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Joyce's Sexual Manifesto: Sex and Sexuality in James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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Abstract

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By Alexandra B. Prebul

This thesis explores sex and corporeality in *Ulysses*, providing a multidisciplinary interpretation of sexuality and sexual expression in James Joyce's early modernist text. Joyce weaves the theme of sexuality throughout *Ulysses*, particularly in the episodes "Calypso," "Lotus Eaters," "Lestrygonians," "Nausicaa," "Circe," "Ithaca," and "Penelope." During the day of June 16, 1904, Leopold Bloom harbors anxiety about his wife's infidelity, and, instead of taking preventative measures to thwart the affair, Bloom conducts his daily duties and engages in sexual encounters that constitute his own sort of adultery. Joyce's incorporation of sexuality not only generates questions about Bloom's morality and character, but the motif of sexuality also highlights the relationship between religion and sexuality, the dichotomy of masculinity and femininity, and sexual practices, such as voyeurism and masochism, in the novel. Even though Joyce presents sexuality through the manifestations of masochism, adultery, voyeurism, and masturbation, I rationalize his incorporation of these socially and religiously condemned behaviors, proffering that these interactions in the text benefit the characters and serve as portals for self-discovery. Not only does the integration of sexual expression challenge society's established conventions and standards, but sexuality in *Ulysses* also undermines the social stereotypes that categorize masculinity and femininity in patriarchal society. Therefore, this double-valenced project examines Joyce's erotic discourse in *Ulysses* and also reveals the deconstructive elements that subvert early twentieth century gender-based stereotypes.

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Introduction

Project

This thesis explores sex and corporeality in *Ulysses*, providing a multidisciplinary interpretation of sexuality and sexual expression in James Joyce's early modernist text. Even though Joyce presents sexuality through the manifestations of masochism, adultery, voyeurism, and masturbation, I rationalize his incorporation of these socially and religiously condemned behaviors, proffering that these interactions in the text benefit the characters and serve as portals for self-discovery. Not only does the integration of sexual expression challenge society's established conventions and standards, but sexuality in *Ulysses* also undermines the social stereotypes that categorize masculinity and femininity in patriarchal society. Therefore, this double-valenced project will examine Joyce's erotic discourse in *Ulysses* as well as reveal the deconstructive elements that subvert early twentieth century gender-based stereotypes.

"I feel that more and more the only subject is love." – Salman Rushdie [1]

Whether James Joyce writes about paternity, nationalism, religion, or romance, the motif of love pervades the text of *Ulysses*. Rushdie succinctly recognizes the integrality of love to art, and thus identifies love as a principal subject of writing. Joyce demonstrates this artistic propensity for the subject of love when Stephen contemplates, "love, yes. Word known to all men. *Amor vero aliquid alicui bonum vult unde et ea quae*

[1] Salman Rushdie, "The Only Subject is Love: Imagining Better Worlds" (in lecture at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, March 26, 2010).

concupiscimus…" (*Ulysses,* 161).[2] This universal nature of love and compassion surfaces in all human expression and art. Even the date of this twenty-four hour novel alludes to the motif of love. Joyce immortalized the day of his first date with Nora Barnacle, June 16, 1904, by setting the entire novel to the course of that one day. Joyce additionally frames the story around the deficient marriage between Molly and Leopold Bloom. Even though the basis of the text hinges on a troubled marriage, *Ulysses* still emblematizes the "love text" because the characters are constantly seeking romantic fulfillment.

While love often manifests as familial love or religious devotion throughout the text, it also refers to sexuality and sexual expression. The central love plot in *Ulysses* revolves around Molly and Leopold Bloom, and the difficulties of their marriage ensue from their inability to experience emotional and physical pleasure with each other; the text documents Molly and Bloom's separate explorations of romantic affection during the course of the day. The catechism of the episode "Ithaca" verifies Bloom and Molly's failed coitus: "there remained a period of 10 years, 5 months and 18 days during which carnal intercourse had been incomplete, without ejaculation of semen within the natural female organ" (*Ulysses*, 605). Molly and Bloom engage in coitus, but Bloom fails to reach his ejaculatory climax during their intercourse. Joyce does not employ sex in *Ulysses* as a rectification of Molly and Bloom's marriage; sexuality and sexual expression instead serve the manifold purpose of providing temporary titillation as well as deconstructing the gender roles that comprise the dynamic of heterosexual erotic encounters.

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[2] "Love truly wishes some good to another and it is that which we all desire."

Love, through the vantage of sexuality, serves as a creative outlet for Joyce. Richard Brown purports that Joyce's work compares to that of psychoanalyst Havelock Ellis because "both of them were prepared to look at sexual anomaly not just as matter for clinical examination but, to some extent, as an aspect of human creativity and imagination."[3] *Ulysses*, for Joyce, was to become a new register of sexual expression, introducing an innovative platform for erotic discourse; thus sexuality transcends anatomical analyses to a literary documentation of human carnal desires. Love and sexuality as portals for creation also correspond to "Hermetic science…[which] maintains that the process of creation, 'physical, mental or spiritual,' is not possible without the interaction of male and female principles."[4] This doctrine suggests that creativity and art stem from the relationships and interactions between men and women. This concept of sexuality and sexual expression as the basis for creative evolution aptly depicts the process by which Joyce presents *Ulysses* because the narrative of *Ulysses* often derives from the ways in which the characters seek romantic or sexual fulfillment; Bloom's behavior during the day often results from his participation or lack of participation in sexual encounters.

During the course of the day, Bloom's wife commits adultery with Blazes Boylan, and Bloom also engages in voyeuristic, masturbatory, and masochistic sexual practices. Even though Bloom participates in these sexual encounters, Joyce renders Bloom as a sympathetic, likeable, and relatable character. Joyce dilutes the text's overt eroticism and sexual documentation with the tender gentility of Bloom's disposition. Because Bloom

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[3] Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 85.

[4] Sheldon R. Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1980), 175.

represents the "everyman," he is a multivalent character whose ambiguous sexuality mirrors his equivocal religious devotion. Bloom is an Irish citizen, father and husband, but he also, paradoxically, possesses maternal, feminine, and pacifistic qualities. On June 16th, Bloom attends a friend's funeral, is cognizant of his wife's infidelity, becomes the victim of a quarrel in Barney Kiernan's pub, and often mourns his son's death. In order to temper the turbulence and grievances of his day, Bloom engages in sexual encounters. Tensions arise, however, between Bloom's sexual expression, religious doctrines, and the societal expectations of sexuality.

Joyce was Catholic and received a Jesuit education, and *Ulysses* harbors many religious references and allusions. Bloom's religious devotion does not solely belong to Judaism, even though he proclaims himself to be Jewish. Bloom actually represents the all-encompassing pious individual because he is at times Jewish and Catholic, and, in "Lotus Eaters," his behavior evokes Buddhism as he sits Buddha-like in the bath. In this ambiguous representation of Bloom's piety as well as the juxtaposition of sexuality and religion, Joyce attempts to redefine sexuality in terms of religious devotion and spirituality. Declan Kiberd asserts that Joyce "did wish to free the religious mind from its entrapment in discredited creeds and outworm social systems. He wished for a church which would cease trying to regulate human behavior and would return instead to studying man's relationship to G-d and fate."[5] Richard Brown exaggerates this concept of Joyce freeing himself from the constraints of religious doctrines and purports that Joyce's characters, Bloom and Stephen, "disbelieve in religion but believe in sex."[6] Joyce does not necessarily denounce religion, but he instead substitutes his belief system and

[5] Declan Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us* (London, United Kingdom: Faber and Faber), 255.
[6] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 16.

spirituality with his devotion to sexuality and his corporeal existence. In *Ulysses*, Joyce adopts an individualistic approach to religious practice and devotion, and he similarly does this with societal expectations. The strict confines and limitations that comprise religious practice and societal standards at the turn of the twentieth century prove to be too suffocating for Joyce's expression of individuality and his acceptance of human carnal desire; in the text, Joyce not only juxtaposes religion and eroticism, but he incorporates unconventional sexual practice in order to undermine societal and religious constraints.

By challenging the concept of sexuality at the turn of the twentieth century, Joyce uses Bloom as a vehicle through which he can express his desire to ground his belief system in the corporeal. To both Joyce and Bloom, sexuality is a "natural act of a nature expressed or understood executed in natured nature by natural creatures in accordance with his, her and their natured natures," thus explicating the human instinctual desire to experience pleasure (*Ulysses*, 603). In tending to his natural instincts and desires, Bloom is able to achieve equanimity in his life, a "reciprocal equilibrium between the bodily organism and its attendant circumstances" (*Ulysses*, 603). Bloom's sexual encounters not only provide a reprieve from his social exclusion and cuckoldry, but his sexual expression also allows him to find a balance or equanimity between his existence and his body. Richard Brown asserts that the climax of *Ulysses* does not occur in "Ithaca" when Stephen and Bloom unite in the semblance of father and son, but since "the central character is the cuckolded husband and far from the adopting of a jealous or revenging attitude Bloom's achievement of tolerance and emotional equilibrium constitutes the

climax of the book's activities."[7] The climax would then consist of the events such as Bloom's masturbatory respite in "Nausicaa," his masochistic fantasy in "Circe," or even his victory over Boylan as he sleeps next to his wife in their conjugal bed at the end of the day. While Bloom and Stephen's union fulfills Bloom's desire to create a paternal bond with young Stephen, the climax of *Ulysses* is sutured to Bloom's climax on Sandymount Strand. Bloom's masturbation in "Nausicaa" serves not only as a respite from the building tension in previous episodes, but also Bloom experiences sexual pleasure that he futilely seeks during the course of the day.

In order to challenge further the limitations and stereotypes established by early twentieth century society and culture, Joyce uses *Ulysses* as a reconstructive platform to analyze the relationship between sexuality and gender. Both religious and societal expectations stifled individual sexual expression, and gender, during this time period, bore stereotypes based on the divisive dichotomy between men and women. In his pursuit to introduce a liberal register of sexual expression, Joyce posits *Ulysses* as a deconstructive text that undermines and redefines the notions of gender and the hierarchy of patriarchal society. The text does not promote male superiority, but instead, with constructions such as the woman's final word in the novel and the feminine man, Joyce elevates women and femininity. Not only does Joyce reverse the establishment of the male societal hierarchy, but he also confuses and challenges the notion of the gender dichotomy in his creation of the androgynous man as well as the manly woman. The combination of masculine qualities with femininity challenges the stereotypes that define masculinity as aggressive and domineering and femininity as passive and reserved. Thus,

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[7] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 19.

the characters in *Ulysses* exemplify another valence from which to understand sexuality and sexual expression that does not involve the dichotomous divide between masculine and feminine sexuality. Just as love and sexuality engender the creative impulse, the liminal space between masculinity and femininity also serves an innovative outlet for Joyce's exploration of gender.

***"One generation's pornography is another generation's classic."*- Salman Rushdie** [8]

While the censuring of *Ulysses* in the early twentieth century deemed the text immoral and inappropriate, *Ulysses* now provides a rich framework for exploring and analyzing sexuality and sexual expression at the turn of the century. Not only does it provide a template for comparing sexual practice to the expectations and doctrines embedded within religion and society, but *Ulysses* also highlights and supports the instinctual need to fulfill sexual desires. Because Joyce's early modernist text did not comply with religious and societal standards during the 1920's and 1930's, many of the scenes in *Ulysses*, such as the episode "Nausicaa," were considered pornographic, and thus precipitated the novel's censuring. Much of the censure hinged on the representation of Gerty MacDowell in "Nausicaa" and the masturbatory undertones that pervade the narrative. Because Joyce attempts to deconstruct and undermine the societal and religious doctrines that condemn these sexual practices, the sexual encounters in the text are not necessarily representations of the stigmas of pornography.

What is pornography if *Ulysses* is considered pornographic or sexually explicit?

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[8] Salman Rushdie, "The Short Story," (class lecture, Emory University, March 16, 2010).

Pornography, according to film critic Linda Williams, is the ultimate documentation or presentation of "the body in movement."[9] Just as in the sex film, *Ulysses* tracks bodily movements and fulfills the reader's desire to "observe accurately the mechanics of the body," which also simultaneously renders "an unanticipated pleasure attached to the visual spectacle of lifelike moving bodies."[10] Because *Ulysses* promotes attention to concupiscent instinct and tracks bodily movement over the course of the day, it exemplifies a pornographic text, according to Williams' explication of pornography. However, this definition does not negatively depict the sexual scenes in *Ulysses*, and instead offers another interpretation of the text's motif of sexuality: the transformation of pornography, as Salman Rushdie contends, into a classic art form. The fact that pornography also exhibits human desire and attention to carnal needs, which Joyce advocates throughout *Ulysses*, doubly substantiates the importance of pornography as a cinematic and literary genre.

Ulysses does not belong to the genre of pornography, but it possesses pornographic elements that led to its censure at the turn of the century. Having read and studied

psychoanalysts such as Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis, Joyce understood and advocated much of the analytic progress made in terms of sexuality and sexual expression. Like the transforming works of these psychoanalysts, Joyce offers in *Ulysses* a new register through which to view, understand, and practice sex. While early twentieth century culture did not support this radical notion of the erotic display of bodily

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[9] Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 38.

[10] Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* 39.

movement, *Ulysses*'s sexual scenes now serve as a portal for understanding the evolution of sexual expression. In accordance with many of the changing attitudes towards sexuality, especially within the psychoanalytic sphere, Joyce demonstrated in *Ulysses* "this sense of new interest in sexuality; the growth of a sexual science; and the development of a new concept of sexuality worked out in distinction from traditional associations between sexuality and reproduction and in relation to new enquiries into sexual perversity."[11] Joyce thus belongs to the great thinkers at the turn of the century who sought to redefine and reconstruct the social perception of sexuality, promoting the natural propensity to engage in sexual expression. Declan Kiberd asserts, "*Ulysses* was not just an example of a high-risk business venture but also a sort of 'self-help' manual."[12] If this is the case, then *Ulysses* represents a pedagogical text on how to integrate sexuality and pleasure into life and daily activities, especially if sexual expression has failed within the conjugal home.

Where is the psychoanalysis? What about Freud, Ellis, and Sacher-Masoch?

Sexual analyses of Joyce's writing often stem from the research of Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. Much of the analysis and research in this thesis refers to the theories of these psychologists, but, in order to show how *Ulysses* introduces a new register of sexual discourse, I explore and utilize resources such as film criticism, feminist theory, religious texts, and disability theory studies. These different lenses of research and criticism provide new vantages through which to explore masochism, voyeurism, masturbation, and gender reconstruction. Freud and many of the

[11] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 52.
[12] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us,* 245.

other psychoanalytic thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth century influenced Joyce's proposition of a sexual discourse; for example, Freud's study of the mystery of women funnels into Joyce's creation of Bloom's androgyny and the image of the manly woman. While psychoanalytic theory still contributes greatly to this exploration of sexuality in *Ulysses*, I use other academic disciplines in order to rationalize the sexual behavior documented in the novel as well as prove its purpose of providing equilibrium in Bloom's life.

Because so many of the scenes in *Ulysses*, such as the sunset scene in "Nausicaa," bear cinematic qualities, film criticism contributes to the analysis of the male-female interactions that occur in the text. Feminist film critic Laura Mulvey analyzes the heterosexual stare dynamic that recurs on the screen, and this model can be imposed upon the study of the gaze scenes in *Ulysses*. *Ulysses* contains scenes that challenge Mulvey's contention that the stare dynamic is a product of patriarchal society, suggesting that the gaze schema may actually yield male rather than female objectification.[13] The crossing of disciplines provides a rich context in which to explore the sexual encounters in *Ulysses* and complicates many of the paradigms of film, disability, and feminist theories. Additionally, religious materials, such as the Catholic catechism, incite an engagement with the text that permits further investigation of the limitations placed upon Irish society during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus the research and analytic materials integrated into this interpretative exploration do not seek to explain the origins or meaning behind Bloom's sexual proclivities or Molly's sexual transgressions, but,

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[13] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 837.

instead, examine the sexual dynamic and how the characters alleviate their sexual tensions during the course of June 16, 1904.

Chapter 1: Religion and Sexuality

The characters in *Ulysses* resort to the expression of their carnal needs on June 16th because the day in itself is relatively uneventful.[14] Because the text closely tracks Bloom's daily activities, the sexual events serve as the building tension in the novel. Declan Kiberd contends, "The very fact that no great events transpire on 16 June 1904 leaves the characters free to attend to their own thoughts as a discipline of self-exploration, rather than those thoughts wholly dictated by others."[15] While religion incites spiritual self-exploration, Joyce illustrates man's instinctual self-discovery through the cathartic expression of carnal desires. The restricting order of Catholicism drove the Irish people to explore another part of their identity; the "colorful eccentricities," such as sexual expression, "are a consequence of the repression of a life policed so thoroughly by church and state."[16] The radical notion that people would tend to their sexuality before religion was considered blasphemous and socially inappropriate. Joyce's use of sexual expression in *Ulysses* correlates with the manifestation of sexuality during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which marked a "new interest in sexuality; the growth of a sexual science; and the development of a new concept of sexuality and reproduction in relation to new enquiries into sexual perversity."[17]

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[14] Declan Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 49.
[15] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 49.
[16] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 126.
[17] Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 52.

Many Irish people repudiated the suffocating constraints of Catholicism and searched for a mode of self-expression that better represented their liberal identity and individuality. The religious constraints upon sexual self-exploration and discovery prompt such questions as, "How is one to be an authentic, free person in a world of filiation, derived gestures, rote-learning and conformity?"[18] Joyce broke free of societal conformity, allowing his characters to think and express themselves without inhibition. The narrative style of stream of consciousness, which is unconstrained by societal and religious limitations, allows the characters to mold their identities. The text explores both Stephen and Bloom's exploration of their identities; specifically for Bloom, his self-exploration rests in his ability to explore his sexual desires and needs.

Joyce's description of overt sexuality in *Ulysses* reflects many of the ways in which he viewed sexuality in his own life. While the circumstances of Joyce's life do not necessarily mimic the sexual encounters in *Ulysses,* he infuses into the novel fundamental qualities of sexuality, contradicting religious and societal norms at the turn of the twentieth century. Richard Brown notes that Joyce separated himself from his religiosity because "It was the beastly and most of all the sexual part of his humanity that Joyce felt that Church most excluded," prohibiting Joyce's desire to accept and express his carnal and sexual needs. [19] Joyce's writing grounds sexuality in the corporeal, prompting his transition "from Christianity to a kind of humanism, from faith in G-d to faith in 'impulses of [his] nature.'"[20] Joyce's rejection of the Church marked his attempt to join the "movement towards individualism," portraying the church "as the enemy of spiritual

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[18] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 58.
[19] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 16.
[20] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 16.

life and an obstacle to personal development" in his works.[21] Joyce established his religiosity in accordance with a kind of Catholicism that promoted individual religious interpretation, opposed to strict scriptural adherence. For Joyce, this personal development encompassed the freedom of sexual practice, and he denounced one of religion's integral components, asceticism. Asceticism marks an abstaining from indulgences, such as sexual expression, in accordance with religious doctrines.

Throughout the episodes of *Ulysses*, Joyce exposes Bloom's adherence to his carnal desires and his predilection to satiate these yearnings. In "Circe," Bloom demonstrates his loyalty to his body over his loyalty to church and state when William, the Archbishop of Armagh, asks Bloom, "Will you to your power cause law and mercy to be executed in all your judgments in Ireland and territories thereunto belonging?" to which Bloom replies by "*plac[ing] his right hand on his testicles, swears…* So may the Creator deal with me. All this I promise to do" (*Ulysses*, 393). In "Circe," Bloom dreams that he becomes the Mayor of Dublin, and now the Archbishop of Armagh questions how he will handle certain political scenarios. As a religious figure inquires about social dilemmas, "Bloom himself distorts and makes an issue of the relationship between his linguistic sexual involvements and his physical activity when, in an archaic intensification of his credibility, he swears by his testicles."[22] Joyce mingles religion and society with sexuality in such a way to demonstrate the inherent desire within humans to resort to their carnal instinct, just as Bloom swears upon his genitals at the inquiry of a religious figure.

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[21] J. Mitchell Morse, *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism* (New York: New York University Press, 1959), 16.

