

2009-02-02

# Amorous Joyce: Ethical and Political Dimensions

Christopher DeVault

University of Miami, [c.devault@umiami.edu](mailto:c.devault@umiami.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa\\_dissertations](https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations)

---

## Recommended Citation

DeVault, Christopher, "Amorous Joyce: Ethical and Political Dimensions" (2009). *Open Access Dissertations*. 196.  
[https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa\\_dissertations/196](https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/196)

This Open access is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact [repository.library@miami.edu](mailto:repository.library@miami.edu).

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

AMOROUS JOYCE: ETHICAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

By

Christopher M. DeVault

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2009

©2009  
Christopher M. DeVault  
All Rights Reserved

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

AMOROUS JOYCE: ETHICAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

Christopher M. DeVault

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Patrick A. McCarthy, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

\_\_\_\_\_  
Terri A. Scandura, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

\_\_\_\_\_  
John Paul Russo, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Watson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of English

\_\_\_\_\_  
Margot Norris, Ph.D.  
Professor of English  
University of California at Irvine

DEVAULT, CHRISTOPHER M.  
Amorous Joyce: Ethical and Political Dimensions

(Ph.D., English)  
(May 2009)

Abstract of a dissertation at the University of Miami.

Dissertation supervised by Professor Patrick A. McCarthy.  
No. of pages in text. (396)

My dissertation challenges the longstanding dismissal of love in James Joyce's texts by examining the ethical and political implications of his love stories. Primarily using Martin Buber's works (but also including perspectives derived from bell hooks and Julia Kristeva), I define love as an affirmation of otherness and adopt a critical framework that promotes the love of others over the narcissistic devotion to oneself. In so doing, I highlight love as the ultimate challenge to authoritarian systems because the embrace of the other is necessary to transcend the boundaries that alienate individuals from each other and that justify imperialist and racist political structures. I thus offer a love ethic that not only compels meaningful individual interaction, but also establishes a model for effective social and civic participation, encouraging a climate of cooperation that embraces the solidarity and empathy needed for progressive politics.

I also argue that analyzing Joyce's works provides a fruitful opportunity to recognize the individual and political viability of this love ethic. Focusing on *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Exiles*, and *Ulysses*, I examine the relationships between his characters' pursuits of love and their socio-political struggles, arguing that their love for others directly influences their acceptance of otherness within the colonialist discourses of Joyce's Dublin. For example, James Duffy's refusal of Emily Sinico in "A Painful Case" also rejects her advice to engage in the political

cooperation that would promote his socialist ideas. Similarly, Stephen Dedalus's promotion of symbolic romance over real-world attachments focuses his aesthetics on ideal beauty instead of everyday Dublin, which alienates him from his audience and limits the practical success of his art. By contrast, Leopold Bloom's love for his wife Molly reflects a broader empathy for others that encourages social dialogue and counteracts what Joyce called "the old pap of racial hatred," an element in both British imperialism and Irish nationalism. My dissertation's afterword anticipates the amorous potential of *Finnegans Wake*, reading ALP's concluding soliloquy as a demonstration of her enduring affection for HCE that is reignited through each iteration of the text's cyclical narrative.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....	iv
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Chapter	
1 BEARING THE CHALICE .....	29
2 THE SOUL'S INCURABLE LONELINESS.....	55
3 THE BOY IN THE GASWORKS.....	84
4 A SADLY PROUD GESTURE OF REFUSAL.....	123
5 THE PERSONALITY OF THE ARTIST.....	166
6 LOVE'S BITTER MYSTERY .....	194
7 THE GIFT OF FREEDOM.....	236
8 LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG.....	268
9 THE OPPOSITE OF HATRED.....	306
10 THE FLOWER OF THE MOUNTAIN.....	344
AFTERWORD.....	378
WORKS CITED .....	387

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- D*            Dubliners. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
- E*            Exiles. New York: Viking Press, 1961.
- FW*          Finnegans Wake. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- G*            Giacomo Joyce. London: Faber and Faber, 1968.
- JJ*          Richard Ellmann. James Joyce: New and Revised Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- LI*          Letters of James Joyce. Volume 1. Ed. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Viking Press, 1957.
- LII*         Letters of James Joyce. Volume 2. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966.
- P*            A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
- SH*         Stephen Hero. New York: New Directions Books, 1944.
- U*            Ulysses. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler. New York: Vintage Books, 1986.



## INTRODUCTION

At the end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a departing Stephen Dedalus recalls his mother's "pray[er] . . . that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels." Stephen, at this point committed to his individual aesthetics, chooses instead to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*P* 275-6). *Ulysses* may demonstrate Stephen's failure to accomplish these goals, but his author succeeds in "forg[ing]" this Irish "conscience," largely because James Joyce recognizes the importance of May Dedalus's "pray[er]" in fulfilling her son's prophetic calling. Indeed, Joyce frequently ties the efficacy of his characters' social and political pursuits to their knowledge of "what the heart is and what it feels," as their capacity to love directly determines their ability to interact productively within Ireland. While the majority of his protagonists can neither love nor engage their socio-political community effectively, his depiction of Leopold Bloom compellingly shows us how the affection that pervades our most personal relationships can empathetically guide our social encounters and challenge the paralysis he attributes to everyday Dublin. By highlighting this intersection between the "heart" and the "smithy of [one's] soul," we see the emergence of a love ethic that extends throughout the Joycean oeuvre and that promotes a loving model of civic dialogue over what he called the "old pap of racial hatred" (*LII* 167).

This love ethic has largely been ignored by the scholarly literature on Joyce's works because his amorous episodes are not usually taken at face value, and with good reason. Given his observations that "it seems to me that a lot of this talk about love is nonsense" (*LII* 192) and "when I hear the word 'love' I feel like puking" (quoted in *JJ* 631fn), to

assert the existence of a love ethic within his works seems to taint them with an incongruous and misguided sentimentality. Indeed, Joyce's criticism of the "lying drivel about pure men and pure women and spiritual love and love for ever" is legendary, as his characterization of these traditional romantic invocations as "blatant lying in the face of the truth" ties such advocacies of love to the conventional sexual morality against which his literature mounts a direct assault (*LII* 191-2). Mary Colum confirms this antagonism by noting Joyce's "sinister way of commenting on that emotion called romantic love. 'What they call love,' he would say argumentatively, 'is merely a temptation of nature in one's youth'" (398). Thus, when we consider the vitriol inherent in Joyce's attacks on love, it is difficult to read the amorous passages within his texts without a certain degree of irony or cynicism.

Unsurprisingly then, a significant amount of scholarly analysis on love and Joyce has followed this skeptical path, either qualifying romantic representations as ironic gestures or reserving an earnest advocacy of love for the later writings of an older and more mature author. For example, Richard Brown argues that "for Joyce ... love was by no means such a positive term," using Stephen Daedalus's interactions with Emma Clery in *Stephen Hero* to assert that "for Joyce ... romance, both in the mythologizing of the Byronic poet lover (SH 37) and in Emma's chaste holding back (SH 215), is a 'burgher' or bourgeois notion" (31). Additionally, John Gordon describes "love's adequacy" as the "key" to *Ulysses* as "similarly dubious, due to Stephen's history and the word's debasement in the adult world; it is not accidentally that Stephen should feel compelled to ask his question when in a whorehouse" ("Love" 243). Even Richard Ellmann, perhaps the most prominent advocate of love in Joyce's works, recognizes that the author "never

uses the word ‘love’ without tension ... In his personal life, he was also chary of it” (“Cruix” 29). Admittedly, scholars have also sought to highlight the amorous significance of Joyce’s writings, but on the whole, these analyses have limited their investigations to *Ulysses*, arguing that Hans Walter Gabler’s restoration of the infamous “love” passage in the “Scylla and Charybdis” chapter compels us to recognize that “the theme of love ... pervade[s]” Joyce’s landmark text (Ellmann “Big Word” par. 12).<sup>1</sup> Given the widespread dismissal of love in Joyce and the limited scope of the challenges to that dismissal, my desire to locate an earnest, ethical endorsement of love throughout the Joycean oeuvre might seem like a naïve, unproductive examination of nonexistent romance initiated by one of “the kind of people who want ‘love’ to be the answer to everything” (Goldman 18).

While this hesitation is certainly understandable and the justification is persuasive, I believe that we should resist the urge to echo Joyce’s suggestion that “it is useless to talk about this any further” (*LII* 192). Instead, to understand the role that love plays in Joyce’s works, we should look at the context for Joyce’s well-documented repulsion towards romance to determine the specific foundations of his objections. When we undertake this analysis, we see that Joyce’s “sinister ... comment[ary]” on “romantic love” is primarily driven by his rejection of the Catholic marriage sacrament instead of the general idea of love itself.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the November 13, 1906 letter to his brother

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard K. Cross’s analysis of Joyce and Malcolm Lowry similarly contends, “That [*Ulysses* and *Under the Volcano*] hinge on the issue of love, broadly construed, can scarcely be doubted” (64). Ruth Bauerle’s study of the recurrence of the word “love” in *Ulysses* notes that “the central position of love shown here does add, however, to my own personal belief that Joyce’s *Ulysses* is as Luciano Pavarotti once remarked on television of opera, ‘all about love’” (“Love” 817).

<sup>2</sup> Joyce’s religious rejection of marriage is well-documented. For example, Stanislaus Joyce describes the “cold scorn” that Joyce “poured” on the “sexual morality” behind marriage, writing that “to make the heavy burden of marriage the exorbitant price of coition was, in his view, to sow the seeds of discord, while at the same time it debased what might be a franker and freer relationship between men and women (155). Maria

Stanislaus that is the source of the majority of his amatory quips<sup>3</sup> is largely an attack on the conventional sexual morality of Catholic Ireland, as the “lying drivel about pure men and pure women and spiritual love and love for ever” primarily describes the sexual “purity” espoused by Francis Skeffington and his contemporaries, and the main reason Joyce gives for “a lot of this talk about love [being] nonsense” concerns the domestic instability of the traditional Irish Catholic marriage.<sup>4</sup> When we take this into account, it becomes harder to view Joyce’s skepticism as a totalizing rejection of the concept of love, as the anti-marital foundations for his most notorious barbs force us to qualify his objections and consider if he would react the same way to forms of love that were not tied exclusively to the sacrament.

Additionally, the suffocating sentimentality that pervades traditional expressions of love and marriage serves as a significant impetus for Joyce’s amatory “nausea.” This revulsion is clearly evident in Joyce’s characterization of “love for ever” as “blatant lying in the face of the truth,” and Stanislaus’s observation that Joyce abandoned love poetry because he could not play the sentimentalist demonstrates his rejection of maudlin romantic schlock. (“My brother was beginning to realize that he was not made of the

---

Jolas also notes that “in the case of Joyce and Nora ... Joyce was against marriage. That was an intellectual attitude of his” (quoted in Dillon 46). Finally, Morris Beja argues that “Joyce had made it clear that he did not believe in the institution of marriage, and there would be no wedding [between Nora and him]” (25).

<sup>3</sup> In my dissertation’s analysis of love, I make a rhetorical distinction between the terms “amatory,” which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as “Of or pertaining to a lover, to love-making, or to sexual love generally” (380), and “amorous,” which it defines as “Loving, affectionate, devoted, ardent” (410). I use “amatory” to describe the abstract, physical longings of narcissistic desire that I find at the heart of Joyce’s condemnation of love (i.e., the “amatory freedom” and “amatory aesthetics” I will attribute to Stephen Dedalus), whereas I use “amorous” to describe the reciprocal affirmation of otherness advocated by Martin Buber and found in Joyce’s characterizations of Leopold and Molly Bloom.

<sup>4</sup> This critique of Catholic marriage is also the context of the quotations from *Stephen Hero* that Brown cites above to support his contention that “for Joyce, as we have seen already, love was by no means such a positive term.”

proper stuff to be a lover, because he was not a sentimentalist” [151].)<sup>5</sup> Also, when we note that Joyce’s “contempt for sentimentality was in great part instinctive aversion to what he regarded as a clownish idealization of lust—a remnant, this, of earlier piety” (S. Joyce 153-4), we see that sentimental romance and marriage are not simply two forms of love that Joyce rejected. Rather, Joyce’s derision of sentimentality is shown to be another component of his assault on Catholicism, as he equates the “clownish idealization of lust” with the pious sexual morality that he famously castigates as “lying drivell.” Joyce may “feel like puking” over the thought of romance, but the sentiment that compels his “nausea” is limited to a specific conception of “true love” that primarily validates the moral teachings of the Catholic church, not a totalizing rejection of all forms of love.

Moreover, even if contextualizing Joyce’s objections fails to convince us that he did not dismiss all forms of love, the author’s committed familial affection complicates our ability to justify this dismissal. Joyce clearly refused religious notions of romantic piety, but his lifelong, passionate devotion to Nora Barnacle makes it difficult to attribute a totalizing rejection of love to the author. Critics frequently cite the author’s “You ask me why I don’t love you” letter to Nora as evidence of his hesitancy towards speaking the language of love (*LII* 55), but as we examine Joyce’s subsequent reflections on and correspondence with Nora, we witness his growing comfort with articulating his romantic passion for his partner. Joyce may qualify his feelings for Nora in that famous September 19, 1904 letter (“You ask me why I don’t love you but surely you must believe I am very fond of you and if to desire to possess a person wholly, to admire and honour that person deeply, and to see to secure that person’s happiness in every way is to ‘love’ then perhaps

---

<sup>5</sup> Ellmann also notes that a primary reason why Joyce was skeptical towards love was that “no one knew better than he how quickly a mention of it could become sentimental” (“Crux” 29).

my affection for you is a kind of love” [LII 55]), but only a few days later he would tell J.F. Byrne that “there’s not another girl in the world I could ever love as I do Nora” (148), and he would admit to Stanislaus in a February 7, 1905 letter that “I admire her and I love her and I trust her” (LII 80).<sup>6</sup> Additionally, when we note that Joyce remained emotionally devoted and faithful to her throughout the thirty-six years that they shared together, we see Joyce’s enduring performance of love towards Nora even if he had intellectual misgivings about the language.<sup>7</sup> Thus, although Joyce may criticize sentimental depictions of romantic purity, his personal and professional lives rest upon a continued affirmation of Nora that demonstrates a passion more authentic than what could be expressed by the sappy love stories that he derided.

Therefore, I suggest that before we can examine the earnestness of Joycean romance, we should step back and ask ourselves what form of love we are dealing with. If love refers simply to the eternal pledge of devotion under the Catholic marriage sacrament, then clearly the isolation of a Joycean critique of love has merit. However, if we expand our definition of love to encompass the affirmation of a beloved other, then Joyce’s antagonistic attitude towards love becomes less clear. In fact, reading Joyce’s works with respect to Martin Buber’s interpretation of love as the “affirmation of *otherness*” (M. Friedman *Life* 79) reveals that amorous sentiment is neither derided by Joyce nor solely confined to *Ulysses*, but is present as early as *Dubliners* and spreads throughout the entirety of the Joycean oeuvre. To undertake this investigation enables us to witness the

---

<sup>6</sup> Beja observes the increased emotional intensity of Joyce’s correspondence with Nora throughout their early years together, noting that “at first he had difficulty speaking to her of ‘love’ ... Joyce’s hesitation did not last long: his letters to her move from ‘Dear Nora’ to ‘My dear Nora’ to ‘Sweetheart’ to ‘My dear, dear Nora’ to ‘Dearest Nora’ to ‘Carissima’ to ‘My dearest Nora’ within two months (SL 24-31)” (24).

<sup>7</sup> “His life showed that he was capable of loving one woman, and as long as I knew him he took no kind of real interest, least of all emotional or intellectual interest, in any other” (S. Joyce 153).

love ethic inherent in the author's works, highlighting the true love of others over the narcissistic desire of the self and enabling a more dialogic form of socio-political interaction that embraces the compassion and solidarity needed for progressive politics.

#### I. The Vital Acknowledgement of Many-Faced Otherness

Buber's writings are the perfect starting point for this investigation because they promote reciprocal, equal relations between individuals as necessary to affirm otherness in the face of alienation and discrimination. To highlight this reciprocity, Buber isolates two conflicting forms of human relationships, which he identifies as I-You<sup>8</sup> ("the world of relation") and I-It ("the world of experience") (*Thou* 56). Whereas the I-You relationship focuses on the mutual acceptance of the two individuals involved, the I-It relationship emerges from the subject's perception of his partner as either an object for examination or a mirror to reflect her/his own grandeur:

The I of the basic word I-You is different from that of the basic word I-It. The I of the basic word I-It appears as an ego and becomes conscious of itself as a subject (of experience and use). The I of the basic word I-You appears as a person and becomes conscious of itself as subjectivity (without any dependent genitive). Egos appear by setting themselves apart from other egos. Persons appear by entering into relation with other persons. (Buber *Thou* 111-2)

This distinction foregrounds the I's relationship with the other as the foundation for authentic existence. Even though Buber acknowledges that the I-It world is necessary for human life (since the subject needs to make use of objects to ensure her/his physical survival), a primary reliance on I-It relationships is both ethically and socially disastrous because it fails to perceive the other as anything other than an object of inquiry or a means to an end. While the subject of the I-You relationship turns to and affirms the

---

<sup>8</sup> Buber actually characterized the I-You relationship as I-Thou, but the edition of *I and Thou* used for this project translates "Ich-Du" as "I-You," so that translation will be used.

other with her/his entire being, the subject of the I-It relationship turns away from and imposes barriers between her/himself and her/his counterpart. This distant, abstract lens of perception reduces the other to a disposable commodity and denies both parties access to meaningful, reciprocal interaction within a particular social realm, thus alienating the participants from each other and from their surroundings. As Buber argues, “Without It a human being cannot live. But whoever lives only with that is not human” (*Thou* 85).

This distinction between I-You and I-It lays the groundwork for Buber’s advocacy of genuine dialogue between individuals. Similar to his distinctions between the two “basic word[s],” Buber distinguishes between dialogue, in which two individuals turn towards and affirm each other with their whole being, and monologue, in which an individual’s obsession with their own survival prevents her/him from confirming the other as unique from her/himself. He argues:

To be aware of a man, therefore, means in particular to perceive his wholeness as a person determined by the spirit; it means to perceive the dynamic centre which stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness. Such an awareness is impossible, however, if and so long as the other is the separated object of my contemplation or even observation, for this wholeness and its centre do not let themselves be known to contemplation or observation. It is only possible when I step into an elemental relation with the other, that is, when he becomes present to me. (*Knowledge* 70)

Buber thus argues that the foundation of “genuine conversation, and therefore every actual fulfillment of relation between men” is the “acceptance of otherness,” that the subject can recognize and affirm the other as a unique and complete person even when s/he acknowledges disagreements or conflicts between them (*Knowledge* 59). In contrast to the monologist (who either rejects those who think differently than s/he does or reshapes their difference into a confirmation of her/himself), the dialogist “affirm[s] the



person [s/he] struggle[s] with,” resisting the temptation to transform the other into a reflection of her/himself and instead “confirm[ing] him as creature and as creation” (*Knowledge* 69). The performance of the I-You relationship through genuine dialogue thus provides a practical method for authentic interaction among individuals, a form of everyday social communication in which “the elemental otherness of the other [is] not merely noted as the necessary starting point, but is affirmed from the one being to the other” (Buber *Knowledge* 59).

The ethical benefits of Buber’s dialogism are most evident and persuasive in his reflections on love and desire. In this realm, the struggle between I-You and I-It manifests itself through a conflict between the love of others and a narcissistic desire that Buber dismisses as “the lover’s delight in the possibilities of his own person” (*Man* 5). According to him, “Love does not cling to an I, as if the You were merely its ‘content’ or object; it is between I and You. Whoever does not know this, know this with his being, does not know love” (*Thou* 66). In contrast to the narcissistic “kingdom of the lame-winged Eros,” full of “mirrors and mirroring,”<sup>9</sup> in authentic amorous encounters, “there is no mirroring. For there I, the lover, turn to this other human being, the beloved, in his otherness, his independence, his self-reality, and turn to him with all the power of intention of my own heart ... I do not assimilate into my own soul that which lives and faces me, I vow it faithfully to myself and myself to it” (*Man* 29). This comparison foregrounds the recognition of the loved one’s being and a confirmation of her/his

---

<sup>9</sup> Gilya Gerda Schmidt explicitly articulates Buber’s rejection of narcissism, identifying the “narcissistic personality” as “the major impediment to the formation of the type of personality and community he envisioned” and labeling this “self-interest” as “nauseating because it bore no consideration for anything but one’s own concerns, with no thought for the needs of the community” (68). Jeffrey Rubin, while not referring to Buber specifically, similarly recognizes that “love does not live when we conceive of the other narcissistically,” contending that “relating to others in terms of what the person does or does not offer the self inhibits mutuality. Extreme self-investment can render the other invisible” (52).

otherness as a precondition for true love. In contrast to the narcissistic tendency to use the love object as a mirror to reflect the lover's grandeur,<sup>10</sup> love entails the "responsibility of an I for a You," a "vow" that establishes an equal, reciprocal connection between two people based upon "the equality of all lovers" (Buber *Thou* 66). Love is thus shown to be a vital form of dialogism, as the ardent affirmation of the beloved's otherness establishes a mutual bond not between a lover and her/his love object, but between two equal lovers who confirm each other with their entire hearts. Buber may not conclude that dialogism and love are synonymous, but he rejects "love without dialogic, without real outgoing to the other, reaching to the other, and companying with the other," branding this narcissistic "love remaining with itself" as "Lucifer" (Buber *Man* 21).

However, the implications of this amorous dialogism are not limited to the specific relationships between individuals. In fact, Buber argues that the affirmation of the beloved's unique being that arises from this dialogue enables its participants to embrace otherness on a broader scale, which carries with it progressive political possibilities:

I wish his otherness to exist, because I wish his particular being to exist. That is the basic principle of marriage and from this basis it leads, if it is real marriage, to insight into the right and the legitimacy of otherness and to that vital acknowledgment of many-faced otherness—even in the contradiction and conflict with it—from which dealings with the body politic receive their religious ethos. (*Man* 61)<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Suzette Henke similarly castigates this narcissistic obsession with the love object's reflection, arguing that "it is only through the *regard* of the other (the look, gaze, or mirror of approval) that the fragmented subject is able to construct a fictive self-image - an image which, for all its apparent integrity, is a myth contingent on deliberate misprision" (*Desire* 18). Garry Leonard also notes that "desiring the desire of others is the secondary manifestation of a more basic impulse; the desire to be desired" (216).

<sup>11</sup> One could argue that Joyce would reject this endorsement of love because it uses marriage as the central metaphor by which love transcends the personal realm. However, my readings of Joyce's love stories (particularly the chapters on *Ulysses*) argue that the affirmation of otherness plays a vital role in the success of both the relationships and the socio-political interactions of his lovers. Thus, even though he explicitly rejects the sacrament of marriage, Joyce frequently affirms what Buber refers to as the "basic principle of marriage."

Thus, the acceptance of the loved one's otherness translates into a general acceptance of otherness that can undo the socio-political boundaries that alienate individuals from each other. By allowing the affirmation of others to shape our social interactions, the dialogic nature of true love transforms the body politic into Buber's idea of "community," which he defines as the "genuine living together of men of similar or of complementary natures but of differing minds" and the "overcoming of *otherness* in living unity" (*Pointing* 102). In contrast to the enforced conformity of the crowd, the "living unity" of the community enables difference to flourish among socio-political agents who constantly "affirm the [people they] struggle with," which makes the loving embrace of otherness the vital foundation for this civic dialogue.

Additionally, love is essential to promote Buber's community because the intensity of such relationships opens up the socio-political arena to an engagement with otherness that is more akin to affirmation than mere tolerance. Indeed, Buber argues:

The question is not one of exercising 'tolerance,' but of making present the roots of community and its ramifications ... It is not a question of a formal apparent understanding on a minimal basis, but of an awareness from the other side of the other's real relation to the truth. What is called for is not 'neutrality' but solidarity, a living answering for one another—and mutuality, living reciprocity. (*Pointing* 102)

Because the lover's "wish" for her/his beloved's "entire being to exist" constitutes an aggressive affirmation of otherness, the "vital acknowledgement of many-faced otherness" enabled by that "wish" provides the best opportunity for individuals within a given social arena to look past their political differences and forge the "solidarity" and "living reciprocity" that comprises Buber's community. Bell hooks confirms the potential for this solidarity by noting the ability of love to overcome the fear of difference that upholds authoritarian political structures:

Fear is the primary force upholding structures of domination. It promotes the desire for separation, the desire not to be known. When we are taught that safety lies always with sameness, then difference, of any kind, will appear as a threat. When we choose to love we choose to move against fear—against alienation and separation. The choice to love is a choice to connect—to find ourselves in the other. (93)

Rather than promoting sameness and labeling difference as a threat to the body politic, the endorsement of otherness brought about by love compels individuals to relate to others not as ciphers or threats, but as legitimate political subjects, which dissolves the foundations of “structures of domination” and paves the way for more positive political engagement. In contrast to the “alienation and separation” of autocratic structures, a socio-political community shaped by love fosters compassion, solidarity, and “living reciprocity” between its members, replacing the alienation of repressive social systems with a more inclusive, accommodating method of civic interaction.

While the socio-political goals of this amorous dialogism may seem lofty, Buber’s community is not a utopian fantasy. In fact, Buber rejects the notion that “his insistence on the power of relation to give meaning and direction to our lives” relegates him to the role of a “romantic optimist” (Moore 220), insisting that a dialogic engagement with otherness is a practically productive manner of improving everyday interactions between others.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, Buber’s insistence on the temporality and impermanence of the I-You relationship demonstrates his refusal to advocate a fantastic, sentimental endorsement of true love as the guaranteed solution to the world’s evils. Whereas Joyce

---

<sup>12</sup> Moore continues by emphasizing Buber’s insistence that this charge of “romantic optimis[m]” is “quite false, for he never asserted that we can overcome our disharmony, the twofoldness of our attitude toward the world, simply through our own ‘good will.’ ‘I am a realistic meliorist; for I mean and say that human life approaches its fulfillment, its redemption, in the measure that the I-Thou relation becomes strong in it’ (220). Laurence J. Silberstein similarly contends that “Buber eschewed all messianic hopes and identified himself as a meliorist. Acknowledging that we can never achieve an ideal society free from alienation, he insisted on a gradualist strategy in which we work toward creating greater opportunities for genuine dialogue and community” (185).

rejected the “lying drivel” concerning “love for ever,” Buber insists that such a state of amorous permanence is impossible, as the potential always exists for a You to regress into an It:

Even love cannot persist in direct relation; it endures, but only in the alternation of actuality and latency. The human being who but now was unique and devoid of qualities, not at hand but only present, not experienceable, only touchable, has again become a He or She, an aggregate of qualities, a quantum with a shape. Now I can again abstract from him the color of his hair, of his speech, of his graciousness; but as long as I can do that he is my You no longer and not yet again. (*Thou* 68-9)

However, even though the I-You relation formed by a romantic encounter is doomed to fade away, the lover’s ability to affirm her/his beloved’s otherness is still valuable because “whatever has thus been changed into It and frozen into a thing among things is still endowed with the meaning and the destiny to change back ever again” (*Thou* 90). Because of this fluctuating nature of human relation, it is more important for the lover to maintain the capability to enter into romantic dialogues than it is for her/him to aspire to an ideal, perfect union since the continued ability to affirm the otherness of potential loved ones better prepares her/him to interact productively with the others s/he encounters.<sup>13</sup> Regardless of the outcome of specific relationships, the compassion and solidarity that occurs through loving dialogues allow “genuine communication” to be “actualized through the everyday relationships and occupations in which we are engaged” (Silberstein 179-80), enabling those who lovingly reach out to the other to “act, help, heal, educate, raise, [and] redeem” (Buber *Thou* 66).

---

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Freidman argues that “It would be a mistake to understand the ‘ought’ that arises out of this ethic to mean that one ought every moment to be in an I-Thou relationship, as if that were an ideal to aim for. The ‘ought’ that is asked of one is the *quantum satis* – what one is capable of at any moment” (*Eternal* 76).

## II. The Passion of Opals and Pearls

Having described Buber's attitude towards love, we can now bring his writings into dialogue with Joyce's works to discern how the affirmation of otherness plays out through the author's love stories. Although Joyce explicitly derides the sentimental fantasy of true love, Buber's pragmatic endorsement of amorous dialogue provides an exemplary framework with which to read Joyce's writings, as the conflict between true love and narcissistic desire becomes a critical site for his articulation of the alienation within paralytic Dublin. Indeed, Buber's fascination "with the turbid, the repressed, the pedestrian, with toil and dull contraryness" perfectly complements Joyce's focus on the everyday, and his advocacy of dialogue as a means to counteract the "dully-tempered disagreeableness, obstinacy, and contraryness in which the man, whom I pluck at random out of the tumult, is living" coincides with the attempts by Joyce's characters to escape the stultifying conditions of their environment (*Man* 36). When we read Joyce's love stories with respect to these representations of everyday paralysis, we uncover the relationship between personal and socio-political love that is at the foundation of Buber's construction of community, which enables us to see how the preoccupation with self-promotion inhibits the ability of Joyce's characters either to transcend their isolated existences or to reshape Ireland in any productive manner. For that reason, although Joyce would consider it "a mistake for you to imagine that my political opinions are those of a universal lover" (*LII* 89), his body of work elucidates both the individual and political implications of the amorous choices his characters make, demonstrating how the capacity to love and affirm otherness is essential to carve a viable space within the Dublin body politic.

In fact, when we evaluate Joyce's outlook on love with respect to his relationship with Nora, we see that his affection for her echoes Buber's call to turn lovingly towards the other. I have already contended that Joyce's relationship with Nora rendered him more comfortable with both performing and speaking the language of love, but what is equally significant is that his descriptions of the viability of their relationship rely on I-You rhetoric that champions the reality of their amorous situation over their ability to attain an idealized notion of romantic bliss. This is especially prevalent within Joyce's August 21, 1909 letter to Nora, as the rekindling of his affection after suspecting her of having an affair with Vincent Cosgrave establishes a contrast between poetic and actual love that reveals the vitality of their relationship. Initially, Joyce contemplates Nora's reaction to *Chamber Music*, noting that "when I wrote [those verses] I was a strange lonely boy, walking about by myself at night and thinking that some day a girl would love me" (*LII* 236-7). This description of the younger Joyce echoes Stephen's romantic quest for a fictitious, ideal Mercedes in the second chapter of *Portrait*, especially considering that his description of this hypothetical love object as "a girl fashioned into a curious grave beauty by the culture of generations before her" represents the ideal muse of his youth as a hodgepodge of romantic and poetic clichés (*LII* 237). Thus, his subsequent recognition that "I never could speak to the girls I used to meet at houses" signifies his acknowledgment of the futility of chasing such romantic symbols (*LII* 237), as the attempts by young Joyce to "meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld" (*P* 67) lead him to girls that inevitably fall short of his ideal.

By contrast, Joyce recognizes that his love for Nora is based on a more realistic affection than the romantic musings of his youth. He explicitly acknowledges that “you were not in a sense the girl for whom I had dreamed and written the verses you find now so enchanting” (*LII* 237), and his subsequent declaration of affection for Nora reveals the extent to which his life’s central relationship overwhelms the amatory idealism that preceded it: “But then I saw that the beauty of your soul outshone that of my verses. There was something in you higher than anything I had put into them” (*LII* 237). This comparison between youthful and mature romance demonstrates Joyce’s preference for an authentic affirmation of his beloved over the self-indulgent quests of his past. By noting that “there was something . . . higher” in Nora than in the muse that inspired *Chamber Music*, Joyce demonstrates both the vibrancy of his confirmation of his partner and the artificiality of the romantic archetypes that comprised his poetic longings (especially considering that this comparison immediately follows his recognition of his youthful muse’s “fashion[ing] by the “culture of generations before her”). Thus, when Joyce proclaims that *Chamber Music* “holds the desire of my youth and you, darling, were the fulfillment of that desire” (*LII* 237), he shows how the maintenance of real-world love outweighs the pursuit of abstract ideals, as his juxtaposition of Nora’s disparity with his youthful love objects with her role as the “fulfillment of [his] desire” promotes a practical foundation for his realization of their love.

This comparison between real-world love and abstract desire continues in Joyce’s subsequent distinction between opals and pearls. As he continues to extol the vitality of his love for Nora, Joyce contrasts his youthful and present-day romances through the



difference between pearls and opals, which allows him to promote the emotional power of the present over the passionless abstraction of the past:

Do you know what a pearl is and what an opal is? My soul when you came sauntering to me first through those sweet summer evenings was beautiful but with the pale passionless beauty of a pearl. Your love has passed through me and now I feel my mind something like an opal, that is, full of strange uncertain hues and colours, of warm lights and quick shadows and of broken music. (*LII* 237)

This passage confirms Joyce's preference for the emotional warmth of real-world attachments over the hollow ardency of romantic idealism. The "pale passionless beauty of a pearl" represents the empty nature of a life spent chasing after fictitious love objects, as the desire to make the real world fit an abstract notion of ideal love and beauty necessarily robs that experience of any romantic energy. His description of his first meeting with Nora counteracts this "pale passionless beauty" because the spontaneity of their encounter forces him to relate to his future partner not as the next candidate for his ideal muse, but as an actual person whose warmth and love fill him with "strange uncertain hues and colours, [with] warm lights and quick shadows and [with] broken music."<sup>14</sup> The fact that these "hues and colours" are "strange" and "uncertain" shows that Joyce's love for Nora emerges out of his affirmation of her otherness rather than her ability to fit his romantic ideal since his inability to classify the sensations that her affection instills in him shows his inability to explain his passion for his partner through a preconceived lens of ideal beauty. This both emphasizes the incongruence between his real-life love for Nora and the abstract, sentimental longings of his youth and demonstrates the authenticity of their relationship because Joyce enters into direct

---

<sup>14</sup> Buber confirms the legitimacy of such recognitions, arguing that "only an inclusive power is able to take the lead; only an inclusive Eros is love. Inclusiveness is the complete realization of the submissive person, the desired person, the 'partner', not by the fancy but by the actuality of the being" (*Man* 97).

relation with Nora rather than classifying or explaining his love through the I-It world of experience. In that sense, Nora truly does become the “fulfillment of [his] desire,” as the “love” that “passes through [him]” throughout their relationship unites Joyce and Nora in a mutual affirmation of otherness that brightens the “pale passionless beauty” of his past.

Joyce’s adoration of Nora thus demonstrates that his characterization of “spiritual love and love for ever” as “blatant lying in the face of the truth” is not a blanket rejection of love. To attribute such a totalizing refusal to Joyce would seem oddly out of place given his lifelong devotion to his wife and children and his understanding that his affection for Nora is based on an affirmation of her specific person that transcends the abstract romantic discourses of his youth. When we read Joyce’s attitudes towards love with respect to Buber, we find that the author’s romantic nausea is not provoked by all forms of love, but rather by the sentimental proclamations of abstract desire that he finds in the hollow platitudes of his contemporaries, a narcissistic assimilation of otherness into preconceived notions of sexual morality that belongs firmly within Buber’s “kingdom of the lame-winged Eros.” In that sense, Joyce’s devotion to Nora demonstrates Buber’s contention that the potential to engage in loving dialogue exists in the everyday interactions of individuals, as his ardent confirmation of his wife’s being establishes a real-world “inclusive Eros” that replaces the “passionless” nature of his Dublin existence with the mutual vibrancy of true love.

### III. The Word Known to All Men

In an October 25, 1909 letter to Nora, Joyce writes that “I *know* and *feel* that if I am to write anything fine or noble in the future I shall do so only by listening at the doors of your heart” (*LII* 254). Taking this into account, it is unsurprising that a central conflict

for many of Joyce's protagonists concerns their pursuits of love, as these characters frequently tie both their personal and social happiness to their ability to attain the adoration that they desire. For an author who "feels like puking" at the thought of love, he writes about the subject extensively, and his narratives frequently demonstrate the futility of romantic passion that is not grounded in the affirmation of one's beloved. Indeed, when we acknowledge that Joyce's "fine" and "noble" works are brought about by "listening at the doors of [Nora's] heart," we see that the conflict between true love and narcissistic desire pervades the Joycean oeuvre, and the way that Joyce resolves this conflict articulates a consistent love ethic that demonstrates the ability of authentic expressions of love to counteract the alienation of everyday Dublin.

The most famous textual example of this conflict occurs in the notorious "love passage" in "Scylla and Charybdis." By reinserting this fragment into Stephen's Shakespeare lecture, Gabler provides us with the most direct comparison between true love and narcissistic desire within Joyce's works, as Stephen's internal evaluation of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* highlights both the disparity between these competing forms of love and the implications of this conflict: "Do you know what you are talking about? Love, yes. Word known to all men. *Amor vero aliquid alicui nonum vult unde et ea quae concupiscimus ...*" (U 9.429-30). Given that the Gabler text has become the standard edition of *Ulysses*, it does not accomplish much to rehash the arguments on both sides concerning the legitimacy of reinserting this passage at this time (since my project's overall position is not dependent upon its legitimacy). Nor is it necessary to determine whether "love" is the definitive "word known to all men" since the comparison of love and narcissism would still exist within the Joycean oeuvre even if

the “word” were conclusively revealed to be “death,”<sup>15</sup> “yes,”<sup>16</sup> or any other alternative solution. What compels me to call our attention to this passage is not Stephen’s articulation of “love” as the “word known to all men,” but the fragments of the *Summa* that follow it.

Don Gifford and Robert J. Seidman translate these passages from Aquinas to read:

For if we understand or rejoice, it follows that we are referred somehow to some object: whereas LOVE WILLS SOMETHING TO SOMEONE, since we are said to love that to which we WILL SOME GOOD, in a way foresaid. Hence WHEN WE WANT A THING, we are said simply and properly to DESIRE IT, and not to love it, but rather to love ourselves for whom we want it. (221)<sup>17</sup>

This passage highlights the disparity between the love of self and the love of others that is at the heart of Buber’s amorous writings. Whereas the willing of something for the good of another person is brought about by the lover’s affection for that person, the desire for “thing[s]” is not brought about by any particular feelings for the object itself, but rather by its utility in advancing the personal goals of the individual lover.<sup>18</sup> That Aquinas distinguishes between the “love” of others and the “desire” for objects demonstrates the incompleteness of the latter yearning since whatever is being pursued (be it object or person) is emptied of its specific essence and relegated to a disposable commodity to

---

<sup>15</sup> Richard J. Finneran argues that “despite the host of distinguished critics who have argued that ‘the word known to all men’ is love ... it seems clear that death must be the answer” (574).

<sup>16</sup> Cheryl Fox contends that “examining the ways in which ‘love’ and ‘yes’ are treated throughout the novel reveals the inappropriateness of ‘love’ as the word known to all men and the ‘rightwiseness’ of ‘yes’” (799).

<sup>17</sup> Capitalization is Gifford and Seidman’s and refers specifically to the Aquinas fragments that Stephen utters in *Ulysses*.

<sup>18</sup> Gifford and Seidman similarly read this passage as establishing the contrast between true love and narcissistic desire, writing that “Aquinas is distinguishing between ‘True love [which] requires one to will another’s good’ and self love, which wills another’s good primarily as conducive to one’s own good” (221). Ellmann also notes that “Aquinas is distinguishing between love, which as he says in the first six words, ‘genuinely wishes another’s good,’ and, in the next five, a selfish desire to secure our own pleasure ‘on account of which we desire these things,’ meaning lovelessly and for our own good, not another’s” (“Preface” xii).

fulfill one's narcissistic pursuit.<sup>19</sup> The Aquinas portions of the "love passage" thus become an explicit textual example of the conflict between narcissistic monologue and loving dialogue that pervades Joyce's writings, establishing an ethical framework to evaluate not simply *Ulysses*, but the author's oeuvre as a whole.

The power of the "Scylla" restoration as an indictment of narcissistic desire is made even more compelling considering that Joyce has Stephen articulate this comparison. As I will argue in later chapters, Stephen's pursuit of love throughout *Portrait*, *Stephen Hero*, and *Ulysses* is the embodiment of narcissistic desire, as his search for a love object whose adoration will provide him with artistic inspiration inhibits his ability to forge loving connections through his everyday interactions with others. It is thus significant that Stephen is the character who pursues the "word known to all men" throughout *Ulysses*, for his desire to find the real-world love object who will ease his loneliness by speaking the "word" to him echoes his quest to "meet in the real world the unsubstantial

---

<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, this interpretation of the Aquinas passage may not be so straight-forward. In her landmark essay on the "Scylla" restorations, Jean Kimball reads the fragments from *Summa Contra Gentiles* differently, arguing that Stephen's internal recitation does not put forth a comparison of true love and narcissistic desire:

Aquinas concludes from the definition he quotes that 'the movement of love therefore has a two-fold object [grammatically, the direct and indirect object]: the good thing which is wanted for someone, whether oneself or another person; and the one for whom it is wanted.' And when he goes on to make a hierarchical distinction between amor amicitiae as the primary sense of love and amor concupiscentiae as the secondary sense, this distinction is between the love of someone and the love of something, not between the love of the other and the love of self, as it appears to be in the definition that he quotes from Aristotle. ("Death" 146)

Kimball may be correct that the Aquinas passages Stephen cites distinguish between the love of persons and the love of objects. However, when we read this comparison with respect to Buber's writings on love, we find that the conflict between love and narcissism exists even if this distinction is not explicitly articulated within the passage from the *Summa*. Given that the "love of someone" could involve self-love as well as the love of others and that the "love of something" could encompass people as well as objects, the Aquinas passage could still be read as denigrating narcissistic desire because it commodifies the love object by conceiving of her/him simply in terms of utility (especially considering that amatory narcissism is grounded in Buber's I-It relationship). In that case, the question becomes whether the object of the lover's affection is treated as the "direct ... object" of "amor amicitiae" or the "indirect object" of "amor concupiscentiae," a distinction that simultaneously evokes the conflict between true love and narcissistic desire even if the latter conflict is not explicitly mentioned in the *Summa*.

image which his soul so constantly beheld” that Joyce earlier dismissed as an empty, abstract endeavor. For that reason, when Stephen contemplates the Aquinas passage, we cannot help but associate those definitions of love with narcissistic desire because Stephen uses those fragments of the *Summa* to reassure himself of the legitimacy of his pursuit of the “word known to all men.” Thus, the narcissism of Stephen’s meditations manifests itself not only through the Aquinas passage, but through the manner in which that passage is deployed, which transforms these aspects of Stephen’s lecture into the self-serving “contrapost to [both] Bloom’s definition of love” and his loving interactions with others throughout Bloomsday (Gabler 17).

The narcissistic motivations behind Stephen’s musings also help to explain the fragmented presentation of the Aquinas passage. As many have noted, Stephen does not quote *Summa Contra Gentiles* directly, but pieces together individual words from the text to put forth an unintelligible presentation of Aquinas’s amorous comparison. While some argue that the fragmented nature of this meditation prevents us from engaging the conflict between love and narcissism satisfactorily, I feel that the incompleteness of Stephen’s thoughts amplifies the validity of this comparison. Even though the phrase Stephen internally expresses essentially argues that “love wills something to someone” and that “when we want some good, we desire it,” we cannot evaluate the Aquinas fragments within “Scylla” without simultaneously recalling the portions that have been excluded (especially considering that Stephen’s presentation of the *Summa* ends with an ellipse). Given that Stephen is using Aquinas’s definitions of love to validate his search for the “word known to all men,” to note that his justification for the pursuit is based on bits and pieces of Aquinas cobbled together shows how the young artist self-servingly reshapes

the *Summa*'s comparison of love and narcissism into an abstract quotation that misses the point of the passage. Not only does this incompleteness highlight the self-absorbed and incomplete nature of Stephen's pursuit of the "word known to all men," but his inability to use this pursuit to influence the audience of his lecture demonstrates the inevitable failure of the undertaking, as his abstract validation of ideal love falls short of improving his real-world situation.

This hollow, abstract nature of Stephen's undertaking is highlighted further by his interpretation of love as a "word known to all men." Regardless of whether love is a "truth universally acknowledged," Stephen's meditations on the subject certainly portray it in this manner, representing love as a static emotion that is perceived and experienced by everyone. Although Stephen uses this definition to encourage his pursuit of *amor matris*, this intellectual understanding of love inevitably falls short of fulfilling his desires for two reasons. First, by limiting its existence to a mere "word" instead of an actual relationship, it relegates Stephen's pursuit to an abstract form of love, which mitigates its real-world, emotional resonance.<sup>20</sup> Second, by defining love as a "word" that is "known," it confines amatory attachments to the I-It world of inquiry instead of the I-You world of relation, and the fact that this "word" is "known by all men" arrests the vibrancy of amorous encounters in a totalizing definition of a universal experience. This static understanding of love prevents Stephen from recognizing and affirming the otherness of the potential love objects he encounters, which renders him incapable of either attaining the specific affection he desires or using love to advance his art (since his totalizing

---

<sup>20</sup> Henke argues that "Joyce might be suggesting, as well, that 'love' may simply be a 'word' and not a reality to the young, inexperienced and misogynist artist who 'knows' this ubiquitous monosyllable as a textual surface, a sign on the white field of a desiring consciousness, but not as a palpable and concrete experience" ("Reconstructing" 90).

interpretation of love ignores the uniqueness of his audience, as is evidenced by the failure of his Shakespeare lecture). The restored portions of “Scylla” thus provide an explicit articulation of the comparison between true love and narcissistic desire not simply through the words that are quoted, but through the motivations of the speaker, and Stephen’s failure to use the passage to advance his goals demonstrates how the obsession with self-advancement is ultimately self-defeating.

The question over the legitimacy of the “love” passage’s restoration may never be resolved satisfactorily, but ultimately such a resolution is not necessary to discover the prominence of love in Joyce’s works. Indeed, even if Gabler never included Stephen’s clarification of the “word known to all men” in “Scylla,” the disparate manners in which the young artist and Bloom seek the love they desire would still establish the comparison between narcissistic monologue and amorous dialogue that is at the heart of Buber’s writings on love. This conflict plays itself out not just in *Ulysses*, but throughout the Joycean oeuvre, as the pursuit of love becomes a popular method by which Joyce’s characters seek to escape the humdrum nature of paralytic Dublin. From *Dubliners* to *Bloomsday*, Joyce’s protagonists explicitly tie their romantic prowess to their socio-political viability, and an examination of the author’s works shows how the success of their civic interaction is directly related to the specific forms of love they seek. However, the majority of Joyce’s characters fall prey to the lure of narcissistic desire, limiting their love stories to the pursuit of abstract, intellectualized symbols of ideal beauty whose attainment will mirror their self-worth, but whose inherent fictitiousness foreshadows the inevitable frustration of their quests. As we witness the downfalls of James Duffy, Gabriel Conroy, Stephen Dedalus, and Richard Rowan, we come to appreciate more fully



the dialogic acceptance of otherness that comprises Leopold and Molly Bloom's affection for each other, which enables Joyce's depictions of their Odyssean journey to demonstrate both the personal and socio-political benefits of true love. Joyce may primarily portray narcissistic protagonists who fall short of using love as a means for escape and exile, but it is ultimately the authentic lover who is able to survive productively within the Dublin body politic, and a Buberian investigation of Joycean love enables us to look past the threat of sentimental nausea to see how the capability to love and affirm the other can improve even the most paralytic of social conditions.

#### IV. From Paralysis to Penelope and Beyond

This project analyzes the ethical and political implications of the love stories present in Joyce's writings. Focusing on *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait*, *Exiles*, and *Ulysses*, I examine the relationships between the characters' pursuits of love and their socio-political struggles and posit that their love for others directly influences their acceptance of otherness within the colonialist discourses of Joyce's Dublin. In so doing, I contend that the narcissistic underpinnings of Duffy's, Gabriel's, Stephen's, and Richard's romantic quests limit themselves to detached constructions of identity and subjectivity that impede effective politics. Instead, I champion the empathy and kindness of Bloom's love as fostering an ethic of compassion and solidarity that transcends the "racial hatred" that Joyce attributes to both British imperialism and Irish nationalism.

The first section of this project will focus on the love stories of *Dubliners*. The first chapter, "Bearing the Chalice," provides a general examination of the collection, arguing that the protagonists' pursuits of romantic validation as an escape from their paralytic situations betray a fundamental ignorance of otherness that exacerbates the alienation that

initially compelled those pursuits. The next chapter, “The Soul’s Incurable Loneliness,” focuses our attention on “A Painful Case,” reading Emily Sinico’s empathy towards James Duffy not simply as a performance of personal love, but as a broader invitation of openness that would enable Duffy to put his socialist politics into action, which makes his narcissistic refusal of her a simultaneous rejection of his political aspirations. The final chapter in this section, “The Boy in the Gasworks,” looks at Gabriel Conroy’s amatory musings in “The Dead,” representing his attitude towards Gretta as a kinder version of Duffy’s refusal of Mrs. Sinico’s invitation of openness. This reading transforms Gabriel’s meditations on Gretta and Michael Furey into rejections of the empathy embodied by his wife, inevitably perpetuating the mundane present he attempts to transcend throughout the story.

The next section focuses on the amatory pursuits of Stephen Dedalus, analyzing *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait*, and *Ulysses* to provide a comprehensive illustration of the development and frustration of his obsession with narcissistic desire. In “A Sadly Proud Gesture of Refusal,” I examine the construction of Stephen’s interpretation of love throughout *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait*. I argue that his pursuit of a romantic submission that does not conflict with his uncompromising freedom reduces his loved ones to symbolic love objects whose refusal to acquiesce unconditionally to him compels him to push them away, magnifying his alienation from Dublin. Then, in “The Personality of the Artist,” I look at the relationship between Stephen’s desire for amatory freedom and his artistic ambitions. I contend that the narcissism that magnifies Stephen’s personal alienation also leads him to adopt an aesthetic theory that counters the political goals of his art by promoting static ideal beauty over the problems of everyday Dublin. Finally, in

“Love’s Bitter Mystery,” I read Stephen’s relationship with his mother as the culmination of his attempts to attain the amatory submission he sought throughout *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait*. Here, I argue that Stephen’s attempts to reclaim *amor matris* throughout *Ulysses* force his narcissistic desires into conflict with his uncompromising performance of the revolutionary artist, creating an irresolvable double bind that unravels both his amatory and artistic pursuits.

As we leave Stephen to wander away from 7 Eccles Street, we turn our attention towards the romantic conflicts that pervade *Exiles*. In “The Gift of Freedom,” I read Richard Rowan as a transition point between the purely narcissistic protagonists of *Dubliners* and *Portrait* and the acceptance of otherness that comprises Bloom’s compassion throughout *Ulysses*. To illustrate this transition, I argue that Richard’s desire to secure for Bertha the same freedom that he exercises speaks to an underlying sympathy for her that guides his actions in the play, which demonstrates a compassion for his loved one that has heretofore been absent from Joyce’s works. Nevertheless, Richard’s desire to advance Bertha’s happiness is nullified by his fundamental ignorance of her longings, as his insistence on forcing her to accept an unwanted amatory freedom replaces her specific yearnings with an abstract ideal of love that only magnifies the alienation between them. This conflict between Richard’s desire to “wish Bertha well” (E 78) and his manipulation of her affection thus transforms *Exiles* into an important training ground for Joyce’s subsequent advocacy of true love in *Ulysses*.

After seven chapters of self-defeating narcissism, the final section of this project allows us to witness Joyce’s endorsement of love through his representations of Leopold and Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*. In “Love’s Old Sweet Song,” I examine Bloom’s attempts

to come to grips with his wife's adultery throughout the text, arguing that his forgiveness of Molly and affirmation of her otherness serves as the critical point of distinction between the loving protagonist of *Ulysses* and his narcissistic predecessors. The next chapter, "The Opposite of Hatred," expands the scope of Bloom's performance of love by arguing that the affection he feels for Molly translates into a broader societal compassion that enables him to engage a hostile body politic dialogically and productively. The final chapter demonstrates the reciprocal love inherent in the Blooms' marriage. In "The Flower of the Mountain," I posit that Molly's recollections of past romantic bliss in both Gibraltar and Dublin anticipate her renewed affirmation of Bloom through the text's concluding "yes," which transforms her thoughts throughout "Penelope" into a restaged acceptance of Bloom's proposal that replaces the adultery of Bloomsday with the hope for reconciliation. And while the project primarily focuses on *Dubliners*, *Portrait*, *Exiles*, and *Ulysses*, the Afterword points us towards the loving potential of *Finnegans Wake*, reading ALP's concluding soliloquy as a demonstration for her enduring affection for HCE that is reignited through each iteration of the text's "commodius vicus of recirculation" (*FW* 3).

## CHAPTER ONE: BEARING THE CHALICE

In his response to the interpretation of the “word known to all men” as love, Richard J. Finneran argues that “on the grounds of simple logic it is not easy to argue in favor of love. If we take ‘known’ in the sense of ‘fully understood, experienced,’ as the context surely demands, one need look no further than Joyce's earlier fiction, let alone *Ulysses*, to conclude that love is hardly a universal experience” (574). I have already argued for reading the “word known to all men” as a narcissistic desire, but in this chapter, I wish to examine Finneran’s claim that *Dubliners* supports his challenge to this interpretation. Whereas he specifically focuses on Gabriel Conroy’s assertion that “he had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love” (which I will address specifically in the third chapter) (*D* 224), analyzing Joyce’s collection as a whole reveals the obsession with love to be at the heart of several of its stories, especially when we recognize narcissistic validation to be the affection most often pursued throughout the Joycean oeuvre. Although the epiphanies experienced by the protagonists in *Dubliners* certainly illustrate the rarity of reciprocal affirmation in the stories, reading their desires as narcissistic demonstrates a “universal experience” of self-serving love present in their attempts to use romance as a means to escape from Irish paralysis.<sup>21</sup>

In that sense, the amatory quests of *Dubliners* become exemplary counterparts to Stephen’s pursuit of the “word known to all men” in *Ulysses*. Finneran may question the definitional viability of love as the answer to Stephen’s question, but I consider the context in which that question is uttered to be more telling. As I have previously argued,

---

<sup>21</sup> Vicki Mahaffey reads *Dubliners* similarly, arguing that Joyce’s collection “records the longing of isolated individuals for meaningful connection, counterpointing their poignant but futile yearning against the rules of a social system that effectively (if not intentionally) prohibits relation in favor of idealized admiration, manipulation, and competition” (“Ulysses” 138).

the “word” should be read narcissistically not because love is a pristine definition for the concept, but because his question is always uttered as an expression of his desire to counteract his perpetual loneliness. For that reason, Stephen’s pursuit of the “word known to all men” is more important than the “word” itself since it comprises a critical part of his search for the submission of an ideal love object that will elevate him over his melancholy isolation.

When read this way, the universality of the “word known to all men” in *Dubliners* becomes evident, as Stephen’s amatory mission finds its origins in the pursuits of love undertaken by Joyce’s earlier protagonists. Indeed, the narrator of “Araby,” Eveline Hill, Little Chandler, and other characters in *Dubliners* also view amatory desire as an opportunity to counter the paralysis that infects their everyday lives, and their desires for romantic validation account for most of their actions within their individual stories. However, the narcissism that I will later attribute to Stephen’s quest permeates these amatory undertakings in *Dubliners* since each character focuses more on individual escape than on the devotion to and affirmation of their beloved, reducing their love objects to symbols of desire that do nothing to counteract the lovers’ alienation. Thus, the stories’ concluding epiphanies, rather than demonstrating the absence of love in *Dubliners*, actually confirm the presence of narcissistic desire in Joyce’s collection, revealing the inevitable futility of romantic pursuits that reduce the loved one to a means for escape or self-promotion.

#### I. Escape!

Several of the protagonists in *Dubliners* seek relationships for a variety of reasons, many of which have little to do with any actual esteem for their love objects. In fact,

these characters frequently perform what Buber refers to as “say[ing] You and mean[ing] It” (*Thou* 85), pursuing connections with loved ones not because they desire to form a passionate attachment to them, but because such connections lead to individual benefits. For example, Corley and Lenehan in “Two Gallants” participate in what Carey Mickalites dubs a “parasitic ego economy,” viewing relationships in purely economic terms that reduce their romantic aspirations to “investments in woman as commodity” (128). Corley appraises the worth of such pursuits based on what he gets in the exchange—a desire that compels him to seduce a slavey in order to gain cigarettes, cigars, and ultimately a pilfered sovereign—while Lenehan fantasizes about “settl[ing] down” and “liv[ing] happily” with a “good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready” (*D* 52). Ignatius Gallaher in “A Little Cloud” also considers romance useful for its financial benefits, viewing marriage as an opportunity to “play [his] cards properly” in order to access the bankroll of one of “thousands of rich Germans and Jews, rotten with money” (*D* 77). Both Mrs. Mooney and Bob Doran in “The Boarding House” view the latter’s marriage to Polly as reparation for tarnishing her honor, though Mrs. Mooney’s knowledge that Doran “had a good screw” and “a bit of stuff put by” reveals her interest in the financial benefits of such atonement (*D* 60).<sup>22</sup> And in “A Mother,” Miss Devlin “become[s] Mrs Kearney out of spite,” suppressing her romantic desires to marry her “sober, thrifty and pious” husband so that she can silence the nagging tongues of her acquaintances (*D* 134; 135). Such justifications hint at the narcissism of the romantic

---

<sup>22</sup> Trevor L. Williams contends that “Throughout *Dubliners*, relationships are paralyzed at the commodity level, a lugubrious example being Bob Doran’s dalliance with Polly, which is transformed by Mrs. Mooney into a very specific economic relationship: marriage equals ‘reparation’” (96). Such a description of this “economic relationship” encourages Suzette Henke to argue that “In ‘The Boarding House,’ as in ‘Two Gallants,’ Joyce exposes Dublin courtship as little more than organized prostitution” (*Desire* 26).

entanglements in *Dubliners*, subordinating the lovers' passion for their pursued love objects to the external benefits of those pursuits.

However, the main reason why the characters in *Dubliners* pursue amatory attachments is to escape their paralyzing everyday lives. They feel as though the passion of sentimental romance provides an alternative to the stultifying conditions in which they find themselves, compelling them to engage in amatory quests that carry them away from their Dublin existences and towards a symbolic Eden. In "Araby," the young narrator associates his fascination with Mangan's sister with the humdrum description of his neighborhood to such an extent that the chivalric quest he undertakes in her name becomes synonymous with escape. His representations of North Richmond Street illustrate the paralysis that comprises his domestic life. He describes the street as "being blind," which signifies both the social blindness and dead-end situations of its inhabitants, and he notes the houses that "[grow] sombre" at night and "[gaze] at one another with brown imperturbable faces" (*D* 21). His subsequent accounts of playing with his friends emphasize this stultification, as he describes the "dark dripping gardens" and "dark odorous stables" that pervade their nightly adventures and isolates their reluctance to encounter his alcoholic uncle as the inevitable reemergence of everyday monotony that brings their play to an end (*D* 22). For that reason, when he shifts his thoughts from the dismal neighborhood to Mangan's sister, he establishes his love for Mangan's sister as a sentimental alternative to the dreariness of his domestic existence, a rare "figure defined by the light from [a] half-opened door" who illuminates his "shadow[ed]" position (*D* 22). His decision to go to Araby for her thus enables the boy to use his performance of passion to fulfill a more self-centered quest: to replace the



humdrum nature of North Richmond Street with the “Eastern enchantment” of Araby (*D* 24).

Similarly, in “A Little Cloud,” Little Chandler views exotic, sentimental romance as a potential escape from his domestic misery. His fascination with the “dark Oriental eyes” of the “rich Jewesses” of whom Gallaher boasts demonstrates his need to use an alluring yet imaginary Eastern entanglement to evade the “cold[ness]” and “composure” of his marriage (especially since the “passion” and “voluptuous longing” that he seeks is evoked from the *idea* of a “rich Jewess” rather than any specific love object) (*D* 78). This desire for fantasized passion is also evident in Chandler’s admiration of Lord Byron’s “On the Death of a Young lady, Cousin of the Author, and Very dear to Him,” as he applauds the melancholic tone of the mournful speaker not because of the authenticity of that lament, but because the expression of that lament compels people to pay attention to the poet. His desire to “give expression” to such melancholy “in a book of poems” reveals that Chandler views romance not as a desirable end in itself, but rather as a performance that is valuable primarily because “men would listen” to it (*D* 68). Whereas the boy in “Araby” used his desire for Mangan’s sister to fulfill a narcissistic longing, the passion that Chandler seeks throughout “A Little Cloud” is completely devoid of any regard or affirmation for his love object; in fact, it features no love object at all, as his wish to express the *idea* of love prevents him from acknowledging Annie as anything other than a hindrance to his individual longings. This transforms his desire to express a “melancholy tempered by recurrences of faith and resignation and simple joy” into an amatory quest for the poetic validation that would carry him “farther from his own sober inartistic life” (*D* 68).

However, while “Araby” and “A Little Cloud” deal with fantasized retreats from Irish paralysis, the most literal example of a protagonist in *Dubliners* using romance for escapist purposes occurs in “Eveline.” Initially, Eveline’s thoughts of marrying Frank echo the self-serving matrimonial opinions of Mrs. Mooney and Mrs. Kearney, viewing marriage simply as a vehicle for social respectability (“Then she would be married – she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then” [D 30]). However, when she places her desire to marry Frank within her overall desire to leave Ireland for Buenos Ayres, she reveals the prominence of escapist desire in her admiration of her newfound lover. By contrasting the respectability of her marriage in Argentina with her mother’s miserable domestic existence (“She would not be treated as her mother had been” [D 30]), Eveline transforms her pending nuptials into a way to avoid the abuse and depression that Joyce isolates as the inevitable result of Irish marriages. Her resolution to flee this fate reveals her preference for security and escape over love in her romantic endeavor: “Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness” (D 33). Similar to Miss Devlin’s suppression of romantic desire in accepting Mr. Kearney’s proposal, Eveline agrees to marry Frank not because she loves him, but rather because he promises a life of security and happiness away from her violent father.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the desire for escape trumps the importance of love, and Eveline’s determination to invoke her “right to happiness” reduces Frank to little more than “the invisible vehicle for bestowing respectful treatment on her” (Norris *Suspicious* 62).

---

<sup>23</sup> Margot Norris similarly argues that “for a girl ostensibly bedazzled by a handsome sailor, her feelings for him are repeatedly expressed in language that points to her concerns for safety and security, rather than to infatuation” (*Suspicious* 62).

Regardless of the specific motives for pursuing romance in these stories, the narcissism behind these pursuits is clear. In each instance, loved ones' otherness is subordinated to their utility, as the lovers in *Dubliners* determine the worth of their beloveds not by who they are, but either by what they can provide or how they can advance the lovers' individual pursuits. This disinterest in affirming the love object's specific identity is evidenced further by the symbolic representations Joyce's characters frequently deploy to describe both their loved ones and their quests. Instead of acknowledging and affirming the "strange uncertain hues and colours" of their beloveds, these lovers equate their love objects' viability with the "pale passionless beauty of a pearl" (*LII* 237), reshaping their uniqueness into one-dimensional representations that complement the specific goals they wish to attain. These representational strategies enable Joyce to demonstrate the pitfalls of amatory narcissism, as the misrecognition of the love object inherent in these strategies pushes the protagonists in *Dubliners* further away from the love that they seek. Just as he derided the sentimental folly of both his youthful pursuits and his contemporaries' representations of romance, Joyce articulates the futility of narcissistic pursuit of romantic ideals through the inevitable failures of his stories' amatory quests, showing how his characters' refusals to affirm the otherness of their beloveds undermine the viability of the connections they desire and perpetuate the alienation that they wish to escape.

In "Araby," the boy's thoughts are dominated by his adoration for Mangan's sister; his "heart leap[s]" whenever "she com[es] out on the doorstep" (*D* 22) and his "confused adoration" of her causes "a flood from my heart" to "pour itself out into my bosom" (*D* 23). However, the specifics of her identity never appear in the boy's exaltation. Rather,

his meditations on Mangan's sister focus almost exclusively on her name. He characterizes her name as a "summons to all my foolish blood" that becomes the catalyst for "strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand" (*D* 22; 23). This subordination of her specific qualities to a symbolic identity continues in the boy's subsequent reflections, where he reduces Mangan's sister to an image that "accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance" (*D* 22) and "came between me and the page I strove to read" (*D* 24). This relationship between the name and image of Mangan's sister and the prayers he "does not understand" demonstrates the inability of the boy's longings to translate into an affirmation of her otherness, as his exaltation never establishes a genuine bond with her, but instead limits him to an isolated adoration that provides no space for his beloved. Especially considering that he never actually speaks the name of Mangan's sister even though it is the foundation of his adoration, the boy's worship of his love object reduces her to "little more than the shadow of a dream" (Henke *Desire* 19), and his adoration of her "brown figure" (*D* 22) confirms that his reduction of her to an abstract symbol of romantic idealism fails to counteract the alienating "brown[ness]" of North Richmond Street to any substantive degree.

This failure is also evidenced by the boy's inability to speak to Mangan's sister. He wonders "whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration," but he is never able to establish any meaningful contact with his beloved. In fact, she initiates their only conversation, and "when she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer" (*D* 23). The narrator can worship his beloved from afar, but when called upon to relate to her as an actual lover, he shuts out the specifics of their conversation. ("She asked me if I was

going to *Araby*. I forget whether I answered yes or no” [D 23].) This preference for solitary worship over a reciprocal encounter validates Edward Brandabur’s contention that “the protagonist actually seeks union not with the girl directly but with her image,” as his failure to forge a romantic bond with Mangan’s sister beyond his adoration of her name reduces his isolated esteem to a “surrogate ... for an actual relationship with a girl which is also so hopeless for him that he cannot bring himself even to consider it openly” (51). That he can only forge meaningful attachments to the name and image of Mangan’s sister reveals how the obsession with symbolic desire distances the lover from his beloved by ignoring the affirmation of otherness needed to forge a viable relationship.

This exclusion of Mangan’s sister is confirmed by the boy’s subsequent thoughts about the bazaar, where “her image” is replaced by “the syllables of the word *Araby*” that “cast an Eastern enchantment over me” (D 24). At this point, Mangan’s sister virtually disappears from the story, as the boy’s obsession with attending the bazaar subordinates the image of his beloved to the exotic image of *Araby*. For that reason, even though the narrator ultimately “[sees] myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity,” that recognition provides no room for any substantive feelings for Mangan’s sister. Instead, the epiphany concludes his symbolic transition away from his love object, replacing the exotic representation of *Araby* that was provoked by their conversation with an “anguish[ed] and ang[ry]” reflection of himself (D 28). This shift from exaltation to anguish thus reveals that the object of the boy’s adoration essentially has always been himself, reducing the “prayers and praises” evoked by her name to the solitary declarations of “*O love! O love!*” uttered from afar in the dark back room of a brown house where he “could see so little” (D 23).

This focus on symbolic love continues in “Eveline,” where the protagonist’s obsession with leaving Dublin prevents Frank from appearing as more than a vehicle for escape. Whereas the otherness of Mangan’s sister barely moves beyond the boy’s utterance of her name, Eveline provides a description of Frank that seemingly establishes a basis for her love. However, while Eveline puts forth a flattering description of her beloved, she fails to depict him as anything other than what Earl Ingersoll deems a “metaphor for liberation” (59), limiting Frank’s worthiness to the specific qualities that enable Eveline to portray him as her “bronze-faced prince who promises personal redemption and a future of wedded bliss” (Henke *Desire* 21). She describes Frank as “very kind, manly, open-hearted,” which might seem to be the basis for an affirmation of his otherness, but the juxtaposition of these qualities with her knowledge that “he had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres” (*D* 32) and “had a home waiting for her” (*D* 31) shows that Eveline values his generosity primarily because it will enable her to start her life anew. Thus, when she later notes that Frank “would give her life, perhaps love, too,” she demonstrates her preference for liberation over affirmation, a narcissistic desire that reduces his “tak[ing]” and “fold[ing] her in his arms” to more of a security blanket than an expression of love (*D* 33).

Similarly, the jovial representations of Frank evoked by Eveline’s memories of their first date are qualified by his ability to fulfill her individual desires. Her depictions of his attractive countenance and musical interests provide a more solid romantic foundation than the interactions between the boy in “Araby” and Mangan’s sister, but even these fond recollections are valued by Eveline “first of all [because] it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then [because] she had begun to like him” (*D* 32). This

prioritization of Eveline's "excitement" over her affection for Frank prevents him from appearing as anything other than a symbolic love object. The narcissistic foundations of this symbolism are evident in her reactions to attending *The Bohemian Girl*, as the family romance aspects of the opera highlight Eveline's desire for escaping her domestic life, and her "elat[ion]" over "s[itting] in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him" demonstrates her perception of Frank as the financial vehicle for this escape (*D* 31-2). This promotion of Frank's utility over his otherness betrays Eveline's inherent disinterest in affirming him on any substantive level.

This apathy culminates in her inability to board the night boat at the story's conclusion, an act of inaction that is significant not only for its embodiment of paralysis, but also for its revelation of Eveline's fundamental misrecognition of Frank. While Eveline had previously described Frank as the guarantor of her liberation, here he becomes little more than a member of the "swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall." Much like the boy in "Araby" cannot process the specifics of his conversation with Mangan's sister, Eveline reduces Frank's conversation with her to "saying something about the passage over and over again," to which "she answer[s] nothing" (*D* 33). Then, as she considers remaining in Dublin, she wonders "could she still draw back after all he had done for her," which encapsulates her assent to leave with Frank in vague terms of gratitude rather than any specific love for him (*D* 33-4). This inability to affirm Frank as they are about to depart culminates in her "clutch[ing] the iron [railing] in frenzy," replacing her resolution that "Frank would save her" (*D* 33) with her newfound fear that "he would drown her" (*D* 34). This decision confirms that her personal security has been the primary influence of her affection for Frank; thus, when she ceases to

believe that he will provide her the escape she desires, she becomes incapable of affirming or even acknowledging his presence. Indeed, the story's concluding observation that her "eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition" shows that the romance developed throughout the text is constructed on a tenuous, narcissistic foundation (*D* 34), and Eveline's inability to follow through on her quest for escape simultaneously dissolves the symbolic love created by that quest.<sup>24</sup>

Bob Doran's representations of Polly Mooney in "The Boarding House" are similarly self-defeating. His thoughts about Polly may construct a more detailed image of his future wife, but the demeaning nature of that image reveals the futility of those thoughts. As Doran considers fleeing the boarding house to avoid Mrs. Mooney's demand for reparation, his reflections on Polly provoked by his amatory dilemma reduces her to an uncultured simpleton who is unworthy of his affection. He notes that "she *was* a little vulgar; sometimes she said *I seen* and *If I had've known*," using her lack of culture as justification for evading a marriage that he fears would be universally ridiculed. The juxtaposition of this demeaning image with his wondering "what [grammar would] matter if he really loved her" demonstrates that regardless of whether Doran chooses to marry or escape Polly, the apprehension of her that spurs this decision is devoid of the loving affirmation needed for a meaningful relationship (*D* 61). For this reason, even though Doran eventually agrees to marry Polly, his hostile representations of his future bride constitute one of the most definitive rejections of otherness in *Dubliners*.

---

<sup>24</sup> Brandabur writes that "Eveline is spiritually and physically paralyzed at the end of the story ... Eveline could be cured of hers if she could submit to the 'salvation' of love, a submission against which she inhibits herself. Eveline ends up ultimately without love. Her celibacy was fruitless, her final lot, living death" (66).



The harmful implications of Doran's rejection of Polly are confirmed by the text's conclusion, where her vague thoughts highlight her lack of voice or substantive identity throughout "The Boarding House." While Joyce provides us with detailed descriptions of Mrs. Mooney's and Doran's perceptions of the story's impending marriage, Polly is rarely given a reciprocal opportunity to speak. Whereas Mrs. Mooney's financial desire for matrimonial "reparation" and Doran's social fears comprise the majority of "The Boarding House," Polly appears as little more than a "slim girl of nineteen" who is reduced to the image of "a little perverse madonna" by the interpretive filters of the other characters (*D* 57). Even when Joyce finally allows her to speak, the vague, abstract narration shuts out her voice, as the detailed perceptions of her counterparts are replaced with "secret amiable memories" and "hopes and visions of the future" (*D* 64). By following Doran's fears with Polly's "hopes and visions," Joyce enables Doran's derisive representation of Polly to drown out her specific desires, which shuts her out of her own section of the story and renders inevitable the deterioration of their marriage in *Ulysses*. Indeed, not only does Joyce attack the heartless nature of the marriage economy throughout "The Boarding House," but his representations of Doran's derisive, self-serving acceptance of Polly's hand demonstrates that the inability to affirm difference derails potentially productive relationships before they even begin.

Finally, Chandler's reliance on literary romance in "A Little Cloud" inevitably ruptures his marriage. Indeed, Chandler epitomizes Joyce's youthful obsession with the "curious grave beauty" "fashion[ed]" by the "culture of generations" before him (*LII* 237), as his determination to "express in verse" the "dominant note of his temperament" compels him to pursue an amatory idealism that is incongruent with the reality of his

marriage (*D* 68). For example, his interest in poetry speaks to a fascination with sentimental forms of idealized romance, but his inability to read this poetry to his wife demonstrates the incompatibility of this sentimentality with his real-life relationship. Instead of sharing these romantic verses with Annie, Chandler compensates for his reticence by “repeat[ing] lines to himself,” and his observation that this gesture “consoled him” reveals this preoccupation with literary romance to be a narcissistic passion that provides no space for his wife (*D* 66). The alienation bred by this initial poetic fascination demonstrates the isolation at the heart of the Chandlers’ marriage.

This isolation is ultimately confirmed by Chandler’s interaction with Annie at the story’s conclusion. Again, the obsession with symbolic amatory sentiments supplants the real-world essence of his relationship, as the hatred initiated by his contemplation of her portrait dictates his perceptions of the story’s concluding confrontation. Similar to the “Araby” narrator’s preoccupation with the name of Mangan’s sister, Chandler obsesses over his wife’s painted eyes, noting that the composed nature of her gaze reveals a lack of passion that underlies their relationship. He observes that there “was no passion” or “rapture” in Annie’s eyes and contrasts that coldness with the “passion” and “voluptuous longing” that he imagines to exist in the “dark Oriental eyes” of Gallaher’s “rich Jewesses” (*D* 78). Not only does this comparison demonstrate the predominance of symbolic sentimentality in Chandler’s romantic beliefs, but his observation that “he looked coldly into the eyes of the photograph and they answered coldly” represents his marriage’s lack of romance in antagonistic terms that “[repel] him and def[y] him” (*D* 78). This obsession with symbolic passion ultimately compels him to lament that he “married the eyes in the photograph,” which not only subordinates Annie’s identity to her

photographic image, but reduces that image further to the point where her gaze is the only significant aspect of her essence. This rejection of Annie's painted gaze thus predetermines his antagonistic reaction towards her at the story's conclusion, as his repulsion towards his wife's hostile image compels him to view her as an enemy before she even returns to their house. Indeed, the "[cold]" exchange of gazes between Chandler and Annie's portrait translates into a real-life encounter where he "me[ets] the hatred" in "the gaze of her eyes" (*D* 80), and the resulting antagonistic exchange over their crying child reveals how the self-absorbed preoccupation with sentimental romance breeds an amatory alienation that replaces reciprocal love with the "repeat[ing]" of poetic "lines to [one]self."

By examining the love stories described in *Dubliners*, we see how the obsession with amatory narcissism inhibits the abilities of Joyce's lovers to transcend the paralysis in which they find themselves immersed. Instead of celebrating their loved ones' otherness, Joyce's protagonists instead choose to use their love objects as stepping stones for their own personal escape. In each situation, the narcissistic nature of such strategies ultimately becomes their undoing, as the inability of these characters to affirm anyone other than themselves perpetuates the very alienation that compelled them to seek liberation through love. The heartbreaking epiphanies that conclude each of these quests may seem to validate Finneran's contention that love is not the "word known to all men" in Joyce's earlier fiction, but reading this phrase narcissistically reveals the quest for this "word" to be a "universal experience" in *Dubliners*. As Stephen will discover throughout *Ulysses*, as long as the self-serving desire to experience the "word" overshadows the

affirmation of one's love object, the narcissistic lover will never be able to counteract the loneliness and monotony that compels their desire for amatory escape.

## II. The Celtic Note

So far, I have examined the personal implications of the attempts by Joyce's lovers to use narcissistic love as a springboard for individual liberation. However, the consequences of this self-absorbed desire are not limited to the specific frustrations of individual lovers, but translate into a broader, societal alienation that prevents Joyce's Dublin from overcoming its paralysis. In fact, *Dubliners* frequently demonstrates the inverse of Buber's contention that the individual affirmation of otherness results in a broader acceptance of "many-faced otherness" (*Man* 61), as the local refusal to acknowledge the difference of a specific love object perpetuates a more global refusal to affirm the difference of the other Dubliners whom the characters encounter. As Joyce's stories progress from individual lives to the Dublin social life, we witness a concomitant progression from the rejection of otherness that occurs within individual love stories to the broader rejection of otherness that comprises the antagonistic and self-defeating composition of the Irish body politic. Here the socio-political implications of this amorous investigation begin to emerge, as the inability to affirm love over narcissism prevents the characters in *Dubliners* from counteracting the everyday stultification that keeps Joyce's Dublin locked in a colonial prison.

The societal alienation inherent in narcissistic desire is initially evident in "Araby." We have already seen how the boy's idealization of Mangan's sister isolates him from her, but what is also significant is the way in which his adoration alienates him from his surroundings. This alienation is initially apparent in the boy's description of his play

behind the houses of North Richmond Street, where he and his friends “ran the gantlet of the rough tribes from the cottages” (*D* 22). Not only does this casual reference to the impoverished neighborhood children demonstrate the boy’s disinterest in those with more unfortunate situations than his, but it introduces his general hostility to the Dubliners he encounters. Indeed, his subsequent lumping together of the “rough tribes” with the “odo[rous] ... ashpits” and “dark odorous stables” adds the children to the boy’s list of paralytic Dublin signs that he desires to evade, which reveals his rejection of individuals whose presence contradict his romantic and escapist desires.

Considering that the boy positions his adoration of Mangan’s sister as an alternative to the “blind[ness]” of North Richmond Street, it is not surprising that this initial hostility carries over into his regard for individuals who distract him from his worship. Indeed, the earliest descriptions of his desire for his beloved demonstrate the zero-sum relationship between his love for Mangan’s sister and his interactions with his fellow Dubliners:

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs’ cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O’Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. (*D* 22-3)

The antagonistic rhetoric in this passage demonstrates the boy’s hostile attitude towards his surroundings. Not only does the image of Mangan’s sister distract him from the Dubliners he encounters at the market, but his hostile representations of these people demonstrate his desire to subordinate realistic experience to narcissistic romance. His reference to the market as a place “most hostile to romance” establishes his domestic

obligations as direct threats to his amatory fixation, and his descriptions of the “drunken men and bargaining women,” the “curses of labourers,” and the “nasal chanting of street-singers” emphasize the derision of real-world otherness generated by his obsession with chivalric love. This refusal of difference is further articulated by the boy’s perception that the “hostile” noises he hears “converged in a single sensation of life for me,” as if the multiple voices he encounters at the market can be assimilated into one totalizing expression of social mundanity that his love for Mangan’s sister counteracts. Thus, when he imagines that he “bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes,” the boy confirms his antagonism towards his Dublin existence, which alienates him further from his surroundings through each utterance of adoration (*D* 23).

This alienation is subsequently realized through the boy’s thoughts and actions after he decides to attend the bazaar. As he anticipates his trip to Araby, he “wishes to annihilate the tedious intervening days” and “chafe[s] against the work of school.” Even though he may try to complete his schoolwork, the boy acknowledges that the “image” of Mangan’s sister “came between me and the page I strove to read,” which illustrates both his continued preference for his beloved’s image over her specific identity and his impulse to subordinate real-world obligations to chivalric desires (*D* 24). Thus, when he dismisses “the serious work of life” as “ugly monotonous child’s play” that “stands between me and my desire” (*D* 24), he confirms his rejection of the “weakened and indistinct” voices of his “companions” in favor of the exaltation of his romantic mental life (*D* 25). However, nothing at the story’s end indicates that his disillusioning epiphany will counteract this societal rejection, as the “anguish and anger” evoked by that epiphany represent Araby as simply another place “most hostile to romance” and his realization

that he was a “creature driven and derided by vanity” continues to promote himself as the center of his perceptions. The self-absorbed nature of this realization reduces his epiphany to a “pseudoenlightenment, contaminated by his unaltered egoism” (Rice 45), which ultimately leaves him with nothing but the social alienation created by his narcissistic fantasies (*D* 28).

