsion to men:

curious the way its made 2 the same in case of twins theyre supposed to represent beauty placed up there in those statues in the museum one of them pretending to hide it with her hand are they so beautiful of course compared with what a man looks like with his two bags full and his other thing hanging down out of him or sticking up at you like a hatrack no wonder they hide it with a cabbageleaf the woman is beauty of course (704)

It could simply be the case that Joyce was unable to imagine the position of a heterosexual woman accurately and couldn't avoid writing his own sexuality into the chapter. Where Molly is a woman who understands her own beauty and prizes her decorative function as something inherently more attractive than male beauty. This kind of interpretation would not be too extreme, as it also seems to be present in Gerty's sexuality as it's presented in "Nausicaa," however this comes through the perspective of a voyeuristic masculine narrator. If Joyce's descriptions of Molly's sexuality are an intentional commentary rather than a failure of his own imaginative power, then Molly being the paradigmatic woman of this text creates an unhappy picture of typical sexuality. This is strange if we are working under the assumption that Joyce is not trying to create some kind feminist account of necessary social reform, but rather to explore and accept a multiplicity of types of sexual encounters and bodily experiences. Typifying Molly Bloom as the typical experienced heterosexual woman and mother, who is also repulsed by male bodies, is unusual. She is also certainly not self-censoring, though. If this revulsion was an

intentional act of Joyce's to empower Molly in some way, then her unhappy heterosexuality pushes against heterosexual norms in general, and not only in her relationship to Bloom.

Molly also resists male authority in reclaiming her own bodily knowledge. When Molly realizes she is starting her period her thoughts quickly turn to virginity. She creates a link between the two things because a woman's loss of virginity is associated with blood. Molly imagines she could recreate the effect and easily fool men: "they always want to see a stain on the bed to know you're a virgin for them all that's troubling them they're such fools too you could be a widow or divorced 40 times over a daub of red ink would do" (719). She derides men for how excited they become over something she considers so insignificant. This moment could also be related to the idea of paternal anxiety, a feeling of which Molly may not be aware. In conversation with Bloom's wondering about menstruation earlier in the novel, she could also be subverting her husband's authority directly. The concept that Molly has of using red colored ink to make it appear as though she is virginal to men is a transgressive act. This is a moment of a woman reclaiming some knowledge of her body and using it to disrupt a sexual ethic that serves the goal of paternal knowledge.

Finally, Molly subverts Joyce's authority itself. She is the only character to break the fourth wall of the novel. Molly addresses Joyce directly in her monologue, and says, "O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh" (719). The "pooh" she wants to be let out of is ambiguous. She thinks this immediately after she begins menstruating, and it could be a reaction to her frustration at her body. It could also be her reaction to male Dublin, which she criticizes throughout her monologue. Or, she could be reacting to being a part of *Ulysses*. In this case, she's judging the novel itself to be "pooh," and wishes she could get out of it. It is also likely that Joyce intends for Molly's statement to be working on all of these levels. By any interpretation though, the Jamesy

she is speaking to is Joyce. She challenges his authorial power by speaking to him as a character, and asks to have some aspect of the novel improved for her sake.

Two

The Disembodied Male Narrator

“The description of the Dublin summer afternoon, threaded with creeping bodies, with creeping minds, that do not know quite what they do, that do not do quite what they know.”

— Rebecca West

There is a straightforward connection between a character and a body, as characters tend to resemble things like people. However, the relationship between a narrator and body is less clear. A narrator typically strives to be disembodied, and in fact has to resist embodiment. While the roles of narrator and character may not always be clearly distinct, a narrator’s lack of a body does most of the work for differentiating the two. Narrators are not physical actors in a scene. Their influence is not over how events happen, but how they are described and framed.

Rather than a character’s relationship between mind and body, for narrators there is a relationship between style and subject. A narrator, in not needing to resemble a human being in the way characters do, becomes something closer to pure mind or voice. Stephen describes a similar effect in *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*, “The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (252). In this way the narrator can be thought of as the gap between a character and its author, where the author has attempted to remove his or her voice. The style of the writing determines the narrator’s voice, and Joyce’s narrators draw heavily on

the characters or scenes they are describing and the themes being explored by them. A narrator is not a bodied thing but is a mediator, a gap, and yet still has a personality of its own, distinct from both the characters and author.

Despite their disembodiment, the narrators of this text have a masculine perspective. The narrators are a part of the received patriarchal discourse which Joyce is resisting based on how they relate the book to readers. The narrators of this text reproduce conventional attitudes of disdain or mockery to Joyce's unconventional subjects. Joyce isn't merely celebrating bodies and their differences in this book, otherwise the theme of paternal alienation from reproductive creation wouldn't be so prevalent. Much more time in this book is dedicated to analyzing and interrogating bodily differences in attempts to understand them. In the most interrogatory section of the book, "Ithaca," there's a difference in the tone of the narrator between a question about the comparison between women and the moon, and the questions on the following page about Stephen and Bloom's urinating. While the tone remains similarly absurd in its degree of explanation in each case, when discussing women the narrator describes, "her antiquity in preceding and surviving successive tellurian generations: her nocturnal predominance: her satellitic dependence: her luminary reflection: her constancy under all her phases, rising, and setting by her appointed times, waxing and waning" and so on (654). The narration contains a mysterious quality to it that is not present when it describes Bloom and Stephen peeing with exacting accuracy, "the trajectories of their, first sequent, then simultaneous, urinations were dissimilar: Bloom's longer, less irruent, [...] Stephen's higher, more sibilant" (655).

However, Joyce does not allow these masculine narrators to go unchecked. There is a constant tension between them and the events of the novel. Heather Callow points to effects like Gerty MacDowell's "heavily undermined indirect narration" (152) as part of this tension,

wherein obscured female testimony calls into question authoritative male voices. Gerty is obscured by her mocking male narrator, but the new perspective on Bloom that she provides still calls into question the information we have been receiving from the novel's other narrators. Joyce's narrators are therefore not necessarily meant to be trusted, and they are importantly disembodied. There is not one feminine or female narrative voice, except for Molly, who speaks directly. Joyce ridicules his male narrators and undermines his own authorial voice, eventually giving Molly the final word.

The Relationship of Narrator to Body

Narrators are disembodied, they essentially represent minds. In the sense that they do not merely report events but also categorize and filter events through their understanding. Narrators give a perspective to the events of the novel that they are framing. While we take them to be authoritative, or at least trustworthy, Joyce's narrators introduce bias in their reports similarly to how characters can introduce bias to the readers through their unchecked assumptions.

