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Molly's Lips: Telephonic Interiority in the "Penelope" Episode of *Ulysses*

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Abstract of Thesis

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Molly Bloom's episode "Penelope" at the end of *Ulysses* is a pronounced narrative of her unique consciousness, yet it is the only first person narrative in the entire work that is interrupted by the gaze of the author. When the final episode of *Ulysses* begins, Molly's narrative is one that seeks to give her a voice and narrative and there by constructs a gaze from which we as readers seek to in order to gain a better understanding of her character's consciousness; yet, Molly's acknowledgement of "Jamesy" alludes to a veiled characterization inherent to Molly Bloom. Why is she given the privilege of being conscious that she is a character in the novel? Furthermore, her calling out to the author demonstrates that her consciousness, as presented through her soliloquy, may not be that of her character *per se*, but is rather given a voice by the author that she appears to resist. There is something forced about her narrative, and the intrusion and inclusion of her speaking out of the text to James Joyce positions her character firmly under his gaze.

While many have argued that Joyce positions Molly Bloom simultaneously as earth goddess and whore, Molly's voice becomes a prevailing characteristic of her embodied being. Her associations with her singing voice, as well as the fact that her monologue is spoken, adds a rhetorical dimension to what she is saying. If Molly's voice is actually a function of prosopopoeia, which is often part of the peroration (the conclusion of an argument, meant to motivate and inspire the audience) then the mask (or clothes) of Molly can be seen as a sort of drag—a male role-playing fantasy of what Joyce desires woman to be. However, it isn't necessarily that simple.

The position of Joyce in relation to Molly Bloom must be considered from angles of sexuality, identity, voice, and narrative. If Joyce's emergence in *Ulysses* positions him as not just author, but a character in the text, can the two be

separated, or should they both be considered one in the same? The relationship between Molly Bloom, James Joyce, and the world of Ulysses presents a tri-partite relationship that gives Molly a certain depth that other characters lack; however, much of this hinges upon her articulation of "Jamesy." If Molly is indeed asking to be lifted out of the text, as most critics agree, where would she go? Why would a character seek to leave if in fact that character, knowing she was a character, couldn't move from the page? There's more to this articulation than a desire to be lifted from the text. The plea for Joyce to lift her up out of "this" requires further examination, specifically if one is led to believe that Molly's speaking the narrative is in fact an act of prosopopoeia.

There is a further question of who is doing the performance. Is Molly playing a role that Joyce wants her to play, and is thus speaking as this earth mother/ whore, or is this Joyce in drag—a fantasy role-play of an idealized woman transformed into adolescent sexual fantasy? As a result of Joyce's appearance in Molly's soliloquy, it becomes necessary to examine the presence of James Joyce as an actual character in his own work as well as the added difficulty of discovering if there is a Molly Bloom that exists behind and beyond the one presented by the narrative in "Penelope." What if "Penelope" is a simulation of Molly Bloom's consciousness and the character of Molly Bloom must recite those lines through Joyce's enforcement? By examining the final episode of *Ulysses*, there is a gaze within a gaze—a narrative beneath the narrative that overlays one Molly Bloom with another. Through an analysis of structure and syntax in the final episode, the "Penelope" episode begins to emerge as something more complex and rich than a soliloquy or monologue, and not as inert as a stream of consciousness transcription. It resembles something more akin to the digital age where websites house our virtual, social identities.

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In the meticulous construction of sign clusters that name, identify, and influence "Penelope," it is impossible to discount the work of *Ulysses* as one of *tekhne*. The episode is programmed to appear and read as stream of consciousness with the understanding that it is a record Molly Bloom's thoughts coming naturally to the reader. Yet reading Molly Bloom's thoughts is complicated by an issue of remoteness—how are we to read her thoughts, understand her cadence, or otherwise "play" Molly's inner voice in our inner voice? This "playing of" Molly would be similar to what Jacques Derrida considered a "gramophone" –a device that plays a pre-recorded voice—in his essay *Ulysses Gramophone*. A more contemporary understanding of Derrida's gramophone would be more akin going on someone's social media page—looking at their pre-recorded life in pictures, videos, and written blurbs. Yet those pages are social systems of communication, programmed formats where by filling in data that we are expecting to find—hometown, occupation, marital status, sex life—we assume that the profile that we are reading is indeed the real thing. In spite of the fact that there are seamless and invisible networks that are running codes, scripts, and operating systems just to have that website appear on a page, the distance that exists between a socially mediated identity—an identity reliant upon readable and recognizable signs—and an autonomic identity—the self, it's consciousness, and empirical body. The voice of the program and the voice of the programmer are not one in the same, and considering Molly Bloom just another fictional character overlooks this profound uniqueness to what's going on in "Penelope." Molly Bloom's "stream of

consciousness" shows a system, a program, a voice on the gramophone, but not an identity. Finding Molly's true voice underneath the programming of "Penelope" demonstrates Derrida's concept of "telephonic interiority," and in doing so, Molly emerges as a character who is struggling against the forced performance of the program, "Penelope."

Michael Rubenstein, in his text *Public Works*, identifies that possibility of technical objects being granted the power of speech.

> Technical objects are granted being, if not human-being, and even the potential for speech. *Ulysses* thus 'locates' narrative authority—what I've been calling panoptical narration—in the tekhne of public works in 'Wandering Rocks' just as in 'Ithaca.' This panoptical narration is also a mechanical form of stream of consciousness because it is a representation of how a machine—the public works—endowed with being might think. (Rubenstein 72)

Considering the written text as technical object is likely a departure from Rubenstein's classification; however, the panoptical narration demonstrates how the cluster of signs that flow into the final episode of *Ulysses* might pool together and speak if given voice. Given that the schema of *Ulysses* names a technic for each episode, and the entire novel itself is a function of meticulous crafting and networking of signs, identifying sign clusters of "Penelope" as panoptical narration

and *not* monologue or soliloquy establishes a much needed distance between Molly Bloom and the text to which she has been fettered since 1922.