Further evidence of the socially isolating tendencies of narcissistic desire is provided in “Two Gallants,” where the self-serving manipulation of a love object is complemented by a conversational monologism that prevents meaningful relationships with others. Not only is the romantic imagery in Joyce’s story limited to a one-sided depiction of Corley’s manipulation of the slavey, but this exploitation of his love object is described through a conversation with Lenehan that similarly promotes Corley’s voice over his counterpart’s. The initial description of these characters indicates that Corley “was just bringing a long monologue to a close” while Lenehan “wore an amused listening face,” which introduces the former’s general interest in listening to the sound of his own voice (*D* 43). The narrator later notes that this monologic exchange is not an isolated incident since Corley frequently “spoke without listening to the speech of his companions. His conversation was mainly about himself: what he had said to such a person and what such a person had said to him and what he had said to settle the manner” (*D* 45). By articulating a one-sided account of sexual exploitation within a broader monologic exchange, Joyce demonstrates the inevitable suppression of dialogue brought about by narcissistic desire, as the obsession with personal advancement undermines the reciprocal acknowledgement of otherness needed to foster meaningful social relationships. This refusal to acknowledge otherness is confirmed by Corley’s continued refusal to acknowledge

Lenehan when they are reunited at the conclusion of “Two Gallants.” In fact, Corley walks away from Lenehan upon meeting him again, and when Lenehan finally tracks him down, he “could see nothing there” in the face of his counterpart (*D* 54), which, in addition to Corley’s silent responses to Lenehan’s questions, demonstrates Corley’s continued reliance on a social monologism that denies attention to “the gaze of his disciple” (*D* 55). Corley may end up a sovereign richer at the story’s end, but his inherent disinterest in the concerns of either the slavey or Lenehan makes that coin his only meaningful companion.

Lenehan’s romantic meditations also perpetuate a monologism that isolates him from his surroundings. As Corley departs to meet with the slavey, Lenehan takes a solitary walk around Dublin that reveals the alienation inherent in his social existence. Lenehan’s thoughts about Corley’s affair force him to acknowledge his “poverty of purse and spirit” and compel him to imagine a symbolic union between himself and a generic love object that would counteract that loneliness (*D* 51). However, similar to the social isolation of Corley’s accounts of his dalliances, Lenehan’s thoughts about “how pleasant it would be to have a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to” are narrated within the context of a mental monologue that perpetuates his alienation from his surroundings (*D* 52). This isolation is confirmed by Lenehan’s dismissal of the Dubliners he encounters on this sojourn, as the narration notes that “he found trivial all that was meant to charm him and did not answer the glances which invited him to be bold” (*D* 50). This refusal of the “invit[ations]” and “glances” he comes across mirrors Corley’s disinterest in “the speech of his companions” and speaks to an underlying rejection of others at the heart of the self-absorption of both characters. By placing one-sided romantic yearnings within



broader monologues that ignore the opinions of others, Joyce demonstrates both the univocal nature of narcissistic desire and the rejection of social otherness that results from such univocality, revealing the quest for self-centered amatory fulfillment to perpetuate the social alienation that his lovers strive to overcome.

The political implications of this univocality manifest themselves in “A Little Cloud,” where Chandler’s preoccupation with sentimental romance ignores the poverty and exploitation that inspires his poetic exercises. I have already mentioned that his fascination with romantic poetry isolates him from marital love, but it is also important to recognize the socio-political alienation that results from this fascination. The relationship between Chandler’s poetic aspirations and Dublin’s socioeconomic ills is evident as early as the story’s third paragraph, where the character’s initial awareness that “a gentle melancholy took possession of him” is brought about by watching the “untidy nurses” and “decrepit old men who drowsed on the benches” outside his office window (*D* 66; 65). This connection would make one think that Chandler would use poetry to convey his reactions to the poverty around him, especially considering he subsequently desires to “give expression” to his “melancholy” in a “book of poems” (*D* 68). However, while Chandler frequently “wonder[s] whether he could write a poem to express his idea[s],” he is never able to articulate the specifics of the social ills that inspired those ideas (or even to recognize that these scenes of inspiration depict social ills at all). Even though he insists that the “poor stunted houses” he perceives invokes a “pit[y]” within him, that emotional response never translates into any empathy for the impoverished people he encounters, but merely becomes a generic “melancholy” to be expressed in the poetry that he wishes to use to make people listen to him. This social ignorance is ultimately

confirmed by his acknowledgement that “he was not sure what idea he wished to express but the thought that a poetic moment had touched him took life within him like an infant hope,” a concession that subordinates the reality of social experience to a generic poetic inspiration whose significance only occurs within the poet’s mind (*D* 68).

This subordination is also evidenced in not only Chandler’s ignorance of, but also his disdain for, the impoverished people he comes across during these moments of inspiration (*D* 69). Chandler’s “melancholy” may be evoked initially by the “untidy nurses” and “decrepit old men” outside the King’s Inns, but his poetic inspiration is primarily brought about by the “glow” of the “late autumn sunset,” which “cast a shower of kindly golden dust” over the poverty-stricken scenes he witnesses (*D* 65). Not only does this articulation of how the sunset changes his perception of those scenes confirm Chandler’s ambivalence towards the impoverished Dubliners, but the calming influence of these perceptions reveals his tendency to aestheticize the socioeconomic problems around him to avoid having to deal with the harsh realities of his surroundings. His hostility towards these lower-class Dubliners is also demonstrated by his reactions to the “horde of grimy children [that] populated the street,” as his instinct to “give them no thought” demonstrates his continued desire to ignore interacting with those in less fortunate situations and his attempts to “[pick] his way deftly through all that minute vermin-like life” (*D* 66) echo the antagonism of the boy in “Araby” “b[earing] [his] chalice safely through a throng of foes.” The relationship between Chandler’s social repulsion and his poetic narcissism is confirmed by his “pit[y]” over “poor stunted houses” of the “lower quays.” Not only does the generic nature of this emotional reaction betray his continued aestheticization of poverty—as he pities the houses instead of the

Dubliners who inhabit them—but his representation of these houses as “a band of tramps, huddled together along the river-banks, their old coats covered with dust and soot” recalls his earlier rejection of the “minute vermin-like life” that he desired to escape. When he desires then to “give expression” to these thoughts in a “book of poems,” he demonstrates the dismissal of social exploitation inherent in his artistic desire, transforming his observation that “he was not sure what idea he wished to express” into a rejection of otherness that will influence his subsequent attempts to be inspired by the “poetic moment” (*D* 68). The romance of Chandler’s poetry is thus achieved through the suppression of otherness, and the social ignorance betrayed by his moments of inspiration illustrates that his attempts to perform the sentimental Irish poet will inevitably fail to influence Dublin in any productive manner.

The political ramifications of this poetic failure are confirmed by Chandler’s desire to perform “the Celtic note” (*D* 69). As he considers the possibility of his poetry gaining an appreciative audience, he rejects the idea that his art could succeed with the Dublin public, conceding that “he could not sway the crowd but he might appeal to a little circle of kindred minds” (*D* 68). Not only does this assertion echo his earlier resolution that “if you wanted to succeed you had to go away. You could do nothing in Dublin,” but his subsequent identification of “the English critics” as this “little circle of kindred minds” speaks to his desire to subordinate any improvement of the Irish body politic to the aesthetic appreciation of the British (*D* 68). The colonial implications of this desire are subsequently articulated when Chandler indulges in a fantasy in which his sentimental poetry has won him an adoring audience. By imagining that the use of his “melancholy tone” and poetic allusions would compel the “English critics” to “recognise him as one of

the Celtic school" (*D* 68) and by lamenting his lack of "a more Irish-looking" name (*D* 69), Chandler demonstrates the propensity for his poetry (that was initially evoked by Dublin's socioeconomic problems) to be co-opted and whitewashed by the British literary community as generic examples of the "Celtic note." Chandler's desire to "pipe the Celtic note in lofty purpose prose crafted to impress the British intelligentsia" (*D Desire* 29) thus reveals the extent to which the narcissistic pursuit of ideal love and beauty both perpetuates the alienation that compelled those aesthetic pursuits and short-circuits artistic attempts to counteract Ireland's colonial state.

By tracing the progression of the amatory quests in *Dubliners* from the personal to the socio-political arenas, we discover that the victims of these narcissistic pursuits are not simply the symbolic love objects created, used, and discarded along the way. In fact, the lovers who perceive themselves as victims of Irish paralysis become the instruments of their own victimhood, as their limited obsession with personal liberation prevents the broader affirmation of social otherness needed to transform Dublin into a more vibrant and accommodating body politic. By tracing the socio-political implications of narcissistic desire from the individual quests of Joyce's younger narrators to the frustrations of their older counterparts, we witness how the refusal of one's loving obligations to others progresses from adolescence to adulthood, as the "throng of foes" through which the boy in "Araby" "bears his chalice" becomes the "grimy children" and "decrepit old men" that constitute the "sober inartistic life" that Little Chandler wishes to escape. Thus, the desire for romantic liberation perpetuates the personal and political paralysis that becomes that liberation's undoing, demonstrating how the narcissistic obsession with individual escape is inevitably self-defeating.

\*\*\*\*

In his response to Finneran's essay, Morton P. Levitt argues that "the listener/artist must be able both to hear and to respond if he is to prove able to create: a lesson ... which Stephen Dedalus will not learn until 'Ithaca' and his own fusion with Leopold Bloom" (963). In many ways, this lesson remains unlearned to the lovers in *Dubliners*, as their preoccupation with individual escape and advancement prevents them from either "hear[ing]" or "respond[ing]" to their love objects. While the protagonists of Joyce's stories may feel as though their amatory attachments are genuine, the enduring silence of their partners reveals that the only meaningful connections these lovers make is with themselves, reducing their beloveds to the symbolic means to their narcissistic ends. For that reason, it is unsurprising that the romantic quests that these characters fashion lack the sentimental happy endings to which they aspire, since their narrow obsessions with ending their loneliness fail to recognize the reciprocal obligation to and affirmation of the others that are necessary to counteract that loneliness. Thus, the alienation that compelled the lovers' quests becomes the only possible outcomes of those quests, immersing Joyce's protagonists deeper into the domestic monotony that they seek to escape and perpetuating that isolation on the socio-political level. The lover's failure "to hear and to respond" to her/his love object thus translates into a broader failure of Joyce's *Dubliners* "to hear and to respond" to each other, which guarantees that Dublin remains the "centre of paralysis" that the author believes it to be (*LII* 134).

Now that we have established the presence of narcissistic desire in *Dubliners* as a whole, it is time for us to examine two of Joyce's stories in more detail to bolster our understanding of the personal and political limitations of such quests. In both "A Painful

Case” and “The Dead,” Joyce shows us how the use of love as a marker of individual grandeur fails to generate the acceptance of otherness needed to transcend the lover’s alienated existence. Both James Duffy and Gabriel Conroy desire to use the admiring gaze of their love objects as testimony to their superiority, and the inevitable frustration of these narcissistic strategies implicates not only the local monotony that they attribute to their everyday lives, but also the social and political identities to which they aspire. It is through such amorous investigations where the obsession with narcissistic love is shown to be both locally and globally problematic, and in the next two chapters, we will discover the extent to which the refusal “to hear and to respond” to the love object one seeks inevitably turns the self-absorbed lover into an “outcast from life’s feast” (*D* 113).

## CHAPTER TWO: THE SOUL'S INCURABLE LONELINESS

To posit that Mr. James Duffy of Chapelizod is narcissistic is nothing new or revolutionary. Not only is this the probable first impression of readers of “A Painful Case,” but the representation of Duffy as an solipsistic loner has assumed the level of critical commonplace in *Dubliners* scholarship. Indeed, critics typically read Mr. Duffy as a closed-off egotistical Dubliner who indulges Emily Sinico’s love for his own benefit and casts her aside when compelled to reciprocate.<sup>25</sup> Because of this, it may seem clichéd and redundant to add another portrait of the bank clerk as an old narcissist to the growing pile of “A Painful Case” criticism.

However, characterizing Duffy as a narcissistic lover is not as simple and straightforward in contemporary scholarship as it may have been in the past. While previous critics have had no trouble presenting Joyce’s protagonist as a heartless charlatan who “[withholds] life from” Mrs. Sinico (*D* 113), recent queer analyses have complicated this traditional reading of “A Painful Case,” arguing that its representation of a potential relationship between Duffy and Mrs. Sinico assumes a heterosexuality in both parties that is not necessarily supported by the text. Roberta Jackson’s assessment of the story with respect to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick illustrates this limitation of the narcissistic reading of James Duffy:

Sedgwick’s observations on the limitations and rigidities of Jamesian criticism also apply to nearly all the criticism on “A Painful Case.” She . . . not[es] that the “easy assumption (by [Henry] James, the society, and the critics) that sexuality and heterosexuality are always exactly translatable into one another is, obviously, homophobic. Importantly, too,

---

<sup>25</sup> For example, Dominic Manganiello argues that Duffy falls prey to an “egoism [that], when it becomes solipsistic, is harmful, a deprivation of life” (79). Bernard Benstock represents Duffy as engaging in a “spiritual quest that seems primarily turned inward, but the ideal of that quest may be a madonna figure that he has steeled himself from anticipating” (*Dubliners* 129). And Trevor L. Williams notes that Duffy “uses Mrs. Sinico to confirm his own sense of identity, to assert his own will to power” (100).

it is deeply heterophobic: it denies the very possibility of *difference* in desires, in objects.” (86)

Jackson’s analysis implicates traditional criticisms of “A Painful Case” in what Joseph Valente calls the “compulsory heterosexuality” of Joyce scholarship, perpetuating the primacy of heteronormativity by assuming the growing intimacy between Duffy and Mrs. Sinico to be a mutual, reciprocal sexual attraction (1). Thus, when Duffy rejects Mrs. Sinico’s advances, such readings automatically castigate Duffy as heartless and egotistical, ignoring the possible societal repression that could justify his refusal.

Margot Norris’s “suspicious reading” of Joyce’s story bolsters both Valente’s characterization of Joyce criticism in general and Jackson’s assessment of “A Painful Case” scholarship, while also imposing an ethical demand upon future inhabitants of this critical path:

In “A Painful Case” the discourse that constitutes “the closet” is the one that resolutely interprets Duffy’s refusal of heterosexual love as volitional in specific registers of ethical culpability coded as egotism, narcissism, solipsism, and coldness. An ethical leap is required to imagine that Duffy’s “hunger-strike against desire” (as Earl Ingersoll suggestively calls it [126]) could be prompted by a criminalized, prosecutable, and therefore frustrated and perhaps repressed desire for a same-sex object. This possibility does not readily *occur* to either the narrator or the reader, and it is this *not-occurring* that is precisely the epistemologically closeting gesture. (*Suspicious* 170)

Norris’s reading accomplishes more than simply putting forth an analysis of Joyce’s story that portrays Duffy as possibly homosexual; by focusing on the potential of this reading to occur to the reader and the critic, she constructs an ethical gateway around “A Painful Case” that forces scholars to reexamine their assumptions about the story’s sexual politics before they can offer judgments of its characters. Thus, while some have countered the



general argument that Duffy is homosexual,<sup>26</sup> we must still determine whether the narcissistic reading of the story's traditional scholarship is inextricably implicated in heteronormativity or if it is possible to bridge the gap between narcissistic and queer readings of "A Painful Case" to expose the ethically problematic nature of Duffy's actions even if they are brought about by societal repression.<sup>27</sup>

Reading Duffy's narcissism under a Buberian rubric of love accomplishes this task because it shifts the focus of his relationship with Mrs. Sinico away from sexual desires that risk being conflated with heterosexuality. A significant reason why Jackson's and Norris's interrogations are so compelling is that the critical literature they question represents Duffy's and Sinico's interactions in erotic terms, which necessarily foregrounds assumptions of Duffy's heterosexuality.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, reading "A Painful Case" with respect to Buber transcends this focus on (hetero)sexuality because his characterization of love as an affirmation of otherness frames the debate over Duffy's narcissism in terms of compassion instead of sexual attraction. From this perspective,

---

<sup>26</sup> Lindsey Tucker argues that "what Duffy's narcissism seems to suggest is a need for self-unification rather than the need for a homosexual union" (93). Patrick Bixby also contends that "Duffy refuses to live beyond dominant social codes or to counter the demand for legitimate heterosexual relations. Rather, Duffy strives to embody the normative figure of a healthy, bourgeois male who represents the category for which Oscar Wilde had recently become one of the most infamous of 'others'" (117).

<sup>27</sup> Colleen Lamos provides a compelling reading of Duffy that satisfies this ethical dilemma, arguing that "for Duffy, the foreclosure of same-sex love coincides with the foreclosure of other-sex love; he disavows *both* homosexuality and heterosexuality" ("Duffy" 66). By contrast, I argue that Duffy refuses compassion of any kind, which transcends issues of sexual orientation and influences his interactions with others in both the personal and political realms.

<sup>28</sup> Jackson specifically references James Fairhall's *James Joyce and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), in which he "ranks [Duffy] with the many other heterosexual 'self-important male characters who dominate or use women' (81)"; Henke's *James Joyce and the Politics of Desire*, in which "Duffy is once again a heterosexual man who represses the 'amorous dimensions of [his] simmering liaison' with Mrs. Sinico (35)"; Benstock's *Narrative Con/Texts in Dubliners*, in which "Duffy is still the repressed ascetic who rejected Mrs. Sinico because his 'middle-class propriety had insisted upon it'"; and Susan Stanford Friedman's *Joyce: The Return of the Repressed* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), in which "Duffy's homosexual desire remains repressed" (87).

even if Duffy's general alienation is brought about primarily by the societal repression of same-sex desire, he would not have to perpetuate his own closeting in order to love Mrs. Sinico because the embrace of empathy knows no sexual limitations. Thus, reading Duffy's objectification, refusal, and denigration of Mrs. Sinico in line with Buber demonstrates the denial of love and the prevalence of narcissism inherent in his meditations and actions, even when we read him as being homosexual.

Additionally, undertaking this amorous examination of "A Painful Case" reclaims Mrs. Sinico's place in Joyce's story. Indeed, the focus on Duffy to the detriment of Mrs. Sinico is a limitation of both traditional narcissistic analyses and queer readings of "A Painful Case." Narcissistic readings of Joyce's story emphasize Duffy's desire for recognition and his concluding acknowledgment of his eternal loneliness, preventing Emily Sinico from transcending her role as the desirable mirror of Duffy's subjectivity. Similarly, queer readings necessarily focus on Duffy's solitary existence to demonstrate his reactions to heteronormative Dublin, prioritizing his societal alienation over the specifics of his encounters with Mrs. Sinico and representing the latter's fall as simply evidence of ingrained heterosexist assumptions. This tendency is unfortunate because it reenacts Duffy's rejection of Emily Sinico and her erasure from the text. By reading Mrs. Sinico as a mere "[stand-]in for the canonical critics who do not consider other possibilities for his behavior" (Jackson 92), the Duffy-centric nature of such interpretations dismisses this victim of a loveless marriage as unworthy of consideration, which limits any testimony to her tragedy to the banal newspaper article and perpetuates the denial of "difference in desires" that Sedgwick brings to light. Thus, reading the narcissism in Joyce's story with respect to Buber is necessary to reclaim Mrs. Sinico as

an active agent in the text and to recognize that “A Painful Case” primarily represents a conflict between two disparate forms of love and documents how the inability to negotiate that amorous divide carries both personal and political consequences.

### I. The Pupil’s Deliberate Swoon

As many critics have noted, Joyce represents Mr. Duffy as the epitome of Irish paralysis, a person so obsessed with his own mental cohesion that he is incapable of any interaction with others. Joyce initially notes that Duffy “lived in Chapelizod because he wished to live as far as possible from the city of which he was a citizen,” an observation whose reference to citizenship signifies a rejection not simply of Dublin, but of its Dubliners (*D* 103). While Jackson points to this self-imposed exile as evidence of Duffy’s ostracism from heteronormative Dublin, it also reveals both his disinterest in interacting with anyone within the body politic and his repulsion towards existences different from his own, an observation bolstered by his representation of Dublin’s other suburbs as “mean, modern and pretentious” (*D* 103). Thus, Joyce subsequently depicts Duffy as a man with “neither companions nor friends, church nor creed” (*D* 105), a person whose “[abhorrence]” of “anything which betokened physical or mental disorder” foregrounds his refusal to entertain any difference in others (*D* 103). The narrator may articulate an “impression” of Duffy’s willingness to “greet a redeeming instinct in others,” but his actual encounters with others demonstrate that he is ultimately unwilling to give any part of himself to his counterparts or to entertain viewpoints that run counter to his own, making it inevitable that such encounters leave him “often disappointed” (*D* 103).

This isolated nature of Duffy's life is temporarily set aside upon meeting Emily Sinico at a concert in the Rotunda. Mrs. Sinico is not simply a newfound acquaintance or a potential love object, as the compassion she demonstrates towards both Duffy and the people around her introduces an accommodating method of surviving within a society that dismisses her presence, which Joyce juxtaposes with the solitary existence of the story's first pages. From the onset, Joyce depicts their initial encounter in manners that highlight this disparity in their attitudes towards their surroundings:

One evening he found himself sitting beside two ladies in the Rotunda. The house, thinly peopled and silent, gave distressing prophecy of failure. The lady who sat next him looked round at the deserted house once or twice and then said: - What a pity there is such a poor house to-night! It's so hard on people to have to sing to empty benches. (*D* 105)

While critics have drawn parallels between the empty hall and the isolated existences of the story's characters, the difference in the characters' reactions to the concert's low attendance is more significant. Mrs. Sinico's initial impulse is to feel sorry for the performers that "have to sing to empty benches," which displays her ability to empathize with others in similarly distressed conditions as herself.<sup>29</sup> Duffy, on the other hand, regards the low attendance as a "distressing prophecy of failure," characterizing the lamentable situation as primarily a disappointing end to his evening. He may take Mrs. Sinico's pitying remark as "an invitation to talk," but the account of that conversation mentions nothing about the people with whom his acquaintance has just

---

<sup>29</sup> Suzanne Katz Hyman recognizes that "whereas Duffy's attitude towards people is to shut himself off from them, Mrs. Sinico's is one of active sympathy. She responds emotionally, and it is not surprising that her first sentence ends in an exclamation mark" (113-4). David G. Wright also argues that "Emily Sinico seems one of the most empathetic characters in *Dubliners*, perhaps a potential Gretta Conroy. The only thing we ever hear her say is her statement of regret at the low turnout for a concert" (110). I will only add that while this "regret" may be the only explicit statement uttered by Emily Sinico, the narration of her later conversations with Duffy provides another opportunity for us to hear her thoughts and opinions. As I will argue later, her suggestion that Duffy share his ideas with her and others further supports Hyman's and Wright's empathetic description of her.

sympathized (*D* 105). In fact, while Duffy accepts Mrs. Sinico's "invitation," his perceptions of that exchange exclude whatever dialogue that occurred. Instead, Duffy's primary reactions focus on Mrs. Sinico's visage rather than her words. By responding to Mrs. Sinico's lament with reflections that shut out her voice, Duffy essentially changes the subject from the concert's low attendance to his impression of his new acquaintance, confirming his disinterest in the empathy demonstrated by that acquaintance. This disparate reaction to the same situation provides the first comparison of the two competing forms of love in "A Painful Case"—while both mourn the low turnout at the concert, only Emily Sinico shows herself capable of an empathetic embrace, which by comparison reveals Duffy's reaction to be the first textual example of his being "ever willing to greet a redeeming instinct in others, but often disappointed" (*D* 104).

Duffy's attitude during that first conversation continues the comparison of their different approaches towards love. The narrator notes that during this initial exchange, Duffy tries to "fix her permanently in his memory," a gesture that indicates a preference for relating to Mrs. Sinico as a symbolic object instead of an actual person. As he constructs this mental image, his initial perceptions of Mrs. Sinico focus on her gaze, whose initially "defiant note" is "confused" by a "deliberate swoon of the pupil into the iris, revealing for an instant a temperament of great sensibility" (*D* 105). This observation provides further proof of the conflict between Duffy's and Mrs. Sinico's approaches to this conversation. Whereas Duffy's interest is purely intellectual and focuses on constructing a mental image of his acquaintance, the "great sensibility" demonstrated by Mrs. Sinico's gaze conveys both her interest in treating Duffy as an

actual human being and her desire for an emotional connection with the protagonist, and this disparity between their reactions foreshadows the inevitable unraveling of that connection. Also, the description of Mrs. Sinico's "swooning" gaze indicates Duffy's recognition that her "great sensibility" is brought about by his presence. His mental construction of a swooning Emily Sinico thus illustrates that Duffy initially is intrigued by his new acquaintance not for her intelligence or air of defiance, but rather for the potential for her to provide him with both her esteem and devotion. This demonstrates the narcissism inherent in both his initial impressions of Mrs. Sinico and his actions during their subsequent encounters, an intellectual self-absorption that is divorced from questions of sexual orientation.

Duffy's subsequent encounters with Mrs. Sinico prove him to be very interested in capitalizing on her potential devotion. In subsequent encounters, he "len[ds] her books" and "provide[s] her with ideas" in an attempt to "entangle his thoughts with hers" (*D* 106). This observation is significant not only because it demonstrates his desire to reshape Mrs. Sinico into a mirror image of himself, but also because it simultaneously recognizes her willingness to heed his ideas. While the specifics of Duffy's attempts to "share his intellectual life with her" make the enterprise seem one-sided and overbearing, what transforms Duffy's intellectual monologue into a dialogic encounter with Mrs. Sinico is the latter's eagerness to "[listen] to all" (*D* 106). This representation of Duffy as orator and Mrs. Sinico as listener provides further evidence of the disparity in their approaches towards others, as the latter's thoughtful attention enables her to transcend the role of sounding board to which Duffy has relegated her, demonstrating the ability of one lonely Dubliner to affirm and encourage the otherness of another. Indeed, the

combination of her attention and her “[urging] him to let his nature open to the full” amplifies the empathy inherent in Mrs. Sinico’s initial appearance (*D* 106), transforming the monologic nature of Duffy’s intellectual pursuits into a dialogic connection with another that could counteract his alienation. Thus, Emily Sinico provides the possibility for two “outcast[s] from life’s feast” to develop a loving bond between each other that could undo the melancholic nature of their previous situations (*D* 113).

However, Duffy rejects this dialogic potential. While he does “let his nature open to the full,” the substance of his conversations is replete with the monologic intellectual oration that characterizes his mental life. Instead of seizing the opportunity for dialogue, Duffy instead transforms Mrs. Sinico into his “confessor,” enabling their subsequent conversations to remain one-sided and dominated by his intellectual musings. In a manner similar to how Stephen Dedalus treats Cranly in the fifth chapter of *Portrait*, Duffy responds to Mrs. Sinico’s “invitation to talk” by denying her the ability to speak, representing her as the silent priest in the confessional box who simply listens and proffers absolution.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Duffy characterizes her undivided attention and her willingness to “become his confessor” as further evidence of the submissive quality he perceived in her initial gaze, and his climactic depictions of this union demonstrate the narcissistic motivations behind his involvement with Mrs. Sinico: “This union exalted him, wore away the rough edges of his character, emotionalised his mental life.

Sometimes he caught himself listening to the sound of his own voice. He thought that in

---

<sup>30</sup> Hyman also notes the anonymity of this confessional role by arguing that “the idea of seeing her as confessor is congenial to Duffy. Confession is a purely verbal transaction; it is anonymous and one-sided. There is intimacy combined with impersonality. The confession is a formal, ritualized means of ‘opening oneself to the fall’ and still feeling safe” (114-5). Thus, while Mrs. Sinico offers Duffy the opportunity to share his passions and aspirations, he transforms her into an impersonal, silent priest that robs her of her individual identity, revealing his continued inability and disinterest in recognizing the otherness of the people he encounters.

her eyes he would ascend to an angelical stature” (*D* 107). Rather than returning Mrs. Sinico’s gaze, Duffy has instead refashioned her image to serve as a reflection of his own greatness, a symbolic gesture that reveals his preference for “emotionalis[ing] his mental life” over connecting emotionally to another human being. This gesture literalizes Mrs. Sinico’s status as a love object by “replicating his own mirror image in Emily’s adoring gaze” (Henke *Desire* 35),<sup>31</sup> and it proves Duffy to be incapable of empathizing with or even acknowledging his partner’s situation. This lack of empathy confines Duffy’s desire for Mrs. Sinico to Buber’s “kingdom of the lame-winged Eros,” which reduces any interaction between the two characters to Duffy “listening to the sound of his own voice.”

This inability to feel affection for others is foregrounded through Duffy’s subsequent reflections on his union with Mrs. Sinico. Whereas his previous thoughts were charged with emotional energy, the meditations that immediately follow Duffy’s desired exaltation deflate that amorous potential: “As he attached the fervent nature of his companion more and more closely to him, he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own, insisting on the soul’s incurable loneliness. We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own” (*D* 107).<sup>32</sup> The voice’s message that “we cannot give

---

<sup>31</sup> Raffaella Baccolini similarly observes that “there is a sense, in fact, that if Mr. Duffy ascends to an angelical stature for Mrs. Sinico, he does so even more for himself; it is Mrs. Sinico’s respect for him – or perhaps the very way in which he perceives her – that generates such feeling” (153). Cynthia Wheatley-Lovoy also characterizes Duffy as being “largely immune to the effects of Sinico’s otherness. Like Narcissus’s pool, she represents to him only a reflector of his own image” (184).

<sup>32</sup> Jackson argues that the representation of Duffy’s loneliness as “incurable” reflects his desire’s suppression under the medical model of heterosexist persecution (89), but to me, this lament is broader in scope. The characterization of “the soul’s” alienation instead of “his soul’s” alienation indicates that the “incurable loneliness” to which Duffy’s “impersonal voice” refers is an endemic flaw in all individuals regardless of sexual orientation. Additionally, I do not think the isolation of “giv[ing] ourselves” should be read as acceding to heterosexual desire because Duffy’s recognition of his inability to “give [him]self” occurs before Emily Sinico places his hand on her cheek. If we read the “impersonal voice’s” message as the acceptance of sexual temptation, then Duffy’s subsequent shock over Mrs. Sinico’s “interpretation of his words” would make no sense because he would have already entertained the possibility that she wanted to pursue a relationship with him (*D* 107). Because of that, I feel that the inability to “give ourselves” at



ourselves ... we are our own” not only shows that whatever emotional attachment Mrs. Sinico has developed towards Duffy will inevitably be rejected because it requires a concession that Duffy is incapable of giving; it also speaks to the inherent alienation at the foundation of his interpretation of love and his interactions with others. He can use “the fervent nature of his companion” to strengthen his self-love, but his insistence that he is his own isolated being renders him incapable of returning her devotion when he is asked to “give [him]sel[f]” to her. Duffy does not want a reciprocal, dialogic connection with Mrs. Sinico, but rather a one-sided romantic monologue that testifies to his own grandeur,<sup>33</sup> a narcissistic desire that tellingly reshapes the narrator’s initial description of Duffy as being ever “alert to greet a redeeming instinct in others, but often disappointed” (*D* 104).

This inevitable disappointment occurs when Mrs. Sinico places Duffy’s hand on her cheek. While critics have pointed to Duffy’s resulting “disillusion[ment]” as evidence of either romantic misinterpretation or adulterous scandal,<sup>34</sup> reading Duffy’s disgust with respect to the monologic lament that preceded it reveals the narcissistic tendencies behind his rejection. Indeed, Duffy’s observation that “her interpretation of his words disillusioned him” foregrounds the irresolvable conflict between their differing attitudes towards love (*D* 107), forcing him to acknowledge that Mrs. Sinico’s embrace constituted

---

the heart of the “soul’s incurable loneliness” speaks to a broader inability to empathize with Mrs. Sinico to the extent that she has already empathized with him.

<sup>33</sup> Edward Brandabur confirms Duffy’s disinterest in reciprocating Mrs. Sinico’s desire for empathetic dialogue, arguing that “Theirs is a relationship without reciprocity. He does not draw her out, inquire into what she thinks. It is on his part a friendship of use” (78).

<sup>34</sup> Patrick Bixby contends that “as soon as Mrs Sinico touches Duffy, she puts an end to their ‘intercourse’ and brings him face to face with what he identifies as perversion” (117). Brandabur reads Duffy’s rejection similarly, noting that “as long as the relationship remains overtly respectable, he can maintain an angelic self-image in what he actually regards as a morally compromising situation; but when this state threatens to become openly immoral, he must stop it” (78).

an invitation for Duffy to reciprocate her “fervent” devotion for him.<sup>35</sup> While Duffy is more than willing to use his companion’s submissive affection to improve his love for himself, he recoils when asked to return the favor and “breaks off their intercourse.” His justification that “every bond . . . is a bond to sorrow” (*D* 108) echoes his earlier isolation of “the soul’s incurable loneliness,” demonstrating the explicit relationship between his inability to give himself to Mrs. Sinico and the rejection that springs from her desire for reciprocal affection.

Of course, if one reads Mrs. Sinico’s grasping of Duffy’s hand as the assertion of heterosexual desire onto a repressed homosexual, then the latter’s refusal of that desire is not itself endemic of callous solipsism. However, what ultimately confirms Duffy’s narcissistic nature is not the rejection of Emily Sinico itself, but rather the way that Duffy performs that rejection. Duffy could still refuse Mrs. Sinico’s desire for intimacy in a way that acknowledged her imprisonment in a loveless marriage and that empathized with another Dubliner who is forced into perpetual loneliness. Such a reaction would constitute a performance of love for her even as he is turning down her desire for sexual intimacy. However, Duffy opts not to take this path, choosing instead to reject her advance through a narcissistic display that demonstrates his inherent inability to empathize with his former companion. Initially, Duffy’s “disillusion[ment]” over “*her* interpretation of *his* words” constitutes a projection of blame onto Mrs. Sinico, as he not only rejects her desire for recognition, but actually demonizes that desire as a revolting sentimental display that precludes him from further encounters with her. Additionally,

---

<sup>35</sup> Garry M. Leonard characterizes Mrs. Sinico’s desire as “a third-person sentence along the lines of ‘I (unpredictable gaze of the Other) love you,’ rather than “‘I’ am nothing more or less than the missing object of the desire (the permanently benevolent gaze of the “Other”) that you need to complete – and, therefore, completely love – yourself” (220).

when Mrs. Sinico begins to fall during their farewell encounter, Duffy, rather than helping his former companion, “[bids] her good-bye quickly and [leaves] her” (*D* 108), mirroring his earlier tendency to refuse alms to beggars and thus treating his former companion as an outcast unworthy of his attention. Regardless of whether Mrs. Sinico’s gesture complemented or contradicted Duffy’s sexual preference, his inability either to see or to treat Emily Sinico as a fellow societal victim confirms his unwavering preoccupation with his “mental life” and robs him of the empathy needed to transcend his alienation.

This lack of empathy is further supported by Duffy’s reaction to the newspaper account of Mrs. Sinico’s death. Rather than lamenting the loss of a former friend or the tragic conditions that made that loss inevitable, Duffy continues to castigate Mrs. Sinico, using her grief and tragedy as evidence of her unworthiness to live. He deems her death “vulgar” and “commonplace” and calls her “one of the wrecks on which civilisation has been reared” (*D* 111-2). Duffy even casts himself as the primary victim of the tragedy, arguing that Mrs. Sinico had “degraded” him by listening to “what he held sacred.” This fear of degradation confirms that what Duffy holds most dear is the sanctity of his self-image, as he’s willing to cast Mrs. Sinico aside and mock her suitability as “his soul’s companion” the second her swooning gaze becomes tainted (*D* 111). His concluding dismissal of Mrs. Sinico’s plight confirms his determination to represent her love as a degrading threat to his grandeur: “He remembered her outburst of that night and interpreted it in a harsher sense than he had ever done. He had no difficulty now in approving of the course he had taken” (*D* 112). Duffy thus deliberately reinterprets Mrs. Sinico’s romantic invitation in a “harsher” light to reassure himself that he was right to

reject her, another projection of blame made more appalling by his conscious acknowledgement that he is denigrating her for strategic purposes. By focusing on his potential degradation, Duffy undoes his opening up that Mrs. Sinico encouraged and effectively erases his former companion from her own tragedy in a reassertion of narcissism that brands his love object “unfit to live” (*D* 111).

However, Duffy’s subsequent reflections on his relationship with Mrs. Sinico open up the possibility for him to experience compassion. Indeed, his initial perception that “he thought her hand touched his” (*D* 112) and his subsequent feeling that “at moments he seemed to feel her voice touch his ear [and] her hand touch his” (*D* 113) establish a posthumous mental connection between Duffy and Mrs. Sinico that could provide the opportunity for Joyce’s protagonist to demonstrate the empathy needed to experience true love. For this reason, many critics have pointed to Duffy’s increasingly sympathetic characterizations of Mrs. Sinico’s memory as evidence of a redemptive quality to the story’s conclusion.<sup>36</sup> However, while Duffy does indeed think about his former companion in a warmer light towards the end of “A Painful Case,” these meditations are still fraught with narcissistic tendencies that undo their empathetic potential.

Initially, Duffy’s preoccupation with the image of Mrs. Sinico continues to deny her the empathy she sought in life. The narrator notes that “as he sat there, living over his life with her and evoking alternately the two images in which he now conceived her, he realized that she was dead, that she had ceased to exist, that she had become a memory”

---

<sup>36</sup> For example, Hyman argues that “for the first time Duffy allows himself to become aware of love” through the story’s concluding reflections (118). John Rickard supports this redemptive characterization of Duffy by contending that “though Duffy’s epiphany is excruciating and leaves him alone, he *feels* for the first time, and we are justified in regarding the destruction of ‘his moral nature’ as a triumph of involuntary memory ... If the reader hopes that Mr. Duffy will learn to love and to accept human companionship, that goal is more available at the end of ‘A Painful Case’ than it was at the beginning” (65).

(*D* 112). While the medium of memory would necessarily force individuals to relate to departed loved ones as images, the specific representation of Duffy “evoking” the “two images” he had “conceived” of Mrs. Sinico very tellingly foregrounds that at no point during their relationship had Emily Sinico ever been anything but an image to Duffy. During their initial encounter, her swooning gaze enabled Duffy to represent her as the image of a woman of “great sensibility”; as their friendship became more intimate, Duffy represented Mrs. Sinico as his sounding board, his confessor, and the mirror of his grandeur; and when she ultimately met her tragic end, Mrs. Sinico was reduced to “one of the wrecks on which civilisation has been reared.” For that reason, when his recollections conjure up her “images,” Duffy reveals himself to continue to rely on symbolic representations of “his soul’s companion” that fall short of recognizing or affirming her difference. Duffy’s continued reliance on constructing Mrs. Sinico’s image thus foreshadows the inevitable failure of his epiphany and renders him incapable of the compassion needed to mourn for his former acquaintance in an ethically productive manner.

Additionally, even though he begins to show remorse for her situation, Duffy’s preoccupation with his own potential demise continues to push Mrs. Sinico out of her own story. While Duffy finally acknowledges “how lonely her life must have been, sitting night after night alone in that room,” her tragedy is immediately assimilated into his recognition that he will have the same fate, that “his life would be lonely too until he, too, died, ceased to exist, became a memory, if anyone remembered him” (*D* 112-3).<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Jackson Rice reads Duffy’s lament here as “nothing but self-pity,” illustrating that “those Dubliners who can see, such as Mr. Duffy, see only mirror images of themselves. Those who can speak and hear listen only to the sound of their own voices” (45). Henke goes one step further and contends that

These lamentations reveal that Duffy's sorrow for Mrs. Sinico is triggered not out of any compassion for her specific condition, but rather out of the recognition that by rejecting "his soul's companion," he has guaranteed his own perpetual loneliness by denying himself his most ardent love object. ("One human being had seemed to love him and he had denied her life and happiness" [D 113].) Duffy's exclusive focus on his alienation is confirmed by his discovery of the amorous couple in Phoenix Park, where he laments the "venal and furtive loves" that he encounters precisely because they signify a mutual, reciprocal love that he has continually denied himself. Thus, at the moment when Mrs. Sinico "seem[s] to be near him in the darkness," Duffy's preoccupation with his impending isolation constitutes a refusal to acknowledge that ghostly presence to any substantive degree. In that sense, Duffy's acknowledgement that he has "sentenced her" to a "death of shame" performatively re-enacts that death sentence, as the focus on Duffy's potential loneliness over Mrs. Sinico's actual loneliness erases her from his memory (D 113).

This erasure of Mrs. Sinico is evident and complete by the story's conclusion. As Duffy laments his being "outcast from life's feast," he hears the engine of the goods train "reiterating the syllables of her name" (D 113). However, as Duffy continues to grieve over his deplorable future, he begins to "doubt the reality of what memory told him," enabling this last connection with Mrs. Sinico to slip from his grasp: "He halted under a tree and allowed the rhythm to die away. He could not feel her near him in the darkness nor her voice touch his ear. He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he

---

Duffy "plagiarizes her story and steals her suffering by converting melodrama into high tragedy" (*Desire* 37).

was alone” (*D* 113-4). By “*allow[ing]* the rhythm to die away,” Duffy has consciously given up any connection with Mrs. Sinico’s memory that was created by his reflections on her death, a withdrawal back into the solitary mental life that characterized Joyce’s initial depictions of his protagonist.<sup>38</sup> Not only does this tactic cement the “soul’s incurable loneliness” that Duffy had previously lamented, but the dying out of Mrs. Sinico’s name simultaneously kills off whatever compassionate feelings were generated by Duffy’s meditations on her death. What we are left with at the story’s conclusion is not the empathetic embrace of a loved one’s memory, but rather the solitary thoughts of a narcissistic lover resigned to the maintenance of a self-affirming mental life “without any communion with others” (*D* 105).

## II. The Hard-Featured Realists

Towards the end of *Pulp Fiction*, Quentin Tarantino resurrects the recently killed-off John Travolta and returns to the movie’s opening shoot-out to shed light on its resulting spiritual epiphany. In much the same way (but with fewer bullets and less profanity), this chapter now revives Emily Sinico and doubles back upon itself to offer a second reading of “A Painful Case.” Similar to the analysis that preceded it, this reading will argue that the interactions between Mrs. Sinico and Duffy represent a conflict between two different methods of loving the others whom they encounter in Dublin. However, whereas the first reading navigated this amorous divide at a more individual level, this second reading will expand the scope of that divide to encompass its political implications. To that end, our

---

<sup>38</sup> This would counter Rickard’s reading of the story’s conclusion that Duffy’s “awakening can be read as one of the few rays of hope or possibility in *Dubliners* – hope that a paralyzed character can break through the habits and behavioral modes that imprison him or her” (65). Duffy “allowing” the memory to slip from his mind signifies his refusal to “break through” the alienation that characterizes his relationship with Dublin, thus dimming the “rays of hope” that Rickard sees as emanating from the story’s concluding epiphany.

task will be to recognize that the love Emily Sinico offers James Duffy is not simply the empathetic embrace of an individual other, but rather an opportunity to transform that empathy into a broader affirmation of otherness that will enable him to bring about the political change that he desires.<sup>39</sup>

It is not much of a stretch to depict Duffy as an aspiring revolutionary; certainly Joyce's protagonist sees himself in that manner. His disdainful references to his Dublin citizenship and bank clerkship signify Duffy's ambivalence towards the prevailing socio-economic structures in Ireland, and his refusal to "concede" to the "conventions which regulate the civic life" speaks to a secret desire to undermine those regimes through acts of political dissent (such as the fantasized robbing of his bank) (*D* 105). Bernard Benstock reads Duffy along these lines, arguing that this secret desire "implies not only a disregard for the class ethic, but a purposefully thought-out disdain for the validity of that ethic" (*Dubliners* 91). Trevor L. Williams points to Duffy's attendance at Irish Socialist Party meetings as further evidence of these revolutionary aspirations, noting that "this is the only example in *Dubliners* (indeed in the whole of Joyce) of a bourgeois character seeking some kind of alignment with the working class" (99). On the surface, these projections of political revolt seem to separate Duffy from *Dubliners*'s other protagonists who either blindly accept their socio-political existences or seek merely individual

---

<sup>39</sup> Seamus Deane persuasively argues that "Duffy can no more be a socialist than he can be a lover; both socialism and love are snares that would violate the integrity of his 'heroic' attitude. They would also, of course, introduce an ethical element that is otherwise entirely absent from an authoritarian and sexless narcissism. Love or socialism would deprive Duffy of the pathological alienation that has him in the habit of writing of himself in the third person and in the past tense" (26-7). While I agree with this reading of Duffy's ambivalence towards love and socialism, I argue in this essay that the love of others, rather than being a separate "snare," is actually at the foundation of the socialist politics to which Duffy aspires. The interconnected nature of love and socialism thus makes Duffy's rejection of Mrs. Sinico's embrace carry broader consequences than those that solely involve Joyce's two characters.



escape, which potentially makes Duffy the type of revolutionary that could cause meaningful change in stultifying Dublin.

The problem with this revolutionary representation is that Duffy is unwilling to engage in the substantive interaction with others needed to effectuate that political change. His manufactured isolation may separate him from the paralytic social structures that he loathes, but by retreating to Chapelizod instead of remaining within the “city of which he was a citizen,” Duffy renders himself so far removed from the center of paralysis that his suburban dissent accomplishes nothing beyond the individual level. Unlike Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, whose outcast status does not preclude him from remaining in the city and interacting with the Dubliners who ostracize him, Duffy resolves to “subtract [him]self” from Dublin in much the same way that Stephen pledges to remove himself from the Catholic church in *Stephen Hero* (Joyce 1944, 233). Such a subtraction may bolster his self-image as the society-spurning intellectual, but it also reduces any acts of revolt to forms of negative resistance that lack the constructive power to produce any meaningful reform.<sup>40</sup>

The individual focus of Duffy’s political fantasies is also emphasized by his general disinterest in helping those in similar or less fortunate situations than himself. Duffy clearly espouses intellectual aspirations towards a socialist ethic, but his refusal to give

---

<sup>40</sup> Weldon Thornton offers a criticism of such forms of negative resistance in his reading of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He argues that “the typical Bildungsroman protagonist construes freedom in terms of escape or release from various constraining elements in his environment; he construes it, that is, in terms of an ‘atomic individualism’ that presumes the self to be discrete and self-contained. The author of the Bildungsroman, however (some ten or twelve years older than his protagonist) has come to realize that such a view of freedom as escape and the self as autonomous is superficial and even self-defeating.” While this passage refers specifically to Stephen’s desired exile from Ireland, Thornton’s criticism of “atomic individualism” applies equally well to Duffy’s disdain towards Dublin, as his desire to remove himself from the city constitutes an “escape or release” that the story’s events will reveal to be “superficial and even self-defeating.” Similar to Thornton’s representation of John Blades’s *Portrait* criticism, Duffy’s desired method of liberation fails partly because it privileges “freedom from” instead of “freedom to” (78-9).

alms to the beggars he encounters constitutes a curious ambivalence towards people who have been exploited and excluded by the prevailing economic structures in Dublin. Similarly, he attends the meetings of an Irish Socialist Party, but abruptly discontinues his presence because he does not want to deal with “hard-featured realists” whose “inordinate” interest in wage issues demonstrates their lack of “an exactitude which was the product of a leisure not within their reach” (*D* 106-7). Not only do these qualified assertions of socialism reveal his revolutionary aspirations to be half-hearted intellectual curiosities, but his refusal to assist those less fortunate than him betrays his reliance on the very class judgments that Benstock characterizes him as disdainful. Duffy’s contradictory politics thus provides a compelling microcosm of the ways in which societal persecution of difference is internalized and redeployed at the local level, as Duffy’s alienation from Dublin does not prevent him from vilifying and excluding his fellow “outcast[s] from life’s feast.” This exclusionary redeployment accomplishes more than simply isolating the inherently contradictory nature of Duffy’s politics; it also signifies his refusal to understand or accept the “many-faced otherness” of the inhabitants of his body politic. Such a refusal indefinitely prolongs his alienation from Dublin and ensures that his revolutionary fantasies will never escape that fantastic realm.

However, the empathetic embrace of Emily Sinico provides Duffy the opportunity to reevaluate his socio-political aspirations. Indeed, throughout the story, Joyce carefully represents Duffy’s interactions with Mrs. Sinico in ways that echo his political meditations, creating a thematic bond between love and socialism that permeates the text. For example, it is surely not coincidental that the two potential sites of “adventure” described in “A Painful Case” are Duffy’s imagined robbery of his bank (which is called

“an adventureless tale” because it is never pursued [*D* 105]) and his growing intimacy with Mrs. Sinico (“Neither he nor she had had any such adventure before” [*D* 106]). In fact, by classifying these two events as “adventures,” Joyce unites Duffy’s fantasy of socio-economic protest with his increased fascination with Emily Sinico’s company, a combinatory gesture that initiates the connection between Duffy’s pursuit of love and his political desires. Not only does the presence of “adventure” in his relationship with Mrs. Sinico highlight the absence of adventure in his inability to rob the bank, but by immediately following the adventurous characterization of their relationship with a political dialogue, Joyce ties love and politics together in such a way as to provide socio-political power to Emily Sinico’s unwavering attention.

The political potential of her attention is revealed by the specific conversation that immediately follows their burgeoning “adventure.” I have already argued that Mrs. Sinico’s “urg[ing]” for Duffy to “let his nature open to the full” is simultaneously an embrace of empathy towards her newfound companion and an invitation for him to engage in the same openness and compassion. It is also significant that Duffy chooses to respond to Mrs. Sinico’s invitation of openness by relating his frustrations over the Irish Socialist Party meetings to his newfound “confessor.” Thus, when she gives this political conversation the same unwavering attention she gave his intellectual musings and suggests that he “write out his thoughts,” Mrs. Sinico puts forth more than simply a continuation of her listening silence (*D* 107). By encouraging Duffy to write out his socialist thoughts, she by extension is suggesting that he share those thoughts with others. Especially when we note that this suggestion immediately follows Duffy’s articulation of difference between his intellectual goals and those of the “hard-featured realists,” Mrs.

Sinico's observation reshapes her invitation of openness in politically productive ways, advising her companion to engage other political subjects regardless of whatever differences potentially draw them apart. What she essentially suggests is a form of coalition-building, an olive branch from an intellectual socialist to the working and middle classes that could pave the way for more effective political cooperation. Thus, not only is Mrs. Sinico capable of empathizing with Duffy, but that empathy also enables her to recognize the potential for individuals within a given body politic to put aside their differences and work together in a non-alienating manner. This transforms the empty paper on Duffy's writing desk into a potential vehicle for entry into the socio-political arena from which he has isolated himself.

However, Duffy rejects Emily Sinico's invitation. In a manner that reveals his inherent disdain towards otherness, Duffy recoils at the notion that he should share his ideas, arguing that his audience's lack of sophistication would inevitably render useless this political endeavor: "For what, he asked her, with careful scorn. To compete with phrasemongers, incapable of thinking consecutively for sixty seconds? To submit himself to the criticisms of an obtuse middle class which entrusted its morality to policemen and its fine arts to impresarios?" (*D* 107). The disparity between Mrs. Sinico's and Duffy's impressions of this possibility is unsurprising given the conflicting manners in which they respond to others. Whereas Mrs. Sinico sees the possibility of coalition-building in the discussion of ideas among differing socio-political parties, Duffy uses those differences as justifications to refuse association with his counterparts. His characterization of this enterprise as a "compet[ition]" with "phrasemongers" demonstrates his determination to view interactions within the political arena in

antagonistic terms, ignoring the possibility of cooperation amongst people with differing viewpoints. His fear that he would have to “submit himself to the criticisms of an obtuse middle class” also shows his refusal to entertain difference, as the possibility that someone could argue against his socialist suggestions is enough for him to avoid undertaking the opportunity altogether. This insistence on competition instead of coalition-building reveals that Duffy’s interaction with Mrs. Sinico has not emboldened him in any productive way, and his continued antagonism pushes him further away from the search for similarity within difference that Buber argues is necessary to transform the body politic.

In addition, Duffy’s use of disparaging labels to characterize his audience enhances his refusal to affirm otherness. Not only does he reject the thought of political competition, but the notion that he would have to engage with “phrasemongers” (whose “phrase[s]” presumably do not match his own) is an especially repulsive prospect to him. Also, his sneering characterizations of his audience as an “obtuse middle class” signify not only his unwillingness to work with others who think differently, but also his continued reliance on class demarcations to close himself off from his fellow Dubliners. His mention of “morality” and “fine arts” as evidence of his audience’s “obtuse[ness]” bolsters this characterization of class snobbery, enhancing the scope of his exclusion to encompass not only those with different political beliefs, but also those with different cultural and social views regardless of their relevance to his specific argumentation.<sup>41</sup>

This guarantees the inevitable failure of his political aspirations because by representing

---

<sup>41</sup> Gerald Doherty agrees with this class-based reading of Duffy’s politics, arguing that “Duffy’s disavowal of identification with the ‘obtuse middle class’ reflects the same highbrow contempt for what lies hierarchically below his superior vision – his ‘careful scorn’ of their ethico-cultural judgements” (103).

anyone who may think differently from him as unworthy of hearing his superior ideas, he has both denied himself an audience for his politics and has foreclosed the coalition-building needed for him to contribute to the body politic in any meaningful way (since his political ideals do not enjoy universal appeal). His refusal to engage in the same “open[ness] to the full” that Mrs. Sinico has offered him thus renders him incapable of turning his political fantasies into reality, locking him into negative strategies of exile and escape that guarantee that “no social revolution ...[will] be likely to strike Dublin for some centuries” (*D* 107).

What’s especially significant about Duffy’s refusal of Mrs. Sinico’s suggestion is that the “careful scorn” generated in response to her openness begins the process that shuts her out of the rest of the story. Even though the intimate rhetoric of the next paragraph seemingly implies a growing intimacy between the two parties, Mrs. Sinico’s idea that Duffy write down his ideas is actually the last thought she expresses in Joyce’s story. After he belittles that suggestion, Emily Sinico loses her voice, and the open dialogue that had existed in the previous paragraphs quickly slides back into Duffy’s monologic desire to “entangle his thoughts with hers” so as to exalt his “mental life.” Mrs. Sinico’s empathetic embrace may have provided an opportunity for Duffy to open himself up to both personal and political openness, but his inability to accept the difference that such openness entails compels him to reject that embrace on both levels. This foreshadows both his inevitable rejection of her passionate display and his more aggravated retreat from Dublin.

This dual nature of this rejection is more apparent when Duffy “return[s] to his even way of life” after “break[ing] off their intercourse” (*D* 108). Not only does he further

limit the amount of time he spends in the city, but the addition of the Nietzsche volumes to his personal library signifies his renewed ambivalence towards compassion on either the individual or socio-political levels.<sup>42</sup> More importantly, the narrator notes that Duffy “wrote seldom in the sheaf of papers which lay in his desk,” a gesture that not only indicates his retreat from his revolutionary fantasies, but is also amorally important considering his political conversations with Mrs. Sinico (*D* 108). Given his former companion’s insistence that he write his political ideas down, to note that the paper on Duffy’s desk remained practically blank after his rejection of Emily Sinico constitutes another form of refusing her love, especially considering that the only statement identified on that paper reads, “Love between man and man is impossible because there must not be sexual intercourse and friendship between man and woman is impossible because there must be sexual intercourse” (*D* 108). While both Jackson and Norris have persuasively read this quotation as evidence of Duffy’s homosexual lamentation, reading it in relation to the personal and political refusals that compelled it broadens the scope of that lamentation to encompass an isolation akin to his earlier reference to “the soul’s incurable loneliness.” Despite the temptation to focus our analysis on Duffy’s quotation, we cannot interpret its significance in a vacuum, but must also read it in relation to the virtually blank pages on which it appears, which recalls Duffy’s refusal of Mrs. Sinico’s “invitation of openness.” By reading the quotation this way, we witness the relationship between Duffy’s renewed perception of “every bond” as a “bond to sorrow” and his earlier refusals of both Emily Sinico and the “phrasemongers” and “obtuse middle class”

---

<sup>42</sup> According to Bixby, “Magalaner noted that the two works by Nietzsche mentioned in the story, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *The Gay Science*, celebrate the philosopher’s notion of the *Übermensch* who has no need for society or the love of women, two characteristics that Duffy seems to exemplify” (114).

with whom he scoffed at sharing his ideas. This reveals his refusal of openness at the personal and socio-political levels to be proof of why for Duffy, “love” and “friendship” are truly “impossible.”

Additionally, Duffy’s focus on love grounded in sexual intercourse limits his ability to transcend his alienated state. Even if physical intimacy undermines certain forms of relationships, viewing love as an empathetic embrace demonstrates the capability of performing love to people of various sexual orientations because this form of love transcends issues of sexuality. However, in refusing compassion towards Mrs. Sinico, Duffy has also refused this broader interpretation of love that could have enabled him to negotiate his position within Dublin despite the sexual alienation that he experiences. Instead, the lone sentence on the virtually blank “sheaf of papers” locks him into a limited interpretation of love that does nothing to ameliorate his alienated state and denies him the political outlet he needs to set his socialist ideas into motion. Duffy’s renewed attention to his orderly life thus solidifies his refusal of Dublin through a reenactment of his rejection of Mrs. Sinico’s empathetic embrace.

This continued refusal of local and global empathy is ultimately confirmed by Duffy’s castigation of Mrs. Sinico after reading the newspaper article. I have already mentioned the disparaging representations that Duffy hurls at his former companion as he blames her for her tragedy, but what gives these representations political significance is his continued equation of Mrs. Sinico with the lower-class individuals that he deems unworthy of his assistance. Not only does Duffy hold Emily Sinico accountable for her “miserable and malodorous” “vice,” but his equation of her with “the hobbling wretches whom he had seen carrying cans and bottles” to bars directly ties Mrs. Sinico to the alms



beggars he had refused to help at the story's opening" (*D* 111). Especially when we recall Duffy's refusal to assist his trembling companion after they "broke off their intercourse," this comparison completes the depersonalization of Emily Sinico that began with her invitation of openness. Furthermore, it constitutes his definitive rejection of both love and socialism by depicting her as a generic vagrant whose vulgarity renders her unworthy of his affection.

These reflections on Mrs. Sinico's tragedy subsequently compel Duffy to visit the public-house on Chapelizod Bridge, where he is thrust into the company of the "working-men" whose interests he spurned at the Irish Socialist Party meetings. In a manner similar to his ambivalence towards writing out his political thoughts, Duffy's vacant gaze at these men "without seeing or hearing them" signifies his continued inability to relate to either the memory of his former companion or the people to whom she encouraged to open himself (*D* 112).<sup>43</sup> This failure to acknowledge the otherness of these bar patrons parallels his subsequent inability to recognize Mrs. Sinico's tragedy as distinct from his own loneliness, and because of this, his "allow[ance]" of "the rhythm [of the train] to die away" at the end of "A Painful Case" renders him incapable of feeling her touch or hearing her voice in much the same way as he is incapable of "seeing or hearing" the working-men's concerns. His concluding sense "that he was alone" thus signifies a renewal of both personal and political exile, as his concluding rejection of Mrs. Sinico's memory also rejects the empathy needed to navigate the Dublin body politic in any productive sense.

---

<sup>43</sup> Deane persuasively articulates that "this moment is designed to remind us of Mr. Duffy's earlier political affiliation ... Here is the counterexample to the previous instance of etherealizing. Mr. Duffy neither sees nor hears the men and their conversation about money and a gentleman's estate in County Kildare. But all the detail reinforces the contrasts between the physical and the refined, the worker and the intellectual, intellectual and scandal, egoism and love, that the story is elaborating" (24-5).

\*\*\*\*

It is entirely possible that the alienation James Duffy experiences is the product of a societal heteronormativity that forces him to repress his sexual identity. If that is indeed the case, then Duffy's exile from the "city of which he was a citizen" takes on a more complex ethical significance that Joyce's readers must acknowledge. However, while the persecuted Duffy's resulting ambivalence towards his fellow Dubliners would certainly be understandable, his callous dismissal of Emily Sinico cannot escape ethical scrutiny. Even if Duffy's sexual orientation prevents him from entering into the type of relationship that Mrs. Sinico possibly desires, the way that he interacts with and subsequently dismisses "his soul's companion" is still complicit in a narcissistic endorsement of love that refashions difference into reflections of the lover's grandeur and rejects what cannot be assimilated. That his attitude towards Mrs. Sinico may be shaped by his broader struggles with heterosexism does not undercut the need to examine "A Painful Case" under a Buberian rubric of love to pinpoint the ways in which Duffy's resulting egoistic outlook on otherness becomes ethically and politically problematic. By continuing to read the homosexual Duffy as narcissistic, we witness the ways in which societal policing of difference becomes internalized and reenacted on the local level, as the victims of socio-political persecution perform versions of that very persecution on their fellow Dubliners, failing to recognize that all members of the paralytic body politic are "outcast[s] from life's feast."

In that sense, Emily Sinico does provide a way for Duffy to come to grips with his societal isolation, though he may not deem the method she offers to be particularly desirable. When we focus our attention on the rare textual instances in which Mrs. Sinico

is allowed to speak, the words she utters establish an alternate method of dealing with a repressive body politic, even from a position of perpetual loneliness. In her ability to feel compassion for people she has not met and her recognition of the importance of cooperation despite political difference, Mrs. Sinico becomes the living embodiment of empathy in *Dubliners*, a person whose inherent alienation does not prevent her from aggressively loving and affirming the others she meets. Even her silence registers louder than Duffy's thoughts, as the unwavering attention she bestows upon her new companion and her "urg[ing]" him to "let his nature open to the full" establish a compassionate invitation of openness whose acceptance could enable both characters to transcend their lonely states. However, "A Painful Case" demonstrates to us the necessity of reciprocal affirmation, and Duffy's rejection of Mrs. Sinico as one "unfit to live" denies life to both parties, performing on the local stage the societal rejection of difference that guarantees that the Dublin body politic cannot function in any productive manner. The "painful case" of Sinico and Duffy thus plays itself out in each of Joyce's stories, finding its concluding parallel in the melancholic interactions between Gabriel and Gretta Conroy. Like "A Painful Case," "The Dead" forces us to acknowledge not only the personal implications of self-involved interactions with one's love object, but also how that narcissistic method of representation plays it out on a societal level, precluding the cultural and political acceptance of difference that could improve the stultifying conditions of Joyce's Dublin. It is thus necessary for us to move from the unacknowledged music of the Rotunda's empty benches to the *Distant Music* of the Morkans' staircase and to recognize the ways in which our awareness and acceptance of otherness determines our relationships with others both living and dead.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE BOY IN THE GASWORKS

Thomas Jackson Rice argues in “The Geometry of Meaning in *Dubliners*: A Euclidian Approach” that “unlike Duffy or the boy of ‘Araby,’ Gabriel [Conroy] appears to progress toward a genuine act of communication and an uncontaminated moment of vision in the conclusion of his story” and “this progress is accompanied by an escape from egoism and a new acuity of perception” (46). This comparison of Duffy to Gabriel is not surprising since Joycean critics have long tied these two Dubliners together, arguing that they demonstrate a progression in the ways that Joyce’s characters come to grips with their attitudes towards others.<sup>44</sup> Whereas Duffy’s narcissism prevents him from properly grieving for Emily Sinico at the end of “A Painful Case,” Gabriel is thought to enter into an awareness of Gretta Conroy’s otherness that is both dialogic and transformative at the conclusion of “The Dead,” replacing his cultural self-absorption with an acceptance of difference that is encapsulated by “generous tears” and the “snow [that] was general all over Ireland” (*D* 224; 225). However, while Gabriel’s concluding thoughts about Gretta are certainly more affectionate than Duffy’s rejection of Mrs. Sinico, this comparison is insufficient to conclude that he experiences a productive loving epiphany. When we read his thoughts and actions throughout “The Dead” with respect to Buber, we see Joyce confirm the futility of attempts to replace a stagnant romantic present with projections of an idealized past, and Gabriel’s epiphany thus becomes the

---

<sup>44</sup> Lucia Boldrini notes that “Gabriel’s ‘indifferent’ voice signals the moment when he almost unwillingly gives up his pretense of superiority and prepares to listen to Gretta’s story with equanimity rather than in order to judge her, and it can be contrasted with Mr. Duffy’s ‘strange impersonal voice’” (241). Cynthia Wheatley-Lovoy similarly contends that “In ‘A Painful Case,’ the monologic self wins the day as Duffy successfully silences the voice of Sinico, but in so doing, he fails to achieve self-reflexivity, while in ‘The Dead,’ Gabriel’s inability to appropriate the female voice leads to a dialogic decentering and successful achievement of the reflexive” (181).

final evidence in *Dubliners* of the inability of narcissism to shield individuals from the mundanities of everyday Dublin.

However, this is not to say that Gabriel behaves as callously as Duffy. In fact, despite the self-absorption inherent in his interactions with others, Gabriel remains one of the most sympathetic protagonists in *Dubliners*, a “well-meaning sentimentalist” whose obsession with bestowing generosity upon others falls short of achieving his desired outcomes.<sup>45</sup> In a sense, that is what makes the narcissism inherent in “The Dead” so jarring, that one need not be conniving or cruel to subordinate the affirmation of difference to the preoccupation with oneself. “The Dead” shows us the implicit egoism at the foundation of a hospitality divorced from love, that exercises in pity that do not also include the acceptance of otherness are ultimately half-hearted gestures of sympathy that fall short of reaching their ethical potential. This emptiness carries with it both ethical and socio-political repercussions, as the inability to embrace difference, even in displays of generosity, can reinscribe the cultural boundaries that compel people of different classes and social strata to talk over and dismiss each other, even when they are congregated at the same dinner table.

#### I. Admiring and Happy Eyes

In “Joyce’s ‘The Dead’: The Dissolution of the Self and the Police,” John Paul Riquelme articulates what has become the traditional reading of “The Dead,” which divides the story into three principal encounters that contribute to Gabriel’s concluding epiphany:

---

<sup>45</sup> Vincent Cheng’s postcolonial reading of “The Dead” reads Gabriel’s sympathetic portrayal similarly, insisting that the protagonist “is no less sympathetic in spite of, or (as I would argue) because of, Joyce’s scrupulously searing and unflattering portrayal of him” (135).

A great deal of Gabriel's anxiety in the story concerns his fear of slipping from the pinnacle that he occupies: that is, his fear that others will not see him as he wishes to be seen. His experiences in turn with Lily, with the nationalistic Miss Ivors, and with his wife indicate to Gabriel and to the reader that the views some others hold about him do not in fact conform to his own. The encounters provide perspectives for reassessing his standing and his positions. ("The Dead" 125)

This characterization of Joyce's story is the way most critics evaluate Gabriel's experiences at the Morkans' dinner party, arguing that the protagonist's sense of socio-cultural superiority is called into question by his conversational blunders with Lily and Molly Ivors, paving the way for his sense of self to be fractured conclusively by the revelation of his wife's relationship with Michael Furey.<sup>46</sup> This explication of the story's events represents these encounters as parallel to each other, portraying Lily, Miss Ivors, and Gretta as equal participants in the dissolution of a pre-determined cultural identity. Such an analysis ignores the role that Gabriel's love for his wife plays in his social and cultural views, as his proud characterizations of Gretta as a reflection of himself signify an ignorance of her otherness that influences his interactions with everybody he encounters. For that reason, Gretta Conroy is not simply the final challenge in a series of contestations to her husband's identity, but instead offers the loving alternative to contemporary stagnancy that Gabriel seeks throughout "The Dead," an empathetic embrace whose rejection confirms the inextricable narcissism at the heart of Gabriel's love and hospitality.

#### A. Country Cute

Traditionally, analyses of Joyce's short story begin with Gabriel's conversation with Lily in the Morkans' pantry; however, since the way that Joyce's protagonist approaches

---

<sup>46</sup> Leonard's Lacanian reading of "The Dead" similarly divides up the story. He contends that "a Lacanian plot summary of 'The Dead' would present the story as three attempts by Gabriel Conroy, with three different women, to confirm the fictional unity of his masculine subjectivity" (289).

this conversation is influenced by the way he relates to his wife, it is necessary to examine Gabriel's initial interactions with Gretta before analyzing the rest of the story. Indeed, the initial acts of generosity described in "The Dead" are performed by Gabriel towards Gretta, and while his first line of spoken dialogue is delivered to the caretaker's daughter, the subject of his initial statement is his wife, attributing the reason why they are late to the fact that "my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself" (*D* 176). Vincent Cheng identifies this statement as a "seemingly good-humored comment" that reflects a hospitable paternalism, a "form of infantilization, similar to the affectionate attitude of the British Empire towards its colonies as incorrigible children ... who can thus be only properly ruled by the parent empire" (135). In that sense, not only does this condescending comment demonstrate how such colonial infantilization is redeployed by Dubliners onto each other, but having Gabriel utter such a jest about his wife illustrates the direct relationship between his marriage and the social persona he performs throughout the dinner party (especially considering he offers an infantilizing comment about Gretta to a servant whom he subsequently will treat as a child). By incorporating this unflattering depiction of his wife into this small talk, Gabriel indicates the primacy of his obsession with Gretta's well-being in his overall conceptions of generosity, revealing the "good-humored" desire for domination at the foundation of his love for his wife.

This infantilization continues in Gabriel's and Gretta's initial conversation with Kate and Julia Morkan. After Kate approves of their plans to stay in a hotel after the party, Gabriel jokes, "But as for Gretta there ... she'd walk home in the snow if she were let." This serves as another incorporation of a condescending reference to Gabriel's wife into socially-appropriate conversation, legitimizing a solicitous paternalism whose

domineering nature is foregrounded by the qualifier “if she were let.” In response, Gretta mockingly chastises her husband for his obsession with the family’s security, noting the “green shades for Tom’s eyes at night and making him do the dumb-bells, and forcing Eva to eat the stirabout” as instances where Gabriel’s concern for his family’s well-being compels him to force undesirable precautions upon them (*D* 180). Even though the well-being of his family is at the heart of these actions, Gabriel’s determination to impose these precautions upon Gretta and the children despite their objections signifies his obliviousness to difference, as his concern for their care compels him to relate to them not as autonomous individuals, but rather as helpless dependents whose health reflects his familial compassion back onto himself.<sup>47</sup> This reveals Gabriel’s inherent obsession with judging what is best for the people he encounters, a well-intentioned but ultimately narcissistic display of power that influences the acts of generosity he displays throughout the story.

Gabriel’s refusal to acknowledge objections to this generosity is highlighted further by his symbolization of Gretta throughout this conversation. As Gretta quips about being forced to wear goloshes in wet weather, she laughs and gives a mock-chastising glance at her husband, “whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair” (*D* 180). This description of Gabriel’s “admiring and happy eyes” not only foreshadows the lustful desire that consumes his thoughts towards the story’s conclusion, but also shows his preference for admiring her appearance over heeding her words. Such

---

<sup>47</sup> Riquelme similarly articulates the ways in which it influences his subsequent encounters by arguing, “More than just a judge of what is good for his family, Gabriel is the main arbiter of taste and action in the story, rendering judgments of praise and blame in his thoughts and in his after-dinner speech. He speaks as one of those in his society empowered to maintain order, tradition, and the status quo” (“The Dead” 124-5). I would only add that rather than reading his familial concern as a subset of his overall desire to “maintain order, tradition, and the status quo,” Gabriel’s preoccupation with “rendering judgments of praise and blame” stem primarily from his love and concern for his family, as this section of the chapter primarily demonstrates.



a preference signifies Gabriel's impulse to represent Gretta as a generic symbol of socially-proper wifedom, especially considering that the description of his gaze as "admiring and happy" anticipates his subsequent observation that his wife's refined presence instilled him with pride throughout the party. ("He had felt proud and happy then, happy that she was his, proud of her grace and wifely carriage" [*D* 216].)<sup>48</sup> Thus, Gretta's apparel and visage drown out her words, and by indicating that his gaze "had been wandering" across her body, Joyce reveals the sustained objectification of Gretta that has occurred throughout this conversation, which indicates how this symbolization will play out in the subsequent conversations Gabriel has at his aunts' party.

The exchange over Gabriel's obsession with goloshes also demonstrates the socio-cultural implications of his familial "solicitude." When Kate and Julia seek further clarification about goloshes, Gretta describes them as "guttapercha things. We both have a pair now. Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent" (*D* 181). This observation illustrates both the cultural fascination behind Gabriel's obsession with galoshes and the colonial implications of that interest. His suggestion that they own the "guttapercha things" because "everyone wears them on the continent" shows that he deems goloshes to be a status symbol that signifies his socioeconomic prowess. Not only does this continental justification transform Gabriel's concern and generosity into reflections of his social standing, but it also reveals the imperialist logic behind that generosity since the reference to guttapercha explicitly highlights Great Britain's

---

<sup>48</sup> Doherty also notes Gabriel's objectification of Gretta's physical appearance here, writing that she is "cursorily configured . . . neutrally as the nondescript 'face and hair' Gabriel admires, as she jokes with his aunts." He later reads this "configur[ation]" as evidence that "Gretta never emerges as a 'real' figure with her own physiognomy, mediated by narritorial fiat, but always as a projection of Gabriel's iconic imagination" (147-8; 151).

exploitation of India.<sup>49</sup> By incorporating a symbol of colonialism into Gabriel's paternalism, Joyce demonstrates the imperialist potential of the rejection of otherness, as Gabriel's co-option of his family's health for social advancement also justifies Britain's subordination of its colonies' interests for its material gain. Cheng is thus correct that "the wearing of goloshes" ties Gabriel's patronizing familial concern to his emulation of "a more 'civilized' dominant European culture, whose very cultural superiority and refinement depended on the exploitation of its colonies" (136-7), and it is this narcissistic motivation behind his performances of generosity that influences his gestures of hospitality towards his fellow guests.

The connection between Gabriel's socio-political superiority and his generosity is confirmed ultimately by his thoughts of the late Mrs. Conroy. As Gabriel recalls the tenuous nature of his mother's relationship with Gretta, his memories grow more somber and uncertain: "A shadow passed over his face as he remembered her sullen opposition to his marriage. Some slighting phrases she had used still rankled in his memory; she had once spoken of Gretta as being country cute and that was not true of Gretta at all. It was Gretta who had nursed her during all her last long illness in their house at Monkstown" (*D* 187). Although this reflection may seem to signify Gabriel's defense of his wife against the haughty condemnations of his mother, it also accomplishes two other objectives. First, it reveals Gretta's empathy since she acknowledges their perceived difference in both social position and attitude and still cares for her mother-in-law during her "last long illness." It is this innate compassion that will spur her recollections of

---

<sup>49</sup> Gifford's annotations stress that goloshes were "made of India rubber or the less elastic gutta-percha" and "became fashionable and popular" in Great Britain in the late-nineteenth century (114).

Michael Furey at the story's conclusion, which articulates her empathetic love as an alternative to the hospitable narcissism displayed by Gabriel throughout "The Dead."

Second, it confirms the importance of social cultivation in Gabriel's assessments of compassion and love. While Gabriel points to Gretta's care as a challenge to his mother's harsh disapproval, the way that he constructs this defense actually vindicates the segregating social structures upon which that disapproval is based. Not only does Gabriel represent Gretta as not being "country cute" instead of disputing the legitimacy of that label,<sup>50</sup> but by following this rebuttal with his observation that Gretta nursed his dying mother, Gabriel rhetorically characterizes that empathy as the reason why his wife is not "country cute." This both solidifies Gabriel's connection between generosity and social standing and confirms his obsession with overshadowing his wife's low birth by symbolically elevating her to his socio-cultural level. Rather than represent Gretta's compassion as an affirmation of her otherness, Gabriel rhetorically co-opts that compassion in order to dissolve that otherness, revealing the preoccupation with amatory sameness and class differences at the heart of his feelings for his wife. This obsession with sameness also compels Gabriel later to qualify Molly Ivors's observation that Gretta is from Connacht by clarifying "shortly" that "her people are," which implies that their marriage has erased his wife's West Irish origins (*D* 189). Similar to his fascination with goloshes, Gabriel's determination to undo Gretta's "country cute[ness]" betrays his aspiration for a continental "cultural superiority and refinement" that suppresses "the more primitive, unrestrained, and still uncolonized Irish free spirit allied symbolically to

---

<sup>50</sup> Henke also notes that "Gabriel prides himself on his continental perspective and feels a bit ashamed of the Galway wife his mother once described as 'country cute'" (*Desire* 42).

the West of Ireland and Gretta's roots in Galway" (Cheng 137), confirming both the narcissism and the denial of otherness that undergirds his generosity throughout the text.

Having established the self-absorption inherent in Gabriel's devotion to his wife and children, we can now turn to the conversations in which he participates during the Morkans' party to discover how his amatory narcissism influences his interactions with his fellow Dubliners. When we read these conversations with respect to his initial representations of Gretta, we see Gabriel adopting similar strategies of symbolization and hospitable paternalism that validate his self worth. The temptation then may be to continue to read such similarities as evidence of Gabriel's broader obsession with socio-cultural superiority, to which his devotion to Gretta is merely one of the story's three subsets. However, when analyzing "The Dead" with respect to Buber, we see how Gabriel's misrecognition of his loved one influences his general ignorance of the "many-faced otherness" of the social situation in which he finds himself (*Man* 61). In each of these episodes, Gabriel's determination to transform his counterparts into reflections of his hospitality and his sophistication compel him to interact with others in manners that disregard their difference, and the recurring failure of these interactions sets Gabriel up for the romantic frustration that concludes Joyce's short story.

#### B. The Men that is Now

Gabriel's interaction with Lily, the caretaker's daughter, illustrates this connection between his romantic and social encounters. Similar to his representations of Gretta, Gabriel infantilizes Lily, using his memory of her as a "child [who] used to sit on the lowest step nursing a rag doll" to justify his patronizing comments towards her.<sup>51</sup> In

---

<sup>51</sup> Cheng argues that "the sexual dynamics here are again a case of sexual infantilization, of Gabriel's insensitivity to the fact that Lily is no longer a child, but a woman with her own voice" (137). Tanja

addition, Gabriel interweaves observations about Lily's social status with these infantilizing representations, basing his patronizing representation of her on the "three syllables she had given his surname," which reveals a flat accent characteristic of low Dublin culture. His subsequent combination of her child-like appearance with her "pale ... complexion" and "hay-coloured hair" thus construct a symbolic image of Lily that is doubly condescending, and his contemplation of her appearance under "the gas in the pantry" signifies Gabriel's temptation to define Lily's existence by her physical place within the Morkans' house (*D* 177). Similar to Gabriel's portrayal of Gretta as the socially-respectable wife, this generic characterization of Lily allows him to utilize stereotypical assumptions about her existence to guide their interaction in a way that comfortably validates his social superiority.

Gabriel's subsequent conversation with Lily continues his attempts to categorize her according to his socioeconomic assumptions. Based on his knowledge of the girl's age and social status, he asks "in a friendly tone, do you still go to school?" When she reveals that she has completed her education, Gabriel immediately and "gaily" responds, "O, then ... I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?" (*D* 177). These questions strengthen Gabriel's attempts to symbolize Lily, as Gabriel's recognition of Lily's potential wedding date arises not from any personal knowledge of the girl's romantic situation, but rather because marriage is one of the only socioeconomic options still available to a lower-class Irish female who is no longer in school. In that sense, these patronizing questions echo the jests Gabriel makes

---

Vesala-Varttala similarly notes this infantilizing representational strategy, writing that "Gabriel's friendly tone and politely sympathetic attitude position Lily as a little girl and completely disregard her complex and changing personality as a young adult" (46). Finally, Benstock argues that these child-like characterizations force Lily to be designated a "dual personality, the split between the Lily who *was* and the Lily who *is*" (*Dubliners* 161).

about his wife's unruliness to both Lily and the Morkan sisters, revealing such polite paternalism to be crucial in validating his self-image. Thus, by asking predetermined questions to a woman that he has symbolically constructed as a lower-class child, Gabriel is able to represent Lily's past, present, and future and redefine her otherness in ways that authenticate his superiority.

However, Lily's response complicates Gabriel's hospitable paternalism. When Gabriel asks if her wedding day is around the corner, Lily answers "with great bitterness" that "the men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you" (*D* 178). This response is shocking to Gabriel not only because it contradicts his assumptions of Lily's future, but also because the bitterness evoked by this reaction foregrounds their insulting nature. Nevertheless, while "the high colour of his cheeks" does demonstrate his embarrassment over Lily's anger, Gabriel's reaction to this breakdown in communication reveals his continued inability to recognize her otherness. The narration notes that "Gabriel coloured *as if he felt* he had made a mistake" (*D* 178; italics mine), which betrays his opinion that he actually did not make a mistake, and his removal of his goloshes "without looking at her" demonstrates his determination to disassociate himself from Lily the second she ceases to conform to his representation of her. This desire to evade Lily's anger is confirmed by the "Christmas-time" present of the coin, which he places in her hand and escapes before she has the chance to return it (*D* 178). This final gesture illustrates both Gabriel's indifference towards Lily's specific identity and the socioeconomic foundations of his generosity, as the "friendly tone" of his prescribed, patronizing questions finds its counterpart in the monetary gift he provides to evade the girl's response. Thus, rather than accept Lily's "bitterness" as evidence of her otherness,

Gabriel covers over that difference with a display of generosity that enables him to continue treating her as the symbolic girl he initially constructed, demonstrating that his embarrassment in the pantry has done nothing to change the way he interacts with others.

