

Beyond History: Re-Reading Molly's Alternative Historiography in “Penelope”

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I. Introduction

and Lord Lytton Eugene Aram Molly bawn she [Hester Stanhope] gave me by Mrs Hungerford on account of the name I dont like books with a Molly in them like that one he [Bloom] brought me about the one from Flanders a whore always shoplifting anything she could cloth and stuff and yards of it *O this blanket is too heavy on me thats better I havent even one decent nightdress this thing gets all rolled under me besides him and his fooling thats better* I used to be weltering then in the heat my shift drenched with the sweat stuck in the cheeks of my bottom on the chair when I stood up they were so fattish and firm when I got up on the sofa cushions to see with my clothes up and the bugs tons of them at night and the mosquito nets I couldnt read a line Lord how long ago it seems centuries of course they [Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope] never came back (*U* 18.656-67 emphasis mine)

“Penelope,” the last episode of *Ulysses*, consists of Molly Bloom’s monologue without any other narratives or interpolations. That is, Molly herself becomes the

author of her own narrative throughout the entire episode. It is true that the stream-of-consciousness technique, which most of episodes in *Ulysses* are written in, necessarily rejects any linear narrative, because it traces inner thoughts of characters free from the constraint of chronological time. However, the way Molly recalls her history and Joyce records it through her in “Penelope” episode seems quite different from other characters’ in other episodes, with the stream-of-consciousness technique in full swing. As demonstrated in the quotation above, Molly’s memory of Hester Stanhope, whom she used to know in Gibraltar, is interrupted or jumbled with her memory of Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, a book Bloom bought for her, and with her complaint about a heavy blanket in the present (in italics). However, all of this unlikely series of memories flow quite seamlessly without any transitions or even punctuation. This lack of punctuation makes it much more feasible for Molly to jump back and forth in her thoughts and memories without any chronological sequence, than other characters in other episodes. In this way, past and present freely crisscross each other’s boundary in “Penelope,” transcending the constraints of conventional/official history.

In “Ousted Possibilities: Critical Histories in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*,” Gregory Castle asserts that “the ‘Penelope’ episode is Joyce’s most radical alternative to conventional historical narrative” (321). If conventional historical narrative is obsessed with the logic of chronology and teleology, “Penelope” is quite free from those constraints and demonstrates its own antihistorical narrative strategy. Accordingly, Molly’s monologue may be a good site for exploring Joyce’s alternative historicism. In this paper, I will examine how Molly’s monologue resists conventional, official historicism and constructs its own alternative history on the levels of both content and style. This discussion will focus on analyzing Molly’s peculiar concepts of time and history and examining how it critiques a conventional concept of time, that which official histories/historiographies are based on. More importantly, this essay will also include a discussion on how Molly’s peculiar “feminine writing” disrupts conventional male-oriented nationalism/historicism and envisions alternative nationalism/historicism for a “postcolonial” Ireland.

II. Rethinking History and Historiography

In *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus declares that "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (*U* 2.377). This declaration, which is often cited even by those who do not know James Joyce or *Ulysses*, might be misleading enough to stigmatize Joyce as an ahistorical modernist. Yet this seemingly obvious sentence, I believe, requires a very careful interpretation in the context of Ireland as a colony of England. Reread in this context, Stephen's declaration might be seen not as a denial of history *per se* but as a denial of the nightmarish Irish history under foreign control and of the orthodox historiographies of Ireland constructed by both the English and Irish cultural nationalists. In order to analyze how Joyce constructs alternative histories through Molly Bloom in "Penelope," it is helpful to build up a theoretical frame through which the concepts of history and historiography can be examined.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle clearly distinguishes between what can possibly happen and what actually did happen, between what can be known because it happened and what can only be imagined, and what, therefore, the historian can legitimately assert as a truth of experience and what the poet might wish to entertain as a truth of thought or conceptualization. However, Aristotle's seemingly solid line demarcating the two areas—history and poetry—seems to get blurry when two meanings of history are taken into account: first, history as the facts of the matter and, second, history as a narrative of those facts. In other words, history means both "what happened" and "that which is said to have happened." These two definitions of history make us note this unbridgeable gap between "history" as the past itself and "history" as narratives about the past. To make matters more complicated, since the reconstruction of historical contexts and processes always has to involve narration and textualization, a "fictive" element, contained in any narrativization and textualization, inevitably comes along. Then, to what extent could histories (in the second definition) represent the history (in the first definition)? Exactly where could one draw a line between historical fiction and fictional history? When history gets

involved with narrative, confusions, problems, and possibilities come along, which have been paid special attention by many theorists.