Rubenstein's panoptical narration, when applied to the *tekhne* of writing stream of consciousness, voices an otherwise voiceless record. Traditionally, stream of consciousness is not vocalized at all; however, in a panoptical narration, where written record of thoughts is given the potential for speech, Molly's stream of consciousness is granted a voice in the same manner that Rubenstein describes in the "Wandering Rocks" episode.

> The networks of rivers, sewers, and canals that make up Dublin's circulatory system, when taken as a whole, present a plausible "point of view" from which the narrating voice of the chapter gains its multiple and simultaneous perspectives, and they explain why "Wandering Rocks" can jump from one section to another without syntactic connection. The infrastructure of the cite "lives" each geographical point simultaneously, it is everywhere at once; it doesn't need syntactic connection because it has infrastructural connection." (Rubenstein 70)

Molly's eight sentences circulate similarly to the sewers, streets, and rivers creating the circulatory system of the panoptical narrative; however, it's the content of those sentences, especially the lack of syntactic connection, that helps give voice to this stream of consciousness. While a lack of connectedness would be common to

a stream of consciousness record, the content of the narrative has referent points to earlier episodes, forming a network similar to the sewers running throughout Dublin—only here it is the clusters of Molly's lexical autobiography as established by every preceding episode. The Molly of the record, the Molly that we can read, is a system, not an identity. However, that system, much like the sewer system Rubenstein describes in "Wandering Rocks," when given voice in a panoptical narration—in "Penelope" it would be the textual record of Molly's thoughts—creates a distance between the character Molly Bloom and the system that represents Molly Bloom. This space between the speaking text and Molly Bloom allows for Molly to be speaking words that are not her own, and in turn, they bounce off the reader and the page. "Penelope" is caught in a feedback loop that sounds like Molly is the one playing, but really, she's just hitting play.

Derrida locates this remoteness in his essay, *Ulysses Gramophone*. "…The telephonic *tekhne* is at work within the voice, multiplying the writing of voices without any instruments, as Mallarme would say, a mental telephony, which, inscribing remoteness, distance, difference, and spacing in sound (*phone*), institutes, forbids *and at the same time* interferes with the so-called monologue." (Norris 82) The operation described by Derrida demonstrates that Joyce's construction of Molly's voice is created by a multitude of voices from the preceding episodes, but at the same time, remains distant in its relation to the novel as a whole. "Penelope" is given a certain privileged status in terms of what the narrative says and what it accomplishes; however, the distance that exists is not simply one of the preservation

of a written voice. This is the same kind of operant distance found in prosopopoeia as put forth by Quintilian.

Prosopopoeia, as in soliloquy, confers a mask that allows one to speak as a deceased being, someone not present, or a system—here in the "Penelope" episode it would be a system. Similar to Rubenstein's panoptical narration, a system can be given vocalization, and one speaking as that system is engaged in prosopopoeia. Thus, there is a distance of voice—the speaker, and the voice of the system; however, the believability or authenticity of that mask is based on the mediation of the speaking subject as to what is reasonable or unreasonable to be spoken. While there is a mediation between speaker and audience, in a soliloquy (engaging in prosopopoeia) the speaker must be the audience as well in order to discern what is unreasonable. This is the process that Derrida speaks of referring to "mental telephony," or specifically, "telephonic interiority." (Norris 81) *Prosopopoeia engages in that act of "telephonic interiority" in that it has to negotiate the tekhne in such a manner that is doesn't feel unnatural or artificial.* If that telephonic interiority of prosopopoeia fails, the conveying of any information loses its hold. Thus, the *tekhne* must be well constructed such that when the affixing of the mask of prosopopoeia occurs, the speaker closes that distance. This is precisely how prosopopoeia would function in a peroration, where the speaker appears to be embodying the words of an absent, deceased, or imagined being. The distance between the *tekhne* (panoptical narration) and telephonic interiority (prosopopoeia) is narrowed when the speaking subject engaged in prosopopoeia ceases to act as

echo. This understanding is critical as it is not only what separates prosopopoeia from ventriloquism, but also demonstrates that Molly Bloom is not Joyce's ventriloquist doll.

Focusing on the distance between the panoptical narration and prosopopoeia, it may appear that the subject engaged in prosopopoeia, in this case, Molly Bloom, is simply mouthing the words of the panoptical narration as constructed by Joyce; however, inherent to prosopopoeia is the notion that the speaking subject isn't speaking as if they are the absent, deceased, or imagined being; the speaker engaged in prosopopoeia is that speaking being. The issue again becomes one of distance and voice. In prosopopoeia, there is one singular voice; in ventriloquism, there are two. *Prosopopoeia, when paired with the panoptical narrative, seeks to embody the voice of the panoptical narrative, the voice of a system. This understanding is a departure from Joycean criticism; however, this departure is necessary to hear the real Molly Bloom.* While critic Patrick O'Donnell, author of *Echo Chambers*, locates "this dialectic of processional identity as a movement between corporeal spacing (the differentiation of the homogenous body into parts and holes) and vocal reproduction," (O'Donnell 89) Molly's voice remains something to be filled by Joyce. "In the instance of 'Penelope,' we cannot help but notice that the projection of Molly's feminine voice is an act of ventriloquy on Joyce's part—the male author ventriloquizing the woman—or that the representation of Molly's desires is potentially the desire of a woman seen by a man if he were one (a woman)." (O'Donnell 83) What complicates O'Donnell's assessment is gender. The