### C. The Rabbit-Eyed Revolutionary

Gabriel's subsequent encounter with Molly Ivors further perpetuates his socio-cultural anxiety. Similar to Gretta and Lily, Miss Ivors's appearance dominates Gabriel's initial perceptions, compelling him to construct a symbolic representation of her socio-political identity that predetermines his interactions with her. He represents Miss Ivors as a "frank-mannered talkative young lady," a characterization that combines negative depictions of her outspokenness with an infantilized description of her youth. Bolstered by his subsequent attention to her "freckled face and prominent brown eyes," the Molly Ivors that Gabriel describes seems barely older than Lily, even though she and Gabriel "were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers" (*D* 187; 188). This paternalist depiction of Miss Ivors as a "young lady" enables Gabriel to dismiss whatever unpleasant remarks come from her "frank-mannered talkative" manner as evidence of a youthful precociousness. His concluding observation that "she did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device" may demonstrate Gabriel's awareness of their differing national and cultural positions (*D* 187), but by combining this observation with the infantilizing description that preceded it, Gabriel undercuts such difference as evidence of a quaint political interest to which he can legitimately dismiss.

Nevertheless, the dispute that occurs during the dance forces Gabriel to pay more than a passing notice to Molly Ivors's otherness. While admittedly Miss Ivors rudely castigates Gabriel for his ambivalence to an Irish Ireland, she is actually more willing than her partner to accept their differing attitudes. Even though she chides his patronage of the unionist "rag" and calls him a "West Briton" (*D* 188), Miss Ivors acknowledges that "I was only joking" and eagerly concedes that "she liked [his review of Browning's poems] immensely" (*D* 189). By contrast, Gabriel reacts to Molly Ivors's chastisement in a manner similar to Lily's bitter retort, "glanc[ing] right and left nervously" and "avoid[ing] her eyes" (*D* 190) while hiding his consternation under "soft friendly tone[s]" (*D* 189) and "good humour" (*D* 190), which confirms his use of politeness to avoid conversations that don't validate his socio-cultural superiority. When he finally does engage Miss Ivors's nationalist charges, his sudden outburst ("O, to tell you the truth ... I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" [*D* 190]) illustrates the suppression of difference at the heart of his gentility, as his inability to undercut Miss Ivors's rebukes through "good humour[ed]" deflections gives way to a harsh rejection of the foundation of his colleague's otherness. Whereas Miss Ivors could see past their differing attitudes and still compliment his review, Gabriel's agitation prevents him from acting in a similar manner, and the end of the dance enables him to retreat from his counterpart as quickly as he escaped the caretaker's daughter.

Gabriel's thoughts after the dance also echo his insecurities after the pantry exchange, where the social superiority that compelled his previous assertions of hospitable paternalism now encourages him to become the party's censor. That Miss Ivors's charges against Gabriel might be valid is irrelevant; what matters is the impropriety of



asserting these jests in public and “[trying] to make him ridiculous before people,” a social transgression that legitimizes his desire to “banish from his mind all memory of the unpleasant incident” (*D* 191).<sup>52</sup> Echoing the colonial implications of his earlier thoughts of Gretta, here Miss Ivors’s calling him a West Briton compels Gabriel to deride his colleague through language reminiscent of Britain’s rejection of “the more primitive, unrestrained, and still uncolonized Irish free spirit.” His labeling of Miss Ivors as a “girl or woman, or whatever she was” recalls his initial characterization of her as a “frank-mannered talkative young lady,” only this time her refusal to play the obedient child encourages Gabriel to deny her humanity by classifying her identity as potentially other than “girl or woman.” This dehumanizing classification continues through Gabriel’s representation of Molly Ivors’s gaze as “staring at him with her rabbit’s eyes,” as her calling him a West Briton essentially transforms her from a child into an animal (*D* 191). This reveals Gabriel’s desire to shut out Miss Ivors’s attempts at dialogue, especially considering that his characterization of her eyes as rabbit-like constitutes a refusal of her gaze, mirroring both his earlier “avoid[ance of] her eyes” (*D* 190) and his subsequent condemnation of her “critical quizzing eyes” (*D* 192). Thus, by trying to “banish from his mind all memory” of his exchange with Miss Ivors, Gabriel rejects the otherness displayed by her playful rebukes, and his use of social etiquette to suppress his colleague betrays the colonial potential of his obsession with generosity.

This attempted rejection of Miss Ivors’s otherness continues in his preparation for his dinner address. Similar to his earlier agitation, Gabriel attempts to blame Miss Ivors

---

<sup>52</sup> Riquelme similarly reads Gabriel’s claims of decorum as attempts to exclude Miss Ivors, arguing that “he pays Miss Ivors back silently with the thoughts that she is unattractive physically and, what may be as bad in his view, that she is discourteous (*D* 203). Her implied failure to meet Gabriel’s standards for her gender and her class enables him to keep his sense of himself temporarily intact” (“The Dead” 130).

entirely for his present irritation, ignoring her jesting tone to paint her as an initiator of “ill-feeling between them” who “would not be sorry to see him fail in his speech” (*D* 192; 193). Gabriel even rejects Miss Ivors’s “[praise]” of his Browning review, doubting the sincerity of her compliments and suggesting that she did not have “any life of her own behind all her propagandism” (*D* 192). This rhetorical interrogation is significant not only because it suppresses Miss Ivors’s attempts at dialogue by representing her approval of his review as insincere, but also because it signifies Gabriel’s refusal to accept her otherness by reducing her qualified rebuke to a generic “propagandism.” When read alongside his earlier chastisements of her decorum, the repressive element of Gabriel’s hospitable paternalism becomes apparent, as his displeasure over his conversation with Miss Ivors entices him to “banish” her otherness “from his mind.”

#### D. The Hypereducated Generation

The height of Gabriel’s narcissistic hospitality occurs at the Morkans’ dinner table. While the temptation may be to consider Gabriel as more generous and sympathetic than Duffy, examining his reactions to the socio-political identities of his fellow dinner guests reveals him to display an anxiety towards cultural difference reminiscent of the hostility in “A Painful Case.” Gabriel may act more politely towards his fellow Dubliners, but that politeness masks an intolerance towards otherness that inevitably promotes his sophistication over the crude manners of his counterparts. This intolerance is evident during his conversations with Lily and Miss Ivors, but the extent to which Gabriel fails to affirm his fellow guests is demonstrated throughout the construction and performance of his Christmas dinner speech. Here Joyce demonstrates how the failure to confirm individual otherness impedes broader socio-political interactions, as the frustrations

Gabriel experiences during the earlier conversations undermine the success of his speech and illustrates his general inability to interact productively within his body politic.

Gabriel's initial thoughts about his speech illustrate this refusal of cultural otherness. As he attempts to recover from his conversation with Lily, he fears that the failure of their interaction will translate into a similar disaster at the dinner table. While his fear that "he had taken up a wrong tone" in his speech seems to acknowledge his culpability for this imagined communicative breakdown, the reasons why the tone of his speech is incorrect prevent this acknowledgement from being a productive breakthrough. Indeed, his references to the "indelicate clacking of the men's heels" (*D* 179) echo Duffy's castigation of the "working-men ... dragging the sawdust over their spits with their heavy boots" in the Chapelizod public-house (*D* 112), as Gabriel blames the audience's lack of proper cultural knowledge for the potential backfiring of his address. Thus, by changing the Browning quote to "some quotation that they could recognise from Shakespeare or from the Melodies" (*D* 179), Gabriel's alterations become further evidence of a socially-classifying generosity that bestows kindness on an uncultured group primarily to confirm his sophistication. Rather than envision the failure of his speech as an opportunity to affirm the otherness of his fellow guests, Gabriel instead exploits their otherness to explain away that failure and to characterize his revisions as validations of his superiority, demonstrating how the colonial logic that Cheng identifies in his social pretensions pervades his monologic interactions with others.

Additionally, the anxiety over Gabriel's speech that follows his exchange with Molly Ivors highlights the narcissistic foundations of his address. As Gabriel tries to balance

the revisions of his address with his agitation with Miss Ivors, he adds a platitude towards his aunts that will secretly enable him to rebuke his former colleague:

He would say, alluding to Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia: *Ladies and Gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had its faults but for my part I think it had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us seems to me to lack.* (D 193)

By identifying the Morkan sisters with the older hospitable generation that is threatened by Miss Ivors's younger "hypereducated" group, Gabriel performs another act of infantilization that essentially transforms him into a benevolent adult teaching "hospitality," "humour," and "humanity" to a precocious youth (even though he belongs to the same generation as Miss Ivors). The social respectability that he plans to endorse in his speech thus becomes merely another power play by which Gabriel can regain the control lost by Miss Ivors's jests, revealing both the exclusionary and hypocritical nature of his generosity.

The hypocrisy of this tactic is also confirmed by his concluding thoughts over these revisions. His self-satisfied "very good: that was one for Miss Ivors" (D 193) demonstrates that his address's praise of the old generation's hospitality is not brought about by any sincere admiration for those qualities, but is solely uttered to score a point against Miss Ivors. His subsequent representation of the aunts whom ostensibly are being praised as "two ignorant old women" (D 193) confirms his disinterest in an earnest endorsement of "hospitality" "humour" and "humanity," which forces us to view his performances of generosity and decorum as strategic exclusions of his fellow

Dubliners.<sup>53</sup> Gabriel's reworking of his dinner speech thus sets up his dinner-table performance to be the ultimate act of hospitable paternalism, and his determination to defeat his colleague reduces this opportunity to engage productively with his fellow Dubliners into both a rejection of Miss Ivors and the Morkan sisters and a congratulatory address to himself.

The performance of Gabriel's dinner speech confirms the monologic and exclusionary nature of this endorsement of generosity. Consistent with his desired alterations following the encounter with Miss Ivors, Gabriel begins his address with the generational argument that he desires to be the retort to his former colleague: "I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality" (*D* 203). Tanja Vesala-Varttala persuasively argues that this collective representation of Irish hospitality "conjures up a firm sense of belonging and togetherness that would counter Miss Ivors's remarks about his being a 'West Briton' (*D* 190)" (41). Indeed, Gabriel's isolation of this hospitality as a national "tradition which does it so much honour" represents the generosity at the heart of his social identity as a collective attribute inherent in all the Irish, and his suggestion that Ireland "should guard" this quality "jealously" represents inhospitable individuals as threats to the nation. Thus, Gabriel fashions what could have been a sincere celebration of Irish hospitality into a weapon to suppress the inhospitable charges of a "frank-mannered talkative young lady" with "rabbit's eyes," confirming the colonial exclusion of otherness behind Gabriel's hospitality.

---

<sup>53</sup> Cheng also reads Gabriel's speech as hypocritical, noting that "this hypocrisy of Gabriel's speech and value judgments becomes apparent in his more pressing desire to attack Miss Ivors. This hypocrisy reveals a level of cultural snobbery already hinted at in his preference for things continental, such as goloshes and cycling in France or Belgium" (139).

This totalizing characterization of hospitable Ireland also ignores the unique identities of his fellow citizens. Whereas previous thoughts about his speech emphasized his audience's difference, Gabriel's oration imposes a rhetorical sameness on not only the dinner table, but on the entire country, enabling him to suppress any distinctions in "grade[s] of culture" by representing everyone as possessing the same generosity that he does. Vesala-Varttala argues that "making the other into a reflection of oneself also has its problems: 'How does one know whether one sees oneself or the other in the mirror of comparison?' (ibid., p. 150). Gabriel imposes sameness onto the group of Dubliners in order to make them serve his own selfish needs" (42). Thus, not only does this tactic enable him to suppress Miss Ivors, but by using his interpretation of hospitality as a marker of authentic Irishness, Gabriel ironically banishes the otherness of his fellow Irish by viewing all Dubliners as reflections of himself, and the continental foundations of his previous assertions of generosity transform this celebration of Irish hospitality into the policing of a "primitive" and "unrestrained" population.

Gabriel's rhetorical assault on inhospitality strengthens when he recalls the absence of Miss Ivors from the dinner table. As he soaks in the "hearty murmur of assent" to his words that "ran through the table," he remembers that "Miss Ivors was not there and that she had gone away discourteously" (*D* 204). This representation of Miss Ivors's departure as "discourteous" builds confidence in Gabriel and emboldens his condemnation of the "new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is." In a manner more explicit than his earlier construction of this argument, Gabriel represents the "serious and enthusiastic" generation embodied by Miss Ivors as the central threat against which hospitable Ireland should be on guard, noting that such Dubliners "lack those

qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day” (*D* 204). Thus, the rhetorical infantilization that Gabriel mentally constructed emerges in his dinner speech, and he can use his assumed position as the hospitable patriarch of the older generation to admonish the “frank-mannered talkative young lady” whose otherness lies at the heart of his criticism.

Miss Ivors’s absence at the dinner table also amplifies the monologic aspects of Gabriel’s address. While the “hearty murmur of assent” illustrates that Gabriel’s points have their share of support, his determination to use his speech as a coded attack on Miss Ivors excludes that “murmur” because it is evident that his words are not intended for his fellow guests. Instead, Gabriel desires to castigate his former colleague regardless of her departure, resulting in an odd performance of exclusion aimed at an already absent party. That Gabriel performs the revised speech anyway demonstrates the hollow nature of his totalizing affirmation of hospitality because nobody at the dinner table has been let in on the real implications of his oration. This reverses the “generous” nature of Gabriel’s earlier amendments to his speech (since he is ultimately uninterested in whether his speech is “above the heads of his hearers” [*D* 179]) and results in him rejecting difference merely for its own sake, transforming his advocacy of “humanity,” “hospitality,” and “kindly humour” into an empty performance of exclusionary flattery whose audience is solely himself.

Gabriel’s concluding remarks confirm the performative and narcissistic nature of his speech. Whereas the first half of his address focused on the exclusion of the “hypereducated” generation epitomized by Miss Ivors, the second half is comprised primarily of flattering characterizations of the Morkan sisters that sharply depart from

what we know to be Gabriel's actual attitude towards his aunts. Considering his earlier characterization of his aunts as "two ignorant old women," Gabriel's subsequent celebration of the Morkan sisters as the "Three Graces of the Dublin musical world" becomes an empty flattering gesture instead of an earnest appreciation of their hospitality (*D* 205). Rather than embrace their kindness despite his feelings that they are inferior, Gabriel chooses to reshape their otherness into an elevated symbolic representation that demonstrates his cultural sophistication. Thus, when he bids the table to "drink to their health, wealth, long life, happiness and prosperity," he suppresses the otherness he finds threatening and characteristic of a lower "grade of culture" under a generic banner of "hospitality" (*D* 206).

Gabriel's dinner speech thus concludes an evening of social interaction that reveals his tendency to reconstruct the otherness of his counterparts into admiring reflections of his generosity and high culture. While the temptation may be to read these encounters as isolated examples of cultural snobbery, reading Gabriel's conversations and social performances with respect to his initial representations of Gretta reveal another factor behind his behavior. The hospitable paternalism inherent in Gabriel's primary relationship becomes amplified on a broader scale throughout the evening, as his determination to transform Gretta's "country cute[ness]" into reflections of his cultural sophistication reveals both the preoccupation with sameness that dominates his interactions with his fellow guests and the colonial implications of micropolitical rejections of otherness. The dinner speech may seem to be a success to him, but his inability to embrace his audience's differing social identities confirms his refusal to affirm the "many-faced otherness" that Buber argues is essential to maintain productive



relationships within the body politic. What we are left with at the party's conclusion is an awareness of the monologic nature of Gabriel's social etiquette, a narcissistic obsession with sameness that ultimately will permeate the "friendly pity" he will display towards his grieving wife at the story's end (*D* 223).

## II. The Face for which Michael Furey Had Braved Death

Towards the middle of his speech, Gabriel states that "our path through life is strewn with many ... sad memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living." In a sense, the ecstatic lust that fills Gabriel's mind throughout the second half of "The Dead" constitutes his failure to take his own advice. While his memories of marital bliss are not necessarily sad, Gabriel's thoughts throughout their journey from the Morkan house to the hotel constitute a determination to "linger on the past" (*D* 205), to envision the joyous recollections of his early relationship with Gretta so as to cover over their present marital stagnation. Such an obsession may entice Gabriel with the possibilities of sexual conquest, but by subordinating his awareness of the present to a remembrance of the past, Gabriel retreats into a narcissistic celebration of his own romantic prowess that renders inevitable the misrecognition at the heart of his concluding encounter with Gretta. What occurs during the story's final exchange constitutes Gabriel's final encounter with the otherness at the heart of his relationship with his wife, and the way that he responds to the revelation of Michael Furey will go a long way towards evaluating the epiphany he experiences.

### A. The Woman on the Staircase

At the party's conclusion, Gabriel finds his wife standing on the Morkans' staircase listening to Bartell D'Arcy sing *The Lass of Aughrim*. As he watches his wife react to the music, Gabriel intellectualizes Gretta's emotional state:

There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter. (*D* 211)

Characteristic of his earlier efforts to symbolize his wife, Gabriel's interpretation of Gretta's reaction to the music relies on material observations that classify her thoughts and emotions according to her physical characteristics. Numerous critics have read this gesture as further evidence of Gabriel's cultural snobbery, subordinating the specific emotions conveyed by Gretta to a masturbatory mental exercise that validates his artistic and cultural knowledge.<sup>54</sup> Since my reading of this scene coincides with this analysis, I will only offer a few additions. First, the narcissistic nature of Gabriel's gesture is confirmed not by his perception that Gretta is a "symbol of something," but rather by his concession that his wife is *not* a symbol. His observation that the "grace and mystery in her attitude" makes it seem "*as if* she were a symbol" demonstrates that Gabriel is fully conscious that his wife is not the symbolic representation that he constructs. This makes Gabriel's decision to symbolize her anyway a deliberately performative gesture that

---

<sup>54</sup> Henke argues that "Shrouded in grace and mystery, Gretta becomes a model of feminine tranquility, a romantic image of blue and bronze, blurred in a setting of vague nostalgia. Her feelings are framed and appropriated, her passions castrated and erased" (*Desire* 44). Norris similarly notes that "The very form of Gabriel's gesture toward woman - the rhetorical question ('He asked himself what is a woman ... a symbol of') that proclaims its disinterest in what woman is in favor of parading its own profundity - masks artistic conceit as gyneolatry" (*Suspicious* 219).

subordinates Gretta's otherness to his intellect, reducing her to a mere object of inquiry and thus forgoing the opportunity to forge an authentic connection with her.

Second, the parallels between this artistic rendering of Gretta and their earlier exchange over the goloshes demonstrate the pervasiveness of Gabriel's symbolic attitude towards his wife. Indeed, his preoccupation with her "blue felt hat" and the "bronze of her hair" echoes the earlier gaze of his "admiring and happy eyes," which "wander[ed] from her dress to her face and hair" throughout their conversation with the Morkan sisters. Especially considering his earlier determination to present his wife as the opposite of "country cute," this sustained effort to envision Gretta as a symbol of wifely grace signifies Gabriel's desire to supplant her otherness with a characterization of a sophisticated wife that validates his social worth. This symbolic gesture thus reveals the prevalence of Gabriel's fear of difference in his romantic desire, illustrating that the exclusion of otherness that comprised his encounters throughout the dinner party ultimately stem from his struggles to accept the "grace and mystery in [Gretta's] attitude."

Finally, the vague nature of Gabriel's representation foreshadows his misrecognition of Gretta's emotional state. Gabriel's reaction to seeing his wife is not significant simply because he represents her as a symbol, but rather because he recognizes her to be a symbol "of something." His reliance on her physical appearance to signify her emotional state may encapsulate his wife as a symbol, but it is incapable of the understanding needed to embellish that symbol in any significant manner. Thus, Gabriel's inability to articulate comprehensively the symbol that Gretta represents produces an incomplete interpretation that fails to grasp the significance of her emotions. This makes it inevitable

that Gabriel misrecognizes the “colour on her cheeks” and the “shining” of “her eyes” as evidence that she feels the desire that festers in him during this encounter, as his determination to construct Gretta into a symbolic and submissive mirror of his desire only results in an incomplete representation of a generic love object.<sup>55</sup>

While the symbolic representation of Gretta on the staircase illustrates Gabriel’s narcissistic love for his wife, the memories stirred by that representation bolster his romantic self-absorption. As the Conroys search for a cab to the hotel, “moments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory” (*D* 214), as Gabriel’s obsession with the symbolic Gretta compels him to recollect past marital bliss that contrasts with the stagnancy he attributes to their present relationship. Such recollections demonstrate Rickard’s contention that “Gabriel . . . tries to create a past better than the present in order to avoid facing the present” (69). While Rickard specifically refers to the dinner speech, his reading applies just as well to this situation since Gabriel’s desire to live within the warm memories of past romance entices him to ignore the marital rut into which he feels they have fallen. This obfuscation of the present is evidenced further by the “wave of yet more tender joy” that “escape[s] from his heart” as a result of these memories, which encourages Gabriel to “recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy” (*D* 215). Not only do such desires contradict Gabriel’s earlier warnings against “linger[ing] on the past,” they speak to his continued efforts to promote a fantasized romance with a symbolic Gretta over the present relationship he has with her, and his longing to “recall to her those

---

<sup>55</sup> Leonard observes that “Gretta’s ‘attitude’ on the stairs is precious to Gabriel. He is excited because he feels he owns what he sees . . . This is called love, but what has caused her to assume this attitude has nothing to do with him” (304).

moments” foreshadows his attempts in the hotel room to force Gretta to comply with his fantasy.

The monologic nature of this symbolic desire is evidenced further by Gabriel’s disinterest in conversing with his colleagues during the cab ride:

He was glad of its rattling noise as it saved him from conversation. She was looking out of the window and seemed tired. The others spoke only a few words, pointing out some building or street. The horse galloped along wearily under the murky morning sky, dragging his old rattling box after his heels, and Gabriel was again in a cab with her, galloping to catch the boat, galloping to their honeymoon. (*D* 215)

What is significant about this observation is not simply that Gabriel’s fantasy dissuades him from interacting with anyone, but that Gretta is included among the list of people with whom Gabriel is “saved” from conversing. The juxtaposition of Gabriel’s relief over being “saved . . . from conversation” and Gretta’s “tired” stare “out of the window” demonstrates that the lust generated by Gabriel’s misapprehension of Gretta’s emotion does not encourage him to communicate with her. Instead, he leaves his wife behind and transports back to the cab ride during their honeymoon, eschewing their present-day relationship for further experience of their past romance. This explicit comparison between their symbolic and actual relationships reveals that the romantic fantasies developed by Gabriel during their journey to the hotel have no place for his wife to participate, but are instead monologic, masturbatory longings for past connubial bliss. Thus, when he uses the desire stirred by these memories to envision a sexual union between them at the hotel, the monologic nature of those memories guarantees that the fantasy he constructs disqualifies any empathetic embrace of her agony, subordinating whatever emotions that were actually stirred by *The Lass of Aughrim* to the generic devotion needed to fulfill Gabriel’s desires.

The specific description of Gabriel's sexual fantasy confirms this exclusion of Gretta's otherness. As they head to their hotel room, Gabriel rehearses his anticipated sexual encounter in his mind, and the fantastic description that results demonstrates the inevitable expulsion of Gretta's longings from his desires:

After the kindling again of so many memories, the first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust. Under cover of her silence he pressed her arm closely to his side; and, as they stood at the hotel door, he felt that they had escaped from their lives and duties, escaped from home and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure. (*D* 216)

Once again, Gabriel's "keen pang of lust" is enabled "under cover of [Gretta's] silence." By isolating his wife's "silence" as the catalyst for their "new adventure," Gabriel explicitly reveals that the renewal of marital love he desires to consummate has no place for the emotions his wife is experiencing. Rather than acknowledge her disturbed mood, Gabriel uses the silence perpetrated by that mood to construct a fantasized encounter in which Gretta will submit to his romantic prowess. Indeed, his subsequent longings to "seize her" (*D* 217) and "crush her body against his" (*D* 218) illustrate his impulse to subordinate her anguish to his lust, confirming the narcissistic, monologic desire triggered by and thus inextricably linked to his symbolic perceptions of Gretta.

#### B. A Strange Friendly Pity

The disparity between Gabriel's imagined encounter with Gretta and the reality of that experience needs little direct engagement. It is indeed nothing revolutionary to assert that Gabriel's assertions of romantic and sexual dominance are supplanted by the primacy of Michael Furey in Gretta's mind. It is also unnecessary to devote substantial analysis to the resulting reconceptualization of class and social hierarchies since most scholars will stipulate that Gabriel's realization that a "boy in the gasworks" could consume his lover's

thoughts forces him to reevaluate the socio-cultural assumptions that had dominated his encounters throughout “The Dead” (*D* 221). Instead, what requires our attention throughout the conclusion to Joyce’s story is not the story of Michael Furey itself, but how Gabriel perceives this story to take place and the conflict that emerges between Gabriel’s and Gretta’s apprehensions of the Galway boy’s fate. Doing so enables us to ascertain the ways in which the hospitable paternalism that Gabriel performed at the Morkans’ party influences his reactions to his wife’s anguish, which clarifies our understanding of both the form of love he expresses at the story’s conclusion and the ability of that love to translate into an ethically productive epiphany.

It is generally agreed that at the end of “The Dead,” Gabriel enters into a “different kind of communion with [Gretta] than he had anticipated, resulting in his recognition of her otherness” (Rice 47). Indeed, the majority of Joyce scholars argue that the revelation of Michael Furey transforms the shallow genteelness that Gabriel initially enacts into a “strange, friendly pity” for his wife’s misery (*D* 223), which compels him to “[reject] both [his] narcissistic and naturalistic selves” (Balsamo 773).<sup>56</sup> However, while Gabriel’s attitude towards his wife may seem softer and more humble at the story’s conclusion, the actual affection that he expresses towards Gretta is only further proof of the narcissistic ambivalence towards difference that typifies his generosity throughout the text. In actuality, Gretta comes closest to an empathetic embrace in “The Dead,” whereas Gabriel’s continued preoccupation with sameness and self-serving sympathy ultimately undermines his redemptive potential. To realize this, we must compare Gretta’s anguish during this scene to Gabriel’s reactions to that anguish to discover the differing attitudes

---

<sup>56</sup> Weatley-Lovoy also notes that “The imperative mood [of his concluding thoughts] indicates that Gabriel is talking *to himself*, a distinct shift toward the dialogical and a first step toward true reflexivity. He has interiorized the voice of the other and is engaged in an inner dialogue” (188-9).

toward otherness at the heart of their contrasting understandings of Michael Furey's tragedy.

Initially, Gabriel ignores the substance of Gretta's remorse by transforming her memories into a romantic competition with Michael Furey. While numerous scholars have argued that Gretta's account of Furey "relegat[es] Gabriel Conroy to the persona of the retroactive cuckold" (Benstock *Dubliners* 164-5),<sup>57</sup> the antagonism between the two rival "suitors" is constructed entirely in Gabriel's head. He may feel that "while he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another," but at no point during Gretta's recollection of Galway does she articulate such a comparison or supplant her love for Gabriel with her anguish for Michael Furey (*D* 221). Rather, Gretta solely laments the tragic death of the "boy in the gasworks," a compassionate reaction to being reminded about a childhood tragedy that has nothing to do with her marriage. While Gretta's melancholy is brought about by empathizing with Michael Furey's illness and death, Gabriel's "dull anger" is triggered by how this death influences him, isolating their different approaches to otherness in a manner that parallels Mrs. Sinico's and Duffy's reactions to the Rotunda concert's failure. This disparity is bolstered by Gabriel's "cool interrogation" of his wife, where his ironic supposition that "you were in love with this Michael Furey" is clarified by Gretta that "I was great with him at that time,"<sup>58</sup> which

---

<sup>57</sup> Norris goes a step further in reading this scene as Gretta's revenge against Gabriel, arguing that she "takes revenge for a denied trip to Galway by revisiting it spiritually and romantically in a way that displaces her husband forever from the passional center of her life and marginalizes him in his own self-image" (*Suspicious* 217).

<sup>58</sup> Seamus Deane's footnote in the Penguin *Dubliners* describes this phrase as "slang" that implies that Gretta "got along very well with him to the point where the relationship might well have become serious, though as yet without any great sexual connotation" (*D* 316fn). By contrast, Gifford notes that "the connotation of the word ['great'] is the intimacy of friendship rather than of 'love'" (*Joyce* 124). In either case, what's being described by Gretta is a serious emotional bond that does not approach the sentimental



reveals that she did not experience the stereotypical love with Michael Furey that Gabriel assumes and that whatever romantic connection that was experienced “at that time” has now worn off (*D* 221). For those reasons, the tears that Gretta sheds are not the tears of lost love, but are rather evidence of her ability to experience the emotional and physical deterioration that comprised Michael Furey’s death. Gabriel and Gretta are thus talking at cross purposes, and his insistence on projecting a romantic competition where it does not exist demonstrates his inherent disinterest in empathizing with either his wife or her former companion.

Gretta’s subsequent attempts to envision Michael Furey confirm her empathetic reaction to his otherness. One could argue that if Gabriel is guilty of a narcissistic obsession with the physical appearances of Gretta, Lily, and Miss Ivors, then Gretta’s evoking the image of Michael Furey at the conclusion of “The Dead” is complicit in a similar narcissism. However, Gretta’s representations of the “expression” in Michael Furey’s “big dark eyes” are not designed to assign him a socio-cultural identity or to highlight her sophistication (*D* 220). Rather, her focus on his love for her and his death provides the Galway boy with an identity that transcends social categories, and it enables Gretta to empathize with his tragic fate and affirm their emotional connection. Just as Emily Sinico feels compassion towards the singers having to perform to an empty Rotunda, Gretta’s lament for Michael Furey is guided by her compassion for his tragedy. (“He died when he was only seventeen. Isn’t it a terrible thing to die so young as that? [*D* 221].) Gretta’s characterization of Michael Furey as a person instead of a symbol thus enables her declaration that “I think he died for me” (*D* 221) and her subsequent account

---

attachment that Gabriel assumes, making her anguish in the hotel room more characteristic of empathy than of romantic love.

of his death to bear witness to him in a manner that “confirm[s] him as creature and creation” (Buber *Knowledge* 69), which provides a thoughtful contemplation of a victim of West Irish paralysis.

By contrast, Gabriel’s refusal to acknowledge the image of Michael Furey proves his inability to empathize with others. While Gabriel’s previous encounters had been initiated by his contemplating the physical appearance of his acquaintances, when he first becomes aware that Gretta’s tears are shed for her departed friend, “Gabriel [is] silent [because] he [does] not wish her to think that he was interested in this delicate boy” (*D* 220). This performed disinterest influences his subsequent responses to Gretta’s story, as each of her attempts to envision the departed Galway boy are interrupted by Gabriel’s insistence that she continue describing his tragedy. When she pauses to note that “he had a very good voice, poor Michael Furey,” Gabriel interrupts her digression with a curt “well; and then?” that forces Gretta to continue recounting his death (*D* 222). Soon after, she notes that “I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree,” but she is again cut short by Gabriel’s question “And did he go home?” (*D* 223). In each instance, Gretta’s attempt to imagine her departed friend is denied by Gabriel’s insistence that she carry on with her story, which subsequently prevents him from relating to Michael Furey as anything other than a generic rival for Gretta’s affection that lacks any specific identity. Gabriel’s refusal to allow Gretta to describe the Galway boy thus becomes an explicit rejection of his otherness.

For that reason, Gabriel’s subsequent inability to “apprehend” the “wayward and flickering existence” of Michael Furey does not signify simply his transition away from the social categorization that has comprised his identity, as it is traditionally read.

Rather, it simply demonstrates Gabriel's ignorance of Michael Furey's appearance since he never let Gretta describe him (*D* 224). Thus, when he groups the "boy in the gasworks" with the "vast hosts of the dead" that he also evokes, Gabriel transforms his refusal to acknowledge Michael Furey's otherness into a broader inability to grasp the "many-faced otherness" of those who comprise his concluding epiphany (*D* 224). Even if Gabriel ultimately rejects the socio-cultural superiority that typified his attitudes towards others throughout "The Dead," he is still no closer to a comprehensive understanding or acceptance of otherness since he replaces social standing with a totalizing death whose inescapability unites all of humanity in a sameness similar to the "hospitality" he endorsed at the dinner table. Gabriel may recognize the fate that unites all beings living and dead, but his refusal to accept Michael Furey or the "vast hosts" he conjures up as anything beyond their inclusion in the body count prevents this epiphany from influencing his future interactions within the Dublin body politic in any productive sense.

Reading Gabriel's attitude towards Michael Furey in dialogue with Gretta's eulogy to her deceased friend thus demonstrates the underlying conflict between their two methods of dealing with otherness. Gretta's attitude throughout the hotel scene reveals the empathy at the heart of her interactions with others, revealing her desire to understand and mourn the tragedy of Michael Furey without ever denying her love for Gabriel. Specifically, her remark that Gabriel's lending the sovereign to Freddy Malins proves him to be "a very generous person" and her kiss affirming that generosity both demonstrate that the agony brought about by *The Lass of Aughrim* has not taken the place of her present love for her husband (*D* 219). Unlike Gabriel, Gretta can negotiate the past

and the present, as her empathy over a tragedy that occurred in her childhood is balanced with an acceptance of the love that comprises her marriage. Thus, Gretta's ability to love the sophisticated Gabriel Conroy and to mourn the "boy in the gasworks" simultaneously reveals the aggressive affirmation of difference that lies at the heart of her attitude towards her fellow Dubliners.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, Gabriel's "dull anger" over the revelation of Michael Furey indicates his overall unwillingness to accept others who are not reflections of his grandeur. That his anger gradually gives way to a "strange friendly pity" does not negate the continued refusal of otherness that undergirds that "pity." In fact, while some might argue that Gabriel's concluding epiphany enables him to understand his wife's situation and affirm her otherness, reading Gabriel's thoughts after Gretta has gone to sleep reveals his mental transformation to be simply a more benevolent version of the narcissistic preoccupation with sameness and the rejection of difference that he has demonstrated throughout "The Dead."

In her advocacy of a reformed Gabriel, Sonia Bašić draws upon "Gabriel's tender pity for his sleeping wife" as evidence that "his love is presented by Joyce as a good, human (and humanly limited) love" (35). While Gabriel's feelings for Gretta certainly become fonder at the end of "The Dead," his "tender pity" also imposes borders between himself and his wife that call that love into question. Not only is the dialogic nature of Gabriel's love compromised by an epiphany that occurs when Gretta is asleep, but his meditations on the memory of Michael Furey carry with them a suppression of his present affection for his wife. He initially notes that "it hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life," which demonstrates both his continued

---

<sup>59</sup> Richard Ellmann similarly contends that "'The Dead' represents in Gretta a woman with genuine maternal sympathy, which she extends both to the dead boy who loved her and to her inadequate husband" (*JJ* 295).

subordination of present responsibilities to past romantic bliss (even though the bliss is not his own this time) and the suppression of his amorous responsibilities to his wife. Also, the symbolic image he constructs of the sleeping Gretta is further alienated from his heart. Gabriel notes that “he watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife,” a gesture that could signify his desire to contemplate Gretta in a new way, but that also entails the suppression of his love for his wife in order to perform that contemplation. Rather than simply state that he saw Gretta in a different light, Gabriel explicitly represents her as a being other than his wife, which shows how his new-found admiration for Michael Furey’s sacrifice compels him to downplay his humdrum perception of his marriage. Thus, when he notes that his image of Gretta “was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death,” he preferences the passion encapsulated in the image of the dying boy over the haggard expression of the grieving wife, revealing the “strange friendly pity” spurred by these contemplations to continue to promote past romance over present stagnation (*D* 223).

In addition, Gabriel’s characterization of Michael Furey as a romantic paragon undercuts the viability of his epiphany. While his concluding thoughts about the Galway boy are kinder than his previous rejections, these benevolent representations still fail to acknowledge him as anything other than an abstract image, this time as a tragic romantic hero. That Gabriel formulates contradictory generic impressions of Furey at the story’s conclusion both highlights the arbitrary nature of his attitudes towards others and nullifies the redemptive potential of his epiphany since his positive impression of the Galway boy replaces his otherness with a stereotypical romantic identity. In a sense, Gabriel’s “strange friendly pity” becomes a masturbatory intellectual exercise akin to his

contemplations of Gretta on the Morkans' staircase, as his envious admiration of Michael Furey's sacrifice essentially seeks to ascertain what a "young man standing under a dripping tree" is a symbol of (*D* 224). Similar to the monologic ecstasy stirred by *Distant Music*, this symbolic contemplation fills Gabriel with a self-pitying jealousy because he perceives that Michael Furey "pass[ed] boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion," whereas Gabriel will "fade and wither dimly with age" (*D* 224). Thus, when Gabriel recognizes that "she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live" (*D* 224), he does not convey an empathetic acceptance of either Gretta or Michael Furey; instead, he uses his wife's anguish as evidence that the Galway boy's death has affected Gretta more than Gabriel's love, which continues to reduce her empathetic outburst to a generic longing for lost love and reveals that the only tragedy for which Gabriel can mourn is his own.

This envious representation of Michael Furey's death complicates our ability to read the "generous tears" that subsequently "[fill] Gabriel's eyes" in any empathetic sense (*D* 224). While most critics point to this outburst as the confirmation of Gabriel's epiphany,<sup>60</sup> juxtaposing his "generous tears" with the melancholy envy that produced

---

<sup>60</sup> Rice contends that "Gabriel's recognition of this could be considered just as self-pitying as Duffy's final vision of himself 'outcast from life's feast' had Joyce not prefaced it by noting that 'Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes' (emphasis mine) and followed it with a significant moment of perception, assisted by the altruistic, generous tears that both blur and create Gabriel's vision" (47-8). Similarly, Riquelme argues that "we can read Gabriel's 'generous tears' as linked more with the snow, 'general all over Ireland,' than with his earlier self-interested magnanimity. In this alternative reading, Gabriel is not merely exercising his habit of dominating solicitude again; he has discovered through a heightened sense of mortality his kinship to a group" ("The Dead" 137). In addition to my narcissistic reading of these tears, I would note that even if we interpret "generous" in ethical instead of numerical terms, we cannot divorce this outburst from his earlier performances of "generosity" that were narcissistically guided (giving the coin to Lily, endorsing hospitality in the dinner speech, etc.). Specifically, we must read Gabriel's "generous tears" alongside Gretta's reference to her husband as a "very generous person" earlier in the hotel scene, specifically recalling that Gabriel brought up his lending Freddy Malins the sovereign primarily to get Gretta into bed. When we also remember that Gretta's ambivalence compelled Gabriel to condemn "the sottish Mallins and

them precludes us from using this as evidence of a shift away from narcissistic love. Since Gabriel cries primarily because he feels that he has been usurped by the Galway boy, we cannot read his tears as evidence of an empathetic connection towards either Gretta or Michael Furey, but must rather recognize them as a sign of Gabriel's continued preoccupation with his self-image. This preoccupation is bolstered by his subsequent concession that "he had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love," which may seem to connote the reclamation of his love for Gretta, but is actually a disturbing rejection of that love in favor of self-pity (*D* 224). When he proclaims that the passion that compels a person to die outside his lover's window "must be love," Gabriel implies that the romantic bond he shares with Gretta is not love, for "he had never felt" this passion that "must be love." By placing a romantically self-destructive Michael Furey on a pedestal, Gabriel confirms his preference for the passions of the past over the love of the present, transforming what could have been an empathetic breakthrough into another self-absorbed exercise and completing his characterization of his current relationship with Gretta "as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife." Similar to Duffy's appropriation of Mrs. Sinico's tragedy, Gabriel's "generous tears" constitute a narcissistic gesture by which he uses the tragedies of Michael Furey and Gretta Conroy to mourn his "soul's perpetual loneliness" (*D* 107), erasing both Galway characters from their own story and using the rhetoric of envious desire to perform his concluding rejection of otherness.

This refusal of difference undermines the epiphanous efficacy of the "snow [that] was general all over Ireland" at the end of the story (*D* 225). Most critics interpret the

---

his pound," we realize that Gabriel's performances of "generosity" are always guided by self-interest, which provides a story-specific context for us to read the "generous tears" he sheds at the end of "The Dead" (*D* 218).

concluding snowfall of “The Dead” as signifying Gabriel’s recognition of humanity’s interconnectedness, noting that “Gabriel is conceding and relinquishing a good deal—his sense of the importance of civilized thinking, of continental tastes, of all those tepid but nice distinctions on which he has prided himself” (*JJ* 249).<sup>61</sup> However, reading the snow’s erasure of boundaries alongside the narcissistic refusal of otherness that preceded it complicates our ability to interpret this erasure as beneficial. If true love requires the empathetic affirmation of the difference within others, then Gabriel’s advocacy of death as humanity’s equalizer risks covering over that otherness with a blanketing, all-consuming sameness.

Cheng may contend that this blanketing can “break down the barriers of difference ... into at least a recognition of generosity and sameness, all shades of equal color” (146-7), but to have Gabriel perform this gesture immediately after ignoring Gretta’s empathy and Michael Furey’s identity risks the erasure of more than the discriminatory signs of difference to which Cheng refers. Rather, it compels the dissolution of all markers of otherness by asserting that humanity’s common fate means that everyone is essentially the same, transforming the “sameness” Gabriel advocates at the story’s conclusion into a self-serving consumption of the other. The snow thus becomes a narcissistic gesture akin to Gabriel’s advocacy of “hospitality,” “good humour,” and “humanity” during his dinner speech, a totalizing endorsement of collectivity and sameness that represents “all the living and the dead” as reflections of himself (*D* 225). The concluding epiphany of “The Dead” may enable Gabriel to understand how death equalizes everyone, but that equalization ultimately prevents him from both the acknowledgment and the affirmation

---

<sup>61</sup> Earl Ingersoll similarly argues that the snow enables Gabriel to understand “the principle of identification, the power of metaphor allowing him to see his experience as synonymous with those of Michael Furey, his aunts, and all the living who will one day be among the dead” (153).



of otherness that is essential to promote ethically and politically productive relationships within the body politic. What emerges from Gabriel's "swoon[ing]" acceptance of the "general" snowfall is thus not a renewed love for Gretta or an acceptance of romantic and socio-political difference, but rather a resigned submission to a solitary "journey westward," a quest spurred primarily by the envious admiration of "a young man standing under a dripping tree" (*D* 225).

\*\*\*\*

Riquelme argues that the resolution of "The Dead" constitutes "Gabriel's recognition of his connection to the dead, his recognition—and ours—that 'death' ... is the word known to all men and all women" ("The Dead"136). While this is certainly true, it is also the central problem with Gabriel's concluding epiphany, as his subordination of love to death continues the obsession with sameness and the ambivalence towards difference that characterize his interactions at both the amorous and social levels. His final thoughts before drifting to sleep may prepare him "to set out on his journey westward," but there is no textual indication that the traveler who awakes the next morning will be closer to empathizing with either his wife, Michael Furey, or any of the Dubliners to whom he has patronized throughout Joyce's story (*D* 225). By reducing his affection for Gretta to a "strange friendly pity," Gabriel has denied himself the loving embrace that enables his wife to give life to Michael Furey through her response to *The Lass of Aughrim*, choosing instead to affirm an abstract human commonality that sacrifices a vibrant otherness to a stultifying sameness. While his "long[ing]" to bury "the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy" does precipitate a commitment to this "journey westward," his inability to acknowledge Gretta's anguish as anything other

than a refusal of his love guarantees that he will travel alone, ending *Dubliners* with an emotional exile indicative of the loneliness that inevitably results from self-absorbed attempts to negotiate one's position within societal paralysis.

In that sense, Gabriel's "journey" sets the stage for our next two encounters with Joycean lovers. Like the protagonists in *Dubliners*, Stephen Dedalus and Richard Rowan find themselves trapped within a stultifying body politic that constrains their free expression, and like Gabriel, both artists will choose the solitary life of the exile over the empathetic embrace of the lover. However, unlike the characters in *Dubliners*, the protagonists of *Portrait* and *Exiles* will be more successful in fleeing their "throng of foes," enabling us to examine the efficacy of romantic escape from the perspectives of two aspiring lovers who actually fly beyond the geographic borders of Irish paralysis. Nevertheless, Stephen's and Richard's inevitable returns to Ireland reveal the liberation offered by narcissistic desire to be both incomplete and temporary, and through their attempts to renegotiate their positions within the city from which they fled, we will see that the refusal to love one's fellow Dubliner inevitably short-circuits the narcissistic lover's escape from the suffocating sameness of everyday Ireland, even when s/he succeeds in leaving the country. As we shall discover, the shortest way to Tara is not via Holyhead, but is rather ventured along the streets of Dublin, as the desires for amatory freedom inevitably give way to the embrace of "Love's Old Sweet Song."

#### CHAPTER FOUR: A SADLY PROUD GESTURE OF REFUSAL

Towards the conclusion of *Stephen Hero*, Stephen tells Cranly that poetry is the exemplary form for the artist to profess amorous desires because “song is the simple rhythmic liberation of an emotion. Love can express itself in part through song” (*SH* 176). However, while Stephen may endorse the ability of poetry to liberate these emotions “in part,” he acknowledges the limitations of expressing his specific desires through the antiquated language of the genre. Echoing Joyce’s criticism of the “lying drivel” about “spiritual love and love for ever” (*LII* 191), Stephen argues that it is impossible for the modern lover to pledge eternal devotion to a loved one, and for that reason, he feels it necessary “to express his love a little ironically” (*SH* 174). In the ensuing conversation, Stephen clarifies these ironic expressions of love and in so doing, articulates the specific aspects of romantic desire that undergird his verses.

This episode is important for two reasons. First, it isolates Stephen’s artistic preoccupation with love, revealing amatory desire to be a primary catalyst for his aesthetic endeavors. Not only do his verses “give him pleasure,” but the “mature and reasoned emotions” of love provide the inspiration necessary for Stephen to fulfill his artistic calling. Second, it specifies Stephen’s attitude towards love, dismissing eternal love as a “feudal terminology” rendered obsolete by the contingency of the modern lover and endorsing instead an amatory interaction that is more akin to a form of gift exchange (*SH* 174). To Stephen, “it might be a test of love to see what exchanges it offers ... when we love, we give ... We give something, a tall hat or a book of music or one’s time and labour or one’s body, in exchange for love” (*SH* 175). This characterization of amatory exchanges corresponds perfectly to the Aquinas fragments in “Scylla and Charybdis,”

portraying love as a commodity that the lover gains in exchange for a desirable good or service. Using the fragments of the *Summa* as a guide, Stephen's longings are thus narcissistic because they value love not as a method to "will some good" to a loved one, but as a "thing" desired by the lover to strengthen a deeper self-love (Gifford and Seidman 221).

This amatory commodification continues in a conversation with Lynch, in which Stephen embellishes his marketplace of love. Here Stephen rails against the lover who pledges eternal devotion to a love object through marriage, noting instead that "I like a woman to give herself. I like to receive" (*SH* 202). Echoing Joyce's Ibsenian characterization of marriage as a form of prostitution, Stephen makes a distinction between love and freedom, which serves as the focal point of his meditations on amatory passion: "A human being can exert freedom to produce or to accept, or love to procreate or to satisfy. Love gives and freedom takes" (*SH* 203). These statements tie Stephen's aesthetic and political agendas to a critical delineation between love and freedom that advocates the latter's "acceptance" and fulfillment of univocal desires over the former's compassion and sacrifice. Rather than seeking a reciprocal attachment to a loved one, Stephen prefers a narcissistic form of amatory freedom that advances the good of his beloved only if it simultaneously promotes his own desires. This subordination of the love object to the lover becomes the foundation of Stephen's amatory aesthetics and a driving force behind his departure from Ireland.

In that sense, Stephen's attitude towards love enables Joyce to bolster the critique of amatory narcissism that he initiated in *Dubliners*, as his desire to advance his individual agenda through the submission of a love object complements the self-centered pursuits of

his predecessors. Not only does his economic characterization of marriage correspond to the sentiments expressed in “Eveline,” “The Boarding House,” and “A Little Cloud,” but Stephen’s efforts to use the admiring gaze of his love objects to transcend his oppressive everyday life recalls the attempts by the boy in “Araby,” Eveline, and Little Chandler to use love for escapist purposes, and his repudiation of Dublin becomes the catalyst for a self-imposed exile that Duffy would envy. Also, like his *Dubliners* counterparts, Stephen’s amatory meditations are almost entirely symbolic. Rather than affirming his loved ones’ otherness, Stephen ignores the specific attributes of his lovers, reducing them to either empty vessels into which he can pour his soul’s longings or general amatory images that he can use to rehearse his artistic and socio-political ideas. In so doing, Stephen “constructs these women out of the materials of his culture” (Harkness *Voices* 57) in the same way that young Joyce “fashioned” his muse for *Chamber Music* out of the “culture of generations before her” (*LII* 237), which foreshadows the inevitable elusiveness of Stephen’s love objects and enables Joyce to critique the sentimentality behind his character’s pursuits. Thus, by draining his love objects of their specific essence, Stephen substitutes a “cool scholasticism” for the dialogic, reciprocal confirmation that Buber argues is needed to maintain a meaningful relationship, reducing his pursuits to a “distancing form that abstracts love” (Polhemus 260).

Furthermore, like Little Chandler, Duffy, and Gabriel, Stephen foregrounds rejection in his amatory pursuits, representing his love as unrequited and acting under the assumption that he ultimately is rejected by his love objects. Even when no outright refusal occurs, the existence of differing viewpoints or qualified love is sufficient for Stephen to assert that his love has been betrayed and to justify his separation from his

love object.<sup>62</sup> Not only does this construct a self-fulfilling prophecy where the suspicion of unrequited love entices Stephen to act in ways that destroy his amatory quest, but it also excludes the acceptance of otherness that is necessary for true love because rather than “affirm the person [he] struggle[s] with” (Buber *Knowledge* 69), Stephen views the mere existence of otherness as a rejection of himself. This predominance of rejection and refusal in Stephen’s longings exacerbates his own fascination with refusal and limits his artistic options to the point where exile becomes the only alternative available.

### I. The Narcissistic Creation of Amatory Freedom

This section constitutes a portrait of the artist as a young lover. While *Portrait* is traditionally read as constituting the gradual development of Stephen’s artistic and egoistic persona, reading the text with respect to amatory desire reveals the young artist’s attitudes towards love to be shaped just as comprehensively as his art. Throughout *Portrait*, Stephen’s attempts to make sense of his fluctuating environment also force him to consider the role love plays in the construction of his individualist persona. The result of this self-examination is the development of his narcissistic attitudes towards amatory desire, as his efforts to craft an amatory framework through his reflections on Mercedes, God, and the bird girl construct a symbolic interpretation of love that denies any meaningful interaction with his love objects.

#### A. Madam, I Never Eat Muscatel Grapes

Stephen’s initial development of a concrete, amatory framework occurs in *Portrait*’s second chapter. Similar to Joyce’s childhood wanderings around the outskirts of

---

<sup>62</sup> Ellmann argues that “[Stephen] searches for disciples who must share his motives vicariously. As he demands increasing allegiance from them, step by step, he brings them to the point where they will go no further, and their refusal, half-anticipated, enables him to feel forsaken and to forsake them” (*JJ* 292).

Blackrock, Stephen envisions himself as a modern Edmond Dantes searching for his ideal Mercedes, and Joyce isolates the social significance of this preoccupation with romance by shifting between Stephen's meditations on love and his recognition of his family's deteriorating financial situation. By juxtaposing Stephen's brooding on *The Count of Monte Cristo* with the Dedalus family's perpetual relocation, Joyce illustrates that Stephen uses amatory desire to avoid the despair that permeates his family life.<sup>63</sup> In so doing, Joyce describes Stephen's pursuit of love as the quest to find an ideal love object whose submission will repair his wounded self-image.

Initially, Stephen's idealization of Mercedes demonstrates his preoccupation with characterizing love objects as symbols. Throughout *Portrait's* second chapter, Stephen's amatory longings are devoted entirely to an image, an ideal projection of Dantes's lover who will rescue him from the paralysis of his surroundings: "As he brooded upon her image, a strange unrest crept into his blood. Sometimes a fever gathered within him and led him to rove alone in the evening along the quiet avenue. The peace of the gardens and the kindly lights in the windows poured a tender influence into his restless heart" (*P* 67). What is striking about this observation is not simply Stephen's fantasized preoccupation with a fictional love object, but that his pursuits of Mercedes isolate him from his environment. While he fashions these romantic quests as havens from his family's financial deterioration, the "fever" the image "gather[s]" in his "restless heart" completely cuts him off from his surroundings, compelling him to "rove alone" in order to quell the "strange unrest" Mercedes instills within him.

---

<sup>63</sup> Harkness writes that "the 'strange unrest' in his blood, his restless heart' (64), his dreams of Mercedes from *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and his longed-for transfiguration all promise an escape from home and an increasingly inadequate father" (*Voices* 58).

The extent to which Stephen's idealized romance alienates him from his fellow Dubliners is evident in his subsequent meditations: "The noise of children at play annoyed him and their silly voices made him feel, even more keenly than he had felt at Clongowes, that he was different from others. He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld" (*P* 67). This longing establishes a mutual exclusivity between Stephen's everyday life and his amatory desires, pitting the "silly voices" of his fellow children against the "unsubstantial image" of his ideal Mercedes for supremacy over his attention. His observation that he "wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld" illustrates his preference for a symbolic encounter over the real-world "play" that comprises his childhood existence, strengthening an idealistic, solitary framework that eschews the social interaction necessary for true love. Rather than accepting and affirming the otherness of his fellow Dubliners, Stephen rejects their "silly voices" and instead affirms the image of an ideal Mercedes whose pursuit and capture will repair his "restless heart."

In addition, the specifics of his desired encounter with the "unsubstantial image" of Mercedes enhance the narcissistic nature of his longings. Stephen recognizes the inherent futility of seeking refuge in an imaginary lover, but he does not let that impossibility deter his quest. Instead, he takes comfort in "a premonition" that assures him that "this image would, without any overt act of his, encounter him" (*P* 67). While primarily enabling Stephen to brood on a fictional Mercedes despite the acknowledged impossibility of an actual encounter, the "premonition" also contributes to the development of his amatory narcissism in two ways:



First, it obviates the need for social interaction. Because Stephen believes that his Mercedes will eventually encounter him, he can distance himself from his environment with impunity because the people he encounters in his everyday life do not figure into his ideal romance. He can continue to take his solitary walks and shirk any social responsibilities because he knows that his romantic escape from his family's decline is inevitable. His life essentially becomes centered on the "unsubstantial image" in his soul, and the premonition enables him to ignore his interactions with and obligations to the real world.

Second, it subordinates the image of his love object to his prowess as a lover. What is telling about Stephen's premonition is not simply that the "unsubstantial image" will encounter him, but that his Mercedes will find him "without any overt act of his." This qualification illustrates that Stephen's fantasy does not consist of a reciprocal encounter in which Stephen advances the good of his loved one, but rather comprises a monologic encounter in which his loved one submits to his affection. His subsequent meditations on this "premonition" illustrate that his pursuit of Mercedes is desirable not because of any actual love for her, but rather because "in that moment of supreme tenderness he would be transfigured. He would fade into something impalpable under her eyes and then in a moment, he would be transfigured. Weakness and timidity and inexperience would fall from him in that magic moment" (*P* 67). Similar to Duffy's fascination with Emily Sinico, Stephen shapes the image of Mercedes to be a mirror that reflects his grandeur and serves as the catalyst to his spiritual awakening. Stephen thus values love not as an end to itself, but rather as a means to a narcissistic end, enacting the subordination of the

love object to the lover that will typify the “romantic irony” he will endorse in *Stephen Hero*.

This objectification of Stephen’s love object is also evident in his choice of Edmond Dantes as an ideal lover. Henke’s description of this choice foregrounds its direct relationship to Stephen’s narcissism, as his idealism of Dantes “identifies with a man betrayed by his friends and his mistress, unjustly exiled and imprisoned, but eventually able to wreak vengeance on those who failed him” (*Desire* 60). Not only does this illustrate the social alienation at the heart of Stephen’s pursuits, but it also reveals the prominence of rejection in his amatory meditations and his determination to refuse his love object during their climactic encounter. Stephen’s fantasized reenactment of *The Count of Monte Cristo* highlights his desire to conclude his pursuit of Mercedes by rejecting her love:

In his imagination he lived through a long train of adventures, marvelous as those in the book itself, towards the close of which there appeared an image of himself, grown older and sadder, standing in a moonlight garden with Mercedes who had so many years before slighted his love, and with a sadly proud gesture of refusal, saying:

-Madam, I never eat muscatel grapes. (*P* 65)

By highlighting Mercedes as the ideal love object, Stephen defines a woman who “slighted his love” as his beloved, committing himself to an amatory pursuit in which his feelings will never be completely requited. Stephen thus desires not to be the lover who affirms a loved one, but rather the jilted lover obsessed with revenge. When we read his fascination with Dumas’s novel in conjunction with his desired transfiguration, the extent to which Stephen’s amatory views necessitate the subordination of his love object becomes apparent. In order to attain the awakening he seeks, he must find an ideal lover that will submit completely to him. However, by identifying Mercedes as the love object

he seeks, Stephen renders inevitable the rejection of his desire, fulfilling his “premonition” by pursuing a real-world Mercedes whose inability to give him unconditional adoration justifies her exclusion. This emphasis on rejection and refusal in Stephen’s interpretation of love thus illustrates its narcissistic underpinnings and foreshadows the extent to which Stephen will alienate the people around him in order to obtain the transfiguration he desires.

However, Stephen finds it difficult to fulfill his premonition. While he feels it inevitable that his Mercedes will encounter him and spur his transfiguration, Stephen cannot shut out the stultifying nature of his surroundings, as the disappointments experienced at the Whitsuntide play and the Cork auction drive him further away from his loved ones. Much like Joyce’s inability to “speak to the girls I used to meet at houses” (*LII* 237), a brooding Stephen recognizes “his own futile isolation. He had not gone one step nearer the lives he had sought to approach nor bridged the restless shame and rancour that divided him from mother and brother and sister.” However, even though he acknowledges that “his life had grown to be a tissue of subterfuge and falsehood,” the “savage desire” for spiritual transfiguration continues to dominate his actions, reducing his everyday interactions to “idle and alien” trivialities (*P* 105). The necessity of achieving “the enormities which he brooded on” thus consumes Stephen, transforming the “fierce longings of his heart” into the “wasting fires of lust” that entice him to accept a prostitute as his Mercedes (*P* 105; 106). The beginning of *Portrait*’s third chapter reveals that whatever awakening that occurred through Stephen’s encounter with the prostitute has driven him further away from his fellow Dubliners, replacing the “wasting fires of lust” with “a cold lucid indifference” that “reign[s] in his soul” (*P* 110). His

desired transfiguration has thus alienated him from everyone he encounters, requiring him to seek another amatory awakening to repair his wounded self-image.

#### B. The Great Cash Register

The opportunity for this second awakening presents itself in the form of the retreat held by the college of the sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Numerous critics have cited Father Arnall's hellfire sermon in *Portrait's* third chapter as triggering the discursive shock to Stephen's system that compels him to seek salvation through religious devotion. While this assessment is certainly correct, the majority of scholarly attention to this sermon has glossed over the role that love plays in enticing Stephen to repent his sinful ways. The terrifying nature of Father Arnall's description of hell is a critical component of the retreat's power, but it is the sermon's juxtaposition of fear and love that appeals to Stephen's romantic sensibilities and ultimately encourages him to repent his lustful past.

Stephen recognizes the need to repent throughout the sermon, but initially his pride holds him back. What finally compels him to repent is the articulation of God's love as the guarantor of a successful confession. Father Arnall concludes his preaching by arguing that God's enduring compassion for humanity ensures that even the most mortal sins will be absolved by an earnest repentance:

[God] is there in the tabernacle burning with love for mankind, ready to comfort the afflicted. Be not afraid. No matter how many or how foul the sins if only you repent of them they will be forgiven you. Let no worldly shame hold you back. God is still the merciful Lord Who wishes not the eternal death of the sinner but rather that he be converted and live. (*P* 145)

By depicting God as a merciful, compassionate deity, Father Arnall presents the love of heaven as the alternative to the terrors of hell, guaranteeing salvation to those who

repudiate their sins through confession. His subsequent juxtaposition of God's love with the act of contrition reveals the interconnected nature of repentance and love, and the articulation of this relationship is what finally compels Stephen to "[bow] his head, praying with his heart" (*P* 146). His thoughts before his confession illustrate this determination to replace the "wasting fires of lust" with the heavenly embrace of God's love, pledging that "he would be at one with others and with God. He would love his neighbour. He would love God Who had made and loved him. He would kneel and pray with others and be happy. God would look down on him and on them and would love them all" (*P* 154). This newly-acquired pledge to "love his neighbor" stands in sharp contrast to the "contempt of others" articulated at the chapter's beginning (*P* 113), and Stephen's desire to "be at one with others and with God" signifies his attempts to replace a limited, self-serving desire with an all-encompassing, transcendent love.

However, reading Stephen's musings on God's love in conjunction with his earlier longings for corporeal desire reveals the narcissistic underpinnings of this spiritual transfiguration. Father Arnall's juxtaposition of fear and love may have enticed Stephen to repent his transgressions, but that rhetorical device also compels him to seek a self-serving interpretation of heavenly love that embraces God's compassion primarily to save his damned soul. He observes that "everybody in the chapel would know then what a sinner he had been. Let them know. It was true. But God had promised to forgive him if he was sorry. He was sorry" (*P* 155). Stephen's reasoning that "God had promised to forgive him if he was sorry" reveals his repentance to be an early example of his "marketplace of love" since he characterizes the spiritual connection he desires as a give-and-take situation where he offers his confession in order to purchase God's forgiveness.

The repudiation of his lustful desires through spiritual love thus becomes just another opportunity for Stephen to achieve his transfiguration, replacing Mercedes with God in his quest for the ideal love object.

Stephen's observation also reveals his continued alienation from his fellow Dubliners. His flippant "let them know" illustrates his inability to truly "be at one with others," as his pride compels him to separate himself from the others in his position. Even though the other inhabitants of the chapel are seeking the same repentance he desires, Stephen's inability to empathize with their common situations entices him to imagine them spurning his sinfulness, constituting a perceived rejection of his soul's longings that justifies their exclusion. Departing from his earlier pledge to "be one with" and "love his neighbor," this snide response to the possibility of his sins being discovered demonstrates Stephen's continued desire to seek transcendent love while driving a wedge between himself and others.

The narcissistic underpinnings of Stephen's religious devotion continue in his rigorous spiritual performances throughout *Portrait's* fourth chapter. While Stephen embraces his obligations at the sodality and submits his life to "a rigorous discipline" (*P* 162), his thoughts concerning the necessity of this discipline betray his self-serving intentions:

His life seemed to have drawn near to eternity; every thought, word and deed, every instance of consciousness could be made to revibrate radiantly in heaven: and at times his sense of such immediate repercussion was so lively that he seemed to feel his soul in devotion pressing like fingers the keyboard of a great cash register and to see the amount of his purchase start forth immediately in heaven, not as a number but as a frail column of incense or as a slender flower. (*P* 160)

Here, the metaphorical cash register reiterates Stephen's perception of God's love as a commodity that can be endlessly purchased through religious performance instead of a transcendent compassion that unites God and humanity in a loving embrace. By equating his "rigorous discipline" with incense and flowers, Stephen illustrates that his spiritual life is not brought about by a sincere desire to be "one with others and with God," but is rather an attempt to save his spiritual life by adhering to an economic interpretation of religious devotion. Stephen's sacrifice to God's compassion is essentially represented as a prison sentence, and his narrow design to use his "time served" as a ticket to his desired transfiguration constructs a substandard version of the love he seeks.

Unsurprisingly, Stephen's commodification of his religious devotion undermines his ability to attain the transcendent love he desires. While he characterizes the world as "one vast symmetrical expression of God's power and love" (*P* 162), Stephen is incapable of experiencing that love and compassion in his heart. He recognizes the centrality of the "passions of love and hate" in the religious life to which he has pledged himself, but his self-serving commitment to that life makes him "unable to harbour them for any time or to force his lips to utter their names with conviction." Instead of being tied to God and humanity in an all-encompassing love, Stephen's adherence to the "great cash register" of religious performance only purchases a "brief iniquitous lust" that "slip[s] beyond his grasp leaving his mind lucid and indifferent" (*P* 161). He may feel that his spiritual redemption can be obtained solely through overt spiritual obligations, but his unwillingness to sacrifice his individual desires and to give himself completely to God's compassion merely results in a half-hearted devotion to a transcendent love.

The half-hearted nature of this commitment is evident in Stephen's attitude towards his fellow Christians. His subsequent thoughts demonstrate both the incompatibility of his spiritual obligations with compassion towards others and the futility of his desire to fulfill those obligations apart from others:

To merge his life in the common tide of other lives was harder for him than any fasting or prayer, and it was his constant failure to do this to his own satisfaction which caused his soul at last a sensation of spiritual dryness together with a growth of doubts and scruples. His soul traversed a period of desolation in which the sacraments themselves seemed to have turned into dried up sources. (*P* 164)

Stephen's inability to "be at one [both] with others and with God" demonstrates the inevitable failure of his desire for spiritual transfiguration. While he is willing to interpret Father Arnall's sermon literally by punishing his senses and seeking continual repentance, Stephen's failure to "merge his life" with his fellow Christians betrays the spirit of that sermon because he is unwilling to sacrifice himself meaningfully for others. By refusing to love his neighbor as himself, Stephen adopts instead a hollow, incomplete form of religious devotion that will inevitably fall short of achieving his salvation. The incompleteness of this narcissistic devotion is evidenced by the gradual deterioration of the religious discipline to which Stephen submits himself, as his continued rejection of others transforms the sacraments he upholds into "dried up sources," ironically unraveling his encounter with God through each subsequent performance of that encounter. His subsequent musings on his hollow confessions demonstrate this insufficiency, as the sacrament Stephen deems integral to his salvation now perpetuates "restless feelings of guilt" and creates an endless cycle by which "he would confess and repent and be absolved, confess and repent again and be absolved again, fruitlessly" (*P* 166). By subordinating his obligation to love others to his rigorous devotion to a



narcissistic reawakening, Stephen denies himself the transcendence that his initial confession made possible.

The inevitable deterioration of that transcendence is evident in Stephen's rejection of "the chill and order" of the Catholic life (*P* 174). Indeed, Stephen's reactions to the sodality director's proposal illustrate both his growing indifference to spiritual love and his restless attitude towards the sacrifice and compassion needed to obtain that love. He may briefly consider the director's offer and imagine himself to be a priest, but those specific contemplations illustrate the increasingly narcissistic nature of his religious framework:

How often had he seen himself as a priest wielding calmly and humbly the awful power of which angels and saints stood in reverence! His soul had loved to muse in secret on this desire. He had seen himself, a young and silentmannered priest, entering a confessional swiftly, ascending the altarsteps, incensing, genuflecting, accomplishing the vague acts of the priesthood which pleased him by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it. (*P* 171)

Stephen thus finds the priesthood desirable not because of the position's devotion to God and humanity, but rather because it grants him the "awful power" that would enable him to be revered by angels and saints. By recognizing that he "loved to muse in secret on this desire," Stephen reveals that his religious adoration is not brought about by a humbling compassion, but is rather compelled by a proud desire to obtain a transcendent power over humanity that would compel the adoration of the masses. This observation exacerbates his growing indifference towards Christ's universal commandment, replacing his desire to love his neighbor with a more powerful yearning to compel his neighbors to love him. However, even this transcendent power is ultimately insufficient to entice his acquiescence to a life of endless religious devotion, and his refusal of the director's proposal in order to "be elusive of social or religious orders" constitutes his greatest

endorsement of freedom over love (*P* 175), which necessitates the renewal of his romantic quest to discover an alternative to the spiritual compassion he rejects.

### C. The Day of Dappled Seaborne Clouds

The climax of this renewed quest occurs on Dollymount strand. As Simon Dedalus inquires about enrolling his son in the University College of Dublin, Stephen ponders the new intellectual opportunity that potentially awaits him, representing this scholarly path as an escape from the “chill and order” of the religious devotion that he has since rejected. In language reminiscent of the premonition concerning Mercedes, Stephen considers these thoughts to be an “elfin prelude” to an unforeseen destiny that will enable him to eschew completely the Catholic Church in favor of the free intellectual life he now considers integral to his transfiguration (*P* 179). His subsequent castigation of the Christian brothers he encounters in Dollymount illustrates the extent to which his rejection of religious love constitutes an uncompromising advocacy of intellectual freedom:

It was idle for him to move himself to be generous towards them, to tell himself that if he ever came to their gates, stripped of his pride, beaten and in beggar's weeds, that they would be generous towards him, loving him as themselves. Idle and embittering, finally, to argue, against his own dispassionate certitude, that the commandment of love bade us not to love our neighbour as ourselves with the same amount and intensity of love but to love him as ourselves with the same kind of love. (*P* 180)

This rejection of the Christian brothers reveals both the role Stephen's unwillingness to abide by Christ's universal commandment plays in his rejection of the Church and the narcissistic nature of the intellectual life with which he replaces his religious devotion. His inability to love his neighbor as himself “with the same kind of love” illustrates an inevitable disconnect between himself and others that will typify the transfiguration he

desires. His subsequent decision to replace the commitment of the brothers with the unfettered expression of “the artist forging anew in his workshop out of the sluggish matter of the earth a new soaring impalpable imperishable being” thus signifies his desire to cast aside the bonds that compel individuals to sacrifice themselves out of love for each other (*P* 183), ensuring that his narcissistic desire will permeate whatever aesthetic persona he constructs.

This aesthetic opportunity is provided by a chance encounter with a girl on the beach “gazing out to sea.” In language that echoes his symbolic representations of Mercedes, Stephen begins to mold his techniques of artistic apprehension by representing this young woman as a bird:

Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane’s and pure save where an emerald trail of seaweed had fashioned itself as a sign upon the flesh. Her thighs, fuller and soft-hued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like featherings of soft white down. Her slate-blue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird’s soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face. (*P* 185-6)

Stephen’s descriptions of the bird girl’s “fuller and soft-hued” thighs, “soft and slight” bosom, and “long fair hair” clearly reveal his attraction to the girl. However, while Stephen is obviously enchanted with the young woman’s beauty, her ability to be assimilated into his symbolic representation of a sea-bird provides him the most excitement. Henke’s observation that Stephen’s representation of the girl “sublimates erotic agitation beneath effusions of purple prose” speaks to this preoccupation with symbolic desire (*Desire* 74), as it is his characterization of her bird-like beauty rather than his specific attraction that emboldens his adoration. In this sense, the bird girl loses any explicit significance and Stephen essentially becomes his own love object, as his

ability to create symbolic beauty out of the “sluggish matter” of his surroundings generates his most ardent romantic exclamation of the text.<sup>64</sup> By divesting the girl of her unique worth and envisioning her instead as a static representation of ideal beauty, Stephen thus unites his developing aesthetic persona with the amatory narcissism that dominates his reflections, and it is this ability to fulfill the prophecy of his last name through an unfettered expression of desire that compels him to cry “heavenly God” in an “outburst of profane joy” (*P* 186).

However, Stephen’s encounter with the bird girl is not as transcendent as he imagines. While he rejoices in his aesthetic apprehension of the young woman’s symbolic beauty, he ignores the stranger’s specific reaction to his gaze that reveals the ultimate futility of his adoration:

When she felt his presence and the worship of his eyes her eyes turned to him in quiet sufferance of his gaze, without shame or wantonness. Long, long she suffered his gaze and then quietly withdrew her eyes from his and bent them towards the stream, gently stirring the water with her foot hither and thither. The first faint noise of gently moving water broke the silence, low and faint and whispering, faint as the bells of sleep; hither and thither, hither and thither: and a faint flame trembled on her cheek. (*P* 186)

While Stephen foregrounds his adoration of the bird girl as the central epiphany of his quest, the girl’s reaction to this adoration reveals both the incompleteness of that epiphany and the misrecognition of his love. The observation that the bird girl “quietly suffers his gaze” only to “withdraw her eyes” indicates that whatever connection initiated by Stephen’s apprehension of her symbolic beauty has been terminated by her desire to ignore his lustful stare, articulating an implicit rejection of Stephen’s worship that echoes

---

<sup>64</sup> Eugene O’Brien notes the depersonalization of the bird girl that occurs through Stephen’s ecstatic apprehension of her, writing that “Woman has here reverted to another stereotype as the Muse, the source of all male inspiration – like the other images of whore and virgin, woman here is valued only for her role as man’s ‘other,’ as the ground that supports and nurtures male desire, whether sexual, religious or aesthetic” (213).

his preoccupation with Mercedes.<sup>65</sup> That his “outburst of profane joy” is uttered in reverence of a love object that casts his presence aside reveals Stephen to have once again constructed a romantic path to a desired re-awakening that contains the rejection of that romance at its heart. This demonstrates that the climactic scene on Dollymount strand is not an authentic encounter between two lovers that affirm each other’s otherness, but is rather the fetishization of a love object that suffers and ultimately rejects the encounter, which alienates the lover from the adoration he seeks and foreshadows the inevitable failure of Stephen’s desired transfiguration.

This inevitable alienation is evident in Stephen’s detachment from his surroundings throughout the episode. Even if the brief connection made with the young woman is sufficient to compel Stephen’s artistic calling, the narration of that connection is bookended by observations of his isolation from the others present on Dollymount strand. Stephen’s initial contemplation of his prophetic surname is juxtaposed with his recognition that “he was alone. He was unheeded, happy and near to the wild heart of life. He was alone and young and willful and wildhearted, alone amid a waste of wild air and brackish waters and the seaharvest of shells and tangle and veiled grey sunlight and gayclad lightclad figures, of children and girls and voices childish and girlish in the air” (*P* 185). Even though this observation illustrates a present contentment through his “happy” and “willful” heart, the repetition of Stephen being “alone” and “unheeded” dominates this description, illustrating the disconnect between the protagonist and the

---

<sup>65</sup> Alan W. Friedman similarly notices the detachment inherent in this epiphanous encounter, describing the scene as a “non-occurrence” (“Stephen” 81) and writing that “rather than serving as ‘the angel of mortal youth and beauty, an envoy from the fair courts of life’ who will ‘throw open before him in an instant of ecstasy the gates of all the ways of error and glory,’ as Stephen would have it, the ‘birdgirl,’ like Emma on the tram, becomes something he can imaginatively capture and make into what he will so long as no actual contact occurs” (“Stephen” 72).

“gayclad lightclad figures” who fail to recognize his presence. This disconnect portends the inevitable isolation that Stephen will experience as he pursues his desired path to unfettered artistic expression.

This isolation continues after Stephen’s “outburst of profane joy.” After he pledges “to live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life,” he recognizes that his epiphany has clouded his awareness of his surroundings (*P* 186). Upon emerging from his internal jubilation, “He halted suddenly and heard his heart in the silence. How far had he walked? What hour is it? There was no human figure near him nor any sound borne to him over the air” (*P* 186-7). Stephen’s recognition of this aloneness reveals that his encounter with the bird girl has done nothing to ameliorate his continual isolation from his environment, as the lack of “human figures near him” echoes his “unheeded” presence amidst the other inhabitants of Dollymount strand earlier in the episode. The juxtaposition of the lingering silence with the beating of his heart amplifies this isolation, signifying the inevitable lack of recognition or acceptance that will arise from Stephen’s choice of freedom over love. Even if the encounter with the bird girl fulfills Stephen’s artistic calling, the epiphanous outbursts that arise from that encounter are drowned out by the silence that surrounds it, and the fact that *Portrait’s* fourth chapter concludes with this quiet recognition shows that Stephen’s rejection of the obligation to love his neighbor in favor of the call “to recreate life out of life” simultaneously abdicates the romantic affirmation he desires and signals the beginning of an isolated and exiled artistic existence.

## II. The Rehearsals of Romance

This chapter now turns to *Stephen Hero* and the conclusion of *Portrait* to analyze the young poet's rehearsals of his amatory framework through his real life relationships. Indeed Stephen's desire to find the real-world counterpart to his ideal Mercedes encourages him to relate to the most important people in his life as similar symbolic catalysts for his transfiguration. In his interactions with his family, Emma, and Cranly, Stephen ignores the specific characteristics of their affection for him, focusing instead on the ways in which they can be re-presented to either validate or be excluded from his romantic and artistic agendas. Henke's contention that Stephen represents women as "one-dimensional projections of a narcissistic imagination" is thus revealed to transcend gender concerns (*Desire* 50), as his encounters with everybody he esteems sacrifice the specifics of those encounters to the potential for his beloveds to fit within an amatory freedom that is oxymoronically narrow and rigid. The end result is a cycle of rejection and alienation, as the inability of his real-world love objects to measure up to his ideal compels Stephen to refuse their affection and choose exile as the necessary path to aesthetic liberation.

### A. The Mystical Kinship

The most immediate effects of Stephen's artistic epiphany are felt in his gradual alienation from his family. Of course, Stephen's feelings of isolation from his parents and siblings are not the exclusive material of *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait's* fifth chapter, as the Dedalus family's economic deterioration initially compelled his fantastic quests in Blackrock in search of his ideal Mercedes. As far back as *Portrait's* second chapter, Stephen has felt that "he was hardly of the one blood with them but stood to them rather

in the mystical kinship of fosterage, fosterchild and fosterbrother,” demonstrating that the “fierce longings of his heart” that encouraged his amatory quest imposed barriers between him and his relatives that fomented an emotional as well as economic deterioration. However, while young Stephen had experienced familial alienation, he also recognized these feelings as indicative of a “futile isolation,” and the lustful desire that encouraged his pursuit of Mercedes was qualified by a “restless shame and rancour” that enabled Stephen to regret these deteriorating familial conditions (*P* 105). By contrast, the artistic epiphany on Dollymount strand quells those feelings of remorse and shame, as Stephen’s choice of freedom over love transforms what was once a “futile isolation” into a guarantor of his liberty. This renewed commitment to his transfiguration enables an older Stephen to refuse his family’s affection nonchalantly by representing their objections to his artistic pursuits as rejections of his love, necessitating the young poet’s casting off his familial relationships to attain the awakening he desires. Stephen’s endorsement of amatory freedom thus compels him to detach himself from the primary relationship in his life to pursue the promise of a symbolic, artistic calling.

The mutual exclusivity between Stephen’s calling and his familial obligations is apparent at the beginning of *Portrait*’s fifth chapter. Here the epiphanous conclusion to the preceding episode is sidetracked by a declining domestic setting, and the jubilant rhetoric of Stephen’s evoking the great artificer is replaced by his parents’ castigations of his intellectual life. His mother’s characterization of Stephen’s academic career as a “scandalous shame” echoes her earlier concern about this intellectual path in the fourth chapter, but his father’s dubbing Stephen a “lazy bitch of a brother” contradicts his earlier inquiries into college enrollment and illustrates the extent to which Stephen’s pursuit of



freedom has soured his relationship with his family (*P* 189). This isolation is highlighted further by the poet's subsequent frustration. As he walks alone along the Dublin streets, he broods upon "his heart already bitten by an ache of loathing and bitterness" and characterizes his parents' disapproval as typical of the "many voices offending and threatening to humble the pride of his youth." These reflections demonstrate Stephen's altered attitudes towards familial isolation, as the "shame and rancour" that characterized his adolescent feelings have been replaced by "loathing and bitterness," and the representation of his parents' disapproval as "threats" to "humble" a "youthful pride" reshape their concern into rejections of his heart. Additionally, the representations of his parents' objections as "offending and threatening" voices echo the "silly voices" of the Blackrock children that he rejected in favor of Mercedes, transforming his brooding into a refusal of familial love in favor of his artistic pursuits. His family's refusal to support unconditionally his aesthetic calling renders them unworthy of his devotion, and Stephen's predictable response to these objections is to "drive their echoes even out of his heart with an execration" (*P* 189-90).

However, while the conflict between familial love and amatory freedom is hinted at in *Portrait*, it is more explicitly pronounced in *Stephen Hero*. From the onset of this text, Stephen represents his familial obligations as direct threats to his artistic life: "his family expected that he would at once follow the path of remunerative respectability and save the situation but he could not satisfy his family. He thanked their intention: it had first fulfilled him with egoism; and he rejoiced that his life had been self-centred. He felt [also] however that there were activities which it <<would be a peril >> to postpone" (*SH*

49).<sup>66</sup> By tying his “self-centred” “life” to the “activities which it <<would be a peril>> to postpone,” Stephen characterizes external obligations as immediate threats to his amatory freedom because they delay his artistic pursuits. The juxtaposition of his family’s wishes with this declaration of “egoism” thus transforms his devotion to familial love into the unacceptable suspension of his agenda.

