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Joyce's Mothers: Aesthetics, Embodiment, and the Limits of Artistic Freedom in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*[*]

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I. Introduction

Readers who have read the first three chapters of *Ulysses* view with an ironic light the words Stephen writes in his diary just before leaving Ireland in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*P* 225). In *Portrait*, the young Stephen is full of confidence regarding his artistic talent, condescending towards those who do not see the world as he, the artist, does. However, when he comes back to Ireland upon the death of his mother in the

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first section of *Ulysses*, we see a very changed Stephen. He muses upon his artistic endeavor in Paris with a sense of ironic bitterness, thinking "Hurray for the Goddamned idiot! Hurray!" (*U* 3.138), particularly about his concept of the epiphany: "[C]opies [of your epiphany were to have been] sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world. . . . Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years" (*U* 3.141-44).

Critics have long struggled to make sense of the changed attitude towards art that Stephen harbors in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. In *Portrait*, Stephen's thoughts towards art are much easier to conjecture, as the narrator lets us have unrestrained access into Stephen's thoughts in the form of coherent sentences, and in the form of Stephen's theorizing to Lynch. However, the narrator of *Ulysses* is seemingly much less considerate in that aspect, for the reader is inundated with the jumbled thoughts of Stephen which may or may not have coherence, with threads of thought of differing significance.

This paper will focus on what Jennifer Levine calls a "novel" (or developmental) reading of *Ulysses* (130) in that it will be centered on how Stephen's psychology alters from *Portrait* to *Ulysses*. Of the various strands of thought Joyce tantalizingly reveals to us regarding the reason for Stephen's change, this paper will follow how Stephen's thoughts on women have changed drastically from *Portrait* to *Ulysses*, focusing on Stephen's thoughts on May Dedalus, his mother, and how this relates to his aesthetics. Charting the evolution of Stephen's aesthetics is crucial, I argue, because his *Künstlerroman* culminates in what is arguably one of the most significant aspects of Joycean aesthetics: the artist's recognition of the inextricability of History—that is, forces of social and material determination—and art. Joyce's ironic distance from Stephen in *A Portrait*, coupled with *Ulysses*' conclusion —Stephen's missed encounter with Molly, set against Joyce's masterful rendering of Molly's interior monologue—suggests that while Stephen's

aesthetics do not fully align with Joyce's, his growing awareness of the link between social determination and aesthetics form marks a movement toward Joyce's own artistic vision.

The first part of this essay will analyze Stephen's aesthetics as indicated by *Portrait* and will argue how his attempts to write about Emma Clery and his attitude towards his mother are related in that the objectification of women which they signify leads to his art's failure to capture the very "quidditas" he argues as the most important element that a beautiful object must embody. The second part of the analysis, focusing on *Ulysses*, argues that Stephen Dedalus's aesthetic vision matures as he begins to acknowledge that women—especially his mother—are shaped by social and historical forces, not ideal forms (as symbolized by the Virgin Mary). This shift is marked by his engagement with the Christian doctrine of consubstantiality, which exposes the instability of origins and the inescapability of historical and familial determination. This insight is embodied by his mother, who represents the entanglement of biology, history, and social discourse that Stephen can neither fully reject nor transcend. By contrast, another mother-figure—Molly Bloom—accepts this determination without being defined by it. Molly's fully lived, material existence offers a model for an art and subjectivity grounded in experience rather than abstraction: one that Joyce's own aesthetics celebrates.

II. The Aesthetics of *Portrait* and the Woman Problem

Portrait has long been read as the work of an older, more mature Joyce writing of his younger self in the guise of the youthful Stephen Dedalus, artist in the making. Careful readings of Joyce's works have revealed that even when Joyce's language seems to indicate sympathy for a particular character,

his sympathy is checked with a sense of irony. *Portrait* is no exception, with irony being most evident in the contrast between the elevated language of Stephen's epiphanies which end every chapter with the dreary, sordid details of Stephen's life in the following chapter. Viewed in this light, Stephen's aesthetics, which appear in the novel in the form of artistic creation (as in his villanelle) or contemplations regarding what makes art (in his description to Lynch), should be read not as faithful renditions of Joyce's own thoughts on art *per se*, but rather views which he might had once held but departed from. This reading is supported by the fact that although Stephen's arguments (both in *Portrait* and *Ulysses*) are often indebted to his Jesuit education, no one doubts his renunciation of the Church. Thus, any investigation of the aesthetics of Stephen Dedalus must take into consideration not only the change in Stephen's aesthetics as we move from *Portrait* to *Ulysses*, but also how the change mirrors Joyce's own views on art.