textual streams that lead into "Penelope" are markers. In spite of references to her sexuality, her breasts, her bum, and her voice, the Molly Bloom of the episodes prior to "Penelope" (which I will now refer to as the *lexo-biographical* Molly), as it pertains to the preceding chapters of the book, is indeed chimerical. She has no character, no gender per se. She is a system of mediated signs as established and rooted in earlier episodes. O'Donnell neglects the fact that what the reader is given is a cluster of signifiers that have been associated with a woman who is situated in bed. There is nothing uniquely "feminine" about the manner of speech. In fact, the language is speaking back to itself (prosopopoeia) in the novel and reflecting upon itself, the panoptical narration, as coalesced image of Molly. Additionally, O'Donnell conflates writing and voice, which according to Sheffield, is a crucial error when examining "Penelope." By way of Derek Attridge's essay *Molly's Flow*, Sheffield asserts that:

> The graphic technique, Attridge argues, exploits and ultimately exposes the "gender ideology" of the critic who chooses to read this as a flowing feminine text. But the graphic technique also directs the reader's attention back to the actual medium of writing, to the possibility of the play of the signifier, to the meeting and parting of sound and sense. (Sheffield 89)

If this is an act of ventriloquy, as O'Donnell claims, then the physical construction of the words on the page is reduced, and the interaction between the

written word and spoken voice is nothing more than a vaudevillian routine. It becomes schtick, and at that point, would not need the presence of any lexo-biographical anchors in the text to present an artificial, female voice. Additionally, relegating "Penelope" as being Joyce ventriloquizing a feminine voice prevents any recovery of an authentic Molly Bloom, as opposed to a system. Once the panoptical narration is granted vocalization, one who speaks or reads that vocalization is engaging in prosopopoeia, and this fundamentally transforms this inert record of stream of consciousness into monologue—into performance. This is why calling this narrative "stream of consciousness" is reductive because it overlooks the established system that creates a believable narrative that is anchored by a system of referent points in the text that precedes it, and it overlooks the possibility of the written record as tekhne which would silence the possibility of giving voice to that record via panoptical narration. Prosopopoeia allows for Molly Bloom to become the panoptical narrative that she is reading; however, it does not exclude her from interrupting this feedback loop of telephonic interiority.

The telephonic interiority at work in "Penelope" begins with "Yes." The silent assent of the reader is what passes from text to reader. "Yes," (Joyce 608) while serving as an articulation of consent, also may serve as an articulation of understanding—a negotiating between two or more voices. "Yes" as understanding becomes a nexus between an inquiring body and an approving body. To clarify, understanding becomes verification of another in our own terms, and with a written narrative, such as this one, the silent acquiescence of the reader authenticates the

program. It's clicking on a user agreement. A lexo-biographical narration positions itself for the reader *to be read*. The first "Yes" tells the reader that this is Molly Bloom without our even asking; however, the understanding that the reader gains in this assent is the promise that one will read precisely what has been laid out with concern to Molly Bloom in the preceding chapters. It's as if by the time the reader gets to "Penelope," we call up Molly and hear someone on the other end answer "Yes," but never bother to ask her name.

Looking at the tekhne of the panoptical narrative of "Penelope" on a superficial level, the presence of any and all capitalization immediately demonstrates the artifice of the program and locates the nexus of the telephonic interiority of the piece. What does a capital letter sound like? Why on page 608 is "Mountain" capitalized and on page 643 "mountain" is not? While one might point out that the mountain in question on page 608 refers to "sugarloaf," it doesn't explain the difference in capitalization in "I was a flower of the mountain" and "I was a Flower of the mountain" (Joyce 643) both found on the penultimate page of the novel. Certain things such as proper names, abbreviations, "I" and the pronouns "He" or "Him" when referring to Bloom or God have privilege in their status as being capitalized, and thus might not be considered significant in terms of variation in speaking.[1] While this may ultimately be dismissed by critics as Molly's simplicity or lack of education, the presence, and at times erratic presence of capitalization casts doubt on this assertion of her simplicity. In giving a voice to "Penelope" through a panoptical narrative, telephonic interiority is at play at the

[1] This assertion is based off of the Hans Walter Gabler edition of *Ulysses*

level of capitalization. Is there an audible difference between a "yes" of assent, a "yes" of understanding, a coerced "yes," or the "yes" of an orgasm when inscribed in a text? Focusing on this point, the only yeses to be capitalized are the first and last ones of "Penelope." The telephonic interiority of the piece demonstrates that these two specific yeses function differently in spite of being both privileged in positioning and capitalization.

While the "Yes" that begins "Penelope" seems to acquiesce and provide a situating or understanding for the reader, the final "Yes" comes after a steady string of yeses. "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." (Joyce 644) In this climax of "Penelope," two ideas are embedded in Molly's asking Bloom with her eyes; silence and a corporeal event. There is a suppression of voice in Molly's asking, rerouting the process of questioning from lips to eyes—an example of telephonic interiority of the body asking with eyes and wanting a response from the lips. This transit of speaking to reading is crucial because it frames the manner in which Molly is telling us *how* to read her narrative. She is asking Bloom indirectly, via a sign to be read by Bloom, as opposed to her outrightly stating "ask me again, Poldy." This silence demonstrates that Molly's voice has a tendency to be suppressed and redirected through another means of signification. While this does not yet pose that Molly's voice is entirely not-present, it demonstrates that Molly's voice is one that is

deferred and seeks validation *to be read* by an external entity, in this case Bloom. This silence of Molly not only invites Bloom to read her, but he understands and assents to the request by asking her to marry him.