For this reason, the further Stephen pursues his artistic agenda, the more he becomes isolated from his relatives. As *Stephen Hero* progresses, his aesthetic platform compels him to qualify his displays of love towards his family, which alienates him from them to the point where he equates them to strangers. He contends that he “[does] not consider his parents very seriously” and characterizes their love as “open[ing] up misleading and unnatural relations between themselves and him” (*SH* 111; brackets mine), which blames his family for their isolation. This assignment of blame continues in Stephen’s subsequent reassurance of the reasonability of his familial devotion:

he considered their affection for him requited by a studious demeanour towards them and by a genuine goodwill to perform for them a great number of such material services as, in his present state of fierce idealism, he could look upon as trifles. The only material services he would refuse them were those which he judged to be spiritually dangerous and it is as well to admit that this exception all but nullified his charity for he had cultivated an independence of the soul which could brook very few subjections. (*SH* 111)

Once again, Stephen articulates an irresolvable divide between his desire for freedom and his obligations towards his family. However, Joyce describes this “charity” as both trivial and “all but nullified” by his “independence of the soul,” Stephen feels that such gestures are sufficient to requite his parents’ affection. This insistence on the

---

<sup>66</sup> In the explanation of his editorial process in the introduction of *Stephen Hero*, Theodore Spencer notes that words that were either deleted or replaced by Joyce are bracketed in the text, while passages that Joyce crossed out with a red or blue crayon, but did not explicitly delete, are “enclose[ed] ... between the marks << >>” (*SH* 18-9).

reasonability of his affection allows him to fit his familial “charity” within his amatory freedom since he conditions his affection on its lack of conflict with his aesthetic goals, and it enables him to blame his parents for their isolation by characterizing his family’s concern as unreasonable refusals of his love. Even though he acknowledges their affection, their desire for him to lead a respectable life conflicts with his desired “independence of the soul,” compelling him to characterize their concern as dissolving the bonds of familial love. Because his family refuses to submit to Stephen’s qualified displays of affection, their demands constitute the rejection of his love, compelling his dismissal of their concern in favor of his pursuit of artistic beauty.

Additionally, Stephen’s preoccupation with viewing people as symbols prevents him from relating to his family successfully on a pragmatic level. In rhetoric akin to the “mystical kinship” of *Portrait*, Stephen finds it increasingly difficult to consider himself related to his relatives, arguing that “there had never been any proof of that relation offered him in their emotional attitude towards him, or any recognition of it permitted in his emotional attitude towards them” (*SH* 127). The emphasis on “emotional attitude” in this statement reveals the relationship between the Daedalus family’s declining love for each other and the legitimacy of those familial bonds, as Stephen’s insistence that his parents refuse his displays of affection drives a wedge between himself and his family that calls their very right to claim kinship into question. Instead, Stephen represents the Daedalus family as the quintessential Catholic clan whose devotion to a religious doctrine that Stephen unconditionally rejects disqualifies them from gaining his empathy and esteem.

Nowhere is this representation more apparent than in Stephen's reactions to his dying sister Isabel. The young poet acknowledges his obligation to express sympathy and care for his sibling, but her steadfast adherence to Catholicism makes it impossible for Stephen to feel any reaction to her condition:

Isabel's case moved Stephen's anger and commiseration but he saw at once how hopeless it was and how vain it would be for him to interfere. Her life had been and would always be a trembling walk before God. The slightest interchange of ideas between them must be either a condescension on his part or an attempt to corrupt. No consciousness of their nearness in blood troubled him with natural, unreasoning affection. (*SH* 126-7)

This reflection reveals Stephen's rejection of Catholicism to be so totalizing that it prevents him from connecting emotionally to any of the religion's adherents. Even though he recognizes the possibility of commiserating with his sister, his characterization of this commiseration as a "condescension" represents Isabel as an inferior Catholic devotee to be humored by a magnanimous concern. This infantilizing description of his sister demonstrates the exclusionary potential of Stephen's amatory symbolization, as the fact that Isabel's religion dissuades him from comforting her signifies his willingness to sacrifice real-world emotional attachments that conflict with his intellectual framework. Stephen's willingness to dismiss Isabel despite his "consciousness of their nearness in blood" thus demonstrates his prioritization of the intellectual over the emotional realm, and the imagined "limited intelligence" and "pious docility" that he envisions would comprise her future reduces Isabel to "a stranger to him on account of the way in which she had been brought up" (*SH* 126).

Stephen's refusal to submit to his family's affection thus reveals the inevitable failure of his attempts to forge an authentic attachment to any of his fellow Dubliners. While Stephen attempts to find validation of his amatory framework through attempted

relationships with his counterparts, his “nullified” requital of his parents’ love and his refusal of Isabel reveal two fundamental limitations of that framework that will inevitably undermine any connection he seeks. First, his rejection of Isabel’s Catholicism signifies a broader refusal to acknowledge love objects whose beliefs run counter to his own. Rather than “affirm the person [he] struggle[s] with,” Stephen rejects Isabel because of her otherness and thus rejects the affirmation of multiple perspectives needed to forge a meaningful loving bond. Second, Stephen’s unwillingness to “condescen[d]” to his sister eschews the reciprocation that undergirds true love. While Stephen desires that his love objects submit unconditionally to his affection, his refusal to entertain his parents’ demands or to console his sister reveals that he is unwilling to return the favor. This determination to refuse anyone with different beliefs guarantees that Stephen will never find his desired love object in his everyday life because his intellectual rejections are so totalizing that they exclude every one of his counterparts. His rejection of familial love throughout *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait* thus signifies a broader rejection of the sacrifice and compassion needed to maintain an authentic emotional attachment and limits his potential romantic quests to pursuits of symbolic love.

#### B. The Most Deceptive and Cowardly of Marsupials

The real-world limitations of Stephen’s amatory freedom are also demonstrated through his interactions with Emma Clery. In both *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait*, Emma serves as Stephen’s primary Mercedes, a young woman whose beauty and attraction to him make her a viable candidate for his artistic muse, but whose religious devotion prevents her from submitting to his narcissistic notions of love. While Joyce may primarily use her as an alluring foil who cements Stephen’s uncompromising

condemnation of Catholicism, reading her religious acquiescence with respect to Stephen's amatory ethics actually reveals more about the lover than about his beloved. In fact, it is almost impossible to come to a reliable understanding of Emma because every representation of her throughout both texts is controlled by Stephen and filtered through his aesthetic and romantic lenses of perception. Thus, Emma struggles to function in either book as much more than a "metaphorical adjunct to the thoughts of the narrator" (O'Brien 213), and recognizing this enables us to view the encounters between them as opportunities to evaluate the practical efficacy of Stephen's amatory framework.

The incompatibility of Stephen's amatory freedom with his affection for Emma is most evident in *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait's* fifth chapter. As Stephen begins to prioritize his aesthetic goals over his Dublin obligations, he finds it difficult to love his childhood sweetheart in manners that do not conflict with his desires for freedom and exile. Since the epiphany on Dollymount strand has solidified his determination to become the artificer, it is unsurprising that Stephen attributes the difficulty in maintaining an attachment to Emma to the failure of her image to inspire his art. While he frequently contemplates her beauty, he repeatedly discovers that he is incapable of utilizing that beauty for artistic inspiration because Emma's affection is tied to moral and romantic obligations that oppose his desire to "be elusive of social or religious orders." Since to acquiesce to Emma would call his rejection of Catholicism into question, Stephen forgoes an amorous attachment, attributing the dissolution of those ties both to her unworthiness to be his muse and to her perceived betrayals of his love. Thus the more he pursues his transfiguration, the more he is compelled to act in manners that render that transfiguration

impossible, as his refusal to compromise his amatory freedom inevitably alienates him from Emma to the point where exile is his only option.

Initially, Stephen's observations at the Daniel family parties in *Stephen Hero* reveal the relationship between Emma's shifting aesthetic value and his waning affection. Both Joyce and Stephen recognize that "it was not for such [images] that [they] had constructed a theory of art and life and a garland of verse," but whereas Joyce developed a more meaningful attachment to Nora, the Stephen of *Stephen Hero* cannot escape the "vulgarity of [Emma's] manners," equating her cultural inferiority with a perceived inability to "understand him or sympathise with him" (*SH* 158). That he equates this inferiority with her declining sympathy not only shows that he characterizes her "vulgarity" as a rejection of his love, it also betrays the lack of reciprocity in their relationship since his constant denigrations of her Catholicism signify his refusal to "understand" or "sympathise with" Emma. Stephen's determination to "be sure of her" may connote an attempt to "understand" Emma (*SH* 158), but he never attempts to "sympathise" with either her principles or her affection, which denies the affirmation of otherness needed to develop their relationship. This ambivalent attitude thus privileges his "theory of art and life" and his "garland of verse" over her love.

This ambivalence is also present in Stephen's method to test the veracity of Emma's manners. His desire to "be sure of" her is not significant simply because it equates the "vulgarity of her manners" to the constancy of her affection, but also because it necessitates sex to test that constancy. By following his uncertainty with his "longing for a mad night of love" (*SH* 158), Stephen essentially requires Emma to surrender her body to his lustful advances to prove her loyalty. This envisioned test reveals Stephen's desire

for amatory mastery because in order to prove her love to his satisfaction, Emma would have to betray those religious principles that Stephen considers vulgar and stupid (*SH* 66). Rather than affirming Emma's otherness, Stephen attempts to destroy it, which limits the possible outcomes of his pursuit of Emma to either her consumption or his rejection.

This attempt at amatory mastery renders Emma's rejection of Stephen inevitable, as his desire to eliminate her "vulgarity" is contested by her refusal to submit completely to his longings. This refusal is evident early in *Stephen Hero*, where he acknowledges that "Emma allowed him to see her home several times but she did not seem to have reserved herself for him." Stephen's recognition that "above all things he hated to be compared with others" reveals the extent to which he desires Emma to "[reserve] herself for him," and his observation that "he would have preferred to have been ignominiously left behind" shows his determination both to isolate himself from his counterparts and to dissolve any attachment with Emma should she choose not to share that isolation. That he identifies her "body compact with pleasure" as the main reason why her lack of complete devotion has not driven him away (*SH* 66), when read with his subsequent desire for intercourse to "be sure of her," initiates the narcissistic comparison of love and freedom that his later conversations with Cranly and Lynch expound. In that sense, the acceptance of Emma's body through sex would validate Stephen's amatory freedom, which makes his offer of "a mad night of love" the climactic encounter of his amatory pursuit of her and the ultimate test of his amatory framework.

Unsurprisingly, Emma rejects this proposition. At first, her "large oval eyes" staring directly at the "disorderly figure beside her" demonstrate her empathy for his struggle



through life “without help or sympathy from anyone” (*SH* 197). However, when his monologue shifts from his despair to her “body compact with pleasure,” her flushed cheeks and tear-filled eyes signify her transition from sympathy to humiliation, and the removal of her eyes from his gaze and her hands from his grasp reveal the irreparable fracture of their loving connection. Her refusal reveals Stephen to be so obsessed with his own desires that he can neither perceive nor affirm the possibility that Emma does not share his desire for amatory freedom. Therefore, when his proposition is rejected, he reasons that her refusal was not because he insulted her love, but simply because he would not participate in a simonious Catholic marriage. His declaration that “I believe you hear my words and understand me, don’t you” is comically ironic given that his “wondering at [the] cause” of Emma’s tears reveal his inability and disinterest in either hearing or understanding her (*SH* 198). This reveals the extent to which Emma’s feelings are rendered superfluous in Stephen’s pursuit of her, as his uncompromising belief in the hypocrisy of the Church ignores that she could actually believe in it. Stephen’s preoccupation with his own desires thus reduces Emma to a generic love object, and the concluding characterization of their relationship as “all but union” signifies their inability to develop a productive, empathetic connection (*SH* 199).

Stephen’s disinterest in Emma is further evident in his reflections on her rejection. As he considers her justifications for storming away, Stephen rationalizes this outcome by blaming her deceptive adherence to the Catholic Church, revealing his determination to view her refusal as a rejection of his love. Because Emma chooses to advocate religious beliefs that Stephen feels do not “[imply] a more genuine emancipation than his own,” he represents her disgust as a “deceptive and cowardly” betrayal of his affection

(*SH* 210). This attempt to exclude Emma by depicting her as villainous continues her objectification for two reasons:

First, it attributes Emma's rejection to religion instead of love. Stephen cannot acknowledge that Emma was insulted by his proposal because to do so would invalidate his amatory freedom. Instead, he equivocates that "it is no insult ... for a man to ask a woman what I have asked you. You are annoyed at something else not at that" (*SH* 198-9). As he reflects on her refusal in the above passage, that "something else" becomes a "menial fear" to go against the hypocrisy of Catholic marriage that Stephen opposes. By attributing her reaction to a religious "attitude of insincerity or stupidity" (*SH* 210), Stephen maintains the validity of his attitudes towards love by characterizing Emma's humiliation as a religious rejection.

Second, it represents Emma as a symbol. While Stephen does not hesitate to deem Emma a "marsupial," his "anathemising" is not brought about by her specific attitude towards his proposition, but rather stems from the "insincerity" and "stupidity" of "the general attitude of women towards religion" (*SH* 210). Not only does this rebuke demonstrate his unwillingness to entertain beliefs that dissent from his own (especially given his assurance that "his nature was incapable of achieving such an attitude of insincerity or stupidity" [*SH* 210]), but the "general" nature of his condemnation denies Emma's voice even though he ostensibly rejects her because of that voice. Stephen's attitude throughout the proposal thus confirms his unwillingness to "understand" or "sympathise" with her condition, and his determination to use her to attain a passion that does not conflict with his amatory freedom pushes his greatest love away.

*Portrait* also illustrates the extent to which Stephen distances himself from Emma because of her incompatibility with his endeavors. These episodes may not feature the same conflicts as *Stephen Hero* and Joyce may not characterize Stephen and Emma identically in the two works, but the role that art plays in his rejection of her is still present in the transition from manuscript to completed text. This relationship is demonstrated during the two poetic endeavors that conclude the text's fifth chapter. Initially, Stephen's construction of the "Villanelle of the Temptress" uses Emma's interest in Father Moran as the impetus to cast her as his poem's titular siren. As Stephen ponders her interaction with the priest, we cannot help but notice that the exchange contains little if any actual flirting. Father Moran simply expresses optimism that women and the church will come around to the language movement, and Emma's participation in this dialogue is limited to the phrase, "And the church, Father Moran?" Still this response is sufficient for Stephen to "leave the room in disdain," arguing that "he had done well not to salute her on the steps of the library. He had done well to leave her to flirt with her priest, to toy with a church which was the scullerymaid of Christendom" (*P* 239). When reading his departure with respect to the conversation that provoked it, we see that Emma is not being charged with flirting with Father Moran, but rather with an interest in the church that depreciates her value as his love object. Indeed, her rapt attention signifies interest in Nationalist and religious ideas that Stephen has rejected, and thus Emma is criticized not because her Catholicism is a beguiling ruse, but because it is sincere.

What seems to anger Stephen the most is that Emma is willing to entertain a discussion with the priest to begin with. This outburst of "rude brutal anger" (*P* 239)

parallels *Stephen Hero*'s Stephen's irritation that Emma "did not seem to have reserved herself for him," especially considering his recognition that she would rather confess her sins to this priest of the "formal rite" than to her "priest of the eternal imagination" (*P* 240). This observation directly ties her Catholicism and her hesitancy to submit to Stephen to her suitability as his muse since she would have to act against her faith and sacrifice her "soul's shy nakedness" to Stephen for him to proclaim her loveliness poetically (*P* 240). By having this criticism spur the villanelle's completion, Joyce reveals that it is not Emma's duplicitous nature that is demonized in the poem, but rather her refusal to compromise her faith to Stephen's dominion, demonstrating his unwillingness to affirm the otherness of his love objects and foreshadowing his inevitable alienation from Emma.

This alienation is confirmed in a subsequent encounter on the library steps, where Stephen's inability to use Emma for poetic inspiration encourages him to cut ties with her altogether: "She had passed through the dusk ... Darkness was falling. *Darkness falls from the air*. A trembling joy, lambent as a faint light, played like a fairy host around him" (*P* 252-3). Stephen's equation of Emma's presence with Thomas Nashe's poetry shows his continued efforts to use her image for artistic purposes. However, when he subsequently uses this poetic description of her to envelop his visions of Covent Garden under a "darkness of desire" (*P* 253), he recognizes that "the images he had summoned gave him no pleasure. They were secret and enflaming but her image was not entangled by them. That was not the way to think of her. It was not even the way in which he thought of her. Could his mind then not trust itself?" (*P* 253). Stephen's assertion that his artistic exercise "gave him no pleasure" reveals that the dissolution of their

relationship has provoked an aesthetic ambivalence, replacing his previous outbursts of jubilation with a vague “darkness of desire.” His aesthetic exercise is further compromised because he incorrectly remembers the Nashe poetry, that “it was not darkness that fell from the air. It was brightness. *Brightness falls from the air*. He had not even remembered rightly Nash’s line. All the images it had awakened were false” (P 254). By acknowledging that he has mistaken “brightness” for “darkness,” Stephen highlights the futility of his “darkness of desire,” as his attempts to use Emma for artistic inspiration transforms what he had perceived to be “secret and inflaming” images into “lice born of the sweat of cloth” (P 254). These characterizations of his creations as “vermin” and “lice” (P 254) illustrate that Stephen’s mind truly cannot “trust itself,” as his refusal to connect emotionally with his muse forces him to evoke a misinterpretation of her image that taints each aesthetic creation it inspires.

Stephen’s first thought after recognizing this artistic misapprehension is to reject Emma as his love object. In rhetoric reminiscent of his rage over the Father Moran encounter, Stephen exclaims, “Well then, let her go and be damned to her. She could love some clean athlete who washed himself every morning to the waist and had black hair on his chest. Let her” (P 254). The juxtaposition of this rejection of Emma with his misapprehension of the Nashe poetry illustrates that when she proves incapable of aiding Stephen’s aesthetic endeavors, she no longer serves a purpose to his amatory freedom and must be cast aside. However, he again cannot represent his exclusion of Emma as a rejection of her affection because to do so would expose cracks in his narcissistic interpretation of love. Instead, he represents her shunning of him on the steps and her inability to inspire viable art as refusals of his desire, using his declarations that she

“could love some clean athlete” for all he cared and his subsequent suspicions of a relationship with Cranly to represent her as rejecting him for another person. In this sense, Emma truly does become a Mercedes for Stephen, as his continued pursuit of transfiguration is foiled by what he represents as unrequited love, and his resolution to “let her go and be damned to her” provides the “sadly proud gesture of refusal” that will complete this amatory quest.

### C. The Noblest and Truest Friend

While Stephen’s interactions with his family and Emma indicate his general unwillingness to love others who do not share his beliefs, he is willing to make an exception to this prohibition through his friendship with Cranly. Upon first glance, this disparate treatment seems puzzling: Stephen relates to his family as strangers and uses Emma’s Catholicism as justification for refusing her love, but the most genuine emotional connection depicted in either *Portrait* or *Stephen Hero* is made between Stephen and a friend whose “submissive deference” to “rabblement and authority” should also exclude him from the artist’s affection (*SH* 123). Yet despite cringing at Cranly’s religious devotion, Stephen “[feels] hope” when he “[looks] steadily into [Cranly’s] pair of bright dark eyes” (*SH* 108; brackets mine) and frequently walks “arm-in-arm” with him (*SH* 125). Even *Stephen Hero*’s narrator acknowledges that “it would seem at first somewhat strange and improbable that these two young men should have anything in common” given both their conflicting religious and political attitudes and Stephen’s desire to distance himself from anybody that shares such disparate beliefs. However, when we read Stephen’s connection to Cranly within his narcissistic framework of amatory freedom, two characteristics of this relationship explain its existence:

First, Stephen characterizes Cranly as submitting to his grandeur. While his family's and Emma's Catholic devotion get in the way of their relationships with Stephen, Cranly seems willing to subordinate his adherence to "rabblement and authority" to maintain his friendship with the poet. Stephen even acknowledges that he would normally consider Cranly's religious submission "a real sign of interior corruption had he not daily evidence that Cranly was willing to endanger his own fair name as a member of the Sodality and as a general lay-servant of the Church by association with one who was known to be contaminated" (*SH* 122-3). Cranly's religious devotion thus becomes excusable because his friendship with one of the "contaminated" signifies his willingness to betray his principles out of affection for his companion, making him the ideal love object for the poet.

Second, the monologic nature of their interaction ensures that Stephen doesn't have to sacrifice himself to maintain the relationship. While Stephen's interactions with other Dubliners are tainted by their disapproval of or disagreement with his egoism, he primarily feels affection for Cranly because his friend "seldom or never obtruded his presence upon these monologues. He listened to all, seemed to understand all, and seemed to think it was the duty of his suppositious character to listen [to] and understand. He never refused his ear" (*SH* 124-5). Stephen essentially treats Cranly as an empty vessel into which he can pour "all the tumults and unrests and longings in his soul, day after day and night after night, only to be answered by his friend's listening silence" (*P* 192). Indeed, his reference to Cranly's reticence as an "intelligent sympathy" and his acknowledged "special affinity" for this "indiscriminate vessel" demonstrate a direct link between Cranly's silence and Stephen's affection (*SH* 125;124). Cranly's seeming

willingness to settle for a monologic relationship thus enables him to be the submissive love object that Stephen desires.

However, this monologic relationship does not last. What begins as Cranly's willingness to listen to Stephen's longings and beliefs gradually becomes a frustration over the content of those longings and a desire to interject his feelings into their exchanges. Whether by explicitly voicing his disagreement or by letting his disapproval seep into his "listening silence," Cranly makes his objections to Stephen's "tumults and unrests" evident: "If a [conversation] monologue which had set out from a triviality seemed to him likely to run on unduly he would receive it with a silence through which aversion was just discernible and at a lull bring his hammer down brutally on the poor original object. At times Stephen found this ultra-classical habit very unpalatable" (*SH* 125-6). Not only does Joyce's replacement of "conversation" with "monologue" further emphasize the one-sided nature of Stephen's interactions with Cranly, but his description of the latter's attempts to "bring his hammer down" on Stephen's meditations convey both Cranly's frustration with their friendship and the poet's anger over his friend's interruptions of his monologues. Indeed, Cranly's intrusions into the conversation reveal his unwillingness to submit completely to Stephen's intellectual desires, and the resulting frustration over these attempts to render their friendship dialogic compels Stephen to lash out at Cranly.

Interestingly, Stephen's initial reaction to Cranly's frustrated silence is to suspect him of interfering in Stephen's relationship with Emma. When Emma shuns him on the library steps towards the conclusion of *Portrait*, Stephen latches on to her greeting Cranly instead of him, noting that "she passed out from the porch of the library and bowed



across Stephen in reply to Cranly's greeting. He also? Was there not a slight flush on Cranly's cheek?" While this reaction may seem simply to signify Stephen's jealousy, his subsequent meditations on Emma's slight reveal the foundations of his suspicions towards Cranly: "Did that explain his friend's listless silence, his harsh comments, the sudden intrusions of rude speech with which he had shattered so often Stephen's ardent wayward confessions?" (*P* 252). By equating Cranly's "listless silence" and "sudden intrusions of rude speech" with a suspected affair with Emma, Stephen essentially represents Cranly's irritation as a betrayal of his affection. This representation enables Stephen to ignore his friend's frustration with their monologic relationship, projecting the blame for any strain in their friendship entirely onto Cranly. By characterizing his friend's unfavorable reaction to his monologues as a refusal of his love, Stephen preserves the stability of his "self-centred" framework of amatory freedom and lays the groundwork for the rejection of his friend's affection at the conclusion of *Portrait's* fifth chapter.

This rejection of Cranly's love culminates in a conversation between the two friends concerning Stephen's deteriorating relationship with his mother. Instead of providing justification for Stephen's refusal of the Easter rites, Cranly argues that Stephen should submit to these Catholic duties both as a gesture of love to his mother and as a knowingly hollow performance of devotion to a religion that he internally rejects. This advice contradicts his earlier performances of "intelligent sympathy" to Stephen's monologues, and the poet's reaction to Cranly's suggestions illustrates his annoyance with these attempts to transform their conversations into dialogues. Ultimately, Stephen views Cranly's advice as a refusal of his affection not only because it calls for him to submit to

a religious institution that he rejects, but also because it demonstrates Cranly's ability to empathize with others, which means that his heart is not completely reserved for Stephen. His recognition that Cranly "felt then the sufferings of women, the weaknesses of their bodies and souls: and would shield them with a strong and resolute arm and bow his mind to them" reveals that Stephen cannot rely upon his unconditional esteem, but instead must settle for being merely one of the people with whom Cranly can sympathize (*P* 266). The seeds of doubt that were stirred on the library steps thus sprout into a confirmation of Stephen's misrecognition of Cranly, as what initially seemed like a deferent to his beliefs has demonstrated himself capable of tainting the sanctity of Stephen's monologues with the demands for reciprocation from which he seeks to escape.

Cranly's refusal to submit completely to his affection immediately compels Stephen to end their friendship. He resolves, "Away then: it is time to go. A voice spoke softly to Stephen's lonely heart, bidding him go and telling him that his friendship was coming to an end. Yes; he would go. He could not strive against another. He knew his part" (*P* 267). This juxtaposition of Stephen's reflections on Cranly's heart with his determination to leave Dublin demonstrates that Cranly's suggested condescension to the Easter duties constituted a betrayal of his affection, representing the continuance of their friendship as an inevitable "[striving] against another." Additionally, the reference to Stephen's "lonely heart," when read with the earlier recognition of Cranly's ability to empathize with others, reveals Stephen's determination to view his loved one's affection for others as a rejection of himself, representing the refusal to love only him as a betrayal of his affection. The openness of Cranly's heart ultimately becomes his undoing, as his

inability to devote himself entirely to Stephen's desires compels the young poet to terminate their relationship.

This characterization of Cranly as an antagonist illustrates the final flaw in Stephen's framework of amatory freedom, as his commitment to his artistic endeavors blinds him to the most authentic emotional attachment in his life. Indeed Cranly's offer to be Stephen's "noblest and truest friend" (*P* 269) and his despondence to Stephen's determination to "discover the modern of life or of art whereby [his] spirit could express itself in unfettered freedom" (*P* 267) reveal both that his affection for Stephen supersedes any intellectual disagreement and that he would be willing and able to provide the love that Stephen has been pursuing throughout both *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*. However, Stephen's narcissistic interpretation of love cannot comprehend the depths of Cranly's affection, misrecognizing his despair as merely evidence of "[Cranly's] own loneliness which he feared" and refusing Cranly's offer of real-world affection for the renewed desire to chase symbolic love. The silence that concludes the fifth chapter signifies the final sundering of Stephen and Cranly's friendship, and Stephen's refusal to compromise with his love object ends up completing his alienation from his surroundings and necessitating his departure from Ireland. Stephen's rejection of Cranly's affection thus speaks to the inevitable failure of monologic relationships, revealing the limitations of attempts to forge connections without the reciprocal affection and empathy needed for those emotional attachments to survive.

\*\*\*\*

In the second chapter of *Portrait*, Stephen expresses his frustration with the empty voices of his fellow Dubliners, arguing that "it was the din of all these hollowsounding

voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms. He gave them ear only for a time but he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades” (*P* 88-9). This statement echoes Stephen’s earlier suppression of the noisy children to pursue a symbolic Mercedes and illustrates his preference for the symbolic pleasure of fantastic encounters over the humdrum attachments of his everyday life. While Stephen may desire to “meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld,” the inevitable outcome of these pursuits is the rejection of his love object and the resumption of his fantasy. Perhaps Stephen’s “desire to press in [his] arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world” renders this outcome inevitable (*P* 273), as the promise of future phantasmic love overwhelms the emotional attachments available to him among his counterparts. In this sense, every attempt to find his soul’s “unsubstantial image” in the “real world” is doomed before it starts, and Stephen’s attempts to win the affection of his fellow Dubliners inevitably turn “hollowsounding” and give way to the promise of the future beauty he is destined to create. Thus, an endless cycle of amatory pursuit and rejection plays itself out, and at the end of *Portrait*, Stephen is left with only the ardent devotion to an amatory freedom whose narcissistic underpinnings limit its viability.

Of course, personal love is not the only goal of Stephen’s amatory freedom. His epiphany over the bird girl on Sandymount Strand entices him both to pursue an alienating form of love and to “create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore” (*P* 184). For this reason, the amatory freedom that emerges from this climactic scene also carries aesthetic possibilities, and when we continue to examine Stephen’s commitment to this framework in *Portrait*, we discover

that his advocacy of love is not limited to his pursuits of his ideal Mercedes. Rather, the ideals that comprise his desire for transfiguration pervade his artistic beliefs, compelling him to create an aesthetic system that could validate his quest for freedom even if his personal love stories do not end successfully. As we turn our attention to the artistic sections of *Portrait*, we witness the interconnected relationship between Stephen's desire for love and his attempts "to recreate life out of life" (*P* 186), and we see how the narcissism that felled his individual pursuits of romantic submission implicates his amatory aesthetics.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE PERSONALITY OF THE ARTIST

While Stephen's desire for amatory freedom undermines his potential romances in *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait*, the attainment of his artistic agenda is ultimately more important to him than the real-world experience of love. Even if he is unsuccessful in easing his loneliness through the affection of his loved ones, Stephen's rehearsals of love in each of these encounters assist in the creation of an aesthetic system that is directly influenced by his amatory ideals. His poetry in *Portrait* is influenced by his attraction to E.C. (and finds its complement in his anticipated wreath of romantic verses in *Stephen Hero*), and the climactic epiphany that brings about his artistic commitment is predicated on a romanticized encounter with a girl whose symbolic beauty unites Stephen's amatory and artistic longings. In that sense, Stephen's desire to give birth to the "uncreated conscience of his race" could be seen as the composition of a love poem to Ireland (*P* 276), as the juxtaposition of this desire with his longing "to press in [his] arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world" potentially transforms his anticipated reclamation of his homeland into an amorous embrace (*P* 273).

For this reason, Dominic Manganiello is correct that Stephen's "egoistic" and "esthetic" desires carry "far-reaching political implications" (78-9). Indeed, Stephen's efforts to create a static apprehension of Irish beauty provide a potential alternative to the didactic art of his contemporaries, which glorifies Catholicism and Nationalism and thus exacerbates Ireland's socio-political paralysis. Pericles Lewis thus characterizes Stephen's art as an "act of martyrdom," arguing that "through his writing ... Stephen will offer a sacrifice of his own soul to Ireland. Just as this act of martyrdom will save the Irish, however, it will also allow Stephen to achieve unfettered freedom because, in

embracing his moral unity with the Irish race, he will reconcile his ethical self with his socially constructed identity” (33). However, while Lewis argues that this aesthetics constitutes an “embrac[e]” of “moral unity” between Stephen and Ireland, the young artist’s refusal to compromise with those outside his intellectual framework disqualifies his aesthetics as an “act of martyrdom” and overwhelms the socio-political benefits of that embrace. He may argue that he wants to save Ireland by “forg[ing]” this “uncreated conscience,” but the only person he is really interested in saving is himself, as his attempts to apprehend ideal beauty promote his amatory freedom over any obligation to assist his fellow Dubliners.

#### I. Let Us Take a Woman

In *I and Thou*, Buber argues that “the eternal origin of art” is a direct encounter between an artist and “a form that wants to become a work through him” (*Thou* 60). Just as he grounds the ethics of loving relationships in the “responsibility of an I for a You” (*Thou* 66), Buber notes that “if [the artist] commits it and speaks with his being the basic word to the form that appears, then the creative power is released and the word comes into being.” For this reason, the artist cannot objectify or dismiss the subject of her/his work because “whoever commits himself may not hold back part of himself; and the work does not permit me ... to seek relaxation in the It-world; it is imperious: if I do not serve it properly, it breaks, or it breaks me” (Buber *Thou* 60-1). Buber thus reveals the ethics of the aesthetic I-You relationship, requiring artists who use real-life objects of inspiration to engage in direct encounters that affirm the otherness of those objects. The failure to engage in this artistic affirmation reduces the “form” to a “thing among things” or an “aggregate of qualities,” which may enable it to be better “experienced and

described” by the artist (Buber *Thou* 61), but which also alienates the participants of this aesthetic encounter and drains the art of its “creative power.”

This obligation reveals a significant limitation of Stephen’s art throughout *Portrait*: just as he uses his love objects to realize his amatory premonition, so too does he utilize the subjects of his poetry as instruments to fulfill his aesthetic calling. This may seem like a reasonable approach and Stephen certainly is not obligated to portray objective reflections of his surroundings, but his resolution “to recreate life out of life” at the end of *Portrait*’s fourth chapter (*P* 186) ties his aesthetics to Buber’s “eternal origin of art,” which requires him to affirm the “life” he uses for regenerative inspiration. However, rather than engaging the subjects of his art in exclusive, direct encounters, Stephen reduces them to “aggregate[s] of qualities,” reshaping his experiences to validate the predetermined objectives of his aesthetics. This tactic may make the fulfillment of these goals easier to accomplish, but it also replicates the central error of his amatory efforts in *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*. Much as his pursuit of symbolic phantoms alienated him from his loved ones, his quest to uncover preconceived artistic ideals robs those encounters of the exclusiveness needed for them to realize their creative potential, which limits the viability of his amatory aesthetics.

#### A. The Tranquil Watcher

The incomplete nature of Stephen’s aesthetics is initially demonstrated in his attempt to write an ode to E.C. in *Portrait*’s second chapter. Given that his artistic struggles mirror his amatory limitations, it is fitting that one of the earliest subjects of his poetry would be one of his first love objects, and this episode enables us to see how Stephen attempts to reshape his amatory failures into validations of his premonition. Indeed, the



reader's introduction to E.C. compellingly represents her as Stephen's ideal Mercedes, as the momentary connection between them at the Harold's Cross birthday party transforms his isolation into the "joy of ... loneliness" and reshapes the merriment from which he previously had been excluded into a "soothing air." This description of the party mirrors Stephen's amatory premonition since his isolation from the "gay cocked hats and sunbonnets" "danc[ing] and romp[ing] noisily" echoes the annoying play of the Blackrock children with which his pursuit of Mercedes opposes (*P* 71). By juxtaposing these annoyances with E.C.'s glance, Joyce parallels Stephen's fantasies in Blackrock with this actual encounter in Harold's Cross and invites us to anticipate their subsequent tram ride as the climactic encounter between the young man and his Mercedes (*P* 72).

However, while Stephen recognizes his amatory possibilities with E.C. on the tram steps, he is incapable of initiating the contact needed to realize that potential. He acknowledges "a voice within him ... asking him would he take her gift to which he had only to stretch out his hand," but his recollection of an encounter with Eileen Vance paralyzes him, reducing him to a "tranquil watcher" of his own love scene (*P* 72-3). The hint of rejection in Eileen's laughter and retreat undermines his ability to initiate a kiss:

She too wants me to catch hold of her, he thought. That's why she came with me to the tram. I could easily catch hold of her when she comes up to my step: nobody is looking. I could hold her and kiss her. But he did neither: and, when he was sitting alone in the deserted tram, he tore his ticket into shreds and stared gloomily at the corrugated footboard. (*P* 73)

The conclusion of this encounter shows that Stephen's romantic fantasies have left him unprepared to experience an actual connection with a real-world love object. He can imagine pursuing and winning his ideal Mercedes, but by viewing these images as alternatives to real-world connections, he undermines his ability to realize them in his

everyday encounters. Indeed, by following his memory of Eileen with the observation that E.C. “too” desires him to kiss her, Stephen reveals that his inability to “take her gift” on the tram is not an isolated misstep, but is rather proof that whenever he finds “in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld,” he cannot initiate the contact needed to obtain the love he desires. Stephen’s earlier insistence that his desired transfiguration occur “without any overt act of his” thus undermines this possibility and reduces Stephen to a “tranquil watcher” rather than an active lover.

The aesthetic implications of Stephen’s frustration are evidenced by his attempts to use the tram encounter to compose an poem to E.C.. His desire to capture this experience in a Byronic ode demonstrates both his early prioritization of aesthetic gains over amorous affection and his efforts to use his love objects to inspire him to greatness. However, the incompleteness of the encounter translates onto the page, and he is ultimately incapable of encapsulating the reality of that experience in an effective poem. Indeed, Stephen’s brain “refuse[s] to grapple with the theme” (*P* 73), as his feelings for E.C. and their encounter on the tram are not sufficient in themselves to compel his artistic endeavor. Rather, he can only begin to write after “brooding on the incident” and “[thinking] himself into confidence” (*P* 74). This reliance on “brooding” and “thinking” prevents Stephen from using E.C. for artistic inspiration because it detaches him from the emotional connection needed for that encounter to translate powerfully on the page. By representing Stephen as consciously willing himself to create, Joyce establishes a parallel between his romantic paralysis on the tram and his artistic paralysis at his desk, showing Stephen’s aesthetic inspiration to be provided not by his love for E.C., but by his

determination to perform the role of the artist. This parallel thus cements his role as the “tranquil watcher” of both his amatory and poetic quests.

The vague content of Stephen’s art also reveals his failure to forge a meaningful aesthetic connection with E.C.. While he is ultimately able to complete his poem, the finished product bears little resemblance to its moment of inspiration. His preference for idealized romance over actual connection realizes itself in his decision to purge from his art the details he considers “common and insignificant.” Thus the specifics of their encounter are omitted from his poem, as the “balmy breeze” and the moon’s “maiden luster” replace the events on the tram steps, and the multiple expressions of fear, anticipation, and desire during that encounter are reduced to an “undefined sorrow” (*P* 74). In essence, Stephen constructs the first example of the aesthetic stasis he will explain to Lynch in *Portrait*’s fifth chapter, excluding “common and insignificant” details from consideration so as to reach a transcendent, ideal beauty. This exclusion may enable him to complete his ode, but it also reduces his encounter with Emma to a “thing among things” by using the bits and pieces of their exchange that are most convenient to his objectives, which prevents the direct engagement with the past needed to unlock his subject’s “creative power.” Stephen does render a symbolically poignant account of the parting of two lovers, but the incomplete representation of that experience limits his poetic effort to “the performance of a series of clichéd gestures” (Friedman *Party Pieces* 61).

Additionally, the muse of Stephen’s ode is mysteriously absent. Not only do “there [remain] no trace of the tram itself nor of the trammen nor of the horses” in his poem, but neither he nor E.C. “appear vividly” in their own encounter (*P* 74). Instead, Stephen

recasts both E.C. and himself as nonspecific lovers whose departing kiss provides a jarring contrast to the lack of consummation in the actual encounter. E.C. is reduced to a generic woman in love, and Stephen's dismissal of their specific actions and desires on the tram as "common and insignificant" demonstrate that the reality of his amatory pursuits means little to his artistic endeavors. This tactic may encourage Stephen to use his poetry to "[redeem] the failed literal kiss into a successful symbolic one" (Froula 208), but the prioritization of ideal beauty and romance over his specific emotions for E.C. undercuts the aesthetic value of that "rede[m]ption." Stephen may not be obligated to provide us with a completely accurate account of the tram episode, but his disinterest in encapsulating E.C.'s specific essence in an ode entitled "To E-C-" shows the extent to which he treats the subjects of his art as commodities for his disposal instead of subjects for his affirmation. This inability to affirm E.C. in either his experiences or his art thus leaves Stephen with little more than a substandard poem that "statically embalm[s] the experience of romantic epiphany" (Henke *Desire* 62).

Stephen's poetic account of the tram episode is significant not only because it introduces the impersonal nature of his art, but also because it hints at the political limitations of this approach. As Stephen struggles to complete his ode, he recalls "sitting at his table in Bray the morning after the discussion at the Christmas dinnertable, trying to write a poem about Parnell." Just as he struggles to write "To E-C-," Stephen's "brain had then refused to grapple with the theme," and instead of elegizing Parnell, he "covered the page with the names and addresses of certain of his classmates" (*P* 73). While this memory may primarily indict the didactic argumentation of both the Christmas dinnertable and the political poetry he could not compose, it also introduces Stephen's

inability to draw upon the religious and political ideas around him in order to compose meaningful art. Of course the youthful Stephen cannot be expected to possess a nuanced understanding of Irish politics at this time, but his inability to write the Parnell poem parallels not only his failure to compose the tram ode, but also his future refusal to write about the social and political troubles he encounters in his everyday life. Thus, the absence of E.C. and Parnell from his youthful art foretells the exclusion of the girl who dies in the hansom cab from his future aesthetics, and Stephen's promotion of symbolic beauty over direct encounters prevents his poetry from having any meaningful socio-political impact.

#### B. The Simple Willful Heart

While the youthful Stephen struggled to engage in the direct encounters needed to compel his poetic endeavors, his older counterpart consciously shirks this "eternal origin of art." His struggle to express his feelings for Emma in "To E-C-" initiated his inability to affirm otherness through his art, but as Stephen develops his uncompromising commitment to amatory freedom, he explicitly subordinates her otherness to his aesthetic objectives, representing her religious beliefs as dangerous submissions to be countered by his aesthetics. This strategy is best expressed in the "Villanelle of the Temptress," where a bitter Stephen casts his love object as a siren that consumes the hearts of her victims. In his presentation of both the composition of the poem and the finished product, Joyce highlights the ways in which Stephen does not "[commit]" or "[speak]" the "basic word" to Emma "with his being," but rather reduces her affection to an "aggregate of qualities" that either validate or threaten his artistic endeavors. The result of this exercise represents Emma's religious devotion and her interactions with others as evidence of her

unsuitability as his love object and muse, and in so doing, exposes holes in both Stephen's narcissistic notions of romance and his amatory aesthetics.

It is easy to compare the villanelle to the earlier tram encounter. In fact, Joyce invites this comparison by having Stephen observe that through the composition of the villanelle, "he had written verses for [Emma] again after ten years" (*P* 241). However, while these two episodes are similar in many ways, the themes of the resulting poems are drastically different. Whereas the earlier poem used Emma's affection for Stephen to represent an ideal love, the villanelle foregrounds rejection and duplicitous desire as its subject. Emma's "strange wilful heart" may inspire a "rose and ardent light" that compels his artistic creation (*P* 236), but Stephen now finds it impossible to characterize Emma as an affectionate lover who validates his amatory aesthetics.

Stephen's depiction of Emma in the villanelle is initiated in the conclusion of the preceding scene. On the steps of the national library, Stephen spots Emma conversing with friends, and his thoughts turn to bitter rebukes of her interactions with Father Moran. However, Stephen concedes that he may have misread the situation: "And if he had judged her harshly? If her life were a simple rosary of hours, her life simple and strange as a bird's life, gay in the morning, restless all day, tired at sundown? Her heart simple and wilful as a bird's heart?" (*P* 235). Stephen may intend to concede Emma's potential virtue, but the wording of this concession still casts her in a negative light. In fact, this contemplation of the sincerity of Emma's devotion re-enacts Stephen's internal debate over the "vulgarity of her manners" from *Stephen Hero*, as the description of her faithful life in *Portrait* as "simple," "strange," and "bird[like]," while overtly conceding that he may have misjudged Emma's motives, also equates her sincere Catholic beliefs with the

cultural inferiority with which he charged her in the other text. Thus, even if Emma is not duplicitously fraternizing with Father Moran, the interaction itself is sufficient to render her unworthy of being either his love object or his muse.

The relationship between Emma's faith and her negative portrayal in the villanelle becomes clear through Stephen's subsequent epiphany. While he may deem this "instant of inspiration" as stemming from an "enchantment of the heart," the specifics of that epiphanous "instant" reveal that this "enchantment" should be read ironically (*P* 235):

An afterglow deepened within his spirit, whence the white flame had passed, deepening to a rose and ardent light. That rose and ardent light was her strange and wilful heart, strange that no man had known or would know, wilful from the before the beginning of the world: and lured by that ardent roselike glow the choirs of the seraphim were falling from heaven. (*P* 236)

Stephen may acknowledge a "rose and ardent light" that compels his artistic creation, but that "ardent roselike glow" also serves as an alluring enchantment that compels the virtuous to fall under its submission. Thus, when he equates the temptress to the "lure of the fallen seraphim" and asks if she is "weary of ardent ways," he criticizes an all-consuming passion that entices men to give up their noble lives and "fall from heaven" to submit to the will of an alluring siren (*P* 236). Even though Stephen does not specify whose "strange wilful heart" is being rebuked, that heart is itself a clear signifier of Emma, whom Stephen had just described as possessing a heart that was "simple and wilful." That Emma's "simple and strange" life and "simple and wilful" heart become the "strange wilful heart" that is the "lure of the fallen seraphim" reveals that Stephen casts Emma as the temptress of his villanelle because of her adherence to Catholicism. By tying the "lure of the fallen seraphim" to the possibility that her life really was "a simple rosary of hours," *Portrait's* Stephen agrees with his *Stephen Hero* counterpart that

Emma's religious beliefs preclude her from being the catalyst for his artistic greatness. Stephen thus depicts this "vulgarity of her manners" as a rejection of his love, transforming her "simple and wilful" Catholic heart into a siren's song to be rejected by his villanelle.

This representation of Emma continues in the villanelle's second stanza. As Stephen comes up with the rhymes that will structure his poem, he finds himself still caught within the "roselike glow" that triggered his artistic epiphany. This recognition returns his thoughts to Emma, noting that the glow's rays "burned up the world, consumed the hearts of men and angels: the rays from the rose that was her wilful heart" (*P* 236). Here the representations of Emma's affection are more dangerous, as what had previously lured potential lovers from their virtuous path now consumes them completely. This all-consuming characterization of Emma's "wilful heart" finds its place in the second stanza, where Stephen writes, "Your eyes have set man's heart ablaze/And you have had your will of him./Are you not weary of ardent ways?" (*P* 236). This depiction of the temptress, as well as the past-tense observation that she "ha[s] had [her] will of him," enables Stephen to describe Emma's "simple and strange life" as a consumption and rejection of his love, ironically reading her refusal to submit completely to his will as a demand that he submit completely to hers. Thus, when he questions this second time if the temptress is "weary" of her "ardent ways," it qualifies those "ways" as attempts to use Stephen's passion to lure him away from his aesthetic aspirations, serving as both a rejection of his affection and a dangerous submission to be avoided. Stephen thus uses Emma to construct a poetic Mercedes, transforming his heart's most ardent love into a deceitful temptress that he must refuse to maintain the sanctity of his amatory freedom.



Stephen's use of memory in writing the villanelle also shows his ignorance of the "eternal origin of art." After writing the poem's initial stanzas, he recalls his recent interactions with Emma in a manner similar to his use of the tram memory to compel his ode. However, the memories he conjures up for inspiration this time only foreground their isolation. His recollection of a musical gathering parallels the birthday party by having Emma interrupt Stephen's social alienation; however, she is now incapable of provoking what he referred to ten years earlier as the "joy of loneliness," and their interaction is drowned out by the meaningless chatter around him. Stephen's recollection of a carnival also compels an amatory response through his descriptions of the "faint glow" of Emma's cheek and the "soft merchandise" of her given hand, but that potential is quashed by her labeling Stephen a "great stranger" and by his sarcastic retort that compels her to leave (*P* 238). In neither memory does Stephen turn to and affirm the muse of his villanelle; instead, he latches onto specific markers of Emma's agitation in order to blame her for their discord. In the musical encounter, he notes that Emma listened to his singing, "or feigned to listen," and the return of the alienating voices upon this qualification of her attention ties her half-hearted recognition to his isolation. Similarly, his memory of the carnival is introduced by the observation that "at certain instants her eyes seemed about to trust him but he had waited in vain," signifying a lack of her complete adoration that is emphasized by her "eyes [being] a little averted" throughout the scene (*P* 238). Stephen's obsession with diverted glances and feigned attention thus provides evidence of Emma's dismissal of his adoration, and her perceived rejection of his love transforms what was the "flattering, taunting, searching, [and] exciting [of] his heart" of Harold's Cross into a frustrated and angry homage (*P* 72).

As Stephen begins the second half of his villanelle, his rebukes of Emma's "ardent ways" become harsher. In the fourth and fifth stanzas, he articulates the destructive consequences of his temptress's enchantment, highlighting the fourth stanza's "broken cries" and "mournful lays" as evidence of the consumptive nature of her passion and using the fifth stanza's "sacrificing hands" to demonstrate the submission that men have to undergo to pay homage to her beauty. However, while this recollection may enable him to finish his poem, his reliance on symbolizing Emma prevents Stephen from using this poem to promote his amatory aesthetics. Indeed, the "rude brutal anger" stirred by his memories depersonalizes Stephen's temptress by "[breaking] up violently [Emma's] fair image" and foregrounding "distorted reflections" of that image. The alluring siren that is criticized towards the end of the villanelle ceases to be simply Emma and now becomes the "flowergirl in the ragged dress," the "kitchengirl in the next house," and whoever else that may be conjured up by his representation of Emma as the "batlike soul" who serves as a "figure of the womanhood of her country" (*P* 239). Stephen essentially pluralizes the "you" in his interrogation of Emma and rejects each "batlike soul," transforming his villanelle from a personalized castigation of his love object into a generic critique of all Irish women. Harkness is thus correct that "the reality of E.C. disappears from the poem" (*Voices* 85), and this depersonalization of Stephen's muse drains his villanelle of the loving energy that inspired its creation and alienates him from both his love object and Ireland.

Furthermore, Stephen bases his inspiration on inaccurate emotional responses. Stephen's rage over his memories may help him finish the poem, but he consciously recognizes the fallacious nature of that rage. Thus, he characterizes his symbolization of

Emma as not simply “reflections of her image,” but “distorted reflections of her image,” an explicit concession that the second half of his poem is erroneously inspired. His subsequent admission that his disdain “was not wholly sincere” further proves that Stephen recognizes the problematic nature of his accusations of Emma (*P* 239). These moments undermine his poetic endeavor because he consciously recognizes that the rejection he uses as inspiration for the villanelle is not an earnest affirmation of his muse, but is rather a representational strategy guided by his quest to validate his amatory aesthetics. His continued reliance on “distorted” and “insincere” poetic inspiration thus foreshadows both the end of his relationship with Emma and the inevitable unraveling of his artistic goals.

Although Stephen uses rage for aesthetic inspiration for the majority of the poem’s composition, his meditations on the final stanza take on a more thoughtful tone. As he reflects on Emma possibly showing her family the poem, a wave of compassion for having potentially wronged her envelops Stephen and entices him to write the sixth stanza in a more tender mood. This compassion represents the first time Stephen has attempted to empathize with Emma through his poetry, and his subsequent desire for a revitalized union with her makes it seem that a meaningful attachment between them is finally possible. However, he falls short of the loving gesture needed for such an attachment to occur,

Initially, Stephen’s desired encounter is imaginary. While Stephen rejects an actual connection with Emma through his refusal to give her the villanelle, he wonders whether during the creation of that poem, “in the mysterious ways of spiritual life ... her soul at those same moments had been conscious of his homage” (*P* 242). This possibility causes

him to imagine a scenario in which her knowledge of his adoration enflames her desire and compels an amatory encounter. By rejecting the possibility of a real-world encounter and focusing instead on a fantasized union, Stephen shuts Emma out of any potential romantic connection, which reduces Stephen's renewed desire to a masturbatory homage to himself. Also, Stephen's description of "her nakedness yield[ing] to him, radiant, warm, odorous and lavishlimbed" demonstrates that his desired encounter with Emma still requires her to submit her body and soul completely to his dominion. By continuing his desire for authority over Emma, Stephen adopts the "ardent ways" for which he criticized his beloved, effectively representing himself as the temptress of his own villanelle. This action nullifies the empathy that preceded it by replacing his affirmation of Emma with her consumption, and it guarantees that he will not transform her into his ideal Mercedes since her "vulgarity of manners" will compel her to reject his demands for her submission.

Finally, his focus on Emma's gaze solidifies the castigatory tone of the villanelle. Admittedly, Stephen's fantasized encounter could rectify his recalled breaches of their relationship because its description of her eyes "opening to his eyes" would supplant the "feigned attention" and "averted eyes" that earlier convinced Stephen of Emma's betrayal. However, when that imagined gaze is represented in the final stanza, its description solidifies his earlier portrayal of his muse as an alluring siren luring virtuous men to their doom. Stephen's assertion that his subject "hold[s] our longing gaze/With languorous look and lavish limb," while perhaps intending to signify the renewed gaze that he finds in this imagined encounter, directly recalls the second stanza's argument that his lover's "eyes have set man's heart ablaze," enabling her to "have ... [her] will of

him” (*P* 243). By characterizing her gaze in this manner, Stephen eliminates the redemptive aspects of Emma’s imagined acknowledgement of his adoration and reduces her eyes “opening to his eyes” to another tactic by his poem’s temptress to compel her lover’s submission. What could have been a compassionate ending that affirmed genuine empathy and love becomes another castigation of Emma’s perceived duplicity, and Stephen’s attempt to express his feelings for her through the villanelle’s “angry homage” weakens with every pencil stroke (*P* 239).

In his description of worthwhile art, Buber argues that the artist “cannot experience nor describe” the subject of his aesthetic encounter; he “can only actualize it” (*Thou* 61). To do so “involves a sacrifice and a risk” since the “exclusiveness” of this encounter demands that “all that but a moment ago floated playfully through one’s perspective has to be exterminated” (Buber *Thou* 60). Stephen’s poetic endeavors in *Portrait* can be seen as his refusals to undergo this “sacrifice” and “risk,” as his desire to “recreate life out of life” compels him to reshape his everyday encounters in manners that validate his ambivalence towards Ireland. Just as he subordinates his real-world pursuits to his quest for his ideal Mercedes, Stephen is less interested in the affirming the otherness of his poetic subjects than he is in re-presenting them to neatly coincide with his aesthetic goals. It is uncertain whether we can completely “[exterminate]” our surroundings to participate in this encounter and Buber concedes that such connections inevitably regress into the I-It world, but Stephen’s ambivalent attitude towards Emma in both the tram poem and the villanelle signify his disinterest in such aesthetic affirmations, which explains why he can never seem to effectively encapsulate his feelings for her in a meaningful poem. Thus, Stephen becomes the “tranquil watcher” not only of his love life, but of his artistic calling

as well, as his refusal to “confirm” either his love objects or his muses “as creature and creation” unravels both his amatory and his poetic efforts (Buber *Knowledge* 69).

## II. The God of Creation

So far, we have seen how Stephen’s failure to find his real-world Mercedes also undermines the effectiveness of his art. However, as we read *Portrait*’s fifth chapter, we see that this failure affects more than his individual poems. While Stephen may seem to be more interested in personal freedom than political gains, the goals of his artistic calling transcend that individual realm, as his desire to “encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience” is expanded into a call to “forge into the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (*P* 275-6). When we examine the textual sites where Stephen’s linguistic and artistic thoughts intersect his political musings, we see his desire to construct an alternative Irish aesthetics that avoids the suffocating influences of both British colonialism and Irish nationalism.

Stephen’s bitterness towards the British occupation of Ireland is explicitly articulated throughout *Portrait*’s fifth chapter. He frequently attacks the Irish informers against the rebels (“no honourable and sincere man ... has given up to you his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to those of Parnell but you sold him out to the enemy” [*P* 220]); he expresses hostility towards William Gladstone, one of the leading forces behind Parnell’s betrayal, and calls his commemorators at a rotunda ceremony a “race of clodhoppers!” (*P* 272); and he resignedly acknowledges that “the Ireland of Tone and Parnell seemed to have receded into space” (*P* 199). However, Stephen’s most explicit connection between language and colonialism occurs during his discussion with the dean of studies over the meaning of the word “tundish.” While the English dean

amusedly ponders this unfamiliar “Irish” word, Stephen resents the fact that “the language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine,” that England’s mastery of Ireland is strengthened through each utterance of the colonial tongue. His acknowledgement that “my soul frets in the shadow of his language” may seem to complicate artistic efforts to combat this colonialism (*P* 205), but when Stephen later isolates “language” as one of the “nets” by which he commits himself to “fly” (*P* 220), he positions his artistic calling as a direct challenge to this English tongue. Thus, the Irish aesthetics that he pledges to create at the chapter’s conclusion potentially becomes a way to “speak or write these [English] words without unrest of spirit” (*P* 205), which could enable Stephen to challenge one of the primary enforcers of colonial mastery through his art.

However, Stephen also rejects his contemporaries’ cultural and artistic obsession with “the sorrowful legend of Ireland” (*P* 195). Even though he desires to see an emancipated Ireland, he takes issue with nationalist art that promotes “authentic” Irish speech and deems the exclusive focus on Irish subjects to be the only worthwhile goal of art. His dismissive contemplation of the “droll statue” of Thomas Moore, the “national poet of Ireland,” demonstrates his skepticism towards the nationalist sentimentality of traditional Irish poetry. He perceives the “sloth of [its] body and of [its] soul cre[eping]” over its “servile head” like “unseen vermin,” and he mocks the primitive nature of Moore’s art by describing him as a “a Firbolg in the borrowed cloak of a Milesian” (*P* 194-5). Stephen also criticizes the Revival’s glorification of West Ireland through a faux newspaper notice in his April 14 diary entry. He satirizes the movement’s fascination with anthropological encounters with “pure” Irish folk by evoking John Alphoncus Mulrennan’s interaction

with an “old man there in a mountain cabin” with “red eyes and [a] short pipe.” The mundanity of Mulrennan’s exchange with this man (“Old man spoke Irish. Mulrennan spoke Irish. Then old man and Mulrennan spoke English”) mocks the Revival’s promotion of Gaelic, and the old man’s lone statement (“Ah, there must be terrible queer creatures at the latter end of the world”) pokes fun at their glorification of the primitive purity of the West. Thus, when Stephen acknowledges that he “fear[s]” and must “struggle” with this old man “with redrimmed horny eyes” (*P* 274), he confirms this nationalist literature base to be another discourse that his artistic agenda evades.

This construction of an alternative national aesthetics would seem to validate Buber’s “eternal origin of art.” By seeking to “forge” a new racial “conscience” that does not fall prey to the didacticism of his contemporaries, Stephen potentially constructs a politically-viable Irish poetics, enabling the artist to turn towards and affirm Ireland without automatically reducing it to an “aggregate of qualities” to be assimilated into predetermined discourses of national pride. However, the same narcissistic pursuit of amatory freedom that denies him the love that he seeks also undermines his aesthetics, as his general indifference to his “race” and his continued fascination with ideal beauty limits his ability to construct this alternative. As the Parnell poem foretold, the alienation inherent in his personal poetics infiltrates his broader amatory aesthetics, and Stephen ultimately proves unwilling to affirm either his fellow Dubliners or any mention of their plight, which mitigates the practical effectiveness of his art.

Initially, Stephen’s promotion of ideal beauty over the concerns of his “race” alienates him from his audience. His initial meditations on this beauty at the beginning of



*Portrait's* fifth chapter illustrate both the personal focus of his artistic platform and the alienating tendencies of that focus:

His thinking was a dusk of doubt and selfmistrust lit up at moments by the lightnings of intuition, but lightnings of so clear a splendour that in those moments the world perished about his feet as if it had been fireconsumed: and thereafter his tongue grew heavy and he met the eyes of others with unanswering eyes for he felt that the spirit of beauty had folded him round like a mantle and that in revery at least he had been acquainted with nobility. (*P* 191)

The isolating qualities of Stephen's aesthetics are immediately apparent, as his preoccupation with the beauty he encounters "fireconsumes" his perceptions of the world and compels him to return the glances of his counterparts with "unanswering eyes." This lack of recognition shows that while Stephen may desire in theory that his art constitute a union with Dublin, in practice the "spirit of beauty" he pursues actually alienates him from the people he wishes to redeem. Because his apprehension of ideal beauty "[folds] him round like a mantle," it constructs a barrier between Stephen and his surroundings and prevents him from using his art to connect with his audience, limiting its transgressive potential to a personal nature.

The alienating tendencies of Stephen's artistic pursuits are also evident in his hesitancy to assist his fellow Dubliners. While he intends to utilize his literary works to liberate Dublin from paralyzing social structures, his agenda lacks the compassion for others that is needed for such liberation to occur. Indeed *Stephen Hero's* protagonist recognizes the "impulses of pity" that entice him to adapt his aesthetic pursuits to aid the people around him, but he ultimately rejects that responsibility because "he had first of all to save himself and he had no business trying to save others unless his experiment with himself justified them" (*SH* 127). This qualification of his assistance parallels his acceptance of love objects as long as their affection coincides with his intellectual

freedom, and Stephen's prioritization of individual over collective obligations demonstrates the limited political effectiveness of his art since any social benefit to Dublin inevitably will be subordinated to his personal gain. Stephen's refusal to sacrifice for the individuals he ostensibly wants to help thus reduces his new Irish "conscience" to an "experiment with himself," which isolates himself further from his audience and impedes the practical success of his politics.

In addition to exacerbating the alienation between artist and audience, Stephen's reliance on ideal beauty impedes personal encounters with specific artistic subjects. The symbolic representations of love promoted by his meditations on Mercedes and the bird girl compel Stephen to adopt a similarly symbolic attitude towards beauty that endorses the static apprehension of ideal pity and terror over the kinetic experience of personal desires and loathing, which he attributes to the "improper arts" of "pornograph[y] and "didactic[ism]." Ironically, Stephen's artistic alternative to his contemporaries' paralytic works is based on an aesthetic stasis where both the artist and audience are "arrested" by the perception of an ideal beauty (*P* 222). Whereas Marian Eide classifies this stasis as more of a "dynamic ambivalence" than a "frozen response" (3), the symbolic nature of Stephen's desired beauty impedes its "dynamic" potential because it forgoes the specifics of his surroundings to achieve an aesthetic encounter "above desire and loathing" (*P* 222). His disqualification of the girl's death in the hansom cab accident as indicative of tragedy reveals this generic advocacy of ideal pity and terror over the everyday examples of those emotions that compel compassionate responses. Stephen's promotion of symbolic beauty over the personal nature of kinetic emotions thus becomes a "prescription for paralysis in the everyday world" by sacrificing the empathetic

attachment to the specific tragedies of Ireland in order to achieve a transcendent but static communion (Harkness *Aesthetics* 109).

Additionally, Stephen ignores the fact that the political goals of his aesthetic agenda are kinetic. While he may dismiss the didactic nature of religious or nationalist art that compels its audience towards predetermined goals, Stephen's efforts to reveal the "uncreated conscience of his race" are complicit in the same project of desire and loathing that he claims to transcend. His efforts to rescue his fellow Dubliners from their paralysis by constructing this new Irish conscience indicate that his political goals are predicated on instilling predetermined reactions in his audience because they would have to throw off their devotion to Catholicism and Nationalism to endorse the "conscience" he has "forge[d]." Because his symbolic interpretations of desire and beauty compel a static platform of artistic apprehension, Stephen short-circuits his ability to save his fellow Dubliners since his audience would have to transcend the social circumstances of his art to uncover the pity and terror that is present. Stephen may desire an embrace of "moral unity" with his audience, but his inability and refusal to connect personally with that audience limit his artistic embrace to a static apprehension of a generic, ideal beauty that is incapable of generating the emotional response needed for the political change he seeks.

Furthermore, Stephen's emphasis on interpretation and apprehension dissolves the direct encounter between artist and subject needed for effective change. When he describes to Lynch the method by which the observer apprehends the static beauty of an object, Stephen argues that "the most satisfying relations of the sensible must therefore correspond to the necessary phases of artistic apprehension. Find these and you find the

qualities of universal beauty. Aquinas says: *ad pulcritudinem tria requiruntur, integritas, consonantia, claritas*. I translate it so: *Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance*” (P 229). By embracing the search for “integritas, consonantia, and claritas” as the way to uncover “universal beauty,” Stephen advocates the artistic dissection and breaking down of objects into components in order to appreciate their worth. Not only does this dissective requirement exacerbate the symbolic limitations of his aesthetics (since the specific significance of the object is subordinated to its ability to reflect “universal beauty”), but the search for these three “qualities” limits Stephen’s artistic endeavors to the discovery of generic components present in every entity, which reduces any personal encounter with the artwork to a mere treasure hunt for “wholeness, harmony and radiance.” This apprehension may enable a more comprehensive understanding of an object, but its reliance on the static apprehension of the “qualities of universal beauty” forces the observer to perceive her/his environment not as a unique, vibrant entity, but as an “aggregate of qualities.” This dissection thus imposes distance between the artist/audience and the artwork and drains their encounter of its creative potential.

This aesthetic distance is not limited simply to the perception of an object’s beauty, but extends to artistic renderings of integritas, consonantia, and claritas. Stephen illustrates this detachment when he describes the artist as “remain[ing] within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork” (P 233) since none of these potential relationships enable her/him to directly “[confront] a form that wants to become a work through him,” which Buber argues is needed to unlock the “creative power” of her/his work. This lack of direct relation illustrates the dissolution of Stephen’s art under his aesthetic stasis, as

the artwork is transformed from a subject commanding an emotional response into a mere object of inquiry that is picked apart and analyzed to uncover its beauty. Just as his symbolization of the bird girl imposed distance between himself and his love object, Stephen's method of depicting the "qualities of universal beauty" erects artistic barriers that reduce the artist to an impersonal "God" who is "refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (*P* 233). The alienation inherent in Stephen's amatory endeavors thus pervades his aesthetic platform, and this subordination of emotion to the static apprehension of beauty eliminates the transgressive potential of his art.

The limitations of Stephen's amatory aesthetics are confirmed by his increasingly distant attitude towards Ireland at the end of *Portrait*. While he desires to create a new unity with his homeland that will rescue his fellow Dubliners, as he prepares to embark on his chosen exile, his growing ambivalence towards Dublin compromises this artistic embrace. Of course, Stephen is not obligated to remain in Ireland to represent his homeland effectively in his work, and Joyce remained capable of doing so long after he departed for the last time. However, Stephen's promotion of universal beauty over Dublin and his indifference towards his fellow Dubliners essentially creates a new Irish aesthetics that excludes Ireland, which compromises the goals of his calling. *Portrait's* concluding diary highlights two significant limitations of Stephen's artistic meditations before departing Dublin that call his ability to "forge" a new Irish "conscience" into question.

First, Stephen's aesthetic fascination with the future dissuades him from a present-day affirmation of Dublin. Whereas Buber argues that successful I-You relationships require a directness that is "lived in the present" (*Thou* 64), Stephen's thoughts in the April 6

diary entries show his ambivalence towards such immediacy. In the first entry, his consideration of whether E.C. remembers their childhood compels him to note that “the past is consumed in the present and the present is living only because it brings forth the future.” This description ignores the importance of present-day affirmations and relegates direct encounters with otherness to stepping-stones for future greatness. The artistic implications of this relegation are evident in the second entry, where Stephen considers Yeats’s poem “Michael Robartes Remembers Forgotten Beauty.” Rejecting Robartes’s infatuation with past greatness (“Not this. Not at all”), Stephen instead “desire[s] to press in my arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world” (*P* 273), which subordinates his immediate interactions with both love objects and aesthetic subjects to the promise of future beauty. This desire to “press” future “loveliness” “in [his] arms” thus dissuades Stephen from seeking similar embraces through his everyday interactions, which not only spurs him towards his desired exile, but also ensures that his artistic representations of Dublin will lack the directness needed to render aesthetically and politically meaningful art.

Second, the violent imagery of Stephen’s imagined encounter with the West Irish peasant confirms his refusal to “affirm the person [he] struggle[s] with” (Buber *Knowledge* 69). I have already mentioned his satiric portrayal of the Revival’s anthropological fascination with West Ireland, but the conclusion of this April 14 entry also highlights the aggressive nature of Stephen’s antagonistic attitude towards this stereotype. His description of his encounter with the “old man” as a “struggle ... till he or I lie dead” portrays Stephen’s encounter with West Ireland not as an empathetic turning towards an other with whom he disagrees, but as a “fear[ful]” battle against a

sworn rival, which highlights the extent to which his aesthetics rejects individuals or ideas that counter his own. Unlike Bloom, who concedes the potential legitimacy of several ideas he opposes throughout *Ulysses*, Stephen's impulse on encountering this marker of difference is to "[grip] him by the sinewy throat," brutally rejecting not only the Revival's West Irish fixation, but the "old man" himself. Even though he concedes that he "mean[s] him no harm" (P 274), the antagonism that pervades this encounter demonstrates Stephen's continued inability to affirm the otherness of those who oppose him. Just as this hostility towards difference compromised his personal pursuits of love, it also limits his artistic engagements with Ireland to monologic "struggle[s]" that exclude any ideas that counter his amatory aesthetics, implicating his new "rac[ial]" "conscience" in the didacticism that he tries to avoid.

Ultimately, the alienation that pervades Stephen's thoughts in these entries complicates his ability to fulfill the political goals of his art. He may deem his exile necessary to create his revolutionary Irish art, but his ambivalence towards Ireland as he anticipates that exile eliminates the direct relationship between himself and his homeland that is essential to complete that objective, reducing Stephen to the "indifferent" artist that "refines [himself] out of existence." This indifference is confirmed in the April 16 entry, where he resolves to heed the "spell of arms and voices" that beckon him "Away! Away!" The anticipation of this entry sharply contrasts with the hostility of the earlier entries, and his descriptions of these ghostly voices as those of his "kinsmen" demonstrate his continued preference for symbolic encounters over real-life interactions. Essentially, his exile becomes an opportunity for Stephen to "press in [his] arms the loveliness which has not yet come into the world," as the "promise of close embraces" of

his exiled “kinsmen” (*P* 275) compels him to continue to chase phantoms rather than affirm his fellow Dubliners. Stephen may not have to remain in Ireland to write effective poetry about his homeland, but his refusal to forge a meaningful attachment with anything other than his personal and artistic desires reduces his artistic calling to an “experiment with himself” and denies him the empathy needed to create a politically viable amatory aesthetics.

\*\*\*\*

In “Framing, Being Framed, and the Janus Faces of Authority,” Vicki Mahaffey describes Stephen as being “almost immune to the pity and terror aroused by a sympathetic contemplation of the other” (310). While this description is offered primarily as a contrast to Cranly’s empathy, it also speaks volumes about his disinterest in the personal sufferings of others and the artistic and political limitations of that apathy. While Stephen may deem the pursuit of ideal “pity and terror” necessary to his amatory aesthetics, his “immun[ity]” to the “pity and terror” he encounters in everyday Dublin reduces his artistic endeavors to the impersonal contemplations of an “indifferent” artist. This indirect aesthetics not only drains his specific poems of their creative potential, but it also prevents Stephen from fulfilling the political objectives of his art, as his continual fascination with universal beauty effectively drains his new Irish aesthetics of its Irishness. Thus, the narcissism that felled his amatory pursuits also compromises his artistic exile, and as he sets out to “forge” this “uncreated conscience of [his] race,” Stephen’s refusal to view his artistic encounters as “sympathetic contemplation[s] of the other” makes it inevitable that this “conscience” will not extend beyond “the smithy of his soul.”



Of course, even though Stephen commits himself to exile at the end of *Portrait*, his departure from Dublin is only temporary. Indeed, in the opening pages of *Ulysses*, we find the young artist back in Ireland, and his wanderings around Dublin throughout that text enable us to watch the frequent intersections of Stephen's amatory and aesthetic longings. Once again, Stephen will have to negotiate the conflict between compassionate love and amatory freedom, and predictably he will make the same choice. Nevertheless, whereas *Portrait's* conclusion allowed him to hope for the possibility of future greatness, in *Ulysses*, his decision will ultimately derail both his personal and aesthetic ambitions. The shift from Stephen's climactic invoking of his "old father, old artificer" (*P* 276) to his brooding over his mother's death thus solidifies his episodes in *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait*, and *Ulysses* as cautionary tales against the narcissistic refusal of the empathy needed to attain freedom within a rubric of love.

## CHAPTER SIX: LOVE'S BITTER MYSTERY

Towards the end of *Portrait*, Cranly attempts to convince Stephen to follow his mother's wishes by making his Easter duties, arguing that "whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother's love is not. Your mother brings you into the world, carries you first in her body. What do we know about what she feels? But whatever she feels, it, at least, must be real" (*P* 263). Stephen, committed to an uncompromising performance of religious transgression, responds by citing Pascal, Aloysius Gonzaga, and Jesus Christ as figures who subordinated their love for their mothers to the pursuit of intellectual and religious endeavors. This exchange on the importance of maternal love culminates in Stephen's recognition of Cranly's empathy towards others and the subsequent termination of their friendship. However, this rejection is not limited to the "noblest and truest friend a man ever had" (*P* 269); in refusing to make his Easter duties and subsequently leaving for Paris, Stephen has once again chosen the pursuit of intellectual phantoms over the devotion to a real-world loved one, prioritizing the "play" of "ideas [and] ambitions" over the commitment to maternal love (*P* 263). When his father's telegram brings him back to Ireland and his mother's deathbed, Stephen is again forced to choose between a rigorous performance of his amatory freedom and a display of compassion for a dying May Dedalus. Here, his predictable refusal to pray for his mother's soul carries more far-reaching consequences, as her death and his growing isolation begin *Ulysses* on a tragic note, sending *Portrait's* protagonist away from his Martello tower in search of something to fill the void created by a vanquished maternal love.

In that sense, Stephen's chapters in *Ulysses* seem to be characterized primarily by remorse. Numerous critics point to his preoccupation with his mother's death and his struggles with his agenbite of inwit throughout June 16, 1904, as evidence of a young artist "paralyzed by this unresolved source of fear and guilt in his memory" (Rickard 36).<sup>67</sup> While these readings are compelling, they also cast the relationship between Stephen and the late May Dedalus in an exclusively antagonistic light, treating the mother's ghostly presence as an avenging demon that he must vanquish to fulfill his artistic calling. Even those who recognize the presence of *amor matris* in Stephen's remorse subordinate his desire for love to this antagonism, arguing that he is "in mourning as much for his own intransigence at not having prayed at his mother's bedside as for the love he feels unable to replace" (Hayman 19).<sup>68</sup> However, while the initial descriptions of Stephen in the "Telemachiad" appear to be merely remorseful continuations of the transgression and *non serviam* that dominated *Portrait's* fifth chapter, reading his struggles over his mother's death with respect to his advocacy of amatory freedom throughout Joyce's earlier text reveals the predominance of love in his brooding. These revelations transform his subsequent wanderings around Dublin into his final quest to regain the unconditional maternal affection that will stabilize the persona of the transgressive artist that has become the predominant armor of Stephen's subjectivity.

---

<sup>67</sup> Similarly, John Bormanis argues that Stephen's "guilty feelings about his mother's death and the loss of her emotional support are compounded by those which he feels over his repudiation of his mother(s) country and religion by crossing her last wishes" (596). Paul Schwaber also notes that "the loss gave rise to mournfulness in him that a year later remains unmitigated, because, pained and at times frightened of her avenging rage, unconsciously he is raging at her for deserting him – for having banished him again and finally, thus depriving him forever of her always-wished-for care and concern" (64).

<sup>68</sup> Schwaber also posits that "His fantasy of writing is life-defeating, holding out promise of a world without end entirely of his own: either that or the abiding wish that the fantasy counters, to have his mother back and to himself alone" (76). By contrast, I argue that these fantasies are one and the same, and the inextricability of Stephen's desire for maternal love and the fulfillment of his amatory aesthetics constitutes his central tragedy.

## I. The Demand for Intelligent Sympathy

When asked by the librarian in “Scylla and Charybdis” if he believes that Anne Hathaway was unfaithful to Shakespeare, Stephen responds, “Where there is a reconciliation ... there must have been first a sundering” (*U* 9.334-5). Similarly, before we can comment on Stephen’s attempts in *Ulysses* to reclaim *amor matris*, we must return to *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero* to witness the development and dissolution of that maternal bond. By undertaking this investigation, we see that Stephen’s alienation from his mother does not arise entirely out of his pursuit of intellectual freedom and exile, but is present in his initial apprehension of May Dedalus and extends throughout both of Joyce’s texts. In *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*, the young artist represents his affection for his mother in manners that subordinate her feelings and qualify her love. Thus, Stephen ultimately proves Cranly right in neither “knowing” nor particularly caring “what [his mother] feels,” rendering inevitable the conflict that transforms the aspiring lover of *Portrait* into the melancholy brooder of *Ulysses*.

### A. Nice Mother!

Stephen’s maternal dilemma in *Ulysses* finds its origins on the opening pages of *Portrait*. While these early interactions between Stephen and May Dedalus do not contain the tension of the later scenes in *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait*, the inextricability of her Catholic devotion from her love for Stephen is still evident. Indeed, Joyce foregrounds the primacy of her faith as early as his initial descriptions of the character, juxtaposing her assisting a young Stephen who has wet his bed with her insistence to Dante that he will apologize for playing with Eileen Vance. In that sense, Stephen’s poetic response of “Put out his eyes/Apologize” (*P* 4) implicates not only Dante, but his

mother as well, creating an immediate link between maternal love and religious policing that will dominate Stephen's subsequent thoughts about her.

Additionally, Stephen's tendency to subordinate his mother's feelings to his own are introduced in *Portrait's* early episodes. As his parents prepare to leave him at Clongowes, Stephen recalls his mother's advice concerning how to survive on his own at school:

His mother had told him not to speak with the rough boys in the college. Nice mother! The first day in the hall of the castle when she had said goodbye she had put up her veil double to her nose to kiss him: and her nose and eyes were red. But he had pretended not to see that she was going to cry. She was a nice mother but she was not so nice when she cried. (*P* 5)

This recollection constitutes the first instance of Stephen qualifying his mother's love in manners that ignore the magnitude of her affection. He recognizes that her desire for him to avoid Clongowes's "rough boys" speaks to a loving concern for his well-being, but his repulsion towards her crying shows his inability to grasp the true extent of her love.

While the reader recognizes these tears as signs of May Dedalus's lament over leaving her child at school, Stephen holds the tears against her, noting that his mother "was not so nice when she cried." Of course Stephen cannot be expected to understand fully the depths of his mother's devotion at such a young age, but even so, his negative reaction to her tears counterbalances his appreciation for the advice that preceded them, which demonstrates his inability to take her love at face value. By "pretend[ing] not to see that she was going to cry," Stephen erases May Dedalus's affection from the scene, a gesture that will be at the foundation of his later qualifications of her love.

Finally, Stephen's confusion over the legitimacy of kissing his mother foreshadows the amatory double bind that comprises both *Portrait's* fifth chapter and *Ulysses*.

Stephen's inability to answer Wells's question correctly is frequently read as evidence of his continued fascination with language, but it also signifies his continued difficulty in responding properly to his mother's affection. Rather than defending his love for May Dedalus, Stephen tries to figure out how a yes/no question can have two wrong answers and attempts to understand what a kiss truly signifies, responses that indicate his early prioritization of intellectualizing love over actually experiencing it. Also, instead of envisioning his own mother, Stephen tries to conjure up an image of Wells's mother, symbolically shutting May Dedalus out of her own question. Stephen eventually ruminates on his mother's kiss, but he primarily uses that memory to ponder why people feel the need to kiss each other, another act that subordinates a sign of May Dedalus's affection to his intellectual curiosities. Thus, when an ailing Stephen fantasizes about coming home for the holidays, he cannot imagine his mother's excitement about the occasion without simultaneously wondering if it was correct of her to kiss him, demonstrating the pervasiveness of Wells's mockery in his future associations with her. Indeed, all of Stephen's subsequent interactions with his mother will be tainted by his inability to "kiss" her properly, and this early intellectualization of *amor matris* foreshadows the inevitable subordination and rejection of her affection in his construction of amatory freedom.

#### B. Mother Indulgent

Stephen's ambivalence and confusion towards his mother's love becomes increasingly hostile as he embarks on his career at UCD. As he begins to follow the aesthetic calling prophetically signified by his last name, Stephen increasingly represents his mother not as the "nice" parent of *Portrait's* opening pages, but as a generic Catholic

devotee who symbolizes all against which he must strive. Similar to his earlier repulsions towards the tears and the kiss, Stephen's religious rebellion compels him to doubt the sincerity of his mother's affection, representing her concern and interest in his life as demands for conformity that he must reject. This representational strategy thus constitutes Stephen's answer to Wells's question, as his commitment to amatory freedom precludes him from "kiss[ing]" a mother whose religious devotion threatens his intellectual pursuits.

This maternal hostility is evident in *Portrait's* fourth chapter. As Stephen's father inquires about possible university enrollment, the young artist recalls his mother's hesitance to this option in manners that reveal his growing alienation from her:

Yes, his mother was hostile to the idea, as he had read from her listless silence. Yet her mistrust pricked him more keenly than his father's pride and he thought coldly how he had watched the faith which was fading down in his soul aging and strengthening in her eyes. A dim antagonism gathered force within him and darkened his mind as a cloud against her disloyalty: and when it passed, cloudlike, leaving his mind serene and dutiful towards her again, he was made aware dimly and without regret of a first noiseless sundering of their lives. (*P* 178)

Stephen may be justified in reacting negatively to his mother's hesitancy, but his specific castigations of her reveal the extent to which he is willing to sacrifice her love for his goals. Similar to Emma Clery, May Dedalus is not given an explicit voice of disapproval, but is instead confined to the "ineluctable modality of the visible," transformed into a "thing" to be "read" by a Stephen who has just rejected the priesthood and is determined to take any sign of hesitancy by a practicing Catholic as evidence that she is his enemy (*U* 3.1-2). Thus, what could be simply maternal concern is instead represented as "hostility," "mistrust," and "disloyalty," and Stephen's acknowledgement that a "dim antagonism . . . darkened his mind" against her reveals this to be a strategic

characterization of his mother designed to promote his intellectual and rebellious interests without knowing or caring “what she feels” for him.