[22] Wolfgang Streit, *Joyce/Foucault: Sexual Confessions* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 96.

In order to depict sexuality through the different valences of religion and societal expectations, Joyce incorporates within *Ulysses* the concept of parallax. For example, in "Proteus," Stephen sees a cloud that Bloom simultaneously sees in a later episode. The parallactic view of the same object highlights the concept of perceptive disparities that arise from looking at an object from different viewpoints. Kiberd explains that parallax demonstrates "how the relative position of two objects changes, depending on the vantage point assumed by the observer."[23] Joyce does not solely assign the motif of parallax to certain objects that link Bloom and Stephen in this telepathic or transcendental sphere, but he uses parallax as a way to understand sexuality. From Bloom's perspective in "Nausicaa," his sexual expression and climactic peak ease his anxiety that ensues from the dispute at Barney Kiernan's and his knowledge of his wife's infidelity. Catholicism and sects of Judaism, however, in regards to sexuality and the freedom of sexual expression, contend that the desire to experience pleasure demotes morality. In *Ulysses*, Joyce juxtaposes religion and sexuality in order to create a parallactic scenario, offering Joyce's perspective on sexuality contrasted with religious views on sexual expression.

"A habit reprehensible at puberty is second nature and an opprobrium in middle life"[24]

In "Nausicaa," Joyce collocates sexuality with religion; a religious service occurs as the backdrop to the interaction that marks the onset of Gerty MacDowell's menstrual cycle and Leopold Bloom's masturbation. Even though Bloom and Gerty are Jewish and Catholic, respectively, they both disregard certain fundamental doctrines of their religions as Bloom and Gerty masturbate and menstruate concurrently with the proceedings of a

[23] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 126.
[24] *Ulysses*, 334.

religious service. Gerty's libidinous nature conflicts with the religious theme that runs throughout the episode- a theme that refers to both her own religiosity and the benediction occurring in the nearby church. Because "Nausicaa" revolves around the masturbatory interaction between Gerty and Bloom, how are we to comprehend the juxtaposition of the sexual encounter with the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at the church? Even more, how are we to reconcile the differences between Gerty's Catholicism and Bloom's Judaism and the religions' different perspectives on sexual encounters, specifically masturbation? Is Joyce trying to suggest that it is impossible to conform to religions' renunciation of masturbation because of the human instinct to experience pleasure?

According to the religious doctrines of Saint Augustine, Gerty and Bloom commit a sin because they concede to the "lusts of the flesh."[25] In order to justify the alleged sins of his characters, Joyce "free[d] himself of the sense of sin as society understood it only by denying the concept of sin as society understood it, and establishing for himself, as godlike artist, a completely different scale of values."[26] Because Joyce describes the scene between Gerty and Joyce against a religious background, he challenges the underlying principles and values of the relationship between religion and sexuality. This reevaluation of sexuality in a religious context highlights Joyce's attempt to neutralize his universe, creating an equanimity between a man's natural, spiritual surroundings and his instinctual desires.[27] Because Joyce imagines the universe in a neutral state, mortal sin (such as the mortal sin of masturbation) does not necessarily constitute a sin, and "Joyce,

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[25] Morse, *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism*, 22.
[26] Morse, *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism*, 22.
[27] Morse, *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism*, 18.

in stating this fact, deprived morality, in his own eyes of its traditional sanction in the nature of things."[28] Thus Joyce's objective in "Nausicaa" revolves around his attempt to show the neutralization and balance of the universe through his illustration of the relationship between sexuality and religion.

Preceding "Nausicaa," the episode "Cyclops" marks Bloom's visit to Barney Kiernan's pub where he engages in conversation with the citizen, who brazenly dismisses Bloom's opinions on sports and nationality as fallacious. The transition from the violent scene to the serene and picturesque image of Sandymount Strand in "Nausicaa," serves as a relief for Bloom from the tempestuous conversation at the pub, acting also as a respite for the reader as the narrative adopts a coherent fluidity that is absent in preceding episodes. The descriptive images of the sun setting on Sandymount Strand make this episode "the painter's episode. The scene is on the seashore, the action begins at about eight o'clock, the light is a rich and magical twilight."[29] The progression from the violence of "Cyclops" to the serenity of "Nausicaa" begets relief, a reprieve that, for Bloom, is peaceful and simultaneously erotic. Joyce pairs the peacefulness of the seaside scene with John Hughes' benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. People "gathered together without distinction of social class" at this religious service, just as the boundaries of age dissipate during the encounter between middle-aged Bloom and youthful Gerty (*Ulysses*, 290). The equality within the religious ceremony contrasts the divisive social dichotomy that exists in "Cyclops." Just as "Nausicaa" represents the peaceful reprieve from the turbulent discourse of "Cyclops," the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in

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[28] Morse, *The Sympathetic Alien: James Joyce and Catholicism*, 18-19.

[29] Frank Budgen, "Nausicaa," in *Critical Essays on James Joyce's Ulysses*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co, 1989), 160.

the nearby church symbolizes a perfection that parodies the overtly immoral sins that take place outside the church's sanctity. Higgins purports that "the text's discourse of sentimentality barely conceals a discourse of pornography," exposing the transparency of the religious veil and beautiful scenery in the presence of the sexual encounter.[30] Gerty's religious affiliations contrasted with Bloom's own religiosity highlight the contradictions of the sexual encounter in "Nausicaa" and also point to a sort of reconciliation between the characters' sexuality and their respective religions.

Because the masturbation scene in "Nausicaa" occurs adjacent to a religious service, the text blurs the dichotomy between religion and non-procreative sexual practice as well as the divide between seduction and innocence. In his description of Gerty, Joyce creates a contradiction between the portrayal of her chastity and her seductive behavior towards Bloom. The fatality of women, Leslie Higgins suggests, lies in the dual nature of their femininity.[31] On one hand, "women were believed to be, and represented as being, both passive, flexible, virginal, non-sexualized 'angels of the house,'" but they are also "sexually rapacious fiends, voracious in their appetites and lethal in their seductive charms."[32] Joyce initially subverts the seductive and libidinous qualities of Gerty's character, but, as the text progresses in "Nausicaa" and the stare intensifies between Gerty and Bloom, Gerty's erotic propensity surfaces. At the outset of the episode, Gerty MacDowell's character exemplifies the antithesis of sexuality as Joyce casts her in the image of the Virgin Mary. Joyce depicts Gerty's face as "spiritual in its ivorylike purity

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[30] Leslie Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men': Fatal Women in *Ulysses,*" in *Gender in Joyce*, ed. Jolanta W. Wawrzycka and Marlene G. Corcoran (Gainseville, Florida: University Press of Florida), 56.

[31] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 47.

[32] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 47.

though her rosebud mouth was a genuine Cupid's bow, Greekly perfect" (*Ulysses*, 286). Joyce compares Gerty's beauty with the Greek mythological figure of love in order to convey her intrinsic passion while simultaneously and paradoxically implying her innocence with her alabaster skin.

Joyce frequently uses colors such as ivory and blue to depict the innocence of Gerty's appearance; analogously, he employs the color red to represent passion and seduction. Ironically, as Joyce uses these descriptive colors, he simultaneously undermines the typical characteristics associated with these colors, particularly when he attributes seductive qualities to blue. Joyce intends for these colors to evoke the characteristic traits of youth, purity, and innocence, but Gerty's inherent desire for passion and pleasure often reverse the aforementioned connotations. Joyce introduces Gerty as a young woman with "eyes of witchery" that are the "bluest Irish blue," and she wears "a neat blouse of electric blue" (*Ulysses*, 286-287). Even though the color blue typically conveys purity, Gerty's blue eyes and clothing are sources of "witchery" and seduction. Gerty accentuates her eyes with makeup, which attracts the attentive stare because her eyes are "a charm that few could resist" (*Ulysses,* 286). She also strategically chooses her clothing on June 16 because "she felt that there was just a might that [Reggie Wylie] might be out" (*Ulysses*, 287). Joyce pairs the innocent and virginal connotations of the color blue with Gerty's desire to see Reggie Wylie, her unrequited love interest, and to impress him with her fashion. Gerty also wears blue because "blue [is a symbol] for luck, hoping against hope, her own colour and lucky too for a bride to have a bit of blue" (*Ulysses*, 288). For Gerty, blue symbolizes innocence as well as marriage, highlighting her chaste beauty and her desire to marry. While associated with fashion,

love, and innocence, Gerty's blue eyes and clothing are also related to "the blue banners of the blessed Virgin's sodality" (*Ulysses*, 294). By associating blue with Gerty's appearance and the Virgin Mary, Joyce proffers the possible similitude between Gerty's alleged innocence and Biblical Mary. Gerty's non-procreative and distant sexual encounter with Bloom also links her to the Virgin Mary. Mary immaculately conceives Jesus, and Gerty refrains from coital penetration as well, but she still experiences her own sort of pleasure from the voyeuristic engagement. Gerty, therefore, shares with Mary "an image of controlled sexuality," in which both women experience the outcome of a sexual encounter without engaging in the act itself.[33]

The color blue yields different implications that range from Gerty's innocent and perfect appearance to her seductive comportment; Joyce's employment of the color red also adopts this connotative duality. For example, when Gerty's friend Cissy Caffrey says she will hit her little brother on the bottom if he misbehaves, Gerty "crimsoned at the idea of Cissy saying an unladylike thing like that out loud she'd be ashamed of her life to say, flushing a deep rosy red" (*Ulysses*, 290). Gerty's reaction to this embarrassing comment is interesting because she has the same blushing reaction when she and Bloom notice each other: "She felt the warm flush, a danger signal always with Gerty MacDowell, surging and flaming into her cheeks" (*Ulysses*, 292). What, if anything, does this similar crimsoning reaction indicate about Gerty? The first blushing incident arises when Cissy speaks of the boy's bottom; the second occurs when Gerty feels she captures Bloom's attention, implying her sexual arousal. Because Gerty represents a virginal, innocent woman, she harbors anxiety about the body and in what ways it is appropriate to talk or

[33] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us* ,196.

think about the body. Therefore, she is as aroused and anxious when speaking about the boy's bottom as when she sees this mysterious man looking at her.

Joyce continues to employ the color red to depict Gerty's flushed skin upon arousal, and, deep in their mutual gaze, Gerty acknowledges that "[Bloom] was eyeing her as a snake eyes it prey," provoking "a burning scarlet [that] swept from throat to brow till the lovely color of her face became a glorious rose" (*Ulysses,* 295). Gerty's reaction proves that she is cognizant of triggering Bloom's own sexual desire as "her woman's instinct told her that she had raised the devil in him" (*Ulysses*, 295). She has the same reaction to Bloom's steady, snake-like stare that she has when Cissy Caffrey says she will spank her brother on the bottom. The act of blushing, therefore, derives from a combination of embarrassment, seduction, and arousal, which parodies the virginal and innocent image that Gerty aims to portray. Her reactive embarrassment and arousal also confirm her knowledge of her seductive actions and Bloom's subsequent masturbation. While her flushed cheeks physically indicate her awareness of her actions, her parting "smile that verged on tears" also highlights her acknowledgement of her religious sin as well as her rejection of societal expectations of being a lady (*Ulysses*, 301). Garland-Thomson suggests, "the female stare compromises a woman's virtue, which is the ultimate position as a lady."[34] She is desperate enough to feel affection (since her love of Reggie Wylie is unrequited) that she compromises her innocent comportment and exposes her libidinous nature, revealing her power of seduction and yearning for desire.

Once the narrative transitions from the descriptive, fluid text to Bloom's stream of consciousness, the text is overwhelmed with his jumbled and disparate thoughts. As he

[34] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (1999), 70.

contemplates his recent exertion of energy and his encounter with this unknown woman, Bloom thinks to himself, "Did she know what I? Course" (*Ulysses*, 304). Bloom wonders if Gerty knew that she led him to masturbate, definitively and affirmatively answering his own question. While Bloom's stream of consciousness provides a unilateral perspective, his understanding of the sexual encounter implies that Gerty relegated her innocent persona in order to sexually please Bloom and engage in her own temporary titillation.

As Bloom begins to masturbate, Gerty feels "a kind of sensation rushing all over her and she knew by the feel of her scalp and that irritation against her stays that that thing must be coming on," suggesting the onset of her menstrual cycle also elicits her sexual satisfaction (*Ulysses*, 296). Gerty's libidinous nature and seductive actions prompt Bloom to think that her monthly cycle may have been her catalyst to engage in this promiscuous act in public. Bloom suspects that Gerty is "Near her monthlies," which "makes [women] feel ticklish" (*Ulysses*, 301). Bloom furthers his thoughts on menstrual cycles as he contemplates their regularity, proposing that it is "Something in the air" that syncs all of the menstrual cycles of the women in Dublin (*Ulysses*, 301). This universal menstrual cycle then explicates Gerty and Molly's desire to fulfill their sexual needs on this June day. Because women feel "ticklish" or sexually aroused during menstruation, the text implies that women seek sexual gratification whether it occurs through coitus or masturbation (*Ulysses*, 301). For Gerty, both her desire to find love and the onset of her menstrual cycle excite this "ticklish" nature, and Bloom's longing stare prompts her yearning to "feel his lips laid on her brow, the cry of a young girl's love, a little strangled cry, wrung from her, that cry that has run through the ages" (*Ulysses*, 300).

As Joyce continues to describe Gerty, her beauty and purity engender allusions to other Biblical women, such as Eve. The characteristics that Gerty and Eve share may be predicated on Milton's retelling of the fall of mankind in *Paradise Lost.* Joyce and Milton both wrote epics that depict the relationship between a man and a woman, which veers from the traditional purpose of epic to recount a battle or war; thus Milton and Joyce substitute the epic of battle with "the epic of the mind."[35] While Milton writes of the mind and its ability to cope with temptation, Joyce writes of the mind and its ability to cope with the grievances of everyday life. Both epics chronicle romantic relationships (Adam and Eve; Gerty and Bloom), and Milton and Joyce introduce the challenges that disturb a committed companionship. In both *Paradise Lost* and *Ulysses*, the couples reveal in the end how they conciliate their grief: Adam and Eve, at the end of *Paradise Lost*, set out to explore the fallen world while Joyce indicates that Molly and Bloom reconcile at the end of *Ulysses* as they fall asleep together in their conjugal bed. The similarities between the two epics, therefore, point to the inherently shared qualities amongst the characters. Milton's Eve and Gerty MacDowell are superficially religious as they appear to adhere to religious or devotional practices, yet their behavior is actually the antithesis of their religious doctrines. Both women also exemplify the *femme fatale* because they exude innocence, passivity, and chastity, but also evoke a threat against the other gender.[36]

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[35] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 270.
[36] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 47.

Milton introduces Eve in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, focusing on her hair, the "unadorned golden tresses wore / Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved."[37] Like Milton's Eve, Gerty's "crowning glory was her wealth of wonderful hair. It was dark brown with a natural wave in it" (*Ulysses*, 286). In both Eve and Gerty's descriptions, their hair becomes a primary focal point of their beauty as they both have natural, cascading waves. Interestingly, Eve and Gerty are also similar in that they share an inherent paradox that undermines their pure beauty. Milton describes Eve as G-d's creation of a perfect human being, and Joyce depicts Gerty as pure and virginal in her physical appearance. Despite Gerty's initial portrayal of innocent and pure in "Nausicaa," her intentional actions that incite Bloom's masturbation on Sandymount Strand prove that "she is not pure and virtuous; she is a libidinous girl whose persistent sentimentalizing keeps her from the proscribed normal sexual activity and causes her to act scarcely less immorally."[38] For Eve, her betrayal of G-d's command undermines her allegedly pure devotion and innocence. Although Eve and Gerty's immoral transgressions greatly differ, they are still similar in that their behavior contrasts the preconceived notions of their characters.

Even though the text exhibits Gerty's contradictory religious subservience and seductive actions, Gerty tries to convince herself that she is not the kind of woman who engages in condemned sexual acts and she even "loathed that sort of person, the fallen women off the accommodation walk beside the Doddler that went with the soldiers and coarse men with no respect for a girl's honour, degrading the sex" (*Ulysses*, 299). Joyce

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[37] John Milton, *John Milton, The Major Works* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 428.

[38] Stanley Sultan, "The Strand (Bloom)," in *Critical Essays on James Joyce's Ulysses*, ed. Bernard Benstock (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co, 1989), 173.

alludes to the Fall of Eden and the first mother Eve with his reference to the "fallen women" who engage in sexually deviant interactions and defy conventional standards or expectations of womanly comportment and decorum. Gerty does not want to identify with these promiscuous women, but "from everything in the least indelicate her finebred nature instinctively recoiled" (*Ulysses*, 289-299). Gerty sheds her innocent exterior and shield of moral codes, and, contrary to her contempt of promiscuous women, she allows herself to become the seductress in order to "share [Bloom's] thoughts," from which she and Bloom experience a sort of mutual connection of passion and desire (*Ulysses*, 289). Also contrary to her initial image of chastity and innocence, Gerty wonders about Bloom's marital status, ultimately and insouciantly disregarding her curiosity because she feels that through their gaze she has found true love: "she was dying to know was he a married man or a widower…But what if- what then? Would it make a very great difference?" (*Ulysses,* 298). Even though Gerty reflects on the different possibilities of Bloom's romantic status, she proceeds to engage in this locked gaze because "Whitehot passion was in that face, passion silent as the grave, and it had made her his" (*Ulysses,* 299). For Gerty, whether Bloom is single, married, or widowed, she feels that their gaze supersedes the ties of their other committed relationships- relationships that do not ultimately "make a very great difference" (*Ulysses*, 298).

The erotic tone of "Nausicaa" does not solely hinge on the contradictory nature of Gerty MacDowell's character, but Bloom's masturbation is another example of the perverse encounter on Sandymount Strand. In both Catholicism and Judaism, masturbation constitutes a sin because it contradicts the original purpose of sexual engagement: procreation. The belief that masturbation constitutes evil or sin is predicated

on the story of Onan in Genesis in which Onan neglects his duty to impregnate his sister-in-law, Tamar.[39] Since her husband, Onan's brother, has died, Onan has the responsibility of giving his sister-in-law children; however, since the children would not be his and they would be Tamar's, he "spilled the semen on the ground, lest he should give offspring to his brother."[40] G-d kills Onan for this misdemeanor, and, over the centuries, onansim, or masturbation, bears a negative connotation with condemnable consequences.[41] Jewish scripture repudiates masturbation, or any non-procreative sexual act, and the Talmud's renunciation "even provoked the death penalty."[42] Stanley Sultan expounds upon Genesis' story of Onan when analyzing "Nausicaa," and he describes how the Code of Jewish Law states, "It is forbidden to cause in vain the effusion of semen, and this crime is severer than any of the violations mentioned in the Torah."[43] Judaism's condemnation of non-procreative sexual acts trickled into sects of Christianity, such as Catholicism, which also adopted this belief that masturbation is a sin.

The sixth and the ninth commandments of the Catholic Catechism explicate the sinful nature of immoral actions and thoughts, expounding upon the sexual practices that violate the doctrines of Christianity.[44] Gerty and Bloom do not engage in coitus, but their eye-locked encounter still satiates their sexual desires. The Catechism vehemently repudiates sexual interactions that occur outside marital union and insists "since the sexual faculties were intended by G-d to be used only in the married state, all deliberate

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[39] Genesis 38.

[40] Genesis 38:9.

[41] Michael S. Patton, "Masturbation from Judaism to Victorianism," *Journal of Religion and Health* 24, no. 2 (1985): 134.

[42] Patton, "Masturbation from Judaism to Victorianism," 134.

[43] Sultan, "The Strand (Bloom)," 168.

[44] Philip O'Reilly, *1000 Questions and Answers on Catholicism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 201.

sins against purity are mortal sins because of their very nature."[45] Excitement and arousal also comprise sin as the Catholic scripture states, "it also is mortal sin if consent is given to the excitement of the lower nature once it is aroused."[46] The mere existence of the instinctual sexual need and the subsequent desire to seek satisfaction constitute a sin. The masturbatory scene in "Nausicaa," thus, exemplifies the mortal sin of Catholicism because it defies the natural practice of sexuality that G-d has intended.

