

FREEDOM OF AND FROM CHOICE:

JOYCE'S REJECTION OF GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES IN ULYSSES

By

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Senior Honors Thesis

Appalachian State University

Submitted to the Department of English

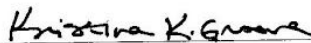
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts in English

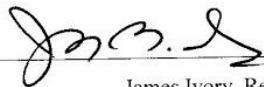
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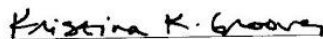
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Abstract: In his work Ulysses, James Joyce uses the characters of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus to express his belief about the deconstruction of binaries- both socially and biologically created. Stephen's preoccupation with ineluctable entelechy prompts him to reject his biological father, Simon, in order to remove this outside influence over his future. In order to completely sever his tie with his father, he must first reject his mother, who represents the link between Simon and Stephen. In doing so, Stephen adopts a new significant mother figure in Leopold Bloom, who becomes a virginal woman who can, and does, bear children in *Circe*. Bloom's ability to bypass the gender binary and become a woman serves as a bolster, rather than a hindrance, to his masculinity, because he cannot cuckold himself in the way that Molly has cuckolded him. Moreover, as the child of a virgin mother, Stephen becomes a definitive Messiah figure within the work. Stephen's position in the work as both an active Messiah and an atheist allows him to avoid the choice of being either religious or non-religious, while Bloom's position as both a highly sexual character who sexualizes nearly every woman he comes across in town and also a virgin mother removes the choice of being purely abstinent or purely sexual. Stephen's discourse on Shakespeare introduces an Aristotelian school of thought that mediates the nature of choice, helping to illustrate Joyce's opinions. Joyce shows his audience that he has two ways of thinking about binaries: Stephen characterizes a 'neither/nor' attitude toward binaries decision, while Bloom embodies a 'both/and' perspective.

## Freedom of and from Choice:

Joyce's Rejection of Given Circumstances in Ulysses

*Oh, I do so want to be a mother.* These words, spoken by Leopold Bloom, mark one of the most significant moments in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, a novel where every moment is significant. Moments before this declaration, Bloom is pronounced by Dr. Malachi Mulligan "bisexually abnormal"—the "new womanly man," "virgo intacta" and yet "about to have a baby." Yet, to this point in the novel, Bloom has been characterized as wholly, if not entirely successfully, male. He imagines sexual fantasies with nearly every woman he encounters in his route through Dublin, yet following the death of his young son, he is unable to fully consummate a real physical union with his wife, leaving him hopelessly unfulfilled as a man, and inspiring Molly to cuckold him. Molly's singular provable infidelity has nonetheless cast a doubt upon their whole married life and the paternity of the two children she bore, and since Bloom cannot feel certain that he is a father, in this crucial scene he becomes a mother instead. Various doctors list a myriad of health concerns which serve to reduce Bloom's masculinity, including the facts that he is "prematurely bald, and idealistic in consequence." It is perhaps this sense of idealism that leads Bloom to strive for the perfect parental role of the virgin mother. After Dr. Dixon announces his imminent birth giving, Bloom bears "eight white and yellow male children" into the dream world of *Circe*. Through the absorption of Rudy Bloom, these children take a real physical form in Stephen, newly motherless and in need of a new possible future. By making him a virgin mother, Joyce places Bloom in a position to become sole significant parent to Stephen; should the characters accept the relationship that is created for them, there would be no question about where Stephen comes from. Thus, Bloom's cuckolded masculinity is paradoxically

restored through his maternity. For Stephen, Bloom's position as significant mother and sole parent would eliminate Simon Dedalus as a possible outcome for his future. Stephen's staunch belief in *entelechy* places him on a path to become exactly what his father is, but Stephen's birth from the virgin mother Bloom at the end of *Circe* recreates him as a Messianic figure, allowing him to be both the Son and the Father, and connected to Bloom through the Holy Spirit of Rudy. Because Stephen is now his own father, he is limited only to becoming himself; the actual possibilities for his future are limitless.

Ulysses is a work chiefly concerned with the construction, and subsequent destruction, of binaries. Both Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom struggle with conflicting ideas concerning their sexual desires, religious ties, and even the parent-to-child relationship dynamic. For both characters, ties with the father connect them to a religion that they no longer practice, and thus symbolically limit what each can become so long as those biological parental ties are validated and significant. Stephen holds firmly to his belief in a process he calls *entelechy*, the inevitable progression and outcome of the future, which Stephen believes limits him to being only what his father is. Bloom has a much friendlier outlook on his father, based on his own position as a father. Bloom thinks of connections between parents and their children in what he terms as *metempsychosis*, the process of reincarnation; for Bloom, *metempsychosis* is the process by which a father lives on through his son-- problematic because Bloom's father broke from the Jewish religion of his fathers and Bloom's son Rudy has passed away. Bloom's *metempsychosis* and Stephen's *entelechy* can be connected in the fact that *entelechy* can be seen as the process by which the son becomes the father, while *metempsychosis* is the process by which the father can continue to live through the son.

Both characters use expressions of a sexual and violent nature to bypass their biological parental connections and create different future outcomes for themselves. For Stephen, this expression manifests itself in an outright rejection of all things both sexual and religious, prompting him to metaphorically kill his mother in order to sever the connection to his father. For Bloom, the difficulties arise in the masculine-to-feminine binary, prompting him to switch between the sexes in the *Circe* chapter of the work. In displaying the difficulties that these two characters have in adhering to socially constructed binaries, Joyce makes an intentional statement about the nature of choice and its place in society-- mainly, that no subject matter is safe from an individual's ability to choose, and yet no individual can be forced to make a choice. In more concrete terms, Leopold Bloom is free to be either male or female, but he cannot be prevented from embodying both sides of the binary at once. Stephen Dedalus's belief in *ineluctable modality* aligns him with his father figure, but he is more than capable of choosing who this father figure is, or is not. Neither character is limited to a lifestyle that is either purely religious or purely sexual. Bloom, with his masochistic tendencies and his ability to emulate the Virgin Mary, rejects choosing in favor of accepting both options, just as he does with his gender. Stephen, by consistently refusing to take part in acts of religious contrition, shows that he rejects his religious lifestyle, while his actions, or lack of action, in the brothel in *Circe* show a similar rejection of a sexual lifestyle. Where Bloom has chosen both, Stephen has effectively chosen neither. Put more simply, Joyce's statement through the characters of Bloom and Stephen can be seen as yet another binary: the freedom both of and from choice. Joyce presents his opinion on binary decisions through his support of Aristotelian thinking, allowing Stephen to argue in the library scene that Aristotle's single world where the ideal and the physical can come together is

superior to Plato's theory of separate worlds. Joyce's viewpoint allows for a space where both the biological parental relationships of Bloom and Stephen and their significant, ideal familial relationship to each other can become true.

Stephen Dedalus is a character of conflicting moral values that the reader can see play out beginning in Joyce's work Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and continuing through Ulysses. This is seen most notably in Stephen's vehement rejection of both religion and sexuality throughout his adolescence and young adulthood, leading up to the beginning of Ulysses. As a youth, Stephen studies at Clongowes-- a religious school for boys. When he begins to mature, Stephen discovers a red light district a short distance from the school, and for a while makes frequent visits to the women. During a repentance ceremony at the school, Stephen is suddenly overcome with guilt at his lascivious actions, and begins a self prescribed regime of religious contrition that leads to him being noticed as one of the most devout students at the school. Beginning with his foray into paid-for sexual encounters and ending with him being offered, and refusing, a position in the priesthood, Stephen's young adult life steers him away from committing either to a life of sin or to the life of a saint. In some ways, Stephen embodies the notion of the strict binary line, because his realization of each lifestyle choice, religious or sexual, is so extreme that it poses limits to other aspects of his life. Stephen's noncommittal relationships with prostitutes limits his ability to make lasting and meaningful connections, but accepting a position in the priesthood would present the same limitation, though through a different means. Stephen, unlike Bloom, is unable to balance these two lifestyle choices, and his rejection of both mirrors Joyce's rejection of binary extremism. Rejection of the sexual side of the binary is easy enough for Stephen through the basic process of abstinence that he adheres to

throughout Ulysses. The rejection of religion is much more complicated. Like Bloom, Stephen's biological family ties attach him to religion. In order to rid himself of this connection, Stephen refuses to pray for his mother in her final moments, metaphorically killing her. This frees up a position in Stephen's life that Bloom steps in to fill-- not as father, but as a mother. Stephen then has no father, and therefore no religion to inherit from him. Though the character of Stephen is, at the time of the setting of Ulysses, as yet too immature to realize it himself, Joyce uses this dual rejection to symbolize the greater idea that one need not always choose between seemingly opposed ideals, especially when normative society pressures one to do so.

