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James Joyce and His Other Language: the "abnihilization of the etym"

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James Joyce and His Other Language: the "abnihlization of the etym" (FW 353:22)

Fenwick Scholar Project
April 30, 1996

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Preface

But the utterance "I am reading Joyce," "read Joyce," "have you read Joyce?" produce an irresistible effect of naivety, irresistibly comical. What exactly do you mean by "read Joyce"? Who can pride himself on having "read" Joyce?

With this admiring resentment, you stay on the edge of reading Joyce-- for me this has been going on for twenty-five or thirty years--and the endless plunge throws you back onto the river-bank, on the brink of another possible immersion, *ad infinitum*...

That is why I've never dared write *on* Joyce.

Jacques Derrida, "Two Words for Joyce" (148)

When I first came to Derrida's words, while researching this Fenwick project during the summer of 1995, it occurred to me that perhaps my only conclusion from a year-long project devoted to Joyce would be the same as Derrida's. "Daring" to write *on* Joyce, to focus one theory like a magnifying glass on all of Joyce's texts through which, suddenly, all his obscurities grow clear, ultimately becomes a misguided, overly ambitious undertaking. One can "read" and reread Joyce in the conventional sense, as I did this year--Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses, selections from Finnegans Wake, "Exiles," Stephen Hero, Giacomo Joyce, Selected Letters, and so on--but if by *reading* we imply comprehending all that we read, and understanding why all of the words are arranged and placed where they are, then I have not *read* Joyce completely since I first opened Dubliners as a junior in high school.

What does the word "gnomon," from the young nameless narrator's Euclid in "The Sisters," really have to do with the text of "The Sisters" as a whole? What does "Derevaun Seraun," the phrase repeated by Eveline's mother, *mean*? Where does Maria's missing plumcake disappear to? How does Stephen Dedalus come up with the answer to the "fox burying his grandmother" riddle? Why the "history of English literature" stylistic format in the "Oxen of the Sun" chapter of Ulysses? Why the question-and-answer structure of "Ithaca"? And, last but certainly not least, why the carefully constructed "Other" or "anti"-language of Finnegans Wake? The more I

“read” Joyce, the more I dislike the notion of ever attempting to *completely* comprehend why certain enigmas are present in his texts. I think that this dislike is akin to Derrida’s throwing up his hands at the presumption in reading or writing about Joyce. I was more certain that I knew what Joyce was “about” when I first read Ulysses as a sophomore than I am now as a senior who has read nothing but Joyce since June of last year. I have found that, for my own studies, the nature of Joyce’s work allows for only transitory theorizing. Stephen Dedalus’ opinion of his own theory of Hamlet ought to be a model for future theorizing upon Joyce’s work:

--You are a delusion, said roundly John Eglinton to Stephen.
You have brought us all this way to show us a French triangle.
Do you believe your own theory?
--No, said Stephen promptly. (U, 213-14)

The ease with which Stephen disengages himself from the Hamlet theory he has so painstakingly constructed at the Dublin National Library could be a model for how we should weave and then unravel any theories about Joyce that we might construct--only to continue reweaving and unraveling “ad infinitum.” I finished my high school English course with a research paper on the first three stories in Dubliners, that I have since forgotten; I finished my sophomore year of college with my first papers on Ulysses--papers I *wanted* to forget; I most likely will have forgotten this slightly longer project in the next five years, dropping it in favor of some new “immersion,” to quote Derrida again, into Joyce studies.

The transitoriness of Joycean theorizing has not stopped me from writing a year-long thesis on my own Joycean theory, however; Derrida, for all his claims to inadequacy in writing about Joyce, nevertheless continues to do just that for quite some time in the essay I quoted above. I began this project in January, 1995, by putting together a proposal with the idea that I might say something *new* about Joyce’s female characters--something that would in a sense redeem Joyce from the sharp criticism of

critics like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who perhaps best exemplify the hostility Joyce's texts encounter from feminist theorists.

I actually am rather relieved that my year's conclusions have not been quite so simplistic as my initial aims. I am finishing with the sense that Joyce definitely has merited some of that sharp feminist criticism; unlike one of his modernist counterparts, Virginia Woolf, Joyce has no "Lily Briscoe"--no female creation who oversteps the boundaries of what "women do," who breaks free of the position patriarchal culture has assigned to her. Whether we are talking about the mysterious "Mangan's sister" of "Araby," the pandering Mrs. Mooney and her flirtatious daughter Polly in "The Boarding House," the sympathetically maternal Mrs. Sinico of "A Painful Case," the bird-girl of Stephen's vision in Portrait, or the voluptuous, adulterous, menstruating Molly Bloom of Ulysses, Joyce's women inevitably resolve themselves into dichotomous poles, whether virginal muse or defiling, tainted whore.

Joyce definitely has merited sharp feminist criticism for such a narrow view of the female as literary character. However (and this is a rather *large* "however"), Joyce, for all his hang-ups where female characters are concerned, nevertheless has left us a telling textual legacy, in a style of writing that in the words of Karen Lawrence "undermin[es] the grounds of representation" ("Joyce and Fem.," 240). If the *word*, the basis for most patriarchal literary representation, is not revered, but instead is dismantled, proven inadequate, and ultimately "abnihilizated," then female characters kept *outside* active participation with the word warrant serious consideration, as harbingers of a logic alternative to the word--one realized fully, finally, with Joyce's Finnegans Wake.

I have spent my year seeking out these instances of alternative logic, of "abnihilization[s] of the etym," to locate and identify an anti-patriarchal, anti-*word* streak in Joyce. I feel that I have definitely been successful in that regard--I don't think

I've *saved* Joyce for feminism, but I find myself, at any rate, continually won over to his side. Should I grow too attached to my own theory, however, I have only to remember Joyce's own comments upon literary theorizing:

I've put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that's the only way of insuring one's immortality.

Fifty-four years later, Joyce's immortality seems unshakable; and I, hopefully a future professor but always a student of literature, am doing exactly what he predicted.

L.J.F.

List of Editions for Joyce Texts Consulted

James Joyce's Dubliners: An Illustrated Edition with Annotations. Ed. John Wyse Jackson and Bernard McGinley. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Exiles: A Play in Three Acts. New York: The Viking Press, 1951.

Finnegans Wake. New York: Penguin Books, 1975.

Giacomo Joyce. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Ed. R.B. Kerschner. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993.

Selected Letters. Ed. Richard Ellmann. New York: The Viking Press, 1975.

Stephen Hero. Ed. Theodore Spencer. New York: New Directions Publishing Co., 1963.

Ulysses. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Introduction

The “abnihilation of the etym” is, as I interpret it, a dismantling (“annihilation”) of the notion of literal, primary word-meanings (“etym”--from Greek “ετυμος,” the literal, true meaning of a word), to expose the etymon’s origin from *nothing* (“ab nihilo”). What I have tried to do this year, using this Wakean pun of Joyce’s as a starting-point, is to trace points in Dubliners, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Ulysses, and selections from Finnegans Wake where the word is dismantled, treated irreverently, or is used as an indicator of its own inadequacy. Where the domain of the word is disrupted, where it refuses to *mean* or resolve itself into a single reading, where it ultimately calls attention to its own arbitrary relationship to what it signifies--in these places, Joyce is employing an “Other” language that suggests an *alternative* to the patriarchal logic that holds the word preeminent.

I generally don’t like to toss around terms like “patriarchal logic” and “alternative logic” without adequately explaining what I mean by them; questions like “What do you mean by patriarchal (or alternative)?” or “How is the logic behind the word patriarchal?” inevitably arise. My year’s research on Joyce, which resulted in five chapters on various works, is a record of both my radically changed views of Joyce and of my own coming to an understanding of “patriarchal logic,” and “alternative logic.” A summary of these chapters, therefore, is the best indicator of how my understanding of these phrases developed.

Chapter 1, as its title would suggest-- “Her image came between me and the page I strove to read”: Female Disruption in Hawthorne’s ‘The Birthmark’ and Joyce’s ‘A Painful Case’”-- is a comparison study of the “couples” in each story: Aylmer and Georgiana in “The Birthmark,” and Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico in “A Painful Case.”

Each author constructs the relationships between the couples on strictly binary lines: Aylmer and Mr. Duffy are both scientific, cultured, devoted to the life of the ordered mind and spirit, and to quote Joyce, "liv[ing] at a little distance from [the] body"; Georgiana and Mrs. Sinico, in exact contrast, inhabit the realm of "sensibility," emotion, and the body, either as, in Georgiana's case, the "*embodiment*" of fleshly beauty "nearly perfect from the hand of *nature*," or, with Mrs. Sinico, as the elder, "*maternally* solicit[ous]" female. Though Aylmer and Mr. Duffy would like to keep their own masculine, cultured worlds separate from, and superior to, their feminine counterparts, Georgiana and Mrs. Sinico periodically invade and disrupt their realm, overturning, for a moment, their traditionally dominant position.

In both stories the masculine world, disturbed by feminine disruption, ultimately acts to quell those disruptions permanently. Each tale thus plays out what Helene Cixous termed the "work of death" in binary oppositions: one side must be superior in order to define itself, as in the male/female opposition, and in order to maintain that position one side finally kills the other, to eliminate its "disruptions"--as Aylmer kills Georgiana, as Mr. Duffy kills Mrs. Sinico, as intellect quells emotion, as culture overpowers nature. The damage has been done, however; with Joyce's "A Painful Case," we have seen Mr. Duffy's *words* disrupted by the suggestion of an alternative tale, one that undermines the discourse of its male narrator.

Chapter 2, "'Derevaun Seraun': The 'Open Wound' upon Joyce's 'Eveline,'" deals primarily with the final, repeated utterance of Eveline's mother on her deathbed--"Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!"--as an example of what Julia Kristeva termed "abject" language. "Abject" utterances "elude and disrupt speech," originating in the "place where meaning collapses"; the final, demented "spell" her mother casts upon Eveline is, in the end, what both fuels her desire for escape and compels her to remain. "Derevaun Seraun" has continually defied interpretation; Joycean critics tend to think it

is some sort of garbled Irish, but, as I try to demonstrate in this chapter, previous attempts to fix an Irish translation on “Derevaun Seraun” have primarily revealed the interpretational biases of the translator, the need to have *one* reading of a maternal “spell” that, in its repeated, circular style, belies translation. Mrs. Hill’s “Derevaun Seraun” is, in the end, what seems to keep Eveline from joining Frank--her utterance, with its inarticulate, “gibberish” nature, “articulates” an ineffable, incomprehensible sorrow, likewise rendering Eveline inarticulate and silent.

Chapter 3, “Julia Morkan’s Final Performance: ‘Arrayed for the Bridal’ in Joyce’s and Huston’s ‘The Dead,’” is a rather personal reading of these two essentially different artworks. This chapter stemmed from my own difficulty with Huston’s interpretation of Julia Morkan and her performance of “Arrayed for the Bridal.” Huston’s Julia performs feebly and is painful to listen to; I find that, in Joyce’s text, both Huston’s view and my own preference--that Julia sang *well*--are supported. Huston’s decision to portray Julia as a “shade” in the film from start to finish de-emphasizes the textual ambiguity that Joyce employs in his own depiction of her--probably the greatest problem I had with what otherwise was a well-intentioned, honest attempt to put “The Dead” to film. With Julia Morkan’s performance in “The Dead” we have Joyce’s text beginning to take on a contradictory tone, a defiance of binary pigeonholing, in its depiction of a female character--a tone that will resurface in his depiction of Molly Bloom in Ulysses.

Chapter 4, “Molly and Penelope: Weaving and Unraveling the $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$,” dealt with two “metempsychotic” partners: the Homeric Penelope and Joyce’s Molly Bloom. Penelope, sent by Telemachus to the “women’s wing” away from the masculine world of the “ $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ ” (public speech) to weave the “ $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ ” (thread of the woof), uses the method of discourse she has been accorded (weaving) to deceive the masculine world that has shut her out--namely, the suitors occupying Odysseus’ palace. In this chapter I

tried to demonstrate the essential similarity between Penelope's discourse of simultaneous acquiescence and dissension (weaving and unraveling the *πηνιον*) and Molly Bloom's discourse--one of acquiescence to a male-created view of her (as adulterous, obscene, menstruating, urinating, flatulent, and so on) and of a dissension from that role as actress who addresses and argues with her creator, mocking her relegation to the "women's wing." In both characters we find a critique of the masculine *μυθος* world, with its divisive need to separate male from female, culture from nature, and logic from emotion--ultimately the need to silence the so-termed "feminine" side of each opposition. Penelope and Molly, then, propose an alternative to the patriarchal logic of binary separation.

Chapter 5, "Stephen Dedalus and the 'abnihilation of the etym,'" attempts to draw together the disruptions to the word I have articulated in the four previous chapters. Whereas before I analyzed characters and their utterances "abnihilizing" the word, or the discourse of the text calling attention to the inadequacies and divisiveness of the word, with this final chapter I trace Stephen Dedalus' relationship, as Joyce's most famous artist, with the word. Stephen as a child encounters words and "plays" with them, appropriately enough for a future writer, but periodically he is frightened by the fact that words arise from "Nothing." Stephen finds that words are not intrinsically related to what they signify, but instead are vehicles for metaphors of unknown tenors. Stephen, whether he seeks the etymological reasoning behind a word's existence, or attempts to create his own new metaphors for what he sees around him, continually comes back to this notion of words as "built" constructs, designed to keep a non-differentiated chaos from consuming him.

Words as *names* for things ultimately have the same type of relationship as paternal names have to their offspring--an *arbitrary* relationship, one that cannot be

proven by any physical means. "Paternity," as Stephen Dedalus points out in "Scylla and Charybdis," "may be a legal fiction"--so too are all words "fictions," creating a relationship to what they represent out of "Nothing." Joyce's "alternative logic," as I term it, works to expose the "ab nihilo" nature of the "etym," by disrupting and dismantling the preeminence of the word in his own texts.

Chapter 1

“Her image came between me and the page I strove to read:” Female Disruption in Hawthorne’s “The Birthmark” and Joyce’s “A Painful Case”

At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read... (“Araby” 23)

It is finally not as “flesh-without-word” that Woman functions for Joyce most powerfully but as an allaphbed figuring the erotic and material potential of language (Lawrence, “Joyce and Fem.” 244).

That which stands over against the Nothing,
The Something, I mean this awkward world...
And this damned stuff, this brood of beasts and men,
There is no coming to grips with them;
I’ve already buried heaps of them!
And always new blood, fresh blood, circulates again... (Faust pt. 1)

Hawthorne’s “The Birthmark” and Joyce’s “A Painful Case”: two short tales from authors one usually would not hear mentioned in the same sentence. Hawthorne appears momentarily in both Ulysses and Finnegans Wake, in instances where Joyce seems primarily concerned with The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne’s title makes its way into Ulysses as the advertisement for “H.E.L.Y.S.” (U:154) in “scarlet letters.” In the “Anna Livia Plurabelle” chapter of Finnegans Wake, the title has been transformed specifically to connote a “scarletter”--a term Maud Ellmann coins in “Polytropic Man” (81)--to connote the “scarification” of the symbolic “A,” marring the otherwise perfect flesh as a reminder of its sinful, mortal nature. Two references elaborate upon Hester Prynne’s “scarletter,” and Anna Livia Plurabelle’s relation to it: “hawthorns blushing and looking askance at her” (FW, 204:20) and “Ellis on quay in scarlet thread. Linked for the world on a flushcaloured field” (FW, (205:07). Hester and Anna Livia are both looked “askance at” because the scarifying mark calls attention to their mortal, “sinful” flesh, made apparent in their open sexuality. The “flushcaloured scarlet thread” is both “flush” (scarlet) and tied into their “flesh” (Hester claims she is “branded” by it)--they

are “linked” for their time in the world to a constant awareness of their own weakness in the face of fleshly desires. The scarlet letter thus becomes a “*scar* letter.”

In “The Birthmark” and “A Painful Case,” both Hawthorne and Joyce create dichotomous worlds organized according to the opposing principles of male/female, intellect/emotion, and spirit/flesh. In each tale, female “scarletters”--markings of mortality, sinfulness, and the flesh--disrupt the superior position traditionally accorded to the male side of each opposition. Both authors pointedly fix each character in his or her respective binary position; neither author, for example, attributes any individual strength of intellect to Georgiana in “The Birthmark” or Mrs. Sinico in “A Painful Case.” Georgiana is rather the *embodiment* of fleshly beauty “nearly perfect from the hand of *nature*” (710, my italics) and Mrs. Sinico, beyond the years of youthful attractiveness, possesses a temperament of “great *sensibility*” (97, my italics) and takes care of Mr. Duffy with “maternal solicitude” (97). Both male characters conform to their respective cultural stereotype as well. Aylmer is a “man of science” whose love of this intellectual-spiritual field (he is an alchemist) “rival[s] the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy” (710)--a rivalry realized in the very limited physical affection he accords to Georgiana. Mr. Duffy, who possesses a “large head” (and an equally-sized mental capacity) “abhorred anything that betokened physical or mental disorder” (95), and “lived at a little distance from his *body*, [that is, *flesh*], regarding his own acts with doubtful side-glances” (96).

Each text professes an almost mimetic adherence to a logocentric, binary system of understanding (Cixous 64). Such a system, as it plays itself out in these two stories, encodes itself according to fixed cultural opposites: male/female (the most noticeable standard), intellect/emotion, spirit/flesh and culture/nature. Hélène Cixous locates *death* at the root of traditional binary logic:

Is the fact that Logocentrism subjects thought--all concepts, codes

and values--to a binary system, related to "the" couple, man/woman? [...] Theory of culture, theory of society, symbolic systems in general--art, religion, family, language--it is all developed while bringing the same schemes to light. And the movement whereby each opposition is set up to make sense is the movement through which *the couple is destroyed*. A universal battlefield. Each time, a war is let loose. *Death is always at work* (Cixous 64).

With Hawthorne and Joyce, I find that each author's fixation upon these binary opposites signals an undermining of, even a *mockery* of, their hierarchical formation. The literal deaths of Georgiana and Mrs. Sinico emphasize the oppositional, "battlefield" nature of binary understanding, whereby mastery is only achieved for the male protagonists when the female side is dead. Aylmer destroys his wife's birthmark (and his wife) to rid himself of a reminder of mortality; Mr. Duffy effectually "kills" Mrs. Sinico to remain at a distance from flesh and sexual desire. Ultimately, both authors portray the "battlefield" of logocentric thought in order to expose the "death" it inevitably produces.

Hawthorne and Joyce significantly endow the female "losing" side of the "battlefield" with a defense mechanism that we see before their deaths--the female "scarletter." Georgiana and Mrs Sinico are both destroyed in the end, but each has her moments in the text when she is able to "disrupt," with her own emotion and flesh (her side of the binary opposition, in other words), the hitherto superior male position of the intellect and spirit. Working within the male/female stereotypes that the binary opposites invite thus does not necessarily imply that the logocentric "mastery" of the male side is absolute, or even a positive thing. Instead, both authors play out the "battlefield" of binary thinking to uncover simultaneously the unhappy "death" at its center and the instability of male "mastery."

Karen Lawrence elaborates upon this notion of feminine “scarletter” disruption in “Joyce and Feminism,” in an explanation which also, I think, applies to Hawthorne and “The Birthmark”:

[A] catalogue of misogynistic images or female stereotypes in Joyce’s work fails to account for his *undermining* of the grounds of representation...the deconstruction of presences poses a relationship between the metaphor of woman and a writing practice that *disrupts* patriarchal signature and conventions...(240, my italics).

For Hawthorne, Georgiana’s “scarletter” *birthmark* is a visible “disruptor” to Aylmer’s solipsistic search for *immortality*. Joyce translates this metaphor of woman as disruptor into Mrs. Sinico’s physical gesture of bringing Mr. Duffy’s hand to her cheek—a disruptive, alternate language within Mr. Duffy’s ultra-rational, “dead” discourse. Mrs. Sinico’s gesture thus becomes a “textual birthmark,” scarring Mr. Duffy’s reality-denying discourse; her gesture parallels the image of “Mangan’s sister” in “Araby,” which comes between the boy-narrator and the “page [he] strove to read,” disrupting and nearly obliterating the text.

The odd coincidence of the “hand on the cheek” in both stories--the shape of Georgiana’s facial birthmark and Mrs. Sinico’s actual gesture--while probably (as far as we know) not intended by Joyce, nevertheless clarifies in my own reading the nature of the disruption each woman represents. The birthmark, as Georgiana puts it, “was laid upon me before I came into the world”(713); that is, “the blemish on the face is a sign of female anonymity rather than the signature of the father, of maternal stain rather than the fresh unstained creation” (Lawrence, “Paternity” 96).^{*} The birthmark is a startling reminder to Aylmer, in spite of his immersion in spiritual, immortal aspirations, of his own “stain”--his own nameless, ambiguous, and mortal beginnings

^{*} Although Lawrence refers here to Cyril Sargent’s facial mark in “Proteus,” in her notations to “Paternity, the Legal Fiction” she compares Joyce’s treatment of the maternal mark to Hawthorne’s treatment of it in “The Birthmark.”

in the maternal womb prior to receiving a “legally fictional” patronym and rationally-placed identity.

Mrs. Sinico’s gesture of grasping Mr. Duffy’s hand and raising it to her cheek parallels the effect of Georgiana’s birthmark in that such an emotional, fleshly, “sinful” (she is married, and actually invites a comparison of herself to Hester Prynne) gesture, brought on by Mr. Duffy’s insistence “on the *soul’s* incurable loneliness” (98, my italics) disrupts the self-distanced, differentiating, logocentric discourse with which Mr. Duffy tells his tale. The language of “gesture,” so important to Stephen Dedalus in Stephen Hero as the primary art form, the most *origin*-al form of communication, is accorded to Mrs. Sinico precisely because such language predates the patro-linguistic conventions to which Mr. Duffy is so attached.

Aylmer’s and Mr. Duffy’s ambivalence towards their feminine counterparts--in two stories where the logocentric binary opposites of male/female, intellect/emotion, and spirit/flesh are so firmly entrenched--calls into question the superiority traditionally accorded to the left, male side of each binary pair and exposes the instabilities and “work of death” upon which that “superiority” is founded. Aylmer’s intellect relies on a negation and killing of the *flesh* which both repulses him and intrigues him. Mr. Duffy’s contented intellectual solipsism depends upon a similar negation and killing of a fleshly gesture that threatens, with its simple *reality*, his rational, “body-distant” prose. Their female counterparts represent an “Other” experience, very literally--one that both men voyeuristically fear and subsequently destroy rather than succumb to. The “erotic and material” potential these woman represent is an experience replete with a life affirmation that undermines the death of

* “Paternity may be a legal fiction” (U, 207)--the words of Stephen Dedalus.

the male constructs--a "Something" posed against the Mephistophelian "Nothing" of sterile intellectualism, solipsism, and would-be immortality.

I.

We are introduced to Aylmer in the opening lines of "The Birthmark": "In the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy..." (710). We learn much of what we need to understand him in the opening paragraph:

In those days when the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, *it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy.* The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, *would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself* (710, my italics).

Aylmer is a man of conflicting interests; we are uncertain from the very beginning whether his love for science will overpower his love for Georgiana or vice versa. Aylmer the philosopher will also be tempted to seek out the secret of creative force--a search that would, significantly, not require the love of a woman, having "congenial aliment" in the potential to "make new worlds for himself." Aylmer is a deliberately exaggerated portrait of the solipsistic artist; he wishes to be, as Stephen Dedalus will wish, "like the God of the creation, remain[ing] within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (PA, 187).

But Aylmer is not as flat a character as the opening paragraph would have him be. Aylmer, the "indifferent intellectual," is nevertheless *curious* about the "Other," fleshly element of himself of which his wife constantly reminds him:

One day very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat *gazing* at his

wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke.

“Georgiana,” said he, “has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?” (710, my italics)

Aylmer’s “gaze” gives him an additional voyeuristic dimension. He is the solipsistic, spirit-driven intellectual perversely drawn to the birthmark or “scarletter” that signals *flesh*, his binary opposite. Toril Moi analyzes Freud’s scopophilic male “gaze” as “a phallic activity linked to the anal desire for sadistic mastery of the object” (Moi 134):

...the act of seeing ...as expressing a desire for *mastery* or for the exercise of *power* over one’s (libidinal) objects, a desire that underlies later (phallic or Oedipal) fantasies about phallic (masculine) power. *Thus the gaze enacts the voyeur’s desire for sadistic power, in which the object of the gaze is cast as its passive, masochistic, feminine victim* (Moi 180n, my italics).

Aylmer is a voyeur to what both attracts his suppressed sexuality and disgusts his sterile spirituality; his “gaze” upon the birthmark is a gaze upon a significantly fleshly beauty that his spirit both abhors and desires binary *mastery* over.