First of all, to Paul Ricoeur, history is “essentially equivocal” and belongs to “the realm of the inexact”: “History wants to be objective, and it cannot be. It wants to resuscitate and it can only reconstruct” (qtd. in Le Goff 105). Considering life “as an activity and a passion in search of a narrative” (“Life” 29), Ricoeur emphasizes how narratives make it possible to concretize history. To Ricoeur, one can confront history only by formulating it in narrative form; and it is the connecting thread of such narratives that binds discrete, separate past events into a seemingly coherent whole. Here, the use of narrative also brings the involvement of “manipulation” because “we cannot tell a story without eliminating or dropping some important event according to the kind of plot we intend to build” (Ricoeur, “Memory and Forgetting” 9).

Not surprisingly, thus, historians’ attempts to redescribe or even restore the past as it was through their historiographies, cannot but be doomed to fail and their projects cannot help ending up endless, numberless, versions of reconstructions of the past. Ricoeur writes:

This synthetic activity, which is well expressed by the verb “to retrace,” sums up in turn operations as complex as those at the origin of the gnomon and the calendar. These are the activities of preserving, selecting, assembling, consulting, and finally, reading documents and archives, which mediate and, so to speak, schematize the trace, making it the ultimate presupposition of the reinscription of lived time (time with a present). (*Time and Narrative* 183-4)

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, the word “gnomon” means “the part of a parallelogram which remains after a similar parallelogram is taken away from one of its corners.” In other words, historians’ writings of history cannot be perfect or complete, much like the “gnomon” with its essential part missing. More importantly, the words such as “selecting,” “assembling,” “consulting,” “schematiz[ing],” and “reinscribing” fetch historiography far from the field of

science or truth-claim as most would associate with history, and instead enlist it into that of literature, in particular fiction.

In this sense, it is not a coincidence that Ricoeur emphasizes intersections between history and fiction. Historical and fictional narratives have something in common in that they are not simply lists of events. However, Ricoeur does not merely argue that history and fiction have things in common—he claims that they are interweaved: “on the one hand, history in some way makes use of fiction to refigure time and, on the other hand, fiction makes use of history for the same ends” (*Time and Narrative* 181). Although it is clear that he never intended to conflate the truth claims of fiction and history, Ricoeur expounds the fictionalization of history and the historicization of fiction, using phrases such as “quasi-fictional” and “quasi-historical”:

History is quasi-fictive once the quasi-presence of events placed “before the eyes of” the reader by a lively narrative supplements through its intuitiveness, its vividness, the elusive character of the pastness of the past, which is illustrated by the paradoxes of standing-for. Fictional narrative is quasi-historical to the extent that the unreal events that it relates are past facts for the narrative voice that addresses itself to the reader. It is in this that they resemble past events and that fiction resembles history. (*Time and Narrative* 190)

Of course, it is clear that Ricoeur does not seek to totally efface the differences between historical and fictional narratives. However, to argue the interweaving of history and fiction can be quite revolutionary because such an argument also suggests that history/historiography can exist in various versions which depend on individual historians' perspectives. That is, narratives in historiography are quite helpful because it is they that always make it possible to tell in another way and to let “others tell their own story, especially the founding events which are the ground of a collective memory” (Ricoeur, “Memory and Forgetting” 9). More importantly, this kind of account makes possible subaltern, alternative historiographies, which revise and critique official historiographies. Ricoeur notes,

“The implications of narration as a retelling of history are considerable. For history is not only the story (*histoire*) of triumphant kings and heroes, of the powerful; it is also the story of the powerless and dispossessed. The history of the vanquished dead crying out for justice demands to be told” (*A Ricoeur Reader* 464). In sum, in Ricoeur’s theory, history becomes one among many types of narratives with no particular distinction except for its pretense of truth.

