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READING MOLLY BLOOM

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Teresa Lanpher Nugent

1994

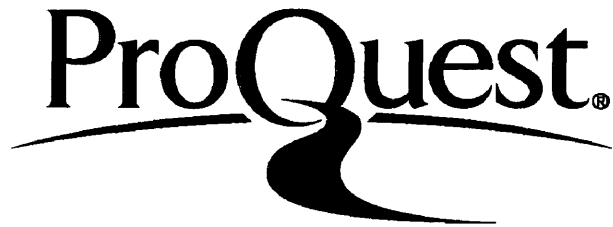
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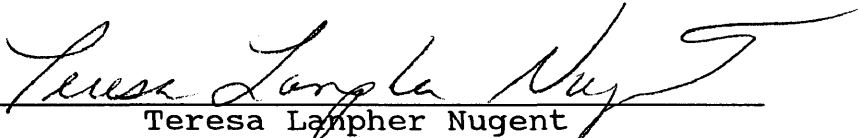
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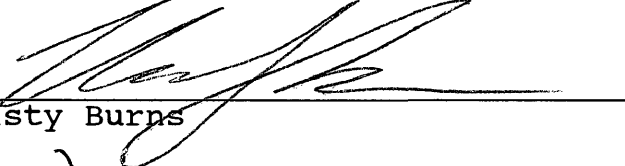
This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts




Teresa Lanpher Nugent


Approved, December 1994



Christy Burns



John H. Willis



Colleen Kennedy

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father,
Buel F. Lanpher,
and for my mother,
Lela R. Lanpher,
for their unconditional love and endless support.

And for Philippe,
who is always there for me.

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ABSTRACT

In the midst of Molly Bloom's remembrance of her youth, she recalls seven novels which she had read and enjoyed or disliked in varying degrees. Molly's list of books is initially called to mind when she remembers her girlhood friend, Hester, and her own flirtations with Hester's husband, whom Molly associates with a character in one of these novels. Significantly, the plots of several of these novels revolve around two women vying for the affections of one man. This study argues that Molly's readings have a direct influence on her concepts of male-female and female-female relationships, her definition of sexuality and womanhood, and her view of marriage.

Joyce's selection of Molly's reading material enriches the reader's understanding of Molly. Perhaps unintentionally, they also suggest certain assumptions about the relationship between printed words and a reader. This study surveys the seven works mentioned by Molly in order to explore how they aid or complicate our understanding of her as a character and what they suggest about Molly as a reader. Ultimately, Molly's resistant reading strategies and manipulation of texts to serve her own purposes portray a dynamic relationship between a reader and a text.

READING MOLLY BLOOM

INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXTS WITHIN TEXTS

Throughout Joyce's Ulysses, texts embedded within the text add dimension to individual characters. Ulysses evokes other texts partly through plot, e.g. the Homeric parallel; partly through a variety of writing styles, imitating and parodying styles from different periods in history or from contemporaneous but contrasting disciplines; and partly by referring to specific titles or authors. For example, Bloom's character develops into a modern, *ersatz* Ulysses as we compare and contrast him with the original wandering Odysseus. The rhetoric of advertising jingles and journalism, pseudoscientific empiricism, and soft pornography shape Bloom's internal dialogue and reveal him to be a product of mass culture. In addition, the specific books, newspapers, and musical lyrics that Bloom quotes, or misquotes, exhibit his interest in (and in some cases, his misunderstanding of) a broad range of topics, including Irish-British politics, Jewish identity and persecution, health and folklore, sadomasochism, etc. While the relation between specific texts and Leopold Bloom has been noted frequently by literary scholars, less attention has been paid to how Molly Bloom is figured through specific texts. I propose to analyze Joyce's

references to specific novels included in Molly's late night reflections for clues that animate her character.

Even Joyce's minor characters are developed through references to other texts; for example, Dilly's purchase of a French primer with one of her few pennies reveals her own hunger for intellectual stimulation as well as food. She eerily prefigures Woolf's later speculations on the likely fate of a hypothetical sister of the Bard. Some characters can be read as personifications of a particular genre of writing; for instance, critics point out that Joyce created Gerty MacDowell as an embodiment of the sentimental novel.¹ In a similar manner, Molly Bloom's preference for romance and sensation novels shapes her discourse and reveals facets of her personality. Yet, comparing Molly with her reading material also shows her to be a resistant reader.²

When we first meet Molly in "Calypso," she has just finished reading Ruby: The Pride of the Ring, described by Don Gifford as an exposé of the cruelties of circus life (78).³ Molly comments, "There's nothing smutty in it." When Bloom asks if she wants "another" she responds, "Yes. Get another of Paul de Kock's. Nice name he has" (4.335-8). At this point in the story, the reader has little information with which to interpret how Molly defines "smut" and whether Molly wants more or less of it in her reading material. Her emphasis on the sexual innuendo of Paul de Kock's name--"Nice name he has" (4.358)--does lend the impression that Molly likes sexual innuendo.

Paul de Kock's works, according to Gifford, focus on the "democratic bourgeoisie" (shopgirls, clerks, etc.) and were estimated by an Edwardian critic as "vulgar but not unmoral" (78). So Molly may prefer reading popular romances, which were usually fashioned with conventional moral lessons. Only in the last chapter, when Molly's internal thoughts are finally voiced, does the reader gain a clearer picture of Molly's view of smut; she thinks about Bloom's postcard of a nun and labels it a "smutty photo" (18.22). The empirical narrator of "Ithaca" describes this postcard thus: "anal violation by male religious (fully clothed, eyes abject) of female religious (partly clothed, eyes direct)" (17.1811-2). So Molly's definition of smut seems to refer to pornography rather than romance. Interestingly, Molly later refers to this postcard and compares herself with the female in the photo: "shes as much a nun as Im not" (18.22). She also identifies with the female subject in Bloom's other erotic postcard: "Im a little like that dirty bitch in that Spanish photo he has" (18.563-4), described in "Ithaca" as a "buccal coition between nude señorita (rere presentation, superior position) and nude torero (fore presentation, inferior position)" (17.1809-11). The mixture of identification and derision that Molly expresses toward these postcards corresponds with the tension between her interest in smut and in romance, and signals her mixed feelings toward her own sexuality in the midst of cultural stereotypes of women as whores or angels. The heroines of sensation novels who

increasingly display female desire caught in the web of economic and social constraints--thus disrupting the classic dichotomy between morally good and bad females--may offer Molly examples of women attempting to negotiate the contrasting sacred and profane stereotypes of women. Molly turns to these female characters to confront conflicting cultural images of femininity.

After reading Ruby: Pride of the Ring, a book calling for reforms to curb the sadistic abuse of orphans in the circus, the question foremost on Molly's mind concerns romance: "Is she in love with the first fellow all the time?" (4.355-6) she asks Bloom. Her question resonates with meaningful relevance to her own role in Joyce's Ulysses; is Molly in love with Bloom all along, despite her affair with Boylan? Significantly, Leopold has not read this book and does not know the answer. Instead, he offers to bring her another book.

Later that day, in the midst of "Wandering Rocks" when Bloom surveys the bookseller's selection, he pages through several different works before settling on what he thinks would most appeal to Molly. He reviews and rejects The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, a fraudulent exposé of abuses committed in a nunnery; Aristotle's Masterpiece, a "mildly pornographic" work of "pseudosexual pseudomedical folklore"; Tales of the Ghetto, a moral upbraiding of anti-Semitic persecutions; and Fair Tyrants, a novel so far unidentified (Gifford 271-2). Bloom recognizes Fair Tyrants as a certain

"type" and decides, "No: she wouldn't like that much. Got her it once" (10.605). In fact, Molly recalls that he brought her this book twice (18.493). Although the book is not initially described, Joyce provides hints of its sexual-sadistic theme by attributing it to the author James Lovebirch who, according to Gifford, had written works with titles such as The Flagellation of Suzette (272). The fact that Bloom weaves this name into his nighttown fantasy of sex and punishment in "Circe"--one of his accusers at his trial charges that Bloom signed his name as James Lovebirch on the "improper" letter he sent her (15.1018)--further suggests Fair Tyrants's sadomasochistic theme. Religion, physiology, politics, and submission and domination themes suit Bloom's tastes more than Molly's, however. Indeed, while thinking about the story of the Prince of Wales using an oyster knife to unlock his mistress's chastity belt, Molly reasons:

cant be true a thing like that like some of those books he brings me . . . Ruby and Fair Tyrants he brought me that twice I remember when I came to page 50 the part about where she hangs him up out of a hook with a cord flagellate sure *theres nothing for a woman in that* all invention made up about he drinking champagne out of her slipper after the ball was over (18.487-96, emphasis added)

Obviously, despite Bloom's repeated efforts to interest Molly in rougher material, she prefers romance to pain. More significantly, as the above quotation indicates, Molly genders

reading material and erotica; domination and submission themes are strictly masculine, holding no interest for a female reader. Romance, however, is feminine material and adulterous or pre-marital exploits are sufficiently titillating for the female mind. Therefore, on June 16th, Bloom selects a tale of illicit passion to entertain Molly, complete with details of the material frills rendered mandatory by modern commerce: "*All the dollarbills her husband gave her were spent in the stores on wondrous gowns and costliest frillies. For him! For Raoul!*" (10.608-9). Sweets of Sin accompanies Bloom throughout the rest of the day, its plot mingling with his worries about Molly and Boylan.