Georgiana is *pale* throughout the story, making it far easier for Aylmer to gaze upon the birthmark with increasing attraction/loathing as the story progresses. Her deathlike pallor foreshadows the inevitable death of the flesh that will result from Aylmer’s revulsion of it. But her pallor also suggests a “Something” lacking in their relationship:

In the usual state of her complexion--a healthy though delicate bloom--the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. *When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow.* But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness (711, my italics).

The description of Georgiana’s blushing and the disappearance of the birthmark into her blushes suggests that during sexual intercourse between she and Aylmer the birthmark would, in theory, disappear. Since the birthmark is glaringly distinct

whenever Aylmer is around it we can assume, I think, that they are not engaging in sexual activities that would force the birthmark to disappear. Georgiana's mark signifies not only "flesh" and "earthly imperfection" for Aylmer, but also the "erotic and material" potential of female sexuality. Aylmer would like to be a godly creator but he has a disliking of joining flesh in *procreation*; he is almost Mephistophelian in his ambivalence over the "Something" of procreation and human life affirmation, precisely because that affirmation works against or "disrupts" the "Nothing" or "death" at the root of differentiating binary thought. In the same way Mr. Duffy will shy away from the life affirmation embodied in Mrs. Sinico's gesture because it disrupts the empty, "*soul's* incurable loneliness" he nevertheless nourishes in himself.

In "The Dirty Goddess" chapter of The Mermaid and the Minotaur, Dorothy Dinnerstein outlines more clearly the nature of Aylmer's ambivalence over the flesh's disruption:

The love of the flesh that woman stands for thus includes...an ashamed love for something actively loathsome...What debases the flesh is our repression of the sense of the flesh's beauty so as to avoid the pain that this sense carries, and the return of the repressed in a form that includes our reproach to ourselves for failing to bury it altogether (148).

If Aylmer were to embrace the flesh's birthmark as beautiful, as Georgiana's past suitors have done, he likewise would have to embrace the mortal implications of that beauty. He is unwilling to do this precisely because the "pain" the sense of the flesh's beauty carries is the pain of the flesh's profound lack of longevity ; it is the ephemeral nature of fleshly beauty that frightens Aylmer the most.

Georgiana calls our attention to one last disruptive characteristic of her birthmark when she points out to Aylmer that her "fatal birthmark...was laid upon [her] before [she] came into the world" (713). Whether a fairy laid the mark upon her (as her old suitors were wont to think) or her mother did, it remains clear that the

“fatal” mark is associated with birth and the *mother*-- specifically the relationship between child and mother before the child is formally (i.e., patronymically) named. The maternal mark hearkens back to non-differentiated, amorphous beginnings in the womb, again undermining the naming and differentiation that comes with the patronym and logocentric thinking. The birthmark can best be summarized as that which continually disrupts--with its reminder of mortality, desire, sexuality, and the necessary reality of the flesh--Aylmer’s “superior” status as intellectual-spiritual creator.

The most literal depiction of these disruptive capabilities occurs towards the end of the tale when Georgiana makes her way to Aylmer’s laboratory, where he is developing an elixir to remove the mark:

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

“Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?” cried he, impetuously. *Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labors?* It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!” (720, my italics)

The “blight” of the birthmark has the potential to taint Aylmer’s intellectual labors and render them painfully short of the perfection he has aimed for. He is working to create an “immortal elixir”; the “fatal” and mortal birthmark reminds him, however, that his aspirations are based in Nothing--no one could have physical immortality using Aylmer’s chemical means. Georgiana and her “scarletter” intrude just as the image of Mangan’s sister intrudes between the reading-narrator and the printed page in “Araby”; the female possesses the power to blot out patriarchal constructs by exposing their basis in the “work of death.” It is Aylmer’s labors that are ultimately and predictably “fatal,” attempting to render Nothing the Something of life affirmation embodied in the flesh of his wife.

II.

“The Birthmark” outlines a significantly male ambivalence towards the “scarletter” of the female, a disruptor that subverts the traditional superiority given to the male side of male/female, intellect/emotion, and spirit/flesh dichotomies. The suppression in the spiritually pure male of attraction towards the “tainted,” ephemeral female flesh continually weakens the “superiority” of the spirit, and exposes its hollow, solipsistic base--its almost Mephistophelian rendering to Nothing the Something of life affirmation, sexuality, and procreation that the flesh represents. Would-be spiritual artists--like Aylmer, Mr. Duffy, and the youthful Stephen Dedalus--are continually disrupted from their egotistical, “‘built’ world, the ‘masculine’ world of reason and unreason; of morality and immorality; law and crime; and dogma and heresy” (French 245) by the life-affirming flesh that such a “built” world denies and is fearful of.

Male ambivalence over maternal fleshly “taints,” like the birthmark, are common throughout Joyce’s work. Karen Lawrence and Maud Ellmann have both discussed various examples in of this ambivalence in Portrait, Ulysses, and Epiphanies. Lawrence cites the instance of a particular “birthmark” from the “Nestor” episode of Ulysses--one that she actually compares to Hawthorne’s “The Birthmark” in her notations--in the conclusion of her essay “Paternity, the Legal Fiction.” The musings of Stephen Dedalus while tutoring Cyril Sargent develop a “juxtaposition,” as Lawrence puts it, “of paternal signature and maternal stain” (95):

*On his cheek...a soft stain of ink lay, dateshaped, recent and damp
as a snail’s bed.*

He held out his copybook...at the foot a crooked signature with
blind loops and a blot. *Cyril Sargent: his name and seal...*

Ugly and futile: lean neck and thick hair and a stain of ink, a
snail’s bed. Yet someone had loved him...But for her the race of the
world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail...
Was that then real? The only true thing in life?...

...Amor matris: subjective and objective genitive. With her
weak blood and wheysour milk she had fed him and hid from sight of

others his swaddling bands (U, 126-27--my italics)

The stain of the inkmark, reminiscent of a mother's birthmark, "comes before the signature" of "Cyril Sargent: his name and seal" (Lawrence 96). As ink predates the act of writing, so does the maternal ink and birthmark predate the patronym. In spite of its association with anonymity and nonpossession, the maternal mark proves itself literally and indelibly "in the flesh," whereas "paternity," as Stephen puts it, "may be a legal *fiction*" (my italics) and not real at all.

Maud Ellmann's earlier "Polytropic Man" essay chronicles probably some of the earliest research on male ambivalence over female fleshly marks in Joyce; her influence on Karen Lawrence is very noticeable in the previous essay I cited. First, in Portrait, Ellmann analyzes the passage where Stephen encounters the word "Foetus" carved into a desk several times at his father's former school:

...Mr. Dedalus, the porter aiding him, searched the desk for his initials. Stephen remained in the background... On the desk before him he read the word Foetus carved several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood. he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word carved in the desk...

Stephen's name was called. He hurried down the steps of the theatre so as to be as far away from the vision as he could be and, peering closely at his father's initials, hid his flushed face (87, my italics).

Another "juxtaposition" has occurred; while searching for his father's identifying initials [and thus his own, as Lawrence has pointed out ("Joyce and Fem." 248)], Stephen discovers the word "Foetus," an effectually frightening reminder not of his identification with his father but of his own ambiguous, amorphous state in the maternal womb, preceding patronymic identification. His "father's words" are "powerless" to bring back the past but the maternal mark within the "stained" wood draws it up instantly. Gretta Conroy's final monologue, embedded (or "carved") within a story that has been largely Gabriel's, in like fashion immediately calls up the spirit of

dead Michael Conroy, preempting (and ultimately destroying) Gabriel's present belief in *possession* of her ("He longed to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to *overmaster* her" Dub. 193). Here, as in the "Foetus" portion, an anonymous undifferentiated past preempts a present based in identification and possession.

Ironically, "Stephen's name [is] called," just when his name has been undermined by anonymity:

In three ways, then, this mutilating word encroaches on the father's empire. Firstly, *it breaks out where the father's name should be*. Then *it lets forth that vision of the dead which Simon Dedalus' words-- according to his son--had been 'powerless to invoke.'* Finally, *its repetitions resist the fiction of a singular begetting...* Repeatedly, the *scarletter refuses the 'Creation from Nothing,' 'from only begetter to only begotten,'* to which paternity at last refers and justifies itself [(U, 43;207) Ellmann 97, my italics].

The "mutilating word" or "scarletter" thus blots out the patronym, exhibiting its own subversive power by disrupting the fiction of unblemished creation. One of the many puzzles I encountered upon first reading Portrait was the word "Foetus" and Stephen's odd fear of it was; one way of explaining their significance is, as Ellmann points out, by reading "foetus" specifically as the "navel" scarletter, "where the mother's namelessness engraves itself upon the flesh before the father ever carved his signature" (97). The word evokes such great ambivalence in Stephen, finally, because it suggests the "phallus has surrendered to the omphalos" (Ellmann 97), a complete reversal of the male/female power structure.

Ellmann deals more fully with the "horror of the omphalos" in this excerpt from the Epiphanies, an episode which eventually became part of Stephen Hero:

Mrs. Joyce--(crimson, trembling, appears at the parlour door)...
 Jim!
 Joyce--(at the piano).. Yes?
 Mrs. Joyce--*Do you know anything about the body?...What ought I do? ...There's some matter coming away from the hole in Georgie's stomach...Did you ever hear of that happening?*
 Joyce--(surprised)...I don't know...
 Mrs. Joyce--Ought I send for the doctor, do you think?
 Joyce--I don't know... *What hole?*

Mrs. Joyce--(impatient)...*The hole we all have...here* (points).
 Joyce--(stands up) (E, 29--my italics).

The "hole in the stomach" is, of course, the navel or "omphalos"--also, as Ellmann writes, it is in this particular epiphany "the hole through which identity, like Georgie, ebbs away into the amniotic fluid of its first world" (97). The "strandentwining cable of flesh" (U, 43), on which Stephen muses in "Proteus," "links all the dying generations back to Edenville and yet beyond, to disappear into a prior nameless unbegotten world" (Ellmann 97). Ultimately the Something embodied in the maternal mark is most powerful in its ability to expose the Nothing, or what Marilyn French calls the "void" [or "death"] (245), upon which the "built," logocentric world dangerously balances its own "fictions" of identity, paternity, possession, and mastery. In "A Painful Case" the "textual birthmark" of Mrs. Sinico's gesture, "carved" and embedded within Mr. Duffy's text, momentarily disrupts his highly rational voice and "scars" the text with the suggestion of an alternate tale-- a real, life-affirming voice finally silenced by the binary "mastery" inherent in her death, emphasizing the "void" over which Mr. Duffy has precariously built both his life and his telling of it.

III.

Mr. James Duffy is a man who, at least at the beginning of "A Painful Case," is rather comfortable in his own "built" world. Joyce introduces the crucial theme to his tale in its opening line, where we hear:

Mr. James Duffy lived in Chapelizod because *he wished to live as far as possible* from the city of which he was a citizen and because he found all the other suburbs of Dublin mean, modern, and pretentious (95, my italics).

"Distance" is essential for Mr. Duffy. His choice of habitation is analogous to the free indirect discourse in which his tale is told--separate, external, gazing onto the subject's

mind as Mr. Duffy gazes from the windows of his Chapelized outpost "into the disused distillery or upwards along the shallow river on which Dublin is built" (95).

The assertion of free indirect discourse alone poses problems for this particular tale, however. We are told by the second paragraph that:

He lived at a little distance from his body, regarding his own acts with doubtful side-glances. He had an odd autobiographical habit which led him to compose in his mind from time to time a short sentence about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense (96).

Mr. Duffy's "odd autobiographical habit" places him not only as the primary character but also as a potential narrator of the story; the whole of "A Painful Case" is told with subjects in the third person and predicates in the past tense. The externality implicit within a free indirect discourse voice comes into conflict with the displaced, yet *subjective* and internal voice of Mr. Duffy. In my chapter on Molly Bloom I explore how Molly's character seems a fusion of two elements: the first is a rather masculinist view of woman as voluptuous, adulterous, menstruating, and confined to the "women's wing" or bedroom; the second is a dissenting voice within the narration, the voice of an actress well-aware of her own fictional nature, and at times openly dissatisfied with her representation in Joyce's text. With Mr. Duffy we have the slightly different situation of a personally-involved man *acting* as an impersonal narrator, who seemingly aims, with his distanced discourse, to "refine himself out of existence," as Stephen Dedalus would say--to have his creation "impersonalize itself" (PA, 187).

The hint of his "odd autobiographical habit," dropped so early in the tale, suggests he is not as capable of self-effacement as he would like to be; the overall discourse of "A Painful Case" bears the signature of Mr. Duffy's ordered, rational thinking throughout. His whole telling of the tale could simply be another of his "doubtful side-glances" upon his own acts; Mr. Duffy is a sort of "voyeur" in his

relation to his own body, gazing upon it from a safe distance, uncertain of its capabilities. Just as Aylmer communicates simultaneously revulsion and attraction towards the body through his "gaze," so does Mr. Duffy communicate, through his own deceptively distant "gaze" upon his body, life and relationship with Mrs. Sinico, his failure to *efface* himself in the midst of his overriding *obsession* with himself. Mr. Duffy's discourse is defined by his "side-glances," which he turns furtively upon himself and everything around him.

Through Mr. Duffy's gaze we learn first of the furnishings in his house:

The lofty walls of his uncarpeted room were free from pictures. He had himself bought every article of furniture in the room: a black iron bedstead, an iron washstand, four cane chairs, a clothes-rack, a coal-scuttle, a fender and irons and a square table on which lay a double desk. (95)

The description could go on, but what I have here illustrates what Anthony Burgess called "Class 1" discourse in fiction:

Such [discourse] is closer to film than to poetry, and it invariably films better than it reads. The aim of the Class 1 novel can only properly be filled when the narrated action is transformed into represented action: content being more important than style, the referents ache to be free of their words and to be presented directly as sense-data. (15)

John Wyse Jackson points out that "the whole passage has a similarity to contemporary stage directions"(95)--the text on the whole begs to be *seen*, as a film or a play would. Mr. Duffy is a somewhat comical figure in that he gazes upon the "movie" he has made out of his life; we laugh at him as we laugh at Little Chandler, mentally writing the reviews of his yet-to-be-written poems ("Mr. Chandler has the gift of easy and graceful verse...A wistful sadness pervades these poems...The Celtic note" [65]). The objects in the room--and the events of the text--are objects of Mr. Duffy's "gaze." We observe the order of the room and should (if we trust Mr. Duffy) understand a mastery over disorder and ambiguity implicit in its arrangement and in the arrangement of the discourse describing it.

Such “mastery” over disorder (“Mr. Duffy abhorred anything which betokened physical or mental disorder” 95) is deceptive, however:

He had neither companions nor friends, church nor creed. He lived his spiritual life without any communion with others, visiting his relatives at Christmas and escorting them to the cemetery when they died. (96)

John Wyse Jackson notes, “[A] relationship with Mr. Duffy seems to presuppose death” (96). Mr. Duffy’s “mastery” over disorder becomes unsettling when his ordered life includes among its basic duties the *methodical* escorting of relatives to the grave. His relationship with Mrs. Sinico and its eventual “painful” end supports this early piece of foreshadowing; the “mastery” of order over disorder, of intellect over emotion, necessitates the death of the “disordering emotions” Mrs. Sinico will come to represent.

Mrs. Sinico’s first words to Mr. Duffy are the only direct dialogue in the whole tale:

--What a pity there is such a poor house to-night! It’s so hard on people to have to sing to empty benches--(96)

Mrs. Sinico’s words are in the *present*, momentarily breaking free from the grammar of Mr. Duffy’s “odd autobiographical habit” and introducing a differing voice, distinct from both the “free indirect discourse voice” and Mr. Duffy’s distanced/displaced voice. Significantly, once Mrs. Sinico speaks, her “speaking” voice is incorporated and “mastered” by Mr. Duffy for the remainder of the tale. “He took the remark as an invitation to talk” (96) and so remains talking or “voicing” his tale until the end-- which is rather ironic when we consider that this is a story about a platonic, *conversational* relationship between two people. We can only assume that Mrs. Sinico does speak occasionally; her disappointment over the people having to “sing to empty benches” ironically foreshadows the lack of a sympathetic audience she will experience in her relationship to Mr. Duffy. Mrs. Sinico thus becomes an object of the discourse’s

“gaze,” rather than a speaker in her own right. Her few opening words, however, invite speculation upon the incipient development of an alternate, “unvoiced” tale running alongside and undercutting Mr. Duffy’s, just as the unvoiced “foetus” scarletter tells a story that undercuts the patronymic “S.D.” fiction.

The relationship between Mr. Duffy and Mrs. Sinico can best be described as that of “speaker” to “audience”:

Little by little he *entangled* his thoughts with hers. He lent her his books, *provided her with ideas*, shared his intellectual life with her. *She listened to all.*

Sometimes in return for his theories she gave out some fact of her own life. With almost *maternal solicitude* she urged him to let his nature open to the full: *she became his confessor* (97, my italics).

Why “entangled?” Why not “joined” or “intertwined?” “Entangled” connotes not only intertwining but confusion; “entangled thoughts” suggests that Mr. Duffy can’t tell Mrs. Sinico’s thoughts from his own. Stephen Dedalus uses “entangled” in a similar manner:

Eyes, opening from the darkness of desire, eyes that dimmed the breaking east. What was their languid grace but the softness of chambering? And what was their shimmer but the shimmer of the scum that mantled the cesspool of the court of a slobbering Stuart.

The images he had summoned gave him no pleasure. They were secret and enflaming *but her image was not entangled by them.* That was not the way to think of her. It was not even the way in which he thought of her. Could his mind then not trust itself?
(PA, 201-2 my italics)

“Entanglement” here implies that Stephen’s original aim was for “her *image*” and his created *images* of her to be so close and so enmeshed as to be indistinguishable.

Entanglement of individual thoughts connotes authorial effacement, then; Mr. Duffy wishes to blend his thoughts so with Mrs. Sinico that he loses *possession* of them and they become indistinguishable from hers, just as Stephen would like “his” images, and the very fact that they are “his,” to disappear and become what he seeks to express.

The moments of “entangled thoughts” are high moments in Mr. Duffy’s narration, where his solipsism seems to wane momentarily; however, the very next lines return us again to *his* speaking, and *his* discourse-- “he *provided* her with ideas, shared *his* intellectual life with her” and “with almost maternal solicitude ...she became *his* confessor .” Mr. Duffy would like to efface himself within her thoughts, yet he contradicts himself with the next lines; “she” *has no thoughts*--according to Mr. Duffy, thoughts must be given to her. The dichotomy of speaker/listener is established anew (an opposition again favoring the masculine side, which could be added to Cixous’ list), where Mrs. Sinico is in a sense an empty, silent space waiting to be filled by Mr. Duffy’s voice. He claims at one point that when speaking to her “Sometimes he caught himself listening to his own voice”(98); if he changed “sometimes” to “all the time” he would probably be more accurate. His voice is the only one that he, Mrs. Sinico, and the reader hear . Luce Irigaray, in “When Our Lips Speak Together,” says of female voice that “We are not lacks, voids awaiting sustenance, plenitude, fulfillment from the other”(209). Mr. Duffy establishes Mrs. Sinico as a “listening void” within his discourse in order to legitimate that discourse--Mr. Duffy’s own voice only becomes “real” to him when he can stop and hear it without any distractions from Mrs. Sinico. Like Homer’s Telemachus, whom I discuss at length in a later chapter on Penelope and Molly Bloom, Mr. Duffy requires that the female closest to him be silent, so that his power over speech may be preeminent and uncontested. It is through Mrs. Sinico’s own seeming acquiescence to this non-speaking role that the text simultaneously suppresses her alternate story and points most vigorously to its absence.

The single point where Mrs. Sinico’s “voice” breaks out the loudest is the climax of the tale:

...he heard the strange impersonal voice which he recognized as his own, insisting on the soul’s incurable loneliness. *We cannot give ourselves, it said: we are our own.* The end of these discourses was that

one night, during which she had shown unusual excitement, *Mrs. Sinico caught up his hand passionately and pressed it to her cheek.*

Mr. Duffy was very much surprised. Her interpretation of his *words* disillusioned him (98, my italics).

Mrs. Sinico's "gestural language" surprises and frightens Mr. Duffy. Mrs. Sinico, the "warm soil about an exotic" (98, my italics), has sprouted a voice of her own, and desires an audience to hear and see her. Mr. Duffy says "We cannot give ourselves" and he puts into words *exactly* his own philosophy, significantly in the first person as this idea is closest to him. His refusal to "give himself" enough to listen, to be the "confessor" for a little while, is akin to Aylmer's refusal to accept his wife's birthmark: both men yield only "empty benches" to their female counterparts, content with intellectual solipsism (Aylmer) and "words" (Mr. Duffy) that they can possess and control. Mrs. Sinico's gesture embodies all the aspects of "mental disorder" that Mr. Duffy desires to quell within himself and his discourse. He cannot remain "at a distance from his own body" when Mrs. Sinico grabs his hand and thus calls attention to it so blatantly. Mrs. Sinico's "interpretation of his *words*" is precisely her desire for Mr. Duffy to get *beyond* his own words. Her gesture acts as a textual birthmark, then, scarring the face of Mr. Duffy's discourse by suggesting another, perhaps more "entangled" discourse that has been stifled while we have been reading his. The fleeting gesture is the source of Mr. Duffy's subsequent ambivalence towards Mrs. Sinico--she now represents a "bodily" disruption in his discourse, just as Georgiana and her birthmark were physical disruptions to Aylmer's alchemical work.

The "gestural language" in itself, apart from its status as textual birthmark or "scarletter," has an inherent femininity that is problematic for Mr. Duffy's "body-distant" discourse and hints at its unreality. Stephen Heath, in his essay "Ambiviolences," comments briefly upon Joyce's interest in the linguistic origin theories

of Marcel Jousse--an orator who emphasized gesture as the basis of all modern written language:

Like Vico, Jousse postulates three stages in [linguistic] development which he calls *style manuel*, *style orale* and *style écrit*; the first is that of living gesticulation, language as depiction, the second is that of utterance miming gesture, shaped and supported by its direct reality, the third is that of alphabetism in which utterance is recorded in the medium of a language of conventional signs. This last stage is the moment of a possible loss of the reality of gesture which needs to be permanently reactivated under the envelope of language (55-6).

The reality of Mrs. Sinico's "style manuel" gesture, and the emotional, physical, life-giving tie it invites, frightens Mr. Duffy, and he retreats from it to the deathly solipsism which has made him "outcast from life's feast" (103). He will continue distancing his discourse from his body in his "odd autobiographical habit" (96) of composing "sentences" (a primary patro-linguistic construct of the *style écrit*) about himself containing a subject in the third person and a predicate in the past tense. Mr. Duffy has retreated into a *style écrit* dismally suppressing the "reality of (Mrs. Sinico's) gesture."

Stephen Heath points out the "primacy of gesture" in the creation of and preservation of communication, the cornerstone of Jousse's linguistics:

When Beckett talks of 'the inevitable clarity of the old inarticulation... the savage economy of hieroglyphics' in connection to Finnegans Wake, the phrases equally describe the ideas of an original vital state of language in Vico and Jousse: the loss of that inevitable clarity in alphabetic writing and increasingly in speech conditioned by the 'literacy' such a writing brings with it can only be remedied by getting back to the basic underlying gestuality (Heath, "Joyce and Lang." 131).

The "inevitable clarity" of Mrs. Sinico's "inarticulate" gesture points to the loss of vitality in Mr. Duffy's discourse; gestures arise from the "body" as the most "economical" communication, the most apt form of expression--naturally, then, Mrs. Sinico's use of gesture to express her hitherto repressed voice undermines Mr. Duffy's "conditioned" speech, with its self-avowed "distance" from the body.

Luce Irigaray locates the language of the body with the female, emphasizing its gestural nature and the “paralysis” of its suppression:

If we don't invent a language, if we don't find our body's language, it will have too few *gestures* to accompany our story. We shall tire of the same ones, and leave our desires unexpressed, unrealized. Asleep again, unsatisfied, we shall fall back on the words of men... *we shall remain paralyzed. Deprived of our movements. Rigid, whereas we were made for endless change...* Truth is necessary for those who are *so distanced from their body that they have forgotten it* (214, my italics).

