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MOLLY BLOOM: A STUDY OF LOVE

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BY

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ABSTRACT

MOLLY BLOOM: A STUDY OF LOVE

BY REAGEN DAY

My research project intends to examine the function of viscerality and sentimentality in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Viscerality, in regards to Molly Bloom, functions as a way to either represent her desire for physical touch, desirability, or sexuality. Its multi-functional status reveals its importance in Molly's life as a key component to her form of love. However, this definition does not cover all of Molly's bases for love. While it is a major factor, we will see how sentimentality works in conjunction with viscerality to reveal how Molly interprets her form of love. The following paper explores Molly's love in *Ulysses* and how Joyce's presentation of Molly's love reveals fears surrounding her youth, maternity, and societal pressures. I intend to focus on the relationship between Molly's love and these three specific anxieties. The immense popularity surrounding Joyce's *Ulysses* led to an array of literary criticism examining various aspects of the novel offering a multitude of theories regarding Molly's love and sexuality. However, not many critics have explored Molly's love on its own in regards to three men: Hugh E. 'Blazes' Boylan, Stephen Dedalus, and Leopold Bloom, and their significant roles in Molly's life. An emphasis on Leopold is placed as the synthesis between these two men and offers a deeper and more insightful understanding which would further aid existing scholarship.

DEDICATION

To Professor Michael North, your unwavering support and guidance have been the cornerstone of this thesis. I am immensely grateful for your dedication in sharing your wisdom and investing your valuable time in nurturing my ideas. Without your mentorship, this work would not have been possible.

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Introduction

“Molly Bloom, the realistic character and individual, takes on the values, limits, and possibilities of mature, married woman, mother, arista, Jewess, Irishwoman, Dubliner, and exile of Gibraltar in 1904...Her habit of contradicting herself is not merely a female foible, but a useful representation of how an individual’s attitude is affected by time and mental association...Molly may not be an ideal representative of women, but her nocturnal thinking may not be an ideally representative expression of her. It is what Joyce chose to show, however, and what we must deal with” (Bonnie Kime Scott in *Joyce and Feminism*, pp.162).

What causes an individual to choose a life partner, and more importantly, what inspires enduring commitment? This thesis takes James Joyce’s magnum opus *Ulysses* (1922) as a case study that answers this question in a particularly revealing way. Molly Bloom’s portrayal of love with Leopold may not represent how all women love, but it does illustrate how some women can love. In an intense scene within Molly Bloom’s stream-of-consciousness, she recalls an intimate moment with her husband Leopold, wherein a gaze lasting ten minutes suggests a connection as profound as if they had known each other for a lifetime. This thesis contends that Molly Bloom’s final stream-of-consciousness episode, “Penelope,” presents Molly’s cuckoldry of Leopold as a deliberate choice. By delving into Molly’s psyche, this study aims to unveil the intricacies of a woman’s capacity for enduring love, shedding light on the conscious choices that underpin commitment in the face of societal challenges to female sexuality—proving that Molly’s love is a deliberate, calculated, and even romantic love.

Ulysses is a novel of three divisions. In the first division (Telemachiad), a young man named Stephen Dedalus leaves home with no key and subsequently no plan in returning for the night. In the second (The Odyssey), Leopold Bloom leaves his home on 7 Eccles Street to run errands and has several missed meetings with Stephen Dedalus—he also avoids going home because he has knowledge of his wife’s meeting with a lover, Hugh ‘Blazes’ Boylan, at around 4:00 pm. In the third division (Nostos), we get the homecoming of Leopold and a drunk Stephen

who break into the Blooms' home and share a wee together, and we get the final episode, "Penelope," where we read Molly Bloom's thoughts throughout June 16, 1904. At the intersection of these narratives the larger tragedy of love emerges—a poignant exploration of the impact of losing a loved one resulting in pursuit for pacification, and the ensuing consequences where individuals navigate desires in a world captivated by others' moral compasses. The novel's final episode consists of Molly Bloom's stream-of-consciousness and reveals the process of falling in love with Leopold and staying in that love.

In "Penelope," both visceral and sentimental experiences play a crucial role, functioning as conduits to manifest Molly's desires for sexual satisfaction, intellectual stimulation, and empathetic understanding. By analyzing the interplay of these sensations within the context of Molly Bloom, a deeper layer of meaning emerges from Joyce's nuanced use of language. Despite the significance of this dichotomy, few critics have thoroughly explored the connection between these desires and Molly's three suitors. The following thesis aims to delve into the integral role of viscosity and sentimentality in "Penelope," seeking to unravel questions regarding their significance throughout the episode. The visceral aspects of the analysis will focus on the physiological responses associated with desire. This involves Molly's lexical choices, metaphors, and narrative structure to reveal aspects of her emotional experience. Simultaneously, this thesis will delve into the sentimental dimensions of her emotional experience by assessing her cognitive responses, expressed through subjective feelings, expressive behaviors, and symbolic imagery. This dual approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of Molly's emotional and hormonal states, offering insight into how *Ulysses* captures both the physical and cognitive aspects of human desire.

The first section of this thesis critically examines existing scholarship, offering a comprehensive analysis that highlights gaps resulting from the lack of in-depth exploration of Molly's past experiences regarding love, each example representing a piece in the intricate puzzle of her desired love. The second section delves into Molly's journey of learning how to love through the prism of both visceral and sentimental sensations drawn from her past experiences. The third section follows by exploring the fulfillment of Molly's sexual fantasies by Hugh 'Blazes' Boylan through visceral desires and investigates her decision to abstain from intercourse with him. The fourth portion examines the ways visceral stimulation functions to reveal Molly's desire for intellectual stimulation and motherhood, where the emphasis is on expressive behaviors. And the fifth and final portion examines Molly's relationship with her husband Leopold. This section reveals the intricacies of Molly's love and its enduring nature, shedding light on how both physiological responses and cognitive experiences contribute to the complexity of her emotional journey.

Literature Review

Existing scholarship often delves into the multifaceted nature of Molly Bloom's character, particularly regarding her relationships with other men and the exploration of her sexuality. However, Luca Crispi's¹ analysis focuses on the importance of Molly's past experiences with men and women in shaping her present desires. He finds in Molly's relationship with Hester Stanhope that "From the beginning, there is an adolescent sexual undercurrent to the young women's relationship, and one of the first things Joyce clarifies is how Molly got her pet name" (Crispi 102). Crispi suggests that Molly's early relationships are underpinned by an "adolescent sexual undercurrent," conveying the imperative of contextualizing her history as it directly corresponds with her desires as an adult. For instance, this attention he draws to Molly's pet name unveils her inclination for older men and their nurturing attributes during her formative years, thereby enriching our comprehension of her evolving desires and motivations. Another scholar, Richard Brown², further explores Molly's sexuality and its complexity. He calls attention to Molly's actions, such as "[unbuttoning] Mulvey, with all the connotations of ethical or psychological sexual inhibition and release in that term" indicating a masculine approach to her sexual agency and inhibition, one that reveals her preference for dominance and control in sexual encounters (Brown 154). Bonnie Kime Scott³ adds depth to the analysis by emphasizing Molly's pleasure in assuming control over men, linking her experiences with different suitors. Notably, she emphasizes Molly's acknowledgement of "the prodigious size of Boylan's organ," and how

¹ See "Molly, Mr. Stanhope, and Hester: A Genetic Reading of a Love Triangle in 'Ulysses'" by Luca Crispi.

² See "'When in doubt do gender': Constructing Masculinities in 'Penelope,' 'they're all Buttons men'" by Richard Brown.

³ See *Joyce and Feminism* by Bonnie Kime Scott.

Molly “recalls that with Mulvey she ‘loved rousing that dog in the hotel,’ (*U.* 760), this being her first experience with arousing a male” (Scott 173). To sum up, the culmination of Molly’s sexual experiences reflects her inclination to be in the driver’s seat of these intimate encounters.

Moreover, Margot Norris’s⁴ examination provides insights into the societal perceptions and treatment of Molly’s sexuality. Norris comments upon the way she is treated by Boylan: “Molly now reveals something that she omitted before: that Boylan’s insulting slap on her rear was not merely an uncouth erotic gesture but a possible reprimand or punishment” (244). Norris interprets Boylan’s actions towards Molly, particularly his disrespectful gesture, as a form of reprimand or punishment. This revelation prompts Molly to reassess her own feelings, revealing a shift in her attitude towards sexual encounters. Molly’s inclination to refuse to be reduced to the status of an animal illustrates her struggle against the pressures that force her to conceal her sexuality and desires. In an environment where she is constantly being scrutinized and judged by the characters of Joyce’s *Dublin*, Molly’s defiance represents a bold assertion of her autonomy in navigating the complexities of intimacy. Through these diverse perspectives, Joyce presents Molly as a complex and evolving character, challenging conventional notions of femininity and sexuality. By analyzing Molly’s relationships and experiences, scholars offer valuable insights into the multi-faceted nature of her character and broader themes of love, desire, and societal expectations within *Ulysses*. This exploration of Molly Bloom not only enriches our understanding of her character but also underscores the novel’s commentary on human relationships and the individual’s struggle for autonomy amidst societal constraints.