Leopold Bloom also struggles with conflicts of both a religious and sexual nature. Being of Jewish descent marks Bloom as an outsider within his mostly Catholic community, and he is treated as such, despite the fact that Bloom himself does not follow the Jewish faith. In fact, Bloom does not exhibit any overtly religious tendencies of any kind throughout the text, apart from a general curiosity. He is, however and unlike Stephen, an extremely overtly sexual character. Bloom's sexual nature is evidenced most in his correspondence to Martha Clifford, a woman with whom he exchanges romantic and erotic letters. Bloom has a tendency to view every female that he come into contact with in the work through the lens of sexuality, from Gerty, who exposes her underwear to him on the beach, to his own daughter, whose "young kisses: the first" he imagines as he reads her letter (Ulysses 105). Bloom's wife Molly does not escape this sexual viewpoint, either, but Bloom's view of Molly as a sexual being is decidedly less self-interested than the other female characters, in that the other women appear as sexual beings relative to Bloom, while Molly appears as a sexual being despite him. Molly is planning to consummate an affair on the day that the events of Ulysses play out, presumably because

Bloom has refused a physical union with her ever since the death of their young son Rudy, and nearly everyone in the town seems to be privy to this fact. Bloom is reminded of it constantly throughout his day, even after his encounter with Gerty MacDowell provides him with a reaffirming sexual experience-- “the clock on the mantelpiece in the priest’s house” chimes “*cuckoo cuckoo*” and at the prompting of the chime, Gerty “noticed at once that that foreign gentleman that was sitting on the rocks looking was *cuckoo cuckoo cuckoo*” (*Ulysses* 546-7).

Bloom’s image within the community as a cuckold brands him in much the same way as his inherited Judaism. The binary being touched upon here is the discord implicit in one’s identity-- namely whether the greatest deciding factor in our identity is the way one perceives oneself or the way one is perceived. The society around Bloom has projected onto him an emasculated identity, stemming from Molly’s single confirmed affair with Blazes Boylan, confirmed only to Molly, Boylan, and the reader, and casting doubt on the paternity of their children. In rejection of this, Bloom adopts the persona of a woman who births her own metaphorical children. Because the children have no father, Bloom cannot be emasculated by society assuming that he is not the father. These children are the symbolic representation of Rudy, the child that Bloom has lost, who is then absorbed into Stephen to become the Holy Spirit part of his trinity at the end of *Circe*. The apparition of Rudy is seen standing over Stephen’s unconscious body and does not dissipate until Stephen is ‘resurrected,’ or regains consciousness.

Bloom’s inner monologue during the *Cyclops* chapter helps display Joyce’s discussion of personal versus perceived identity. Though he no longer practices the Jewish religion, Bloom feels the need to struggle through a defense of the culture of Judaism to make his feelings clear to a society bent on misunderstanding him. Despite his sympathy for his Jewish heritage, the



*Cyclops* chapter marks the first of several times that Bloom is compared to the Prophet Elijah. This comparison, alongside Bloom's female parallel in the Virgin Mary (*virgo intacta*), help Bloom to bridge the gap between Irish Christianity and his cultural Judaism. Not only does Bloom reject the choice between sexual secularism and religiosity, he also rejects the idea that one must adhere to only one religion. Bloom pairs with Stephen because he embodies the option of multiplicity where Stephen rejects every option. Bloom becomes both Jew and Christian when Stephen rejects religion altogether-- seen in Stephen's refusal to pray for his biological mother-- and embodies both male and female sexuality when Stephen rejects the sexual lifestyle as a whole-- seen in the fact that Stephen's visit in *Circe* is the only confirmed visit to a brothel since having repented in Portrait. The presence of Buck Mulligan also in the brothel, paired with Stephen lack of sexual activity during the visit, leads the reader to believe that Stephen may have been lead there, rather than choosing to go on his own.. Joyce uses them both together to encourage readers to think differently about the lifestyle choices with which they are faced, presenting a 'both/and' and a 'neither/nor' for traditional societal binaries.

The throwing together of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus presents the reader with one of the most difficult metaphorical choices to understand-- the father/son choice, although to a certain extent, it may be more accurate to call it the mother/son choice. Stephen's belief that *entelechy* is *ineluctable*, that the son's becoming the father, is inevitable, forces the necessity for Stephen to be able to choose a new parental figure. Stephen metaphorically kills his mother and rejects his father in order to open up those positions to be otherwise filled. Stephen cannot bear the idea that Simon Dedalus is his only option for the future, so he seeks a more palatable choice. However, the position that Bloom will eventually fill in Stephen's life is not that of the father,

but that of the mother. In *Circe*, Bloom is first declared “bisexually abnormal” and then a female “virgo intacta” who then gives birth to eight metaphorical male children (Ulysses 678-80). These metaphorical children take physical form in Stephen, who is born from his mother Bloom without a father, and therefore without limitations as to what he may become. Leopold’s own son died at a young age; moreover, Molly’s single act of infidelity casts the haze of doubt over their entire relationship, including the paternity of Rudy and Milly. Bloom’s persistent refusal to attempt to have another child with Molly figures as his attempt to prevent further question of his masculinity in this vein, or perhaps protect himself from further loss. After all, it can be said that Bloom has lost not one child, but two. Rudy has died, and Molly’s planned affair with Boylan gives Bloom reason, unfounded though it may be, to doubt the paternity of Milly. Yet by choosing Stephen, Bloom may yet choose to have a son-- a son that assuredly belongs to him, not because he is the father, but because he is the mother. More specifically, Bloom is a virgin mother, mother to a child without a father, a child who has spawned wholly and singly from himself. Stephen, on the other hand, has a father who is alive and well, in a sense. His choice to take on Bloom as a parent involves death, rather than the birth involved in Bloom’s taking on of Stephen. This choice is not consciously made by Stephen at the time of the end of the novel; Stephen leaves Bloom’s house without saying whether or not he intends to return. However, through the absorption of Rudy at the end of the *Circe* chapter, the reader already has the power to see the choice Stephen will, but has not yet, make. Through Portrait, the reader sees Stephen struggle with his perception of his biological father. Stephen at first attempts to understand and emulate his father. In the opening of Portrait, during his first year at Clongowes, Stephen remembers his father’s advice “never to peach on a fellow,” which he obeys, showing respect

and deference (17). However, when Stephen's family is forced to move to a smaller house in a less prestigious neighborhood, Stephen's respect for his father dwindles. When he is told by his younger brother that his family is moving again, "a frown of scorn darkened quickly his forehead" (Portrait 143). As Stephen grows into his own ability to make choices, he is seen to defy his father's staunch opinions on Irish nationalism by showing a curiosity in British people and affairs. Moreover, he chooses neither to join the priesthood nor to take a steady position as a wage laborer; instead, Stephen chooses to continue educating himself, teaching only for the money he needs to get by. Because this is a decision which Simon Dedalus can neither understand nor condone, by the time the events of Ulysses play out, Stephen has fairly abandoned his true paternity altogether, choosing instead to search for a new father figure that bears a greater resemblance to himself. His search ends when Bloom gives metaphorical virgin birth to him, allowing him to circumvent the problem of the father entirely, even though he is not entirely aware of what Joyce has set up for him.