Additionally, Stephen’s focus on religion in this passage demonstrates his continued refusal to entertain or accept difference in his love objects. His antagonism towards his mother is not brought about by any overt attempt by her to prevent him from enrolling in UCD, but is rather based on his recognition that “the faith which was fading down in his soul [was] aging and strengthening in her eyes.” Thus, even though her protest is simply a “listless silence,” the fact that she practices a religion that he has rejected is sufficient to characterize her as “disloyal.” Ironically, Stephen’s desire to avoid the conformity of the Catholic Church has compelled him to demand that very conformity in his counterparts, and his mother’s inability to abandon her faith for him is therefore interpreted by Stephen as a rejection of his love. This refusal of his intellectual pursuits compels him to treat his mother not as the life-giving guarantor of *amor matris*, but rather as a symbol of Catholic dominion no different from the other “sentries” and “guardians of his boyhood” that are rejected in the following paragraph (P 178). That Stephen subsequently recognizes “dimly and without regret ... a first noiseless sundering of their lives” reveals the extent to which he desires a love object that is merely a reflection of himself, and May Dedalus’s Catholic devotion subordinates her role as his mother to that of a generic churchgoer who is to blame for their growing estrangement.

Stephen’s antagonistic characterization of his mother’s religion reaches its climax in his refusal to take his Easter duty in *Stephen Hero*. While it is certainly legitimate for Stephen to reject this pledge to a religion he feels has tyrannized his life, the way that he conveys this to his mother emphasizes both his inability to empathize with his family’s



faith and his insistence on casting maternal love antagonistically. While May Daedalus's initial request for his Easter communion certainly irritates the young artist, her idea to use the family's duty as a special intention for Isabel definitively arms Stephen against his mother: "He was much annoyed that his mother should try to wheedle him into conformity by using his sister's health as an argument. He felt that such an attempt dishonoured him and freed him from the last dissuasions of considerate piety" (*SH* 132). This reaction illustrates the extent to which Stephen deems his mother's faith as evidence of her villainy. Disregarding the fact that, as a practicing Catholic and loving mother, May Daedalus may feel it important to offer prayers for her dying daughter's health, Stephen represents her request as a nefarious scheme to trick him into submitting to the church. Such a reaction shows the narcissistic depths of his amatory freedom, as Stephen casts both his mother's love and his sister's health as threats to his "honor" that compel his rejection of his family. By articulating that this request "freed him from the last dissuasions of considerate piety," Stephen justifies his subsequent attack on his mother's faith by blaming her for making her request, demonstrating his determination to view any suggestion that conflicts with his rebellious goals as a rejection of his love.

The religious attacks that follow this request also illustrate Stephen's insistence on rejecting loved ones whose beliefs counter his own. In response to her desire that he make his Easter duties, Stephen "[settles] into definite hostility," initiating an assault on the religious foundations of his mother's request (*SH* 132). To that end, he counters his mother with a form of "religion baiting," asking mocking questions about the Ascension primarily to provoke his mother into a reaction that can be used as proof of her role as the Catholic enemy. He refers to the Easter beliefs as "drive!" and accuses his mother of

knowingly forcing him into a sacrilegious communion (*SH* 133). Once he gets his mother upset enough to tearfully threaten to burn his books, he accuses her of beginning the conversation and flippantly responds that “if you were a genuine Roman Catholic, mother, you would burn me as well as the books.” His concluding statement that “I don’t see what you’re crying for” parallels his puzzlement over Emma’s tears upon being propositioned (*SH* 135), as his insistence on viewing all Catholics as enemies renders him incapable of comprehending the feelings of his loved ones and subordinates their love to his uncompromising rebellion.

By contrast, *Portrait*’s depiction of this conflict seems tame. In this text, Joyce does not show us Stephen’s argument with his mother over the Easter duty, but it is reasonable to conclude that a similar dispute has taken place, especially considering the conversation with Cranly that discusses it. Indeed, *Portrait*’s Stephen tells Cranly that an “unpleasant quarrel” took place between him and his mother “about religion” (*P* 259), and when Cranly asks him if he loves his mother, he shakes his head and tells him “I don’t know what your words mean” (*P* 261). When Cranly presses further and asks if Stephen’s mother has lived a happy life, he curtly responds, “How do I know?” (*P* 262), demonstrating that Stephen’s preoccupation with her Catholicism has blinded him to the specifics of her person. His commitment to amatory freedom has prevented him from understanding or empathizing with May Dedalus, making her desire for him to take his Easter duty enough for him to argue that he does not know what it means to love one’s mother. Despite the suffering and love that Cranly mentions, Stephen’s uncompromising advocacy of rebellion disqualifies that love from consideration, leaving only her Catholicism to be used to justify his separation from her.

Stephen's insistence on this separation is confirmed in *Portrait's* concluding diary. The initial March 20 entry begins this divorce from *amor matris* by presenting an abbreviated account of his conversation with Cranly. While Stephen does mention Cranly's suggestion that he obey his mother's wishes, his presentation of this argument demonstrates that he has no intention of taking this suggestion seriously. He indicates that Cranly "had his grand manner on," characterizing his friend's arguments as righteous indignation that Stephen can easily dismiss. He also represents Cranly's advocacy as "attacking [Stephen] on the score of love for one's mother," which both represents maternal love as a weapon that Cranly wields against him and erases May Dedalus from the discussion by referring to the love of "one's" mother instead of "his" mother. Finally, just as he reacted to Wells at Clongowes, Stephen tries to imagine Cranly's mother instead of his own, signifying both his disinterest in taking his argument seriously and his unwillingness to consider his mother under an amorous obligation.

This dismissal of his mother's love continues in the March 24 entry, where Stephen writes: "Mother indulgent. Said I have a queer mind and have read too much. Not true. Have read little and understood less. Then she said I would come back to faith because I had a restless mind. This means to leave church by backdoor of sin and reenter through the skylight of repentance. Cannot repent" (*P* 271). While the bulk of the entry reiterates his belief that his mother's concern threatens his intellectual freedom, Stephen's concluding remark illustrates just how uncompromising that freedom is. By articulating that he "cannot repent" his refusal to submit to the Church, Stephen has permanently removed a method of reconnecting not only to Catholicism (which he will not lose much sleep over), but also to his mother's love (which he will lose a lot of sleep over in

*Ulysses*). The absolute nature of this statement thus solidifies the double bind in which Stephen will find himself on Bloomsday, dismissing the only option he has towards reclaiming maternal love.

This inextricability between maternal love, religion, and Stephen's amatory aesthetics is ultimately confirmed in the penultimate diary entry. Stephen writes on April 26 that his mother "prays ... that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels" (*P* 275). This hope demonstrates the extent to which May Dedalus's concern for Stephen is guided by love, as her insistence that he learn "what the heart is and what it feels" signifies a desire for Stephen to experience a love that transcends the religious concerns to which *Portrait* had previously confined her statements. However, Stephen's response to this suggestion confirms the unlikelihood of him ever feeling this form of love. His flippant "Amen" dismisses the specifics of her entreaty and instead focuses on its characterization as a "prayer" so as to continually portray May Dedalus as a Catholic against whom he must strive. Thus, when Stephen immediately follows this "Amen" with his desire to "encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience," he positions his exile and freedom as a rejection of maternal love, tossing aside his mother's plea for him to "learn ... how [the heart] feels" so that he can "forge into the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race." In a sense, his invoking of the "old father, old artificer" in *Portrait*'s final diary entry (*P* 276) constitutes an emphatic shift away from the mother of love and religion towards the father of aesthetic creation ... until his father's blue telegram brings him back to the bedside of his mother.

## II. Ghostly Light on the Tortured Face

Throughout *Portrait*, Stephen subordinates real-world love to symbolic phantoms, crafting a framework of amatory freedom that rejects Cranly, Emma, and May Dedalus so that he can pursue his ideal Mercedes. In an event that is not narrated explicitly, but is referenced extensively in *Ulysses*, Stephen is called back to Ireland to care for his dying mother and is once again asked to make a religious concession, this time to kneel down at her bedside and pray for her eternal soul. While this request may seem similar to his refusal of the Easter duty, the bedside prayer carries more extensive amorous implications because its specific focus on preserving May Dedalus's well-being would constitute an empathetic embrace that would confirm the son's affection in his mother's eyes. However, to Stephen this request is simply another demand to submit to Catholic tyranny, and his refusal to kneel, when combined with her subsequent death, constitutes his final rejection of *amor matris* during his mother's life.

However, this does not mean that Stephen shuts the door on maternal love after May Dedalus's death. In fact, once his mother leaves the realm of the living, Stephen becomes obsessed with reclaiming the love that he refused in real-life. Critics are certainly correct in reading remorse in his maternal meditations, but when we read these reflections with respect to the pursuits of symbolic love that dominated *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*, we see that more than guilt is at play. His fonder memories of his mother's life can be seen as attempts to suppress the despair and rejection that concluded it through a sanitized representation of maternal bliss, and his focus on playing "Who Goes with Fergus" on the piano to comfort his dying mother enables Stephen to prioritize a moment of compassion and care towards her throughout his brooding. When read this way, Stephen's reflections

on his mother throughout *Ulysses* are shown to be another pursuit of a symbolic love object, as his efforts to solidify a more heartwarming representation of maternal affection become attempts to reclaim *amor matris* through the suppression of his refusal of her final wish.

However, these efforts do not go smoothly. While Stephen is able to envision a happier, loving mother, his memories inevitably return to her deathbed and his refusal to pray for her soul. Unsurprisingly, Stephen's response to this memory is to blame his mother for compelling his refusal, relying on his *Portrait* claim that he "cannot repent" and castigating the dead May Dedalus for causing his unrest of Bloomsday. The dead mother thus undergoes what Julia Kristeva calls "abjection," the banishment of signs that cannot be assimilated into oneself through representations that are considered repulsive and unclean. She writes, "What is abject, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. A certain 'ego' that merged with its master, a superego, has flatly driven it away. It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game" (*Powers* 2). Scholars have noted the abject nature of Stephen's representations of his mother in *Ulysses*,<sup>69</sup> but the role of the "jettisoned object" becomes clear when we consider his amatory reflections on Bloomsday. Since any shift in Stephen's mind from loving to dying mother turns his representations of May Dedalus into gruesome, threatening images, abjection becomes a critical component of Stephen's quest to reclaim maternal

---

<sup>69</sup> Ewa Ziarek argues that "the compulsion to eject the maternal element from the artist's consciousness, is intensified by an emotional response of revulsion and disgust. Yet the experience of aversion, according to Kristeva, is a curious synthesis of affect and judgment, which points to the defensive expulsion of what cannot be assimilated to the self" (61).

love, as memories that reveal the futile nature of that quest are represented as loathsome and excluded from his mind so that he can continue chasing his symbolic phantom.

Nevertheless, the inability of abjection to exclude the “jettisoned object” completely and permanently ultimately undermines its effectiveness. Kristeva’s observation that the suppression of the abject “draws me towards the place where meaning collapses” shows that although cracks in symbolic constructions are suppressed through abjection, their return is inevitable because “from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master” (*Powers* 2). Such “challeng[es]” frequently plague Stephen throughout *Bloomsday*, as his attempts to transform his mother’s ghost into a gruesome threat to be excluded perpetuate reappearances of the ghostly memory and stronger challenges to his desire to reclaim maternal love. His amatory quest is ultimately foiled if his ideal love object is overshadowed by the reemergence of the abject other he casts aside along the way.

#### A. The Bowl of Bitter Waters

Stephen’s failure to ignore his refusal of May Dedalus’s love is revealed through his interactions with Buck Mulligan and his visions of his mother’s corpse in “Telemachus.” When Mulligan chides Stephen for refusing to kneel at his mother’s deathbed, the latter experiences “pain, that was not yet the pain of love” in his heart, and his mind turns to a dream that has tormented him since her passing: “Silently, in a dream she had come to him after her death, her wasted body, within its loose brown graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, that had bent upon him, mute, reproachful, a faint odour of wetted ashes” (*U* 1.102-5). Not only does Mulligan’s rebuke that Stephen’s refusal to pray for his mother reveals “something sinister in [him]” (*U* 1.94)

compels the latter to conjure up a sinister image of his mother, but given his earlier assertion that “someone killed [his mother]” (*U* 1.90), Stephen’s dream reveals his desire to avoid culpability for refusing to pray for her, as its horrific nature enables him to blame her for his melancholy by transforming her into a hideous, reproachful corpse, whose “mute” and “reproachful” countenance pose a threat that Stephen must vanquish.

This corpse-like imagery also reveals the prominence of abjection in Stephen’s brooding. Whenever Stephen desires to imagine that he possesses his mother’s affection, his thoughts prioritize fonder moments of the past over the events at her deathbed. However, when his mind turns to her plea for Stephen’s prayer, he immediately represents her as a monstrous corpse whose presence threatens the sanctity of his soul. Kristeva calls this representational strategy “the utmost of abjection,” describing “the corpse” both as a “real threat” and as “death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part” (*Powers* 4). Stephen’s construction of a “‘dual mother’ [that is] at once loving and terrible” demonstrates the pervasiveness of his use of abjection (Kimball *Odyssey* 90), as his inability to reclaim his mother’s love compels his continued treatment of her as an enemy to his amatory freedom. This strategy may temporarily assuage his remorse, but its suppression of his mother’s desires and affection keeps Stephen from the love he seeks throughout *Ulysses* by preventing him from empathizing with her condition, leaving him with only a “pain, that was not yet the pain of love.”

This inability to empathize with May Dedalus continues when Stephen chastises Mulligan for a past grievance. When Stephen recalls Mulligan referencing him as “only Dedalus whose mother is beastly dead” (*U* 1.198-9), Mulligan understandably assumes



that he has “offend[ed] the memory” of Stephen’s mother and apologizes (*U* 214-5).

However, Stephen’s retort that he was referring to “the offence to me” demonstrates his unwillingness to sympathize with his mother’s suffering and death (*U* 1.220), suppressing her grief in order to solidify his self-importance. His subsequent observation that “pulses were beating in his eyes, veiling their sight” thus conveys more than just his apprehension of the sea (*U* 1.225); it also signifies a “veiling [of] sight” towards the “offence to [his] mother” (*U* 1.218), preventing Stephen from recognizing her in a manner that would adequately allow him to reclaim the love he seeks.

However, Stephen’s attempts to suppress his mother’s memory are only temporary. After trying to convince Stephen to “give up the moody brooding” (*U* 1.235-6), Mulligan quotes “Who Goes with Fergus” as he descends the tower steps: “And no more turn aside and brood/Upon love’s bitter mystery/For Fergus rules the brazen cars” (*U* 1.239-41). Stephen’s reaction to the poem reveals both the impossibility of Mulligan’s suggestion and the extent of his preoccupation with “love’s bitter mystery”:

A cloud began to cover the sun slowly, wholly, shadowing the bay in deeper green. It lay beneath him, a bowl of bitter waters. Fergus’s song: I sang it alone in the house, holding down the long dark chords. Her door was open: she wanted to hear my music. Silent with awe and pity I went to her bedside. She was crying in her wretched bed. For those words, Stephen: love’s bitter mystery (*U* 1.248-53).

This passage reveals the “bitter” love at the foundation of Stephen’s anguish. His juxtaposition of Fergus’s song with the “bowl of bitter waters” foregrounds his recognition of his refusal of maternal love, representing his rejection of his mother’s dying wish in the rhetoric of the Biblical “trial of jealousy.” Gifford and Seidman’s explanation of this reference to the Book of Numbers reveals the punitive nature of this representation:

Numbers 5: 11-31 outlines the “trial of jealousy,” the trial of a woman suspected of an unproven adultery. The priest presents the woman with the “bitter water,” cursing her so that if she is guilty, “this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot.” If she is not guilty, the curse will have no effect (18).

The association of the “trial of jealousy” with an “unproven adultery” provides a compelling analogy for Stephen’s brooding, as his suppression of “the offence to [his] mother” and his preoccupation with the ghostly dream constitute his attempts to vindicate himself from the charge of betraying her affection. Juxtaposing Stephen’s situation with the “bowl of bitter waters” thus represents the rejection of his mother’s dying wish as his own “trial of jealousy,” forcing him to stand judgment for refusing to pray for her soul. By tying the “bowl of bitter waters” to “love’s bitter mystery,” Stephen highlights the amorous significance of this trial, as May Dedalus’s desire for him to utter “those words” represents the requests from her deathbed as a desire for his returned affection.

Juxtaposing her desire for “love’s bitter mystery” with her desire for Stephen’s prayer transforms his mother’s dying wish into evidence of the inextricability of his double bind. Not only does it reveal the maternal love Stephen seeks to be a direct threat to his amatory freedom since it would require him to submit to the Church to obtain it, but it also shows that this love is not unconditional. Throughout *Portrait and Stephen Hero*, Stephen perpetually seeks an unconditional surrender of his love object “without any overt act of his.” By contrast, the requirement that Stephen has to pray to attain maternal love foregrounds the conditional nature of that love, as his mother will return Stephen’s affection only if he prays for her eternal rest. The conditional nature of the love Stephen seeks thus illustrates the inevitable frustration of his quest, as the love object he desires will reject his pleas for unconditional affection.

Stephen's response to this dilemma is again to transform his mother into an abject corpse. His subsequent meditations on her death return him to the dream where the spirit of his mother plagues his refusal of her deathbed request:

Her glazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on the tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. *Liliata rutilantium te confessorum turma circumdet: iubilantium te virginum chorus exipiat.*<sup>70</sup> Ghoul! Chewer of corpses! No, mother! Let me be and let me live (*U* 1.273-9).

The horrific nature of his mother's corpse highlights Stephen's use of abjection to overcome his maternal dilemma. His focus on his mother's "glazing eyes" and "ghostly light" highlight its monstrous and loathsome nature, representing her as villainous so as to necessitate her exclusion. Ironically, this gruesome imagery recalls the rotting bodies of those who fail the "trial of jealousy," showing Stephen's corpse imagery to be an attempt to push the "bowl of bitter waters" away from him and towards his mother. Additionally, Stephen's fears that the corpse emerges "to shake and bend [his] soul" and "to strike [him] down" establish an intentional malice behind his mother's presence by representing her gruesome visage as a deliberate attempt to torture his mind. His observation that the corpse "stares out of death" echoes Kristeva's description of the corpse as "death infecting life," positioning the apparition as a threat to Stephen with each appearance she makes. Thus, the antagonistic nature of his dream is not only evidenced by the monstrous nature of the corpse, but by its ability to maintain a constant challenge to the aesthetic persona that carried out its abjection.

---

<sup>70</sup> Translated: "May the glittering throng of confessors, bright as lilies, gather about you. May the glorious choir of virgins receive you" (Gifford and Seidman 19).

However, the most compelling evidence of abjection's role in the visions of the corpse appears towards the end of the passage. Not only does Stephen's mother appear to him as a monstrous creature, but she also constantly reminds him of his rejection of maternal love. Indeed, the corpse's utterance of the "Ordo Commendationis Animae," the prayer for the dying, foregrounds his dilemma: for Stephen to reclaim maternal love, he would have to submit to a religious performance that calls his amatory freedom into question. Thus it is significant that the corpse's desire for the last rites is immediately followed by Stephen labeling the vision as a "ghoul," as evidence of his refusal of maternal love is represented in antagonistic terms that enable its exclusion. Stephen's desires for the corpse to "let [him] be and let [him] live" become the most definitive evidence of his mother's suppression in "Telemachus," as his attempts to shield himself from her ghost enable him to exclude challenges to his quest to reclaim maternal love.

#### B. Weep No More

Stephen's efforts to negotiate his double bind continue throughout "Nestor." While it is a critical commonplace to point to Stephen's reflections on Cyril Sargent as evidence of his preoccupation with *amor matris*, his obsession with this affection in this chapter is evident as early as his consideration of John Milton's "Lycidas." Even though Talbot's recitation of the poem is primarily used to support Stephen's critique of the "nightmare of history" (*U* 2.377), it is telling that Joyce follows his mourning for his dead mother in "Telemachus" with one of English literature's most famous elegies in the following chapter. In that sense, it is necessary to read "Nestor" as an elegy, or rather as a failed elegy, for Stephen's indifference to the performance of "Lycidas" demonstrates his inability to "weep" for his mother's rest.

Joyce's inclusion of "Lycidas" in "Nestor" is important not simply because of its overall relevance as an elegy, but also because of the relevance of the specific stanza recited by Talbot to Stephen's desire to overcome his grief. Indeed, the concluding verses of the shepherd's lament establish a way to come to grips with death that potentially provides an opportunity for Stephen to come to terms with his refusal to pray for his mother's rest. Initially, the stanza's opening decry of "weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more" (*U* 2.64) echoes Mulligan's call for Stephen to "give up the moody brooding" (*U* 1.235-6), establishing the relinquishing of grief and the acceptance of the spirit's enduring life as prerequisites for overcoming an emotionally paralyzing death. Additionally, the observation that "Lycidas ... is not dead/Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor" (*U* 2.65-6), while developing the shepherd's position that the departed spirit is eternal, finds its Joycean counterpart in May Dedalus, whose death does not prevent her ghost from making continued appearances in Stephen's mind. The speaker's isolation of the soul's undying existence thus means that emotional connections do not end with death, but potentially endure depending on how one chooses to remember the deceased. When read within the context of Stephen's brooding, these fragments of "Lycidas" establish a proper elegy to May Dedalus as necessary for him to restore the maternal affection he seeks throughout the text.

The efficacy of this elegy is developed throughout the rest of the stanza. While these lines are not explicitly cited in *Ulysses*, they are definitely uttered in Stephen's classroom, as Talbot's recitation of the poem's conclusion gives them an absent presence in "Nestor."<sup>71</sup> Specifically, we know that he recites the shepherd's contention in the

---

<sup>71</sup> Patrick Hogan similarly contends that Talbot recited the entirety of that stanza, arguing that "sentences end on lines 177 and 181, but the entire concluding section of the poem runs only to line 185 ... It seems

middle of the stanza that Lycidas's tragic demise has been replaced by a heavenly happiness since he repeats the line "*Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves*" (U 2.78), making it plausible that Stephen's allowing him to "turn over" the page in his recitation book enables him to finish the poem (U 2.80). This observation is significant because the conclusion of "Lycidas" articulates ways for the "woful shepherds" to overcome their anguish that could also quell Stephen's brooding.

Initially, the advocacy of a tranquil afterlife in the lines that follow Talbot's error provides an alternative to Stephen's antagonistic representations of his mother's corpse in "Telemachus." Instead of focusing on his drowned corpse, the narrator contends that Lycidas "lathes" his hair "with *Nectar*" and "hears the unexpressive nuptial Song,/In the blest Kingdoms meek of joy and love" (175-7). He subsequently insists that Lycidas is "entertain[ed]" by "all the Saints above" (178), who "wipe the tears for ever from his eyes" (181). Such peaceful descriptions of the heavenly Lycidas enable the speaker to convince his fellow shepherds to cease their mourning, to envision the tranquil image of their comrade instead of his drowned corpse, and to accept the happiness of his afterlife despite his tragic death.

When read alongside Stephen's brooding over the maternal ghost in "Telemachus," the relevance of this advice becomes apparent. Similar to the "woful shepherds," Stephen's inability to "give up the moody brooding" compels him to dwell upon his mother as a ghastly corpse instead of as the "beautiful May Goulding" (U 15.4173-4). For that reason, the recitation of "Lycidas" becomes a plea to Stephen to "weep no more" over her death by forgoing the preoccupation with her gruesome cadaver and instead

---

most plausible to assume that the students were assigned the entire twenty-line concluding section, rather than a twelve- or sixteen-line portion of that section" (*Milton* 122).

envisioning his mother at peace. For Stephen to obey the “uncouth Swain” would be for him to accept that although his mother’s religious devotion contradicts his chosen career path, it at least eased the pain in her life both before and after death, enabling a present tranquility that obviates the need for his grief. This acceptance of her happy afterlife would allow Stephen to perceive her spirit in a more positive light despite their differing Catholic attitudes, which would enable him to move past his remorse.

Furthermore, this acceptance of a tranquil maternal spirit would enable Stephen to resolve his amatory double bind. Because Stephen insists on characterizing May Dedalus as a menacing corpse that threatens his amatory freedom, the demands imposed by this ominous spirit inevitably jeopardize his aesthetic pursuits (in this case, by forcing him to submit to a religious performance he unconditionally rejects to regain maternal love). Were Stephen to acknowledge that his mother’s faith might have granted her a peaceful life afterlife, then that tranquil image would supplant the gruesome corpse that demands his repentance. By shifting his maternal representations away from the deathbed, Stephen could affirm his mother’s religious otherness without compromising his *non serviam*, not only because he would not need to pray for her soul if it were already in heaven, but also because he would not have to submit to a religious performance to acknowledge that his mother’s Catholicism was sufficient for her. Rather than excluding his mother because of her dissenting beliefs, Stephen could “confirm ... as creature and as creation, [she] who is opposed to [him]” and develop a loving bond with her enduring presence that would affirm her as “the personal bearer of a conviction” without compromising his intellectual pursuits (Buber *Knowledge* 69).

However, Stephen ignores this call to “weep no more.” While “Lycidas” may provide a way to overcome his grief through a loving acceptance of his mother’s otherness, Stephen does not listen to the entire recitation. In fact, he tunes out Talbot after the first three lines and instead contemplates his life in Paris, overlooking the speaker’s description of Lycidas’s enduring presence after death.<sup>72</sup> Then, after he sets Talbot’s recitation back on track, he does not pay attention to the rest of the stanza that establishes Lycidas’s tranquil heavenly existence, choosing instead to contemplate the poem’s reference to “him that walked the waves” (*U* 2.83). His mental digressions throughout the recitation demonstrate that Stephen does not heed the specifics of the recitation, but instead uses random lines as springboards for a religious contemplation that has nothing to do with “Lycidas.” These digressions prevent Stephen from acknowledging Milton’s alternative to his brooding over the maternal corpse, inhibiting his ability to affirm May Dedalus in the manner needed for him to come to grips with her death and to build a loving relationship with her enduring spirit. Thus, when Stephen asks “have I heard all” (*U* 2.91), he reveals that he has heard nothing, as his inability to overcome his remorseful conscience prevents him from reaffirming his love for May Dedalus.

This missed opportunity is confirmed towards the middle of “Proteus.” As Stephen considers Mulligan’s once saving a man from drowning, he wonders if he could ever be so heroic. What begins as a hypothetical scenario involving an imaginary victim quickly takes on personal significance, as his insistence that “I could not save her” transforms the victim into May Dedalus, and the subsequent reference to “waters: bitter death: lost”

---

<sup>72</sup> “So sinks the day-star in the Ocean bed,/And yet anon repairs his drooping head,/And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled Ore,/Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:/So *Lycidas* sunk low, but mounted high” (168-72)



demonstrates his continued obsession with the “trial of jealousy” that consumed his thoughts in “Telemachus” (*U* 3.329-30). Not only does this “bitter death” imagery signify Stephen’s continued representation of his mother as a corpse instead of a tranquil spirit, but the defensive nature of this imagery also demonstrates his continued guilt over his death bed refusal. His insistence that there was nothing he could do to save her reveals his continued belief that he cannot help his mother without compromising his freedom, an assertion that recalls his similar equivocations in *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*.<sup>73</sup> Whereas the acceptance of a tranquil afterlife could enable him to move beyond his remorse, Stephen’s determination to view maternal aid as a threat forces him into an amatory paralysis that prevents him from developing a more loving bond with her eternal spirit.

This is not to say that Stephen completely ignores maternal affection in “Nestor”; however, the mechanism that he chooses to gain that affection falls short of the success potentially offered by “Lycidas.” Rather than elegizing his mother, he continues to perceive his maternal obligations according to the amatory freedom that guided him throughout *Portrait* and *Stephen Hero*. Initially, Stephen tells his class a riddle and changes the answer to have “the fox [bury] his grandmother,” instead of his mother, “under a hollybush” (*U* 2.115), which continues his suppression of his mother’s death from “Telemachus.” This decision precludes Stephen’s strategy from sharing the efficacious potential of “Lycidas” since his inability to acknowledge her heavenly afterlife prevents him from moving past his grief. His alteration of the joke’s conclusion confirms his failure to accept either his mother’s otherness or her death productively

---

<sup>73</sup> In *Portrait*, Stephen responds to Cranly’s question of if he would “try to save her from suffering” by stating “If I could ... that would cost me very little” (*P* 262). In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen responds to a similar question from Cranly by contending that “I would in many cases” (*SH* 138).

since her “poor soul” cannot “go to heaven” if Stephen refuses to bury her (*U* 2.106-7). This tactic may enable him to continue his amatory quest by suppressing his role in his mother’s death, but by improperly elegizing May Dedalus through the riddle, Stephen ensures that his quest will have no end, as his denial of her difference prevents him from demonstrating the love he wishes to reclaim.

Also, Stephen’s exclusion of his mother in his subsequent contemplations of Sargent limits his isolation of *amor matris* to a symbolic desire. He may famously describe maternal love as “the only true thing in life” (*U* 2.143), but the loving potential of *amor matris* is undermined by May Dedalus’s absence in these meditations. Initially, Stephen imagines Sargent’s mother, who “[bore] him in her arms and in her heart” (*U* 2.140). Then, he contemplates the “fiery Columbanus,” whose religious devotion compelled him to “[leave] his mother ‘grievously against her will’” (Gifford and Seidman 33). While this scenario is clearly analogous to Stephen’s departure from his mother at *Portrait*’s conclusion, he never mentions himself specifically, and any hint of May Dedalus is confined to her being likened to Columbanus’s mother and to the mention of “rosewood and wetted ashes” (*U* 2.145-6). When Stephen finally refers to himself as needing maternal love, recognizing that “like [Sargent] was I” (*U* 2.168), he still does not mention his mother and abruptly ends his reflection with the “secrets” in his heart “weary of their tyranny” (*U* 2.171). As in *Portrait*, Stephen avoids dealing with the reality of his maternal relationship by imagining other people’s mothers instead of his own, failing to see how a renewed affirmation of May Dedalus would enable him to experience the love he envies in Sargent and limiting his subsequent pursuits to generic love objects that will never quench his brooding.

The limitations of this maternal suppression become evident in “Proteus,” where Stephen’s hesitancy to represent his mother forces him to acknowledge the pitfalls of his amatory aesthetics. Lacking the triumph and assurance of *Portrait*’s artistic episodes, Stephen’s efforts to “[think] himself into confidence” are immediately nullified by his realization that nobody will acknowledge his accomplishments (*P* 74). Whereas his thoughts of Emma enabled an ecstatic construction of the villanelle, his brooding on his mother’s death compels the writing of a vampire poem that is crumpled into his pants pocket as he wonders, “Who ever anywhere will read these written words?” (*U* 3.414-5). His subsequent isolation of “a woman to her lover clinging” echoes the orgasmic fantasy of a submissive Emma that concluded the villanelle section, but his attempts to develop *Ulysses*’s fantasy lead him to a dead end that forces him to ask “She, she, she. What she?” (*U* 3.426). Because he cannot evoke his mother’s image without simultaneously brooding on her death, he has to invoke a generic love object that is unable to spur his genius to any satisfactory degree. These failed attempts force Stephen to realize that his commitment to symbolic love and beauty has alienated him from his loved ones to the point where no love objects remain to reflect his greatness. He can continue to chase his ideal Mercedes, but Stephen now recognizes that embracing “the beauty that has not yet come into the world” without a real-world lover with whom to share that beauty amounts to little more than “bow[ing] to [him]self in the mirror” (*U* 3.137).

Stephen’s brooding in “Proteus” climaxes with his desire to attain the “word known to all men.” His failure to envision a symbolic love object causes Stephen to lament his solitary existence and to yearn for a love that he has yet to experience: “Touch me. Soft eyes. Soft soft soft hand. I am lonely here. O’, touch me soon, now. What is that word

known to all men? I am quiet here alone. Sad too. Touch, touch me” (*U* 3.434-6). Not only does the remorseful rhetoric signify Stephen’s lonely existence, but it also demonstrates his continued longing for a love object that would give herself to him without compromising his amatory freedom. His pleas for this lover to “touch [him]” to ease his loneliness reveal his disinterest in initiating the act of love for which he longs, continuing to hope that his desires will be fulfilled “without any overt act of his” (*P* 67). Thus, the “word known to all men” that Stephen longs to hear is simply another form of the amatory surrender that he sought throughout *Portrait*, and by juxtaposing this “word” with the Yeats fragment “*And no more turn aside and brood*” nine lines later (*U* 3.445), he shows that his insistence on being handed the cure to his loneliness rather than actively “giv[ing] up the moody brooding” denies him the “touch” he seeks.

This juxtaposition also confirms the alienating nature of Stephen’s longings. Indeed, his subsequent transition from “Fergus’s Song” to Mulligan’s potential desertion demonstrates his inability to consider his mother’s death empathetically, as the parallel he draws between Cranly and Mulligan solidifies the exclusionary nature of his maternal brooding: “Staunch friend, a brother soul: Wilde’s love that dare not speak its name. His arm: Cranly’s arm. He now will leave me. And the blame? As I am. As I am. All or not at all” (*U* 3.450-2). Similar to the end of *Portrait*, Stephen initiates his thoughts about Mulligan in an amatory light that abruptly give way to feelings of betrayal. By comparing him to Cranly through the touch of their arms, Stephen rhetorically unites Mulligan’s rebuke of Stephen’s refusal to pray for his mother (“You could have knelt down, damn it, Kinch, when your dying mother asked you” [*U* 1.91-2]) with Cranly’s criticism of his refusal to take his Easter duty. For that reason, when Stephen guesses

that Mulligan “now will leave me,” he performs an amatory exclusion reminiscent of his termination of Cranly’s friendship, representing both criticisms of his refusal to pray as rejections of his love. Rather than move towards an acceptance of his mother’s death, Stephen shuts out any attempt to paint his ambivalence as problematic, transforming his concluding “All or not at all” into a renewed dedication to an uncompromising amatory freedom. Thus, in the transition from the “word known to all men” to his resolve to be “as I am,” Stephen solidifies his double bind, striving to attain a maternal love but unable to initiate the action required to gain it. His continued deflection of blame and his demand that his love objects accept him “all or not at all” foreshadow the failure of his encounter with May Dedalus in “Circe” and guarantee that his subsequent attempts to gain the love he seeks will do nothing to alleviate his loneliness.

### C. Nebrakada Femininum

When we read Stephen’s reaction to “Lycidas” with respect to *amor matris*, we see how his reliance on amatory freedom undermines his ability to gain the love he desires. While Milton’s elegy provides a way for him to regain a loving relationship with his mother, his insistence on performing the uncompromising artist blinds him to this alternative, compelling him to continue representing her in antagonistic terms that fail to ease his loneliness. This antagonism not only accounts for his personal and artistic failures in “Proteus,” but recurs throughout the rest of *Ulysses*, as Stephen’s obsession with the maternal threat he has created undermines his attempts to set his aesthetic pursuits back on track. What emerges in “Scylla and Charybdis,” “Wandering Rocks,” and “Oxen of the Sun” is a continued performance of Stephen’s *non serviam*, which guarantees his failure to gain either maternal love or artistic success.

“Scylla and Charybdis” begins Stephen’s efforts to rebuild his amatory aesthetics. Here, he puts forth an alternative reading of *Hamlet* that both establishes a parallel between himself and Shakespeare and continues to project the blame for lost maternal love onto May Dedalus. By depicting Anne Hathaway as a malicious siren who “saw [Shakespeare] into and out of the world,” Stephen constructs a strategically destructive interpretation of love that concedes her “[taking] his first embraces” and “bearing his children” while still enabling him to foreground her adulterous betrayal (*U* 9.217-9). In so doing, he reveals his continued refusal to represent his mother empathetically, instead representing her maternal care as masking an inevitable betrayal. Thus, when Stephen charges that “By cock, she was to blame,” he simultaneously articulates a critical component to his literary creation and continues to shift responsibility for his mother’s death onto the deceased, a rhetorical strategy that seemingly fulfills his artistic calling in a manner consistent with his amatory freedom (*U* 9.257).

However, similar to his struggles in “Proteus,” Stephen’s lecture falls short of the literary glory that he seeks, as his *Hamlet* analysis succumbs to two limitations. First, his continued reflections on his mother’s death prevent him from moving past his brooding isolation. His initial description of maternal love may equate Anne with May Dedalus, but that definition is immediately troubled by his mental return to “mother’s deathbed. Candle. The sheeted mirror. Who brought me into this world lies there, bronzelidded, under few cheap flowers. *Liliata rutilantium*. I wept alone” (*U* 9.221-4). This reflection may simply rearticulate the maternal dilemma that Stephen’s Shakespeare theory attempts to negotiate, but his concluding acknowledgement that he “wept alone” foreshadows his perpetual loneliness even if he does suppress his remorse. This isolation

infiltrates Stephen's subsequent thoughts, as his accusations of Anne's infidelity compel him to plead for his own seduction. (And my turn? When? Come!" [U 9.261-2].)

Stephen's awareness of being "condemned" to contemplate *amor matris* this way confirms the failure of his theory (U 8.499), not only because he may not know "what the hell ... [he is] driving at (U 8.496), but also because even if he can construct an interpretation of maternal love that validates his actions, it will not assuage his mental pain.

Second, Stephen alienates his audience. Eglinton, Best, and Russell may provide his theory with the critical attention that his vampire poem lacked, but Stephen's preoccupation with resolving his maternal conflict results in an aggressively personal interpretation of *Hamlet* that undermines its receptivity. A.E. dismisses Stephen's theory as "prying into the family life of a great man" (U 9.181), and his focus on Anne's betrayal underwhelms Eglinton, who had anticipated "paradoxes" (U 9.369). As a result, even if Stephen's strategic construction of *amor matris* helps him resolve his double bind, his resolution is so limited in its appeal that it will not advance his artistic ambitions. His omission from Russell's "sheaf of our younger poets' verses" (U 9.291) and his exclusion from George Moore's party show that his amatory aesthetics excludes him from the Dublin literary establishment, denying him his audience even in a crowded library. Thus, his characterization of *amor matris* in "Scylla" unravels in its very construction, and Stephen's failed attempt to suppress his mother's death becomes simply another opportunity for him to "bow to [him]self in the mirror."

The extent of this failure is evident in "Wandering Rocks," where Stephen's thoughts reveal his continued preoccupation with maternal love. As he walks past the

powerhouse, he notes the “beingless beings” on Bedford Row who “throb always without you and the throb always within” (*U* 10.822-3). This observation not only demonstrates his alienation from his fellow Dubliners, but also refers to James Lane Allen’s *The Mettle of the Pasture*,<sup>74</sup> a text whose focus on the refusal of maternal desires signifies the role his brooding plays in this alienation (*U* 10.822-3). Thus, when he desires to “shatter” the “two roaring worlds” of the “bawd and butcher”<sup>75</sup> between which he finds himself, Stephen reiterates his determination to overcome his double bind without compromising his religious rebellion. He acknowledges that this resolution will “stun [him]self too in the blow,” but he immediately suppresses this failure, challenging his enemies to “shatter me you who can” (*U* 10.825-6). Again, Stephen has forced himself to acknowledge the unraveling of his efforts to win maternal love through amatory freedom, only to suppress that knowledge through a reclamation of his isolated artistic persona, limiting himself again to the pursuit of symbolic phantoms to gain the love he desires.

Stephen’s next opportunity to win this symbolic love occurs at the bookcart on Bedford Row. As he flips through “eighth and ninth book of Moses,” he comes across an incantation from Peter Salanka that he deems potentially useful: “How to win a woman’s love. For me this. Say the following talisman three times with hands folded: *Se el yilo nebrakada femininum! Amor me solo! Sanktus! Amen*” (*U* 10.847-9).<sup>76</sup> Stephen’s reaction to the incantation reveals the narcissistic nature of his pursuit, as his recognition

---

<sup>74</sup> Gifford and Seidman point out that the novel’s protagonist “has a climactic scene with his mother, in which he refuses her wish (that he and [his] fiancée be married)” (276).

<sup>75</sup> Stephen refers to the *dio boia* in “Scylla” as “ostler and butcher, and would be bawd and cuckold too but that in the economy of heaven, foretold by Hamlet, there are no more marriages, glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself” (*U* 9.1050-2). Thus, the isolation of the hangman god in his description of the “two roaring worlds” speaks to the religious submission that comprises an essential component of his double bind.

<sup>76</sup> Translated, “My little heaven of blessed femininity! Love only me! Holy! Amen” (Gifford and Seidman 277).



that he needs help to “win a woman’s love” represents her as a prize to be attained by an incantation. This characterization echoes Aquinas’s depiction of narcissistic desire in “Scylla,” as the “love” of a “woman” is valued because its attainment would strengthen his self-love. The command that his love object only love him reiterates the unconditional nature of Stephen’s desire, representing the love to be won by the spell as a complete submission to and reflection of his ideal image. Finally, similar to the generic love objects he sought in “Proteus,” Stephen chooses to “win” the love of simply “a woman” instead of directly affirming his mother or any other specific love object, limiting himself once again to the pursuit of symbolic phantoms. Thus, his application of the love charm undermines its ability to restore the love he desires, pushing him towards the nebulous submission of a fictitious love object that will inevitably elude his grasp.

The disconnect between the incantation and Stephen’s desired love is inherent in his subsequent encounter with Dilly Dedalus. While their conversation has been read as evidence of Stephen’s ability to “sympathize with his sister’s poverty and suffering” and to “share her misery” (Dickson 24), his thoughts throughout this exchange demonstrate his disinterest in empathizing with her. As soon as he sees Dilly, Stephen’s impulse is to “shut the book quick. Don’t let see,” an instinct that clearly signifies embarrassment but also constitutes a literal refusal to share his love with her (*U* 10.856). Also, his preoccupation with his Paris life and Salanka’s love charm throughout this exchange reveal that his obsession with his mother’s love renders him ambivalent towards the family plight that Dilly describes. This ambivalence is confirmed by his refusal to assist Dilly for fear that “she will drown me with her, eyes and hair,” which shows that he has yet to discover “what the heart feels” and thus cannot express the empathy needed to

restore the love he seeks (*U* 10.875-6). In refusing to help his poverty-stricken sister, Stephen again has limited his amatory pursuits to empty demands for symbolic love objects that only bring him “misery! Misery!” (*U* 10.880).

The emptiness of these demands is confirmed in “Oxen of the Sun,” where an intoxicated Stephen performs his amatory freedom to the amusement of his drunken comrades. Here, Stephen articulates an uncompromising advocacy of artistic creation that also attempts to promote his amatory aesthetics over maternal love: “In woman’s womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. This is the postcreation. *Omnis caro ad te veniet*” (*U* 14.292-4).<sup>77</sup> Contradicting his earlier isolation of *amor matris* as the “only true thing in life,” Stephen notes the temporality of maternal creation, arguing that the life-giving powers of the artist supersede those of the mother because the poet confers eternal life on those about whom s/he writes, and the fragment of the Requiem Mass that concludes this passage reveals the influence of his mother’s death in this characterization. Thus, rather than embrace the memory of his mother, Stephen’s advocacy of eternal artistic power subordinates the love lost at her deathbed to the aesthetic persona that justifies his refusal.

This subordination continues throughout “Oxen,” where Stephen reduces his mother to a symbol of church and Ireland. His initial ridicule of “our mighty mother and mother most venerable” not only unites Erin and Mary as targets of scorn, but its maternal focus forces May Dedalus to be included as well (*U* 14.296). Thus, when Stephen mocks Mary’s participation in the Immaculate Conception, he not only condemns Catholic love, but also dismisses his mother’s care as another form of amatory religion that his artistic prowess overcomes. Similarly, he describes Ireland as a duplicitous mother by

---

<sup>77</sup> Translated, “All flesh will come to thee” (Gifford and Seidman 62).

representing its crimes as a perverted form of maternal love, which passes judgment on Stephen's mother as well as his nation. By representing this love as being "suckled" with "bitter milk" (*U* 14.377-8), he transforms the life giving power of *amor matris* into sins against him that justify his rejection. His subsequent charge that his mother "[has] left [him] alone for ever" allows Stephen to characterize her death as a desertion (*U* 14.379), and his reference to their departing "kiss of ashes" denies her an identity beyond the abject cadaver from "Telemachus" (*U* 14.380). Not only does this tactic enable May Dedalus to be excluded, but by linking his maternal rejection to his critique of church and nation, Stephen reveals the relationship between his individual frustration and his social alienation, as his refusal to "affirm the *person* [he] struggle [s] with" strengthens his broader refusal to "affirm the [*people*] [he] struggle[s] with" (Buber *Knowledge* 69). He may suppress his maternal loss through his performance of the uncompromising artist, but that performance only confirms his inability to affirm the "many-faced otherness" of either his mother or his body politic (Buber *Man* 61), foreshadowing the unraveling of both his personal and aesthetic endeavors.

This unraveling occurs towards the end of "Oxen," where Stephen reclaims the title of "Bous Stephanoumenos" that coincided with his initial acceptance of the artificer in *Portrait* and pronounces himself "lord and giver of their life" (*U* 14.1115-6). In a reversal of the apathy in "Scylla," Lynch proclaims universal support for Stephen's aesthetics: "All who wish you well hope this for you. All desire to see you bring forth the work you meditate, to acclaim you Stephaneforos. I heartily wish you may not fail them" (*U* 14.1119-22). However, this solidarity is interrupted by Lenehan, whose insensitive retort unleashes the maternal presence from her symbolic prison: "Have no

fear. He could not leave his mother an orphan" (*U* 14.1123). While Stephen has focused on his mother throughout "Oxen," Lenehan's reply is the first instance where she exists as something other than a religious or national symbol. This is apparent in Stephen's reaction, as rather than demonstrating the pride of his symbolic rebukes of *amor matris*, the humiliated artist's "face [grows] dark" and he is resigned to a brooding silence (*U* 14.1124). The fact that "all could see how hard it was for him to be reminded of his promise and of his recent loss" highlights the extent to which Stephen's symbolic representations of maternal love had shielded him from such "reminde[rs]" throughout the episode (*U* 14.1124-5), and the silence of the once triumphant artist reveals his success in "Oxen" to be as temporary as he initially characterized the "woman's womb." Stephen's symbolic dismissal of *amor matris* thus collapses, forcing him to recognize his inability to maintain his amatory freedom without reclaiming his mother's love.

#### D. Liliata Rutilantium

As Stephen discovers throughout *Ulysses*, the dead will not go quietly. Kristeva's argument that the abject figure inevitably returns to "challenge its master" is evidenced by May Dedalus's recurring presence in the artist's broodings. Stephen's efforts either to suppress his remorse or to exclude his mother through the ghostly dream unravel, as each attempt is followed by the reemergence of the corpse whose existence undermines the legitimacy of Stephen's amatory freedom, requiring him to confront the ghost to resolve his dilemma. "Circe" thus provides Stephen a final chance to confront his mother's apparition and to seek the love he deems necessary to counteract his artistic paralysis.

May Dedalus's entrance in "Circe" foregrounds her continued abject identity:

*Stephen's mother, emaciated, rises stark through the floor, in leper grey with a wreath of faded orangeblossoms and a torn bridal veil, her face*

*worn and noseless, green with gravemould. Her hair is scant and lank. She fixes her bluecircled hollow eyesockets on Stephen and opens her toothless mouth uttering a silent word (U 15.4157-61).*

This gruesome appearance is immediately followed by the “Ordo Commendationis Animae,” a juxtaposition that shows Stephen’s continued desire to suppress his remorse over his deathbed refusal by projecting May Dedalus as a threat. Stephen’s reaction confirms this tactic, as his “horrorstruck” exclamation “Lemur, who are you? No. What bogeyman’s trick is this?” (U 15.4176) denies the ghost’s self-identification as the “beautiful May Goulding” and thus continues his attempts to symbolize her as something other than the loving mother whom he refused. However, while many critics paint this confrontation in an exclusively antagonistic light,<sup>78</sup> reading Stephen’s subsequent responses with respect to his longings reveals that his interaction with the ghost is not merely antagonistic; rather, Stephen attempts to explain his actions to his mother’s ghost in order to reclaim the maternal love he has lost.

Initially, Stephen tries to convince her that he was not to blame for her death. He exclaims, “(*choking with fright, remorse and horror*) They say I killed you, mother. He offended your memory. Cancer did it, not I. Destiny” (U 15.4186-7). The stage directions reveal Stephen’s altered mental state, as his feelings of “remorse” enable him to counterbalance his “fright” and “horror” and interact with his mother’s presence without automatically rejecting her as a dangerous corpse. His projections of blame onto Mulligan’s “offen[se],” cancer, and destiny are thus attempts to negotiate his way out of

---

<sup>78</sup> Hayman views the apparition as an “emblem of the force that has brought him back from Paris and now refuses to release him from Ireland, absolve him of his guilt, and remove his fear of death” (25-6). Frances Restuccia also argues that “Stephen (and Joyce through Stephen) steels himself against her. He shouts out the rebellious Satanic words 'Non serviam!' (U 475), smashing the chandelier with his ashplant (possibly in an attempt to kill the ghost). Anti-Oedipal Stephen has no qualms about employing his ashplant ... to fend off the real mother whom he resented in her role as agent of the punishing (religious) patriarchy” (93).

his amatory double bind, reclaiming his mother's affection while shifting attention away from his refusal to pray for her soul.

His mother's reaction seems to validate this tactic. After Stephen professes his innocence, the ghost recalls that "you sang that song to me. *Love's bitter mystery*" (*U* 15.4189-90). This memory grants new hope to Stephen, as its reference to his act of empathy confirms this confrontation as his second chance to attain the affection he has sought throughout *Ulysses*. However, his reaction to this recollection reveals his inability to capitalize on this opportunity. Rather than offering a compassionate embrace similar to his performance of "Fergus's Song," Stephen desires that his mother "tell" him "the word known to all men," sacrificing the empathy he recalled in "Telemachus" to his narcissistic longings in "Proteus." Thus, Stephen does not "confirm" his mother "as creature and as creation," but instead reduces her to a generic love object to assuage his loneliness "without any overt act of his," which denies her love even as he pleads for it and guarantees that he will fail to gain the affection he desires.

Unsurprisingly, Stephen's request not granted, as his mother's reaction rearticulates the dilemma that characterized his rejection of her deathbed plea: "Who saved you the night you jumped into the train at Dalkey with Paddy Lee? Who had pity for you when you were sad among the strangers? Prayer is allpowerful. Prayer for the suffering souls in the Ursuline manual and forty days' indulgence. Repent, Stephen!" (*U* 15.4195-8). This reaction reveals the failure of Stephen's quest, as the ghost does not "tell" him the "word," but instead recalls the sacrifices she made for his happiness and reiterates her pleas for prayer. Stronger than the "unimaginative piety" Schwaber reads in this demand (156) or the "trivial and nagging" "words" that Rickard finds (164), the ghost's conflation

of maternal love and repentance solidifies Stephen's double bind: to regain maternal love, he has to repent his refusal to pray for her soul, but to do so would destabilize his amatory freedom, not only by submitting to a prayer that his aesthetic persona rejects, but also by conceding that his earlier refusal was regrettable and thus the artistic identity he has constructed is problematic. This insistence on Stephen's repentance thus provides the ultimate rejection of his desire for unconditional maternal affection.

Stephen's rejection of his mother's plea instantaneously triggers her abjection. Stephen was willing to accept the ghost as the "beautiful May Goulding" when the conversation focused on "love's bitter mystery," but once his mother demands Stephen's repentance, he represents the vision as "the ghoul! Hyena!" (*U* 15.4200). These outbursts contrast sharply to the eagerness of his earlier desire for love and confirm the role of abjection in shielding the spurned lover from his painful rejection. Stephen's recommitment to amatory freedom culminates in his exclamation, "*Ah non, par exemple!* The intellectual imagination! With me all or not at all! *Non serviam!*" (*U* 15.4227-8). This reaffirmation of his refusal to serve thus becomes an attempt to restabilize his aesthetic persona by banishing his mother's presence, minimizing the damage caused by the rejection of maternal love under the guise of reclaiming his artistic agency.

To many, this reassertion of *non serviam* is successful. Several scholars read Stephen's destruction of Bella Cohen's chandelier as a reassertion of his freedom, arguing that "he has done battle with the loving and terrible mother, and he has won his deliverance" (Kimball *Odyssey* 96).<sup>79</sup> However, while critics posit that May Dedalus meets her end in "Circe," Ziarek is correct in arguing that "this ghostwoman continues to

---

<sup>79</sup> Benstock also interprets this scene as a "symbolic victory won by Stephen Dedalus," noting that "the Stephen Dedalus who emerges from the experience seems soberer and calmer" (*Con/Texts* 146).

live in Joyce's text even though she has died" (63). Stephen's initial utterances upon being awakened by Bloom in "Circe" confirm that even if wielding the ashplant has banished the ghost, the "beautiful May Goulding" continues to pervade his thoughts: "Who...drive...Fergus now/And pierce...wood's woven shade..?" (*U* 15.4932-3). These fragments from "Fergus's Song" demonstrate the failure of Stephen's attempt to banish his preoccupation with maternal love, foreshadowing the recurring presence of maternal guilt in the "Nostos" episodes.

This failure is demonstrated by Stephen and Bloom's interactions in these episodes. Some critics argue that Stephen's rejection of his mother is compensated by a newfound friendship with Bloom, contending that the latter "becom[es] the nurturer of and believer in Stephen's artistic ability" (Bormanis 596). However, Stephen's general indifference to his newfound acquaintance undermines the reciprocal attachment needed for these conversations to supplant his brooding. In fact, Stephen barely acknowledges Bloom's attempts at conversation in either "Eumaeus" or "Ithaca," sings an anti-Semitic song in Bloom's house, and "promptly, inexplicably, with amicability [and] gratefully ... decline[s]" his offer to stay the night (*U* 17.955). Even if the "amicability" and "gratefulness" of this refusal might constitute Stephen's warming up to Bloom, his "[prompt]" and "inexplicabl[e]" resolution to leave 7 Eccles Street makes it probable that "there will be no sequel to this visit" (Hayman 27), preventing Bloom from helping Stephen overcome his mother's death.

Stephen's inability to overcome his maternal dilemma is confirmed by the final image of the young artist in "Ithaca." As Stephen departs from Bloom's house, he hears the sound of the bells of St. George's Church, and his reaction highlights his continuing



anguish: “What echoes of that sound were by both and each heard? By Stephen: *Liliata rutilantium. Turma circumdet. Iubilantium te virginum. Chorus excipiat*” (*U* 17.1228-31). The reemergence of the prayer for the dying demonstrates that any peace that can be attributed to the conclusion of “Circe” has worn off and the remembrance of Stephen’s refusal to pray for his mother’s soul has returned to torment him.<sup>80</sup> Thus Stephen’s unswerving commitment to amatory freedom has denied him the love he has sought throughout *Ulysses* and has alienated him from his surroundings to the point where his freedom is all he has left.

\*\*\*\*

In “Scylla and Charybdis,” Stephen quotes Goethe as saying, “Beware of what you wish for in youth because you will get it in middle life” (*U* 9.451-2). While the Stephen that departs 7 Eccles Street certainly has not reached “middle life,” the conclusion of his amatory struggles in *Portrait*, *Stephen Hero*, and *Ulysses* reveals him to be living proof of that adage. His desire to “meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld” tied his subsequent pursuits to a symbolic framework of amatory freedom, as his obsession with encountering his ideal Mercedes enticed Stephen to treat Emma Clery, Cranly, and his mother as images of submission instead of as individuals. Since the reality of the love object cannot be encapsulated in a mere symbol, Stephen represented the inevitable disjunctions between the amorous real and the

---

<sup>80</sup> Rickard reads Stephen’s reaction differently, arguing that “significantly, now Stephen’s mind omits the words ‘*te confessorum*,’ which were contained in two earlier occurrences of the prayer (*U* 1.277 and 15.4164). This omission of ‘confessors’ may again suggest that Stephen’s memory of his mother is finally free from guilt” (194). However, I read this omission as an attempt to alter reflections on his mother’s death in order to suppress his culpability. Considering that his meditations on the litany at the end of “Telemachus” also omitted “*te confessorum*” (“He walked along the upwardcurving path. *Liliata rutilantium./Turma circumdet./Iubilantium te virginum.*” [*U* 1.735-8]), his brooding on the prayer in “Ithaca” confirms that the grief that consumed his thoughts at the beginning of *Ulysses* remains at the end of the text.

amatory ideal as refusals of his love, prioritizing his artistic calling over the obligations to his loved ones.

However, whereas Stephen could rationalize his refusals of Emma and Cranly in manners consistent with his aesthetic persona, his maternal relationship proves more challenging, as his mother's death establishes a double bind from which he attempts to extricate himself throughout *Ulysses*. However, his rigid adherence to amatory freedom becomes his undoing, as his inability to repent his rejection of his mother's dying plea renders him incapable of gaining the submissive affection he desires. Thus, May Dedalus becomes Stephen's ideal Mercedes, though not in the way he desired, but what can we expect from the idealization of a love object who betrays the lover's affection? Thus, the premonition of *Portrait's* second chapter is fulfilled at the conclusion of *Ulysses*, as the last glimpse that Joyce provides us of Stephen consists of him "standing in a moonlit garden with [Bloom]," uttering a "sadly proud gesture of refusal" (*P* 65).

In that sense, Stephen strengthens Joyce's cautionary tale of narcissistic desire. Whereas *Dubliners* depicted self-involved lovers falling short of their amatory escapes, in *Portrait*, *Stephen Hero*, and *Ulysses*, Joyce traces the development and performance of a comprehensive amatory framework whose primary characteristic is the ascendance of the lover through the submission of his love object. Clearly Stephen's failure demonstrates the limitations of such love, but Joyce's descriptions of his relationships with others also illustrate the ethical and political limitations of this framework. By treating his love objects as reflections of himself and refusing their empathetic embrace, Stephen's amatory freedom continues the rejection of difference that inhibits any meaningful relationships with Dublin, as his efforts to construct "the uncreated conscience of [his]

race” isolate him from his intended audience and limit his art to static apprehensions of ideal terror and pity that will do nothing to change the body politic in which he finds himself entrapped. Thus, Stephen reveals himself to be one of the Dubliners he tries so hard to reject, and Joyce’s doppelganger becomes another confirmation of an alienating Irish narcissism that his subsequent protagonists will attempt to counteract.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE GIFT OF FREEDOM

In many ways, the amatory struggles of Stephen Dedalus and Richard Rowan are very similar. Both characters use romance as an impetus for artistic success, struggle with the conflict between love and freedom, and pursue exiles that push them away from their lovers and their individual ambitions. Thus, it is not surprising that Richard suffers a similar fate as Stephen, as the self-centered foundations of his amatory pursuits prevent him from achieving a “uni[on] ... in body and soul in utter nakedness” with Bertha, his “bride in exile” (*E* 112; 111). Critics have long noted Richard’s narcissistic attitude in *Exiles*, casting him as a cruel manipulator who treats Bertha, Beatrice Justice, and Robert Hand as “moral and aesthetic pawn[s] to implement his own psychological liberation” (Henke *Desire* 92).<sup>81</sup> However, while Richard is certainly fascinated with dissolving the bonds of monogamy that constrain him, his meditations on love throughout Joyce’s play demonstrate a compassion that makes his quest more complex and understandable than Stephen’s.

Considering Joyce and Nora’s domestic struggles during the composition of *Exiles*, this complexity is not surprising. Indeed, Richard’s adulterous guilt over his fascination with Beatrice parallels Joyce’s infatuation with a Triestine English student (likely Amalia Popper) from 1911 to 1914,<sup>82</sup> and Robert’s unsuccessful wooing of Bertha echoes Roberto Prezioso’s 1913 advances towards Nora. These domestic crises thus provided the “crucial first-hand experience” for the author to be obsessed with “the themes of

---

<sup>81</sup> Froula also contends that “in *Exiles*, Richard/Joyce maneuvers Bertha to the brink of adultery and then melodramatically rebuffs her assurances of fidelity in order to inflict upon himself a wound that he cherishes for the sake of his writing” (111). John M. Clark notes that “[Richard’s] traumatic rebirth into doubt may be a necessary and from Joyce’s viewpoint a desirable event, but his churlishness indicates how far he remains from genuinely matching either Blake’s or Joyce’s compassion” (185).

<sup>82</sup> In his introduction to *Giacomo Joyce*, Ellmann notes that “its heroine, whom Giacomo relates to Beatrice Portinari and Beatrice Cenci, is related also to Beatrice Justice in *Exiles*” (*G* xxii).

attraction and betrayal, marriage and infidelity and the often ambiguous nature of sexual attraction” during this time (McCourt 192-3). For that reason, it is natural that Joyce would wrestle with the duality of adulterer and cuckold as he began writing *Exiles* in 1914, and his dramatic attempt to resolve this conflict between lust and fidelity expands the scope of his amorous writings to consider not simply the failure of sentimental narcissism, but also the proper means to fulfill the loving “responsibility of an I for a You” (Buber *Thou* 66).

This expansion is articulated most explicitly in Richard’s conversation with Robert in Act II, where his rebukes of his friend’s pursuit of Bertha demonstrates his understanding of both the limitations of individual passion and the ultimate objective of true love. Noting that “longing to possess a woman is not love,” Richard rebuffs Robert’s claim that “no man ever lived on this earth who did not long to possess ... the woman whom he loves,” arguing instead that the true purpose of love is “to wish her well” (*E* 63). In so doing, Richard reveals that his pursuits in *Exiles* are not purely self-motivated, as his desire to be rid of love’s constraints carries with it a desire to obtain a similar freedom for Bertha, illustrating his desire for her happiness even as it misrecognizes the steps needed to obtain it. Thus, although Richard engages in manipulative actions throughout the play, he is aware on some level of his responsibility for his beloved’s well-being, which makes him a crucial transition figure from the narcissism of Stephen to the empathy of Bloom and transforms *Exiles* into what Padraic Colum called a “sort of watershed between the work James Joyce has done and the work he is to do” (*E* 9).<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Brown also recognizes that Richard anticipates Joyce’s endorsement of true love in *Ulysses*, arguing that his “tentative definition” of love in Act II “perhaps prefigur[es] Bloom’s definition of love in ‘Cyclops’” (34). David Cotter similarly notes that “Richard’s ideal of love (‘to wish her well’) is central to Joyce’s work” (208).

## I. The False Pretender

Whereas Richard contends that the purpose of love is to “wish [one’s beloved] well,” Robert endorses “the passion which burns us night and day to possess her” (*E* 63). In so doing, he demonstrates that his amatory advances towards Bertha throughout the play are inherently hollow, that beneath his insistence that he has “a deep liking” for her is the desire for amatory possession that Joyce critiqued throughout *Dubliners* and *Portrait* (*E* 31). Thus, Robert becomes the embodiment of Joyce’s well-documented repulsion towards amatory desire, as the author mocks Prezioso’s reputation as a “*conquistatore amoroso*, a ‘*Don Giovanni*’” (McCourt 193) by reducing his play’s lothario to “the almost comic stereotype of the seducer” (Brown 19). Through Robert’s interactions with Bertha and Richard, Joyce constructs a one-dimensional, narcissistic foil to his protagonists’ struggles throughout *Exiles*, transforming Robert into a “false [pretender]” whose seductive advances are mocked and undermined by his love objects (*E* 54).

Robert’s status as a “false [pretender]” is best conveyed through his conversation with Richard in Act I. Responding to Richard’s question whether he “kiss[es] everything that is beautiful to [him],” Robert notes: “This stone, for instance. It is so cool, so polished, so delicate, like a woman’s temple. It is silent, it suffers our passion; and it is beautiful ... And so I kiss it because it is beautiful. And what is a woman? A work of nature, too, like a stone or a flower or a bird” (*E* 41). Similar to Stephen’s fascination with generic beauty in *Portrait*’s fifth chapter, Robert is disinterested in the specific attributes of his love objects, choosing instead to lionize feminine loveliness as indicative of a general beauty that embodies all worthwhile “work[s] of nature.” Such homage reveals the

narcissism behind Robert's passion throughout *Exiles*, as his isolation of a woman's "silen[ce]" and "suffera[nce]" of masculine advances as evidence of her worthiness mutes the specifics of her feelings and transforms her into an empty vessel whose worth is signified by his "kiss." In that sense, the object of Robert's affection inevitably is dehumanized by a distant desire that ignores her feelings and values her as if she were no different than "a stone or a flower or a bird."<sup>84</sup>

This distant desire is demonstrated further in their subsequent discussion over a kiss's value. Whereas Richard argues that a kiss is "an act of union between man and woman" (*E* 41), Robert characterizes it instead as merely "an act of homage" to a beautiful object. This distinction between "union" and "homage" highlights the fundamental difference between Richard's and Robert's attitudes towards love. While Richard values the connection forged between two people through a physical expression of love, Robert values a kiss as simply an abstract testimony to his partner's beauty, which isolates him from his love object even through an act of intimacy. Also, even though Robert desires to celebrate beauty, his representation of his potential loved one as a "beautiful object" renders their relationship unequal by reducing her to a generic entity over which he wields his amatory power. By contrast, Richard's characterization of a kiss as an "act of union between man and woman" represents the intimate act as a reciprocal passionate exchange between two equal participants, which highlights the self-serving foundations upon which Robert's adoration is built and reveals the shallow nature of one-sided displays of passion that ignore the love object's otherness.

---

<sup>84</sup> Clark similarly argues that "kissing a stone with the same emotion as kissing a woman can seem natural not because the stone is human ... but because the woman might as well be a stone as far as her admirer's ability to identify with what she thinks and feels is concerned" (189). Kristin N. Sanner also notes that "rather than seeing, and consequently understanding the complexity of the individuals who surround him, Robert seeks simply to look at them as objects, to admire their surfaces without going beyond them" (282).

Robert's apathy towards otherness is confirmed by their concluding remarks on feminine beauty. Scoffing at Richard's question of whether "the beautiful is what we desire," Robert argues that "what is most attractive in even the most beautiful woman" is "not those qualities which she has and other women have not but the qualities which she has in common with them" (E 41-2). By claiming that "those qualities which she has and other women have not" are not beautiful, Robert dismisses the otherness of his beloveds, ignoring their individual qualities and passions in favor of their ability to validate abstract feminine beauty. His accompanying list of "[common]" beautiful qualities, while ostensibly meant to demonstrate Robert's playfully "common" mood ("*Laughing*. I am very common today"), actually highlight the ridiculous nature of his homage, showing his fascination with generic feminine beauty to regress to a worship of "how her body develops heat when it is pressed, the movement of her blood, [and] how quickly she changes by digestion what she eats into—what shall be nameless" (E 42). Thus, it is appropriate that Robert ends his argument by insisting that the excrement he celebrates "shall be nameless," since the passion he chooses to express inevitably reduces his love objects to "nameless" markers of universal beauty to which Robert can only offer a distant homage.

#### A. Love's Labour Lost

The most explicit examples of Robert's artificial passion occur during his numerous advances towards Bertha. While he claims to feel strongly for her, Robert's actions are more indicative of an infatuation with the idea of love rather than his specific love object, as he rarely articulates a specific passion for Bertha but instead compares her to markers of natural beauty that robs his wooing of any intimacy. Echoing Prezioso's infamous



claim that “‘Il sole s’è levato per Lei’—the sun has risen for [Nora]” (McCourt 193), Robert notes of the previous night that “I could see the dark green masses of the trees. And you passed beyond them. You were like the moon.” This observation demonstrates the symbolic foundations of Robert’s desire, as his thoughts of Bertha equate her with “the dark green masses of the trees” and trivialize her specific beauty by comparing her to the moon. This abstract wooing continues when Robert mentions Bertha’s dress, “slim body,” and walk as reasons why he “saw the moon passing in the dusk till you passed and left my sight” (*E* 31). This gesture in particular betrays his ignorance of her, as his relegating her physical qualities to those of the moon literally causes him to “s[ee] the moon passing in the dusk” when she is in his line of sight. Bertha thus loses her identity through Robert’s homage, and his insistence on equating her with a distant object simultaneously marks the distance in their intimate exchanges.

This distance is also demonstrated by Robert’s subsequent advances. When Bertha asks if he thought of her the previous night, he responds, “I think of you always—as something beautiful and distant—the moon or some deep music” (*E* 32). Not only does Robert’s description of Bertha as “something beautiful and distant” betray the lack of intimacy between them, but his equation of her “beautiful and distant” nature with “the moon or some deep music” echoes Gabriel’s characterization of Gretta’s reaction to *The Lass of Aughrim* as *Distant Music*, showing that Robert’s wooing suffers from the same misrecognition of Bertha’s desires that encapsulated Gabriel’s exaltation. His subsequent declaration that “I was awake half the night. I could hear your voice. I could see your face in the dark. Your eyes” confirms the problematic nature of his distant metaphors (*E* 32), as he can only hear Bertha’s voice and see her face in the darkness of his solitary

bedroom. In that sense, her specific beauty only comes into focus when she has departed his company, which relegates her to a symbolic image even when Robert is not comparing her to the moon or distant music. Thus, Robert's "one-dimensional fascination with [Bertha's] appearance" prevents him from understanding her otherness (Sanner 282), reducing his eventual contemplations of her specific qualities to his "see[ing] [her] face in the dark."

Robert's symbolic advances are further undone by Bertha's awareness of his motives. When he notes that "your face is a flower too—but more beautiful. A wild flower blowing in a hedge," Bertha teasingly smiles and asks her seducer "if that is what you say—to the others" (*E* 32), recognizing that she is simply one entry in a list of admirers that also are told that they resemble the moon and wild flowers. Especially since Bertha will later refer to this behavior as endemic of "false pretenders," Robert's insistence on celebrating "the qualities which [the most beautiful woman] has in common with [others]" blinds him to the specific essence of his current conquest and dampens her receptivity to his homage. Bertha's knowledge that Robert "[has] so many admirers" thus signifies her refusal to be merely one of his "works of nature," and her concluding "thank you for saying it—and for thinking it" shows that Robert's celebrations of her natural beauty are primarily oral performances with little substance behind them (*E* 32).

Furthermore, Robert's insistence on performing the seductive lothario undermines the legitimacy of his affection for Bertha. Rather than articulating genuine feelings for Bertha, Robert limits his words and actions to those of a stereotypical lover from a sentimental romance, emptying his wooing of any authenticity. Initially he fears that he has annoyed Bertha because "you put away my poor flowers so quickly," as if her

attention to his flowers is an accurate measure of her love for him (E 32). Then, when Bertha admits skepticism over his nature similes (“men speak like that to all women whom they like or admire” [E 33]), Robert avoids her uncertainty by “suddenly” asking her: “Bertha, may I kiss your hand? Let me. May I?” (E 34). His subsequent actions constitute a checklist of clichéd romantic performances, as Robert kisses Bertha’s eyes, runs his hand through her hair, calls her “Little Bertha,” asks her to look deep into his eyes, embraces her, and asks her to kiss him (E 35). The mechanical way in which Robert completes this list and the trite exclamations that accompany his actions (“Your voice!” “At last I hold you in my arms!” “Your lips, Bertha!” [E 35]) reduce Robert’s wooing to the absurd performance of a lover more concerned with enacting the right demonstrations of physical passion than articulating a meaningful emotional connection with his beloved.

The empty nature of Robert’s performance is emphasized further by Bertha’s reactions to these displays. In contrast to the desperation of his entreaties, Bertha playfully ridicules Robert’s use of generic romantic conventions, which prevents us from taking his advances seriously. For example, when Robert fears an apathetic reaction to his flowers, Bertha “*takes them from the table and holds them close to her face,*” asking Robert if “this [is] what you wish me to do with them” (E 32). This response reveals the meaninglessness of Robert’s obsession with his flowers, proving him to be more concerned with his overt displays of passion than with any feelings that have actually been stirred in Bertha. Similarly, when he runs through his checklist of physical homage, Bertha answers his requests with resigned submissions that highlight the lack of emotion in this encounter. Through responses such as “if you wish” (E 34), “do so,” and “take it,”

as well as her repeated query “and then you will be satisfied?” (E 35), Bertha calls attention to the irrelevance of Robert’s displays of adoration, as each of his performances is completed successfully, yet nothing significant is gained by their completion. Bertha’s “[disdain of] the inflated, unnatural language [Robert] so often uses” thus robs his wooing of any emotional resonance (Bauerle “Bertha” 119), as her resigned acquiescence to his advances makes it likely that the only person he is seducing is himself.

Unsurprisingly, Robert’s hollow advances render him incapable of winning Bertha. He may wish to possess her physically, but his symbolic representations of her and his clichéd romantic performances prevent any genuine emotional attachment from forming between them. The beginning of their conversation in Act I demonstrates this, as Robert’s clarification of the letter that he handed Bertha the previous night falls short of the emotional declaration needed to entice her. While the letter does make Bertha aware of a vague regard, Robert immediately clarifies the “*one word which I have never dared to say to you*” to signify “a deep liking for you,” which conveys merely an abstract affection instead of love (E 31). Ironically, Robert’s inability to speak the language of love to Bertha foreshadows her refusal of him in Act II, as his subsequent desire for her to tell him she loves him garner responses such as “I like you, Robert. I think you are good” that fall short of the romantic affirmation that he desires (E 88), and the fact that “*she does not answer*” his concluding plea makes it likely that he does not get the answer he seeks (E 88). The failure of Robert’s advances towards Bertha are confirmed in Act III, where his persistent pursuit of her throughout the first two acts is reduced to a “dream that [Bertha] was [his]” (E 106) and a concession to Richard that “she is yours, as she was nine years ago” (E 107). Ultimately, Robert’s narcissistic desire for possession

becomes his undoing, and his subordination of Bertha's desires to his symbolic homage undermines his goals to the point where "only [his] dream is real" (E 106).

#### B. The Faith of a Disciple in his Master

Robert's obsession with generic notions of love is demonstrated further by his relationship with Richard. As in his advances towards Bertha, Robert primarily relates to Richard through platitudes, using their conversations to note his undying devotion to his colleague. However, unlike Robert's flattery of "Little Bertha," his approach towards Richard is more antagonistic, as his obsession with Bertha compels him to view Richard as a rival suitor and to treat their interactions as a battle for ownership of her. Not only does this obsession continue to reduce Bertha to an object, it also undermines the viability of his relationship with Richard, as Robert's desire to play the cavalier hero misrecognizes his friend's desire for Bertha's freedom and alienates him further from his "master" (E 44).

Robert may view Richard primarily as his enemy in *Exiles*, but his initial interactions with his friend convey an intense congeniality that echoes his wooing of Bertha. In Act I, Robert resolves to whitewash the negative perception of Richard's exile nine years ago out of a sense of "our friendship, our lifelong friendship" (E 39), and he assures Richard that "I fought for you all the time you were away. I fought to bring you back. I fought to keep your place for you here." Thus, when he describes his devotion to Richard as "the faith of a disciple in his master" (E 44), he employs strategies similar to his advances towards Bertha, using symbolic representations of his unwavering affection and loyalty to compel Richard to go along with his wishes. Robert's professed discipleship thus

ostensibly serves as a catalyst for his determination to reclaim his “master[’s]” place within Ireland.

However, Robert’s devotion to Richard is not as genuine as it may initially seem. While he may claim to have his friend’s best interests at heart, Richard is correct in characterizing his comrade’s devotion as that of “the disciple who will betray him” (*E* 44). Robert might pledge to secure Richard the position of humanities chair, but his scheduling of Richard’s key meeting at the same time that he has invited Bertha to his house demonstrates this commitment in large part to be a ruse to occupy Richard so that he can seduce her. More importantly, Robert’s plan demonstrates his ambivalence towards his friend’s desire for freedom. Even though he claims that he “will fight for [Richard] still” (*E* 44), his characterization of Richard’s decision to leave Ireland as “r[unning] away years ago ...[w]ith a young girl not exactly your equal” (*E* 39) illustrates his disinterest in validating the desire for freedom that compelled Richard’s escape. Instead, he represents that escape as an “episode in your past” and an “act of impulse” (*E* 38), which explains Richard’s exile not as the necessary act of a smothered intellectual, but rather as a scandalous act of youthful carelessness that has been renounced by his return. For that reason, Robert’s efforts to “give the lie to [Richard’s] past life” prove him willing to ignore Richard’s otherness and to sacrifice his happiness to secure his place within Ireland (*E* 39). Especially when we note his admission in Act II that he originally discouraged Richard from leaving Ireland to remain close to Bertha, Robert’s desire to resecure his friend’s place in the country is shown to be motivated by self-interest, and his determination to view Richard as an enemy to be one-upped compels him to sacrifice his friend’s freedom to facilitate his conquest of Bertha.

Robert's perception of Richard as a rival suitor is strengthened in Act II, where his panic over his ruse being discovered compels him to act as a stereotypical lover trying to steal his lady from his rival. Even though he initially dismisses his feelings for Bertha as "a lightheaded idea of mine" (*E* 62), by observing that "there was some danger" for Richard were his feelings for her to develop (*E* 61), Robert seemingly renders inevitable a confrontation where he would declare his intentions and successfully "take her from [Richard]" (*E* 62). His subsequent "brave" questioning whether Richard "think[s] he] ha[s] rights over her—over her heart" constitutes a rehearsal of that confrontation, as he plays the romantic hero seeking to rescue a victimized Bertha from his rival (*E* 62). Thus, even when Robert's duplicity is exposed, his obsession with Bertha forces him to continue to treat Richard as a generic obstacle to his quest, subordinating their friendship to a generic adversarial hostility.

Robert's desire to play the romantic rival is evident even in his relinquishment of this overt hostility. When Richard denies his right to Bertha's heart, Robert's attitude shifts from confrontation to shame and he pleads for his friend to "upbraid me, curse me, hate me as I deserve" (*E* 62). However, even this change in attitude continues to cast Richard and Robert as rival suitors, this time by presenting the latter as the blackguard that unjustly tries to steal Bertha away from her true love. Not only does this approach continue to portray their friendship through an antagonistic lens, but it also demonstrates the artificiality of Robert's attitude throughout the conversation. Robert confidently declared his intentions to Richard because he perceived his obsession with individual liberty as placing unjust bonds on Bertha, but when Richard abdicates these bonds, his attempt to portray him as the villain collapses. Because his seduction of Bertha has been

justified by this adversarial lens, Robert reverses the roles and casts himself as the villain that needs to be rebuked, which reveals the arbitrariness of his representational approach since he performs both the hero and villain of the same conflict. Thus, Richard's refusal to follow this romantic script reveals the hollow and self-serving foundations of his "disciple[']s" approach to their dispute.

Ultimately, Robert's perception of Richard as a rival suitor blinds him to a significant change in his friend's interpretation of freedom that could dissolve their antagonism. Robert claims in Act I to "understand your pride and your sense of liberty" (*E* 39), but this "understand[ing]" is based upon an outdated version of Richard's desire for freedom that the latter dismisses as "the language of my youth" (*E* 71). Whereas Robert views this freedom as an escape from bonds that also places unjust obligations upon Bertha, Richard's fear "that I stand between her and any moments of life that should be hers" demonstrates his determination to secure the same freedom for her that he has pursued for himself, even if that results in an attachment between Bertha and Robert (*E* 69). Thus, Richard does not object necessarily to Robert's desire for Bertha, but the duplicitous way he goes about fulfilling that desire, which accounts for his refusal to play along with the attempt to frame their dispute as a generic confrontation between rival suitors. By making an open declaration of intentions in Act II, Richard forces Robert to relate to him as a friend instead of a rival and to acknowledge the changes in his beliefs that had been subordinated by his approach to their conversation. Even if Richard's freedom is ultimately narcissistic, his reinterpretation of freedom provides an opportunity for Robert and Bertha to act on their feelings without alienating him in the process, which would



dissolve the antagonism through which Robert perceives their interactions and enable them to be “united ... in brotherhood” (*E* 69).

However, Robert refuses this opportunity. Responding to Richard’s reinterpretation of freedom, Robert claims that “my friendship for you has laid bonds on me” and views his continued seduction of Bertha as “a moment which will free us both ... from the last bonds of what is called morality” (*E* 70). Richard’s altered perception of freedom is revealed to have fallen on deaf ears, as Robert’s characterization of his pursuit of Bertha as “a battle of both our souls ... against all that is false in them and in the world” (*E* 70) remains grounded in the “language of [Richard’s] youth,” and his claim that “the blinding instant of passion alone ... is the only gate by which we can escape from the misery of what slaves call life” relies upon the same obsession with passion and possession that Richard rebutted earlier in the conversation (*E* 71). Thus, although Richard has altered his attitude towards freedom in a more accommodating manner, Robert’s inability to look beyond the generic lens of sexual desire prevents him from embracing this accommodation, and Joyce shows him to remain “convinced of the non-existence, of the unreality of the spiritual facts which exist and are real for Richard” (*E* 116).