In this section, I argue that Joyce links Stephen's shortcomings as an artist to his inability to apprehend women as real, embodied individuals—subjects who are shaped by social and material forces (in *Portrait*, exemplified above all by Christianity and its views on women) but are ultimately not reducible to them (as Stephen comes to realize in *Ulysses*). I also suggest that Stephen's tendency to idealize women undermines the very aesthetic ideals he espouses in *Portrait*—especially his aesthetic concept of quidditas. Stephen's artistic sensibility is initially shaped by his immersion in romantic literature. His adolescent obsession with *The Count of Monte Cristo* feeds his desire to see himself as a heroic figure, and his admiration for Mercedes as a romantic ideal becomes the prototype for how he views women in general. His first love poem to Emma Clery is already informed by this fantasy. Though he has little real connection with Emma, he projects an elaborate narrative onto their imagined relationship—one in which he heroically rejects her affections. The

actual experience—watching her from a distance, fantasizing during tram rides—is thin, yet it becomes the foundation for his self-image as a suffering artist misunderstood by the world. Furthermore, with all the endless fantasizing about Emma, Joyce lets on to the reader that Stephen, in fact, knows very little about Emma Clery the individual (rather than type).

Stephen's tendency towards abstraction and idealization is consistent with his broader theory of art, which he explains at length to Lynch in Chapter 5 of *Portrait*. Many critics have pointed out that despite his frequent citing of St. Aquinas, the foundation of his theory deviates from Aquinas in that whereas Aquinas held that beauty is in the object itself, Stephen claims that it is the act of apprehension itself which defines beauty, for "though the same object may not seem beautiful to all people, all people who admire a beautiful object find in it certain relations which satisfy and coincide with the stages... of all esthetic apprehension" (*P* 186). In this sense, Stephen does seem to give perception and experience the upper hand when it comes to appreciating art. However, in making a connection between Stephen's notion of epiphany and artistic apprehension, critics find Stephen's Aristotelianism in conflict with the Platonism traditionally attributed to the notion of epiphany.

David E. Jones attempts to deal with this apparent paradox by arguing that the influential article by Robert Scholes, which claims that the "spiritual manifestation" of the Joycean epiphany is grounded in a "Platonic Idealism" (70), is in fact misinformed, for it does not take into account how the Aristotlean concept of the soul is different from Plato's. What must be emphasized instead is that Aristotle did not see the soul as a separate entity which can be separated from the body (as did Plato), but as more of an "animator" whose purpose for existing was to function, a goal contingent upon the material body (Barnes 107). With this in mind, it is enlightening to read the passage where Stephen discusses his third attribute of beauty, "claritas":

> The connotation of the word . . . is rather vague. . . . It baffled me for a long time. It would lead you to believe that he [Aquinas] had in mind symbolism or idealism, the supreme quality of beauty being a light from some other world, the idea of which the matter was but the shadow, the reality of which it was but the symbol. . . . But that is literary talk. I understand it so. When you have apprehended the basket as one thing and have then analyzed it according to its form and apprehended it as a thing you make the only synthesis which is logically and esthetically permissible. You see that it is that thing which it is and no other thing. The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic quidditas, the whatness of a thing. This supreme quality is felt by the artist when the esthetic image is first conceived in his imagination. (*P* 189)

Jones suggests that as Stephen expands the notion of the soul to inanimate objects (the basket), he links the concept of "quidditas"—the purpose of the soul's existence in that it defines that particular object as that thing only and no other thing—to the objects themselves and not some Idea (for example, an Ideal basket which is the model for all earthly, imperfect baskets). Thus, in Stephen's theory of artistic apprehension, material reality is a necessary condition; Stephen calls the moment when the artist manages to "conceive in his imagination [the quidditas from reality] . . . the enchantment of the heart" (*P* 189).