In order to understand Molly's reading tastes, we must look at her earliest experiences with novels. In the midst of her late night monologue in "Penelope," Molly thinks about the books she read as a young girl and which ones she preferred. In particular, Molly recalls several novels that she associates with her first experience in a love triangle. A closer look at Molly's formative reading material reveals how it has influenced her views on love, men, herself, and other women, and sheds light on Molly's present situation as she reviews her first day in an adulterous affair. Fiction and reality in Molly's mind mirror and distort one another, as the following chapters will illustrate.

CHAPTER I

NOVELS REMEMBERED BY MOLLY

In the course of her musings, Molly recalls several novels that she has read. These texts, in conjunction with the memories with which they are associated, provide insightful clues for understanding Molly's character. In the space of six lines Molly recalls seven books. Most importantly, her thoughts about these books are intermixed with her reflections on one of her first intimate relationships with another woman and with a man.

The unusual heat of Dublin on June 16th, finally broken by the sudden rain storm, reminds Molly of her youth in Gibraltar and of a girlhood friend named Hester who married a man much older than herself. Thinking of Hester, Molly muses, "she didnt look a bit married just like a girl he was years older than her wogger he was awfully fond of me" (18.623-5). Molly remembers that this man, Mr. Stanhope, also gave her the eye frequently.⁴ Her memories of her friendship with Hester, her attraction to Hester's husband, and then the Stanhopes' departure from Gibraltar seem to have profoundly affected Molly. The Stanhopes' significance is confirmed when they reappear near the end of Molly's mental wanderings as she recalls Bloom's proposal: she didn't answer him immediately

because she was thinking about "so many things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr. Stanhope and Hester" (18.1582-3).

Hester was probably a few years older than Molly and acted as a surrogate older sister/role model to the motherless Molly, teaching her how to fix her hair and how to sew: "we used to compare our hair mine was thicker than hers she showed me how to settle it at the back when I put it up and whats this else how to make a knot on a thread with the one hand we were like cousins" (18.638-41). This is the second time in her monologue that Molly associates her hair with another female with whom she competes for male attention. Earlier that night, she recalled Josie Powell's jealousy of her and Bloom's courtship:

she didnt like it so much the day I was in fits of laughing with the giggles I couldnt stop *about all my hairpins falling out one after another with the mass of hair I had* youre always in great humour she said yes because it grigged her because she knew what it meant because I used to tell her a good bit of what went on between us not all but just enough to make her mouth water (18.211-6, emphasis added)

Clearly, Molly associates her great "mass of hair" with her sexuality; therefore, Hester's attempt to show Molly how to "settle" her hair and how to sew translates into an attempt to tame and domesticate Molly. In addition, Molly's interjection in mid-thought of "whats this" may denote the discovery of some potted meat crumbs in the sheets left behind

from her afternoon rendezvous with Blazes Boylan (Leopold had also discovered "some flakes of potted meat" (17.2125) upon climbing into bed); these crumbs further emphasize Molly's sexuality and penchant for transgressing sexual codes. Perhaps this interruption in her thoughts also signals how easily Molly is distracted from thoughts of domestic tasks by libidinal diversions.

Molly recalls spending a stormy night sleeping in Hester's arms and then pillow fighting with her in the morning:

what age was I then the night of the storm I slept
in her bed she had her arms round me then we were
fighting in the morning with the pillow what fun
(18.640-3)

This early experience of girlhood companionship with hints of homoeroticism⁵ instantly transfers to an explicitly sexual association with the man whom Hester marries: "he was watching me whenever he got an opportunity" (18.643). This may be Molly's first experience with flirting, and she reflects on how this initiation into gazing and being the object of a man's gaze seemed to change her image in the mirror:

I looked up at the Church first and then at the
windows then down and our eyes met I felt something
go through me like all needles my eyes were dancing
I remember after when I looked at myself in the
glass hardly recognized myself the change (18.645-

8)

This changed image in the mirror that Molly perceives reflects Molly's altered view of her own identity in light of her new sexual awareness. She begins to view herself as the object of a male gaze. Significantly, Molly's first close girlfriend becomes her first competitor for male attention and, if marriage is the goal, as all her novels prescribe, the other woman wins.

Molly's awakening to the excitement of heterosexual attraction also redefines for her the dynamics within female relations: male sexual attention takes precedence over female friendships as Molly fantasizes about having a tryst with her friend's husband. Yet, she does concede that there exists a code of honor regarding such behavior: "it wouldnt have been nice on account of her but I could have stopped it in time" (18.651-2). At a young age, Molly has confidence in her ability to control sexual encounters. Molly also speculates that jealousy motivates some of Mrs. Stanhope's subsequent actions: When Molly received a letter from Hester after the Stanhopes had left Gibraltar, she recalls, "she didnt put her address right on it either she may have noticed her wogger" (18.667-8).

Molly seems to use plots in sensation novels to categorize and understand her new sexual role in the social dynamics surrounding her. Thinking of Mr. Stanhope conjures an image in Molly's mind of a character from a novel. Molly decides that "he was like Thomas in the shadow of Ashlydyat"

because "he was attractive to a girl in spite of his being a little bald intelligent looking disappointed and gay at the same time" (18.648-50). Immediately following her rationalization for flirting with her friend's husband, Molly recalls, "she [Hester] gave me the Moonstone to read that was the first I read of Wilkie Collins" and then proceeds to list similar works that come to mind:

East Lynne I read and the shadow of Ashlydyat Mrs. Henry Wood Henry Dunbar by that other woman I lent him afterwards with Mulveys photo in it so as he see I wasnt without and Lord Lytton Eugene Aram 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 bought me about the one from Flanders a whore always shoplifting anything she could (18.652-9)

Associating The Shadow of Ashlydyat character with Hester's husband sparks this chronicle of novels; interestingly, Ashlydyat is the only title mentioned twice. Apparently, Hester gave Molly The Moonstone by Wilkie Collins and, as Molly's words suggest, Molly read this book and then other works by Collins. Thinking of The Moonstone causes Molly to recall other novels she had read, and she remembers East Lynne, another work by Mrs. Henry Wood, as well as The Shadow of Ashlydyat. The three books whose titles and authors Molly remembers seem to have had the strongest effects on her. Linked to her memory of Hester and her husband, these works

seem likely to have shaped Molly's perceptions about male and female relationships and behavior.

Next, Molly recalls the novel Henry Dunbar, but only remembers that the author was another woman (Mary Elizabeth Braddon); she particularly remembers how she used this book to let some man--Bloom?--know that she had other suitors by lending it to him with a photo of Mulvey tucked inside. Molly's memory of Henry Dunbar is followed immediately with The Trial and Life of Eugene Aram by Edward Bulwer-Lytton; perhaps this book also was passed on to the same man. Finally, Molly lists two more works that both revolve around a character named Molly: Margaret Wolfe Hungerford's Molly Bawn and Daniel Defoe's The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders. The context of Molly's musings implies that Hester Stanhope also gave her Molly Bawn and that Bloom probably brought her the copy of Moll Flanders. Evidently, Molly did not like the way these other "Mollys" were portrayed: "I dont like books with a Molly in them" (18.657-8).

The first three authors whom Molly recalls, directly or indirectly, are famous for originating the genre of sensation novels. Collins' The Woman in White, Wood's East Lynne, and Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret were wildly successful novels in the 1860s. As Sally Mitchell notes in her introduction to East Lynne, the qualities of the sensation novel occurred in earlier literature, "but the term, the fashion, and ultimately the formula originated with these three books" (xi).

Joyce directly references only one of these three famous works, East Lynne. The Moonstone, however, is probably Collins' second best-known work of his twenty-odd novels, and, as Gifford notes, it has been proclaimed "the first and most perfect detective novel ever written" (618). Similarly, Joyce includes another novel by Margaret Braddon, Henry Dunbar, instead of her most famous work, Lady Audley's Secret. Oddly, Joyce incorporates two works by Mrs. Henry Wood, the popular East Lynne, and a lesser known novel, The Myth of Ashlydyat. This second novel acquires particular significance since Molly mentions it by name twice and associates it with Mr. Stanhope.

The following chapters will examine these novels for clues to explain why Joyce selected them to represent Molly's girlhood reading. Some of the questions I pursue in this study include whether Molly Bloom of 1904 is a product of the materials she read in the past, and to what extent the sensation plot continues to shape her perspective on the world around her. Molly evidently used narrative to understand her first experience of being part of a love triangle. Does she continue to use narrative--the same ones or different ones--to comprehend her present roles as wife and mistress?

CHAPTER II

MRS. HENRY WOOD'S CRITIQUE OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Two works by Mrs. Henry Wood drift through Molly's memories as she lies in bed thinking about Hester and Mr. Stanhope: The Shadow of Ashlydyat, published in 1863, and East Lynne, published in 1861. Since these novels are infrequently read today (most of Molly's novels are out of print), I will briefly summarize each, noting their relevance to Molly, and then discuss the significance of Joyce associating Molly with the sensation genre.

Wood's The Shadow of Ashlydyat provides Molly with a frame of reference for categorizing the people around her. Her comparison of Hester's husband to the character Thomas in Ashlydyat--"intelligent looking disappointed and gay at the same time he was like Thomas in . . ." (18.649-50)--is unusual, according to Gifford, because "Thomas can hardly be described as 'gay' (a word Mrs. Wood uses repeatedly to characterize George)" (618). George is Thomas's carefree, handsome, younger brother who squanders the family fortune. In contrast, Thomas is the pale, responsible, quietly-suffering, never-complaining elder brother: "a casual observer might have pronounced him 'insignificant.' But there was a certain attraction in his face which won its way to

hearts" (Ashlydyat 9). A comparison of Ashlydyat with Ulysses suggests an interesting correspondence between Thomas and the patient, responsible Leopold Bloom as well as between George and the impetuous and impecunious Stephen Dedalus. Molly's blending of the two brothers, Thomas and George, mirrors the frequent conflating of Stephen and Bloom to represent elements of Joyce himself. More significantly, by recalling Thomas's name instead of George's to associate with Mr. Stanhope, Molly may signal her preference for a solid, reliable man over a more flamboyant but less stable lover. Or, she may reveal her desire for both reliability and gaiety in one man.