From the eyes, the corporeal event travels through the body, like a network. She "drew him down" so that he could feel her breasts and smell her perfume. That event, or perhaps even the anticipation of proposal, had Bloom's heart beating like mad until ultimately Molly erupts with yeses that are closer and closer in succession. The capitalization of the final "Yes" differentiates it from the closest two that precede it. Additionally, in the entirety of "Penelope", this is the largest cluster of yeses in terms of their proximity to one another on the page. In the final five lines of *Ulysses*, there are eight instances of "yes." In any other successive five lines, the largest cluster of "yes" is six, and coincidentally, it is on the second to last page as the narrative when she initially recalls Bloom's proposal. The frequency of "yes" in the final five lines, as she brings Bloom down to her body, suggests that "yes" is functioning beyond a signification of assent, consent, and understanding. "Yes" appears to function as a bodily event prior to that final, capitalized "Yes." (Joyce 643) As Molly indirectly asks Bloom to ask her again, the first yes appears to echo his silent assent—his asking again—"yes and then he asked me." (Joyce 644) The next "yes" appears to anticipate her answer, as if her desire to answer his question is overwhelming her thoughts of anything else that is going on, so much that Leopold's actual proposal is broken apart and fragmented. Of that proposal, all that is certain (aside from Molly saying Yes) is that he calls her his mountain

flower. “Penelope” claims that Molly said “yes I will Yes.” The event of the body ends with her voice—the telephonic interiority of the piece calls from the body and responds with the voice. Yet the rate and increasing occurrences of “yes,” while tied to her bringing his body down into hers, suggests sexual excitement.

The “yes” of sexual excitement or orgasm escapes any definition provided by the Oxford English Dictionary. The closest understanding of the “yes” of sexual excitement and orgasm, as mentioned before, would be assent. However, aside from the “concurrence of will” or “compliance with a desire” innate to the definition of assent (OED), which wills and which desires are coming together? If the “Yes” that begins “Penelope” acts the same as the one that ends it, why the cluster of yeses surrounding the last five lines, as opposed to the first four? While the yes that opens “Penelope” acts as silent assent, this final “Yes” is a verbal proclamation. This event of the body that culminates in the vocalization of “Yes” brings together the moment of Bloom’s proposal to Molly (and the way it supposedly made her feel at the time) and brings it back around as if she is enjoying the memory as it is unfolding to her again—because there is no referent to their proposal scene in any of the previous episodes. Tying these final yeses to the body not only suggests sexual excitement and orgasm, but also presents “Yes” as an affective term when tied to the body. While “yes” is not a formally recognized emotion, it is a sentiment that is grounded in the body in both sexual and non-sexual terms. The joy and pleasure of drinking water when thirsty can warrant a “yes,” as can the sensations of a sexual experience. The difficulty with identifying a network of how the

sensation of "yes" works when tied to the body is that there can be contradictory data tied up in that "yes." What if a hostage is made to say "yes?" What if the bodily enjoyment is contrary to the desire of the individual, like the addict who wishes to quit, or someone who achieves orgasm through rape? While Molly says "yes" to Leopold in "Penelope," she's forced to re-live (albeit positively) Bloom's proposal through Joyce's programming.

In addition to capitalization, typographical aspects further demonstrate the telephonic interiority of "Penelope." The presence of Arabic numerals in the narrative, as well as "4d" (608) meaning four pounds and "6/-" (Joyce 618) meaning six shillings, were this an explicitly spoken monologue, numbers and currency would be written out. Elisabeth Sheffield calls attention to this fact in her work *Joyce's Abandoned Female Costumes, Gratefully Received*. She too, inquires:

> What are we to infer from these numerical symbols appearing where words would be the convention? That Molly actually thinks in numbers—that the sign appears to her mind's eye? This seems rather extraordinary, since generally we think of concepts with their auditory signs rather than their written ones, probably in part because we learn language first by hearing it, not by seeing it." (Sheffield 85)

Sheffield's analysis presents the cacophony between text and voice when considering the "Penelope" episode as one of telephonic interiority. While it is a

sustained narrative, there appears to be a larger concern with reading Molly Bloom as opposed to hearing Molly Bloom. Indeed, if a reader attempts to read "Penelope," each reader will give it different affects, meter, rhythm, stress, pace, and punctuation. No voice, no matter the reader, will get it right. But that isn't the concern of the telephonic interiority of the piece; the written word establishes a Molly Bloom that one assents to upon beginning a reading of "Penelope." In that assent, the reader seeks to coalesce ideas that this truly is Molly's autonomic identity through the lexo-biographical content, as mentioned earlier.

With Molly Bloom as a character that is being forced to perform a pre-programmed version of herself, the programming requires a significant amount of data from the previous episodes, as mentioned earlier. This programming is reliant upon the lexo-biographical information about Molly. If the content as panoptical narrative is lexo-biographical, Molly's performance of that narrative makes it, to a degree, an autobiography in the sense that she is, herself, speaking about herself, albeit under the enforcement of Joyce. Molly speaking the panoptical narrative has her always already engaged in prosopopoeia, demonstrating the telephonic interiority of the episode. Expanding on Paul De Man's remarks that "Prosopopoeia is the trope of autobiography," to include this lexo-biography, his definition shows how "one's name, as in the Milton poem, is made intelligible and memorable as face." (De Man 76) Indeed, Molly Bloom—not Penelope and not Nora—is the mask affixed to the final episode.

The lexo-biographical content anchors the information of the panoptical narration to the tekhne that is the novel itself. Molly's recent history is the previous seventeen episodes, so to further validate the effectiveness of the system, the narrative begins by not only recalling a recent memory of Leopold requesting eggs, but also triggers a recollection of a moment of the last time he did such a thing. "Yes because he never did a thing like that before as ask to get his breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs since the City Arms hotel when he used to be pretending to be laid up with a sick voice doing his highness to make himself interesting for that old faggot Mrs. Riordan…" (Joyce 608) Mrs. Riordan and her tenure at the City Arms Hotel are directly mentioned in the "Ithaca" episode, anchoring Molly's recollection to something verified outside of her narrative. In "Ithaca," Bloom discovers a link that connects both he and Stephen; that link is Mrs. Riordan.