The interweaving of history and fiction is also an important issue to Hayden White, who goes as far as to erase the boundary between the two. White starts with Croce’s declaration that “Where there is no narrative, there is no history” (*The Content* 5) and argues for his theory of so-called “narrative historiography” against the historians who would see history as a science. White, instead, regards historical narratives as “verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with their counterparts in literature than they have with those in the sciences” (“The Historical Text” 42). According to White, it would be absurd to expect that historical narratives can unambiguously represent the historical events that they describe; rather, White argues that “histories ought never to be read as unambiguous signs of the events they report, but rather as symbolic structures, extended metaphors, that ‘liken’ the events reported in them to some form with which we have already become familiar in our literary culture” (52). Not surprisingly, White’s theory of the “fictional” nature of history fits quite well in the Irish case, because both Irish historians and men of letters have had no choice but to “invent” most of their histories, which were ruthlessly destroyed and distorted by British colonial power.

The difference between Ricoeur and White, at any rate, is quite clear. Ricoeur saw narrative as an inevitable medium of historiography or the ultimate character of history, which is not something that the historian may or may not use, because without it, history’s “historicity” itself cannot be indicated; on the other hand, White goes even deeper and further than Ricoeur and declares that historical writings must be understood as a poetic act, which valorizes “the historian’s command of a power that is plastic and figurative, and finally linguistic, in nature” (*Tropics* 118). For

White, historical narratives are not innate within past events, waiting to be found or discovered, but must be constructed by the historian. In other words, for White, historical narratives are determined by historians' hands as well as by the historical events that they report: "Histories, then, are not only about events but also about the possible sets of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure. These sets of relationships are not, however, immanent in the events themselves; they exist only in the mind of the historian reflecting on them" ("The Historical Text" 55).

Yet, it should be admitted that this historian's power of narrating historical work is necessarily restricted because the narrativization of history is always contingent on the existence of a state: "narratives in general, from the folktale to the novel, from the annals to the fully realized 'history,' has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy, or, more generally, *authority*" (White, *The Content* 13). That is, history-making has much to do with state formation or nation-making. White suggests, borrowing Althusser's theory of ideology, that historical writing must thus be understood primarily as a form of ideology. And he also utilizes Levi-Strauss, who argues that "to *historicize* any structure, to write its history, is to mythologize it" and thus that "history [. . .] is never only history *of*, it is always also history *for*" (*Tropics* 103-4). Put in another way, history cannot be neutral or objective because it is always written for something or somebody. In this sense, White also endorses Barthes, who also insists that "historical discourse is in its essence a form of ideological elaboration" (*The Content* 36). Here, what White sees that Althusser, Levi-Strauss, and Barthes have in common is the ideological and discursive nature of history, which is quite crucial in interpreting literary works as well as historical works.

In this sense, Joyce's *Ulysses* in itself can be seen as an attempt to an alternative historiography. In particular, "Penelope," in which Joyce's experiment of narratives and techniques are stretched in their full swings, can be a useful place for exploring Joyce's alternative vision for a post-colonial Ireland. Both on the thematic and stylistic level, "Penelope," the last episode of *Ulysses* contains a lot

of possibilities of being interpreted as an alternative historiography presenting an alternative vision toward the post-colonial Ireland and the femininity of the postcolonial Irish women. By analyzing the Penelope episode, hopefully, we can see how Joyce transcends the orthodox phallogocentric discourse and how he suggests an alternative historiography.

III. Molly as an Alternative Historiographer

Molly Bloom, as a narrative/dramatic representation of “woman,” has provoked a welter of never-ending debates among Joyce scholars.¹⁾ Many critics have criticized Molly as “an unexemplary mother and a voluptuous, domineering betrayer of her sensitive, pathetic husband” (Callow 474). However, Molly’s hybridity and infidelity should be read as a significant message for a “postcolonial” Ireland. Much like Bloom, who stands for hybridization and inauthenticity, Molly “performs” Ireland’s anomalousness and adulteratedness both through language and through her

1) Right after the publication of the novel, critics extolled Molly as the “earth mother” not only to canonize *Ulysses* as a work of high art but also to seek “a means of neutralizing the threat of Molly’s sexuality” (McCormick 20).