Judging from Stephen's theorizing, it seems that he does indeed believe in the importance of material reality for the artist. Yet, what Stephen knows in theory, he is unable to appreciate in practice. Despite the implications of his aesthetic theory—which posits that material reality is inextricable from the soul that art must capture—Stephen continues to separate art from the material world (Riquelme 118). While I previously mentioned Stephen's villanelle to Emma Clery in the context of his tendency to idealize women, I now turn to a closer analysis of the writing process itself. The description is fraught with tension between the material conditions that shape his sensibility and his artistic impulse to transcend those very conditions. The moment in which he

composes his poem is unabashedly erotic, with his imagining that Emma's "nakedness yielded to him" in his final bout of inspiration (Weir 215). Yet, whereas Stephen's bouts of artistic inspiration are obviously grounded in the body, the language in which he depicts his emotions—that of poetry—is devoid of the circumstances which brought about his feelings. Even if we put aside the rather glaring omission of Emma's name within his poetry, choosing instead to address her as E-C- (the name "Emma Clery" appears only in *Stephen Hero*), the poem he writes is described by the Joycean narrator as bearing "no trace of the tram [which occasioned the emotions which he imbibes the poem with] . . . nor did he or she [Emma] appear vividly" (*P* 61); only concrete image that remains in the poem is the kiss which Stephen deliberated upon giving Emma on the tram.

The villanelle itself is full of vague imagery which has little relevance to the real Emma or the memories of her which surround him when he is composing the poem, as in his use of terms such as "Eucharistic hymn" and "chalice flowing to the brim" (*P* 198). His visits to her house, his dancing with her at a party, his intense jealousy of her supposed flirting with Father Moran, are all lost in the highly symbolic poetry he writes. His jealousy when thinking of her with Father Moran temporarily shatters his poetic sensitivities, and his chain of thought leads him to the more "vulgar" girls occupying his memories—the coarse flower girl he saw in the morning, a kitchen maid living next door, a girl he passed on the street— and he thinks in disdain of Emma's supposedly temptress-like behavior, which he thinks is similar to the peasant woman who tried to lure his friend Davies into her bed. After his sudden burst of bitterness at Emma's coyness, Stephen feels that perhaps he had been too rash in judging her, and pities her for her "strange humiliation at her nature," and wonders if perhaps their souls might be connected so that she may know of his "homage" (*P* 197). His thinking is overwhelmingly egoistic, and

Emma's "coyness" (we are never given an objective view of her behavior) is read by Stephen as either deceiving—as all the "womanhood of her country" must be, he tells himself—or, on second thoughts, pitiable, for she is forever marked by "the dark shame of womanhood" (*P* 197). We thus see Stephen idealizing and abstracting the female figure while excluding any trace of the material conditions—not the least the body—that generate his appreciation (and lust).

At this point, I wish to pose the following question: how is Stephen's idealization—or rather, his typification—of women related to the immature aesthetics of *Portrait*? By typification, I refer to how, for Stephen, women tend to fall into rigid categories: either the ethereal virgin or the wholly corporeal whore. Recall, for instance, Stephen's reverence for the Virgin Mary; Stephen's description of the Virgin strikes one as similar to depictions of lady loves from medieval tales of chivalry, with his description emphasizing Mary's "royal lineage . . . [surrounded by] her emblems ... symbolizing the agelong gradual growth of her cultus among men," and her generous soul, for "her holiness . . . did not humiliate the sinner who approached her" (*P* 92). The Virgin Mary stands as the idealized female figure in Stephen's worldview, embodying pure, non-corporeal femininity. In Stephen's adolescent theology, Mary is not an object of desire but an exalted presence—one who, crucially, does not humiliate the sinner. Stephen's attraction to Emma—or rather, his aestheticization of that attraction—echoes this logic. Rather than engage with the complexities of the real Emma, he splits her into two: she is either a virgin who deserves adulation or a whore whose "coyness" belies her sexual corruption. This binary, deeply rooted in Catholic ideology, is what ultimately constrains Stephen's artistic vision in *Portrait.*

What thus prevents Stephen from apprehending the "quidditas" of women is his insistence on reducing them to types, his refusal to recognize their

singularity. While he believes that he himself can transcend social and material forces, he treats women as wholly determined by theirs. His refusal to imagine the possibility that women might not be reducible to their conditions of existence also underlies his fraught relationship with his mother. As a child, he loves her deeply—her kisses and care are some of his first memories.[1] But as he grows older, she becomes aligned with Catholic guilt and domestic tedium. She is, in his eyes, entirely determined by her circumstances—a social type (the poor religious fanatic). Her wish for him to attend mass before leaving for Paris becomes, for him, a symbol of religious oppression. He famously refuses as a *non servium* artist to pray for her soul on her deathbed—this act of defiance becomes a central point of guilt and shame in *Ulysses*.