Joyce’s portrayal of Molly Bloom’s sexuality in *Ulysses* also navigates anxieties and desires surrounding maternal relationships and intimate connections. While Molly’s sexual

⁴ See “Don’t Call Him ‘Blazes’: Hugh E. Boylan’s Narrative Caricature” by Margot Norris.

encounters are often depicted with a certain degree of negativity, Joyce's exploration of her interactions with younger men offers an opportunity to dive deeper into fears and insecurities, particularly regarding mother-son dynamics. Nora Barnacle, Joyce's muse and life partner, emerges as a significant influence on Molly's character. Nora's impact on Joyce's literary creations is evident from Greta Conroy in his short story *The Dead* (1914), to Bertha in his play *The Exiles* (1918), and of course, the memorable Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*. Joyce's enduring love for Nora suggests that Molly's character—as a woman, mother, and wife—is meant to be understood and empathized with, rather than simply condemned for her actions. As John Bormanis⁵ aptly notes, “Molly's (or rather Joyce's) association of the troubles she had in breast-feeding Milly with those she just had with Boylan produce an intersection of infantile, male, female, and maternal desires, all of which center on Molly's breasts” (602). This intersection of family dynamics represents a fear of vulnerability and a longing for connection, especially in Molly's feminine identity, thereby revealing the interplay between societal norms and primal instinct in shaping her personal relationships and experiences.

Evelyn Liegner and Ronda Motycka's⁶ analysis unpacks the theme of boundary dissolution in Molly's character. Liegner and Motycka contend that Molly represents a breakdown of traditional familial roles and boundaries, particularly in her relationship with Stephen. By illustrating how Molly and Stephen are unable to connect on a deeper level, Liegner and Motycka reveal the complexities of maternal longing and vulnerability within Stephen's character. Liegner and Motycka argue, “Stephen never meets Molly, but continues searching for the lost mother (as Joyce did for his), never enjoying the fruits of her mentally fruitful universe

⁵ See “‘In the first bloom of her new motherhood’: the Appropriation of the Maternal and the representation of mothering in *Ulysses*” by John Bormanis.

⁶ See “James Joyce's ‘Ulysses’ Revisited: Matricide and the Search for the Mother” by Evelyn Liegner.

(in its wish-fulfilling aspects somewhat like Joyce's dream of an all-accepting mother" (572).

This inability to connect blurs the lines between motherhood, sexuality, and intellectual stimulation, leading to Stephen's fear of losing the maternal bond. Similarly, Molly, a mother without a son, experiences a parallel disconnect within her maternal world. That disconnect is soldered back together by one man who puts others' needs before himself, Molly's husband.

It is in Leopold Bloom's depiction as a cuckold husband that presents a counterargument of what people typically regard as true love. Molly needs someone who sets aside their own needs for others and Leopold does just that. Joyce's depiction of Leopold's cuckoldry forms a stark contrast to the conventional image of masculine heroism exemplified by Homer's Odysseus, shedding light on the complexities of his character through the lens of his wife, Molly. Leopold's capacity to empathize with Molly transcends societal expectations in Joyce's Dublin, fostering an unspoken understanding that elevates their relationship. Scott delves into Leopold's roles as both a father and a husband, revealing the impact his son's death has had on his marriage. Scott's analysis emphasizes the losses endured by the Blooms, particularly the cessation of "complete sexual intercourse" following Rudy's demise, only adds more strain to their marital challenges (177). Despite being labeled a coward for his avoidance and passive acceptance of Molly's liaisons, Leopold's willingness to accommodate her desires reflects his willingness to prioritize his wife's sexual satisfaction and well-being over traditional societal norms or expectations. Joyce's portrayal of Molly's openness about her intimacy with other men, juxtaposed with Leopold's acceptance and even encouragement, speaks to his remarkable comfort with her sexual nature.

Leopold's acceptance of his cuckoldry reflects his understanding of the necessity for both Molly and him to address their sexual needs—despite their difficulties in being intimate with

each other. Many literary scholars have analyzed the presence of sexual fulfillment within Joyce's novel; however, critics often exclude an analysis on sexual satisfaction as a representation for deeper connection of this relationship he shares with Molly. Peter Lee⁷ offers a keen analysis of Leopold's masturbation scene in "Nausicaa" within the context of the narrative's representation of loss: "We are thus given three perspectives on 'twenty-two' through four characters in different parts of the book: a parallax of looking at a period of life as the future, the present, and the past" (821). Lee explores the different perspectives on the theme of 'twenty-two' from different characters to aid his point, analyzing Leopold's mutual masturbation scene with Gerty as a representation of a reunion with a seventeen-year-old Molly. As Leopold accommodates his wife's needs by consenting to her intimacy with Boylan, we later learn that full sexual intercourse did not take place, mirroring Leopold's experience with Gerty earlier in the novel.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* presents viscerality and sentimentality as an integral part of the novel's plot while also revealing the dual approach as imperative to the wide range of fulfillment that Molly needs as a woman. The dynamic between Boylan and the suitors from the *Odyssey* throughout the "Penelope" episode reflects Molly's conflicting emotions—desiring Boylan's attention while grappling with anxieties surrounding intimacy with anyone other than her husband, Leopold. Furthermore, Joyce strategically utilizes Stephen as a surrogate son for Molly and Leopold, underscoring Molly's longing for maternal fulfillment, a yearning left unmet in her life. Molly's fantasies about engaging in sexual relationships with a younger man also signify her desire for intellectual stimulation and challenge. As for Leopold, his role as Molly's husband encompasses a multitude of responsibilities, from facilitating her sexual fantasies with Boylan to

⁷ See "How Old is Gertrude MacDowell?" by Peter Lee.

nurturing her literary tastes and understanding her past experiences. Through his unconditional acceptance and support, Leopold empowers Molly to fully embrace her authentic self. This paper aims to address the gap in existing scholarship regarding Joyce's exploration of love in the realms of sexuality, intellectual engagement, and empathy. As we delve deeper into this inquiry, we will unravel the complexities of love and its transformative ability to interconnect disparate themes and experiences.

Past Lovers

Throughout *Ulysses*, Molly emerges as a character oscillating between sensuality and sentimentality. A deeper exploration of Molly's past lovers offers a divergent perspective, one that delves into sentiments of nostalgia and visceral intensity akin to those of a woman both intellectually refined and emotionally unbridled. This exploration reveals how Molly seeks self-fulfillment in a world that all too often asks more from a woman than mere fidelity. By examining Molly's experiences before June 16, 1904, we will see how Molly interprets love during the present time in "Penelope."

Reflecting on her initial infatuation with her friend Hester's husband Mr. Stanhope, an older man who captures Molly's attention as an adolescent, a sense of sentimental attachment surfaces, intertwined with their shared encounter amidst live music:

he was watching me whenever he got an opportunity at the band on the Alameda
esplanade [...] I felt something go through me like needles my eyes were dancing I
remember after when I looked at myself in the glass hardly recognised myself the change
he was so attractive to a girl (U 18.646-47).

Here, a young Molly begins to understand that Mr. Stanhope's appreciation of music (and appreciation of Molly) has triggered the most intimate parts of Molly's desire. This vignette mirrors the dynamic between Molly and her husband Leopold, as Leopold, in a similar manner displays an interest in Molly's preferences, revealing, "I know what Ill do Ill go about rather gay not too much singing a bit now and then mi fa pieta Masetto [...] Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful" (U 18.1506-9). Here, Molly emerges as both inclined to deepen her connection with Leopold through music and keen on indulging their shared visceral desires by embracing the primal sides of her sexuality.