> Mrs. Riordan (Dante), a widow of independent means, had resided in the house of Stephens parents from 1 September 1888 to 29 December 1891 and had also resided during the years 1892, 1893, and 1894 in the City Arms Hotel…she had been a constant informant of Blood who also resided in the same hotel, being at that time a clerk… (Joyce 556)

What "Penelope" accomplishes from its onset, aside from the silent acquiescence of the reader, is that it grounds its signposts through the various

chapters in the text. This establishes a kind of authenticity through the lexo-biographical narrative. Bloom's request of eggs becomes linked to the City Arms Hotel and his association with Mrs. Riordan. Given that a previous episode validates that Bloom did indeed have contact with Mrs. Riordan while they were both at the City Arms Hotel (for an extended time), the "breakfast in bed with a couple of eggs," (Joyce 608), though not directly mentioned in the text, must have been requested by Bloom just before falling sleep. This metonymy, where the missing piece of the breakfast request is made whole and included through Mrs. Riordan and the City Arms Hotel, demonstrates how part of the lexo-biographical Molly Bloom is formed. This information stretches even further back to "Lestrygonians" when it recalls "Old Mrs Riordan with the rumbling stomach's Sky terrier in the City Arms hotel. Molly fondling him in her lap. O, the big doggybowwowsywowsy." (Joyce 143) "Penelope" as panoptical narrative preoccupies itself with coalescing this idea of "Molly" that the reader has been prepped for in previous chapters and is willing to upload by the time "Penelope" is encountered. "Her potential for substantiation, to make 'real or actual,'…would seem to be derived from the interior monologue, which with its wealth of specific, idiosyncratic detail 'proves' or substantiates not only Molly Bloom's existence, but also that of the husband who appears in her thoughts." (Sheffield 83) This substantiation of claims is inherent to the lexo-biographical nature of "Penelope," constantly reaffixing signs that remind us of her Molly-ness. It's the lacunae that gets filled in, like the requesting of breakfast in bed with eggs, through the employment of trope.

Trope, in this case, isn't just a significant or recurrent theme, but it also includes figure of speech (prosopopoeia), as well as "an instance of a property as occurring at a particular time and place; a particular unrepeatable property." (Oxford English Dictionary Online) Trope can include accidental connections and instances between signs, and specifically here, instances in the panoptical narrative that while outside of the lexo-biographical system set up by previous episodes, are otherwise missing pieces that are inferred into being part of that system. In this case, it's Leopold asking for breakfast in bed with eggs. While it isn't something he normally ever does, it can act as a habituated accidental instance, and given the day Leopold has had and the transformations he has underwent, it is a plausible thing he'd do.

Yet, it is the specific and idiosyncratic details that Molly provides in her narrative that can all be found in prior episodes, and "Penelope" essentially acts as a reservoir of that data. The earliest anchoring points of an identifiable Molly can be found in the "Calypso" episode. As Bloom is getting his breakfast together, Molly hasn't even been shown to the reader, yet the paragraph that introduces her provides images and symbols repeated throughout her narrative. "She turned over and the loose brass quoits of the bedstead jingled. Must get those settled really. Pity. All the way from Gibraltar. Forgotten the little Spanish she knew. Wonder what her father gave for it…Hard as nails at a bargain, old Tweedy!" (Joyce 46) Molly confirms that "old jingly bed" (Joyce 635) but contradicts Bloom's claim about her Spanish as she states "I wonder could I get my tongue round any of the Spanish

como esta usted muy bien gracias y usted see I havent forgotten it all." (Joyce 640) The speaking of Spanish and the jingling of the bed are indeed idiosyncratic and specific—factors which add a sense of authenticity to this narrative. Still, with Molly's introduction in "Calypso," signs such as "Gibraltar," "Tweedy," and "Spanish" form tributaries along with the mention of "metempsychosis" and "Paul de Kock." The clustering of these five terms flow into the narrative of Molly Bloom while they gather additional data along the way.

Scenes such as the metempsychosis scene from "Calypso" are referred to constantly, and by doing so, it authenticates the intellectual lexo-biography of Molly. Molly. Molly wanted to ask Bloom about a word and marked the page. "—Met him what? he asked. He leaned downward and read near her polished thumbnail. —Metempsychosis, he said, frowning. It's Greek: from the Greek. That means the transmigration of souls. –O, rocks! she said. Tell us in plain words." (Joyce 52) Again, there is missing information here. Molly's pronunciation of the word is suppressed and fragmented into Bloom's "Met him what?" (Joyce 52) These clusters of words, beginning with the list mentioned above and now including "Greek," "O, rocks" and "metempsychosis," demand the reader to picture Molly as Bloom does every time one of these words are mentioned. So when Bloom is thinking of the Greek origins of the word parallax in "Lestrygonians," it's only natural for his thought processes turn back to Molly.

Par it's Greek: parallel, parallax. Met him pike hoses she called it till I told her about the transmigration. O rocks!

