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A REASSESSMENT OF JAMES JOYCE'S FEMALE CHARACTERS

by

Anna M. Gordon

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

Brigham Young University

December 2008

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Anna M. Gordon

This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Anna M. Gordon in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements, (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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## ABSTRACT

### A REASSESSMENT OF JAMES JOYCE'S FEMALE CHARACTERS

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Master of Arts

The female characters in James Joyce's fiction have received considerable critical attention since the publication of his writings and are often denigrated as misogynist portrayals of women. However, a textual and historical analysis of the female characters in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake* shows them in a more constructive light. Such an analysis reveals them to be sympathetic portrayals of the situation of Irish women at the turn of the twentieth century. An historical contextualization of the characters is essential in any reading of Joyce, but is particularly important for his female characters. An historical and textual analysis also reveals a noticeable shift in the characterization of women from his early novel to his later novels. Additionally, approaching Joyce's fiction from this angle highlights the significant influence of Nora Barnacle, whom he eventually married, on Joyce's characterizations of women.

Joyce started writing *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as a very young man, before he met Nora, and this fact coupled with the choice of an adolescent boy as the narrator explains some of the criticism leveled at the novel. The subject of the

novel, an artist as a young man, requires that the narrator be a self-centered youth. Consequently, the aesthetics of the novel are not focused on the female characters, but this is a result of the somewhat narcissistic adolescence of the narrator, not Joyce's purported misogyny. A close textual reading reveals the female characters as somewhat fleeting as a result of the age of the narrator, but not misogynist creations. The discussion of *Portrait* serves as an introduction to the larger subject of the admirable aspects of his female characters in *Dubliners*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*.

Numerous parallels can be found between the female characters in "Araby," one of the first short stories in *Dubliners*, and the female characters in *Portrait*. However, throughout the progression of the collection of short stories, the female characters become more detailed, in part because the narrator is no longer an adolescent and has become more socially aware. This textual analysis of the female characters in "Araby," "Clay," "Eveline," and "The Dead" is enhanced by an historical analysis that clarifies the similarities between the women in the stories and the situation of Irish women as Joyce observed them, as discussed by Joyce in some of his published letters. An awareness of these close parallels between the characters and the historical setting reveals the characters as sympathetically drawn, eliciting a reader's pity rather than judgments of misogyny.

A similar textual and historical analysis, when applied to Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*, reveals the mosaic-like quality of her characterization. Although she speaks only in the "Penelope" episode, Molly Bloom's characterization is established from the beginning of the novel through frequent references to her by her husband Leopold

Bloom, and other characters throughout the novel. The layered or mosaic-like approach to her characterization is a departure from Joyce's earlier style, but the resultant character is engaging and intricately detailed. An historical and textual analysis accounts for the stylistic aspect of her character and allows for a more engaging perspective of Molly.

Always innovative, Joyce transforms the mosaic style of characterization used for Molly in the characterization of Anna Livia Plurabelle and Issy in *Finnegans Wake* and, instead, creates the characters on an entirely different scale, that of myth. *Ulysses* is a daytime walk through Dublin that could also function as a founding myth for Ireland; *Finnegans Wake* is the nighttime counterpart to a walk through Dublin. Joyce chose to stylistically obscure the language in the novel in order to create the nighttime setting for his dream-like comment on Dublin's founding myths. The characters of *Finnegans Wake* are rooted in mythic tradition also, which serves this aesthetic choice well. An historical and textual analysis of ALP and Issy reveals the universalized and nuanced characterization inherent in their creation and execution. From *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to *Dubliners*, Joyce's early female characters are notable in their own right, and function as important precursors to Joyce's visionary approach to characterization which culminated in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* with Anna Livia Plurabelle.



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I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband Chris: for always believing in me, for always encouraging me, and for helping me find the time to write; and to my daughter, who was no help at all, but that is as it should be.

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## Chapter One

## A Portrait of Emma from the Perspective of a Young Man

The literary reputation of James Joyce is almost beyond compare. Joyce is described as “justifiably famous...one is never done with introducing Joyce, such is the myth of his difficulty and encyclopaedic inexhaustibility” (Coyle 5). The glaring exception to his “justifiably famous” literary genius is his reputed affinity for writing misogynist female characters or, at the very least, incomplete female characters. The perception that Joyce wrote misogynist female characters is so established in Joyce studies that one would be hard-pressed to find a scholarly article or book that is not written from this insular perspective<sup>1</sup>. While these books and articles pay homage to his literary genius, it is almost in spite of his female characters, and these characters are often dismissed, denigrated, or ignored in favor of other subjects and characters. However, careful reassessment of James Joyce’s female characters shows them to be more complex and sympathetically rendered than popular opinion allows. In addition, when examined and studied in chronological order of when they were written, a distinct pattern of progressive maturity and increasing complexity begins to emerge. While James Joyce’s early characters are well-written in their own right, his later female characters are as engaging and complex as Joyce’s language and plot innovations in the same texts, specifically *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

Joyce’s significant literary innovations led his biographer Richard Ellmann to declare of Joyce: “We are still learning to be James Joyce’s contemporaries, to

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<sup>1</sup> The vast body of Joyce scholarship precludes a comprehensive list of all Joyce scholars who hold this opinion, but an abbreviated list includes: Robert Adams, Ruth Bauerle, Susan Bazargan, Shari Benstock, Joseph Campbell, John Coyle, Adaline Glasheen, Diana Henderson, Suzette Henke, Earl Ingersoll, Hugh Kenner, L.O. Mink, Margot Norris, Alyssa O’Brien, Richard Pearce, Bonnie Kime Scott, Lewis Schwartz, Laurie Teal, and Elaine Unkeless.

understand our interpreter” (*James Joyce* 3). The accepted notion of his innovations that places scholars in the position of learning to be his contemporaries should include the characterization of his female characters. As we learn to become James Joyce’s contemporaries and to better understand his creations, this evolving process must include his female characters which are notable parts of all his fiction, from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, his first novel, to *Finnegans Wake*, his final novel. The female characters of James Joyce have been a core component of Joyce studies over the years, but the conversation remains centered on the rather limited perspective that Joyce is a literary genius despite his female characters. I add this reassessment to the body of Joyce scholarship to celebrate the female characters of Joyce’s fiction as notable achievements, especially in light of their chronology, and to offer my own attempt to “understand our interpreter” and his creations.

The women in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Dubliners*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are complex, sympathetic renderings of Joyce’s observations of the women he encountered throughout his life. Often his female characters are written with sympathy in light of the situations they find themselves in. The lack of options available to his female characters and their close ties to domestic concerns accurately reflects the situations Joyce observed in the lives of the women of his acquaintance, from his mother to his sisters and aunts. Joyce paints the portraits of his female characters with an eye for detail, emphasizing the smaller concerns in their lives. His tone is not derisive or mocking; rather he appears sympathetic and observant, noting the difficulties women might encounter and recording them in his fiction.

While the level of detail Joyce includes about the female characters in his early work in *Portrait* or the early stories in *Dubliners* is noticeably less than the copious details associated with his later female characters, this serves an important aesthetic purpose. In both *Portrait* and the first several stories in *Dubliners*, the narrator is an adolescent boy who is, predictably, somewhat narcissistic. While this is a failing indeed on the part of the narrator, it does not constitute misogyny on the part of the author. Misogyny is traditionally defined as hatred of women, but for the purposes of this project, the definition of the term has been broadened somewhat to include criticisms ranging from that of traditionally defined misogyny at the most extreme definition to softer criticisms of his limited treatment of his women characters. In *Portrait*, criticized most often for Joyce's purported misogyny, the scant detail about anyone other than the adolescent narrator serves to highlight his adolescence. With an eye to the age of the narrator and the aesthetic of the novel or short story, the fleeting glimpses of the women in *Portrait* and "Araby" are rendered less objectionable. Although his first attempts at female characters in *Portrait* are not without fault, neither are the fleeting images of Mrs. Joyce, Dante Riordan, and Emma without merit. As much of Joyce's early work is semi-autobiographical, the charge of misogyny is easily associated with both Stephen and Joyce, but this assumption ignores the possibility that Joyce's portrayal of Stephen is tinged with irony; in looking back at himself at that age, he possibly noted his faults and chose to paint an ironic portrait of a somewhat narcissistic young artist. The ironic tone and close autobiographical ties fade somewhat as Joyce's writing career progresses. Examined chronologically, the female characters in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young*

*Man, Dubliners, Ulysses, and Finnegans Wake* could be viewed as a record of Joyce learning to write compelling and realistic female characters.

As the narrator in *Dubliners* ages, best shown through an historical analysis, the female characters become the protagonists in several of the stories. The sympathetic rendering of their pitiable situations references the historical situations of women in Ireland at the turn of the century. Not to be ignored is the influence of Nora Barnacle, Joyce's chosen companion whom he later married. His careful observation of her can be glimpsed in many of his female characters, but particularly in *Ulysses*, in the character of Molly Bloom. She is an intricately detailed and engaging character. The characterizations of Joyce's final female characters, Anna Livia Plurabelle and Issy in *Finnegans Wake* emphasize universality, a key aspect of the aesthetic of the *Wake*. All of these characters are explored in this project to highlight how they resonate as examples of multi-faceted characterization. As part of his female audience, I am uniquely situated to respond to the scholarship about these issues.

This reassessment focuses on a textual and historical analysis of James Joyce's fiction. To read Joyce from a strictly textual or formalist analysis would be to ignore the richness of the sources in which Joyce found inspiration: the people he knew, the places he visited, the sociological and historical situation of Ireland at the turn of the century, and his concurrent love and distaste for Ireland. The thesis uses a wide range of critical sources, including those from various theoretical fields. but the focus of the project is textual criticism. Although some sources are recognized feminist scholars and the subject may appear to imply a feminist reading of James Joyce, that is not the basis of this thesis. These sources, as well as the text of the novels themselves form the basis for

this reassessment. This discussion begins with the female characters in *Portrait*, most notably Emma, in light of her own merit as a character and in light of Joyce's age at the time he crafted the novel and its characters. Discussing the female characters in *Portrait* functions as a natural introduction to the larger subject of Joyce's female characters, as the fleeting glimpses of women in *Portrait* can be seen to be better developed in the later characters written by Joyce, once he and his early adolescent narrator matured. The female characters in Joyce's other fictional works, *Dubliners*, *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* are discussed in the following chapters, showing both Joyce's growth in his ability to portray women as well as the increasing sophistication of female characters in each of his works.

*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce's first novel, is admittedly the most problematic for this project. The protagonist, Stephen Dedalus, has difficult relationships with the women in his life. Part of this can be explained by his somewhat narcissistic tendencies. Specifically, Stephen's difficult relationships with women can be attributed to his age; in the beginning of the novel he is a "nicens little boy named baby tuckoo" who likes to dance while his mother "played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe," and at the end of the novel, he is a young man of nineteen, the age at which Joyce began writing the novel (*Portrait* 1). The same progression in maturity that Stephen experiences from the beginning of the novel to the end can be seen in the progression of the portrayal of the women in Stephen's life. The female characters become more sophisticated as Stephen matures. As the novel is written from his perspective, it is only natural that his observations of the women in the novel should mature as he does, starting from relative immaturity and evolving as he does. The novel's adolescent subject is

clearly stated in the title, and as such one might reasonably expect a noticeably flawed narrator. Stephen's adolescence serves a specific aesthetic purpose which does not constitute misogyny.

The coming-of-age setting for the novel highlights Stephen's awkwardness and his uncertainty in interactions with others, especially those of the opposite sex. To gloss over the awkward moments and Stephen's uncertainty would be a disservice to Joyce's attempts to portray adolescence. However, the adolescent moments in the novel are the examples cited most by critics as the interactions in which Stephen's misogyny becomes apparent. For example, Suzette Henke argues that in *Portrait* Stephen "identifies himself as 'spirit' by nature of his own subjective consciousness; he then perceives the female as the Other, who limits and denies him....[Stephen] disdains his mother's feminine vulnerability and thinks that she is 'not nice' when she cries....Stephen begins to interpret his relationship with his mother as an obstacle to more grown-up ties with his own sex" (*Women in Joyce* 84). The scene in *Portrait* cited in this particular example occurs in the novel within the first few pages as Stephen is brought to Clongowes Wood boarding school by his mother and father. He is hardly five years old. Understandably Mary Dedalus, his mother, is visibly upset, and Stephen is embarrassed by her motherly tears. He thinks to himself, "She was a nice mother but she was not so nice when she cried" (3). A child's embarrassment at his mother's affection on the occasion of leaving her child at boarding school for the first time is entirely natural, given his age and his apprehension at the new living arrangements.

He is very fond of his mother, and when he dreams of his home during his homesick moments at school, it is the image of his mother "sitting at the fire" or of laying



“his head on his mother’s lap” that brings him the most comfort in this foreign environment. Mothers are inextricably linked with comforting thoughts of home and family throughout the novel, not with “emblems of the flesh—frightening reminders of sex, generation, and death,” as Henke argues (*Politics of Desire* 82). One evening in the cold chapel at school, Stephen conjures up the image of a peasant woman he once saw “standing at the halfdoor of a cottage with a child in her arms [...] It would be lovely to sleep for one night in that cottage before the fire of smoking turf, in the dark lit by the fire, in the warm dark, breathing in the smell of the peasants, air and rain and turf and corduroy” (*Portrait* 12). Stephen’s vision of the peasant woman’s home is a “lovely” one that works to ease his discomfort in the cold chapel. It is somewhat idealized of course, but this peasant woman is clearly not the “Other” who “limits and denies him” nor is his mother (*Politics of Desire* 84). Often the women Stephen comes into contact with are associated with comfort in Stephen’s young mind, particularly Stephen’s mother and his tutor Dante Riordan, as would be expected of a very young boy sent off to boarding school. Viewing his mother as a comforting caregiver is not an example of young Stephen’s misogyny; it is an example of a young boy’s affection for his mother and his anxiety at his separation from her. Young Stephen maintains an uncomplicated affection for his mother.

However, as Stephen ages, the opposite sex becomes more of an enigma to him. While Stephen is very young, he hopes to one day marry Eileen, who lives nearby. Her character is not developed beyond a few child-like observations, in part because young Eileen is Protestant and Stephen is Catholic. In Ireland at the turn of the century, love matches that defied the established separation between the religions were not encouraged

and were often forbidden. Through the effort of both their families, Eileen soon fades from the narrative and from Stephen's thoughts. Not long after, Emma Clery becomes Stephen's new adolescent love interest. As she is Catholic, Stephen's family does not object. Her character is developed further than that of Eileen because there is no familial objection to her but, more importantly, because Stephen is older now and slightly more observant. As the events of the novel are filtered entirely through Stephen's thoughts, his age plays a significant factor in how the women characters are presented. His adolescent desires color his perception of the women and girls around him, and not always in the most flattering way. While this would not be acceptable for an adult, for a coming of age novel whose narrative occurs in the mind of an adolescent boy, this is to be expected.

Stephen writes poems to E\_\_\_ C\_\_\_, "verses that told only of the night and the balmy breeze and the maiden lustre of the moon. Some undefined sorrow was hidden in the hearts of the protagonists as they stood in silence beneath the leafless trees and when the moment of farewell had come the kiss, which had been withheld by one, was given by both" (*Portrait* 65). Stephen uses Emma's image freely in his artistic endeavors as somewhat of a muse. As he writes poetry or indulges in erotic fantasies, Emma is often in his mind. His willful command of Emma's image as a muse for his own purposes could be seen as another example of his misogyny, but it is a better example of his moody adolescence and emotional excess. From the romanticized "balmy breeze" and "lustre of the moon" to the imagined mystery of "undefined sorrow" in their "hearts," the scene plays out as an exaggerated manifestation of Stephen's desires. Emma's desires play a small role in the episode, as it is a narcissistic daydream at best, but the focus remains on Stephen to further emphasize his relative immaturity. His thoughts are the lens through

which the events are captured, and they evolve from the beginning of the novel to the end.

The fleeting images of Emma that appear throughout the novel can be viewed as a measuring stick of Stephen's maturity; early in the novel, the images are highly romanticized and idealized and become appropriately less so as the novel progresses. The next time Stephen sees Emma is at a children's party at Harold's Cross, and again the incident is filtered through Stephen's mind. "He did not want to play. He wanted to meet in the real world the unsubstantial image which his soul so constantly beheld" (*Portrait* 59). Stephen admits to himself that the image conjured in his mind is separate from the "real world" Emma, but goes on to imagine his interactions with the "unsubstantial" and idealized Emma, preferring her willing nature to any objections that might be presented by "real world" Emma, as any awkward adolescent might. "They would meet quietly as if they had known each other [...]. They would be alone, surrounded by darkness and silence: and 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 would fall from him in that magic moment" (59). The substantial part of Stephen, the awkward adolescent part, yearns for an "unsubstantial being" to "transfigure" him into something less "weak" and "timid." He fixes upon Emma as being the one for the task and imagines the "magic moment" often. Although he clearly wishes to know Emma better, he must settle for the chance encounters and visions that his immature mind creates. His motivation may be a selfish desire for improvement, but he can hardly be faulted for his adolescent desire to leave his awkwardness behind.