While the scene brims with visceral sensations, Molly's embrace of their shared musical enjoyment also alludes to her sentimental side. Sebastian Knowles⁸ highlights Leopold's recollection of meeting Molly for the first time: "'Mappari' also links the Virgin Mary with Molly, since the song reminds Bloom of their first meeting: 'First night when first I saw her at Mat Dillon's in Terenure'(U-G 593)'" (451). Joyce intertwines Leopold's attraction to Molly with their mutual appreciation of music, infusing a romantic undertone that further positions Molly as a sentimental figure, countering and complementing the intense visceral experiences she relishes. Knowles' account of Leopold's memory of meeting Molly for the first time suggests that Leopold subconsciously connects music to Molly and the feelings he felt during their initial encounter—implying that these same emotions still persist to the present day on June 16th. Additionally, there is something to be said for comparing her to the Virgin Mary, although it is evident that Molly is no virgin—Leopold still thinks of her as committing no acts of sin. And this different understanding of Molly that is—strangely—a hot take, paints Molly as a human being and not simply as an innocent virgin for Leopold to project his desires on.

In a moment steeped in sentimentality, Molly reflects on her past connection with a man named Harry, a military man encountered during her youth. Rather than offering explicit descriptions of Harry, Molly reminisces through tangible objects, leaving an imprint on her memory. Upon mentioning his name, Molly's thoughts turn to an image of herself contemplating him by the sea, evoking memories of a "handkerchief under [her] pillow" which she kept shortly after he left (U 18.863). However, her longing to gift Harry a keepsake contrasts sharply with his gesture of presenting her a "clumsy Claddagh ring," signaling a disconnect from the sentimental bond she thought they once shared (U 18.863-64, 866). Molly perceives this disparity as

⁸ See "The Substructure of 'Sirens': Molly as 'Nexus Omnia Ligans.'" by Sebastian Knowles.

disrespectful, ultimately bestowing Harry's ring upon another man, Gardner, who had ventured south to Africa. This act of disrespect weighs heavily on Molly, mainly because she cherished the handkerchief, which bore Harry's intimate essence.

As much as Molly thinks about the men who shaped the way she loves, she thinks several times about women—seemingly in a negative manner; however, Hester is one woman that stands out in a positive light in Molly's narrative. Although Molly is attracted to Hester's husband Mr. Stanhope, an examination of Molly's correspondences sheds light on the relationship she has with Hester and the symbolism behind the letters that they exchange. And it is clear that Molly and Hester share an intimate relationship, both appreciating the experience of sharing letters between one another with Hester signing off: "love yrs affly Hester x x x x x" (U 18.623). The tender sign off carries symbolic meaning that suggests this form of communication as a relationship that prioritizes emotional connection and affection; it's a way of reinforcing the nurturing and supportive aspects of their friendship. It's a sign-off of admiration and love. Molly responds to the thought of Hester's letter by acknowledging Hester's relationship with an older man: "she didnt look a bit married just like a girl he was years older than her wogger" (U 18.623-24). Molly refers to Hester's husband, Mr. Stanhope, in a manner similar to how she is addressed by the Stanhope couple, using a pet name. By referring to Mr. Stanhope as a "wogger," a term she has coined from 'wog,' meaning a foreigner or immigrant, Molly deepens the implication of intimacy between herself and the Stanhopes. Hester's unusual relationship with a much older man thus solidifies the parallels between Hester's union and Molly's own marriage to Leopold, suggesting a resonance between the women's experiences.

As Molly thinks about the letters she sends back and forth with Hester, her mind ebbs and flows into other letters she has sent or received in her life. When considering the idea of women

sending letters, Molly's reaction differs from those shared with Hester. She feels repulsed by the way other women talk and write in their letters. For example, Molly thinks:

who did I get the last letter from O Mrs Dwenn now what possessed her to write from Canada after so many years to know the recipe I had for pisto madrilenio Floey Dillon since she wrote to say she was married to a very rich architect if Im to believe all I hear with a villa and eight rooms her father was an awfully nice man he was near seventy always goodhumoured well now Miss Tweedy or Miss Gillespie (U 18.718-23).

From Molly's thoughts about Hester we see that there are positive thoughts surrounding their relationship; however that does not seem to be the case when she talks about other women. It's not to say that Molly hates these women, but it does suggest that Molly finds the phony nature of their correspondences to be unattractive qualities. Her words, "what possessed her [...] after so many years to know the recipe I had," feels ridiculous to Molly. She hasn't had any communication with this woman for years, for reasons unknown, and it irritates Molly when women avoid addressing the long period of silence between them. This situation emphasizes Molly's detachment from these other women.

Although Molly's famous soliloquy is riddled with many errors, it is in this instance of thinking about women where she becomes hyperconscious of her grammar. Only a few lines after talking about Mrs Dwenn, Miss Tweedy, Miss Gillespie—she finds difficulty in communicating herself clearly. Molly says: "symphathy I always make that mistake and newpew with 2 double yous" crossing out, in the Gabler edition, the misplaced 'h' and 'w'. This self-consciousness indirectly reveals Molly's inability to connect with women who cannot authentically express their emotions to her, as evidenced by her subconscious correction of her grammar. This now hyperconscious state of her grammar and perfectionism also symbolizes a

deeper desire for validation and understanding. Molly's meticulous correction of words she's likely been made aware of for incorrectly spelling in the past, suggests a subconscious need for precision and clarity in verbal communication, perhaps stemming from a sense of being misunderstood in the past. This attention to detail may reflect Molly's internal struggle to reconcile her own identity and experiences within a society that may not fully appreciate or acknowledge her.

As we have established that Molly appreciates letters, it is important to mention Leopold's similar appreciation of them because it deepens our understanding of his character and his relationship with Molly. In episode five, "Lotus Eaters," we learn that the letter Leopold has received earlier is from a woman named Martha. After reading the letter, the narrative oscillates between a narrator and the internal monologue: "He tore the flower gravely from its pinhold smelt its almost no smell and placed it in his heart pocket. Language of flowers. They like it because no-one can hear" (U. 5.260-62). The action of tearing the flower from his pinhold symbolizes a deliberate and careful effort to capture something fleeting, akin to the sentimentality often associated with letter-writing. Placing the letter close to his heart signifies an emotional attachment which represents a personal and intimate space, reinforcing the sentimentality of the gesture. Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf⁹ sheds light on the intimacy of letters in Joyce's work: "[T]he letters stand in for the absent body of the beloved. The tangibility of the paper, which once was touched by the now-absent correspondent, and the materiality of the letters-their very shape and size-become sexual and emotional triggers" (469-70). Leopold and Molly share these same sentiments about letter writing, finding excitement and emotional connection in the absence of their dear friend or lover.

⁹ See "The Nora Letters as a Source of Joyce's Performativity" by Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf.

Molly's admission of sending herself letters reveals a dual longing: a longing for romantic communication and for self-love. She thinks: "not a letter from a living soul except the odd few I posted to myself with bits of paper in them" (U 18.698-99). While she yearns for someone to speak her love language, the act also suggests her ability to fulfill her own emotional needs. This practice, influenced by her relationship with Hester, highlights the significance of female communication in shaping Molly's understanding of love. It portrays both her desire for external validation and her resilience in fulfilling her own emotional needs, illuminating the complexity of Molly's relationships and the importance of emotional connection in shaping her sense of self-worth and fulfillment. If Molly's needs aren't being met, she's sure to find out how she can fix it.

Hugh 'Blazes' Boylan

As a result of the past lovers and letters examined in Molly's narrative, Molly often needs visceral stimulation to feel loved. After learning about Molly's letter from Hugh 'Blazes' Boylan in the morning, Leopold has a near encounter with Boylan in "Hades": "Mr Bloom reviewed the nails of his left hand, then those of his right hand. The nails, yes. Is there anything more in him that they sees? Fascination. Worst man in Dublin" (U. 6.200-2). Leopold's immense anxiety over Boylan's meeting with Molly later that day permeates the mind of the reader. But in this instance, we get a sense of Leopold's control over his anxiety, even if it means sacrificing his own happiness. Yes, it is true that Leopold doesn't like Boylan, but what does he do? He checks his cuticles and looks at his fingers as if he doesn't care, because that is what he does for his wife's happiness.

At the same time, Molly's narrative is imbued with thoughts of this encounter with Boylan later in the day. Molly boldly thinks: "but I dont know what kind of drawers he likes none at all I think didnt he say yes" (U 18.439-40). Her proclamations resonate with her interest in Boylan and the way he is interested in her. Boylan's character serves to remind the reader that there are aspects of Molly's love language that aren't quite fulfilled by her husband at the moment. He is depicted as a confident and cocky man and is demonized by Leopold in the previous episodes. Yet, Molly's character reveals her need for this fulfillment. Her desire is represented through the want of physical touch. Molly notes: "I wish some man or other would take me sometime when hes there and kiss me in his arms theres nothing like a kiss long and hot down to your soul almost paralyses you" (U 18.104-6). The need for physical touch endures throughout the entirety of the "Penelope" episode with the idea that Molly can't go on without this desire fulfilled. While she is still attracted to mental stimulation, Molly is described as a

human that still craves touch and embrace by a man. Boylan's character reveals Molly's necessity surrounding physical stimulation, presenting her character as craving more than just mental stimulation.