Mr. Bloom smiled O rocks at two windows of the ballastoffice. She's right after all. Only big words for ordinary things on account of the sound. She's not exactly witty. Can be rude too. Blurt out what I was thinking: (Joyce 126)

What these clusters begin to do, when identified, is feed the reader data about the character of Molly. This prepares us for the silent acquiescence of her narrative, attempting to prevent the reader from ever casting doubt upon the authenticity of the Molly being presented. A good and effective program or system would never call attention to the intricacies of how it's running while it's running. "Penelope" is an up and running social profile of Molly Bloom with links back to "Calypso" and "Lestrygonians," regarding information not only about Molly's lexo-biographical self, but also her intellect. When Mrs. Marion Bloom is mentioned in "Sirens," "Met him pike hoses. Smell of burn. Of Paul de Kock. Nice name he," (Joyce 221) these associations have been forged in a way for us to feel as if we know about Molly Bloom without even having met her. This format follows throughout. The sexuality of Molly becomes linked to the erotica of Paul de Kock, specifically the *Sweets of Sin*, as well as her "Spanish nationality…having been born in (technically) Spain, i.e. Gibraltar." (Joyce 520) The work of *Ulysses* flows into and contributes to the lexo-biographical, representational Molly Bloom found in

"Penelope." Yet the tropes that hold the signs together and thus sustain the narrative are fundamentally unverifiable in previous episodes, but somehow, they are privileged in their believability that this really is her internal monologue.

These events produce an image that should be questioned just as much as Leopold Bloom's hallucination of their son Rudy. At the end of the "Circe" episode, Leopold imagines that he sees a figure, "*a fairy boy of eleven, a changeling, kidnapped, dressed in an Eton suit with glass shoes and a little bronze helmet, holding a book in his hand.*" (Joyce 497) The text bolsters the actuality of this revenant Rudy by having Bloom call out "Rudy" and even giving this Rudy stage directions to have one imagine this spectral body in motion; however, there is no antecedent that allows for this description of Rudy. Rudy died soonafter his birth, some ten years ago. It is impossible to say what Rudy would have looked like, yet the presence of the "Eton suit" along with the posture of "holding a book in his hand" (Joyce 497) provides the reader with additional markers allowing us to fill in and validate the presence and authenticity of this hallucination. Back in the "Hades" episode, Bloom imagines that had his son lived, Rudy would have worn such a uniform. "If little Rudy had lived. See him grow up. Hear his voice in the house. Walking beside Molly in an Eton suit." (Joyce 73) The hallucinatory image of Rudy in "Circe", though ambiguous and anachronistic, has its associated link back in the "Hades" episode. The reader will accept this hallucination as Rudy despite not knowing what Rudy would look like, but assured in the fact that were he alive, he would be wearing an Eton suit because it was what Bloom imagined.

The body of text that precedes "Circe," with regard to this Rudy hallucination, establishes a network that navigates and deposits the image of "Eton suit" into this chimerical Rudy that closes "Circe." While it may seem that Bloom is the only one who can see Rudy, the reader, as audience in this performative episode, is privy to this information as well. Nothing aside from the name "Rudy" and the phrase "Eton suit" give us anything about the body or voice of the phantom. Removal of those markers unmask the image as nothing more than a homunculus. Without being anchored to a larger network which channels and filters the image of "Eton suit" by attaching it to a faceless "Rudy," we are guided into reading and accepting the sign as truth, despite knowing that Rudy never achieved that age, having died almost ten years prior. This understanding of Rudy is not without complications, because although we know Rudy is not really there in "Circe" it is the only image we are given for the name Rudy. It's an image tied to a name, and while it is a false image, it is nevertheless attached to the Rudy. The "elvish" features provide a face, and the figure "holding a book in his hand," provides an embodied posture that pours this changeling into an Eton suit, calling him Rudy. *This is a system, not an identity.* If the hallucinatory "Rudy" is indeed an imagined creation, not to be taken as the genuine article (and even if it was, it is impossible to verify within the confines of the novel itself), it is because everything that the reader is lead to believe about this spectral Rudy is caught up in signs, in writing. Thus, Rudy's character is inscribed for us to accept it *ab intio*. The lexo-biography of the character "Rudy" does not match up with that which is presented, still, the reader

assents to its possibility. This silent assent of the reader, coupled with the network of text that precedes the emergence of a character, shows that the lexo-biographical Molly Bloom, just like Rudy, is part of a system, a program written and executed by Joyce.

Much like the way in which one identifies the hallucinated little boy at the end of "Circe" as Rudy, the same operations of calling upon the preceding text are at work in the construction of Molly's mask. Filling in the gaps between signs is trope. The employment of trope in a narrative allows for and:

> confirms that the specular moment [that] is not primarily a situation or an event that can be located in a history, but that it is the manifestation, on the level of the referent, of a linguistic structure. The specular moment that is part of all understanding reveals the tropological structure that underlies all cognitions, including knowledge of self. The interest of autobiography, then, is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge—it does not—but that it demonstrates in a striking way the impossibility of closure and of totalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological situations." (De Man 70-71)

What De Man points to here is the difficulty locating and verifying an event in the history of a narrative because the narrative is always reliant upon tropological structures that allow one to feign knowledge of a specific referent event.

Auto-biography, or in this case lexo-biography, becomes fundamentally unreliable as a source of gaining a better understanding of a self—in this case Molly Bloom—because, as De Man claims, it shows that the linguistic system that configures trope is inescapable. It is a net, a mask, that is conferred upon its narrator signifying its readability. The reading of "Penelope" by Molly is thus fundamentally an act of prosopopoeia as she is performing, as one would do in monologue or soliloquy, an auto-biographical form—here for our purposes, lexi-biographical.