Mr. Duffy's discourse, with its *distance* from the body and denial of the primacy of gesture, suggests a “paralyzed” voice, completely “dis-entangled” from the feminine and thus immobile. He cannot efface himself from the text because it would require yielding possession of discourse, allowing alternate tales and voices to entangle themselves within and around his own. Mrs. Sinico's gesture--the “textual birthmark”--and the gestures of her “ghost,” where “her voice *touches* his ear”(103, my italics), suggest a tale that predates and disrupts Mr. Duffy's paralyzed language with the “savage economy” of “inarticulation” and *non-language*. Mr. Duffy's suppression of and eventual killing off of the gestural or “non”-language is a telling depiction of Cixous' “work of death,” where the “master” language, with its one voice, “feels that [it] is alone”(103), with its victory.

IV.

In Stephen Hero, Stephen Dedalus expresses his own opinion of the place of a “language of gesture:”

--There should be an art of gesture, said Stephen one night to Cranly.

--Yes?

--Of course I don't mean art of gesture in the sense that the elocution professor understands the word. For him a gesture is an emphasis. I mean a rhythm. You know the song “Come unto these yellow sands?”

--No.

--This is it, said the youth making a graceful anapestic gesture with each arm. That's the rhythm, do you see?

--Yes.

--I would like to go out into Grafton St. some day and make gestures

in the middle of the street...My art will proceed from a free and noble source...(SH, 184).

Stephen's fascination with the gesture arises from a need to develop his art from a "free source," a direct "language" of rhythm unhindered by acquired words and grammatical structures. In the "Circe" chapter of *Ulysses* Stephen emphasizes once again his desire to capture this primary language: "So that gesture, not music, not odours, would be a universal language, the gift of tongues rendering visible not the lay sense but the first entelechy, the structural rhythm" (432). Stephen's conception of art as gesture is strongly semiotic; Kristeva's depiction of the *chora*, the pre-symbolic linguistic state prior to thetic subject/object delineation, is similarly "analogous only to vocal or *kinetic rhythm*" (94, my italics). The rhythmic *chora*, for Kristeva, is also associated with the mother, while the thetic, with the development of naming and sentence structures, is associated with the father--symbolized in the affixing of the patronym (98).

As the *chora* precedes the thetic, as the birthmark precedes the patronym, and as the gesture precedes the language that attempts to represent it, so then do Georgiana and Mrs. Sinico stand for what precedes Aylmer and Mr. Duffy's "built" rational world by positing an alternate tale, an earlier way of knowing-- a suggestion of paternity as "legal fiction," distanced from the body and thus absorbed in "gazing" voyeuristically upon it. The deaths of Georgiana and Mrs. Sinico are triumphs of binary mastery for Aylmer and Mr. Duffy; rather than "entangling" the binary opposites and blurring their oppositional positions, they effectually efface both facial birthmark and textual birthmark, maintaining the male/female hierarchy even though the "scarletters" have suggested that their "superiority" is teetering upon the void. Both Hawthorne and Joyce, then, have implemented binary understanding to expose the "void," or "work of death," or "Nothing," upon which such understanding balances itself.

Chapter 2

“Derevaun Seraun”: The Open Wound upon Joyce’s “Eveline”

...from afar, the writer approaches the hysterical body so that it might speak, so that he might speak, using it as a springboard, of what eludes speech... the absolute because primeval seat of the impossible--of the excluded, the outside-of-meaning, the abject.

(Julia Kristeva, P.O.H. 22)

In comparing “The Birthmark” and “A Painful Case,” I attempted to demonstrate the articulation of *disruption* that Georgiana and Mrs. Sinico represent within their respective tales. Georgiana’s literal facial birthmark undermines the scientific means that Aylmer uses to efface it by suggesting an alternate, earlier story-- one of sexuality and life affirmation, which threatens to expose the “Nothing” upon which Aylmer’s sterile, “built” world is precariously balanced. In a similar way, Mrs. Sinico’s gesture of desire, the textual “birthmark” upon the body of the tale, suggests an alternate, “desiring” voice repressed within Mr. Duffy’s “body-distanced,” ordered prose.

Female textual disruption appears in marked, isolated instances within Dubliners. It articulates itself from moment to moment within the ellipses of the female conversation at the wake in “The Sisters,” for example, or the “cough” of the girl in “Two Gallants.” Both instances represent momentary *stops* in the discourse of their tales, emphasizing what the majority of their tale represses--the questionable last years of Father Flynn, and the pathetic ignorance of the slavey, who has to cough to get Corley’s attention because she doesn’t even know the name of the man to whom she is giving her money. These alternate, largely nonverbal “tales,” like Mrs. Sinico’s own gestural “tale” of desperately needed emotional recognition, disrupt the discourse that surrounds them and briefly point to its fundamental (because linguistic) limitations. Women in Dubliners generally “sing to empty benches,” to quote Mrs. Sinico’s telltale

phrase and her only “voiced” words in “A Painful Case;” in some ways it is only with Gretta Conroy in “The Dead” that we see the “alternate tale” permanently transform the prevailing discourse, granting Gretta a somewhat imperfect “audience” in Gabriel.

Probably the most violent breakthrough of female textual disruption in Dubliners occurs in “Eveline,” when Eveline remembers her mother’s repetition of the nonsensical “Derevaun Seraun” with “foolish insistence” on her deathbed (32). The essentially rational, ordered discourse up to this point in the text, dramatizing Eveline’s careful weighing of her options, is abruptly scarred by the *maternal* mark (appropriately enough) of frenzied, baffling anguish. Mrs. Hill’s crazed final utterance, marked by what Suzette Henke terms “semiotic dementia” (24), “defer[s] meaning along with linguistic closure” (Henke 24). The open-ended, semiotic aspect of “Derevaun Seraun” is perhaps the most striking to me; its rhythmic repetition encompasses multiple meanings (and thus no strict determinable meaning), and its voicing causes a painful disruption in the tale--an “open” wound-- from which the initial language of the text never recovers. It would be easier, I think, to understand why Eveline won’t leave with Frank if “Derevaun Seraun” were never voiced; without it, she is merely a confused woman paralyzed by her inability to make a decision. The added semiotic variable transforms Eveline’s final decision (or nondecision) to a mystery-- intruding a lack of closure upon the text of “Eveline” that we can also see on a much greater scale in the Molly Bloom monologue of Ulysses.

Early points in Julia Kristeva’s discussion of “abjection” shed some light on the nature of the “Derevaun Seraun” disruption:

It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite...

In the dark halls of the museum that is now what remains of Auschwitz, I see a heap of children’s shoes, or something like that, something I have already seen elsewhere, under a Christmas tree,

for instance, dolls I believe. The abjection of Nazi crime reaches its apex when death, which, in any case, kills me, interferes with what, in my living universe, is supposed to save me from death: childhood, science, among other things. (P.O.H., 4)

The abjection Kristeva feels when confronted with Nazi crime is that it defies laws, customs, and what is "supposed" to protect children (i.e., the state of childhood alone), and reveals these ordered "positions" as *necessary* human constructs, built to avoid the final reality of death as both highly arbitrary and inexorable. The pile of shoes doesn't "match" anything; it "appears" like piled dolls under a Christmas tree, but it is nothing like that scene and indeed is nothing like anything the speaker has ever seen--a massive reminder of former individual identities now jumbled and lumped together in a momentary, overwhelming articulation of complete equality and anonymity.

"Derevaun Seraun" could be a brief instance of the abject articulating itself in Joyce--a voice from "death" interfering with what is "supposed" to *save* from death, i.e., an "escape" with Frank. "Frank's" possible dishonesty (or non-*frankness*), which Eveline alludes to inadvertently with his tales of seeing the "terrible Patagonians," suggests strongly that even what is "supposed" to save one from death is "built" precariously and easily transgressed. "Derevaun Seraun" is *like* nothing Eveline has heard before; its abjection lies in its denial of signifiable meaning, in its origination in "the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, P.O.H. 2). Joyce uses the "hysterical body" (with emphasis on the "hyster"-- "womb"--of the mother) in "Eveline" to suggest "what eludes [and thus disrupts] speech." The "outside-of-meaning" is precisely the abject pain of the life of Mrs. Hill-- the "open wound" upon the body of the text carved in by "that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" (32).

Prior to its painful scarring the text of "Eveline" is, at least on the surface, whole and ordered; throughout we *hear* her (as a third person narrator *tells* us what she is thinking) logically weighing her options for her future. In only brief instances do we get a hint of the threat to rational order that is to come, the deathly abjection looming within the margins of the text:

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue.
Her head was leaning against the window curtains and in her
nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired. (29)

Dust and exhaustion are two of the first things we learn about Eveline; in the midst of the plans for her future with Frank that she will outline in the paragraphs to come we will be reminded that her story began in *dust* --to which Eveline shall ultimately return.

Eveline's maturity is rather noticeable as her story comes so soon after "Araby" and the other early Dubliners tales with their child narrators. Eveline is in a sense suspended over a rather "dusty," faded childhood, watching those old, seemingly happy scenes slowly pass away from her:

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it--not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. (29)

The "man from Belfast" has introduced *change*. After the hint of death in the first lines we now see the possibility of revitalization in those "bright brick houses," suggesting newness, prosperity, and ultimately "maturity" from the "little brown houses"--like the one Eveline lives in right now.

Yet this reading is problematic, as it fails to address the violation of innocence manifested in the children's loss of playing space. Kristeva makes the point that "all abjection is in fact recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (P.O.H. 5). The absence or want of children upon which the new

houses are built (and depend upon) suggests the want or "void" (Marilyn French's term) at the root of all human "constructs"--even those constructs that are necessary, like houses (or language, customs, and laws, as Kristeva argues). Throughout "Eveline" we continually revert back to the warring dialectic between the necessity of change and escape (as Eveline views the marriage to Frank) and the possibility (never confirmed) that any "change" ostensibly for the better is merely a "built" construct--like the new houses-- erected upon an absence and loss akin to that of the now-missing children:

The children of the avenue used to play together in that field-- the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father often used to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep *nix* and call out when he saw their father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home. (29)

The image of the children's playing field is one of an almost idyllic Edenic garden-- *almost* because the watchful angel, Keogh the cripple, must guard it against the angry God figure carrying a blackthorn stick--Eveline's father. "Still they *seemed* to have been rather happy then"--we get a sense early on that Eveline is not the most reliable witness to the past, perhaps blotting out unpleasant memories of her father and his uses for the blackthorn stick. At the same time, however, movement away from home (and thus her father) is intimately tied to death in the succeeding lines: her mother is dead, Tizzie Dunn is dead, the Waters have gone back to England, and *now* she too will "leave." Leaving home is thus connected to a sense of absence and death for Eveline; like Milton's Adam and Eve she must move away from the garden, and she unconsciously senses that such a move entails loss rather than revitalization.

Probably one of the most troubling elements in "Eveline" is that the narrator never allows one side of the change/stasis dialectic to "win," and thus sound more favorable to us. By the end of the tale we have lost any sense of whether change or stasis is "death" for Eveline. Underneath its careful ordering of options "Eveline" begins to unravel its order and "defer... linguistic closure" (Henke 24); her mother's final "words" (for lack of a better term) are merely the manifestation of a silently growing abjection--a gradually developing disbelief in linguistic closure--within the language of the text. If we can apply to "Eveline" Cixous' belief that the "work of death" lies in binary logic, then the discourse that creates Eveline's story works to undermine that binary logic, suggesting that neither of Eveline's choices are truly superior to the other. We get a sense that the "work of death" in "Eveline" would only occur if the story's conflicting change/stasis dialectic resolved itself along one ostensibly "better" life-choice for Eveline .

In the next paragraph our narrator, true to dialectical form, moves the locus of death away from change and leavetaking and back to Eveline's own "little brown house":

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. (29)

The comfortable familiarity of the objects Eveline has dusted for years is clouded somewhat by the inexorability of the very "dust" she seeks to efface. The indifference and stasis that are cause and effect of the accumulation of dust suggest that "Home!" is continually besieged by the presence of death, a presence that Eveline works feverishly to ward off .

The energy that Eveline expends to keep death at bay is notable. Kristeva attaches to language a significance similar to that which Eveline attaches to dusting:

In the speaking subject, fantasies articulate this irruption of drives within the realm of the signifier; they disrupt the signifier and shift the metonymy of desire, which acts within the place of the Other, on to a *jouissance* that divests the object and turns back towards the auto-erotic body. That language is a defensive construction reveals its ambiguity--the death drive underlying it. (Kristeva, "R. I. P. L." 102-3)

The "speaking subject"--that is, one equipped with language--works within the "realm of the signifier," where a name or *signifier* is affixed to an object or conceptual meaning (a signified). The disruption of the realm of the signifier occurs when pre-Oedipal, nondifferentiating drives break in upon language and take away the differentiation imposed by the signifier/signified relationship, instigating a momentary return to the maternal *chora*--the pre-linguistic, pre-"fort-da" articulation where language has not yet come to exist, because voicing maternal absence and controlling maternal return has not yet become a necessity. Language is constructed to block a complete return to the *chora* -- "the sign represses the chora and its eternal return" (Kristeva, P.O.H. 14). Language is thus defensive because it is constructed as a defense against the "primary masochism" (Eagleton 161) of the final, most inexorable *drive*--the death drive--an articulation arising, as with all primary drives (so Kristeva argues), from the maternal *chora* .

The most important point to be drawn from Kristeva's theory is that language is constructed as a defense mechanism against the death drive, just as Eveline's dusting is a defense mechanism against the ever-encroaching dust and the stasis of death it represents. Language and Eveline's dusting are both devised with death in mind and, therefore, have death at their very foundation. Eveline's dusting, a response she devises

to hold off the inexorable dust, has at its base the deathbed promise she made to her mother:

Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. (32)

Her promise to her mother is at the very heart of all that keeps her in the "little brown house"--not just continually dusting familiar objects but working at the "Stores," (30) performing the housekeeping "in danger of her father's violence"(30) with his growing alcoholism, and living the "hard life" (31), as Eveline puts it herself. All of her actions find an origin in the deathbed promise. They are designed, like the discourse Eveline uses to tell her story, to hold at bay the decrepitude and decay that would overwhelm her--were she to stop speaking *around* the death of her mother, or to cease literally dusting signs of time's passage away. She maintains her life in Dublin so as to instill in her dead mother's life "of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" (32) a sense of worth and legitimacy, pushing away (or "dusting" away) the possibility that all Mrs. Hill's existence was really "commonplace" and senseless to the very end.

The simple act of "dusting" becomes a defense mechanism against the silent, abject ghost her mother would become without Eveline's continued execution of the deathbed promise. But the remembrance of her mother's final "Derevaun Seraun" significantly compels Eveline not to preserve her mother's wishes but to plan her own "Escape!" from the ghost mother by leaving the dust of the "little brown house" for "Buenos Ayres" (i.e., "Good *Airs*,") with Frank:

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her (32).

Why is the repeated phrase “Derevaun Seraun” powerful enough to jar Eveline out of her “not wholly undesirable life” (31) into immediate thoughts of abandoning home, responsibilities, and especially deathbed promise?

She trembled as she heard again her mother’s voice saying
constantly with foolish insistence:
--Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!--(32)

Just as Mrs. Sinico’s “communication” to Mr. Duffy was a nonliterate, alternative discourse, so too is Eveline’s mother’s “Derevaun Seraun” a cry to Eveline that preempts and subverts the careful, rational weighing of options characterizing Eveline’s discourse up to this point.

“Derevaun Seraun” has prompted many translations, principally into Irish (as a particularly “mother” tongue) but also French and slurred English. Suzette Henke translates it as Irish for “The end of pleasure is pain” (23), suggesting that “Derevaun Seraun” is a warning to Eveline of the eventual degeneration of early matrimonial excitement and happiness. Other translations include:

“Farewell to the white oak-woods” and “My own little one,
grasp my hand.” It might also possibly be:

Deireadh amhain sorair. There is one end: maggots; *Deireadh fan saoram*. The end of the free person; *Deirbhfhine ‘s arair*. Bloodline and bread (line); *Do raibh unsa arair*. There was an ounce of bread; *Deirbh an soirear*. The real laughing-stock; *Dearbhan sarair*. The right louse; *Deireadh amhrain siabhrar*. The end of song is derangement; *Deirbh an sorr*. Certain is the furnace; *Deireadh amhain siarair*. The only end is westwards.

It could be bad French: *Devrons serons*, We ought to be what we we will be. It could even be English: There, a fancy run!; Dare advance, or run; The reforms are on; The reverends are wrong. One hesitates to suggest that if she really was saying the words constantly, she might have been saying “Seraun Derevaun!” (Wyse Jackson 32n).

In spite of all these exciting possibilities, it seems to me that reading any one, permanent meaning into these repeated “words” presupposes a “linguistic closure” (and “work of death”) upon Eveline’s reactions and final decisions that the rest of the text has, albeit quietly, subverted. Very few of the proposed translations are even

objective; all seem to have a personal interpretation of "Eveline" interwoven in them, from an indifferent, yet menacing vision of the end of physical being ("There is one end: maggots") to the final entrapment of marriage and sexual relations ("The end of pleasure is pain," "The end of the free person" and "The end of song is derangement"). If we can assert that "Derevaun Seraun," like the majority of other Irish phrases in Joyce's work, is spelt phonetically,* then many of these suggestions for the original Irish words, when given their proper Irish pronunciation, do not even *sound* like "Derevaun Seraun," reinforcing their status as textual interpretations rather than objective attempts at translation. "Deireadh amhain sorain," or "There is one end: maggots," relies on the interpretation of "sorain" as "maggots"; the actual meaning of "sorain" is "wire-worms," a certain type of plant-eating beetle larva--not exactly having the same nasty connotation as "maggots." Reading "bloodline" into "deirbhfine" is also problematic--the actual meaning of that word is specifically a "family group of four generations." "Deirbh an sorn" or "Certain is the furnace" simply does not *sound* like "Derevaun Seraun"--the "sorn" is pronounced just as it looks in English and doesn't have that strong, doubly-syllabic "Seraun" sound to it. "Siabhran" or "derangement" and "siarain" or "westwards" have a similar pronunciation problem: an "s" in Irish followed by a slender vowel ("e" or in this case "i") is pronounced as "sh," rendering Eveline's mother's utterance "Derevaun Sheraun." The translation "The only end is westwards" also suggests a need on the part of the interpreter to tie this quote to Gabriel Conroy's later comment in "The Dead": "The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward" (198).

* We do have instances in Joyce that could support such an assertion: the "old man" in "Ivy Day in the Committee Room" says "Muise!" (109) or "indeed!" but Joyce spells it phonetically as "Musha!"; Buck Mulligan, in *Ulysses*, says "Pog mo thoin! An cuisle mo chroi!" (205), or "Kiss my ass! Pulse of my heart!" but Joyce spells these phonetically as "Pogue mahone! Acushla machree!" At any rate, it is safe to say that "Derevaun Seraun," if it is meant to be Irish, must be spelt phonetically simply because these words don't occur in a standard Irish-English Dictionary spelt as they are.

The most pertinent fact to be drawn from Jackson's note is that if "Derevaun Seraun" were *really* being repeated continually then it might possibly be "Seraun Derevaun." This difficulty truly makes it an example of "semiotic dementia" because it undermines the hierarchical fundamentals of the thetic sentence*, irrupting a cyclical nondifferentiation into the highly differential "positions" that critical interpretations foist upon it. John Barth's cyclical and literally circular "Frame-Tale" works in like fashion; with "ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A STORY THAT BEGAN...." and so on ad infinitum we get a sense that even beginning with "ONCE" is an arbitrary choice on the part of the reader--the true tale has no beginning and no end. So it is with "Derevaun Seraun;" heard as frequently as Eveline has heard it, it is doubtful whether even she could definitely give a thetic "order" to her mother's utterance.

What remains most compelling in Dubliners, for me, is the stories' final defiance of simple interpretation--no careful tracing of recurrent images or details adequately gets at the "point" of any one story, if such a point even exists. Any Joyce critic who can convincingly argue the "meaning" of "Derevaun Seraun" also ought to be able to give the location of Maria's "missing plumcake," or the reasoning behind Stephen Dedalus' "fox burying his grandmother" riddle. Such unsolvable mysteries in Joycean texts are part of the continual deference of linguistic closure that solvable mysteries bear. The open-ended nature of "Derevaun Seraun" returns readers momentarily to the semiotic *chora*, suggesting an alternate tale where binary oppositions are blurred, where all interpretations are thus rendered provisional, and where an "anti"-language briefly surfaces, an "open" point in the text that simultaneously calls attention to the "openness" or "absence" that the rest of the text attempts to defend itself against.

* Irish, English, French or otherwise, the thetic sentence traditionally contains, in some order, a subject, a verb, and an object; that is, a higher subject that acts upon a lower object.

The lack of an affixable meaning for "Derevaun Seraun" does not imply that it has nothing to communicate, however. On the contrary, something very powerful is communicated to Eveline, something that compels her to think of "Escape!" and paradoxically compels her to remain, "passive, like a helpless animal" (33). The maternal message, logically understood, is contradictory; semiotically understood it simply does not differentiate between the change/stasis choices that binary logic has thrust upon the story. "Derevaun Seraun" is in and of itself its own cyclical story; its incantatory "spell"(32) communicates the hidden, painful tale of the mother. While we can only speculate on what exactly occurred in Mrs. Hill's life, her pain is exposed essentially in its rendering her inarticulate--she has no point of reference to begin to express her pain, nothing "like" what she has felt that she can point to. As Stanley Fish points out in "The Aesthetic of the Good Physician":

Of language such as this one cannot ask the question, "what does it mean?" for in everyday terms it doesn't mean anything (as a statement it is self-consuming); in fact, in its refusal to "mean" in those terms lies its value. A more fruitful question would be, "what does it do?"; and what it does is alert the reader to its inability (which is also his inability) to contain, deal with, capture, say anything about its putative subject...(42)

It is in "Derevaun Seraun's" refusal to *mean* that it has the greatest impact upon us and upon Eveline. "Derevaun Seraun" is more important for what it *does* to us; in its failure to bow to interpretation it alerts us to what is ineffable and unspeakable in Mrs. Hill's anguish, in the end of her "life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" (32). She thus gives voice to the Kristevan abjection--that "place where *meaning* collapses"-- always tacitly present within the text.

Sharon Cameron, in her work on Emily Dickinson, captures perfectly the sense of what abject pain does to the language of Dickinson's text:

We have looked briefly...at the way in which pain is the line

drawn around a speaker's experience, separating her from vision, thought, and above all, from the framing utterance... Pain is the space where words would be, the hole torn out of language. Sometimes, in its self-consuming totality, it is amnesia:

There is a pain--so utter--
 It swallows substance up--
 Then covers the Abyss with Trance --
 So Memory can step
 Around--across--upon it--
 As one within a Swoon--
 Goes safely--where an open eye--
 Would drop Him--Bone by Bone. (P 599)

* * * * *

Unmindful any longer of its cause, pain is first of all a marshaling of forces against language that would need to know historical particularities in order to name them... (158)

"Pain" positions itself in a text via absence--it is a "hole" in language, an "open wound" that denies closure and realizes the final limitations of expression through language. Prufrock's lament "I cannot say what I really mean!" seems to stem from a similar experience with the difficulties of adequately phrasing what is a "self-consuming totality." How does one define "Derevaun Seraun" so that all its conflicting possibilities are expressed in total? The very notion of *definition* ("it is this thing and no other") is "consumed" by the reality that totality defies the "work of death" in binary logic. "Derevaun Seraun" becomes not "this thing and no other" but "all things," denying linguistic closure with open-endedness and multiplicity. In the end there is only the "open wound" of Mrs. Hill's utterance, "marshaling forces against language," against the notion that her pain is easily contained within a text.

What only remains in the end is to understand first why Eveline is so frightened into leaving by the remembrance of her mother's utterance, and then why she is unwilling to leave with Frank:

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love too. But she wanted to live (32).

* * * * *

--Eveline! Evvy!--
 He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him

no sign of love or farewell or recognition (33).

Terry Eagleton paraphrases Freud's interpretation of the "fort-da" game as the "infant's symbolic mastery of the mother's absence" (185), but he takes the interpretation further and associates the infant's coming to grips with the final provisionality of the mother's presence as the child's first understanding of narrative: "Fort-da is perhaps the shortest story we can imagine: an object is lost, and then recovered" (185). The acquisition of language, then, and the ability to tell a proper story, is inherently tied to giving voice to the mother's absence *and* causing her return, just as a child crying for the return of his toy that he dropped from his highchair has articulated his need for the return of the absent object.

Mrs. Hill's "Derevaun Seraun" articulates perfectly a fundamental lack of absence/return logic precisely because her "motherly" voice is always "present," and therefore never "absent," for Eveline. What frightens Eveline into escaping is the realization that such a voice will render her mute (as it eventually does) and thus will take away her ability to articulate her story in a logical manner, or make decisions for her own life in a rational way. Stephen Dedalus, with his relationship to his own dead mother, offers a telling contrast to Eveline. In the "Circe" chapter of *Ulysses*, Stephen encounters the ghost of May Goulding, his mother, who calls to him as she has repeatedly in his dreams, with a "Derevaun Seraun"-style insistence:

(Comes nearer, breathing upon him softly her breath of wetted ashes.) All must go through it, Stephen. More women than men in the world. You too. Time will come.