As Molly discusses Boylan's position in her life, she reflects on his varied interests, stating: "theyre all so different Boylan talking about the shape of my foot he noticed at once [...] I was waggling my foot" (U 18.246, 248). This observation unveils Boylan's parallel interest in Molly's physicality; he appreciates even the most mundane parts of her body, such as her feet, as much as he does the rest of her. Her words imply that she also values a man who is playful with her and is interested in all aspects of her physical features.

One clear marker of the connection between Molly's sexuality and her need for visceral stimulation is the way she gets excited for Boylan's visit. Molly's choice to have Boylan over to 7 Eccles street and stay for a while suggests that she is not naïve or innocent, but rather assertive and self-aware. She thinks: "I bet he never saw a pair of thighs than that look how white they are the smoothest place is right there between this bit here how soft like a peach" (U 18.1144-46). Molly's language creates a positive connotation, directing readers towards a more sensual description of her body that she immediately sexualizes. By describing the space in between her thighs as smooth as a "peach" there is a strong sexual and youthful aspect to her identity now. Because she is a married woman, Molly's age is emphasized, and her need to be desirable manifests in the idea of being youthful.

Molly's desire to be young highlights what she perceives as essential to female sexuality and the potential for her own acceptance of herself as a sexual being. Her self-awareness appears to generate from other women's judgment: "she used to be always embracing me Josie whenever he was there meaning him of course glauming me over and when I said I washed up and down as

far as possible asking me and did you wash possible” (U 18.202-5). By asking Molly in front of another man if she washed “possible,” Josie inadvertently embarrasses Molly by insinuating that she may have difficulty reaching certain areas while cleaning herself. This implies a questioning of Molly’s age and an inability to maintain proper hygiene. The embarrassment may stem from Molly’s subconscious, as she appears to drop the comment in her stream of consciousness without much comment on it; however, her dislike of Josie is abundantly clear. For Molly, the mention of her struggle to reach certain places during washing accentuates her vulnerability to the passage of time and the physical changes that come with it.

After Boylan’s visit, Molly finds herself wondering where he is. This longing for sexual fulfillment not only arises from her interaction with Boylan but also from her lack of intimacy with her husband, Leopold, in the aftermath of their son Rudy’s death. Since then, the couple has refrained from “complete carnal intercourse” (U 17.2278). While they still engage in sexual activity, Leopold withdraws before ejaculation to reduce the risk of conception. Joyce portrays a scene of detachment and neglect because the mere possibility of conceiving brings immense stress, given their past tragedy and the fear of it recurring.

While Leopold neglects their marriage’s intimate and primal aspects, Molly craves the physical attention even more. The act of submitting to a more primal side of her desires is incredibly perverse and intimate to the early twentieth-century readers because women are expected not to want to desire a man in the way that Molly does—yet here this woman is, desperately trying to feed her desires with another man. Joyce presents Molly as a sexually assertive character in Leopold’s narrative yet paradoxically portrays her as lacking fulfillment in her expressions of affection. This presentation underscores Molly’s female sexuality as a crucial aspect of her identity that requires fulfillment and recognition.

After Boylan visits, Molly is fulfilled by their encounter and thinks about when she will see him again. Among Molly's thoughts about her trip in two weeks with Boylan, Molly comments on their expected train ride together: "O I love jaunting in a train or a car with lovely soft cushions I wonder will he take a 1st class for me he might want to do it in a train by tipping the guard" (U 18.366-68). The resurgence of Molly's sexual fantasies and encounters with Boylan highlights the boldness and uninhibited nature of female sexuality as depicted by Molly. Her remarks also imply that Molly is more interested in spontaneous and thrilling sexual encounters, rather than meticulously planned ones. Molly's feelings towards Boylan and other male characters demonstrate her full acceptance and embrace of female sexuality. With it, comes the power to captivate men in various situations, such as when Boylan knelt to assist Molly with her petticoat: "so I lifted them a bit and touched his trousers outside the way I used to Gardner" (U 18.312-13). Joyce's portrayal of the connection between female sexuality and viscosity emphasizes the idea that a woman's desire to embrace her sexuality can lead to sexual fulfillment without necessarily engaging in sexual intercourse. This exchange in power poses an interesting conversation not only to women but to men as well, there is a strong sense of excitement that the sexual promiscuity gives Molly which fuels her throughout the course of "Penelope."

After Molly has gotten over the high of Boylan coming over and fulfilling her sexual desire, Molly thinks about several sexual encounters she's had before, namely with Leopold. Thus, Boylan is painted in a less favorable light in Molly's stream-of-consciousness:

all the time with his big hipbones hes heavy too with his hairy chest for this heat always having to lie down for them better for him put it into me from behind the way Mrs Mastiansky told me her husband made her like the dogs for it and stick out her tongue as far as ever she could and he so quiet and mild with his tingating either can you ever be up

to men the way it takes them lovely stuff in that blue suit he had on and stylish tie and socks the skyblue silk things on them (U 18.415-21).

Molly uses words like “hipbones,” “heavy,” and “hairy” in conjunction with one another to invoke a negative, intruding tone, prompting her to think about how she’d feel better if she were just treated like a dog. This treatment seems to suggest that Molly might desire for a simpler, more primal form of physical affection, one that is uncomplicated by societal expectation or complexities. She then follows it with Boylan in his “stylish tie” and “skyblue silk” suit to round out the fact that Boylan is not depicted like an animal in this encounter.

Desire, power dynamics, and societal expectation seem to be at the core of Molly’s encounter with Boylan. Margot Norris expands on Molly’s encounter with Boylan:

Molly now reveals something that she omitted before: that Boylan’s insulting slap on her rear was not merely an uncouth erotic gesture but a possible reprimand or punishment—‘slapping us behind like that on my bottom because I didnt call him Hugh’ (U 18.1369-70). This information is significant and troubling because only now—very late in the novel—the caricature is cracked a bit and we receive a narrow and ambiguous glimpse into Hugh Boylan’s more complex inferiority (244-45).

Norris claims the encounter between Molly and Boylan was not all it was cracked up to be—that being—an erotic experience for Molly. By connecting the shocking scene with the knowledge of Molly’s built up excitement for the encounter, Joyce represents Molly not as a complete deviant, but someone who enjoys fantasies while also being respected. Molly’s sexuality is then belittled by Boylan’s inappropriate slap. Thus, in slapping Molly’s rear, Boylan objectifies Molly and puts her in a position that takes the power away from her.

While Molly lay in her bedroom, anticipating her husband Leopold's return home, her desire for sexual satisfaction diminishes. The encounter she had with Boylan seems to have fulfilled her sexual appetite, despite not involving sexual intercourse. Additionally, her words indicate a diminished sexual attraction, and she appears more confused and disorganized than in her thoughts before. She describes men as constantly seeking a hole to insert something into, a thought that disgusts her. Molly's simultaneous disgust and intrigue with men suggests a broader fear surrounding her sexual attraction towards them:

‘I wonder is he awake thinking of me or dreaming am I in it’ (U 18.121-22,124-25). Even if her concern here is solely with her own image and her own sexual desirability, her concession that Boylan too has thoughts and desires and that his feelings may not match her own shows Molly not to be treating him as a stereotype (Norris).

This introspective moment reveals a shift in Molly's perspective. Despite her initial focus on her own image and sexual desirability, she acknowledges that Boylan, too, has thoughts and desires. She wonders if she is one of them. This demonstrates that Molly does not view Boylan as merely a stereotype or object of her desires, but as a complex individual with his own thoughts and feelings. Unlike the instinctual disgust Molly feels towards Boylan's actions, Molly's female desires hold a stronger sense of autonomy for her female body.

Joyce links Molly's sexual appetite to Hugh 'Blazes' Boylan through his presentation and appeals to Molly's visceral stimulations; specifically, Joyce uses intimate touch to depict Molly's sexuality. Boylan is immediately sexualized simply through his interactions with Molly to describe their physical interests in each other. This sexualization is emphasized with the presence of their skin to skin contact. As Molly consummates her interaction with Boylan at around 4 pm when he comes to 'deliver the program,' her first moments after meeting with Boylan

immediately turn to disgust by his actions and the actions of other men in her life. Alongside using Boylan to reflect Molly's strong interest in visceral sensations, Joyce's use of Molly's encounter with Boylan also reflects the lack of sexual urgency in her life. Molly's interactions with Boylan hold a visceral aspect to them, this heightens Molly's need for a man who will desire her. Viscerality holds a certain control over Molly. While visceral sensations function to reflect sexual interests in Molly, Joyce's use of viscerality also reflects Molly's fear of losing it.