The Catholic Catechism does not completely repudiate all sexual desire; desire and the ability to act upon one's desire, however, are limited to the confines of marriage. Catholicism believes that "the physical associated with the use of these faculties is designed to enhance the perfect unity of marriage and compensate us for the responsibilities of parenthood," declaring procreation as the primary justification of coitus and bond strengthening as the second.[47] Because procreation is the primary reason to engage in sexual relations, the union of marriage permits the indulgence in the sexual pleasure that ensues from coitus. The Catechism explicitly addresses the conditions of desire when it states, "the quieting of concupiscence which the husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as these are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved."[48] Concupiscence, or desire, therefore, is not entirely rejected within the doctrines and ideologies of the Catholic faith; however, the expression of desire is condemned amongst unmarried couples, such as Gerty and Bloom as well as Boylan and Molly. Gerty exhibits a leniency in her adherence to Catholic

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[45] O'Reilly, *1000 Questions and Answers on Catholicism,* 202.
[46] O'Reilly, *1000 Questions and Answers on Catholicism,* 202.
[47] O'Reilly, *1000 Questions and Answers on Catholicism*, 203.
[48] Amintore Fanfani, *Catechism of Catholic Social Teaching* (Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), 44.

doctrines pertaining to premarital sexual relations when she reveals "there was absolution so long as you didn't do the other thing before being married" (*Ulysses*, 300). Gerty justifies and rationalizes her libidinous engagement with Bloom, yet she does so just as the climax ascends between their erotic gazes. Gerty's attitude towards premarital relationships, therefore, may result from the uncontrollable, uninhibited passion that she experiences right before she and Bloom climax, provoking her to forget the religious consequences of her erotic behavior.

Another valence in the relationship between religion and sexual practice is the modern Reformed Jewish perspective on sexuality. Unlike the strict statement in the Talmud and the moral understanding derived from the story of Onan, the Reformed sect of Judaism introduces another lens for viewing sexuality that may support, if not encourage, sexual practice as a means of pleasure. Judaism values and privileges procreation and it "celebrates not only the procreative potential of sexual intimacy, but also its capacity to provide pleasure."[49] While Jewish doctrines may not excuse Bloom's public masturbation as an acceptable expression of sexual desire, this Reformed perspective of sex allows fulfillment in sexual activity that does not necessarily beget procreation. Jewish scripture, unlike the Catholic Catechism, does not explicitly elucidate the stipulations of desire, but rabbinical interpretations convey "sex as positive and constructive, central to the fundamental institutions of family and marriage"; however, Reformed Jewish scripture also implies that "when unregulated, sex could lead to chaos and the destruction of the social order."[50] While Judaism does not condemn sexual

[49] Christel Manning and Phil Zuckerman, *Sex & Religion* (California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 98.

[50] Manning and Zuckerman, *Sex & Religion,* 98.

desires and thoughts, Bloom's actions would not contribute to the holiness within that Judaism seeks to derive from sexual interactions, especially because this masturbatory scene may constitute a form of adultery. The desired "social order" of regulated sexual activity and intimacy dissipates in the adulterous act of masturbation; the Sandymount Strand encounter thus represents the chaotic and disruptive order that ensues from uncontrolled sexual expression or practice.

Freud, like Joyce, undermines the religious premises of sexual interactions, offering a radical notion that challenges the Church's ideologies. Richard Brown references Freud's 1908 essay, "Civilised Sexual Morality," in order to illuminate Freud's deconstruction of "the difference between the sexual instinct and reproduction, arguing 'that man's sexual instinct is not at all primarily meant to serve purposes of reproduction but is intended to furnish certain forms of gratification.'"[51] Gerty and Bloom "furnish certain forms of gratification" in their non-verbal, distant, and non-coital interaction. Bloom thinks to himself that he could be considered a "Peeping Tom" because he indulges in sexual gratification by watching this woman from a distance (*Ulysses,* 301). Bloom also alludes to the silent void that stood between them when he wonders if he should have spoken with her: "Suppose I spoke to her. What about? Bad plan if you don't now how to end the conversation…Cause of half the trouble" (*Ulysses,* 303). Bloom posits that their silence enhances their sexual encounter because it does not obstruct them from the satisfaction that they both wish to derive from this interaction. Bloom neither has anything to say to her, nor wants to be the person that makes the

[51] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 51.

closing remarks; therefore, the noncommittal, voyeuristic gaze is the ideal medium through which Gerty and Bloom achieved a sexual climax.

Richard Brown proffers that Molly and Bloom, in their simultaneous climaxes, may in fact have a sort of telepathic or metaphysical sexual experience together. Because Molly and Bloom "experience a kind of *onanisme à deux* across Dublin," "Nausicaa might read not as a poignant moment of loneliness and alienation for Bloom but as a perversely triumphant extension of his marital sexuality: a shared gratificatory act."[52] The temporal juxtaposition of Bloom's masturbation and Molly's adultery indicates a connection between Molly and Bloom, which defines, for them, a metaphysical bond in their marital union. Kiberd even suggests that, during Molly's soliloquy in "Penelope," "as the night trains sound in the distance, she masturbates to images of Bloom."[53] The fragmented and often disjointed sentences going through Molly's mind during "Penelope" may be her stream of consciousness as she enters her beginning stages of sleep; Kiberd, however, suggests that her mental images of Bloom and her recapitulation of her sexual escapade during the day provoke her masturbation, " an act which links her strangely across the book to Bloom."[54] Therefore, if Molly is in fact masturbating, Kiberd's assertion doubly substantiates the idea that Molly and Bloom engage in an "*onanisme à deux,*" as they both masturbate during the course of the day, their thoughts reverting to each other in their sexual endeavors: "As Bloom came to his lonely climax

[52] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 62.
[53] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 260.
[54] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 270.

on Sandymount Strand, his thoughts returned to Molly. Likewise [in "Penelope"], she quickly passes over Boylan to musings on Bloom."[55]

While Joyce attempts to introduce another facet to daily comportment- the integration of satiating sexual desires- the text in itself becomes a sexual object or register and, specifically, the narrative style assumes a masturbatory undertone.[56] The text is a forum for sexual discussion and it also epitomizes in its literary style the sexual practice that it exhibits. Therefore, not only does Joyce assert the integrality of his characters' instinctual and carnal needs in his writing, but he also makes the text an emblem of masturbation because each episode is "a self-caressing vanity which gives no lasting life."[57] Each episode explores a new style of writing that strokes the writer's vain attempt to conquer former styles of great writing. Like masturbation, the jumping of narrative styles from one episode to the next provides a temporary pleasure of accomplishment for the writer as well as the reader in understanding the narrative style: "Each achieves only a temporary control, more a matter of fashion than substance in the flow of time."[58] Not only does Kiberd suggest that the book itself serves as a forum to convey the pleasure of sexual expression, but the novel is also a text of seduction, allowing the reader to uncover new and pertinent information with each successive episode. Chapters such as "Circe" and "Ithaca" are the principal episodes that epitomize the seductress quality of *Ulysses* because they both reveal information that is crucial to the understanding of the text, capturing the reader's attention with each factual revelation.[59] While "Ithaca" reveals

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[55] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 270.
[56] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 213.
[57] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 213.
[58] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 213.
[59] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 226.

information pertaining to the lives of the characters, "Circe" exposes the sublimated anxieties and fears of the characters. Kiberd claims, "in 'Circe' the book itself becomes drunk and teases the reader by lifting its skirts to reveal many secrets." [60] Joyce, therefore, not only depicts his characters through the expression of their sexuality and sensuality, but the text's techniques of varying narrative styles and the revelation of enticing information also allude to the motif of sexual expression.

Sexual Confession

Joyce casts Gerty as the virginal and innocent young woman, yet she engages in an act that constitutes a sin in the Catholic and Jewish traditions. This encounter, however, does not mark the only time during which she has achieved sexual climax; the text reveals Gerty's confession to a priest that she has masturbated or had lascivious thoughts (the text does not fully elucidate the action itself), and she feared the consequences of her sexual transgression. When confessing to the priest, Gerty "crimson[ed] up to the roots of her hair for fear he could see, not to be troubled because that was only the voice of nature and we were all subject to nature's laws"; upon her confession of either her masturbation or lustful thoughts, Gerty's embarrassment engenders her subsequent crimsoned cheeks, a dual expression of embarrassment and desire (*Ulysses*, 294). The priest, paradoxically, pardons Gerty and her sexual violation even though Catholic doctrine explicitly states that "the sexual instinct was given us by G-d for the procreation of the race," not to fulfill sexual desires or fantasies.[61] The priest

[60] Kiberd, *Ulyssse and Us*, 226.

[61] Philip O'Reilly, *1000 Questions and Answers on Catholicism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 203.

instead explains that humans are subject to nature and it is natural to experience carnal desire. The priest's pardoning of Gerty's libidinous act is laden with Joyce's belief that a human should express bodily urges, refusing the Church's suppression of carnal desire.[62]

The act of Gerty's confession, however, is double-valenced because it not only allows Gerty to atone and rid herself of her sins, but it also serves as a way for her to discuss sex. Film critic Linda Williams extrapolates this idea of the confessional as a portal for sexual discussion as she references Michel Foucault in her critique, *Screening Sex*. Williams, through her analysis of Foucault, explicates the ways in which the atoning confession has transformed over time into a forum for exploring sexual acts: "Confession thus becomes not simply the unburdening of guilt; it becomes an incitement to speak sex, to make it the motive force of our lives."[63] Gerty's exchange with the priest epitomizes this forum of sexual discourse; the priest's failure to reprimand Gerty for her sinful transgressions transforms the pedagogical purpose of the confessional into a platform for sexual discussion. Joyce thus demonstrates how the confessional experience becomes an experience "'of reconstructing, in and around, the act, the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations and quality of the pleasure that animated it.'"[64] Therefore, Gerty's confession to the priest is no longer a place for her to release guilt and atone for her sinful behavior, but the confession conversely serves as an "'implantation of perversions'" that reinforces sexual or sinful deviations.[65] Because the priest pardons Gerty's behavior, Joyce creates a forum in which

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[62] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 16.

[63] Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), 219.

[64] Williams, *Screening Sex,* 219.

[65] Williams, *Screening Sex,* 219.

the discussion of sex is accepted and natural; the text continues to show Joyce's modernist attempt to reveal the repression of sexual expression and discourse.

In *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions*, Wolfgang Streit not only acknowledges that the confession represents this dynamic sexual forum, in which there is an "expansion of desire through confession," but he also contends that Gerty's confession to Father Conroy may constitute a more libidinous, sexual, and intimate encounter than Bloom's own masturbation on Sandymount Strand.[66] When Gerty reflects on her confession to Father Conroy, she thinks to herself,

> "He looked almost a saint and his confessionbox was so quiet and clean and dark and his hands were just like white wax and if ever she became a Dominican nun in their white habit perhaps he might come to the convent for the novena of Saint Dominic" (*Ulysses,* 294).

Streit argues that this passage is a "sexual fantasy" for Gerty as Joyce carefully depicts the alabaster quality of the priest's hands, the cleanliness of the confessional box, and the priest's saintly qualities.[67] Not only does Gerty confess a sexual transgression, but also "the erotic darkness and the blending of Father Conroy's colorless hands with the imaginary clothing of a nun…forms a clerical and verbally erotic scenario, of which Bloom's voyeuristic presence on the strand is merely a fleeting profane reflection."[68] Streit, therefore, proposes that Gerty, rather than Bloom, commits the more promiscuous act because she blatantly juxtaposes her religiosity and adherence to religious doctrine with her sexuality and libidinous proclivities. Bloom's masturbation, at first reading,

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[66] Wolfgang Streit, *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 88.

[67] Streit, *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions,* 87.

[68] Streit, *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions,* 87.

defies societal and religious norms; however, the manifestation of his carnal needs "does not exhaust itself in a confessional conversation" as Gerty's sexual acts do.[69]

Both Linda Williams and Wolfgang Streit analyze this notion that the confession not only provokes the discussion of sexuality and sexual practice, but it also becomes a portal for self-discovery or "the search for individual truth" that has "shifted in emphasis from issues of ancestry and heredity to personal confession, including, of course, one's private sexual behavior."[70] Joyce, thus, demonstrates once again that the self-exploration of *Ulysses* is the examination of the body and the body's carnal needs; yet, while confession serves as an outlet for this discovery, the concept of confession is still rooted in religion, which denounces, punishes, and condemns sexual deviations. Therefore, the confession, according to Foucault and as seen in *Ulysses*, becomes a mockery because it is contradictory in nature as it incites religious and "individual truth," but also creates a forum for sexual discourse. [71]

If confession is a means of self-discovery and "individual truth," then *Ulysses* itself is a confessional text. Bloom and Stephen sift through the duties of their everyday lives while trying to discover their true identities, whether through sexual self-discovery or intellectual endeavors. Specifically in Bloom's case, the text allows for his sexual expression, and, in "Circe," the narrative reveals its confessional quality because it

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[69] Streit, *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions,* 87.

[70] Streit, *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions*, 5.

[71] Streit, *Joyce/ Foucault: Sexual Confessions*, 5-7. Within the Catholic religions, Catholics are expected to confess annually in order to atone their sins. However, this repentance reveals the inherent juxtaposition of the "profane and liturgical confessions" because, in order to receive forgiveness, one has to breech the topic of their sexual transgressions. Therefore, according to Streit, the "advance[ment] in virtue" of the confession paradoxically "ensured that the talk about one's own sex was the central individual possibility for obtaining G-d's grace" (7). The act of confession thus fuses sexuality and religion.

exposes the repressed and sublimated sexual desires and activities in which Bloom has engaged, just as a confessional forces a Catholic to disclose their behavioral deviations. Streit asserts that "Circe" is "compelled to tell 'all,'" and, therefore, "the episode becomes the text's confessional."[72] In "Circe," Joyce reveals many of Bloom's subconscious desires, but the confessional quality of this episode also reveals the libidinous, blasphemous nature of the priest. Not only does Gerty associate the priest, Father Conroy, with her intimate desires, but Zoe also claims "There was a priest down here two nights ago to do his but of business with his coat buttoned up. You needn't try to hide, I says to him. I know you've a Roman collar" (*Ulysses*, 423). Joyce again incorporates his ideas about the inherent contradictions of the Church; just as the priest ironically pardons Gerty's lascivious behavior, a priest now engages in his own sexual deviance in Dublin's "Nighttown." Not only does confession becomes a forum of sexual discourse for a Catholic, but the confessional quality of "Circe" reveals the farce Catholic doctrines because the priest himself engages in that which Catholicism denounces. After Zoe reveals her sexual encounter with a clergyman, Virag, Bloom's father and alter ego, states that the hypocrisy and the stringency of the Catholic Church are "why [he] left the church of Rome. Read the Priest, the Woman and the Confessional" (*Ulysses*, 423). The reference to Father Chiniquy's novel *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional* substantiates Joyce's motif that the confessional is a forum that blurs the distinction between religious truth and sexuality, and all men, including religious figures, can succumb to the instinctual needs of their bodies; also, sacred relationships between men and women and the bonds formed with society, such as marriage, seem to unravel in the

[72] Streit, *Joyce/ FoucaultL Sexual Confessions*, 95.

all-revealing confession to the priest.[73] Therefore, Father Chiniquy and Joyce proffer that this doctrine of forced confession reveals a problem that lies within the framework of Catholicism. Not only does the priest, according to Zoe, epitomize the antithesis of Catholic morality in his practice of sexual activity, but he also serves as the paradoxical mediator between a Catholic and G-d in a confessional practice that creates a sexual discourse and expands the realm of sexual discussion.

Bloom, The Iconic Divinity

According to Catholic teachings, Gerty's repetition of the sexual act or salacious thoughts is "recidivism."[74] Joyce creates a manifold schema of sin that reveals layers of past sexual violations in the midst of a present sexual act that has a Catholic ceremony in the background. Bloom also commits a sort of "recidivism" in "Nausicaa" because he thought about masturbating in the bath earlier that day. In the episode "Lotus Eaters," Bloom takes a bath and feels a sense of relaxation and escapism as he watches his body, still, in the bathwater. Like "Nausicaa," "Lotus Eaters" illustrates a pacific, serene scene during which Bloom feels the palpable presence of his body; this cathartic, narcotic scene begets Bloom's musings about his genitals. Joyce again fuses religion and corporeality when Bloom thinks to himself, "Enjoy a bath now: clean trough of water, cook enamel, the gentle tepid stream. This is my body" (*Ulysses* 71). The "gentle tepid stream" evokes the same peacefulness as the description of the setting sun on the seashore in "Nausicaa" as well as a baptismal ceremony in which the holy water trickles over the head of a Christian. Bloom's proclamation that "This is my body" also alludes to the liturgical

[73] Charles Chiniquy, *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional* (Chick Pub, 1979).
[74] O'Reilly, *1000 Questions and Answers on Catholicism*, 203.

worship of the Holy Communion. Bloom's Eucharistic worship of his corporeal existence relates to the ceremony that takes place in "Nausicaa," which is a benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Does Joyce intend, then, to draw a connection between Bloom's body and Christ's body? Kiberd analogously connects Bloom to Jesus who, like Bloom, was "a womanly man, Jewish-Christian, and also served as a scapegoat for local frustration."[75] Jesus proclaimed that the bread eaten during the Last Supper "is [his] body" and shall be consumed as such during Holy Communion. During his bath, Bloom repeats Jesus' proclamation, yet the only kind of consumption occurring, especially in "Nausicaa," is a sort of corporeal, desirous, and sexual consumption. In "Nausicaa," during the benediction of the communion, Gerty is "consuming" Bloom's body as well as his lonely, sad visage with her own eyes; therefore, instead of consuming the Eucharistic body of Christ as a proclamation of religious unity and devotion, Joyce proffers that his characters consume each other, satiating their sexual desires and need to find unity and existential wholeness.

Bloom, again compared to Jesus before the crucifixion, thinks about his body in the bath and his skin that is "oiled by scented melting soap," just as the old woman prepared Jesus' body for burial by pouring oil over him (*Ulysses*, 71). Joyce, however, undermines the religious allusions as Bloom reclines in the tub and watches "his trunk and limbs riprippled over and sustained, buoyed lightly upward" (*Ulysses*, 71). While Joyce metaphorically connects Bloom's body to Christian liturgies, he also depicts the corporeal, sexual facet of the body through his description of Bloom's floating genitals. "Lotus Eaters" and "Nausicaa" both exhibit scenes of masturbation, or at least the

[75] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 190.

contemplation of masturbation, and, in both episodes, the sexual scene is either juxtaposed to a religious reference or it is couched within a religious context.

In "Nausicaa," Bloom knows that he has committed a sin when the narrative in the episode switches to his stream of consciousness. He thinks to himself "O, Father, will you"; his train of thought prematurely ends his question, which can be interpreted as "O, Father, will you 'forgive me?'" (*Ulysses*, 307). Bloom asks forgiveness from a Christian patriarch, "Father," but, ironically, Bloom is a Jew. He again complicates his proclaimed religious devotion when he says, "Well the foreskin is not back. Better detach" (*Ulysses*, 306). Bloom, an alleged Jew, is not circumcised, a ritual that occurs for each Jewish male infant at a brit milah, which represents "a covenant betwixt [G-d] and you."[76] Both his confession to the patriarchy of the Church and his presence of foreskin complicates, or even invalidates, Bloom's Jewish identity. The ambiguity and vicissitude of Bloom's religious identity hinges on "the nexus between Judaism, Catholicism, and agnosticism" that thus "justifies Bloom's profane interest in the unrestricted expansion of sexual discourse."[77]

Bloom's actions in "Nausicaa" indicate that he may oppose religion or disregard religious doctrines in his everyday activities. Bloom is indefinable in terms of his religiosity; in "Cyclops" he tells the Citizen that his "G-d was a jew. Christ was a jew like me" and yet he has been baptized three times (*Ulysses*, 280, 558). Bloom, therefore, does not completely adhere to either religion even though he declares himself Jewish. Bloom's religiosity appears to be ambiguous, but Kiberd suggests that Bloom may be the most religious character of all of the characters in *Ulysses*; in fact, he assumes a sort of god-

[76] Genesis 17:11.
[77] Streit, *Joyce/ FoucaultL Sexual Confessions*, 98.

like role because "Unlike the religious founders, Bloom's role is not to teach any great truth in works, but simply to embody a way of being in the world."[78] Bloom's daily conduct, therefore, serves as a standard by which to live. Even though he is not directly associated with a religious sect and is not practicing stringent doctrines in respect to his pronounced religion, the pacifistic temperament of Bloom's daily comportment and his assumption of multiple different religions portray him as the mortal embodiment of a divinity. This concept of Bloom as the divine character neutralizes his actions, such as his masturbation in "Nausicaa" and his dream in "Circe" of masochistic male subordination. By engaging in sexual pleasure during the day, Bloom attempts to "reconcile theory and practice" as he engages in an act that is socially and religious reprehensible and condemned.[79] He balances the poles of practice and theory by allowing his sexual engagement to contribute to the betterment of his day and his conscience. Having experience sexual satisfaction, Bloom not only achieves the telepathic orgasm with Molly, but he also finds relief from the tension of previous episodes.