* * * * *

I pray for you in my other world. Get Dilly to make you that boiled rice every night after your brain work. Years and years I loved you, O my son, my firstborn, when you lay in my womb...Repent! O, the fire of hell! (580-581)

May Goulding calls to Stephen from the grave, at the same time hearkening him back to his beginnings in the womb. Stephen, frightened by her words, smashes the chandelier

in Bella Cohen's brothel crying "Nothung" ("Needful"--the name of Siegfried's sword) and causing her spirit to disappear. From this point on, we understand that Stephen's "intellectual imagination" is freed from her presence; the final sundering of his relationship with his mother marks the dawning of his ability to *write* unhindered. Stephen's relationship with May Goulding, then, is a mirror-image of Eveline's with her own mother, with significantly opposite results: Stephen's voice is released, while Eveline's is abjectly muted.

The abjection of "Derevaun Seraun" lies in that it hearkens *back* to a semiotic period when Eveline had no identity, and *forward* to a time when Eveline, like her mother, will have no identity. Her mother's utterance flies in the face of "identity" because it comes from an abject place, a place where all identities are finally leveled to the dust that Eveline is so eager to be rid of. Her mother's voice comes from a place of no life--it is a place continually present but one Eveline tries to defend herself from through dusting, through her story's rational discourse, through asserting her right to live. When Frank calls to her and she doesn't answer Eveline has joined her mother in a rejection of language, in a refusal to *mean*. As a witness to abjection she has seen the "built" nature of identity and does not answer to her own name. She ultimately gives Frank no "sign" because she has recognized the inadequacy of signs.

Chapter 3

Aunt Julia's Final Performance: "Arrayed for the Bridal" in Joyce's and Huston's "The Dead"

Aunt Julia Morkan is, to me, one of the most carefully wrought characters in Joyce's "The Dead." Although she is hardly more literally present or vocal in the text than Mrs. Sinico of "A Painful Case," or Mrs. Hill of "Eveline," her character is constantly worked and reworked through the few, significant words we hear from her and the limited commentary about her from the outside narrator. "Aunt Julia," as we slowly come to know her, evolves into a highly ambiguous and mysterious figure; in the end we understand her story only through the discrepancies and gaps in her portrayal--disrupting any notion we may have of "The Dead" as a logical, non-contradictory text.

One such discrepancy occurs early in "The Dead," shortly after we have learned, through the outside, third-person narrator, that Aunt Julia, though "stout in build and...erect" in bearing, nevertheless has "slow eyes and parted lips [which] gave her the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going" (161):

They had hardly gone when Aunt Julia *wandered* slowly into the room, *looking behind her at something*.

--What is the matter Julia? asked Aunt Kate *anxiously*. Who is it?--

Julia, who was carrying a column of table-napkins, turned to her sister and said, simply, *as if the question had surprised her*.

--It's only Freddy, Kate, and Gabriel with him--(165, my italics)

Whatever we have heard of Aunt Julia previously from the outside narrator, these few lines should disrupt our complacent certainty of her senility. The possibility arises that "wandering" Aunt Julia has not been wandering at all. Julia appears *surprised* at Kate's apprehension--an apprehension that can be read doubly as a fear of who has arrived,

and a concern over what appears to be an aimless “rambling about” in Julia.* Julia could, after all, “simply” be carrying in the napkins and noticing that Gabriel has arrived with the “screwed” Freddy Malins.

Does Aunt Julia truly “wander” aimlessly, as the outside narrator tells us, looking behind her at someone or something that may or may not be there? Or, does she walk with a specific purpose into the dining room, as her comment to Kate would seem to indicate, looking backwards to the perfectly apparent Gabriel and Freddy? To suggest that Aunt Julia is completely sound in mind and body would be at the very least problematic, but to suggest that everything the outside narration says of her be taken as objective truth is equally difficult, and would lead to a dangerously minimalist reading of her character.

Nowhere in “The Dead” are we more aware of this point than during her performance of Bellini’s “Arrayed for the Bridal.” According to the outside narrator, her voice is “strong and clear in tone” (172), seeming to have lost none of its energy and power. Yet, when she completes her performance, we also learn that the “loud applause” only “sounds” genuine (172). The narrator’s choice of words subtly suggests that its volume is in part designed to hasten the close of “Arrayed for the Bridal,” and bring an end to the painful, embarrassing spectacle of a feeble old soprano destroying a song that she once sang so well. As if to deepen the uncertain nature of her performance for us, Julia herself claims that “Thirty years ago I hadn’t a bad voice as voices go” (173). Is she merely modest, or truthful? Has she surprised everyone with

* Aunt Kate’s concern for Aunt Julia’s apparent senility is even more pointed in this instance: “[Aunt Kate] broke off suddenly to gaze after her sister, who had *wandered* down the stairs and was craning her neck over the banisters.

--Now, I ask you, she said almost testily, where is Julia going? Julia! Julia! Where are you going?--
 _”
 (163, my italics)

the lasting strength of her voice, or have they only humored her, out of respect for the soprano she once was?

In his 1987 film version of "The Dead," John Huston has his Aunt Julia (Cathleen Delany) perform as an aging soprano well past her prime. Her voice is high-pitched to the point of cracking, weak, and painful to listen to. Her performance is indeed "sad," as Huston puts it, and pitifully comical, with its aging, grey spinster singing of youth and love. "Arrayed for the Bridal," in Huston's film, is as outdated as Aunt Julia--making all the more necessary Bartell D'Arcy's stunning rendition of "The Lass of Aughrim" by the end of the film.

Did Huston make the right decision for Aunt Julia's character? To me, the more vital question is not *did* he portray her correctly, but *could* he do so. Margot Norris, in her essay "Not the Girl She Was at All: Women in 'The Dead,'" charges us to view the outside narrator of "The Dead" with "acute skepticism" (197). We can *only* view the outside narrator skeptically in the case of Aunt Julia, because this narrator essentially lets us create our textual view of her from contradictions, understatements, and discrepancies--elements that in no way give us a clear, objective view of her character. Joyce's outside narration gives us the events of the Morkans' annual dance suspended in a sort of "limbo" where non-objectivity is the only rule. How does a film director, working with a visual, largely objective medium, portray the simultaneous contradiction that we see in Joyce's text? The outside narrator's "language," or more appropriately "*anti-language*," rejects any linguistic "didacticism" or "dogmatism" (Kristeva 92) in its portrayal of Aunt Julia. Ultimately, with "The Dead," we have a text that subverts the authority of written language as an acceptable, objective medium for events. "Aunt Julia," as we know her through the outside narrator, rejects the patriarchal, binary thinking that demands she be portrayed either as senile or sharp-

witted, either a great soprano or an old, feeble one. She is defined by a textual ambiguity that defies a “pigeonholing” into one category or another. It is in this defiance of strict, binary categorizing for Julia Morkan and her performance that Joyce’s “The Dead” is artistically distinct from Huston’s film, exposing the inevitable problem of casting Julia solely in one mode, as an aging, frail woman from the first moment she appears on the screen.

On the whole, female singers in Dubliners have a very checkered past. If John Huston had needed proof to back up his choice of a poor performance for Julia Morkan, he could have cited several instances in previous tales where female singers at best possess dubious talents. Consider Polly Mooney of “The Boarding House”:

Polly Mooney, the Madam’s daughter, would also sing. She sang:
I’m a ... naughty girl.
You needn’t sham:
You know I am. (54)

As Polly uses her singing largely to flirt with and hopefully ensnare the young men she is “give[n] the run of” (54), the question of her having any talent for it is not even considered in the tale--it is merely a tool she wields to attract a man who “means business” (54).

In “Clay,” the aging spinster Maria’s performance at the Donnelly’s Hallows Eve party neatly anticipates several key elements of Aunt Julia’s performance:

Then she played the prelude and said *Now Maria!* and Maria, blushing very much, began to sing in a tiny, quavering voice. She sang *I Dreamt that I Dwelt*, and when she came to the second verse she sang again...

But no one tried to show her her mistake, and when she had ended her song Joe was very much moved. He said that there was no time like the long ago and no music for him like poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say; and his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was. (93)

Maria's rendition of "I Dreamt that I Dwelt" is most likely her last "performance;" her imminent death has been predicted via the eponymous "clay" of the Hallows Eve game, just as Julia Morkan's last end is foretold by Gabriel and occurs, as we find out in Ulysses, by June 14, 1906. Both women are portrayed, then, as "singing shades," and the greatest admirers of their performances--Joe Donnelly and Freddy Malins--are rather sloppy alcoholics, discrediting their performance level still further. Add to this Maria's "tiny quavering voice" and it seems more possible that Julia Morkan's voice must also be feeble, humored by an audience as sympathetic to her frailty, and as deferential to her age, as Maria's.

Huston also could have found justification for his feeble Aunt Julia in "A Mother," where we hear of another elderly soprano and her last performance. Kathleen Kearney is the first to notice her appearance at the Irish Revival concert:

An unknown solitary woman with a pale face walked through the room. The women followed with keen eyes the faded blue dress which was stretched upon a meagre body. Some one said that she was Madam Glynn, the soprano.

--I wonder where did they dig her up, said Kathleen to Miss Healy. I'm sure I never heard of her-- (128)

Madam Glynn, "the soprano," appears to have arrived directly from the grave. Her face is "pale," her blue dress is "faded" and ill-fitting for her "meagre" body. She looks, as Kathleen Kearney succinctly puts it, as if she had just been "dug up."

Madam Glynn is true to her deathly appearance and is agonizing to listen to, as we learn later after her performance of "Killarney:"

The first part of the concert was very successful except for Madam Glynn's item. The poor lady sang *Killarney* in a bodiless gasping voice, with all the old-fashioned mannerisms of intonation and and pronunciation which she believed lent elegance to her singing. She looked as if she had been resurrected from an old stage wardrobe and the cheaper parts of the hall made fun of her high wailing notes. (131)

Madam Glynn sings in a “bodiless” voice and appears “resurrected” (or “dug up”) from a long-forgotten theatrical period--one where “mannerisms of intonation and pronunciation” were in vogue. Gabriel’s remembrance of the “haggard” look on Aunt Julia’s face as she sang, soon to become “a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse” (197), is directly anticipated by the “bodiless,” other-worldly singing of Madam Glynn.

Over and over female singing in Dubliners is tinged with decrepitude and death, so that by the time we arrive at “The Dead,” Julia Morkan must of necessity sing feebly and poorly, if her character is to remain consistent with her singing counterparts in previous tales. If we combine some of the negative elements at play in Maria’s and Madam Glynn’s performances: feebleness; a patronizing audience; loud, suspicious praise from the party’s noticeable drunk; and, probably most significantly, a failing, “bodiless” quality (appropriate to a near “shade”) inexorably tied to elderly female performance, we find all the hints of a poor performance by Julia realized in these two earlier sopranos.

John Huston definitely could have found support for his interpretation of Aunt Julia in Joyce’s other female singers, had he needed to at all. The only question that remains, in spite of all this evidence, is whether Joyce himself intended that *his* Aunt Julia be an elderly female singer as consistently *poor* in performance as the other female singers of Dubliners. To answer this question we need to look specifically at the text of “The Dead:”

Mr. Browne was advancing from the door, gallantly escorting Aunt Julia, who leaned upon his arm, smiling and hanging her head. An irregular musketry of applause escorted her also as far as the piano and then, as Mary Jane seated herself on the stool, and Aunt Julia, no longer smiling, half-turned so as to pitch her voice fairly into the room, gradually ceased. Gabriel recognized the prelude. It was that of an old song of Aunt Julia’s--
Arrayed for the Bridal. (172)

The appearance of Mr. Browne should automatically alert the reader; anything he is concerned with, even if it is simply escorting Aunt Julia to her solo, cannot be taken simply at face value. The rather sophomoric, off-color jokes he has shared with the company throughout the evening, coupled with his offhand, slighting remarks concerning Freddy Malins, characterize him as a rather impudent, mercurial old man. He also is becoming more drunk and more ornery as the night progresses--a subtle point in the text which the Huston film admirably captures. His "gallant escorting" of Aunt Julia thus can be taken as a literal admiration of her person and her talents, or--just the opposite--as a mischievous old man's attempt to strain the party's atmosphere by "ungallantly" placing a feeble old woman and her audience in a highly uncomfortable position. Huston noticeably does not have *his* Mr. Browne escort Aunt Julia to her place, as if to avoid the question of Mr. Browne's ambiguous motives entirely. Huston has Mary Jane, the rather patronizing but otherwise harmless niece, in Browne's position.

The "*irregular* musketry of applause" is another puzzle: is Aunt Julia's audience happily *surprised* by her sudden decision to perform, or are they uncertain of her ability and concerned that she may embarrass herself and them? Or, are they inattentive to what is going on, and therefore applauding distractedly? The odd metaphor of "musketry" to describe the sound of the applause is also a problem. Is Julia the "old soldier" receiving accolades for her merits from a younger audience? Throughout this moment in the text Aunt Julia has been "smiling and hanging her head"; would a truly great soprano have such poor carriage? Or is she merely shy, accustomed only to choir singing and uncomfortable with parlor performance? Joyce's outside narrator carefully paints the scene in a way that leaves the text open to endless, contradictory possibilities; "no...harmonizing interpretive synthesis is possible because the story's language and its

structure contain inherently heterogeneous elements whose double antithetical character resists being resolved into a single reading" (Riquelme 220). It is in fact the text's failure to "harmonize" into *one* reading of Julia Morkan that separates Joyce's text "The Dead" from the film. Huston's decision to portray Aunt Julia as a "shade" from start to finish is even more complicated by the following "heterogeneous" element in her performance of "Arrayed for the Bridal:"

Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit the runs which embellish the air and though she sang very rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes. To follow the voice, without looking at the singer's face, was to feel and share the excitement of a swift and secure flight. (172)

After all the negative undertones the outside narration has conditioned us to read into Aunt Julia's performance--the overall poor female singing in Dubliners up to this point, Julia's senility, the involvement of Mr. Browne, the uncertain initial response of Julia's audience--how are we to read these two sentences? John Huston apparently decided to ignore them and move on; at no point in Cathleen Delany's performance do we "feel and share the excitement of a swift and secure flight." On the contrary, Delany is far more reminiscent of Maria of "Clay" and Madam Glynn of "A Mother." Margot Norris, outraged by Huston's choice for Julia's performance, argues that:

The extent to which...deliberate suppression of the possibility that Julia produced a singing of extraordinary beauty, a musical triumph, is carried over into the male criticism of the text, can be seen most dramatically in what was perhaps the grossest of many travesties in John Huston's film version of "The Dead." The film renders Julia's performance of "Arrayed for the Bridal" as pathetically dreadful and painfully embarrassing...In the film, her voice is made thin, cracking, and quavery, and Julia sings neither in tempo nor in tune. ("SBA" 497-98)

Norris' polemic is aimed at predominantly male interpretations of "The Dead," and for her, Huston's film is just one of many examples of *suppression* of female art in the patriarchal politics of the art world--of which film is a noticeable part. The politics of Huston's vision of the Morkan sisters' annual dance does not allow a senile old woman

to remain a moving, powerful soprano. To compensate for this he has the celebrated tenor, Bartell D'Arcy, perform a profoundly moving rendition of "The Lass of Aughrim" at the end of the tale; *Joyce's* Bartell D'Arcy is "hoarse as a crow" (187) and *his* "Lass of Aughrim" is made "plaintive" by his hoarseness. Thus, in the film Huston effectively *balances* out the performances--one very poor, one very good.

While I do agree that Huston's rearrangement of performance abilities is rather heavy-handed on his part, I find that I am not as outraged by the film as Margot Norris. For her assertion that Huston has suppressed female art to be correct, she would have to prove absolutely that Julia Morkan's performance was outstanding on January 6th, 1904. But the *text* of "The Dead" does not allow for any such interpretation, *nor* does it own that Huston's view is correct. The text essentially equivocates between these two views, never allowing one to take precedence over the other. Just as we learn that "to follow the voice was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight," we hear the response of the audience:

Gabriel applauded loudly with all the others at the close of the song and loud applause was borne in from the invisible supper-table. It sounded so genuine that a little colour struggled into Aunt Julia's face as she bent to replace in the music-stand the old leather-bound song-book that had her initials on the cover.
(172-73)

Gabriel's ostensibly positive response is colored somewhat by his thoughts just prior to his Aunt Julia's performance: "What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant old women?" (172) He rather patronizingly inserts praise for his aunts' traditional Irish hospitality in his speech, primarily as a retaliating dig to the modern, hypereducated Molly Ivors' snub. What is to keep us from thinking that he is similarly patronizing in his applause for Aunt Julia? That the applause "*sounded* so genuine" is probably the most notable aspersion cast on the reception of "Arrayed for the Bridal;" as Norris accurately points out, the outside narration is "implying either that it was not [genuine]"

or that Julia was skeptical over whether it was sincere.” (“SBA” 497) In light of these three words, the loudness of the applause can be taken to mean a pleased, appreciative ovation *or* a patronizing, embarrassed audience, hastily covering up the painful scene of a feeble old woman trying to sing as she once did, and failing miserably.

The outside narration of “The Dead” actively contradicts itself, deferring the possibility of an objective rendition of the events of January 6th, 1904. The ambiguity of Julia’s “Arrayed for the Bridal” thus poses an irresolvable dilemma for a director like Huston, attempting to render in an objective, visual medium the contradictions and discrepancies of a non-objective narrator. Joyce’s rendition of these events anticipates this very problem; his text tells us that “[t]o follow the voice, *without looking at the singer’s face*, was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight” (172, my italics). Perhaps, for Huston, the anomaly of a feeble old woman with a voice that nevertheless induces a feeling of “swift and secure flight” is, as Joyce’s narrator has already said, too great a contradiction for a *visual* medium like film. That such an anomaly can be contained within Joyce’s non-visual text calls our attention to this very fundamental difference in capabilities between Joyce’s and Huston’s “The Dead.”

Norris argues that the outside narration’s praise for Julia Morkan--“Her voice, strong and clear in tone...”--be understood by the reader as “[T]he narration, caught off guard and surprised by Julia’s singing, bursts out its honestly thrilled appraisal” (“SBA” 497). I would argue that her view grants a hierarchical legitimacy to the language of the outside narrator in this instance, a legitimacy that the text as a whole subverts continually. Norris relies upon a comment of Leopold Bloom’s in Ulysses: “Great song of Julia Morkan’s. Kept her voice up to the very last. Pupil of Michael Balfe’s, wasn’t she?” (162), to prove conclusively that Julia’s most likely final performance on January 6th, 1904 was an operatic tour de force (“SBA” 498). While it is true that positive criticism

from Bloom, someone well-acquainted with operatic performance (as the husband and one-time manager of Madam Marion Tweedy, or Molly Bloom, a Dublin opera talent) suggests Julia's career was a strong one, even in these few lines Joyce retains his mystery about the caliber of Julia's final performance. Notice the phrasing of Bloom's praise: "Kept her voice up to the very last." Either Julia "*Kept her voice up to the very last,*" which would make her last performance a great one, or, she "*Kept her voice up to the very last,*" meaning she was indeed feeble by January 6th, 1904--a little more than five months before Bloomsday. How are we finally to decide whether the outside narration is "*honestly thrilled*" when so many other comments from that same narration, *and* from narration outside "The Dead," seem to undermine this idea? The spirit of linguistic playfulness that overcomes the unsuspecting reader of Finnegans Wake is beginning to formulate itself here, in "The Dead," with the rejection of language and the word--and any claim they may have to success in definitively *capturing* life.

The uncertainties abound over Julia's performance even more so after the applause has subsided, and her greatest admirer, Freddy Malins, speaks up:

Freddy Malins, who had listened with his head perched sideways to hear better, was still applauding when every one else had ceased and talking animatedly to his mother, who nodded her head gravely and slowly in acquiescence. At last, when he could clap no more, he stood up suddenly and hurried across the room to Aunt Julia, whose hand he seized and held in both his hands, shaking it when words failed him or the catch in his voice proved too much for him.

--I was just telling my mother, he said, I never heard you sing so well, never. No, I never heard your voice so good as it is tonight. Now I would you believe that now? That's the truth. Upon my word and honour that's the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh and so...so clear and fresh,

* What Leopold Bloom means by "the last" can be two things. In the "Ithaca" chapter of Ulysses, Stephen Dedalus is remembering an "other time"(670) "of his godmother Miss Kate Morkan in the house of her dying sister Miss Julia Morkan at 15 Usher's Island"(670). Julia does not seem ill at the party, set roughly five months before Stephen's reminiscence, so we can at least conclude that "the last" is either her death or her final illness.

never--(173)

Huston, I think, captures perfectly in his film the implication in the text of Freddy's loud clapping, long after everyone else has moved on, and his effusive praise: Freddy is the rather embarrassing habitual drunkard who doesn't understand the social etiquette around parlor performance, and he makes the scene more awkward both for his own social appearance and for Aunt Julia's. Whether we feel that Julia sang well or poorly, Freddy's commentary only confuses the issue more by introducing yet another problematic contradiction. In Huston's film, Freddy's moment is carefully timed-- just after the company has finished applauding politely for Aunt Julia's very poor performance--and his excessive, loud praise, with the "habitual catch" in his voice even more noticeable, only heightens the rather tragicomical irony of the scene. In short, Huston's Freddy Malins, like Joe Donnelly of "Clay," is so drunk that he may think Julia Morkan has sung wonderfully, and his awkward over-praising is embarrassingly inappropriate, as evidenced by the snickers of some non-family members of the company.

Huston captures the tensions within this scene perfectly; however, the essential problem still remains of whether Freddy Malins' praise is truly *meant* to be comically ironic to us. Freddy's alcoholism conditions us to read nothing he says as serious or accurate; in spite of this, could what he says be the "honest truth" after all? Could he merely be voicing what ought to be the general opinion of the company, that Julia's enduring talent has truly surprised them all? Could his drunkenness, then, have *blinded* him to Aunt Julia's external frailty, and allowed him to truly *hear* and "feel the excitement of swift and secure flight"?

This contradiction, one of many in the "Arrayed for the Bridal" scene, stems back to an irresolvable dilemma of this text: does Aunt Julia sing well, or doesn't she? If

she doesn't, then Freddy's drunken, comical interlude is awkward and embarrassing; if she does sing well, however, Freddy's interlude is a very appropriate response--more appropriate, in fact, than the polite applause that only "sounds genuine," which Aunt Julia receives from the rest of the largely sober company.

It is rather futile to try to determine which is the correct reading of Freddy's interlude; with an outside narration that continually bounces back and forth between extremes in its depictions of characters, we are not meant to know objectively, from the text, whether Freddy's extreme praise is appropriate or not. The failure of the text to resolve itself into what Riquelme termed the "single reading" for any of its characters, while making an *exact* replication of it to film impossible, emphasizes just how much a delaying of objectivity, and an accentuation of contradiction, are an integral part of *Joyce's* "The Dead." As John Simon points out vehemently in his 1988 review of Huston's "The Dead:"

How many times must one let fall on deaf ears the truth that no great work of literature can be turned into a comparable movie? We should all know by now, that form is part of the content: a sonnet can't be turned into an epic, a mural can't be translated into a miniature, the most artistic photograph of a statue is nowhere near the statue. In a piece of great fiction, it is the descriptions, reflections, paragraphs, sentences, words, and cadences that make the art, not just plot and dialogue. And what writing leaves to the inner eye and ear is inevitably distorted or oversimplified by transposition for the outer senses. James Joyce's last and greatest story, or novella, "The Dead," is no exception. (26)

Simon is for the most part accurate, I think, in his assessment of the impossibility of transposing one form of art into another; he is, however, also rather harsh in his critique of the Huston film. It is not so much that the film is not "comparable" to the text in its magnitude and power (how can one possibly prove such a measurement?) but rather, that the film is an artistic work in and of itself. Any film based on a primary text is necessarily a personal interpretation of that text on the part of its creators, just as a translation of a text from one language to another is an interpretation on the part of

the translator. In both instances, the interpretation grows into an artwork fundamentally distinct from the primary text and its formulation.