To understand how the narrators of *Ulysses* operate in ways that are importantly disembodied, a general overview of how Joyce's narrators operate is necessary. David Hayman has suggested a figure that exists alongside the narrators of this text, the "arranger." The arranger of *Ulysses* is "a figure or presence that can be identified with neither the author nor his narrators, but that exercises an increasing degree of overt control over increasingly challenging materials" (Hayman 84). The arranger and narrators work together and perform a similar function over the novel. They operate to add an additional level of organization over the events of the novel for the readers beyond characters' perceptions and thoughts. "Aeolus" is one of the clearest

introductions of the arranger with the newspaper headlines that segment the chapter. These headlines disrupt the text, and do not function like narration, but they inform how the narration is received. The headline “EXIT BLOOM” precedes a short passage during which Bloom leaves the scene (124). This has a literal connection to the events narrated. Although, other things happen even in this short passage, the title “EXIT BLOOM” leads to a focus on the moment Bloom leaves the scene. The headlines also segment the narration into seeming like separate episodes or events, although without the headlines interrupting the narration, it would apparently be cohesive. After the “EXIT BLOOM” passage begins “A STREET CORTÈGE” (125). This headline appears not immediately after Bloom leaves, but only after the other two men Bloom had been speaking to turned to the window to view some activity outside. So, the reader is already anticipating the focus of the scene to move away from Bloom to something else when the headline appears.

Narrators are not simply characters without bodies, they are also the mediators between the author and character. Narrators have a connection to style and literary voices. If Joyce were only interested in realism, he would not need such distinctive narrators. However, his narrators allow him to push novelistic and literary convention more than just writing an unnarrated novel would. The initial style serves the purposes of realism, it’s disorienting and only subtly narrated, so rather than an explicit plot impressed onto those chapters, they read as just muddling through someone’s ordinary morning. The first six chapters feel like a strange type of novel where Joyce is pushing against the conventions that prevent novels from realism. However, once Joyce departs from that style and *Ulysses* looks less and less like a novel in any typical way, he is pushing the boundaries of the genre more fully.

For example, when the text jumps suddenly from the familiar style of the earlier parts of the book to looking like a drama, starting in the middle of “Scylla and Charybdis.” This short interruption in the normal style makes the difference between ‘narration that is similar to stage direction’ and ‘stage direction’ much more distinct. For the first time in the novel, the dialogue is unambiguous because it’s prefaced by the name of the speaker each time. However, the artificial clarity this provides also drops the interior monologue of the initial style, so we lose the rich, wandering minds of the characters. The parenthetical directions for either the type of music or laughter alongside the dialogue gives the readers a better sense of how Joyce might want us to react or feel about what’s being said, making the effect of the narration more explicit.

There is a meta-narrative operating throughout *Ulysses* wherein the reader takes on a character-like role: the reader’s growing and changing understanding is the plot, and their eventual completion of that understanding is the climax. More than this though, the meta-narrative also operates as a commentary on literary style. Where Joyce is interested in how the novel and other literary forms interpret events, and then how we interpret both the event and the literature. This is relevant because it is part of understanding why there is something rebellious or subversive about Joyce’s narrators.

Joyce’s Narrators are Masculine Interlocutors

Narrators are disembodied, they are not identifiable as bodies but instead identified with this gap between character and author. Narrators perform this mental process of arranging the events of the novel for us and literary style is integral to how narrators perform this mediation. Because narrators have this function, there is just as much opportunity for them to reflect or

reveal values and biases as there is for characters. Joyce's narrators, significantly, reflect the bias of male Dublin.

The bias of male Dublin is found in Gerty's "heavily undermined indirect narration." This is felt in the tension between Gerty's and the narrator's idiom. The narrator of the first half of "Nausicaa" has a distinctive voice which is unusual of Joyce's typical narration, because of the pastiche technique he is using. This narrator is romantic and flowery, expressing sentiments unusual to Joyce: "Mayhaps it was this, the love that might have been, that lent to her softlyfeatured face at whiles a look, tense with suppressed meaning, that imparted a strange yearning tendency to the beautiful eyes, a charm few could resist. Why have women such eyes of mystery?" (334). This kind of language reflects Gerty's taste and style in poetry and romance novels, however the narrator cannot be identified with adopting Gerty's perspective or voice the way that narrative voices do in earlier chapters in the book. Even though the narrator has a telepathic view into Gerty's thoughts and there are moments of free indirect narration where Gerty's language briefly overtakes the narrator's. As in, "it would have served her just right if she had tripped up over something accidentally on purpose with her crooked French heels on to make her look tall and got a fine tumble" (343-4). The phrase "accidentally on purpose" in particular reflects Gerty's clumsy and conversational tone more than the narrator's saccharine voice. But, the moment also honestly reflects Gerty's embarrassment and irritation with her companions, and in similar ways the narrator bends his language slightly to accommodate Gerty's annoyance with the twins. There are other moments where Gerty is caught up in her romantic fantasies, such as about her ideal husband, where the narrator includes words like "brekky" and "wifey" (337), which are certainly Gerty's own words.

Gerty's narration is undermined and indirect in that her thoughts are never delivered without the mediation of the narrator, and the narrator obscures her. There is no interior monologue in this part of the chapter and there are moments that create a large distance between this narrator and Gerty. Sentences like "Why have women such eyes of mystery?" place the narrator outside of Gerty's experiences, making him instead a romantic observer. There is a regular use of the second person in this first half of the chapter where the person being referred to is clearly Gerty: "You are lovely, Gerty, it said" (336). This also creates the feeling that the narrator is speaking to or wishes that he was speaking to Gerty directly, even as he describes her and her actions. In these ways the narrator of "Nausicaa" is like a second voyeur in the chapter. However, the style that reflects Gerty's tastes as well as the sympathetic linguistic responses to her and the privileged access to her memories and moods, implies that the narrator is a voyeur of her own creation. Gerty imagines this voyeuristic narrator and views herself through its lens, while simultaneously projecting it onto Bloom, imagining he has the same romanticized monologue about her as the text does.