His adolescence manifests itself on the evening of the Whitsuntide play, another example that is often incorrectly construed as misogyny. Stephen encounters two schoolmates outside the theater, and as they recount Emma's entrance into the theater, "A shaft of momentary anger flew through Stephen's mind at these indelicate allusions in the hearing of a stranger. For him there was nothing amusing in a girl's interest and regard. All day long he had thought of nothing but their leavetaking on the steps of the tram at Harold's Cross, the stream of moody emotions it had made to course through him, and the poem he had written about it" (*Portrait* 71). Stephen admits to being "moody" about the subject, and his emotions confirm it: in a few short moments he is "angry," irritated, wistful, and jealous. It is all very serious, nothing "amusing," especially given the fact that he has been thinking all day about the last time he saw her. He catches a glimpse of her, and "her dark eyes had invited and unnerved him" (77), but when she is not waiting for him after the play he feels "vapours of wounded pride and fallen hope and baffled desire" (80). Henke describes his reaction as Stephen's "terror of the female" (*Women in Joyce* 89) made manifest, but adolescent excitement followed by bitter disappointment seem much more apt descriptors. Laurie Teal argues that "Stephen's adolescent narcissism" (66) is much more to blame. Stephen's adolescent focus on himself leaves little room for Emma to make herself known to the reader, but the glimpses caught from Stephen's vantage point hint at an expressive, engaging character. A textual and historical analysis cannot absolve Stephen of the problematic aspects of his adolescent observations, but it can highlight the way in which Stephen's somewhat narcissistic perspective has been slightly misunderstood.

Joyce's characterization of Emma receives harsh treatment from most critics. She is described as "an anonymous girl usually known only by her initials" (Scott 134), or "at best, a failed heroine: her timidity of spirit and conventional demeanor disqualify her as a person with Stephen doing most of the disqualifying through his restrictive, symbolic interpretation of Emma's demeanor in thought and poetry" (B. Benstock 101). Margot Norris is exaggeratingly critical, commenting that Stephen "betrays his misogyny by [...] treating the plump Emma Clery throughout the text as a warm mammal" (*Joyce's Web* 57) and denying her humanity in the face of his own desires. Although Stephen does use her image for his own purposes, he clearly recognizes her as a person rather than an animal. Such criticism almost seems unnecessarily vindictive in the face of his admitted adolescent flaws, clearly stated in the title of the novel. As he matures, his perspective shifts, and the glimpses of Emma are less fleeting and less colored by his adolescent narcissism. This is more of a reflection of his shortcomings as a character rather than hers. Although readers catch only glimpses of her, she apparently lives a full life beyond Stephen's scant observations. The structure of passages such as these seems to suggest a wiser Joyce ironically portraying his immature self. Readers are given glimpses of a more full character than Stephen describes, or even notices. The aspects of Emma's character that are mostly unbeknownst to him fill him with jealousy and chagrin when he notices a small part of them. While the autobiographical ties between Joyce and young Stephen cannot be ignored, the ironic tone of certain passages such as this one suggest that, while Stephen is somewhat short-sighted, Joyce appears not to be.

One of the aspects of Emma's character that receives Stephen's cursory notice that hints at a more complete character is Emma's enrollment at the university. Stephen

is enrolled as well, and he occasionally sees her there. Although he has aged in years, Stephen remains emotionally immature and, as a result, does not speak to Emma when he sees her. He imagines her with Cranly, his friend and schoolmate, but refrains from completing his mental image of her with actual facts. He prefers the more blurry image of her that he creates, and this preference is a vestige of his adolescence rather than evidence of misogyny. The incomplete visions of women characters in the novel serve to highlight Stephen's adolescence, and do so throughout the novel. "Female characters are present everywhere and nowhere in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. They pervade the novel, yet remain elusive. Their sensuous figures haunt the developing consciousness of Stephen Dedalus and provide a foil against which he defines himself as both man and artist. Like everything in *A Portrait*, women are portrayed almost exclusively from Stephen's point of view" (Henke, *Women in Joyce* 82). While some scholars such as Henke argue that the incomplete glimpses of the female characters arise in the novel because women are made the "psychological other, forceful antagonists in the novel's dialectical structure" (Henke, *Politics of Desire* 83), this argument does not allow for the age of both the author during the conception of the novel, nor does it account for the age of the protagonist. Up to this point, Stephen has had very little real interaction with girls, much less girls his own age. His trysts with the prostitutes in the red-light district leave him feeling hollow and ashamed, and Stephen barely speaks to them out of both shyness and humiliation. Although they initiate him sexually, Stephen's conversational skills are not improved through these interactions, and his transition from boy to man is awkward and incomplete. As a result, he can hardly speak to Emma when

he sees her on the library steps at the university. His imagined jealousy and shyness overcome him, and he remains silent.

He reacts similarly when he sees Emma talking to Father Moran and does not speak to her. He thinks of all the women that he has seen and begins to picture them as iterations of Emma, who in his mind is a “a figure of the womanhood of her country, a bat-like soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness” (*Portrait* 215). Stephen appears at his adolescent worst as he shares his developing mind’s perspective of women. At first glance, this description seems far from complimentary, but in reality the description is rife with sympathy for women and for the systematic repression of Irish women in the early twentieth century by both Irish society and the Roman Catholic Church. While Stephen is unable to admit sympathy for Emma, the words chosen by Joyce belie sympathy for her situation, in yet another example of Joyce’s ironic tone in the novel. Emma is a symbol “of the womanhood of her country” who has existed in “darkness” and “secrecy” and “loneliness,” not necessarily her chosen living conditions but rather the conditions that have been imposed upon her, a condition from which she is “waking,” symbolizing a new beginning, or a rebirth.

Significantly, Emma’s soul is given wings upon her rebirth through which she can escape the “darkness,” the “secrecy” and the “loneliness,” perhaps through her education. Emma is one of the few women enrolled at the university Stephen attends. Dublin’s universities had only recently been opened to women, but family opinions were usually effective in keeping daughters from pursuing an education. “In Emma’s time, undergraduate education aimed at Catholic middle-class women had been available for only twenty years in Dublin and was still very unequal” (Scott 135). Emma is actually

one of the more progressive-minded women Stephen comes into contact with, but his immaturity prefers the view of her that he has created in his mind, a not altogether unflattering one. As Stephen watches her from a distance, moving about the square, talking and laughing with other students, Joyce has Stephen recognize in her a change from a being cloaked in “darkness” to a woman whose soul can rise up on the wings of a bat and be reborn. While bats are not the elegant creatures that birds are, their wings give them equal freedom. Joyce describes women in the novel in terms of birds and bats, winged to escape the confines of Ireland and the Catholic Church, “the scullery-maid of Christendom” (*Portrait* 214). Joyce portrays Stephen growing angry as he watches Emma outside the university library, jealous over her intimacy with his friend Cranly, but jealous also because of his realization that Emma is far more than he imagined her to be. That Joyce limited her as a character in Stephen’s mind was not an act of misogyny, but the result of Stephen’s post-adolescent emotional immaturity, which is a very different sort of problem. Joyce appears to be distancing himself from his semi-autobiographical character, and ironically portrays his younger self and his lack of understanding as it once stood. In writing a character so closely tied to himself, Joyce creates for himself a problem that he never quite succeeds in resolving; he fails to create enough distance between himself and his somewhat narcissistic creation. Understandably, many critics conflate the unlikeable adolescent Stephen with Joyce; even Joyce appears to have difficulty separating the two. However, a careful textual analysis reveals certain sections of the novel in which Joyce appears to be distancing himself, and allows a more ironic tone to creep into the narrative.



Joyce allows Stephen's realization to come slowly, and a little late, but it happens nonetheless, and soon extends to the other women in Stephen's life. Through a conversation with Cranly, he realizes that in his mind he treated his mother similarly. Cranly asks Stephen, "Has your mother had a happy life?" to which Stephen replies, "How do I know?" Cranly then asks, "'How many children had she?' 'Nine or ten'— Stephen answered.—'Some died.'—" (*Portrait* 235). In a few short questions, Cranly ascertains what Stephen never had, that his mother "must have gone through a good deal of suffering" (235) and that she was most likely unhappy. Stephen appears not to have noticed. While this could be taken as somewhat heartless and perhaps misogynist, it is more a function of his circumstances. He was sent away to boarding school at a young age, first to Clongowes Wood, then to Belvedere. The family pinned their hopes of advancement upon Stephen, intending that he become a priest, and he was given the best education the family could afford. Consequently, he spent most of his formative years away from his family. Certainly this is reason enough for being somewhat out of touch with his mother's feelings, but his emotional immaturity contributes to his lack of vision as well. Not many nineteen year old boys have the emotional maturity to reflect on the feelings tucked away in the furthest recesses of their mothers' hearts, and Stephen certainly does not. Portraying a nineteen year old boy's self-absorption is hardly the same thing as writing misogynist female characters. Clearly, Joyce understood that losing several children might pain a mother's tender heart, even if Stephen did not or could not.

Once Stephen recognizes his self-absorption and relative callousness in reference to his mother's feelings, he begins to imagine how she might be feeling. He has a limited

frame of reference from which to do so and has not entirely lost his self-absorption so his vision is somewhat self-aggrandizing, but it shows significant progression from the adolescent Stephen who was completely oblivious. “He had spoken of a mother’s love. He 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” (*Portrait* 239). While describing their bodies and souls as “weak” is hardly complimentary, his chivalrous desire to “shield” them from further suffering is more admirable. While he might not understand the suffering caused by losing a child, as in his mother’s case, he can understand that he has more physical strength than his mother and therefore resolves to be more of a protector— not ideal but an improvement, and one that shows some greatness of mind as well as an increased awareness of the feelings of others. This progression comes slowly but, as such, should not be confused with misogyny. Although Henke went so far as to call the novel “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Misogynist” (*Women in Joyce* 82), naming the novel as Joyce did, “The Artist as a Young Man,” already implies that Stephen will be somewhat narcissistic, immature, and awkward, as he is still a young man. And so he is, but not misogynist. Some of Stephen’s narcissistic tendencies even begin to dissipate by the end of the novel.

Stephen’s narcissism manifests itself in his tendency to focus on his own impressions and imaginings rather than on reality; often the female characters appear only in glimpses. Practically speaking, Stephen’s self-absorption is a function of his adolescence, and artistically speaking, Stephen’s mind is the lens for viewing all of the episodes in the novel, particularly his interactions with women. It is a lens that views only part of the original image or event. Some of the recent responses to *Portrait* focus

specifically on the incomplete nature of the female characters but fail to acknowledge the artistic consequences made possible by using this lens. Reducing the women characters to brief appearances on the stage of Stephen's mind emphasizes the thoughts of the protagonist, but this reduction also creates an unusual dynamic among the characters that occupy his thoughts. Although Stephen's observations of the women he encounters are represented individually as somewhat incomplete, when taken as a whole, they form a more complete portrait. Perhaps unconsciously, Stephen confesses this penchant for reducing images to mere slivers. Watching Emma laughing with Father Moran angers Stephen, bringing about this epiphany:

rude brutal anger[...] broke up violently her fair image and flung the fragments on all sides. On all sides distorted reflections of her image started from his memory: the flower girl in the ragged dress with damp coarse hair and a hoyden's face who had called herself his own girl and begged his handsel, the kitchen-girl in the next house who sang over the clatter of her plates,[...] a girl who had laughed gaily to see him stumble when the iron grating in the footpath near Cork Hill had caught the broken sole of his shoe, a girl he had glanced at, attracted by her small ripe mouth as she passed out of Jacob's biscuit factory. (*Portrait* 214)

Stephen acknowledges to himself that he views each girl he encounters as a part of his vision of the idealized Emma, an adolescent metempsychosis, or transfer of their images onto the imagined figure of his beloved. He admits to "distorting" the "reflections" of these girls, selfishly using their appearances to turn his thoughts to Emma. The resultant

composition of the cobbled-together images is loosely based on reality, but in Stephen's mind they form a complete whole.

In terms of physicality, the pieced-together fragments of the women Stephen has encountered form a complete physical body. For example, Eileen is associated with her white hands (*Portrait* 37), young Emma is associated with a "cowled head" and "tapping feet" (63), his Mother with "nice smells" (1) and "red eyes" (59), the prostitute with "round arms," and "breasts" (94), the bird girl with "slender bare legs" (165), the imagined peasant woman with "hanging hair" and a "figure that might be carrying a child" (177), the girl he passes in the street with "curly eyebrows" (215), and specific references to Emma often allude to her "soul" (216). Emma's soul symbolically forms the soul of all the women Stephen encounters, and his brief associations with all of them form the basis for his amalgamation of his manufactured images of women.

The combined fragments, distorted as they are by Stephen's narcissism, represent a thorough sampling of Dublin society. While Stephen filters out much of the detail, the collective whole provides an insightful portrait of Stephen's associations: neighbors, schoolmates, repulsive prostitutes, desirable prostitutes, middle class mothers, peasant mothers, acquaintances, girls Stephen passes on the street, the mysterious bird girl by the sea, sisters, fellow students, aunts, tutors, etc. This varied combination of the women Stephen encounters forms a more complete portrait, albeit through a somewhat adolescent point of view. Stephen's self-absorption and his interest in Emma allows for significant overlap in the descriptors. Almost in spite of himself and his adolescent myopic vision, *Portrait* presents a multi-faceted Dublin woman that incorporates the fragments of Stephen's memories into a somewhat universalized figure. The fragmented

nature of this universalized woman is eminently suitable for the stream-of-consciousness aesthetic characteristic of *Portrait*.

These two visions of Emma, the Emma based on reality and the Emma amalgamation of all of the women Stephen encounters, displease readers searching for a “female heroine” in the novel (Scott 134). *Portrait* has no female heroine, for Stephen is shown as his true self in the absence of a heroine as he creates a vision of Emma imminently suitable for his shyness, adolescent immaturity, and self-absorption. At the end of the novel as Stephen prepares to flee Ireland to “forge in the smithy of [his] soul the uncreated conscience of [his] race,” he begins to shed some of his residual adolescent tendencies but not before he loses the real Emma to Cranly (*Portrait* 247). Stephen leaves Ireland without a physical heroine but retains the artistic version of one in his mind. Joyce originally wrote a physical heroine for the novel in its earliest iteration, but extensive revision over the course of ten years simplified the character of Emma considerably.

Joyce consigned the first version of the novel, entitled *Stephen Hero*, to the flames of the family fireplace upon recognition of its deep flaws (Kenner 48). Rescued from the ashes by one of Joyce’s sisters, the fragments provide a comparison for the evolution of the characters and for the developing artist. The original Emma in *Stephen Hero* bears little resemblance to the Emma in *Portrait* but would please heroine-seekers more than *Portrait*’s Emma. “As a realistic character, Emma Clery of *Stephen Hero* compares favorably with her male counterpart, Stephen [...]. The creation of Emma Clery was a noble experiment, an effort in part to provide a female counterpart to Stephen. But Joyce apparently felt incapable of sustaining the portrait at this early stage”

(Scott 155). What Joyce “felt” about either version of Emma is uncertain, but the outcome of the revisions is a *Portrait* that lacks a heroine. Emma is not a “failed heroine” because she is not a heroine at all (B. Benstock 101). Stephen’s character is best shown without a “counterpart,” as is his progression towards self-awareness and an awareness of the reality of those around him. By removing the *Stephen Hero* version of Emma, the novel also became a less complicated project for the young author, as explained by Scott: “It seems likely that the Emma-Stephen relationship was something that Joyce, like Stephen, was not prepared to handle in his youth. In rewriting, Joyce’s easier path was to focus on the character closest to his own identity, to internalize his conflicts, and to concentrate on his artistic processes. For this new emphasis, it was advisable to make E \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ a faint, peripheral image instead of a lively, interfering, and admirable foil” (Scott 154). Emma’s characterization is a good measure of Stephen’s adolescent progress. Her character comes more sharply into relief as Stephen matures. While it may have been that Joyce’s youthful inexperience left him unprepared to handle her characterization properly as Scott suggests, the result is a more realistic view of an adolescent boy’s mind, and one that highlights the artistic process rather than characterization, suggesting that the book is perfectly titled.

After making the decision to rewrite Emma Clery as a more peripheral character, “Joyce needed only to follow one adolescent through momentous choices in life. And, like a wise parent, he postponed Stephen’s serious union with a woman, insisting that Stephen first establish his aesthetic vocation and life values; quick glances at a number of women were easier to handle” (Scott 154). The fragmented Emma in *Portrait* serves to highlight Stephen’s adolescence and accompanying self-absorption, which is an integral

aesthetic in the coming-of-age aspect of the novel and does not arise out of misogyny on the part of Joyce. If Scott is correct in her analysis that Joyce took the easier road, then it may be said that Joyce was somewhat self-absorbed as well, maintaining his own artistic vision at the expense of certain characters, but not misogynist. Viewed through the lens of Stephen's perceptions, Joyce's characterization of Emma lends credibility to the age of the protagonist, and the accompanying symptom of self-absorption.