The plot of Ashlydyat revolves primarily around George and the two women who want to marry him. Aptly-named Charlotte Pain is a striking, self-assured shrew, often considered 'unfeminine' in her direct manners, and is motivated in her pursuit of George by his ancient Godolphin family heritage as well as his handsome face. George, as a younger brother in primogenitor England, is urged by his father to consider Charlotte for a wife since she has money. However, George is already in love with meek, pious, loyal and pretty Maria Hastings, the minister's daughter who has no fortune. George chooses the 'proper' girl, Maria, but he lacks the moral constitution of his brother. Charlotte Pain and her relations coax George to the gaming tables where he quickly amasses overwhelming debts and begins embezzling money from the family-run bank to cover his losses. Maria stands by him even after he is discovered, but the pressure of public

scandal is multiplied by untrue rumors of George's romantic attachment to Charlotte Pain, fueled by the thoughtless George's continued association with Charlotte and her family.⁶ Maria slowly dies of a broken heart. Only at her deathbed does George learn of her belief in this affair and he disabuses her of it before she dies.

A lesser, parallel plot introduces the novel; it involves elder brother Thomas who is engaged to marry the 'Cinderella' of the village: poor, never-complaining, ever-faithful Ethyl who is constantly abused by her ill-mannered mother and petulant sister, Sarah Anne. When Sarah Anne falls sick with dreaded fever, Thomas contemplates defying propriety and taking his fiancé away to escape harm even though they are not yet unmarried. But prudence causes him to ask only that Ethyl stay out of the sick chamber. Despite his wish and the doctor's orders, Ethyl's mother insists that Ethyl nurse her sick sister. Predictably, Sarah Anne recovers and Ethyl becomes mortally ill and dies. Gradually, the grief-stricken Thomas develops an untreatable malady and wastes away, too; thus, destroying Ethyl's mother's hopes for coaxing Thomas into marrying Sarah Anne.

By associating Mr. Stanhope with Thomas/George, Molly seems to be placing herself in the role of 'the other woman whom the hero does not marry' vis-a-vis Hester. The primary 'other woman' in Ashlydyat is Charlotte Pain; the Ethyl/Sarah Anne plot functions mainly as a stark reflection of the Maria/Charlotte story. The description of vivacious and

daring Charlotte would seem far more appealing to and characteristic of Molly who chafed under the strict moral conventions of Catholic Ireland and Gibraltar as indicated by her reaction to Mrs. Riordan--"let us have a bit of fun first God help the world if all women were her sort down on bathingsuits and lownecks" (8-10)--and Mrs. Rubio--"I didnt run into mass often enough in Santa Maria to please her" (757-8). While Molly would more easily identify with the tastes and manners of Charlotte Pain, the moral narration in Wood's book strongly encourages the reader to side with Maria Hastings. Thus, the book would throw Molly into a quandary between a 'proper' reading and her own preferred responses. Molly might have noted that Maria dies in the novel, while Charlotte lives on to enjoy her dogs, and horses, and feathers. This rather unorthodox killing off of the 'good' girl while allowing the 'bad' girl to live on--although Maria's death is probably meant to be read as George's punishment--would add to Molly's confusion over identifying with Charlotte or Maria.

Molly might identify with Charlotte's propensity for transgressing conventional codes. Charlotte shocks the sensibilities of the most pious Godolphin sister, Janet, by visiting without wearing her bonnet. She also disrupts established views of femininity. Janet worries about Charlotte's unanticipated presence at dinner when they are expecting an older female friend of the family because, as she explains to George,

[Charlotte's] conversation is at time unfeminine . . . Should she launch into some of her favorite topics, her horses and her dogs, it will sound unfeminine to Mrs. Briscow's ears. In her young days these subjects were deemed more suitable to men's lips than to women's. (Ashlydyat 148)

Molly also would be more impressed by Charlotte's striking outfits, particularly her bright green riding-habit with gold buttons and feathers rather than Maria's plain white and grey attire (13). The narrator of The Shadow of Ashlydyat muses at the end of his story, "What she'll do when these feathers go out of fashion it's hard to say: Charlotte could hardly stir out without one" (510). Molly remembers her own hat with a feather, ruined when Bloom nearly sunk their rowboat at Bray: "I couldnt even change my new white shoes all ruined with saltwater and the hat I had with that feather all blowy and tossed on me how annoying and provoking (18.970-3). Throughout her thoughts, Molly's love of clothes is apparent and she clearly links clothes to sexuality; when she thinks about Boylan she determines, "in any case if its going to go on I want at least two other good chemises for one thing . . . and one of those kidfitting corsets . . . now garters that much I have" (18.438-57). Later, when Molly imagines having Stephen live with her and Bloom, she concludes, "Id have to get a nice pair of red slippers like those Turks with the fez used to sell or yellow and a nice semitransparent morning gown that I badly want or a peachblossom dressing

jacket like the one long ago in Walpoles" (18.1494-7). Molly's desire for sexy clothing echoes the line from Sweets of Sin for "wondrous gowns and frillies. For him!" (10.609). The added insistence, as a second thought, that these frillies are for a man (the other man) also belies the reality that they are for *her*. Molly's reading material reflects and reinscribes capitalism's successful commodification of female sexual desire.⁷ Molly identifies with the image of the fashionable woman portrayed in novels and advertisements and reenacts these desires in her fantasized and actual relationships with Boylan, Stephen, and Bloom.

In addition to her interest in clothes, Molly's ideas about men and marriage may have been shaped by her attraction to strong-willed Charlotte. Charlotte defers Rodolf's repeated marriage proposals, hoping that George will propose, and then finally accepts Rodolf, but only on her own terms.

'Mind, Rodolf, it shall be an understood thing beforehand that you don't attempt to control me in the smallest particular; that I have my own way in everything.'

'You will take care to have that, Charlotte, whether it be an understood thing beforehand or not,' replied he. (SA 168)

Although Molly seems slightly more gracious in her behavior toward Bloom, one reason she selects him for a mate, she says, is because "I knew I could always get round him" (18.1579-80). She also evaded Bloom's proposal until it was convenient: "he

was on the pop of asking me too the night in the kitchen I was rolling the potato cake theres something I want to say to you only I put him off letting on I was in a temper with my hands and arms full of pasty flour" (18.198-201).

Molly seems to associate The Shadow of Ashlydyat with her experience of being the 'other' in a love triangle which provokes feelings of rejection--since the man, Mr. Stanhope, marries the other woman, Hester--but also a sensation of power as Molly discovers her ability to disrupt their marital bond. Again, this experience could cause Molly to identify with Charlotte Pain, who strives to outshine Maria Hastings and win George Godolphin's affection. Then, after George marries Maria, Charlotte continues to flirt with George and delights in exciting rumors of their love specifically to distress Maria. In comparison with Charlotte, Molly seems similarly threatened by other women and compelled to proclaim her superior sexual power over all potential contenders.

Molly's experience with Hester--her shift away from desire for another woman's attention toward desire for male approval--evidently sets the foundation for her confrontational relationships with women throughout her life. She competes with Josie Powell for Bloom's attentions and pointedly flaunts her success. She distrusts all women with whom Bloom comes in contact, including the aging Mrs. Riordan, the pathetic Miss Stack--"bring him flowers the worst old ones she could find at the bottom of the basket anything at all to get into a mans bedroom with her old maids voice trying to

imagine he was dying on account of her" (18.26-9)--and the servant Mary, "that slut . . . padding out her false bottom to excite him" (18.55-7). Molly's own delight in flirting with a married man arouses her suspicion of all other women, including her own daughter.⁸ Once Molly is married, the shoe is on the other foot and she becomes the legitimate lover defending her property. Over time, however, marital satisfaction wanes and Molly reverts to illicit pleasures for fulfillment. Initially, stolen kisses on a backstage staircase with Bartell d'Arcy are sufficiently thrilling. Eventually, Molly adopts the role of adulteress, mimicking another of Mrs. Henry Wood's heroines, but with significant differences.

The evocation of East Lynne in Molly's remembrances is significant since it features a repentant adulteress and because it was one of the most famous sensation novels during the late nineteenth century. Lady Isabel Vane, a naive, pampered aristocrat, the daughter of an earl, suddenly finds herself stripped of title and possessions when her father dies and his estate is revealed to be insolvent from gambling debts. In desperation, Isabel marries an industrious and well-meaning but unromantic barrister, Mr. Carlyle. Long hours of loneliness combined with a romantic imagination (fueled by novels) leave her susceptible to the scoundrel Francis Levison who persuades her to doubt her husband's affection, to suspect he is in love with another woman, and therefore to flee to the continent with Levison.