While De Man's remarks on prosopopoeia are significant in gaining an understanding of how autobiography coincides with it, one must look at both the origins of the word as well as how it had originally been classified by Quintilian. Prosopopoeia derives from the Greek *prosopon*, which can mean face, person,(OED) or "mask employed on the dramatic stage." (Lundberg 135) *Poeia*, or in its noun form, *poesis*, means "the process of making; production." (OED) In terms of the signification of a word, the term can apply to an individual in public—their public appearance—or a public work, such as a text or piece of art. In this uniquely public space, that individual is "making a face." Prosopopoeia, displays "the thoughts of our opponents, as they themselves would do in a soliloquy, but in our inventions of that sort will meet with credit only so far as we represent people saying what is not unreasonable to suppose that they may have meditates."(Quintilian 9:2:31) This function is an innately social one. When speaking, the individual cannot see their own face; they are in essence, de-faced. Words, not to mention our faces, may not properly or even remotely signify how an experience is grounded in a body. At the

same time, it is a mode of display. The speaking subject, Molly, is showing the thoughts of the opponent, the text itself, and is again, engaged in telephonic interiority. There is a distance here, between face and mask, text and voice, words and body. The telephonic interiority of this episode shows that the addressee is always pointed outward to a public that may not even be listening. Having established that "Penelope" is written, it simultaneously de-faces Molly Bloom and affixes upon her the mask of "Penelope" in the novel *Ulysses*. The words of "Penelope" are grafted onto Molly through Molly's engaging in prosopopoeia to the point that the telephonic interiority of the episode makes is difficult to say what is real about Molly Bloom.

Molly manages to interrupt this telephonic interiority in three key articulations. The first appears coded and ambiguous. "Who is in your mind now tell me who are you thinking of who is it tell me his name who tell me who the german Emperor is it yes imagine Im him think of him can you feel him trying to make a whore of me." (Joyce 610) The ambiguity here is that Molly seems to be recalling Bloom apparently roleplaying, imploring Molly to confess who she's thinking of while trying to have sex with Bloom—a cuckolding fantasy. He imagines Molly is thinking of the German Emperor, for we get nothing more than a "yes" that suggests that maybe Molly told him with her eyes. The "can you feel him trying to make a whore of me" conflates "imagine" and "feel" and thus would make Bloom the whore and not the cuckold. (Joyce 610) However, the continuation of the line shows that the "me" in the line is indeed Molly. "Can you feel him trying to

make a whore of me what he never will he ought to give it up now at this age of his life simply ruination for any woman and no satisfaction in it pretending to like it." (Joyce 610) The ambiguity of this line now changes the "him" as possibly being a remembrance of Bloom attempting to turn Molly into a prostitute, which in itself would perpetually fulfill the cuckolding fantasy; however, if this happened at all, it not only is ahistorical, but also it has no reference point to allow one to fill it in metonymically. Yet, if the "him" in question is Joyce himself, the author, Molly demonstrates that she is aware that he is "trying" to make a whore of her, but "he never will." (Joyce 610) Not only does it demonstrate a struggle, but it displays the distance, the telephonic interiority, between Molly's act of prosopopoeia and this panoptical narrative of "Penelope." Molly continues that "he ought to give it up not at this age of his life" because were she to become a prostitute, he would be an old pimp, and she would derive "no satisfaction in it pretending to like it." (Joyce 610) This doesn't necessarily mean that she wouldn't pretend, she simply would not get any satisfaction. Wryly, prosopopoeia, to a degree, is pretending. It doesn't implicate or suggest the satisfaction of a subject engaged in prosopopoeia; it does however, suggest that there must be believability.

With concern to believability in prosopopoeia, Quintilian writes that "so far as we introduce our own conversations with others, or those of others among themselves, with an air of plausibility; and when we invent persuasions, or reproaches, or complaints, or eulogies, or lamentations, and put them into the mouths of characters likely to utter them." (Quintilian 9:2:30) This idea of an "air of

plausibility" allows for pretending and not necessarily satisfaction—though it doesn't omit the possibility. Nevertheless, that likelihood and authenticity behind Molly making such a statement that is grounded in sexuality, cuckoldry, and prostitution falls into the category of "plausible" things Molly might say. While ambiguous, there is the subtle glance at Joyce.

The next emergence of Molly's frustration comes at the expense of her own name. As she recounts books that she has read, lent, and borrowed, "Molly bawn she gave me by Mrs Hungerford on account of the name I dont like books with a Molly in them like that one he brought me about the one from Flanders a whore always shoplifting." (Joyce 622) Molly is referring to the texts *Molly Bawn* by Margaret Wolfe Hungerford and Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, who indeed, for twelve years was a whore. (Gifford 618) This articulation manages to weave in her name, *Ulysses*, which is a book with a Molly in it, and again, prostitution. Still, here is the most lucid articulation of Molly's awareness that she is represented as a character in a text, and no matter what, she doesn't like it. In the case of *Molly Bawn*, which in Irish means beautiful Molly, the novel is titled after an Irish ballad. According to Don Gifford's annotations, in Hungerford's novel, "Molly is the beautiful, well-meaning, but capricious Irish girl of good family who is wooed, almost lost, and finally won by the hero." (Gifford 618) This representation, this Molly, is not quite like the cluster of signs that gather around Joyce's Molly. Though the Defoe reference fulfills some aspect of sexuality with Moll Flanders' being a prostitute, it's the clever reference to the Irish ballad that escapes Molly

Bloom's distaste. In fact, what we know of this Molly, with regards to the preceding chapters telling us so, is that she sings. Metonymically filling in the gap from Molly to novel is the Irish ballad that presumably, much like the breakfast in bed, our textual Molly would have to be familiar with given that she encountered a novel of the same name—of which is she decidedly fond.

The Irish ballad *Molly Bawn* exists outside of this text, as it is only referred to as a novel, not as ballad. With the help of Don Gifford's annotations, the link to the ballad comes to light, and suddenly, Molly Bloom has an ahistorical, anachronistic link that reaches outside of the fiction of the text. Inevitably, the Irish ballad shares several key words that inextricably link it back to *Ulysses*, though the ballad itself was never outrightly the reference. Nevertheless, upon further examination of the ballad of *Molly Bawn*, while the first stanza predominantly concerns the stars brightly shining above and the flowers remaining in bloom longer than usual, as to rival Molly's beauty, it's the second stanza where the pining for Molly takes on a more sinister demeanor.