In the end, I do not think that Huston is guilty of suppressing female artistry in Aunt Julia, as Margot Norris argues. The level of talent of Julia Morkan's performance is in question from the moment she begins her solo, and Joyce's "The Dead" never permits us an answer. Huston's point of departure from the text is primarily the "oversimplification" that Simon refers to. Joyce's text equivocates over the caliber of Julia's performance, so much so that there is no "correct" choice for portraying her. However, Huston chose to have Cathleen Delany sing poorly, keeping her character "undisrupted," as a "shade" from start to finish. If Huston had wanted to capture more precisely the contradictory, discrepant nature of Julia's character, as we read it in the text, he would have had her sing *well*, jolting the complacent film viewer out of the one-sided view of Aunt Julia as "senile shade," as we readers are jolted by the outside narration's "To listen to the voice..." praise.

Joyce's characters in "The Dead," particularly the so-called "marginal" ones like Julia Morkan and Freddy Malins, have a habit of disrupting our fixed views of them, exposing the inadequacies of language for capturing their highly complex, mutable natures. Huston's characters, on the other hand, are almost *too* consistent, exposing the necessary directorial maneuvering involved in their one-sided natures. Thus, Julia is a "shade" from beginning to end, and Freddy is a perpetually inept drunk. The playfulness in a text that could suggest a frail-looking old soprano might nevertheless give an exceptional performance, or that a comical, inept drunk might make a completely accurate assessment of that performance, is finally not permitted in Huston's film.

Instances of careful “directorship maneuvering” are not limited to Julia Morkan and Freddy Malins; consider these lines, from Joyce’s “The Dead,” in an early scene between Gabriel Conroy and Lily, the Morkan sisters’ primary house-servant:

--O, then, said Gabriel gaily, I suppose we’ll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man--eh?--
 The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness:
 --The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out if you--
 Gabriel coloured, as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent-leather shoes. (160)

Joyce’s Gabriel is physically upset by Lily’s harsh statement, and attempts to hide his embarrassment by fussing with his shoes. Adjusting his clothing when he is unnerved is a continual habit of Gabriel’s; later on, we will see his other nervous habit: checking and correcting his after-dinner speech. Donal McCann, Huston’s Gabriel, appears entirely unmoved by Lily’s bitterness; he doesn’t blush, he doesn’t play with his shoes-- his facial expression doesn’t change at all. This may seem a minor point, but Huston, with his limited attention to this scene, effectively deemphasizes Lily’s significance to the tale. If Gabriel is not affected by her retort, then Lily just appears to be grumbling to herself, and she remains, from beginning to end, a minor figure of no real bearing on the outcome of the tale. But Joyce’s Gabriel *is* affected by Lily, most likely because up to this point he has in fact been speaking “palaver” to her, and this gives a disruptive depth to her character which anticipates, in its bitterness towards “palaver-speaking” men, the plight of the “Lass of Aghrim” sung by Bartell D’Arcy at the end of the tale.

An even more glaring instance of oversimplification occurs in a scene involving Gretta Conroy and Gabriel, just after Gabriel has argued with Miss Molly Ivors. According to Joyce’s text, the dialogue between Gretta and Gabriel occurs in this way:

--There were no words, said Gabriel moodily, only she [i.e., Molly Ivors] wanted me to go for a trip to the west of Ireland and I said I wouldn’t--
 His wife clasped her hands excitedly and gave a little jump.

--O, do go, Gabriel, she cried. I'd love to see Galway again--
 --You can go if you like, said Gabriel coldly--
 She looked at him for a moment, then turned to Mrs. Malins and
 said:
 --There's a nice husband for you, Mrs. Malins-- (171)

Huston's rendition of this scene follows Joyce's to the letter, with the exception of Gretta's final line--this Huston completely strikes from the film, instead having his Gretta, Anjelica Huston, looking after Gabriel with a hurt look on her face. As in the case of Lily, a moment of female bitterness with men and specifically with Gabriel is downplayed to nonexistence. Gretta, who throughout the text of "The Dead"-- up to Bartell D'Arcy's "Lass of Aughrim"--is gracious, witty, and seemingly content, exposes in this line a certain bitterness and dissatisfaction with her husband that once again disrupts the view we initially have established of her character. Without this line, Gretta's character--again only up to the *end* of "The Dead"--is diffident in the face of her husband's ill-concealed shame over her "country cute" (167) Galway background.

Julia Morkan's "Arrayed for the Bridal," along with these instances with Lily and Gretta, thus work together to distinguish "The Dead"'s of Joyce and Huston. On the one hand we have a non-objective, contradictory text, one that continually surprises us with the disruptive mutability of its characters. Joyce's "The Dead," particularly with Julia Morkan's performance of "Arrayed for the Bridal," embodies perfectly what Eco termed a "work in movement," or "open" text, where "indeterminacy" is the only governing "logic" of events. (56,58) On the other hand, we have Huston's rather straightforward, visually objective film that resists disrupting the consistency it has established for its characters, whether they be a senile "shade," a clumsy drunk, a largely silent maid, or a gracious, acquiescent wife. The resistance to linguistic disruption, largely due to the virtual impossibility of rendering Joyce's contradictions on the screen (how is Aunt Julia to *sound* both good and bad, simultaneously?) is the most

effective divider between Joyce's "The Dead" and Huston's well-intentioned, Bloomian misreading of it.

Julia Morkan, like Mrs. Sinico and Eveline's mother, occupies a position in the text that *challenges* language; the contradictions at work in the depiction of her character defy a *literal*, logical reading, just as Mrs. Hill's "Derevaun Seraun" and Mrs. Sinico's gesture locate themselves outside logic, outside the word. Julia's failure to conform to one reading, either as frail soprano or as still-strong soprano, anticipates the similar failure to conform of *another* contradictory soprano: Molly Bloom.

Chapter 4

“Molly and Penelope: Weaving and Unraveling the *πηνιον*”

I will inform you, dear lady and gentleman, that in the country of Portugal in very old and noble families a venerable custom has been observed. On the morning after the wedding of a daughter of the house, and before the morning gift had yet been handed over, the Chamberlain or High Steward from a balcony of the palace would hang out the sheet of the night and would solemnly proclaim: *Virginem eam tenemus*-- “we declare her to have been a virgin.”

Isak Dinesen, “The Blank Page” 102-3

anyhow he didnt make me pregnant as big as he is I dont want to ruin the clean sheets the clean linen I wore brought it on too damn it damn it and they always want to see a stain on the bed to know youre a virgin for them all thats troubling them theyre such fools too you could be a widow or divorced 40 times over a daub of red ink would do or blackberry juice no thats too purple

James Joyce, *Ulysses* 769

αλλ εις οικον ιουσα τα σ αυτης εργα κομιζε,
ιστον τ ηλακατην τε, και αμφιπολοισι κελευε
εργον εποιχεσθαι μυθος δ ανδεσσι μελησει
πασι, μαλιστα δ εμοι του γαρ κρατος εστ ενι οικω.

The Odyssey, Book 1. 356-59

Isak Dinesen’s short story “The Blank Page” articulates the “voice of silence” (100) in a Portuguese convent’s collection of bloodstained bridal bed linen-- “sheet[s] of the [first] night” (103). The Carmelite nuns of the convent weave the finest, purest linen from flax that grows “air-blue, the very color of the apron which the blessed virgin put on to go out and collect eggs within St. Anne’s poultry yard” (101), and this linen is then given to the new brides of “very old and noble families” (102). After the wedding night the stained bedsheet is displayed from the palace balcony, and a representative of the family proclaims “*Virginem eam tenemus*”-- “we declare her to

have been a virgin" (102-3). The stained portion of the sheet is then cut out, framed, and hung by the Carmelites in their convent, each bearing the name of its respective princess: "Donna Christina, Donna Ines, Donna Jacintha Lenora, Donna Maria" (103).

Within the row of framed stains--where "people of some imagination and sensibility may read all the signs of the zodiac...or a rose, a heart, a sword--or even a heart pierced through with a sword" (103)--the "voice of silence" suddenly articulates itself:

But in the midst of the long row there hangs a canvas which differs from the others. The frame of it is as fine and as heavy as any, and as proudly as any carries the golden plate with the royal crown. But on this one plate no name is inscribed, and the linen within the frame is snow-white from corner to corner, a blank page (104).

The "blank page" of the bloodless sheet is, as Dinesen's narrator initially describes it, "a deeper tale than [the one] upon the most perfectly printed page of the most precious book" (100). The snow-white sheet strikes dumb the tourists who see it; it is anonymous and seemingly authorless, unlike the others, and it is silent on the message of virginity it is supposed to impart. In her excellent analysis of "The Blank Page," Susan Gubar calls the stained sheets witnesses to the "fram[ing] of the princesses into telling the same story, namely, the story of their acquiescence as objects of exchange" (Gubar 301). She points out that:

[T]hese bloodstained marks illustrate at least two points about female anatomy and creativity: first, many women experience their own bodies as the only available medium for their art... second, one of the primary and most resonant metaphors provided by the female body is blood.(296)

The bloodstained sheets suggest, then, that the artistry allowed females is relegated to the body (or to nature, as opposed to culture), and that female creativity is often "experienced as painful wounding"(296)--making blood its natural and powerful metaphor. The eponymous "blank page" defies the relegation of female artistic voice both to the body and to a singular metaphor; the absence of a mark suggests *multiple*,

open-ended tales, while the bloodstains told only *one* tale of a painful end to virginity. Gubar describes the blankness of the pure sheet as “all stories in no story” (305). The anonymous “voice of silence” indeed articulates numerous, conflicting tales within itself: nonvirginity, failure to consummate the marriage, a simple failure to bleed “properly,” a bride who held off her husband (like Scheherazade), and so on. “The Blank Page” is thus a female act of defiance against the binary message of virginity/nonvirginity that the masculine world foists upon the young Portuguese brides.

Molly Bloom, in her closing monologue to *Ulysses*, has a slightly different view from the author of the “blank page” on the staining (or non-staining) of bridal bedsheets:

and they always want to see a stain on the bed to know youre a virgin for them all thats troubling them theyre such fools too you could be a widow or divorced 40 times over a daub of red ink would do or blackberry juice no thats too purplely (769)

For Molly, forging the expected bridal message is not a complicated matter. She hypothetically situates herself between the acquiescent virgins “Donna Maria and Donna Christina,” and the anonymous, subversive author of “the blank page,” as a *dissembler*. Molly is both acquiescent and subversive simultaneously. She *weaves* the expected tale of acquiescence, of virginity, by producing the necessary “stain,” even as she *unravels* that same tale through deceit. The stain is thus *not* what it appears to be but instead articulates a tale of *masquerade* for her male audience of “fools.” Kimberly Devlin, in her essay “Pretending in ‘Penelope:’ Masquerade, Mimicry, and Molly Bloom” articulates exactly the nature of Molly’s masquerade: “I would argue that Molly does not, strictly speaking, imitate her own voice...but rather an assumed voice, the voice of a female cultural caricature” (96). Molly *assumes* her socially-constructed, binary position as “Nature” (as opposed to Culture), as woman who communicates

solely through her body with the singular metaphor of blood, only to subvert the male relegation of female art to the body; she suggests that mere *mimicry* is at the heart of her role. As Tania Modleski explains:

Feminist critics have argued that mimicry is often a subversive practice, a time-honored tactic among oppressed groups, who often appear to acquiesce to the oppressor's ideas about it, thus producing a double meaning: the same language or act simultaneously confirms the oppressor's stereotypes of the oppressed and offers a dissenting and empowering view for those in the know. (Modleski 129, qtd. in Devlin 96)

In "Strategies of Coding in Women's Cultures," Susan Lanser and Joan Radner term such mimicry "appropriation," in which a woman takes on an "androcentrically feminine [practice], thereby converting 'subordination into affirmation' to dismantle 'the place of [woman's] subordination by discourse'" (13).

Molly, then, through her hypothetical musings on the proper staining of bridal bedsheets appropriates her androcentric role as "Nature" in order to dissent from its limiting binary definition of her via "red ink" and "blackberry juice." That Molly could hold within her a contradiction such as the one I have just outlined is certainly not a new idea; Marilyn French's chapter on Molly in The Book as World, for example, expertly identifies and exposes the "logically ridiculous" within Molly's monologue (French 248). This "logically ridiculous" quality is precisely what blurs the hierarchical distinctions between these contradictions--such as acquiescence and dissension, virginity and nonvirginity, culture and nature--traditionally imposed by Western civilization's binary logic. As French remarks,

Molly represents the opposite of the void. The void exists in the "built" world, the "masculine" world of reason and unreason; of morality and immorality; law and crime; and dogma and heresy...She is whole because she is able to synthesize all opposites, obliterate contradictions by her innocent self-interest. No term adequately describes this aspect of Molly's character. (French 245)

As I emphasized in an earlier chapter, French critiques here what Cixous terms the “work of death” in binary logic.* French calls the “work of death” a product of the masculine “built” world or the “void.” That Molly encompasses contradictions, rather than differentiating between them, hints also at the elements of the Kristevan “chora” within her monologue. One term that I would like to posit, to describe what French calls “this [indescribable] aspect of Molly’s character,” is the notion of *weaving* and *unraveling* the $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$. Molly *weaves* her tale and then *unravels* it by contradicting what she initially said--she acquiesces to her socially-constructed “Nature” role (producing the necessary “stain”), but then she secretly dissents from it (letting us know that it is only “ink” or “blackberry juice”). She is not, then, merely “logically ridiculous,” as French asserts. Instead I argue that Molly posits an “alternative logic,” one where the realization of “truth,” such as the “built” world would define and expect it, is continually delayed--just as the completed weaving of the $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ (thread of the woof) that the suitors eagerly await is continually delayed by Penelope, Molly’s “metempsychotic” partner in The Odyssey.

Homer’s Penelope, or Πηνελοπεία, contains the $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ (thread of the woof) within the first letters of her name; threading the loom is the decidedly female task that Penelope is assigned by her son Telemachus, in an artistic relegation that neatly parallels the forcing of the Portuguese princesses to “*natural*” (and thus female), bodily-derived art. Here are Telemachus’ words, in translation from the original Greek that appears at the opening of this paper:

But to the home [or women’s wing] go tend to your chores,

* The “work of death” is a term Cixous devises in her study of Derrida’s critique of Western logocentrism. To summarize quickly, Derrida locates *understanding* in the Western world as composed of binary opposites, where one term in the opposition defines the other and is accepted as hierarchically superior; Cixous, in her analysis of the male/female binary opposition, finds the female in the inferior position through the “work of death”--the need in binary logic for one side to be superior to the other, to silence the other.

the loom and the distaff, and order your maids
to go up to work; the word [specifically *public speech*] will be the
care to all men,
but especially to me; for the power in the house is mine. (1. 356-59)

Telemachus establishes very early that the *μυθος* or “public, spoken word” will be the domain of men; Penelope and her maids are literally relegated to the “women’s wing,” and to the usage of the *ιστον* (loom) and *ηλακατην* (distaff), segregated from the world of culture to a world of female tasks. Penelope, however, like Molly (and unlike the acquiescent Portuguese princesses) uses the mode of expression she has been “accorded” by her son to deceive the male world of suitors around her for three years. She literally “weaves” and then “unravels” the *πηνιον*, fooling the male world simply by mimicking the mode of discourse to which it has relegated her. Penelope’s use of the loom and distaff thus parallels Molly’s hypothetical use of “red ink” and “blackberry juice” in her monologue. In my first chapter on Hawthorne’s “The Birthmark” and Joyce’s “A Painful Case,” we saw women acting *within* their culturally-defined position of “Nature” (the birth-*mark*, preempting the legal patronym, and the female bodily *gesture* undermining distanced, “masculine” discourse). Now with both Molly and Penelope we see women *masquerading* as what the masculine world perceives them to be--domestic, “Nature,” separated from the *μυθος*-- in order to express a concealed message of dissension from cultural limitations of the female position.

The repeated, unending task of weaving and unraveling, and the false “staining” of the bedsheets--an act that could similarly be *repeated* for as many hypothetical husbands as Molly could imagine--suggest that Penelope and Molly’s discourses are defined (if they can be defined) by a daily working and unworking of themselves. Neither discourse yields a closed interpretation, a fixed ending, or a literal woven shroud (until the *suitors* force its completion, that is). Molly and Penelope both embrace

the contradiction inherent in simultaneous acquiescence and dissension, in weaving and unraveling, expressing an alternative logic of female masquerade and non-binary “wholeness.” Like Whitman, they “contradict themselves” because they are “large” and “contain multitudes,” simultaneously expressing the weavings and unravelings of the πηνιον.

I.

Penelope, Molly’s partner in “metempsychosis,” was created first and so will be treated first. As we have seen, Telemachus literally sends Penelope to her room and her weaving, formally taking over the power of the μυθος by separating Penelope from it. We find soon after in Book 2, however, that Penelope is not exactly using her weaving innocently:^{*}

παντας μεν ρ ελπει και υπισχεται άνδρι εκαστω
αγγελιας προεισα, νοος δε οι αλλα μενοινα.
η δε δολον τονδ αλλον ενι φρεσι μερμηριξε;
στησαμενη μεγαν ιστον ενι μεγαροισιν υφαινε ,
λεπτον και περιμετρον (emphasis mine)

On the one hand she gives hope to all and promises to each man
sending forth messages, *on the other hand* the mind in her ponders other things.
And she thinks in her mind this other deceit;
Having set up a large loom (web) she weaves in the palace,
delicate and exceedingly large (i.e., the web); (2. 91-5, emphasis mine).

The “μεν.....δε” construction in Greek is one for which we have no literal translation in English; the closest equivalent is “on the one hand...on the other hand,” as I have tried to demonstrate above. It is important here in that it captures precisely the encompassing of contradictions that Penelope represents. In this instance, Antinous is complaining that Penelope appears one way to the suitors, holding them off with seemingly

^{*} For ease of reading the translation of the Greek text will be placed with the original text throughout the remainder of this paper.

acquiescent “messages” to all, while in her mind she is “thinking of other things” and thus deceiving them. She has set up her large loom (the *μεγαν ιστον*), and, just as Telemachus has commanded, she is performing her womanly tasks. But the other implication of “ιστον”--*web*--soon comes into play when her deceit becomes apparent. Her weaving becomes a “web” that hides the “other things” in her heart, specifically the need to unravel the weaving nightly to hold off the suitors and their offers of marriage.

Penelope’s Homeric epithet suggests much about her ability to appear one way and think differently-- “περιφρων Πηνελοπεια.” “φρων,” from “φρονεω” the verb and “φρην” the noun, suggests “thinking,” or “having living thoughts.” “περι” has multiple meanings--here it most likely means “around,” “all round,” or “over and above all others.” Penelope thus translates as “around-thinking” or “thinking all around.” She is devious enough to circumvent the *one* end result that the suitors are waiting for her to produce. She is “whole,” as Marilyn French articulates it, primarily because she is “round-thinking,” and does not allow herself to become divided amidst contradictions. Therefore, she rejects the choice either to “weave,” and be acquiescent, or “not to weave,” and be rebellious. Like Molly, then, she differs from the polar opposites of the acquiescent Portuguese princesses and the anonymous artist of the blank page. Penelope contains both contradictions in weaving and unraveling the *πηνιον*; she is both acquiescent and dissenting simultaneously.

Penelope’s task is attentively repeated daily, and yet her own goal is never to complete it, contrary to the suitors’ wishes. Earlier in my chapter on “Eveline” I commented upon the inexorable *dust* in Eveline’s home and how she repeatedly and fruitlessly dusts daily, “wonder[ing] where on earth all the dust came from” (29). Both Penelope and Eveline repeatedly work at daily tasks that are undone by nightfall and

that have to be repeated the next day, and the next. For the masculine world around them, such unnecessary repetition is incomprehensible-- the suitors, for example, would never even *imagine* that Penelope could perform such a “pointless” act for three years. As for Eveline and her story, it is doubtful that “Frank” comprehends Eveline’s rejection of a promising *change*, a decided *closure* upon the endless dusting of the little brown house, to remain fixed within a life that will ensure much more fruitless dusting for her. The fixed end, the decided change, the finished product--these are alien, masculine principles for Penelope and Eveline, inapplicable to the performance of female tasks. As Penelope ironically points out, “μη μοι μεταμωνια νηματ’ οληται”-- “I would not have my spun yarn be lost, vainly woven” (2. 98). Here she specifically says one thing and means the opposite: “losing” (or “loosing”) the spun yarn nightly and having it spun “in vain” actually *is* her object, whereas having the weaving successfully completed is the suitors’ expectation. She delays, for three years at least, the finishing of the product that the masculine “built” world wants of her.

When Penelope pleads with the suitors to allow her to “finish” weaving Laertes’ shroud, they concede, as Antinous describes:

ως εφαθ’, ημιν δ’αυτ’ επειθειτο θυμος αγηνωρ.
 ενθα και ηματιη μεν υφαινεσκεν μεγαν ιστον,
 νυκτας δ’αλλυεσκεν, επει δαιδας παραθειτο.
 ως τριετες μεν εληθε δολω και επειθεν Αχαιους (emphasis mine)

So she spoke, and the manly heart in us was persuaded to it.
 And then *on the one hand* day by day she kept weaving the
 great loom/web,
 But *on the other hand* by night she kept unravelling it, since
 she had torches placed before her.
 So three long years indeed she escaped notice by a trick and
 convinced the Achaeans; (2. 103-6, emphasis mine).

Notice that the “μεν...δε” construction is used once again to denote specifically the contradictory nature of Penelope’s daily and nightly activities: by day she weaves, by night she unravels; by day she acquiesces, by night she deceives. Her “all round” or

“circular” thinking thus encompasses two binary contradictions, blurring the distinction between two “logical” opposites; she defies the “work of death” and embraces non-differentiation. Penelope’s complete daily/nightly action thus falls into the category of the “logically ridiculous” that Marilyn French coined for Molly Bloom. How can it possibly make realistic “sense” to tirelessly weave and unravel one’s work? The concept of being “logically ridiculous” is essential; Penelope and Molly both possess an “alternative logic,” one that allows contradictions to coexist and suggests an alternative to the “work of death” inherent in the binary logic of the *μυθος*. This alternative logic is what allows Penelope to delay the completion of Laertes’ shroud and to put off the definitive decision for her future that the suitors have devised; it is what will allow Molly to evade a fixed cultural position as “Earth-mother,” or “adulteress,” or most specifically “Nature.” Penelope and Molly devise their own discourse to delay or offset the definitions and expectations that the male world has of them.

The three-year limit on Penelope’s deception is notable; she might have gone on deceiving the suitors for the whole twenty years if, significantly, one of her *women* hadn’t let the truth slip out to them, as Antinous reports:

αλλ’ οτε τετρατον ηλθεν ετος και επηλυθον ωραι,
 και τοτε δη τις εειπε γυναικων, η σαφα ηδη,
 και την γ’ αλλουσαν εφευρομεν αγλαον ιστον.
 ως το μεν εξετελεσσε και ουκ εθελουσ’ υπ’ αναγκης

But when the fourth year came and the seasons went by,
 and then in fact one of the women spoke, who knew clearly,
 and we surprised her unraveling the splendid web .
 So she finished it unwilling and by compulsion; (2. 107-10)

The implication here is that if one of Penelope’s maids hadn’t informed the suitors of the deception, Penelope could have continued her ruse for far longer. In Penelope’s particular case only another woman “sees” (the verb “ειδω”-- “see”--taken in the pluperfect “ηδη” means “had seen” or “knew”) the message of deception hidden

within the masquerade of acquiescence to both Telemachus' and the suitors' demands. In a similar way, the tale of the rape of Philomele by Tereus describes a distinctly female message produced by a woman and deciphered only by another woman. Philomele is raped by Tereus, who cuts her tongue out to prevent her accusing him of the crime. Like Penelope, Philomele is relegated to a place outside the *μῦθος*, outside "public speech" and public accusation. To communicate Tereus' crime to Procne--her sister and the wife of Tereus--Philomele weaves a cloth that outlines within its pattern the details of Tereus' crime and has it sent to her sister: "The Tyrant's wife unfolded all the clout,/ And of hir wretched fortune red the process whole throughout" (Ovid, *Met.* 6. 741-2). Philomele is thus able to devise her own method of discourse after she is separated from the *μῦθος*; her alternative logic undermines the silence that Tereus has forced her to, by presenting the "whole" story of "*hir* wretched fortune."

Procne immediately understands the woven message that the messenger who carried it could not fathom.* By the same token, Penelope's suitors cannot understand the concept of a woven and unraveled *πηνιον*--they have to first be *told* of the deception by the woman, and then *shown* the act of unraveling before they can perceive the "whole" story. In other words, they cannot grasp the "whole" action at once--they must see it by day (as they always have) and by night (where they surprise her), as composed of separate, binary opposites.