Robert’s rejection of Richard’s otherness is evident in his subsequent encounter with Bertha at the end of Act II. Although Richard allows him to pursue Bertha primarily out of a desire for her freedom, Robert continues to represent Richard as the unjust suitor whose self-serving desire for liberty imprisons his devoted lover. Initially, he asks Bertha whether “the gift of freedom which he gave you—nine years ago” has made Bertha happy (*E* 83), which subordinates Richard’s reconfigured “gift” to the “language of [his] youth.” Then, when Bertha still hesitates to accede to Robert’s seduction, he

justifies their affair by arguing that Richard “longs to be delivered ... From every law, Bertha, from every bond. All his life he has sought to deliver himself. Every chain but one he has broken and that one we are to break—you and I” (*E* 87). Not only is this self-serving description of Richard’s motives designed to compel Bertha to sleep with him, it ignores the change in attitude towards freedom that he described earlier in the act, as Robert reduces Richard’s desire for Bertha’s freedom to his youthful desire for self liberation and justifies their affair through his own advocacy of sexual passion. (“I am sure that no law made by man is sacred before the impulse of passion” [*E* 87].) In so doing, Robert subordinates Richard’s hope to “wish [Bertha] well” to his own desire to possess her body, which prevents him from affirming either his “master[’s]” or his lover’s otherness and guarantees that his attitude towards their “lifelong friendship” will be inevitably tainted.

This inevitable alienation is confirmed in Robert’s attitude towards Richard in Act III. Having had his advances likely rejected, Robert reacts through a two-pronged strategy that solidifies the rift in his friendship with Richard. First, he writes a newspaper article that ostensibly champions Richard as the necessary chair for the humanities department, but that simultaneously disparages his commitment to freedom through that endorsement. While Robert argues that Ireland should welcome Richard back with open arms, he also characterizes him as a “spiritual exile” who “having left her in her hour of need, ha[s] been called back to her now on the eve of her longawaited victory, to her whom in loneliness and exile [he has] at last learned to love” (*E* 99). While Robert may be correct that Richard “learned to love” during his period “in loneliness and exile,” his description of his friend as “having left [Ireland] in her hour of need” denigrates his desire for

liberation by portraying him as an ungrateful abandoner who has to grovel for his country's forgiveness. This continues Robert's characterization of Richard's freedom as an "act of impulse" from Act I by representing his need for freedom as a youthful folly that requires Ireland's pardon, which proves Robert to continue to ignore the otherness that fundamentally defines his "master."

Second, Robert resolves to leave Ireland. Having been rejected by Bertha, he chooses the life of exile over continued association with those whom he feels have refused his love. Additionally, he reverts back to his role as the disgraced seducer, telling Richard that "[he] failed" and that "Bertha is yours now as she was nine years ago, when you—when we—met her first" (*E* 108-9). While this resignation ends Robert's determination to steal Bertha from Richard, it also continues to cast Robert's desire for Bertha as a conflict between rivals, which not only reduces her to a prize to be won, but also ignores Richard's desire to be excluded from Robert's advances. This representation solidifies Robert's position as an adversary to Richard and alienates him from his friend to the point where exile becomes his only option. Thus, the antagonism that underlies Robert's performances of clichéd romance overwhelms his ability to win the love of either Bertha or Richard, and his departure from Ireland reveals the inevitable alienation at the heart of the narcissistic desire for possession.

## II. A Deep Wound of Doubt

Compared to Robert, Richard's attitude towards love certainly seems more generous. Whereas Robert's professions of love and friendship are primarily guided by a narcissistic desire for possession, Richard appears interested in advancing the interests of his love object as well as (and perhaps more than) his own. His contention that the

purpose of love is to “wish [the loved one] well” seems to position Richard closer to Bloom than to his narcissistic predecessors on Joyce’s amorous spectrum, as his desire to secure the same freedom for Bertha that he practices makes him the first Joycean protagonist to demonstrate anything resembling Buber’s loving embrace. However, although Richard refuses to force monogamous bonds onto Bertha, he fails to achieve what Joyce called “the very immolation of the pleasure of possession on the altar of love” (*E* 114), for his reinterpretation of amatory freedom is still complicit in the narcissistic desire for sexual possession even as he relinquishes his claims to Bertha.

This fascination with possession is most persuasively articulated in Richard’s conversation with Archie in Act I, where their discussion of cow robbery metaphorically enables him to justify his response to Robert’s treachery. Responding to his son’s question of “what makes a cow give milk,” Richard explains the difference between “giv[ing] a thing” and “hav[ing] a thing ... taken from you” (*E* 46). By claiming that when you give something, “no robber can take it from you ... It is yours then for ever when you have given it” (*E* 47), Richard “defines ultimate spiritual possession as an act of sacrificial generosity” (Henke *Desire* 90), which represents Bertha as an object that he must secure from Robert’s desired robbery. Thus, even though Richard’s love for Bertha separates him from Stephen’s purely self-serving quest, his strategy for securing her freedom relies on the same “pleasure of possession” that inevitably felled his predecessors. Through his interactions with Beatrice and Bertha, we see that the intellectual desire for amatory freedom that consumed Stephen in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* remains embedded in *Exiles*, which ensures that Richard’s pursuit of completely

unfettered relationships will “[condemn]” him to “live side by side apart” from his love objects in “Joyce’s world of exile” (Clark 190).<sup>85</sup>

#### A. Otherwise I Could Not See You

Richard’s interactions with Beatrice demonstrate his aesthetic fascination with amatory desire. Similar to Stephen’s pursuit of his ideal Mercedes, Richard has considered Beatrice his primary source of artistic inspiration for at least eight years, writing her letters and sending her book chapters while he and Bertha were in Rome. Upon returning to Ireland, their artistic relationship has continued, as Richard spends the majority of the play locked in his study writing new works inspired by Beatrice. Thus, in many ways, Beatrice is Richard’s primary romantic interest in *Exiles*, as he uses his fascination with her to fulfill his literary pursuits.

However, while Richard is clearly infatuated with Beatrice to some extent (and that attraction is reciprocated), the connection between these two characters has almost no chance of being fulfilled. In Act I, he tells Beatrice that her one-time engagement to Robert “made me so reserved with you—then—even though I felt your interest in me, even though I felt that I too was something in your life . . . that separated me from you. I was a third person I felt” (*E* 20). This characterization of Richard as being “separated from” Beatrice is also appropriate considering that the intellectual connection that binds them was established only after he and Bertha had been settled in Rome for a year.

Although Beatrice has been Richard’s primary source of artistic inspiration, his exile has imposed distance between the two characters that prevents any connection between them

---

<sup>85</sup> Brown similarly argues that “love is presented [in *Exiles*] not as a kind of union but as a kind of separation of individuals and the play’s free-love morality consists, as Joyce points out in his note, in ‘the very immolation of the pleasure of possession on the altar of love’ (*E* 164). As Budgen reports, ‘the Joycean conception of sexual love (at any rate on the male side)’ is an ‘irreconcilable conflict between a passion for absolute possession and a categorical imperative for absolute freedom” (34).

from transcending the relationship between artist and muse. For this reason, Richard can never escape his role as a “third person” even if he replaces Robert as Beatrice’s primary infatuation, and the role that “her untouchability” and “the impossibility of sexual consummation” plays in this infatuation renders any attachment between them as abstract and impersonal as Stephen’s idolization of Mercedes and the bird girl (Cotter 206).

The impersonal nature of Richard’s regard for Beatrice continues upon his return to Ireland. Even though this renunciation of physical exile provides them the opportunity to consummate their intellectual relationship, Richard’s continued “spiritual exile” prevents him from shedding his “reserved” attitude towards Robert’s cousin. This is apparent during their conversation in Act I, where Richard quizzes Beatrice over the extent of her attraction to him. While Joyce’s protagonist articulates a vague regard for her, his primary role in this exchange is akin to an amatory anthropologist, imploring Beatrice to “tell me what your words mean” and to articulate the full extent of her attraction to him (*E* 19). In so doing, he reduces Beatrice to an “inspiring virgin” instead of a “real lover” (Rabaté 26), treating her infatuation as an object of inquiry rather than a genuine affection to be reciprocated. This guarantees that their connection remains encapsulated in the impersonal regard of his exile, as Richard’s desire to paint a comprehensive portrait of Beatrice’s adoration compels him to perform the same “cool scholasticism” in which Polhemus accuses Stephen of engaging: “a distancing form that abstracts love” (260)

Richard’s focus on her abstract fascination with his intellect also ignores the emotional implications of her responses. Even if his inquisition provides him with a better understanding of Beatrice’s feelings, his focus on her regard for his writings and

ideas prevents that understanding from translating into a reciprocal affirmation of those feelings. While Beatrice reveals that Richard has always been “something in [her] life” (*E* 20) and that she primarily comes to his home because “otherwise I could not see you” (*E* 19), Richard suppresses the emotional nature of these declarations, preferring to believe that “I expressed in those chapters and letters, and in my character and life as well, something in your soul which you could not” (*E* 20). This interest in discovering if “it is my mind that attracts you” reduces her infatuation for him to that of a fan for the writer that expresses her soul’s longings (*E* 18), which prevents whatever attraction that exists between them from moving beyond the detached intellectual companionship upon which it began.

Finally, Richard’s obsession with his own struggles undermines the reciprocal regard needed to affirm Beatrice’s love. Richard shows some concern for Beatrice’s situation, inquiring into her recovery from the illness that plagued her during his exile; however, although this temporarily establishes an emotional bond between the two characters, that connection is quickly dissolved when Richard turns his attention towards his personal problems: “O, if you knew how I am suffering at this moment! For your case, too. But suffering most of all for my own” (*E* 22). This outburst abruptly shifts the focus of the conversation away from Beatrice’s struggles “to give oneself freely and wholly—and be happy” and towards the problems that initially compelled Richard’s exile (*E* 22), reducing her to a sounding board for Richard to air his personal grievances. Beatrice may have momentarily moved beyond her roles of artistic muse and enthusiast, but in so doing, she loses her role in the conversation altogether, which reveals the narcissistic

foundations of Richard's regard for her and guarantees that the distance that comprised the beginnings of their relationship will remain through its completion.

The inevitable alienation between Richard and Beatrice is confirmed in Act III, where the former's dismissal of the latter's regard demonstrates the extent to which his exile has tainted their relationship. Upon encountering Beatrice the morning after the events of Acts I and II, Richard makes an observation concerning Ireland's duplicity that reveals the irreparable damage wrought by his "deep wound of doubt": "There are demons (*he points out towards the strand*) out there. I heard them jabbering since dawn ... The isle is full of voices. Yours also. *Otherwise I could not see you*, it said. And [Bertha's] voice. But, I assure you, they are all demons. I made the sign of the cross upside down and that silenced them" (E 98). While this statement shows Richard to still be exiled from Ireland even upon his return, the inclusion of Beatrice's and Bertha's voices in this "demon[ic]" representation of "the isle" also isolates the personal implications of that exile. Significantly, Richard includes Beatrice's ardent declaration in Act I in his list of ominous "voices," revealing that the possible affair at the end of Act II has compelled him to doubt not only Bertha and Robert, but her as well. This inclusion continues the dismissal of Beatrice's affection that was initiated at the beginning of the play, as the generic muse and aficionado of Act I has now been transformed into a "demon" whose duplicitous words threaten to lure Richard into a dangerous submission. By reducing her desire to "see" him to the ominous "jabbering" of a depersonalized "voice," Richard demonstrates that whatever emotional attachment Beatrice has for him is not reciprocated, which cements the alienation at the heart of their flirtation. Thus, when he later tells Robert that he refuses the call of the "voices of those who say they love me" (E



109), he completes the suppression of Beatrice that began with his artistic inquisition, which confirms the emotional isolation of his embrace of exile.

Ultimately, Beatrice plays an important role in *Exiles*, though probably not the one she desires. Rather than serving as a crucial love interest for Richard, Beatrice instead becomes a catalyst for his desire to grant amatory freedom to Bertha, as the liberty he takes in carrying on this flirtation makes him fear that he has denied similar opportunities to his partner. Beatrice becomes an alienated “third person” in Richard’s and Bertha’s relationship, a person who is “something in [Richard’s] life,” but who cannot compel Richard to feel the same sympathetic concern and guilt towards her that he shows towards Bertha. Beatrice thus becomes a necessary sacrifice to Richard’s desire to “wish [Bertha] well,” and her dismissal in Act III provides another entry into the list of Joycean muses whose inability to transcend their inspirational utility denies them the affection they seek.

B. I am Living with a Stranger!

In Act III, Bertha lashes out at Richard’s ambivalence towards her claims of fidelity, accusing him of granting her complete liberty “to make me humble before you, as you always did. To be free yourself ... With [Beatrice]! And that is your love! Every word you say is false” (*E* 103). To many, this characterization of Richard is correct, as numerous critics have accused Richard of “foist[ing] the illusion of freedom onto Bertha in order to be free himself” (Henke *Desire* 98). To them, the only freedom that Richard desires is personal liberation, and this obsession compels him to turn Robert and Bertha into pawns that he can manipulate to perpetuate his narcissistic exile.<sup>86</sup> However,

---

<sup>86</sup> Henke develops this narcissistic characterization of Richard by arguing that he “thrusts both sexual freedom and ethical responsibility onto Bertha, only to revel in her understandable perplexity. He does, in

Richard does not merely desire to liberate himself from the bonds of marital fidelity; indeed his flirtation with Beatrice indicates that he has already shaken free of those impositions. Instead, his actions throughout *Exiles* are guided by the desire to secure liberty for Bertha, as his guilt over selfishly taking advantage of her loyalty entices him to repair that breach by bestowing a similar freedom on her. Nevertheless, while Richard may act primarily out of affection for Bertha, the abstract freedom he foists upon her ignores the reality of her love, perpetuating the alienation that has developed between them throughout their years in exile.

Initially, Richard's guilty conscience overtakes his ability to develop an empathetic understanding of Bertha's suffering. His attempts to secure liberty for Bertha may be more sympathetic than the actions of Duffy, Gabriel, or Stephen, but his desire to "act on the principle of honouring her free will in all things" is brought about in similarly narcissistic ways (Brown 112), as the primary benefit of this freedom will ultimately be experienced by the lover instead of his beloved. This narcissism is exemplified by his conversation with Robert in Act II, where Richard reveals that his primary motivation for granting liberty to Bertha is the fear that "I will reproach myself then for having taken all for myself because I would not suffer her to give to another what was hers and not mine to give, because I accepted from her her loyalty and made her life poorer in love" (E 69). This concern, while seemingly respectful of Bertha's feelings, establishes the fear of "reproaching [him]self" for "robbing" her of her happiness as what motivates Richard rather than the robbery itself, which prioritizes his guilt over her misery. For that reason, his primary goal throughout *Exiles* is not to alleviate Bertha's suffering, but to alleviate

---

fact, take advantage of her simplicity by using her as a moral and aesthetic pawn to implement his own psychological liberation" (92). Clark similarly notes that "the spectacle of Richard's churlish self-pity urges our ironic detachment from him" (185).

his personal pain over having caused that suffering. Thus, even though Richard believes that he is advancing Bertha's interests, Joyce depicts him as "fighting for his own hand, for his own emotional dignity and liberation in which Bertha, no less and no more than Beatrice or any other woman is coinvolved" (*E* 120), which prevents his gift of freedom from alleviating her suffering to any significant degree.

Additionally, Richard's refusal to compromise his own freedom undermines his ability to bestow that freedom on Bertha. While he claims responsibility for "having taken all for himself" and "ma[king] her life poorer in love," Richard ignores the most logical solution to his quandary, that the pain caused by his infidelity could be alleviated by pledging his unwavering fidelity to Bertha. Instead, he continues his intellectual flirtation with Beatrice, choosing to alleviate the inequity of freedom between he and Bertha by granting her the same liberty that he exercises. This solution may shield Richard from accusations that he is unfairly taking advantage of Bertha's faithfulness, but it ignores the fact that her pain is not caused by the inequity of infidelity, but by the infidelity itself. However, since to swear loyalty to Bertha would confine Richard to the bonds of monogamy, he refuses to consider this a viable option to his dilemma. In that sense, Richard's gift is brought about by the same commitment to amatory freedom that influences Stephen's interactions with his love objects, as he is willing to remedy the isolation between himself and Bertha as long as that remedy does not encroach on the liberty he has practiced throughout their relationship. Thus, Bertha is correct that Richard wants "to have complete liberty with—that girl," (*E* 53), though not in the manner that she perceives; while Richard may have no interest in pursuing a physical or emotional relationship with Beatrice, he is unwilling to sacrifice their flirtation in order to

secure Bertha's happiness, which reveals the narcissistic foundations of the freedom he offers as an alternative.

Finally, Richard's granting Bertha the freedom to pursue Robert participates in the same "pleasure of possession" that he criticized in Act II. I have already argued that Richard treats Bertha as his sexual possession, as his conversation with Archie established the giving of an object as enabling complete mastery over that object. This mastery is strengthened by his assumption that the freedom he desires for Bertha is something that he both possesses and can bestow upon her as a "gift." By asserting that he holds the power to release Bertha from the bonds of monogamy, Richard places himself in the position of "an enlightened, somewhat condescending patriarch," conferring a charitable gift to a subordinate whose freedom to act is "contingent on spousal benevolence" (Henke *Desire* 91). Thus, by granting Bertha the same liberty that he autonomously exercises (since presumably no one had to bestow that liberty upon him), he ties the advancement of her happiness to his patriarchal power and charity. Not only does this give Richard absolute control over Bertha, but it also makes whatever happiness she enjoys as a result of his "gift" a testimony to his generosity, which confirms the narcissism inherent in his determination to "wish her well."

Inevitably, the individual, intellectual foundations of Richard's gift blind him to Bertha's attitude towards this freedom. Richard may desire to grant Bertha the same liberty that he enjoys, but his determination to assuage his guilt through his gift of freedom prevents him from understanding that she does not want this gift. While Richard feels that to "hold [Bertha] by no bonds, even of love" is the best way to repair the breach in their relationship, he fails to consider that what Bertha ultimately desires is not the

ability to participate in the same flirtations as Richard, but to engage in a committed union with him.<sup>87</sup> Thus, his attempts to allow Bertha to pursue an affair with Robert are based upon abstract principles of freedom that overlook the reality of the situation in which he finds himself, revealing his obsession with personal liberty to result in the fundamental ignorance of her otherness.

Bertha's exasperated reactions to Richard's gift continually demonstrate his inability to recognize her otherness. While Richard may feel that he is right to encourage Bertha to pursue Robert, her frustration and anger demonstrate that she considers this gift to be evidence of betrayal and heartlessness. This pain is apparent in Act I, where Bertha's accusation that "you take advantage of my simplicity as you did—the first time" shows that Richard's attempts to repair the breach caused by his initial infidelity will inevitably be met by suspicions of further unfaithfulness (*E* 52). Thus, his insistence that "you have complete liberty to do as you wish—you and he" is countered by Bertha's suspicions that he is a "deceiver" who simply desires to pursue an affair with Beatrice (*E* 52; 53). This exchange demonstrates the inevitable futility of Richard's gift and illustrates that his obsession with amatory freedom has blinded him to the reality of Bertha's love for him. For this reason, "Richard has begotten the situation from which he proceeds to suffer" (*JJ* 356), as his refusal to stop Bertha from going to Robert's cottage only exacerbates her suspicion and confusion and foreshadows the irreparable breach in their relationship at the play's conclusion.

---

<sup>87</sup> Ellmann persuasively articulates the impasse created by Richard's and Bertha's differing interpretations of love, noting that "to his wife, love is not what it is to Richard; rather than the bestowal of freedom, it is the insistence upon bonds. She waits for the sign which he will not give, and encourages Robert less for himself than in the hope of bestirring her husband to express his love" (*JJ* 356).

Richard's ignorance of Bertha's desire is evident not only in her frustration, but also in his irritated reactions to her suspicions. Revealing himself to be completely consumed by amatory freedom, Richard is caught off guard by Bertha's rebukes of his permission to pursue Robert and stunned that the liberty that he cherishes is not similarly desired by her. He is genuinely shocked when Bertha labels him a "deceiver" and accuses him of further infidelities with Beatrice ("What the devil are you talking about her for?" [E 103]), and he responds to her inquiries over whether he wants her to go to Robert with a frustrated "why do you ask me? Decide yourself" (E 55). Then, when she continues to rebuke Richard in Act II, he is shocked to discover that Bertha "ha[s] come here and led [Robert] on in this way on account of me" and continues to express confusion over her hesitancy towards the freedom she has been granted (E 74). Such interchanges shows Richard's inability to recognize that even though he has granted Bertha the freedom to pursue Robert, she is acting primarily out of loyalty to him, demonstrating both her preference of fidelity to freedom and her continued suspicions over his refusal to "tell me what you wish me to do" (E 75). Even though Bertha's reactions clearly signify her ambivalence towards amatory freedom, Richard's unwavering advocacy of that freedom prevents him from coming to terms with that ambivalence, which hinders the empathy needed to repair their relationship and guarantees that his subsequent attempts to secure her happiness will further alienate them from each other.

This alienation is demonstrated throughout Act III, where Richard's refusal to acknowledge Bertha's repeated assertions of fidelity irreparably ruptures their union. While Richard feels that the "deep wound of doubt" created by the previous night is necessary to release her from her monogamous bonds, Bertha feels that it is more

important for Richard to realize her continued loyalty to him, perpetuating the impasse that has characterized their interactions throughout *Exiles*. Even though Bertha's claim that "I will tell you the truth, Dick, as I always told you" is meant to ease Richard's fears over her possible infidelity (*E* 102), it is anathema to his desire to love her "in restless living wounded doubt" (*E* 112), and his insistence that "I will never know, I tell you" denies Bertha the evidence of her commitment that she feels is necessary to repair their relationship (*E* 102). For that reason, even if he wills himself into the doubt needed to be "united with [Bertha] in body and soul in utter nakedness" (*E* 112), the refusals of her fidelity that he utters to secure that union only drive her further away, causing her to feel that "you are a stranger to me. You do not understand anything in me—not one thing in my heart or soul. A stranger! I am living with a stranger!" (*E* 104). Indeed, Richard's subordination of Bertha's desire for fidelity to his desire for freedom inevitably makes him a "stranger" to her, and his inability to affirm the reality of her feelings truly makes Bertha his permanent "bride in exile" (*E* 111).

This marital exile is confirmed by the conversation that concludes *Exiles*. Initially, this final exchange seems to provide hope for Richard and Bertha to resolve their strife, as her empathetic embrace of his despair provides an alternative to the frustration that epitomized both characters' attitudes throughout the play. Even though Richard continues to profess ambivalence to her protestations of fidelity, Bertha's response is no longer one of exasperation and anger, but is rather the loving caress of one who sees her beloved every day as she did the first time they met. ("Not a day passes that I do not see ourselves, you and me, as we were when we met first. Every day of my life I see that" [*E* 111].) Here, Joyce introduces the loving potential of memory that will guide Bloom's

thoughts of Molly throughout *Ulysses*, as the blissful recollections of a loved one become a mechanism for the lover to reaffirm her/his feelings for her/him despite their present problems. Here, the ability of past bliss to compel a present affirmation is evident considering that Bertha's loving recollections are immediately followed by her renewed commitment to "follow" Richard "wherever you go" (*E* 111). Bertha thus articulates the most meaningful expression of love in Joyce's play, and her desire for Richard to "speak out all your heart to me. What you feel and what you suffer" demonstrates the empathy needed for them to reestablish the dialogic connection tempered by freedom and exile (*E* 112).

However, Richard squanders this dialogic opportunity. Even if Bertha's commitment to "try to understand everything you say" signifies an empathetic affirmation (*E* 112), Richard's vacant response reveals that her desire for recognition will not be reciprocated. Although he obeys Bertha by "speak[ing] out all [his] heart to [her]," the description in the stage directions of Richard "*speaking as if to an absent person*" reduces her to "a person who is absent and present at the same time" (Rabaté 34), making his confession no different than if he were talking to himself. For that reason, when he confesses his desire "to hold [Bertha] by no bonds, even of love," Richard shows the isolation inherent in that desire, as the moment when he becomes "united with [her] in body and soul in utter nakedness" simultaneously becomes the moment where he loses the ability to recognize her altogether (*E* 112). Even though Bertha pleads for Richard to "forget me and love me again as you did the first time" and to "come back to me again," it seems probable that when she "*closes her eyes*" in the play's final stage direction, they will not open again on the reciprocal affection encapsulated by when they first met. Thus, the



“deep wound of doubt” that Richard creates in order to fulfill his gift of freedom deprives him of the fidelity of Bertha’s love (*E* 112), condemning both lovers to “a stasis that freezes their predicament and frustrates any happy resolution” (Shaffer “Kindred” 210).

Throughout her interactions with Richard, Bertha remains the loving voice that reveals the narcissistic artificiality of his desires. Similar to her ridicule of Robert’s advances, Bertha’s reactions to Richard’s gift of freedom throughout *Exiles* demonstrate the problematic nature of his beliefs, as the frustration, despair, and longing that she exudes highlight the self-serving nature of his obsession with securing her liberation. Even though Richard professes to have “allowed [her] complete liberty,” Bertha’s desire for Richard to “speak out all your heart to me” becomes the most liberating gesture in *Exiles*, providing both characters the opportunity to declare their souls’ longings in a manner that could move past his obsession with personal freedom. Bertha thus plays a role similar to Emily Sinico in that the “invitation of openness” that she offers at the play’s conclusion reveals the closed nature of her lover’s gift while establishing a dialogic alternative to their constant miscommunication that could provide them with the love they both desire, if only Richard would accept her invitation. Nevertheless, while Bertha is very much alive when the curtain drops on *Exiles*, her heart suffers a fate similar to Mrs. Sinico’s, and her plea for her “strange wild lover” to “come back to me again” is drowned out by the “tired[ness]” of Richard’s “deep wound of doubt.”

\*\*\*\*

In his 1989 article in the *James Joyce Quarterly*, Brian W. Shaffer posits that “if Richard is a prophet of freedom he is at the same time a false messiah. Insisting that he and Bertha are now free, he nevertheless appears fundamentally bound to ideas that

victimize them both” (“Kindred” 210). This characterization provides a convincing challenge to the traditionally villainous reading of Joyce’s protagonist, as Shaffer’s representation of Richard as a “false messiah” who is “fundamentally bound” to faulty “ideas” enables us to recognize the self-serving nature of his actions throughout *Exiles* while resisting the temptation to cast him as a purely callous and manipulative narcissist. While his foisting of amatory freedom onto Bertha irreparably damages their relationship, we should not ignore that his actions are primarily motivated by a desire to rectify the damage he has already inflicted upon her happiness. In that sense, while Richard shares Stephen’s obsession with personal liberation, he also demonstrates the sympathy of Gabriel’s well-intentioned reactions to Gretta’s misery. However, even the best intentions cannot overcome the fundamental ignorance of a beloved’s desires, and Richard’s insistence on using the gift of freedom to “wish [Bertha] well” only compounds her loneliness and furthers their isolation from each other, demonstrating the futility of non-reciprocal attachments even in the most benevolent instances.

Richard thus provides an exemplary conclusion to Joyce’s examination of narcissistic desire. In his attempts to balance his personal liberation with Bertha’s happiness, Richard becomes a crucial transition point in Joyce’s representations of love, a character who, while still lured by self-serving amatory pursuits, has moved beyond the purely personal agendas of the lovers before him to consider the well-being of his beloved as well. Through his struggles with a more sympathetic love, Richard enables us to see his author reconciling his youthful advocacy of personal liberation with the consequences of such freedom, and the melancholic conclusion of *Exiles* allows Joyce to demonstrate the inadequacy of an unwavering exile that denies space to the loved ones in one’s life. In

*Ulysses*, Joyce will provide us with another portrait of a Dubliner oppressed by a suffocating socio-political structure, but unlike Duffy, Stephen, or Richard, Leopold Bloom will not seek the liberation of exile. Instead, Bloom will embody the principles of compassionate love articulated throughout the Joycean oeuvre, combining Richard's desire to "wish [one's lover] well" with Bertha's empathy in his enduring homage to Molly. It is ultimately Bloom who will enable Joyce to move past the "isle ... of [demonic] voices" and towards the Hill of Howth to depict a union that, while not perfect by any means, will prove more liberating than the exiles and escapes that preceded it.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG

In previous chapters, I examined the self-serving motivations behind the amatory pursuits of Joyce's characters. From this perspective, Joyce's early fiction reads like a cautionary tale against narcissistic desire, as his protagonists' promotion of their interests over those of their loved ones limits them to alienating forms of self-love that undermine their personal and political goals. With the introduction of Leopold Bloom, Joyce begins to articulate an alternative to narcissism by crafting a character whose empathy for his fellow Dubliners enables him to negotiate his body politic more effectively than his predecessors. For that reason, Joyce's progression from Stephen and Richard to Bloom also constitutes a textual evolution from negative portrayals of self-centered desire towards a positive love ethic that can challenge the paralysis of everyday Dublin.<sup>88</sup>

However, although *Ulysses* offers an alternative to the narcissism of Joyce's earlier fiction, Marguerite Harkness is correct that the text's central love story is anything but "a psychologist's description of married bliss" (*Aesthetics* 162). Indeed, Bloom's flirtations with Martha Clifford and Gerty MacDowell show that while he may be committed to Molly Bloom, he is also complicit in adulterous tendencies. This is not surprising since to present an amorous hero who was perfect, wholesome, and loyal would inject a sentimentality into *Ulysses* that is out of character with Joyce's attitude towards love.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup> Ellmann similarly documents such a transition from the earlier fiction to *Ulysses*, writing that "On June 16, as he would afterwards realize, [Joyce] entered into relation with the world around him and left behind him the loneliness he had felt since his mother's death. He would tell her later, 'You made me a man.' June 16 was the sacred day that divided Stephen Dedalus, the insurgent youth, from Leopold Bloom, the complaisant husband" (*JJ* 156).

<sup>89</sup> Bloom's lack of completely unwavering devotion also does not conflict with Buber's dialogic understanding of love. In fact, Buber concedes that the dialogic potential of love is inevitably temporary, that "the sublime melancholy of our lot [is] that every You must become an It in our world. However exclusively present it may have been in the direct relationship – as soon as the relationship has run its course or is permeated by *means*, the You becomes an object among objects ... Even love cannot persist in direct relation; it endures, but only in the alternation of actuality and latency" (*Thou* 68-9). However, even

Instead, Bloom embodies the Joycean love ethic not through any performance of stereotypical romantic fidelity, but through his unwavering compassion for his wife despite whatever complications arise in their marriage. For that reason, even though he acts on his loneliness in problematic ways, he neither lets those actions cloud his devotion to Molly nor seriously contemplates rejecting her, which makes him “one of the few heroes in literature to acknowledge that the beloved ‘object’ is *not* an object at all but a subjective individual capable of independence, change, and self-transcendence” (Henke *Sindbook* 127). Thus, his love for Molly ultimately validates his actions throughout *Ulysses*, transforming his odyssey into a journey that prepares him to reclaim his life’s greatest love.

#### I. Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

While listening to a discussion about Parnell in “Eumaeus,” Bloom ponders the “eternal question of the life connubial”: “Can real love, supposing there happens to be another chap in the case, exist between married folk?” (*U* 16.1384-6). This question establishes a fundamental difference between Bloom and Joyce’s earlier protagonists. Unlike Duffy, Gabriel, and Stephen, who believe they have been wronged by their loved ones, and Richard, who desires to be wronged by his loved ones (“Because in the very core of my ignoble heart I longed to be betrayed by you and by her” [*E* 89]), Bloom actually has been wronged, as Molly’s affair with Blazes Boylan forces him to come to grips with his cuckoldry. However, the manner in which he resolves this conflict reveals a second difference from his predecessors. Whereas earlier characters obsess over their

---

if the “You” in question inevitably turns into an “It,” the I-You relationship can be resumed because “whatever has thus been changed into It and frozen into a thing among things is still endowed with the meaning and the destiny to change back ever again” (*Thou* 90). Thus, it is not the permanency of a specific I-You encounter that is important, but rather the continued ability to engage in such encounters, which legitimizes Bloom’s advocacy of love even though his marriage is in trouble throughout *Ulysses*.

personal pain, Bloom remains “humane and sensitive to others rather than selfishly preoccupied with the wrongs done him; and basically [accepts] the lot life has to offer” (Bowen *Comic* 40). Even though marital stagnation has made him extremely lonely, Bloom never lets personal anguish overshadow his devotion to Molly, which shapes his thoughts and actions throughout the text into a renewed affirmation of their love.

Bloom’s response to his wife’s infidelity is best encapsulated by the music that Molly is scheduled to perform on her concert tour. Upon learning in “Calypso” that Boylan and Molly will be rehearsing at four-thirty that afternoon, Bloom finds out that she is booked to sing “*Là ci darem* with J.C. Doyle ... and *Love’s Old Sweet Song*” (*U* 4.314). We can easily grasp the ominous implications of *Là ci darem la mano*, as the seduction duet from *Don Giovanni* provides an appropriate context for Molly’s liaison with Boylan.

However, what might not be immediately apparent are the ways in which that piece foreshadows not simply adultery, but reconciliation. If we are to view Mozart’s opera as a lens for evaluating the Bloom-Molly-Boylan triangle, then that comparison should extend not only to the specific duet mentioned in *Ulysses*, but also to the outcome of the seduction advanced by that duet. *Là ci darem la mano* may enable Don Giovanni to entice Zerlina away from her fiancé Masseto temporarily, but that couple ends up together at the opera’s conclusion, while the seducer’s advances only push him towards inevitable damnation. Similarly, Molly’s and Boylan’s performance of this musical seduction may disrupt the Blooms’ marriage to some extent, but whatever breach emerges from their sexual encounter stands a good chance of being resolved by the conclusion of *Ulysses*.

The possibility of reconciliation is even more apparent when we consider the concert program as a whole. Even if we ignore the happy resolution of *Don Giovanni*, we can still glean hints of the Blooms' inevitable reunion through *Love's Old Sweet Song*. In many ways, these two songs convey the central conflict of the Bloom episodes in *Ulysses*, as the sexual enticement of *Là ci darem la mano* is counteracted by the enduring love in *Love's Old Sweet Song*. In fact, the optimism of the latter piece subsumes the seductive elements of its operatic counterpart because it concedes the inevitability of obstacles to love and still concludes that the love in question will be maintained. ("Though the heart be weary, / Sad the day and long, / Still to us at twilight, / Comes love's sweet song" [Gifford and Seidman 77].) Thus, when we read the Bloom episodes with respect to both songs, we discover that even though Molly's liaison constitutes adultery, the love at the foundation of their marriage will enable them to move past that betrayal. ("Footsteps may falter, weary grow the way, / Still we can hear it, at the close of the day" ([Gifford and Seidman 77].) The performance of *Là ci darem la mano* may initially spell disaster for their marriage, but the program as a whole foreshadows its inevitable restoration.

However, even though we can glimpse a happy resolution to *Ulysses* in "Calypso," the seduction inherent in *Là ci darem la mano* still maintains an imposing presence throughout the text, as Bloom's journey towards rekindling the passion of Howth forces him to deal with the pain of cuckoldry. He may try to banish the affair from his mind by contemplating the minutiae of the day, but the majority of his thoughts inevitably bring him back to Molly and her impending betrayal. In a sense, Bloom is trapped between *Là ci darem la mano* and *Love's Old Sweet Song* throughout *Ulysses*: he can either obsess

over his wife's affair and lament their faltering marriage, or he can accept the inevitability of this obstacle and work towards restoring their love. And while Bloom does continually brood upon his loneliness and anguish, his unswerving commitment to Molly compels an acceptance of cuckoldry that reaffirms their relationship, subordinating the seductive allure of *Don Giovanni* to the enduring life of the "sweetest song of all" (Gifford and Seidman 77).

#### A. Useless to go Back

Initially, Bloom's inability to think negatively of his wife enables him to envision their marriage continuing after the affair. He may react harshly to Boylan and brand him the "worst man in Dublin" (*U* 6.202), but he rarely lets that hostility cloud his feelings for Molly or allows alienation to get in the way of his marital obligations. Indeed, although he senses his impending betrayal as early as "Calypso," he continues to run errands and do favors for his wife, such as purchasing her lotion at Sweny's and borrowing a smutty book for her. Even when his thoughts turn to her "rehearsal" with Boylan, he does not think bitterly of her. Instead, he reflects upon her singing abilities, wondering if she pronounces the (nonexistent) *voglio* in *Là ci darem la mano* correctly and admiring her "beautiful ... weeping tone" when she sings the line "*Mi trema un poco il*" (*U* 6.239-40). Not only do these thoughts enable him to banish the adulterous implications of the song from his mind, but they also demonstrate his continued admiration for Molly's voice and his concern for the success of her upcoming tour. This focus enables Bloom to think fondly about Molly despite her impending infidelity and to use her upcoming performances to envision a future for their marriage. Thus, by continuing to demonstrate his love for Molly and to visualize an enduring relationship after her liaison, Bloom



initiates the acceptance of cuckoldry that is needed for them to move beyond their impasse.

Bloom's continued concern for Molly is also evidenced by his consideration of the physical harms that could result from her encounter with Boylan. In "Lestrygonians," Bloom's contemplation of an ad for "that quack doctor for the clap" (*U* 8.96) compels him to consider whether Molly could be exposed to the disease: "If he ...? O! Eh? No ..... No. No, no. I don't believe it. He wouldn't surely? No, no. Mr Bloom moved forward, raising his troubled eyes. Think no more about that" (*U* 8.102-9). Unlike Duffy and Gabriel, who narcissistically fear that their lives will be disadvantaged by their loved one's problems, Bloom shows genuine concern for the health risks of Molly's encounter with Boylan, placing her safety ahead of his personal pain. Not only does this show Bloom's refusal to blanketly denigrate anyone including his rival (because even the "worst man in Dublin" would not deliberately expose his lover to the clap), but it also shows his unconditional love for Molly despite her adultery, which provides a noticeable contrast to the totalizing rejections of "unfaithful" love objects performed by his counterparts. Thus, when Bloom resolves to "think no more about that," he adds a compassionate dimension to his attempts to ignore Molly's impending affair, enabling him to develop a more productive attitude towards his inevitable cuckoldry.

Additionally, Bloom's refusal to act on his knowledge of the affair demonstrates his continued affirmation of his loved one. Critics have characterized Bloom's inability to interrupt the encounter as a sign of weakness, arguing that his fatalistic acceptance of the inevitable affair shows that he is mired in Joycean paralysis. However, Bloom's insistence that it is "useless to go back. Had to be" (*U* 8.633) is not evidence of passivity,

but is rather a conscious understanding of and concession to Molly's desires. He obviously recognizes that Molly's rehearsal is a pretense for an adulterous encounter, but that knowledge also carries with it the understanding that their failure to have complete sexual intercourse since Rudy's death has emboldened desires within Molly that he does not presently fulfill. Thus, his refusal to break up their affair can be seen as "an identification with the desire of the other" because to walk in on Molly's encounter with Boylan would be a conscious denial of her sexual longings (McGee 127).<sup>90</sup> In a sense, Bloom shows himself to be concerned with Molly's amorous freedom in a manner similar to Richard's obsession with Bertha's amatory freedom; however, unlike Richard, Bloom acknowledges and affirms an innate desire of his loved one instead of forcing her to accept an unwanted freedom that conflicts with her desires. Kimberly Devlin is thus correct that "Bloom here is implicitly acknowledging the otherness of others" since his resignation to the inevitability of the affair becomes a conscious promotion of Molly's interests over his own, which transforms the "paradoxical choice of passivity" into a "usually unrecognized virtue" ("En-Gendered" 85-6).

#### B. My Memory's Not So Bad

Bloom's loving memories throughout the text also aid his acceptance of cuckoldry. While some scholars characterize his memories as a paralyzing form of escapism, when we read Bloom's recollections of his courtship of Molly with respect to Buber, we discover that his retreats into the past are necessary to provide vitality to a relationship

---

<sup>90</sup> Patrick McGee continues: "this identification is the key to Bloom and the ground of his ethical being. Though he knows that his wife has been unfaithful to him ... and though his unconscious desires and passions run rampant along every possible avenue of human sexual practice, he does not act. He subordinates his own demand for love (which is always determined within the framework of culture by ideology) to the desire of the other as the structure of his own desire" (127-8). Henke also describes Bloom's attitude here as "admirable, even heroic," noting that "he must prevent himself from circumscribing his wife's independence. What good is fidelity if it is forced? Bloom recognizes Molly's freedom and accedes to the priority of individual choice" (*Sindbook* 127).

that has been undermined by death, isolation, and betrayal. Bloom's loving memories aid his acceptance of cuckoldry for two reasons: they compel him to maintain loving thoughts about Molly, which decreases his incentive to castigate her for her affair; and they enable past passion to counteract his present-day loneliness.<sup>91</sup> By returning in thought to Dolphin's Barn and Howth Head, he allows his blissful past with Molly to recur throughout June 16, 1904, enabling the amorous energy of their courtship to "catch fire and become present, returning to the element from which it issued, to be beheld and lived ... as present" (Buber *Thou* 90). Bloom's recollections in *Ulysses* become the perfect complement to his marital compassion because they provide the constant reminder of his enduring love for Molly that enables him to move towards reconciliation.

### 1. The Same Young Eyes

It is fitting that Bloom's first major memory in *Ulysses* concerns the night he first kissed his wife. Indeed, his loving observation in "Calypso" that Molly has "the same young eyes. The first night after the charades. Dolphin's Barn" (*U* 4.344-5) both provides context for the text's central relationship and demonstrates that the attraction that was piqued at Luke Doyle's house is still alive on Bloomsday. Not only does Bloom's "smil[ing]" reaction to Molly's "mocking eyes" (*U* 4.344) provide the first evidence of his fondness for her despite her infidelity (since her teasing immediately follows her explanation of Boylan's visit), but his observation that Molly possesses "the *same* young eyes" indicates that the young Miss Tweedy that enticed him in Dolphin's Barn provokes the same attraction now as Mrs. Bloom. That Molly's "mocking eyes" are

---

<sup>91</sup> Philip Sicker notes Bloom's application of past experience to his present-day reflections, writing that "memory can bring past and present perspectives into stereoscopic resolution, focusing time-distant images with mind's intimate and immediate gaze. Volitional acts of memory, like Bloom's, combine a quick, telescopic renewal of prior experience or information with a slow-motion, microscopic scrutiny of its content" ("Swiftian" 77).

a reaction to Bloom's explanation of metempsychosis also hints at the redemptive nature of his recollections, as the juxtaposition of the "transmigration of souls" with Bloom's remembering their first kiss enables his memories to be seen as a reawakening and renewal of past passion. His remembrance of the charades game thus provides the initial example of how his memories influence his perceptions of the present, enabling him to focus on the love still present in their marriage despite the knowledge of its inevitable breach.

However, while Bloom's recollections of that evening frequently lighten his thoughts throughout *Ulysses*, the most telling example of this past event influencing his present amorous aspirations occurs oddly through his exchanges with another woman. While his erotic correspondence with Martha Clifford may convey his temptation towards adultery, Gordon is correct that "Leopold-Henry's indiscretion with Martha ... is entirely a function of his connection to Molly. She is the one running the show" (*Reality* 84). That Bloom uses these letters to indulge in masochistic fantasy and to express his loneliness is obvious, but these episodes gain memorial significance when we discover in "Sirens" that Martha also resides in Dolphin's Barn (*U* 11.897-400). By following his remembrances of Dolphin's Barn in "Calypso" with the introduction of erotic correspondence to Dolphin's Barn in "Lotus Eaters," Joyce constructs a textual link between a past flirtation with Molly and a present-day flirtation with a character that stands in for Molly. In much the same way that Howth Head will cast a shadow over Bloom's masturbation in "Nausicaa," Dolphin's Barn infiltrates his correspondence with Martha, transforming his epistolary exchange into a way to "pursu[e] a series of objects and bodily pleasures that finally lead him back to his place with Molly" (McGee 123).

The relationship between Luke Doyle's party and Martha Clifford becomes explicit in "Nausicaa," where a solitary Bloom resigns himself to the completion of Molly's infidelity. At one point in the chapter, Bloom seems to replace his remembered affection with an adulterous desire, as his melancholy thoughts about Howth stir up the temptation to continue corresponding with Martha. ("Returning not the same ... The new I want. Nothing new under the sun. Care of P.O. Dolphin's Barn" [*U* 13.1103-5].) However, this contemplation of an adulterous future immediately reverts to the past, and Bloom's meditations over Martha's letter give way to remembrances of the charades game. ("Are you not happy in your? Naughty darling. At Dolphin's barn charades in Luke Doyle's house. Mat Dillon and his bevy of daughters: Tiny, Atty, Floey, Maimy, Louy, Hetty. Molly too" [*U* 13.1105-8].) Not only does this transition demonstrate the intertwined nature of Marion Tweedy and Martha Clifford, but Bloom's subsequent acknowledgement of this linkage reveals the irrevocable link between past and present: "So it returns. Think you're escaping and run into yourself. Longest way round is the shortest way home" (*U* 13.1109-11). Thus, even if Bloom were using Martha to distract him from his loneliness, his correspondence is so permanently tied to his history with Molly that he cannot engage present-day Dolphin's Barn without simultaneously invoking its past.<sup>92</sup> Bloom's statement thus confirms the power of his remembrances of Molly in reaffirming his love throughout Bloomsday, as his subsequent invoking of metempsychosis in the next paragraph ("metempsychosis. They believed you could be changed into a tree from grief" [*U* 13.1118-9]) brings us back to "Calypso" and the

---

<sup>92</sup> Gordon's interpretation of the "milkwhite dolphin" (*U* 12.1772) towards the end of "Cyclops" also reads Bloom's flirtation with Martha as a reigniting of his passion for Molly, writing that "Bloom is not, mainly, heading toward the other woman in his life (see Hart and Knuth 1976, 33). He is, mainly, heading to the place where he and his first love of his life had their first kiss" ("Reality" 85).

“mocking eyes” that provoked his initial invocation of the charades game. Through Bloom’s exchanges with Martha, Joyce demonstrates how his protagonist uses memory to promote the passion of Doyle’s party over the loneliness of his epistolary return to Dolphin’s Barn, and the metempsychotic reawakening of his initial passion for Molly shows how the “longest way round [truly] is the shortest way home.”

## 2. The Wild Ferns on Howth

While the charades party of 1887 serves as the introduction of the text’s central infatuation, its climax occurs a year later on the Hill of Howth. The memory of Bloom’s proposal to Molly captivates him during his lunch at Davy Byrne’s in “Lestrygonians,” as the warmth of his glass of burgundy performs a “secret touch” that “moisten[s]” his memory and brings the “wild ferns on Howth” to his mind (*U* 8.898-900):

Pillowed on my coat she had her hair, earwigs in the heather scrub my hand under her nape, you’ll toss me all. O wonder! Coolsoft with ointments her hand touched me, caressed: her eyes upon me did not turn away. Ravished over her I lay, full lips full open, kissed her mouth. Yum. Softly she gave me in my mouth the seedcake warm and chewed. Mawkish pulp her mouth had mumbled sweetsour of her spittle. Joy: I ate it: joy. Young life, her lips that gave me pouting. Soft warm sticky gumjelly lips. Flowers her eyes were, take me, willing eyes ... Screened under ferns she laughed warmfolded. Wildly I lay on her, kissed her: eyes, her lips, her stretched neck beating, woman’s breasts full in her blouse of nun’s veiling, fat nipples upright. Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed. (*U* 8.903-10; 912-5)

To some critics, this recollection of Howth illustrates Bloom’s suppression of his anguish throughout *Ulysses*, as his equation of this nostalgic embrace with his present-day loneliness (“Me. And me now” [*U* 8.917]) compels him to bury his feelings for Molly under his contemplations of everyday minutiae.<sup>93</sup> However, I agree with Henke’s

---

<sup>93</sup> For example, Rickard argues that “perhaps to avoid the pain of this powerful memory of happier times, Bloom again shifts immediately away from the images of physical love between man and woman presented to him by the past into a vision ... Bloom flees from his memory of love on Howth to a correspondent

contention that Bloom's "recollection is carefully restricted to the frame of positive memory, rather than the lure of futile reminiscence" (*Sindbook* 128). Even though Bloom's memory cannot be separated from the loneliness he experiences throughout the text, the love contained within this recollection envelops this loneliness with the warmth needed for him to come to grips with Molly's affair.

Initially, the prominence of food in Bloom's reverie provides the spiritual sustenance necessary to quell his misery. It is not coincidental that Joyce includes a memory based on the erotic exchange of a seedcake within the food-dominated "Lestrygonians," as the glass of burgundy and gorgonzola sandwich ingested by Bloom on June 16, 1904, harkens back to the "mawkish pulp" consumed by Molly and Bloom sixteen years earlier. In fact, Joyce unites these two events not simply through their shared act of consumption, but also through the warmth instilled in his characters as a result of that consumption. Henke is correct in describing Bloom's memory of Howth as "sanctified by a spiritual love-communion with Molly" (*Sindbook* 128) since the reciprocal nature of both their sharing the seedcake and their kissing ("Hot I tongued her. She kissed me. I was kissed.") unites their lips in a mutually erotic affirmation of their affection. In that sense, Bloom's contemplation of the connection between "me" and "me now" can be seen as more than simply evidence of his continued depression; especially when we consider the reverie-like rhetoric of Bloom's memory, the recollection of Howth provides the rekindling of amorous bliss that counteracts his painful resignation over Molly's liaison. Joyce's inclusion of this memory in "Lestrygonians" thus establishes a textual and temporal bond between the emotional communion of Howth and the physical

---

idealization that filters out the physical, replacing the 'seedcake warm and chewed' with nectar, replacing the real woman with a goddess free from the gross properties and processes of the flesh" (82-3).

communion of Davy Byrne's, and the warmth generated by his glass of burgundy emboldens the renewal of the warmth of the sun over Howth that will enable him to reaffirm his love for Molly.

The positive implications of Bloom's recollection are also demonstrated by his post-lunch thoughts. As Bloom leaves Davy Byrne's on his way to the National Library, he resumes humming the music from *Don Giovanni*. However, while this action had previously signified his preoccupation with Molly's affair, here his musical thoughts take on a more positive note, as the progression from Howth to Davy Byrne's has also shifted his position in Mozart's opera from the seduction of Act II to the triumph of Act V: "He hummed, prolonging in solemn echo the closes of the bars: —*Don Giovanni, a cenar teco M'invitasti.*<sup>94</sup> Feel better. Burgundy. Good pick me up" (U 8.1039-42). Whereas Bloom's previous contemplations of *Don Giovanni* centered on Zerlina's seduction in *Là ci darem la mano*, here he assumes the position of the spirit of Il Commendatore, Don Giovanni's vanquished enemy who resurfaces at the opera's conclusion to initiate his rival's damnation. As he assumes this role, Bloom improves his position within his present-day *Don Giovanni* by forgoing the generic role of the would-be cuckold and becoming the conquered figure that returns to vanquish his enemy. This operatic renegotiation is essential for Bloom to develop a productive acceptance of his cuckoldry because when he assumes the position of Il Commendatore, he can both acknowledge the wounds created by Boylan and move past those wounds to the point where he can reassume his position with Molly. By following his recitation of the lyrics with his acknowledge nourishment from his burgundy, Joyce establishes a causal link between the memory of Howth triggered by that burgundy and his acquired desire to overcome his

---

<sup>94</sup> Translated: "Don Giovanni, you invited me to sup with you" (Gifford and Seidman 185).



usurpation by Boylan. “Lestrygonians” thus functions as a critical site where Bloom’s memories shape his perceptions of present-day romance, and the loving communion of Howth becomes an important “pick me up” that pushes him closer to repairing his relationship with Molly.

### 3. Come Thou Lost One

The efficacy of Bloom’s memorial strategy is confirmed in “Sirens,” where the recollections of Dolphin’s Barn and Howth allow him to avoid the lamentable sirens’ songs of the Ormond Hotel. Bloom’s thoughts are naturally melancholy in this chapter because his witnessing of Boylan’s departure for Eccles Street forces him to acknowledge that Molly’s liaison is imminent. Given the heartbreaking nature of this realization, it would be simple for him to succumb to depression when the bar patrons perform *Love and War*, *All Is Lost Now*, and *M’appari*. However, rather than yield to the pain of his present cuckoldry, Bloom uses the songs as springboards for nostalgic recollections of his marriage, which enables him to maintain his warm feelings for Marion Tweedy despite the infidelity of Molly Bloom.

Bloom’s memorial coping begins during Ben Dollard’s performance of *Love and War*. As Bloom recognizes Dollard’s performance of the opening lyrics, he recalls the humorous time when Dollard had to borrow a tight dress suit for an evening’s concert. This memory diverts Bloom’s attention from his loneliness by compelling him to envision both Molly’s merriment over Dollard’s “tight as a drum” trousers (*U* 11.555) and her witty references to his “base barreltone” (*U* 15.559). Such a diversion enables Bloom to replace his resignation over Molly’s betrayal with fonder memories of his joyful wife, which brightens his spirits as the hour of his cuckoldry approaches.

The most compelling example of Bloom's memory combating his painful reactions to *Love and War* occurs later in the performance. Once he discerns that Father Cowley is accompanying Dollard on the piano, his thoughts turn to larger performances of the song by full orchestras, including the "jiggedy jiggedy" of the conductor's "bagtrousers" (*U* 11.578). No sooner does Bloom contemplate this than the evoked "jiggedy jiggedy" becomes the "jingle jaunty" of Boylan's approaches to Eccles Street (*U* 11.579). This transition demonstrates the prominence of Boylan's destination in Bloom's mind, highlighting his anguish despite his seemingly amiable contemplations of the music. Nevertheless, as Bloom continues to wrestle with *Love and War*, the "jingle jaunty" of Boylan's advances gives way to "Ben Howth, the rhododendrons" (*U* 11.582), and he is able to suppress his melancholy for the moment. The memory of Howth thus buries Bloom's thoughts of Boylan, enabling him to use the "pick me up" initiated in "Lestrygonians" to avoid surrendering to his loneliness.

However, Bloom's reprieve is short lived. As soon as Dollard and Cowley finish *Love and War*, Richie Goulding is reminded of a performance of Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, which compels him to whistle *All Is Lost Now*. This aria, in which Elvino laments his fiancé's seeming infidelity, foregrounds Molly's adultery in Bloom's mind, as his perception of "a thrush" and "a throstle" in Goulding's whistle (*U* 11.631) recalls his perceptions of similar qualities in her performance of *Là ci darem la mano*. ("Beautiful on that *tre* her voice is: weeping tone. A thrush. A throstle" [*U* 6.239-40].) This recollection causes Bloom to reconsider the "Jingle jaunty" of Boylan's advances (*U* 11.640), and his acknowledgment that he is powerless to stop the affair ("Too late. She longed to go. That's why. Woman. As easy stop the sea. Yes: all is lost" [*U* 11.640-1])

reveals his returning despair. *All Is Lost Now* thus restores the loneliness that was initiated by Boylan's departure, and Bloom's reaction to Goulding's "thrush" and "throstle" binds him to Elvino as a fellow cuckold powerless to improve his condition.

Fortunately for Bloom, this operatic union is short-lived. While *All Is Lost Now* may have foregrounded the seductive despair of *Là ci darem la mano* in his mind, the *Love's Old Sweet Song* counterpart soon arrives in the form of *M'appari*, an aria from *Martha* that also laments lost love. In fact, Simon Dedalus only has to sing two lines from *M'appari* before Bloom explicitly identifies it as such ("Love that is singing: love's old sweet song" [U 11.681]), which transforms the song into an opportunity for him to negotiate his feelings about Molly's infidelity. Initially, his thoughts during *M'appari* echo the "falter[ing]" "footsteps" and "weary ... way[s]" of *Love's Old Sweet Song*, as the first verses that Simon sings constitute a mental projection of Molly's liaison with Boylan: "Jing. Stop. Knock. Last look at mirror always before she answers the door. The hall. There? How do you? I do well. There? What? Or? ... Hands felt for the opulent" (U 11.689-92). Indeed, by following this image with the line "*But alas, 'twas idle dreaming*" from *M'appari* (U 11.694), Joyce amplifies the seeming hopelessness of Bloom's situation, which makes his subsequent thoughts about *Martha* seem all the more productive.

This shift in the tone of Bloom's thoughts occurs as Simon continues to perform *M'appari*. As Simon moves from the despair of the song's third stanza to the fourth stanza's reprisal of "when first I saw that form endearing" (U 11.665), Bloom shifts from lamenting his current cuckoldry to remembering the night at Mat Dillon's house when he met Molly. At the moment when the tone of *M'appari* shifts from despair to hope,

Bloom's thoughts undergo a similar transition, as his recollection of their conversation that night stirs up thoughts that fate brought them together. ("First I saw. She thanked me. Why did she me? Fate" [*U* 11.732]). No sooner does Bloom experience this shift than Simon performs the song's concluding cry for the singer's "lost" and "dear one" (*U* 11.740-1) to return to him, and Bloom's concurrent thoughts about Mat Dillon's echo the same desire: "Alone. One love. One hope. One comfort me. Martha, chestnote, return!" (*U* 11.742-3). In contrast to the hopelessness of *All Is Lost Now*, Bloom's nostalgic remembrance of his wife replaces his despair over her adultery with the hope for reconciliation embodied by the conclusion of *M'appari*, transforming young Marion Tweedy into the Martha that Bloom desires to return to him.<sup>95</sup> For that reason, when Simon's concluding "*Come ... To me!*" (*U* 11.744; 751) compels the "consum[ing]" exclamation "Siopold!" (*U* 11.753; 752), we witness Bloom's union with the hopeful connotation of the song's concluding line, with Simon standing in for the musical invocation that he has performed. This merger created by Bloom's yearning for reconciliation thus demonstrates how his memories of happier times with Molly enable him to move past the pain of the infidelity that is simultaneously occurring, paving the way for a more productive homecoming.

John Paul Riquelme argues that "through a defining reliance on memory, Joyce's writings encourage us to remember in various ways and to recognize that remembering is

---

<sup>95</sup> Bowen argues that the "Martha" that Bloom is calling to is actually Martha Clifford since Bloom composes his response to her letter during the "Sirens" episode. He writes, "Molly, at this hour, is the lost one to whom Lionel-Leopold addresses his plaintive notes, but Lionel's song is sung to Martha, and it is Martha to whom Leopold appeals for deliverance from the ignominy of cuckoldry" (*Song* 52). By contrast, I feel that since Bloom's reaction to Simon's performance is to envision the night at Mat Dillon's, then the "Martha" he has in mind is not Martha Clifford, but rather the young Marion Tweedy. Thus, when Bloom says "Martha, chestnote, return," he is calling for Molly, "the lost one to whom [he] addresses his plaintive notes," to come back to him, which enables him to consider a reconciliation with his wife despite the adultery that is occurring.

part of moving forward” (“Preparatory” 12). Indeed, Bloom’s meditations throughout *Ulysses* embody this characterization of memory, as the numerous recollections that come to his mind throughout Bloomsday enable him to move beyond the pain caused by Molly’s adultery. This productive use of memory is confirmed by Bloom’s exit from the Ormond Hotel, where his declaration that “Ben Howth. That rules the world” shows the extent to which his loving memories of Molly have enabled him to get past the despair of her betrayal (*U* 11.1183-4). As we progress through “Sirens,” we witness the heartbroken cuckold that entered the Ormond become the transfigured “Lionelleopold” (*U* 11.1187) who still holds out hope that his “Martha” will “come to [him].” The “jaunty jingle” of Boylan has thus been replaced “with sweets of sin with frillies for Raoul with met him pike hoses” (*U* 11.1188), and Bloom’s nostalgic negotiation through the hour of his betrayal readies him for his masochistic journey towards an amorous metempsychosis.

### C. Sweets of Sin

Throughout *Ulysses*, Bloom demonstrates himself to be the most capable of Joyce’s protagonists in affirming his beloved. While one certainly does not need to go as far as accepting betrayal to demonstrate true love, Bloom’s thoughts about the affair show that he understands and accepts his wife’s desires, and his warm recollections of their courtship and continued concern for her well-being speak to a substantial affection for Molly that is not grounded in a narcissistic obsession with advancing his own interests. What ends up solidifying Bloom’s productive reaction to the affair is his masochistic tendencies throughout the text, as his fascination with experiencing pleasure through pain provide him with a conduit through which he can move past the heartbreak of that affair.

The perverse satisfaction aroused by Bloom's masochism enables him to accept his inevitable cuckoldry,<sup>96</sup> and Molly's enduring presence in these practices establishes a loving foundation for his sexual fantasies that allows him to reaffirm his commitment to her through each indulgence.

Bloom's masochistic affirmation of Molly is exemplarily demonstrated by the book that he borrows for her in "Wandering Rocks." Initially, his decision to select *Sweets of Sin* instead of *Fair Tyrants* demonstrates his continued promotion of Molly's desires over his own, as his recognition that the former book is "more in her line" guides his decision more than the masochistic enticement of the latter (*U* 10.606). More importantly, Bloom borrows *Sweets of Sin* for Molly despite the fact that it contains an adulterous episode that echoes her affair with Boylan, which forces him to contemplate his impending betrayal in order to secure her pleasure. By reading a significant portion of the text's adulterous encounter, Bloom performatively experiences his impending usurpation, and his decision to secure that book for Molly despite its personal implications constitutes a loving embrace of masochism.

The pleasure derived from this experience is evident in Bloom's reaction to the erotic narrative. By noting that "warmth showered gently over him" and that "flesh yielded amply amid rumpled clothes" (*U* 10.619-20), Bloom demonstrates his arousal over an adulterous scene that foreshadows the adultery of the person for whom he is borrowing the book. That Bloom is turned on by the descriptions of this affair shows that he is capable of gaining satisfaction out of pain, that the fact that the scene described in *Sweets of Sin* hits close to home does not prevent him from relishing its eroticism. Especially

---

<sup>96</sup> Bowen writes that "even if there is a painful reversal for Bloom in his recognition of Molly's infidelity, his masochism comically turns it into pleasure" (*Comic* 44).

when we consider that he is primarily aroused by the thought of “*the beautiful woman*” (U 10.618), Bloom’s excitement over the text shows that he is still capable of strong passion for his wife since his enchantment by the book’s adulteress parallels his infatuation with Molly. Thus, Bloom’s masochistic fascination with *Sweets of Sin* demonstrates his ability to view his cuckoldry productively, as the excitement he gains from “*the beautiful woman*” foreshadows his continued ability to desire his wife even after her adultery.

The amorous benefits of this masochistic act are confirmed by the Blooms’ shared fascination with *Sweets of Sin*. Bloom’s fascination with the book is significant not only because it enables him to derive pleasure from a text that details the pain of adultery, but also because he recognizes that his wife would enjoy the book’s eroticism. That both Bloom and Molly can gain gratification out of a book that foreshadows her infidelity towards him hints at the revitalization of their marriage, as the end result of her adultery becomes the sexual fulfillment of an adulteress and her cuckold. By choosing to borrow the text, Bloom advances Molly’s desires while gaining pleasure from the pain it describes, which parallels his actions throughout *Ulysses* and foreshadows the amicable resolution of their marital impasse.

Bloom’s loving masochism is also evident in “Nausicaa,” where his masturbation on Sandymount Strand enables him to derive satisfaction from his own cuckoldry. Although the chapter’s primary erotic exchange occurs between Bloom and Gerty MacDowell, the specter of Molly Bloom permeates “Nausicaa,” which prevents us from detaching the pleasure he experiences from ogling Gerty’s undergarments from the lingering pain of his wife’s adultery. Oddly enough, the initial evidence of Molly’s presence is provided not

by Bloom, but by Gerty, as her sentimental descriptions of “her dreamhusband” contain indicators of his enduring suffering (*U* 13.431). Her observation that the sky’s beauty was gradually “blotted out” by “the Bailey light on Howth” forces us to note that Bloom’s fascination with Gerty occurs within full view of his and Molly’s proposal site (*U* 13.408;409), which prevents him from experiencing this masturbatory encounter without simultaneously evoking that event. Additionally, Gerty’s description of Bloom as a “foreigner” (*U* 13.416) parallels Bloom’s later recollection of Molly’s reasons for choosing him. (“Why me? Because you were so foreign from the others” [*U* 13.1209-10].) This later remembrance of Molly’s fascination with Bloom thus reshapes Gerty’s initial fascination, establishing a bond between the two characters that forces Molly into the forefront of Gerty’s erotic performance. Finally, her observation that “the story of a haunting sorrow was written on his face” (*U* 13.421-2) and her description of him as “[having] suffered, more sinned against than sinning” (*U* 13.432) make his cuckoldry a defining characteristic of his appearance, which prevents us from reading his subsequent masturbation as detached from his brooding over the affair. Gerty’s descriptions may primarily demonstrate her sentimental mode of perception, but they also betray the pain that Bloom is experiencing from his wife’s infidelity, which transforms the orgasm he experiences later in the episode into a masochistic catharsis.

This masochistic element in “Nausicaa” is more explicit in Bloom’s continued meditations on Molly’s and Boylan’s encounter. While his masturbation is brought about initially by Gerty’s undergarments, it is important to note that “when Bloom finally comes, he does it thinking not of Gerty, but of Molly with Boylan” (Bowen “Theoretical” 265). Bloom may be aroused during the chapter’s infamous fireworks display, but his



subsequent “Ah!” at line 821 indicates that he did not experience a complete orgasm, and he does not achieve the full pleasure of his sexual act until later in the episode when he contemplates the consummation of Molly and Boylan’s affair: “Funny my watch stopped at half past four. Dust. Shark liver oil they use to clean. Could do it myself. Save. Was that just when he, she? O, he did. Into her. She did. Done. Ah!” (*U* 13.846-50). By withholding Bloom’s orgasm until his “climactic fantasies of Molly and Blazes” (Bowen *Comic* 59), Joyce forces him literally to experience pleasure from pain, which bolsters his use of masochism to compensate for his loneliness. That Bloom ultimately climaxes over Molly having sex with Boylan further illustrates his sexual adoration of her, transforming her from “*the beautiful woman*” of *Sweets of Sin* into “*the beautiful woman*” of his personal adultery fantasy. The masochistic pleasure initiated in “Wandering Rocks” builds in “Nausicaa,” enabling Bloom to promote his orgasmic fascination with Molly over his marital pain.

If “Nausicaa” constitutes the escalation of Bloom’s masochistic negotiation of cuckoldry, then its climax occurs in “Circe.” Indeed, Bloom’s obsession with Molly’s infidelity colors the majority of his hallucinatory experiences, as nearly every incident he endures in Nighttown combines his pain over her affair with the masochistic impulses that spring from that pain. In fact, one of Bloom’s initial hallucinations in the chapter is of Molly, whose description as a “handsome woman” with “*opulent curves*” explicitly casts her as the “*beautiful woman*” from *Sweets of Sin* (*U* 15.297-8). By juxtaposing this description with Molly’s subsequent taunting of his cuckoldry, Joyce strengthens the relationship between Bloom’s anguish and his masochism, as his insistence that he is “at your service” (*U* 15.296) despite Molly’s mocking intimation that she is pregnant by

Boylan (“So you notice some change?” [U 15.328]) shows his continued submission in the face of adultery. Thus, Bloom’s suppression of his individual desires to better serve his mistress highlights the selfless spousal love that undergirds his masochistic experiences throughout the rest of the chapter.

The masochistic foundations of this encounter are also indicated by Molly’s departure at the beginning of “Circe.” As Bloom attempts to secure her lotion from Sweny the chemist (reaffirming his commitment to running Molly’s errands from “Lotus Eaters”), Molly asks him “*Ti trema un poco il cuore?*”<sup>97</sup> and “saunters away” (U 15.351-2). This allusion to *Là ci darem la mano* is significant not only because it reiterates the adulterous foundations of this exchange (and the chapter as a whole), but also because it changes the grammatical person of the song’s lyric, altering Zerlina’s first-person isolation of her trembling heart into a second-person seductive inquiry. By singing this altered lyric to Bloom, Molly transforms a song that signifies her husband’s estrangement throughout *Ulysses* into an invitation for his own seduction. Even if this invitation is offered “in disdain” (U 15.352), it has also opened up the *Don Giovanni* motif to provide space for Bloom’s arousal, which turns the pleasure he gains from both the pain of betrayal and the abuse inflicted throughout the rest of the chapter into the erotic fulfillment needed for him to accept his cuckolded status.

This resulting abuse begins almost immediately after Molly’s departure, as Bloom is put on trial for acts of perversion committed against several women. Even though the hallucinatory nature of “Circe” prevents us from conclusively discerning what occurs in the chapter, Bloom’s mental interruptions are necessary to repair his marriage for two reasons. First, to place Bloom on trial foregrounds his indiscretions instead of Molly’s,

---

<sup>97</sup> Translated, “Does your heart tremble a little (beat a little faster)?” (Gifford and Seidman 457).

which enables him to avoid the alienating blame game that felled Duffy, Gabriel, and Stephen. By focusing the adulterous allegations entirely on his alleged ogling and solicitation, Bloom shows that he does not consider Molly's adultery to be the sole marital transgression, which enables him to resist the temptation to castigate her for her affair. This focus demonstrates Bloom's productive understanding of their impasse because it acknowledges reciprocal culpability and avoids the blanket rejection of Molly that typified Stephen's reactions towards his "duplicitous" love objects, thus providing the means for reconciliation.

Second, the masochistic allusions throughout the trial enable Bloom to derive pleasure from his guilty and lonely conscience. Bloom's hallucinatory self-punishment is significant not simply because it subordinates his victimhood to his alleged performances of the "dirty married man" (*U* 15.385), but also because the allegations combine adulterous and masochistic allusions in manners that demonstrate his enjoyment of the flagellation. For example, his alleged desire for Mrs. Yelverton Barry to "misconduct [herself] at half past four p.m. on the following Thursday" clearly foregrounds Molly's affair in Bloom's mind, but the fact that he signs this letter James Lovebitch—the author of *Fair Tyrants*—reveals how his masochistic arousal challenges his distress over that affair. Similarly, the adulterous allegations of Mrs. Bellingham (He urged me ... to defile the marriage bed, to commit adultery at the earliest possible opportunity" [*U* 15.1054-6]) point to Bloom's continued depression; however, the fact that he allegedly initiates these pleadings by calling her a "Venus in furs" hints at the pleasure that could be stimulated by contemplating this despair (*U* 15.1045). When we arrive at the testimony of the honorable Mrs. Mervyn Talboys, we see the direct relationship between

Molly's infidelity and Bloom's masochistic response, as the punishment he desires for mailing Mrs. Talboys a picture of "his wife, as he solemnly assured me" having "illicit intercourse with a muscular torero" (*U* 15.1067-9) is for her "to chastise him as he richly deserves, to bestride and ride him, to give him a most vicious horsewhipping" (*U* 15.1071-3). The trial thus demonstrates Bloom's masochism to be a continued response to his loneliness, which makes his ability to derive sexual arousal from his marital pain a way to move past his bitterness over Molly's adultery.

The trial's resolution moves Bloom to Bella Cohen's brothel, where he experiences another hallucinatory flagellation at the proprietor's hands. Similar to his previous experiences in "Circe," this encounter arises from Bloom's anxiety over Molly's affair, as Bella's fan's representation of his marriage as a "petticoat government" (*U* 15.2759-60) (not to mention the "*sheepish grin*" Bloom offers as assent [*U* 15.2762]) maintains his willing submission to his wife throughout the text. What makes the resulting sexual humiliation important from an amorous standpoint is Bello's mocking of Bloom's sexual dysfunction towards the end of the episode. Indeed, Bello's taunting inquiry "Where's your curly teapot gone to" demonstrates the marital anxiety at the foundation of this hallucination (*U* 15.3129-30), and his subsequent references to Boylan cement Bloom's cuckolded status:

I wouldn't hurt your feelings for the world but there's a man of brawn in possession there. The tables are turned, my gay young fellow! He is something like a fullgrown outdoor man. Well for you, you muff, if you had that weapon with knobs and lumps and warts all over it. He shot his bolt, I can tell you! Foot to foot, knee to knee, belly to belly, bubs to breast! He's no eunuch ... Wait for nine months, my lad! Holy ginger, it's kicking and coughing up and down in her guts already! That makes you wild, don't it? Touches the spot? (*U* 15.3127-44).

This passage confirms Bloom's masochism to be both an assertion of guilt for Molly's infidelity and the necessary response to that infidelity. The comparison of Boylan's potency to Bloom's "eunuch"-like status demonstrates the latter's continued assumption of responsibility for the affair, as he deems his lack of complete sexual intercourse with Molly a reason for her desire to sleep with Boylan. This confirms the affirmation of otherness inherent in Bloom's masochism, not only because he acknowledges reciprocal culpability in their marital breach, but also because he comprehends the erotic desires that led Molly to betray him. Bloom's acknowledgement that his failure to "sho[ot] his bolt" effectively may have played a role in her temptation to stray thus enables him to react to the affair in a more loving manner.

The productivity of this masochistic understanding is evident in Bloom's reaction to Bello's taunts. Similar to his earlier meditations, Bloom has no problem blaming Boylan for his role in Molly's infidelity, but he avoids the temptation to chide his wife in a similar manner. He acknowledges that "I was indecently treated" and desires someone to "inform the police" (*U* 15.3146); however, this statement is not made in response to Molly's role in the affair, but rather to Bello's repeated acknowledgements of Boylan's sexual prowess. In contrast to Bloom's castigation of Boylan, he absolves Molly of her role in the affair, insisting to "Moll" that "I forgot! Forgive!" His subsequent assertion of "Moll ... We ... Still ..." (*U* 15.3151) confirms that his assignment of blame for the liaison carries with it a desire to maintain their relationship, demonstrating that Bloom's repeated attempts to derive pleasure from adulterous pain have enabled him to continue loving his wife despite her betrayal. Thus, the most explicitly masochistic episode in *Ulysses* contains within it Bloom's ardent declaration of his commitment to Molly, and

the interplay of pleasure and pain that occurs within the brothel demonstrates the affirming potential of his acceptance of cuckoldry.

The climax of Bloom's acceptance occurs when Boylan arrives to handle "a little private business with your wife" (*U* 15.3764-5). Here, the productive nature of Bloom's hallucination is evident not by the staged reenactment of Molly's and Boylan's liaison, but by Bloom's acquiescence to it. Not only does Bloom not try to stop Boylan from sleeping with her, he actively encourages it, playing the role of Molly's servant who greets her lover and watches the tryst from the keyhole. By making Bloom a more active agent in Molly's and Bloom's affair, this restaging dissolves the alienation of the initial encounter, transforming Bloom into the means by which Molly's sexual desires are fulfilled. In that sense, Bloom attains an amorous freedom similar to what Richard desired in *Exiles* by enabling his active participation in "Circe" to mitigate the secrecy and treachery that comprised the actual encounter. The masochistic nature of this restaging is confirmed by Bloom's excitement over watching Boylan and Molly have sex through the keyhole. His oral ejaculations of "Show! Hide! Show! Plough her! More! Shoot!" while "clasp[ing] himself" (*U* 15.3815-6) echo his literal ejaculation over envisioning Boylan and Molly having sex during "Nausicaa," which demonstrates that the end result of his hallucinatory humiliation throughout "Circe" is the masochistic orgasm needed to rectify his marriage. If Richard's desired "uni[on] ... in body and soul in utter nakedness" is possible, then the Blooms' reconciliation stands the best chance of constituting it, as the "dirty married man[']s" acceptance of cuckoldry enables both participants to experience an amorous freedom that will lead them back to each other.

## II. Less Envy than Equanimity

So far, we have focused on Bloom's attempts to come to an acceptance of Molly's adultery. Throughout the second section of *Ulysses*, we have seen the struggle that Joyce's protagonist undergoes on Bloomsday, as his recollections of past happiness and his masochistic embrace of cuckoldry become complementary strategies designed to ensure that the affair does not cause a more sizeable rupture to their relationship. While the open-ended nature of the text's conclusion prevents a conclusive evaluation of the fate of the Blooms' marriage, we can see glimpses throughout "Eumaeus" and "Ithaca" that support an optimistic speculation, as the melancholy that dominated Bloom's mindset throughout his wanderings has given way to a reaffirmed affection for Molly. The "Nostos" episodes of *Ulysses* thus enable us to see Bloom's homecoming as a form of amorous metempsychosis, supplementing the adulterous seduction of *Là ci darem la mano* with the hopeful coda of *Love's Old Sweet Song*.

### A. Sylvan Spots for Rejuvenation

Bloom's amorous metempsychosis is initially set up in "Eumaeus," where his interactions with Stephen promote his fondness for Molly over the loneliness he has experienced throughout the text. At first, it seems as though Bloom has not succeeded in banishing his melancholy contemplations of the affair, as the abstracted air that he puts on in response to Corley's desire for Boylan to get him a job recalls his earlier attempts to distract himself whenever he encounters the "jaunty jingle" of his rival. His vague declaration that "everybody gets their own ration of luck" and his subsequent desire to "leave that [topic] for the moment" make it seem as though the pain that encompassed Bloom's earlier wandering has not subsided, casting doubt on the success of his imminent

homecoming (*U* 16.240-1). However, once they enter the cabman's shelter, the melancholy that was stirred by thinking of Boylan quickly subsides, and Bloom's thoughts about Molly during the rest of the episode articulate the warmth and compassion that epitomized his recollections of their courtship. Indeed, the strategies of memory and masochism interweave throughout "Eumaeus," demonstrating the success of Bloom's attempts to accept Molly's adultery and foreshadowing the triumph of his homecoming.

Bloom's reconciled attitude towards Molly is evident in his reactions to D.B. Murphy's stories. When the sailor mentions his seven years at sea and his impending return to his wife, Bloom ponders numerous literary representations of the homecoming theme, noting that "quite a number of stories there were on that particular Alice Ben Bolt topic, Enoch Arden and Rip van Winkle" (*U* 16.424-6). While his reaction to Murphy's return is replete with the cynical tone that comprises Bloom's overall opinion of the sailor, it also shapes his own homecoming because we cannot hear Bloom mention Rip van Winkle without recalling that he pantomimed Irving's character during the charades game in Dolphin's Barn. ("Rip van Winkle we played" [*U* 13.1112].) Thus, the passion of Bloom's courtship interrupts his present-day meditations, and Bloom's literary reaction to Murphy's return to Carrigaloe paints his impending arrival at Eccles Street in a more optimistic manner, providing hope that in returning home Bloom will "come to stay and make a fresh start" (*U* 16.432-3).

Bloom's subsequent thoughts about Murphy also shed a positive light on his marital future. As he considers what traveling options might be available to him, Bloom thinks of the "by no means bad notion" of "trying to make arrangements about a concert tour of summer music embracing the most prominent pleasure resorts" (*U* 16.516-9). Since to



undertake such a venture would necessitate the company of Madam Marion Tweedy, Bloom's idea of a future concert tour projects a future where he and Molly are still together, and his lack of hesitation or awkwardness in articulating this idea shows how natural such a future seems to him. Additionally, Bloom's idea to promote this tour under "the Tweedy-Flower grand opera company with his own legal consort as leading lady" articulates an explicit partnership between him and Molly that anticipates the maintenance of their marriage (*U* 16.525-6). His labeling this venture the "Tweedy-Flower grand opera company" also confirms his use of Martha Clifford as an epistolary return to Marion Tweedy, not only because it unites Bloom's wife with his adulterous pseudonym, but also because its reference to Molly as "Tweedy" evokes the memorial power of his letters. While it is natural that Molly's maiden name would be used for an operatic venture (since that is her stage name), by juxtaposing the Tweedy surname with the name he uses to write to Dolphin's Barn, Bloom again reaffirms his past courtship through his present and future contemplations. Marion Tweedy thus conquers Martha Clifford, and the fact that Bloom "was quite sanguine of [the] success" of this "perfectly simple matter" confirms his confidence in the future of his marriage (*U* 16.527-8), enabling the passion of Dolphin's Barn to revitalize their relationship.

The ability of Bloom's memories to replenish his present-day romance is supported further by his subsequent thoughts about Irish tourism. Recognizing the ability of travel to counter a humdrum existence, Bloom notes that Ireland contains several "sylvan spots for rejuvenation" that provide the "bracing tonic for the system" that all Dubliners require (*U* 16.548-50). Significantly, Bloom isolates Howth as one of these "rejuvenat[ing]" destinations and lists the "rhododendrons several hundred feet above sealevel" as one of

its “historic associations and otherwise” (*U* 16.557-9), which recalls the replenishment provided by his remembered proposal in “Lestrygonians.” By labeling the rhododendrons a “historic association” and by noting the attractiveness of Howth “in spring when young men’s fancy” (*U* 16.560-1), Bloom unites memory and romantic passion in a characterization of Howth that reawakens the “rejuvenat[ing]” potential of the past. His contemplations of travel thus anticipate the success of his homecoming, and the emergence of his proposal within “Eumaeus” rekindles the love inherent in that memory and serves as the necessary counterpart to Molly’s concluding “yes.”