Cranly, Stephen's confidant in *Portrait*, criticizes Stephen's intrasigence. Cranly points out that Stephen's mother is a poor Irishwoman with many children and a troubled marriage—why should she not cling to her faith? In Aristotlean terms, Stephen, as long as he persists in failing to see the cause

1) The following are excerpts from Chapter 1:

- His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance. (*P* 3)
- His mother had told him not to speak with the rough boys in the college. Nice mother! The first day in the hall of the castle when she had said goodbye she had put up her veil double to her nose to kiss him... [b]ut he had pretended not to see that she was going to cry. (*P* 6)
- Was it right to kiss his mother or wrong to kiss his mother? What did that mean, to kiss? You put your face up like that to say goodnight and then his mother put her face down. That was to kiss. (*P* 12)
- Had they [the priests] written to his mother and father? But it would be quicker for one of the priests to go himself to tell them. Or he would write a letter for the priest to bring.

Dear Mother,

I am sick. I want to go home. Please come and take me home. I am in the infirmary.

Your fond son, Stephen (*P* 19)

of his mother's behavior, will never understand why she acts as she does. That Cranly asks Stephen if he has ever loved anyone is understandable in the sense that he is asking "How can you love anyone if you refuse to see them as they are in reality?" indicating that Stephen, in failing to do this, cannot love anyone unless he can break free from his own typifying gaze. Ironically, Stephen justifies his typification of his mother with Catholic logic; he defends his position by insisting that Saint Pascal and Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, and even Jesus were demeaning to their mothers (*P* 215). This theological rationalization reveals how deeply he remains entangled in the logic of Catholic patriarchy, even as he claims to reject Catholicism.

We thus see through Stephen's attitude towards Emma and his mother that Stephen has not truly freed himself from the language of oppressive ideologies. While he proclaims "I will not serve," he continues to serve an aesthetic ideal built upon the typification and exclusion of women. His inability to recognize his mother as fully human—that is, as a material and socially constituted being—prevents him from achieving the artistic clarity he seeks. His theory of art is ultimately undermined by his own gendered blind spots.

III. *Ulysses*: Beyond the Aesthetics of Detachment

In this section, I examine Stephen Dedalus's evolving artistic identity in *Ulysses*, arguing that his increasing awareness of the determining force of "History" (*U* 1.42) signals a transition from an idealized aestheticism toward a more mature and grounded—that is, a Joycean—artistic orientation. Significantly, Stephen begins to recognize that his understanding of women—especially his mother—is shaped by the same material and social forces that

he previously believed art could transcend. This recognition challenges and ultimately begins to dismantle his earlier aesthetic ideals.

3.1 Stephen's Parable of the Plums: A Departure from Romantic Idealism

The parable of the plums from "Aeolus," though short and comedic, is significant as it represents Stephen's only completed piece of art in *Ulysses*. The story centers on two elderly women or "vestal virgins," Florence MacCabe and her companion, climbing Nelson's Pillar. As they attempt to look upward at the statue, this gives them a "crick in their necks" (*U* 7.1023). They settle instead to eat plums and drop the pits below. The tale has been interpreted as a parody of political nationalism (the statue of Nelson doubles as a symbol of Parnell), a symbol of Irish paralysis (the barren virgins can neither look up nor down, as if "paralyzed"), and a critique of sexual repression (the virgins are unable to look up at Nelson the "adulterer").

But most importantly, the women in the parable are not elevated or vilified; they are ordinary Dubliners. The vestal virgins in the story are not just simply symbols but actual people with family histories within the fictional Dublin Joyce has created for them. This marks a significant departure from the ethereal, symbolic women of *Portrait*. Florence MacCabe in particular is a midwife, a figure deeply entwined with the physical reality of birth—a thematic echo of Stephen's unresolved relationship with his own mother; the midwife is both the facilitator of life and a figure who embodies the material, physical world Stephen once disavowed. The parable thus signals a growing awareness that art must engage with the real, material world that makes up the social structures constituting everyday life.