In truth, Bloom and Stephen have a great deal in common with respect to the desire for knowledge and the refusal to accept the choices that society attempts to make for them. Bloom's frequent forging of the 'both/and' path, in his portrayal of both male and female roles and both Jewish and Christian faiths, creates both foil and compliment for Stephen's 'neither/nor' attitudes, his outright rejection of everything sexual or religious. For Stephen, rejecting his biological father Simon means grasping at the chance to grow into something other than the option that nature has given him, defying the very core of the natural order. However, it does not necessarily mean that he must take a new father figure. Stephen takes Bloom on not as a father, but as a mother, which allows him to imagine himself fatherless-- or rather to be his own father.

Stephen is born of the female persona of Leopold Bloom, who is proclaimed by Dr. Mulligan to be “virgo intacta” (Ulysses 678). Despite his rejection of the Christian religion, Stephen is very much caught up in it through this portrayal of himself as a Messianic figure. In fact, it is Stephen’s rejection of religion that leads him into this religious role. Part of Stephen’s rejection of Simon is a denial of his destiny to become the Catholic that Simon is, and it is Stephen’s rejection of his father that leads him to ‘kill’ his mother and adopt a new mother in Bloom, the virgin who gives him a metaphorical birth as the Messiah. Stephen as the Messiah then inhabits the roles of both son and father.

Though Stephen Dedalus’ original break with his father Simon occurs in Portrait, Ulysses continues his pattern of trying on and rejecting a series of different fathers, looking for what he would deem to be a proper fit. Exactly what constitutes a proper fit can be gleaned from Stephen’s speech in *Scylla and Charabdis*, which takes place in the National Library and concerns Shakespeare and his play *Hamlet*. Stephen amalgamates the playwright with his own deceased son Hamnet by comparing both of them simultaneously to Hamlet and his father’s ghost, saying that “through the ghost of the unquiet father the image of the unliving son comes forth” (Ulysses 283). This statement projects Hamlet’s father onto Shakespeare’s son Hamnet, seeming to contradict an early statement by Stephen in which he postulated that Hamlet was a message from Shakespeare to his son stating “you are the dispossessed son: I am the murdered father: your mother is the guilty queen, Ann Shakespeare, born Hathaway” (Ulysses 276), which clearly places Shakespeare himself in the guise of the ghostly king. If Hamlet can be a stand-in for both Shakespeare and Hamnet, and the ghost of the king can figure in as both Hamnet and Shakespeare, then the logical conclusion is that, to a certain extent, Shakespeare and his

deceased son are the same person in much the same way that Bloom and Rudy are the same person. Because Rudy is also part of Stephen's trinity, this can also suggest that Stephen and Bloom are tied into a single entity, much like the *Blephen* or *Stoom of Circe*.

Stephen's combining of father and son in his discussion of Hamlet, aside from being an interesting take on the work of the Bard, allows for an in-depth look at the qualifications which Stephen is considering in his search for a suitable father figure. Stephen simply wishes for a father who resembles himself-- so closely, in fact, that a difference might not be made between them. Essentially, he believes that paternity should play into the idea of *entelechy*; the process by which an individual reaches full potential. For Stephen, the individual's potential is defined by the *ineluctable* fate of becoming like one's father. This idea is brought up in a different light by Molly Bloom in the form of *metempsychosis*, or reincarnation, which is adopted by Bloom as the means by which a father can live on through his son. Stephen wishes for a father that, as the progenitor, actively becomes Stephen at the same moment that Stephen, through the process of *ineluctable entelechy*, inevitably grows into being his father-- i.e., the child is "father" to the man. For Joyce, this is the unavoidable transformation, but the process can be shaped by the choice of the players. Stephen is not limited to Simon Dedalus as progenitor. Neither is Leopold Bloom destined to become nothing because his biological progeny has been lost. All that must happen to influence this course of events is that both Stephen and Bloom must choose new partners, and new futures. Rudy's appearance as Holy Spirit who is absorbed into Stephen during his resurrection at the end of *Circe* indicates that this process has begun. Bloom can become Stephen because Rudy is now a part of them both, and Stephen is free to become Bloom or

whatever else he wishes. No difference can now be found between Stephen and his father because Stephen *is* his own father.

One of the problems associated with simply choosing a new father is the undeniable tie between paternity and maternity. Stephen's discussion of paternity in the library is underlaid with thoughts about his mother. In criticizing Ann Hathaway for her coldness toward Shakespeare, Stephen tells his audience "She [Hathaway] died. . . sixtyseven years after she was born. She took his first embraces. She bore his children and she laid pennies on his eyes to keep his eyelids closed when he lay on his deathbed" (Ulysses 277). Internally, Stephen is remembering the death of his own mother, brought about by the image of the pennies over the eyelids. Stephen recalls his mother as the one "who brought me into this world," remembering that he "wept alone" (Ulysses 277) in his grief. The removal of the mother figure is necessary in order Bloom to step in, therefore it does not follow that Stephen's grief is for the loss of his mother, especially given the hand that he played in her 'killing.' Why should someone who intentionally severs his significant bond with his mother mourn her loss? Rather, Stephen's grief is for the fact that his mother existed at all. He mourns for himself over who his mother was and the associations that she forced upon him by linking him to the undesirable father figure of Simon. In his essay "Unsubstantial Father: A Study of the Hamlet Symbolism in Joyce's *Ulysses*," Edward Duncan argues for ties between maternity and paternity that Stephen makes, stating of the library scene that "Stephen's relations with his mother are the focal point of the discussion and form a matrix from which arise, later on, the problems concerning paternity" (Duncan 127). Duncan then goes on to summarize Stephen's comparison of Hathaway and the character of Gertrude in Hamlet, supporting Stephen's claim that Shakespeare was first

emasculated by the seduction he suffered from Ann at such a young age, and was further spurned when, after he left for London, she committed acts of incest paralleling those that Gertrude commits with Claudius.

Implicit in Stephen's critique of Hathaway's treatment of Shakespeare is his critique of his own mother. That Stephen should never have presented his mother as anything other than a good and virtuous woman is precisely the point. Stephen's mother never gave him a reason to doubt his own paternity in the way that the adulterous acts of Gertrude, Ann Hathaway, and even Molly Bloom lend the parentage of their children to question. By contrast, Stephen's mother, having never committed an act of adultery, has subsequently forced Stephen to accept his own paternity. In order to circumvent this difficulty and gain the ability to choose his paternal source, Stephen must break with his maternal source as well. Thus his decision not to pray when his mother requests him to is not simply an act of rejection targeted at Catholicism, but also a targeted decision to spurn his mother. Shortly before the events of Ulysses, following his refusal to pray for her, Stephen's mother dies. In *Telemachus*, Buck Mulligan tells Stephen that "[Buck's] aunt thinks you killed your mother" (Ulysses 20). It is revealed in short order that Mulligan does not entirely disagree his aunt's opinion. He tells Stephen that "there is something sinister" (Ulysses 20) in the fact that Stephen would not acquiesce to his mother's dying wish that he should pray for her. Whether or not it can truly be believed that Mrs. Dedalus died of the broken heart caused by her son's stubbornness rather than cancer, the fact remains that Stephen did, in effect, kill his mother, insofar as his needs were concerned. His defiance of her final wish allows him to believe that the emotional bond, and thus the familial bond, between them has been 'killed' - an act that was a long time coming, as is evidenced in Portrait when Stephen fails

to respond affirmatively to Cranly's question of whether or not he had ever actually loved anyone. Under the guise of irreconcilable difference in religious opinions, Stephen has eradicated the final tie that he has with Simon Dedalus as a father. It would not have simply been enough that Mrs. Dedalus should die in a physical sense, and her continued ghostly presence in Stephen's mind and as an actual manifestation in *Circe* implies that she may not, in fact, have entirely done so. In order to sever the paternal connection between himself and Simon, Stephen must also completely disconnect from his good and virtuous maternal parent, and his rejection of her in her final attempt to connect with him allows him to believe that this has been accomplished. However, her ghost returns to haunt Stephen until the novel presents him with a new significant mother, requiring that he deny her both physically before she dies and spiritually after she dies in order for Stephen's rejection of her as significant mother to be complete.