When the chapter shifts perspectives to Bloom, the narrator changes dramatically. The change comes at the same moment as the discovery of Gerty's disability, "Tight boots? No. She's lame! O!" (351). The immediate effect of this is to ruin the impression of the romantic voyeur Gerty has just created. However, the narrator of Bloom's half of this chapter is also significantly more personal and identifiable with Bloom. Interior monologue is present throughout, making it difficult to tell when Bloom or a different voice is narrating. The romance is also completely absent from the language, supplanted with far more Bloomean phrases like, "that squinty one is delicate" (351). So, the narrator of this half of the chapter is closely identifiable with Bloom's style and consciousness, and Bloom also occupies a voyeuristic role in

this chapter. It is not the case that this chapter has one singular narrator which just happens to change style dramatically once it is divorced from Gerty's idealism, but rather that Joyce is intentionally contrasting the imagined and real voyeur. Gerty and Bloom are both narrated by a male perspective, even if they are distinct.

The masculine bias of the narration of "Nausicaa" is similarly present in "Oxen of the Sun," however Joyce is criticizing it more. The narrator of this chapter also represents the decline of male literary tradition. The narrator of "Oxen" first needs to be identified. It is difficult to say whether or not "Oxen" has one stable narrative voice. The use of pastiche to travel through the stylistic development of a language creates what feels like a multiplicity of narrative voices. Stuart Gilbert created a schema of *Ulysses* based on notes Joyce sent him in their correspondence.⁵ This schema gives a tabular overview of the elements that are central to or working uniquely in each chapter, and includes a column for the stylistic technique Joyce attempted for each chapter. Based on Gilbert's schema, "Oxen" has the style of "embryonic development." From this, it could be argued that there is a single, developing narrator throughout the chapter. In the earlier parts of this chapter the narrator is consciously avoiding sharing any similarity in its language with that of the characters whose conversation it's witnessing. For example, "And he said now that he should go into that castle for to make merry with them that were there. And the traveller Leopold said that he should go otherwither for he was a man of cautels and a subtle" (369). While this is identifiable as speech happening, it's also clearly not representing actual speech, but instead the narrator's idiom alone. The narrator feels significantly more impersonal than other narrators in this text as a result of this. It's both further removed from the action of the chapter and more distinct a voice, not sharing much in common with either

⁵ For reference, Gilbert's schema is included in the appendix.

other narrative voices from the text or character's voices. However by the end of the chapter, when the narrator has caught up to the contemporary style, it is closer to the characters. Moments of untagged dialogue, "Bless me, I'm all of a wibbly wobbly" (387), reflect the character's style of speech whereas before descriptions of conversation between characters would avoid resembling natural speech or anything like dialogue.

Throughout the chapter the narrator maintains a distinctly masculine perspective which reflects the conversation between men which is being reported on. While Bloom is curious and has pity for women during childbirth, Cheryl Herr argues that, "It is instructive to view Bloom's much-praised cross-gender sympathy with Mrs. Purefoy in this equivocal contextual light, as an ideofragment of the systematic reduction of female power within the hospital system" (38). Bloom regards birth as something mysterious and worth both reverence and pity, as he reflects on the unfortunate physical conditions of pregnancy and birth. The section of "Oxen" where the narrator muses on how the sex of a child is determined and how a seemingly healthy child can die in infancy displays this honest curiosity about the process of birth, but with the sense that it is uninformed while also being absurdly over-informed. This narrator is not Bloom's internal monologue, but the questions that are being pondered reflect Bloom's probable thoughts on the subject. Near the end of this section the narrator begins to mock Simon Dedalus' attempts at scientific knowledge by calling him a "morbidminded esthete and embryo philosopher," which is an ironic reflection on the content of this entire passage. Simon Dedalus' speech is no less absurd than any of the theories put forth by the narrator.

Irony is one of Joyce's driving forces throughout "Oxen." Despite the style of the chapter being "embryonic development," the narrator does not adopt a feminine perspective. The development of the style also does not follow the birth happening in the background of the

chapter, but rather the increasing inebriation of the men. This is not entirely dissimilar to the narrator of “Nausicaa,” where the masculine perspective prevails, and this may be related to the ways in which Joyce is parodying other styles from male dominated literary traditions. There is an ironic juxtaposition of the action of the chapter and the perspective of the narrator. The majority of the chapter follows the conversation between the group of men that are drinking at this hospital. They are all discussing topics of fertility, pregnancy, and birth and arguing about different moral problems and explanations for certain birth-related phenomena (e.g. the determination of sex), but this conversation is deeply unsympathetic to the difficult birth that is happening simultaneously in this chapter. Overall, “Oxen” is filled with ironic juxtapositions and distances. There is the distance between the unsympathetic debates about matters of birth and the actual activity of birth. The distance between the style of “embryonic development” and the style’s masculine-oriented decay as a result of the narrator’s perspective aligning with the drunken conversation rather than with the birth. There is also the distance between the narrator and the characters themselves through Joyce’s stylistic experiment. The narrator of this chapter is peculiar in how uncomfortable it is in its position. It is a narrator that is unstable and removed from both character and action, and that has only an ironic relation to the expressed style of the chapter. If Joyce’s goal in this chapter is to show the failings or the decay of masculine literary tradition, then the awkward narrator of “Oxen” is itself symptomatic.

The Self-Mockery of “Ithaca”: Molly Bloom as Interrogator

Joyce’s narrators are distinctively masculine, and he undermines them to remind that this perspective is limited. One of the clearest examples of a self-undermining narrator is from “Ithaca,” a narrator which is so absurd that it cannot be taken seriously as an authority. The first

task, again, is to establish what kind of narrator “Ithaca” has. The style of “Ithaca” is described in the Gilbert schema as catechism (impersonal). This is a stylistic choice that seems as though it should reflect a kind of objective authority that will impart truths on the reader. The question then, is whose authority? The narrator is the one in control of the availability and creation of knowledge in a novel. Plock, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ulysses*, brings up a relevant discussion of authority and the control of knowledge while discussing how bodies are encoded in this text. She describes an argument Foucault makes in *The History of Sexuality* about how “institutional control of individuals was facilitated by a multiplication of discourses” (Plock 186). The example she gives to illustrate Foucault’s argument is of Gerty describing her first period in the confessional, and being patronizingly reassured by the priest, “her body becomes the site of a discursive intervention that maintains the hierarchical relationship between priest and patient” (Plock 187). The catechism style similarly draws on Catholic tradition, and fashions for itself a narrator who is an authoritative voice on whichever subject he or she chooses to describe – deciding what knowledge is. The narrator of “Ithaca” is controlling and commanding, with an incredible wealth of information available to dispense.