3.2 The Mother and the Collapse of Consubstantiality

Indeed, Stephen's growing discomfort with his earlier aesthetic ideals is paralleled by his increasingly complex feelings toward his mother. In "Telemachus," we learn that Stephen is still the pig-headed youth from *Portrait* who had refused to pray for his mother on her deathbed. It is in this chapter that we catch a glimpse, for the first time, of what kind of a person May Dedalus may have been:

> Her secrets: old featherfans, tasseled dancecards, powdered with musk, a gaud of amber beads in her locked drawer. A birdcage hung in the sunny window of her house when she was a girl. She heard old Royce sing in the pantomime of Turko the Terrible and laughed with others when he sang....
> Folded away in the memory of nature with her toys. Memories beset his brooding brain. Her glass of water from the kitchen tap when she had approached the sacrament. A cored apple, filled with brown sugar, roasting for her at the hob on a dark autumn evening. Her shapely fingernails reddened by the blood of squashed lice from the children's shirts. (*U* 1.249-69)

One can only imagine what May Dedalus is feeling on the verge of death regarding her many children, her drunk of a husband, and her ungrateful, firstborn son who refused until the end to pray for her soul. Her "secrets," remnants of her younger (presumably more affluent) days, are superimposed by images which point to her religious faith as well as her more difficult days as a wife and mother in a poor household. While we know from *Portrait* that Stephen's estrangement from his mother had much to do with her religious fervor, here her fervor is tempered by its juxtaposition with another feature of her married life: poverty.

The relationship between a woman and her religion is summed up neatly by another of Joyce's woman characters in one of his short stories from *The*

Dubliners, "Grace," in which Mrs. Keman's religion in described as "a habit ... [h]er beliefs were not extravagant. . . . Her faith was bounded by her kitchen, but, if she was put to it, she could believe also in the banshee and in the Holy Ghost" (*D* 358). That Mrs. Keman's religion is contingent upon her family's welfare would have not been the exception for most of the married women of 19th century Dublin. Taking into consideration the poverty of the Dedalus family—hinted at in *Ulysses* most explicitly by the fact that Mrs. Dedalus' deathbed is presided over by Dr Bob Kenny, a welfare doctor (*U* 9.826)—it is quite possible that she would have relied on charity for her family's livelihood, as was common among most poor Dublin families. Other than the fact that religion would have helped her endure her difficult livelihood, the majority of welfare organizations in 19th century Dublin had a religious foundation (Luddy 216), giving Mrs. Dedalus all the more reason to cling to it. That Stephen is starting to think of her religious fervor in connection with her poverty is a sign of his growing awareness of the social basis, not an intellectual one such as he as a man is entitled to indulge in, of religious piousness.

In "Nestor" Stephen sees his own childhood "bend[ing] beside him" while watching his awkward pupil Sargent doing his math problems (*U* 2.169). It is here that he remembers what Cranly in *Portrait* had said was the only real thing in this world: "Amor matris: subjective and objective genitive. With her weak blood and wheysour milk she had fed him and hid from sight of others his swaddlingbands" (*U* 2.160). However, he finds this caring love burdensome, calling a mother's love a "tyrant, willing to be dethroned" (*U* 2.171). This thought is echoed in "Proteus" as he thinks about his "origins"—a topic he is much invested in given his resolve to maintain his independence as an artist—upon seeing a midwife's bag. He muses upon the fact that the first humans (Adam Kadmon and Eve) were "creation from nothing" (*U* 3.95),

then contrasts their creation with his own:

> Wombed in sin darkness I was too, made not begotten. By them, the man with my voice and my eyes and a ghostwoman with ashes on her breath. They clasped and sundered, did the coupler's will. From before the ages He willed me and now may not will be away or ever. A *lex externa* stays about Him. Is that then the divine substance wherein Father and Son are consubstantial? Where is poor dear Arius to try conclusions? (*U* 3.45-50)

Arius, excommunicated for his claim that the Father had made the Son, the Son the Holy Spirit, differs from the canonized doctrine of Consubstantiality, in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one and the same, yet separable. Critics differ (as Joyce supposedly does) in how they intrerpret the meaning of "consubstantiality" within differing contexts, but here I rely on the definition as it is accepted in the Catholic doctrine, as well as on how Stephen chooses reads it: as a doctrine which justifies the *independence* of the Son from the Father ("He willed me and now may not will me away or ever"). Since we already know that Stephen is an admirer of St. Aquinas and Cardinal Newman despite their religion, it is not strange that Stephen will borrow from Christian doctrine that which serves as a rationalization for his own principles; Stephen may have forgone his religion due to its suffocating nature, but he nevertheless acknowledges Catholicism as "logical and coherent" (*P* 217). Consubstantiality he thus uses to justify to himself that he too can be free from his origins: his father, his nation, his religion.