Stephen Dedalus

Amidst her nocturnal reflections, Molly is incessantly besieged by an instinctual longing for motherhood. As she contemplates her deceased son Rudy, who passed 11 days after birth, she reflects:

I was in mourning thats 11 years ago now yes hed be 11 though what was the good in going into mourning for what was neither one thing nor the other the first cry was enough for me I heard the deathwatch too ticking in the wall of course he insisted hed go into mourning for the cat I suppose hes a man now by this time (18.1306-10).

This number 11 serves as a reminder for the fleeting nature of life, as their child lived for only 11 days. The brevity amplifies the tragedy of their loss—the fragility of parenthood, and their mourning for the cat contrasted with their mourning for their child. Throughout the novel, the specter of their lost child, Rudy, looms over both Leopold and Molly, whether explicitly acknowledged or lingering implicitly, epitomizing a sentimental void in their parenthood.

For Leopold, we know that he is established as a caring father, to the point of practically assuming the role of motherly-fatherhood. His connection to Milly is apparent, whether it's through her comfortability in sending him letters with details about her love life, or drawing pictures of him. Bormanis delves into Leopold's motherly-fatherhood by stating:

The importance of nurturing for the development of language and literature is a crucial theme in both *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*, and Ong's remarks would seem to support the idea that a connection to the mother's breasts is essential for creativity. But by a commodious vicus of recirculation, the mammaries become the "papparies," or attributes of the father, in *Ulysses*. Indeed, Milly's nickname for Bloom, "Papli," sounds like the Latin word

“papilla” meaning “nipple” or “breast,” further suggesting Bloom’s possession of maternal attributes (599).

In Stephen’s pursuit for the mother, he finds pacification in his meeting with Leopold that night at 7 Eccles street and so too does Leopold find the son he never got to have. This mutual understanding indeed seems to suggest that Leopold and Stephen possess a deep understanding of each other’s struggles. What with the constant thoughts of each other’s lost one lingering on their minds throughout each of their narratives.

As Leopold and Stephen pacify each other’s needs that night, Molly remains physically absent, confined to her bedroom upstairs—detached from what could have been a familial gathering. However, as Molly situates herself upstairs, hoping Stephen stays the night, her pride ultimately gets the best of her and she chooses avoidance instead of confrontation. As she continues to think, her son Rudy crops back up in her mind:

I suppose I oughtnt to have buried him in that little woolly jacket I knitted crying as I was but give it to some poor child but I knew well Id never have another our 1st death too it was we were never the same since O Im not going to think myself into the glooms about that any more I wonder why he wouldnt stay the night (U 18.1448-52).

We can see here that Molly does not take the route Leopold and Stephen do in their loss of a loved one. Instead, her pursuit for pacification manifests in the form of avoidance, and therefore, sidestepping contentious issues allows Molly to maintain tranquility in herself. However, avoiding sensitive topics has its drawbacks. While Molly’s self-pacification temporarily calms her, the unresolved issue may begin to simmer beneath the surface, potentially causing greater problems for her down the line.

Molly's problems with addressing her need for a son manifest in the form of sexual desire for Stephen. As we have seen previously, Molly's thoughts about her only son shift dramatically to explicitly sexual thoughts about the young man she wished would have stayed and been a pseudo-son. For example, she focuses on Stephen's age:

I always liked poetry when I was a girl first I thought he was a poet like Lord Byron and not an ounce of it in his composition I thought he was quite different I wonder is he too young hes about wait 88 I was married 88 Milly is 15 yesterday 89 what age was he then at Dillons 5 or 6 about 88 I suppose hes 20 or more Im not too old for him if hes 23 or 24 (U 18.1323-28).

The recurring theme of age in Molly's stream-of-consciousness, punctuated by her contemplation of Stephen's potential age, serves to probe whether he is too young for her pursuit. Molly sees an opportunity with a young man as a means to empower and enhance her confidence. Ultimately, her concluding thought on his age unveils a desire to engage with the young Stephen because it may empower her and boost her confidence.

Stephen's presence in Molly's home serves as a reminder of a mother-son connection that remains missing. Liegner delves into Molly's role in Stephen's life, noting his perpetual search for the absent maternal figure: "And Stephen never meets Molly, but continues searching for the lost mother (as Joyce did for his), never enjoying the fruits of her mentally fruitful universe (in its wish-fulfilling aspects somewhat like Joyce's dream of an all-accepting mother)" (572). Liegner's observations echo the notion of Stephen embodying the missing link in Molly's maternal experience—a figure who never had the opportunity to challenge Molly's identity as a mother. The contrast between Leopold's interaction with Stephen and Molly's complete absence from the scenario underscores Stephen's role in unfulfilled aspects of Molly's life. Molly and

Leopold approach nurturing a son from vastly different perspectives, with Molly intimately connected to the child's birthing process and inevitable demise—evinced in her creation of the woolly jacket for the child's departure, while Leopold maintains a distance until after the child's birth—desperately trying to form a bond in what little time he has left. Liegner further explores the complexity of Stephen's desire for closeness and warmth, juxtaposed with the fear of vulnerability and dependency. This dynamic reflects Molly's internal struggle, as admitting her yearning for Stephen would require vulnerability and submission—traits both characters find challenging to acknowledge. By unraveling the intricate dynamics between Molly, Stephen, and Leopold, it becomes apparent that Molly's longing for a son that she cannot fully acknowledge stems from her unique perspective as a mother, contrasting sharply with Leopold's more overt expression of paternal grief.

In Leopold's final episode, "Ithaca," he finally has the opportunity to engage in a face-to-face conversation with Stephen, marking a symbolic reunion where understanding is exchanged through the language of eyes and words. Johanna Winant¹⁰ characterizes this encounter as "close a connection as is possible... Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and into the twentieth, philosophers argued that empathy actually allowed one to feel the feelings of another" (376). Winant emphasizes that true empathy occurs when individuals are in each other's physical presence, which suggests a unique bond between Leopold and Stephen. One that transcends ordinary relationships. However, while Winant emphasizes the positive implications of this connection, she overlooks its potential negative impact on Molly.

This oversight prompts Winant to propose an alternative perspective, suggesting that Bloom and Stephen share a deeper, more profound form of empathy—one rooted in intellectual

¹⁰ See "Empathy and Other Minds in Ulysses" by Johanna Winant.

history. Winant's exploration of this concept serves to illuminate why the question of what transpires between Bloom and Stephen remains open-ended. She suggests that Stephen and Leopold's relationship is not underpinned by sexual or romantic dynamics, rather their form of empathy is rooted in an intellectual connection.

This section of the paper presents a novel interpretation of the significance of Stephen and Leopold's interaction, positing that it sheds light on the neglect Molly experiences. Regardless of the rationality of Molly's emotions, they hold undeniable validity. The father-son dynamic between Stephen and Leopold serves as a stark contrast to the absence of a mother-son relationship between Molly and Stephen, acting as a painful reminder of the void in Molly's life.

The foci of the preceding quote, previously mentioned, is on Molly's thoughts regarding Stephen and her concern about his potential pretentiousness as a university student¹¹. As she contemplates the prospect of intimacy with Stephen, Molly's apprehension reflects a common perception of Stephen throughout *A Portrait* and *Ulysses*—that he is serious, academic and perhaps disconnected from the everyday concerns of others:

I hope hes not that stuckup university student sort no otherwise he wouldnt go sitting down in the old kitchen with him taking Eppss cocoa and talking of course he pretended to understand it all probably he told him he was out of Trinity college hes very young to be a professor I hope hes not a professor of John Jameson they all write about some woman in their poetry well I suppose he wont find many like me (U 18.1332-34).

Molly's fears regarding Stephen as a "stuckup university student sort" proposes a stereotype associated with individuals that are immersed in academia. Molly's reflection on Stephen's

¹¹ To clarify, Stephen Dedalus is not a professor, rather a teacher at Mr. Deasy's all boy's school. Molly seems to know little about Stephen, only rumors she's heard from Joyce's Dubliners.

potential demeanor as a university student reinforces the idea that she hopes he is not the kind of student that is absorbed in his academic world as it would be difficult for her to relate to him on an emotional level. In this light, Stephen's intellectualism becomes a potential source of tension within Molly's hope for a mother-son relationship, as it may contribute to a sense of alienation or misunderstanding between them.