In the 1950s and 1960s, a time of strong antifeminist sentiment, critics vilified Molly as a bitch, a whore, and an embodiment of evil. For example, Robert Adams asserts, “She is a slut, a sloven, and a voracious sexual animal, [. . .] she is a frightening venture into the unconsciousness of evil, and certainly, deliberately obscene” (166). Darcy O’Brien asserts, “For all Molly’s attractive vitality, for all of her fleshly charms and engaging bravado, she is at heart a thirty-shilling whore” (qtd. in Scott 159). However, many feminist critics have responded since the 1970s, from a socio-political perspective of Western patriarchal assumptions, to male critics’ celebration of Molly as an earth goddess and their stigmatization of her as a whore. For example, Suzette Henke argues, “Molly Bloom’s discourse is fluid and feminine, deracinated and polymorphic, uncontained by the limits of logocentric authority” (*James* 130). Kimberly Devlin seconds this view by arguing that “Molly’s monologue can be read as a savvy critique of gender performance” (77). However, Devlin also presents an interesting view that “‘Molly’ is really a male female impersonation, a ‘man’ doing a ‘woman’ who in turn does both genders” (88).

body. First of all, if Bloom is "not Irish enough" (*U* 18.379), Molly, belonging to the "the Spanish type" (*U* 16.879), can be seen as another hybridized subaltern subject transported from one colony (Gibraltar) to another (Ireland). Therefore, it is more or less natural that she does not fit into the stereotypical image of woman as a pure Mother/Nation. Penelope in the *Odyssey*, the emblem of a chaste wife who keeps weaving and unweaving to resist suitors while waiting for Odysseus, is reborn in Molly, who commits adultery for sexual pleasure. Molly also weaves and unweaves her history in her semiconscious monologue, much of which, however, is not limited to her sexual desire, including her own keen criticisms about the male-oriented society.

In this way, Molly upends patriarchy itself, which is based upon the exchange of women through marriage and the containment of female subjectivity and sexuality within wedlock. In her monologue, furthermore, Molly reduces all males to their phallus regardless of their differences in age or class:

a young boy would like me Id confuse him a little alone with him if we were
 Id let him see my garters the new ones and make him turn red looking at him
 seduce him I know what boys feel with that down on their cheek doing that
 frigging drawing out the thing by the hour question and answer would you do
 this that and the other with the coalman yes with a bishop yes I would (*U*
 18.85-90)

Here, Molly subverts the well-known role-playing between men and women; she becomes the "subject" of her own thoughts and fantasies, and men are turned into the "object" of her sexual desire. In short, Molly's monologue breaks the male gaze and embodies an alternative to it. In this sense, Richard Pearce also argues, "In *Ulysses* Joyce creates Molly Bloom as an apparently independent woman, who, given her interior monologue, would seem to be the author of her own thoughts and fantasies, her own gaze and desire" (40). In "Penelope," again, Molly writes her own "her-story"(not history), registering her own "female" gaze and desire.

However, Molly does not borrow a conventional style of writing to narrate her

own gaze. The “Penelope” episode textualizes a peculiar dimension of time and history. The past, for Molly, seems to exist in permanent simultaneity instead of chronological sequence, transcending a rigid progression of time:

he smelt of some kind of drink not whisky or stout or perhaps the sweetie kind of paste they stick their bills up with some liqueur Id like to sip those richlooking green and yellow expensive drinks those stagedoor johnnies drink with the opera hats I tasted once with my finger dipped out of that American that had the squirrel talking stamps with father he had all he could do keep himself from falling asleep after the last time after we took the port and potted meat it had a find salty taste yes because I felt lovely and tired myself and fell asleep as sound as a top the moment I popped straight into bed till that thunder woke me up God be merciful to us I thought the heavens were coming down about us to punish us when I blessed myself and said a Hail Mary like those awful thunderbolts in Gibraltar as if the world was coming to an end [. . .] the candle I lit that evening in Whitefriars street chapel for the month of May see it brought its luck though hed scoff if he heard because he never goes to church mass or meeting [. . .] yes when I lit the lamp because he must have come 3 or 4 times with the tremendous big red brute of a thing he has I thought the vein or whatever the dickens they call it was going to burst though his nose is not so big (*U* 18.125-46)

Here, Molly’s recollection of Boylan is interrupted by several other memories: a memory of a certain liqueur she tasted in Gibraltar, the sound of thunder in the same afternoon, the candle she lit in “Whitefriars chapel,” and Bloom’s atheism. These different memories, however, are not organized by a chronological order; they flow with free association of thoughts, linked through certain triggers of memories such as “drink,” “prayer,” and “candle.” In spite of differences in time and space, these memories are jumbled together, as if they all exist simultaneously on one dimension. After all of these interruptions, her memory comes back to the one about having sex with Boylan in the afternoon. All in all, Molly’s way of recalling past or writing history is not linear or chronological but circular and desultory.