The narrator of “Ithaca” is undermined by being absurdly knowledgeable in way that comes across as ridiculous rather than commanding respect. The chapter begins with the question, “What parallel courses did Bloom and Stephen follow returning?” (619), which is a conspicuously pretentious way to ask the question of how they walked to Bloom’s house together. The response only escalates the unnecessarily complex language and unwanted exactness in its description. The process of walking home is described by phrases like, “at reduced pace with interruptions of halt, bearing right” or, “they crossed both the circus before George’s church diametrically, the chord in any circle being less than the arc which it subtends”

(619). This is simply unnecessary narration. The narrator's insistence on giving as much information as possible, including similar digressions throughout about topics like geometry and using over-the-top diction contribute to making this narrator comical. It is as though the narrator is attempting to show off how much he knows. The questions and answers, delivered in this style, obfuscate rather than create understanding. So, if Joyce is intentionally playing with the concepts of discursive authority and omniscient narration, then it is to poke fun at the uselessness of this kind of knowledge and narration.

The narrator of this chapter is identifiable with authorial power because of its peculiar omniscience, so the narrator of "Ithaca" being undermined is also a way for Joyce to playfully undermine himself.⁶ This narrator borrows the authorial powers of being able to make things come into existence within the world of the novel. For example, when the narrator commands "Compile the budget for 16 June 1904" (664), a budget springs into existence. At the same time this is also the type of omniscient narrator that has knowledge of any irrelevant detail about the scenes or characters being described which could have been true in the novel and simply not reported on. This reflects a kind of authorial power of inventing details and further background that are simply not necessary to actually write into the story, but the narrator evidences this power through the truly absurd amount of information that this narrator provides. As in response to "What points of contact existed between these languages and between the people who spoke them?" (641), where the narrator provides a nearly full page paragraph of information both truly

⁶ In many ways this narrator resembles the type of 'omniscient' narrator that Culler rejects in "The Literary in Theory." Culler's argument, in rejecting this type of narrator, is that people are assuming the existence of a narrator with mental abilities which are superior to a typical human, so the narrator is projected to have some kind of god-like powers which are labeled as omniscience. While Culler is pushing against the concept of omniscient narration as a useful general concept, I would not be surprised if Joyce were intentionally playing with the concept of a god-like narration technique.

factual and factual only within the novel but that all is beyond the normal scope of the novel. Finally, there is a sense that the narrator is privy to the minds and thoughts of the characters in a very impersonal way, as though he is a remote telepathic observer of their inner lives: “What, the enclosures of reticence removed, were their respective parentages?” (634). What is key here is the phrase “the enclosures of reticence removed,” implying that the narrator is able to access information that both Stephen and Bloom have in their memories, but are unwilling to bring up in conversation. The narrator can both access this private knowledge and anticipate what this conversation, were it to occur, would reveal about each of them. The catechism style would lend itself to a narrator with god-like powers and authority, and Joyce is highlighting the absurdity of this style of narration.

However, the narrator of “Ithaca” is not as impersonal or distinct from the characters as it seems it ought to be; the narrator is increasingly author-like rather than god-like. The narrator of “Ithaca” is reminiscent of a moment in the narration of “Calypso.” Monika Fludernik in her essay “Narrative and Its Development in *Ulysses*,” argues that there is not one distinct initial style for the early episodes of *Ulysses*, but instead that the seemingly similar chapters have narrators that draw on the style and voices of their primary characters in various ways. She points to the moment in “Calypso” where Bloom is reaching for his hat, described as “His hand took his hat from the peg over his initialed heavy overcoat and his lost property office secondhand waterproof” (Joyce 55). Fludernik emphasizes how in this narration, “Bloom’s most casual movements are recorded with circumstantiality, [and] this report is also complemented by extensive extracts from his seemingly quite banal mental notes” (22). This description is not entirely dissimilar to the tone and attitude of the narrator of “Ithaca,” which also describes movements in a meandering way and adds reflections about banal information onto these reports.

There is also an ironic distance between Bloom and the narrator of “Calypso” in the way the action being described is performed not by Bloom but by his hand, an ironic distance which the impersonal narrator of “Ithaca” replicates. An argument made by Kenner in “Joyce’s Voices” that “Eumaeus” is perhaps narrated by Bloom’s voice, displaying Bloom’s penchant for polysyllabic words, would also support the possibility that there is something of Bloom’s narrative voice present in the voice of the narrator of “Ithaca.” This chapter’s narrator also has rare wittier moments, where Stephen’s speech feels echoed, such as “What were then the alternatives before the, premeditatedly (respectively) and inadvertently, keyless couple? To enter or not to enter. To knock or not to knock” (621). As great as the distance between the narrator and the scenes it is witnessing initially appears to be, it still cannot help drawing on the conversation of the two characters it is primarily observing and being infected by their language. It may be the case that the over-knowing and powerful narrator of Ithaca, in its unempathetic and yet infected manner of speech, is Joyce choosing to self-consciously end his novel by making fun of his own authorial voice.

Finally, Joyce gives the final word to Molly. What does it mean to say Molly is the interrogator of the text? After Stephen leaves and Bloom gets into bed with Molly, the narrator reports: “What followed this silent action? Somnolent invocation, less somnolent recognition, incipient excitation, catechetical interrogation” (686). Following this, in describing Bloom recounting the events of the day to Molly the narrator repeatedly refers to the pair as gendered narrator and listener: “the female issue of narrator and listener,” “females (listener and issue),” and “feminine interrogation concerning the masculine destination” (688). What’s fascinating is this author-narrator designating one of its characters as another narrator, and the other character as both interrogator and listener. While in this situation it is natural to think of Bloom and Molly

as a kind of narrator and interrogator, that relationship is not reflected in the style of this chapter. This narratorial voice is not attempting to reflect the actions of its characters, and the ‘asker’ and ‘answerer’ of “Ithaca” are not Bloom and Molly. Because the style of both the questions and answers are so similar it seems more likely that there is only one voice narrating “Ithaca,” Molly’s voice is never present in the style of the narration the way Bloom’s arguably is, and the narrator definitely has more knowledge than either of them.