Even though Bloom behaves in an unrepressed and expanded forum of sexual expression, he still seems to have an understanding of the negative societal and religious implications of masturbation when he thinks to himself how semen "diffuses itself all through the body, permeates. Source of life" (*Ulysses,* 307). According to the understanding of sexual expression over the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, masturbation greatly affected the body, specifically the nervous system. Medicine suggested that the results of masturbation caused widespread anxiety and

[78] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 191.
[79] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 191.

fatigue that "permeated" the body after the taxing emission.[80] Bloom implies that he has some sort of understanding about these medicinal notions of masturbation, but he also points to the Renaissance belief that masturbation is condemned because it is considered the selfish expulsion of the seed that could lead to a human life.[81] Therefore, Bloom not only feels the sensation suffusing all over his body, but he also acknowledges the procreative affects of semen emissions, "the source of life."

Even after his sinful expulsion of semen for pleasure purposes, Bloom continues to think about his masturbation, pondering the smell of his bodily emission: "And it's extremely curious the smell. Celery sauce" (*Ulysses*, 307). Even though Bloom thinks about the possible immoral implications that his masturbation insinuates, he buoys these serious thoughts with his curiosity about the smell of his semen. This balancing of his emotions may point to his attempt to find the equanimity of his actions and their consequential aftermath. In order for Joyce to elucidate the equanimity of sexuality, he blurs the divisive limitations that exist between religion and sexuality, thus allowing his characters' bodily needs to supersede certain stringent religious doctrines.

While "Nausicaa" proffers a new valence by which to regard the relationship between sexuality and religion, this episode also speaks to "Love's bitter mystery," of Yeats' *Who Goes With Fergus*[82]. The mystery constitutes the nuances of love, romance, and sexual expression. "Love's bitter mystery" in "Nausicaa" is the enigmatic way in which the characters express passion and desire while also standing as a sort of metonymic symbol of their respective religions. As Gerty stands to join her friends, she

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[80] Patton, "Masturbation from Judaism to Victorianism," 140.
[81] Patton, "Masturbation from Judaism to Victorianism," 139.
[82] W.B. Yeats, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 31.

"had an idea, one of love's little ruses" (*Ulysses,* 301). She thinks to herself that this brief interaction not only provoked her erotic thoughts of the "hot touch of his handsome lips," but it also allowed her to feel a sort of passion towards and love for this mysterious man; yet, despite this mélange of emotions, the interaction between Bloom and Gerty ends, inconclusively, as she runs back to her friends. The Sandymount Strand encounter is a part of "Love's bitter mystery" because it is a moment during which Gerty and Bloom abandon their religious affiliations and doctrines in order to pursue their erotic, intimate desires and needs.

Chapter 2: Voyeurism

Throughout *Ulysses*, Bloom is passive in most of his interactions with women, examining them from a distance, mentally deconstructing their movements and actions. Bloom's desire to derive sexual satisfaction from these distant encounters reveals the anxiety that ensues from his failure to experience sexual pleasure with his wife, the woman with whom he is most closely connected. Bloom's voyeurism is not limited to his distant eye-locked exchange with Gerty in "Nausicaa," but he also voyeuristically gazes at "the nextdoor girl at the counter" of Dlugacz's butcher shop as well as the expensively dressed woman outside of the Grosvenor (*Ulysses*, 48). In both the Dlugacz's and Grosvenor scenes, something incidentally interrupts Bloom's gaze, preventing his ultimate, masturbatory satisfaction. These encounters are examples of what Declan Kiberd deems the "missed or insufficiently developed encounters" that often weave throughout *Ulysses*. In "Nausicaa," however, Bloom's mutually voyeuristic gaze with Gerty finally results in the sexual satisfaction that he seeks during the course of the day.[83] The recurrence of Bloom's erotic gaze prompts questions about the dynamic between the starer and the staree: Why is voyeuristic, erotic staring a means of sexual expression in *Ulysses*? Does visual stimulation dictate a gender hierarchy?

Most of the staring scenes in *Ulysses* are examples of what Rosemarie Garland-Thomason calls baroque staring, which accounts for the staring that "entangles viewer and viewed in an urgent exchange that redefines both."[84] The gazing encounters do not necessarily involve a gawking stare or complete bewilderment that is associated with

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[83] Declan Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009), 53.

[84] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2009), 50.

baroque staring, but, in *Ulysses*, there is a sort of "unapologetic staring" that allows Bloom, in particular, to derive meaning and sexual satisfaction from his staring.[85] In "Nausicaa," for example, Bloom's gaze epitomizes baroque staring: "If ever there was undisguised admiration in a man's passionate gaze it was there plain to be seen on [Bloom's] face" (*Ulysses*, 296). The uninhibited style of staring also prompts questions as to whether the baroque stare is automatically an erotically charged gaze between the starer and staree. Scholars, such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson and Laura Mulvey, focus on disability and cinematic gazes, respectively. Each scholar analyzes and describes the unique dynamic that constitutes the relationship between the starer and staree, illuminating the positions and power struggles inherent in the staring schema. The application of disability studies and film criticism to voyeurism not only provides innovative valences from which to analyze the gaze scene in "Nausicaa," but these disciplines also instigate the deconstruction of the power dynamic in the stare.

"The Power of the Erotic Look" [86]

Feminist film critic Laura Mulvey is an especially important resource for Joyce research because many of the scenes in *Ulysses*, especially "Nausicaa," are cinematic in their writing style and content. Joyce writes each episode in a different style, ranging from the liturgical form of the catechism to the format of newspaper headings; Joyce jumps from literary style to literary style just as a film progressively switches scenes and music. The episodes' cinematic quality also hinges on the translation of the literary

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[85] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 50.

[86] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism,* ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 839.

episodes into a visual performance or adaptation, and Joyce's incorporation of sensory recognition and descriptive surroundings evokes the film-like aspects that are embedded within the text.

Each voyeuristic scene differs in content and setting, yet they all introduce the gender disparities between the object and the wielder of the stare. While heterosexual staring bears an intrinsic gender hierarchy, Bloom's staring encounters do not necessarily conform to this conventional categorization of feminine object and masculine wielder of the stare. In a stare, power is associated with gender, more specifically the power struggle between the male starer and the female object; the staring scenes in *Ulysses*, however, suggest that a woman actually possesses the dominance in the stare and that "the sustained male gaze is not an impersonal instrument of objectification, but a testament to [the woman's] seductive potency and feminine allure."[87] The establishment of Bloom's effeminate qualities in *Ulysses* already confuses conventional gender identifications, and Joyce further complicates gender distinctions as he deconstructs the hierarchy of the male-female binary through the gaze. There are three main instances in which the woman possesses the power in a gaze, redistributing the dominance from the man to the woman: leaving the male, or the wielder of the stare, unsatisfied; arresting the starer's attention and rendering the starer vulnerable; the woman staring back at the man so that she becomes both the staree and starer. Even though the staring scenes in *Ulysses* undermine the conventional notions of the gender hierarchy of a stare, each scene illustrates the way that staring can provide sexual pleasure from a distance.

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[87] Philip Sicker, "Unveiling Desire: Pleasure, Power, and Masquerade in Joyce's "Nausicaa" Episode," *Joyce Studies Annual* 14 (2003): 103.

Is Bloom's staring solely for his pleasure or is he trying to understand something about women? If it is just pleasure driven, Bloom's voyeuristic and erotic proclivities produce an antithetical image of Bloom that has previously been illustrated as sympathetic, relatable, and even maternal. Is Joyce saying that because Bloom is a representation of the "everyman" that all human staring is intrinsically laden with desire? The connection between staring and eroticism mirrors Jonathan Dollimore's theory of normalcy's inherent connection to perversity. Erotic staring is a different way of looking just as perversions are deviations of normal behaviors, interests, etc.[88] Therefore, Bloom's erotic gazes are not necessarily condemnable, but instead represent a human behavior that has been defined by its variation from *correct staring*. Even though societal and religious doctrines would consider this erotic gaze as a perversion or sin, Joyce has his principal, sympathetic, and likeable character, Bloom, engaging in these conventionally unacceptable gazing encounters. Joyce attempts to offset the perversity of the act by permitting Bloom's erotic gaze to wander; the everyman's erotic gaze thus exemplifies and parallels the inherent and tangential relationship between perversity and normalcy.

In "Calypso," Bloom's trip to Dlugacz's butcher shop begins with his steady gaze fed by the "shiny links, packed with forcemeat" in the window (*Ulysses*, 48). He directs his salivating desire for meat to the woman who is ordering in front of him. Bloom holds a page of advertising "aslant patiently, bending his senses and his will, his soft subject gaze at rest" upon her voluptuous body and the vigorous "way her crooked skirt swings at each whack" (*Ulysses*, 48). The sight of this woman's enticing body and her seductive

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[88] Johnathan Dollimore, "The Cultural Politics of Perversion: Augustine, Shakespeare, Freud, Foucault," *Genders* no.8 (1990): 2.

movements completely arrest Bloom's gaze. According to Mulvey's paradigm, the woman at the butcher shop would be the passive object at which Bloom actively stares.[89] The woman assumes the "traditional exhibitionist role," in which she is "simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness.*"[90] The way in which the woman's hips swing and thighs move as she walks comprise the quality of "*to-be-looked-at-ness*." With the woman as the object of the gaze, the man appears to possess power because he chooses the subject and subsequently wields his gaze. Mulvey suggests that the man bears omnipotence because "he controls events" that coincide "with the active power of the erotic look," placing the power of the gaze in the eyes of the male.[91] The act of staring supports the patriarchal hierarchy in which the woman becomes objectified and the man wields the sexually charged gaze.[92]

Interestingly, in Bloom's case, he does not reach any kind of sexual satisfaction from this gaze. Does the insufficiency of this gaze allocate the power to the other gender? As the woman walks out of the butcher shop, she interrupts the building anticipation of Bloom's erotic gaze, and her lack of acknowledgement prompts Bloom to feel "the sting of disregard [that] glowed to weak pleasure within his breast" (*Ulysses*, 49). Because the woman is oblivious of Bloom's intense gaze, she is also unaware of her acquisition of power. The woman, however, still gains the power in the situation because of her brazen disregard and heedlessness to Bloom's blatant stare, rendering Bloom neglected and vulnerable. Bloom describes the measure of his pleasure as "weak" because the woman

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[89] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.
[90] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.
[91] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 839.
[92] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.

fails to return any kind of gaze or recognition of his attraction to her body. In order for Bloom to derive pleasure from the sexual stare, the object must either become a wielder of the gaze and stare back at the initial starer or remain in the starer's window of vision long enough for him to reach a desired climax. Because the woman does not return the stare or indicate any acknowledgement of the situation, the initial power of Bloom's lustful stare subsides and he laments that "they never understand," referring to the voluptuous and seductive women that do not understand the effect they have on men and the way in which they should act towards men who admire their bodies (*Ulysses*, 49).

Budd Boetticher suggests that a woman's importance derives from the reaction she provokes in a man: the woman "is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance."[93] This scene in Dlugacz's butcher shop indicates more about Bloom's character than it does about the enticing body of this woman. Joyce uses the seductive qualities of the woman to show that Bloom often reverts to thoughts of women and sexual pleasure, which could be attributed to his anxiety about the lack of sexual expression in his home and his wife's infidelity with Blazes Boylan.

Bloom's gaze is again unsatisfactory when he stares at a woman outside the Grosvenor Hotel in "Lotus Eaters." This scene differs from the previous seduction scene in the butcher shop because, in Dlugacz's, Bloom examines the woman's body parts and compares her body to succulent meat. Outside the Grosvenor, Bloom instead finds himself immediately drawn to another woman's clothing, subsequently feeling the pull of his sexual attraction to this woman. He examines her "Stylish kind of coat with that roll

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[93] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.

collar, warm for a day like this, looks like blanketcloth," highlighting the expensive clothing in order to convey her wealth and social status (*Ulysses*, 60). Joyce specifically uses "gaze" in order to depict this scene of Bloom watching the well-dressed woman with a distant, erotic stare: "Drawing back his head and gazing far from beneath his vailed eyelids he saw the bright fawn skin shine in the glare, the braided drums" (*Ulysses*, 60). The word "gaze" connotes seduction and desire; Bloom is sexually aroused as he looks at this woman's clothing and demure gestures. Even though he could be excited by the idea of what is underneath her clothing, Bloom is primarily interested in her garments when he thinks to himself, "Proud: rich: silk stockings" (*Ulysses*, 60). This woman is fully clothed and belongs to a higher stratum of society, and Bloom imagines the way in which she would perform sexually, contrasting her stuffy appearance with sexual promiscuity: "Women all for caste till you touch the spot. Handsome is and handsome does. Reserved about to yield…Possess her once take the stark out of her" (*Ulysses*, 60). Bloom thinks to himself that even though this woman projects an air of sophistication in her physical appearance, she would cast aside her demureness upon sexual pleasure, all boundaries of class dissolving if she is sufficiently pleased. A sexual experience will ultimately "take the starch out of her," ridding her of her severe comportment (*Ulysses*, 60).

Just like the woman, Bloom himself demonstrates an element of reserve in his appearance. Joyce uses the word "vailed" to describe Bloom's gaze directed towards the woman outside of the Grosvenor Hotel. "Vailed" conveys submission; therefore, Bloom's "vailed eyelids" do not substantiate Mulvey's established power hierarchy that inherently exists in the stare schema. Instead of representing the powerful male that initiates the gaze, Bloom wields the gaze, but in a submissive and passive manner. The unassertive

stance, typically associated with the woman's position in the gaze dynamic, complicates the gender associations of the starer and staree. This well-dressed woman, like the voluptuous woman in the butcher shop, does not acknowledge Bloom's gaze, but most of her power stems from her ability to attract and arrest the male gaze, rendering Bloom submissive at the sight of her image.

Bloom's admiration and fetishization of this woman's clothing simultaneously provokes his physical arousal. While he gazes at the woman, he questions, "Which side will she get up?" alluding to an erection (*Ulysses*, 60). While this question could refer to the woman entering a particular side of the tramcar, it bears a phallic undertone because "up" recurs in phrases couched within a sexual context throughout the novel. For example, the postcard addressed to Mr. Breen succinctly states "U.p: up," which may be a "coded taunt against a man who may prefer to lie under his wife during love making" (*Ulysses,* 130).[94] Joyce again recycles the phallic image when M'Coy asks Bloom "Who's getting it up?" in reference to the production of Molly and Boylan's upcoming performance (*Ulysses*, 61). M'Coy's multivalent and sexually-charged question prompts Blooms to think of his wife and the ensuing sexual encounter she will have later that day with Blazes Boylan. He thinks to himself, "Not up yet," implying that the affair has not yet occurred (*Ulysses*, 61). As M'Coy speaks with him, Bloom thinks again to himself, "Getting up in a minute," which could refer to his departure from this conversation momentarily or the ascension of his erection from gazing at this woman (*Ulysses*, 61). The double-entendre of "up" throughout the text confirms the duplicity of the word in this scopophlic scene, possibly referring to the tramcar as well as Bloom's sexual arousal.

[94] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 126.

The redistribution of the power in the gazing scene does not escape Bloom entirely because he continues to wield his prolonged stare, but when a vehicle breaks the erotic gaze, Joyce renders Bloom powerless and unsatisfied because he fails to achieve his desired climax. Before the tramcar interrupts the gaze, Bloom thinks "Watch! Watch! Silk flash rich stockings white. Watch!" suggesting that he is progressing towards his desired climax in this sexual gaze (*Ulysses*, 61). Bloom's interior monologue of "Watch! Watch!" closely mirrors the "O! O!" in "Nausicaa" when Bloom reaches an orgasmic climax after the eye-locked exchange with Gerty (*Ulysses*, 300). Even in the midst of his climax in "Lotus Eaters," he is completely entranced by her "rich stockings white" and not her body or facial beauty (*Ulysses*, 61). The tramcar's interruption introduces Bloom's tone of disappointment and rejection because this is the second time during his day that he has tried to obtain some sexual desire through scopophilc endeavors. His disappointment emanates from his feeling "locked out of it. Paradise and the peri," referring to the world of beautiful and seductive women (*Ulysses*, 61). Bloom does not have sex with his wife Molly, and he also fails to experience complete climactic pleasure with the women he sees on the streets of Dublin.

Bloom's fetish of women's clothing, such as his attention to this woman's stockings and gloves, alludes to Joyce's own predilection for women's clothing, which aroused him almost as much as women's bodies.[95] Brenda Maddox describes one instance in which Joyce took Nora's glove and wrote to her of his admiration of this garment: "it lay beside me all night-unbuttoned-but otherwise conducted itself very

[95] Brenda Maddox, *Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988), 31.

properly-like Nora."[96] The connections between eroticism and women's clothing illustrates the fetishistic quality of Joyce's letter to Nora- a fetish that pervades Joyce's writing and becomes an integral facet to Bloom's own sexual preferences.

Bloom's voyeuristic interaction with the woman outside of the Grosvenor may not only represent an example of Bloom's persevering libidinous nature, but it also serves as a balancing tactic that allows Bloom to reconcile tensions in his life. While he gazes at the woman, M'Coy relays the news of Paddy Dignam's death to Bloom. When M'Coy informs him of the death, Bloom continues to watch the woman, but thinks to himself "I couldn't believe it when I heard it. I was with him no later than Friday last or Thursday was it in the Arch" (*Ulysses*, 61). Bloom has sexual thoughts in the midst of his conversation with M'Coy, suggesting that Bloom thinks of life simultaneously as he thinks of death. Joyce repeats this same concept of life and death when Bloom thinks of romance in the graveyard at Dignam's funeral: "Love among the tombstones. Romeo. Spice of pleasure. In the midst of death we are in life. Both ends meet" (*Ulysses*, 89). Not only do the living walk among the ranks of the dead, but Bloom's thoughts about romance and pleasure also point to the life-bearing qualities of sex. Bloom's romantic musings in the graveyard prompt his thoughts about his wife "Molly wanting to do it at the window," which in turn evokes the memories of Bloom's deceased son, Rudy (*Ulysses*, 89). Bloom eases his anxiety of death with his active pursuit of sexual pleasure, thus revealing the intrinsic interconnectedness of life and death.

The scopophilic gazes in *Ulysses* lead up to the mutual eye-locked encounter between Bloom and Gerty in "Nausicaa." This gaze differs from the previous two

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[96] Maddox, *Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce*, 31.

voyeuristic scenes because not only does Bloom successfully experience an orgasm, but Gerty also stares back at Bloom, intensifying the gaze as she and Bloom seek sexual gratification from the distant stare. As in the other staring encounters, Bloom focuses on clothing and body parts and he masturbates to the sight of Gerty revealing "all her graceful beautifully shaped legs like that, supply soft and delicately rounded" (*Ulysses*, 299). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson suggests, "faces…are the first territory our eyes inhabit when we encounter one another," but Bloom does not notice women's faces first.[97] Gerty, on the other hand, notices Bloom's face when she sees him and "the face that met her gaze there in the twilight, wan and strangely drawn, seemed to her the saddest she had ever seen" (*Ulysses*, 292). As she looks back at him, Gerty examines Bloom's facial features just as he mentally scrutinizes women's bodies and clothing. From his facial expression Gerty notices "He was in deep mourning…the story of a haunting sorrow was written on his face," and yet later his face also conveys the "flash of admiration in his eyes that set her tingling in every nerve" (*Ulysses*, 293-295). This eye-locked exchange between Bloom and Gerty prompts her to question why he looks sad, but "her woman's instinct told her that she had raised the devil in him" and her curiosity about his feelings dissipates as she feels the tension between their gaze becoming increasingly sexual and climactic (*Ulysses*, 295). Garland-Thomson also states, "hands, as well, are places of recognition telling us whom we are approaching."[98] Gerty directs her eyes to the two principal areas that Garland-Thomson declares the primary corporeal territories that attract a stare. As the gaze intensifies, Gerty notices that "His hands and face were working and a tremor went over her" (*Ulysses*, 299). While she knows that his

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[97] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 95.
[98] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 95.

eyes are directed towards her legs as she leans back and lifts her skirt, she focuses on his hands and face and how his reaction has evolved from his initial sadness to erotic pleasure.