Penelope is thus *forced* to end her weaving and unraveling; the suitors compel her to end her three-year long delaying deception with the closure they have always expected. The sense of open-endedness, of an alternative logic woven by acquiescence

* For an excellent study of coded female messages in weaving, stitching, and other domestic tasks, see the first chapter of Joan N. Radner and Susan S. Lanser's *Feminist Messages: Coding in Women's Folk Cultures's*-- "Strategies of Coding in Women's Cultures." Their opening comments on Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" are particularly akin to Philomele's tale.

to the “female” task and the undoing of that acquiescence--these things are quelled by the suitors’ demand, marking an end to Penelope’s cleverly disguised discourse of defiance. She is confined, finally, to producing only the acquiescent, closed binary answer--the finished *πηνιον*, the completed shroud for Laertes.

Penelope and Molly’s discourses, then, reflect both the inevitable relegation of the female away from the *μυθος*, and a defiance of that relegation. An important distinction between these women is, I believe, that Molly is never forced “by compulsion” to forfeit her alternative logic; she never produces a fixed interpretation for the determined English major to find, and she is never forced to explain, finally, where her acquiescence and dissension lie. No completed *πηνιον* is hung up and framed at the end of her monologue for the reader’s perusal. Arguably, no “fixed interpretation” is available for any dynamic literary character. Nevertheless, I feel that Molly and Penelope are unique in that the essential aspect of character for each woman--the only such aspect we really can pinpoint--is her need for masquerade, for continually delaying the male world’s interpretation of her actions. Both women acquiesce to a socially-constructed role and, in so doing, expose male preconceptions of the female role as grounded in “a combination of *hubris*, assault, fascination, even envy” (Lawrence 239). Penelope and Molly are both relegated to the “woman’s wing” or the bedroom by a male world that includes their male authors. The embedding of their alternative “bedroom tales” within the dominant, public-speaking male discourse suggests, then, a sense of fear in the *μυθος*-world for what female alternative discourse could *do* to the very nature of the *μυθος*. The weaving and unraveling of the *πηνιον* encompasses contradictions by allowing them to coexist, whereas binary logic would demand that one side of the contradiction be smothered by the other; the suitors desire that Penelope’s acquiescence to their demands, symbolized in her weaving, should

smother her dissension or unraveling, through the completion of the shroud for Laertes. That the finished product is specifically a ταφῆσιος or *shroud* is telling; the *finished* πτηνιον is a triumph of Cixous' "work of death."

What is the threat that a feminine, "Other" discourse of alternative logic could pose to the male world of the μυθος? The end of the "work of death" of binary logic that Penelope and Molly's discourse suggests allows the Kristevan *chora* --non-differentiating, non-hierarchical, definitely non-binary--to intrude upon the *thetic*, subject-oriented, differentiating world of the μυθος. Telemachus' assumption of power in his father's house is marked significantly by his silencing of Penelope--his break with his mother is what formally allows him to assume his power over the μυθος. Stephen Dedalus, with his cry of "Nothung" and breaking of the chandelier at Bella Cohen's, similarly needs to break with the ghost of his mother in order to truly begin his life as artist and writer--in other words, as one with power over the house of the μυθος. Eveline Hill, as I pointed out in an earlier chapter, cannot separate her identity from her mother and her abject cry of "Derevaun Seraun." Eveline is thus *mute* by the end of her tale--again, separated from the μυθος. Embracing the "work of death" and its binary logic would seem to be, in the cases of Telemachus and Stephen, what allows one to gain power over the μυθος.

We get the sense upon closing Ulysses, however, that Stephen Dedalus, whatever power over the μυθος he may have assumed, could never have gone on to write Molly Bloom's monologue, and certainly could never have written Finnegans Wake. The need to separate the μυθος from an alternative logic, symbolized in the break with the mother, is for me the point where "Stephen Dedalus, artist" and "James Joyce, artist" formally part company. Molly's discourse is a return to where the

maternal *chora* is not feared but instead appropriated to express defiance for the limitations of binary logic and its language. Joyce's Molly Bloom allows the weaving and unraveling of the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ to coexist through simultaneous acquiescence and dissension; her masquerade invades the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ with the earlier, preverbal *chora* and flouts male preconceptions of the female--preconceptions that the structure of the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ keeps alive.

II.

The point where Molly begins menstruating in her monologue articulates perfectly her tendency towards masquerade, precisely at the point where she occupies the most traditional cultural stereotypes of "Earth-mother," "Nature," and, even more specifically, "blood"--the androcentric female metaphor of Dinesen's "The Blank Page."

As Molly says:

I want to get up a minute if Im let O Jesus wait yes that thing has come on me yes now wouldnt that afflict you of course all the poking and rooting and ploughing he had up in me now what am I to do Friday Saturday Sunday wouldnt that pester the soul out of a body unless he likes it some men do God knows theres always something wrong with us 5 days every 3 or 4 weeks usual monthly auction. (769)

Even though Molly knows that she is menstruating, notice how she transforms the *blood* in her mind into the result of Blazes Boylan's rough style of intercourse. Blood and wounding are once again the primary female metaphor, just as they were for the acquiescent princesses of "The Blank Page." Also, Molly refers to her period significantly as "that thing;" like Gerty MacDowall she is reluctant (or unable), in this instance, to use the specific biological $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ for her physical condition, preferring to dodge the "uncleanliness" of her period through euphemism. As "Earth-mother" Molly is "rooted" and "ploughed" by Blazes; she refers to herself here and at other points in her monologue as "a body," emphasizing her status (like Georgiana of "The

Birthmark" and Mrs. Sinico of "A Painful Case") as *flesh*. Joyce himself describes Molly in a letter to Frank Budgen as the "indifferent Weib" (Woman) and puns on Mephistopheles' self-identification as "the spirit that always denies" with "Ich bin der [sic] Fleisch der stets bejaht"-- "I am the flesh that always affirms" (Sel. Letters 285). Molly, with her emphatic "yes"'s throughout her monologue, perpetually affirms her status as "Nature," as woman confined solely to the bedroom--the only place (in the male world's view) for both hymeneal rupture and menstruation.

In "Sexual Linguistics," Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar speak of Molly's ultimate relegation to "Nature" as Joyce's way of denying her "linguistic primacy" and a voice outside her $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ -defined one:

Whether, like Joyce's fluidly fluent Anna Livia Plurabelle, woman ceaselessly burbles and babbles on her way to her "cold mad feary father," or whether, like his fluently fluid Molly Bloom, she dribbles and drivels as she dreams of male jinglings, her artless jingles are secondary and asyntactic. Despite the valorization of Joyce by feminists like Cixous, it seems that his heroine's scattered logos is a scatalogos, for it is at bottom a Swiftian language that issues from the many obscene mouths of the female body. When she speaks as Molly in Joyce's passages, she passes blood and water; (523)

For Gilbert and Gubar, then, Molly's monologue is a "framed" male tale of female "artless dribbling," separated from the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ --a relegation characteristic of a "long masculinist tradition that identifies female anatomy with a degrading linguistic destiny" (523). They read Molly's "framed tale" not as one that vacillates between binary opposites; rather, her adultery, menstruation, urinating and flatulence place her in a male-constructed vision of female uncleanliness and obscenity. Joyce himself called her monologue "more obscene than any preceding episode" (Sel. Letters 285)--thus a degraded "scatalogos" is the only "inferior" discourse she is allowed.

I feel that Gilbert and Gubar are partly correct. Molly is indeed relegated to "Earth-mother" status in her monologue; her male author sends her to the "women's

wing,” just as Telemachus does Penelope. Endowing Molly with flowing, unpunctuated discourse separates her from the structured, sentence-oriented world of the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$; Joyce styled her monologue at least in part with Nora Barnacle’s letter-writing in mind, and commented once (of Nora) on “how women when they write disregard stops and capital letters” (Sel. Letters 116). Molly is not allowed to publicly develop a theory of Shakespeare at the National Library; she cannot pick arguments with the Citizen at Barney Kiernan’s. Her discourse is strictly for the bedroom or the *women’s wing*; as such, it is separated from the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$, unstructured, and suggestively dirty due to its association with femininity.

Gilbert and Gubar’s reading becomes problematic only in dealing with *why* Molly is relegated away from the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$. They would argue that Joyce situates Molly in the bedroom because he needs “linguistic primacy,” just as Telemachus sends Penelope away to establish the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ as the “domain of men.” Perhaps if Stephen Dedalus had written Molly’s monologue, “metempsychotically” tied to Telemachus as he is, such a reasoning would be accurate. But Stephen Dedalus is emphatically *not* the author of Molly’s monologue. Joyce keeps Molly in her bedroom to expose the *fear* of an alternative logic inherent in any patriarchal, artistic claim to the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$; as a male author he calls attention to that fear (which he too is susceptible to) by putting Molly in her socially-constructed place. That such fear could exist suggests that this simultaneous weaving and unraveling logic has an essential power of its own-- a defiance of limitations to self-expression maintained by binary logic. With Molly as “Nature” Joyce proposes that no author (male or female) who desires complete power over the $\mu\theta\omicron\varsigma$ is exempt from the power play that results in the “work of death” and the relegation of alternative logic to “scatalogos” status. As Karen Lawrence remarks,

“[I]n unmasking the power relations inscribed in culture and the workings of male fear and desire of the Other, Joyce implies that no one can stand outside this process” (242). It is only by hinting, at certain points in the monologue, that Molly is indeed *masquerading* an acquiescence to her socially-constructed role, that Joyce allows Molly’s discourse of simultaneous acquiescence and dissension to penetrate and undermine the closure of the text called for by the $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$.

The passage I cited at the beginning of this essay, in which Molly contemplates ways of fooling the male world into thinking she is a virgin, is a perfect glimpse of her masquerade:

they always want to see a stain on the bed to know youre a virgin for them all thats troubling them theyre such fools too you could be a widow or divorced 40 times over a daub of red ink would do (769)

Acquiescence and dissension together, then, form a delay tactic against the masculine world--one that, repeated “40 times over” ad infinitum, pushes the notion of infallibly determining virginity further and further into ambiguity, debilitating the blood metaphor more and more as the sole mode of discourse for the female artist. In Molly’s eyes “all thats troubling” the male world is the prescribed answer of virginity that they seek--specifically virginity “for them,” as a sort of gift. What Molly retains, even as she yields the “gift” of the stain, is her deception. Her discourse even in these few lines reflects a disguised, contradictory dissension that delays male comprehension perpetually, exhibiting in microcosm the delay of certainty and closure that her entire contradictory monologue will impose upon the text of the novel.

At one point while she menstruates Molly cries “O Jamesy let me up out of this” (769). As there is no one of prominence named “James” in Ulysses we are prompted to think she is speaking directly to her author. What “this” could be thus simultaneously takes on multiple facets: her menstruation, her limitation to the bedroom, her life with

Bloom, her separation from the $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ -world of Culture--and, ultimately, her androcentric place as "Nature" within the novel, relegated to "weaving" within the women's wing.

In a novel where authorial intervention and textual disruption run rampant, most obviously since "Aeolus," Molly Bloom turns the tables and speaks back to her author, interrupting his telling of the tale. That Molly could be aware of her position as *fiction* in relation to her creator (an awareness given to no other character in Ulysses) suggests that even "she," the anonymous woman who "plays" Molly, is acting out a part and thus masquerading as someone she is not. The final monologue of Ulysses thus gains a dimension that I do not think Gilbert and Gubar adequately address. In reading Molly's monologue we are not reading a male author's mimetic representation of an inferior, "scatalogos" female discourse, as they would argue. Rather, we are listening to an actress reading a script crafted for her by an author who is as liable to succumb to the "work of death" as any other author claiming the $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ as his or her domain. Throughout she comments on the words and actions her fictional character is given, at points even criticizing --as in the "O Jamesy" quote-- the male misrepresentation of her female character.

The points where the original, male author's draft of the script and the actress' dissenting commentaries differentiate into two voices are ultimately unknowable and can only be guessed at. The male author's script for Molly as "Nature" and the antithetical comments of the anonymous actress are not simply two distinct voices, one male and one female, one masculinist and one contradicting the masculine view. If this were the case, then the anonymous actress would merely be defined as "Other" than the masculine view, and thrust back into her binary position as not-male. Instead, the vast majority of Molly's monologue comprises two indistinguishable voices of

acquiescence to the female separation from the *μυθος* as “Nature,” and of dissension from that role. Molly’s discourse, as her plea to “Jamesy” suggests, constructs a mise-en-abyme whereby the *whole* “Molly” is, at the very least, “untrustworthy” (as Joyce terms her in the letter to Frank Budgen) and ultimately defies the textual *authority* that Joyce’s authorial interventions have asserted from “Telemachus” to “Ithaka.” “Textual *authority*” thus becomes “an illusion, some would say, symptomatic of a masculine and logocentric concept of language” (Laennac 46). Here lies the fundamental ambiguity of the alternative logic, weaving and unravelling the *author*ity of the *μυθος* in the perpetual delay of closure upon the text-- ultimately “refining the author out of existence,” as Stephen Dedalus would term it.

Kimberly Devlin identifies Molly’s remembrance of confession to Father Corrigan as her favorite “act of mimicry”(95) in the monologue. Here actress-Molly portrays a childhood religious experience of her character while commenting on the comedy of it throughout:

then I hate that confession when I used to go to Father Corrigan
 he touched me father and what harm if he did where and I said
 on the canal bank like a fool but whereabouts on your person my
 child on the leg behind high up was it yes rather high up was it
 where you sit down yes O Lord couldnt he say bottom right out and
 have done with it what has that got to do with it and did you
 whatever way he put it I forget no father (741)

As Devlin points out,

The recollection is actually a trialogue insofar as three distinct intonations can be heard in the passage: the pseudo-penitent complaints of the female confessee (e.g., “he touched me father”), the solemn tones of the male priest (e.g., “whereabouts on your person my child”) and the critical voice of the actress herself (e.g., “O Lord couldnt he say bottom right out and have done with it”) [95]

Not only are the voices of the female confessee and the male priest “acts” or mimicries recreated by the actress-Molly, as Devlin points out, but the confessional conversation depicts once again the male relegation of the female to euphemism. The female is

relegated to speaking only in terms of her body (“whereabouts on your *person* my child”) *and* she is taught to speak euphemistically about that body. Father Corrigan won’t use the word “bottom” or a more direct biological term to his female penitent; he prefers to edge around the correct *μυθος* when speaking to her, requiring that she respond positively or negatively to his “G-rated” question.

The relegation to euphemism bothers actress-Molly the most as she mimics their voices; that is the basis for her exasperation in the comment “O Lord couldnt he say bottom right out and have done with it.” She finds it rather silly that the male world should segregate females to a limited, immature language. Actress-Molly, the voice that criticizes “Jamesy,” thus rejects and mocks her character’s relegation to euphemism at the hands of the masculine world; we get the sense that *she* wouldn’t refer to menstruation as “that thing,” as Joyce’s scripted “Molly” does. Actress-Molly interacts with Joyce’s fictional Molly to emphasize male fear of a female “taint” on language, of a challenge to “linguistic primacy.” This fear is exposed in Joyce’s relegation of Molly to euphemism and the women’s “non- *μυθος*” apartment; it is mocked by actress-Molly as exasperating and tiresome. A “whole” monologue that contains both acquiescence to relegation and mockery of it, therefore, deconstructs itself to expose a basic ambivalence towards the alternative logic and what it could do to the *μυθος*.

Essentially, then, we find two intermingled voices speaking throughout Molly’s final monologue, weaving one tale of a fictional woman’s acquiescence to the male world’s image of her, and unraveling that same tale by suggesting that any image of woman established by the binary rules of the *μυθος* is indeed merely a *fiction* -- a masquerade for what is inexpressible in patriarchal language. We thus have a growing disparity between “fictional” Molly (as Joyce portrays her) and the “real,” defiant

actress-Molly; the contradicting, “O Jamesy” voice of dissension seems to take on a life apart from the very text that produces it.

Karen Lawrence cites Joyce’s dream of Molly Bloom (recorded in Ellmann’s biography) as evidence of Joyce’s own belief in the life actress-Molly acquires apart from his misrepresentation:

I saw Molly Bloom on a hillock under a sky full of moonlit clouds rushing overhead. She had just picked up from the grass a child’s black coffin and flung it after the figure of a man passing down a side road by the field she was in. It struck his shoulders, and she said, ‘I’ve done with you.’ The man was Bloom seen from behind...I was very indignant and vaulted over a gate into the field and strode up to her and delivered the one speech of my life. It was very long, eloquent, and full of passion, explaining all the last episode of *Ulysses* to her...She smiled when I ended on an astronomical climax, and then, bending, picked up a tiny snuffbox, in the form of a little black coffin, and tossed it towards me, saying, ‘And I have done with you too, Mr. Joyce.’ (Ellmann 549)

In Joyce’s dream, then, the anonymous actress behind the fictional Molly refuses his representation of her--she is “done with” both her position as Bloom’s wife and as Joyce’s female fiction. Lawrence appropriately remarks that “It is as if the ‘real’ Molly accuses Joyce of offering a constructed woman as a naturalistic Everywoman” (239). No “Everywoman” can be constructed out of binary logic, as Joyce seems to be aware, because the “alternative logic” that Molly (and Penelope) devise overwhelms the weakened, separated position that the *μυθος* would have them occupy. Significantly, Joyce indignantly retaliates against Molly’s rejection by delivering the “one *speech* of his life.” Joyce’s position as writer is of one in control of the *μυθος*, or *public speech*. But the “real” Molly exists somewhere outside the relegating power of the *μυθος*, beyond her position as “Nature” in the “work of death” Whereas Penelope was forced by the masculine world to complete weaving the shroud and to provide the closure that the *μυθος* world desires, Molly casts away the coffin and thus the “work of death,”

perpetually undermining the integrity of the text by denying its textual *authority* and logical closure.

III.

Frank R. Stockton's children's story "The Lady or the Tiger?" provides a much shorter (but no less profound) study of the denial of *authority* and closure that a vacillating female character thrusts upon the binary organization of the text. Stockton's story parallels exactly what I feel Joyce is trying to do with Molly's monologue.

A "semi-barbaric king" (1) enjoys refining the minds of his subjects through exhibitions within the public arena. He has a daughter who falls in love with a commoner. Once the king discovers their affair he sentences the boy to the arena, where he is faced with the choice of two doors to determine his guilt or innocence. One door has a ferocious tiger behind it, which will immediately devour him; the other, a beautiful lady, whom he will subsequently marry. The boy must choose between them.

The last and most essential aspect of the plot is that the king's daughter has discovered the secret of the doors. She will determine whether the boy dies a horrible death or marries someone other than herself. The boy knows this and waits for her signal before deciding which door to open. The signal is given. Then, "Without the slightest hesitation, he went to the door on the right, and opened it" (9).

The narrating of events ends at this point, and the narrator steps in with a commentary:

The question of her decision is not one to be lightly considered, and it is not for me to presume to set myself up as the one person able to answer it. And so I leave it with all of you: Which came out of the opened door,-- the lady, or the tiger? (10)

The princess is presented with two choices, imposed upon her by the masculine world embodied in her semi-barbaric father. Her lover either lives or dies, and she is charged with the decision. Stockton depicts a woman caught in a choice between binary oppositions and then abandons his own *author*ity to finish the tale; he finds it presumptuous for any one person to claim an understanding of his “semi-barbaric princess” and the workings of her mind.

The princess thus necessarily acquires a life outside her author (just as Molly does), flouting any ability he might have had of comprehending her and positioning her in one course of action. Significantly, the irresolution of binary opposites also signifies the suspension of the tale for all eternity; the tale has no end because the binary logic has no outlet. “The Lady or the Tiger?” is a rejection of binary logic and the *completion* of tales inherent within it.

It is in the preserving of contradiction, therefore, rather than in the obliteration of one side in favor of the other, that the “tale” as we comfortably know it loses the stasis inherent in a single, permanent ending. “The Lady or the Tiger?” leaves us without a completed shroud, without a “framed” tale; so too does Molly’s monologue leave us with no closure for Ulysses. We finish Molly’s monologue with no real knowledge of what will happen the next day at Eccles St., but we do have an incipient knowledge of the problem an alternative logic poses for patriarchal language:

O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the
glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes
and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow
houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums
and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of
the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the
Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he
kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well
him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask
again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my
mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew
him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and
his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes. (783)

Where is the actress speaking for herself, and where are her scripted lines? As we approach the end of the monologue, the possibility of distinguishing between Joyce's vision of Molly and the comments of dissenting actress-Molly becomes more and more remote. In the end we do not know where the awareness of "untrustworthy Molly" as misrepresented *fiction* or as dissenting female voice lies; we hope instead that the distinction need not be made, that simultaneous acquiescence to misrepresentation and female dissension have fused to become what forms the "whole" Molly. We hope, in short, that these contradictions will be allowed to coexist perpetually.

Molly's "last" words are striking not only in their resounding affirmation of the life of the flesh, as Joyce described them, but in their affirmation of an end to hierarchical language. The paratactic "and...yes...and" structure allows no one thing in her final recollections to gain superiority over any other and affirms an end to the "work of death" of the binary $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$. The "sea crimson sometimes like fire" and "the glorious sunsets" and the "pink and blue and yellow houses" exist alongside the "rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes." Mulvey, who "kissed [her] under the Moorish wall" is remembered alongside Bloom, whom Molly "asked with her eyes to ask again yes." The seeming indifference to a choice of husband in "I thought well as well him as another" is equivalent to the seemingly specific choice of Bloom in "first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me yes so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes." No memory is superior; it would be wishful thinking to presume that Bloom and Molly's sexual life will return to its status on the Hill of Howth but it also becomes problematic to say that it will not.

Stanley Fish, in "The Aesthetic of the Good Physician," outlines with his paradigm of the sermon as self-consuming artifact what I term the paratactic alternative logic of Penelope and Molly's discourses:

Since the vision [the sermon] would persuade to is of a universe in which all things ("and words also are things") are signs of God and therefore are finally not (separate things), its language could not function conventionally. The simplest syntactical string-- subject-object-verb--assumes distinctions a sacramental view of the world denies, and one cannot write a sentence without placing the objects to which its words refer in relationships of subordination and dependence. In the face of this, the writer of sermons must either remain silent (hardly a feasible alternative) or contrive somehow to frustrate these dividing and distinguishing tendencies of language, perhaps by writing sentences like this one of Augustine's:

Illuc ergo venit ubi erat.

He came to a place where he was already (I, 12.12).

The first part of the sentence-- "He came to a place"--establishes a world of fixed and discrete objects, and then the second half-- "where he was already"--takes it away...Augustine, in effect, has made language defeat itself. (41-42)

Penelope and Molly's alternative logic does just this; what Fish terms a "self-consuming artifact" I term weaving and unraveling the $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$. The hierarchical "distinctions" of the "simplest syntactical string" are power-laden discriminations that the world of the $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$ makes (of which the thetic sentence is the archetype) when it separates public speech from the loom and distaff, the court of Odysseus' palace from the women's apartment, the "domain of men" from the woman's male-created "place." Molly Bloom's monologue ultimately defeats itself as a text because it consumes itself in contradiction, pointing beyond its language to Fish's "vision" of a *living* text, "sacramental" in that it refuses to "contain, deal with, capture, say anything about, its putative subject" (Fish 42)--that is, Molly herself. A self-consuming artifact and a woven and unraveled $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ deny closure; their very nature relies on their remaining open, in defiance of the $\mu\upsilon\theta\omicron\varsigma$. For Penelope and Molly, then, the $\pi\eta\nu\iota\omicron\nu$ is made and

consumed, the tale is woven and unwoven, the μυθος misrepresents them and is subverted by them, and language is always both all-powerful and conquered.

Chapter 5

Stephen Dedalus and the “abnihilation of the etym” (FW 353.22)

In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, little Stephen Dedalus articulates on the “flyleaf of the geography” (26) what arguably could be his first written work of art - a sophisticated ordering of his own world:

He turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name, and where he was.

*Stephen Dedalus
Class of Elements
Clongowes Wood College
Sallins
County Kildare
Ireland
Europe
The World
The Universe (26-7)*

Stephen has meticulously located “himself” and “his name” by distinguishing them from everything else around them: the Elements class, Clongowes and so on all the way to the Universe. With the ordered, balanced placement of his words he effectively creates a spot for his own *name* by separating it from the names around him.

Stephen’s tiny artwork reveals that he has survived and accepted a key element of what Lacan and Kristeva metaphorically term “castration”-- their notion that language and meaning arise from *separation* and *division*:

[C]astration is, in sum, the imaginary construction of a radical operation which constitutes the symbolic field and all beings inscribed therein. This operation constitutes sign and syntax; that is, language as a *separation* from a presumed state of nature, of pleasure fused with nature so that the introduction of an articulated network of differences, which refers to objects henceforth and only in this way separated from a subject, may constitute *meaning*. (Kristeva, WT 23)

An unweaned *infant* is thus literally “without speech,” its name derived from the Latin “in” (not) and “fans” (present participle of “fari,” or “to speak”). The infant exists in a

totally pleasurable state of nature because it does not comprehend any possible separation of itself from the satisfaction of all its needs; indeed, it does not even comprehend itself as an "I," separate from the pleasure-giving mother, but instead, according to Kristeva, is "fused" completely within this content-filled universe. With the inevitable realization that the mother is not always present for the infant comes the simultaneous understanding that the infant is an "I" (or a "Stephen Dedalus"), something separate from both the pleasurable state of nature and the maternal pleasure-giver. According to Freud, the realization that the mother does not possess a penis also occurs at this point, introducing fear of castration in male infants and penis envy in female infants.