In this way, Molly in "Penelope" writes the history of her childhood in Gibraltar, her relationship with Bloom before marriage, episodes with her ex-lovers (Mulvey and Gardner, to name a few), Bloom's flirtation with their maid, Molly's sex with Boylan, and so on. Again, however, it is impossible for the reader to write a chronological history of Molly because all of those memories are presented out of order. Molly even asserts, "I never know the time" (*U* 18.344-5); "Lord its just like yesterday to me" (*U* 18.821). All history, all memory, seems to live in the present for Molly. In this sense, Suzette Henke's comment is quite insightful: "She [Molly] never differentiates past from present: the contiguous images of her life appear simultaneously before her gaze" (*Joyce's* 237). The past, which Stephen tries so hard to deny, seems to be totally at Molly's disposal and gets reconstructed or deconstructed according to Molly's recollection in "Penelope." In this way, Molly defies the nightmare of history by ceaselessly crisscrossing or even erasing the line dividing past and present.

At the same time that Molly critiques the rigid progress of time and history in conventional/official historiographies, more importantly, she also problematizes male-oriented nationalism by deriding the Irish Revival's essentialist portrayal of the nation as a pure, sacrificing woman/mother. In fact, this essentialism was challenged earlier in the "Telemachus" episode by the old milkwoman, who cannot speak Gaelic, and in the "Nausicaa" episode by Gerty, the crippled young woman.²⁾ However, Molly's monologue disrupts more radically and strikingly this appropriation of woman as object rather than as subject in national imagining.

Here, this charged relationship between nation and gender requires a close examination. George Mosse, echoing Benedict Anderson, argues that "Nationalism had a special affinity for male society, and together with the concept of respectability legitimized the dominance of men over women" (67). Supporting this view, Anne McClintock elaborates on the uneven gendering of the national subjects.³⁾

2) See Chapter 7 of Len Platt's *Joyce and the Anglo-Irish: A Study of Joyce and the Literary Revival* (Amsterdam, 1998).

3) For the subject of uneven gendering in nationalisms, see Andrew Parker et al.

However, unlike Anderson, who defines nations as “imagined communities” whereby people imagine a shared experience of identification in “homogeneous time,” McClintock sees nations as “historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed” (353). Gendering, as “social difference,” is also engendered and reinforced through nationalism:

All nations depend on powerful construction of gender. Despite many nationalists’ ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender *difference*. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state. (353)

Excluded from direct action as national citizens, women are subsumed symbolically into the national body politic as its boundary and metaphoric limit. [. . .] Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency. (354)

Seen in this way, the Citizen’s earlier assertion of antifeminism in the “Cyclops” episode seems to have much to do with the idealization of women in nation formation. At any rate, while Stephen, Deasy, Bloom, the Citizen, and many other Irish men are involved in national imagining as the major (the Citizen’s case) or minor (Bloom’s case) agents of national collectivity in most of chapters of *Ulysses*, women such as the milkwoman, Gerty, and Molly are assigned to marginal, peripheral roles in this phallogocentric nationalism.

However, Molly refuses to accept this passive, dormant role; instead, her monologue, which registers her as the author of a female gaze toward men outside of phallogocentric concepts of time and history, seems to subvert the masculinized version of nationalism based on the unequal gender politics. Instead of being an emblem of a chaste woman as the “holy grail” of nation, Molly demonstrates her obsession with sex throughout the text; she even asserts that “know me come sleep with me” (*U* 18.233). In this way, the “Penelope” text records Molly in the image

of an unconventional sexuality, armed with frank and daunting sexual desire—exactly opposite of the image ascribed to women by cultural nationalists:

Id like to be embraced by one [father] in his vestments and the smell of incense off him like the pope (*U* 18.118-20)

would I be like the bath of the nymph with my hair down yes only shes younger or Im a little like that dirty bitch in that Spanish photo he has (*U* 18.562-4)

that delicate looking student that stopped in no 28 with the Citrons Penrose nearly caught me washing through the window only for I snapped up the towel to my face that was his studenting (*U* 18.572-5)