One individual, complete female character would not meet the aesthetic needs of the text; however, the combination of brief snapshots of many women which forms a more complete overall portrait of Stephen's perceptions fits the episodic stream-of-consciousness prose of the novel quite well. The women characters in Joyce's later work can be viewed as related to the female characters in *Portrait*, appearing later in a more sophisticated form. Both Stephen and Joyce grow up a little more in the interim. While there is obviously not an exact correlation, the autobiographical parallels between Joyce and Stephen Dedalus are significant enough that a critique of Stephen might be applied to Joyce as well. However, the ironic tone of some of the passages in *Portrait* addresses this concern. Confusing Stephen with an exact representation of Joyce's sentiments occasionally occurs in Joyce scholarship: Henke, a staunch critic of Joyce's female characters, begrudgingly admits that "the historical Joyce seems eventually to have outgrown the kind of Daedalian/Dedalian narcissism he draws so boldly in *Stephen Hero* and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" (*Politics of Desire* 9). For Henke, Stephen and Joyce are apparently closely related on all of Stephen's worst characteristics. However, the moments in which Stephen's character failings become more evident are when Joyce's ironic tone becomes most evident, and he seems to be distancing himself

from Stephen somewhat. This autobiographical problem Joyce creates for himself is alleviated in his later work as the narrators are more distanced from the proceedings than Stephen is. Stephen reappears in a less narcissistic form in *Ulysses*, and Joyce appears to distance himself from Stephen more so in *Ulysses* than he manages to do in *Portrait*. A clear example of the growth shown in Joyce's characterization and perhaps in Joyce himself as an author is seen in the progression from fleeting female characters early in *Dubliners* to more detailed and sympathetically drawn women in the later stories.



## Chapter Two

Women *Dubliners*: “Araby,” “Clay,” “Eveline,” and “The Dead”

The fleeting female characters in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* have a few counterparts in *Dubliners*, but by the end of the collection of short stories, the female characters are noticeably more developed. *Dubliners*, Joyce’s collection of short stories, contains numerous examples of female characters that maintain a more central role in the narrative in comparison with the female characters in *Portrait*. The female characters that populate the pages of *Dubliners* resemble the characters in *Portrait* in structure, but as a result of their more central role, the reader receives a more in-depth perspective on the characters in *Dubliners*, all of whom are different ages and in different stages of life. The age of the characters in each of the stories, including the female characters, echoes the organization of the collection of stories. The organization of *Dubliners* is deliberate; the stories are arranged to follow the maturation process of a young man, starting from childhood, progressing through adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and finally old age. In a letter to his brother Stanislaus in 1905, Joyce explained that “‘The Sisters,’ ‘An Encounter,’ and ‘Araby’ are stories of childhood: ‘The Boarding House,’ ‘After the Race,’ and ‘Eveline’ [...] are stories of adolescence: ‘The Clay,’ ‘Counterparts,’ and ‘A Painful Case’ are stories of mature life: ‘Ivy Day in the Committee Room,’ ‘A Mother,’ and the last story in the book...are stories of public life in Dublin.” (Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 208). While the order of the stories has changed somewhat and other stories were added later, the essence of Joyce’s structural organization remains.

Joyce’s structural organization highlights the progression of the narrator; he begins to see more complicated situations beyond his adolescent desire for his friend’s

sister in “Araby,” for example. He increasingly sees the limited life choices available to the women he observes, and a similar progression exists in Joyce’s body of work as a whole. A shift in the depth and complexity of the female characters in *Dubliners* can be seen from the adolescent novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, to the adult novel *Ulysses*, and finally to the novel of old age, agelessness, rebirth, and funerary traditions, *Finnegans Wake*. This particular chapter addresses *Dubliners* through a textual and historical reading, but the same progression seen in the characters in *Dubliners* as discussed here is echoed in this project as a whole. Joyce’s increasingly detailed female characters have their beginnings in the women in *Dubliners*.

The women in *Dubliners* have received treatment similar to the criticism leveled at Joyce’s female characters in general. Among these critics is Bonnie Kime Scott, who noted that in *Dubliners* “women are placed in self-sacrificing nursing, serving roles...unlike some of the men in *Dubliners* who detect the paralysis of their positions through an epiphany, often touched off by a woman... the women of *Dubliners* are denied such illumination” (Scott 16). Scott fails to acknowledge that *Dubliners* was Joyce’s stated attempt to portray Dublin as it was in the early twentieth century and that the lack of variety in the roles for women is quite possibly much more a reflection of Dublin’s social hierarchies and values at that time than a reflection of Joyce’s misogyny. Limited options and difficult circumstances are hardly conducive to epiphanic moments. In the case of *Dubliners*, as with Joyce’s novels, a textual reading is enhanced considerably by taking into account the historical context in which it was written. As observed by Brenda Maddox, the stories in *Dubliners* are a direct reflection of Joyce’s observation of Ireland: “*Dubliners* however, is no exercise in nostalgia. It is a look back

in anger. Joyce portrays his countrymen as drunks, cheats, child batterers, boasters, gossips, and schemers: failures all, people who cannot take the chances life offers them and who, as in ‘Araby,’ prevent the young from taking theirs” (Maddox, *Introduction ix*). Joyce wrote about what he observed, and a textual reading such as this is only enhanced by a concurrent historical reading, and a contextualization of the stories. Maddox attempts this, noting in her introduction to the Bantam edition that “Joyce believed that when his countrymen saw themselves in ‘the polished looking-glass’ of [his] art, it would be the first step in his countrymen’s liberation...Joyce held that with these stories he was writing the moral history of his country” (*Introduction xi*). Joyce himself said as much in a letter to Grant Richards, a publisher who objected to some of the stories, declaring, “It is not my fault that the odor of ashpits and old weeds and offal hangs round my stories. I seriously believe that you will retard the course of civilisation in Ireland by preventing the Irish people by having one good look at themselves in my nicely polished looking-glass” (Gilbert 63). Viewing the characters as reflections of Irish men and women at the turn of the century, as observed by Joyce, is critical in a textual reading of *Dubliners*; with such historical notes as these, the stories take on added nuances of meaning and added import.

Armed with historical context and with a fresh reading of the text, readers can see that observations such as Scott’s, that the women in *Dubliners* lack the epiphanic moments experienced by the men, while correct, are rendered incomplete. Joyce’s portrait of the women in *Dubliners* is not entirely unsympathetic; intrinsic in the narrative of his short story “The Dead” is a critique of the limited options available to women in early twentieth-century Dublin. Inherent in the short story “Eveline” is a similar critique

of the limited chances the main character has to make something of her life. As a textual and historical reading, this project addresses both the characterization of the women in the texts and the historical context in which they were described by Joyce. A few critics have mentioned the importance of the historical context for the stories, such as Maddox. She notes that the few options available to Irish men and women at the turn of the century were observed and recorded by Joyce in *Dubliners*: the Irish are “people who cannot take the chances life offers them [...]. [Joyce’s] summary judgment of Ireland appears as a word on the very first page of *Dubliners*: paralysis” (*Introduction* xi). By extension, the collection of short stories also contains Joyce’s summary judgment of the predicament of women in Ireland at that time: they were paralyzed and constrained within undesirable circumstances, as evidenced in “Eveline,” “Clay,” and “The Dead.”

The emotional and sometimes physical paralysis Joyce chose to emphasize in his portrayal of Dublin is most evident in the lives of Irish women. What is often mistaken as a limited range of female characters in Joyce’s repertoire is actually due to Joyce’s creation of a narrator who seems sympathetic to the women in the stories. This seemingly sympathetic rendering does not obscure the terrible paralysis and limited availability of social roles for women, evident throughout *Dubliners* but, rather, imbues the harsh reality with an element of humanity. Joyce’s careful representation of this paralysis in his short stories shows an awareness of the situation of women in Ireland at the turn of the century, an awareness unusual for the culture at that time. For Joyce to have written such a narrator and to have written such characters shows him to be a careful observer and faithful replicator in his writing of that which he observed, as well as having an appreciation for those he observed. Stephen is a rather self-absorbed narrator and

colors his observations in *Portrait*; the omniscient narrator of *Dubliners* is, in comparison, without flaw. The straightforward descriptions allow the women characters to be presented with a sense of concreteness and tangibility. The stories discussed in this chapter were chosen for the strength of their female characters even though they are somewhat limited by societal expectations. Many of the stories in *Dubliners* portray public life, and as *Dubliners* is a reflection of Dublin at the turn of the century and women did not participate in public or political life there are few, if any, women characters in the other stories in *Dubliners*. However, as Joyce's attempt to capture Dublin in his "polished looking glass" includes both private and public Dublin life, an historical and textual analysis of the female characters highlights a shift in the characterization from the beginning of *Dubliners* to the end.

The progression of the characterization in the collection can be attributed to the adolescent to old age representations found in the stories, but it could also be explained by an historical contextualization of the collection. Joyce wrote the stories in *Dubliners* over the course of nine years (1904-1913). They were published intermittently during that time before they were compiled into the collection in which they now exist and were published as such in 1914. During that time, Joyce met Nora Barnacle, who became his constant companion until they eventually married. He was deeply in love with Nora, and perhaps she could be viewed as the impetus for Joyce learning more of women than he had known previously and for this heightened awareness becoming manifest in his work. Joyce is described by Ellmann, his biographer, as "ferreting out details" as he "conduct[ed] minute interrogations of Nora" (*James Joyce* 243). His life-long affection

for and interest in Nora is reflected in his work, and its beginnings can be noted in *Dubliners*.

Despite his close observation of Nora and the subsequent understanding he gained, Joyce's early female characters are often seen as weak in comparison to some of his later female characters, especially in light of the difficulties inherent in a male author writing female characters, of which the male gaze is an example. Many of the problematic aspects of female characters written by a male author can be attributed to the concept of the male gaze. First discussed by Laura Mulvey, the male gaze is defined as allowing a reader to view the characters only as a heterosexual man would. Women are said to be relegated to objects, and the events are discussed from a man's perspective. As such, the woman reader experiences the text secondhand and does so by identifying with a male perspective, the male gaze. More importantly, "the power of the gaze, according to Mulvey, derives from the pleasure we take in looking when we are not seen" (Pearce 41). While some semblance of this type of critique could be applicable to early parts of *Portrait*, such concerns are ameliorated by the clear title and the obviously flawed narrator. Stephen Dedalus is looking, but Emma is aware of it, as are readers of *Portrait*, and such transparency may render a critique such as this one less applicable in this case. The omniscient narrator in *Dubliners* is less flawed than Stephen, and while Joyce, as the author, cannot be excused from the fact of being male, the attempt could be seen as an effort in neutrality and appears to significantly reduce the effects of the problems associated with male authorship. A further analysis of the male gaze in Joyce's work would, no doubt, merit discussion in another project.

The presentation of the limited options life has to offer these women as depicted in *Dubliners* is based on the lives of Irish women Joyce knew at the turn of the century, and with this knowledge in hand, the portraits of the women seem rendered to highlight the wholeness of the women characters despite their situational hardships. A few of the stories in the collection are more notable for the strength of their female characters; they include “Araby,” “Clay,” “Eveline,” and “The Dead.” In these short stories, the strength of the characterization is paradoxically shown through the lack of options available to the women in the stories, and the characterization progressively increases in complexity from the beginning of *Dubliners* to “The Dead” at the end of the collection. The third story in *Dubliners*, “Araby,” is most comparable to *Portrait* in terms of characterization. In “Araby,” the narrator describes his passionate observation of his schoolmate Mangan’s older sister from afar, similar to Stephen’s descriptions of Emma throughout *Portrait*. Appropriately, such a parallel exists between the characterization in *Portrait* and “Araby,” as “Araby” is Joyce’s representation of childhood as it verges on adolescence in short story form, much as *Portrait* is a representation of childhood changing into adolescence in novel form. Like Stephen at the beginning of *Portrait*, the narrator of “Araby” has never had much of a conversation with Mangan’s sister, his love interest: “I had never spoken to her, yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood” (*Dubliners* 19). All of his adolescent desires, represented by his “blood” are aroused, and in a typical adolescent fashion, he feels “foolish” when she finally does speak to him and asks if he is going to the Araby bazaar. She expresses her desire to go, and when the adolescent narrator asks her why she cannot attend, she tells him that there is a retreat at her convent she must attend. The boy promises to bring her something if he goes and

then waits anxiously for the day of the bazaar. He waits all day in agony for his uncle to return home so he can go to the bazaar. When his uncle finally returns, late, the boy goes anyway and is terribly disappointed to find the bazaar almost empty and dark, for they have already begun to close.

While the actual narrative of the story has little to do with the object of his affection, this neighbor girl occupies the foreground of the story, even more so than Emma does in *Portrait*. The boy's actions focus on her as he watches her door in the morning so he can walk to school right behind her, hoping to please her by bringing her something from the bazaar. But precious few details of her character are included, even though she does serve as the impetus for the story. She remains an under-developed character because she is seen only through the lens of the adolescent boy, and he unintentionally reduces her to what he sees because that is the extent of his interaction with her: "I did not know whether I would ever speak to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires" (*Dubliners* 20). Her words and gestures are described by the effect they have on him, true to his self-centered worldview which is typical of adolescents and which serves to highlight the change that occurs in the characterization of women in *Dubliners* from this early story to the later ones. In "Araby," Mangan's sister is developed as a character perhaps to emphasize the adolescent nature of the boy observing her and narrating the story, similar to Stephen's characterization of Emma in *Portrait*. The desperate hoping and waiting, the extremes of passionate longing and heart-breaking disappointment of the boy narrator, necessarily limit her character even as she plays an important role in the short story: "I imagined I bore my chalice [her name]



safely through a throng of foes...Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises that I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom” (*Dubliners* 20). She remains the focus of his thoughts and of the narrative, but she is somewhat limited as a character because of the age of the narrator. In “Araby,” the boy is the central character, and the girl is made important through his thoughts, which focus on her. However, in a few of the later stories in *Dubliners*, the central characters are female, and the characterization of the women changes significantly from this early story.

One of these later stories, “Eveline,” contains a female character as the main focus of the story. Although the girl in “Araby” plays a key role in the story, in “Eveline” the emphasis on the female character is much more pronounced. The narrator of the story places considerable emphasis on Eveline’s thoughts, and it almost seems that she is the narrator. As a female character, she is no longer limited in development by the viewpoint of another character. She is limited in circumstance rather than in development, an important distinction. The essential parts of the narrative in “Eveline” take place almost entirely in her mind. While the story itself is written in third person, the unfettered access readers have to her thoughts as she mulls over the details and circumstances of her life lends a more personal sense to the story as it, in turn, elevates her position as the primary voice in the story, a significant change from the female characters in previous stories and from the female characters in *Portrait*. Much like the other female characters in *Dubliners*, Eveline’s life is an unhappy one with a few brief treasured moments of happiness. Her mother died, leaving her to care for two young

children and manage the household, a difficult task given that her father is an abusive, controlling alcoholic. Recently, she met Frank, an Irish sailor, who has promised to take her away to his home in Buenos Aires and marry her. This is the day that they have scheduled for her escape, and she sits at the window, thinking about the letter that she will leave for her family. The final scene takes place on the quay, where she is overcome by doubts which freeze her in place. The fear of the unknown becomes too much, and she refuses to go with Frank.

This story is one of young adulthood in which Eveline feels the pull of both her family and the potential for her own future. It also clearly illustrates the paralysis that Joyce chose to emphasize in this collection of short stories as his country's principal weakness; the word *paralysis* appears on the first page of *Dubliners* and is alluded to on nearly every page after that. In terms of plot, "Eveline" is rather uneventful; however, it is fraught with emotional tension as Eveline ponders her options. She stays in the same physical location for almost the entire duration of the story which highlights the paralysis she feels as a result of her lack of options. When she finally does physically change locations and stands on the quay, she seems physically paralyzed by her thoughts to such an extent that leaving with Frank was probably never a viable option for her, which further emphasizes her emotional paralysis.

Eveline is, above all, tired. It is the first word that Joyce uses to describe her. Exhaustion, brought on by the many demands placed upon her, permeates the story. Her responsibilities include employment as a clerk in a shop and caring for her family while dodging the verbal abuse and threats of physical abuse flung at her by her father. As she sits at the window and muses over her life, she dreams of being married to Frank, for in a

“distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married— she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father’s violence” (*Dubliners* 25). She gives all of her wages to her father for the care of the family and must beg money from him to run the household. She yearns for the respect that her hard work should have earned her. Instead, she fears her father’s abuse and dreams of escaping with Frank. She clearly understands her social standing as a woman as well as its ramifications. She is not respected for her hard work because she is not married, placing her social status entirely at the mercy of the men around her. She is powerless to do anything to change her lot in life other than change her connections to men, and moving from her father to a husband. She is bound by filial duty to continue to give her wages to her father, take care of the household, and live in fear of his anger.