Kristeva, however, differs slightly from Freud here and embraces Lacan's view of castration: loss of the permanent mother and the subsequent fear of losing (or having lost) the penis become the first understandings of *absence* for the infant. At this point the infant sheds "infancy" and begins trying to control absence and return through speech, exemplified in Freud's study of the *fort-da* game. Speech is the means through which the child begins to understand its own separation as an "I" from everything that surrounds it; understanding and articulating its own separation enables it to control the return of what is absent. The move to a language derived from absence is thus a move away from the mother and towards the *father*--the parent characterized by complete physical *absence*.

Stephen Dedalus has clearly moved into the "castrated" phase successfully. His artistic placement of himself is firmly rooted in an establishment of clear boundaries around himself and between what is *not*-himself: the Class of Elements, Clongowes, Sallins, and so on. In creating his own "articulated network of differences" he imagines a secure, centered view of life and his place in it that seeks to emulate the stability and

contentedness of the pleasurable, maternal state. Problems arise with his comfortable order, however, in the very next paragraph:

That was he: and he read down the page again. What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall but there could be a thin thin line there all round everything. It was very big to think about everything and everywhere. Only God could do that. He tried to think what a big thought that must be but he could think only of God. (27)

After self-articulation (“that was he”) comes the problem of how to close his artwork with a final, all-encompassing container of the discrete entities he has identified. He comes up with, literally, “Nothing”--a mysterious place completely unlike the Something he defines himself to be. The problem of this mutable “Nothing” is that it could encroach upon the carefully ordered world of Somethings that Stephen has created--hence his desire to separate “the nothing place” from his world with a “thin thin line.” Already we can see Stephen’s musings growing philosophically problematic; how, for example, can “Nothing” occupy a place when its very nature denies such a concept? “Nothing” is literally “no thing,” or complete *absence*, and as such it cannot be roped off and kept at bay from our world of Somethings.

We now reach the further implications of Lacanian/Kristevan castration: the construction of an “articulated network of differences” in the form of signs and syntax is necessarily an “imaginary construction.” Children perceive separation and difference by acquiring a patriarchal language that syntactically revolves around subject-verb-object structures, but the names that the subject knows both for itself and the objects around it are fundamentally arbitrary, because they are based upon a primary, paternal absence. Even the hierarchical syntax of the sentence is an imposed ordering akin to Stephen’s written ordering of his universe. “Nothing,” despite the desire of young Stephen the poet to keep it away from the word, fixes itself inevitably between the word

and the thing the word signifies--between the name "Stephen Dedalus" and the young artist himself. J. Hillis Miller stated this inevitability more succinctly here:

All etymology is false etymology, both in the sense that there is always some bend or discontinuity in the etymological line, and in the sense that etymology always fails to find an *etymon*, a true literal meaning at the origin. (70)

Stephen, in the continuation of his musings on God and Nothing, grapples with this same problem of finding a true etymon, but he, somewhat alarmed, does not come to Miller's conclusion:

God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. *Dieu* was the French for God and that was God's name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said *Dieu* then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God. (27)

Stephen draws an analogy between God and himself rooted primarily in their relationship to their respective names: "God" and "Stephen." But the analogy, in its very correctness, establishes the tenuousness with which the name "God" exerts any influence over what it signifies. "*Dieu* was the French for God and that was God's name too"-- "God" has many names, all perfectly legitimate, but this idea bothers Stephen and so he concludes rather incongruously that even though there are many ways of signifying God, God's *real* name is "God."

The desire for a "real" name, one irrevocably tied to what it signifies, is precisely the search for the primary *etymon* that Hillis Miller speaks of. Stephen, having stumbled upon the essential arbitrariness of all naming through his self-articulating artwork and "God/Dieu" musings, hastily concludes by convincing himself that God's *real* name is "God." What he leaves unsaid is the reality that we do not *know* what God's *real* name is; as English speakers we have only three letters that articulate what we call "God." Stephen yearns for that state before the Tower of Babel, when "all

mankind spoke a single language” (Gen. 11:1) and thus presumably knew and spoke the true etymons. But that state has been taken away forever, as God says in the Tower of Babel tale, “Come, let us go down and give them different languages, so that they won’t understand each other’s words!” (Gen. 11:7). Notice that God does not suggest giving humanity different languages that nevertheless can be traced back to the true etymon; multiple languages are a punishment designed to keep humanity *away* from the power of the true etymon. “Nothing” continually invades the domain of the word and what it signifies, in spite of the “thin thin [etymological] line” we, like Stephen, build with our languages to ward it off.

When Joyce speaks of the “abnihilation of the etym” (353.22) in Finnegans Wake, he is playing with a number of simultaneously contradicting significations: “annihilation of the atom;” “ab nihilo” (L. “from nothing”); and “etym” or “etymon,” from G. ετυμος, “the true literal sense of a word according to its derivation.” We can draw two conflicting ideas from this phrase: the annihilation of the etymon, the primary, literal unit of language, and the “from nothing-ness” of the etymon. As Tom Hofheinz observes:

At one time you have the etym/atom being annihilated and coming from nothing, apocalypse and genesis, alpha and omega... The “abnihilation of the etym” is thus both the destruction and origination of meaning...(Hofheinz 1)

Throughout his writings, Joyce splices and reassembles etymons (as in the “abnihilation of the etym” construction) to ultimately capture their conception “ab nihilo.” We can see a very young Stephen Dedalus struggling with this “Nothing” as a developing artist of the absence-oriented, patriarchal word. The culmination of his largely unstated fears for the status of the word is, finally, Finnegans Wake, where an alternative logic of awareness of the etymon’s disparity and fundamental absence from what it represents--foreshadowed in the gesture of Mrs. Sinico, the “Derevaun Seraun”

of Eveline's mother, the playfulness of "The Dead"'s outside narration, and the masquerade of Molly Bloom--takes over and consumes the patriarchal text.

We first become acquainted with Stephen Dedalus in Portrait through a story his father tells about him:

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo....

His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.

He was baby tuckoo. (19)

From the very first lines of the novel we see language, naming, and artistry of the word tied to paternity. Simon Dedalus is the first storyteller baby Stephen encounters, and he places Stephen *within* his own story, giving him the name "baby tuckoo." The opening Daedalian epigraph: "And he applies his mind to unknown arts" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8:188) does more than merely invite the inevitable parallel between Stephen the artist and Daedalus the creator/champion of the labyrinth. Daedalus is the spiritual father, counterpart to the physical Simon Dedalus; partnering the two at the beginning of Portrait fuses the importance Stephen will attach to his *name*, whether "baby tuckoo" or "Dedalus."

With the opening of Portrait we have ambivalence in baby Stephen akin to what a slightly older Stephen will feel over the names "God/Dieu." "He was baby tuckoo" Stephen tells us, implying with the copulative that he can *only* be "baby tuckoo," and "baby tuckoo" is *only* him. Such an understanding of the name his father has imparted suggests that when the narrative begins he still occupies Kristeva's maternal *chora*, where "the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and as the distinction between real and symbolic." (RPL, 94) Stephen could very well say here "Baby tuckoo's real name is baby tuckoo" in the same vein that he will later say "God's

real name is God." A problem arises, however-- Stephen has already told us that "baby tuckoo" is a "story," a fiction--a paternal symbol created to represent him. Why "baby tuckoo" and not something else? "Nothing" has crept once again between the name and what it represents--again and again, Stephen will repeat this pattern, desiring the comfort of true etymons and realizing that in post-Babel language they do not exist.

The arbitrary nature of paternal names is addressed once again in Stephen's early confrontation with Nasty Roche:

--What is your name?
 Stephen had answered:
 --Stephen Dedalus.
 Then Nasty Roche had said:
 --What kind of a name is that?
 And when Stephen had not been able to answer Nasty Roche
 had asked :
 --What is your father?
 Stephen had answered:
 --A gentleman. (21)

Stephen knows what his name is, but he cannot answer Nasty Roche's second challenge. What kind of a name is Dedalus?--where does it come from, how did it come to be the name of a young Irish boy, how far back can it be traced? Stephen seemingly has never thought of this before; just as he believed "he was baby tuckoo," so now he has always taken for granted that he could *only* be "Stephen *Dedalus*"--he has never distinguished himself from the name, never questioned it until this moment. His silence on this point marks his distress: why, indeed, "Dedalus" and not some other name? Nasty Roche's next question, "What is your father?" reminds us where the arbitrary name originated--in paternity, in Stephen's father and his father before him, continuing back ultimately to a question mark. Miller elaborates more on the nature of this "question mark" here:

Each word inheres in a labyrinth of branching interverbal relationships going back not to a referential source but to something already, at the beginning, a figurative transfer, according to the Rousseauistic or Condillacion law that all

words were originally metaphors. (70)

The name "Dedalus," even if it could be traced back to the great artificer himself and still further, would remain a mere "figurative transfer," an arbitrary configuration of letters forming a vehicle with an unknown tenor. Stephen suggests that paternity "may be a legal fiction" later in Ulysses; names thus cement the fictional nature of paternity--*absence* is what lies between both words and what they represent, just as it lies between legal paternity and physical paternity.

As a child, Stephen on the whole seeks out the true etymon--the reassurance that "God's *real* name is God." However, he inadvertently allows himself moments of troubled musing upon the multivalent nature of words--how they simultaneously can mean one thing and another seemingly unrelated thing. His thoughts upon "suck" are a good example of this:

The fellow turned to Simon Moonan and said:

--We all know why you speak. You are McGlade's suck.

Suck was a queer word. The fellow called Simon Moonan that name because Simon Moonan used to tie the prefect's false sleeves behind his back and the prefect used to let on to be angry. But the sound was ugly. Once he had washed his hands... and the dirty water went down through the hole in the basin. And when it had all gone down slowly the hole in the basin had made a sound like that: suck. Only louder.(23)

"Queer words" for Stephen are words that have several puzzling, often contradictory meanings that seem to arise from "Nothing." Later on in Portrait, Athy will call "Dedalus" a "queer name" (34), as will Molly Bloom in Ulysses (779), tying the paternal surname to this sense of contradiction and absence once again. As a child Stephen safely views "queer words" as the exceptions to the overwhelming number of true clear etymons, with singular definitions, that he wants to believe in; as an adolescent and adult he will grow to see the situation as exactly the opposite.

“Suck” is a “queer word” to young Stephen because its varying meanings do not form a coherent, linear etymology in his mind. The fellow calling Simon Moonan “McGlade’s suck” means that he is a sycophant--literally “sucking up” to the prefect--tying his false sleeves as a joke he knows he will not be punished for. But for “suck” to signify a sycophant is a notion completely incongruous with Stephen’s understanding of the word. The *sound* of “suck” is “ugly;” Stephen only wants to know it onomatopoeically, as the ugly noise the hole in the basin makes when dirty water runs through it. After he washes his hands, “suck” makes sense to Stephen, as a true etymon, because the organization of its consonants and vowel seem to depend upon the real life sound that “suck” is. He is, once again, longing for the *chora*, desiring that the word “suck” be closely tied to the sound he knows. Again, Stephen runs into the same problem: how does one reconcile the onomatopoeic “suck” with the idiomatic “sucking up” that the fellow uses? How can Simon Moonan’s “name”-- “McGlade’s suck”-- somehow lead straight back to the etymon, the ugly sound the hole in the basin makes when the dirty water runs through it?

What is implied in Stephen’s musings upon “suck” is that he does not know how its incongruities can be resolved (or if they can be), and so resigns himself to calling it a “queer word.” His difficulties in discovering a tenor for the sycophant-suck vehicle inevitably invite questions into his accepted onomatopoeic definition of “suck.” Is the sound made by basin holes when water runs through them *always* a sound we would spell “s-u-c-k?” How are the sounds we attach to the individual letters “s-u-c-k” related to the shapes of the letters that “have” those sounds? Could the verb “to suck” have anything to do with the decision Stephen makes about the noise the basin hole makes, since the hole would appear “to suck” the water out of the basin? Which came first, the sound “suck,” the verb “to suck,” or the noun “suck,” a sycophant? Miller

calls questions like these raised by the text “a soft wintry aurora playing behind [the straightforward logic] that an etymological line attempts to construct (70). “Queer words” disrupt the linear, etymological pattern Stephen attempts to construct with onomatopoeics like “suck;” absence still separates it from its primary tenor.

Stephen continues his reminiscence of the lavatory and its water basin, recalling another notable “queer thing”:

To remember that and the white look of the lavatory made him feel cold and then hot. There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing. (23)

This reminiscence seems to reverse the effect of the previous musings on “suck;” rather than start with the “queer word” and work backwards to find its etymon, Stephen encounters “hot” and “cold” feelings and then is troubled by the distance between those feelings and the words printed on the water cocks. Remembering “suck” and the white lavatory makes Stephen feel “cold and then hot”--the feelings arise instantaneously and unbidden. But what exactly does it *mean* to be “cold” or “hot?” Stephen has called these feelings by their acquired names without thinking; looking at those same acquired names printed on the water cocks forces him to question them. A feeling cannot be onomatopoeically related to its name--feelings don’t make sounds. To an unweaned infant, we can only imagine that the feelings we now call “hot” and “cold” are equally unpleasant and therefore indistinguishable in their painful intensity; how, indeed, do we distinguish between two so-called opposite feelings when their painful effects on the body are so similar? We “shake” when we are “cold” and we do the same when very “hot”; we jump back after touching both cold and hot things. Where is the difference in the two feelings, other than that which we create by constructing words we arbitrarily call opposites?

Which is encountered first-- a true difference in feelings, or words that created an *imaginary* difference between essentially similar feelings? This unstated question is at the center of Stephen's musings. He feels cold and then hot, but when he sees the names of his feelings printed in front of him he finds them "queer things." "Hot" and "cold," with their status as printed, oppositional *names* physically removed from Stephen and his almost-simultaneous feelings, suggest an analogous distance between inner, primarily similar feelings and outer, linguistically-created (or imagined) differences. Difference is rooted specifically in language; Stephen glimpses, if only for a moment, how his "articulated network of differences" is based in imaginary, constructed separations--imaginary precisely because they are rooted in the printed words "hot" and "cold."

"Queer" words for Stephen thus call into question any necessary relationship the word can have to what it signifies; such words dramatize the move of the "Nothing" past its "thin thin line" and into the world of the word. As Cheryl Herr points out:

The endless self-inquisition and his own uneasy relationship to a language that he knows to be both imbued with dead philosophic platitudes and untapped in terms of its prismatic possibilities for free play, for the endless transfiguration that he desires in his own life--these developments permanently texture Stephen's understanding of language. (347)

Stephen's relationship to language is indeed characterized by a profound "uneasiness." The "queer words" he encounters simultaneously call into question the power we invest in the etymon's "dead philosophic platitudes" and point toward a more dismantling approach to etymons--an unravelling of their ultimately false relationship to what they represent. With this dismantling or "abnihlizing" of the etymon will come, in Finnegans Wake, the possibilities for "free play" with language(s), in a post-Babel "babble" that communicates as it confuses, that tries to capture the sense of the lost true etymons while exposing the impossibility of doing so.

Stephen's musings over the "queer" words "hot" and "cold" continues in the next scene from the Clongowes cafeteria:

He sat looking at the two prints of butter on his plate but could not eat the damp bread. The tablecloth was damp and limp. But he drank off the hot weak tea which the clumsy scullion, girt with a white apron, poured into his cup. He wondered whether the scullion's apron was damp too or whether all white things were cold and damp.
(24)

Stephen's tea is hot and presumably dark in color; should it naturally follow that everything "white" is "cold and damp," as the white tablecloth and bread are? Does whiteness *signify* cold and dampness?

Stephen's problems with "white" open up another linguistic dilemma: the relationship of the names of colors to the colors themselves. Anyone who has ever opened up one of the giant Crayola crayon boxes has most likely experienced a moment of Stephen's ambivalence, viewing rows upon rows of varying colors with neatly printed names on each crayon wrapper. What is the relationship between the name and the color within the wrapper? We can trace "white" etymologically to OE "hwit," but how do we go further back to the primary tenor for which "hwit" and "white" eventually became the vehicle?

We return once again to Hillis Miller's assertion that "all etymologies are false etymologies." Stephen wonders whether "all white things were cold and damp;" he might just as easily wonder why "white" signifies absence of color, the opposite of black, Caucasian, a type of wine, snow, and so on. Why the name "white" and not some other name? Just prior to the Clongowes cafeteria passage, Stephen ponders colors and their relationship to their names, and his thoughts tacitly pose that question:

He thought his face must be white because it felt so cool. He could not get out the answer for the sum but it did not matter. White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colors to think of. And the cards for first place and second place and third

* Stephen's fixation on *white* and what it may signify is remarkably similar to Melville's Ishmael's ambivalence towards the color in Chapter 42 of *Moby Dick*, "The Whiteness of the Whale."

place were beautiful colours too: pink and cream and lavender.
 Lavender and pink and cream roses were beautiful to think of.
 Perhaps a wild rose might be like those colours and he remembered
 the song about the wild rose blossoms on the little green place.
 But you could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in
 the world you could. (24)

Notice once again Stephen's association of whiteness with coolness--an association he will question in the very next paragraph. "White roses and red roses: those were beautiful colors to think of;" Stephen's sentence ends oddly because we assume he means that they are beautiful colors "for roses" and we wonder why the "for roses" qualifier is missing at the end. Does he mean that white and red are beautiful colors to think of, or that "white roses" and "red roses" are beautiful colors to think of? Are the names of colors inextricably tied to the objects that we say possess those colors? Stephen in a sense repeats this same question with a different focus when he comments on the cards, "beautiful colours too: pink and cream and lavender." Card and color are fused together in Stephen's mind just as rose and color are.

Stephen's next comments overturn this fusion: "Lavender and cream and pink roses were beautiful to think of." Stephen transfers the colors of the cards onto the roses, not only, I think, because the thought of roses of these colors is beautiful, but because *names* like "lavender rose" and "cream rose" are beautiful to him. But "green rose" stands out conspicuously; "you could not have a green rose," as the mature seven year-old tells us. In the song Stephen remembers at the opening of Portrait:

*O, the wild rose blossoms
 On the little green place. (19)*

Stephen sings it jumbling the adjectives: "*O, the geen wothe botheth*" (19), so that the possibility for a *green* rose is suggested. The very fact that in his song he has, by accident, joined the color "green" to a rose, allows Stephen the possibility that "perhaps somewhere in the world" they exist. Simply by *naming* something a color, by tying a

color inextricably to something, Stephen hopes to create the possibility of its existence-- even though he rationally knows that "green roses" do not exist.

Two essentially similar ideas are at play for Stephen here: on the one hand, he hopes that through *naming* a rose "green," he might somehow cause a green rose to exist, while on the other hand, implicit in his musings, he begins to realize that the arbitrariness of color-names *allows* a green rose to exist, if only in the realm of words-- as his own version of the song "*O, the geen wothe botheth*" would indicate. The names of colors and what they signify are in the end easily confused; in the "free play" with language that Cheryl Herr identifies in Stephen, a rose can be whatever color-name sounds right to the young poet, whether white, red, lavender, cream, pink, or green. No intrinsic relationship exists between color-name--color--rose itself, for Stephen.

Some final color-reminiscences permanently break any relationship between color-name and intrinsic signification:

Dante had two brushes in her press. The brush with the maroon velvet back was for Michael Davitt and the brush with the green velvet back was for Parnell. (20)

For Stephen, the juxtaposition of maroon and green, literalized in Dante's two brushes, signifies Davitt and Parnell. This color-signification becomes ambiguous, however:

There was a picture of the earth on the first page of his geography: a big ball in the middle of the clouds. Fleming had a box of crayons and one night during free study he had coloured the earth green and the clouds maroon. That was like the two brushes in Dante's press, the brush with the green velvet back for Parnell and the brush with the maroon velvet back for Michael Davitt. But he had not told Fleming to colour them those colours. Fleming had done it himself. (26)

In the "outside world" Stephen encounters a completely random articulation of his maroon-green signification. Fleming, of his own volition, colored the earth green and the clouds maroon in the picture of the earth in Stephen's geography book. Fleming, however, was not told of the hidden association that immediately comes to Stephen's

mind whenever he sees the colors maroon and green together. On the one hand we have an unconscious, seemingly random affirmation in the outside world of a color combination Stephen has learned from Dante to deem necessary, just as, of necessity, he has learned that Parnell and Davitt should always be seen as counterparts. On the other hand, the very randomness of Fleming's combination of colors suggests that the association of maroon and green with Davitt and Parnell is an equally arbitrary one--as arbitrary as a child's idle "free study" doodling, easily dismantled.

The ease with which color-signification can be broken is apparent a little later in Portrait, just after we become aware of Parnell's "Kitty O'Shea" incident and subsequent death:

He turned over the flyleaf and looked wearily at the green round earth in the middle of the maroon clouds. He wondered which was right, to be for the green or for the maroon, because Dante had ripped the green velvet back off the brush that was for Parnell one day with her scissors and had told him that Parnell was a bad man. (27)

For Stephen, Parnell-- formerly signified with only the most patriotic of Irish colors-- undergoes a complete removal from his previous, almost sainted position with the Irish populace. This removal is literalized by Dante's tearing of the *green* velvet back from her brush; the color that once instantaneously called Parnell to mind for Stephen is exposed as a mere metaphor for him, one that can be dismantled as easily as it was constructed.

What we are seeing in Stephen, from his early ambivalence over his name, through his confusion over "suck" and the "hot" and "cold" water cocks, and finally to his color-name musings, is a young artist encountering and grappling with the metaphorical nature of everything he speaks and writes. Names that he initially took for granted to be intrinsically related to what they signified are slowly revealing their "queerness" and their foundation in "Nothing." This discovery is not exactly a

promising one for a young writer eager to capture experience precisely and permanently in the *word*. Stephen's first, self-articulating artwork, with its inevitable unravelling by the "Nothing" it seeks to contain with a "thin thin line," fails to conceal this underlying problem. Coming to grips with the metaphorical, and therefore transient and uncertain, origin of language dominates the early encounters Stephen has with the "queerness" of certain words.

Stephen addresses the problem of the metaphorical word head-on in a slightly more mature passage:

And [Dante] did not like him to play with Eileen because Eileen was a protestant and when she was young she knew children that used to play with protestants and the protestants used to make fun of the litany of the Blessed Virgin. *Tower of Ivory*, they used to say, *House of Gold!* How could a woman be a tower of ivory or a house of gold? Who was right then? (43)

Stephen's quandary over the litany of the Blessed Virgin stems from his own coming to grips with metaphor. How *can* a woman be a tower of ivory, or a house of gold, except through metaphor? Stephen raises the question that remained tacitly present in his musings over "queer words." The relationship of the Blessed Virgin to the tower of ivory/house of gold praises is exactly the relationship of all words to what they signify. Words attempt to name what is inexpressible-- the name has never been, nor does it become, the inexpressible thing itself. The Blessed Virgin "is" neither a tower of ivory nor a house of gold, but we name her these things because their splendor and their very contradictory nature hint at the impossibility of adequacy in naming her. Words are metaphors whose tenors are unknowable--"figurative transfers," as Hillis Miller describes and as Stephen here discovers, are the only primary origin we have for any etymology.

Stephen's question "Who was right then?" goes far beyond merely addressing a protestant/catholic conflict; what concerns Stephen is whether it is "right" to accept

the metaphorical nature of names and thus all speech. He has discovered how crucially the metaphor is tied to basic communication--is it then right to "buy in" to the "Nothing" between words and what they signify? Rather than answer this question outright, Stephen shows through his musings on Eileen and her "long white hands" what he in fact thinks is "right"--the only option for the young artist:

Eileen had long white hands. One evening when playing
 fig she had put her hands over his eyes: long and white and thin
 and cold and soft. That was ivory: a cold white thing. That was
 the meaning of *Tower of Ivory*. (43)

Eileen's and her "long white hands" become the *meaning* of "Tower of Ivory," as young Stephen the artist tells us. The notion of a tower of *ivory*--that "cold white thing"--is transposed onto Eileen herself via her metonymic hands, "long and white and thin and cold and soft."