Garland-Thomson also notes that "so essential is the face to human interaction that it anchors much of our language."[99] The mutual gaze between Gerty and Bloom allows them to examine each other, an inspection that constitutes the non-verbal language between the two starers. The mutually voyeuristic gaze appears to satisfy both Bloom and Gerty, even though they are seeking different kinds of love. While Gerty's arousal is libidinous, she is looking for someone to "embrace her gently, like a real man…love her, his ownest girlie, for herself alone" (*Ulysses*, 294). Gerty, therefore, seeks a companionship and thinks that this unknown man, Bloom, could fulfill her desires. Bloom's desire for Gerty, however, is completely sexual and he seeks a relief from the turbulent events at Barney Kiernan's as well as the anxiety he harbors about his wife's infidelity. After he reaches his climax and the narrative switches to his stream of consciousness, Bloom concludes that the unspoken form of communication was essential to the pleasure that they both wanted to derive from the encounter: "Suppose I spoke with her. What about? Bad plan however if you don't know how to end the conversation" (*Ulysses*, 303). Bloom believes that verbal communication would have changed the dynamic of their sexual exchange because it would have added an element of awkwardness and uncertainty. According to Garland-Thomson, a verbal exchange would be superfluous because "staring is a part of our enormous communal vocabulary of the eyes that we use to put a sharp point on what we mean, think, or want," representing its

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[99] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 98.

own unique form of language.[100] Bloom acknowledges the importance of their distant eye-locked exchange and thinks that their stare "was kind of a language between us" (*Ulysses*, 305). The final image of Gerty's "sweet flowerlike face," however, conveys the bittersweet nature of her departure. Just like staring, faces provide a sort of understanding and language between the starers, and "Because humans turn to their own bodies to understand the world, our facedness provides a rich source of collective meaning."[101] Gerty's complacent visage and Bloom's facial transformation from sadness to red-hot passion define many of the internal emotions provoked by the non-verbal interaction.

During the gaze, Gerty veils her face with her hat "so that she could see from underneath the brim and swung her buckled shoe faster for her breath caught as she caught the expression in his eyes" (*Ulysses*, 295). Her pseudo-concealed countenance provides what Garland-Thomson refers to as the "rich source of collective meaning" because it highlights Gerty's coyness, revealing her inherent nature to seduce while simultaneously appearing innocent and reserved. Gerty's seductive, yet concealed body also grants her "voyeuristic agency" in this scopophilic engagement because she creates "the requisite illusion that he is controlling both the spectacle and the fantasies it engenders."[102] Therefore, Gerty's "innocent" comportment captivates Bloom, allowing him to think he has control or dominance over this erotic gaze. Joyce portrays Gerty as this virginal and innocent young woman by incorporating blue into her clothing palette; also the background ceremony of the Most Blessed Sacrament juxtaposes Gerty's image

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[100] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 39.
[101] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 98.

[102] Philip Sicker, "Unveiling Desire: Pleasure, Power, and Masquerade in Joyce's "Nausicaa" Episode": 109.

with that of the Virgin Mary. Gerty thus epitomizes Mary with her "finely veiled alabaster" skin and her blue accents (*Ulysses*, 286). Gerty's ensuing tactics of coy seduction tend to contradict her initial image as virginal and innocent; yet, despite her libidinous actions, she still possesses virginal qualities because she relieves Bloom of the anxiety that he harbors during this day. Like Gerty's visage, "the placid countenance of the Virgin Mary consoles and redeems."[103] While Gerty's actions do not emulate the Virgin Mary's purity, Gerty's outward appearance still has the ability, like the visage of the Virgin Mary, to put another at ease. Bloom finds this ease and relief by allowing his attraction to Gerty's physical attributes to culminate in his masturbation.

Gerty delays the mutual glance that drives the completion of the sexual climax, feeling Bloom's gaze upon her so that "She could almost see the swift answering flash of admiration in his eyes that set her tingling in every nerve" (*Ulysses*, 295). Throughout their encounter, Gerty "gazed out towards the distant sea" and stares at the "far away lights of the lighthouses," flirting in order to seduce Bloom and extend his climax (*Ulysses*, 293- 298). Gerty abandons her reticent gazes towards the scenery when "She looked at him a moment, meeting his glance," once Cissy, Edy, and the young boys left Gerty and her admirer alone (*Ulysses*, 299). Even though Gerty has stolen glances at Bloom to see that he has a sad countenance and mournful, yearning eyes, this is the first time that their gaze is mutually exchanged and erotic. Gerty sees that "Whitehot passion was in that face, passion silent as the grave, and it had made her his" (*Ulysses*, 299). Gerty has succeeded in arresting Bloom's attention and she then returns the erotic gaze, concluding that she has won him over in a sort of possessive, romantic relationship.

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[103] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 99.

Paradoxically, Bloom's involvement in these voyeuristic activities conveys the antithesis of possessiveness because he wants to engage in a distant, non-committal sexual encounter that results in his pleasurable climax.

The narrative tracks the building tension of the temporary glances between Gerty and Bloom to the erotic gaze that encompasses their mutual desire to find some sort of affection: "Till then they had only exchanged glances of the most casual but now under the brim of her new hat she ventured a look at him" (*Ulysses*, 292). Even though Gerty returns the stare, she is initially coquettish in her wielding of the gaze as she examines him from "underneath the brim" of her hat and sees "without looking that he never took his eyes off her" (*Ulysses*, 295). Not only does Bloom, as the voyeuristic starer, derive pleasure from the encounter, but "there is a pleasure in being looked at," implying that much of Gerty's pleasure ensues from Bloom's arrested and prolonged gaze towards her.[104]

Because Gerty stares back at Bloom, she confuses Mulvey's interpretation of dominance in the gazing dynamic. Not only does the staree know that she is the object of the male gaze, but she stares back and becomes the object that wields a returning gaze. Gerty remains in the "traditional exhibitionist role" in which "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed," but her gaze at Bloom places him in the exhibitionist role as well because she examines his face and the way he moves his hand in his pocket.[105] Mulvey suggests that the male gains "control and possession of the woman" because the woman is "isolated, glamorous, on display, and sexualized."[106] What does it mean,

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[104] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 835.
[105] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.
[106] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 840.

however, when the woman also becomes the spectator? Is the power apportioned to the woman or do the man and woman in the gaze bear an equal amount of dominance? Garland-Thomson highlights the discrepancies in the staring schema when she states, "Regardless of which sex the partners in the exchange identify with, looking masculinizes, then, and being looked at feminizes."[107] Garland-Thomson's model mirrors Mulvey's cinematic staring paradigm that hinges on the "split between active/male and passive/ female."[108] Bloom possesses the masculine attribute because he wields the stare during most of their encounter, and his unrelenting stare thus engenders his masculinization when he is often considered effeminate and even androgynous throughout many episodes of the book; therefore, this scene is beneficial for Bloom in that it serves as relief, and he feels masculinized for initiating an erotic stare. Yet, once Gerty meets his gaze and stares back at him, she then again feminizes Bloom, according to Garland-Thomson's theory, because she is the wielder of the gaze and Bloom is the object. Gerty's aggressively seductive behavior and her mutually erotic gaze confuse conventional gender identifications, and her behavior reveals her masculine characteristics. Both Bloom and Gerty are the objects and the wielders of the gaze; therefore, they derive the pleasure associated with each position in the gazing schema. Even if the staree does not return the stare, "the sight of the staree has brought a starer to his or her cognitive knees," which indicates an adjustment of power that now definitively rests in the possession of the staree because the starer is vulnerably arrested in a gaze.[109] The initial wielder of the gaze also "reveals a sexual hunger that puts a man in the

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[107] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* , 41.
[108] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 837.
[109] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 51.

vulnerable position of seeming, even being, enthralled by women."[110] Whether Gerty stares back at Bloom or not, Bloom still posits himself in a vulnerable position with his erotic, arrested gaze that indicates a demotion of male dominance.

Another way in which Joyce confuses the power dynamic between Gerty and Bloom is in their parting after the firework festivities. They engage in a final mutual gaze in which "their souls met in a last lingering glance," but, as Gerty walks away, she denies Bloom the satisfaction of looking back at him. He later thinks to himself how she "didn't look back when she was going down the strand. Wouldn't give that satisfaction" (*Ulysses*, 301- 304). The final glance back towards Bloom would have represented the "gratified recognition upon 'discovering' that she has been the object of the man's voyeuristic detection."[111] Gerty's last glance would have indicated and confirmed to Bloom that she is aware of his sensual gaze directed towards her. This deprivation of the returning gaze relates to the other staring scenes in which the women did not look back at Bloom. The lack of recognition towards Bloom suggests a relegation of Bloom's masculine power, thus halting any further satisfaction from the erotic gaze. In "Nausicaa," Gerty's behavior conveys complacency and a sense of completion because she leaves "with a certain quiet dignity" (*Ulysses*, 301).

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[110] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* , 69.

[111] Philip Sicker, "Unveiling Desire: Pleasure, Power, and Masquerade in Joyce's "Nausicaa" Episode":126.

Bloom's Visual Access

Why is Bloom a voyeur? Rosemarie Garland-Thomson succinctly states, "seeing is visual access to the whole person."[112] An a theorist of Disability Studies, Garland-Thomson explores the way in which humans stare and what provokes the wielding of the gaze. In *Ulysses*, whether someone is looking at Bloom or he is staring at another person, the visual satiates a curiosity or desire within the wielder of the stare, serving as a portal for discovery as well as satisfaction. For Bloom, "looking and eye contact determine conversation, establish intimacy, and convey emotion."[113] Even though he does not posses the conventionally dominant stance in most of his voyeuristic encounters, he uses staring as his mode of uninhibited, non-judgmental communication as well as a non-committal intimacy. Staring thus becomes the vehicle through which Bloom conveys his desire, relief, and curiosity.

While staring often serves as Bloom's emotional and sexual expression in *Ulysses*, Laura Mulvey proffers that the male starer's frequent examination of the woman's body results from fear of castration. [114] The castration complex is a psychoanalytic facet of the male sexual gaze, suggesting that the biological fact that a woman does not have a penis invites the inquisitive male gaze.[115] Because the primary differences between men and women are anatomical disparities, "the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always

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[112] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 39.
[113] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 39.
[114] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 840.
[115] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 840.

threaten to evoke the anxiety it originally signified."[116] Mulvey suggests that women elicit, on one hand, a sexual and erotic demeanor, and, on the other hand, serve as a reminder to the male viewer of the sexual differences between men and women, specifically a woman's lack of a penis. Joyce portrays Bloom as the emblem of the feminine man, which represents the fusion of his physical masculinity and his feminine proclivities. Bloom may be able to relate to the women he stares at because of their shared maternal and passive characteristics, but women can also serve as a threat because Bloom is unable to connect with women anatomically. Therefore, even with the surge of erotic emotions in the stare, there exists an inevitable threat of castration. In order to temper the anxiety of the castration complex, Mulvey suggests that men often engage in a "complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object," which implies that the male directs his attention towards eroticism and away from the anxiety that ensues from the castration complex.[117] Bloom's concentration on women's clothing and body movements derives from his "fetishistic scopophilia," which highlights his propensity to admire "the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself."[118] Bloom's erotic gazing may be predicated on the biological differences between men and women, and his subsequent admiration of a woman's body and clothing tempers his corporeal anxiety.

Another facet of voyeurism is the "simultaneous domination and subjection" of the starer.[119] Not only is Bloom a voyeur in "Circe," as well as in other episodes, but he is also the subject of the reader's own voyeurism. The concept of the reader's voyeurism

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[116] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 840.
[117] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 840.
[118] Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 840.
[119] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 44.

reappears often in film criticism, which maintains that the film viewers or the audience are inevitably voyeurs because they are watching a film, investing their interest in the characters' fate. Linda Williams asks, "What is a film, after all, without voyeurism?"[120] This voyeuristic facet can also be applied to literature and the role that the reader plays in peering intrusively into the lives and actions of the characters. In reading *Ulysses*, the reader voyeuristically watches how Bloom derives pleasure from his scopophilic encounters. Bloom is the wielder of the stare and simultaneously the staree because the reader acknowledges and watches Bloom's own gazing. Essentially the reader catches Bloom in his voyeuristic acts and "the excessive, indecorous enthrallment of staring subjugated the starer by begetting shame."[121] The audience or reader appropriates any dominance that Bloom initially has as the wielder of the stare and replaces his dominance with shame and disdain of his actions as the intrusive voyeur.

"Apply your eye to the keyhole…"

Most of the voyeurism scenes in *Ulysses* involve Bloom's gazing at a woman from a distance; however, he also voyeuristically imposes himself in the sexual engagement between Molly and Boylan. Although the narrative never reveals the exact details of Molly and Boylan's encounter, Bloom is an invasive voyeur as he thinks about the sex scene, positing himself as a third party spectator just outside the bedroom. The text reveals Bloom's anxiety as the time of Boylan's arrival at Eccles' Street nears, and

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[120] Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 6.

[121] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 44.

Bloom pictures Boylan knocking at the door of his house. Bloom is not only the third person voyeur, but he also places himself within Molly's internal thoughts. He thinks through Molly's point of view as she eagerly awaits Boylan's arrival: "Bronze, listening, by the beerpull gazed far away" (*Ulysses*, 233). Bloom metaphysically posits himself in different places from which to view Molly and Boylan's affair. As the third person voyeur, he thinks, "Doesn't half know I'm," as if to say that Molly is unaware that he knows about the affair and is cognizant enough of the events as though he were there watching. Bloom imagines that he is in his house watching Molly prepare as she looks in the "mirror there. Is that the best side of her face? They always know. Knock at the door. Last tip to titivate" (*Ulysses*, 233). Bloom's role as the voyeur emanates from his instinctive knowledge of Molly's typical behavior as she examines herself in the mirror before she answers the door.

In the "Circe" dream sequence, Boylan tells Bloom, "You can apply your eye to the keyhole and play with yourself while I just go through her a few times" (*Ulysses*, 462). Boylan invites Bloom to watch him have sex with Molly; in this surreal depiction of Molly and Boylan's sex scene, Joyce creates an invasive and distorted love triangle. Joyce inverts a voyeuristic device when Bloom asks Boylan, "May I bring two men chums to witness the deed and take a snapshot?" (*Ulysses*, 462). Like the eyes, the camera is another portal for voyeurism, permitting visual access to something that is initially inaccessible or inappropriate for staring. Not only will three sets of eyes look through the narrow barrel of a keyhole, but Bloom will also bring a camera that will allow him to immortalize the coital intercourse between Boylan and Molly. Ironically,

Bloom does not intend to use this hypothetical picture to exploit the adulterous act, but instead he would use it for his own sexual pleasure.

Mina Kennedy, Kitty, and Lydia Douce become voyeurs with Bloom and they discuss how Boylan is "carrying [Molly] round the room doing it…You could hear them in Paris and New York" (*Ulysses*, 462). Not only does Bloom derive pleasure (and pain) from this invasive voyeuristic scene, but the women also gain satisfaction from watching the way in which Boylan "simply idolizes every bit of her" (*Ulysses*, 462). The act of staring connotes a visual desire that needs to be satiated through an intrusive and prolonged stare, but the erotic gaze of watching sex is "Driven by 'jealousy, curiosity, or vice'" and the "starer is vulnerable for indulging in such prolifigate and inappropriate looking."[122] Therefore, the pleasure that ensues from this voyeurism does not result in the starers' power as established in Mulvey's staring schema, but it instead renders the starers vulnerable as they satiate their curiosity and jealousy.

All of the voyeurs of Molly and Boylan's sex scene become involved in their sexual climax, and the starers experience their own pleasure in their watching as they laugh and giggle concurrently with the orgasms. Bloom's excitement manifests when his "*eyes* [become] *widely dilated*," and he yells to Boylan, "Show! Hide! Show! Plough her! More! Shoot!" (*Ulysses*, 462). Bloom participates in Boylan and Molly's sexual encounter not only by watching them, but also by shouting directions and orders so that he can see better. When Bloom yells, "Plough her," he implies a sadomasochistic undertone of his pleasure that derives from the severity of his wife's intercourse.

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[122] Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look*, 43.

Zoe, one of the prostitutes in "Circe" tells Bloom, "What the eye can't see the heart can't grieve for" (*Ulysses*, 408). Bloom is a participating witness in the encounter with Gerty in "Nausicaa," and he thus reveals his anxiety in "Circe" about his voyeurism and masturbation. In order to temper his anxiety and possible guilt, he claims that Gerty is "dreaming. I never saw you," absolving himself of any involvement in this perverse act (*Ulysses*, 361). Even though Bloom says in "Circe" that he did not see Gerty, the text, in "Nausicaa," reveals that he actually did see her, and he is subject to the consequences of his masturbatory act; however, he does not want to deal with the grievances and thus disowns his involvement. On the other hand, Bloom never actually sees his wife and Boylan commit adultery, yet he grieves and expresses his anxiety during the whole day. Bloom disavows Zoe's rationalization of grief when he conjures the image of his wife and Boylan in his dream does he release his grievances and anxiety, moving forward in order to claim his place in bed next to Molly at the end of the novel. Bloom's disowning of the eye-locked exchange with Gerty implies that he wants to rid himself of any sexual guilt; paradoxically, Bloom feels that his visual knowledge of Molly's affair may be the dissipation of his anxiety and grief. "Circe," thus, becomes the episode of seeing or not seeing that which has had an affect on Bloom during the course of the day, allowing him to confront and release his anxieties. Kiberd suggests that "Circe" is a monumental episode because "Bloom undergoes many humiliations before he can enjoy a more positive wish-fulfillment, which can also go with dreams."[123] Bloom's voyeuristic proclivities during the novel conclude with his ultimate erotic gaze at his wife committing adultery, and his voyeuristic participation in the sex scene allows Bloom to

[123] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 223.

"confront the fear," and, as with a dream, his confrontation with his anxiety will allow him to "sleep more deeply afterwards."[124]

Even though most of the staring scenes are couched within an erotic context, Joyce uses the staring scenes in order to convey Bloom's expression of affection and love that is not quite palpable throughout the novel. Staring does not serve as a complete substitute for Bloom's acceptance or demonstration of love, but it serves as a comfortable form of expression that allows him to feel and communicate admiration and affection easily. The eyes serve as a powerful mechanism for Bloom because they allow him to indulge, invasively, in a part of life from which he feels locked out. At the end of "Circe," Bloom directs his stare towards "a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet, holding a book in his hand" (*Ulysses,* 497). Bloom, "wonderstruck," recognizes this boy to be his son Rudy who passed away eleven years ago (*Ulysses*, 497). Even though Bloom recognizes and calls out to his dead child, Rudy does not respond and "goes on reading, kissing, smiling," recreating the stare dynamic that Bloom experienced twice during the day in which the staree fails to return the stare (*Ulysses*, 497). Not only is the ghost of Rudy unable to stare back, but also his failure to satisfy Bloom's desire changes the sentimentality of this loving moment into a scene of heartbreak and distress. Kiberd asserts that any power Bloom had preceding this encounter with Rudy dissipates because not only does the staree fail to return the yearning stare, but this is the love that Bloom desires the most, that between father and son: "Bloom has his finger on his lips in the style of 'a secret master,' but that mastery leaves him powerless before a boy who is

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[124] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 223.

stuck in a book."[125] Rudy's inability to stare back at his father confirms that Bloom is "locked out of it. Paradise and the peri," which, in this context, refers to the love he desires over romantic affection: familial love (*Ulysses,* 61). Scenes such as this much desired, yet failed encounter with Rudy, invites the reader to sympathize for Bloom in more ways than the lost sexual experiences with his wife and the women around Dublin. As Kiberd suggests, Bloom frequently finds himself stuck in moments that are incomplete, and his supernatural interaction with his deceased son is eternally insufficient. The penultimate scene of staring is not Bloom's admittance into the sex scene with Boylan and Molly, but it is the staring scene in which he seeks the true love between father and child.