Regardless, the positing of Molly as both listener and interrogator has interesting implications, particularly as she has not yet been but will immediately after this moment be a narrator herself. Plock, in her explanation of Gerty’s being subject to the powers of hierarchical discursive interventions, also describes how Molly resists a similar situation. While Molly describes an unpleasant experience to her male priest, rather than simply telling him the story outright, Plock argues that she plays dumb and refuses to give him the answers he wants. Thus Molly forces him to ask more explicit questions to get the information out of her and engage actively in a dialogue, rather than simply handing down the correct authoritative truth (Plock 187). This is another reason to feel that Molly is the subversive feminine voice in this novel. That she is the “listener” of the novel, listening to Bloom’s account of the day’s events, places her in a central position in the way the narrative is formed for her. While she is also the novel’s “interrogator,” asking questions of Bloom and demanding he tell the story in the first place, as in Plock’s argument, the duality of narrator and interrogator create an engaged dialogue in a way that narrator and mere listener do not. In this way, she takes on what ought to be Joyce’s role of coaxing the story into existence.

Molly gets the literal final word of the text in her soliloquy in “Penelope,” which I will return to in the next chapter. I want to emphasize here that “Penelope” is embodied, while the

narrators are not, it is feminine and not masculine, and it is unmediated, since it is not narrated. Joyce opens this novel with the more realistic initial style, then experiments with his narrators and pushes the boundaries of conventional novel form with them. The effect of Molly's soliloquy coming after all of this is not a return to the less mediated and perhaps less transgressive initial style, but another departure for the novel. It is her soliloquy that comes unmediated from her body which inscribes the final tone of rebellion in *Ulysses*.

Three

The Textual Embodiment of Maternal Rebellion

“Every proof was covered with additional text...they are all adorned with the Joycean rockets and myriads of stars guiding the printers to words and phrases all around the margins.”

— Sylvia Beach

The language of manuscripts, books, texts and writing in general is littered with body metaphors. We can speak of an author’s “body of work” or the “body of an essay,” or of features of a text like headers and footnotes. A guiding curiosity of this paper is to ask what sort of object the body of a novel is. The first thing to note, is there is a divorce between the actual physicality of a text and its body, i.e. *Ulysses* is not the book I have in my hands, but some text that’s been reproduced in many books.

So the text itself seems to be what is of interest in thinking about a novel’s body. Primarily, this means the plot, structure, and stylistic choices of the story. Also relevant however, is the creation of the text and additional texts which inform how readers appreciate the structure and body of it. Joyce was constantly tinkering with the text and it is probably miraculous a final version was even printed. His publisher, Sylvia Beach, remarked, “up to the last minute, the long suffering printers in Dijon were getting back these proofs, with new things to be inserted somehow, whole paragraphs, even, dislocating pages” (Beach 58). Along with the initial publishing of the text, there is also the creation of paratextual elements to consider: “One does

not always know if one should consider that they belong to the text or not, but in any case they surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to *make it present*” (Genette 261). Joyce’s conversations and letters about the book after its initial publication, particularly documents like the Gilbert schema that have dramatically affected the way the text is interpreted. These things are not present in the text itself, but taken for granted as interpretive tools, and taken with a kind of authority. “*Ulysses* is perhaps *the* modern novel above all others that readers consciously enter through critical ‘pre-texts’ and read by rereading” (Callow 152). The body of *Ulysses*, then, is something larger and more fractured than any singular book.

Joyce was not continually updating the text of *Ulysses* conscious of the full effect this would have on its interpretation. He would not have been intentionally undermining the finality of *Ulysses* or the authority of his voice, instead he was motivated only the passion he had for writing it. However, the runaway effect of his actions impacting the interpretation of *Ulysses* more than he could have anticipated is what allows Joyce to be a feminist ally in his writing. Callow makes this tension clear: “Joyce was capable of structuring the narrative of *Ulysses* so as to undermine authoritative male voices and the patriarchal symbolic order that they represent through the use of initially discredited and later vindicated female voices while at the same time indicating to Frank Budgen that women’s clothes interested him more than women themselves” (Callow 161).

The themes of the maternal body that this essay has explored so far are reproduced in the text itself. Joyce cannot fully claim ownership of *Ulysses*, and the text embodies the outside voice of the feminine creative. In this way, *Ulysses* itself is a maternal body, because of how on a structural level it is defined by and modeled after the feminine and maternal.

The Bodily Voice of Molly Bloom

The last section left off with Molly as the interrogator of *Ulysses*, and in reading “Penelope” I am going to discuss Molly’s soliloquy and consider her character as a synecdoche for the novel,⁷ to begin developing the maternal body of the text itself. The “Penelope” chapter of *Ulysses* is written with the female interior monologue style according to Gilbert’s schema. This is in contrast to Stephen’s male interior monologue in the earlier chapter “Proteus.” While the monologue in general seems to more aptly describe mental processes than bodily, Molly’s monologue is undeniably rooted in the experience of her body. In Stephen’s monologue this is not as obviously the case. Either Stephen is particularly dissociated from his body, or this is possibly a contrast in the gendered style of the monologues. It’s possible that Joyce wrote Molly’s monologue with as much embodiment as he did because of a sexist bias, critical responses to Molly as unfortunately anti-intellectual and overly sexual would reflect this. Regardless of if Molly’s monologue is exceptional because of Joyce’s bias or his intention, Joyce is not a dualist and acknowledges that there is a necessary connection between mental and bodily states.

The most initially striking feature of the style of Molly’s monologue is the near complete lack of punctuation, her thoughts spilling forth undeterred in eight lengthy sentences. This gives the chapter a loose and unstructured feeling, and significantly affecting the reading pace of the chapter. Rather than punctuation guiding readers to pause, the chapter never stops but rolls

⁷ Deidre Lynch describes characters as synecdoche for the novel in terms of epistolary fiction, however I think this concept holds for Molly and *Ulysses* because of the uniquely bodily nature of the work.

forward at an easy pace. Readers are guided through Molly's thoughts through the repetition of the phrases "yes" and "yes because" rather than punctuation, which gives the chapter as a whole a rhythmic quality. The rhythmic, free-flowing conscience of this part of the text arguably reflects either Molly's mind as she drifts off to sleep, or her bodily state as she has just begun menstruating. I think Joyce would have us think of both possibilities, and would have us connect the physical experience to the mental. The description of the style of Molly's monologue so far closely aligns with her description of realizing her period has begun, "I want to get up a minute if im let wait O Jesus wait yes that thing has come on me yes now wouldnt that afflictu ou ... have we too much blood up in us or what O patience above its pouring out of me like the sea" (719). The repetition of "wait" imagines a kind of pause Molly is wishing for but she cannot stop or control the flow of her body any more than of her unpunctuated thoughts. The "pouring out of me like the sea" is reminiscent of the pace of the chapter, not just that it is ceaseless but also rhythmic. Similarly, she later attempts to stop her thoughts and drift off to sleep, "let me see if I can doze off 1 2 3 4 5" (730), but her attempt to stop her thoughts fails and she immediately returns to thinking about flowers. Moments where the letters of one word run into an earlier, "afflicty ou," happen a few times throughout Molly's monologue. Each time it creates the feeling that her thoughts are moving too quickly to come out quite properly, instead accidentally catching on each other and clumping together randomly. This also reflects the kind of mental tiredness Molly is experiencing that she is slurring her thoughts occasionally.