Stephen's rejection of his mother happens prior to the beginning of *Ulysses*, yet his full independence from her does not occur until the end of *Circe*, because it is not possible that Stephen can exist without a maternal connection. In *Scylla and Charybdis*, Stephen considers the notion that "*amor matris* (mother's love) . . . may be the only true thing in life," while "paternity may be legal fiction" (*Ulysses* 301). Therefore, Stephen's mother must haunt him until the novel has created the Virgin Mary-Bloom to take her place. Stephen can, however, exist without an external father figure due to Bloom's status as his virgin mother, which circumvents the need for the 'legal fiction' of paternity, but this connection between them is not solidified until Rudy's appearance at the end of *Circe*, when Rudy is absorbed into the resurrecting Stephen and creates a spiritual parental connection between Stephen and Bloom. It is not until this moment that Mrs. Dedalus ceases to be the mother, having been overtaken by Bloom. Therefore, up until this point,



her influence over Stephen persists, as is evidenced in her continuously haunting ghostly presence in the novel up until that point. Despite the necessity that brought about the severing of the maternal bond, Stephen later expresses guilt and remorse before the apparition of his mother in *Circe*. He pleads before her, crying “Cancer did it. Not I. Destiny” (*Ulysses* 767). Duncan would connect this remorse to Stephen’s parallel between his relationship with his mother and Shakespeare’s relationship with Ann Hathaway. To define this connection, Duncan argues:

It is obvious that, to a certain extent, Stephen is covering up the trail which would lead to an understanding of his relations with his own mother. Nevertheless, he provides two clues. First, he stresses the fact that Ann was older than Shakespeare, and secondly, he points out the nature of the psychological trauma brought about by his relationship with her, symbolized by the wound in the thigh [in *Venus and Andonis*] and resulting in a psychological semi-impotence from which “assumed Dongiovannism will not save him.” Thus he seems to be thinking in Freudian terms and indirectly suggests that Shakespeare has unconsciously taken Ann for a mother substitute (130-1).

Should Duncan be correct in his assumption that Stephen believes Shakespeare took Hathaway as pseudomother who then forcibly emasculated him, it would imply that Stephen believes his own mother has forcibly emasculated him. Because the good and virtuous Mrs. Dedalus gave Stephen only Simon as a possibly paternal model, she has metaphorical castrated his potential in

life by limiting his ability to fulfill his individual potential, *entelechy*, due to the force of paternal influence. Therefore, in order to restore his manhood, Stephen must restore his ability to choose his own *ineluctable* future, ergo the removal of the influential father figure. The apparition of Stephen's mother, in an echo of her last living request, bids Stephen to repent and pray, to which Stephen replies "The ghoul! Hyena! . . . The corpsechewer! Raw head and bloody bones" (Ulysses 767-8). This second rejection of the maternal presence, marking a denial of both Mrs. Dedalus's physical and spiritual presence in Stephen's life, opens the space of significant mother model that Bloom steps in to fill. The fact that Stephen's second rejection of his mother is again placed on the grounds of religion is not insignificant. If Duncan's argument is to be believed that Shakespeare's taking of Ann Hathaway to be a combination of mother and lover mirrors Stephen's feelings toward his own mother, the Catholic Church has now foiled Stephen's designs on two separate levels. Firstly, as previously acknowledged, the religious and moral virtue ascribed to Stephen's mother, who practiced fidelity at the bidding of the Church, locks him into his paternal parentage and his castrated potential until he can escape his maternal connection. Stephen's plea to his mother that he did not kill her indicated that his problem with his mother does not stem from her as a person, but rather her as the embodiment of the religious piety that locks him into a future as Simon Dedalus. Should Mrs. Dedalus abandon the staunch religious path that she followed in life, Stephen could be reconciled with his mother's ghost, and he

displays the desire to be so. However, Stephen finds his mother more or less unchanged after her death, and because he is unable to realize a different potential while she holds the Church, and her loyalty to it, over his head, he denounces her a second time. His declaration that she is either “with [him] all or not at all” (Ulysses 768) reflects his acknowledgement that she will always place her fidelity to Simon, and her loyalty to the Church, over her desire to see Stephen realize the potential that he wishes to have and she must therefore be eradicated from his life.

Molly Bloom, unlike Stephen’s mother, does nothing to beholden Leopold Bloom to a paternal relationship. Her impending tryst with Blazes Boylan, though the only accounted for lapse in her fidelity, is enough to call into question her entire marriage with Bloom, including the paternity of Milly and the late Rudy. Moreover, nearly every secondary character that Bloom meets as he travels the city seems to be aware of the imminent affair, leading them all to draw this same conclusion about Bloom’s lost son-- rather, that he never had a son in the first place. In much the same way that Stephen’s twofold ‘killing’ of his mother destroys his metaphorical parentage rather than his biological one, and yet is able to transition the significance of parenthood and *entelechy* onto a new figure in Bloom, the suspicion surrounding Molly’s fidelity destroys the significance of Bloom’s fatherhood, if not his biological ties to his children. It is enough that he, and the rest of society, is suspicious about the circumstances of Rudy’s birth, even if they have no reason to be so. The death and doubt that attach themselves to the child

absolve Bloom of his paternal ties in a much more simplistic way than the denouncements Stephen must make to create similar freedom for himself. However, the added consequences for Bloom mirror's Duncan's argument for Stephen concerning Shakespeare and Ann Hathaway in that Molly's removal of the paternal element from Bloom's character has effectively not just emasculated, but rather feminized him. As Bloom traverses Nighttown in *Circe*, he encounters his own father and mother, who, like the ghost of Stephen's mother, discuss with him the topic of religion. Yet, Bloom's reaction to the topic of religion in conversation with his parental apparitions is quite different than Stephen's. Bloom's father asks him "Are you not my dear son Leopold who left the house of his father and left the god of his fathers Abraham and Jacob?" To this, Bloom replies "All that is left of him" (*Ulysses* 622). Bloom is not wholly his father's son anymore, because Molly's emasculation of him has robbed him of his ability to call himself male. Where Stephen rejects the fidelity of a religious marriage because it poses a detriment to claiming his own masculinity apart from his father's, Bloom yearns for the religion he has lost as a means to reclaim his status as his father's son with the *ineluctable entelechy* of becoming his father, thereby restoring his masculinity and position as progenitor in his own family. However, Bloom is unable to reclaim his masculine position, as is evidenced later in *Circe* when Bloom is convicted of an adulterous act that he, in his reduced state of un-manhood, had not the ability to commit, and is sentenced to be whipped by a woman, whilst another woman instructs her to

“geld him” (Ulysses 654). Ironically, while the punishment for his so-called crime is taking place, The Honorable Mrs. Mervyn Talboys informs the public that Bloom “is a wellknown cuckold” (Ulysses 654) thereby further emasculating and castrating him, thus proving that he is incapable of committing the act of which he was originally accused.

The hypothetical situation presented in this section of *Circe* represents a real aspect of Bloom’s life in his consistent pondering of the letter he has received from Martha. Bloom’s intimate knowledge of Molly’s planned affair with Blazes Boylan has so emasculated Bloom in his own mind that the playful verbiage used by Martha when she tells Bloom he is ‘naughty’ and she will ‘spank him’ is turned from eroticism into a power move that further removes Bloom’s own sense of agency in his sexuality. Moreover, Bloom’s inability to please his wife and keep her faithful to him places doubt of the paternity of his children, rendering him infertile, useless to women, and therefore incapable of consummating a physical union with either Molly or Martha, limiting him to their written correspondence.