The optimistic foreshadowing of Bloom’s homecoming is also evidenced by his continued masochistic thoughts of Molly. As Bloom listens to the Parnell discussion that occurs in the shelter, he tells Stephen of the potential Spanish origins of Katherine O’Shea and shows him a provocative photograph of Molly, a perplexing action that takes on amorous significance through frequent allusions to *Sweets of Sin*. That Bloom keeps both photo and book in the same pocket initiates the juxtaposition of the two objects, and his subsequent equation of Molly’s appearance with the text’s adulterous wife solidifies this connection: “He sat tight just viewing the slightly soiled photo creased by opulent curves, none the worse for wear however, and looked away thoughtfully with the intention of not further increasing the other’s possible embarrassment while gauging her symmetry of heaving *embonpoint*” (*U* 16.1464-8). These allusions confirm Bloom’s ability to experience pleasure from the pain of his cuckolding, as the adulterous references in the Parnell discussion compel him to think about an alternative representation of infidelity that has been proven to arouse him. We know from “Wandering Rocks” that Bloom equates the book’s plot with Molly’s affair, but by

describing the photograph through the language of *Sweets of Sin*, he rekindles his earlier arousal over “*the beautiful woman*” through a visual representation of Molly’s “opulent curves” and “heaving *embonpoint*.” Thus, the transference of Bloom’s masochistic arousal from the book to the photograph replaces the pain of cuckoldry with the *Sweets of Sin* and hints at a reconciliation with his wife.

The success of “Eumaeus” in preparing Bloom for his return to Molly is confirmed by his discussion with Stephen after departing the shelter. As they walk towards Eccles Street, Bloom strikes up a conversation with Stephen about music. In so doing, he rekindles his musical method of coping with his amorous dilemma, as the songs that he offers as praiseworthy pieces foreground his enduring affection for Molly and cast his homecoming in an optimistic light. Initially he mentions “the music of Mercadante’s *Huguenots*, Meyerbeer’s *Seven Last Words on the Cross* and Mozart’s *Twelfth Mass*” (U 16.1738-9), liturgical pieces which we know from “Calypso” that he attributes to Molly’s virtuoso performance “in the Jesuit fathers’ church in upper Gardiner street” (U 16.1747-8). Then, Bloom speaks of his “admiration of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*, a work simply abounding in immortal numbers, in which his wife, Madam Marion Tweedy, made a hit, a veritable sensation, he might safely say, greatly adding to her other laurels and putting the others totally in the shade” (U 16.1744-7). These references demonstrate Bloom’s enduring admiration of and affection for Molly, continuing the promotion of love over loneliness that has occurred throughout the chapter. Especially when we remember his idea for a future concert tour, Bloom’s regard for “Madam Marion Tweedy” provides a past, present, and future context to his love for her, enabling an enduring affirmation that anticipates a happy resolution to his homecoming.

While Bloom's liturgical reflections demonstrate his continued affection for Molly, the possibility for reconciliation is validated when the conversation turns to opera. As he discusses his preference for "light opera" and notes his "*penchant ... for the severe classical school such as Mendelssohn*" (U 16.1752-5), he mentions *Don Giovanni* and *Martha* as examples of praiseworthy operas, works whose themes of seduction and lost love have colored his thoughts about Molly's adultery throughout the text. However, as he continues to proclaim the virtues of the "light opera," Bloom "mention[s] *par excellence* Lionel's air in *Martha*, *M'appari*, which, curiously enough, he had heard or overheard, to be more accurate, on yesterday" (U 16.1756-8). Even though he also mentions *Don Giovanni* in this discussion, it is telling that the only specific aria that is cited as an example of admirable opera is *M'appari*, whose conclusion casts a hopeful light on Bloom's return home. He may intend for this discussion to gauge Stephen's feelings for his father, but Bloom's praise of "Lionel's air in *Martha*" represents his arrival home as his own performance of *M'appari*, transforming Bloom into "Lionelleopold" whose return to "Ithaca" provides the opportunity for his own *Martha* to "come to [him]."

#### B. Adorer of the Adulterous Rump

If "Eumaeus" demonstrates Bloom's anticipation of a successful reconciliation with Molly, then "Ithaca" validates his optimism. Indeed, upon returning to 7 Eccles Street, Bloom's thoughts convey little of the loneliness and misery that comprised his earlier struggles in the text, replacing these sentiments with a tranquility and compassion that anticipates his acceptance of Molly at the chapter's conclusion. This emotional change is exemplified by Bloom's perception of Molly's shadow as he urinates with Stephen. As

he admires her appearance, the narration notes that Bloom “elucidate[s] the mystery” of this “invisible attractive person” “with indirect and direct verbal allusions or affirmations” and “with subdued affection and admiration” (*U* 17.1177; 1179-80). This description confirms that Bloom’s earlier depression has given way to “affirmations” of Molly’s loveliness that convey his “subdued affection and admiration.” Even if Bloom also views her “with impediment” (*U* 17.1180), there is nothing to indicate that this sentiment implies a significant melancholy that would counteract the “affection” that comprises his overall reaction. Considering that this constitutes Bloom’s first encounter with Molly after her affair with Boylan, his bestowal of “affirmations” upon her “attractive” appearance conveys the prominence of love in his emotions in “Ithaca,” demonstrating the empathetic mindset needed to move past the events of Bloomsday.

Bloom’s reaffirmation of Molly is developed further when he has to deal with the visible signs of his her affair. Fortunately, this reaffirmation is demonstrated before Bloom even returns inside, as his contemplation of “the disparition of three final stars” and “the diffusion of daybreak” calls his attention back to the charades party at Doyle’s, where “he had awaited with patience the apparition of the diurnal phenomenon” (*U* 17.1257; 1261-2). This reawakening of amorous memory anticipates the text’s concluding reconciliation by portraying his solitary homecoming as a reiteration of his past with Molly. Thus, Bloom’s return home is not simply an arrival at the scene of his cuckoldry, but is rather the renewal of the passionate connection initiated seventeen years beforehand. By presenting Bloom’s return inside the house through the language of Dolphin’s Barn, Joyce presents the second half of “Ithaca” as a scene of amorous

metempsychosis, which equips Bloom to look past the evidence of Molly's betrayal and move towards a renewal of their loving bond.

This amorous metempsychosis gains further credence as Bloom contemplates the objects in his house. As he notes the rearrangement of the furniture, Bloom's eye catches sight of "a dwarf tree of glacial arborescence under a transparent bellshade, [a] matrimonial gift of Luke and Caroline Doyle" (*U* 17.1336-8). By shifting from the contemplation of daybreak to the Doyles' wedding gift, Joyce represents Bloom's homecoming as a present restaging of the Blooms' progression from courtship to marriage. That the Doyles' gift is a tree amplifies this amorous depiction of their reincarnation when we recall Bloom's observation about metempsychosis in "Nausicaa." ("They believed you could be changed into a tree from grief.") Indeed, Bloom's journey from "Lotus Eaters" to "Ithaca" chronicles his progression from grief to a tree, and Joyce's introduction of this wedding gift during Bloom's homecoming solidifies the connection between the past and present components of their relationship, transforming his return to Molly into the endpoint of their amorous metempsychosis.

The viability of "Ithaca" serving as the conclusion for this marital rebirth gains further credence from Bloom's contemplation of the condition of their piano. Here, the cluttered state of the piano signifies the final evidence of Molly and Boylan's affair, as the "a pair of long yellow ladies' gloves" and the "partly consumed cigarette and two discoloured ends of cigarettes" complement the rearranged furniture and the discarded lottery tickets as markers of his usurpation (*U* 17.1304-6). However, the most significant aspect of the altered piano is that the "musicrest support[s] the music in the key of G natural for voice and piano of *Love's Old Sweet Song* ... open at the last page" (*U*

17.1306-7; 1309). This observation confirms the redemptive quality of the musical theme throughout *Ulysses*; not only does the absence of *Là ci darem la mano* magnify the importance of *Love's Old Sweet Song* still being on the music rest, but the fact that the sheet music is "open at the last page" foregrounds the redemptive conclusion of that piece. ("So till the end, when life's dim shadows fall, / Love will be found the sweetest song of all" [Gifford and Seidman 77].) By having Bloom return home to the affirming finale of this song, Joyce establishes that his wanderings throughout the text will enjoy a redemptive ending, ensuring the conclusive promotion of *Love's Old Sweet Song* over the seductive allure of *Là ci darem la mano* and foreshadowing the inevitability of Bloom's reconciliation with Molly.

This inevitable reconciliation is all but confirmed towards the conclusion of "Ithaca," where Bloom's consideration of the implications of Molly's affair demonstrates his desire to maintain their loving bond. As Bloom lies down in bed for the night, he ponders his conflicted emotions regarding his marriage to Molly in the wake of her adultery. Even though he entertains thoughts of leaving and concedes that feelings of "envy" and "jealousy" cross his mind, he does not let this agitation cloud his affection for his wife, allowing "abnegation" and "equanimity" to hold sway (*U* 17.2195). His acknowledgement that "the matrimonial violator of the matrimonially violated had not been outraged by the adulterous violator of the adulterously violated" signifies both Bloom's belief in shared culpability for the affair and his refusal to let whatever loneliness that was created by that affair cloud his love for Molly (*U* 2197-9). The concluding satisfaction that he gains by "kiss[ing] the plump mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump" (*U* 17.2241) thus confirms Bloom's success in accepting his

cuckolded status and relishing the perverse pleasure needed to dissolve his marital pain, enabling him to reaffirm his love for Molly through his “ador[ation] of [her] adulterous rump” (*U* 15.2839).

\*\*\*\*

In “Oxen of the Sun,” Bloom is described as being “stained by the mire of an indelible dishonour, but from whose steadfast and constant heart no lure or peril or threat or degradation could ever efface the image of that voluptuous loveliness which the inspired pencil of Lafayette has limned for ages yet to come” (*U* 14.1218-22). This description perfectly encapsulates Bloom’s mindset throughout *Ulysses*, as he never lets his despair over Molly’s affair overshadow his unwavering devotion, and he anticipates a loving reconciliation that will secure their marriage “for ages yet to come.” He may indulge erotic curiosities about other women, but these fantasies never lead Bloom to renounce his love for his wife and at no point does he seriously consider ending their relationship. Instead, he allows the warmth of the past to heal his present-day wounds and embraces the pain that comes from his refusal to encroach on his wife’s desires, all the while never giving up hope that his “Martha” will eventually “come to [him].” This continued insistence on affirming his loved one despite his personal pain differentiates Bloom’s actions from those of his predecessors, enabling the empathy and compassion that he demonstrates in *Ulysses* to become an alternative to the bitter narcissism of his counterparts. Joyce’s earlier protagonists may seek love more aggressively than Bloom, but it is ultimately the cuckold who successfully returns to his beloved, demonstrating that it is not the love that’s pursued but the love that’s affirmed that provides the most viable path to happiness.



Bloom also stands out from his counterparts in that he does not use love as a springboard for greater personal success. He may envy the “prize titbit” of Mr Philip Beaufoy (*U* 4.502-3) and consider a plethora of bizarre ideas for social reform, but at no point does Bloom desire anything approaching the revolutionary aspirations of Duffy, the aesthetic pursuits of Stephen or the amatory freedom of Richard. Instead, he is content to make his daily odyssey through Dublin, entertaining a reformist thought here and there, but never letting the desire for greatness overshadow his obligations to Molly. It is thus ironic that Bloom’s empathetic attitude towards his fellow Dubliners provides the most effective example of socio-political interaction in the Joycean oeuvre, while the broader attempts by the other protagonists towards political and aesthetic revolution suffer the same failures as their amatory pursuits. As we shall see, Bloom’s “steadfast and constant heart” enables him to affirm not only his wife, but the other people he encounters throughout *Ulysses*, transforming his empathetic embrace of otherness into a powerful loving alternative to the socio-political paralysis of Joyce’s Dublin.

## CHAPTER NINE: THE OPPOSITE OF HATRED

We have seen how Bloom's loving thoughts about Molly enable him to move past the pain of his cuckoldry and towards an amorous metempsychosis. However, while this acceptance can be seen primarily as Bloom's "wish" for his wife's "otherness" and "entire being to exist," his empathy and compassion throughout *Ulysses* transcend the boundaries of their marriage, as his reflections on his fellow Dubliners demonstrate a similar acceptance of their perspectives and concern for their well-being. While it may be difficult to prove a causal link between Bloom's affection for Molly and his compassion for others, it is significant that the only protagonist in Joyce's works who affirms Buber's "basic principle of marriage" is also the only character capable of productive, dialogic interaction within his socio-political community (*Man* 61). For this reason, Bloom's ability to "see another's face and listen to another's words" (*U* 17.637) in both his personal and social interactions makes him the most capable of Joyce's characters of affirming the "many-faced otherness" of his loved ones (Buber *Man* 61), which would facilitate the "overcoming of *otherness* in living unity" needed to realize Buber's vision of a dialogic community, if only his colleagues would reciprocate his affirmation (Buber *Pointing* 102). Bloom thus becomes the most authentic political actor in the Joycean oeuvre, not through his social and political ideas, but rather through his "assumption of a bond between himself and other created beings" (*JJ* 362),<sup>98</sup> revealing the practical viability of the Joycean love ethic.

---

<sup>98</sup> Bowen similarly contends that Bloom is "a rational, sensitive, compassionate, humane man. There is so much good about Bloom that an identification with him assures us that we ourselves are better" (*Comic* 7).

## I. I Am Doing Good To Others

In “Wandering Rocks,” John Wyse Nolan expresses shock that Bloom has donated five shillings to the late Patrick Dignam’s family, conceding that “there is much kindness in the jew” (*U* 10.980). While the racial implications of this allusion may necessitate our viewing his response with a skeptical eye, Nolan’s observation is accurate since a central defining characteristic of Bloom is his unswerving compassion and generosity. From feeding a flock of gulls to helping a blind stripling cross the street, he frequently goes out of his way to aid his fellow Dubliners, as his inherent tendency to empathize with others’ situations compels him to assist them to the best of his abilities. The warmth that Bloom shows for Molly thus can also be seen in his affection for the citizens within his nation, and his actions throughout *Ulysses* demonstrate the ability of the Joycean lover to affirm the “responsibility of an I for a You” (Buber *Thou* 66).

### A. Poor Dignam!

Bloom’s social compassion is articulated initially in his thoughts about Paddy Dignam, whose death is introduced in “Calypso” and who maintains an enduring presence throughout the text. Like Stephen, Bloom spends June 16, 1904, in mourning, as his thoughts and actions throughout *Ulysses* are significantly affected by his obligation to pay his respects to his late friend. However, unlike Stephen, who views his mother’s death as a psychic imposition on his amatory freedom, Bloom rarely considers the impact that Dignam’s death has on himself, choosing instead to contemplate how it affects the deceased, his family, and the human race as a whole. This focus makes Bloom a unique figure in Joyce’s Dublin since, despite the numerous performances of mourning that occur in the text, few of the other characters seem terribly affected by Dignam’s passing.

Besides Martin Cunningham, nobody seems to react to this death beyond the socially required funeral and pub attendance, which makes Bloom's compassion towards the Dignam family a rare instance of empathy and kindness in these episodes of *Ulysses*.

Joyce first mentions Bloom's compassion for Dignam at almost the same time that he introduces the character himself. Bloom first mentions the funeral on his way to Dlugacz's butcher shop, and the depth of his consideration becomes evident as he attempts to formulate a definition of metempsychosis that his wife will comprehend and considers the possibility that Dignam may have experienced this phenomenon: "That we live after death. Our soul. That a man's soul after he dies, Dignam's soul ...." (*U* 4.352-3). By pondering whether Dignam has undergone metempsychosis, Bloom shows that he is concerned with Dignam's death beyond what is socially obligated, which also highlights the difference between his and Stephen's approaches to loss. While Bloom's connection between Dignam's death and metempsychosis may seem to signify merely the depths of his meditations, the wording of this mental connection echoes Stephen in "Telemachus," as one cannot help reading Bloom's "Our soul ... Dignam's soul" without simultaneously recalling Stephen's "Cranly's arm. His arm" (*U* 1.159). These two expressions demonstrate Bloom's and Stephen's disparate reactions towards relating to others, contrasting the interconnectivity of Bloom's consideration of metempsychosis with the alienation of Stephen's remembrance of Cranly's "desertion." Bloom's contemplation over Dignam's fate thus demonstrates his ability to feel compassion for a fallen friend, whereas Stephen's lament over his refusal of Cranly's friendship in *Portrait* reveals him to be preoccupied constantly with "the offence to me" (*U* 1.220).

This contrast is also apparent at the conclusions of “Calypso” and “Telemachus,” as both characters’ perceptions of the bells of St. George’s Church provoke disparate reactions that elevate Bloom’s empathy over Stephen’s narcissism. Even though they hear the same bells that chime the same time, Bloom’s thoughts about the funeral compel him to express grief over “poor Dignam!” (*U* 4.551), while Stephen’s hearing the “Ordo Commendationis Animae” in the chimes keeps him grounded in his self-absorbed alienation, leading him to rebuke Mulligan’s role as his “usurper” (*U* 1.744). Considering that these are the last expressions uttered before both characters begin to wander around Dublin, Bloom’s and Stephen’s reactions to the bells prefigure their methods of interacting within their social spheres, as the empathy that comprises Bloom’s reflections throughout Bloomsday contrasts with Stephen’s narcissistic brooding. Thus, Bloom’s consideration of Dignam’s death in “Calypso” provides the first evidence of his ability to feel compassion for others he encounters, transforming his love for Molly into the broader embrace of his fellow Dubliners.

The depth of Bloom’s empathy for Dignam is developed in “Lotus Eaters” and “Hades,” where his thoughtful reflections on his late friend contrast with the banal conversations of his fellow mourners. While numerous characters in *Ulysses* express their condolences over Dignam, the majority of these characters do not seem to be terribly affected by his death. Initially, Bloom’s conversation with C.P. M’Coy in “Lotus Eaters” shows him to be unique in his concern for Dignam’s fate. Although M’Coy expresses remorse over the tragedy and relates an earlier conversation with Hoppy Holohan concerning it, his references to Dignam do not progress beyond the socially courteous “one of the best” (*U* 5.141). M’Coy also does not attend the funeral, but

instead asks Bloom to include his name among the mourners in Joe Hynes's newspaper write-up. ("You might put down my name at the funeral, will you?" [*U* 5.169-70].) In contrast to Bloom's earlier considerations of Dignam's soul, M'Coy's attitude does not progress beyond the superficial social level, which shows that the compassion that Bloom demonstrates for his fellow citizens is in short supply in Joyce's Dublin.

This lack of compassion is also evident in "Hades," as Bloom's empathy towards the Dignam family contrasts with the irrelevant conversations of his fellow mourners. Indeed, Bloom's counterparts in the funeral procession do not seem to be terribly interested in talking about Paddy Dignam, instead contemplating Mulligan's improper influence over Stephen, castigating Reuben J. Dodd, and praising Ben Dollard's singing of "The Croppy Boy." At one point, Jack Power does mention Dignam's death, but the conversation that ensues quickly sidetracks into a discussion over the concurrent funeral of a child and the cowardice of "the man who takes his own life" (*U* 6.335). Even though the carriage is going to Dignam's funeral, the majority of its inhabitants view the proceedings merely from a social standpoint, revealing the general disinterest in an earnest consideration of their late friend.

By contrast, Bloom spends the majority of "Hades" meditating on Dignam's death. He occasionally contributes to the conversations that occur in the carriage, but the main focus of Bloom's thoughts throughout the chapter remains "poor Dignam." He skims the obituary notices while his counterparts discuss Dan Dawson's speech, and he ponders Dignam's postmortem appearance ("Red face: grey now. Mouth fallen open" [*U* 6.423]) during their conversation about a coffin falling out of its hearse. Then, after his conversation with Ned Lambert concerning the problems with Dignam's insurance,

Bloom's attention turns to Dignam's widow and son. He empathizes with Mrs. Dignam's loss and recognizes that her sorrow is much greater than his own ("Lost her husband. More dead for her than for me" [U 6.545]), and he laments the thought of young Patrick Dignam being left fatherless. ("Poor boy! Was he there when the father? Both unconscious. Lighten up at the last moment and recognise for the last time. All he might have done" [U 6.576-8].) By contrasting Bloom's thoughts with those of his counterparts, Joyce highlights the artificiality behind the mourners' social grief and develops his characterization of Bloom's empathy.

The magnitude of Bloom's compassion for the Dignam family is confirmed by his subsequent attempts to provide financial assistance to Dignam's widow and children. Not only does Bloom contribute five shillings to Cunningham's pool of donations, but he also agrees to help the Dignams collect on Paddy's insurance policy by soliciting funds from the Scottish Widows' Fund Life Assurance Agency on behalf of the Dignam family. ("Anyhow she wants the money. Must call to those Scottish Widows as I promised" [U 13.1226-7].)<sup>99</sup> Again, Joyce contrasts Bloom's empathy with the artificiality of his counterparts, as the tenets of social respectability that compelled them to attend the funeral become the instruments used to persecute Bloom in "Cyclops" for being too busy securing the Dignams' insurance payments to stand them a drink. That they rely on Jewish stereotypes to deny Bloom's charitable acts ("The courthouse is a blind. He had a few bob on *Throwaway* and he's gone to gather in the shekels" [U 12.1550-1]) shows the racial implications of this artificiality, revealing the hatred that undergirds the characters' strict adherence to social performance. By making Bloom's financial assistance to the Dignams the source of his persecution, Joyce thus shows that the empathy his protagonist

---

<sup>99</sup> For an explanation of this agency, see Gifford and Seidman 403.

displays throughout *Ulysses* is largely absent in Dublin, positioning Bloom's compassion and charity as an alternative to the social alienation that embodies his body politic.

### B. Life With Hard Labour

Bloom's compassion is also evident in his reflections on the pregnant Mina Purefoy. In much the same way that he thinks about Dignam's death, Bloom sympathizes with the pains that Mrs. Purefoy has had to endure during her three days in labor. In fact, Bloom's thoughts frequently unite Dignam and Mrs. Purefoy ("Dignam carted off. Mina Purefoy swollen belly on a bed groaning to have a child tugged out of her" [*U* 8.479-80]), and these meditations on death and life compel him to empathize not only with the individuals in question, but with humanity as a whole. ("One born every second somewhere. Other dying every second" [*U* 8.480-1].) Bloom's commiseration with Mrs. Purefoy thus demonstrates how the compassion he feels for an individual transcends that local sphere to encompass a more global empathy, which bolsters his ability to affirm the "many-faced otherness" of Dublin.

Bloom's empathetic reaction towards Mrs. Purefoy is apparent when he hears about her labor from Josie Breen in "Lestrygonians." As Mrs. Breen explains Mina Purefoy's hardship, Bloom offers the typical words of condolence that encapsulated the general reaction towards Dignam in the previous chapters. ("I'm sorry to hear that" [*U* 8.283]; "Poor thing! Three days! That's terrible for her" [*U* 8.289-90].) However, what separates this reaction from the generic social performance of sorrow is the narration's juxtaposition of Bloom's words with his visible reactions. By describing his "heavy pitying gaze" and his "tongue clack[ing] in compassion" (*U* 8.287-8), Joyce shows that Bloom's attitude towards Mrs. Breen's news is more than the general condolences that



dominated earlier chapters; in fact, by noting these facial expressions, Joyce reshapes Bloom's visage into the living embodiment of sympathy, which anticipates the compassion in his subsequent thoughts about Mrs. Purefoy.

The extent to which Mrs. Breen's news has affected Bloom is evident in his subsequent considerations on Mina Purefoy's condition in "Lestrygonians." As he continues his walk to lunch, he imagines the pain experienced by "Poor Mrs Purefoy" (*U* 8.358) and shivers at the thought of having to undergo the same torment: "Three days imagine groaning on a bed with a vinegared handkerchief round her forehead, her belly swollen out. Phew! Dreadful simply! Child's head too big: forceps. Doubled up inside her trying to butt its way out blindly, groping for the way out. Kill me that would" (*U* 8.373-7). This observation reveals the sincerity of Bloom's compassionate words to Mrs. Breen, as his consideration of what labor must feel like forces him to consider that suffering from the sufferer's perspective. His subsequent relief that "Molly got over hers lightly" (*U* 8.377) not only demonstrates his continued concern for his wife's well-being; it also concedes that the Blooms experienced a more fortunate pregnancy than Mrs. Purefoy's current torment, which demonstrates that his sorrowful feelings are more grounded in the concern for another instead of his own torment. Bloom's projected experience of childbirth thus illustrates his willingness to understand others' sufferings.

Bloom's compassion towards Mrs. Purefoy is confirmed by his speculations on how to alleviate labor pangs. As he contemplates the misery of enduring three days "groaning in a bed," he decries the lack of initiative in developing ways to mitigate the suffering of pregnant women:

They ought to invent something to stop that. Life with hard labour.  
Twilight sleep idea: queen Victoria was given that. Nine she had. A good

layer. Old woman that lived in a shoe she had so many children. Suppose he was consumptive. Time someone thought about it instead of gassing about the what was it the pensive bosom of the silver effulgence. Flapdoodle to feed fools on. They could easily have big establishments whole thing quite painless. (*U* 8.377-83)

Similar to his desire to help the Dignams with their financial situation, Bloom's thoughts about Mrs. Purefoy progress from a contemplation of her "life with hard labour" to a desire to ease her suffering. Bloom may be incapable of "invent[ing] something to stop that," but his compassionate understanding with her pain establishes a sympathetic model of social interaction that enhances the desire to alleviate the sufferings of others. Especially when he contrasts such a desire to the "flapdoodle" of Dan Dawson's speech (which again ties Dignam's death and Mrs. Purefoy's pain), Bloom's empathy elevates him above the hollowness of his counterparts whose banal expressions of socially acceptable pity never progress beyond a verbal performance.

This elevation of Bloom's concern over his counterparts' apathy is best articulated in "Sirens," as his sorrowful thoughts about Mrs. Purefoy contrast with the empty pity expressed by the other bar patrons. As "Lid, De, Cow, Ker, Doll" (*U* 11.1271) embrace the mournful aspects of "The Croppy Boy," Bloom considers the pleasure gained by this performance and contrasts it with the compassion he feels for Mrs. Purefoy: "Thrill now. Pity they feel. To wipe away a tear for martyrs that want to, dying to, die. For all things dying, for all things born. Poor Mrs Purefoy. Hope she's over. Because their wombs" (*U* 11.1101-3). By juxtaposing the "pity they feel" with a perceived "thrill," Bloom reveals the purely performative nature of their reactions to "The Croppy Boy," as their melodramatic connection to the song underlines a self-contained enjoyment in this musical restaging of the 1798 rebellion. By juxtaposing this performance of pity with his

actual pity for Mrs. Purefoy, Bloom shows how the social exercise of sorrow is merely a banal act of narcissistic navel gazing that ignores existing pain and suffering. Similar to the carriage ride in “Hades,” Bloom is the only character in the scene who can display genuine compassion instead of performed condolence, and the authenticity of his empathetic identification with Mrs. Purefoy bolsters Joyce’s loving depiction of Bloom.

Bloom’s compassion towards Mina Purefoy culminates in his visit to the Holles Street hospital in “Oxen of the Sun,” where his interactions with the drunken medical students provide another comparison between his ethical attitudes and those of his counterparts. Similar to “Hades” and “Sirens,” Bloom finds himself amidst Dubliners who are more interested in social amusement than the suffering woman upstairs, and his consternation confirms the extent to which his compassion counters this tendency: “To those who create themselves wits at the cost of feminine delicacy (a habit of mind which he never did hold with) to them he would concede neither to bear the name nor to herit the tradition of a proper breeding” (*U* 14.865-8). Again, Bloom is “the only male in the novel to empathize with ‘pure Mrs Purefoy’ in the throes of a painful *accouchement*” (Henke *Joyce* 109), as the students’ drunken carousing confirms that the obsession with social amusement blinds people to the suffering in front of them.<sup>100</sup> However, whereas Bloom tolerated previous banalities, here “the voice of Mr Canvasser Bloom was heard endeavouring to urge, to mollify, to refrain” (*U* 14.952-3). Not only does Bloom’s empathy contrast with the students’ drunken carousing, but he actively attempts to improve the behavior of the students, which demonstrates his desire to act for the benefit of his body politic. As “Bloom stays with nurse a thought to send a kind word to happy

---

<sup>100</sup> Bowen similarly argues that “the whole scene is ... colored by the idiosyncratic points of view of scores of narrators and a general insensitivity to what is taking place upstairs. Only Bloom, the new womanly man, demonstrates any concern with Mrs. Purefoy or appreciation of obstetrical realities” (*Comic* 111).

mother and nursing up there” (*U* 14.1401-2) at the end of “Oxen,” we witness the culmination of Bloom’s compassion for Mina Purefoy throughout *Ulysses*, which shows how his understanding of otherness can productively influence the Dublin body politic.

### C. A Kind of Language Between Us

Bloom’s compassion manifests itself differently through his encounter with Gerty in “Nausicaa.” To many, his actions in this episode do not rise above a narcissistic level, as his masturbation on Sandymount Strand reduces Gerty to a sexual object that he uses solely for his own gratification. Indeed, Patrick McGee likens Bloom’s fulfillment of this gratification to a “grave and loveless” game of “catch with her gaze,” which uses Gerty’s desire for him simply as a means to repair his wounded self image. Read this way, Bloom’s actions in “Nausicaa” liken him to Stephen’s objectification of the bird girl in *Portrait* in that he “creates a myth for himself in the fetishistic gleam of her shadowy undergarments” (McGee 89).<sup>101</sup> However, when we consider Bloom’s thoughts about Gerty throughout the second half of the chapter, we see that the compassion that has been present in his considerations of others is still at work, which enables his meditations on Sandymount Strand to transcend that narcissistic realm. “Nausicaa” thus provides us with two lonely Dubliners forging a momentary loving connection, demonstrating the ability of body politic’s outcasts to affirm the otherness of each other.

So much attention has been paid to the sentimentality of Gerty’s “namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy” thoughts that it would be redundant to revisit it (*LI* 135).<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> Philip Sicker similarly reads Bloom’s masturbation as imposing a sexual barrier between himself and Gerty, noting that “Bloom can sustain his erotic interest in Gerty only through a controlling distance. In this case . . . it is a visual distance, for the subject’s strategic separation from the spectacle underlies the entire mechanism of voyeuristic/cinematic desire itself” (“Nausicaa” 832).

<sup>102</sup> For example, Mahaffey argues that Gerty “is so thoroughly indoctrinated with the image of the culturally desirable young woman that she cannot own or realize her own desires, revealing them by indirection, cloaking them with narrative fantasies, burying them in the sand on which she sits” (“Ulysses”

However, the initial evidence of Bloom's empathy towards her is found at the end of her section. As she composes herself after her display, she gives Bloom "a pathetic little glance of piteous protest" (*U* 13.742-3), and his responding gaze demonstrates the emotional foundations of his lust:

Leopold Bloom (for it is he) stands silent, with bowed head before those young guileless eyes. What a brute he had been! At it again? A fair unsullied soul had called to him and, wretch that he was, how had he answered? An utter cad he had been! He of all men! But there was an infinite store of mercy in those eyes, for him too a word of pardon even though he had erred and sinned and wandered. (*U* 13.744-9)

Even though Bloom's masturbation foregrounds Gerty's sexuality throughout much of the chapter, this observation highlights an accompanying compassion that differentiates him from his narcissistic predecessors. Indeed, his projected exclamation that "a fair unsullied soul had called to him and ... how had he answered" echoes Duffy's concluding thoughts over having "denied [Mrs. Sinico] life and happiness" (*D* 113); however, while Duffy laments how this "deni[al]" affects his life, Bloom's projected self-castigation ("what a brute he had been!") illustrates his guilt over having taken advantage of Gerty's attention, which shows that his perceived anguish is selfless in nature.<sup>103</sup>

---

148). Karen Lawrence contends that Joyce "parodies her sentimental mind by parodying the second-rate fiction that has nurtured it ... Gerty wonders at one point why 'you couldn't eat something poetical like violets or roses' (p. 352), and it is clear from her description that she has ingested a complete diet of romantic clichés" (120-1). Benstock notes that "Gerty is caught between the world of dream-potential and real inadequacies, highlighted by her very precise awareness of her actual surroundings" (*Ulysses* 161). Finally, Brian W. Shaffer writes that "Gerty accepts a narcissistic orientation toward her experience in order, as Freud would have it, 'to re-create the world; to build up in its stead another world in which its most unbearable features are eliminated and replaced by others that are in conformity with [her] wishes'" ("Freud" 78).

<sup>103</sup> Admittedly, the fact that these expressions of guilt are articulated by Gerty instead of Bloom could cast doubt on the authenticity of his guilt because Gerty may have misinterpreted his gaze. In fact, Shaffer argues that she frequently misrecognizes his thoughts, contending that "Gerty mistakes Bloom's lust for love, his 'passionate gaze' for 'undisguised admiration'" ("Freud" 80). However, I would argue that since Bloom "colour[s] like a girl" in response to her "shy reproach" (*U* 13.743), his sexual fascination with Gerty carries with it an embarrassed or remorseful response that corresponds to the guilt expressed in the passage. Also, his thoughts about Gerty in the second half of "Nausicaa" demonstrate an emotional reaction that goes beyond simple lust.

Additionally, his acknowledgment of the “infinite store of mercy” in Gerty’s gaze shows that Bloom perceives more than her sexual desirability, that he also recognizes an emotional worthiness that complements her physical attractiveness. While Joyce’s other characters have fetishized the gaze of their love objects, Bloom articulates an emotional foundation for that gaze, demonstrating his attempts to understand the perspectives of others. The transition from Gerty’s to Bloom’s narration thus establishes a substantive connection between their corresponding glances that lays the groundwork for the compassion that he expresses for her throughout the rest of the chapter.

Bloom’s empathetic reaction to Gerty continues once the narration shifts to his perspective. Even though he refers to her as a “hot little devil” (*U* 13.796) and is glad that he did not perceive her lameness “when she was on show” (*U* 13.794-5), his subsequent thoughts reveal the compassion and consideration that has typified his reactions to others. Indeed, Bloom may be thankful that he did not know about Gerty’s disability while he was masturbating, but his initial perception of her limp provokes a more thoughtful response: “Poor girl! That’s why she’s left on the shelf and the others did a sprint. Thought something was wrong by the cut of her jib. Jilted beauty” (*U* 13.772-4). Similar to his contemplating Mina Purefoy labor pains, Bloom’s recognition of Gerty’s lameness compels him to consider how it must feel to live with her disability, which shows that his arousal does not mitigate his ability to pity others’ suffering. While he does admire her physical attractiveness, the fact that Bloom also sees her as “an individualized, suffering human being, operating in a realistic environment in which deformity is demeaning, and trying to erect her imaginative defenses against the real world” shows that he is still capable of understanding the otherness of those he

encounters (Bowen “Theoretical” 265). That he empathizes with her condition before he contemplates her beauty shows that his initial instinct is to sympathize with her instead of lust over her, and this compassion will comprise his subsequent feelings.

Bloom’s empathy towards Gerty is further demonstrated by his consideration of whether to speak to her, as his contention that it would “spoil all” to “see her as she is” (*U* 13.855) quickly disintegrates into speculation over whether he should establish communication with her: “Suppose I spoke to her. What about? Bad plan however if you don’t know how to end the conversation” (*U* 13.862-3). Unlike Duffy and Stephen, who “break off their intercourse” upon the fulfillment or refusal of their desires, Bloom contemplates progressing from self-satisfaction to a more emotional connection with Gerty. Even though he decides against talking to her, the fact that he gives this idea consideration confirms that he perceives Gerty as a person instead of merely a sexual object. This humanization of Gerty is bolstered by Bloom’s fear that he would “offend her” through this hypothesized communication (*U* 13.883), illustrating that his hesitation is based in part by his concern for her feelings. That this contemplation occurs immediately after he achieves orgasm bolsters this characterization of Bloom’s attitude, as his sexual fantasies dissolve into thoughts of relating to Gerty on a more meaningful level. This establishes a connection between his compassion for a fellow outsider and his desire to develop his connection with her, enveloping “Nausicaa” with reciprocal communicative possibilities.

This reciprocity is strengthened by Bloom’s subsequent meditations on their sexual encounter. Even though he decides against conversing with her, Bloom’s revisiting of Gerty’s temptation represents this episode in a more dialogic light, transforming the “hot

little devil” “on show” into an active participant of an intense sexual exchange: “Might have made a worse fool of myself however. Instead of talking about nothing. Then I will tell you all. Still it was a kind of language between us” (*U* 13.942-4). This characterization of his arousal as “a kind of language between us” reshapes our consideration of the power relationships involved in the exchange by recognizing their interactions as more of a reciprocal act of sexual communication than as Bloom’s objectification of Gerty. By emphasizing the linguistic nature of this episode, Bloom reveals that a connection has been made between them despite the lack of any verbal exchange. The progression between Bloom’s compassionate thoughts and his recognition of “a kind of language between us” thus demonstrates how his empathetic attitude towards others compels him to forge relationships with his counterparts, which establishes the productive potential of a compassionate engagement with otherness.

Ultimately, even though Bloom does not develop a lasting relationship with Gerty, the momentary connection ignited by this sexual exchange enables both characters to find solace with each other. His fond farewell to Gerty demonstrates this, as his recognition that “we’ll never meet again” does not prevent him from recognizing that the experience “was lovely,” and his “thank[ful]” acknowledgment that she “made me feel so young” reveals the success of this encounter in enabling two societal outsiders to commiserate in each other’s loneliness (*U* 13.1272-3). Whereas Bloom’s predecessors would deny their love objects upon the fulfillment of their desires, Bloom’s compassion enables him to view the exchange in “Nausicaa” as more than simply an opportunity for sexual gratification; Rather than “den[y]ing] ... life and happiness” from Gerty, he affirms her struggles through his sympathetic attitude towards her condition, and his concluding



“Goodbye, dear” fills his thoughts about Gerty with the warmth and empathy that has become the calling card of his interactions with others (*U* 13.1272).

#### D. The Son and Heir

If Bloom’s reactions to Dignam’s death and Mrs. Purefoy’s pregnancy illustrate his capacity for compassion and generosity, then his concern for Stephen shows how far his hospitality extends. While their climactic encounter is frequently analyzed from the perspective of fathers and sons, reading their interactions with respect to Buber highlights Bloom’s accommodating kindness as the necessary alternative to Stephen’s alienating narcissism. Indeed, even though Stephen’s apathy throughout the “Nostos” episodes renders their conversations one-sided and limited, Bloom’s attention to his well-being and his willingness to engage him on a substantive level signify an empathetic embrace that is sorely missing in the young artist’s experiences throughout the text. Bloom thus provides the only affirmation of otherness that Stephen receives in *Ulysses*, which validates Zack Bowen’s identification of Joyce’s protagonist as “the only one in *Ulysses* who would help Stephen and offer friendship, assistance, and hospitality, in short offer to show Stephen ‘what the heart is and what it feels’” (*Song* 84).

Bloom thinks about the Dedalus family throughout the first half of Joyce’s text, but his paternal concern for Stephen truly emerges upon encountering him in “Oxen.” As he awaits word on the delivery of Mrs. Purefoy’s baby, he contemplates the despair of “his good lady Marion” upon the death of Rudy, noting that “she was wondrous stricken of heart for that evil hap and for his burial did him on a fair corselet of lamb’s wool, the flower of the flock, lest he might perish utterly and lie akeled” (*U* 14.268-70). Tellingly, this dual-reflection on Molly’s grief and concern for Rudy compels Bloom to consider

Stephen's well-being, lamenting the fact that "he lived riotously with those wastrels and murdered his goods with whores" (*U* 14.276). The generosity that emerges from this paternal concern thus confirms Bloom's ability to demonstrate compassion for his fellow Dubliners, which sets the stage for the most conclusive social affirmation of otherness in *Ulysses*.

The generous implications of Bloom's paternal reflections become immediately apparent. No sooner does he begin to show concern for Stephen's well being than he spends the rest of the text attempting to restore security and tranquility to his life. He watches over Stephen during the remainder of "Oxen," soothing his nerves after a frightening thunderclap. ("Master Bloom, at the braggart's side, spoke to him calming words to slumber his great fear, advertising how it was no other thing but a hubbub noise that he heard" [*U* 14.424-6].) Then, he follows the medical students to Nighttown, where he holds onto Stephen's money, settles the bill over the broken lamp at Bella Cohen's, and rescues him from his impending arrest by the night watch. Bloom also gives Stephen advice as they walk to the cabman's shelter in "Eumaeus," cautioning him to avoid Nighttown ("Mr Bloom ... spoke a word of caution *re* the dangers of nighttown, women of ill fame and swell mobsmen" [*U* 16.61-4]), the medicos in general ("He commented adversely on the desertion of Stephen by all his pubhunting *confrères* but one, a most glaring piece of ratting on the part of his brother medicos under all the circs" [*U* 16.95-7]), and Mulligan specifically ("I wouldn't personally repose much trust in that boon companion of yours ... Dr Mulligan, as a guide, philosopher and friend if I were in your shoes" [*U* 16.279-81]). These actions constitute the first acts of concern for Stephen's

well-being in *Ulysses* and demonstrate the extent to which Bloom's love for Molly compels his compassion for others.

This compassion continues throughout the rest of "Eumaeus," where Bloom's interaction with Stephen at the cabmen's shelter builds upon the generosity that was initiated at "Oxen." Initially, he orders Stephen coffee and food, expressing alarm that he has not eaten in over a day. ("It occurs to me you ought to sample something in the shape of solid food, say, a roll of some description" [*U* 16.332-3].) More importantly, Bloom engages Stephen in conversation throughout the episode, soliciting his opinions on the Italian language, transubstantiation, and the imposition of force. In contrast to Mulligan, the newspapermen in "Aeolus," and the library patrons in "Scylla," Bloom does not seek to humor, ignore, or deride Stephen's ideas; instead, he becomes the first character in *Ulysses* to attempt to relate to him on an equal level, conveying a respect for his ideas that is sorely lacking throughout the text. Bloom may misinterpret Stephen's responses, but at least he attempts to understand what he is saying, which continues the fascination with other people's perspectives that comprises his thoughts throughout *Ulysses*. Bloom's observation that "though they didn't see eye to eye in everything ... both their minds were traveling, so to speak, in the same train of thought" thus speaks to more than simply a similarity in thought (*U* 16.1579-81); it also conveys a mutual confirmation of each other's otherness despite differing opinions, which demonstrates the practical viability of Buber's community and provides Stephen with a much needed empathetic companion.

However, Bloom's most elaborate attempt to help Stephen concerns Molly, which is fitting considering that his paternal regard for him initially sprang from her anguish over

Rudy. Indeed, Bloom's initial description of Molly in "Eumaeus" establishes this connection, as he explains to Stephen that "I asked you if you wrote your poetry in Italian" because her appearance and "character" embody "the Spanish type" (*U* 16.879-81). This connection between Stephen and Molly is further developed during the discussion of music at the end of the chapter, where Bloom indicates that "my wife ... would have the greatest of pleasure in making your acquaintance as she is passionately attached to music of any kind" (*U* 16.1800-2). Henke is certainly correct that "Molly is so conspicuously a part of Bloom's identity that he *must* allude to her in order to establish intimacy with Stephen" (*Sindbook* 213), but I feel that more is at play here. Since Bloom's concern for Stephen has always been tied to his compassion for Molly, it seems plausible that, in inviting Stephen home to (possibly) meet his wife, Bloom embarks on a charitable project designed to improve both of their lives. ("All kinds of Utopian plans were flashing through his (B's) busy brain" [*U* 16.1652].) Given his subsequent suggestion in "Ithaca" that Stephen spend the night at his house, we can assume that Bloom envisions their interactions on Bloomsday as laying the foundation for a more substantive relationship between Stephen and the Bloom family that will benefit everybody involved.<sup>104</sup>

For Stephen, the benefits of this project are obvious. By extending this invitation, Bloom certainly has Stephen's impending homelessness in mind, as he notes that "to think of him house and homeless, rooked by some landlady worse than any stepmother,

---

<sup>104</sup> Admittedly, this arrangement would benefit Bloom as well. Tracey Teets Schwarze persuasively contends that "in his 'Utopian plans' involving Stephen ... Bloom determines on a larger plan for Stephen's rehabilitation, one that will also, not coincidentally, benefit himself. Realizing he has already made an investment in Stephen (his reparation for the damaged lamp shade in 'Circe' as well as the current coffee and roll), Bloom decides he might 'profit by the unlookedfor occasion' (*U* 16.1217)" (112). However, I would argue that while Bloom does gain intellectual stimulation and a potential partner for Molly that he actually respects, Bloom ultimately is more interested in helping Stephen and Molly than he is in benefiting himself, as I argue in the next paragraph.

was really too bad at his age” (*U* 16.1565-7). For that reason, if Stephen were to agree to stay with them, he would inherit a surrogate family and would be provided with the mother figure whose absence has weighed on him throughout the text. For Molly, the benefits are more emotional. As Bloom has noted throughout *Ulysses*, Molly has been significantly wounded by Rudy’s death, creating a maternal lack in her psyche that (along with Bloom’s paternal lack caused by the same event) has significantly damaged their marriage. By basing his concern for Stephen on his empathetic love for Molly, Bloom transforms his invitation to Stephen into a means to provide Molly with the son whose loss she still mourns. Thus, when Bloom suggests the possibility of introducing Stephen to Molly, he simultaneously acts to repair her most significant emotional wound, which validates his enduring love for her and confirms the redemptive nature of the text’s conclusion.

Nevertheless, Stephen rejects Bloom’s invitation. Although he agrees to walk home with Bloom and accepts a cup of cocoa, he “promptly, inexplicably, with amicability, [and] gratefully” declines Bloom’s suggestion that he spend the night, and it is uncertain upon his departure from 7 Eccles Street whether he will ever return to the Blooms’ house. However, the refusal of the invitation does not invalidate the generosity behind it, as “in the temporary union of the two [characters] Joyce affirms his perception of community” (*JJ* 372). In his “sorrow” for [Stephen’s] forepassed happiness” (*U* 14.273), Bloom becomes the only character in *Ulysses* to empathize with Stephen’s condition, and his attempts to look out for him from “Oxen” to “Ithaca” constitutes the compassionate embrace of otherness that the young artist has sought throughout the text, if only he would accept it. Joyce thus concludes Bloom’s interactions with others in *Ulysses* in the

most loving way possible and solidifies his characterization of his protagonist as an anomaly within his oeuvre, a character whose self-love is enhanced and strengthened by an unwavering commitment to his fellow Dubliners.

## II. A Soft Answer Turns Away Wrath

So far, we have seen the love implicit in Bloom's individual interactions with those he encounters in *Ulysses*. However, his ability to "see another's face and listen to another's words" carries significance beyond that individual realm. In addition to his consideration of others, Bloom is able to empathize with and understand broader societal problems, which compels him to theorize ways to counteract those problems and improve Dublin as a whole. In that sense, Bloom serves as more than a model of local compassion; his wanderings throughout the text are replete with political implications and demonstrate the viability of his civic interactions in providing alternatives to the socio-political paralysis of Joyce's Dublin.

Admittedly, even though Bloom brainstorms numerous political reforms throughout *Ulysses*, it is hard to take many of his ideas seriously. Indeed, it is doubtful that his idea to "give every child born five quid at compound interest up to twentyone" (*U* 8.383-4) or to "use ... dogvans and goatvans for the delivery of early morning milk" (*U* 17.1719-20) will move beyond Bloom's mind; and for all the suggestions that he comes up with, the Dublin that began Bloomsday does not change to a significant degree as the night falls on June 16, 1904. This lack of substantive progress compels some scholars to read Bloom's politics ironically, concluding as Terry Eagleton does that "his admirable humanitarianism involves a set of shallow, mildly crankish schemes for social reform, fit meat for his author's satiric debunkery" (306). However, even if Bloom's specific ideas

do not stand up to critical scrutiny, we cannot dismiss the viability of his political beliefs, for his socio-political importance lies not in his specific schemes, but in his method of interacting with others. Thus, the empathy that comprises his everyday life spills over into his participation in the civic life, which provides us with a compassionate reconfiguration of the model Dublin citizen.<sup>105</sup>

#### A. Parallax

In “Lestrygonians,” Bloom briefly ponders the concept of parallax, which he discovered in a “fascinating little book ... of sir Robert Ball’s” (*U* 8.110). While Bloom’s consideration of the term does not extend beyond its etymology (“Par it’s Greek: parallel, parallax” [*U* 8.111-2]), Gifford’s and Seidman’s explanation of the concept demonstrates its relevance to Bloom’s outlook on otherness: “the apparent displacement or the difference in apparent direction of an object as seen from two different points of view” (160). Indeed, this ability to see the difference in an object from multiple perspectives encapsulates Bloom’s lens of perception throughout the text, as his insistence that “you must look at both sides of [a given] question” (*U* 16.1094-5), as well as his tendency to view others as both he and they perceive them, prevent him from settling on a fixed interpretation of almost anything. While some may classify this “anythingarianism” as a “perspectival ambivalence” that “undercuts the political significance of his revisioning,” Bloom’s “multivocality” enables him to understand socio-political ideas more comprehensively and effectively than the limited perspectives

---

<sup>105</sup> Harkness makes a similar argument, noting that “Bloom’s philosophy, if we can call his odd assortment of ideas a philosophy, is ludicrous only to a doctrinaire politician. His ideal of the redistribution of income is prompted by the belief that it would promote ‘friendlier intercourse between man and man’ (*U*, 644)” (*Aesthetics* 169).

of his counterparts (Castle 226).<sup>106</sup> He may claim that he “never exactly understood” parallax (*U* 8.110-1), but his thoughts and actions throughout *Ulysses* constitute an emphatic embrace of the concept, which better equips him to engage his fellow citizens in socio-political dialogue.

Bloom’s political parallax is introduced in conjunction with his introduction in *Ulysses*. As he leaves Dlugacz’s in “Calypso,” he contemplates an exotic representation of an Oriental city, noting the “awned streets,” “turbaned faces,” “dark caves of carpet shops,” and “cries of sellers in the streets” (*U* 4.88-90). Critics have read such characterizations as indicative of Ireland’s exoticizing of the Orient, arguing that this depiction of the East provides “both a *topos* and a *tropos* for ‘spiritual liberation’” that ultimately “pre-structures a hierarchical relationship that always already functions the Oriental as Other” (Cheng 77; 81). In fact, Bloom’s subsequent thoughts about Arthur Griffith articulate this strategy because his transition from the “strange land” (*U* 4.86) to the “homerule sun rising up in the northwest” (*U* 4.101-2) metaphorically unites the Irish fascination with the East with their desire for political emancipation. However, his subsequent consideration of this “strange land” implodes the univocality of this stereotype. Indeed, Bloom acknowledges that his vision of the Orient is “probably not a bit like it really. Kind of stuff you read: in the track of the sun” (*U* 4.99-100). This recognition reveals the racial fetishization implicit in such constructions of the East, as his awareness that such a city would probably only be found in books like *In The Track of the Sun* highlights the artificial nature of the stereotype (as does his placement of Turko the Terrible within his imagined village [*U* 4.89]). By juxtaposing the dominant

---

<sup>106</sup> Cheng also argues that “Bloom is able to hold simultaneous perspectives, to imagine being other and thus to transcend the monologic narrowness of a single, cycloptic perspective” (177).



conception of the Orient with the recognition of its fictitiousness, Bloom undercuts the political viability of such impositions of static, racialized visions of the East, which challenges the racial foundations of this Irish escapist fantasy.

On the other hand, Bloom's acknowledgement does not constitute an absolute rejection of such Eastern representations. In fact, his opinion that his fantasy is "*probably* not a bit like it really" concedes that his projection could be accurate. The open-ended nature of Bloom's criticism enables him to entertain the potential legitimacy of both the popular depiction of the Orient and its critical alternative. If he were to reject the totality of this representation, he would still fall prey to the racialized rejection of Oriental otherness by performing the enlightened Western intellectual who possesses the knowledge and mastery needed to define the East, regardless of what alternative vision replaces the stereotype. Because he is able to view the East from both perspectives, Bloom dissolves the racial univocality of the Irish characterization of the Orient by enabling multiple, distinct versions to be potentially legitimate. His performance of representational parallax thus constitutes an embrace of Oriental otherness, allowing its essence to flourish under a dialogic engagement with difference.

This dialogic embrace is also evident in Bloom's consideration of Agendath Netaim. Similar to his earlier contemplations of Orientalism, his perusal of this advertisement contains both a description and a reversal, as his meditations on the Zionist "planters' company" (*U* 4.192) are immediately countered by his recognition that this opportunity is not for him. However, again he offers a qualified refusal of the venture, noting that his lack of interest does not negate the value of the enterprise as a whole. ("Nothing doing. Still an idea behind it" [*U* 4.200].) Once again, Bloom avoids imposing an absolute value

judgment either way on Agendath Netaim, conceding that even if an economic return to the homeland is not enticing to him, it may still benefit other members of the European Jewish community. Not only does this provide another example of Bloom's acceptance of otherness, but it also constitutes a multivocal understanding of Jewishness that allows Zionism to flourish without pinning down Jewish identity to either a totalizing acceptance or rejection of the movement. Just as his earlier thoughts on Orientalism avoided the temptation to impose a univocal Western interpretation of the East, Bloom's acknowledgment that there is "still an idea behind" Agendath Netaim demonstrates his hesitancy to designate authentic and inauthentic Jewish performances, enabling his "parallactic" understanding of Zionism to provide space for multiple articulations of Jewish identity.

Bloom's encounter with the citizen in "Cyclops" highlights a second benefit to this Jewish parallax. When Bloom argues in Barney Kiernan's that he "belong[s] to a race" that is "plundered," "insulted," and "persecuted" (*U* 12.1467; 1470), the citizen derisively asks him if he is "talking about the new Jerusalem" (*U* 12.1473). This reference demonstrates the univocal interpretation of Jewishness that flourishes within Dublin, as the Jewish Bloom's references to racial persecution can be interpreted only as an endorsement of Zionism. Bloom's "parallactic" attitude towards the "new Jerusalem" counteracts this racial totalization because its affirmation of multiple, legitimate Jewish identities introduce a fluid representation of Jewishness that can evade generic attacks based on static stereotypes. For that reason, when Bloom responds to the citizen's slur by arguing that he is "talking about injustice" (*U* 12.1474), he demonstrates the ability to attack anti-Semitism without being subject to a critique of Zionism, which enables him to

assert his Jewish identity outside the parameters of the citizen's discriminatory discourse. Bloom's advocacy of parallax thus demonstrates the socio-political benefits of Buber's affirmation of "many-faced otherness," and his resulting dialogic approach to ethnic identity enables him to negotiate his position as a productive citizen within the Dublin body politic.

The religious implications of Bloom's parallax are not limited to his dialogic acceptance of Judaism. Indeed, his contemplation of the "sermon by the very reverend John Conmee S.J. on saint Peter Claver S.J. and the African Mission" in "Lotus Eaters" conveys a broader skepticism towards organized religion's imposition of faith on non-believing populations (*U* 8.322-3). Recognizing that Catholicism and Protestantism promote such conversion "to the true religion" (*U* 8.325-6), Bloom considers this practice from the targeted population's perspective, wondering "how they explain" the mission to "save China's millions" to the "heathen Chinees" (*U* 8.326-7). This perspective contrasts with the importance Catholic Ireland places on missionary work, as his recognition that the candidates for conversion would regard the religion as "rank heresy" conveys an understanding of religious otherness that diverges from the general apathy towards it (*U* 8.327). Not only does this understanding enable the accommodation of multiple legitimate faiths, but it also promotes a broader critique of imperialism because the suppression of subaltern expression that Bloom attributes to missionary practices is at the heart of imperial strategies of conquest. His attempt to view conversion through the perspective of the converted thus constitutes a religious performance of parallax whose affirmation of otherness extends far beyond the Catholic and Protestant arenas.

However, Bloom's criticism of the sermon does not carry with it a dismissal of Catholicism as a whole. While he empathizes with the Chinese who are suppressed by an imperial religious agenda, his reactions to the mass he attends in "Lotus Eaters" convey an attempt to understand the Catholic ideas and practices that he witnesses. He tries to interpret the initials on the priest's garments ("Letters on his back: I.N.R.I? No: I.H.S." [U 5.372]), contemplates the type of bread used for the Eucharist ("Something like those mazzoth" [U 5.358]), and approves of the priest being the sole person to drink the wine ("otherwise they'd have one old booser worse than another coming along, cadging for a drink" [U 5.390-2]). Bloom also recognizes that Catholics experience a spiritual awakening through the Eucharist, noting that there is a "kind of kingdom of God is within you feel" within the communion that "makes them feel happy" (U 5.361; 359). Similar to his contemplation of the "heathen Chinees[']s" attitude towards conversion, Bloom tries to experience Catholicism through the viewpoint of the Catholic, which avoids promoting his religious perspective over his counterparts by acknowledging the legitimacy of others adhering to the religion even though he does not. Even if he finds "the whole atmosphere" of the mass to be "queer" (U 5.392-3), his repeated assertion that the "big idea behind it" is "perfectly right" echoes his earlier concessions of the legitimacy of Zionism despite his personal ambivalence towards the movement (U 5.360-1; 393). Such an attitude towards Catholicism solidifies Bloom's adherence to parallax, and his ability to "affirm the [people he] struggle[s] with" constitutes a dialogic embrace that is both socially and politically productive.

The most significant benefit to Bloom's multivocal perception is the peaceful coexistence promoted by his accommodation of conflicting viewpoints. While some may

argue that the absurdity of his ideas makes it hard to take his politics seriously, Bloom's significance as a political agent is not necessarily contained in his specific beliefs, but rather in his commitment to a dialogic, accommodating concept of citizenship that contrasts with the inflexible paralysis of his body politic. We have witnessed the discriminatory implications of the univocal discourses that pervade Irish culture, but we must also consider the practical impossibility of such conflicting, uncompromising factions coexisting with each other. Given the tendency of these groups to impose borders around their agendas that dismiss dissenting voices, it is difficult to determine how Ireland is supposed to function as a viable nation when its inhabitants are too busy fighting each other to push for meaningful change. Bloom's adherence to parallax becomes an alternative to this socio-political paralysis, as his ability to consider the perspectives of others and to acknowledge the legitimacy of belief structures that he does not share enable him to interact peacefully with his fellow Dubliners despite their differing perspectives. Thus, not only does Bloom embody the exemplary Irish citizen, but his accommodating approach to civic life makes him a viable model for the body politic as a whole. He may feel that he "never exactly understood" the concept of parallax, but his thoughts throughout *Ulysses* transform him into the living embodiment of the concept, demonstrating how the "vital acknowledgement of many-faced otherness" fosters a dialogic and cooperative system of civic interaction.

#### B. The New Bloomusalem

A significant criticism of Bloom's "parallactic" socio-politics comes from Gregory Castle, who contends that the "anythingarianism" that comprises his thoughts and interactions throughout *Ulysses* "makes it difficult to discover any kind of ideological

consistency” in his beliefs. He feels that Bloom’s willingness to accept multiple, conflicting viewpoints “means that his attitudes are as often complicit with as they are resistant to the social authorities of colonialism, anthropology, and the Revival” (226). While it is true that Bloom avoids giving an absolute endorsement of any of the ideologies described in Joyce’s text, that does not mean that his ideas suffer from irresolution or contradiction. In fact, even though Bloom considers his surroundings from multiple perspectives, the foundation for this approach promotes a consistent, ethico-political belief system that shields him from the co-optive hazards of “anythingarianism.”

To illustrate this “ideological consistency,” I call attention to one of the most quoted passages in *Ulysses*: “it’s no use, says he. Force, hatred, history, all that. That’s not life for men and women, insult and hatred. And everybody knows that it’s the very opposite of that that is really life ... Love” (*U* 12.1481-3; 1485). Critics have long debated how seriously we are supposed to take this statement, but as we read Bloom’s actions with respect to Buber, we see the loving foundations of both his individual and social interactions. For that reason, even if Bloom entertains multiple, distinct ideas, that does not mean that he lacks an “ideological consistency.” In fact, his “anythingarianism” conveys that very consistency, as his empathetic acceptance of otherness constitutes an unswerving endorsement of community, and his refusal to reject any position completely shows how love can create a dialogic body politic that enables multiple, distinct ideologies to thrive. Not only does this approach evade Castle’s fears of co-option (since “the social authorities of colonialism” cannot exist in a political community that

encourages otherness),<sup>107</sup> but it also shows how a consistent commitment to love in everyday interactions can lay the groundwork for effective civic participation. Thus, Bloom's explicit endorsement of love constitutes the empathetic political advocacy that arises from an everyday commitment to compassion, demonstrating that it truly is "the very opposite of [hatred] that is really life."

Bloom's endorsement of this loving community is confirmed in "Cyclops," where he negotiates his civic identity within an increasingly hostile xenophobic community. While his advocacy of love does not occur until half-way through the chapter, the groundwork for this advocacy is evident throughout the episode, as the way that he approaches his interactions with the other bar patrons demonstrates the empathetic accommodation behind his politics. Initially, Bloom's "argument" with the citizen about "the brothers Sheares and Wolfe Tone beyond on Arbour Hill ..." shows his commitment to parallax (*U* 12.498-9). While the barfly's digressions concerning the City Arms Hotel prevent us from following a significant amount of this conversation, we learn enough to recognize the disparity between Bloom's and the citizen's approaches to this political debate. We may not learn the substance of any of Bloom's responses, but the narrator's mockery of his "*but don't you see?* and *but on the other hand?*" (*U* 12.515) enable us to view his "contributions" as "continual attempt[s] to induce the monocular Dubliners to view objects and issues from multiple angles" (Sicker "Swiftian" 75). Even though he seems to disagree with the citizen's interpretation of history, he never attempts to force his viewpoint on him. Instead, he tries to persuade the citizen to entertain his opposing position, using phrases like "on the other hand" to compel a side-by-side comparison of

---

<sup>107</sup> Hooks similarly notes the incompatibility of love and colonialism by arguing that "domination cannot exist in any social situation where a love ethic prevails ... When love is present the desire to dominate and exercise power cannot rule the day" (98).

conflicting versions of history. Such a strategy reveals Bloom's ability to articulate a dissenting point of view without it constituting a totalizing rejection of his adversary, which enables the spirit of accommodation to emerge from a contentious political exchange.

However, the citizen's response quashes that accommodating spirit. Rather than entertain Bloom's alternative interpretations of "Robert Emmet and die for your country" (*U* 12.499-500), the citizen raises a toast to "the memory of the dead" (*U* 12.519), which buries Bloom's responses under a generic performance of national pride (especially since the barfly notes that the citizen toasts while "glaring at Bloom" [*U* 12.520]). Then, when Bloom tries to compel him to acknowledge his arguments ("You don't quite grasp my point ... What I mean is ...." [*U* 12.522]), the citizen silences his adversary by exclaiming, "*Sinn Fein! ... Sinn fein amhain!* The friends we love are by our side and the foes we hate before us" (*U* 12.523-4).<sup>108</sup> Whereas Bloom attempts to persuade his counterpart to consider the validity of his arguments, the citizen responds with patriotic slogans that serve little purpose beyond excluding his opponent's voice. Not only is his interjection specifically uttered to silence Bloom, but his use of the Gaelic League motto "ourselves alone" imposes a border between him and Bloom that denies the legitimacy of the latter's voice. When we recall the rumor that Bloom gave Arthur Griffith the idea for *Sinn Fein*, this conversation provides us with two competing versions of the movement and shows us how exclusionary rhetoric undermines more accommodating forms of political organization.

This comparison between political exclusion and accommodation continues in the famous conversation over the definition of a nation. Much has been made already of

---

<sup>108</sup> Translated: "Ourselves! ... Ourselves alone!" (Gifford and Seidman 333).



Bloom's exasperated explanation of a nation as being "the same people living in the same place ... or also living in different places" (*U* 12.1422-3; 1428); however, two aspects of this exchange merit specific attention. First, it demonstrates the ambivalence towards intolerance at the heart of this nationalist discourse. While the discussion of what constitutes a nation is itself an important aspect of "Cyclops," we should remember that the question is a response to Bloom's contention that "all the history of the world is full of [persecution]. Perpetuating national hatred among nations" (*U* 12.1417-8). Bloom may have brought the idea of nationhood to the bar's attention, but by reading the resulting discussion with respect to the observation that initiated it, we see that the question of what a nation constitutes is largely a non sequitur designed to humiliate Bloom. Since Bloom's main point was to illustrate the predominance of persecution, the barflies' interrogation of his nationhood dismisses his argument, which also performs the "national hatred among nations" within Barney Kiernan's because the fact that Bloom does not "know what a nation means" defines him as an outsider and justifies his exclusion (*U* 12.1418-9). Similar to the citizen's cry of "*Sinn fein amhain*," this discussion combats Bloom's argument with a generic nationalist tactic that reveals the "old pap of racial hatred" behind its univocal politics.

Second, Bloom's definition of nationhood constitutes a political performance of parallax. Cheng interprets his characterization of a nation as "a people generally within a geographical location" (211-2), but I think more is at play here. By articulating a national classification that includes "the same people" simultaneously "living in the same place" and "living in different places," Bloom proposes a broad definition of nationhood that contains conflicting examples at its foundation. This "parallactic" definition

accomplishes two objectives: it transforms nationhood into an affirmation of otherness since difference is granted the same legitimacy as sameness,<sup>109</sup> and it undermines the ability of xenophobia to use artificial borders to exclude outsiders since the outsider has now been defined as the citizen. Thus, the univocality of the nation discussion collapses under the weight of national parallax, and we are left with an accommodating construction of nationhood that complements Bloom's stance against injustice, providing the necessary foundation for his subsequent advocacy of love.

As I mentioned earlier, Bloom's advocacy of love as "the opposite of hatred" has frequently been dismissed as naïve, sentimental cant that demonstrates Joyce's satire. However, reading Bloom's advocacy with respect to Buber's community allows us to see a practical basis for love in his discourse against "force, hatred, [and] history." Indeed, Bloom here does not articulate a saccharinely righteous justification for "insult and hatred" "not [being] life for men and women"; instead, he dismisses those qualities on the basis that they are "no[t] use[ful]," that socio-political interaction based on hate does nothing to improve the conditions of the body politic. He may also convey moral objections to "force, hatred, [and] history," but his pragmatic criticisms dominate both his argumentation in "Cyclops" and his recounting of that exchange in "Eumaeus." ("I resent violence and intolerance in any shape or form. It never reaches anything or stops anything ... It's a patent absurdity on the face of it to hate people because they live round the corner and speak another vernacular" [U 16.1099-1103].) By limiting his endorsement of love to a pragmatic affirmation of equal social interaction ("It's all very fine to boast of mutual superiority but what about mutual equality" [U 16.1098-9]),

---

<sup>109</sup> Cheng notes that "Bloom's answer refuses either to hierarchize or to 'imagine' an essentialized community, but rather allows for personal or ethnic difference and heterogeneity without denying the status of 'citizens' or 'nationals' to anyone within the community" (212).

Bloom demonstrates the futility of ideologies that spend more time fighting each other than improving their social conditions, which avoids the romanticization that would render him susceptible to charges of sentimentality. Bloom thus grounds his political ideology in a sensible affirmation of otherness and articulates a dialogic, cooperative politics of love that even his author could endorse.<sup>110</sup>

Bloom's amorous dialogism is supported further by the "love loves to love love" passage that occurs later in "Cyclops" (*U* 12.1493). While one could read this interruption as skewering Bloom's endorsement of love, it is important to recognize not only that the "interpolated 'texts'" parody a "sentimentalized version of history" that is absent from "Bloom's words" (Lawrence 116), but also that he has left the tavern when this interruption occurs and is thus immune to any humiliation as a result of it. Instead, what is being satirized is the citizen's mockery of "universal love" in his subsequent conversation with John Wyse Nolan (*U* 12.1489). When Nolan questions this derision ("Isn't that what we're told. Love your neighbour"), the citizen scoffs at "love, moya!" and dismisses Bloom as "a nice pattern of a Romeo and Juliet" (*U* 12.1490-92). The fact that the "love loves to love love" interruption occurs immediately after this insult demonstrates that the sentimentality behind that mockery is the subject of the narrative commentary. Thus, the citizen has ignored the practical justifications for Bloom's position, choosing to continue to exclude "the new apostle to the gentiles" through his xenophobic lens of national pride (*U* 12.1489), and by following the one-eyed citizen's mockery of "universal love" with this parodic response, Joyce uses the limited,

---

<sup>110</sup> Colleen Lamos argues that "whether or not it is 'the word known to all men,' *love* is at least the word invoked by Bloom in his definition of justice as 'the opposite of hatred' (*U* 12.1485). Bloom's vision of a community in which the addressers and addressees are able to utter divergent phrases, free from 'force' and 'hatred' (*U* 12.1481), is ironically contrasted to the patriotic myth promoted by the Irish citizen of the pub for whom community is defined and legitimated by a 'we' determined by race and nation" ("Cheating" 92).

monocular nature of his Cyclops's nationalist sentimentality to highlight the compassionate accommodation of Bloom's loving politics.

The inclusivity of Bloom's politics is confirmed by his religious argumentation at the chapter's conclusion. As Cunningham ushers Bloom out of Barney Kiernan's, the frustrated canvasser responds to the citizen's anti-Semitic barbs by exclaiming that "your God was a Jew. Christ was a Jew like me" (*U* 12.1808-9). This outburst encapsulates the inclusiveness that Bloom has championed throughout the episode by using a "parallactic" religious argument to emphasize the interconnectedness of Catholicism and Judaism. Instead of promoting his Jewish identity over the Christian perspective of the citizen, Bloom argues that the citizen's Messiah "was a Jew like [Bloom]," which connects the two combatants through a web of religious inclusivity. When we recall Nolan's earlier articulation of Jesus's commandment to "love your neighbour," this inclusive web becomes infused with loving implications, demonstrating that the love Bloom champions transcends religious and political differences and accommodates even the most disparate belief systems. The citizen may try to silence Bloom's "parallactic" outburst by attempting to "brain that bloody Jewman for using the holy name" (*U* 12.1811), but Bloom's successful escape reveals this final exclusion to be unsuccessful. The "ascen[sion]" of "ben Bloom Elijah" (*U* 12.1916) at the conclusion of "Cyclops" thus validates his role as the "new apostle to the gentiles" and confirms the decisive victory of amorous parallax over the discriminatory tactics of the citizen's monocular nationalism.

Ultimately, the conclusive validation of Bloom's advocacy in "Cyclops" does not occur within that chapter. Instead, the full measure of the inclusiveness fostered by this love ethic is revealed in "Nausicaa," where Bloom's reflections on his argument with the

citizen demonstrate the accommodating potential of that ethic. As he recalls this exchange, Bloom's thoughts gradually shift from confrontation to concession. Not only does he assume partial culpability for the escalation of their argument ("Mistake to hit back" [*U* 13.1217]), but he also entertains possible reasons for the citizen's attacks in order to moderate his adversary's malice ("perhaps not to hurt he meant" [*U* 13.1220]), which conveys his empathetic desire to understand opposing perspectives. This justification for the citizen's actions thus confirms the innate inclusiveness of Bloom's "parallactic" civic identity because he is willing to entertain a divergent perspective of their confrontation in order to ensure that the Dublin body politic can accommodate both citizens. Indeed, his characterization of the dispute as "gentle repartee" in "Eumaeus" (*U* 16.1637-8) proves this desire for accommodation by re-presenting his persecution in Barney Kiernan's as a friendly discussion of dissenting viewpoints. Through his reflections on his argument with the citizen, Bloom signifies his desire to view civic interaction within Dublin in the most cooperative manner possible, confirming the ability of his endorsement of love to provide space for even the most opposed socio-political agents.

Bloom's loving politics is thus more compellingly demonstrated through his interactions with others than through any explicit advocacy of "the opposite of hatred." He may not offer a forceful, developed articulation of a politically viable love, but by encouraging the consideration of multiple perspectives, Bloom expands the parameters of civic life to provide space for numerous, distinct performances of Irish citizenship, extending a compassionate embrace of "many-faced otherness" that counteracts the "violence and intolerance" inherent in cultural sameness. In that sense, it is not the

specifics of Bloom's platform, but rather his model of civil interaction, that reveals the efficacy of his politics. He may champion an absurd, utopian agenda during his coronation in "Circe," but not even the "three acres and a cow for all children of nature" or the "compulsory manual labour for all" can distract us from the tolerance promoted by his desire for the "union of all, jew, moslem and gentile" (*U* 15.1686-8). For that reason, one does not have to erect "a colossal edifice with crystal roof, built in the shape of a huge pork kidney" to herald the coming of the "new Bloomusalem" (*U* 15.1548-9), for that community emerges from the empathy that comprises Bloom's everyday interaction. His wanderings throughout *Ulysses* thus provide us with a microcosmic examination of how the affirmation of difference that guides a politics of love moves past the "old pap of racial hatred" and how a "soft answer" truly does "turn away wrath" (*U* 16.1085-6).

\*\*\*\*

According to Ellmann, Bloom's compassion towards others throughout *Ulysses* articulates the central theme of the text: "Casual kindness overcomes unconscionable power" (*JJ* 379). While this observation is true, it only scratches the surface of the empathy needed to counteract the discriminatory socio-political system that Joyce describes. His interactions with the Dubliners he encounters are certainly respectful and courteous, but the full extent of the affection he displays transcends the parameters of "casual kindness." Bloom thus validates Buber's contention that the "basic principle of marriage" coincides with the "vital acknowledgment of many-faced otherness" needed for meaningful civic interaction, as his ability to love his wife despite her adultery is indicative of his broader ability to dialogically engage a body politic that constantly tries to exclude him. This desire to realize the "overcoming of *otherness* in living unity"

transforms Bloom's advocacy of the "opposite of hatred" into the love ethic needed to promote dialogue and cooperation within a discriminatory and paralytic collective.

Of course, Bloom is not the only character in the Joycean oeuvre that is capable of this validation of otherness. What grants legitimacy to his amorous thoughts throughout *Ulysses* is not simply the compassion that they embody, but their eventual reciprocation at the end of the text. Indeed, it is not sufficient to confine our investigation of the central love story in *Ulysses* to Bloom's struggles with cuckoldry; to do so would ignore the ardent desires inherent in Molly's meditations at the text's conclusion, which would render us complicit in the same narcissistic apathy towards the love object's otherness that felled the protagonists of Joyce's earlier fiction. By expanding our analysis of the text's homecoming to encompass "Penelope" as well as "Ithaca," we not only witness a more developed and powerful articulation of the loving bond initiated in 1887 and reaffirmed in 1904; we also discover the necessity of reciprocal affirmation to bolster the cooperative nature of a viable politics of love. Through an embrace of amorous parallax, we must now revisit the Hill of Howth and heed the concluding affirmation of Bloom's "mountain flower" (*U* 18.1606) to understand the extent to which the "heal[ing]" of "family wounds" becomes an amorous springboard for the "constructive building of community" (hooks 144).

## CHAPTER TEN: THE FLOWER OF THE MOUNTAIN

It is fitting that “Ithaca” ends with a conversation between Leopold and Molly Bloom concerning the events of Bloomsday since one could describe their episodes in *Ulysses* in this manner. Joyce’s description of Molly’s soliloquy as “the indispensable countersign to Bloom’s passport to eternity” demonstrates this conversational structure, as his decision to “le[ave]” “the last word ... to Penelope” introduces a dialogic element to the text that places Bloom’s and Molly’s perceptions of June 16, 1904, on an equal level (*LI* 160). For that reason, the final chapter of *Ulysses* cannot be seen as simply the coda to Bloom’s story because its rejoinder to his reflections on the day establishes Molly as an active participant in a reciprocal loving exchange and develops our overall understanding of their marriage. Thus, the transition from “Ithaca” to “Penelope” solidifies the authenticity of the text’s central relationship, which compels us both to engage in a side-by-side comparison of their reactions to the text’s central conflict and to recognize the reciprocal affirmation inherent in both versions, highlighting an enduring love that can move past an adulterous betrayal.

The reciprocal nature of the Blooms’ relationship also compels us to view Molly as an active lover because her unmediated reflections in “Penelope” make her an equal, “indispensable” component of the text’s primary union.<sup>111</sup> To view Molly this way forces us to recognize her as more than a symbol marker for a broader critical agenda. Indeed, the prevailing tendency in Joyce scholarship has been to view Molly as either a

---

<sup>111</sup> By “unmediated,” I mean simply that Molly’s opinions in “Penelope” emerge through her conscious perceptions and not through the thoughts of another character. I recognize that the legitimacy of Molly’s opinions may be compromised by their representation through Joyce’s pen, which filters a female perspective through a male narrative lens. Conceding this to be true (though unavoidable given the author’s gender), Molly’s role as a Joycean love object is still more realized than Mangan’s sister, Polly Mooney, Mrs. Sinico, or Emma Clery because expresses her desires through her own words rather than through another character’s or narrator’s interpretation.



“‘mother-wife’ and ‘earth-goddess’” (Henke *Sindbook* 213)<sup>112</sup> or a “thirty-shilling whore” (Darcy O’Brien, quoted in Froula 171),<sup>113</sup> as either “a rare example of *écriture féminine*” (Sternlieb 757) or a co-opted masculine interpretation of that voice.<sup>114</sup> While these interpretations have developed the literature on *Ulysses* in important ways, they inevitably represent Molly as a generic sign, which prevents her from transcending the symbolic constructions that typify her amatory predecessors.<sup>115</sup> By contrast, by reading her thoughts in “Penelope” as an “indispensable countersign,” Joyce forces us to view Molly as an actualized character who struggles to balance her sexual frustration and marital isolation with her overall affection for Bloom. Not only does this enhance his depiction of “a person whose loneliness, loss, and wistful optimism is every bit as moving as that of her generally sympathetically received husband” (Callow 466), it also enables us to witness her reciprocal affirmation of Bloom’s love, which bolsters the legitimacy of their relationship as a whole. The affection inherent in their marriage may be initiated through Bloom’s thoughts, but its enduring vitality is confirmed by Molly’s concluding “yes,” making “Penelope” the critical site for the first reciprocal embrace of otherness within the Joycean oeuvre.

---

<sup>112</sup> Elaine Unkeless similarly writes, “From chaos Gea-Tellus sprang, and from the dullness and triviality of her existence, Molly, in the last two pages of her monologue, is transfigured into someone who is more accepting than the character portrayed previously ... By his magnificent language, [Joyce] transforms Molly into the rolling earth, amoral, indifferent” (164).

<sup>113</sup> Froula also notes that Molly has been read by “Robert M. Adams, as ‘a slut, a sloven, and a voracious sexual animal ... in a frightening venture into the unconsciousness of evil’; Robert Richardson as ‘howling like a bitch in heat’; [and] J. Mitchell Morse, as a figure of ‘sterility, perversion, disease, and death,’ ‘a dirty joke’ whom ‘No one regards ... as anything but a whore’” (171)

<sup>114</sup> Marilyn French argues that “her relation to actual women is only tangential. She is built of shreds of realistic but very conventional characteristics of women” (259).

<sup>115</sup> For example, Unkeless stresses that “if Molly transcends her daily existence, she does so as a symbol, not as an individual. In magnifying her significance, Joyce dehumanizes her” (164). French also contends that “to discuss her as if she were a discrete and autonomous character is to mistake her function in the novel” (259)

## I. Don Poldo de la Flora

Although Molly and Bloom find themselves at opposing ends of the text's adulterous affair, they come to grips with the implications of that affair in remarkably similar ways. Like Bloom's meditations throughout his Odyssean journey, Molly's thoughts in "Penelope" utilize memories to interpret her present day situation, relying upon her encounters with Mulvey and Gardner to shape her attitudes towards Boylan and Bloom. While Devlin contends that "the content of Molly's recollections often renders explicit the distance and difference between former selves," reading her reflections on Gibraltar with respect to her Dublin situation dissolves this "critical distance between past and present," revealing the importance of her youthful experiences in shaping her perceptions of her contemporary lovers ("Pretending" 87). Mrs. Marion Bloom may bear little resemblance to Molly Tweedy, but the narrative fluidity of "Penelope" frequently unites this double life of Molly Bloom, as the passion that encapsulated her excitement over Mulvey's and Gardner's courtships spills over into her thoughts of Bloom and provides hope for a reconciliation. By recalling her encounters in Gibraltar and her affair with Boylan, Molly provides the historical context needed to interpret her loving attitudes on Bloomsday and reawakens the passion of that past life, which enables her to melt her present-day marital stagnation through the warmth of the sun over Howth Head.

### A. The Moorish Wall

Molly's primary memories from Gibraltar involve her interactions with "Jack Joe Harry" Mulvey (*U* 18.818), with whom she experiences her first kiss under the Moorish wall. One could argue that these recollections constitute a retreat from her marriage into past bliss, which demonstrates the growing distance between Molly and Bloom.

However, when we read her thoughts of Mulvey with respect to her contemporary relationships, we discover that her memories of him are framed through her attempts to negotiate her feelings for Bloom. In that sense, Mulvey does not serve as an alternative to Bloom, but instead becomes a memorial symbol that Molly uses to enable the passion of Gibraltar to aid her in reaffirming Bloom.

Molly's inability to represent Mulvey as a fleshed out character illustrates his role as more of a reclamation of than an alternative to Bloom. She frequently uses Mulvey to guide her present-day contemplations of Boylan and Bloom, but when she attempts to paint a detailed portrait of her former lover, her memories fall short of encapsulating his identity. Molly even has trouble remembering his name, referring to him as "Jack Joe Harry Mulvey was it" and noting that he was "I think a lieutenant" (*U* 18.818-9). When she tries to remember his appearance, she gets his face mixed up with Lieutenant Gardner's ("no he hadnt a moustache that was Gardner yes I can see his face cleanshaven" [*U* 18.872-3]), which prevents her from conveying Mulvey's identity to any substantive degree. Molly's failure to remember Mulvey beyond the passion of their courtship thus compels her to focus on his actions instead of his person, which transforms him into a yardstick by which Molly can evaluate her two contemporary suitors. Through her recollections of Mulvey, Molly rediscovers her love for Bloom, which enables her to move beyond Boylan's advances and towards the reclamation of her marriage.