The Feminine Creative

The importance of the maternal body is not at all limited to "Penelope," however. According to Miles Hanley's concordance to *Ulysses*, the word "mother" occurs 154 times in

this book (122 “m/Mother and 32 ‘mother’s’, ‘mothers’, ‘motherhood’ etc). The frequency with which Stephen is thinking about his mother in the initial chapters is related to his grief, his thoughts are continually returning to memories of his mother and attempts to understand her or the concept of her role in abstract ways that he cannot quite connect to. The image of her ghost reappears, at length, at least four times in these chapters, along with other references to the prayer said at her death and more general considerations Stephen has of mothers. The ways Stephen’s thoughts keep curving back onto this subject and he is unable to escape it seem like a reasonable characterization given how recent her death was for him and the emotional state he must be in as people are accusing him of either disrespecting or even outright killing her. These chapters also include most of the few instances of the word “omphalos,” which Joyce uses in only intriguing ways. First in a rather enigmatic statement, “To ourselves . . . new paganism . . . omphalos” (7), which is ambiguously Stephen’s thought on the people making a lot of noise outside, or simply the narrator interjecting. The second reference is spoken by Mulligan, describing the tower in which they live, “ours is the omphalos” (17). And the last, in Stephen’s monologue after seeing the midwife. He thinks, “Gaze in your omphalos” (38), and then imagines the ability to call Eve through the intertwined cables of umbilical cords reaching back from children to mothers through all time, through the navel. The last use of the word “omphalos” in this section of the novel is the most clearly related to the considerations of motherhood and its unique positionality.

While the word literally means navel, which is reasonable in the context Stephen uses it, it also means “the center or hub of something.” This interpretation explains the description of the tower in which he lives as the omphalos, as the central and perhaps first tower of its kind. However, it also can be related to Stephen’s thought processes in these chapters, as his thoughts

meander and branch out and yet continually return to his memories of his mother and his origin. The word “omphalos” only occurs one other time in *Ulysses*, in “Oxen,” describing a hypothetical, ideal fertility farm. “Oxen,” which is perhaps the most easily associated chapter with motherhood, and the topic of an operation to promote women’s fertility only relate the word more closely to the idea of mothers. Considering that the word ‘omphalos’ only occurs with any frequency in these chapters where Stephen is consumed by the thoughts and memories of his mother, it seems as though there is a close association between the two concepts for Joyce. Acknowledging also that he chooses to begin his novel with the topic of motherhood, and thinking of the definition of omphalos as the center of not just Stephen’s thoughts, but as a general hub of things, Joyce may be making a move early in *Ulysses* to establish the narrative importance of mothers in general. If the maternal body is the omphalos then she is the center of this novel; the center of body, thought, and creation.

Within “Oxen” Joyce is playing with a dichotomy of female experience and knowledge and male speech and narration. The subtle introduction of a female voice or creativity obscured by male discourse. This is not a larger feminist commentary on Joyce’s part, but rather another moment of his rebelliousness. Declan Kiberd in his annotations on *Ulysses*, comments on this episode:

[Oxen], in general, is troubled by intimations of Western decline – the rise and fall of English literary tradition; the rise and fall of an Irish nation, whose abject women embrace foreign invaders while their menfolk emigrate, leaving in their wake men who are not proudly potent but seed-spillers, fornicators or child killers. The sneering attitudes of the medical students to birth is mitigated only by Bloom’s empathy with Mrs. Purefoy. Bloom believes that the young medicals are secretly unnerved by women’s superior

power in the crucial phases of life, and that they take their revenge in nervous jokes and drunken jibes. Whether this is true or not, the pervasive impression is of a *male* civilization in decline (1113).

Joyce at least seems to appreciate there is something powerful about the ability to give birth, even as he sidelines that aspect of the action in this chapter because his primary goal is offering criticism of male Dublin. His rebellious criticism against patriarchal convention outstrips him, however, and while it may not have been his goal to empower female voices for their own sake in this chapter, he succeeds in doing so.

Cixous' theory of *l'écriture féminine* is most often brought up in discussions of Molly's monologue in "Penelope," but it also provides an interesting perspective for the dichotomy of male and female in "Oxen." At the end of her essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous writes, "Wherever history still unfolds as the history of death, she does not tread . . . all that comes from a period in time governed by phallogocentric values." The "she" in this case being any woman who writes. Cixous is arguing that while the male centered literary tradition which has existed is a decline, a history of death, female writing will instead be of growth and generation. This history of death is the same literary tradition governed by phallogocentric values that Joyce is criticizing and writing the death of in this episode. And it raises the question of what to make of the setting of the maternity hospital, the action of the chapter being a birth.

If this declining masculine literary tradition is not where the women of "Oxen" tread, then where are they? They are creating something new. The equating of female creativity with pregnancy and birth might be a fairly essentialist and reductive view for Joyce to take, but Cixous makes similar moves in her essay. She describes that *l'écriture féminine* is generally an act of writing and reclaiming the body, and links the acts of birth and writing herself. She writes,

“among them is the gestation drive – just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood” (891). Joyce is playing with these ideas himself. He considers the role of mothers and the power of birth quite seriously throughout the novel, particularly in “Oxen” when his narrators begin invoking Christian imagery as they meditate over these concepts: “In woman’s womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation” (Joyce 373). The Pentecost imagery of the chapter allows Joyce to consider themes about linguistic creativity, by referencing the idea of the “word” of creation and the eventual speaking in tongues.⁸ While male literary civilization is in decline, something new and something literary is about to be created.