[125] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 233.

Chapter 3: Deconstructing Gender

Bloom the Masochist

Masturbation, juxtaposed with the hermeneutical narrative in "Nausicaa," serves as a way for Gerty and Bloom to reconcile their carnal needs with their spirituality. While their acts overtly negate religious doctrines and practice, the scene on Sandymount Strand exhibits how Bloom and Gerty spiritually entrust themselves to their bodies in ways that are opposed to the strict practices of the church that restrict individual expression and free will. With voyeurism as well, Bloom's sexual practice is not condemnable, but instead renders the reader sympathetic because Bloom yearns to fulfill a sexual desire that he lacks in his life; his voyeuristic encounters demonstrate his need to observe and discover pleasure from a distance, offering an intimate experience without the constraints of engaging in a verbal, or physically sexual, encounter. Staring, even scopophlic staring, becomes one of Bloom's modes of expression and acceptance of love during the course of the day.

With both masturbation and staring, Joyce demarcates the societal and religious constraints that conventionally suppress and condemn these types of sexual expression. Even though society and some religions would deem these sexual acts as perverse, this behavior may also be redemptive because it serves for the betterment of Bloom's day: masturbation allows Bloom to experience pleasure and also relieves the burden of his tension-filled conversations at Barney Kiernan's, and voyeurism permits entrance into a world from which he constantly feels excluded in Dublin. While these sexual acts convey a sense of Bloom's redemption, Joyce incorporates into the novel some sexual

engagements that force the reader to question Bloom's sexual proclivities. In many episodes, Bloom has masochistic fantasies, which render him the subservient recipient of sexual dominance. Thomas Balazs analyzes masochism in *Ulysses* and claims that Bloom "samples all of the elements of classic sexual masochism: secret encounters with dominating women, flagellation, bondage, fetishized clothing, foot worship, verbal abuse, sexual humiliation, forced cross-dressing, and, of course, self-induced cuckoldry."[126] Why does Joyce, who wants Bloom to represent the "everyman," also expose Bloom to be a masochist? Are there any redemptive qualities that justify or rationalize this sexual behavior? Are Bloom's masochistic tendencies strictly perversions or should we, as readers, accept this behavior as a possible intrinsic component of human sexuality? How are we to interpret the fact that Bloom is the eternal pacifist, yet he seems to enjoy his masochistic musings? While masochism typically exemplifies a sexual perversion, the incorporation of this sexual preference may instead be a "sexual aberration that Joyce built into the texture of Bloom's mind to expose the narrowness of traditional definitions of sexual normality."[127] Therefore, in the reading of Bloom's masochistic tendencies, our interpretation should not be laden with discomfort or disdain, but rather we should understand that Joyce was attempting to reveal the restricting limitations of acceptable sexual behavior by integrating these demeaned practices into *Ulysses*.

Masochism manifests in different ways throughout the text, surfacing in Bloom's correspondence with Martha Clifford, the "Circe" dream sequence, and his distant, voyeuristic encounters. When Bloom observes the woman at Dlugacz's, he not only

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[126] Thomas P. Balazs, "Recognizing Masochism: Psychoanalysis and the Politics of Sexual Submission in Ulysses," *Joyce Studies Annual 2002*, 13 (2002): 160-192.

[127] Richard Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985):110.

wishes to derive some pleasure from the scopophlic experience, but he also reveals his sadistic and masochistic fantasies. Bloom's attention to this voluptuous woman provokes his thoughts about the body as a piece of meat, referring to her body as a "Sound meat there: like a stallfed heifer" (*Ulysses*, 48). Bloom continues to equate her body to meat as he compares her legs to "moving hams" (*Ulysses*, 49). The carnal and corporeal image of this woman's body is both seductive and sadomasochistic because her legs are compared to the ham that will be cut and prepared for consumption. The violent quality that Bloom attributes to this experience exposes his natural inclination and desire to integrate aggressiveness into his sexual pleasure.

However, when masochism emerges in the novel, this motif of sexual practice often posits Bloom as submissive to the aggressive woman. Female dominance and male subservience undermine the conventional gender positions attributed to masculinity and femininity; the sexual dynamic typically yields the male as aggressive and commanding while the female exudes a passivity and sexual willingness. During the time that Joyce was writing, the First Wave of Feminism encouraged women to become more involved in the workforce and integrate themselves into society.[128] The text mimics this transition from the hierarchy of patriarchal society to an increase in female dominance. Even though the early twentieth century marked a crucial period for feminism, there still existed the stereotypical separation and categorization of femininity and masculinity as established by patriarchal society. Havelock Ellis acknowledged the gender-based dichotomy of sexual practice, noting "Masochism is commonly regarded as a peculiarly feminine perversion, in women, indeed, as normal in some degree, and in man as a sort of

[128] Balazs, "Recognizing Masochism," 160-192.

inversion of the normal masculine emotional attitude."[129] Thus, the gender differentiation in masochistic sexual practice hinges on female submission and male sexual dominance. Ellis reveals, however, that this notion of the binary opposition of macho-masculinity and passive femininity does not fully explicate the tendency of men to render themselves submissive to women.[130] For a man, heterosexual romance inherently involves "'passion in its more lyric exaltations [that] almost necessarily involves some resort to masochistic expression.'"[131] Conventional gender classifications often dissipate in a romance because a man will inevitably seek pleasure from his submission to a woman's dominance.

The correspondence between erotic pen pals Martha Clifford and Leopold Bloom exemplifies this intrinsic male desire to experience pleasure as the submissive recipient of female eroticism. In Martha's letter to Bloom, she writes, "Please write me a long letter and tell me more. Remember if you do not I will punish you. So now you know what I will do to you, you naughty boy, if you do not wrote" (*Ulysses,* 63-64). The "weak joy that opened his lips" upon reading this letter confirms the pleasure Bloom experiences as he thinks about this impending punishment if he does not write a longer (and maybe more lascivious) letter to Martha (*Ulysses*, 64). Later, in "Sirens," Bloom reflects on his correspondence with Martha, and, in his response to her letter, he questions, "How will you pun? You punish me? Crooked skirt swinging, whack by" (*Ulysses,* 230). Bloom mentally juxtaposes Martha's threatening punishment letter with his memory of the aggressive hips of the woman who captured his gaze in the butcher shop. Both women

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[129] Carol Siegel, ""Venus Metempsychosis" and Venus in Furs: Masochism and Fertility in Ulysses," *Twentieth Century Literature* 33, no. 2 (1987): 188.

[130] Carol Siegel, "Venus Metempsychosis," 188.

[131] Carol Siegel, "Venus Metempsychosis," 188.

exert dominance over Bloom and render him vulnerable, thus placing him in the passive and submissive position. Bloom even wants Martha to elucidate what kind of punishment he would receive in order to sustain his masochistic fantasy in their dialogue: "Tell me I want to. Know. O. Course if I didn't I wouldn't ask" (*Ulysses*, 230).

Many of Bloom's masochistic tendencies arise from his correspondence with Martha Clifford, which closely mirrors James and Nora Joyce's correspondence. Even though Bloom's erotic letters reflect many of Joyce's own letters to his wife, "critics, including both Brown and Ellmann, who believe that Joyce's intentions were more serious, stress literary rather than experiential sources for his descriptions of masochistic rituals."[132] While Bloom's masochistic tendencies do not completely echo Joyce's sexual proclivities, the text often harbors autobiographical hints that draw parallels between Joyce's sexual preferences and Bloom's, thus negating Ellmann and Brown's claim that the text's masochistic undertones are not experiential. The masochistic fantasies provoked and maintained through Bloom's correspondence reflect Joyce's own communication with Nora during their separation in 1909. While Joyce was in Dublin, he wrote letters to his wife nearly every day, and, for a period of time, his letters were laden with descriptive images of his sexual desires for Nora. On December 13, 1909, Joyce desired "to feel you flog, flog, flog me viciously on my naked quivering flesh."[133] As Joyce longingly writes of his erotic fantasies, he reveals his desire for painful flagellation. He yearns for Nora to assume the dominating and aggressive role in their sexual relationship as he writes, "I wish you would smack me or flog me even. Not in play, dear,

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[132] Siegel, ""Venus Metempsychosis," 179.

[133] Richard Ellmann, ed., *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (New York: The Viking Press, 1975): 189.

in earnest and on my naked flesh. I wish you were strong, *strong*, dear, and had a big full proud bosom and big fat thighs I would love to be whipped by you."[134] Couched within his repetitive yearning for Nora to whip and flog him, Joyce desires female strength, which ensures Nora's aggressive dominance over him.

The epistolary correspondence between Joyce and Nora introduces the idea that the letter represents both a forum for sexual discourse as well as an "erotic object" as "he asked [Nora] to take his letter into bed with her."[135] Bloom's correspondence may also reflect this double-valenced quality of the erotic letter; however, after Bloom masturbates on Sandymount Strand, he thinks to himself "damned glad I didn't do it in the bath this morning over her silly I will punish you letter" (*Ulysses*, 301). In a way, Bloom denounces the letter as a register of erotic arousal and prefers the distant fetishization of Gerty's clothing. Bloom continues to exert masochistic sexual preferences even though he expresses his relief that he did not masturbate to the threatening punishment letter. Bloom still reaps the benefit of the masochistic power dynamic because Gerty possesses dominance in the gaze during the Sandymount Strand encounter.

Even though Joyce's letters to Nora possess perversions that shock and often dismay readers, Ellmann purports that Joyce did not seek solely to evoke arousal and sexual pleasure in this epistolary effort, but instead, "Joyce wishes to anatomize and reconstitute and crystallize the emotion of love."[136] Bloom's sexual predilections and erotic letters closely correlate with the practices in Joyce's archived letters, and Bloom also strives to experience a love that transcends the normal emotions that accompany

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[134] Ellmann, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, 188.

[135] Brenda Maddox, *Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1988): 31.

[136] Ellmann, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, xxv.

romance. In these letters, Joyce sought "to know someone else beyond love and hate, beyond vanity and remorse, beyond human possibility almost," redefining human expression through his overtly erotic and sexual letters to his wife.[137] Analogously, Bloom's correspondence with Martha Clifford may ensue from his desire to know someone beyond the conventional standards of a loving, romantic relationship.

In "Circe," Joyce again infuses an autobiographical element into the text, focusing particularly on the masochistic undertones of the sexual encounters between Bello (Bella Cohen) and Bloom. In Dublin's Nighttown, Bloom follows Stephen into a brothel where he meets the "massive whoremistress" Bella Cohen (*Ulysses*, 429). Bella's masculine alter ego, Bello, not only reverses and confuses the gender dynamic in the episode, but Bello's aggressiveness reflects Bloom's masochistic fantasies of female domination. At one point, Bello sits on top of Bloom's head and crudely expels gas:

> **Bello**
>
> Well, I'm not. *(he holds his breath)* Curse it. Here. This bung's about to burst. *(he uncorks himself behind: then, contorting his features, farts stoutly)* Take that! *(he recorks himself)* Yes, by Jingo, sixteen these quarters.
>
> **Bloom**
>
> *(a sweat breaking over him)* Not man. *(he sniffs)* Woman.

Because "Circe" is the confessional chapter that exposes Bloom's repressed and sublimated emotions and desires, this scene represents his desire for the other gender to assume hierarchal and abusive dominance. Bloom's recognition of Bello's true sex,

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[137] Ellmann, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, xxv.

through her expulsion of gas, exemplifies the gender dynamic of masochism: the veil of masculinity engenders Bello's aggressive dominance and behavior, yet she is still a woman.[138] The image of Bello expelling gas on Bloom's head alludes to Joyce's letters to Nora that vividly describe Joyce's desire for his wife to expel gas during their sexual intercourse, comingling the body's natural propensity to experience sexual pleasure with the body's necessity to expel waste.[139] Therefore, Joyce again uses Bloom as his portal through which he expresses his own desires.

The construction of the masculine woman comparatively mirrors the recurring concept of the womanly man throughout the text. The masculine qualities of aggressiveness and domination fuse with the feminine figure of Bella in order to create the ideal image of a domineering woman. The masculine alter ego of Bella Cohen not only challenges the typical gender binary, but it also suggests that Bloom's desires could be homoerotic. If not homoerotic, then these masochistic fantasies derive from Bloom's desire to cower under a woman's aggressiveness. In the transformation from female to male, Joyce posits Bello as a man "*with bobbed hair, purple gills, fat mustache rings round his shaven mouth…his hands stuck deep in his breeches pockets*" (*Ulysses*, 433). Bello entertains Bloom's masochistic fantasies as she orders Bloom to behave in certain ways, but, in this surreal brothel setting, Bloom not only becomes submissive to the domineering woman, but the text also refers to him as "she"; Joyce portrays the reconstructed gender dynamic through a sex reversal. Bello yells to Bloom, "Down! *(he taps her on the shoulder with his fan)* Incline feet forward…On the hands down!"

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[138] Even when Bella Cohen turns into her masculine alter ego, I still refer to her as a woman or "she."

[139] Ellmann, *Selected Letters of James Joyce*, 185.

(*Ulysses,* 433). The stage instructions in "Circe" indicate that Bello, the man, forces Bloom, "her," onto the ground, and "*With a piercing epileptic cry she sinks on all fours, grunting, snuffling, rooting at his feet: then lies, shamming dead, with eyes shut tight, trembling eyelids, bowed upon the ground in the attitude of most excellent master"* (*Ulysses*, 433). Not only does Bello assume the sadistic characteristics that satisfy the sadomasochistic sexual dynamic, but she also becomes a master that rules over humiliated and compliant Bloom. An integral facet of masochism's "subversion lies in its construction of a 'feminine' yet heterosexual male," which Joyce creates in his protagonist Bloom, the "new womanly man"; thus sadomasochism deconstructs and overturns patriarchal society's establishment of gender-appropriate power positions (*Ulysses*, 403).

The reconstruction of Bello and Bloom's genders, however, also introduces the transience of gender roles because Bloom still refers to Bello as "mistress." For example, Bello "*places a ruby ring on her finger*... And there now! With this ring I thee own. Say, *thank you, mistress*" (*Ulysses*, 439). Bello still assumes the male role by proposing to Bloom and stating that she "owns" Bloom, yet she bids him to call her "mistress." In "Circe," Joyce creates a manifold scheme that allows Bloom to stage and play out his masochistic desires, which, in turn, provokes the interchangeable and mutable genders and associative stereotypes. Just as the gaze dynamic between men and women subverts conventional gender associations, masochism's "inversions of hierarchies [lead] to

confusion regarding who is really in power," especially in the context of gender transparency.[140]

While masochism often posits the woman's dominance over the man's submissiveness, Linda Williams suggests that this relegation of male agency is more of "a ruse, a manipulation of appearances, so that pleasure can be attained."[141] There is a superficial quality to the woman's power because the man methodically places himself in the position of pain in order to derive pleasure. The man's passivity is a self-inflicted compliance that results in a prolongation of pleasure and sexual satisfaction. This masochistic agency represents a denial of "what the masochist actually knows to exist," which is "his (or her) very real sexual agency and pleasure."[142] Even though Bloom relegates his dominance in the heterosexual gaze, he may still possess power in his masochistic fantasies because he consciously places himself in the passive position.

The interaction between Bello Cohen and Bloom serves as the staged culmination of Bloom's masochistic proclivities, but, before this surreal sexual encounter, Mrs. Bellingham, Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Talboys prosecute Bloom for his inappropriate and crude sexual behavior. Mrs. Bellingham accuses Bloom of addressing her "in several handwritings with fulsome compliments as a Venus in furs" (*Ulysses*, 380). Joyce alludes to Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novella *Venus in Furs* and thus exhibits Bloom's desire to experience degradation during sexual encounters, for which these women criminally accuse Bloom of illicit behavior. Mrs. Talboys, referred to as "The Honourable Mrs Mervyn Talboys," recalls how Bloom "implored me to soil his letter in an unspeakable

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[140] Linda Williams, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999): 212.

[141] Williams, *Hard Core,* 212.

[142] Williams, *Hard Core,* 212.

manner, to chastise him as he richly deserves, to bestride and ride him, to give him a most vicious horsewhipping" (*Ulysses*, 381). Ironically, Joyce refers to Mrs. Talboys as honorable because she accuses Bloom of illicit and aggressive sexual behavior. Her public chastisement of Bloom's personal preferences negates her alleged characteristic of honorability and dignity. Joyce refers to her as honorable in order to critique and parody the characteristics that society deems admirable when they actually represent the antithesis of respectability.

While the adulterous facet to Bloom's sexual requests is condemnable, Bloom's masochistic fantasies are double-valenced in that they introduce a violent component to sexual experience, but they also comprise "a contract that reverses the normal patriarchal order in which the woman is only an object."[143] Masochistic tendencies are not easily rationalized or justified, but the analysis of such sexual practices can elicit a reversal of gender positions that have been established by the stigmas of patriarchal order.[144] Because these women indict Bloom and accuse him of inappropriate behavior, Joyce tries to expose these narrow confines of sexual expression. Therefore, in the "Circe" courtroom scene, Joyce does not create a critique of Bloom's eroticism and sexual propensity, but instead he critiques the narrow confines that society attributes to acceptable sexual expression.[145]

Bloom attempts to defend his sexual fantasies when he says, "I meant only the spanking idea. A warm tingling glow without effusion. Refined birching to stimulate the circulation" (*Ulysses*, 382). While the women censure his married status and

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[143] Williams, *Hard Core,* 211.
[144] Restuccia, "Molly in Furs," 106.
[145] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 110.

"disgraceful" intentions, Bloom rationalizes his masochistic tendencies by saying that he desires flagellation that will merely energize and excite his senses, not necessarily resulting in a sexual climax. Bloom does not experience a sexual climax from masochism even though he fantasizes about it; the experience in the brothel, while it satisfies sadomasochistic fantasies, is surreal and couched in the dream narrative of the text, thus denying its reality. The ejaculatory pleasure that Bloom experiences during the day instead results from his voyeurism on Sandymount Strand. Bloom truthfully admits in this trial that his masochistic fantasies beget his arousal, but not necessarily the completion of a sexual climax.

Because Bloom is a cuckold, he doubly substantiates Linda Williams' contention that the position of the masochist is a self-infliction of passivity and submissiveness.[146] Throughout the day, Bloom has many opportunities to return to 7 Eccles Street and halt his wife's infidelity. The text even provides hints that imply Bloom's instinctive knowledge of the affair: For example, Mrs. Talboys states that Bloom "is a wellknown cuckold," just as the timepiece chimes "Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo," temporally indicating the onset of Molly and Boylan's coitus (*Ulysses*, 381-382). The cuckold's passivity and subsequent experience of pain and guilt closely mirrors the submissive torture of masochism. Cuckoldry, therefore, epitomizes masochism: Bloom experiences pleasure and pain from his acknowledgement and visualization of his wife's adultery, just as he wishes to experience pleasure from the threat of Martha's impending punishment.