Joyce was a conscientious writer and scrupulous editor, and the inclusion of these details shows a consciousness of the limited resources available to women and the difficult situations of Irish women at the turn of the century. And the details are not given a brief mention but permeate the entire story. Joyce shows Eveline constantly worrying about her respectability and irrevocably tied to the patriarchal figure in her life. Joyce also highlights her limited options, her frustrations about her marital status, and her concern over the potential circulating neighborhood gossip that, as a young single female, she is most subject to. She deliberates over her decision to leave with Frank: “was that wise? [...] In her home anyway, she had shelter and food, she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard, both at the house and at the

business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool perhaps” (*Dubliners* 25). Eveline is torn between the familiar hardships and the unknown. She is resigned to her position. It is this attitude of resignation, of paralysis, that Joyce emphasizes in this particular female character. However, her choice to abandon the plan of escaping with Frank does not necessarily make her a weak character; on the contrary, the richness of the detail of her thoughts creates an emotional tension within the story and, by extension, adds depth to her character. Joyce wrote *Dubliners* based on his observations of his country, and the paralysis he describes, while uncomplimentary to the Irish and to his characters, is a reflection of his findings. For example, Joyce was aware of the widely held fears in Dublin in the early twentieth century that Irish women were being trafficked to Argentina as part of an illicit white slave trade. Mullin discusses Joyce’s awareness of the situation: “To Joyce, Buenos Aires was a city synonymous with the sexual betrayal of women, and the ill-wind of its notoriety blows across ‘Eveline’” (Mullin 191). A textual and historical analysis clarifies this distinction in Eveline’s characterization.

The dynamics of Eveline’s character are extreme, ranging from a sense of injustice to frustration, resolute determination, resignation, and finally to an overwhelming fear of the unknown. Joyce paints her as a conflicted character, caught between two difficult situations. She describes her plan to elope with Frank as an escape, but in reality, it is just another version of a trapped life. Eveline is left without options in life. She must continue in servitude in her father’s house or escape to an unknown existence with a man she only recently met. The emotional complexity of her character, when contrasted with her bleak options, serves poignantly to emphasize the similarly

limited range of options available to the women Joyce would have observed and are highlighted by a textual and historical reading of his work. She has few options for happiness because there were few options for happiness for Irish women at the time.

“Clay” similarly emphasizes emotionally taut female characters caught in situations with limited options available to them. The main character in the story “Clay,” found later in *Dubliners*, is Maria, a cook in a laundry facility. “Clay” is a story of middle age, as compared to the adolescence of “Araby” and the young adulthood of “Eveline.” The structure of “Clay” is similar to that of “Eveline;” both are narrated by an omniscient narrator who discusses the women’s thoughts with more sophistication than the women might. Maria is looking forward to her night off from the laundry facility to do a little shopping and then to visit Joe, one of the boys she tended as a nanny who is now a grown man with a family of his own. She purchases cakes for the children, and plum cake for the adults; after a short conversation with a gentleman on the train, she arrives at Joe’s house. She is warmly greeted, and they spend a pleasant evening together. The rather commonplace setting and somewhat uneventful plot is characteristic of *Dubliners* as a whole, but the significance of this story is found in the commonplace setting and somewhat average protagonist. The narration of the story includes Maria’s thoughts, and as with Eveline, the level of detail creates a compelling character who is trapped by her situation.

Maria is not married and has worked menial, low-paying jobs her entire life. She started as a nanny to two little boys, Joe and Alphy, but after “the break-up at home the boys had got her the position in the ‘Dublin by Lamplight’ laundry, and she liked it” (*Dubliners* 77). Like Eveline, Maria is dependent on the men in her life for both her

social standing and for her employment. Joe and Alphy arranged for her to have this position and even offered to have her live with them, somewhat a necessity as most jobs available to women at the time did not pay enough to sustain a living. Luckily, her job at the laundry included room and board. Although Maria is happier than Eveline, she also is rather limited in her life options. She has no family and is dependent on others both for employment and for the replacement of the familial connections that she herself lacks. She, too, is paralyzed by her situation.

However, although Maria's social situation is dependant on others, her character is engaging and elicits readers' sympathy. Her character's emotional range is more limited than that of Eveline, but that difference can be attributed to the relative age of each of the characters. Younger Eveline is at an emotionally unsteady stage of life with looming life-changing decisions to make, where the older Maria is more settled. However, this settled, seemingly contented air also increases Maria's paralysis. She has no prospects for change, and even something as small as a slice of plumcake for Joe and his wife is out of her realm of control. She cannot find the plumcake when it is time to unveil the surprise and stops just short of accusing the children of eating it. "Mrs. Donnelly said it was plain that Maria had left it behind on the tram. Maria, remembering how confused the gentleman had made her, coloured with shame and vexation and disappointment. At the thought of the failure of her little surprise and of the two and four-pence she had thrown away for nothing she nearly cried outright" (*Dubliners* 80). Although she is generally happy, this small incident frustrates her so much that it is a cogent example of her frustrated life, with many aspects of her life spinning out of her control, and of her being left helpless, "vexed" and "disappointed" at the outcome.

Maddox notes a similar example with the same outcome: “Joyce has his Dubliners fail through unintentionally revealing acts. In ‘Clay,’ a tiny, aging Maria [...] gropes blindfolded at a party for the ring (marriage). Instead she gets clay (death)” (*Introduction* xviii). Her failure to produce the surprise plum cake is failure of the same tincture.

Maria does not despair quite as Eveline does, however Maria experiences a range of emotions that emphasizes the limited social roles Joyce shows available to women. Maria is expected to be the “peace-maker” in the laundry and attributes the quarrels of the washerwomen to being “common” (*Dubliners* 76). She is expected to maintain a peaceful presence in Joe’s home and to avoid discussing tense situations such as the subject of his quarrel with his brother, Alphy. She is also expected to do as she is asked, whether it is to avoid certain topics or to take a drink when it is offered. She is offered “stout and Mrs. Donnelly said there was port wine too in the house if she would prefer that. Maria said she would rather they didn’t ask her to take anything, but Joe insisted. So Maria let him have his way” (80). Although Maria is clearly older than Joe, because of her unmarried status, she must defer to him, even in social interactions of no great significance. Maria does what is expected of her in all aspects of her life, from keeping peace to accepting unwanted drinks in social situations, because that is the only respectable social role available to her and to women of her situation in Ireland at the time Joyce was writing. Without an historical contextualization of the setting and circumstances in the stories, the events in “Eveline,” “Clay,” and the other stories in *Dubliners* could be seen as crafted to limit the female characters. However, a textual and

historical reassessment of the characters allows for a reassessment that renders the characters more emotionally complex, and none more so than in “The Dead.”

The women in the short story “The Dead,” the last short story in the collection, also have limited roles available to them. From Lily, the caretaker’s daughter, to Gabriel’s aging aunts, Kate and Julia, all seem to feel an acute sense of paralysis. However, a textual and historical reading such as this one that incorporates the entire scope of Joyce’s work shows them to be sympathetically drawn, with little evidence of a problematic male gaze that might objectify the women. The women are portraits of the somewhat desperate situations of many Irish women at the turn of the century, Gabriel’s aunts in particular. The events of “The Dead” center on a holiday gathering held at the home of Gabriel’s aunts. After Gabriel and his wife Gretta leave the party, they return to their hotel room. Gabriel’s hopes for intimacy with his wife are shattered when she begins to speak of Michael Furey, a boy she loved long ago and who died very young. While earlier stories thematically center on the different stages of life, “The Dead” manages to cover two of them simultaneously: both middle age and, more particularly, the stage of old age and death. Accompanying this stage of life are reflections and regret, which echo throughout the story. For most of the story, the regret belongs to the women. Both of Gabriel’s aunts are unmarried but fortunate enough to be able to afford to rent part of a house. After the death of their brother, they were forced by necessity to start teaching music to support themselves. Living with the spinster aunts is their spinster niece, Mary-Jane, whose situation is precarious at best. When her aging aunts die, she will find herself in quite a difficult situation, forced to live off the charity of other relatives. All three women are limited to teaching music lessons, for at the turn of the



twentieth century, there are few occupations outside of these lady-like lessons which are socially acceptable for unmarried women of their class in Dublin.

*Dubliners*, according to Florence Walzl, “contains the most comprehensive picture in all of Joyce’s work of the condition of women [...]. In the Ireland of his day, female opportunities were limited, and marriages were few and late, an unromantic business. Bachelors and spinsters abounded [...]. The Conroys seem to be the only married couple to attend the Misses Morkan’s Christmas party” in “The Dead” (36). The pitiable situations and accompanying regret in the story reflect Ireland as Joyce knew it. The regret that permeates the story remains almost unspoken; only Gabriel as narrator speaks of it, articulating his aunt Julia’s fading looks as she ironically sings a song entitled “Arrayed for the Bridal.” Along with Gabriel, all of the women in the story are tinged with traces of regret: regret at spinsterhood, regret about their offspring, and most of all, regret at how their lives have turned out. Regret is one of the results of paralysis. Joyce’s “summary judgment of Ireland [...is] paralysis” (Maddox, *Introduction* x), and as such, it is fitting that the final story in the collection is the end result of years of paralysis: regret. The particular brand of regret in “The Dead” is a manifestation of unmet potential, as shown in Gabriel’s speech. He frets about his speech from the moment he arrives at the party until he begins his speech, worrying about “making himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them...He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure” (*Dubliners* 145). The potential for the speech to be appropriate for his audience, witty, and well-written soon fades under the expectation of and the actuality of its average composition, which

Gabriel feels acutely. He regrets that his hopes for intimacy with his wife are shattered. However, Gabriel's regret in the story is of a different tone than the regret of the women. While his regrets seem small in scope and are noticeable to very few, the regrets for the women are larger and more evocative of a reader's sympathies. The women feel regret for their situations, Gabriel feels regret that his expectations go unmet. Readers pity Gabriel but ache for the women.

While all of the characters in this story feel the weight of their unmet potential, it is the women in particular whose situations garner sympathy and whose characters are the most compelling. These women all have aspects of their lives that are comparable to the lost potential of a bud rose that never blossoms, or is cut off too soon, as in Lily's case. Lily is the servant girl employed by the Misses Morkan, Gabriel's aunts. The story opens with a summary of her situation: "Lily [...] was literally run off her feet" (*Dubliners* 142). She is tired from her party duties, but life experience has worn her out, as well. Lily greets Gabriel at the door when he arrives at the party; they carry on a polite conversation until Gabriel suggests that they might soon attend her wedding. Lily "glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness, 'The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you'" (*Dubliners* 144). Gabriel is shocked that such a young girl could already be so bitter about her future and about potential suitors. As indicated by her response, she probably has had an undesirable run-in with a man which has left her embittered and without hope for a good match. Her bitterness echoes the despair Gabriel feels at the prospect of his speech— that it could have been better, that there could have been more. Although Lily's bitterness expresses the same tone of regret, there is a difference in the timbre of their respective regret.

Gabriel's disappointment seems to extend only as far as his speech, where Lily's disappointment extends to all of her interactions with men. The women in the story may feel the regret that permeates the story more acutely than do the men.

Gretta, in particular, appears to feel regret most acutely. The last scene of the novel closes with Gabriel feeling intense regret that he has never experienced the passion that Gretta appears to have experienced with Michael Furey. He lies down next to Gretta and "thought of how 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" (*Dubliners* 181). Gabriel's reaction indicates wonder at the pain and regret she has felt for many years over Michael Furey's death, as though he has almost no point of comparison from which he could understand how she feels. His regret pales in comparison with Gretta's impassioned weeping and vivid, painful memories. The morning after Michael Furey, shivering and sickly, serenaded her in the cold evening rain, Gretta was sent to her Grandmother's house in Nuns' Island. He died a week later, while she was away. She sobs as she relates to Gabriel the misery of the day she learned of it: "And when I was only a week in the convent he died and was buried [...]. O, the day I heard that, that he was dead!" She stopped, choking with sobs, and, overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt" (180). Gretta seems to have been unable to act in any way other than she did at the time, and now, years later, her regret seems to be, in part, that she did nothing. Perhaps the travel plans were already set, perhaps she was forced to leave. The narrative is vague on this point, but Gretta clearly regrets the circumstances and feels terrible guilt that "he died for [her]" (179). Although the circumstances differ considerably from those of the other women in

the story, as Gretta is not a spinster and seems to be relatively happy with her life, Gretta's regret is as painful as Lily's or Aunt Kate's.

The despair felt by the women can be directly related to the lack of options available to them, not to a more acute sense of despair that the male characters possess. The men in the story, Gabriel in particular, seem awestruck by the depth of regret experienced by the women, even as they also feel regret about their own lives. Gabriel turns from Gretta's weeping so as not to intrude on her grief, but also seems curiously awed by it, as though he does not quite understand it. The narrator appears to understand it, and the discrepancy between the two reactions, Gretta's and Gabriel's, is noted in the story. Joyce observed the limited options available to women in Dublin at the turn of the century, and his description of his female characters in these terms serves to deepen their characters and to draw attention to the social limitations of the period rather than to limit their characterization. The women are characterized as feeling social constraints much more deeply than the men, and particularly in "The Dead."

The characterization of some of the female characters serves to heighten awareness of their social situations. One of the female characters who appears limited in scope is Freddy Malins' mother. Her characterization is tied solely to that of her children. Her place in society is defined as being mother to a son; even her name is eschewed in favor of her title as "Freddy Malin's mother," which becomes more significant given his copious drinking habit. Up to the moment of Freddy's arrival, the Aunts fuss and worry about his arrival and the possible incidents that might arise as a result of his enthusiastic drinking. The Aunts beg Gabriel to look out for him, as they are certain that he will show up "screwed," or drunk (*Dubliners* 147). Freddy's drinking

habits highlight the relative powerlessness of the Aunts and of his mother. Granted, all three are older women, but the authority to deny entry to someone who is not “all right” and who is drunk rests with their male relative. The drunken Freddy Malins reflects badly on both the hostesses of the party and his mother, but particularly on his mother. The Aunts seem quite distressed by his drunken state, and Mrs. Malins seems deeply embarrassed. After Gabriel has been dispatched by his aunts to deal with Freddy Malins, his aunt Kate sighs with relief: “It’s such a relief [...] that Gabriel is here. I always feel easier in my mind when he’s here” (148). Freddy’s mother remains focused on her children, and talks of “the beautiful house her daughter kept in Glasgow, and of all of the friends they had there...” and her son-in-law’s fishing exploits, all in effort to deflect the attention drawn by her son’s antics to the more admirable situation of her daughter (155). As she talks, her tongue is described as “rambling on,” and Gabriel hardly listens, allowing his mind to drift to other topics. Mrs. Malins’ stream of prattle is a thin disguise for her pitiable situation. Her respectability is tied to her children, and only one of them gives her reason for motherly pride. Her regrets are never made explicit, but the certain embarrassment of a display of public drunkenness by your child is cause for regret. In light of her son’s behavior, even her title of “Freddy Malins’ mother” is most unfortunate. Her cause for regret is matched only by her inability to change her situation.

Miss Ivors, another of the Aunts’ Christmas party guests, is a slight exception to the characterizations of the women as unable to change their circumstances. As Walzl explains, “Molly Ivors, the teacher in ‘The Dead,’ had achieved a considerable educational position. Most readers do not realize that the tension that arises between Miss Ivors and Gabriel Conroy lies in part in his realization that she is his professional

equal (40). The narrator in “The Dead” notes that Gabriel and Miss Ivors “were friends of many years’ standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her” (*Dubliners* 153). Miss Ivors is the only woman among the dozens of female character in *Dubliners* whose employment opportunity is enviable, and her situation is notable as the exception to the rest. To complete Joyce’s portrait of Dublin in the early twentieth century, Miss Ivors is a representative of the small percentage of women who were able to overcome the considerable odds, acquire the requisite education necessary for an upper-level teaching position, and secure such a position for themselves. While she is a spinster as well, her situation is less precarious as she does not need to rely on a male relative for her well-being or livelihood. However, Miss Ivors is not immune to the paralytic effects of societal constraints. Her unmarried state is likely to endure, and a woman like Miss Ivors is unlikely to advance further in her career because, “unfortunately, the brightest and most ambitious young women encountered their most formidable barriers at top levels” (Walzl 39). The inclusion of her character shows that it was possible for women to advance professionally but that it was extremely difficult. “It is clear that *Dubliners* accurately reflects the social conditions of Ireland at the turn of the century and presents a realistic picture of middle-class life. Additional analysis of the stories demonstrates that in *Dubliners* Joyce also traces the paralytic effects on his characters of life in such a constrictive environment. Human relationships become distorted and human communion is destroyed” (44).