And yet, despite her not wanting to engage with an arrogant Stephen, Molly articulates her yearning for a youthful poet to engage in intellectual discourse with. Reflecting on Stephen's presence in her home and his occupation, she muses:

yes there was something about poetry in it I hope he hasnt long greasy hair hanging into his eyes or standing up like a red Indian what do they go about like that for only getting themselves and their poetry laughed at I always liked poetry when I was a girl first I thought he was a poet like lord Byron (U 18.1321-25).

Molly's choice of descriptors hints at her interest in his poetry. She thinks more about Stephen as a poet, and Lord Byron crops up in her mind. The thought of Lord Byron, a renowned poet whom Leopold gifted Molly a collection of poems, makes Molly hope that Stephen is not interested in that kind of poetry as she already has someone like that in her life. Molly's passion for poetry traces back to her youth, yet despite this shared interest with Leopold, she longs for the intellectual stimulation that only a new, younger poet can provide.

Molly delves further into the realm of poetry, attempting to envision the persona of Stephen in her mind. As she contemplates Stephen's appearance and age, she projects him as a handsome poet of some prestige. She ponders Stephen's possible role as a professor and then indulges in a moment of poetic expression herself: "they all write about some woman in their poetry well I suppose he wont find many like me where softly sighs of love the light guitar where

poetry is in the air the blue sea moon shining so beautifully” (U 18.1331-36). Molly’s attempt to discern Stephen’s poetic and academic persona underscores her keen interest in ensuring he doesn’t conform to the stereotype of poets who write solely about women. Her subsequent poetic musings, while eloquent, serve to highlight her disconnection from Stephen and her struggle to effectively communicate with him. Moreover, her reluctance to imagine Stephen writing about other women hints at a maternal protectiveness, suggesting her desire to maintain an exclusive connection with him.

Molly delves deeper into her thoughts about Stephen, unaware that she’s subconsciously comparing herself to him. After indulging in a bit of poetic expression, she muses, “two glancing eyes a lattice hid Ill sing that for him theyre my eyes if hes anything of a poet two eyes as darkly bright as loves own star arent those beautiful words as loves young star” (U 18.1338-40). Here, Molly’s thoughts revolve around Stephen once more, as she draws comparison between his eyes and her own. The mention of “loves own star” suggests that Molly perceives Stephen as the embodiment of the son she and Leopold could have had together, evoking a love that never got the chance to flourish leading to her maternal longing. She continues, expressing her desire for intellectual companionship: “Lord knows to have an intelligent person to talk to about yourself not always listening to him...Im sure hes very distinguished Id like to meet a man like that” (18.1341-45). Throughout the episode, Molly grapples with the absence of a son who would challenge her intellectually, and her thoughts about Stephen serve as a reminder of this maternal void, prompting her to reflect on the aspects of the motherhood she yearns for.

Furthermore, Molly’s reflection on Stephen reveals subconscious desires for the physical maternal connection she never experienced. As she expresses her longing for an intelligent young man like Stephen to engage in conversations about poetry with, Molly’s focus shifts to

Stephen's physical appearance. She thinks, "I could look at him all day long curly head and his shoulder his finger up for you to listen theres real beauty in poetry for you I often felt I wanted to kiss him all over" (U 18.1349-52). In these words, the imagery of Stephen's finger raised and Molly's impulse to "kiss him all over" evokes the desire to shower someone in kisses of affection. It hints at a maternal instinct within Molly, portraying Stephen not just as a potential romantic interest, but also as a symbol of the infant son she never had. The outstretched finger and tender kisses evoke imagery reminiscent of a mother's affection towards her child, suggesting that within Molly's psyche, there is a deeper, subconscious yearning for motherhood.

Joyce's portrayal of Stephen occupying Molly's thoughts complicates her maternal inclination as it is conflated with her uncertainty in navigating relationships with younger men. As she mulls over the prospect of Stephen, Molly muses: "Im sure itll be grand if I can only get in with a handsome young poet at my age" and continues to think, "I can find or learn a bit off by heart if I knew who he likes so he wont think me stupid if he thinks all women are the same and I can teach him the other part Ill make him feel all over him till he half faints under me then hell write about me lover and mistress publicly too" (U 18.1361-65). The verbs "learn" and "teach" extend Molly's maternal instincts toward Stephen, accentuating her desire to guide and educate him—a role she's familiar with, albeit with older men. The spatial disparity between their respective positions in the house serve as a reminder of the rift in their relationship dynamic—a void Molly can never bridge, as evinced by her query: "O but then what am I going to do about him though" (U 18.1366-67). This final conclusion, coupled with her lingering grief over the loss of her son Rudy, crystallizes the image of Molly as a mother figure grappling with an unfulfilled maternal instinct and a longing for the son she never had.

At first glance, Molly's relationship with Stephen may seem solely driven by sexual dynamics, although such a characterization barely scratches the surface. Instead, there's a nuanced undercurrent of maternal longing at play, hinting at unexplored facets of Molly's identity. This latent maternal instinct surfaces involuntarily whenever Stephen occupies her thoughts. As a woman deeply attuned to poetry and artistic pursuits, Molly's contemplation of Stephen triggers reflections on the absence of motherhood in her life—a void his presence unwittingly accentuates, embodying the son she might have raised in an alternate reality. This perception is reinforced by Stephen's evident erudition, resonating with Molly and nurturing a desire for intellectual connection with a younger man. This relationship, or rather its absence of, underscores the challenges inherent in Molly's motherhood. Moreover, Molly's inclination to impart lessons of love to Stephen reflects a yearning born from her inability to guide her own son in matters of affection, a sentiment that morphs into an overtly sexualized fantasy. The realization that consummating such desires with a younger man like Stephen is untenable fills Molly with a palpable sense of disillusionment, prompting her consciousness to swiftly pivot towards other romantic pursuits.

Leopold Bloom

As Molly contemplates Leopold and the institution of marriage, her reflections unveil a resolute stance against ever marrying again: “Id rather die 20 times over than marry another of their sex of course hed never find another woman like me to put up with him the way I do know me come sleep with me yes and he knows that too at the bottom of his heart” (U 18.231-35). This declaration represents Molly’s aversion to remarriage but also emphasizes the depth of her bond with Leopold. By both Molly and Leopold knowing Leopold’s feelings “at the bottom of his heart,” their love transcends verbal expression. Though Leopold frustrates her at times, she acknowledges his unique ability to make her feel cherished through gestures of affection: “I liked the way he made love then he knew the way to take a woman when he sent me the 8 big poppies because mine was the 8th then I wrote the night he kissed my heart at Dolphins” (18.328-30). In reminiscing about Leopold’s intimate understanding of her intense sexuality and his thoughtful gestures like presenting “8 big poppies” on her birthday which landed on the eighth of the month, Molly’s narrative reveals Leopold’s connection with both her sentimental and visceral aspects, rooted in their shared history.

Leopold’s unique ability to resonate with Molly’s visceral and sensual inclinations distinguishes him as a remarkable suitor. As Molly’s contemplations shift away from the people from her past, Boylan, and Stephen, her focus increasingly centers on Leopold. Reflecting on him, she recalls a moment when he encouraged her to pose nude: “he said I could pose for a picture naked to some rich fellow in Holles street when he lost the job in Helys and I was selling the clothes and strumming the coffee palace would I be like that bath of the nymph with my hair down ” (18.560-63). Molly, often candid about her body and sensuality, recognizes Leopold as the sole individual who ignites a sense of fascination within her. His confidence in their

relationship, evident in his consent for Molly to pose nude for another man's painting—a piece potentially to be viewed by others—exemplifies his pride in her. Despite prevailing portrayals of Molly in a negative light by Joyce's *Dubliners*, in “Penelope” she emerges as a corrective force: “Molly is usually mediated through gossip and figured through the synecdoche of her breasts. Though there is still a lot to discover about Leopold and Molly's reactions to the affair that day” (Lawrence 64). Lawrence's analysis highlights the inadequacy of relying solely on town gossip to comprehend the complexity of Molly and Leopold's bond. Consequently, Molly's narrative arc suggests readers are implicated in perpetuating the town's limited understanding, indicating that verbal accounts alone fail to capture the essence of Molly and Leopold's relationship.

The connection between Leopold and Molly, rooted in their shared sentimentality, is revealed through Molly's musings about Leopold: “he was in Gibraltar the year I was born I bet he found lilies there too where he planted the tree he planted more than that in his time he might have planted me a bit sooner” (18.500-3). Here, Molly intertwines the notion of her birth with Leopold's presence, suggesting a symbolic inception of their relationship. The image of Leopold literally planting himself in Molly's life, in her womb, in her heart—is apparent. But Leopold's position in Molly's life gains added significance when juxtaposed with his encounter with Gertrude MacDowell, a twenty-two-year-old earlier in the narrative:

If Bloom's encounter with Gerty could be seen as a kind of reunion with a young seventeen-year-old Molly, albeit perhaps an incomplete and ultimately false experience (just as masturbation would be considered false in comparison to actual sexual intercourse), how does this affect the narrative structure of *Ulysses*? (Lee 823).