While Joyce often portrays masochism as the submissive experience of sexual pleasure that ensues from pain, he expands the definition of masochism by incorporating

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[146] Williams, *Hard Core,* 212.

the dichotomy of eroticism and death. The juxtaposition of death and sexuality speaks to the violent and aggressive aspects of masochistic pleasure. Joyce illustrates the masochistic sexual dynamic in which the submissive participant experiences pain and simultaneous sexual pleasure, but the concept of death and eroticism introduces a tangential facet to the pleasurable pain of masochism. In "Cyclops," Alf Bergan provides a corporeal description of capital punishment and recalls that "when they cut [a prisoner] down after the drop it was standing up in their faces like a poker," referring to the hanged man's erection (*Ulysses*, 250). Because Joyce portrays Bloom as the pragmatic and methodical character, Bloom offers a scientific explanation for the hanged man's erection, stating that the readjustment of the spinal cord during this death sentence will "inevitably produce in the human subject a violent ganglionic stimulus of the nerve centres of the genital apparatus" (*Ulysses*, 250). Bloom's explanation for this occurrence demonstrates his fascination with medicinal and anatomical knowledge, which may allude to Joyce's own short-lived medical pursuits. Later in "Circe," the stage directions indicate that "*a violent erection of the hanged sends gouts of sperm spouting through his deathclothes on to the cobblestones*" (*Ulysses*, 485). The recurring image of the hanged man's erection reinforces the juxtaposition of violence and eroticism that parallels the experience of the masochist's pain and pleasure; the combination of death and eroticism exacerbates and heightens the masochist's experience of pain.

Joyce again incorporates this hyper-violent dimension of masochism when Bloom thinks about returning to see Gerty the next day on Sandymount Strand. He wonders, "Will she come here tomorrow? Wait for her somewhere for ever. Must come back. Murderers do. Will I? (*Ulysses*, 312). Bloom equates his return to Sandymount Strand to

a murderer's return to a crime scene. Even though the Sandymount Strand scene evokes the masochistic undertones that weave throughout the text, Bloom actually assumes the role of the sadist in this interior monologue because he compares his behavior to the violence of a murderer, which opposes the submissive willingness of the masochist to experience pain as a source of pleasure.

Bloom's masochistic behaviors and tendencies often surface when he is at a distance from his objects of desire, such as the voyeuristic scene in "Nausicaa." Because Bloom is unable "to satisfy his much reiterated longing for loving contact with a woman," the insufficiency of his romantic encounters exemplifies the motif of masochism.[147] Bloom's distant, scopophilic interactions demonstrate his engagement in non-committal encounters from which he can derive pleasure. The voyeuristic gazes, however, render Bloom vulnerable because the gaze brings a "starer to his or her cognitive knees"; yet, even in this subservient and submissive position, Bloom still seeks sexual pleasure.[148] Because Bloom's voyeuristic encounters are insufficient, they embody the masochistic tendencies that resurface through the course of the text. While the starer's inevitable vulnerability evokes masochistic pleasure, Carol Siegel also suggests that the insufficiency of these gazing encounters and the distant "avoidance of the thing desired is also a kind of masochism."[149] Thus Bloom's avoidance of communicative encounters exemplifies masochistic practice.

Joyce also uses women's aesthetics to evoke the masochistic undertones that recur throughout the text and many of the female characters in *Ulysses* share three principal

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[147] Siegel, "Venus Metempsychosis," 188.

[148] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Staring: How We Look* (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2009): 51.

[149] Siegel, "Venus Metempsychosis," 188.

qualities: "flowing hair, singing, and rocky setting."[150] These descriptive stereotypes pertain to most of the women in the novel, but they most specifically refer to Martha Clifford and the "seaside girls" on Sandymount Strand.[151] Martha's last name, Clifford, possesses masochistic innuendos because the word "cliff" implies Martha's "potential to shipwreck Bloom" as he wanders around Dublin.[152] The description of Gerty's hair also bears seductive, hermeneutical, and masochistic undertones. While Gerty's hair may allude to Milton's Eve, "the hair fetish is particularly revealing, inscribing as 'natural' or 'organic' the female's propensity to rope, lasso, or otherwise fetter the male."[153] Bloom not only assumes the passive position in the gaze dynamic, but the masochistic, rope-like qualities of Gerty's hair as well as Martha's threatening surname posit Bloom as the submissive recipient of pain and pleasure. Therefore, Bloom fantasizes about masochism, but the women in the novel possess qualities that inadvertently force him into this submissive position.

A psychoanalytic understanding of masochism hinges on the familial order and repressed and sublimated urges, desires, and fears. Frances Restuccia explicates Deleuzean analyses of masochism, which offer different interpretations that derive from the family dynamic.[154] Deleuze suggests that the masochist may associate with the father figure rather than the Oedipal mother figure because "the subject atones for…his resemblance to the father and the father's likeness in him: the formula of masochism is

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[150] Leslie Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men': Fatal Women in Ulysses," *Gender in Joyce*, ed. Jolanta W. Wawrzycka and Marlene G. Corcoran (Gainseville, Florida: University Press of Florida): 50.

[151] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 50.

[152] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 54.

[153] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 50.

[154] Restuccia, "Molly in Furs," 109.

the humiliated father. Hence the father is not so much the beater as the beaten."[155] Thus, the sadist's mode of punishment represents the restitution that the mother figure claims over the father figure, which is reenacted through the male-female sadomasochistic dynamic. Sadism and masochism, however, do not necessarily evolve from the dejected position of the father figure; masochism can apply more to the female while the male in the sexual encounter assumes the sadist's role. Rather than accepting punishment, the man becomes the sadist who identifies "with the power of the father and the phallus…[rejecting] the mother in himself, expels his ego, and over invests in the superego."[156] The man acts violently towards the woman in order to reject symbolically his Oedipal desires of the mother figure. Therefore, from this perspective, Deleuze asserts that "this punishment of the female aspect of the self then yields sadistic fantasies of the obsessive and violent punishment of women who substitute for that rejected part."[157] Even though Bloom is "a finished example of the new womanly man" and he possesses maternal qualities, he exemplifies the analysis of masochism that hinges on the dejected father figure (*Ulysses*, 403). By assuming the rejected and punished father role, Bloom allows himself to be subservient and submissive to the mother figure, elevating and almost praising the role of the mother. Bloom's position as the beaten father in masochistic practice may derive from the guilt that ensues from his inability to give Molly a healthy, living son or his inability to be the masculine man she desires (*Ulysses*, 610).

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[155] Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty* (Zone Books, 1991), quoted in Frances Restuccia, "Molly in Furs," 109.

[156] Williams, *Hard Core,* 210.

[157] Williams, *Hard Core,* 211.

Bloom assumes the position of the masochist more often than that of the sadist in his sexual fantasies; however, during in his encounter on Sandymount Strand, Bloom engages in "voyeuristic pleasure, vacillating between memories of tainting Gerty's 'little girlwhite' with his invasive eye and thoughts of the 'hot little devil' who bewitched him."[158] Bloom oscillates between sadism and masochism in his encounter with Gerty because he derives pleasure from the influence that she has over him, and he also experiences pleasure as he envisions "tainting" her youthful innocence. Bloom's sadistic and masochistic tendencies in "Nausicaa" result from the fact that he "is part father-figure, part demon lover whom Gerty imagines 'crushing her soft body into him…his ownest girlie.'"[159] Bloom fulfills his masochistic fantasies by subordinating himself to Gerty's powerful seduction, but he also confuses and challenges the familial system that substantiates the behavior of sadomasochism. The age difference between Gerty and Bloom complicates the psychoanalytic understanding of masochism based on either the male desire to reject his Oedipal relationship with his mother or to accept the position of the dejected father figure that is subject to female punishment. With Bloom as the father figure, Gerty assumes the role of the young "girlie" or daughter in the familial dynamic. Even though Bloom associates with the punished father figure, Deleuzean analyses do not fully explicate the origins of Bloom's masochism because the objects of his desire are, at times, the mother figure and, at other times, the young "girlie." The ambiguous nature of Bloom's masochistic fantasies in "Nausicaa" may imply that his sexual preferences are not easily definable within the confines of the different interpretations

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[158] Philip Sicker, "Unveiling Desire: Pleasure, Power, and Masquerade in Joyce's "Nausicaa" Episode," *Joyce Studies Annual 2003* 14 (2003): 104.

[159] Sicker, "Unveiling Desire": 118.

and definitions of masochism. Just as Bloom is religiously indefinable, his sexual fantasies are also elusive and complex.

Psychoanalysis also posits that the motif of voyeurism is integrally important to the recurring concept of masochism because staring reveals Bloom's vigilant attention to and fetish of women's clothing and certain clothed body parts; fetishism and masochism are intrinsically connected because "the fetish is the means by which the masochist denies that a woman *lacks* a penis, and thus it keeps him from having to face a menacing reality."[160] Fetishism is an integral component or behavior that ensues from masochistic practice because it allows the masochist to focus his aggressive desires on something that will distract him from the anatomical differences between himself and the female object of his desire. Bloom's masochistic tendencies and fantasies thus justify or explain his fetishization of Gerty's clothes and the clothing of other women in Dublin; fetishism alleviates his anxiety that may ensue from the castration complex. If, in fact, Bloom emblematizes the masochist who transposes his anxiety with fetishistic obsessions, then the narrative in the episode "Nausicaa" must be entirely from Bloom's stream of consciousness because this episode is essentially a "fetish text." When looking at Gerty, Bloom admires her hair, shoes, and garter. The initial fluid, descriptive quality of the "Nausicaa" narrative greatly contrasts the later fragmented narration of Bloom's thoughts; the first half of the episode progresses analogously to a romance novel, the kind of which a young woman like Gerty MacDowell might read. However, this narrative may actually be Bloom's stream of consciousness, and Joyce has adjusted Bloom's typically jarring and fragmented thoughts to reflect the picturesque scene as the sun is setting on

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[160] Restuccia, "Molly in Furs," 102.

Sandymount Strand. The fact that Bloom is portrayed as a masochist and that the flowing, comprehensible style of the episode harbors the fetishistic qualities validates this argument that the narrative of "Nausicaa" may in fact stem from Bloom's own mind. The whole episode may not derive from his stream of consciousness, but the fetishistic qualities towards the beginning of the episode and the fragmented thoughts after the masturbatory climax belong entirely to Bloom.

"Nausicaa" demonstrates how the text itself becomes a masochistic medium that hinges on the fetishistic tendencies that coexist with submissive sexual practice. Declan Kiberd contends that Joyce executes the text of *Ulysses* in a masturbatory literary style because it provides temporary pleasure as it switches from narrative style to narrative style; however, the text also adopts this masochistic style because the novel overwhelms the reader with the complexity of language and the vicissitude of Joyce's literary techniques. Restuccia purports that Joyce himself may derive masochistic pleasure from the text because "he strains to father the world that fathered him, conscious that he is bound to fail because words on a page dance around, recombine capriciously, link up with 'unrelated' words crazily, cancel out their referents anarchically."[161] Joyce attempted to conquer previous literature with his epic, but, according to Restuccia, he was cognizant of the variability and multivalent nature of words and language. He did not fail at his attempt to defeat literature that precedes his own writing because he successfully creates the ultimate epic that documents the life of the everyman. The masochistic quality of the text ensues from his effort to challenge language and the conventional construct of words. Comprehending and understanding the text, for the reader, encompasses this

[161] Restuccia, "Molly in Furs," 110.

masochistic idea of pain that begets pleasure, and this same concept applies to Joyce as the writer who "relishes his play, delights in it precisely because it means the downfall of his position as the ultimate (phallic) realist."[162] While Restuccia suggests Joyce may have fallen to the complexity of language, Joyce actually allowed the intelligence and difficulty of language to challenge him as a writer and it instigated his creation of an epic that samples and recreates different forms of narrative styles. Therefore, Joyce assumes the subservient position to his writing and process of putting words on a page, and this submissive position marks his genius rather than a downfall.

Both Joyce's writing and his sexual fantasies, as documented by his correspondence with Nora, reveal Joyce to be the practicing masochist, while Bloom, in fact, only exhibits masochistic desires and does not fulfill his fantasies with practice. In *Ulysses*, Bloom does not engage in masochistic practice that actually results in his pleasure- the scene in Nighttown exemplifies masochism, but does not necessarily provide pleasure because "Circe" is a surreal dream sequence. After the scene in "Circe," Bloom seems to abandon his fantasies and he may do so because they "fail to satisfy his most basic needs, the need to maintain a coherent sense of self and a coherent fulfilling relationship with a significant other."[163] Bloom's masochistic fantasies during the course of the day provide the building tension for his sexual pleasure, but they never serve as the means by which he actually reaches climactic satisfaction or establishes a meaningful relationship with a woman; therefore, his masochistic desires are simply unsubstantiated fantasies.

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[162] Restuccia, "Molly in Furs," 110.
[163] Balazs, "Recognizing Masochism," 160-192.

Ulysses*, An Antifeminist Novel?*

Many feminists contend that *Ulysses* is an anti-feminist work that undermines women and their contribution to a cohesive societal and cultural unit. Leslie Higgins purports that *Ulysses* "documents the erasure of most women from everyday life in Dublin" because the text subverts the importance of women in order to bolster patriarchal society's gender hierarchy.[164] While *Ulysses* contains a discourse that exhibits the stigmas from turn of the century patriarchal society, the text actually presents the antithesis of anti-feminism and instead elevates women, either through the feminine qualities of the womanly man or the power and dominance that Bloom admires in a woman. When speaking with Stephen in "Nestor," Mr. Deasy chauvinistically contends that

> "A woman brought sin into the world. For a woman who was no better than she should be, Helen, the runaway bride of Menelaus, ten years the Greeks made war on Troy. A faithless wife first brought strangers to our shore here, MacMurrough's wife and her leman, O'Rourke, prince of Breffni. A woman too brought Parnell low. Many errors, many failures but not the one sin" (*Ulysses*, 29).

Joyce places these misogynistic words in Deasy's narrative because Deasy is an unreliable and prejudiced character (he also denounces Judaism). Joyce exposes the narrow confines of attitudes towards women during the turn of the century in Dublin, just as he reveals the limitations society and religion impose upon sexual practice; Joyce employs these stigmas in order to undermine and deconstruct these socially and culturally imposed restraints.

Even though Deasy recalls the sin that Eve brought into the world and catalogs the different instances in which women led to destruction, sinful behavior and immorality

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[164] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 48.

in *Ulysses* do not wholly belong to one gender. Bloom commits a sin according to Catholicism and strict sects of Judaism when he masturbates in "Nausicaa." Women such as Gerty and Martha may provoke his masturbation, but Bloom executes the act himself. While Molly sinfully and immorally commits adultery, Bloom permits this infidelity and does not return to his house in order to impede her sexual interaction with Boylan; the adulterous sin involves both Molly and Bloom's participation. Higgins claims that "the text as a whole does not correct [Deasy's] view," but she neglects to acknowledge that the text actually involves both genders in the act of sin and tries to refrain from defining one gender as inferior and immoral.[165]

The motifs of masochism and voyeurism in *Ulysses* demonstrate Joyce's deconstruction of patriarchal society's hierarchy, ultimately elevating the power of women in the novel. Both masochism and voyeurism posit the woman as the dominating force in the gender dynamic because both staring and masochistic sexual practice render the male vulnerable and passive, thus reversing the conventional male-female dichotomy. However, without deconstructing these sexual practices and innuendos embedded within the text, it is understandable that readers discover sexist undertones. For example, the barmaids in "Sirens," Molly, Martha Clifford, and Gerty MacDowell maintain much of their importance in the text by their sexual impact on the men or the sexual acts in which they engage during the course of the day. Bloom often visually examines women's bodies and clothing throughout the text, which evokes the objectification of women. At one point, Bloom watches barmaid Lydia Douce's hand "gently touching…slid so smoothly, slowly down, a cool firm white enamel baton protruding through their sliding ring"

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[165] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 52.

(*Ulysses*, 235). This sexually charged image of Lydia caressing a phallic object posits her as the eroticized object of Bloom's attention. These detailed images of female bodies and movements recur throughout the novel and indicate Bloom's unfulfilled desire to experience pleasure. The sensual images and scenes, serve less the purpose of objectification than of highlighting Bloom's sexual depravity. Even though Joyce incorporates women in the novel in a sexual register, he actually intends to transcend the notion of female objectification and attempts to displace misogynistic interpretation.

In "Ithaca," Joyce, in the guise of Leopold Bloom, contemplates women, describing natural female qualities that engender his curiosity and admiration:

> "her power to enamour, to mortify, to invest with beauty, to render insane, to incite to and aid delinquency: the tranquil inscrutability of her visage: the terribility of her isolated dominant implacable resplendent propinquity: her omens of tempest and of calm: the stimulation of her light, her motion and her presence: the admonition of her crates, her arid seas, her silence: her splendour, when visible: her attraction, when invisible" (*Ulysses*, 576).

Even though Joyce often posits women in the context of Bloom's masochistic fantasies and his voyeuristic engagements, he highlights the many female characteristics that render men vulnerable and have a magnetizing effect on men. In this catalog of admirable feminine qualities, Joyce attempts to deconstruct the conventional perception of compliant, submissive women, specifically because he "admired strength and self-possession in women."[166] Richard Brown asserts that Joyce's incorporation of masochism should not denote "sexual exploitation," but instead the sexual dimorphism that prompts Bloom's erotic fantasies.[167] Joyce creates an image of women that corresponds to the

[166] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 109.
[167] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 115.

progress of the First Wave of Feminism, presenting women "whose qualities of self-generating free will and self-determination are high."[168]

Just as twentieth century feminism sought to introduce the self-possessed, self-aware, independent woman, eighteenth and nineteenth century Gaelic poets also presented a new image of women by condemning female objectification and attempting to eliminate sexually demeaning innuendos in their poetry. These eighteenth and nineteenth century writers abhorred the "degradation of woman to sex-object and fantasy-machine by the jaded puritan imagination."[169] In their poetic endeavors, these writers explored other modes of expression that did not subordinate women to objectification; however, this Gaelic tradition of female de-objectification dissipated with the writers of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.[170] Kiberd notes that "selective 'revivalists' of our own century chose to ignore" these progressive movements away from female inferiority and objectivity.[171] While the eighteenth and nineteenth century writers "launched a full assault on the entire apparatus of feminine frippery-stiletto heels, powder and cosmetics, fashionable hoods," Joyce incorporated female aesthetics and sexual objectification into his writing; however, instead of solely objectifying women through fetishization, Joyce also incorporates male objectification. He continues to scrutinize women's clothing and appearance, but, in doing so, he introduces another facet to sexual objectification.

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[168] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 115.

[169] Declan Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, ed. R.F. Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 304.

[170] Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 304.

[171] Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 304.

While some feminist thought suggests "*Ulysses* is a text in which females are devalued, repressed, and /or deliberately dehumanized," Molly's soliloquy challenges this notion of female objectivity.[172] *Ulysses* demonstrates male objectification through Molly's soliloquy as she muses about men and her sexual encounter that day in "Penelope."[173] She thinks to her herself, "I made him blush a little when I got over him that way when I unbuttoned him and took his out and drew back the skin it had a kind of eye in it theyre all Buttons men" (*Ulysses*, 626). Instead of the stereotypical objectification of women, Molly reverses the stigma of women as objects and says that all men are "buttons."[174] According to Molly, men are all alike in that they represent the small device that holds together fabric. This button metaphor may refer to the integral role that men place in social cohesion and unity, but Molly's connection between small clasps and men reduces male importance. Because Molly objectifies men and refers to them as buttons, she assumes the superiority that men typically have over women or that masculinity has over femininity. The text also reveals Molly's aggressiveness as she actively pursues this man and removes his clothes herself. The stereotypically aggressive quality transcends masculinity and now exemplifies a feminine characteristic. This episode's privileging of femininity over masculinity dissipates the initial dichotomy between masculinity and femininity, in which female is the subordinate gender.

Male objectification elicits a reversal of society's implantation of gender roles, and Joyce further challenges stereotypes in the creation of his androgynous protagonist; Bloom's androgyny stems from his multivalent gender. In "Lotus Eaters," Bloom's

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[172] Higgins, "'Lovely Seaside Girls' or 'Sweet Murderers of Men,'" 48.
[173] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 148.
[174] Brown, *James Joyce and Sexuality*, 148.

behavior in the bath evokes the ambiguity and transience of his gender. While Bloom reclines in the tub, he thinks about his body, particularly his genitals, and he watches "the dark tangled curls of his bush floating, floating hair of the stream around the limp father of thousands" (*Ulysses*, 71). Just as Bloom thinks about his semen as the "source of life" in "Nausicaa," he thinks of his flaccid genitals housing his life bearing sperm in "Lotus Eaters." He concludes his narcotic ponderings about his body as he compares his genitals to "a languid floating flower" (*Ulysses*, 71). While Bloom acknowledges that his genitals will serve as the pollinating mechanism that will impregnate a woman, he paradoxically reverses sex roles, and his genitals become the flower needing to be pollinated. A flower does not bear the connotations of other more common phallic innuendos, thus attributing a physically feminine quality to Bloom's masculinity.