It is in "Scylla and Charybdis" that the reader is faced explicitly with the contradiction Stephen himself may have recognized after his mother's death, and therefore the reason for his guilt: that his acceptance of the logic on consubstantiality has led to unforeseen consequences. "Scylla and Charybdis" deals with Stephen wielding his "dagger definitions" against the clique-ridden librarians of the Dublin National Library, arguing for his now famous

Shakespeare theory in which "he proves by algebra that Hamlet's grandson is Shakespeare's grandfather and that he himself is the ghost of his own father" (*U* 1.550). To put it in clearer terms, his theory argues that Hamlet the Elder is in fact Shakespeare himself, and that the younger is Hamnet Shakepeare (his deceased son), Gertrude the temptress Anne Hathaway who managed to woo Shakespeare when he was a young lad (a mere 18 years old), only to betray him for his older brother (which one, Stephen does not specify). The confusing relationship between sons and fathers and grandfathers in the quote above is linked to Stephen's claim that when Shakespeare wrote Hamlet "he was not the father of his own son merely, but being no more a son, he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson who, by the same token, never was born" (*U* 9.867-69). Of course, this claim is relevant not only to Shakespeare as an artist, but also to (even more so) Stephen; the quote echoes the definition of consubstantiality Stephen has already offered in "Proteus." However, right before this claim Stephen ruminates upon the mystery of consubstantiality, which sheds light onto the relationship between the doctrine and Catholicism's treatment of women:

> Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On the mystery and not on the Madonna which the cunning Italian intellect flung to the mob of Europe the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. Amor matris, subjective and objective genitive, may be the only true thing in life. Paternity may be a legal fiction. (*U* 9.837-44)

Stephen, rambling along his many threads of thought, stumbles upon a crucial fact which underlies Catholicism as a religion led by men. Catholicism, in

upholding Consubstantiality as Truth, has ensured the independence of the Son from Father at a cost: the downplaying of the importance of the mother and her Amor matris, "the only true thing in life." That is, in internalizing this doctrine as a principle which justifies his independence, Stephen is barred access to a true understanding of the women in his life. This is because the doctrine of Consubstantiality depends on the erasure of women and their pivotal role as the bearers of the next generation of "life"—comprising not only mundane folk but even *non servium* artists—in favor of upholding a "fiction."

In summary, while both quidditas and consubstationality (as Stephen understands them) revolve around essence, the latter concept initiates Stephen's struggle to understand the role of the artist in relation to the burden of History itself. In grappling with the notion of origin, Stephen begins to recognize that (male) self-origination may be a fiction. We are all, inescapably, borne of the "nightmare" that is "History" (*U* 1.42)—that is, shaped by the entanglements of biology and history, matter and form. This insight crystallizes for Stephen in the figure of the mother.

IV. Molly Bloom, Determination, Life

Though Stephen and Molly never directly interact in *Ulysses*, I argue that Molly is crucial to completing the arc of Stephen's aesthetic development. That is, while Stephen does not quite achieve the aesthetic maturity of Joyce—embodied, I suggest, in the final chapter of *Ulysses*—the fact that the novel ends with a portrayal of a mother points to what Stephen must ultimately recognize if he is to attain true artistic maturity. Stephen must, like Joyce himself, come to acknowledge that the human condition—most poignantly

represented by the mother—is defined by a will to freedom that is informed, but never completely determined, by necessity.