Perhaps the most poignant example of distorted communication and paralysis in “The Dead” occurs between Gretta and Gabriel, at the end of the story. They leave the

Christmas party, and as they ride to the hotel, Gabriel reminisces about some of his most treasured memories of their lives together. He is filled with love and longing for his wife, and upon reaching their hotel room, she gives him a kiss. “His heart was brimming over with happiness. Just when he was wishing for it she had come to him of her own accord. Perhaps her thoughts had been running with his. Perhaps she had felt the impetuous desire that was in him, and then the yielding mood had come upon her” (*Dubliners* 177). At this important moment, when their relationship seems to be at its best and when Gabriel and Gretta seem the closest, Gabriel realizes how distorted his impression of the evening has been. Gretta tells him that her mind has been preoccupied with thoughts of Michael Furey, the boy who loved her long ago and who died of his love for her. “A vague terror seized Gabriel at this[...], as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world” (179). Paralysis seizes both of them, and Gretta cries herself to sleep while Gabriel retreats into his thoughts.

In this last scene of “The Dead,” Gretta’s complexity becomes most evident. Through her tearful account of Michael Furey’s love for her and her belief that she inadvertently caused his death, Gabriel comes to realize that there is a part of his wife that is inaccessible to him, a part of her that is dead to him. Gabriel is quite upset initially at the realization, and later as she sleeps, he watches his wife and thinks of “what she must have been like then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange, friendly pity for her entered his soul [...] it hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life” (181). The reader and Gabriel come to the same realization in that moment. Gretta’s character is not entirely knowable, and there are

aspects of her character complex enough to be somewhat baffling to both her husband and the reader. In contrast to the other female character in *Dubliners*, Gretta seems less constrained by societal mores of the period in her actions, or at the very least, her thoughts reveal more depth than some of the other female characters, and her complexity is unfettered by social position. As a proper middle class woman, her duty to her husband remains most important; however, her emotional loyalty becomes the locus for a complication of her character as well as somewhat a point of resistance. Gretta's emotional loyalty is in a subtle way divided between the past and the present. This conflicting loyalty contributes to the complexity of her character and symbolizes the difficulty faced by most of the female characters in *Dubliners*: the pull of societal expectations against each character's individuality. The resultant paralysis is experienced by all of the characters in *Dubliners* to some degree, but particularly by the female characters.

Gretta's complex characterization stands in contrast to the characterization of Lily, Mrs. Malins, and the Aunts. The contrast between the complex character of Gretta and the other female characters in the story serves to emphasize the relative scale of Joyce's female characters in *Dubliners* as a whole. Joyce's skill in writing complex female characters is showcased in "The Dead," but throughout the story and, appropriately, throughout *Dubliners*, the characterization ranges across an entire spectrum of complexity. As such, "The Dead" functions as a microcosm of the macrocosm of the collection. In the collection, characterization ranges in depth from an adolescent observer from afar in "Araby" to a complicated and beautiful portrait of a woman in "The Dead," and in this final story, the characterization ranges from the



pitiable Mrs. Malins to Gretta. Each character can be better understood through a careful textual analysis firmly grounded in the historical context in which *Dubliners* was written. Gretta's emotions, which come as such a surprise to her husband, can figure as a metaphor for a similar discovery that can happen for each reader of Joyce. His female characters range in complexity, depending on the character itself as well as on Joyce's maturity as a writer when he produced the work, but each character has a strength and a comparative complexity that will take the discerning reader pleasantly by surprise.

## Chapter Three

Molly Blooming in *Ulysses*

The shift in complexity of the female characters in *Dubliners* from “Araby” to “The Dead” mirrors a similar change in Joyce’s work as a whole, and this evolution reaches its zenith in *Ulysses*. Joyce’s skeleton outline for the novel follows the sections of Homer’s *Odyssey*, an epic poem describing the travels of Odysseus and his struggle to return home to his wife, Penelope. “The title *Ulysses* [...] is the key to the structure. Bloom is Ulysses having little adventures in Dublin; Stephen Dedalus is Telemachus in search of a father; Molly Bloom is both the beguiling Calypso and the faithful Penelope. Each episode of *Ulysses* corresponds to an episode of the *Odyssey*, and the correspondence proliferates in a mass of subtle references” (Burgess 85). Although he used the *Odyssey* as the basis for the structure of his novel, Joyce made significant changes as well. Burgess notes: “Joyce tells it rather differently [...]. He has eighteen chapters to Homer’s twenty-four books; he misses out on some of Homer’s material but inserts [some...]. Also, he changes the order of Odysseus’s exploits and presents them all in dramatic immediacy, not in epic-narration-within-a-narration” (90). Similar to the structure of the *Odyssey*, *Ulysses* ends with the “Penelope” episode, named for Odysseus’ faithful wife.

The Penelope corollary in *Ulysses* is Molly Bloom. Penelope waits at home for Odysseus to return from his travels, and although Penelope is absent for many of the events that transpire, she maintains a central presence in the poem through her place at the forefront of Odysseus’s mind, as does Molly. Comprised of only eight sentences, the thirty-six page “Penelope” episode is the monologue of Molly Bloom, wife to Leopold

Bloom, who is the cuckolded wandering Jewish outsider in the Christian sphere of Dublin and the main character in *Ulysses*. While the events of Odysseus's travels unfold over the course of years, the adventures of Leopold Bloom, a modern Odysseus, take place over the course of one day: June 16, 1904. Similar to the character of Penelope, Molly Bloom remains at home at 7 Eccles Street during the twenty-four hour period during which the events of *Ulysses* transpire, away from the events that Bloom experiences, but she still maintains a strong presence throughout the novel as she is always in the forefront of Bloom's mind. Molly is a complex character, as evidenced by the implied dialogue between Leopold Bloom, her husband, and herself throughout the novel. The large number of details provided throughout the novel by Bloom, Molly, and other characters about Molly's life story add complexity to her characterization as well. And although she remains at home for most of the novel, Molly is shown to have a life independent of her husband's needs and desires. The complexity of her character is achieved through a layered effect, as the pieces of information about Molly's life and about her character are embedded throughout the course of the novel.

Tantamount to an understanding of Molly's character is an understanding of Joyce's writing process. Such an historical analysis highlights the layered effect of Molly's character and its inherent complexity. Joyce wrote the "Penelope" episode in a series of nine composition stages, and a study of the composition

reveals it to be scrupulously arranged and highly structured with the aid of various notebooks, a pack of colored pencils, and several travel books, especially Henry M. Fields's *Gibraltar*. As a result, 'Penelope' is [...] the 'art of the mosaic': a carefully constructed text that did not spring whole

from Joyce's head but rather was skillfully woven into its final form with linguistic threads [...]. Fifty-four percent of 'Penelope' was added through insertions Joyce made across nine proof stages. (A. O'Brien 9)

Coupled with a textual analysis, an historical analysis reveals the mosaic-like quality of the episode, and underscores the consciously crafted complexity of Molly's character. In addition, a careful textual reading serves to highlight links to the other episodes in the novel as part of an overall framework to which Molly is the key. This serves to provide a sharp contrast to the final episode of Molly's soliloquy in which Molly is center stage. For the majority of the novel the complexity of Molly's character is revealed through bits and pieces and snatches of conversation by other characters in the novel, particularly by Bloom.

Evidences of the implied dialogue between Molly and Bloom abound in *Ulysses*, and do much to reveal Molly's character. Bloom's recollections of Molly are often rather pleasant, with their rendezvous among the rhododendrons on Howth Hill, the location of their first sexual encounter, and the beginning of their relationship, as the most cherished. He often thinks of phrases she has used in past conversations with him, or remembers situations based on what Molly was doing at the time. At one point as he reminisces, he recalls that "Molly was eating a sandwich of spiced beef out of Mrs Joe Gallaher's lunch basket...yes, and Molly was laughing because Rogers and Maggot O'Reilly were mimicking a cock as we passed a farmhouse" (*Ulysses* 449). Molly recalls numerous conversations with Bloom as well, often mimicking him or quoting him directly as she does so. "The hotel story he made up a pack of lies to hide it planning it Hynes kept me who did I meet as yes I met do you remember Menton and who else let me see" (Joyce,

*Ulysses*, 239). She remembers “the night in the kitchen I was rolling the potato cake theres something I want to say to you” (743), quoting Bloom. She also remembers “when we met asking me have I offended you” (747), meaning Bloom. Although Joyce did not use quotation marks, there are numerous places throughout the novel where a long-standing dialogue between Molly and her husband is reproduced or alluded to, both by Bloom and by Molly. This creates in readers the perception that there is much more to them and to their relationship than what is recorded on the pages, and this contributes to the complexity of Molly’s character.

The complexity of her character is established through the layering of detail throughout the text, and in particular the details of her life before she met Bloom. Her childhood in Gibraltar is referred to numerous times and this does much to create the impression that she has lead a full life. Joyce apparently took pains to ensure that the information was accurate and appropriately detailed, as noted by Alyssa O’Brien, who mentions Joyce’s use of a Gibraltar travel book in writing and editing the “Penelope” episode. The resulting sense of authenticity of Molly’s childhood strengthens her characterization as a complex character. The references to Gibraltar are scattered throughout the novel and in the “Penelope” episode when the afternoon’s lightning reminds her of “those awful thunderbolts in Gibraltar” (741), or when she thinks of the Gibraltar coast: “that day with the waves and the boats [...] and the smell of the ship those Officers uniforms on shore leave made me seasick” (756). Gibraltar has pleasant associations for Bloom as well. It appears often in his conversations during the course of the day, sometimes through his mention of it, and sometimes through other characters mentioning it. In describing Molly’s personality to Stephen Dedalus, Bloom mentions

Gibraltar, noting that, “I for one, certainly believe climate accounts for character” (622).

In addition to the references to her childhood, Molly is shown as having a life independent of her husband’s needs and desires, both before and after they met.

In the “Penelope” episode, Molly refers to men that she had an interest in before meeting Bloom, such as Lieutenant Gardner. Blamires notes that she lists “twenty-five suitors [...] but [readers] should not regard the twenty-five suitors as lovers with whom Molly has had sexual intercourse” (240), an important distinction as part of the reason early scholars denigrated Molly’s characterization was in objection to her long list of adulterous encounters. However, this interpretation has since been shown to be false, and this list of men signifies that Molly’s life story was as engaging before she met Bloom as it is after. Molly is shown as desirable and of having had a full and exciting life before she met her husband. In addition, she mentions several other acquaintances who seem to have no ties to Bloom during her monologue, such as the Stanhopes. Although much of her character is revealed through Bloom’s thoughts in the early part of the novel, her characterization maintains independence and a sense of wholeness through the inclusion of details such as her upbringing in Gibraltar and her former associations. Joyce writes her as a strong character by the inclusion of details that imply a life independent of her husband, most notably through her affair with Blazes Boylan. Both Bloom and Molly allude to the affair, although Bloom merely suspects it, and it is not until the “Penelope” episode that Molly confirms Bloom’s suspicions to readers as she wonders, “was he satisfied with me” and sharing vivid details of the afternoon tryst and Boylan’s anatomy (741). What Bloom does not know is that this tryst is the first time Molly has strayed.

Bloom often thinks of Molly, mostly in pleasant circumstances, such as buying her a gift or reminiscing about a treasured memory, but four o'clock becomes an unpleasant thought for him. Bloom suspects that Boylan, Molly's lover, will be coming to their home at four o'clock to visit Molly, and Bloom tortures himself with thoughts of them together and of Molly's betrayal over and over throughout the day. He pictures Boylan going about his business during the day, and Bloom imagines that each time Boylan is asked a question, Boylan always replies with some variation of a reference to his anticipated tryst with Molly, "Not yet...at four he. All said four..." (265). In the "Circe" episode where everything is exaggerated to monstrous proportions, Bloom pictures himself at home during the encounter. He answers the door when Boylan appears and imagines Boylan informing him of his "private business with your wife" and inviting Bloom to "apply [his] eye to the keyhole...while I just go through her a few times" (565). Although the circumstances are the most terrible a man could imagine, one of the consequences of this betrayal is that she is seen as independent of her husband by him, by readers, by Molly, and perhaps by Joyce as well.

While the sexual aspects of her character are well-established, less established are the maternal aspects of her character. She often speaks of Milly, their daughter, and mourns the loss of their infant son, Rudy. Bloom mentions that little Rudy was buried in a lambswool vest that she knitted for him, and apparently, Molly and Bloom's physical relationship ended not long after. While there could be many explanations for this, the grief and loss inherent in losing a child could certainly contribute to emotional distance between a couple. However, it was not always so. Molly reminisces about Milly's infancy and her own over-abundant milk supply, remembering that she "had to get

[Bloom] to suck them they were so hard” (754) while she was trying to wean Milly. Bloom liked the taste of the milk, declaring that “it was sweeter and thicker than cows then he wanted to milk me into the tea well hes beyond everything I declare [...] if only I could remember the one half of the things and write a book out of it the works of Master Poldy” (754). In this intimate moment between Molly and her husband, she is shown as both maternal and sexual, and her tone in reminiscing about Bloom’s slightly outlandish response to the experience is one of indulgence and fond bemusement. This tender memory hints at the complexity of her character; she is simultaneously wife and mother, humoring her husband’s offbeat remarks and caring for their child. The paradoxical brevity of the two seemingly disparate roles adds yet another layer of complexity to the mosaic of her beguiling character.

Throughout the novel, Bloom hints at other events and recollections that add additional bits and pieces to Molly’s characterization, and culminate in the “Penelope” episode. A careful textual analysis reveals the interplay between their thoughts, and such an analysis highlights the complexity of her character by laying bare the mosaic-like quality of its construction. A discussion of her character that draws attention to the layered effect created by Joyce’s allusions renders her character more accessible to readers, and an historical analysis of the creation of the “Penelope” episode and of Molly’s character adds additional insight as well. As the “Penelope” episode is the last of the *Ulysses* episodes, she is given the final word, a deliberate and conscious choice on Joyce’s part.

Ralph Rader writes: “we know that Molly was where Joyce knew, from the beginning, he was going in the book, since he sketched the ending from the outset” (572).



As such, the character of Molly is given unique stature throughout the book as she appears constantly throughout the novel, although not always in corporeal form. Not only can Molly be seen as complex, independent, and a whole character, but she also can be seen symbolically as the center of the novel. Joyce describes his well thought-out plans for the “Penelope” episode in a letter to Frank Budgen on August 16, 1921:

*Penelope* is the clou [star turn] of the book. There are eight sentences in the episode. It begins and ends with the female word *yes*. It turns like the huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning, its four cardinal points being the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt expressed by the words *because*, *bottom*, (in all senses bottom button, bottom of the class, bottom of the sea, bottom of his heart), *woman*, *yes*. Though probably more obscene than any preceding episode it seems to me to be perfectly sane full amoral fertilisable untrustworthy engaging shrewd limited prudent indifferent *Weib*. *Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht*.

(Gilbert 169)

Translated, the last sentence means “I am the flesh that always affirms” and is a reversal of Mephistopheles’ statement from Goethe’s *Faust* “I am the Spirit that always denies.” Indeed, Molly’s literal flesh, lying in their bed at home on Eccles Street is always in Bloom’s thoughts, affirming his existence and hers as Joyce planned whether Bloom is buying her presents, picturing her figure in his mind, showing a photograph of her, or describing her appearance to those he meets as a “quite dark, regular brunette, black” (*Ulysses* 622), as he does to Stephen. Molly is the “star turn” of the novel, and “surely” and “evenly” functions as the fixed reference point for all of Bloom’s erratic travels.

Throughout the novel, Molly commands Bloom's thoughts, as noted by other characters, among them Bella Cohen, the whoremistress: "Married I see...and the missus is master. Petticoat government." Bloom acknowledges with a sheepish grin, "That is so" (527). And through his preoccupation with Molly, she takes part in almost every episode in the novel, adding additional layers of significance to the mosaic of her character. Bloom's tendency to have his wife continually at the forefront of his mind is noted by numerous scholars, among them Lewis Schwartz, and serves to highlight the complexities of her character. Her influence in most of the novel is one of present absence, but nonetheless, she almost commands the events of the novel through Bloom's preoccupation with her. Schwartz notes this tendency:

Throughout the day, regardless of where his odyssey takes him, Bloom's thoughts return constantly to his wife. Leaving All Hallows' church at a quarter past ten, he remembers the face lotion that Molly asked him to buy for her. This thought intrudes upon his consciousness for the rest of the day, and in his mirage of Molly on the streets of nighttown, he explains some fourteen hours later, "I was just going back for that lotion...shop closes early on Thursday. But the first thing in the morning." (161, quoting *Ulysses* 440)

The thought of Molly's request flares up as a "perfectly sane" thought amidst the madness of nighttown in the nightmarish atmosphere of the "Circe" episode. Indeed, through the garish lights and haze of the red-light district of Dublin and through Bloom's roving, Molly stands as a beacon for Bloom, lighting the way home, functioning in the novel as a complex character as well as a metaphor of home and family. Nothing seems

real in the “Circe” episode except for the concrete images of Molly conjured up in Bloom’s imaginings. Later in the episode as Bloom is put on trial or as he gives birth to his sons, his thoughts of Molly provide one of the few links to reality. It is she he cries out for as he is accosted, shouting “Eccles Street...[and] Moll! I forgot! Forgive! Moll!” (*Ulysses* 541).