The Pentecost is most affirmed at the end of the chapter. The religious language is in full effect just after Mrs. Purefoy gives birth: “so and not otherwise was the transformation, violent and instantaneous, upon the utterance of the Word” (401). So, the act of God’s creation and birth are linked. Emphasizing perhaps the special power of birth and the use of the “Word” again reminds that there is a metaphorical creation happening as well in this moment. After all, what is the creation of a new character except for more words? After her successful birth the group of men this chapter is watching leave the maternity hospital to a dewy night: “The air is impregnated with raindew moisture, life essence” (402). Creativity is bursting out through the world so potently that the setting itself is pregnant, filled with life. As far as the Pentecost allusion goes, this is the moment at which the breaking into tongues would occur also, evidenced perhaps by the men’s chaotic, drunken babbling. There is another link between the maternal

⁸ Harry Blamires discusses the Pentecost allusion of this chapter at more length in *The New Bloomsday Book*.

body and creativity in: “Mother’s milk, Purefoy, the milk of human kin, milk too of those burgeoning stars overhead, rutilant in thin rainvapour” (403). Cixous also references breast milk as symbolic of the kind of generative force of creativity specific to women’s writing, “She writes in white ink” (881). The creative feminine is deeply embodied as it is understood here, it is a part of the maternal body. It is subversive because it challenges a masculine creative tradition which has excluded women and failed to believe in their creative ability.

The Maternal Structure of Ulysses

What does it mean to say that Ulysses has a body? Well, Joyce literally assigns organs to each chapter of the book. Somewhat curiously, Gilbert’s schema would seem to suggest the book itself is not only body, but that it is a woman’s body. Scanning the ‘organ’ column reveals that there are no distinctively male or masculine organs of the text, yet there is the distinctively female ‘womb’ of “Oxen of the Sun,” and, arguably, the ‘flesh’ of “Penelope” as well. Possibly, the “Lotus-Eaters” chapter could embody the male with its assigned organ ‘genitals.’ However, the mere fact that this is left androgynous seems to suggest otherwise. “Lotus-Eaters” is also dominated by floral imagery and motifs. Even Bloom’s penis is described at the end of the chapter as a “languid floating flower” (83). Flowers are a classically yonic symbol, this emphasizes a kind of androgyny or even emasculation, rather than a clear embodiment of the male form in the text. In technique as well, there is the male monologue of “Proteus,” but it is balanced by the female monologue of “Penelope.” And again, “Oxen” is markedly female with its style of “embryonic development.” The monologue of “Penelope” is also distinctively female in the way the feminine is embodied in it, whereas the male monologue of “Proteus” is

disembodied. Finally, “Oxen of the Sun” indicates not just a female body, but a maternal body as well.

Ulysses is not just a female or feminine, but a maternal body. The maternal body requires being subversive to a received patriarchal order, or at least unintelligible to that order, as well as somehow exceptional, which *Ulysses* is. Recalling in the first chapter of this essay that Molly subverts male Dublin, then male authority, and finally Joyce’s authority itself, *Ulysses* operates similarly.

First, how does *Ulysses* subvert the attitudes of male Dublin? On a plot and structure level, the events of the book are caused by female characters. It is women who write Bloomsday. Women are the cause of the plot and create the structure of this novel. Heather Callow makes this argument:

Molly is the chief attraction of the day; it is she who determines the shape of Bloomsday, which is lived out in reaction to her agenda, beginning and ending in her presence. (It is interesting to note that the other important event of Bloom’s day – his meeting with Stephen – is also precipitated by a woman, Josie Breen, who mentions Mrs. Purefoy’s difficult labor, a remark that sends him to the maternity hospital where he encounters Stephen). (160)

So it is the voices of women that are instrumental in creating Bloomsday. While an initial take on *Ulysses* would suggest that it is about Bloom and Stephen’s meeting and their relationship, it’s the women in Bloom’s life that motivate his movement and his actions. I would argue Stephen’s movements in his section of the novel are motivated to a degree by his grief over his mother. By having women be the instigators of the plot of the novel I think is another way Joyce is subtly

challenging male literary tradition. Where traditionally the position of a woman in male-centric literature is to be a site for a male character to act on, in *Ulysses* men react to women. Joyce's effect is subtle, "muted" but creates an inverse effect. It's difficult to say that "Penelope" is an example of *l'écriture féminine* because of the fact that it is male authored, but that Joyce writes from this perspective for the goal of subverting reader expectations and literary convention could make it succeed.

Second, how does *Ulysses* subvert the attitudes of male authority and literary convention? Callow argues that Joyce is subtly using the voices of his female characters to challenge the authority of the standard, patriarchal view. According to Callow, he achieves this through subverting reader expectations – by placing true discourse in the voices of women and having them supported only by the muted testimony of "Ithaca," such that readers have to first take seriously the things said by women in order to be rewarded with evidence. This challenge throughout the novel comes through alterity, "One of Joyce's consistent interests in the novel lies in the voice outside, the alternative voice that testifies to alternative realities co-existing alongside the narrative reality of the moment" (Callow 161). Callow cites "Oxen" as one example of this particular phenomena. The feminine creative of "Oxen" suggests there is something particularly other, but also powerful about maternal bodies.

Ulysses also subverts Joyce himself. Importantly, the things which most clearly give the text a body are either hidden in the text or external to it, which relates to a kind of 'being outside' of the masculine authority of literary convention, authorship, etc. Patrick McGee summarizes the effect of these external texts:

Joyce has complicated the interpretation of his book by constructing frames of reference whose status is unstable. He deposits these outlines – the schemata with titles, symbols,

organs, and so on—in a space proper neither to the author nor to the text. By doing so he calls the authority of his intentions and the finality of his signature into question (3).

These things which give a feminine body or form to *Ulysses* come from these encoded or paratextual sources which “call into question the finality of Joyce’s signature.” This undermines Joyce’s own authorial integrity, in a way that reinforces what the “Ithaca” chapter does with its self-mockery.

Callow’s argument ends with accepting that Joyce was only challenging patriarchal authority through using “voices outside,” however this process also inevitably brings those voices inside. I am not suggesting that Joyce substitutes for actual women writers in any feminist project, but that he does move the literary creative authority from man to the maternal woman. Molly Bloom is the voice of *Ulysses*. The kind of rebellion Joyce performed in this novel, because of the form it took, has consequences greater than his intent. If Joyce cannot sign this novel, then Molly Bloom can.