The answer to this question lies in Leopold's sentimentality toward Molly, particularly recalling the age at which they met. The symbolic meaning of their ages when they met leaves a mark on

their relationship, enriching its emotional depth and narrative significance when studied closely. As Molly attempts to feel young again with Boylan, Leopold does the same with Gerty. Ultimately, the two cannot fully consummate intercourse with anyone outside of their relationship, and so they find other outlets to let out their sexual frustration.

Leopold nurtures Molly's sentimental side, cementing in the reader's consciousness of the bond they possess, "And the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get around him and I gave him all the pleasure I could" (U 18.1577-80). Their connection goes beyond superficiality; Molly senses an understanding from Leopold, a deep empathy that resonates with her core identity. Her swift inclination to "get around him" intimates a remarkable level of trust and comfort, a departure from her past hesitations regarding intimacy. The empathy Leopold shares with Molly allows her to finally dominate her relationship with Leopold—a form of love she never had before, a form of love that she prefers. Through their mutual understanding and emotional resonance, Leopold and Molly forge a connection that enriches both their lives and the narrative of their story.

In Leopold's narrative, connections among sentimentality manifest in objects and scent and are sewn together by Leopold in "Lotus Eaters": "He foresaw his pale body reclined in it at full, naked, in a womb of warmth, oiled by scented melting soap, softly laved" (U 5.567-68). Leopold's picking up of this soap might have had practical reasons—like reminding himself to return to the chemist later in the day—as well as sentimental ones: sentiment does remind us of loved ones. But a distinctive feature of Leopold's picking up of this soap is the way that the search for feeling and the person that comes with it has begun to walk with him, metaphorically hand in hand throughout the rest of *Ulysses*. In The Odyssey section, Leopold's effort to remain

united with his wife (which for Leopold was not an easy feat considering he avoided Boylan throughout the day) came with this soap memento. The soap's substitution for his wife calls back to Molly's form of sentimentality as a marker of love—just like how she kept Harry's handkerchief under her pillow for his scent and closeness.

The characters' instinctual magnetism towards each other encapsulates the organic nature of their relationship. Molly perceives Leopold as an ideal partner, once again evoking the motif of flowers: "I love flowers Id love to have the whole place swimming in roses God of heaven theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea and the waves rushing then the beautiful country with the fields of oats and wheat and all kinds of things" (U 18.1557-60). Her longing for an environment adorned with flowers subtly conveys her desire to be enveloped in the presence of her husband. While other characters, such as Boylan, exhibit a primal, more visceral allure, Molly ultimately yearns for deeper connections in addition to these more bodily instincts. Their inability to fulfill Molly's need for both visceral and sentimental stimulation accentuates their shortcomings in her eyes. This stark contrast underscores Leopold's unique position in Molly's affections. Because of his inability to provide visceral stimulation following the loss of their son, Leopold recedes, allowing another suitor to briefly fill the void while leaning heavily into his sentimental gestures. In response, Molly's physical yearning for Leopold intensifies, emphasizing the impact of sentimental stimulation on her hormonal needs. Through this interplay of instinctual attraction and sentimental longing, the dynamics of Molly's relationships are laid bare, illuminating the complexities of desire and emotional fulfillment within Molly.

Leopold's comprehensive fulfillment of Molly's emotional needs solidifies his position as the chosen partner among all others in her life. Molly's quest for both sentimental and visceral

stimulation, including her longing for a romantic companion and a son, resonates deeply within her. These desires manifest in her yearning to be cherished as a woman. As Leopold's relationship with Molly unfolds, it becomes apparent that surrounding men are unable to match his capacity to satisfy her. Therefore, Molly's hesitance to engage in intercourse with Boylan and her insistence on his assistance in moving a heavy piano and furniture underscore her respect for Leopold and their relationship. Throughout the culmination of their love story in "Penelope," Joyce's portrayal of Molly is one of unwavering devotion to her husband and her commitment to their marital union, despite their unconventional relationship. Through Molly's actions and sentiments, it becomes evident that Leopold encompasses all she desires in a partner, embodying the ideal of love and companionship she seeks.

In my attempt to distinguish Leopold from other men, I've come to recognize the impossibility of completely segregating Molly's experiences with them into distinct categories. Much like Molly's sentimentality, Leopold engages in acts such as writing letters and preserving scents of Molly, reflecting their shared affection. An illustration of the visceral and sentimental depths of Molly and Leopold's enduring love, distinct from her relationships with past lovers, Boylan, and Stephen, emerges in the following reflection:

I knew what was coming next only natural weakness it was he excited me I dont know how the first night ever we met when I was living in Rehoboth terrace we stood staring at one another for about 10 minutes as if we met somewhere (U 18.1180-84).

This scene encapsulates the raw excitement and visceral stimulation Molly experiences upon meeting Leopold for the first time. The phrase "the first night ever we met" hints at the notion of "metempsychosis," suggesting a deeper connection akin to the transmigration of souls, a theme pivotal to "The Odyssey" section and indicative of familiarity across lifetimes. Moreover, the

image of Molly and Leopold locked in a prolonged gaze for approximately ten minutes during their initial encounter serves as a metaphor for the brief yet important existence of their son, who lived only eleven days. This imagery suggests that the first ten minutes may have been spent absorbing every aspect of the child who would soon depart. Through these intertwined layers of visceral excitement and sentimental depth, Molly finds the essence of her love embodied in her husband Leopold.

Conclusion

As it happens, within Molly Bloom lies a dichotomy: the Molly we know exudes familiarity with sensuality, while Molly concealed from us veils her emotions for discovery. We have finally understood the presence of Molly's love, which arises from a need to fulfill her every single desire. From this study, we have learned that it is regulated by the relationship and mutual understanding shared with her preferred partner, Leopold. I conclude by noting that among the more visceral---albeit sexual---outcomes of Molly's partners, her successful love-making forced me to read it in the first place: a woman empowered to choose a man to marry who allows her to be her complete and authentic self. Molly's love produced attention that has lasted over a hundred years, and if you have stuck with me to the end, Molly's love-making has produced your attention as well.

Annotated Bibliography

Past Lovers and Hugh ‘Blazes’ Boylan:

Brown, Richard. “‘When in Doubt Do Gender’: Constructing Masculinities in ‘Penelope,’ ‘They’re All Buttons Men.’” *Joyce Studies Annual* (Fordham University Press), vol. 13, 2002, pp. 147–59. *search.library.ucla.edu*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/joy.2002.0005>.

In Richard Brown’s article “‘When in Doubt Do Gender’: Constructing Masculinities in ‘Penelope,’ ‘They’re All Buttons Men,’” Brown highlights Molly’s recollection of a sexual encounter with a man named Jack Joe Harry Mulvey. This encounter explores the objectification and gendered construction of masculinity. Molly refers to men as “Buttons,” highlighting the visual echo of an “eye” in Mulvey’s genitals. The description challenges traditional notions of gender and clothing construction, inviting readers to question and explore the fluidity of gender. This exploration positions Molly in a more masculine role, assuming control over men by ‘unbuttoning them’ thereby placing men in the role of objectification. Joyce’s use of language and the playfulness of the narrative structure invite readers to consider the complexities of language, culture, and gendered experiences.

Van Boheemen-Saaf, Christine. “The Nora Letters as a Source of Joyce’s Performativity.” *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 3/4, 2008, pp. 469–79. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30244389>.

Christine Van Boheemen-Saaf’s article explores Joyce’s intimate correspondences with Nora Barnacle in 1909. The letters reveal a sense of performativity in

substitution for the physical human body. Boheemen-Saaf examines the toll that the distance between Nora took on Joyce at the time and how it subsequently led to Joyce accusing her of cheating. Boheeman-Saaf argues that in Joyce's eyes, Nora was a sort of 'virgin', and the thought of her cheating tainted her image and turned her into a whore overnight. Joyce later found out the accusation was false. Boheemen-Saaf concludes by saying that there is ultimately a visceral and intellectual link correlated with Joyce and Nora's letters.

Crispi, Luca. "Molly, Mr. Stanhope, and Hester: A Genetic Reading of a Love Triangle in 'Ulysses.'" *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2013, pp. 97–117. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24598849>.