In addition to Schwartz, Harry Blamires and Heather Callow have similarly noted Bloom’s frequent thoughts of Molly. Blamires notes this preoccupation several times during his *Bloomsday Book* commentary on *Ulysses*: “Bloom, his mind drawn back as ever to its pole, asks the seaman if he has been to Gibraltar” (203). And a similar comment comes later, “Spaniards, too, have passionate temperaments, Bloom adds, happily bringing round minds and talk to the lodestar subject, Molly” (Blamires 204). Heather Callow writes of it as well: “Despite the real difference, as perceived by us and the Blooms, between Molly’s intellectual level and Bloom’s, the number of shared or similar independent thoughts they experience during the day is considerable. Bloom...and Molly travel the same wavelengths much of the time” (Callow 470). Joyce’s careful planning of each of the episodes, his crafting of Bloom’s preoccupation with Molly, and the deliberate placement of the “Penelope” episode— all give added import to the character of Molly. The progressive layering of small bits of information to form a larger and more coherent whole can be seen throughout the novel as Joyce layers the allusions. Bloom’s fixation on his wife, Molly, affirms his every action and her existence gives meaning and direction to Bloom’s wanderings. As such, one might argue that the whole of the novel is crafted to lead up to Molly.

Similarly, as Molly's flesh affirms Bloom's existence through mock legal battles, funerals, and the birthing of the children he experiences during his odyssey, the existence of the "Penelope" episode reaffirms the rest of the episodes as well. If the "Penelope" episode is the "huge earth ball slowly surely and evenly round and round spinning," then it provides the fixed point for the events that take place (Gilbert 169). The "Penelope" episode provides the reference point for the events in the novel, the starting point as well as the end point, much as Molly does for Bloom's character. Bloom's thoughts always drift to Molly and, in so doing, highlight the affirming importance of her character in the novel and also of the "Penelope" episode. In a 1921 letter to Frank Budgen, Joyce wrote that "the last word (human, all too human) is left to Penelope." Ellmann notes that leaving the last word to Molly "is the indispensable countersign to Bloom's passport to eternity," (*James Joyce* 501) and perhaps is the indispensable countersign to *Ulysses's* passport to eternity as well.

Similar to Molly's character, the setting for the novel, Dublin city, is revealed through bits and pieces. To recreate Dublin in the novel, Joyce asked his aunt Josephine to send him "any news you like, programmes, pawntickets, press cuttings, handbills. I like reading them" (Gilbert 194). He then took the bits of information and carefully wove them into the narrative of the novel. Claudia Harris discusses this unique approach: "Writing at a distance, Joyce asked various friends or family members to pace out certain sections of Dublin so he could reproduce precisely his characters' traverse of the city. In his working notebooks, he recorded impressions, quotes from conversations, bits of data, lists of seemingly unrelated words, phrases, thoughts. Then, he used these unlikely collections to create a multi-leveled, paradigmatic construction of his native city" (Harris

143). Joyce's "construction" of Dublin in the novel is so complete that it is possible to walk the physical route Bloom takes through the city. Alyssa O'Brien's description of *Ulysses* as a "mosaic" of the bits of information collected by Joyce is a suitable description for the writing process of *Ulysses* as a whole but is also a suitable description for the characterization of Molly. Through the bits and pieces of information about Dublin Joyce weaves into the text, readers come to know the Dublin Joyce loved, and through the bits and pieces of Molly's characterization Joyce weaves throughout the text, readers come to know Molly Bloom. In this way, *Ulysses* can be seen as a sequel to *Dubliners*. The collection of short stories holds a looking-glass to the Dublin populace, and *Ulysses* holds a looking glass to the physical landscape of the city. The scraps of information Joyce collected to write the novel are easily seen in a textual analysis but take on added import through an historical analysis of Joyce's writing process.

Published in February of 1929, *Ulysses* was the culmination of years of painstaking effort (Ellmann 601). By his own estimation, "Joyce spent over 1,000 hours on the 35 page 'Oxen of the Sun' episode alone" (Ellmann 476). As part of his careful craftsmanship, Joyce planned out the episodes of *Ulysses* in advance, followed by months of focused writing. The multi-layered details, snatches of conversations, and fragments of memories that fill the "Penelope" episode are the end result of a painstaking writing process, described by Alyssa O'Brien and referred to earlier, that closely follow his original plans for the episode. Molly's characterization is as much a result of this process as the portrait of Dublin in the novel, and an awareness of this process is essential in any discussion of Molly.

Such an historical analysis of Molly's character would be incomplete without a discussion of the autobiographical ties between the characters and Joyce's life. Bloom and Molly have their counterparts in Joyce and Nora Barnacle, later Nora Joyce, who affirmed Joyce as Molly affirms Bloom. Joyce and Nora's relationship spanned the whole of his adult life, and she is credited as the inspiration for the character of Molly. In his biography of Joyce, Ellmann comments: "In *Ulysses*, Nora...fades into Molly, Joyce into Bloom" (291). While it is not always clear which aspects of Nora and Joyce fade into Molly and Bloom, there are definite parallels between them and their respective relationships, and a close reading of the text is enhanced by a concurrent historical analysis of the parallels. Joyce's passionate affair with Nora and near worship of her contains many similarities to Bloom's feelings for Molly.

Bloom is very much in love with Molly, cherishes his memories of her, and thinks of her constantly throughout the course of the novel, despite a ten-year hiatus in their marital relations. While Molly loves him in return, she is unfaithful to him, and letters from Boylan, her lover, openly arrive at their home. As Bloom brings her mail, including a letter from Boylan and her breakfast in bed, it is as though he is bringing an offering to the altar of his love, albeit everyday tea and bread and butter on a "humpy tray" (*Ulysses* 55). He carefully sets it "on a chair by the bedhead" after her request to "hurry with the tea." (62). That he brings her breakfast to start the day and to start the beginning of their interactions in the novel elevates her status in the literal beginning and the end of the novel, the Alpha and Omega of *Ulysses*. And she functions as the fixed reference of the four cardinal points of woman, the female breasts, arse, womb and cunt, as described by Joyce in a 1921 letter to Frank Budgen. She also functions as the reference point for the

morning tea ritual, for the entirety of the “Penelope” episode, and for everything that transpires in the novel in between. Her physical presence elevates the everyday monotony of breakfast to a worshipful act of near religious significance. Bloom’s act of worship in bringing Molly her tea and the feelings that are the impetus for his actions have similar parallels to Joyce’s feelings about the everyday with Nora. Ellmann writes: “When Joyce met Nora Barnacle in 1904, it was not enough for her to be his mistress, she must be his queen and even his goddess” (*James Joyce* 294). Despite their quarrels, their frequent moves, the constant irritation of too many expenses and too little money, and the imagined jealousies, Joyce and Nora were inextricably linked and very much in love. While no evidence exists that Nora was unfaithful to Joyce, he was a jealous, passionate man and accused her of infidelity on more than one occasion (279, 294, 445). He quickly followed his moody outbursts with penitent pleas for forgiveness, addressing her as “my darling, my love, my queen” (534) and plying her with promises of better behavior, which were usually kept.

Yet there existed between Joyce and Nora an odd playful antagonism that manifested itself in games and tests of one another, but mostly on the part of Joyce:

He must test her by making her his wife without calling her that...Nora Barnacle passed this test easily...Then he tried her further...by doubting her fidelity. When this test too was surmounted, Joyce made a final trial of her: she must recognize all his impulses, even the strangest, and match his candor by confiding in him every thought she has found in herself, especially the most embarrassing. She must allow him to know her inmost life, to learn with odd exactitude what it is to be a woman. In *Ulysses* and

*Finnegans Wake* he apportioned womanhood in its sexual aspect to Molly Bloom, and in its maternal aspect to Anna Livia Plurabelle. (294)

This odd aspect of their relationship and Joyce's thorough interrogation of Nora's "inmost life" and her willingness to go along with his schemes allowed him to write Molly as the complex, engaging character she is. Molly is a direct result of his study of Nora's thoughts and his learning from her with "exactitude" a woman's experience. Helene Cixous, one of the founders of the feminist literary movement *écriture féminine*, scathingly and excitedly indicts almost all writing about women up to that point as a betrayal of what it is to be a woman with the one notable exception being the "Penelope" episode in *Ulysses*: "Molly carr[ies] *Ulysses* beyond any book and toward the new writing" (Cixous 884), the new writing being *écriture féminine*, or non-linear circular narratives that reflect woman's lived experience. Joyce's careful study of Nora and his scrupulous editing process made "Penelope" so. Considering the discriminating source Cixous, this is high praise indeed. Joyce's interrogation of Nora and his determination to place her "inmost life" in his novel is a successful characterization and stems from his affection for and his obsession with Nora. Bloom's infatuation with Molly is an echo of Joyce's near-worship of Nora.

During an extended trip to Dublin, leaving Nora behind in Trieste, Joyce sent frequent impassioned letters to Nora that vacillated between adoration and despair. He often wrote to her in terms of worship, as he did on December 10, 1909, after seeing a room in which she once lived in at Finn's Hotel in Dublin:

Tonight, dearest, I will not write to you as I have done before. All men are brutes, dearest, but at least in me there is also something higher at



times. Yes, I too have felt at moments the burning in my soul of that pure and sacred fire which burns for ever on the altar of my love's heart. I could have knelt by that little bed and abandoned myself to a flood of tears. The tears were besieging my eyes as I stood looking at it. I could have knelt and prayed there as the three kings from the East knelt and prayed before the manger in which Jesus lay. They had traveled over deserts and seas and brought their gifts and wisdom and royal trains to kneel before a little new-born child and I had brought my errors and follies and sins and wondering and longing to lay them at the little bed in which a young girl had dreamed of me. (Ellmann, *Letters II* 187)

His deeply religious comparison between his beloved and the Christ child does unfairly idealize Nora to some degree, but it also conveys a deep and abiding respect for her that borders on worship. In a separate letter to Nora, Joyce wrote, "If you leave me I shall live for ever with your memory, holier than God to me. I shall pray to your name" (Ellmann, *Selected Letters* 177).

As part of his worship, Joyce selected June 16, 1904 as the date for the events in *Ulysses* as it was on this day that Nora Barnacle accepted Joyce's proposed appointment. They went walking in Ringsend, a southern part of Dublin city, and he considered June 16 as the beginning of their courtship (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 156). About this auspicious choice, Ellmann comments:

To set *Ulysses* on this date was Joyce's most eloquent if indirect tribute to Nora, a recognition of the determining effect upon his life of his attachment to her. On June 16, as he would afterwards realize, he entered

into relation with the world around him and left behind the loneliness he had felt...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. (156)

Similarly, Bloom’s thoughts and actions in the novel focus primarily on Molly, their life together, and his memories of her. “Joyce attributes to his heroine [Molly] the character of woman as Nora had shown it to him” (377). The parallels between the two women were established so well that after Joyce’s death Nora was asked if she were Molly Bloom. Nora replied: “I’m not— she was much fatter” (Campbell 171). Several surface parallels between the two couples exist, as well, from their unsteady financial situations to Joyce’s and Bloom’s persistent ruminations of their lovers’ infidelity. However, the most significant parallel for this project is the one previously mentioned, the worshipful respect and deep interest belied by their thoughts and deeds. Although Joyce’s characterization of women in the novel is not without some degree of idealization, it is the result of human frailty and devoted love on his part as a husband rather than on his part as a writer. Ellmann wryly writes, if Joyce was wrong in his analysis of Nora and his subsequent characterization of Molly, “the error was not for lack of observation” (*James Joyce* 377).

Joyce’s characterization of Molly takes on greater import when compared to some of his earlier female characters who lack the complexity of Molly’s character. His earlier female characters are not without merit, as previously discussed, and in fact, their level of complexity is often a function of the literary genre. It is a disservice to both to compare a character from a short story, such as Maria in *Dubliners*, with a character in a novel as

some critics have, and a particularly lengthy novel at that. The length of *Ulysses* allows for the layering of Molly's character and the addition of autobiographical ties that result in her complexity. She is at times brash, reveling in her sexuality, at others, mournful at the loss of her son, an anxious mother to her teenage daughter, or a loving wife.

Occasionally she is a bemused spouse, wistful at her lack of pretty things, at times overcome with loneliness for her husband and for the closeness they once had. Often she is a strong woman with a clear picture of exactly what she wants. She is an engaging character, made more so by the apparently conflicting accounts of her throughout the novel, communicated through Bloom and others, and her final vindication in "Penelope" when the layers of complexity shift to form a more complete and enthralling picture of her. Aside from her presence in the novel through Bloom's thoughts and the numerous discussions about her by various characters, Molly is placed in key strategic locations throughout the novel to assure her presence at each juncture in each episode and to build a layered structure that culminates in her own final words. Molly's voice and Bloom's voice are two of the most significant in the novel, and the interplay between them, crafted through Joyce's careful observation and meticulous writing, creates a dynamic, interesting, and engaging character in Molly.

Molly Bloom stands in sharper relief when compared to Joyce's prior female characters. These characters seem to have existences that stretch only a few years in either direction from the events taking place, and often readers only learn of past experiences simply in reference to the male characters they interact with. But Molly Bloom in *Ulysses* is revealed from specifics of her childhood in Gibraltar to her youthful love interests. Joyce's characterization of Molly is considerably more complex than the

female characters he wrote previously; as he moved from short stories to a lengthy novel, so too did his characterization of women evolve. That Molly is the focus of the novel, affirming Bloom's actions and giving meaning to his wanderings, is an illustration of the shift. Molly's character resonates through the detailed descriptions and the range of emotions she expresses in the "Penelope" episode. In this final episode of *Ulysses*, the perspective shifts from Stephen's mind as the position of observation in *Portrait* to a direct understanding of Molly's mind as Joyce lays bare her thoughts on the pages of the "Penelope" episode. This is a significant modification in perspective from *Portrait*, and its only precedent is a few of the female characters in *Dubliners*. When Molly wishes that "some man or other would take me sometime when he's there and kiss me in his arms theres nothing like a kiss long and hot down to your soul," she articulates her own desires rather than having them articulated for her, as occurs in some of Joyce's earlier works (*Ulysses* 740). Her private moments are viewed by readers solely from her perspective: "he touched me father and what harm if he did where and I said on the canal bank like a fool" (741). The plethora of detail reveals her multi-faceted character and the broad range of emotions that contribute to the complexity of her character.

As she flits from subject to subject in her thoughts, she articulates jealousy over imagined rivals: "that Mary we had in Ontario terrace padding out her false bottom to excite him" (446). She dwells on maternal thoughts of her daughter Milly, reveals insecurities about her physical self: her "belly a bit too big" (446). She analyzes her spouse and day dreams about material objects she would like to acquire. She also reminisces about her relationship with Bloom, and reminds herself of past relationships; she is at one moment cynical about men and at the next, hopeful and wistful. In short,

Molly encompasses and eclipses all of the small portraits of women in *Portrait* and *Dubliners*.

Molly's importance in *Ulysses* and as a character is almost matched by her infamy and even seems supported by it. Over the years, significant scholarly dialogue about her has taken place. The scholarship has moved beyond viewing the "Penelope" episode as Adams saw it— "a frightening venture into the unconsciousness of evil" (166). But the overall reception to the "Penelope" episode still seems somewhat negative. Suzette Henke commented, "By virtue of her capacious monologue, Molly can be envisioned as both goddess and whore, Dublin housewife and archetypal precursor to Anna Livia Plurabelle, the great mother/lover of *Finnegans Wake*" (*Politics of Desire* 7). Such criticism appears to highlight the facets of Molly's character but, in actuality, serves to further the purported misogyny by limiting the roles available to Molly, firmly slotting Molly's character into the Victorian/early twentieth century perception of the female as either an angel by the hearth or a whore on the street. Summarized in another context, "Molly would seem to be either a fictional embodiment of the 'eternal feminine' or a middle-aged, cranky, and erotically-minded housewife frightened of losing her tenuous powers of sexual allure" (126). This type of virgin/whore reading limits the resonance of Molly's character to rather narrow confines by using the traditional critique of Joyce being a misogynist as a lens for viewing the text. When this lens is removed, much of her character comes clearly into focus, creating a more complete character. Viewing Molly as a mere embodiment of these confining roles effectively cuts off discussion of the varied facets of Molly's persona which constitute a rather complex and vibrant character.

Not all criticism of Molly operates from the angel/whore binary, but enough analyses of her character were made from narrow paradigms that some residual effects of the analysis can still be felt. While some critics such as Kathleen McCormick openly disregard any reading of Molly that finds “transcendent meaning which can be traced to Joyce’s intentions” (17), equally ludicrous is examining a text with such uniquely careful and meticulous writing and disdainfully discard any ties to its authorial source. Molly is Joyce’s everywoman character of the novel, and knowledge of his copious observations of Nora as the basis for her character is essential for a proper understanding of the depth of Molly’s character. An analysis firmly grounded in the text with an eye to the historical context reveals Molly as the complex character she is. Those critics that summarize the entire “Penelope” episode as Molly “howling like a bitch in heat” (Richardson 184) or argue that “for all Molly’s attractive vitality, for all of her fleshly charms and engaging bravado, she is at heart a thirty-shilling whore” (D. O’Brien 211) fail to glean the enormity of what Joyce accomplished in the character of Molly and with the “Penelope” episode. They do so by ignoring the premise for the novel and for her character. After an overview of Joycean scholarship focusing on Molly at the beginning of Callow’s article, these same critics led her to lament: “I think Molly might echo Stephen Dedalus’s cry, ‘History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.’ Molly’s critical history has been such a nightmare” (Callow 474).