The love triangle and other key elements of the plot in East Lynne clearly resemble Ulysses, but with significant differences. Both Isabel and Molly married as a means of escape. Molly complains of the isolation of Gibraltar: "it got as dull as the devil after [the Stanhopes] went I was almost planning to run away mad out of it somewhere were never easy where we are father or aunt or marriage waiting always waiting" (18.676-8). Even though Molly meets Bloom after she leaves Gibraltar, her desire to become *Bloom's* wife seems less than overwhelming; she decides to accept his marriage proposal with the conviction, "as well him as another" (18.1604-5). Like Isabel, Molly becomes a bored, suspicious wife, frustrated because reality fails to mirror a romance novel. Bloom, like Carlyle, is the compassionate but not passionate husband; and Boylan, playing the same role as Levison, is the unscrupulous seducer. The primary difference between the two novels, however, is their moral tone; Molly certainly does not repent of her infidelity nor does she view it as changing her current relationship with Bloom.

In sharp contrast to Ulysses, the Victorian morality which pervades East Lynne is apparent in the narrator's judgement of Vane's rash act:

How fared it with Lady Isabel? Just as it might be expected to fare, and does fare, when a high-principled gentlewoman falls from her pedestal. Never had she experienced a moment's calm, or peace, or happiness, since the fatal night of

quitting her home. . . she had found herself plunged into an abyss of horror, from which there was never more any escape; never more, never more. The very hour of her departure she awoke to what she had done . . . and a lively remorse, a never dying anguish, took possession of her soul for ever. Oh, reader, believe me! Lady--wife--mother! should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you awake! (237)

This passage became the dramatic midpoint of the phenomenally popular, numerous stage productions of East Lynne. "At least nine different adaptations by unknown authors were presented between 1866 and 1899" (Intro., xiv). East Lynne's immense popularity highlights the cultural obsession with issues of marital fidelity and control over female sexuality. Wood's novel was revolutionary in its depiction of female desire trapped in the domestic confines limited to wives; however, the moral message clearly warned women to suppress such dangerous sexual desires to avoid the shame of adultery.

Molly's remembrance of East Lynne is especially ironic since she obviously misses (or dismisses) the moral that the book sought to convey. Having just become an adulteress that very afternoon, Molly's thoughts seem strikingly void of guilt, remorse, or regret. Isabel Vane (vain) is transformed into the suffering penitent Madame Vine--disfigured by fire in a railroad accident--who returns to her husband's home in disguise to care for her own children as their governess.

Thus, the adulteress rejects sexual desire and reinforces Victorian-sanctioned maternal instinct. Molly Bloom, on the other hand, expresses her great relief to have daughter Milly out of the way: "I couldnt turn round with her in the place lately unless I bolted the door first" (18.1009-10); she even suspects her husband arranged for Milly's departure because of Molly's developing relationship with Boylan: "such an idea for him to send the girl down there . . . hed do a thing like that all the same on account of me and Boylan thats why he did it Im certain" (18.1004-8). It would be impossible to imagine Molly repentantly returning to be near Milly and meekly observing Bloom with a new wife!

Molly's afternoon affair, instead of constituting an "O tragic" (18.24) plunge into the abyss of sin, seems unlikely to materially alter her day-to-day existence or her marriage. Unlike Isabel Vane, Molly exults in the aftermath of illicit passion: "O thanks be to the Great God I got somebody to give me what I badly wanted to put some heart up into me youve no chances at all in this place like you used long ago" (18.732-4). Not only does Molly appear undaunted by the stigma of adultery, she fantasizes about a prospective future lover, Stephen Dedalus, and about becoming the publicly acknowledged mistress of a young artist:

itll be grand if I can only get in with a handsome young poet at my age . . . then hell write about me lover and mistress publicly too with our 2 photographs in all the papers when he becomes

famous O but then what am I going to do about him
 though (18.1363-7)⁹

It remains provocatively unclear whether Molly's last "him" refers to Boylan or Bloom.

Interestingly, as many feminist critics have pointed out, Mrs. Henry Wood (and Mary E. Braddon) created heroines who voiced the growing sense of dissatisfaction and powerlessness felt by numerous Victorian women. Elaine Showalter writes of East Lynne, "Wood adopts a moral and prudential tone, but she clearly sympathizes with feelings of the wife who is neither deceived nor mistreated, but sexually frustrated and simply bored to death" (172). Isabel Vane's isolated and undirected life, in sharp contrast to her husband's absorbing career, leaves her vulnerable to Levison's persuasions. Molly expresses similar feelings of boredom and loneliness when she complains, "youve no chances at all in this place like you used long ago" (18.733-4), and she longs for a love letter that she says, "fills up your whole day and life always something to think about every moment and see it all round you like a new world" (18.738-9). But unlike repentant Isabel Vane, Molly's frustration erupts into bitter anger: "Ill let him know if thats what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck nearly not by him . . . serves him right its all his own fault if I am an adultress" (18.1510-6). Molly's comments imply that the Blooms' lack of conjugal intercourse since the death of their son, Rudy, eleven years earlier, has been Bloom's responsibility and

Molly has avenged his "cold" (18.1400) treatment of her by making him a cuckold.¹⁰

Interestingly, the sensation novel genre that influenced Molly's girlhood ideas about female identity and desire also offered unprecedented expressions of women's frustration and dissatisfaction with their positions in the family and society (Showalter, 160). Critics of sensation novels declared them dangerous and objected to their intimations of female sexuality; "it is a shame to the women who read and accept as a true representation of themselves and their ways the equivocal talk and fleshly inclinations herein attributed to them" (175), exclaimed Mrs. Oliphant in a review of Rhoda Broughton's Cometh Up as a Flower, whose heroine reads East Lynne and then resists the temptation to run away from her husband (173). Showalter contends, however, that

the sensationalists and their women readers were less preoccupied with sexuality than with self-assertion and independence from the tedium and injustice of the feminine role in marriage and the family . . . the messages schoolgirls and their mothers were picking up had relatively little to do with adultery and bigamy, but much to do with an implied criticism of monogamy, the marriage-market, and the obstacles placed in the paths of intelligent women. (161)

In light of these comments, some critics might view Joyce's creation of Molly Bloom as a fictional fulfillment of the type

of fears voiced by Mrs. Oliphant: Molly reads about an adulteress and imitates her role. Oliphant accused the reading material of producing the 'dreadful' desire in its female audience, and critics could argue that this is precisely what happens to Molly. However, an important distinction between Molly and Isabel Vane undermines an interpretation of Molly as passive reader mimicking a text: Molly appropriates the role of adulteress in order to satisfy her sexual impulses, but she resists the social stigma traditionally associated with adultery by glamorizing its illicit image. Unlike Isabel Vane, Molly transgresses the vows and yet retains the economic security of her marriage.

Rather than reading Molly as unquestioningly mimicking the stories that she reads, this backdrop of sensation novels in her monologue suggests that Molly reads and dismisses the Victorian morality of Mrs. Henry Wood et al. Molly challenges the belief that fleshly desires are unnatural or improper in a woman: "what else were we given all those desires for I'd like to know" (18.1397-8). But, in addition to being the flesh that affirms, as Joyce described her,¹¹ Molly voices dissatisfaction with the options available to women and the double standards imposed upon them by society: "men again all over they can pick and choose what they please a married woman or a fast widow or a girl for their different tastes . . . but were to be always chained up they're not going to be chaining me up" (18.1388-91). Showalter calls Wood's Lady Isabel "a precursor to Ibsen's Nora," but without ideology (180). In

Molly Bloom, Joyce seems to extend Ibsen's theme of the emancipation of women. While Ibsen's Nora must cast herself into an unrealistic exile in order to exert her independence from her husband, however, Molly voices and acts out her desires without having to relinquish her position in society as a married woman. Yet, Joyce's unfettering of female desire in the figure of Molly also serves his own masculine fantasy, as many feminist critics have noted.¹²

So, even as Molly defies Wood's warning against acting upon female desire, she apparently absorbs Wood's implicit advice to scrutinize the institution of marriage--only she does not heed this advice until after she is married. Wood's novels, while reinscribing many traditional restrictions on women's behavior, also opened the way for critical reflection and may have afforded Molly the necessary courage to challenge the prevailing stigma of adultery. But Molly's resistance to cultural stereotypes also would be tried, and possibly tempered, by the conventional images she viewed in novels, such as Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone.

CHAPTER III

HESTER'S GIFT: WILKIE COLLINS' VOICE OF AUTHORITY

Hester presented Molly with a copy of Wilkie Collins' The Moonstone. It remains unclear whether this occurred before or after Hester's marriage, before or after Hester "may have noticed her wogger['s]" (18.676-7) fondness for Molly. The book's significance resides in the fact that Molly remembers Hester's gift after thinking of her flirtations with Mr. Stanhope and comparing him to Thomas in Ashlydyat, and immediately after thinking about this flirtation in terms of Hester: "it wouldnt have been nice on account of her but I could have stopped it in time she gave me the Moonstone to read" (18.651-3). Molly's juxtaposition of flirting with Mr. Stanhope and Hester's gift of The Moonstone suggests a link between them in her mind. Perhaps Molly suspected that Hester hoped to convey a subtle message with this gift.

In The Moonstone, as in Ashlydyat, two women vie for the affections of one man. In the latter novel, the two women are of similar social standing and are therefore genuine competition for each other. In the former story, however, one woman is a lady of high social rank and the other is a reformed thief and house servant. In Ashlydyat, Maria is the plainer, less flashy choice next to brassy Charlotte Pain;

they differ in terms of moral character. In contrast, there is never any question in The Moonstone whether the servant, plain and slightly deformed Rosanna Spearman, could steal the heart of dashing young Franklin Blake from lovely Rachel Verinder since the two women represent different social classes. Franklin Blake and Rachel Verinder love each other from chapter one, but they are driven apart by a practical joke which turns into the crime of the century. Collins combines greed, misunderstanding, honor, loyalty, and love into a story of intrigue, slowly unravelled by multiple character-narrators.