In "Molly, Mr. Stanhope, and Hester: A Genetic Reading of a Love Triangle in 'Ulysses'" by Luca Crispi, Molly Bloom's sexuality is explored through the examination of her adolescent relationships in Gibraltar, namely, Mr. Stanhope and Hester (Mrs.) Stanhope. Hester is one of, if not the only female and childhood friend of Molly, and Crispi identifies her relationship with Hester as an adolescent sexual kind. Mr. Stanhope is an older man, and he takes a liking to Molly. He has a seemingly intimate conversation with her and appreciates the song that she performs which also happens to be one of two songs that she shares with Leopold. What's important to note is that "he (Joyce) did not create the secondary and tertiary characters for their own sakes, but rather they function principally to illuminate various aspects of the main protagonists or the relationships between them" (114). Hester and Mr. Stanhope do just that for the argument of the thesis.

Knowles, Sebastian. "The Substructure of 'Sirens': Molly as 'Nexus Omnia Ligans.'" *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 4, 1986, pp. 447–63. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25476759>.

Sebastian Knowles' article examines the Homeric elements present in *Ulysses*, focusing on the episode "Sirens." He contends that Joyce incorporates these elements to draw parallels with Homer's *Odyssey* and Samuel Butler's translation to create a coherent underlying structure. Specifically, Joyce's manipulation of language and imagery from the *Odyssey* contributes to the nexus of siren imagery centered around Molly Bloom. The article also explores the connections between various female characters in the novel, suggesting that each serves as a siren figure in Bloom's day. From Molly to Martha to Cleopatra and Gerty, these characters are linked either through Bloom's thoughts or narrative connections, ultimately revolving around Molly as the central figure. The article sheds light on the dual perspective employed in interpretation, exemplified by the multiple meanings of the episode's final word, "Done." Knowles ultimately hits on a major point of Molly and Leopold's relationship which is the first moment the couple met when they were surrounded by music.

Norris, Margot. "Don't Call Him 'Blazes': Hugh E. Boylan's Narrative Caricature." *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2011, pp. 229–49. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23342802>.

Margot Norris thoroughly examines the characterization of Hugh E. 'Blazes' Boylan in *Ulysses* and asks whether he fits into the mold of a minor or flat character. She draws upon Mieke Bal's distinction between round and flat characters, highlighting how the narrative portrays Boylan primarily through

external observations, denying him interiority and complexity. Despite this, Boylan's role in the novel, particularly in his affair with Molly Bloom, is undeniably significant, posing a threat to the Bloom marriage. The article argues that Boylan's presence at pivotal moments in the narrative impacts the dynamics within the textual universe, as per Marie Laure Ryan's criteria for narrative functionality. However, ethical questions are raised regarding Joyce's reduction of Boylan to a caricature, prompting readers to reconsider their interpretation of the character. By examining Molly's perspective, Norris reveals a nuanced understanding of Boylan, showing him as more than just a stereotype, but rather as a multifaceted individual with desires and complexities deserving recognition beyond his nickname "Blazes."

Scott, Bonnie Kime. *Joyce and Feminism*. 1984, pp.156-183.

In Bonnie Kime Scott's book *Joyce and Feminism*, she examines the portrayal of gender roles in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. She emphasizes Molly's complexity as a character who embodies multiple identities and roles. Scott argues that the habit of contradicting herself serves as more than just a female foible; this habit is a representation of how an individual's attitudes are influenced by various factors such as time and mental association.

Stephen Dedalus:

Bormanis, John. ““In the First Bloom of Her New Motherhood’: The Appropriation of the Maternal and the Representation of Mothering in ‘Ulysses.’” *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1992, pp. 593–606. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25485295>.

The theme of parental symbolism and reconciliation in *Ulysses* is the focus of John Bormanis’s argument and he supports it with Blooms’ dual role as a nurturing figure. He argues that alongside Bloom’s portrayal as a “new womanly man,” he embodies the archetype of the “new motherly father” through the instances of appropriation such as maternal symbols like Molly’s breasts and milk. Through Bloom’s portrayal as an imaginary “good breasted mother,” Bormanis suggests a process of reconciliation with maternal figures like May Dedalus and Molly, facilitated by Bloom’s nurturing qualities. Drawing interpretations from Margot Norris and Suzette Henke, the article proposes that Bloom’s role as a mediator aims to reunify separated mother-child relationships, potentially alleviating persecution fantasies, particularly in Stephen’s case. Additionally, the Bormanis discusses Joyce’s personal relationships and suggests that Bloom’s role reflects the author’s anxieties and dependency on maternal figures, despite underlying misogyny. This interplay of gender roles and parental symbolism possibly explains Joyce’s intense emotional connection with the women who influenced his life and art, shaping the narrative dynamics of *Ulysses*.

Liegner E, Motycka R. James Joyce's "Ulysses" Revisited: Matricide and the Search for the Mother. *Psychoanal Rev.* 1981;68(4):561.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/james-joyces-ulysses-revisited-matricide-search/docview/1310162580/se-2>.

Evelyn Liegner and Ronda Motycka contend that James Joyce's obsession with the mother imbued all aspects of his work. They compare Joyce to Stephen and the issues they share surrounding their mothers. Being the eldest of all his siblings, Joyce lost his mother's favoritism, and he uses his intellectual gifts to try and win over his mother's attention. Liegner and Motycka conclude by explaining that Joyce's relationship with his mother was a complicated one, and can perhaps be explained by preoedipal aggression and hatred in a relationship to a beloved mother.

Winant, Johanna. "Empathy and Other Minds in Ulysses." *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2019, pp. 371–89. *Project MUSE*, <https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/80/article/725538>.

Johanna Winant examines the meeting between Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce's *Ulysses* and the challenge of interpreting its significance. While the literal events of their encounter—drinking coffee, walking, talking, and parting ways—are clear, understanding the deeper meaning proves elusive. Winant attributes this difficulty to a shift in philosophical thought about empathy in the early 20th century. Before 1930, empathy allowed individuals to feel the feelings of others, overcoming the "problem of other minds." However, post-1930, the privacy of other minds became unsurmountable, leading to a new paradigm of intersubjectivity for human connection.

Recontextualizing *Ulysses* within this intellectual history, Winant suggests that Bloom and Stephen's meeting transcends discourse, both emotionally and practically due to the lack of available discourse to assimilate it. Joyce situates this encounter within the contested space of evolving philosophical understanding, marking it as a significant and enigmatic moment in the novel. Winant then goes into describing the metaphorical significance of crabs in the text, particularly in relation to Bloom and Stephen's interaction. Initially serving as a vehicle for empathy, the crabs suggest an underground sameness despite surface-level differences; however, she also acknowledges the limitations of empathy, as indicated by uncertainty and the privacy of subjective experience. This interaction extends to Stephen's perception of Bloom's eyes, highlighting the complexity of their interaction. While Stephen can discern honesty or dishonesty in Bloom's gaze, he is unaware of his own empathetic abilities.

Leopold Bloom:

Hall, Gail. "'Plots and Plans': Molly Bloom's Fiction." *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1990, pp. 582–98. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25090216>.

Gail Hall explains in her article "'Plots and Plans': Molly Bloom's Fiction," that Molly Bloom is an active participant in writing her own story. Hall compares Molly's story to Penelope's from Homer's *Odyssey*, and explains how she is based on Homer's character, but she diverts and does what Penelope could not do which was have freedom through controlling her sexuality. The quote is important

because it highlights how the sexual episode should not be taken at face value but rather is a way to communicate other forms of Molly's love. Hall goes on to explain how Leopold and Molly's relationship is also similar to Joyce's own with Nora Barnacle and that he explored the power she had through her sexuality that was hidden beneath the surface that many saw on face value. Bloom allows Molly to be sexually free and in return she gives him fidelity.

Lee, Peter. "How Old Is Gertrude MacDowell?" *James Joyce Quarterly*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2013, pp. 819–24. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24598581>.

In "How Old is Gertrude MacDowell?" Peter Lee asks the all important question of Gertrude (Gerty) MacDowell's age as it has been lightly debated in the past, yet holds more significance than one might suspect on the first read. He breaks down and defines her age as seventeen, as it is often considered and confused with twenty-two. Not only does Lee define twenty-two as the age of Edy Boardman, but he explains why the number twenty-two is significant throughout the novel. Lee argues against the common interpretation of the scene as predatory, asserting that it instead represents mutual participation and alludes to Bloom's relationship with Molly. Gerty's age is relevant to Lee because it refers to Molly as a seventeen-year-old engaging with the older Bloom, suggesting her youthfulness and sexual exploration.

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