Mulvey's introduction demonstrates his role in guiding Molly's feelings on Bloomsday. While her recollections of Mulvey dominate the fourth and fifth sentences of "Penelope," these passages are bookended by Molly's perceptions of the train engine

that develop the musical motif for the Blooms' reconciliation. By beginning the fourth sentence with Molly noting the similarities between the "frseeeeeeeefronnng" of the train and the "the end of Loves old sweeeeetsonnng" (*U* 18.596; 598), Joyce shapes the passage into a rebuttal of Molly's desire for Boylan's return at the end of the third sentence. Similarly, her concluding thoughts in the fifth sentence are interrupted by the "frseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeefrong" of "that train again" and end with her "pianissimo" farting to the "sweeeee ... tsong" of the engine (*U* 874; 908). By using *Love's Old Sweet Song* to frame the Mulvey passages in "Penelope," Joyce enables the redemptive potential of the piece to pervade these sections of the chapter. Thus, Molly's memories of her earliest romantic experience become a method to infuse her marriage with the passion of Gibraltar to move past Bloomsday's liaison.

Additionally, Molly's first references to Mulvey demonstrate the role his memory plays in restoring the Blooms' marriage. By noting that she once loaned Bloom *Henry Dunbar* "with Mulveys photo in it so as he see I wasnt without" (*U* 18.655-6), Molly directly ties the success of her amorous past to the success of her relationship with Bloom, using Mulvey's photo as a marker of her desirability to entice her contemporary suitor. By introducing Mulvey this way, Joyce shows that the primary importance of his memory is to enable Molly to advance her relationship with Bloom, and her use of the photo during their courtship compels us to read her memories in "Penelope" as a present-day version of this strategy. Similarly, Molly's thoughts of Mulvey highlight her dissatisfaction with Boylan, as her disappointment over Boylan's terse love note contrasts with her excitement over receiving her first letter from Mulvey. By characterizing Molly's initial attraction to Mulvey in terms of his written correspondence ("an admirer

he signed it I near jumped out of my skin" [U 18.762]), Joyce positions Mulvey as a marker of amorous value that Molly utilizes to qualify her feelings for Boylan, especially considering that this description of Mulvey immediately follows her dissatisfaction with both Boylan's letter ("I hope hell write me a longer letter the next time if its a thing he really likes me ... his wasnt much" [U 18.730-1; 735]) and his sexual dismissal of women ("its all very fine for them but as for being a woman as soon as youre older they might as well throw you out in the bottom of the ashpit" [U 18.745-7]). When we recall her fondness for Bloom's letters during their courtship, we see that Molly's love of romantic correspondence compels her to prefer Bloom's passion to Boylan's brutishness, which enables her memory of Mulvey's letter to guide her away from Boylan and towards Bloom. Thus, Molly's initial thoughts of Mulvey not only revive the passion of Gibraltar, they also reignite the warmth of her early relationship with Bloom, demonstrating her ability to use her memories to move past the events of Bloomsday.

Molly's subsequent descriptions of Mulvey also show the connection between him and Bloom. As she recalls their walks around Gibraltar, Molly notes that she told Mulvey that "I was engaged for fun to the son of a Spanish nobleman named Don Miguel de la Flora" (U 18.772-4). This fictitious engagement to Don Miguel de la Flora is significant given that Molly's future husband adopts the name Henry Flower to correspond with Martha Clifford. Of course, Marion Tweedy had not met Bloom when she created this fiancé, but in recalling this engagement to a man "of the flower," Molly ties her experiences with Mulvey to her marriage to Bloom, especially since she later refers to her husband as "the great Suggester Don Poldo de la Flora" (U 18.1427-8). In much the same way that Henry Flower's letters to Dolphin's Barn constitute Bloom's

engagement with the past, Molly's association of Bloom with Don Miguel de la Flora revitalizes her marriage through the passion of Gibraltar. In that sense, the Mulvey passages can be seen as a transition from a fictitious marriage to her eventual marriage (from a Spanish gentleman "of the flower" to Henry Flower), and Molly's association of this "true word spoken in jest" with the "flower that bloometh" demonstrates the viability of her memories of Mulvey in reaffirming her love for Bloom (*U* 18.775).

The bond between Mulvey and Bloom climaxes with Molly's last encounter with Mulvey on the Rock of Gibraltar. Her descriptions of the "firtree cove" in which they laid (*U* 18.790) and the manner in which she seduced Mulvey echo her seductive encouragement of Bloom's proposal on Howth Head, but what is also significant is that Molly's remembrance of this encounter directly bleeds into her contemplations of her present situation. Her recollection of denying intercourse to Mulvey compels her to acknowledge that men are "all mad to get in there where they come out of youd think they could never go far enough up and then theyre done with you in a way till the next time" (*U* 18.806-8), which echoes her earlier frustrations over Boylan's sexual manipulation and rejection. This comparison enables Molly to promote the excitement of Gibraltar over the mechanical lust of Bloomsday, and her observation that "theyre done with you ... till the next time" demonstrates that even if she anticipates the next liaison with Boylan, she also acknowledges the hollowness of this arrangement.

Molly's reflections on the conclusion of this encounter solidify the connection between Mulvey and Bloom. As she remembers them walking through the Jewish cemetery, Molly thinks about the bishop of Lystra's articulations of "womans higher

functions” and “the new woman bloomers,” which compels her to consider her future married identity:

I never thought that would be my name Bloom when I used to write it in print to see how it looked on a visiting card or practising for the butcher and oblige M Bloom you're looking blooming Josie used to say after I married him well it's better than Breen or Briggs does brig or those awful names with bottom in them Mrs Ramsbottom or some other kind of a bottom Mulvey I wouldn't go mad about either or suppose I divorced him Mrs Boylan. (*U* 18.838-46)

Not only does this demonstrate Molly's tendency to conflate her flirtation with Mulvey with her marriage to Bloom, but the acceptance of her married surname over a list of alternatives shows her to promote by extension her marriage to Bloom over a plethora of alternative situations. Even though “Mulvey” and “Boylan” do not incur the same disdain as “those awful names with bottom in them,” neither is praised to the degree that Molly promotes “Bloom,” which shows that the passion stirred by Mulvey has not pushed her away from her marriage.

Mulvey's role as a facilitator for Molly's marital love is confirmed by her final recollections of him in the fifth sentence, where the passion that typified their courtship turns into an abstract regard upon his departure. Even though Molly Tweedy's thoughts of Mulvey arouse her during Mass, Marion Bloom's thoughts pale in comparison to the excitement of her earlier memories, and her wish to have given Mulvey a memento of her collapses under the acknowledgement that she gave his “clumsy Claddagh ring” to Gardner (*U* 18.866). At that point, Molly's passion for Mulvey gives way not only to her thoughts of Gardner, but to the penultimate “frseeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeefrong” of “that train again,” which subordinates the passion of Gibraltar to the vitality of “loves sweet soooooooooong.” Molly's dismissal of Mulvey may constitute the loss of the “dear

deaead days” of Gibraltar “beyondre call” (*U* 18.874-5), but her enduring love for Bloom shows that the redemptive potential of *Love’s Old Sweet Song* remains at the end of this section, setting in motion her acceptance of Bloom at the end of “Penelope.”

The redemptive potential of Molly’s memories is validated on Howth Head at the conclusion of *Ulysses*, where her thoughts of Mulvey interrupt her consideration of Bloom’s marriage proposal. Much has been made of Mulvey’s presence in Molly’s head at this point in the text, as critics argue that her recollections of Gibraltar distance her from Bloom and temper the reconciliatory potential of the chapter’s conclusion.<sup>116</sup> However, when we read Molly’s contemplations of the proposal with respect to her earlier thoughts of Mulvey, we see that her consideration of Gibraltar is simply another site where her reflections on the past guide her acceptance of Bloom. Even though she responds to his proposal by thinking of Mulvey and “so many things he didnt know of” (*U* 18.1582), as we progress through her list of secret memories, we discover that Molly primarily uses these recollections to justify her inevitable acceptance of Bloom, a strategy that she repeats in her marriage bed sixteen years later. Given that the last thought that crosses her mind before she agrees to marry Bloom is of “how [Mulvey] kissed me under the Moorish wall,” Molly’s coy response to his proposal confirms her use of Mulvey to justify her decision that “well as well him as another” (*U* 18.1604-5).

This is especially the case when we consider the grammatical “structure” of the “sentence” that describes Molly’s evaluation of Bloom’s proposal.<sup>117</sup> Even though her

---

<sup>116</sup> For example, Alyssa O’Brien argues that “while the final phrase in ‘Penelope’ is commonly viewed as simply a rush of marital love, reading it archivally, we find that the fantasy of betrothal is blended with many other character referents, travelogue descriptions of Gibraltar, and confusion concerning the identity of the signifier ‘him’” (20).

<sup>117</sup> By “sentence,” I am referring to lines 1582-1605 of “Penelope,” beginning with “I was thinking of so many things he didnt know” and ending with “well as well him as another.”



thoughts of Gibraltar consume twenty-two lines of text (1582-1604), there is not one active verb within these lines to identify a concomitant action to her “thinking of so many things he didnt know”; rather, her list of secret thoughts constitutes a gigantic prepositional phrase that clarifies the only action (“thinking”) that occurs during this passage. In fact, the next identification of a direct action by Molly occurs at the conclusion of this list where she “th[inks] well as well him as another,” which shows the causal connection between her thoughts of Gibraltar and her eventual acceptance of Bloom. Molly’s memories may impose grammatical distance between his proposal and her response, but they also solidify a passionate union between Joyce’s two lovers that demonstrates the importance of the Moorish Wall in affirming the Hill of Howth.

#### B. The Lovely Fellow in Khaki

Molly’s romantic representations of Gibraltar continue through her recalled flirtation with Lieutenant Stanley G. Gardner. Similar to her memories of Mulvey, Molly’s perceptions of Gardner are charged with a passion that is noticeably absent from her reflections on her present situation. Nevertheless, in both cases she uses their memories to move past the dilemma in which she finds herself on Bloomsday, only in this instance, the connection between Gardner and Bloom is more explicit. Whereas Molly’s memories of Mulvey established metaphorical connections between Gibraltar and Howth, her reflections on Gardner directly infiltrate her thoughts about Bloom and force explicit comparisons between her two lovers. For this reason, Molly’s thoughts of Gardner reawaken the passion not only of Gibraltar, but also of Dolphin’s Barn and Roundtown, revealing the extent to which Bloom’s love overcomes Boylan’s lust.

Molly's introduction of Gardner echoes her use of Mulvey to enhance her early experiences with Bloom. As she recounts a sexual encounter with Bloom in the rain, she notes that she "touched his trousers outside the way I used to Gardner after with my ring hand to keep him from doing worse where it was too public" (*U* 18.312-4). Just as she utilized Mulvey's photo to enhance her desirability to Bloom, here she incorporates sexual techniques that she rehearsed with Gardner to maximize his satisfaction, and her descriptions of Bloom "shaking like a jelly all over" demonstrate the extent to which her experiences in Gibraltar have improved her amorous viability in Dublin (*U* 18.315). Molly's subsequent reflections strengthen this connection between the two lovers. During her recollections of the letters that Bloom sent her, Molly remembers that "I liked the way he made love then he knew the way to take a woman when he sent me the 8 big poppies because mine was the 8<sup>th</sup> then I wrote the night he kissed my heart at Dolphins barn I couldn't describe it simply it makes you feel like nothing on earth but he never knew how to embrace well like Gardner" (*U* 18.328-32). Whereas the previous memory utilized a past sexual experience to enhance a more recent encounter, here Molly places Bloom's and Gardner's amorous abilities side-by-side, which enables us to see her preference for Bloom's romantic sensibility over Gardner's sexual repertoire. Even though she concedes that Bloom "never knew how to embrace well like Gardner," her observation confines the lieutenant to the physical realm, whereas her accounts of Bloom writing her letters, sending her flowers, and "kiss[ing her] heart" at Dolphin's Barn establish a more meaningful emotional attachment.

This comparison bolsters Molly's preference for Bloom's affection over Gardner's passion. For one thing, Bloom's courtship occupies a greater portion of Molly's

attention, as she describes in detail the steps that he took to win her heart while limiting Gardner's participation to a vague embrace. Also, Molly uses warmer language to describe Bloom's actions than she does to articulate Gardner's advances. She not only recalls the "8 big poppies" that Bloom sent to her, but specifies the reasoning behind his present, showing that she understands his thoughts and motivations. More importantly, Molly notes that Bloom's kiss in Dolphin's Barn touched her heart instead of her lips, and she explicitly mentions that she "couldnt describe" the feeling it stirred in her (making the kiss so transcendent that it defies description), whereas she simply omits her reaction to Gardner's embrace. Bloom may not physically embrace her as well as Gardner, but Molly's insistence that he "knew the way to take a woman" conveys a more meaningful emotional embrace that rivals any of her recollections of Gibraltar.

Molly's memorial comparison of Gardner and Bloom continues during her subsequent meditations, where her recollections of Bloom's efforts to advance her career turn to thoughts of Gardner's death in the Boer War. As before, she uses an emotional/physical distinction to evaluate her two lovers, contrasting Bloom's concern for her career with the sexual passion that Gardner instilled within her. Here, it seems that Molly's erotic memories of Gardner may win out over Bloom, as the excitement of her descriptions of their encounter ("I so hot as I never felt" [*U* 18.393]) contrasts with her irritated thoughts about Bloom ("he was going about with some of them Sinner Fein lately or whatever they call themselves talking his usual trash and nonsense" [*U* 18.383-4]). However, even though her thoughts of Gardner are more emotionally charged, her descriptions of Bloom's promotional efforts are validated to a greater extent than her memories of Gibraltar. Specifically, Molly combines Bloom's assistance with castigations of the

Dublin cultural society that promotes banal nationalist performances over a major's daughter "singing the absentminded beggar and wearing a brooch for Lord Roberts" (*U* 18.377-8). By placing Bloom's efforts within the context of this close-minded artistic world, Molly shows the just compassion of her husband's desires to advance her career, and her suspicions that Bloom arranged for her upcoming tour establishes a past, present, and future to his generosity that overwhelms the incidental physical pleasure of Gardner.

Additionally, Molly develops Bloom's memories to a more substantive degree than she does Gardner's. By providing a cultural context to Bloom's promotional efforts, Molly comprehensively describes not only his assistance in her occupational pursuits, but also his political relationships, as his interactions with the "coming man Griffiths" (*U* 18.386) and his "Sinner Fein" types broaden our perceptions of Bloom's politics beyond the rumor and innuendo of his fellow Dubliners. By contrast, Molly's descriptions of Gardner barely move beyond a momentary identification. He is introduced in this passage as "Gardner lieut Stanley G 8<sup>th</sup> Bn 2<sup>nd</sup> East Lancs Rgt," which confines his identity to the first line of his obituary, and her sole attempts to describe a personality behind this identification are limited to his being "a lovely fellow in khaki and just the right height over me" (*U* 18.389-90). Again, Gardner's worth is reduced to an abstract physical desirability, while Bloom occupies a more developed space in Molly's memories, enabling her to develop a more comprehensive connection to her husband than to her former lover. Gardner is thus reduced to little more than one of the "finelooking men" who were killed in the Boer War (*U* 18.396), and Bloom's triumph over Gardner in Molly's recollections provides further confirmation of the latter's utility in confirming her affection for her husband.

Molly's use of Gardner's memory to reaffirm her married life is confirmed by her concluding recollections of their relationship. As she continues to lament her subordination to "Kathleen Kearney and her lot of squealers" (*U* 18.878), Molly recalls Gardner's praise of her physical attributes as evidence that "I knew more about men and life when I was 15 than theyll know at 50" (*U* 18.886-7), and her subsequent remarks demonstrate her use of past amorous experiences as evidence of her present marital success: "theyre so snotty about themselves some of those cads he wasnt a bit like that he was dead gone on my lips let them get a husband first thats fit to be looked at and a daughter like mine or see if they can excite a swell with money that can pick and choose whoever he wants like Boylan" (*U* 18.891-5). Although Gardner's identity in this observation never progresses beyond a reflection of her youthful beauty, his praise compels Molly to point to her marriage to Bloom as evidence that she is better off than her competitors. Even though she also isolates Boylan as further evidence of her superiority, his value is limited to that of a "swell with money" that is "excite[d]" by Molly's beauty, which enables Bloom to stand out over his rival. Thus, not only does Gardner serve as a catalyst for her love for her husband, he also enables her to promote Bloom over Boylan, demonstrating the ability of her memories to move her towards a reclamation of her marriage.

Molly's memories of Gibraltar thus become more than simply a retreat from her present situation. By tying her past experiences with Mulvey and Gardner to her romantic dilemma on Bloomsday, Molly enables the passion of her youth to envelop her emotionally stagnated marriage, demonstrating that her affair with Boylan has not dissolved her love for Bloom. She may connect her past to both Boylan and Bloom, but

she only allows the warmth kindled by Mulvey and Gardner to bolster her affection for her husband. If Molly uses her memories as an escape from any part of her contemporary love life, it is from Boylan, as her disgust over the masculine tendency to use and abandon their sexual partners triggers her warm recollections of Gibraltar, which inevitably lead her back to Dolphin's Barn and Howth Head. Thus, Molly's remembrances not only enable past passion to overcome present stagnation, but they also establish a loving framework for her to resolve the situation in which she finds herself on Bloomsday, which provides the necessary catalyst for her eventual reaffirmation of Bloom.

### C. The Tremendous Big Red Brute

We have seen how Molly's memories of Mulvey and Gardner create a memorial link between Gibraltar and Dublin that strengthens her commitment to Bloom. However, although this link provides an implicit promotion of Bloom over Boylan, Molly's reaffirmation of her marriage is even more compelling when she directly compares her competing suitors. Even in her fondest recollections of the affair, her thoughts inevitably return to Bloom and prefer his affection over Boylan's sexual prowess. In that sense, Henke's contention that "Molly's thoughts about Boylan ... are all suffused with an awareness of Bloom" is correct, but the implications of this connection go beyond a simple "awareness" (*Desire* 151). Through her remembrances of her liaison with Boylan, Molly continues the promotion of emotional affection over sexual desirability that comprised her thoughts about Gardner, which indicates that the affair will have no significant detrimental effect on her love for Bloom.

Molly's introductory thoughts about Boylan demonstrate his inevitable subordination to Bloom throughout "Penelope." As she considers where and with whom Bloom had sex that day, she recalls that "the last time he came on my bottom when was it the night Boylan gave my hand a great squeeze going along by the Tolka" (*U* 18.77-8). While she notes the excitement of her initial flirtations with Boylan, the fact that Molly chooses to mention her lover's advances within the context of her last sexual encounter with Bloom reduces her affair to a subset of her marriage. Indeed, although Molly goes into great detail about the affair, she frequently frames her thoughts about her adultery through her broader perceptions of her relationship to Bloom. She acknowledges that he is aware of her infidelity ("he has an idea about him and me hes not such a fool he said Im dining out and going to the Gaiety" [*U* 18.81-2]), asserts that he sent their daughter Milly to Mullingar to facilitate the affair ("only hed do a thing like that all the same on account of me and Boylan thats why he did it Im certain the way he plots and plans everything out" [*U* 18.1007-9]), and blames him for her adultery ("serve him right its all his own fault if Im an adulteress" [*U* 18.1516]). By framing her affair this way, Molly reveals the predominance of her relationship with Bloom in *Ulysses*, relegating Boylan to a subordinate position in her amorous affairs. Even though she castigates and blames Bloom, the marital focus of Molly's explanations for her infidelity trivializes Boylan's role in their liaison, which prevents their new sexual relationship from becoming a viable alternative to Molly's marriage.

Molly's subsequent thoughts about Boylan also demonstrate the artificiality of this relationship. Even when her recollections of their affair are not explicitly framed through her marriage, Molly's opinions about Boylan inevitably invite comparisons to Bloom that

promote her husband over her lover. As she considers the aftermath of their sexual intercourse, Molly wonders “was he satisfied with me ... I wonder is he awake thinking of me or dreaming am I in it who gave him that flower he said he bought” (*U* 18.121-2; 124-5). While these thoughts convey a concern for Boylan’s satisfaction, they also betray an ignorance of his desires, as Molly’s speculation of whether Boylan is thinking about her reveals that she does not know much about him. By contrast, Molly frequently boasts that she understands Bloom better than anybody. She scoffs that whomever Bloom had sex with would not be a significant threat to her “if they only knew him as well as I do” (*U* 18.45-6), and she qualifies his perverse desires by noting that “nobody understands his cracked ideas but me” (*U* 18.1407). Whereas Molly does not know if Boylan would think of her after the affair, she knows Bloom so well that she could “write a book out of [his crazy ideas] the works of Master Poldy” (*U* 18.580), which shows her to be more aware of the otherness of her husband than of her lover. This recognition shows greater long-term potential to Molly’s marriage than to her affair, making it unlikely that Boylan can transcend the role of impersonal sexual partner to become an authentic alternative to Bloom.

Molly’s inability to understand Boylan’s otherness is emphasized further by her thoughts about his reticence. While we frequently hear her mock Bloom’s observations and desires, we barely hear her discuss anything mentioned by Boylan, which emphasizes the lack of substantive communication between them. Even though she frequently acknowledges the pleasure that she experienced during their liaison, her concurrent observation that Boylan is not much of a conversationalist qualifies her enjoyment of the affair. This qualification is initiated at the end of the third sentence in “Penelope,” where



Molly's arousal over her second orgasm with Boylan is immediately tempered by her observation that "he does it and doesn't talk" (*U* 18.592). Although this observation does not express explicit disgust, it does establish the impersonal nature of their relationship. Molly's subsequent thoughts about their affair both develop this communicative distance and reveal the underlying disgust behind her acknowledgment:

that's what you get for not keeping them in their proper place pulling off his shoes and trousers there on the chair before me so barefaced without even asking permission and standing out that vulgar way in the half of a shirt they wear to be admired like a priest or a butcher or those old hypocrites in the time of Julius Caesar of course he's right enough in his way to pass the time as a joke sure you might as well be in bed with what a lion God I'm sure he'd have something better to say for himself an old Lion would. (*U* 18.1371-8)

This observation shows the relationship between Boylan's impersonal advances and Molly's growing ambivalence towards him. Her recollection of him disrobing "without even asking permission" illustrates his ignorance of Molly's desires, and his posing "to be admired like a priest or a butcher" betrays his perception of her as a distant admirer of his prowess instead of an equal participant in their sexual relationship. Her statement that "an old Lion" would "have something better to say for himself" emphasizes their lack of communication, as the silence that Molly initially attributed to his lovemaking spills over to implicate their emotional as well as physical intercourse. This silence prevents Molly from gaining the understanding of Boylan needed to affirm his otherness, and the scorn that develops through these impersonal characterizations of their affair demonstrates that the sexual satisfaction that Molly gains from her adultery will ultimately be insufficient for Boylan to supplant Bloom.

This emotional insufficiency is highlighted by Molly's qualified enjoyment of their liaison. She may relish "the four, five, or six climaxes she purportedly enjoyed with

Boylan,” but her subsequent thoughts highlight the inadequacy of their affair, as her “memory is imbued with the vacuous residue of copulation without sentiment, coupling without *jouissance*” (Henke *Desire* 135).<sup>118</sup> For example, Molly expresses awe over “that tremendous big red brute of a thing he has” (*U* 18.144), but her amazement quickly turns into her recognition that intercourse is “all they want out of you,” a sentiment that she repeats throughout the chapter (“all the pleasure those men get out of a woman” [*U* 18.583]). This demonstrates Molly’s awareness of the lack of intimacy in their liaison, as her argument that men use sex to gain pleasure from a woman reduces the female partner to a dehumanized facilitator of masculine satisfaction. In contrast to the love letters and embraces that Molly desires throughout “Penelope,” Boylan’s mechanical approach to lovemaking constitutes a monologic sexual exchange that subordinates his lover’s desires to his personal pleasure. Indeed, one gets the sense that the “determined vicious look in his eye” carries no recognition of Molly’s satisfaction (*U* 18.153), perceiving her as an emotionless body “with a big hole in the middle” instead of an equal participant in a physical union (*U* 18.151). That she recognizes this lack of reciprocity deflates the satisfaction she gains from remembering their liaison, as even her anticipation for their next encounter is qualified by her thought that men are “done with you in a way till the next time.” Especially when we recall her awareness of Bloom’s concern for her, her descriptions of Boylan’s apathy divorces their encounters from the emotional affection she craves and undercuts the long-term viability of their affair.

---

<sup>118</sup> Patrick Hogan similarly contends that “though she strenuously affirms the satisfactions of her adulterous affair, the afternoon seems to have served primarily to remind Molly of the gaping lack in her own life – a lack from which her sexual ecstasies with Boylan (even if these are not primarily imagined) can serve as little more than a brief distraction” (“Molly” 105).

Boylan's inevitable failure to supplant Bloom is confirmed by Molly's inability to imagine a substantive future with him. Throughout "Penelope," Molly considers the possibilities of subsequent encounters with Boylan, but each of these considerations is immediately undercut by thoughts of Bloom that foreshadow her reaffirmation of her husband. At one point, Molly considers Boylan's potential as a father ("if he was married Im sure hed have a fine strong child"), but she refuses to "[risk] having another ... off him" and her concession that "Poldy has more spunk in him" than Boylan represents Bloom as a more viable candidate, which articulates a more viable familial future to Molly's marriage than to her affair (*U* 18.166-8). Additionally, Molly thinks of sleeping with Boylan in the carriage to Belfast and eloping with him during the concert tour ("suppose I never came back what would they say eloped with him" [*U* 18.372-3]), but her imagined tryst conjures up memories of Bloom's and Molly's trip to Howth, and her assumption that the elopement would get her back on the stage makes her recall Bloom's multiple efforts to promote her singing career. Even when she wishes that Boylan were in bed with her instead of Bloom, Molly articulates this as a "[wish that] he was here *or somebody* to let myself go with and come again" (*U* 18.584-5; emphasis mine), which reduces Boylan to an interchangeable sexual partner. Even though her statement that she "cant wait till Monday" hints at a sexual future with Boylan (*U* 18.595), her inability to imagine an emotional future to complement their affair makes it unlikely that Molly's infidelity will entice her to reject Bloom.

Through her qualified descriptions of her liaison, Molly shows that her lust for "that big red brute of a thing he has" is insufficient for Boylan to supplant Bloom in her amorous future; in fact, it may not even guarantee a subsequent encounter with Boylan.

While Molly's observation that she "cant wait till Monday" may seem like anticipation for a future tryst, her statement can also be read as an actual inability to delay her satisfaction until her next rendezvous with Boylan, especially when we note her recognition that this encounter cannot occur for three days. ("Thursday Friday one Saturday two Sunday three O Lord I cant wait till Monday" [*U* 18.594-5].)<sup>119</sup> When we read her statement this way, we see that her pleasure overrides her feelings for Boylan, making it probable that she would discard her "jaunty" lover if a satisfactory amorous alternative arose. Oddly enough, that alternative would seem to be Bloom, for her final description of a sexual future occurs not on Monday with Boylan, but the next morning with Poldy. Indeed, her concluding fantasy of seducing her husband and shoving her "adulterous rump" in his face signifies Molly's desire to rejuvenate her physical relationship with Bloom, which makes the progression from this fantasy to her memories of Howth a simultaneous renouncing of Boylan's seed for Bloom's seedcake. Boylan may have provided her with temporary sexual satisfaction, but it is ultimately Bloom with whom Molly desires to share her future, thus constituting the cuckold's final victory over his usurper.

## II. That was Why I Liked Him

Thus far, I have focused my analysis on Molly's use of memory to foster temporal competitions between rival suitors that privilege Bloom over his adversaries. Through her recollections of Mulvey and Gardner, Molly draws on the warmth of past experiences to resolve her feelings for Bloom, and these comparisons compel her to acknowledge that

---

<sup>119</sup> One could argue that Molly is merely demonstrating frustration that her current menstruation prevents her from having sex until Monday's encounter with Boylan, but considering that Molly's fantasized encounter with Bloom at the end of "Penelope" does not necessitate sexual intercourse, the frustration that she articulates here still provides the opportunity for Bloom to reclaim his position in their sexual relationship before Monday's scheduled liaison.

her love for Poldy has not waned despite the events of Bloomsday. Even her erotic memories of Boylan prove insufficient to minimize her affirmation of Bloom, as the distinction she draws between physical and emotional affection privileges the compassion of her husband over the mechanical lust of her lover. However, the most poignant aspects of “Penelope” occur where no such comparisons or competitions are needed, where the rivals for Molly’s attention fade into the background and she relates to her husband on an individual level. Indeed, when Molly focuses exclusively on Bloom, we see that the love that compelled her to accept Bloom’s proposal on Howth pervades her attitude towards him sixteen years later, transforming her soliloquy into the reciprocal affirmation of otherness needed to rekindle the love in their relationship.

Admittedly, Molly’s thoughts of Bloom in “Penelope” lack the uncompromising warmth and affection that typify the rhetoric of her husband’s episodes. This should come as no surprise since her adultery is brought about by frustration over the emotional stagnation in their marriage. Specifically, her acknowledgements that Bloom no longer embraces her or engages in complete sexual intercourse articulate a lack of intimacy that has tempted Molly to stray with Boylan. For that reason, it is somewhat understandable that Molly attempts to resolve her guilt for betraying Bloom’s love by blaming him for her adultery, and the cynical and scornful tone that pervades her thoughts provides a telling contrast to his compassion that highlights their marital impasse. On the surface, this cynicism would seem to classify Molly as one of Joyce’s narcissistic lovers who blame their love objects for their amatory failures. However, while she is tempted to act in manners that push Bloom away, her thoughts reveal her enduring fondness for her husband, which transforms her castigations of him into the “indispensable countersign” to

his episodes in *Ulysses* that is needed for the Blooms to dialogically and reciprocally affirm their relationship.

#### A. Wasnt I the Born Fool

Initially, Molly's memories of Bloom enable a more affectionate understanding of the current status of their relationship. Like Bloom, Molly frequently relies on their past experiences to come to grips with their present situation, and her recollections of their courtship articulate a fondness for him that tempers the bitterness of her rebukes. In fact, Molly's and Bloom's memories frequently overlap, as their attempts to use the past to negotiate the present entice them to reflect on the same events in their early relationship. However, whereas Bloom describes these initial encounters through predominantly affectionate sentiments, Molly's excitement is qualified by mocking allusions to his eccentricities that prevent us from viewing these experiences as purely positive. Not only does this tactic provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of the Blooms' courtship, but it also enables Molly to evaluate her feelings for Bloom more productively, uniting her positive and negative attitudes towards him in a dialogic contemplation of the past that provides for a more effective affirmation of her husband.

For example, Molly's thoughts about their first meeting at Mat Dillon's house echo Bloom's meditations on this event in "Sirens." Just as Bloom reacts passionately to *M'appari*, Molly recalls the "excite[ment]" that she experienced as "we stood staring at one another for about 10 minutes as if we met somewhere" (*U* 18.1181; 1183-4). However, whereas Lionelleopold's remembrances of this encounter are completely encapsulated by this anticipation, Molly's "excite[ment]" is mitigated by her sardonic characterizations of Bloom, as she scoffs at the DoYLES' descriptions of his Parliamentary

future (“O wasn't I the born fool to believe all his blather about home rule and the land league” [*U* 18.1187-8]) and derides Bloom's political argumentation. (“explaining and rigmaroling about religion and persecution he wont let you enjoy anything naturally” [*U* 18.1190-1].) However, even though her memories of their first encounter are more negative than his, her derision of Bloom is bookended by recollections of her amusement over his eccentricities. Not only does her rebuke of the Doyles emerge from her statement that Bloom “used to amuse me the things he said with the half sloothering smile on him” (*U* 18.1185-6), but her subsequent castigation of Bloom's socio-political babbling gives way to remembrances of his perverse sexual desires that revive Molly's amusement. (“O I laughed myself sick at him that day” [*U* 18.1195].) She may be laughing at Bloom, but the fact that this humor replaces her caustic remarks demonstrates the tendency of her affection to supersede her irritation, resulting in a net positive evaluation of their first meeting. Through this recollection, Molly engages in a dialogic assessment of the past that enables her to use her overall affection for Bloom to overcome her frustration with him.

Molly's thoughts about subsequent events during their courtship also engage in this dialogic evaluation of her past. As she scoffs at Bloom's obsession with women's undergarments, she recalls the night on Harold's Cross road when they fooled around in the rain. While Molly derides Bloom's underwear fixation (“drawers the whole blessed time” [*U* 18.305]) and labels him a “Deceiver” for begging her to hide this experience from her father (*U* 18.318), her caustic thoughts dissolve into fonder recollections of their courtship that cast her memories in a more positive light. Not only does she subsequently acknowledge Bloom's intellect through a comparison with “that other fool Henry Doyle”

(“he was always breaking or tearing something in the charades I hate an unlucky man”) (*U* 18.322-3), but Molly’s memories shift from Harold’s Cross road to the “night he kissed my heart at Dolphins barn,” which replaces the disgust over Bloom’s sexual quirks with a passion that “makes you feel like nothing on earth.” By transitioning from the exasperation of Bloom’s physical lovemaking to the excitement of his emotional lovemaking (“I liked the way he made love then he knew the way to take a woman”), she acknowledges her affection for her husband despite her frustration over their sexual relationship. Thus, Molly’s use of the past to interpret the present not only enables her to promote Bloom over her previous lovers, it also constructs the loving framework needed to reaffirm her love for Bloom despite their sexual stagnation, which demonstrates the efficacy of her dialogic interpretation of their relationship.

#### B. The King of the Country

The viability of Molly’s memorial dialogism is shown in her comprehensive evaluation of Bloom’s contemporary quirks. Readers have noted the derisive tone that pervades Molly’s thoughts of Bloom, but it is also important to recognize how her derision inevitably gives way to fonder descriptions of him that dissolve that scorn. Similar to her dialogic recollections of their courtship, Molly’s present-day evaluation of Bloom combines positive and negative assessments of his character that inevitably promote her emotional affection over her sexual frustration. For example, she derides Bloom for sucking up to Dante Riordan at the City Arms Hotel, but that scorn is immediately qualified by her admiration for her husband’s “polite[ness] to old women like that and waiters and beggars too hes not proud out of nothing” (*U* 18.16-7). Especially considering her rebukes of his counterparts, Molly’s concession of Bloom’s



consideration tempers the caustic tone of her initial thoughts in “Penelope,” which establishes the dialogism that comprises her narrative approach to the episode.

Molly’s dialogic acceptance of Bloom continues in her consideration of their conversation at the end of “Ithaca.” While Molly does express frustration over Bloom’s late return to 7 Eccles Street (“well thats a nice hour of the night for him to be coming home at ...Ill knock him off that little habit tomorrow” [U 18.1232-4]) and scoffs at his supposed demand for breakfast in bed (“I suppose well have him sitting up like the king of the country” [U 18.930-1]), what resonates the most from these thoughts is not her frustration over Bloom’s late night activities, but rather her concern for his well being. She may be put off by her husband’s hanging out with medicos to feel young again, but her initial anxiety is a fear for Bloom’s physical and emotional security from being “[led] ... astray” by “get[ting] in with those medicals” (U 18.926). Similarly, Molly’s disbelief over his “demand” for breakfast in bed is immediately subordinated to her “love to hear him falling up the stairs of a morning with the cups rattling on the tray” (U 18.933-4), which illustrates her acknowledgment of his affection for her despite her frustration with his quirks. Even though she derides the substance of their conversation, that derision carries with it both a recognition of his compassion and a concern for his safety, demonstrating that her narrative snarkiness will not seriously impede her love for him.

Molly’s concern for Bloom is also evident in her perceptions of his adult acquaintances. While her revived exasperation over his breakfast “request” initially compels her to minimize his affection (“I suppose Im nothing anymore” [U 18.1244-5]) and suspect him of infidelity (“its some little bitch hes got in with” [U 18.1256]), those thoughts shift to a renewed fear for Bloom’s well being, as her recollection of Dignam’s

obituary compels her to rebuke the other funeral attendees and to protect her husband from their influence: “theyre a nice lot all of them well theyre not going to get my husband again into their clutches if I can help it making fun of him then behind his back I know well when he goes on with his idiotics because he has sense enough not to squander every penny piece he earns down their gullets and looks after his wife and family goodfornothings” (*U* 18.1275-9). Similar to her concern with the medical students, Molly’s thoughts about Bloom’s peers reflect her fear of their opportunistic influence and her acknowledgment of his marital responsibility. Her castigation of Jack Power and Simon Dedalus “making fun of him then behind his back” shows that her affection for Bloom overrides her frustration with his “idiotics,” as her marital insults do not mitigate her impulse to defend him against similar mockery from others. Her insistence that Bloom “has sense enough not to squander every penny piece he earns down their gullets” strengthens her assessment of her husband’s sensibility, and her acknowledgement that he “looks after his wife and family” solidifies her recognition of his unwavering devotion to her and Milly. Thus, Molly’s love for Bloom inevitably tempers her sarcastic descriptions of him, which demonstrates that the events of Bloomsday should not damage her marital affection to any substantive degree.

Perhaps the most conclusive evidence of Molly’s commitment to Bloom concerns her eventual acquiescence to her husband’s sexual eccentricities. While Bloom’s perverse sexual desires are a central target of Molly’s mockery and frustration, when she nears the conclusion of her soliloquy, her attitude towards his fetishes change from derision to acceptance, as her projected strategy to win him back consists of an erotic encounter that caters to his sexual delights. Initially, Molly resolves to sing *Là ci darem la mano* while

flashing her best drawers at her husband to “make his mickey stand for him” (*U* 18.1509-10), which combines Bloom’s efforts to achieve masochistic pleasure through his cuckoldry with his obsession with women’s undergarments. Then, she decides to embrace his kissing of “the plump mellow yellow smellow melons of her rump” by shoving her bare bottom in his face, enabling him to relish his role as the “adorer of the adulterous rump.” Finally, she opts to “tell him I want £1 or perhaps 30/- ... to buy underclothes” (*U* 18.1523), which develops her embrace of Bloom’s underpants fetish while implicitly catering to his excitement over *Sweets of Sin*. This last point is particularly significant because to spend Bloom’s money on exotic underwear parallels the fictional adulteress’s purchase of “frillies for Raoul,” which not only transforms Molly into the “*beautiful woman*” that provokes his arousal, but also reshapes Bloom into Raoul because she is purchasing these “frillies” for him.<sup>120</sup> Molly may have no knowledge of *Sweets of Sin*,<sup>121</sup> but her fantasized reclamation of her sex life with Bloom provides an opportunity for the cuckold to reclaim his physical relationship with his adulteress. Especially when we consider her earlier criticism of Bloom’s sadomasochistic literary preferences (“theres nothing for a woman in that” [*U* 18.495]), Molly’s anticipated encounter with her husband becomes another example of her acceptance of him despite her earlier scorn, which confirms the efficacy of her amorous dialogism in enabling her to move past her marital frustration and towards a reaffirmation of her love for Bloom.

---

<sup>120</sup> This transformation of Bloom into Raoul is supported further by Molly’s earlier recognition that Boylan prefers nakedness over lingerie. (“if its going to go on I want at least two other good chemises for one thing and but I dont know what kind of drawers he likes none at all I think didnt he say yes” [*U* 18.438-40].) Considering that it is Bloom and not Boylan that is enticed by women’s underwear, Molly’s concluding decision to buy lingerie constitutes an explicit promotion of Bloom over Boylan.

<sup>121</sup> “I wonder what kind is that book he brought me *Sweets of Sin* by a gentleman of fashion some other Mr De Kock I suppose the people gave him that nickname going about with his tube from one woman to another” (*U* 18.967-70).

### C. As Well Him as Another

This reclamation of the Blooms' marriage is confirmed on the Hill of Howth, where Molly's recollection of their engagement completes the transformation of her fondness for Bloom throughout "Penelope" into a climactic affirmation. I have already discussed the importance of Mulvey's memory in facilitating this affirmation, but the most compelling evidence of Molly's reacceptance of Bloom occurs through her direct thoughts about him. Initially, her perceptions of his kindness establish a compassionate bond between her justifications for accepting his proposal and the affection she has attributed to him throughout the chapter. Through her recollections of Bloom's statements that "I was a flower of the mountain" (*U* 18.1576) and "the sun shines for you today" (*U* 18.1578), Molly establishes his affection and generosity as the foundation for her love for him, especially when we note that his compassion and understanding were the main reasons why Molly accepted his proposal. ("that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is" [*U* 18.1578-9].) When we place this historical compassion in dialogue with her concessions of Bloom's marital kindness, we discover that her evoking of their engagement unifies "Howth Bloom" with "Eccles Street Bloom" through both the compassion that they display towards her and their ability to understand and affirm her desires. In that sense, Molly's recalled acceptance of Bloom's proposal constitutes an affirmation of both her past lover and her present-day husband, which transforms her meditations on their engagement into her final use of past bliss to compel her acceptance of contemporary love.

The reciprocal nature of Molly's description of their engagement also confirms the viability of their relationship. In contrast to the other amatory quests in Joyce's works,

Molly's acceptance of Bloom on Howth Head is noteworthy in that there is no primary actor, that both Marion Tweedy and Leopold Bloom actively engage each other in a mutual desire to share the rest of their lives together.<sup>122</sup> He may initiate the question as they lie among the rhododendrons of Howth, but her characterization of this memory as "the day I got him to propose to me" represents her as a principal agent in facilitating this union (*U* 18.1573-4). Indeed, Molly's subsequent description of the step-by-step process she employed to aid his proposal reveals her explicit involvement in enabling Bloom to ask her to marry him, which represents both Blooms as active agents in this loving bond and provides a sharp contrast to the unequal entanglements that comprised their narcissistic predecessors.

Molly's description of her acceptance of the proposal confirms the reciprocal nature of their engagement. While she ultimately responds to Bloom's proposal with the text's concluding "yes," it is significant that upon resolving to marry him, she does not immediately respond with this affirmation. Instead, Molly "ask[s] him with my eyes to ask again" (*U* 18.1605), which constitutes an initiated proposal of her own instead of a response to his original question.<sup>123</sup> That Bloom responds to her ocular proposal by reiterating his verbal proposal ("then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes" [*U* 18.1605-6]) confirms the reciprocal bond forged between the two lovers on the Hill of Howth. From this perspective, both Bloom and Molly say

---

<sup>122</sup> Devlin notes that "there is no domination in this scene, nor acquiescent passivity, for both parties – like Shakespeare through his art – act and are acted on. In Joyce's lyric rendering of secular communion, the mutuality is all" ("En-Gendered" 87).

<sup>123</sup> It is also important that Molly asks this question "with my eyes," because this gesture reconfigures the narcissistic gaze over which Joyce's earlier lovers obsessed. Instead of constituting a vacant and impersonal reflection of Bloom's grandeur, Molly reshapes the female gaze to function as a communicative medium, and the fact that her optic question gets its desired response demonstrates the efficacy of this gesture.

“yes” at the conclusion of *Ulysses*, and this mutual acceptance between two lovers constitutes the first reciprocal affirmation of otherness within the Joycean oeuvre.

It is significant that Molly’s recollection of their engagement constructs a temporal bond between Howth Head and Eccles Street, for it instills her concluding memory in “Penelope” with performative, as well as constative, implications. By tying her recollections of Howth to her current perceptions of their relationship, Molly restages her acceptance of Bloom’s proposal within the confines of their marriage bed. Bloom may be asleep and no seedcake may be exchanged, but in comparing him to her past lovers and conceding his enduring compassion, Molly reenacts the thoughts that led her to accept his proposal sixteen years beforehand. In addition, Molly’s recalled desire to “g[ive] him all the pleasure I could” reshapes our understanding of the fantasized encounter with Bloom that preceded this memory, as the bond created between 1888 and 1904 transforms her contemporary attempts to “make him want me” (*U* 18.1539) into a reenactment of her attempts to “[lead] him on till he asked me to say yes” (*U* 18.1580-1). For that reason, her concluding “yes I said yes I will yes” is not simply a recollection of her initial acceptance of Bloom or a resolution to make his breakfast the next morning; instead, Molly’s “yes” constitutes a renewed acceptance of Bloom’s proposal, enabling the passion of Howth to replenish their marital love and replacing the frustration that compelled her infidelity with a revitalized affirmation of Bloom.

Molly’s soliloquy thus demonstrates the dialogic potential of the Blooms’ love for each other. By narrating “Penelope” from the perspective of Bloom’s loved one, Joyce enables Molly to transcend the objectifying silence that defined his previous love objects, and her concluding “yes” confirms the maintenance of a mutual love that counterbalances

the rejection and alienation of his earlier fiction. Molly may characterize their courtship differently from Bloom and her representations of him may lack the uncompromising warmth of his narration, but her restaged acceptance of Bloom's proposal in the face of marital frustration articulates the reciprocal affirmation of otherness needed for their relationship to survive beyond June 17, 1904. Even her mindset complements his, as her ability to consider the minutiae of whatever crosses her mind and her willingness to embrace even the most contradictory of viewpoints articulate a dialogic method of perception that parallels Bloom's embrace of parallax.<sup>124</sup> By reading the "Nostos" episodes with respect to Buber, we see the ability of loving dialogue to overcome a marital breach that would have crippled Joyce's previous lovers, which confirms the viability of reciprocal love as an alternative to narcissistic desire and transforms Molly's concluding acceptance of Bloom into the "indispensable countersign" to her husband's thoughts needed for the Blooms' "passport to eternity."

\*\*\*\*

In a 1921 letter to Harriet Shaw Weaver, Joyce described "Ithaca" as "the end [of *Ulysses*] as ["Penelope"] has no beginning, middle or end" (*LI* 172). This refusal to attribute closure to "Penelope" is significant, for to read its conclusion as Molly's reaffirmation of Bloom does not guarantee that they will live happily ever after. Indeed, Richard Pearce warns us that to impose such closure on *Ulysses* "would restore Molly to

---

<sup>124</sup> Suzan Bazargan describes "Penelope" as a "myriorama" that is "is anything but univocal ... [Molly's] narrative is the site of interaction of a multiplicity of competing voices ('heteroglossia') and is imbricated by hybrid constructions that contain 'two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages," two semantic and axiological belief systems' (Bakhtin 304)" (128). Richard Pearce argues that "Molly's monologue or dialogue or polylogue embodies an alternative to the male gaze—and the male narrative—which allows not only an alternative way of looking but a multiplicity of desires and an intersubjectivity" (47). Finally, Brian W. Shaffer notes that "more than any other episode of *Ulysses*, then, 'Penelope' represents the internal struggle of discourses that make up subjectivity and reveals the great extent to which the subject's 'interior monologue' is always already dialogic—an open-ended, now subversive, now conformist dialogue of self and self, self and other" ("Penelope" 149-50).

the norm of wife” and “define her as an essentialized, idealized figure of feminine vitality” (53), which would both contradict the spirit of “Penelope” and sacrifice her unique identity to an objectified marker of patriarchal obedience. Of course, we need not characterize Molly as an “essentialized, idealized” model of the faithful wife to conclude that she reaffirms her love for Bloom at the end of the text. In fact, Buber concedes the inevitable difficulty of such uncompromising monogamy because the potential always exists for a “You” to become an “It” again, and Molly’s Monday rendezvous with Boylan makes this regression a real possibility. However, it is important to remember that one does not need to maintain an ideal romantic partnership permanently in order to affirm a loved one; one need only possess the inherent respect for otherness at the foundation of such affirmations, for that ability to view an other as a person instead of an object ensures the possibility of even lost love “catch[ing] fire and becom[ing] present” again (Buber *Thou* 90).

In that sense, Molly’s restaged acceptance of Bloom’s proposal demonstrates this ability to rekindle the flames of a dwindling relationship, which enables us to hope for a happy resolution to *Ulysses* even though her affair with Boylan makes us question its monogamous nature. Indeed, the warmth that encapsulates the conclusion of her soliloquy indicates that even though her infidelity signifies a regression of the Blooms’ marriage, the love that pervades her past and present thoughts in “Penelope” shows her continued ability to affirm Bloom’s compassion in the face of their sexual isolation. This compels us to look past her adultery and see the affection that still pervades her feelings for him, and just as she privileges emotional warmth over physical desire, so too are we called to foreground her emotional affirmation of Bloom over her sexual betrayal. Molly



Bloom is far from a perfect person or an ideal lover, but her transgressions should neither cloud our critical vision nor distract us from recognizing that her renewed “yes” at the end of “Penelope” connotes the reciprocal counterpart to Bloom’s enduring affection and concludes *Ulysses* on the most lovingly productive note possible.

For that reason, I disagree with Carol Shloss’s description of Molly’s affair with Boylan as “a ‘speech act’ against marriage [and] a refusal of its bonds” (115). Although her primary action in *Ulysses* is to commit a significant rupture of matrimonial “bonds,” the love that flows throughout her concluding “speech act” constitutes an aggressive affirmation of the viability of her marital relationship. In fact, when we read Molly’s concluding “yes” with respect to Bloom’s concluding kiss in “Ithaca,” we see the renewal of the dialogic, reciprocal connection that was initiated at Mat Dillon’s and solidified on Howth Head, enabling Joyce to articulate a mutual respect of otherness that stands in sharp contrast to the love stories that preceded *Ulysses*. Joyce may have strenuously objected to the sacrament of marriage, but his loving representation of Molly and Leopold Bloom shows that he endorses the “basic principle of marriage” (Buber *Man* 61), and the Blooms’ participation in his first loving dialogue demonstrates that whatever future pitfalls may occur, their mutual acceptance and affirmation of each other guarantees the inevitability of an amorous metempsychosis.

## AFTERWORD

Jeffrey B. Rubin describes love as “a religion with a *fallible* god, in that along with its immense power, it is all-too-humanly imperfect and flawed. It does not provide certain answers or unerring protection. It does not solve all one’s dilemmas” (59). Although Rubin does not explicitly refer to Joyce, his understanding of love perfectly encapsulates the author’s approach throughout his works, as his “fallible” amorous “religion” constructs a realistic alternative to the sentimental depictions of ideal romance that famously earned Joyce’s scorn. When we undertake a Buberian analysis of the Joycean oeuvre, we recognize that neither writer aspires towards a permanent state of uncomplicated, romantic bliss. Rather, their promotions of affirmation over narcissism articulate loving methods of everyday interaction grounded in the “vital acknowledgment of many-faced otherness,” an amorous dialogism that may not guarantee “unerring protection” from “all one’s dilemmas,” but at least provides a productive guide for personal and civic interaction.

Leopold and Molly Bloom convincingly demonstrate that true love “does not offer insurance against loneliness and suffering,” but Joyce would never validate a loving bond that was not “characterized by grandeur as well as by misery ... greatness as well as wretchedness” (Rubin 59; 55). Instead, both characters retain the capacity to love even as their present bond risks crumbling under adultery, which makes them the best equipped of Joyce’s protagonists to move past their impasse and maintain a dialogic relationship with both each other and their body politic. While the narcissistic lovers of Joyce’s earlier fiction fail to fulfill their individual and political desires, the reciprocal affection of the Blooms’ marriage enables both lovers to envision a reconciliation that extends

beyond June 17, 1904. Thus, the progression from the paralysis of the first page of *Dubliners* to the concluding “Yes” of *Ulysses* allows Joyce to articulate a sustained love ethic that provides a practical alternative to the alienation of everyday Dublin.

Of course, the Joycean oeuvre does not end with “Penelope,” and *Finnegans Wake* seems to indicate that the author has regained his nausea over the “lying drivell” about “love for ever.” Indeed, Joyce represents the text’s central relationship as anything but stable, as Humphrey Chimpenden Earwicker (HCE) allegedly engages in a sexual transgression in Phoenix Park and replaces his wife with his daughter in his amatory obsessions. Such complications encourage Richard Beckman to argue that “marriage does not have a good name in *Finnegans Wake*,” describing it as “the slave of biological forces and clumsy social conventions” and “the instrument of personal power” (83). Nevertheless, even though Joyce depicts this marriage as turbulent, he continues to develop his love ethic through Anna Livia Plurabelle (ALP), whose sufferings do not quell her love for HCE. Similar to Bloom, ALP continues to promote her husband’s happiness, supplying him with lovers and writing the letter that defends him against the “old mutthergoosip” that condemns him throughout the text (*FW* 623.3-4). However, the most convincing evidence of ALP’s devotion occurs in the *Wake*’s concluding monologue. Norris is correct that “the act of raising her fallen husband ... takes the form of the simple, loving injunction” (“ALP” 200), as ALP invites him to “rise up now and aruse” and accompany her on a journey through past scenes of their relationship (*FW* 619.28-9). Not only does her response to HCE’s infidelity echo Bloom’s devotion throughout *Ulysses*, but her invitation parallels Molly’s reacceptance of her husband in

“Penelope,” transforming her enduring affection into a powerful attachment that is strengthened through each iteration of the *Wake*.

Initially, the loving tone of ALP’s soliloquy demonstrates her continued fondness for HCE. She indicates being “sharm[ed]” by his calling her “leafy, your golden” (*FW* 619.31; 29), noting that “there’s a great poet in you too” (*FW* 619.31-2), and she lays out HCE’s best clothes because “I want to see you looking fine for me” (*FW* 620.1-2). The affection behind her invitation to “give me your great bearspaw” (*FW* 621.20-1) echoes both Bloom’s loving thoughts of Molly throughout *Ulysses* and Molly’s joyful remembrance of being called a “flower of the mountain,” and ALP’s subsequent assurance that HCE will be “glad that I waked you! My! How well you’ll feel! For ever after” (*FW* 625.33-4) reveals this journey as another opportunity for her to promote his happiness. The warmth of ALP’s “loving invocation” thus demonstrates the lover’s ability to continue to affirm the otherness of her/his beloved despite the difficulties of their relationship, which hints at the possibility of reconciliation at the end of her monologue.

Additionally, ALP’s memories bolster the redemptive potential of her monologue. Similar to Bloom and Molly, ALP frequently utilizes memory to embellish her thoughts of their marriage, which enables her to treat past romance as a catalyst for present desire. Just as Molly uses memories of Mulvey and Gardner to influence her perceptions of Bloom, ALP compares HCE to her past lovers, noting that “You make me think of a wonderdecker I once. Or somebalt the sailder, the man megallant, with the bangled ears. Or an earl was he, at Lucan? Or, no, it’s the Iren duke’s I mean. Or somebery erse from the Dark Countries” (*FW* 620.6-10). Similar to Molly’s promotion of Bloom over her

Gibraltar lovers, ALP's inability to describe any of her past lovers beyond "an earl was he" and "somebery erse from the Dark Countries" undermines our ability to consider these characters as legitimate rivals for her affection. The vague nature of these recollections thus amplifies her comprehensive representations of HCE throughout the monologue, which magnifies the loving potential of her descriptions of their marriage.

More importantly, ALP's memories of her courtship with HCE revitalize their present journey. She recalls the day they first met ("Here, weir, reach, island, bridge. Where you meet I. The day. Remember! Why there that moment and us two only?" [FW 626.7-9]), their marriage night ("Our native night when you twicetook me for some Marianne Sherry and then your Jermyn cousin who signs hers with exes" [FW 624.36-635.2]),<sup>125</sup> and the birth of their daughter ("And blowing off to me, hugly Judsys, what wouldn't you give to have a girl. Your wish was mewill" [FW 620.26-7]). Not only do these memories enable the passion of their courtship to interrupt their marital stagnation, but ALP frequently ties this passion directly to the walk she wishes to take with HCE, as her desire to "go duct to Danegreven" is brought about by her recollections of "when I ran berrying after hucks and haws" (FW 622.20; 17-8) and "[gave] Shaughnessy's mare the hillymount of her life" (FW 623.22-3). By using memories to justify the *Wake's* concluding walk, ALP establishes a redemptive link between past and present, especially when we consider that the trip to Howth spurred by these recollections would enable them to "watch would the letter you're wanting be coming may be" (FW 623.29-30).<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Admittedly, ALP's memories may not be completely positive, but neither are Molly's remembrances of Dolphin's Barn and Roundtown, which frequently combine warmth and derision and ultimately privilege her love for Bloom over her frustration. ALP may castigate HCE as often as she praises him, but her recollections ultimately portray their courtship in an affectionate light.

<sup>126</sup> Norris also recognizes the redemptive potential of ALP's memories, arguing that "in reversing her memories, she reverses, as it were, the husband's fortunes and their decline ('Rise up, man of the hooths,

Thus, when ALP argues that “It’s Phoenix, dear. And the flame is, hear!” (*FW* 621.1-2), she depicts the text’s concluding walk as an opportunity both to redeem HCE and resurrect their love for each other, and the memorial foundation of this walk enables their marriage to “catch fire and become present” like the Phoenix flame she evokes (Buber *Thou* 90).

However, ALP does not allow her rhetoric to descend into maudlin sentimentality. Sheldon Brivic may read her desire to “close me eyes” and “lave” HCE’s faults (*FW* 621.29; 33) as her construction of an “ideal incubus” that “betrays HCE” by projecting a “series of images of the phallus not as an actual penis, but as a magic wand” (“Terror” 153; 152),<sup>127</sup> but I do not see her attempting to whitewash his crimes in order to represent a pristine love object. In fact, ALP is quick to articulate her marital frustration, noting that their relationship forced her to suppress her youthful dreams (“I wrote me hopes and buried the page when I heart Thy voice” [*FW* 624.4-5]) and that HCE’s scheming has harmed their marriage (“All your graundplotting and the little it brought!” [*FW* 624.12-3]). She even acknowledges that he has begun to promote Issy over her as his beloved, recognizing that “you’re changing, sonhusband, and you’re turning, I can feel you, for a daughterwife from the hills again” (*FW* 627.1-3). Rather than filtering HCE’s philandering through a rose-tinted romantic idealism, ALP qualifies her loving representations of him with concessions of their marital problems, which recalls the combination of affection and disgust that Molly uses to articulate her feelings for Bloom.

---

you have slept so long!’ – *FW* 619.25), by reforming him as Mrs. Dedalus tried to reform Stephen” (“Last” 25-6).

<sup>127</sup> Devlin similarly notes that “in the final monologue, though, ALP is imagined tactfully censoring her visual field, reassuring her spouse that she will not look at him in his fallen state, that she will think instead of how he looked when young ... This politely veiled female eye, which blocks out unpleasant sights and replaces them with happier ones, provides an apt figure for the final monologue’s dominant discourse: the kindly, optimistic, and circumlocutory speech is the verbal equivalent of ALP’s censored gaze” (*Wandering* 164).

ALP may desire to view HCE as “the child we all love to place our hope in for ever” (*FW* 621.31-2), but she also portrays this “child” as a “bumpkin” and a “puny” (*FW* 627.23-4), which enables her to articulate a more comprehensive assessment of him grounded in a realistic marital love.<sup>128</sup>

Where Brivic sees ALP representing HCE as her “ideal incubus,” I agree with Norris that she “not only forgives past transgressions but assumes the heroic mission of saving her husband from slander and raising him from his fallen state” (“ALP” 207). ALP may pledge to “lave” HCE’s wrongdoings, but it is more likely that she desires to move past the “horner corner” and “old mutthergoosip” that plagues him throughout the *Wake* than it is that she wants to believe that her husband is faultless (*FW* 623.3-4). Indeed, her argument that “all men has done something” constitutes a conscious acknowledgment that HCE has transgressed (*FW* 621.32), and her subsequent conditions that he must not “start your stunts of Donachie’s yeards agoad again” (*FW* 624.16-7) and “must redoform again” (*FW* 624.20) for them to “cohabit respectable” show that she recognizes his betrayals and still desires to share her life with him (*FW* 624.8). By directly confronting HCE’s transgressions and still envisioning a future with him, ALP turns to and affirms the otherness of her husband, which establishes a solid, loving foundation for her monologue to revitalize their marriage.

---

<sup>128</sup> Critics argue that these hostile representations constitute ALP’s definitive rejection of HCE. For example, Beckman argues that “man, the husband, she will scorn in her dying thoughts. The colossus is reduced to a ‘Cooloosus’ (*FW* 625.22) – a rear end. She alone has defended him, but she regrets her effort” (97). Finn Fordham also contends that “ALP’s letter is that of a woman who will not believe the charges against her city-building man, a woman who forgives the violence of man, defends him against accusations of malpractice and respects his energy. When she dies she seems to realize her mistake” (50). Finally, Devlin writes that “at the end of her speech, the dream wife acknowledges even more frankly the discrepancy between her wishful estimation of her husband and the reality of his achievements . . . The female voice grows more and more overtly dissatisfied, ALP ending her speech with both a verbal and physical rejection of her spouse” (*Wandering* 173). But these negative characterizations of HCE also enable us to view ALP’s love more realistically: even if ALP derides HCE towards the end of the *Wake*, her loving addresses to him as she returns to the sea connote her ultimate reacceptance of their love, which enables their marriage to reignite through the text’s cyclical structure.

This hope for reconciliation is confirmed by the conclusion of the *Wake*. While some contend that ALP's departure signifies her irreparable separation from HCE, reading her return to the sea with respect to her marital affection demonstrates that this return carries with it the possibility for renewal. Even though she feels "looneley in me loneness" and considers "slip[ping] away before they're up" (*FW* 627.34-5), ALP ultimately promotes "[her] only" (*FW* 628.4) over her "cold mad feary father" (*FW* 628.2), desiring to "rush ... into [HCE'S] arms" so that he can "save [her]" from the sea's "terrible prongs" (*FW* 628.4-5). As before, ALP balances resignation with affection, and the warmth that has guided her thoughts of HCE throughout her soliloquy compels her to prioritize her love for him over her "loneness."

Additionally, her parting words confirm the power of memory to maintain an amorous connection despite the lovers' physical separation. As she resigns herself to returning to her "cold mad feary father," she uses her remaining leaf ("I'll bear it on me. To remind me of" [*FW* 628.7]) and their concluding kiss ("Take. Bussoftlhee, mememormee!" [*FW* 628.14]) as memorial markers to preserve their love even when she has emerged back into the sea. That she concludes by observing, "Lps. The keys to. Given!" (*FW* 628.15) confirms the efficacy of these markers because this description of their kiss recalls HCE's past pledge to "give me the keys of me heart" (*FW* 626.30-1), which shows how their parting kiss enables the passion of their courtship to envelop their current situation. Once again, the ability of past bliss to revitalize present desire enables ALP and HCE to move past their marital impasse, only this time the temporal connection is solidified by the "commodius vicus" of the text's "recirculation" (*FW* 3.2), and the circular structure of the *Wake* guarantees that the separation that concludes the novel will



inevitably give way to a reconciliation upon our return to its opening pages. Joyce thus concludes his final work by presenting us with one last lover who ends her journey admittedly “a lone” but unquestionably “a loved” (*FW* 628.15), and although she may temporarily leave HCE to return to the sea, each iteration of the *Wake* will inevitably carry her back to Howth Castle and Environs.

One could object that “the picture of marriage” in Joyce’s final love story “seems bleaker than the one in *Ulysses* because loyalty seems to be one-way” (Beckman 90-1), lacking the reciprocal affirmation needed to constitute a meaningful attachment.<sup>129</sup> Certainly, HCE’s perpetual slumber complicates a mutual confirmation of otherness, and his infidelity towards ALP makes it hard to view him as a viable partner for her. Nevertheless, even if her love is presently unrequited, ALP never loses the ability to turn towards and affirm her beloved. Like Bloom, she remains capable of looking past HCE’s transgressions and hoping for a reconciliation, which allows us to entertain the possibility of their marriage “catch[ing] fire and becom[ing] present” through the iterative cycles of the *Wake*.

ALP’s concluding monologue thus combines the rejuvenating potential of Bloom’s and Molly’s confirmations of otherness, and thus Anna Livia joins her *Ulysses* counterparts as the apex of a Joycean triangle of lovers whose ability to engage in loving dialogue provides a realistic possibility of countering the narcissistic alienation that paralyzed his early fiction. Their affirmations may go unheeded and their social dialogues may be ignored, but the “fallible” nature of this amorous “religion” renders such complications inevitable. It is their ability to “liv[e] through and [transform] ... the

---

<sup>129</sup> Brivic similarly argues that ALP “still calls on HCE, but the beauty of her last appeals has to do with the increasingly obvious fact that he will not reply” (*Joyce* 125).

struggles with dashed hopes and failures, unfulfilled ambitions, and sometimes even bitter resignation, amid blissful union and joyous discovery” that renders them the most capable of Joyce’s lovers of solidifying meaningful relations with their beloveds and their fellow Dubliners (Rubin 59). Recognizing this may make Joyce a tad queasy, but this should not dissuade us from acknowledging that his ability to look past the banal sentimentality of ideal romance and assert a pragmatically-viable love ethic makes him the author of some of the twentieth century’s most meaningful love stories.

## WORKS CITED

- Baccolini, Raffaella. "‘She Had Become a Memory’: Women as Memory in James Joyce’s *Dubliners*." ReJoycing: New Readings of *Dubliners*. Eds. Rosa M. Bolletieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 145-64.
- Balsamo, Gian. "The Necropolitan Journey: Dante's Negative Poetics in James Joyce's 'The Dead.'" James Joyce Quarterly. 40.4 (Summer 2003) 763-82.
- Bašić, Sonja. "A Book of Many Uncertainties: Joyce’s *Dubliners*." ReJoycing: New Readings of *Dubliners*. Eds. Rosa M. Bolletieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 13-40.
- Bauerle, Ruth H. "Bertha’s Role in *Exiles*." Women in Joyce. Eds. Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982. 108-31.
- . "Love—that word debated by All." James Joyce Quarterly. 36.4 (Summer 1999): 813-23.
- Bazargan, Susan. "Mapping Gibraltar: Colonialism, Time, and Narrative in ‘Penelope.’" Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on “Penelope” and Cultural Studies. Ed. Richard Pearce. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. 119-38.
- Beckman, Richard. "Perils of Marriage in *Finnegans Wake*." James Joyce Quarterly. 33.1 (Fall 1996): 83-99.
- Beja, Morris. James Joyce: A Literary Life. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992.
- Benstock, Bernard. Narrative Con/Texts in *Dubliners*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994.
- . Narrative Con/Texts in *Ulysses*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991.
- Bixby, Patrick. "Perversion and the Press: Victorian Self-Fashioning in ‘A Painful Case.’" A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce’s *Dubliners*. Ed. Oona Frawley. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2004. 112-21.
- Boldrini, Lucia. "The Artist Paring His Quotations: Aesthetic and Ethical Implications of the Dantean Intertext in *Dubliners*." ReJoycing: New Readings of *Dubliners*. Eds. Rosa M. Bolletieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 228-46.

- Bormanis, John. "In the First Bloom of Her New Motherhood: the Appropriation of the Maternal and the Representation of Mothering in *Ulysses*." James Joyce Quarterly. 29.3 (Spring 1992): 593-606.
- Bowen, Zack. Bloom's Old Sweet Song: Essays on Joyce and Music. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.
- . Ulysses as a Comic Novel. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989.
- . "Theoretical Bloom." Twenty-First Joyce. Eds. Ellen Carol Jones and Morris Beja. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004. 259-70.
- Brandabur, Edward. A Scrupulous Meanness: A Study of Joyce's Early Work. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971.
- Brivic, Sheldon. Joyce's Waking Women: An Introduction to *Finnegans Wake*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
- . "The Terror and Pity of Love: ALP's Soliloquy." James Joyce Quarterly. 29.1 (Fall 1991): 145-71.
- . James Joyce and Sexuality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Buber, Martin. Between Man and Man. Trans. Roland Gregor Smith. London: K. Paul, 1947.
- . I and Thou. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Scribners, 1970.
- . The Knowledge of Man: Selected Essays. Ed. Maurice S. Friedman. Trans. Maurice Friedman and Roland Gregor Smith. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988.
- . Pointing the Way. Ed. and Trans. Maurice S. Friedman. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.
- Byrne, J.F. Silent Years: An Autobiography with Memoirs of James Joyce and Our Ireland. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953.
- Callow, Heather Cook. "'Marion of the Bountiful Bosoms': Molly Bloom and the Nightmare of History." Twentieth Century Literature. 36.4 (Winter 1990): 464-76.
- Castle, Gregory. Modernism and the Celtic Revival. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

- Cheng, Vincent. Joyce, Race, and Empire. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Clark, John M. "Writing 'Jerusalem' Backwards: William Blake in 'Exiles.'" James Joyce Quarterly. 26.2 (Winter 1989): 183-198.
- Colum, Mary. Life and the Dream. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1947.
- Cotter, David. James Joyce and the Perverse Ideal. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Cross, Richard K. "*Ulysses* and *Under the Volcano*: The Difficulty of Loving." Joyce/Lowry: Critical Perspectives. Eds. Patrick A. McCarthy and Paul Tiessen. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997. 63-83.
- Deane, Seamus. "Dead ends: Joyce's finest moments." Semicolonial Joyce. Eds. Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 21-36.
- Devlin, Kimberly J. "En-Gendered Choice and Agency in *Ulysses*." Ulysses in Critical Perspective. Eds. Michael Patrick Gillespie and A. Nicholas Fagnoli. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. 70-87.
- . "Pretending in 'Penelope': Masquerade, Mimicry, and Molly Bloom." Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on "Penelope" and Cultural Studies. Ed. Richard Pearce. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. 80-102.
- . Wandering and Return in *Finnegans Wake*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Dillon, Eilis. "The Innocent Muse: An Interview with Maria Jolas." James Joyce Quarterly. 20.1 (Fall 1982): 33-66.
- Doherty, Gerald. Dubliners' Dozen: The Games Narrators Play. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004.
- Eagleton, Terry. The English Novel: An Introduction. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2005.
- Eide, Marian. Ethical Joyce. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Ellmann, Richard. "A Crux in the New Edition." Assessing the 1984 *Ulysses*. Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1986. 28-34.

- . “The Big Word in ‘Ulysses.’” The New York Review of Books. 31.16 (25 October 1984). October 7, 2006. <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/5695>>
- . James Joyce: New and Revised Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
- . “Preface.” Ulysses. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler. New York: Vintage Books, 1986. ix-xiv.
- Finneran, Richard J. “That Word known to All Men in *Ulysses*.” James Joyce Quarterly. 33.4 (Summer 1996): 569-82.
- Fordham, Finn. Lots of Fun at *Finnegans Wake*: Unraveling Universals. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Fox, Cheryl. “Absolutely: Redefining the Word Known to All Men.” James Joyce Quarterly. 29.4 (Summer 1992): 799-804.
- French, Marilyn. The Book as World: James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Friedman, Alan W. Party Pieces: Oral Storytelling and Social Performance in Joyce and Beckett. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007.
- . “Stephen Dedalus's *Non Serviam*: Patriarchal and Performative Failure in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.” Joyce Studies Annual 13 (Summer 2002): 64-85.
- Friedman, Maurice. Martin Buber and the Eternal. New York: Human Sciences Press Inc., 1986.
- . Martin Buber's Life and Work: The Middle Years 1923-1945. New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1983.
- Froula, Christine. Modernism's Body: Sex, Culture, and Joyce. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Gabler, Hans Walter. “The Love Word.” James Joyce Literary Supplement. 3 (Fall 1989): 17-8.
- Gifford, Don. Joyce Annotated : Notes for Dubliners and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- Gifford, Don and Robert J. Seidman. Ulysses Annotated: Notes for James Joyce's Ulysses. London: University of California Press, 1988.

- Goldman, Arnold. "The Love Word." James Joyce Literary Supplement. 3 (Fall 1989): 17-8.
- Gordon, John. Joyce and Reality: The Empirical Strikes Back. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004.
- . "Love in Bloom, by Stephen Dedalus." James Joyce Quarterly. 27.2 (Winter 1990): 241-55.
- Harkness, Marguerite. The Aesthetics of Dedalus and Bloom. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1984.
- . A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Voices of the Text. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990.
- Hayman, David. Ulysses: The Mechanics of Meaning. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970.
- Henke, Suzette. James Joyce and the Politics of Desire. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- . Joyce's Moraculous Sindbook: A Study of Ulysses. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978.
- . "Reconstructing *Ulysses* in a Deconstructive Mode." Assessing the 1984 Ulysses. Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1986. 86-91.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm. Joyce, Milton, and the Theory of Influence. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995.
- . "Molly Bloom's Lacanian Flirtee: Law, Ambiguity, and the Limits of Paradise." James Joyce Quarterly. 29.1 (Fall 1991): 103-16.
- hooks, bell. All About Love: New Visions. New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
- Hyman, Suzanne Katz. "'A Painful Case': The Movement of a Story through a Shift in Voice." James Joyce Quarterly. 19.2 (Winter 1982): 111-18.
- Ingersoll, Earl G. Engendered Trope in Joyce's Dubliners. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996.
- Jackson, Roberta. "The Open Closet in *Dubliners*: James Duffy's Painful Case." James Joyce Quarterly. 37.1/2 (Fall 1999/Winter 2000): 83-98.
- Joyce, James. Dubliners. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

- . Exiles. New York: Viking Press, 1961.
- . Finnegans Wake. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- . Giacomo Joyce. London: Faber and Faber, 1968.
- . Letters of James Joyce. Volume 1. Ed. Stuart Gilbert. New York: Viking Press, 1957.
- . Letters of James Joyce. Volume 2. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: Viking Press, 1966.
- . A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
- . Stephen Hero. Ed. Theodore Spencer. New York: New Directions Books, 1944.
- . Ulysses. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler. New York: Vintage Books, 1986.
- Joyce, Stanislaus. My Brother's Keeper: James Joyce's Early Years. Ed. Richard Ellmann. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2003.
- Kimball, Jean. "Love and Death in Ulysses: 'Word known to all men.'" James Joyce Quarterly 24.2 (Winter 1987): 143-60.
- . Odyssey of the Psyche: Jungian Patterns in Joyce's Ulysses. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997.
- Lamos, Colleen. "Cheating on the father: Joyce and gender justice in *Ulysses*." Joyce in Context. Eds. Vincent J. Cheng and Timothy Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 91-9.
- . "Duffy's Subjectivation: The Psychic Life of 'A Painful Case.'" European Joyce Studies 10: Masculinities in Joyce: Postcolonial Constructions. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 59-71.
- Lawrence, Karen. The Odyssey of Style in Ulysses. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Leonard, Garry M. Reading Dubliners Again: A Lacanian Perspective. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993.
- Levitt, Morton P. "Songs of Death and Love: Reprising Those Words Known to All Men." James Joyce Quarterly. 36.4 (Summer 1999): 962-5.



- Mahaffey, Vicki. "Framing, Being Framed, and the Janus Faces of Authority." Critical Essays on James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Eds. Philip Brady and James F. Carens. New York: G.K. Hall and Company, 1998. 290-315.
- . "Ulysses and the End of Gender." European Joyce Studies 10: Masculinities in Joyce: Postcolonial Constructions. Eds. Christine van Boheemen-Saaf and Colleen Lamos. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 137-62.
- Manganiello, Dominic. Joyce's Politics. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.
- McCourt, Frank. The Years of Bloom: James Joyce in Trieste 1904-1920. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2000.
- Mickalites, Carey. "Dubliners' IOU: the Aesthetics of Exchange in 'After the Race' and 'Two Gallants.'" Journal of Modern Literature. 30.2 (Winter 2007): 121-38.
- Milton, John. "Lycidas." Complete Shorter Poems. Ed. John Carey. London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1968.
- Moore, Donald J. Martin Buber: Prophet of Religious Secularism. New York: Fordham University Press, 1996.
- Norris, Margot. "Anna Livia Plurabelle: The Dream Woman." Women in Joyce. Eds. Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982. 197-213.
- . "The Last Chapter of *Finnegans Wake*: Stephen Finds His Mother." James Joyce Quarterly. 11.4 (Fall 1987): 11-30.
- . Suspicious Readings of Joyce's *Dubliners*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.
- O'Brien, Eugene. "'You can never know women': Framing Female Identity in *Dubliners*." A New and Complex Sensation: Essays on Joyce's *Dubliners*. Ed. Oona Frawley. Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2004. 212-22.
- Oxford English Dictionary: Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Pearce, Richard. "How Does Molly Bloom Look Through the Male Gaze?" Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on "Penelope" and Cultural Studies. Ed. Richard Pearce. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. 40-60.
- Polhemus, Robert. Erotic Faith: Being in Love from Jane Austen to D.H. Lawrence. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

- Rabaté, Jean Michel. "The Modernity of *Exiles*." European Joyce Studies 1: Modernity and its Mediation. Ed. Christine Van Boheemen. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1989. 23-36.
- Restuccia, Frances. Joyce and the Law of the Father. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Rice, Thomas Jackson. "The Geometry of Meaning in *Dubliners*: A Euclidian Approach." ReJoycing: New Readings of *Dubliners*. Eds. Rosa M. Bolletieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 41-52.
- Rickard, John. Joyce's Book of Memory: The Mnemotechnic of *Ulysses*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Riquelme, John Paul. "Joyce's 'The Dead': The Dissolution of the Self and the Police." ReJoycing: New Readings of *Dubliners*. Eds. Rosa M. Bolletieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 123-41.
- . "'Preparatory to Anything Else': Joyce's Styles as Forms of Memory – The Case of 'Eumaeus.'" *Ulysses in Critical Perspective*. Eds. Michael Patrick Gillespie and A. Nicholas Fagnoli. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. 9-34.
- Rubin, Jeffrey B. The Good Life: Psychoanalytic Reflections on Love, Ethics, Creativity, and Spirituality. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Sanner, Kristin N. "Exchanging Letters and Silence: Moments of Empowerment in *Exiles*." James Joyce Quarterly. 39.2 (Winter 2002): 275-88.
- Schmidt, Gilya Gerda. Martin Buber's Formative Years: From German Culture to Jewish Renewal, 1897-1909. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995.
- Schwarze, Tracey Teets. Joyce and the Victorians. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002.
- Shaffer, Brian W. "Joyce and Freud: discontent and its civilizations." Joyce in Context. Eds. Vincent J. Cheng and Timothy Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 73-88.
- . "Kindred by Choice: Joyce's 'Exiles' and Goethe's 'Elective Affinities.'" James Joyce Quarterly. 26.2 (Winter 1989): 199-212.

- . “Negotiating Self and Culture: Narcissism, Competing Discourses, and Ideological Becoming in ‘Penelope.’” Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on “Penelope” and Cultural Studies. Ed. Richard Pearce. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. 139-51.
- Shloss, Carol. “Molly’s Resistance to the Union: Marriage and Colonialism in Dublin, 1904.” Molly Blooms: A Polylogue on “Penelope” and Cultural Studies. Ed. Richard Pearce. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994. 105-18.
- Sicker, Philip. “‘Alone in the Hiding Twilight’: Bloom’s Cinematic Gaze in ‘Nausicaa.’” James Joyce Quarterly. 36.4 (Summer 1999): 825-51.
- . “Leopold’s Travels: Swiftian Optics in Joyce’s ‘Cyclops.’” Joyce Studies Annual 1995. Ed. Thomas F. Staley. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. 59-78.
- Silberstein, Laurence J. Martin Buber’s Social and Religious Thought: Alienation and the Quest for Meaning. New York: New York University Press, 1989.
- Sternlieb, Lisa Ruth. “Molly Bloom: Acting Natural.” ELH. 65.3 (1998): 757-78.
- Tucker, Lindsey. “Duffy’s Last Supper: Food, Language, and the Failure of Integrative Processes in ‘A Painful Case.’” Modern Critical Interpretations: James Joyce’s Dubliners. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. 89-96.
- Unkeless, Elaine. “The Conventional Molly Bloom.” Women in Joyce. Eds. Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982. 150-68.
- Valente, Joseph. “Joyce’s (Sexual) Choices: A Historical Overview.” Quare Joyce. Ed. Joseph Valente. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998. 1-16.
- Vesala-Varttala, Tanja. Sympathy and Joyce’s Dubliners: Ethical Probing of Reading, Narrative, and Textuality. Tampere, Finland: Tampere University Press, 1999.
- Wheatley-Lovoy, Cynthia D. “The Rebirth of Tragedy: Nietzsche and Narcissus in ‘A Painful Case’ and ‘The Dead.’” James Joyce Quarterly. 33.2 (Winter 1996): 177-93.
- Williams, Trevor L. “No Cheer for ‘the Gratefully Oppressed’: Ideology in Joyce’s *Dubliners*.” ReJoycing: New Readings of Dubliners. Eds. Rosa M. Bolletieri Bosinelli and Harold F. Mosher Jr. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. 87-109.
- Wright, David G. “The Secret Life of Leopold Bloom and Emily Sinico.” James Joyce Quarterly. 37.1/2 (Winter 1999/2000). 99-112.

Ziarek, Ewa. "Circe: Joyce's *Argumentum ad Feminam*." James Joyce Quarterly. 30.1 (Fall 1992). 51-68.