Because of his inability to be a father, Bloom adopts instead a maternal persona within the key scene in *Circe*. Bloom is seen to be described as “the new womanly man” who is a virgin, and yet “about to have a baby” (Ulysses 678-9). Bloom himself claims that he “so want[s] to be a mother”, and he does in fact, within the hallucinatory world of Nighttown, bear “eight male children” which are embodied in Stephen through his absorption of Rudy (Ulysses 680).

The gender of Bloom's children pose an interesting comparison to Stephen's parentage because, with Bloom as the virgin mother and the absence of a father figure, these eight children will have none of the Freudian difficulties that Stephen experiences in the connection between his maternal and paternal sources. This is why Stephen's eventual adoption of Bloom as significant mother figure, as implied by the connection the two now have through Rudy, will become so essential to his *entelechy*, because with the removal of Simon as significant father figure, his destiny now has no fixed outcome.

It is Bloom's ability to transition from Rudy's insignificant, uncertain father figure to Stephen's significant, certain mother figure that makes him the ideal choice for Stephen as progenitor. Frances Restuccia, author of Joyce and the Law of the Father, postulates that "Stephen Dedalus, instead of following his the footsteps of his literary ancestor Oedipus by killing his father and marrying his mother, behaves anti-Oedipally by 'killing' his [patriarchal] mother and 'marrying' [at the end of 'Eumaeus'] his [noncastrating] 'father' Leopold Bloom" (Restuccia 15). Two main points mark Bloom as the ideal choice for Stephen as an alternative parentage. Firstly, as Restuccia points out, as the mother rather than the father, Bloom's own lack of masculinity poses no limitation to the development and eventual outcome of Stephen's own masculine character. Secondly, Bloom identification as both himself and the deceased Rudy allows the circular relationship between Stephen and Bloom to be realized, thus completing the

cycle of *metempsychosis*. Bloom now has a son who belongs solely and definitely to him and through which he will live on, while Stephen is allowed to realize his full potential of becoming himself without the limiting factor of Simon Dedalus. Because Stephen's potential is now limitless, so too is Bloom's by association.

Of course, insofar as Bloom can be considered an ideal choice for Stephen, Stephen must also be considered an ideal choice for Bloom. To begin with, Stephen has already denounced his maternal source twice over, and subsequently rid himself of his paternal ties as well. This marks Stephen as without either mother or father, and because these roles are inseparable in the person of Leopold Bloom, who is both a biological father and a significant mother, only someone without either would be fit to be Bloom's progeny. Moreover, Bloom's vision of Rudy at the end of *Circe* is indicative that his subconscious has already made the connection for him. Rudy has become the third part of Stephen's trinity, and as part of both Stephen and Bloom he represents the significant, as well as biological, parent-to-child relationship between them. Bloom is caring for a drunken and unconscious Stephen at the moment of the vision, in which Rudy appears reading "from right to left" and "hold[ing] a slim ivory cane" (*Ulysses* 795). There are two possible interpretations for this image, specifically because there is no indication of the material the apparition is reading; both readings are indicative of Joyce's deconstruction of binaries. It could be assumed that the boy is reading backwards as an affront to Stephen's own assumptions

of *ineluctable modality*; that is to say, the presence of Rudy reading backwards is symbolic of Joyce's assertion that the natural order of things can be effectively be changed, thus allowing for the choice that both Bloom and Stephen are making in regards to their parental relationships, and religious and sexual binaries. In opposition to that, it could be assumed that the boy is reading in Hebrew, which is read correctly right to left, and which would harmonize the discord between Christianity and Judaism in Bloom's life by portraying Rudy as both embracing Jewish texts and embodying a part of the Holy Trinity. In addition to this, Rudy's ivory cane mirrors the ashplant that Bloom is now holding for Stephen, thus affirming not only their right to choose, but effectively stating that they have made the right choice. The vision of Rudy fades as Stephen is resurrected, indicating the absorption of Rudy into the Messianic figure of Stephen.

Stephen's status as both atheist and Messiah plays into Joyce's argument for the 'both/and' acceptance of the binary choice, showing that Stephen's rejection of religious life is what allows him to become a pseudoreligious figure, which is in turn what allows him to reject religious life. Stephen rejects the limitation of a religious life, but the theory of religion is what allows him to circumvent the need for a limiting external father figure. Bloom's ability to become Stephen's significant mother is achieved through religious ties. Dr. Mulligan's description of Bloom in *Circe* as "virgo intacta" marks Bloom as the new Virgin Mary, as well as his own version of the Messiah, the prophet Elijah, and myriad other roles. Yet, Stephen's



denouncement of his former mother came about on the basis of religion. This seemingly contradictory choice on Stephen's part can once again be tied to his Freudian feelings about paternity. By shirking his former parentage and being mothered by Bloom instead, religious practices no longer define his paternity, because his denouncement of his birth-mother has given him the right to choose a replacement, and Bloom's role as the new mother allows for Stephen to inhabit the spheres of both son and father, which in turn allows for Stephen to reach true *entelechy*, an entirely personal potential for his future, rather than forcing him toward an external, limiting father figure in Simon. Simply put, religion is no longer a threat to the outcome of Stephen's future, and therefore it no longer poses the problem that would force him to run from it; instead, in order to realize his desire to father himself, he must embrace the religion of his significant mother Bloom in the same way that he rejected the religion of his biological mother Mrs. Dedalus.

Stephen's difficulty with the religion of his biological mother, aside from locking him into a relationship with Simon Dedalus, is that it proves to be a limiting binary choice that is fundamentally opposed to a sexual lifestyle. Stephen says of his origin that he "was made and not begotten," implying a certain mechanical air to the production of children within a marriage, subsequently denying sexual fulfillment even to married couples within the religious sphere (Ulysses 68). Stephen's rejection of both God as the Father and the connection that religious

piety forces him to have with Simon can be tied to his desire for freedom from the rules and expectations of others, namely the Freudian and sexual freedoms that have already been described, and Stephen's views, as such, can be said to voice Joyce's own opinions. Restuccia states that "Joyce ha[d] a surplus of fathers and surrogate fathers. . . their presumed authority was the problem, and. . . Joyce exhausted himself in attempting to subvert the law of the father/Father to achieve the pleasure of Nora, Molly, Mary, and 'Penelope'" (Restuccia 3). In Portrait, Stephen can be seen to choose and then reject a life at either extreme-- beginning with complete sexual freedom, with frequent visits to prostitutes, and transitioning to a life of complete religious devotion, resulting in an offer to join the priesthood. However, neither of these options are entirely fulfilling for Stephen, nor for Joyce, who questions the very idea of being forced to choose. Stephen denies the binary choice by enforcing the 'neither/nor' rejection-- he chooses to live a lifestyle that is neither religious nor sexual. Bloom on the other hand, with his over-sexualization of secondary female characters and his status as a virgin mother, chooses a lifestyle that is *both* sexual *and* religious, adopting both sides of the binary simultaneously.

The choice of Bloom as Stephen's sole parental figure becomes important because it negates the choice of sexual versus religious fulfillment. Stephen, as the son of the metaphorical Virgin Mary/Bloom, becomes the literal Messiah. Yet, Stephen also become connected to the

literal Leopold Bloom, and therefore his *entelechy* now also contains the potential to be the overtly sexual entity that Bloom is. In this way, Joyce destroys even his own dividing line; the ‘both/and’ approach to binaries and the ‘neither/nor’ approach must exist together and feed off each other to be successful. Bloom and Stephen’s tripartite connection through Rudy means that they, like the binaries that Joyce creates and subsequently destroys, are one and the same.

Stephen’s ability to adopt the persona of the *uebermensch*, or metaphorically the Messiah, applied to him by Buck Mulligan in *Telemachus* (*Ulysses* 45) is brought about by simply engaging in his ability to bypass the binary choice and create a median in which both the sexual and the religious are possible but neither are necessary. Bloom becomes the *uebermensch* as well, finding in himself the Messiah who brings about “the new Bloomusalem” (*Ulysses* 670) in *Circe*. That both Bloom and Stephen should find themselves as the Messiah is important to the notion of what Bloom calls *metempsychosis* and Stephen calls *entelechy*. The Messiah is an inherently fatherless figure, which leaves open the path for Stephen to reach true *entelechy* without the influence of an external paternal model-- he is not forced to transform into anyone but himself-- and also opens the characters up to the notion of transubstantiation, meaning that Bloom is free not to be himself and instead to transform into Stephen through *metempsychosis*.