Im sure that fellow opposite used to be there the whole time watching with the lights out in the summer and I in my skin hopping around I used to love myself then stripped at the washstand dabbing and creaming (*U* 18.920-3)

If Bloom is diagnosed as a voyeur, Molly perhaps can be diagnosed as an exhibitionist. The text is full of Molly's scandalous sexual episodes with other men in both Gibraltar and Dublin, let alone her major sexual experiences with ex-lovers and Boylan. In this sense, as Len Platt notes, Molly is "hardly the eternal holy image of the land venerated by Yeats. Nor is she the pure, Gaelicized homemaker of Catholicism" (226). Demythologizing the fetishized image as "Mother Ireland" ascribed to women by cultural nationalists, Molly writes her own "herstory" of sexuality. In this way, the alternative historiography of the "Penelope" episode can be said to free Irish culture from the conservatism of revivalism (Platt 231). Molly, much like her husband, also suggests a new pattern of adulterated, anomalous culture for a "postcolonial" Ireland—on a more fundamental and drastic level, however, from a different view than a patriarchal perspective.

The peculiar writing style of "Penelope," in which, with no punctuation (except two periods at the end of the fourth and eighth sentence), words and sentences are jumbled together and construct a huge conglomeration of seamless thoughts, surely

announces the death of “patriarchal” writing, and introduces the birth of an alternative, “feminine” writing. Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva assert, “Molly Bloom’s language of flow and overflow is an example of ‘*écriture féminine*’” (qtd. in McCormick 34).⁴⁾ Of course, this “*écriture féminine*” of “Penelope” might seem merely as a “male ventriloquism” of the male writer. Nonetheless, in order to subvert the phallogocentric ideology embedded in language, it is of utmost importance to construct a new narrative structure that can defy masculine, developmental narrative.

According to Cixous, for a woman, becoming a linguistic subject always means having only one kind of sexuality: passive, vaginal, heterosexual, reproductive. And that sexuality is not a “female” sexuality *per se*, but always a sexuality defined and described in male/masculine terms. So, Cixous concludes, there really is not any such thing as female sexuality in and of itself in a phallogocentric system: it is always a sexuality defined by the presence (or absence) of a penis, and not by anything intrinsic to the female body or female sexual pleasure. Cixous argues that most women do write and speak, but that they do so from a “masculine” position; in order to speak, woman has assumed she needs a stable system of meaning, and thus has aligned herself with the Phallus, which anchors language. There has been little or no “feminine” writing, Cixous says. In making this statement, she insists that writing is always “marked” within a Symbolic Order that is structured through binary oppositions, including “masculine/feminine,” in which the feminine is always repressed. Cixous coins the term *écriture féminine* to refer to this notion of feminine writing, with masculine writing as its phallogocentric counterpart.

Here, it is important to note that Cixous sees *écriture féminine* as something possible only in poetry, in terms of existing genres, and not in realist prose. Novels, she says, are “allies of representationalism”; they are genres, which try to speak in

4) In “Molly’s Heavenly Body and the Economy of the Sign: The Invention of Gender in ‘Penelope,’” Christine van Boheemen argues that “the last chapter of *Ulysses*, characterized by its unpunctuated flow of feminine speech is the *locus* of the invention of what we now call ‘gender,’ the understanding of sexual difference as inscription and style, rather than an ontological essence” (268).

stable language, language where one signifier points to one signified. In poetry, however, language is set free—the chains of signifiers flow more freely, and meaning is less determinate. Poetry, according to Cixous, is closer to the unconscious, which is structured like chains of signifiers which never rest, never attach to any signified. Being closer to the unconscious, poetry is also closer to what has been repressed into the unconscious, which is female sexuality and the female body. In this context, we can regard Molly's rather poetic stream of (un)consciousness as an exemplar text of *écriture féminine*.