Joycean scholarship that discusses Molly has shifted focus since the publication of these particular articles and others like them and has become less critical of Molly’s sexuality and of Molly herself. While some scholars might argue that this signals an evolution in perceptions of Molly that allows for new and engaging ways of looking at

her character, some recent publications still center on an analysis of her character from a limited paradigm. Often the arguments discussing the misogyny of the piece focus on the perceived male agenda for the episode, with some scholars arguing that its organizational structure is “the male authorial fist” of a male author creating female characters that are submissive to and controlled by male characters (Henderson 521), or arguing that the language of the episode is “fearfully phallic, determined by the male register of desire” (Henke, *Politics of Desire* 130).

Suzette Henke discusses Joyce’s women characters in light of the French feminist Luce Irigaray’s article “This Sex Which is Not One.” Irigaray discusses the limiting phallic binary in which female sexuality exists only in reference to male sexuality. The charge leveled at Joyce, then, is that his female characters are merely constructs of male desire, formed by either Joyce or Bloom or both. In so doing, these analyses focus on a perceived male perspective, attributing the structure to a “male register of desire” or a reflection of masculine desires. These critics ignore the inherently feminine flow of the language, the stream-of-consciousness narrative, and Nora’s indirect and significant contribution to Molly’s character. Few scholars have given the character of Molly a thorough reading from this perspective, and even fewer have found her character well-written, complex, and engaging. Molly is all of these things.

Callow concedes this point, somewhat unwillingly: “Molly’s portrait, if closely scrutinized, reveals a person whose loneliness, loss, and wistful optimism is every bit as moving as that of her generally sympathetically received husband” (466). Alyssa O’Brien agrees to some extent, admitting that “Penelope” is an “often reductively read episode” (8). James Card observes that “too many critics have come to simplistic or

wrongheaded conclusions by picking and choosing from the many contradictions, perhaps suppressing or ignoring those which will not fit their views of Molly or simply lighting upon those which support preconceptions of her” (42). Card presents here the core difficulty that lies at the heart of constructing a thorough picture of Molly. While Card is male, most of the recent criticism aimed at Molly has come from female critics, such as Bonnie Kime Scott, Suzette Henke, and Elaine Unkeless. With Nora functioning as Joyce’s wellspring of information about women, it seems incongruous that the portrayal of Molly should be so despised by those of her sex. In light of Molly’s long critical history, however, some of the harshest criticism of Molly’s character has come from male critics over the years, suggesting an odd unity of male and female critics on a particularly gendered issue, albeit with dissimilar specificity. It appears that Molly has no ideal audience, but a few scholars disagree. As Susan Bazargan points out, “Molly’s chapter is not a monologue. It is a dialogue- ‘Yes...because’ being an explanation to an ideal listener” (65). Richard Pearce continues: “Molly’s ideal listener is a woman, with whom she can share her restlessness, her physical desires, her fantasies, her cynical views of men as well as her realistic views of motherhood and menstruation that don’t come from the dominant discourses of her society” (46). The women who criticize Molly do not merit the status of “ideal listener” based simply on gender alone, but a few women critics do not dismiss Molly.

Brenda Maddox concludes her biography of Nora with a reference to Molly Bloom: “When Joyce made Leopold recall Molly’s pleading, ‘Give us a touch Poldy God I’m dying for it,’ he gave his country, and his century, the voice of female desire” (*Nora* 381), as opposed to the omnipresent male desire seen by Henke and Scott. French



Feminists such as Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva manage to avoid the pitfall of disliking Molly's portrayal by focusing on the language of "Penelope," arguing that Joyce is one of the few male authors whose prose works to dissolve sexual differences in language. In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous quotes the final words of "Penelope," arguing that Molly's discourse of flow and overflow is an example of "écriture feminine" and that in her "Yes" Molly "carries *Ulysses* beyond any book and toward the new writing" of feminine discourse (Cixous 884). The writing reveals Molly's character: "her frank and plucky...monologue and her plaintive situation is concealed from the casual eye by a cloud of bravado" (Callow 475). It is appropriate that such different yet accurate accounts of her exist.

Eliciting such a variety of responses from readers, the "Penelope" episode illustrates the dynamic nature of the character of Molly Bloom. Her renown approaches mythic proportions, as Joyce hoped. Joyce combined his observations of Nora into Molly's character, and the resulting characterization transcends average characterization and becomes mythic. In writing *Ulysses* Joyce is described by Ellmann as "bent on creating a comedy which [...] would have the complexity of a medieval myth" (Ellmann, *Ulysses on the Liffey*, xii). *Ulysses* represents Joyce's attempt to write a founding myth for Ireland that would function for the Irish as *Odyssey* functions as founding myth for Western culture. Kenner describes *Ulysses* as "The fulfillment of his old promise to forge abroad, in the smithy of his soul, the uncreated conscience of his race" (Kenner 1). First Joyce showed Ireland itself in the looking-glass of *Dubliners*, then he created for the Irish what he hoped would be for the country a universal new beginning in *Ulysses*. The character of Molly Bloom encompasses a broad spectrum of female characteristics and

her free-flowing effusive prose in the “Penelope episode” similarly approaches some degree of universality. The epic/ mythological roots of the novel’s structure in the *Odyssey* have been traced in Molly’s character as well. Ellmann describes “Joyce[‘s] delight in mythologizing Molly as Gea-Tellus, then, by bringing her down with a thump onto the orangekeyed chamberpot at 7 Eccles street, in demythologizing her into an old shoe” (*Ulysses on the Liffey* 164). The mythological aspects of Molly’s character are re-created by Joyce in the amplified degree of universality in the characterization of the women in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce’s final novel. Molly’s characterization can be seen as a predecessor to that of Issy and Anna Livia Plurabelle in the *Wake*.

Molly is engaging yet elusive and entirely impossible to pin down completely. Joyce layered the complexities of his novel and boasted: “I’ve put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality” (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 533). The complex and “enigmatic” characterization of Molly contributes to Joyce’s “immortality” and is accentuated by a textual and historical analysis that grounds the characterization in its proper context.

## Chapter Four

Anna Livia Plurabelle and Issy Center *Finnegans Wake*

Comparisons between an author's works are inevitable, and indeed, the foundation for this project rests upon that premise. There are few texts that resist this type of analysis more than Joyce's final novel, *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce himself detested such comparisons, wondering aloud to William Bird: "About my new work— do you know, Bird, I confess I can't understand some of my critics, like Pound or Miss Weaver, for instance. They say it's obscure. They compare it, of course, with *Ulysses*. But the action of *Ulysses* was chiefly in the daytime, and the action of my new work takes place chiefly at night. It's natural things should not be so clear at night, isn't it now?" (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 590). And later to Jacques Mercanton, who questioned the obscurity of a few passages in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce says, "It is night. It is dark. You can hardly see. You sense rather" (Mercanton 214). John Bishop clarifies: "Joyce was[...] pointing out that 'obscurity' is 'darkness' rendered verbal (L. *obscuritas*, 'darkness'), and that the night, his subject, was intractably obscure...and the systematic darkening of every term in *Finnegans Wake* was an absolute necessity, dictated by Joyce's subject" (Bishop 4). *Ulysses*, aside from the nightmarish "Circe" episode, is a daytime walk through Dublin, and *Finnegans Wake* is its counterpart in that it is a nighttime or dreamlike walk through Dublin.

Joyce's choice of a nighttime setting gave rise to his declaration that "you sense rather" than see in reading it, and as such, he manipulates language considerably in *Finnegans Wake* to achieve that sensory effect. The obscurity of *Finnegans Wake*, aside from linguistically representing the dream-like state of night, also tends to resist

traditional plot and character analysis. Further complicating the issue is the decision Joyce made to avoid assigning each character one signifier and instead chose to assign several to each character, including symbols. The essential characters each have a key identity: Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker, or HCE as the main character and Anna Livia Plurabelle, or ALP as his wife. They represent city/river pairings across the globe, as the HCE section usually has city names woven into the text, and in the ALP section, river names are woven into the text. Paired as they are, they represent the primordial parents of Ireland and all of humanity, a secular Adam and Eve story. They have two sons, twins, named Shem and Shaun, and a daughter, Issy. However, each of these characters also has dozens of additional names throughout the novel.

Anna Livia Plurabelle is arguably the more important of the two main female characters in the novel, but Issy also has received considerable attention from critics over the years. Issy has long perplexed critics, but most would agree that Issy is not to be thought of as one character, as characters are traditionally thought of, and neither should any other character in *Finnegans Wake*, for that matter. “We need not limit ourselves to one” identification for Issy, argues Scott (184). She has many identifications. She is

the young woman (or women) of *Finnegans Wake*, the daughter (or daughters) of the ALP-HCE family, the sister of Shem and Shaun. But she is also one or both of the Iseults of the Tristan and Iseult legend, the Irish heroines Grainne, Deidre, and Arrah na Pogue [...], as a babe she is associated with the fleeting goddess, Daphne, and her forest setting, which includes mystical hawthorn blossoms, as usually associated with goddesses.” (Scott 184)

The mythic aspects of Issy's character are well-established in Joycean criticism, as is the mythic aspect of *Finnegans Wake* in general. The characterization of Issy and Anna Livia Plurabelle center *Finnegans Wake* with the universality of their characterization and with the universality of the novel in general. In setting the novel at night and mimicking a dream-like state, Joyce aligned the foundational premise for the novel with the notion of universal experience: everyone sleeps. *Finnegans Wake* is a step further from *Ulysses* in almost every respect. Ellmann records that, according to T.S. Eliot, in writing *Ulysses*, Joyce "killed the nineteenth century, exposed the futility of all styles, and destroyed his own future" (*James Joyce* 528). Bishop asks the next logical question: "What could Joyce have done after writing *Ulysses*? A chronicle of June 17, 1904? Or a sweeping saga of three generations of family life whose culminating item would be a writer dense with sensitivity? The logical place for him to go was down, into the night" (21). Joyce explains: "Having written *Ulysses* about the day, I wanted to write this book (*Finnegans Wake*) about the night" (*James Joyce* 695).

A nighttime setting attracted Joyce for many reasons, but significantly, it attracted him for its universal characteristics. Joyce

had begun his writing by asserting his difference from other men, and now increasingly he recognized his similarity to them. This point of view was more easily demonstrable in sleeping than in real life. Sleep is the great democratizer[...]. In *Portrait* Joyce had demonstrated the repetition of traits in the first twenty years of one person's life; in *Ulysses* he had displayed this repetition in the day of two persons; in *Finnegans Wake* he

displayed it in the lives of everyone including women. (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 716)

“The mind asleep” is the unifier of the seemingly disparate elements of *Finnegans Wake*, and this thematic structure underscores the admirable universality of the characters in the novel. The historical context of the novel’s creation is essential for this point. Without it, the characters might certainly appear mad. Without some explanation, every dream seems somewhat mad. And it is precisely that point, that everyone dreams and that dreams are universally similar in their manifestation of some part of the unconscious mind, that Joyce hoped to emphasize. It was not sufficient for Joyce to constantly change the monikers for the characters throughout the novel; he sought to highlight the universal applicability of night in every way.

The universality of the mythological underpinnings of the novel tie in beautifully with the nighttime setting for the novel, as mythology is part of the unconscious of a culture, and dreams are evidences of the unconscious mind. Bishop writes, *Finnegans Wake* “invites us to be conscious of the unconscious, or, in its own idiom, wakening the dead” (23). Issy appears to be one of the characters most conscious of her unconscious; perhaps it is this aspect of her character that causes critics to mistake the mythical aspect of her character in a dream-like novel for madness or mistake her character as merely a misogynist creation. Adaline Glasheen limits Issy to unflattering descriptors such as “mad” and declares her “a triumph of female imbecility and sexual attraction” (138). Issy is often described as “narcissistic” due to her frequent addresses to her mirror (Norris, *Anna Livia* 53). Scott summarizes the Issy traits discussed by these critics thus: “none of these attributes suggest that Joyce has created a character worthy of feminists’

admiration or enhanced the range of literary conceptions of woman in this key late character” (185). Scott accepts these limited and slightly antiquated views of Issy and of the female characters in *Finnegans Wake* in general and views the characters through this lens. Therein lies the weakness of her analysis and the analysis of most critics who have addressed the subject of Joyce’s female characters, including Suzette Henke and Elaine Unkeless, for whom Issy is merely a function of HCE’s dream— “a vision that belongs to Earwicker...how Earwicker sees Issy, or his wife, is the only “vision” analyzed in the *Wake*” (S. Benstock 172). All of the characters are dreaming, however, and HCE is not the narrator for the whole of the novel. Issy’s madness is used by critics as evidence of her incomplete character but a textual and historical analysis of her character works to counter these arguments.

The key omission, which functions as the similarity between the critiques of Issy made by Glasheen, Scott, Henke, and Unkeless, is of Issy’s loose biographical ties to Joyce’s mentally ill daughter, Lucia. Lucia’s eventual diagnosis was schizophrenia, a condition that Joyce felt partially responsible for, as noted by Ellmann: “The sources of schizophrenia are not known, but the possibility that a more regular family life might have prevented her illness invaded and occupied Joyce’s mind. He did not disavow guilt; he embraced it eagerly. ‘Whatever spark of gift I possess has been transmitted to Lucia,’ he said bitterly, ‘and has kindled a fire in her brain.’ He identified himself closely with her” (Ellmann 650). Ellmann notes that Joyce felt that Lucia was unusually gifted and somewhat clairvoyant. Joyce felt guilty for the perceived ties between her madness and his genius, and thus an understanding of the autobiographical ties between Issy and Lucia does much to properly contextualize this important character. Scott is correct in calling

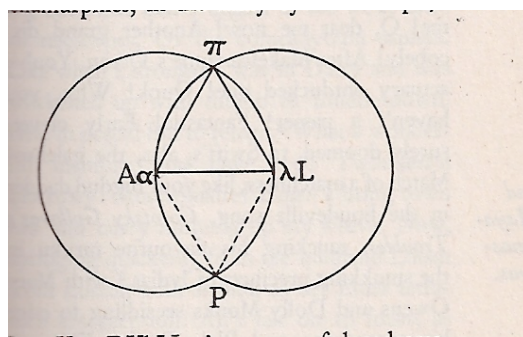
Issy a “late key character” (185) and using a textual and historical analysis, Issy can be viewed as an extension of what Joyce created in Molly’s character. The universality that is broached in Molly’s feminine and effusive language is more evident in the characterization of Issy as well as her mother, ALP. Issy’s language follows a similarly effusive course but, perhaps, is less noticeable because of the systematic darkening of language, mentioned earlier, that Joyce employed in writing the *Wake*.

The premise for this view of Issy as a female character unworthy of admiration, as well as for most of the criticism of Anna Livia and Issy, is that in fragmenting their characters and universalizing them by increasing the symbolic facets of their characters, Joyce has limited these female characters to traditional stereotypes by failing to “enhance the range of literary conceptions of woman” (Scott 185). In so doing, Joyce has apparently written female characters that are lacking in depth when, in fact, this limited perspective ignores the possibilities rendered through Joyce’s unwillingness to hold to the established character conventions. On the contrary, the increased universality of Joyce’s female characters in *Finnegans Wake* does not equate with anti-feminism or “the perennial critical dichotomy of virgin vs. whore” (185). The increased universality of Joyce’s female characters, especially those in *Finnegans Wake*, incorporates aspects of and references to femininity from such diverse sources as mythology, botany, and catechism. In creating the female characters in *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce also drew on his knowledge of the women he knew intimately, such as Nora and his daughter Lucia. The incorporation of such varied sources of femininity into the characters imbues them with the possibility of almost infinite analysis due to Joyce’s careful layering of words, puns, and allusions throughout the text. Some degree of this rich characterization unfolds



through a careful historical and textual reading, such as this project. An understanding of the historical context in which these characters were written is essential in plumbing their depths. Joyce does not limit his characters and neither should readers. His writing itself resists limited and traditional analysis, as do his female characters, particularly in *Finnegans Wake* and specifically with ALP, as discussed in this chapter.

Anna Livia Plurabelle is the liquid presence in the *Wake*; rivulets of her character appear throughout and lend a unifying note to a text that appears to be anything but. “Critics who have studied the chapter have confirmed what Joyce himself publicized... ‘hundreds of river-names are woven into the text. I think it moves’” (Bishop 336). By Mink’s estimation, there are close to a thousand river names woven into the ALP chapter (83). But the river names are more than just a curiosity: “‘it is an attempt to subordinate words to the rhythm of water’ Joyce said of Anna Livia Plurabelle” (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 564). Anna Livia’s character contains the “rhythm of water” within her name as well as within her characterization, as she is named for the River Liffey which flows through the heart of Dublin. Below is the symbol Joyce created to represent ALP:



The overlapping circles emphasize the universality of her character and provide a visual image of her pervasive watery influence in the novel. That the edges of the characterization of ALP and HCE are blurry and slippery serves a particular purpose in *Finnegans Wake*.