Given the cyclical connection between Bloom and Stephen, Bloom’s acceptance of his femininity in order to boost his own masculinity contrasts interestingly Stephen’s own attitudes

toward the masculine. In his essay *A Little Trouble About Those White Corpuscles: Mockery, Heresy, and the Transubstantiation of Masculinity in 'Telemachus'*, Garry Leonard makes an appraisal of Stephen's desperate need to 'find himself,' both as masculine by embracing prostitution and as non-masculine by prostrating himself in repentance before the Christian Father, throughout both Portrait and Ulysses, citing conclusions about modernist writers reached by Peter Middleton:

Male modernist writers, as Peter Middleton notes, wrote about this crisis [of masculinity] in modernity as though it were existential and universal: they "rarely acknowledge that their subject is men . . . men's culture is simply assumed to be universal culture, men's issues simply human issues." Writers such as Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, however, are "much more flexible in their representation of self-consciousness. . . for the men there is a kind of all or nothing quality to it, either complete rational clarity or dark unconscious groping." For the Stephen of Portrait and Gabriel Conroy of "The Dead," such "unconscious groping" is figured as a "swoon," a gesture which, in its connotations of a lady fainting under stress, suggests that a "swoon" concerns a crisis in masculinity, a crisis figured as a male character "falling" into

a “feminine” space when his (imaginary) boundaries constituting his identity are breached (2).

Leonard points to Stephen being insecure in his masculinity as it compares with those of the other male characters around him, and how a lot of his insecurity is based around physicality and appearance. In *Telemachus*, Stephen watches Buck Mulligan shave and dress, noting his “strong wellknit trunk.” This reference brings to mind not only the strength that Mulligan’s young masculine body is imbued with but also phallic images of masculinity as well, embodied in the very tower where the Mulligan and Stephen live. The phallic symbolism of the tower is important to note because of the desperation with which Stephen hopes to keep his key to it. For Stephen, Mulligan’s request for the key is a literal recalling of his masculinity. Leonard argues for Stephen’s perception of masculinity itself as a physical element, mirrored in the phallic imagery implied by the location of the tower, that requires the complete rejection of all things un-masculine in order to remain complete and erect-- “The construction of this ‘tower’ of masculinity requires one to deny, among other things, the original ‘sea’ of a mother’s womb, and additionally, it requires countless rituals to maintain its (fictional) edifice against a sea of troubles” (Leonard 2). Stephen proves to hold tightly to the assessment Leonard makes here. His killing of his mother serves the dual purpose of allowing him to deny his paternity and reject the nature of femininity. In fact, these two concepts directly relate to each others. Because Simon

Dedalus, as Stephen's father, is representative of Stephen's future self and his example of masculinity, Stephen's desire not to emulate his father becomes a threat to Stephen's own masculinity, thereby forcing him into the feminine. By 'killing' his mother, Stephen simultaneously rejects this association with the feminine while also ridding himself of the problematic definition of masculinity found in Simon. Bloom takes the place of significant mother for Stephen, and poses less of a threat of imposing femininity because of his status as biologically male. This is a re-masculating experience for Stephen in two ways. Firstly, Stephen's significant mother figure is now technically male, meaning that accepting Bloom as a mother does not inherently mean accepting femininity. Moreover, Bloom is Stephen's virgin mother, thus removing the father and allowing Stephen to produce his own *entelechy* instead of having the future predestined for him and allowing him to be castrated by the limiting factor of an external father figure.

Bloom's definition of masculinity is so unique in Ulysses because it is created and saved by his acceptance, rather than rejection, of femininity. By making Bloom Stephen's choice of parental figure, specifically a mother figure, Joyce himself denies Leonard's accusation that male modernist writers inherently reject the feminine as a viable piece of existence. Joyce creates, in effect, a more stable and sustainable definition of masculinity, seen not as a 'tower' that is rocked and destabilized by the outside elements of the world, but rather one that moves with

these elements, just as Bloom moves between the sexes. In Bloom, Joyce postulates that the feminine, rather than derailing the masculine, can only serve to enhance it. It is by accepting this femininity that Bloom, and by extension Stephen, surpasses ordinary manhood to become the *ubermensch*- in other words, his own Messiah.

In much the same way that the Christian Messiah was validated as the Son of God by the presence of his followers, Stephen and Bloom are now caught in an endlessly recurring act of choosing-- a state of *metempsychosis* and *entelechy* in which each must continually prove able to become the other, thus providing each with the constant presence of a following. For Bloom, this means using the accepted femininity in order to stabilize his masculinity. He becomes the virgin mother of Stephen in order to secure his status as parent to a child, the doubt of which in respects to Milly and Rudy being what has stripped him of his masculinity in the first place. Stephen, on the other hand, must destabilize his own sense of masculinity in order to emulate Bloom's acceptance of the feminine. He does so by rejecting Simon, who represents the definition of masculinity that Stephen's notion of *ineluctable entelechy* would eventually force him to adopt. In doing so, he can accept Bloom as his sole parental figure- a mother- and eventual future self, thus creating for himself a new definition of masculinity that, just like Bloom's, hinges on the acceptance of the feminine.

The lack in masculinity that is made up for in the acceptance of the feminine is what allows for the transcendence from man to Messiah made by Stephen and Bloom. According to Joseph Valente, author of the essay “The Perils of Masculinity in *Scylla and Charybdis*,” “. . . a man can only journey to transcendence by a negative road, through an experience of an accession to his own gendered limitation or lack” (111). Valente uses this acceptance of one’s own inability as a precursor to overcoming limitation and achieving transcendence as a working definition of the law of castration. He argues that a male must accept his limitations, and thus assent to castration, in order to transcend, the act of which he denotes is the “defining mandate of masculinity” (Valente 112). However, the acceptance of castration is an affront to masculinity. In other words, in order to achieve the ultimate goal of masculinity, masculinity itself must first fail and thus be forsaken.

The failure of Bloom’s masculinity, while easily seen in Molly’s impending liaison with Blazes Boylan, is perhaps better illustrated in his correspondence with Martha. To begin with, Bloom writes to Martha under his alias “Henry Flower.” While this serves the practical purpose of aiding in the covering up of his actions, it also implies that Bloom’s direct character does not possess the manhood needed to please a second woman, and therefore he must invent a new one. Still, Bloom’s own emasculated character inevitably leaks into the invented Henry Flower. In her letter, Martha tells him that she is “angry” with him and that she “wish[es]



she] could punish” him, calling him a naughty boy. Of course, the fact that she could imagine herself with the ability to punish him marks her as the dominant character between the two. More importantly however, she specifically refers to him, in a line that Bloom recalls repeatedly throughout the day, as “little naughty boy” (Ulysses 120). The significance of this lies in the express idea that the word *boy* contradicts the word *man*. Martha then further emasculates Bloom by telling him that his name, or rather his pseudonym Henry Flower, is beautiful. Of course, the name Flower being not so far from a direct translation of Bloom, in can be inferred that Bloom’s true name is also beautiful-- a strictly feminine quality. The final blow comes in the post-script of Martha’s letter, in which she mentions Molly, the thought of whom instantly recalls for Bloom the thought of Blazes Boylan, thus tying the emasculation of his real self with the emasculation of his created self, reducing him to a totally feminine state.