This insight is reflected in the novel's final chapter, "Penelope," which is composed entirely of Molly's unpunctuated interior monologue. Crucially, Molly is never reduced to an idealized or abstract figure removed from lived experience—that is, a life lived admist social and material determination (Radar 346). Her interior monologue reveals that she exceeds the material circumstances that define her existence. For instance, while Molly has internalized some of the limitations Irish society imposes on her sex, she also flouts (without quite rejecting outright) those which she deems to hinder her sexual and economic independence. For one, her stance on Catholicism is more flexible compared to the pious women of *Ulysses*: Mrs. Riordan, Mrs. Rubio with all her "religi[ous] domineering" (*U* 18.754), and Mrs. Dedalus. Her promiscuous lifestyle notwithstanding, Molly scoffs at the hypocrisy of Mrs. Riordan and her using up all her savings for "all the masses for [her soul]," sneering that her piousness may well be not because she had a heart for the goodness of mankind, but "because no man would look her twice" (*U* 18.11). Molly also pokes fun at the atheists, for despite all their pretensions of learning, "I wouldn't give a snap of my two fingers...why don't they go and create something... howling for the priest [when] they dying and why why because theyre afraid of hell on account oft heir bad conscience" (*U* 18.1568). Molly's faith is not rooted in a conviction which stems from profound reflections over the Christian doctrine (such as Stephen); but nor does it stem from a self-centered regard for one's own salvation (Mrs. Riordan) or for one's family (Mrs. Dedalus). Molly's faith is, in large part, habitual—she instinctively repeats Hail Marys to herself when she hears thunder—as would have been the case for most, if not all, Dubliners. For her, religion is an embodied experience. Yet embodiment does not preclude profundity: Molly's

religiosity is deepened by her reverence for creation, as reflected in her jeering at atheists who refuse to acknowledge the miracle of something arising from nothing. Her faith, then, is grounded not in doctrine but in a lived awareness of life itself as miraculous.

Molly's connection with life is associated with the fact that she is neither a pure victim (like May Dedalus) nor a straightforward perpetrator of the social norms that define Irish society (embodied by Catholic patriarchy): she lives *through* norms but cannot be reduced to them. Take her adultery for instance. Critic-bashing of her audacity of having an affair with Boylan has constantly glossed over the fact that Molly's infidelity does have justification; in her opinion, Bloom has neglected her for ten years (as she constantly complains about his obsession with only her behind) for the flesh of prostitutes or some other woman (Martha). Viewed in this light, Molly can be read as yet another victim of a domestic snare she cannot escape from, for in the early 20th century there would have considerably less tolerance and economic opportunities for female divorcees. However, she is different from May Dedalus in that she actively seeks to do whatever she can to fill her feelings of lack; she has an affair with Boylan and continues her singing career (and thus supporting her husband's off again on again income). She is also an unconventional mother in that she is critical of childbirth, complaining of how men get all the pleasure while the women have to pay for it with their swollen bellies: "Mina Purefoys husband give us a swing out of your whiskers filling her up with a child or twins once a year as regular as a clock always with the smell of children off her" (*U* 18.160). Molly thus departs from conventional notions of motherhood, which paradoxically prioritize bearing children over caring for them. Her life as a woman is not subsumed by motherhood; rather, it is enriched by it, as motherhood emerges as one facet among many in the broader experience of being a woman.

Molly Bloom thus plays a pivotal role in completing the aesthetic arc begun by Stephen in *Portrait* and carried into *Ulysses*. Unlike Stephen's earlier representations of women—idealized, symbolic, or theological—Molly is fully embedded in the material, social world. She embodies on the one hand determination, shaped by history, biology, and social norms, but on the other hand does not submit passively to them. Instead, she negotiates these constraints to assert her independence as a sexual, economic, and thinking subject. In contrast to Stephen's abstract ideals from *Portrait*, Molly affirms—as does Joyce—that determination need not preclude individuality; it is, rather, the very ground from which a full life can be lived.

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Abstract

Joyce's Mothers: Aesthetics, Embodiment, and the Limits of Artistic Freedom in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*

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This essay explores Stephen Dedalus's evolving aesthetics in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, arguing that his early artistic failure stems from his idealization and typification of women. In *Portrait*, Stephen's abstract aesthetic theory is undermined by his inability to apprehend the material reality of women, exemplified most clearly in his treatment of his mother. In *Ulysses*, his perception begins to shift as he is confronted with the social and embodied dimensions of womanhood. The essay concludes with a reading of Molly Bloom, who symbolizes lived, non-idealized womanhood—complicating Stephen's earlier scorn for the mother in *Portrait*—and embodies the mature aesthetic sensibility Stephen must embrace in order to transcend patriarchal abstraction.

■ Key words : Joyce, history, determinism, aesthetics, Catholicism, mother
(조이스, 역사, 결정론, 미학, 천주교, 어머니)

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