Conclusion

"Funny, I always read Molly Bloom's soliloquy as the tirade of a vicious hysterical ego-monster. But I guess there's, like, different ways of interpreting it."

— Alun Richards, YouTube comment

When the *People of the State of New York v. Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap* banned the continuation of the publishing of *Ulysses* because of its obscenity, the decision was based on reactions to the “Nausicaa” episode. Twelve years later, *The United States of America v. One Book Called “Ulysses”* would reverse this decision and accept the book back into the country. This time, the trial was based on the book as a whole, but Molly’s soliloquy played a particularly significant role in the debate. Kevin Birmingham summarizes the main issue at stake during the trial:

Since the government acknowledged the book’s literary merit only to contend that it did nothing to mitigate its filth, [Judge] Woolsey had to pit the virtue of literature against the vice of obscenity and declare a victor. He had no intention of categorically legalizing Molly’s coarse language. If *Ulysses* was going to be permissible in the United States, he would have to assert that the novel was transcendent, that it turned filth into art. (326)

Judge Woolsey decided that yes, the book was transcendent in its filth. It’s telling that “Penelope” is where the tension between the “filthy” language and the art of *Ulysses* is strongest,

that this chapter played such a key role in the trial. It was the subversive maternal body in Molly's speech which decided the lasting impact of *Ulysses*.

I have left Joyce largely out of the picture in this essay, considering his intentions in writing mostly to get past them. Birmingham also says of the trial, "The decision stemmed from Joyce's sincerity. Judge Woolsey peered into the text and imagined James Joyce, a half-blind artist, compelled by nature to say everything, and everything, including decorum, was subservient to his design" (329). Joyce's artistic integrity motivated him to write this book which pushed against convention. He wasn't trying to fix American obscenity law when he was just writing about Dublin. Regardless, the effect of Joyce's novel is the result of his sincerity, which has taken *Ulysses* beyond challenging norms and made it into a book which breaks and changes them. This is how *Ulysses*, the text itself, is a subversive maternal body.

The project of searching for the body of a text owes a lot to the peculiarities of Joyce: it would likely not be fruitful to search for the lungs of a novel in most cases. My hope is that there is a reason to look at novels (and other works of literature, but particularly novels) in terms of how they were created and how they have been modified after being published. Looking at novels in this way provides another interpretative and contextualizing framework to gain an understanding of a text that goes beyond methods like its historical context or biographical details of its author. The goal of this approach is to gain a holistic sense of how the physical existence of a text affects the stories and the ideas it contains.

I admit there are also things which make the body of *Ulysses* "other," which are not attributable to a maternal body, necessarily. For example, the scope of the allusions in the text which are typically beyond any one reader's immediate knowledge. In some loose sense perhaps the fact that this feature of the novel encourages collaboration and rereading could be argued to

be part of a kind of feminist project more generally, but I have no desire to make that kind of stretch. Still, the fact that the density of the book means it is rarely approached blindly, but with some kind of pre-text or critical companion text causes the body of *Ulysses* to be altered and take on a less conventional form.

A decision like the one made in *The United States of America v. One Book Called "Ulysses"* asks the question of who we should trust when we read a novel (to give us information, to make sense of it, to prove that it's truly literature and, not, say, pornography). *Ulysses'* masculine narrators question authority by being authority. The answer *Ulysses* gives is, do not just listen to authoritative voices, because they are not necessarily trustworthy. But listen also to the voices challenging that authority, voices like Gerty, Josie, and Molly. The undermined and obscured feminine voices of the novel are more difficult to find, but were eventually crucial to establishing the book's artistic merit.

Joyce, by putting authority into the voices of women, brings those voices inside the scope of the novel. He gives them a credibility in literature. The maternal subversive smuggles a critical view into a book which on the surface might be comfortable within a masculine literary tradition. What follows from the challenge of the maternal subversive is the feminine creative. Judge Woolsey described the value of Joyce's artistry as a compulsion "to say everything." And Cixous echoes a similar sentiment, "When I write, it's everything that we don't know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be" (893). Joyce, through writing "everything," and *Ulysses* through bringing literary merit to the female voice and body in a way that forced a system to accept it, surmounted one barrier to the new women's writing.

Appendix

TITLE	SCENE	HOUR	ORGAN	ART	COLOUR	SYMBOL	TECHNIC
1. Telemachus	The Tower	8 a.m.		Theology	White, gold	Heir	Narrative (young)
2. Nestor	The School	10 a.m.		History	Brown	Horse	Catechism (personal)
3. Proteus	The Strand	11 a.m.		Philology	Green	Tide	Monologue (male)
4. Calypso	The House	8 a.m.	Kidney	Economics	Orange	Nymph	Narrative (mature)
5. Lotus-eaters	The Bath	10 a.m.	Genitals	Botany, Chemistry		Eucharist	Narcissism
6. Hades	The Graveyard	12 a.m.	Heart	Religion	White, black	Caretaker	Incubism
7. Aeolus	The Newspaper	12 noon	Lungs	Rhetoric	Red	Editor	Enthymemic
8. Lestrygonians	The Lunch	1 p.m.	Esophagus	Architecture		Constables	Peristaltic
9. Scylla and Charybdis	The Library	2 p.m.	Brain	Literature		Stratford, London	Dialectic
10. Wandering Rocks	The Streets	3 p.m.	Blood	Mechanics		Citizens	Labyrinth
11. Sirens	The Concert Room	4 p.m.	Ear	Music		Barmaids	Fuga per canonem
12. Cyclops	The Tavern	5 p.m.	Muscle	Politics		Fenian	Gigantism
13. Nausicaa	The Rocks	8 p.m.	Eye, Nose	Painting	Grey, blue	Virgin	Tumescence, detumescence
14. Oxen of the Sun	The Hospital	10 p.m.	Womb	Medicine	White	Mothers	Embryonic development
15. Circe	The Brothel	12 midnight	Locomotor Apparatus	Magic		Whore	Hallucination
16. Eumaeus	The Shelter	1 a.m.	Nerves	Navigation		Sailors	Narrative (old)
17. Ithaca	The House	2 a.m.	Skeleton	Science		Comets	Catechism (impersonal)
18. Penelope	The Bed		Flesh			Earth	Monologue (female)

Stuart Gilbert's schema to *Ulysses*, published in *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study*.

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