Mother Bloom

The "erasure of most women" from the novel presumptuously brands Joyce as a misogynist writer. However, this incorrect conclusion about the role that women play does not address how femininity manifests in the novel. Joyce's incorporation of women is more complex and intricate than the reductive conclusion that women are written out of the text as well as Dublin society. Because *Ulysses* revolves around the life of two men, women are on the peripheral of the story; however, these women have an effect on the male characters, and feminine qualities even transcend their typical gender categorization and become a part of the male psyche. For example, Bloom assumes maternal characteristics when he brings Molly's breakfast to her in bed in the episode "Calypso." Bloom becomes the housewife or mother as he "moved about the kitchen softly,"

preparing his wife's breakfast and also feeding the cat (*Ulysses,* 45). Not only does Bloom deftly move about the kitchen, but he also tidies his and Molly's room as he "clear[ed] the chair: her striped petticoat, tossed soiled linen: and lifted all in an armful on to the foot of the bed" (*Ulysses*, 51). Molly evokes the image of a seductive, Cleopatra figure "propped on her elbow" in her bed as she awaits her tea (*Ulysses*, 50). Bloom assumes the roles of cleaning and cooking that typically have been the woman's roles in the household as established by the practices of patriarchal society, and "in the male-dominated city of 1904 [this role reversal] must have seemed an act of tantamount to perversion."[175] This early modernist test thus seems to serve as the feminist platform for societal reconstruction in regard to male and female roles.

In "Circe," maternity resurfaces and introduces Bloom's desire to become a mother. Because this chapter exposes repressed and sublimated desires, Bloom reveals, "O, I so want to be a mother," which may stem from his predilection of serving and catering to his wife or his desire to experience the love between a mother and child (*Ulysses*, 403). Bloom's voyeuristic gaze at Rudy, at the end of "Circe," exposes Bloom's unsatisfied yearning to experience the bond and love between a father and son; fulfilling Bloom's desire, Dr. Dixon, in the surreal dream sequence, reveals that Bloom "is about to have a baby" (*Ulysses*, 403). Because Bloom's sexual fantasies reveal his yearning to be subservient and submissive, masochism provides another vantage through which to understand his pregnancy desire. With Bloom as the mother, he would acquire the stereotypical submissive and compliant role of mother and wife.

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[175] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 83.

Bloom's compassionate nature and maternal tendencies also direct him towards the maternity hospital on Holles Street to visit Mina Purefoy even though "many men in *Ulysses* are intimidated by the centrality of woman to the life-giving process."[176] While the "jocularity of the students around the table has a hysterical quality, as if they are unnerved by the procreative power of the nearby women," Bloom empathizes with Mina Purefoy's strenuous, three-day labor[177] ; he "hearkened to [the nurse's] words for he felt with wonder women's woe in the travail that they have of motherhood and he wondered to look on her face" (*Ulysses*, 316). The text implies a sort of telepathic or metaphysical connection between Bloom and Mina Purefoy that exemplifies Bloom's maternal tendencies. Joyce exaggerates the sympathetic curiosity and wonder of pregnancy in "Oxen of the Sun" with Bloom's subconscious desire to become a mother in "Circe." While "Oxen of the Sun" exhibits Bloom's sensitivity towards women, it also creates an image of the woman as the bearer of life, providing another way to interpret the deconstruction of the male and female hierarchical dichotomy.

After the nurse in the maternity hospital describes O'Hare Doctor's death, the text tangentially muses on life and death, encouraging "everyman, [to] look to that last end that is thy death and the dust that gripeth on every man that is born of woman for as he came naked forth from his mother's womb so naked shall he wend him at the last for to go as he came" (*Ulysses*, 316). Joyce expounds upon the cyclical nature of life through the image of the womb; just as the child emerges from the mother's womb, the dead will reenter the womb of Mother Earth similar to the same manner in which he entered; thus women envelope the processes of both life and death. Joyce not only elevates the

[176] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 208.
[177] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 208.

importance of women in *Ulysses* though the relegation of power in sexual encounters, but he also explores the origin of humans through the image of the life-bearing mother. The integrality of female procreation subverts Deasy's condemnation of women who brought sin into the world.

Analogous to the image of the woman as the bearer of life, Joyce also posits the woman as the head of the family and, in doing so, he overturns and undermines the hierarchy within the family as well as hierarchy of patriarchal society. While masculinity is traditionally the privileged opposition of the gender binary, *Ulysses* blurs the distinction between the two genders, even proffering the possibility that femininity is the privileged and preferred gender. In the episode "Penelope," the reader enters Molly's mind as she lies in bed next to Bloom at the end of the day. This internal dialogue reveals Molly's promiscuity, memories of past relationships, and memories of her family. When Molly remembers breastfeeding Milly, she reveals that she simultaneously breastfed Bloom as well: "I had to get him to suck at them they were so hard he said it was sweeter and thicker than cows" (*Ulysses*, 621). While Bloom's proclivity for breast milk generates questions about his character, the woman becomes the familial provider in this situation, demoting the man to a childlike position. In a way, the woman becomes the head of the family, thus subverting masculinity.

"Do you call that a man?"

Bloom, unlike the other male characters in the novel, does not exemplify the cultural stereotypes of masculinity. While men such as Mr. Deasy and the Citizen

brazenly denounce women and femininity in order to bolster their masculinity, Bloom emblematizes the feminine or womanly man. Bloom's ambiguous religion parallels his complex gender, and, with both religion and gender, Joyce demonstrates how his narrative and literary "style 'deliberately subverts the binary opposition upon which meaning rests."[178] In his creation of the feminine man, Joyce challenges the normative system that ensues from the divisive dichotomy of male and female. Dr. Dixon declares that Bloom "is a finished example of the new womanly man," addressing Bloom's "simple and lovable" nature and the "many [that] have found him a dear man, a dear person" (*Ulysses*, 403). Bloom's tender, pacifistic, and gentle characteristics seem to engender this diagnosis of amorphous sexuality. The doctor does not exploit and criticize Bloom's ambiguous sexuality, but the Citizen and the men at Barney Kiernan's pub mock Bloom's feminine qualities and contend that he is "one of those mixed middlings he is. Lying up in the hotel Pisser was telling me once a month with headache like a totty with her courses," accusing Bloom of having a monthly menstrual cycle (*Ulysses*, 277). Not only do these men question Bloom's sexuality, but they also discuss Mr. Breen's androgyny, asserting that he is "half and half…A fellow that's neither fish nor flesh" (*Ulysses*, 263). Because Mr. Breen and Bloom do not conform to society's definition of masculinity, they represent the "pishoque" or the man who was "bewitched" with androgynous sexuality, their sensitivity and feminine characteristics thus subject to castigation.

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[178] Martha F. Black, "S/He-Male Voices in *Ulysses*: Counterpointing the 'New Womanly Man,'" in *Gender In Joyce*, ed. Jolanta W. Wawrzycka and Marlena G. Corcoran (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997), 68.

Bloom and Mr. Breen represent the opposite of hypermasculinity, exemplified by the Citizen and Blazes Boylan, and they instead depict the Irish "liberationist response to [Anglo-Saxon] stereotyping" during the turn of the twentieth century.[179] Stereotypically, the Irish portray the exact opposite of English societal and cultural classifications. The English bear the stereotype of hyper-masculinity, while the Irish are associated with femininity, from which the British deduced that "the Celts would scarcely be ready for the discipline of self-government."[180] Joyce embraced this stereotype and allowed it to pervade his writing, characterizing his protagonist in a way that incites "Irish men to acknowledge, celebrate, and explore their female dimension."[181] Joyce's construction of the "womanly man" derives from his desire to create the indefinable, all-encompassing everyman, but Bloom also exhibits Joyce's acceptance of the feminine stereotype of Irishmen opposed to the British attribute of masculinity. Gender and the stereotypes attributed to masculinity and femininity have the potential to precipitate political tension and debate in *Ulysses*; men, such as the Citizen and Blazes Boylan, are emblems of the hyper-masculine male and represent obstinate and intolerant anti-nationalists. Bloom, the epitome of the feminine man, conquers Boylan because he takes his place next to Molly in their conjugal bed at the end of the day; therefore, he defeats the masculine man, Blazes Boylan, which may indirectly represent a symbolic national victory of Ireland over England.

While gender indirectly denotes nationalist preferences in *Ulysses*, it most specifically elicits discussion of sexuality and sexual expression. Joyce deconstructs the

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[179] Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 286.
[180] Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 286.
[181] Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 286.

conventional subordination of women, confusing the binary of masculinity and femininity in his creation of an ambiguously androgynous man. Joyce not only reconstructs and redefines masculinity in the text, but he also creates an image of the masculine or powerful woman. Gerty MacDowell, Martha Clifford, Molly, and Bella Cohen exemplify the manly women in *Ulysses*, and they all participate in a romantic exchange with Bloom (the romantic relationship or encounter may not necessarily occur on June 16, 1904). In her soliloquy, Molly thinks about female dominance: "a woman whatever she does she knows where to stop sure they wouldnt be in the world all only for us they dont know what it is to be a woman and a mother how could they where would they all of them be if they hadn't all a mother to look after them" (*Ulysses*, 640). Through Molly, Joyce depicts the integrality of women to societal and cultural cohesion, expressing simultaneously the dependency that men have on women.

The dominating woman and the feminine man fulfill the configuration of masochistic sexual practice, which recurs throughout the novel, but there also exists a romantic compatibility between the womanly man and the manly woman.[182] Kiberd suggests that Bloom and his wife, for example, "are true androgynies, embodiments of Freud's dictum that manly women are attracted and attractive to womanly men."[183] The sensitivity associated with femininity and the aggressiveness associated with masculinity constitute a compatibility that Bloom seeks to experience throughout the course of the day, and Freud's analysis of contradictory attraction may explain Bloom's masochistic tendencies. However, Bloom's feminine qualities and Molly's domineering characteristics do not ensure their union and "the tragedy of their relationship is that their

[182] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 262.
[183] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 262.

respective balances of masculine and feminine are no longer compatible."[184] Molly even admits that she would "rather die 20 times over than marry another of their sex," which may refer to Bloom's liminal sexuality of feminized masculinity (*Ulysses*, 613). Even though Molly possesses power and a certain means of dominance as a woman, she still desires a masculine man: "she wishes that could have used four-letter words in bed with Boylan; she would like to possess a penis and even imagines what it would be like to be a man mounting her thighs."[185] Even though Boylan has "no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing in his nature slapping us behind like that on my bottom," Molly still desires and admires masculine traits (*Ulysses*, 610).

In a feminist critique of *Ulysses*, Martha Black contends that "Joyce's females are parodies of masculine models- Gerty MacDowell the deluded 'womanly woman,' Bella Cohen a caricature of the 'manly woman,' and Molly a narcissistic retort to and test of the 'New' self-realizing woman of the turn of the century."[186] Gerty, Molly, and Bella Cohen are not necessarily "parodies of masculine models," but they instead epitomize the increasing prominence of the powerful, self-possessed woman at the beginning of the twentieth century. Gerty does not represent the "womanly woman" because her participation in the voyeuristic encounter secures her dominance over Bloom, and she sexually objectifies him with her fixed gaze. Her attention to aesthetic detail and her romantic musings about her unrequited love falsely stigmatize Gerty, and Joyce attempts to reveal the depth of Gerty's power and knowledge through the sexually charged gaze in "Nausicaa." Black accurately depicts Bella Cohen as "a caricature of the 'manly

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[184] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 262.
[185] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us*, 261.
[186] Black, "S/He-Male Voices in *Ulysses*," 62.

woman'" because, in Bloom's dream, she assumes the role of the overbearing sadist as she commands and orders Bloom into humiliation and submission. Molly also represents the "manly woman"; her assumption of power does not manifest in sadistic practice, but, as Black asserts, in Molly's self-awareness and dominance in her relationships.

Molly exhibits her masculine characteristics in the recapitulation of her first sexual encounter with Bloom on Howth Head. In "Lestrygonians," Bloom has a poignant and pleasant memory of Molly and himself before they were married. The warmth of the sun reminds Bloom of this moment like "a secret touch telling me memory" (*Ulysses,* 144). Bloom vividly remembers the purple hue of the sea and the clear sky, but he muffles the memories of these surroundings when he muses over the memory of Molly's body. Bloom fantasizes over the "lips that gave me pouting," her "soft warm sticky gumjelly lips" (*Ulysses*, 144). Molly's supplely full lips ingrain this distinctive memory upon Bloom's mind, and he mentally examines Molly's body as he remembers "her stretched neck beating, woman's breasts full in her blouse of nun's veiling, fat nipples upright" (*Ulysses*, 144). Joyce sensually describes Molly's body parts and highlights Molly and Bloom's heightened emotions during this memory. Bloom's memory is laden with sexually graphic images of Molly's body, but he ironically still assumes the submissive position in this sexual encounter. He remembers, "She kissed me. I was kissed. All yielding she tossed my hair. Kissed, she kissed me" (*Ulysses*, 144). Joyce posits Bloom, "all yielding," as the recipient of Molly's erotic behavior. Even though this scene does not exhibit the juxtaposition of pain and eroticism, it still exemplifies the masochism model of submissive recipient and aggressive dominant.

Because Molly actively kisses Bloom, Joyce reconstructs the gender schema in their first sexual encounter on Howth Head, and he continues to attribute conventionally masculine qualities to Molly as she "penetrates" Bloom. Molly seductively feeds Bloom some cake from her own mouth: "Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed" (*Ulysses*, 144). The transfer of the "warm and chewed" seedcake from Molly's mouth to Bloom's bears a penetrative quality that implies "Molly, in a sense, inseminated Bloom."[187] Molly essentially fulfills the construct of the manly woman as she assumes the dominant position and penetrates her husband with the oral insertion of the warm seedcake.

In the Howth Head memory, Joyce depicts a gender inversion that substantiates and exemplifies his deconstruction of gender in *Ulysses*. Joyce's deconstructive attempt highlights the inherent opposition that exists in the binary of masculinity and femininity, thus revealing the "limitations of the ideolog[ies]" that ensued from the time period and patriarchal society.[188] *Ulysses* demonstrates the binary and oppositional tension that accrues between nationalists and anti-nationalists, husband and wife, as well as parent and child. In addressing these different intrinsic dichotomies of life, Joyce also offers a critique of society's implantation of gender stereotypes and classifications. Joyce creates Bloom in the image of the "Everyman and Noman" in order to illustrate the limiting confines that society and religion place upon gender behavior and sexual expression."[189] The ambiguity of Bloom's sexuality allows him to mingle characteristics of both genders, which simultaneously categorizes him as the all-encompassing "everyman" and the

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[187] Kiberd, *Ulysses and Us,* 154.

[188] Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 254.

[189] Black, "S/He-Male Voices in *Ulysses*," 67.

"noman" because of his indefinable nature. While Higgins contends that this anti-feminist text engenders the erasure of women from the novel and Dublin's society, this assertion does not consider that the liminal nature of Bloom's existence alienates him from associating with one particular gender and that "in effect, Bloom is a diffused personality…In later chapters of the book he will turn transparent, become mythical, and disintegrate."[190] Instead of marking this transparency and mutability as the erasure of men in the novel, it is "but a deliberate dropping of character into some other continuum."[191] Joyce's depiction of women in *Ulysses* introduces another "continuum" of thought and interpretation that posits the woman as self-possessing and powerful even though this representation arises from sexual interactions with Bloom.

[190] Sheldon Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1980), 171.

[191] Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung*, 171.

Conclusion

Ulysses not only serves as a platform for sexual discourse and behavior, but it is also the literary portal for self-discovery through sexual expression. Molly and Bloom's physical and emotion separation engenders Molly's adultery and the exhibition of Bloom's own sexual behavior. Bloom may not impede upon Molly's interaction with Boylan because it "allows [Bloom] to express his neurotic need for infidelity in such a way that both are satisfied and his indirect act of union with her stirs his imagination to the encounter with Stephen."[192] Because Bloom and Molly often fail to have a physical connection, he essentially permits her infidelity so that she can experience pleasure while he seeks his own sexual satisfaction with women around Dublin. Also, Molly and Bloom's separation precipitates Bloom's bond with Stephen and allows Bloom to experience a sort of love between father and son.

While adultery and promiscuous sexual behavior go against the grain of a conventional love story plot, the conjugal separation and infidelity that take place on June 16, 1904 "promote self-development" as Bloom devotes attention to his carnal desires and Molly also experiences pleasure.[193] However, at the end of the day, Bloom climbs into bed with Molly, hinting at his potential reconciliation with his wife, and Molly also "feels a resurgence of love for him in 'Penelope,' remembering their passion on Howth Head and consenting to make his breakfast for the first time in a decade."[194] Therefore, the sexual encounters that take place during the course of the day may serve as a

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[192] Sheldon R. Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1980), 181.

[193] Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung*, 180.

[194] Brivic, *Joyce Between Freud and Jung*, 177.

reconciliation of Molly and Bloom's troubled marriage; their sexual encounters are with other people, but the climactic pleasure that ensues from their separate activities metaphysically link Molly and Bloom.

Joyce's incorporation of sexuality and sexual expression is multivalent in that it serves the purpose of balancing the tensions in Bloom's life while also creating a connection between Bloom and his wife. In *Ulysses*, Joyce attempts to document the truth of human sexuality and sexual expression, overturning and undermining the stereotypical constraints that society and religion place upon voyeurism, masochism, adultery, and masturbation. Joyce may not have intended for *Ulysses* to advocate particular sexual practices or certain representations of gender, but he attempts to reveal the transient nature of gender and the inconsistency of stereotypes while also promoting human attention to carnal desires. Joyce renders Bloom as the womanly man and women, such as Molly, as aggressive and dominant in order to expose the elusive and ambiguous characteristics of gender that do not belong to society's divisive categorization of male and female. The text offers a deconstructed interpretation of gender and gender stereotypes that posit women as the dominant gender, contradicting patriarchal society's paradigm that possessed cultural prominence during the early twentieth century. Joyce's incorporation of masochism in the text exposes the ambiguity of gender and the falseness of gender stereotypes. In *Ulysses*, masochism hinges on male passivity and female aggression. Not only does Joyce challenge conventional gender stereotypes through Molly and Bloom's relationship, but he also uses masochism to illustrate gendered role reversal.

As Joyce deconstructed gender, he also contradicted society and religions' standards of sexuality and sexual expression. With masturbation, Joyce juxtaposed the sexual act with a religious service in order to blatantly parody the constraints that religion places upon personal sexual expression. Even though Joyce commits onanism, Gerty, the seemingly pious emblem of the Virgin Mary, reveals her libidinous nature as she incites Bloom's masturbation. Joyce undermines religious authorities who declare dominance over an individual's expression of natural carnal desires. The text even implies that within the religious structure, especially within Catholicism, there exists a contradiction between a priest's actions and his religious beliefs, thus implying that concupiscence is an intrinsic component of all human existence. Joyce continues to challenge society's stifling principles of sexual reserve when Bloom repeatedly engages in voyeuristic encounters during his day journey around Dublin. The perversity of voyeurism in *Ulysses* does not lie in the act of staring itself, but in the fact that Joyce's text challenges the patriarchal model of female passivity and objectivity.

Because of Joyce's extensive knowledge of the psychoanalytic theorizing conducted during the turn of the century, his text reflects much of the progress made in the analysis of sex and sexuality. While Joyce's writing does not necessarily dovetail the works of nineteenth and twentieth century psychoanalysts, he employs concepts such as Freud's mystery of women in order to illustrate an accurate depiction of gender and human sexuality. Joyce's incorporation of sexuality exemplifies his non-conformist attempt to exhibit the truth that sexual expression intrinsically challenges societal and religious establishments. Just as the confessional practice in Catholicism serves as a medium for sexual discourse and discussion, *Ulysses* serves as a literary platform for

exhibiting both the evolving perceptions of sexuality at the turn of the twentieth century and an honest documentation of human sexual desire.

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