Molly, as a writer of *écriture féminine*, does not mind her grammar or spelling, strictly observed in patriarchal/official writing: "your sad bereavement symphathy I always make that mistake and newphew with 2 double yous in" (*U* 18.729-31). Molly also tries to avoid a formal, lengthy writing style, highly admired in patriarchal/official writing: "short just a few words not those long crossed letters Atty Dillon used to write [. . .] say a few simple words he could twist how he liked" (*U* 18.740-43). The unpunctuated flow of "feminine" writing of the "Penelope" episode, in this way, embodies the locus of "feminine resistance" not only against patriarchy and phallogocentrism, but also against any form of conventional, official writing based on linear, developmental narrative. Much like Stephen, Molly also uses language as a weapon against monologism and teleology.

IV. Conclusion

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous regards female writing as an opportunity of women's entry into history: "An act that will also be marked by woman's *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based *on her suppression*. To write and thus to forge for herself the antilogos weapon. To become at will the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process" (880). "Penelope" provides an alternative perspective to the male gaze; Molly writes the history of

June 16th 1904—yet this history is never distinct from her past—from her own perspective apart from Stephen’s or Bloom’s. Molly’s body functions as an alternative stage where alternative perspectives and repressed female desires are performed and displayed. In “Calypso,” Molly, seen through Bloom’s eyes, might appear to readers as rather “sluttish, gross, blown, unpalatable, and antisexual,” since Bloom is the narrator of the episode (Callow 466). However, Molly inscribes herself with her own words in “Penelope,” becoming herself an author. For example, Bloom’s remark in “Calypso”—“forgotten any little Spanish she knew” (*U* 4.61-2)—receives its revision in “Penelope”—“see I haven’t forgotten it all” (*U* 18.1472). In “Penelope,” Molly writes her own (hi)story about her past and present from her own perspective, not using any chronological, structured narrative.

In a letter, Joyce notes the significance of the “Penelope” episode: “The last word (Human, all too human) is left to Penelope. This is the indispensable countersign to Bloom’s passport to eternity. I mean the last episode *Penelope*” (*SL* 278). Here, Joyce explains the overall importance of Molly as a compensatory figure for Bloom. Although Bloom signifies an in-between identity, his biological gender as male still limits what he could represent in *Ulysses*. Thus, by allowing Molly the last word, Joyce seems to compensate for the all-too-male, instead of “all too human,” color of his novel. More importantly, however, Molly’s monologue can be seen as a further “countersign” to the masculine rehearsal of the national imagination for an alternative “postcolonial” Ireland. In ““Marion of the Bountiful Bosoms’: Molly Bloom and the Nightmare of History,” Heather Cook Callow also argues, “Joyce’s interest in alterity, in alternative voices and coexisting alternate realities, causes him to work, in style and characterization, toward the subversion of received ideas and the disconcertation of the reader. With regard to Molly, this results in her own thoughtful silence bringing a challenge to all the male thoughts and voices that have come before” (475). By suggesting the simultaneity and circularity of past and present, “Penelope” critiques linear/teleological historicism and transcends the narrow constraints of history itself. By closing *Ulysses* with Molly’s monologue, Joyce seems to complete the “back kick” (*U* 2.379) of his

alternative historicism. In this way, the "Penelope" episode also provides a room for "infinite possibilities" (*U* 2.50-1) of alternative histories, ousted from conventional/official/male-oriented histories/historiographies.

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Abstract

Beyond History: Re-Reading Molly's Alternative Historiography in “Penelope”

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“Penelope” has long been stigmatized as a voluptuous female narrator’s desultory reverie, which has nothing to do with history or politics. For sure, it is quite free from the constraints of orthodox historiography and demonstrates its own antihistorical narrative strategy. In this sense, accordingly, Molly’s monologue may be a good site for exploring Joyce’s alternative historicism. This essay examines how Molly’s monologue resists conventional, official historicism and constructs its own alternative history on the levels of both content and style. This discussion focuses on analyzing Molly’s peculiar concepts of time and history and examining how it critiques a conventional concept of time, that which official histories/historiographies are based on. More importantly, this essay argues that Molly’s monologue as an exemplar form of “feminine writing” disrupts conventional male-oriented nationalism/historicism and envisions alternative nationalism/historicism for a “postcolonial” Ireland.

■ **Key words** : Molly, Penelope, alternative historiography, stream of consciousness, *écriture féminine*
(몰리, 페넬로페, 대안적 역사쓰기, 의식의 흐름, 여성적 글쓰기)

논문접수: 2014년 5월 31일

논문심사: 2014년 6월 1일

게재확정: 2014년 6월 14일