For Molly, the important aspect of the plot would probably be the love triangle. Rosanna and Rachel are the only people who know that Franklin Blake took the priceless moonstone (they do not realize that he was in a drug-induced trance, nor that he intended merely to move the moonstone to a safer location--it is stolen from him in his sleep). Each woman, in love with Blake and believing she is the only person who knows the truth, conceals his guilt; meanwhile, he searches for the thief, not realizing it is himself, and wonders why Rachel refuses to help him. Rachel, shocked at the moral depravity of her lover, breaks off their engagement and tries never to see him again. She accepts in stubborn silence the public opinion of her own guilt in the jewelry theft because she still loves Blake, meanwhile upbraiding herself for loving a reprobate. Rosanna realizes that Blake will never love her and kills herself. First, however, she

leaves with a friend a letter to Blake which explains her belief in his guilt and her unrequited love for him which has driven her to despair.

Clearly, The Moonstone reflects the rigidity of class structure in Victorian England. If the plot offers Molly a message from Hester (real or imagined), it might be that Molly was reaching beyond herself, whether due to her age or her station, in flirting with Mr. Stanhope. Significantly, Molly selects a character from The Shadow of Ashlydyat instead of The Moonstone to label and interpret Mr. Stanhope. Immediately after remembering Hester's gift she switches back to works by Wood: "she gave me the Moonstone to read that was the first I read of Wilkie Collins East Lynne I read and the shadow of Ashlydyat Mrs. Henry Wood" (18.652-4). Molly's focus on Wood is suggestive since Wood's plots privilege middle-class women who compete with aristocratic women for the attentions of men. In East Lynne, the less sophisticated, middle-class Barbara Hare ultimately wins the love and trust of Mr. Carlyle after the aristocrat, Lady Isabel, rashly abandons her position as his wife in her search for romance. Likewise, the loyal but poor minister's daughter wins the heart and hand of George Godolphin instead of the rich and showy Charlotte Pain. Molly, sensitive herself about other women's pretensions--"the day we met Mrs. Joe Gallaher at the trotting matches and she pretended not to see us in her trap with Friery the solicitor we werent grand enough" (18.1068-70)--seems to prefer Wood's depictions of a democratic playing

field of love rather than Collins' prescribed hierarchy of suitable matches.

In addition, The Moonstone also contains numerous assumptions and stereotypes about women characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. Hester may have hoped subtly to inculcate basic codes of propriety. From The Moonstone, Molly might have absorbed ideas about moral integrity; the two female characters most praised in the book, Rachel and her maid Penelope, are both commended for always telling the truth. When Penelope is questioned by an insolent superintendent who reminds her to tell the truth, she retorts, "I've never been taught to tell lies, Mr Policeman!" (72). When the narrator, Betteredge the butler, describes Rachel, he notes,

I can call to mind, in her childhood, more than one occasion when the good little soul took the blame, and suffered the punishment, for some fault committed by a playfellow whom she loved. Nobody ever knew her to confess to it when the thing was found out, and she was charged with it afterward. But nobody ever knew her to lie about it either.

(47)

Obviously, this passage establishes Rachel's inherent moral goodness, exhibited in childhood, and foreshadows her faithful silence when she believes Franklin Blake to have stolen the Moonstone. Molly attempts to adopt a similar pose of moral rectitude, but even she sounds unconvinced: she thinks about

Milly listening to Bloom explain items in the newspaper, and criticizes, "she pretending to understand sly of course that comes from his side of the house he cant say I pretend things can he Im too honest as a matter of fact" (18.1018-20, emphasis added).

Rather than a lesson on moral integrity, what Molly seems to have gleaned from this narrative is a patriarchal view of female contrariness. In regards to Rachel's moral code exceeding into "saucy" stubbornness, Betteredge comments to the reader,

Perhaps you think you see a certain contradiction here? In that case, a word in your ear. Study your wife closely for the next four-and-twenty hours. If your good lady doesn't exhibit something in the shape of a contradiction in that time, Heaven help you!--you have married a monster. (47)

If Molly is consistently anything, she is consistently contradictory. When she fumes over Bloom and the servant Mary, she insists, "I wouldnt lower myself to spy on them," but then immediately mentions, "the garters I found in her room the Friday she was out" (18.67-9). Perhaps snooping is different than spying. Then, after speculating that Bloom was with "one of those night women" (18.36), Molly reacts to the thought of Mary and says, "I couldnt even touch him if I thought he was with a dirty barefaced liar and sloven like that one denying it up to my face" (18.73-5). Molly seems more repulsed by the contamination of a liar than of a

prostitute; however, when she remembers Bloom making her late returning to her father's house one night and creating an excuse for her--"he told me to say I left my purse in the butchers and had to go back for it," Molly playfully thinks, "what a Deceiver" (18.317-8).

In addition to suggesting to Molly that women are naturally inconsistent, The Moonstone might also lead her to question women's ability to compose, think independently and handle business matters. In The Moonstone, Molly would have scanned several of Collins' jabs against women writers. For example, Penelope regards a religious tract on hair ribbons offered to her and comments, "Is it written by a man or a woman, Miss? *If it's written by a woman, I had rather not read it on that account.* If it's written by a man, I beg to inform him that he knows nothing about it" (159, emphasis added). The logic of her statement ultimately insists that no one could ever write an acceptable statement on the subject of feminine accessories because only a woman could understand the matter and writing by women is categorically abhorrent! Notably, Molly contemplates compiling a book of Bloom's ideas, rather than writing down her own: "if only I could remember the 1 half of the things and write a book out of it the works of Master Poldy" (18.579-80). Molly accepts the position of women as objects rather than subjects in art: "they all write about some woman in their poetry" (18.1333-4). The only thing Molly wishes to write are love letters; yet, she fantasizes about inspiring Stephen Dedalus's works, and, in exchange for

lessons in Italian (188.1302), Molly offers to "teach him the other part Ill make him feel all over him till he half faints under me then hell write about me" (18.1363-5). Hence, Molly accepts and reinscribes the stereotype that men are inherently rational and intellectual, while women are comparatively irrational and emotional.

Oddly, while Molly imagines Stephen becoming famous and herself becoming his publicly acknowledged mistress, she thinks very little about her own career. She does comment, "I could have been a prima donna only I married him" (18.896), and she constantly incorporates bits of songs into her thoughts, but Molly never fantasizes specifically about becoming famous for her own talents. Indeed, there is always a man in charge of managing her career. Molly may have taken to heart the conventional wisdom expressed by the solicitor in The Moonstone who tells a woman when she has just outwitted him, "You would have done great things in my profession, ma'am, *if you had happened to be a man*" (179, emphasis added). Collins also denigrates women's business sense by purporting its rarity; the same solicitor comments on a will in which the husband left everything to his wife:

In the majority of cases, I am afraid I should have felt it my duty to my client to ask him to reconsider his Will. In the case of Sir John, I knew Lady Verinder to be, not only worthy of the unreserved trust which her husband had placed in her (all good wives are worthy of that)--but to be

also capable of properly administering a trust
(which, in my experience of the fair sex, not one
in a thousand of them is competent to do). (216)

Despite moments of feminist rhetoric--"itd be much better for
the world to be governed by the women in it" (18.1434-5)--
Molly never expresses an interest in taking charge of her own
career, let alone the world's government. She seems content
to fall into the socially-prescribed, dependent roles for
women reenforced by writers such as Collins, so long as they
do not infringe upon her romance-inspired desires.

In the first three books that Molly recalls, prominent
female characters defy conventions of feminine submissiveness
and passivity, and act upon their own desires; yet, they are
all seeking the love and support of some man. Significantly,
in the next two books, the ones Molly gave to a man, the women
exude traditional qualities of modesty and loyalty to male
figures of authority.

CHAPTER IV

BOOKS THAT MOLLY GAVE AWAY

One of the books Molly remembers is Henry Dunbar, written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, the successful sensation novelist. Interestingly, immediately after mentioning The Myth of Ashlydyat--in which, I argue, Molly identifies with the 'other woman'--she forgets the name of the next book's author and simply calls her "that other woman" (18.655). The plots of the next two novels listed by Molly do not include 'other women'; instead, they both feature women who remain loyal to men after those men are discovered to be murderers. Significantly, these works, Henry Dunbar and Eugene Aram, are the ones she chooses to pass on to some man: "Henry Dunbar by that other woman I lent him afterwards with Mulveys photo in it so as he see I wasnt without and Lord Lytton Eugene Aram" (18.654-6). It is particularly ironic that Molly uses Henry Dunbar, a book depicting an extraordinarily loyal and conscientious woman, to demonstrate to one man the existence of another suitor, in order to make this man jealous. Also significantly, both novels portray one woman courted by two men, instead of one man with two female admirers. These female characters, however, never waver in their devotion to one of their respective suitors.

The recipient of these books would seem to be either Mr. Stanhope or Bloom. In Shari and Bernard Benstock's analysis of Molly's masculine pronouns, they assign the pronouns 'him' and 'he' in the above quotation to Bloom (230). This interpretation seems the most reasonable, particularly if Stanhope was Molly's initial flirtation that transformed her image in the mirror. In other words, Molly met Mulvey after Stanhope left Gibraltar, but before she met Bloom, when she had a photograph of Mulvey with which to tease Bloom.