Bloom defines his masculinity in the abundance of his sexual dialogue, transferred from the outright rejection of Molly to the more subtle denial of Martha, and his fall from masculinity could be seen as its own kind of inevitability. Leonard argues that, in order for masculinity to be proved, it must be performed for the viewing of others, thus Bloom’s original reaching out to Martha. However, the very performative nature of masculinity lends itself to the destabilization of that trait:

. . . in other words, a display of “masculinity” calls attention to its derivative status as an effect of performance, rather than, as it purports to be, an expression of a prediscursive, supposedly essential, “nature.” Any virile presentation-- that is to say, one to insistently coded as “masculine”-- risks being perceived, at least by others, not only as a “fake” expression of manhood, but also, and at the same time, as an “authentic” expression of womanhood (Leonard 7).

The evidence of the failure of Bloom’s play at masculinity can be seen in *Circe*, when Bloom encounters the brothel madam Bella, who transforms into the monstrous male beast Bello. In a transformation mirroring that of Bello, Bloom is reduced physically to the woman that he was reduced to metaphorically by Martha and Molly. Bello then proceeds to degrade Bloom entirely with various acts of dominance, ending in Bloom’s forced confession that he “tried her [Molly’s] things on only once. . . in Holles street. When we were hardup I washed them to save the laundry bill. My own shirts I turned. It was the purest thrift” (Ulysses 723). This admission proves that Bloom’s status as a literal, not just metaphorical, woman is long standing, predating even the start of the novel, Molly’s impending infidelity with Boylan, and Martha’s emasculating letter. It underlies nearly all of Bloom’s adult and married life and is not simply isolated to the dream-like atmosphere of *Circe*, the implication of which is that it precludes the birth of his real-life children, adding more weight to the doubt in their paternity.

Bloom's admission of wearing Molly's clothes figures in as the necessary admission of the failure of masculinity, the assent to castration that Valente argues in the necessary step toward transcendence. It is necessary in order for Bloom to become the woman who saves his masculinity. The first notice and mention of Bloom's status as both male and female comes earlier in *Circe* when Dr. Mulligan pronounces Bloom to be "bisexually abnormal" (Ulysses 678). Though his admission of wearing Molly's clothes does not come until the end of the chapter, the actual event occurs much earlier, making this statement a truth throughout the entirety of the book-- Bloom's masculinity is not destroyed by his adoption of the feminine identity. The two coexist together, in a true version of the prediscursive essential nature that Leonard argues pure masculinity only pretends to be. Moreover, as a woman, Bloom is pronounced "virgo intacta," after which he promptly gives birth, announcing that he "so want[s] to be a mother" (Ulysses 678-80). While Bloom figuratively gives birth to eight male children inside the dream of *Circe*, the broader implication of Bloom's desire for motherhood is that he can symbolically give birth to Stephen as his son.

In Stephen, there is a representation both of Bloom's denial of traditional masculinity and his attempt at redeeming whatever kind of masculinity he can be said to have left after having transcended, taking into account Valente's argument that transcendence involves the shirking off of performative masculinity. In some sense, adopting, or figuratively birthing, Stephen as

progeny is the only attempt of recovering his masculinity that Bloom has left. Bloom's desire for a masculine persona, even after transcendence and the adoption of a female persona, as argued by Valente, "speaks to the insolubility of the classical impasse of manhood, the need for some sort of phallic overcompensation-- ultimately embodied in the son-- to cover up or redress the permanent deficit that castration entails" (112). Stephen is able to fulfill this requirement for Bloom in a way that Rudy cannot, not simply because of his premature death, but also because of his distinct connection to Molly and her distinct disconnection from Bloom in her capacity as wife. Moreover, Stephen's status as the product of the birth of the Virgin Mary-Bloom marks him as the Messiah, transcended from the outset and thus not requiring the castration and emasculation that Bloom went through in order to birth him. Aside from Stephen's figurative parentage being assured, this secures Bloom's masculinity in the sense that after he inevitably becomes Stephen through the circular process of *metempsychosis*. Therefore, in a circuitous sense, Bloom's masculinity is saved because his adoption of Stephen ensures that he will have never had to forfeit it in the first place. The ambiguity of Bloom's position in relation to Stephen shows Joyce's opinions about the nature and function of choice and binaries in society. Bloom inhabits a place between masculinity and femininity, easily slipping back and forth between across the gender dividing line, yet neither his male nor his female persona suffer for the division. In fact, Bloom's choice to embrace both male and female characteristics only serves to

enhance both as they bolster each other. The female Bloom provides the male Bloom with a son whose parentage he can be sure of, thus preventing the emasculation Bloom has suffered at the hand of his wife and boosting his masculinity, which has in turn allowed the male Bloom to create a space in which the female Bloom is allowed to exist, thus provide Bloom as his entire self with an outlet through which to achieve transcendence.

Bloom's position as both male and female also serves to thwart rising notions of theosophy and social purity that were becoming popular in the early twentieth century. While his male persona is hyper-sexualized in his pursuit of Mary, his female persona is allowed to become a mother while at the same time remaining socially pure and virginal. Stephen's own pursuit of a new father calls into question the inner workings of theosophy as well, because in taking Bloom as his mother figure and sole external parent, he achieves a self-fathering status. Yet, as mentioned previously, the female Bloom is not defiled by the pregnancy and birth of his son Stephen, making Stephen into a Messianic figure. Both he and Bloom remain socially pure individuals, while still indulging in the parent/child relationship that theosophy prevents in its adherents through the enforcement of abstinence.

Joyce treated with the theosophical movement in the same way that he dealt with ideas of religion, gender, and sexuality in Ulysses- by proving that a definitive and binary choice is not necessary and that one can be socially pure without adhering to the strictly repressive lifestyle

touted by followers of the movement. In James Joyce, Sexuality, and Social Purity, Katharine Mullin points to Stephen's discussion of Shakespeare in the National Library in *Scylla and Charybdis* as expressing Joyce's well informed opinions of the theosophical movement, stating that Stephen's reference to a "Virgin Dublin" provocatively invites his listeners to ponder their own sexual identity, and read his remarks on Shakespeare as disconcertingly personal" (Mullins 121). Stephen's ensuing discourse on Shakespeare's marriage to Ann Hathaway then deals almost exclusively with how she forced him into a life of social impurity by cuckolding him in the extreme and placing doubt on the paternity of their children. This validates the assuredness of Stephen's new parentage through his virgin mother Bloom as being pure because it eliminates this doubt. Moreover, because Bloom is the sole parental unit, no sex act had to take place in order to create Stephen and Bloom's relationship-- literally because Stephen becomes Bloom's son only in the significant and not the biological sense. This is confirmed by Dr. Mulligan's proclamation of Bloom's virgin status in *Circe*. Therefore both Stephen and Bloom retain their purity as immaculate beings.

Stephen's status as an immaculate being inside of an assured parental relationship which mirrors the creation story shows that Stephen and his significant parent Bloom have achieved the goals of theosophy in a greater capacity in than the movement itself can claim. Mullin ties the theosophical ideology of brotherhood among all persons into Stephen's discussion of how

Shakespeare was cuckolded by his own brothers, arguing that “Stephen suggests that theosophy’s conspicuous disdain for heterosexuality or ‘straight sex’ in favour of an asexual sibling bond in fact masks a sexuality which contemporary standards would have judged perverted or corrupt” (Mullin 123). Mullin points specifically to a passage of *Scylla and Charybdis* in which Stephen makes reference to a founder of the theosophy movement, Helena Blavatsky, and her assertion that, upon her death, her spirit or ‘elemental’ would appear to her followers. Another young woman in the movement, Isabel Cooper-Oakley, claims to have been the recipient of such a visit. Yet, Stephen comments negatively on the issue with the inward reflection that “You naughtn’t to look, missus, so you naughtn’t when a lady’s ashowing of her elemental” (Ulysses 272). Mullin argues that, in so thinking, “Stephen reappraises the [familial] relationship [presented in theosophical ideology], building upon his insinuations about Blavatsky and Cooper-Oakley to present the sibling bond not as an evasion of sex, but as a bizarre perversion of it” (Mullin 123). Therefore, Stephen and Bloom’s success at establishing a familial relationship between them that does not originate nor culminate in a sexual act represents a success in the achievement of social purity that the theosophists cannot achieve.