If, as Kristeva points out, "Psychosis proceeds by the disavowal of reality and demands that the signifier be real in order to be true," (T-R 226) then Stephen has moved well beyond any possibility of becoming psychotic by this point. He, having already discovered that signifiers are not real, has chosen the only route available to the artist glimpsing the inexorable "Nothing" at the heart of all Hillis Miller's "false etymologies." If all words are metaphors for an unknown, primary tenor, then the only outlet for the artist is the creation of *new* metaphors--artistic creations that suggest a unique, original relationship between tenor and vehicle while simultaneously exposing the disparity between that same tenor and vehicle. Even more profoundly, Stephen has discovered that the greater the disparity between tenor and vehicle, the more of an "original" artist he becomes-- the more *lasting* meaning he creates. Stephen's resolution of "Who was right then?" is ultimately an "if you can't bet them, join them" philosophy--he will join the metaphor-makers with the idea of forging even more transcendent "meanings," in the vein of Eileen as "tower of ivory."

Recalling this moment later on in Portrait, Stephen will cement his move into the artist's realm of metaphor:

Eileen had long thin cool white hands too because she was a girl. They were like ivory; only soft. That was the meaning of *Tower of Ivory* but protestants could not understand it and made fun of it.

.....
Her fair hair had streamed out behind her like gold in the sun.
Tower of Ivory. House of Gold. By thinking about things you could understand them. (49)

Stephen's use of "like" in his comparisons develops a similitic relationship between ivory and Eileen's hands, and her "fair hair" and gold. From these metonymic aspects he "understands" how "Tower of Ivory" and "House of Gold," two seeming opposites, can be contained in one entity, and so how correspondingly they can be contained within the Blessed Virgin. "By thinking about things you could understand them," Stephen concludes rather positively; working the words over and over in the mind, one can *create* a connection between them and what they represent. Even if the connection does not really exist, and the words Stephen uses to create it are all similarly metaphorical alone, the fact that this new metaphor came from the artist himself and was not a learned or acquired one establishes, for Stephen, a *knowable* tenor--the litany of the Blessed Virgin. Stephen has what Robert Frost would later call a "temporary stay against chaos" in his artwork--a built-but-easily-dismantled bridge across the "Nothing" between words and what they represent.

Two more incidents in Stephen's more mature life temper the positive tone of "understanding" through art that young Stephen develops here. The first is the infamous "Foetus" incident that occurs when Stephen and his father return to Cork to liquidate some of his Cork assets. They visit Simon's old school and seek out the initials he carved into his desk as a boy:

Stephen remained in the background...On the desk before him he read the word *Foetus* cut several times in the dark stained wood. The sudden legend startled his blood: he seemed to feel

the absent students of the college about him and to shrink from their company. A vision of their life, which his father's words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word carved into the desk. A broadshouldered student with a moustache was cutting in the letters with a jackknife, seriously. Other students stood or sat near him laughing at his handiwork. One jogged his elbow. The big student turned on him, frowning. He was dressed in loose grey clothes and had tan boots. (87)

Stephen at first is looking for his father's initials--"SD"--or, more to the point, *his own*. What he discovers instead is not a paternal self-identification but a maternal state of pre-identification. Stephen just previously has decided that "By thinking about things you could understand them;" thinking about *Foetus*, however, frightens him in a way that seems, at the very least, *odd* upon a first reading.

Two different strands of ambivalence run through this passage. "Foetus" on one level preempts and defies self-identification--an identification that Stephen has desired ever since his first self-articulating artwork. He is looking for "SD," a separate entity apart from the desks, the school, Cork, and so on. What he finds reminds him not of Kristeva's paternalthetic phase, where the child desires to separate the subjective self from the objects around it, establishing a hierarchy through words as Stephen's first artwork does. Instead, he recalls a maternal, womb state, where there is no "I," no "SD," no absence and thus no need for words to bring back what is absent. When looking for a reminder of his *name*, for an intrinsic relationship between himself and his surname, he encounters instead a jarring, ambiguous pre-identification state. As Cheryl Herr points out:

Seeking similarity, identity, a host of connections that can affirm presence and unity, Stephen instead constantly registers dissonance, fracture, dissimilarity, dissemination, deflection from the expected. (352)

The continuity and legitimacy that paternity attempts to construct with names that carry on from father to son is blown apart by the realization of the "legal fiction" that paternity is. We come back to Nasty Roche's challenge to the Dedalus name that I

mentioned at the beginning of this paper: "What kind of a name is that?" What are names arising from fictional paternity, except reminders of their own metaphorical state, of their lost tenor, of their base in "Nothing?" Stephen is jarred by this "dissonance" in his relationship with his father even more crucially in a scene occurring a little bit later in Portrait:

He could scarcely recognize as his his own thoughts: and repeated slowly to himself:

--I am Stephen Dedalus. I am walking beside my father whose name is Simon Dedalus. We are in Cork, in Ireland. Cork is a city. Our room is in the Victoria Hotel. Victoria and Simon and Stephen. Simon and Stephen and Victoria. Names. (89)

"Names," like Stephen, like Dedalus, like Simon, are simply names and nothing more, as Stephen understands here. Paternity, with its base in both physical indeterminacy and legalizing, *named* certainty, is as fictional as the word, with its metaphorical base.

Maud Ellmann analyzes expertly the second strand of ambivalence in Stephen running through this passage:

Finally, its repetitions resist the fiction of a singular begetting. How can we trace a first creation in the word 'cut several times' by unknown hands? Repeated, the scarletter refuses the 'Creation from Nothing', 'from only begetter to only begotten', to which paternity at last refers itself and justifies itself (U: 43;207). [96]

The nature of the word and the nature of paternity are remarkably similar in their essentially fictional, metaphorical nature. This relationship is cemented by the repetitive aspect of the "scarletter," as Ellmann terms the carved "Foetus." Just as the navel mark scars the belly with the reminder of maternal, rather than paternal, begetting, so too does the carved "Foetus" irreparably scar the notion of a singular author, a primary creator behind the metaphor. Stephen's reverie of the "broadshouldered student with a moustache" carving his artwork carefully into the desk is belied by the reality that it has been "cut several times in the dark stained wood." The carved "Foetus" has no author; the safety Stephen felt thinking about "Tower of Ivory/House of Gold" and his

own role in creating a metaphor is jarred by this reminder of a lack of known origin, of a known tenor, at the root of all words. Why "Foetus?" What was the tenor behind the "Foetus" vehicle, that these varied authors were trying to convey? The possibilities seem endless, and "Creation from Nothing" is thus repudiated by a questioning of the "creation" act--whether we can know how, or why, metaphorical creations come about

Stephen's realization of this essential problem occurs soon after the "Foetus" incident:

It shocked him to find in the outer world a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind. His recent monstrous reveries came thronging into his memory. They too had sprung up before him, suddenly and furiously, out of mere words. He had soon given in to them and allowed them to sweep across and abase his intellect, wondering always where they came from, from what den of monstrous images...(87)

Stephen's assessment of this encounter is a mirror-image of his earlier encounter with the hot and cold water-cocks in the hotel lavatory. With the water-cock incident, Stephen had hot and cold feelings that he nevertheless did not put a name to; he is jarred into an awareness of *names* for those feelings when he looks at the water-cocks with "hot" and "cold" printed on them. Here, with the "Foetus" incident, he reverses the initial experience and discovers *feelings* and "monstrous reveries" which emerge from "thinking about" certain words. These unmentioned words puzzle Stephen because he does not know where they come from-- their origin is an ambiguous "den," with no identifiable author, no established "monstrous" image intrinsically attached to each individual word.

In young, maturing Stephen, then, we have the gradual, awakening cognizance of metaphor, and what metaphor essentially *means* for all language. The language we learn to communicate with, whatever it may be, becomes in Stephen's case an acquired

set of *names* he must learn, names that signify himself and the things around him. The relationship that he unconsciously assumes to exist between sign and signifier, in order to communicate on a day-to-day basis, is broken down continually by the reality of names as mere vehicles, for metaphors of unknown or long-forgotten tenors. The task of the artist, as Stephen decides, lies in creating new metaphors--ones that, though arbitrarily related to their tenors, nevertheless suggest a primary author and origin in the artist. Problems arise with this theory of Stephen's, however--some words arise from a "monstrous den of images" within him, a den he feels no control over. Even the comfort of authoring a metaphor (and thereby establishing an origin for it) is tempered by his difficulty in discerning how the words he ponders bring up uncontrollable "monstrous reveries," rather than carefully-authored metaphors like Eileen's hands and her streaming golden hair signifying "Tower of Ivory/House of Gold."

Paternity, the "legal fiction" with its reliance upon legalizing *names* and the belief in a singular author, is thus analogous to language with its base in metaphorical names and a belief in a singular author. Both are *acquired* ways of knowing, learned methodologies that hinge upon the "Nothing" at the root of their creation. A final note on this point occurs much later in Portrait, as Stephen converses with the dean of studies:

--What funnel? asked Stephen.
 --The funnel through which you pour the oil into
 your lamp.
 --That? said Stephen. Is that called a funnel? Is that not
 a tundish?
 --What is a tundish?
 --That. The...the funnel.
 --Is that called a tundish in Ireland? asked the dean. I
 never heard the word in my life. (165)

The "English convert" (165) dean of studies, while instructing Stephen on how to feed the lamp, refers to the "thing" he uses to pour oil neatly into the lamp as a "funnel." Stephen refers to this same "thing" as a "tundish." The result recalls us directly back to

Stephen's quandary over "God" and "Dieu," the comparison of names that multiple languages have for something reminds Stephen again of the post-Babel state of all language. Where is the legitimate etymon for the utensil that Irish Stephen Dedalus and the English dean of studies recognize as "tundish" and "funnel," respectively? Stephen fumbles for a definition of "tundish" and can only come up with "funnel," just as earlier he defined "Dieu" as "God." In his definition he also is capitulating to the dean of studies, caught in a moment of uncertainty over his native word for the utensil and succumbing to the elder, primary English speaker's word. Stephen verbalizes his capitulation soon after this incident:

--The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted his words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (166)

Stephen wrestles once again with the *acquired* nature of all language; the literal situation here, of a young Irishman coming into conflict with an older, primary speaker of English, develops in microcosm the reality that all languages are learned forms of communication, prefabricated for each new generation's use. The "so familiar" and "so foreign" paradox captures perfectly the regressive, "abnihilizating" attitude Stephen will begin to take towards language. Words that were once so familiar he took them for granted have now, through their very "queerness," become so foreign from what they represent that Stephen feels he is in their "shadow" when he uses them. He has not "made or accepted" "funnel," but he also significantly has not "made or accepted" "tundish," as evidenced by his questioning of it. Both "tundish" and "funnel" have been "held at bay" by Stephen's voice; in an instant, he is aware of the metaphorical nature of both, and he "accepts" neither of them.

Stephen's experience with the dean of studies seems simply a replaying of an encounter he keeps having throughout Portrait--what does an artist do with an acquired language? How does an artist reconcile a need to name things, and to understand the significance of those names, with the "Nothing" at the root of all metaphors threatening to dismantle the tenuous relationship between sign and signifier?

If you are James Joyce (and therefore *not* Stephen Dedalus), the answer to these questions lies in the writing of Finnegans Wake. A possible solution to Stephen's dilemma is the alternative logic inherent in passages like this one from the Wake:

[The abnihilization of the etym by the grisning of the grosning
of the grinder of the grunder of the first lord of Hurtreford
explodotonates...(353:24)

As I explained in the introduction, "abnihilization of the etym" simultaneously connotes: "annihilation of the atom," "annihilation of the etymon," the "from-nothingness' of the atom," and the "from-nothingness' of the etymon." From just this short phrase alone we are invited to surmise that the "annihilation of the etymon" is something *like* the "from-nothingness' of the etymon." Reading this, we cannot help but instinctively look for a relationship between the two contradictions, even if such a relationship seems highly arbitrary. How does dismantling or "annihilating" the etymon have anything to do with its origin "ab nihilo?"

Here we return once again to J. Hillis Miller, and his notion that "all etymologies are false etymologies." When we try to trace a word to its primary origin, we ultimately dismantle it; we look it up in the O.E.D., usually, where we encounter a current definition and earlier, altered versions of the word, sometimes extending as far back as Indo-European spellings and usages. As far back as we may go with an etymology, we do not find that first metaphor, the one vehicle that has been an origin for all its

successors. Dismantling or “abnihilizating” the etymon by tracing its etymology finally leads to the realization that words arise “ab nihilo,” from a “figurative transfer” whose significance has long been forgotten.

We can see, then, how Joyce’s Wakean narrator relates the “annihilation of the etym” with its “ab nihilo” origins. This phrase also, perhaps even more significantly, lives out the credo we have just discovered. In reading this phrase, with its contradictory terms juxtaposed, we cannot help but look for a relationship between the two. In other words, we cannot help but wonder how “annihilation” is *like* an origin “ab nihilo.” We are looking to create a metaphor--Finnegans Wake becomes an exercise in exposing the role metaphor plays in our understanding of foreign, new phrases like “abnihilization of the etym.” We don’t know at first glance how the two contradictions are related, so we create a relationship. Writing that literalizes the metaphor at the base of all words, if it cannot be called “feminine” writing, can at least be called “non-patriarchal” writing, because it continually admits to the “Nothing” at the base of all understanding. As Anthony Burgess points out:

Our educational tradition, both in Britain and America, has conditioned us to look on words as mere counters which, given a particular context, mean one thing and one thing only... When a word is ambiguous we are uneasy...But the exploitation of the ambiguity of the word is, as Professor Empson has been pointing out for a long time, one of the joys of the literary art. (266) -

An “exploitation” or irreverence to the word seems precisely what Finnegans Wake is all about. The patriarchal tradition that has attached “one thing and one thing only” as the intrinsic meaning of a word, therefore, is under fire in Joyce’s text, where the reading process itself breaks those intrinsic relationships and suggests alternatives-- alternatives which themselves are merely created by one reader, to be “annihilated” and “abnihilizated” by the next reader. The post-Babel language we speak is thus not

feared for its distance from true, primary etymons, as young Stephen fears it, but celebrated and exploited.

To return to the text of Finnegans Wake: “by the grisning of the grosning of the grinder of the grunder of the first lord of Hurtreford explodotonates...” Relationships that we can pinpoint and be happy with, as “abnihilization of the etym” afforded, become more difficult to construct with these more standard Wakean puns. The four plays on the “gr” phoneme illustrate the problem: “grisning” has no known roots and seems a true made-up, most likely onomatopoeic, word; “grosning” is a combination of Russian “groza” or “thunderstorm” and Russian “groznyi” or “terrible;” “grinder” appears to be just what it is--a “grinder” akin to a mill; and “grunder” is German for “founder.” Thus the “abnihilization of the etym” occurs through the “grisning-sound” of the “terrible thunder” of the “grinder” (simultaneously a dismantler, abnihilizer, churner, and renderer) of the “founder” or “creator.” Once again, the text tacitly invites us to draw connections and relationships, this time between these “gr” phonemes, and then between them and the “abnihilization of the etym” that came before.

Why the repetition of “gr”’s? At first, the repeated phoneme may onomatopoeically remind us of the scraping sound of a “grinder.” It also might serve to bring to mind the repeated nature of “terrible thunder,” something that incidentally would have brought fear and a reminder of the Almighty to Joyce in real life. We are solicited to find a possible relationship between thunder and the first founder, between simultaneous creation from Nothing and dismantling of that creation. The “terrible thunder” should remind us of the Fall recounted in the first pages of the Wake:

“(bababadalgharaghtakamminarronkonnbronntonnerronnt--
uonnthunntrovarrhounawnskawntoohooorderenthurnuki)”--made up of Japanese,

Hindi, Greek, French, Italian, Swahili, Irish, Portuguese, Old Rumanian, and Danish words for “thunder.” Thunder signals the creation and dismantling of the word in the same way it earlier suggests the creation and fall/dismantling of humanity.

This short passage abounds in the “possible” relationships with which Finnegans Wake is full. The “first lord of Hurtleford” suggests simultaneously “Lord Rutherford” the first atom-splitter, and “Hurdle Ford,” the Irish name for “Dublin.” How the two could be related is anyone’s guess; it could just be that they *sound* similar and so they are joined together. They could also just be joined arbitrarily--a situation that would reemphasize the fundamentally arbitrary relationship between tenor and vehicle which words have come to possess for Stephen Dedalus and for Joyce.

The text attempts to reactivate an awareness in the reader of the metaphorical nature of language. Julia Kristeva points out that:

For the Ancients the verb “to read” had a meaning that is worth recalling and bringing out with a view to an understanding of literary practice. “To read” was also “to pick up,” “to pluck,” “to keep watch on,” “to recognize traces,” “to take,” “to steal.” “To read thus denotes an aggressive participation, an active appropriation of the other. (Kristeva, Semiotike 181)

“Reading,” in Finnegans Wake, thus becomes an aggressive practice, one where a reader must “recognize traces” between relationships the narrator ostensibly sets up. We are not *told* what is “going on,” because the only thing really going on is the *telling* of the tale.

It is worthwhile to look at all the mutations that “etym/etymon/etymology” take on in Finnegans Wake together, to reemphasize the multiplicity of metaphors that one word can take on:

“entomophilust” (107:13)--etymologist/entomologist (one who studies insects)

* *J* kaminari, *Hin* karak, *Gr* brontao, *F* tonnerre, *It* tuono, *Sw* aska, *I* tornach, *Port* trovao, *Old Rum* tun, *Da* tordenen. All from McHugh’s Annotations to Finnegans Wake.

“adamologists” (113:4)--etymologist/one who studies Adam’s logic
 “a very fairworded instance of falsemeaning adamelegy” (77:26-7)
 a well-worded occurrence of a false etymology/death of Adam.
 “abnihilation of the etym” (353:22)-- annihilation of the etymon/
 ab nihilo-nature of the etymon.
 “intimologies” (101:17)--etymologies/logics of intimation
 “entymology” (417:4)--etymology/entomology

The suggested relationships between etymology and entomology seem more along the lines of the “Rutherford/Hurdle Ford” variety, but the constructions concerning Adam are notable. Adam was the first “namer” of things--the first to affix a metaphorical vehicle to the hitherto undifferentiated animal beings roaming Eden. “Adam’s logic” is essentially what modern etymon-logic seeks to discover; how did Adam create the pre-Babel, original etymons? “Falsemeaning adamelegies” are in a sense all we have left; that first, primary logic died with Adam, and all remnants of it were forever lost with the destruction of the Tower of Babel. We have only false etymologies now, or a “logic of intimations”--a logic that seeks to “trace out” (as Kristeva said) meanings amidst the wild play of metaphorical vehicles.

Dante’s Paradiso 26 addresses the “adamology/adamelegy” problem, in a passage that winds up transformed in Finnegans Wake. Here is Dante’s version, with Adam speaking to Dante:

Long was extinct the language which I spoke
 Ere work on the unfinishable tower
 First contemplated was by Nimrod’s folk.

No work of reason lasts beyond its hour,
 For usage, as fate wills, doth ever seek
 To recreate according to its power.

Nature so fashioned man that he should speak,
 But how, she leaves to you, as seemeth well
 According to your choice or fancy’s freak.

Ere I descended to the pains of Hell
Jah was the name men called the highest Good
 Which swathes me in this joy. Thereafter *EI*

His title was on earth; for as they should,
 Like leaves upon the branches of a tree,
 The words of mortals die and are renewed.

(XXVI: 124-138, trans. Dorothy L. Sayers)

Through Adam, Dante finds that even the most primary, pre-Babel “adamologies” are at their base human, mortal constructs, and so arbitrary and subject to change, whether by “choice” or “fancy’s freak.” Dante has significantly changed his mind, in this passage, from an earlier passage in De Vulgari Eloquentia dealing with this same issue:

To return to my subject, I say that God created a certain form of speech together with and for the first soul. I say “form” with reference to the words for things, and the construction of these words, and their grammatical pronunciation; and certainly this form would be used by every speaking being if it had not been dispersed through human presumption, as I will demonstrate. (52, trans. Marianne Shapiro)

Dante’s earlier feelings lend a legitimacy and immortality to the primary “adamologies,” a permanence that Paradiso 26 subverts--Adam’s first etymons become as mutable as our “falsemeaning adamelegies.”

“Adamologies” are thus metaphors as well; they arguably may be the *first* metaphors, but this does not make them any less changeable to time. Joyce echoes the feeling of Paradiso 26 in Finnegans Wake:

Because, Soferim Bebel, if it goes to that,...every person, place and thing in the chaosmos of Alle anyway connected to the gobblydumped turkery was moving and changing every part of the time: the traveling inkhorn (possibly pot), the hare and turtle pen and paper, the continually more or less intermisunderstanding minds of the anticollaborators, the as time went as it will variously inflected, differently pronounced, otherwise spelled, changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns. (118: 18-28)

“Soferim” is Hebrew for “writers”; the narrator seems to be addressing the original Biblical writers. Joyce points out, just prior to this, that “one who deeper thinks will always bear in the baccbuccus of his mind that this downright there you are and there it is only all in his eye. Why?” (118:15-7) The notion that “there something is” and there it is and always will be is undermined by the mutability of the names we have for “something”s; the “traveling inkhorn” of “changeably meaning vocable scriptsigns”

does not allow for a stability, a continuity, an immortality in human words--even when those words claim to be inspired by God. The metaphor that little Stephen Dedalus finds at the basis of "suck," the difference that is portrayed in the hot and cold water-cocks--these are constructs of human reason designed to hold at bay our "chaosmos" of contradiction and non-differentiation. A text like Finnegans Wake, rooted in an alternative, mutable logic, seeks to reexpose the playfulness of the tenor/vehicle relationship--to emphasize not a reverence for word permanence, but an irreverence that celebrates word death, and renewal.

Afterword

--I'm rather at sea as to *language*. I have a firm grip of my thoughts, my argument...but communicating the ideas clearly in English is my difficulty. You see, there has been considerable variation as between English on the one hand, and Hebrew and Greek as vehicles of epistemology.

- I know, of course, that you're interested in languages as such...
- My thoughts are new, you understand, and I'm afraid...
- What's the trouble?
- They tend to be ineffable.

Flann O'Brien, The Dalkey Archive (147)

Flann O'Brien relates, in The Dalkey Archive, this hypothetical conversation between Mick, a young Irishman, and a "resurrected" James Joyce--according to the novel, Joyce did not die in Zurich, but survived his perforated ulcer and escaped to Skerries to live in seclusion. Joyce's feelings about language in this instance capture perfectly the sense I have after finishing a year's work on Joyce. After Ulysses, after the few pages of Finnegans Wake I was able to "translate" (for want of a better word), I leave off (for the moment) my study of Joyce not with certainty but with difficulty in articulating my final thoughts. Joyce's progression from the *relative* linguistic simplicity of Dubliners to the chaos of Finnegans Wake is mirrored, I think, in my own research difficulties. We tend to think, as English majors, that the more we write, the more able we eventually become to capture the perfect sentence, the perfect phrasing of our thoughts. The reality is the exact opposite--the more we rethink, rephrase, and rewrite what we are trying to say in our own little "theses," the more we discover only the profound gap between the words we use and the thoughts ostensibly behind them.

We traditionally term "good writers" those who articulate in written words what we have all felt or thought at one time or another. Joyce, I think, goes a level deeper, to "articulating" ("inarticulating" might be a better word) what we may have thought in *brief* moments, but have never willingly given serious consideration. When

I was younger, my mother would use the word "behave!" around me frequently (not without reason, either) before I ever understood what the word really meant. I knew it was generally said when I was not doing what I was told, and so I attached a negative connotation to it immediately, but I remember at one point thinking "How do you *be* 'haive'? What does 'haive' mean anyway?" When a child just becoming acquainted to language begins to "fool around" with the arbitrariness of the letters arranged into the words we speak, slowly and clumsily acquiring them for its own usage, we have a moment in language acquisition that Joyce's fiction never seems to leave. The awareness of language's "built," rather than "intrinsic" nature, an awareness we have as children but willingly and necessarily forget as adults, is at the heart of Joyce's work.

Joyce may feel, in O'Brien's novel, that his thoughts are "ineffable"; what we should realize, in our analyses of Joyce's creative process, is that all our thoughts are in a sense ineffable--or at least distinctly unrelated to the words we use to express them. Words, in whatever language we speak, do not form the thoughts themselves--words are the great categorizers and pigeonholers of thought. My thesis on the whole has taught me that any thesis, on any author, by any English major, is just another categorizer and pigeonholer of the chaotic thoughts one has when confronted by "literature"--that fancy word we have for someone else's attempt at capturing "life." We should recognize this fact, I think, and not take our theses so seriously--perhaps by scrapping them as soon as they are done and beginning again.

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