Henry Dunbar is the story of a reprobate father, Joseph Wilmot, who as a young man was tempted into forging bank notes for his master, Henry Dunbar. When the forgery was discovered, Dunbar was quietly sent to India by his father who conveniently owned the bank and therefore did not press charges. The servant who had tried to help his master out of a gambling debt was abandoned by the young Dunbar who could have spoken for his character. Wilmot was subsequently discharged from his clerk position at the bank and black-listed from similar employment in London. Unable to get reputable work, Wilmot turned to crime and eventually was transported for forgery.

At the beginning of the novel, Henry Dunbar is returning to England, a very wealthy man, after thirty-five years in India. Joseph Wilmot, who has been in England for many years now, lives with his faithful daughter who worships him although she knows he is haunted by some secret from his past. By a series of events, Joseph Wilmot is the first person to

meet Henry Dunbar upon his arrival; Wilmot accompanies Dunbar on a visit in the countryside where Wilmot is mysteriously murdered. Dunbar is accused of the crime, but no motive or direct evidence can be found, so he is released. The only person who believes in Dunbar's guilt is Margaret Wilmot, Joseph's daughter to whom he had revealed the name of Henry Dunbar as the cause of his youthful disgrace and lost reputation. Margaret persists in trying to confront Dunbar, with the help of her fiancé, Clement Austin, whom she initially tried to refuse because of her father's shamed name. After several rebuffs, she finally succeeds in seeing Dunbar by sneaking into his home, only to discover that the present Mr. Dunbar is her own father, who actually murdered Henry Dunbar. Overwrought with the shame of his sin, but equally determined that her duty is to protect her father, Margaret breaks her engagement with Clement. Baffled by Margaret's refusal to explain herself and her sudden insistence that Henry Dunbar is not guilty of her father's murder, Clement hires a detective to solve the murder case. Eventually, the truth is revealed, but Wilmot escapes capture with Margaret's help, and they live quietly in a small village until his death. Soon afterwards, Clement finds Margaret and convinces her that he still loves her despite her father's crime. She is satisfied that her father died a repentant man, and she and Clement live happily ever after.

The theme of daughter-father love is further emphasized in the novel by the daughter of the real Henry Dunbar, Laura,

who was sent back to England as a very young child after her mother died and who anxiously awaits her father's return from India. Once she meets him, Laura grieves bitterly, convinced that her father does not love her because he avoids her company and turns cold whenever she embraces him.

Several themes in Henry Dunbar make it a significant choice for Molly to present to Bloom. The mothers of Margaret and Laura both died before their girls could remember them well. Molly also lost her mother at an early age, although possibly by abandonment rather than death: "where would they all of them be if they hadnt all a mother to look after them *what I never had*" (18.1441-2, emphasis added). Both daughters worship the images of their fathers. Margaret willingly sacrifices the love of the honest Clement in order to care for the spiritual and physical health of her father. In contrast, while Molly seems proud of her father's military position, she also remembers being bored with officers' talk: "only captain Groves and father talking about Rorkes drift and Plevna and sir Garnet Wolseley and Gordon at Khartoum" (18.689-91). She remembers playing helpmaid, "lighting their pipes for them everytime they went out" (18.691-2), but there are few sentimental remembrances of her father in particular. Presenting Bloom with a story advancing the naturally strong bond between fathers and daughters may have been Molly's way of provoking him to imitate the male lovers who strive to overcome this bond and turn these daughters into wives.

Henry Dunbar strongly emphasizes that the appropriate

female role consists of first faithful daughter and then loving wife. Once Laura relinquishes her dream of a blissful father-daughter relationship, she immediately falls in love with a "dashing young baronet" (134). While Laura was still anticipating the arrival of her father, she received another proposal from a sincere, but middle-class, solicitor, Mr. Lovell. What is particularly interesting here is that when both Laura and Margaret receive marriage proposals, they exhibit complete surprise. Until Clement Austin reveals his love to Margaret Wilmot, she has been unaware of her own feelings for him. But within the brief transition from paragraph to paragraph, she recognizes that she *must* love him too:

Margaret looked at her lover with a frightened face. Had she done wrong, then, to be happy in his society, if she did not love him--if she did not love him! But surely, this sudden thrill of triumph and delight which filled her breast, as Clement spoke to her, *must be in some degree akin to love.*

Yes, she loved him. (194, emphasis added)

Unlike Margaret, Laura does not even recognize the amorous meaning in Arthur's proposal; she looks at him innocently when asked if she loves him and answers, " I do love you, Arthur . . . as dearly as I should have loved my brother had I ever known a brother's love" (76). Both women are portrayed as unaware of desire, and only Margaret develops a sense of

feelings toward Clement after he expresses his love. Laura becomes capable of romantic love only after her envisioned happiness with her father is dashed by his unresponsive demeanor.

In contrast to Henry Dunbar, the heroines in Mrs. Wood's novels fall in love independently of male professions of similar affections. Even in The Moonstone, the servant Rosanna Spearman falls violently in love on first sight of Franklin Blake. This contradiction between the types of female figures that Molly presents to a man and those that she associates with her own romantic experiences implies that Molly attempted to play the role of the 'proper lady,' devoid of sexual knowledge, even though Molly recognizes such a role to be a sham.

In Henry Dunbar, Braddon represents, and probably mocks, what Mary Poovey has identified as the late eighteenth-century Proper Lady (3). Poovey points out the paradox in the code of female modesty: for a woman to blush at appropriate moments requires sufficient knowledge. Poovey explains, since women were considered to contain voracious sexual desire, "a modest demeanor served not only to assure the world that a woman's appetites were under control; it also indicated that female sexuality was still assertive enough to *require* control" (21). Poovey suggests that an important component in the evolution from eighteenth century Proper Lady to Victorian Angel in the House was the change in the concept of female nature. The code of modesty for the Proper Lady sought to conceal women's

natural passions, but the Angel of the House figured the woman as the natural guide of moral goodness, because women were now thought to be inherently moral. The conflicting portrayals of female desire in the novels that Molly reads, illustrate women writers' attempts to privilege or expose these various views of womanhood.

Molly may give Bloom a novel that makes fun of stereotypes of female modesty because she knows that Bloom also sees through the convention of form; she remembers pretending to be unaware of the meaning of Bloom's dirty words in his erotic love letters (another allusion to Joyce and Nora's relationship).

he wrote me that letter with all those words in it
 . . . making it so awkward after when we met asking
 me have I offended you with my eyelids down of
 course he saw I wasnt he had a few brains . . . and
 if I knew what it meant of course I had to say no
 for form sake dont understand you (18.318-24)

However, the possibility that Molly also gave Bloom a copy of Eugene Aram, which sincerely portrays women as meek and loyal subjects of men, may indicate that Molly did not recognize Braddon's subtlety and offered her gift to Bloom as an example of the type of idealized romance Molly prefers. Throughout Braddon's novel, she glosses the lovers with parodic descriptions of chivalrous knights and ladies who suffer willingly for their lovers.

In addition, the ending of Henry Dunbar also emphasizes

that the ultimate role for women rested in marriage and motherhood. In the epilogue, 'written' by Clement Austin, he triumphantly announces, "No prying eye would ever read in Margaret's bright face the sad story of her early life. A new existence has begun for her as wife and mother" (350). In presenting such a story to a man, Molly implies that she subscribes to the notion that supreme female satisfaction rests in marriage and motherhood. Clearly, Molly has not found blissful fulfillment in either institution.

Eugene Aram also instills the image of the faithful woman. Eugene Aram is a man whose superior intellect has won him fame and provided him with numerous opportunities to pursue success, either in philosophy or politics. Yet, he shuns society and lives alone in a remote cottage dwelling. His neighbors insist on visiting him, however. Eventually, despite his efforts to the contrary, Eugene falls in love with Madeline Lester and gets drawn back into society. Unfortunately, Madeline's cousin Walter, who lives with her father, is also deeply in love with her. He fails to voice his feelings, however, until too late, after Madeline falls in love with Eugene. Meanwhile, Madeline's younger sister, Ellinor, is secretly in love with Walter. When Madeline and Eugene become engaged, Walter leaves home to seek news of his father who abandoned his family shortly after Walter's birth. He discovers that his father was murdered by Eugene Aram and leads the authorities to Eugene on the morning of his wedding day. Shortly after Eugene is convicted and sentenced to

death, grief-stricken Madeline dies. Walter, overcome with uncertainty of Eugene's guilt, seeks to know if he has brought about her death unjustly. Eugene agrees to write out the history of his connection to Walter's father, Daniel Clarke, for Walter to read after Eugene is executed and to share with the world after Madeline's father has gone to his grave.

In this document, Eugene acknowledges his crime, but links his actions to indignation over his constant struggle with severe poverty even though he lived honestly, while the morally reprehensible Clarke lived comfortably off stolen goods. Eugene's indignation escalates to murderous rage when a young girl whom he knew killed herself, driven to despair from the humiliation of having been raped by Clarke. Clarke had paid off her destitute parents not to press charges, but the girl's reputation was ruined. Outraged at such injustice, Eugene murders Clarke, but refuses to steal his victim's money. A few days later, Eugene receives a modest inheritance which plunges him into despair. He believes that his poverty drove him into a condition willing to commit this immoral act. (Oddly, he does not focus on the rape as having prompted his action.) So ends the story of Eugene Aram, and Walter is satisfied that he did not accuse Eugene unjustly. Years later, Walter and Ellinor marry and live happily ever after.