> Oh, Molly Bawn, why leave me pining,
> All lonely, waiting here for you?
> Now the pretty flowers were made to bloom, dear,
> And the pretty stars were made to shine;
> And the pretty girls were made for the boys, dear,
> And may be you were made for mine:
> The wicked watch-dog here is snarling,
> He takes me for a thief, you see;
> For he knows I'd steal you, Molly, darling,
> And then transported I should be.
> Oh, Molly Bawn, why leave me pining,
> All lonely, waiting here for you? (Lover 55)

The pining quickly turns to something more identifiable as obsession and delusion as its says "And the pretty girls were made for the boys, dear,/ And may be you were made for mine." (Lover 55) The tone turns ominous, where the watch-dog snarls, sensing that the one doing the pining would kidnap Molly "and then [be] transported" presumably to prison, he would be. What gets suggested here is the intention of stealing Molly, which implies force, and the crime, whether it is kidnapping, rape, or murder, would cause the one who pines to be jailed. This dark ballad has an individual, obsessed with a Molly, aiming to take her by force, or steal her. This notion is integral to the final utterance of Molly from beneath the confines of the narrative.

In perhaps her most famous utterance aside from "yes," Molly calls out the creator of the text. When Molly Bloom says "O Jamesy let me up out of this pooh," (Joyce 633) there are several things surrounding that line that must be noted before examining why at that particular moment in the text, Molly decides to break through the narrative. While the articulation takes place on lines 1128-1129, this particular beat has Molly realizing that she is menstruating, which begins on line 1105 with "yes that thing has come on me yes." (Joyce 632) The "monthly auction" (Joyce 632) appears, and in doing so, Molly's narrative recollects previous times where it was an inconvenience, before ultimately talking about the quantity of blood; blood on the sheets, and blood associated with virginity. Before returning to the menstrual blood associations, "*Sweets of Sin*" (Joyce 633) intrudes in the text immediately following the metafictional utterance. The placement of this utterance

in the middle of this menstrual cycle of the narrative, for some, situates Molly as earth mother, reveling in her feminine body as "the waters come down at Lahore." (Joyce 633) Sheffield states that this "plea calls the reader's attention to her status as a construct of the writer's imagination (and also comments whether Joyce intended it or not, on his founding her character in the ancient muck of woman = earth)" (Sheffield 83-84) The earth mother reading of this line is popular, as O'Donnell also writes that "Molly may be viewed in this passage as enjoying her own maternal body and freely giving vent to her desires in this fluid, 'semiotic' grammar…and within the terms of the reconstitution of the 'boundaries' approached and potentially transgressed by the moment of *jouissance*." (O'Donnell 83) While it is safe to say that this utterance reaches out from the menstrual blood to transgress and plea up to her creator, it's the language used in the articulation that implies that this plea might be one imploring Joyce to stop.

"Jamesy" sounds like a pet name, one used to perhaps coerce. "Let me up" suggests permission. "Jamesy" has the control, and Molly, seemingly placed in a position lower than "Jamesy," needs his permission to rise out of the "pooh," which while previously associated with menstrual blood, also could function as text itself. Molly's request to get out of the performance again enacts telephonic interiority, where the character is speaking outside of the enforced role to plea to Joyce to allow her to stop and get out of this system. The telephonic interiority of this episode is highlighted by the fact that the tone of Molly changes to a submissive tone for the only time in the episode; the panoptical narration presents "Penelope" as the

dominant, assured Molly Bloom—a mask that Molly wears at Joyce's behest. Yet it is when she is bleeding, menstruating, there is the articulation of submission with "Jamesy" and "let me up." From that articulation, the "*Sweets of sin*," (Joyce 633) refers to an erotic novel by Paul de Kock, a Joycean pun on Poldy Cuck, or Leopold the Cuckold. It's presence and reference throughout the novel is yet another point that anchors sexuality to Molly Bloom, but it's placement here seems anything but erotic unless one is a fetishist, which we know Bloom is. While the "sweets of sin" present on line 1129 could simply refer to the "blackberry juice" (Joyce 633) of menstrual blood on line 1128, taken in conjunction with her other utterances—the imagined prostitution of Molly, the stealing away of Molly Bawn, and more prostitution in Moll Flanders—Joyce doesn't seem to be making a whore of Molly, rather, he is fetishizing her for his arousal. With this more ominous reading, the "sweets of sin" is Joyce's cuckolding of Bloom while simultaneously having menstrual sex with Molly. Yet in this sex act, there is Molly's remoteness in this telephonic interiority—a request to get out of this enforced sexual performance of "Penelope." The character of Molly Bloom wants to show that what she's been reading is not her, but it's a simulation, a virtual Molly called "Penelope" that she unwillingly assents to with a yes.

The "Penelope" episode of *Ulysses* demonstrates how telephonic interiority functions with concern to a panoptical narrative voiced via prosopopoeia. By calling attention to Molly being forced to read the "plain words" of a written narrative under which she has no say, it demonstrates how reliant upon pre-existing

programs and systems we are when considering and constructing our own identities. This notion is more prevalent in a digital culture, and understanding the "Penelope" episode in this context presents a new understanding of "Penelope" as a Molly simulation. Identity becomes hidden in language, obscured by systems, and the virtual becomes the more desirable identity because it's what people want to see, read, or fetishize. Each word is a silent "yes" that allows language to invade our bodies, distort our voices, and affix masks over our faces rendering it impossible to discern if we ever are who we say we are.

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