Moreover, the theosophy movement as seen by Stephen should be considered as more of a perversion of the Christian religion rather than an aid to religious purity. Blavatsky’s post-death appearance to Isabel Cooper-Oakley harkins to the resurrection of Christ. Stephen’s

assumption of the sexual nature of the visit creates an inverted view of the immaculate conception, in which a sexual act takes place between the visiting spirit and a young woman and is not followed by pregnancy and the birth of the Messiah. The theosophical movement's inability to produce a Messiah marks them as less religiously fulfilled than Stephen in his relationship with Bloom.

Stephen's breakdown of the Platonic relationships implied in theosophy indicate a rejection of Platonic philosophy as a whole, in favor of an Aristotelian approach. In *Scylla and Charybdis*, John Eglinton treats on "Plato's world of ideas" as "the eternal wisdom," dismissing all other schools of thought as "the speculation of schoolboys for schoolboys." Stephen's interjection that "Aristotle was once Plato's schoolboy" is met with the reply "And has remained so. . . a model schoolboy with his diploma under his arm" (*Ulysses* 271). Eglinton's dismissal of Aristotle as only relevant insofar as he adheres to Plato's ideas serves as a direct contradiction to Stephen's implication that Plato's philosophy is outdated when succeeded by Aristotelian thought.

Joyce uses Aristotle's rejection of Plato's idea that there are two separate worlds as justification for the lack of true religiosity present in the characters of Stephen and Bloom and his circumvention of the religio-sexual binary. Joyce's dismissal of the sanctity of religion can be seen in the pseudo-creation story that leads to Bloom become Stephen's parent, and into which



Joyce sees fit to place a male virgin mother. The notion of two worlds, even where one is an unreachable ideal, is necessarily implicit of a society filled with binaries and forced choices and outcomes. As Joyce's intention with the relationship between Bloom and Stephen within Ulysses is to prove that adhering to one side of any socially or biologically constructed binary is not necessary, but is rather a hindrance to complete fulfillment, this implication supplied by Plato's theory of Ideal Forms proves limiting. Aristotle's single world does away with the notion of binaries and the ideal, thereby also creating the possibility that any and everything could embody the ideal. This school of thought is much more tailored to Joyce's breakdown of choice and binaries within the work because Bloom's dismissal of important binary choices, such as religion and gender, creates a situation in which both sides of the binary are equally fulfilled by the presence of the other, as in Bloom's femininity being the force which rescues and secures his masculinity. In this situation, there is no ideal, because neither state could be realized without the other.

Moreover, Plato's ideal form presents a direct and literal divide between idealistic, metaphysical substances and physical, material substances. Within Ulysses and its precursor Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man this divide is evidenced in the pressure that Stephen and Bloom are put under to lead either a wholly spiritual and religious life or a wholly sexual one. In Portrait, a young Stephen discovers and frequently visits brothels and prostitutes, only to be so

overcome by guilt that he throws himself in completely the opposite direction, devoting himself to religious study to the point that he is eventually offered a place in the priesthood. As an adult in Ulysses, Stephen can be seen rejecting both the sexual and the religious lifestyles-- he refuses to pray for his mother on her deathbed, yet his visit to the brothel in Nighttown results in no sexual encounter. Bloom, on the other hand, accepts in part both sides of the binary. Despite his cuckolded masculinity, Bloom is a highly sexual being who exchanges erotic letters with Mary and gains pleasure from watching Gerty expose herself on the beach. Yet he takes pride in his Jewish ancestry and adheres more or less to the Catholicism adopted by his father. Thus, Bloom rejects the notion having to choose between a singularly religious or singularly sexual life, while Stephen denies that life must be defined in one of those terms at all. Both characters, in their individual lifestyle choices, mirror Aristotle's conjoining of the metaphysical to the physical in a bond that cannot be separated onto two different planes as Plato would suggest.

Joyce may have agreed with Aristotelian philosophy, indeed most of Stephen's personal philosophy reflects Aristotle's, yet, he still encourages his readers to doubt that a choice has to be made regarding a binary between Aristotle and Plato. He shows this by having Stephen, whose own way of thinking is almost entirely Aristotelian, pondering an idea that directly contradicts Aristotle's teaching. As Stephen ponders the magnitude of his personal debts, he remarks to himself that the cells and matter that compose his physical body are and always have been

constantly changing. He wonders whether he should really be held responsible for debts that belonged to a different version of himself. This contradiction shows that Joyce encourages his readers never to be lead into making a choice, even one that he himself would approve of.

Joyce's rejections of strictly religious, sexual, and theosophic lifestyles, paired with his denial of the gender binary and traditional notions of paternity, allow him to create a situation in which both sides of every binary are fulfilled through the power of both choosing and not choosing. Neither Stephen nor Bloom choose to be strict adherents of the Catholic religion, and yet both of them can figure in as Messianic figures. Bloom's denial of the choice between the wholly masculine and the wholly feminine makes this possible. Because Bloom embodies both male and female in one person, he is able to metaphorically produce the child Stephen without the need for a sexual encounter. Stephen's desire to create his own *entelechy* and his choice of Bloom as his sole external parental figure is what allows Bloom to fully take hold of his femininity in order to produce for himself an heir in whose origin he can be sure. The Christian notion of the Holy Trinity then allows for the Messiah Stephen to be both the Son and Father inside of this relationship, and the absorption of Rudy Bloom as the Holy Ghost upon Stephen metaphorical resurrection ties Bloom into this circle. Thus, Stephen's idea of *ineluctable entelechy*, stating that it is inevitable that he should grow to become what his father is, is fulfilled, yet the notion is no longer limiting. Because Stephen is his own father, and the product

of the immaculate conception of a sexually ambiguous character, the possibilities for what he would grow into are now limitless.

Stephen's desire to escape defining himself in terms of his parentage prompts him to reject not just Simon, but really the entirety of the world outside of himself. Sam Slote, author of Joyce's Nietzschean Ethics, labels Stephen's rejection of Simon as a desire for "auto-genesis," comparing this idea to that of Nietzsche's aesthetic ideal, wherein only one's personal existence is confirmed, rather than the existence of the world at large (Slote 41). Stephen becoming his own father completes the process of auto-genesis, while at the same time encompassing Joyce's breakdown of yet another binary choice. The process by which Stephen becomes his own parent begins with him accepting Bloom as both his mother and father. Therefore, Stephen must simultaneously deny and accept his position inside a larger outside world-- namely in relation to Bloom as his parent[s]-- in order to achieve his self-made status. Bloom, however, poses no threat to Stephen's individuality, for two reasons. The first of these reasons is that the dominant fact of Bloom's parentage of Stephen is his virginal birth, creating Stephen the Messiah who can be both Father and Son. Secondly, just as Stephen is preoccupied with the *ineluctable entelechy* posed by his paternity, Bloom focuses on the process of *metempsychosis*, which ensures that he has a future for himself through his progeny. In Stephen, Bloom has chosen a living son and heir. His metaphorical virginal motherhood removes the question of origin that Molly's infidelity

forces him to consider in relation to Milly and the late Rudy. In the presence of this definite progeny, Bloom can be recreated through the process of *metempsychosis*, completing the cyclical state of Stephen's *ineluctable entelechy* by allowing that, while the son is becoming the father, the father is simultaneously becoming the son.

The circuitous relationship presented between Bloom and Stephen achieves the outcome of all binary decisions without forcing the decisions themselves, allowing Joyce embrace the 'both/and' and the 'neither/nor' outcome of binary choices. In fact, achieving the binary outcome proves many times over to be dependant on the rejection of the binary itself. Bloom can only save his masculinity by become feminine; Stephen can only become auto-genetic by acknowledging and accepting Bloom's parentage of him, and neither character is forced to define himself based solely on his sexual or religious life. This simultaneous acceptance and rejection of binary decision making reinforces and solidifies Joyce's argument for the freedom both of and from choice.

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