Madeline is portrayed as an ideal woman, Ellinor as a slightly less perfect version of her sister. They both "eminently possessed that earnestness and purity of heart which would have made them, perhaps in an equal degree,

constant and devoted to the object of an attachment once formed, in defiance of change, and to the brink of death" (11). Naturally, this assessment of devotion is confirmed in their respective loyalties to Eugene and Walter. The most important quality in a woman, according to Lord Lytton's romance, is that she will not waver in her affections. This sentiment is reiterated in slightly different terms by one of the local villagers when he describes the ideal wife:

'First place sir, woman I'd marry must not mope when alone! must be able to 'muse herself, -- must be easily 'mused. That's a great sign, sir, of an innocent mind, to be tickled with straws. Besides, employment keeps 'em out of harm's way. Second place, should obsarve [sic] if she was very fond of place, your honor,--sorry to move: that's a sure signe she won't tire easily; but that if she like you now from fancy, she'll like you by-and-by from custom. Thirdly, your honor, she should not be averse to dress,--a leaning that way shows she has desire to please: people who don't care about pleasing, always sullen. Fourthly, she must bear to be crossed,--I'd be quite sure that she might be contradicted, without mumping or storming: 'cause then, you knows, your honer, if she wanted anything expensive, need not give it,--augh! Fifthly, must not set up for a saint, you honor; they pye-house she-creturs always thinks themsels so much better

nor we men; don't understand our language and ways,
your honor: they wants us to not only to belave
[sic], but to tremble,-- bother!' (308)

Not only should the ideal wife be faithful, but also easily pleased, cheerful, undemanding, and nonjudgemental--the exact opposite of Molly! Of course, the villager's catalogue of the attributes of the ideal wife betrays a general male anxiety regarding the independent, perhaps uncontrollable, desires of women. All the attributes that the villager seeks to avoid in a wife combine to construct the stereotype of the average woman: restless, inconstant, sullen, passionately stubborn, and self-righteous. Molly presents Bloom with a work that reinforces the dichotomy of angel/whore in the contrast established between the Lester sisters and the average village shew. Her gift may illustrate her own hesitancy as a young woman to present to a man a portrayal of women who express their own desires. If Bloom read Henry Dunbar or Eugene Aram for insight into their bestower, he would have had to read between the lines to get a clue about the complexity of Molly.

CHAPTER V

WHY DOES MOLLY DISLIKE MOLLY?

In addition to The Moonstone, Molly mentions another book given to her by a woman: "Molly bawn she gave me by Mrs. Hungerford on account of the name" (18.656-7). This novel was probably another gift of Hester's, presumably due to the shared name of 'Molly.' The phrasing, however, offers an alternate impression that the name "Hungerford" might have caused Hester to link the work with Molly.¹³ In fact, the novel's heroine, Molly Bawn, is genuinely man hungry and makes no efforts to hide it.

Molly Bawn is the only daughter of an Irish man who eloped with a rich Englishman's daughter. Both parents died of fever, leaving the three-year-old child in the care of her step-brother (her father's son from a previous marriage). Despite the existence of a rich grandfather, young Molly was never acknowledged by her mother's family as punishment for the mother's elopement. But shortly after the story opens--and after she accepts, conditionally, Tedcastle's marriage proposal--she receives an invitation to visit her grandfather.

Throughout the novel, Molly plays the role of irrepressible coquette. She tells Tedcastle that she has had many lovers; every year they have a new curate who asks her to

marry him. She does not care for curates, she admits, but "they were something: a proposal is always an excitement" (33). However, since the present curate is married, there is no such excitement to be had this year; so, "You may fancy with what rapture I hailed your coming" (33). Later, Molly Bawn asks Tedcastle to keep their engagement secret, since it would spoil all her fun in flirting (72). She responds to his subsequent wrath by arguing,

That is just one of the great points which the defenders of women's rights forget to expatiate upon. A man may love as often as he chooses, while a woman must only love once, or he considers himself very badly used. Why not be on equal footing? (72)

The significance of Molly Bloom's aversion for Molly Bawn--"I dont like books with a Molly in them" (18.657-8)--becomes apparent as we recognize the similarities between these two Mollys. Joyce's Molly also resents men's sexual freedom; men "can go and get whatever they like from anything at all with a skirt on it and were not to ask any questions" (18.297-9), they "can pick and choose what they please" while women are "to be always chained up" (18.1388-91). She elaborates on Molly Bawn's desire for the freedom to fall in love more than once before marrying by visualizing free love after marriage: "stupid husband's jealousy why cant we all remain friends over it instead of quarrelling" (18.1392-3).

Both Molly Bloom and Molly Bawn feel keenly that they are

at a disadvantage for making a marriage arrangement. Molly Bloom indicates that the secret past of her mother limits her bargaining power: "[Bloom] hadn't an idea about my mother till we were engaged otherwise he'd never have got me so cheap as he did" (18.282-4), and Molly Bawn bewails her lack of a fortune to offer a prospective mate. She responds to Tedcastle's proposal with this warning:

'I must confess I think you are behaving very foolishly. I may be--I probably am--good to look at; but what is the use of that? You, who have seen so much of the world, have, of course, known people ten times prettier than I am, and, perhaps, fonder of you. And still you come all the way down here to this stupid place to fall in love with me, a girl without a penny! I really think,' winds up Molly, growing positively melancholy over his lack of sense, 'it is the most absurd thing I ever heard in my life.' (43)

In addition, both characters are motherless, and they are both incorrigible flirts.¹⁴ These Mollys also share a sense of oppressive isolation in a remote backwater, far from society's entertainments.

Yet, Molly Bawn, despite her coquettish ways, remains faithful to Tedcastle. She declines marriage proposals from dukes and barons who could provide her with the money she desperately needs after her brother's death leaves her and his wife and children alone in the world with no income. Molly

stubbornly pursues a stage career as a singer to support them, refusing to marry Tedcastle who can not afford to support the whole family either. Then, when Molly receives the bulk of her grandfather's wealth upon his death, and she feels able to marry Tedcastle, he releases her from their engagement. Furious, Molly berates him for thinking that money would change her feelings for him, but her friend warns her that it is "a point of honour" (282) for Tedcastle. He realizes, the friend explains, that Molly is now beyond his legitimate expectations; "he thinks of the world and its opinion, and how fond they are of applying the word 'fortune-hunter' when they get the chance" (282). To this, Molly counters,

'Had he come into a fortune, I should have been delighted, and I should have married him instantly.'

'Quite so, But who ever heard the opprobrious term 'fortune-hunter' given to a woman? It is the legitimate thing for us to sell ourselves as dearly as we can.' (282)

This emphasis on the importance of money in marriage arrangements is also raised when Tedcastle initially proposes to Molly. He expresses his amazement that she does not inquire about his income and remains genuinely unconcerned about his modest means. Molly is the only character in the novel consistently unmoved by wealth. She refuses to marry Tedcastle only while she must sing to support her dead brother's family; she knows she could not continue to earn

money in this manner if she married. In fact, unlike Molly Bloom, Molly Bawn displays a keen awareness of the impropriety of a woman performing in public. She breaks off in mid-song when she recognizes Tedcastle in the audience, overcome with embarrassment:

Oh, that he should see her here, singing before all these people! For the first time a terrible sense of shame overpowers her; a longing to escape the eyes that from all parts of the hall appear to stare at her and criticise her voice--herself.

(255)

So, while these two Mollys share many superficial characteristics, they are also strikingly dissimilar.

Molly's dislike of Molly Bawn probably centers on the distinctions in their moral characters. Unlike Bawn, Molly Bloom seems quite easily seduced by money. She thinks about Boylan, "he has plenty of money and hes not a marrying man so somebody better get it out of him" (18.411-2). Molly Bloom has no aversion to being the center of attention on stage (or off.) Another striking difference between these Mollys is their practice of flirting. Molly Bawn occasionally allows Tedcastle to hold her hand, but she is quite shaken and refuses him when he requests to kiss her after they become engaged. Her innocent flirtations sharply contrast with Molly's memories of her own youthful love making with Mulvey and Gardner.

If Molly Bawn's moral integrity irks Molly, Defoe's Moll

Flanders evidently offends her sense of propriety. The most remarkable aspect of Molly's comment about Moll Flanders, is that she focuses on Moll as a whore who steals. Since Moll Flanders commits incest, bigamy, marries five men for their money, and gives birth to ten children all of whom she gives away or abandons before she steals her first bundle of goods, it seems odd that Molly recalls and reproaches the character primarily for stealing. She does not express these scruples when citing Eugene Aram in which the protagonist is reduced to murder due to poverty. Something else bothers Molly about Moll Flanders. Perhaps it is that she is a *whore* who steals. Molly already has "night women" on her mind and whores could be associated with stealing husbands. Molly obsesses about other women trying to get Leopold's attention just as much as he imagines her having countless suitors. Yet, at the same time, she fantasizes about being a mistress and she is pleased to have Milly out of the house; indeed, she is not so very different from Moll Flanders and perhaps that is precisely why Molly dislikes her.

Molly, "on account of the name" (18.657), would necessarily view the heroines of these two novels as reflections of herself, but Molly rejects them as distorted images, denying that these representations express any truth about her. It is particularly significant that the character whose morality seems to expose Molly's lack of scruples is associated with Hester. Thus, Molly Bawn, as Hester's gift, represents another attempt to control Molly's sexuality with

an alternative image of a coquette who proves herself to be true to her family and to one man. Molly's disdain for Molly Bawn signals her resistance to discursive attempts to rein in her own character.