The insubstantial nature of the characterization allows for a broader appeal for the characters and represents the culmination of Joyce's writing efforts. Ellmann explains: "In *Dubliners* he had explored the waking consciousness from outside, in *Portrait* and *Ulysses* from the inside. He had begun to impinge, but gingerly, on the mind asleep [...]. There lay before him this almost totally unexplored expanse. That the great psychological discovery of his century was the night world he was, of course, aware, but he frowned on using that world as a means of therapy" (*James Joyce* 716). Despite Joyce's personal misgivings about Freudian analysis, he was fascinated by dream theory and by the universality expressed in dream studies. As Joyce explored the night through *Finnegans Wake*, he worked to incorporate this aspect of his setting into each component of his novel, including the characterization. The characterization of ALP, then, encompasses rivers, water nymphs, mythological goddesses, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, wives, and any and every female representation imaginable, as pictured in the overlapping circles of the ALP symbol.

The universality of the night allowed Joyce to create female characters that seem to transcend traditional characterization and approach the realm of myth. Although the characterization of Molly in *Ulysses* is extraordinarily detailed and fairly complex, she lacks the universality that Joyce creates for Anna Livia. *Finnegans Wake* acts as the culminating achievement of Joyce's progression in writing female characters. The female characters in *Finnegans Wake* are woven more closely into the narrative than in his earlier works, and while the characterization is more ethereal than corporeal, the influence of the female characters can be found throughout each section of the novel. Although Molly is given the last word in her soliloquy and is present throughout *Ulysses*,

her character is not woven into the narrative as completely as Anna Livia is into *Finnegans Wake*. Anna Livia is the “great democratizer” of Joyce’s female characters.

Joyce himself recognized the progressive shift in his work; on Anna Livia Plurabelle, the showpiece of *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce said that he was “prepared to stake everything” (Ellmann, *Letters III* 163), for “either the end of Part I is something or I am an imbecile in my judgment of language” (Gilbert 249). Joyce’s innovations in language, woven throughout the *Wake* showcase Anna Livia Plurabelle as well. The seemingly random river names incorporated into the text are the literary equivalent of omnipresence. Anna Livia Plurabelle is the personification of the river Liffey, flowing through Dublin, but she is also all of the rivers and the lifeblood of the chapter, and of the novel itself. Joyce referred to his final revisions of *Finnegans Wake* as “combing and recombining the locks of Anna Livia. It is now time that she tread the boards” (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 714). The balance of his final revisions on the novel swung unevenly in favor of Anna Livia; clearly, it was a matter of some importance to Joyce.

The ALP section of the novel is referred to by Campbell as “The Washers at the Ford,” so named because of the washerwomen attending to their laundry duties in the river. The gossip and chatter of the women reflect the ebb and flow of the river in which they are laundering the clothes and is heard at its best advantage when read out loud. Attention to the “liquid sonority” of the Anna Livia Plurabelle section will “also clarify much of the chapter’s content, which bears primarily on four things: an absent man who will not listen, genealogies, laundering, and Anna Livia” (Bishop 352). The washerwomen are iterations of Anna Livia, and the musicality of their speech reflects the themes of the section, as described by Bishop. Water is an important presence, as are the

themes of sight and sound: “Can’t hear the waters of. The chittering waters of. Flittering bats, fieldmice, bawk talk. Ho! Are you not gone ahome? What Thom Malone? Can’t hear with Bawk of Bats, all thim liffeying waters of. Ho, talk save us! My foos won’t moos. I feel as old as yonder elm” (*Finnegans Wake* 215). Mimicking the ebb and flow of the water, their conversation echoes the ebb and flow of the “Penelope” episode. Like Molly, Anna Livia Plurabelle is given her own voice in the novel, and it is heard throughout this section in particular. Much as Leopold is noticeably absent during Molly’s soliloquy, HCE is absent during these proceedings, although he overhears the washerwomen whose conversation comprises much of the chapter. Bloom arrives home, crawls into bed and sleeps, and “Penelope” begins. Bloom is absently present throughout the episode.

Similarly, HCE is absently present during “Anna Livia Plurabelle,” also, as evidenced by the last paragraph in the episode: “A tale told of Shaun or Shem? All Livia’s daughtersons. Dark hawks hear us. Night! Night! My ho head halls. I feel as heavy as yonder stone. Tell me of John or Shaun? Who were Shem and Shaun the living sons or daughters of? Night now! Tell me, tell me, tell me, elm! Night Night! Telmetale of stem or stone. Beside the rivering waters of, hitherandthithering waters of. Night! (*Finnegans Wake* 215). The focus remains on Anna Livia, not on HCE, and emphasizes familial relationships, old age, death, and the natural environment— all universals in human experience. The section is also unique in its narration. Bishop notes that “the oddest feature of this paragraph— and one which has led many readers to reject Joyce’s intimations that the *Wake* has ‘one stable somebody’ as a hero— is its apparently absolute lack of bearing on HCE, who is not simply absent from the scene, but not even

talked about” (Bishop 338). The focus is left on Anna Livia, for her children are mentioned only in reference to her, and the “rivering waters of” the section flowing throughout are the linguistic representation of her character as well. During the entirety of the novel, and in this section in particular, Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker “is not all there, and is all the more himself since he is not so” (*Finnegans Wake* 507). His “Real Absence” (536) brought on by night and his dream-like state are further emphasized by Anna Livia, the focus on the water and on her children, leaving the ebb and flow of the section to Anna Livia.

Ellmann delineates his perspective on the parallels between Molly and Anna Livia Plurabelle thus: “In *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* he apportioned womanhood in its sexual aspect to Molly Bloom, and in its maternal aspect to Anna Livia Plurabelle” (*James Joyce* 294). Often unusually perceptive and erudite in Joyce scholarship, in this case Ellmann is reductionistic by categorizing Molly and ALP in traditional, firmly delineated stereotypes of either mother or temptress. However, both women clearly display characteristics throughout the spectrum. Molly is candid about her sexuality, but also displays frequent motherly affection and concern for her daughter Milly, and sadness and affection for their dead son Rudy, who was buried in a little vest she knitted for him, a rather motherly gesture. Anna Livia Plurabelle has obvious maternal inclinations as well as symbolic significance as life-giving water allusions abound in the sections in which she is mentioned. But often ignored are the sexual undertones in the same sections and the sexual nature of water descriptors.

Throughout the chapter, Anna Livia is simultaneously motherly and attractive, even electrifying: “Describe her!...I wouldn’t miss her for irthing...Whole lady

fair?...What had she on?...Call her calamity electrifies man” (*Finnegans Wake* 207).

Although she is an “electrifying” woman, signifying the sexual aspects of her character, she is motherly as well, as evidenced by some of the motherly complaints she airs:

Looking at the dirt of it! [...]. And it is steeping and stuping since this time last wik. How many goes it I wonder I washed it? I know by heart the places he likes to sale, duddurty devil! Scorching my hand and starving my famine to make his private linen public...My wrists are wrusty rubbing the mouldaw stains. And the dneepers of wet and the gangres of sin in it! (196)

She is “steeping” and “washing” and “rubbing stains” of various meanings, literal laundry as well as the figurative “private linen” of HCE’s embarrassment in Phoenix Park. There is a distinctively maternal tone amidst the complaints of “stains,” and sacrifice made for her children. She is figured as the matriarch of Ireland and the great all-mother. She is also figured as mother to her own children, Shem, Issy, and Shaun, and “starving” in the “famine” caused by the potato blight along with her people, or her children. They are all “steeping” in the shared experiences of Irish nationality.

The “steeping” is both literal and figurative; in a literal sense the laundry being washed in the river has been soaking in an attempt to remove stains. As always, Joyce plays with multiple levels of meaning throughout the text and potential figurative meanings abound. The section refers repeatedly to laundry: “Amn’t I up since the damp dawn, marthared mary allacook, with Corrigan’s pulse and varicoarse veins...soaking and bleaching...a widow like me, for to deck my...son, the laundryman with the lavandier flannels?” (214). The laundry aspect of the section may seem somewhat

limiting in terms of traditional stereotypes associated with women characters, but Bishop notes that the maternal tones of the section actually belie something greater:

“If all these recriminations, made by a woman who has injured herself while irriming and even starved herself— all for the sake of an ingratefully heedless little man— now sound unbearably maternal, they ought to. For the figure speaking of ‘lavandier’ here (Fr. *lavandiere*, ‘washerwoman’) pours forth an audible vision, like that visited upon Saint ‘Martha Mary Alacoque’ (marthared mary allacook), of a ‘Sacred Heart’— and, in particular, of a ‘sacred heart’ associated with self-sacrifice (hence the ‘martyr’ in ‘marthared’) and with lots of ‘cooking’ (hence ‘allacook’).” (Bishop 354)

Layered among the seemingly pedantic associations of women with laundry is praise for a woman likened to a saint. This sainted woman has accumulated varicose veins and scorched hands through her self-sacrifice. And yet, she is attractive, as well as kind and motherly, and rises to her husband’s defense when he stands accused. Of what, readers are never quite certain, but she defends him all the same. She is the ideal woman, or more aptly stated, she is a universalized representation of woman as seen through the dream-like haze of night. She is a composite idea of all women and as such she drives the narrative. In *Anna Livia*, there is an element of the fleeting images of women characterized in *Portrait*, but the historical context of the universality Joyce imagined and mythic aspects of her character renders this comparison incongruent.

The various meanings layered in the text, from surface laundry allusions to

Anna Livia Plurabelle take many forms throughout the novel, but each of them serves to increase the depth of her character and the breadth of her influence in the novel. Anna Livia Plurabelle is a powerful and pervasive force in the novel and is only limited by the perspective of her beholder. Both Molly and Anna Livia seem destined to be misunderstood. Both are, in actuality, well-rounded, multi-faceted characters. While reading the novel, readers are meant to feel compelled “to wonder whether there was ever a time in their lives comparable to the hour of night constructed in ‘Anna Livia,’ when they dwelled, only in unconsciousness, in a universe circumbounded primarily by the sound of a beating heart and arteries of running water” (Bishop 354). Such a liquid environment, surrounded by liquid and darkness, is a universal experience as well, that of being carried in a mother’s womb. Anna Livia, the maternal figure whose “arteries of running water” and whose “beating heart” surround readers as they experience the novel, becomes a universalizing figure to all who read *Finnegans Wake*. Anna Livia is clearly the maternal influence in the novel, saying “Listen now. Are you listening? ...Think of your Ma!” (*Finnegans Wake* 206). One must also acknowledge that to be a mother is to be a sexual being simultaneously. One state does not preclude the other, and, in fact, to be a sexual being is a clear imperative to being a mother figure as well. The characters of Molly and Anna Livia Plurabelle are illustrations of the significant overlap between the two roles.

Joyce envisioned a novel in which universals were more emphasized than individualistic characteristics, and a dream-like state is a “great democratizer.” It also functions as an interlocutor between the seemingly disparate facets of each of the characters and allows for more subtle, yet universal nuances. Joyce “conceived of his



book as the dream of old Finn, lying in death beside the river Liffey and watching the history of Ireland and the world—past and future—flow through his mind like flotsam on the river of life” (Ellmann, *James Joyce* 590). *Ulysses* can be seen as the daytime version of Joyce’s Irish myth, and *Finnegans Wake* as the nighttime version. Within the realm of myth spanning “the history of Ireland and the world,” there is surely space and time enough to develop several aspects of womanhood and to emphasize its universal aspects. Literalism in reading the *Wake* should be avoided as antithetical to the conception of the novel and a disservice to the characters as well as to the reader. “The greatest obstacle to our comprehension of *Finnegans Wake* [...has been...] the failure on the part of readers to believe that Joyce really meant what he said when he spoke of the book as a ‘reconstruction of the nocturnal life’ and an ‘imitation of the dream-state’” (Bishop 309). Anna Livia Plurabelle and Issy are not “mad” or examples of “female imbecility” or entirely maternal and asexual or sexual beings only; they are an amalgamation of woman’s lived experience. As such, they are seen at their best advantage and in their most true form through a universal lens, or through a textual and historical analysis that takes into consideration the context in which they were written. The nighttime setting and the intent of the author are essential parts of any reading of the *Wake*, but particularly in terms of the characterization.

Dreams can be best described as fragmented, and the female characters in *Finnegans Wake* are fragmented into various incarnations throughout the novel to maintain the nocturnal obscurity aesthetic of the novel and to increase the universality of each character. By incorporating numerous levels of allusion and systematically “obscuring” the language, Joyce lifted women in *Finnegans Wake* out of mere

representation into myth. The term “systematic darkening” (4), as used by Bishop to describe Joyce’s writing process for the *Wake*, must also be applied to the characterizations in the novel. Paradoxically, the “systematic darkening” of his subject frees his female characters from the traditional constraints placed on character development, allowing them a transcendent, mythical quality; in so doing it works to enhance the range of literary conceptions of woman.

Anna Livia Plurabelle encompasses the types of female characters in all of Joyce’s fiction. There are aspects of her character that seem fleeting, like the images of women in *Portrait*. Yet Anna Livia is also a central character like Maria and Eveline in *Dubliners*, and her suffering is portrayed sympathetically, as is the difficult situations of the women in *Dubliners*. ALP is similar to Molly in *Ulysses* as well: engaging, candidly sexual, motherly, and entirely complex. And yet, while encompassing all of these characterizations of women, the universality of the mythic aspects of her character make her unique among Joyce’s creations.

The characterization of the women in all of Joyce’s fiction is notable to some degree. The characterization of the early women characters in *Portrait*, particularly Emma Clery, is symptomatic of Stephen’s adolescence and his accompanying self-absorption, not of his misogyny, and certainly not of Joyce’s purported misogyny. The situations in *Portrait*, often cited as evidence of misogyny, are more aptly described as evidences of Stephen’s adolescent narcissism. In addition, the scarcity of detail of the female characters could reflect Joyce’s relative inexperience as a writer, as his characterization of women steadily improves over the course of his writing career.

The characterization of the women in *Dubliners* is defined by significant detail that is mostly absent from Joyce's characterization of women in *Portrait*. Although the adolescent narrator of "Araby" has many of the same narrative shortcomings as Stephen does in *Portrait*, the clear age-based organization of the stories in *Dubliners* allows for a somewhat self-centered adolescent narrator at the beginning of the collection. In later stories, the narration clearly shifts to that of a sympathetic narrator who shares with readers the pathetic range of options available to women in Dublin at the turn of the century. The sense of paralysis and the pervading feeling of gloom captured by Joyce in *Dubliners* seems to be an accurate representation of their plight, and the detailed descriptions, while limited by the constraints of the short-story genre, give clear pictures of the range of emotions experienced by each character. The increased degree of complexity from the earlier works to the later works exists in miniature within the collection of short stories; the depth and complexity of the characters increases in direct correlation to the placement of the stories within the collection, showing an increasing maturity in Joyce's ability to write admirable women characters. The female characters in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Dubliners* reflect the age of the author at the time that they were written. Joyce was nineteen years old when he wrote *Portrait* and had not yet begun his study of Nora that became such a significant dynamic in their relationship and had considerable influence on his characterization of women in his writing. From his close acquaintance with Nora grew an increased understanding of women, or at least of her, and that understanding is reflected in his later works *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*.

The notable examples of successful female characters are, in part, a result of his association with Nora Barnacle. The parallel between the relationship in *Ulysses* and the relationship between Joyce and Nora lends a sense of authenticity to the characterization. Molly Bloom remains a powerful force throughout *Ulysses* as a result of her fixed position in the forefront of Bloom's mind. While the complexity of her character is unrelated to the trajectory of the novel and remains consistently intricate in scope, the considerable length of Joyce's later novels, such as *Ulysses*, allows for increased depth in his characterization of women as well. Molly resists attempts to reduce or simplify her character, and as such, she functions as the affirming presence for the entirety of the novel.

From the plucky Molly Bloom, who is the reference point for *Ulysses* as well as for the novel's beginning and end, to Anna Livia Plurabelle, the mythic river-mother in *Finnegans Wake* who is fragmented into numerous universal incarnations, Joyce's later female characters show themselves to be complex creations. In the introduction to his landmark biography of Joyce, Richard Ellmann said of him: "We are still learning to be James Joyce's contemporaries, to understand our interpreter" (*James Joyce* 3). One aspect of learning to become his contemporaries is to present and discuss varied insights on his creations. I hope my project will contribute to the ongoing scholarly conversation about Joyce's female characters and, in so doing, will add to the small but growing part of that conversation that does not dismiss his female characters as products of a misogynist genius but evaluates them as the complicated multi-faceted characters that they are.

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