Moll Flanders, as a gift from Bloom, may represent a pointed response to Molly's gifts of Henry Dunbar and Eugene Aram. Bloom reads Molly's presentations of faithful and inherently moral women, and juxtaposes them with the frankly mercantile, though lusty, figure of Moll Flanders. Based on his sexual fantasies in "Circe," Bloom may prefer Defoe's vivacious character to the prim misses created by Braddon and Lytton. But Molly, rejects being associated with the "whore" "from Flanders." Perhaps her misreading of the character's name as her nationality suggests that Molly misreads Bloom's message as well.

Apparently, Molly reads both these Mollys as negative critiques of herself directed at her from Hester and Bloom. In fact, Molly Bawn and Moll Flanders reproduce the stereotypes of angel and whore that Molly struggles to avoid. One wonders, if Molly could read her own soliloquy, would she like herself?

CONCLUSION

READING MOLLY BLOOM AS READER

In seeking to discover how Molly is affected by the books she reads, it is interesting to note that most of these books present a view of how reading influences the reader. In the Shadow of Ashlydyat and East Lynne, Wood raises intriguing questions about the effects of different written material on the intellectual and emotional development of the reader. In Ashlydyat, Ethyl attributes the sharp distinction between her own sweet, kindly and spiritual nature and her sister's sour, self-centered, materialist character to the different types of books they read as children: she always read "stories of heaven," while her sister would only read stories "of gaiety; balls, and such-like" (84). Similarly, in East Lynne novel reading leads to trouble. Wood constructs a foil to Lady Isabel, Afy, who was bought up "above her station" (131) and then left penniless when her guardian died. After she settles at the home of her working class relatives, her half-sister complains, "her notions were fine, and her dress was fine; she was gay and giddy and very pretty, and would do nothing all day but read books, which she got at the West Lynne Library" (131). Significantly, Afy turns out to be another victim of Lady Isabel's seducer, Levison!

Yet, in the books Molly gives to Bloom, reading romances produces positive effects. In Eugene Aram, Madeline's lofty mind is attributed to her extensive reading when she was a young girl as the result of physical confinement after an accident:

as the old hall possessed a very respectable share of books, she had then matured and confirmed that love of reading and reflection which she had at a yet earlier period prematurely evinced. *The woman's tendency to romance naturally tintured her meditations, and thus, while they dignified, they also softened her mind.* (10, emphasis added)

Reading does not render Madeline overly rational and insensitive, or 'hard,' because she reads 'feminine' romances. Her reading experience contrasts with Eugene's, whose obsessive scholarly pursuits have "dashed" his natural "benevolence" and made him scornful of humankind (43). Eugene's haughty demeanor and disdain for others mellows as he falls in love with Madeline. What is most interesting about this classic portrayal of the salvation of a man, jaded by worldly knowledge, through the mediation of a 'morally good' woman is that their respective characters are presented as resulting (at least partially) from their reading experiences.

Leopold and Molly also mimic the gendered practice of reading portrayed in Eugene Aram. Like Madeline, Molly reads romances that may keep her mind 'soft' and 'feminine.' Leopold, meanwhile, reads mainly non-fiction, 'real

knowledge,' works--as does Eugene Aram--that ostensibly suit his manly inclinations. Perhaps Bloom's interest in fiction also betrays the womanly side of his nature.

Whether novels produce positive or negative effects, Molly and Leopold might both expect to be influenced by what they read, based on the assumptions in these books. Molly and Bloom both toy with the ways fiction may influence life. The fact that Bloom brings Molly Fair Tyrants twice, signals his desire to interest Molly in the sort of sadomasochistic eroticism that characterize his fantasies in "Circe." Bloom's fantasies are shaped by what he reads, just as are Molly's. Since they apparently believe in the persuasive power of printed words, Bloom's procurement of Sweets of Sin for Molly suggests his desire for her transgression. On the other hand, since what one fantasizes may be distinct from what one wishes to have occur in real life, Bloom may bring Molly books similar to Sweets of Sin in the hopes of substituting a reading experience for an actual affair.

Here again, Joyce fashions Leopold and Molly as artful images of his and Nora's relationship. Joyce evidently encouraged Nora to invite attention from other men and tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade her to have an affair.¹⁵ In Ulysses, Bloom expresses Joyce's desire in his voyeuristic fantasy of watching through a keyhole while Molly and Boylan have sex. Joyce shows Molly responding to Bloom's provocations to play the role of adulteress. Thus, the writer shows a woman manipulated through printed words--the novels

Bloom brings to her--to fulfill the masculine desire that the husband (Joyce) could not cajole his wife to perform. Molly Bloom becomes a multilayered emblem of masculine desire to bend a female figure to its will, even as it gestures toward a particular man's inability to manipulate his wife. However, Molly seems to pick and choose in which fantasies she will participate. Her disbelief in the pleasure of flagellation indicates that Bloom has not been able to lure Molly into that activity with carefully selected reading material, i.e. Fair Tyrants.

We cannot separate Molly as a reader from Molly as Joyce's creation. He constructs her reading list and crafts her reactions to each novel. To his credit as a writer¹⁶--and probably due to the strong female models he used to create his Penelope, particularly Nora--Joyce constructs a woman figure who fulfills some of his erotic desires, yet also actively resists certain roles and stereotypes. He fashions Molly's reading list, I argue, to emphasize her selective mimicking and rejection of diverse cultural images of women. She is both product and reinterpreter of the fictive figures she has read.

Ultimately, how we interpret Molly as a reader depends on our own assumptions as readers. Molly Bloom illustrates the importance of reading actively and resistantly, and reminds postmodern readers that by recognizing and appropriating the potential power of discursive discourses, we can consciously alter the figure of Woman that we impose on to future readers.

NOTES

1. Gifford notes that Gerty is based on a character in Maria Cummins' sentimental novel The Lamplighter and that the narrative style of "Nausicaa" associated with Gerty is a parody of this novel (384, n. 1).

2. I am drawing upon Judith Fetterley's concept described in The Resistant Reader in which she argues that women need to recognize patriarchal biases in their reading material. I am expanding the term to apply to all readers who need to recognize the potential influence of dominant discourses in order to reassert agency over their own reading experiences.

3. For more information about the novel Ruby: The Pride of the Ring, see Mary Power, "The Discovery of Ruby."

4. Here, Molly also recalls Hester's nickname for her husband, "wogger." Gifford notes that "wog" was derogatory English slang for a dark-skinned or Arab person (617). Hester's nickname seems to indicate that Mr. Stanhope was probably of mediterranean descent. Perhaps Joyce includes this detail to signify Molly's early attraction to dark-complected men such as Bloom.

5. Suzette Henke, in James Joyce and the Politics of Desire, notices the lesbian attraction between Molly and Hester. Brenda Maddox also notes that Joyce had detected a trace of lesbianism in Nora (216); see Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce. For a recent discussion of lesbian desire in Joyce's work, see Christy Burns, "An Erotics of the Word: Female 'Assaucyeties' in Finnegans Wake."

6. Rumors play a key function in several of the seven novels that Molly lists. See Richard Ellmann's biography, James Joyce, for a discussion of Joyce's own vulnerability to damaging rumors about Nora, 279-84.

7. See Patrick Colm Hogan, "Molly Bloom's Lacanian Firtree: Law, Ambiguity, and the Limits of Paradise," for a marxist analysis of Molly's resistance to the commodification of her sexuality.

8. See Jane Ford, "Why is Milly in Mullingar?," for a discussion of allusions to incest and improper conduct by Bloom with Milly.

9. This is just one of numerous allusions to James Joyce and Nora Barnacle's own relationship.

10. See Ellmann's discussion of Joyce's fear of Nora's infidelity, James Joyce, 279-84, and Maddox's presentation of the same incident from Nora's perspective, Nora, 90-6. Maddox notes the significance of Joyce's fear of cuckoldry, asserting, "The glaring truth in the whole shadowy episode is that Joyce could not have written Ulysses without the surge of fear and relief that he derived from it" (95).

11. See Joyce's letter to Frank Budgen, August 16, 1921, in which he describes Molly as "Ich bin der Fleisch der stets bejaht" in Letters of James Joyce.

12. For example, see Marilyn French, The Book as World: James Joyce's 'Ulysses'; Marcia Holly, "Consciousness and Authenticity: Toward a Feminist Aesthetic"; Elaine Unkelass, "The Conventional Molly Bloom"; and Diane E. Henderson, "Joyce's Modernist Woman: Whose Last Word?"

13. It is especially interesting that Molly (or Joyce) associates the novel with Mrs. Hungerford since it was actually published under the pseudonym of "The Duchess." Even editions issued in 1900 still referred only to "The Duchess" without mentioning Mrs. Hungerford by name.

14. See Brenda Maddox, Nora: A Biography of Nora Joyce (203) for an interpretation of Molly modeled on Nora, attributing their shared flirtatiousness to growing up without maternal affection. See also Suzette Henke, James Joyce and the Politics of Desire (126-49) for a psychoanalytic discussion of the influence of maternal abjection.

15. See Ellmann, 316-7, and Maddox, 115-6.

16. The ongoing critical debate over whether Molly Bloom represents a realistic, archetypical, or misogynistic figure of a woman testifies to Joyce's creation of a multidimensional character who offers an infinite number of potential interpretations. See Mark Shechner, "Das Fleisch das Stets Bejaht," for a summary of the new critical debate of Molly as whore versus fertility goddess. See Alan Roughley, James Joyce and Critical Theory for a summary of the feminist debate over Molly as misogynist creation or feminine écriture.

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